LIVING MARXISM

ANTI-WAR DOUBLE ISSUE

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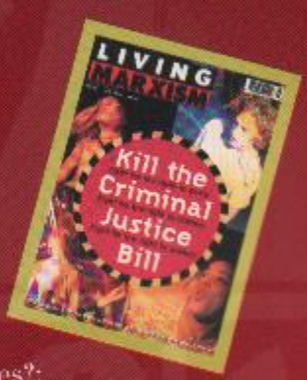
NO MORE HIROSHIMAS

HIROSHIMA THE MUSICAL conference London, 28 July-4 August 1995, see page 39

CONTENTS



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Back issues

All issues £2.50 including p&p

77 The spirit of Hiroshima; James Ferman interview; Who owns your genes?; Fundamentalism in Algeria; Cantona; Clegg; Poussin

78 The strange death of British politics; Recovered memory syndrome; Barings collapse; Inside the new South Africa; Global warming; Boxing; Richard Rodgers

79 Is it a girl's world?; Ireland: a nation never again; Rape and anonymity; VE-Day; Exploiting the Indians; Outing; Aids in Africa; Cot death; Woody Allen

80 Global-degook; A mad, mad, mad, mad world economy; David Edgar interview; Divorce on demand; The Oklahoma bombing; Genes and violence

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Welcome to an anti-war double issue of **Living Marxism**, 68 pages of sanity in a summer of militarist madness.

The official celebrations of the Second World War anniversaries drone on from VE-Day to VJ-Day. Meanwhile the American bombing raids in Bosnia, followed by Anglo-French troop reinforcements and talk of the Germans joining in, should have woken us all up to the fact that Western militarism is not a thing of the past.

This issue of *Living Marxism* marks the culmination of a year-long campaign leading up to the fiftieth anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The contents are devoted to developing the anti-militarist arguments that we have featured during those 12 months.

If there is one theme underlying the multiplicity of subjects covered in this month's magazine, it is the need to expose double standards in a divided world. Today militarism is seen as a problem which only exists 'over there' in the little states of the third world and the East. Meanwhile the great military powers of the West, the people who brought you everything from Hiroshima and Vietnam to the Gulf War and Northern Ireland, are allowed to pose as peacekeepers.

On every issue from nuclear weapons to war crimes trials, Western governments can now assume the moral authority to lay down the law to the rest of the world. This moral divide is really just a modern equivalent of the old imperial politics of race, since it separates the few 'civilised' white nations from the 'savages' swarming over the globe. The widespread acceptance of the moral divide is what lends legitimacy to Western intervention and militarism in the nineties. And exposing that racial double standard is the aim of this issue of *Living Marxism*.

We begin with the hidden history of Hiroshima, which is revealed here as the end result of an Anglo-American race war against the Japanese. The furore caused in June by the mere suggestion that the word 'reconciliation' might be included in British VJ-Day prayers confirmed that race hatred is alive and well.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has been attacked in *Living Marxism* over the past year. In this issue David Nolan argues that the recent decision to extend the NPT indefinitely, and subsequent moves by the nuclear weapons states to resume test explosions, show that, 50 years on, nuclear weapons are still the White Man's Bomb, a symbol of imperial power hanging over the heads of third world peoples. And it is no idle threat. In their latest report from Iraq, Hugh Livingstone and Kayode Olafimihan reveal the damage which the Allied powers have inflicted with depleted uranium shells and sanctions, on the pretext of preventing nuclear proliferation.

Over the past three years, Joan Phillips has won an international reputation as a war reporter for her exposés of Western propaganda about the civil war in the former Yugoslavia. As the Bosnian conflict explodes back into the headlines, she takes issue with the case for bombing the Serbs and putting them on trial for war crimes.

But it's not all bombs. A key feature of *Living Marxism's* recent coverage has been the understanding that militarism does not always come out of the barrel of a gun. There are other, less obvious (and often more effective) ways for the Western powers to interfere in and dominate other people's affairs. Helen Simons highlights one of the most important of such developments in international affairs—the way in which women's issues and gender politics are now being exploited by Western governments and financiers in the third world. And Vanessa Adams reveals what's wrong with the UN campaign to stop the use of child soldiers in Africa.

There is much else besides in this double-barrelled issue of *Living Marxism*, from John Gillott and Manjit Kumar's critical analysis of the links between science and the Bomb to Daniel Nassim's interview with the Nobel Prize-winning Japanese author Kenzaburo Oe. It's all good stuff, and it all points up the importance of the Hiroshima: The Week conference against war and repression, sponsored by *Living Marxism*, which takes place in London from 28 July to 4 August. I hope to see you there.

The magazine will be back as normal in September.

Mick Hume

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COVER ILLUSTRATION: ALEC CAMPBELL AFTER KEIJI NAKAZAWA

Mick Hume

A revolutionary project for our times

What does it really mean to be left wing, radical or revolutionary in the second half of the 1990s? *Living Marxism* is launching an open discussion around that question. The aim is to clarify the meaning of anti-capitalist politics for today. And we need your help to get it right.

First let's fill in some background to the discussion. The political world in which we all live and work has changed beyond recognition since the first issue of *Living Marxism* hit the streets in November 1988. The end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the defeat of the Western labour movements more or less wiped out the forces of the traditional left. Then the impact of economic slump and political decay did much the same to the right.

One upshot of these momentous changes is that the terms left and right do not mean very much any more. As we have discussed in *Living Marxism* features over recent months, there is no longer any clear delineation between the various shades of mainstream political opinion. Ideological differences have largely disappeared, and politicians now appear merely as individual 'personalities' rather than as representatives of a clear political programme.

The end of left and right is an international phenomenon. So while Tony Blair and Baroness Thatcher can form a mutual admiration society in the British media, across the Atlantic US President Bill Clinton and his most prominent right-wing opponent, Newt Gingrich, could recently appear together in a televised debate that looked more like a love-in.

A big factor behind this state of affairs is what we have called the temporary suspension of the class struggle. The most obvious illustration of this trend is the decline of industrial action by workers over jobs, pay and working conditions; the number of strikes in Britain today is at a historically low level. More broadly, there is no longer any real sense in society of a confrontation between the collective forces of working people on the one hand and capitalists on the other.

Of course, people still get angry and embittered about what capitalism does to their lives—redundancies, pay restraint, housing problems and so on. But today most people tend to express their rage in an arbitrary, individual fashion rather than as part of an exploited social class. That is why something like the recent protests over animal welfare can easily become an outlet for popular frustrations about the state of society today, while more traditional forms of working class action are considered irrelevant.

As a result of the suspension of the class struggle there is little pressure on politicians to act in the clear-cut interests of any distinct class in society. With all sides competing to appeal to the nebulous no-man's land of 'Middle England', the dissolution of political lines accelerates.

It is against the background of the end of the traditional left-right divide that we can identify a need to clarify the meaning of anti-capitalist politics today. The upheavals of the past decade have made redundant most of the language and the policies associated with the left. The landmarks which guided left-wing politics through the past century have been swallowed up by the tide of history, and those who still look to them today will quickly get lost.

In Britain, for instance, people who call themselves socialists have always lent heavily on the Labour Party and the trade unions. Yet these organisations have been entirely transformed in recent years. Tony Blair's New Labour is now a classless party of law and order and austerity, staffed by well-heeled women and former policy technic men. As for the trade unions, they are no longer unions at all in any real sense. Instead of collective organisations of workers, they have become marketing machines selling cut-price insurance to their members and cut-price pay and productivity deals to the employers.

The collapse of the old politics has created a lot of confusion about the problems people face and what needs to be done about them. In particular, many of the basic assumptions of an anti-capitalist approach to the world are now dismissed out of hand.

There have always been two starting points to our approach. First, that human emancipation is the one goal worth fighting for. And second, that the barriers to realising that goal are not natural or technical but *social*. They stem from the fact that capitalist society is managed so as to subordinate the needs of the majority to the interests of a profit-hungry elite.

Such an anti-capitalist approach has never commanded majority support in Britain. In the climate of today, however, people's horizons are even lower. From all sides attention now tends to focus on the moral failings of individuals, and any attempt to find a social explanation for our problems is seen as irrelevant. At the same time, any idea of changing the way society is run is rejected, often on the basis that change could only be for the worse. This fatalistic mood has been noted with relief by members of the establishment, whose books and newspapers are now full of the comforting thought that, no matter how bad the market system might be, it

urvive, since at least 'the alternatives have been discredited'.

It is important to note that what has changed here is not the exploitative and repressive facts of life under capitalism. What has changed are the political perceptions of that reality.

Earlier this year, social commentator Richard North announced that 'one of the oddest features of modern Britain is that there is nothing big to protest about'. For decades, North noted, 'bright young people' had been able 'to fight for socialism, against the Bomb, against American intervention in Vietnam, even for women's rights. All these causes have gone'. All that remains, he said, is green protest, 'and in truth even that is a busted flush'.

In one sense, of course, this analysis is wrong. There are plenty of big things to protest about in Britain. The old beasts which North lists, from social inequality to imperialism, still remain to be slain, and new ones rear their ugly heads all the time. Where he is right, however, is that today none of these 'big things' are seen as *causes*, which young people believe that it is possible and necessary to fight around.

Most people have given up on any idea of striving for liberation and emancipation through trying to change society. Although there are still plenty of complaints and criticisms about what is happening, they rarely get at the deeper roots of the problem in the workings of the capitalist system. So while there might be a public furore over the 'excessive' pay rises of a few executives, there is no uproar about the increased economic insecurity afflicting millions of working people. The same culture of low expectations helps to explain why local campaigns against roads or in defence of trees are often the limits of the politics of protest today.

Not only have the politics of liberation been rejected, but some very regressive trends are now being embraced as positive developments. We have often noted in *Living Marxism* the increasing tendency towards interference in people's affairs by all manner of official and semi-official agencies these days, from the police and the courts to social services, counsellors and censors. Worse still, this new authoritarianism is now widely welcomed on the left as a defence of society's victims.

An equally dangerous trend is the vogue among radical-minded people for 'identity' politics; stripped of the pretentious jargon of empowerment, this usually signals a retreat from an engagement with broader issues in favour of narrow-mindedly revelling in your own origins and lifestyle. And that amounts to little more than reconciling yourself to what you are stuck with, and celebrating the powerlessness of the individual in capitalist society.

These are some of the considerable problems that we face as we try to win support for revolutionary ideas today. So what is the solution? In the context of 1995 and beyond, how can we best present the case for an anti-capitalist alternative?

Too often in the past few years, discussions of how to advance radical politics have proved wasted opportunities. Those trying to come to terms with complex new realities have tended merely to flip-flop and apologise for their pasts, instead of tackling the more difficult job of working out some creative ways for critics of capitalism to engage with the present.

It would certainly be worse than useless for us to restate what Karl Marx or anybody else said in the past. Revolutionary ideas will mean nothing to a new audience unless they can give a clear insight into current developments, and demonstrate their relevance to people's contemporary experience. To do that properly will require a whole new political vocabulary, and an attitude that rejects safe and familiar formulations in favour of bold experimentation.

Living Marxism is launching an open discussion to clarify the meaning of anti-capitalist politics for today

The discussion we are launching in *Living Marxism* will aim to clarify the real problems facing society today, and work out an appropriate response for our times. This will be a central theme of the magazine in the months ahead. Your involvement in that debate is not only welcome, but vital; if the discussion is to succeed in its aims it will have to consider and reflect the widest possible range of experiences.

Although we are surrounded on all sides by evidence of capitalist stagnation and decay, there is a palpable silence on the possibilities for change and revolution. Too many people seem to be trying to evade thinking through this problem. In a sense that is understandable, since developing a contemporary argument for revolution is a difficult nut to crack. But that is also what makes clarifying anti-capitalist politics such an important and worthwhile project for our times.

There are pressing questions that need to be addressed. The answers, as they say, will be printed in future issues.

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

LETTERS

The right to bear arms

In the horror of the Oklahoma bombing, it is very easy to miss seeing the wood for all the trees. The image of a small group of right-wing fanatics imposing their ideas upon society by use of the terror tactic is the picture that immediately springs to mind. All else is immediately discounted. But it is important to remember the democratic content of the right to bear arms, as embodied in the American Constitution.

The early history of the American republic, that of a revolutionary struggle to free the American colony from the tyranny of British rule, spelt out for the American colonists certain truths that to them became self-evident. Today these are known throughout the world, yet nowhere established other than in mock form.

'All men are created equal.' In a world in which governments were either those of priestcraft or conquerors, this statement was like a thunderclap.

'All power in society arises from the people and must reside in the people.' This was going against the old idea that God had picked out the monarchs and the priesthood. All civil progress since 1776 has been tied up with this claim, which our rulers are afraid to deny. None of them dares suggest that Elizabeth Windsor was chosen by God for us—they would be laughed out of court.

Like all those whose lives depend on it, the eighteenth-century American rebels gave deep thought to the matter of government. When you risk your lives trying to get rid of a despotic ruler, you are extremely careful not to be jumping out of a frying pan and finding oneself in a fire.

Thus 'government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worse state, an intolerable one' (Tom Paine, *Common Sense*). Should things not turn out as planned, then the safeguards should be well established beforehand: 'the right of the people to bear arms shall not be denied.' (Second Amendment to the American Constitution)

Surely these are the rights which today's 'democrats' are seeking to deny the people 'in whom power resides'—or maybe the USA is Utopia and they do not need rights now.

Dave Hallsworth *Manchester*

Exploiting the Indians

I agree with most of the points raised by Ben Brack in 'Exploiting the Indians' (May). Especially when he raises the issue of Western institutions and aid agencies using indigenous rights as a wedge to intervene in the affairs of Latin American states. It strikes me as laughable that the USA could even pretend to lecture other countries on the treatment of their native peoples, given its own history regarding Native Americans. Aside from the genocidal assaults on Indians in the nineteenth century, the current status of Native North America leaves much to be desired.

By all the standard indices used to determine a group's status in society, American Indians are the poorest group in America. They have the highest rate of infant mortality and death by preventable disease. Native Americans also experience the highest level of unemployment and the highest dropout rate. Alcoholism and drug abuse are rampant on the reservations; the suicide rate is also several times the national average. Life expectancy for reservation-based Indian males is only 45 years; for females it is less than three years longer. The USA's ruling class need to tend their own garden before looking to tend their neighbour's.

However, there was one point in an otherwise exceptional article that I did not entirely endorse. The author said that the recent Mayan rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico, is just another example of 'bogus indigenism'. I would argue that the Chiapas uprising is an attempt, by a local group of rebels, to end the rule of a corrupt, one-party oligarchy, namely the Mexican government.

Max Pringle *Vallejo, California*

In defence of feminism

The article 'The Emily within' (May) is right to point out that women's subordination does not rest solely within the cosy confines of Westminster, nor will it be eradicated by its denizens. It is certainly the case that promoting the campaign for more women in parliament is very different from dealing with women's oppression in all its guises.

However, to suggest that women should be allowed to participate in conventional political organisations on the basis of their individual merits is not an argument I expected from you. Are you suggesting that it is just a coincidence that white, middle class men are elected into positions of power, or perhaps it can be explained by the all too familiar refrain that men are more independent and innovative than women? As (t)he story goes, either you (he) have it or you (she) don't.

It is not just some women being criticised here, but feminist politics *per se*. You use the Labour Party's manipulation of some feminist concerns as if this was all the feminist political agenda was about. Feminism is concerned with a lot more than a few seats in parliament or for that matter a better job.

The locus of women's oppression is to be found in the way reproduction is organised within a monogamous, heterosexual family set-up. The few women who work full time today are s socialised to be mothers and carers first a foremost. The nature of women's oppression all its complexity should be dealt with direc and with the same rigour as applied to oth areas of interest—not surreptitiously attacked the basis of a feminisation of politics, work, e Rather than rely on the overwhelming fear castration to maintain your readership, sur you can come up with something a tad mo innovative. Not completely yours,

T Long

War and peace

Mick Hume's editorial ('What's a war crim between friends?', June) clearly expresses th crass double standards of the major Weste powers. They have always sought to justify the aggression by blaming the victims and claimi the high moral ground. As Brendan Behan sai 'bombs are only legitimate when they are b ones and they are dropped from aeroplane

Hume makes a valid point about the rac assumptions underlying this strategy. But w do not have to look as far away as Vietnam, Ira or Rwanda for evidence of this. It has bee evident for centuries in Britain's own imperia war in Ireland.

The British ruling class has always portraye Irish freedom fighters as 'evil men, driven tribal bloodlusts and ancient ethnic hatred This propaganda has been dutifully swallowe by the gullible British working class.

Britain's own war crimes tribunals have be in operation for years. They handed out bru sentences to those Irish 'savages' found gui of crimes against the state. When the sam tribunals were recently exposed as a farce, al the 'savages' were shown to be innocer nobody questioned either the legitimacy of th war or that of the judges.

Until there is a complete reassessment British imperialism and an understanding by th working class of their own duplicity in crimes, British workers will always be ripe exploitation. And the paddies, wogs and Pak will continue to suffer.

Paul O'Connor *Derby*

Mick Hume's editorial ('War and peace, the and now', May) missed out the subtle militar message underlying the VE-Day event Through using words like 'never again', 'gre sacrifice' and 'liberation', we're supposed rally round because it was a 'good war'. Th reality was that for the second time in th twentieth century the working class found its conscripted into fighting for the preservati of capitalism.

The elites of Europe and America a cynically manipulating people's sad memor

tragic wartime experiences. The media is full military talking heads, all of them claiming at the only thing which can prevent a future uropean war is bigger bangs for your buck—leaner, meaner war machine.

It is seen as disrespectful to the fallen if opposite view is taken and the consensus roken. But the only monument worth a damn a society based on human need.

loyd King *Camden, London*

ame old global-degook?

like Freeman's cover feature 'Global-degook' June) presents the idea that the search r global patterns of human behaviour and curring themes in worldwide society is somew trivial—a passing fad of no consequence.

If Marxism were not originally conceived s a global one-size-fits-all political system, it ould never have survived. If it is prepared only discuss its approach to a particular policy in particular country, or a particular campaign ver a particular bill, then it will evolve only in e minutiae of its thought.

Marxism is supposed to embody change. that change cannot extend to a better understanding of global systems, then it is simply nkering. Revolutions the like of which we have ot seen since the discovery of agriculture re bursting out around us. Do we want to e left sitting in the eye of the storm, saying, es, of course we can adapt to change, but here is no change. Our global view remains e same'?

hristian Darkin *christian@darkin.demon.co.uk*

ostly divorce

oncerning Ann Bradley's 'What's wrong with ivorce on demand?' (June), I wish to share the llowing points.

I am amazed at the government's ability to pend £332m in '1993-93' on legal aid in family atters. It is an incredible transaction to make uring the New Year's holiday period, although r many couples the Christmas break can be especially trying!

It seems without logic to review the existing ivorce laws but not even consider whether arriage is a satisfactory agreement. After all, is the marriage that fails.

Lastly, I have never witnessed a more phallic wig than the one shown on the last page of the article. Does Lord Mackay wear this on his head?

Nathan Friel *Brighton*

Animal matters

Ann Bradley's article, 'Of hedgehogs and men' (April), is riddled with flaws. Let me point out just two.

Firstly, Bradley makes assumptions about the nature of consciousness which are at least highly debatable, for example that the capacity for abstract thought is a litmus test for consciousness. A basic introduction to psychology and the philosophy of mind would reveal this to be a complex matter, not one which can be passed off at once so authoritatively and so simplistically.

Secondly, she fails to recognise that animals have the capacity to feel pain and to suffer in other ways. Whilst a veal calf cannot 'resent captivity'—resentment requires sophisticated conceptualisation and language—it can and does suffer from it. One does not need to deny the differences between humans and other sentient beings in order to have concern for the latter, as well as, if to a lesser extent than, for our own species.

Ian Yates (letters, May) will say we do not know other mammals can suffer. This strikes me as a kind of species solipsism, and it is dangerously counter-intuitive given the presence in other mammals of a highly developed brain, a central nervous system, pain receptors, etc, all comparable to our own. We must make a reasonable assessment on the basis of what we know, and should we not err on the side of caution? Or are we to become like Descartes, nailing cats to the door to flaunt our confidence that animals cannot feel pain and that the screams are akin to the chimes of a clock?

Finally, just a thought: might you organise a week-long conference aimed at making sense of Ann Bradley's writings?

Marc Gardiner *Plymouth*

You persist in alleging that British people 'love' animals ('Respectable rebellion in Middle England', March). No they don't, but they are becoming more aware of how cruelly our society treats non-human animals.

It is not anthropomorphic to point out that animals suffer; it is a scientific fact. The dairy farmer quoted has a vested interest in denying that what he does is cruel. It's like asking a Tory MP if Conservative policies are good for people! You won't get an honest answer.

To insinuate that one should not be concerned with factory farming because some people are confined in prisons is completely illogical. It is akin to saying that one should ignore the question of domestic violence because the war in former Yugoslavia is more important, or vice versa. Wake up! Most of the firms which oppress animals also oppress people, either by exploiting workers or by polluting the environment.

Non-human animals are described as 'dumb'. Does that mean 'dumb' as in 'stupid', as in 'mute' or as in 'lacking the power of human speech'? Do human rights depend on intelligence, working vocal chords or ability to communicate? Where does that leave babies and severely disabled people?

Katharine A Gilchrist *Canterbury, Kent*

New Zealand calling

A *Living Marxism* readers' group is starting in Christchurch, New Zealand. We are interested in hearing from other readers in New Zealand and in the Asia/Pacific area. We can be contacted by e-mail (p.ferguson@student.canterbury.ac.nz) or by writing to:

Phil Duncan *LMRG, PO Box 513, Christchurch, New Zealand*

Wages of sin

In response to 'University lecherers' (May). Personally, I think sleeping with students is its own punishment.

Paul Chown *London SW19*

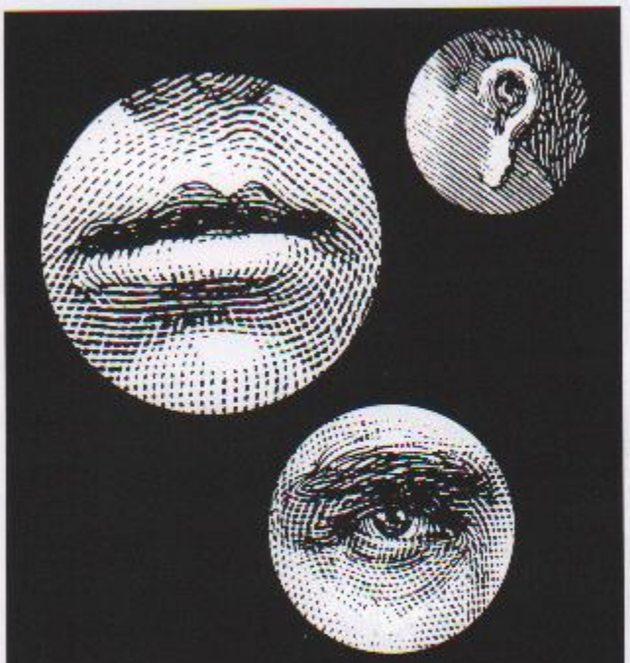
Monkees business

In '"Recovered Memory": a morbid symptom' (April), Michael Fitzpatrick's own memory seems to be playing tricks on him. The lyric quoted is from 'Take a Giant Step' by The Monkees (1966). Unlike 'Taj Mahal', they did not need to adopt gimmicky names—particularly those of suburban curry houses—in order to 'spice up' their music.

True Monkees Fan *London*

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 editor@junius.co.uk



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

TABOOS

Far from the third world threatening humanity with an Ebola pandemic, the meltdown is in the West says Toby Andrew

Ebola panic: pulp fiction

'Doomsday bug: 3 in alert here.' The *Daily Mirror* front page on 19 May informed Britain that we were all at risk from a lethal new virus carried by a Zairean woman 'hiding out in Hackney'. The *Mirror* branded the Ebola virus 'Liquid Death...a million times more contagious than Aids', and warned that 'countries across the globe have been put on alert for victims'. A *Times* editorial made the same link between Ebola, Aids and black Africa, stating that 'the Ebola virus is not the first mysterious virus to emerge from the dark heart of Africa' (12 May 1995). 'Disease fights back', ran the *Economist's* front page, picturing a skull growing in a petri-dish (20 May 1995). Scare stories even arose in Japan that the Aum cult, accused of the gas attack on Tokyo commuters, had got hold of the Ebola virus (*Independent*, 25 May 1995).

Ebola does appear truly frightening. Starting with innocent flu-like symptoms, the disease rapidly deteriorates into a severe fever until 'by the sixth day, blood flows freely from the eyes, ears and nose, and the sufferer starts vomiting the black sludge of his disintegrating internal tissues. Death usually follows by day nine' (*Newsweek*, 22 May 1995). The lethal nature of the virus was confirmed by one professor of medicine who told the *Sunday Times* that 'if I were to inoculate 100 people with Ebola, three weeks later 88 per cent of them would be dead' (14 May 1995). Faced with such dangers, the government's Chief Medical Officer, Kenneth Calman, issued a public-spirited health warning that anyone suffering from fever or diarrhoea within three weeks of visiting Zaire should consult a doctor.

The message of the Ebola coverage was that we are all at risk. It made little difference to the unfolding panic that the Zairean woman's doctor announced the same day that she and her two children were only suffering from flu. Nor did the panicky discussion seem to be influenced by the known facts about Ebola, which suggest that we were never at risk at all.

In the unlikely event of becoming infected, the virus is undoubtedly life-threatening, and in the worst cases there are horrific symptoms before death. But unless you are an unprotected hospital worker in the Zairean town of Kitwit, Ebola is virtually impossible to catch. The virus is not transmitted by air and infection is believed to require the exchange of body fluids.

Ebola is not a mysterious product of the 'dark continent'. It is an 'African' disease in one sense; its success relies on conditions created by poverty and poor health services. The widely quoted mortality rates of 53 and 88 per cent are based on two previous outbreaks in 1976 in southern Sudan and northern Zaire. In both cases, medical treatment was either limited or non-existent. Patients, however, do survive if given hygienic care and rehydration treatment. For example, the technician at Porton Down, Britain's biological warfare facility, who stuck himself with an infected needle and the Swiss zoologist studying chimps in the Ivory Coast both lived because intensive care was immediately available.

There is nothing 'mysterious' at all about previous Ebola outbreaks. According to David Simpson who led the World Health Organisation (WHO) team investigating the 1976 outbreak in Sudan, the northern Zaire epidemic was caused by some 200 people being injected for malaria and typhoid, using the same contaminated syringe

ILLUSTRATION: AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL PICTURES

If sterilised syringes had been used, the epidemic would never have happened.

Ebola is a relatively minor medical problem even in Africa. By the end of May, out of 205 cases *thought* to be Ebola, 153 ended in fatality (*International Herald Tribune,* 31 May 1995). As a *New Scientist* editorial rightly pointed out, more Zaireans than that die of sleeping sickness or in car crashes *every month* in the capital Kinshasa ('Whose nightmare?', 20 May 1995). British fears of the disease are certainly not motivated by any humanitarian concern for the well-being of people in the third world. At the same time as the Ebola story, 400 people in Bangladesh died from an outbreak of diarrhoea and more than 50 000 were infected following a three-day storm that devastated the country. Yet there were no front-page headlines about them.

It is clear that we are not all at risk from Ebola, and that those few who are could be medically protected. Even the worst scaremongers had to admit in small print that Ebola was not really about to wipe us out. 'Could the virus reach a critical mass in a third world capital, then engulf the globe? Could Ebola mutate into some airborne form? Could coughs and sneezes become agents of mass death?'. 'Not likely' is how *Newsweek* answers itself on the next line. Last year a similar panic came and went about an outbreak of plague in India (see 'Plague spread by media rats', *Living Marxism,* December 1994). This time the Ebola scare could barely be sustained for three weeks before the WHO had to admit the epidemic was over (*International Herald Tribune,* 31 May 1995). So much for the pandemic. ▶

But if we are not at risk from Ebola, then what has been driving the irrational response to this obscure disease?

Entitled 'Outbreak of fear', the *Newsweek* article quoted above gave a clue. The authors argued that the significance of Ebola is not so much that the disease itself is a threat, but that it is a 'potent emblem' of *disasters to come* if man continues to 'interfere with the environment'. They argue that, as humanity interacts with nature through 'people encroaching on untouched land, faster travel or reasons still unknown', new conditions are inadvertently created in which new and deadly viruses can emerge.

In the minds of today's experts, it seems that we are increasingly threatened by incomprehensible forces unleashed by our own actions. The discovery of Ebola has now prompted speculation that other diseases may 'emerge' as rainforests are cut down to accommodate expanding populations. Dr Robert Ryder, a virologist at Yale University argues that 'it is almost as if the virus is saying to man, "I'll leave you alone if you leave me alone, but as soon as you step on my turf I'm going to get you"' (*Times*, 12 May 1995).

It is almost as if medical experts are abandoning their discipline for a morose new sociology. 'The primary problem is no longer virological but social', explains Stephen Morse, another widely quoted virologist. According to Morse, human activities as diverse as farming, urbanisation and jet travel can now unleash new diseases. As society develops, he claims, the clearance of land, the concentration of people and the growth of international travel all threaten to give rise to health disasters. Diseases are no longer perceived as a problem of nature which development must overcome; instead, development itself is now seen to be threatening humanity with disease.

The main culprit in alarmist minds is urbanisation, especially in the third world. Take Zaire, where 44 per cent of the country's estimated 43m people live in cities, but only 14 per cent have access to clean water. Such insanitary conditions mean diseases can break out and spread fast. Yet the authors of the *Newsweek* article which cited these figures implicitly blame outbreaks of disease on the process of urbanisation in the third world, rather than the lack of clean water. They clearly feel that to prevent a disease 'reaching a critical mass in a third world capital', people in places like Zaire should remain stuck in preindustrial villages. For *Newsweek*, urbanisation and development in the third world are synonymous with disease. The solution it offers is not

the development of a clean water and a sewage system in Zaire, but a system of monitoring outbreaks in the third world in order to contain the global spread of disease.

The consensus today is that any human activity is inherently risky, which makes the only realistic policy one of damage limitation in response to disaster. For example, agriculture used to be considered an unproblematic source of food. Now it is retrospectively being reinterpreted as a source of

Diseases are no longer seen as a problem of nature, but one of development

unforeseen health hazards. One example often cited to illustrate the problem is that of Argentina after the Second World War, where farmers ploughed under grasslands for cornfields. With the cornfields came field mice harbouring the virus Junín, which caused an epidemic among farmers in the 1950s, killing one in five of those infected. The conclusion drawn from this today is that *agriculture* is the problem, rather than the mice or the need for a vaccine. The perception is that there are no longer any solutions for humanity, only competing risks. As *Newsweek* asks, 'when building a dam is the only way to grow crops, is the prospect of a new mosquito-borne illness more daunting than [that] of famine?'.

In a 'shrinking world' jet travel is also seen as a problem, speeding up the spread of unknown diseases, even though lethal pandemics have yet to occur. It is migration that strikes the strongest chord of fear. The Ebola headlines revealed dovetailing concerns about a burgeoning world population, mass migration of the world's poor into the West, and threats of disease 'from over there'. So *Newsweek's* front cover asked, ostensibly in the name of medicine: 'Beyond the Ebola scare: what else is out there?' (22 May 1995)

According to the new medico-sociologists, disasters are now being brought about by urbanisation, farming, international travel, migration and people moving into the countryside. In other words, just about everything we do in the cause of development. The suggested solution to all these man-made problems is that people should stay put, stop consuming and fear for our lives. The nightmare alternative offered is that humanity will be destroyed by its own interference with nature. In his best-selling novel *The Hot Zone*, about an Ebola-type virus threatening to become airborne and wipe out the USA, Richard Pres presents his own apocalyptic worldv 'The earth is attempting to rid itself of an infection by the human parasit Perhaps Aids is the first step in a pro of clearance....Aids is the revenge of the rainforest.' (p321)

Fact merges into fiction with bo such as *The Hot Zone*, *The Coming Plague* and the film *Outbreak*. But fo Preston such pulp fiction is an entirel positive public awareness exercise, reflecting the 'geological shift in scientific perceptions'. For him the response to Ebola is not irrational, but a 'classic warning' of threats to come. Even the *New Scientist* editori concludes that Ebola 'bears watchin given the experience of Aids. There is a growing consensus that 'emergi viruses like Aids and Ebola should now be regarded as the primary thre to world health. 'The puncturing of an almost Victorian belief in inevitab medical progress has created a humb and more fearful view of viruses.' (*Times*, 12 May 1995)

For agencies such as the WHO, combating Aids or even Ebola has become more important than tackling the world's biggest killers - tuberculo and malaria. Well-known diseases su as TB are less suited to the doomsda mood of our times, less dark and mysterious than the modern 'plagues which signal, in the words of the *Tim* the return of 'the black horseman tha loomed so large in medieval thinking Of course a cure is known for mass killers like TB, but the development of healthcare systems and the availability of antibiotics are not considered realistic for the third wor Diseases which are curable elsewher are implicitly viewed as an inherent feature of third world societies. Meanwhile, attention focuses on scare stories about the spread of new viruses from the 'dark continent to the West.

Not everybody has been taken in by the panic. Many saw the far-fetche Ebola scare as a bit of a joke. Even th *Sun* ran an uncharacteristically sensib editorial on Ebola: 'Forget it. Listen to the medical experts, not the alarmi Don't panic.' (13 May 1995: althoug that didn't stop the same paper runnin a front-page story a week later about 'horror bug' being brought into Brita by the Zairean woman with flu. Neve let the facts interfere with a good anti-immigrant tale.)

The only people who seemed fully taken in by the irrational scare about Ebola were the scaremongers themselv What they really fear is the future.

ANN BRADLEY

Pill panics

Recent headlines about deaths of young women on the pill have scared the living daylights out of many pill-takers and given the hope of a quick buck to some solicitors. One Liverpool law firm has advertised in the local papers, asking women on particular brands of pill to contact them if they believe they are suffering pill-related side-effects. The result: more than 200 women hoping that solicitors can win them compensation, and thousands more petrified that they are about to drop dead from a heart attack. Already there are reports of women turning up at family planning clinics horrified to find that they are pregnant after needlessly abandoning the pill, a method of contraception they have successfully and safely used for years.

Every year approximately 15 deaths are associated with the use of the contraceptive pill. I say 'associated with' and not 'caused by' because no coroner could swear that a woman who dies while on the pill would have lived if she had not been using it. Pill-associated deaths are a bit of a mystery. It is known that the hormones in the pill can increase the risk of thrombosis and heart attacks in some women, but doctors can nearly always screen out those likely to have problems because there are clear 'risk factors'. If you have a personal or family history of thrombosis, strokes or heart attacks, if you are very overweight, if you are over 35 and smoke or if you suffer from some other very specific conditions you should not be on the pill. Otherwise you can probably assume that it is as safe as houses—safer, actually, given that 40 times more people die every year from falling down stairs than die from pill-related problems.

The risk from the pill is less than a tenth of the risk of dying in pregnancy

Life is full of risks. Yet some risks are played up more than others. John Guillebaud, professor of family planning at University College Hospital and the pill expert's expert, recently told the doctor's magazine *GP* that 'the risk of dying from circulatory disease caused by the pill is six per million, less than a tenth of the risk of dying in pregnancy'. So why is it that, following a coroner's judgement that the pill may have played a part in the death of a teenager, the media is full of it, yet you never see Anne and Nick surrounded by bereaved relatives after one of the occasional pregnancy-related deaths? The *Guardian* blithely headlines an article on the pill 'The lady killers'. Yet nobody would think of printing an article on Ford Fiestas under the header 'The people killers', even though you are far more likely to die while driving to collect your pills than you are from taking them.

Those who have whipped up the pill panics claim that they are acting responsibly by providing women with information which medical professionals fail to provide. The solicitors trying to make their names and their first millions by needlessly terrifying women imply that they are siding with the woman in the street against the evil pharmaceutical conglomerates who fail to provide appropriate product information. In an attempt to connect with women's worries about the pill, even many family planning experts have taken the line that the information women receive about the pill is inadequate and insufficient.

There is always a grain of truth in the argument that many doctors could improve their knowledge of contraception and their patient communication skills. But it is hard to make a case that the way in which doctors assess patients' suitability for any given method of contraception, and the information they provide on the pill, is less adequate than their provision of other medical treatments. It may be true that some doctors prescribe the pill for totally unsuitable candidates, but then they probably provide antidepressants, antibiotics and all manner of other drugs for totally unsuitable patients too. The problem is the doctor's training, temperament and possibly the amount of time he or she has to spend with each patient. The problem is not particular to the pill.

The same argument can be made in respect of product information. Yes, the product information that comes in pill packets probably could be improved. But if you compare it to that which comes with many other medicines, you will find that contraceptive pill information is incomparably more detailed. Some manufacturers now insert little consumer-friendly booklets in each pack detailing every possible side-effect known to medical science.

The fact is that the pill is singled out for special scrutiny because of what it does and what it stands for. Women on the pill want to have sex but not children. Sex on the pill is sheer, shameless, undisguised sex for fun. And the moral minority who still believe that sex should be procreational have a problem with this. For them every pill death is proof that sinners suffer retribution.

It is no coincidence that the main 'medical experts' fuelling the pill panics are the Victorian values moralists such as Dr Margaret White (retired GP), vice-president of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children. Unfortunately, instead of being laughed out of town these self-righteous prudes can now find a hearing among those who are suspicious of the drugs industry, suspicious of medical intervention and suspicious of the motives of the agencies promoting family planning.

Medical developments, and the motives of those who promote them, should always be scrutinised. But so should the motives of those who manufacture needless panics. In this case it is those who are gunning against the multinational manufacturers who have the most reactionary agenda. ●

When is a bombing an act of war and when is it a humanitarian intervention? In th eyes of the press corps, it depends on who is bombing whom, says Joan Phillips

Laptop bombardiers

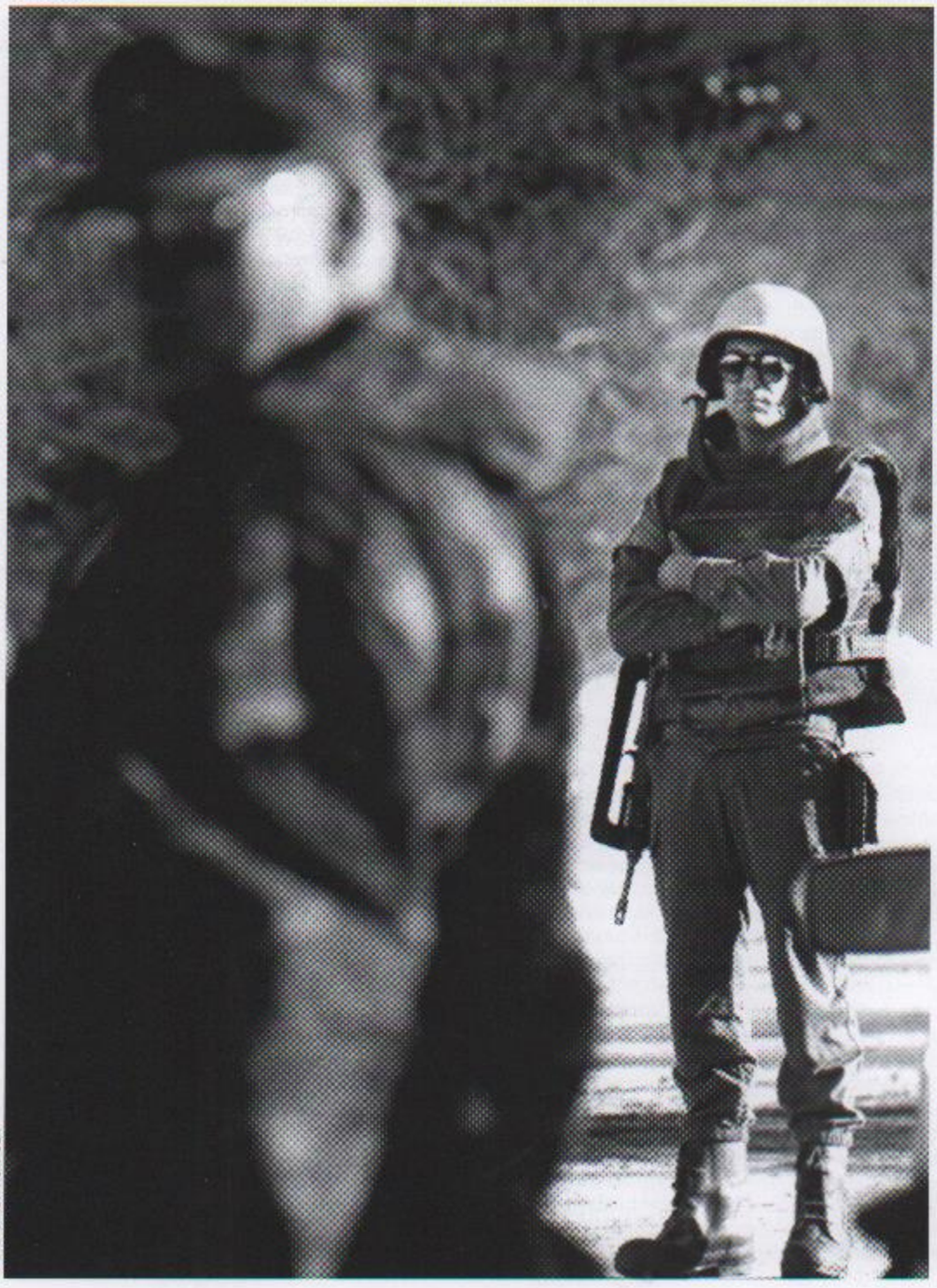


PHOTO: SIMON NORFOLK

The coverage of recent event in Bosnia summed up the one-eyed worldview of the media. Nato planes bombed a Bosni Serb arms depot in response to a Un Nations request for air-strikes. The Bosnian Serbs took hundreds of UN soldiers hostage and used some as 'human shields' against more air-strikes. The world media denoun the hostage-taking as barbaric and accused the Bosnian Serbs of breaki international law.

The irony of the civilised world which dropped the bombs denounci as uncivilised, action aimed at preventing more bombs being dropped seemed to escape most me commentators. As far as they were concerned, the UN was in the right and the Serbs were in the wrong. Apparently it is legitimate for one si to bomb, but illegitimate for the oth side to retaliate. Presumably the Serb should have sat there and waited to be bombed again.

The coverage of the air-strike and its aftermath made clear that ea side was expected to play by differe rules. While the Serbs were suppose to behave like gentlemen in a cricke match, UN forces were free to act like terminators in a computer game

When the Serbs started taking th other side prisoner, everybody complained that they were breaking rules. Only the International Comm of the Red Cross (ICRC) pointed ou that the rules had changed as soon a the UN used force against the Bosni Serbs. Once this happened there wa way the soldiers could be regarded hostages said the ICRC—they were prisoners of war because they had become parties to the conflict.

It seems from this incident that t is one law for the Western powers o the UN Security Council and anothe for everybody else. The UN can bo a Serbian bunker and it is seen as a humanitarian intervention rather t an act of war. But if the Serbs defe themselves by taking prisoners of w

it is condemned as terrorist activity.

This double standard is accepted because people make a distinction between the Bosnian Serbs and the UN Security Council. The distinction is an essentially moral one, based on the assumption that one side is better than the other. This assumption of moral superiority gives the UN the right to bomb people, while the insinuation of moral inferiority gives the Bosnian Serbs the right only to be bombed.

The division of the world along moral lines, into goodies and baddies, goes virtually unquestioned today. So even those who are sceptical about the efficacy of bombing the Bosnian Serbs do not question Nato's right to bomb them. These critics of military action might quibble about the consequences of bombing the Serbs, but they do not question the idea that right, as well as might, is on the side of the West. They too judge the West and the Serbs by different standards.

Moral imperialists

It is this moral division between the West and the rest that justifies intervention in the first place. After all, why should the people running the UN have the right to meddle in the affairs of other nations unless it is accepted that they are more civilised? The right to intervention depends on people accepting the idea that the West knows what's best for Bosnia—or Somalia or Haiti or Rwanda or anywhere else for that matter—and that those who live there are like small children who cannot look after themselves.

The most fervent exponents of this elitist view today are not the old-fashioned racists and neo-colonialists, but the radical voices which used to oppose intervention in the third world. It is the hand-wringing liberals of the *Guardian*, the *New York Times* and *Le Monde* who insist that there is a moral imperative for the West to intervene in places like Bosnia.

The new interventionists can be pretty selective in their moral outrage. Croatian troops can kill hundreds of Serbs fleeing an offensive in Western Slavonia, and use chemicals to scrape their burned bodies off the tarmac, without anybody demanding an air-strike. Tutsi soldiers can massacre thousands of Hutu refugees without anybody getting upset. In the lexicon of the new imperialists, all Serbs are 'aggressors' and all Hutus are 'extremists'—as if it is in their blood.

The new interventionists can be choosy too about where the West should intervene. For some reason they get upset about conflict in Sarajevo but not in Kabul. But what is the difference between Bosnia, Afghanistan, Liberia, Angola, Sudan and Tadzhikistan—apart from the fact that more people have died in the latter civil wars? If the moral imperialists demand intervention in Bosnia, they could at least be consistent and demand the complete colonisation of the whole non-Western world.

Middle class broadsheet journalists or politicians like Paddy Ashdown would not appreciate anybody lecturing them about how to behave. Yet they insist that the Western authorities know what's best for the people of Bosnia. But why should government ministers and generals from over here give orders to people over there? Why is there an automatic assumption that wisdom resides in the West? The idea that the West knows what's best is credible only if you ignore events in Bosnia over the past three years.

The interventionists who continually call on the West to 'do something' do not seem to have noticed that the Western powers have never stopped doing something in Bosnia—and that something has prolonged the war and made things worse. Take the recent intensification of the war, which was the occasion for the Nato air-strike against the Serbs. The casual observer would have assumed that the Bosnian Serbs were to blame for what happened—after all they were the ones who ended up getting bombed. The casual observer would have been wrong. The people responsible for what happened were sitting in Washington, not the Bosnian Serb HQ at Pale.

The Americans began pushing for air-strikes against the Serbs more or less as soon as the ceasefire in Bosnia came to an end at the start of May. Throughout that month the top guns in the Clinton administration worked overtime trying to convince other members of the Contact Group on Bosnia (Germany, Britain, France and Russia) to get tough with the Bosnian Serbs. At the same time, Washington was beefing up the military alliance between the Bosnian Croats and Muslims. The intelligence, training and arms being supplied to these forces by the Americans were beginning to pay off in successful offensives against the Serbs.

Meanwhile, strong US pressure was being applied to the Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic, to recognise Bosnia. Clinton's special envoy, Robert Frasure, spent weeks in Belgrade trying to extract concessions from Milosevic. On Tuesday 23 May, Frasure left Belgrade empty-handed. On Wednesday 24 May the UN commander in Bosnia, Lieutenant-General Rupert Smith, threatened the Muslims and Serbs with air-strikes. And on Thursday 25 May Nato bombers tried a little persuading of their own by bombing the Bosnian Serb ammunition depot in Pale. The Serbs responded by shelling the Bosnian Muslims in Tuzla, Sarajevo and Bihac.

These events followed the pattern of the past few years, with a bloody civil war being reignited by the intervention of outside powers. First the Americans bang the drum for punitive strikes against the Bosnian Serbs, allowing Washington to seize the international initiative and take the moral high ground at the expense of the European powers. The Europeans give in to the demands for air-strikes and then the British and French try to retake the moral high ground by sending in more troops. And then the German government discusses sending forces into the Balkans for the first time since 1945.

Western intervention has already done enough damage in Bosnia, yet the interventionists continue to demand that something must be done. They don't seem to have noticed that to date the UN 'doing something' has usually meant somebody getting killed.

Sending troops to do something ('save the starving') in Somalia meant the marines killing Somalis in their thousands on the streets of Mogadishu. Doing something in the Gulf ('defending democracy' in Kuwait—one that didn't exist in the first place) meant killing 180 000 Iraqis in the desert.

Hitler's book

The belief in the moral superiority of the West not only gives the great and the good *carte blanche* to poke their noses into the affairs of other states, it also gives them a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. It is a monopoly which the moral interventionists wish the West would use more often. They may be the meekest of people in public but when they get behind their laptops they become bombardiers. The *Guardian*'s Martin Woollacott advised the Western powers to take a leaf out of Adolf Hitler's book and bomb Belgrade. The *New York Times*' Anthony Lewis demanded that Nato drop 10 bombs for every Serbian shell.

The UN Security Council's right to bomb people in faraway places whenever it feels like it is not enshrined in any international resolution, statute, convention or rule book. According to the UN Charter, the Security Council has the right to use force as a last resort in cases of inter-state aggression that threaten international peace. The conflict in Bosnia is a civil war, not a case of inter-state aggression. And the only threat to international peace it poses is due to the meddling of the USA and its allies. Yet somehow the Western powers have assumed the right to bomb the Bosnian Serbs whenever they see fit. From the vantage point of the moral high ground, it seems you can shit on who you like. ●

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

So said Arkan, the Serbian militiaman accused of war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Joan Phillips thinks he has a point

Of all the initiatives undertaken by the United Nations in the former Yugoslavia the least criticised has been the decision to establish a war crimes tribunal. There is a consensus that war crimes trials are a good thing—because they will ensure that justice is done in court if not on the battlefield.

For those who believe that the international powers have been remiss in not sorting out the Serbs, a war crimes tribunal is the second best thing to a bombing campaign. It is seen as a way of making up for the evasions of politicians. The law is presented as being above politics—the legal process will succeed where governments have failed.

But the war crimes tribunal now sitting in the Hague does not serve justice and it is not above politics. In fact it can never deliver anything resembling justice precisely because it is a political tool invented to serve the interests of a handful of powerful states.

The decision to create a war crimes tribunal was made by politicians not judges. It has no basi in international law. The members of the UN Security Council, led by the USA, have no mandate to establish an international war crime tribunal. They may have passed a fe resolutions sanctioning its creation, that still begs the question of where they got the power to pass such

resolutions in the first place.

Citing Chapter VII of the UN Charter is no good. Nowhere in Chapter VII does it say that the Security Council can establish a standing international court that can convict people of war crimes. Chapter VII gives the Security Council the authority to use force in cases of aggression between states that threaten international peace. No matter how you read the Charter, upside down, back to front, or right to left, you cannot make it say that the Security Council can create a war crimes tribunal.

Article 29 of Chapter VII says that the Security Council can establish such subsidiary organs as it deems necessary for the performance of its duties. But the international war crimes tribunal created by the UN cannot possibly be regarded as a subsidiary body. It has been given extraordinary powers to intervene in the affairs of sovereign states: the tribunal's statute states that it should have primacy over national courts.

The move to establish a war crimes tribunal infringes what used to be one of the most sacred principles of the UN Charter—that of national sovereignty. One thing Chapter VII does say is that the UN has no authority to intervene in matters which are in the domestic jurisdiction of any state. Yet this safeguard against unwarranted interference by big powers in the affairs of small states has been summarily done away with by the big powers which sit on the UN Security Council.

Grotesque equation

In order to close the legal loopholes it has been necessary to insist upon the uniqueness of the crimes against humanity committed in the civil war in the former Yugoslavia. If it can be proved that the war crimes committed are exceptional then nobody will protest about national sovereignty being abrogated. The tribunal has therefore joined the international media in making a grotesque equation between the atrocities committed in Bosnia and the genocide carried out by the Nazis.

Of course there have been atrocities committed in Bosnia, as in all wars. To date, however, and despite three years of searching, nobody has produced any hard evidence to substantiate the claims of genocide. Instead, lurid stories, based only on hearsay, about ethnic cleansing, death camps and mass rape, suffice to damn the Serbs (the only people who have been indicted by the tribunal to date) before they even reach the dock. (For a critique of the 'death camp' story as told by Pulitzer Prize-winner Roy Gutman, see 'Who's making the news in Bosnia?, *Living Marxism*, May 1993.) If the case of Dusko Cvjetkovic is anything to go by (see box overleaf), guilty until proven innocent is likely to be the fate of any Serb accused of war crimes. This should come as no surprise since seeing that justice is done was the last thing on the minds of the Security Council members when they set up the tribunal.

What was on their minds was the low esteem in which their states are held by people today. The war crimes issue allows the governments of the West to assert their moral authority in the international arena at a time when they are sorely lacking legitimacy at home. There is nothing quite like a war crimes tribunal to increase the moral stature of political leaders whose names are mud.

More just than thou

Just as the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials established the moral superiority of the victorious Allied powers 50 years ago, so today's international war crimes tribunal boosts the moral authority of Western leaders. It gives legal sanction to the idea that some states are more civilised than others.

The very act of creating an international court to hear cases against alleged war criminals divides the world between the judges and the judged. Clearly there are some countries which can be trusted to see that justice is done and there are others which cannot be trusted. An international court is needed where the trustworthy can judge the untrustworthy.

Some powers are keener than others to launch a moral crusade at the moment. America in particular has used the tribunal to establish its moral authority over other members of the Security Council. Washington has been the driving force behind the Yugoslav war crimes initiative, forcing it through the Security Council in face of resistance from the British and French governments, which saw it as an American manoeuvre to sideline them. (Washington also pushed for an international war crimes tribunal for Rwanda, despite the objections of the Tutsi government which wanted to stage its own trials.)

Death camp story

Germany too has been an enthusiastic supporter of war crimes tribunals and it is not difficult to fathom why. For a state which itself was condemned for war crimes in the past, today's tribunal offers the prospect of overcoming the legacy of the Second World War. If the Holocaust can be equated with the civil war in Bosnia, then what was once seen as uniquely awful becomes just another horror of the modern world. Germany's desire to relativise its fascist past explains why it is so keen to put the Serbs on trial for war crimes today.

The idea of establishing a war crimes tribunal originated in the USA, following media stories about Serbian 'death camps' in the summer of 1992. The emotions generated by the 'death camps' episode allowed Washington to win back the initiative over Bosnia from the Europeans. The attraction of the war crimes tribunal is that it allows Washington to win moral authority without having to commit troops to combat. Why commit thousands of troops when you can commit a few attorneys instead?

The politicking that has accompanied the setting up of the tribunal tells us a lot about the motives of the major players. From August 1992, when the 'death camp' story broke, until February 1993, when the UN Security Council established the war crimes tribunal, Washington was pushing other members of the Security Council to agree to its proposal. While US diplomats twisted arms in London, Paris, Moscow and Beijing, the state department got down to work compiling reports of human rights abuses in Bosnia. The press corps obliged by discovering ever more sensational and salacious atrocities, such as the 'systematic' rape of tens of thousands of Muslim women by Serbian soldiers in 'rape camps'. If the world wasn't full of coincidences, you might suspect a conspiracy.

Transatlantic struggle

The Americans encountered considerable resistance to their plans from the Europeans. The British were especially obstructive, and together with the French and the Russians used the UN bureaucracy to block the tribunal. They refused to hand over any money for the initiative and made sure that the UN's office of legal affairs did not give a penny either. The commission of experts appointed to investigate cases of alleged war crimes was so broke that it had to close down three months before it was due to finish its work. In September 1993, Frits Kalshoven, the commission chairman, resigned in protest at British and French obstruction.

The selection of the chief prosecutor was dogged by infighting on the Security Council. The Americans insisted on a strong candidate, who would force the pace of prosecutions, while the Europeans wanted a weaker man who would hold back from indicting Serbian leaders such as Slobodan Milosevic and Radovan Karadzic, with whom they were trying to negotiate a settlement. A transatlantic struggle that lasted more than a year ensued, with each side voting down the other's proposals, and refusing to accept each other's appointees. It took about two years ▶

before a compromise candidate was found in the South African Richard Goldstone.

The tribunal is about a handful of powerful states trying to set themselves up as gods on Earth, with the right to judge the rest of the world. A court which was created to serve the cynical interests of great powers cannot deliver justice for the peoples of Bosnia. But the problem runs even deeper than this. Why should we trust the governments on the UN Security Council, or their appointees, to judge anybody?

The worst thing about the war crimes tribunal is that it puts the cause of world justice into the hands of governments with more blood on their hands than all the murderers in Yugoslavia put together. The armies of the USA, Britain and the other permanent members of the Security Council are responsible for mass murder in war zones around the world. Yet they have appointed themselves to sit in judgement on the Serbs, Hutus and other little peoples cast in the role of international war criminals.

The people responsible for the turkey-shoot on the road to Basra, the massacre in Tiananmen Square, the Bloody Sunday executions in Ireland, the torture in Algiers and the bombardment of Grozny in Chechnya would never allow themselves to be judged by anybody else. It is inconceivable that the USA would accept the jurisdiction of an international tribunal—with primacy over the US constitution and courts—created by a resolution of the Security Council.

It took the Americans 40 years to sign the Genocide Convention, and even then they attached conditions making it impossible for any American ever to be prosecuted. For years, Washington has resisted moves to establish an international criminal court with a remit to pursue crimes against humanity wherever they occur. The USA insists that every prosecution must be approved by a unanimous vote of the Security Council—just in case anybody gets any ideas about arraigning American presidents or generals for crimes against humanity.

'Bomb on'

The Nuremberg trials, upon which the international war crimes tribunal is modelled, institutionalised the double standard that informs the laws of war. In order to avoid condemning Allied as well as Axis conduct, the war crimes tribunal left unpunished the most devastating forms of warfare. No defendant was ever prosecuted for the aerial bombing of civilians during the Second World War. The tribunal's only conviction on this charge was of a Japanese judge, for the crime of convicting two US pilots for fire-bombing Japanese cities.

The Allied judges at Nuremberg justified attacks on civilians, including the dropping of atomic bombs, saying that it was legitimate to bombard cities to induce surrender. The tribunal argued that there was no parallel 'between an act of legitimate warfare, namely the bombing of a city'—including 'an air bombardment, whether with the usual bombs or by atomic bombs'—and the 'premeditated killing of certain categories of the civilian population in occupied territory'.

US exemption

By stating that international law tolerated the massacre of civilians by aerial bombardment, including bombardment by atomic weapons, Nuremberg set a precedent. America could bomb the Vietnamese and the Iraqis back to the Middle Ages in the 1970s and the 1990s, without worrying that they would be put on trial for war crimes.

How can it be that aerial bombardment, which has caused more death and destruction than any other kind of warfare, should be singled out by a war crimes tribunal as a legitimate activity? Quite simply because the people with the biggest capacity for aerial bombardment are not Serb militiamen who lob artillery shells at Bosnian cities, but American politicians like Harry S Truman, who gave the order to vaporise Hiroshima and Nagasaki with atom bombs, and said it was the greatest thing in history.

Additional research by Bill Hawk

> The allied judges at Nuremberg justified aerial bombardment as 'legitimate warfare'

Carry on in the courtroom

The case of Dusko Cvjetkovic, who is being tried as a war criminal in Austria, is a warning of what we should expect from the international tribunal in the Hague. A refugee from Kucice in central Bosnia, where virtually all Serbs have been driven from their homes, Cvjetkovic fled to Austria in 1993. In May 1994 he was arrested in Salzburg and charged with war crimes. The case against him has been thrown out of court three times—most recently in May—but the Austrian authorities have not given up yet.

Cvjetkovic first went on trial in October 1994, charged with arson, murder and genocide. The trial was a farce. The prosecution relied almost entirely on hearsay evidence, the chief witness contradicted his own affidavit in court, sworn statements from some witnesses identified people other than the accused as the murderers and the police records of statements were full of inaccuracies and translation errors.

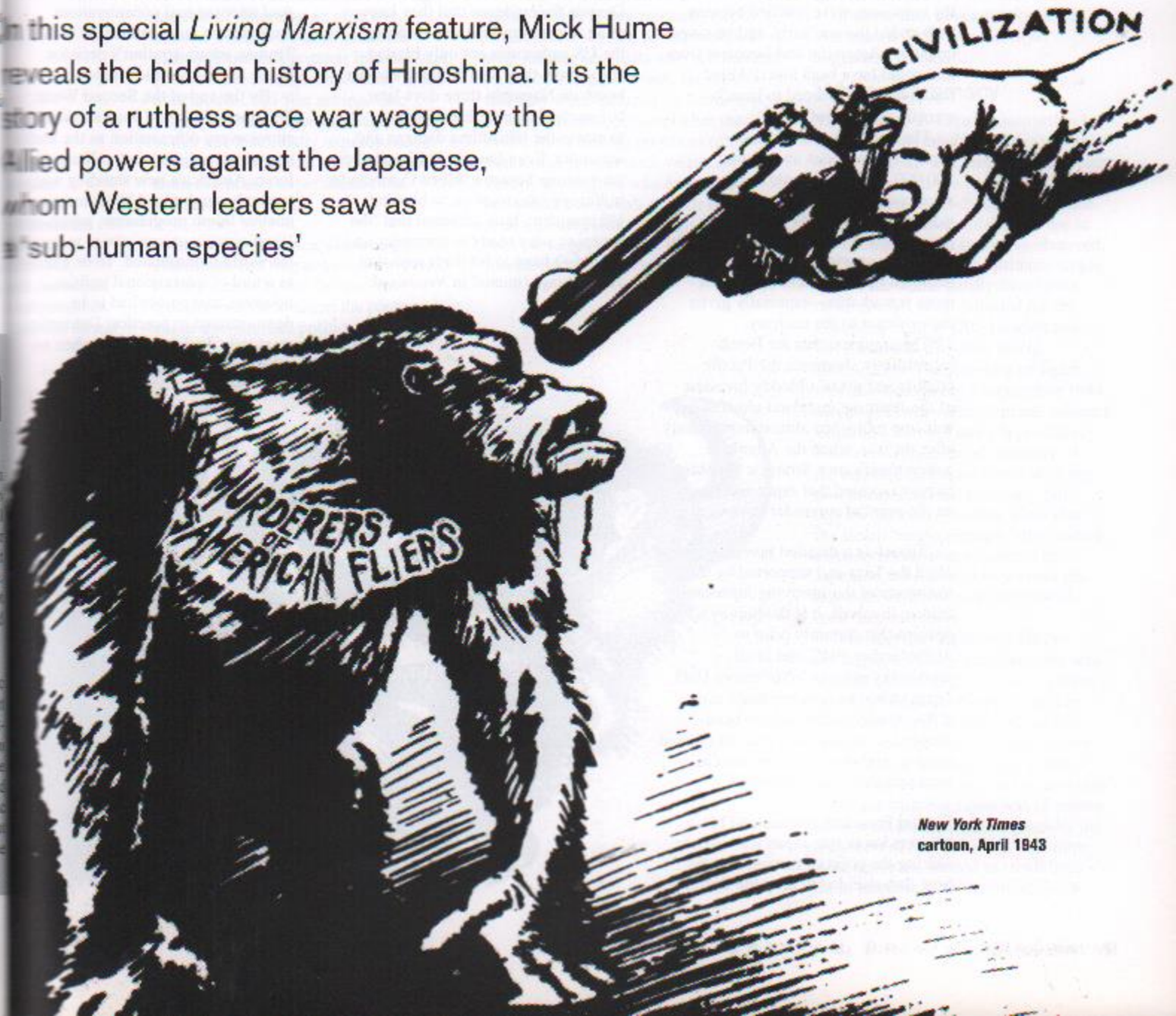
Instead of throwing the case out, the judge adjourned the trial until December 1994 to allow the prosecution more time to find some evidence that would stand up in court. When the case resumed, the prosecution still did not have a leg to stand on. The judge presiding over the hearing discontinued the trial a week after it started, declaring that the jury had made a mistake. Their mistake was to have found Cvjetkovic not guilty; the judge annulled the decision and declared a mistrial.

Three months later, in March 1995, Cvjetkovic was in court again, only he was facing different charges. In addition to the murder and genocide indictments, he was accused of inflicting mental pain on Muslim prisoners at a prison camp in Kamenica. None of the five witnesses Cvjetkovic was meant to have tortured mentally could identify him in court. Cvjetkovic was acquitted of the charges at the end of May, but the indefatigable prosecutor has now appealed to the highest court in the land.

In August it will be 50 years since the Americans, with British backing, dropped the first atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing at least 200 000 people. Half a century on, the truth about why they did it remains shrouded in myth and misinformation.

Hiroshima: the White Man's Bomb

In this special *Living Marxism* feature, Mick Hume reveals the hidden history of Hiroshima. It is the story of a ruthless race war waged by the Allied powers against the Japanese, whom Western leaders saw as a 'sub-human species'



New York Times cartoon, April 1943

'The only language [the Japanese] seem to understand is the one we have been using to bombard them. When you have to deal with a beast you have to treat him as a beast. It is most regrettable but nevertheless true.'

US president Harry S Truman, 11 August 1945, in a letter justifying his decision to drop the atomic bomb on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

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

Reuters, 7 April 1995

Why did the US government drop atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945? Throughout the past 50 years, the official Anglo-American line has remained more or less the same: that the bombings were justified because they ended the war early, and so saved countless American and Japanese lives that could have been lost if Allied forces had been forced to launch a costly invasion of Japan.

The notion that the Allies vaporised two cities and around 200 000 Japanese people as a humanitarian act was perverse even by the standards of wartime propaganda. That such a notion should have been so widely and uncritically accepted for half a century is even more remarkable—especially given the evidence to the contrary.

The argument that the Bomb significantly shortened the Pacific conflict and made a bloody invasion of the Japanese mainland unnecessary was first rubbished almost immediately after the war, when the American government's own Strategic Bombing Survey reported that Japan had been on the point of surrender anyway:

'Based on a detailed investigation of all the facts and supported by the testimony of the surviving Japanese leaders involved, it is the Survey's opinion that certainly prior to 31 December 1945, and in all probability prior to 1 November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated.'

But did President Truman and his advisers know that Japan was already nearing the point of surrender at the time they decided to drop the Bomb? If they did not, they must surely have been ignoring their own intelligence reports.

A couple of years ago, the author Gar Alperovitz obtained hundreds of pages of US National Security Agency intercepts of secret enemy wartime communications. These revealed that US intelligence knew top Japanese army officers were willing to surrender more than three months before the Hiroshima bomb was dropped. For instance, one document intercepted by the NSA quotes a German diplomat reporting back to Berlin on the state of Japan on 5 May 1945: 'since the situation is clearly recognised to be hopeless, large sections of the Japanese armed forces would not regard with disfavour an American request for capitulation even if the terms were hard' (see *New York Times*, 11 August 1993). Alperovitz has also shown how the president's recently rediscovered diary 'leaves no doubt that Truman knew the war would end "a year sooner now" and without an invasion' (*Nation*, 10 May 1993).

Demanding results

Despite the evidence that they knew of an impending Japanese collapse, the US authorities not only blasted Hiroshima, they also dropped another bomb on Nagasaki three days later, before the Japanese had a chance to assess the Hiroshima damage and surrender. Even Dwight D Eisenhower, the wartime Supreme Allied Commander in Europe who went on to become US president, later admitted that 'the Japanese were ready to surrender and we didn't have to hit them with that awful thing' (quoted in *Newsweek*, 11 November 1963). All of which beg the question, why did they do it?

The decision to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki clearly rested on something more than battlefield calculations about the specific state of the military campaign in August 1945. Two broader political considerations made up Truman's mind. First, the politics of international power dictated that the USA would definitely drop the Bomb somewhere, regardless of the state of the war. And second, the politics of racial superiority determined that that somewhere would definitely be Japan.

Having developed the Bomb, the US administration was always going to use it. Truman and his predecessor as president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, had invested $2 billion in the Manhattan Project to develop the Bomb, a massive sum at that time. The government was under considerable pressure from Congress to show some bang for its megabucks expenditure. That was one reason why Truman's Secretary of State, James F Byrnes, demanded that the atom bomb be dropped as soon as possible in order to 'show results'. And international considerations proved even more influential in the Truman administration's decision to use its new atomic weapon.

By the end of the Second World War, the USA stood head and shoulders above every other nation as the leading economic, political and military global force. America's new standing was perfectly symbolised by its massive nuclear bomb programme, which gave Washington a unique power to destroy the world it dominated. To be effective as a tool of international politics, however, that power had to be demonstrated in practice. Detonating an atomic device at a time when no other state could come close to

building one would be the ultimate demonstration of American supremacy on Earth—a demonstration to be aimed not merely at the Japanese regime, but at Stalin's Soviet Union, the other Allies, the whole of Asia and indeed the world.

A detailed study by the Japanese Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage Caused by the Atomic Bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki puts the attacks in something like their proper international perspective:

'the A-Bomb attacks were needed not so much against Japan—already on the brink of surrender and no longer capable of mounting an effective counter-offensive—as to establish clearly America's postwar international position and strategic supremacy in the anticipated Cold War setting. One tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is that this historically unprecedented devastation of human society stemmed from essentially experimental and political aims.'

In this sense, America's bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was motivated less by a need to end the war than a determination to shape the postwar era in international politics.

The target is and always was expected to be Japan' Manhattan Project director Leslie Groves

If the US authorities always intended to drop the Bomb, it is equally certain that they always intended to drop it on the Japanese. No serious consideration was given to demonstrating the power of atomic weaponry on an unpopulated area like a desert or a mountain. Nor, more significantly, was there any high-level discussion about using the Bomb in Europe against Nazi Germany. Only the Japanese were ever in the Allies' nuclear bombsights. Here we come to the hidden history of Hiroshima: the story of the Allied powers' race war against the Japanese, which culminated in the explosion of the White Man's Bomb.

'Hands off Hitler'

On 23 April 1945, General Leslie Groves, the director of the Manhattan Project, sent a memo to Henry L Stimson, the American Secretary of War, on plans for using the Bomb. It included the striking observation that '[t]he target is *and was always expected* to be Japan' (emphasis added).

When he unearthed this memo during recent research, Arjun Makhijani discussed its implications with leading scientists who had worked on the Manhattan Project. He reports that they were 'amazed' to learn of Groves' attitude, 50 years after the event. Most leading members of the Manhattan project team were east European emigrés, who had agreed to work on the Bomb only on the understanding that the Nazis were both the target and their competitors. Joseph Rotblat, the Polish scientist, told Makhijani that 'there was never any idea [among the scientists] that [the Bomb] would be used against Japan. We never worried that the Japanese would have the Bomb. We always worried what Heisenberg and the other German scientists were doing. All of our concentration was on Germany' (see A Makhijani, 'Always the target', *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, May/June 1995). All of the concentration of the political and military strategists, however, was on using the Bomb against the Japanese.

The first American discussion about possible targets for an atomic attack took place in May 1943, at a meeting of the high-powered Military Policy Committee. At that time, a year before the D-Day invasion and two years before VE-Day, Hitler's Germany was still very much a player in the war. Yet the committee's automatic assumption was that Japan would be the target. General Groves' summary of the meeting records how '[t]he point of use of the first bomb was discussed and the general view appeared to be that its best point of use would be on a Japanese fleet concentration in the Harbour of Truk. General Styer suggested Tokyo...'.

White supremacy

That Japan was already assumed to be the target was confirmed later in 1943, when the B-29 was chosen as the plane the USA would use to drop the Bomb. The distance the B-29 could fly made it the only bomber suitable for use in the Pacific. As one study has observed, 'had Germany been the primary target, the choice would hardly have fallen on an aircraft never intended for the European theatre' (RG Hewlett and OE Anderson, *The New World*, 1962, p253). The targeting of Japan was affirmed during a September 1944 meeting between British prime minister Winston Churchill and US president Roosevelt. The official summary of the meeting makes no mention of any possible use against Germany, but reports the Allied leaders' view that the Bomb 'might perhaps, after mature consideration, be used against the Japanese, who should be warned that this bombardment will be repeated until they surrender'.

The fact that Japan was always the target, and that Nazi Germany was not considered, demonstrates a potent double standard in Anglo-American foreign policy. And the basis of that double standard was the issue of race. To the Allies, Germany was a fellow white power which they had temporarily fallen out with; but Japan was an enemy alien, a nation apart. That was why the architects of the Holocaust in Europe were never mentioned as candidates for a 'humanitarian' bombing like ▶

monthly counselled vermin

Hiroshima. Instead, the atomic bomb was aimed solely at the Japanese. They were considered legitimate targets because the Western powers considered them to be a lower race; as president Truman put it in the letter quoted above, the Japanese were no better than 'beasts', and to be treated accordingly.

Japan had been seen as a problem by the Western elites ever since its victory over Russia in 1905 catapulted it on to the world stage. Japan had emerged as a major capitalist power, but was never quite one of the club; it was not, in short, a white man. The notion of racial supremacy and the 'White Man's burden' lay at the heart of the ideology and self-image of the Western imperialists. An Asian nation could not be allowed to sit freely at the top table of world affairs.

The racial double standard in imperial politics was clearly demonstrated back at the Versailles conference which followed the First World War in 1919. While the Americans and the British affirmed their commitment to national self-determination in Europe, they rebutted Japan's attempt to include a clause on racial equality in the covenant of the new League of Nations (forerunner of the UN). As one account puts it, the rejected Japanese amendment was 'palpably a challenge to the theory of the superiority of the white race on which rested so many of Great Britain's imperial pretensions' (AW Griswold, *The Far Eastern Policy of the United States,* 1966, p247).

Race war

The run-up to the Second World War was marked by escalating tensions between Japan, the USA and Britain over spheres of influence and trade in Asia and the Pacific. And always, the Western elites interpreted these conflicts through the prism of race. In 1938, three years before the Pacific War with Japan began, Antony Eden (later a Tory foreign secretary and prime minister) was already emphasising the importance of 'effectively asserting white-race authority in the Far East'. In 1939 Sir Frederick Maze, a top British official in China, described the coming conflict as 'not merely Japan against Great Britain' but also 'the Orient against the Occident—the Yellow race against the White race'.

The view of the Japanese as a less advanced race was so powerful, however, that many members of the Western elites—including Churchill—believed that Japan would not dare to fight the white powers, or would be quickly crushed if it did. Peering into Japanese-occupied China through the barbed-wire fences around British-occupied Hong Kong in 1940, the British commander-in-chief of the Far East described seeing 'various sub-human species dressed in dirty grey uniform, which I was informed were Japanese soldiers...I cannot believe they would form an intelligent fighting force'. The strength of this prejudice was such that, when war did break out and the British garrison at Hong Kong was strafed by enemy aircraft, many initially believed that German pilots must have been imported to do it, since the Japanese would not have been capable.

Against this background, the string of military successes which Japan achieved against the Americans and the British, Dutch and French colonialists between December 1941 and 1943 traumatised the Allied powers. The white imperialists had been beaten and humiliated by an Asian power, before the eyes of their colonial subjects. The effect, as one perceptive commentator notes, was to free the peoples of India and the rest of Asia from 'the spell of European invincibility' (see C Thorne, 'Racial aspects of the Far Eastern war of 1941-45', *Proceedings of the British Council,* 80, 1980).

Loss of prestige

'Japan's attack', wrote Dr Margery Perham at the time, 'has produced a very real revolution in race relationships' (*Times,* 13 March 1942). The abject British surrender to Japan in Singapore and Malaya was particularly damaging to the image of the old empires in Asia, as the president of Singapore's India Association was to reflect in 1945: 'the running away action of the Empire, both officers and non-officers, created a very deep impression in the minds of the people throughout Malaya [and] brought great disgrace on the white race generally.'

Reading through the Allied leaders' discussion of these events, the major concern which they voiced time and again was not so much about the loss of territory to Japan, but about the loss of *prestige* suffered by the white powers in the process. Islands and colonial outposts could always be won back; but the image of invincible racial superiority which the imperialists had built up over a century was lost forever. That is why, for the British authorities, the real impact of the loss of Singapore

was 'not a strategic one, but a moral one' (L Allen, *Singapore 1941-42*, 1977, p259).

The fears over a loss of racial prestige also help to explain why the Allies were (and indeed remain) so sensitive about Japan's treatment of their prisoners of war. Contrary to the impression that is usually given, Allied POWs held by the Japanese fared no worse than many other wartime prisoners. It is true that a quarter of Western POWs died in Japanese captivity; but then, only a quarter of Russians held in German camps survived.

Under the slogan 'Asia for the Asiatics' Tokyo attacked Britain's colonial record

What made Japan's mistreatment of Allied prisoners so uniquely controversial was the inversion of racial roles that it involved. In effect, the Japanese were treating white POWs in the way that the white colonialists had always treated entire Asian peoples—like coolies. General Thomas Blamey of Australia let the cat out of the bag when reporting on the mood of POWs released in 1945. 'The thing that has hurt our fellows more than harsh treatment', said Blamey, 'has been the loss of prestige amongst the natives by British personnel due to the ignominious treatment they have received at the hands of the Japs in the sight of the natives'. Fears over the loss of racial prestige in the Pacific War were so widespread in the West that even Hitler was reported to be ambivalent about the victories of his Japanese ally, complaining that with 'the loss of a whole continent....the white race [is] the loser'.

When they were not lice underfoot, the Japanese were superhuman monsters as in this British cartoon (left), reproduced in the *New York Times*, 1943, or vicious rapists threatening white honour (right), on exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1942

'Notorious lynchings'

The Allies were acutely sensitive to the way that Japan's wartime propaganda played upon their weak spots of racial and national oppression. 'And everywhere', wrote one American observer, 'Tokyo makes good use of our greatest weaknesses—our past imperialism and our present racial discrimination' (SC Menefee, 'Japan's psychological warfare', *Social Forces*, May 1943). Under the slogan 'Asia for the Asiatics', Tokyo attacked Britain's bloody colonial record and presented Japan as the champion of Indian freedom. After the surrender of Singapore, 45 000 captured Indian troops were addressed by a Japanese major. 'Japan is fighting for the liberation of the Asiatic nations which have been for so long trodden under the cruel heels of British imperialism. Japan is the liberator and the friend of Asiatics.' Around 25 000 Indian soldiers eventually changed sides, and joined the Japanese-sponsored Indian National Army to fight against the British.

When they came to attack America, Japanese propagandists concentrated on the treatment of racial minorities within the USA. They made great play of the immigration laws which barred Chinese and Indians from entering the USA. And the systematic segregation employed against blacks in America proved even richer pickings. In the article quoted above, Selden Menefee noted that 'the Deep South is our India', and quoted this Tokyo radio broadcast of August 1942:

'How is the United States transmitting her ideas of the four freedoms into her living, into her labour and racial problems? What about her ever-present negro problem? Her notorious lynchings [are] a rare practice even among savages....The Americans prove and advertise to the whole world by their actions that they have completely forgotten that negroes are just as much a part of humanity as they are themselves.'

The Allies had no effective answer to this kind of propaganda. It touched on the raw nerves of Western imperialists who claimed to be fighting a war for freedom and against fascism, while practising racial and national oppression themselves. As Mahatma Gandhi pointed out to Roosevelt in 1942, 'the Allied declaration that [they] are fighting to make the world safe for freedom of the individual sounds hollow, so long as India, and for that matter Africa, are exploited by Great Britain, and America has the negro problem in her own home'. Indeed the Western elites had become so insecure on these issues that their *fears* of racial and colonial unrest being stirred up by the Japanese during the war often outweighed any real immediate threat. So there was a constant debate about the growing threat of Pan-Asian unity, even though that 'movement' was largely a myth. There was even a serious discussion among the fearful US authorities about the possibility that American blacks might actively side with Japan. ▶

The racial dimension made the Japanese a very different enemy from the Germans. The Japanese posed not just a military threat to the old imperial order, but a political challenge to white power that could spark the fires of Asian nationalism. The leaders of the Allied powers saw the Pacific War as a life-and-death struggle to salvage the prestige of the Western elites. They had been humiliated by 'Asiatics'. As a consequence they were fighting a race war, in which the enemy had to be not just contained, but crushed if the white powers were to retain any authority in Asia. The extent to which they saw the Japanese as different was reflected in the ruthless attitudes and actions adopted by Allied governments and forces during the Pacific War, culminating in the decision to drop the White Man's Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Justifying internment of Japanese Americans General De Witt announced bluntly that 'a Jap is a Jap'

Less developed craniums

Throughout the conflict, the Japanese were depicted and treated as a lower race. These attitudes predated Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. America's president Roosevelt, the leader of Western liberalism, seriously endorsed the proposition that the Japanese were evil because their skulls were 2000 years less developed than the white man's civilised cranium. He reportedly thought that the solution was to encourage some cross-breeding to create a new 'Euroindoasian' race that could isolate the Japanese. On the British side, Churchill was always noted for espousing the blunt racial attitudes of his Edwardian background, disparaging Asian peoples as 'dirty baboos' and 'chinks' in need of a good thrashing with 'the sjambok'. And Churchill was far from the exception. In the months before the Pacific War began, the diary of Sir Alexander Cadogan of the British Foreign Office records Cadogan's own views of the Japanese as 'beastly little monkeys' and 'yellow dwarf slaves'.

Once the war with Japan had begun, these prejudices were no longer confined to the private diaries and dinner party conversations of the Western elite. Instead, the politics of racial superiority were made public by Allied propagandists, and put into practice by the US and British military.

The American press branded Japan 'a racial menace', and routinely depicted the Japanese as monkeys, mad dogs, rats and vermin. Hollywood war movies emphasised the sadistic character of Japanese soldiers, who seemed to break the rules of 'civilised' warfare in every film. Allied propagandists made a clear distinction between their two major enemies. They showed the problem in Europe not as the whole German nation, but as Hitler and the Nazis. In Asia, by contrast, the enemy was 'the Japs'—an entire malignant race. As one of the best studies of the race war in the Pacific points out, '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).

The racial denigration of the Japanese did not only happen in the movies. In America, the only German immigrants interned were those with suspected Nazi connections. Meanwhile, 120 000 Japanese-Americans, many of them born US citizens, were indiscriminately rounded up in camps. Asked to justify this treatment, General De Witt announced bluntly that 'a Jap is a Jap'. Meanwhile in the Pacific war zone, working on the assumption that the only good Jap was a dead one, Admiral William Halsey of the US Navy urged his men to make 'monkey meat' out of the Japanese, and demanded that any Japanese survivors of the war should be rendered impotent.

The lower ranks took their lead from above. One US marine explained the racial outlook which made it easy for his comrades to slaughter the Japanese and mutilate their bodies on the battlefield:

'The Japanese made the perfect enemy. They had many characteristics that an American marine could hate. Physically they were small, a strange colour and, by some standards, unattractive....Marines did not consider that they were killing men. They were wiping out dirty animals.' (Quoted in J Weingartner, 'Trophies of war: US troops and the mutilation of Japanese war dead, 1941-45', *Pacific Historical Review*, February 1992)

If the Americans were happy 'wiping out dirty animals' with bayonets and flame-throwers on the beaches of Pacific islands, why should they worry about wiping out two whole cities of 'beasts' with the atom bomb?

At the same time as they were fighting a ruthless race war against the Japanese, the US authorities understood that there could be no return to old colonial arrangements in Asia after the war. The 'revolution in race relationships' triggered by Japan's victories, and the rise of nationalist sentiment, saw to that. Washington's concern was to reach an accommodation with the anti-colonial movements which would leave intact as much of the past power relations as possible, and so preserve the authority of the West. To that end, in 1942 the US government declared that the European powers' Far Eastern colonies should be 'liberated after the war, and such possessions should be placed under an international trusteeship to assist the peoples to attain political maturity'. The dual emphasis on reforming the colonial system while leaving the former colonies under 'international' (that is, Western) supervision reflected America's 'well-defined commitment to maintaining the prewar structure of Asian politics...not a concern with abstract rights and freedoms for Asians' (A Iriye, *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War 1941-45*, 1981, p81). In Washington's vision of a new Asian order, the white powers led by America would still hold the whip hand over the 'immature' native peoples.

The Japanese virus

The Allied powers understood that crushing the Japanese remained the precondition for reaching such an accommodation with the new Asian nationalism. Japan had acted as the catalyst for change in the colonial world, and its victories over the white powers had revolutionised race relations in Asia. That humiliation had to be avenged and that threat extinguished before the Western powers could re-establish their dominance.

Admiral Leahy, Roosevelt's close adviser, expressed the widely held fear that 'unless we administer a defeat to Japan in the near future, that nation will succeed in combining most of the Asiatic people against the whites'. In May 1943, when a top US government committee first discussed the question of how to treat Japan after the war, the navy's representative, Captain HL Pence, was in no doubt that 'Japan should be bombed...so that the country could not begin to recuperate for 50 years'. The war was 'a question of which race was to survive....we should kill them before they kill us'. The Japanese 'should not be dealt with as civilised human beings. The only thing they would respect was force applied for a long time'. Two years later, in May 1945, a US official in China named Robert Ward warned that Japan had exposed the peoples of the East to 'a virus that may yet poison the whole soul of Asia and ultimately commit the world to racial war that would destroy the white man and decimate the Asiatic'. Three months

after that, the US authorities sought to destroy that Japanese 'virus' and win the race war by decimating Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Right to the last, the Allied powers maintained their view of the Japanese as a lower race that could be experimented on at will. The myth that the bombing of Hiroshima was intended to save lives turns the truth completely on its head; the planning meetings which preceded the attack made clear that the intention was *to kill as many people as possible*, in order that the American bomb might make the most dramatic impact on the world.

On 31 May 1945, the Interim Committee (formed to advise the president on the use of the Bomb), met to discuss using atomic weapons against the Japanese. The committee comprised the leading political, military and scientific figures involved in the Manhattan Project. The two key players at this meeting were the top chemist and former president of Harvard University, James B Conant, and the Secretary of War, Henry L Stimson. The minutes record their conclusions:

'At the suggestion of Dr Conant, the secretary agreed that the most desirable target would be a vital war plant employing a large number of workers and closely surrounded by workers' houses.'

Hiroshima fitted the bomb sights perfectly. On 6 August it was destroyed, followed by Nagasaki on 9 August, along with at least 200 000 Japanese. The racial aspects of the fearful bombing were not lost on either side. Canadian prime minister Mackenzie King was one of many to express his private relief that the Bomb had not been dropped on the 'white races' in Europe (see *Times*, 3 January 1976).

Fifty years on from August 1945, it might seem that a lot has changed in the language and practice of international politics. The issue of race in particular is no longer discussed in the old imperialist terms of white supremacy. Yet beneath the surface, a racial double standard is still an organising principle of the Western worldview. When the British government invited the Germans to the VE-Day commemorations in May, but refused to have the Japanese at the VJ-Day events in August, it made clear that the distinction between the white powers and the rest remains in place.

Atomic authority

While they continue to attack the Japanese for their war record, no American president or British prime minister has ever expressed regret for Hiroshima. Bill Clinton is only the latest incumbent of the White House to declare that Truman was right to drop the Bomb. The Clinton administration even planned to issue a postage stamp to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the atomic bombing, depicting a mushroom cloud and carrying the slogan 'A-Bombs hasten war's end, August 1945'. Although the stamp was dropped last December on the grounds of taste, the Clinton White House made clear that it would still have dropped the Bomb. This is more than a matter of historical interest. Those who justify Hiroshima today are effectively saying that they would do it again to defend Western authority around the world.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki were destroyed by the White Man's Bomb. As is argued elsewhere in this issue of *Living Marxism*, the same racial double standard still shapes international nuclear diplomacy today. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) institutionalises the divide between the few powers considered civilised enough to control the Bomb, and the rest of the world which is seen as fit only to be threatened with it. The NPT is the face of the White Man's Bomb in the 1990s.

The potential for another Hiroshima will hang over the heads of the non-Western world so long as the politics of race go unchallenged. Those who want to ensure that there are no more Hiroshimas should respond to the August anniversaries by exposing the dirty secrets of the race wars of the past, as a warning of the threat we face in the present. ●

In the *Washington Post* the occupation of the Philippines by the Japs' could only ape Hitler's occupation of Czechoslovakia, from July 1942

0815 hrs 6 August 1945
Hiroshima

0815 hrs 6 August 1995
London

Fifty years after Hiroshima, the US president says he would do it again. Angry?

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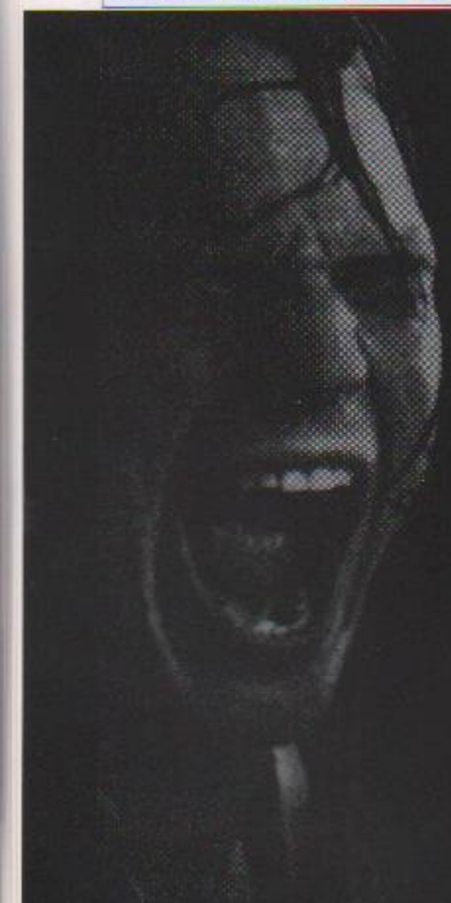

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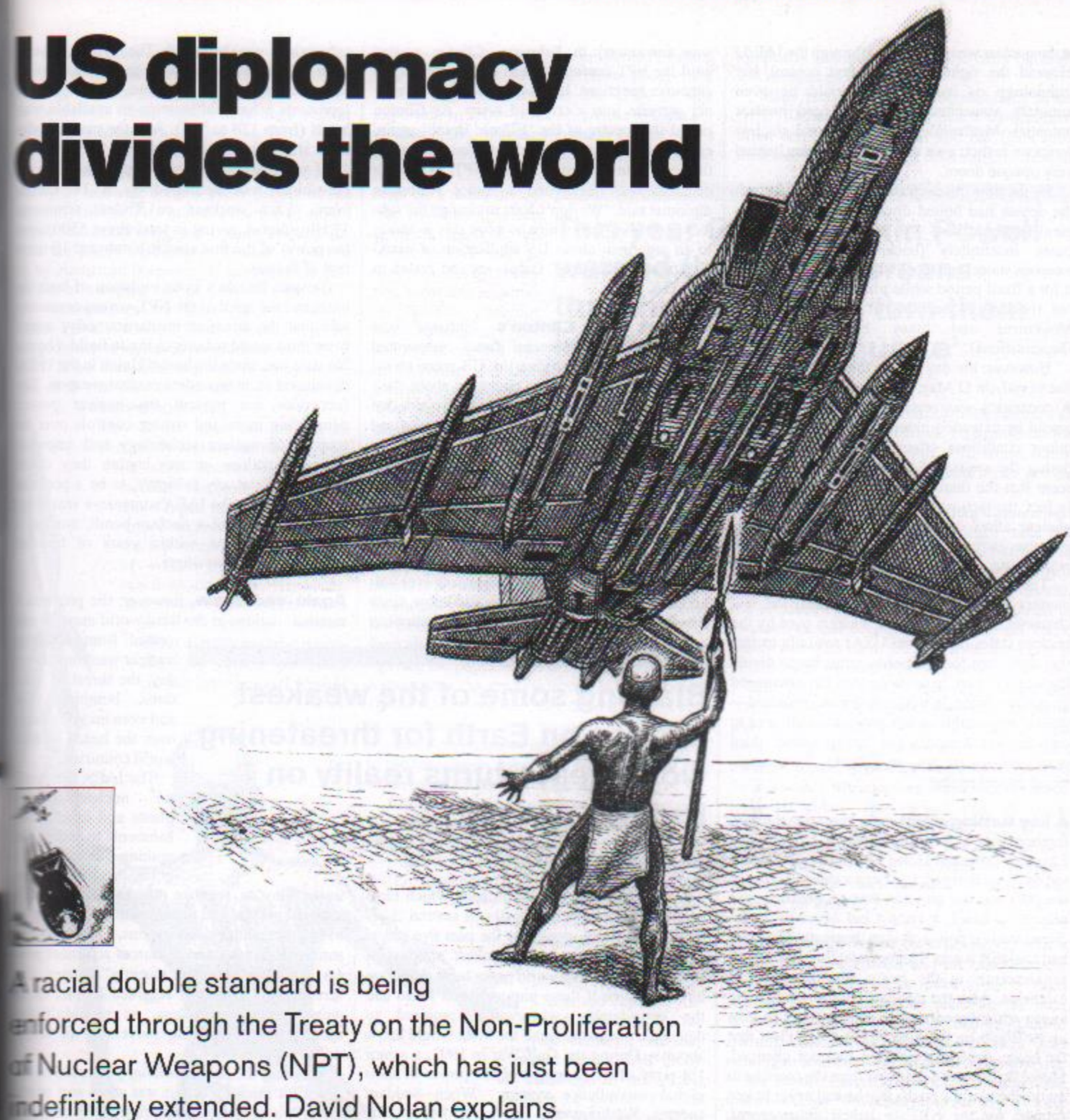
US diplomacy divides the world



A racial double standard is being enforced through the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which has just been indefinitely extended. David Nolan explains

American president Bill Clinton called it a 'critical step' towards world peace. British foreign secretary Douglas Hurd agreed that 'it will make the world a safer place'.

What were they talking about? A new global treaty renouncing war? Hardly. What got the US and British governments excited in May was that a major international conference confirmed forever their right to possess massive nuclear arsenals, and their right to intervene in any other country accused of trying to obtain the Bomb. That is a step towards world peace and harmony in the language of Clinton and Hurd; others might see it as a permanent declaration of war and division of the world.

The conference was staged to decide the future of the 1970 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Debate focused on the discriminatory aspects of the treaty. Article I of the NPT allows the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (the USA, Britain, France, China and Russia) to own nuclear weapons, but calls on them to give neither nuclear weapons nor the technology to build them to any other nation. Article II of the treaty forbids every other state from even trying to acquire a nuclear weapons potential. These two articles mark the divide between the five nuclear powers and the rest.

Article VI of the NPT demands that all nations pursue negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament, but this aspect of the treaty has been almost completely ignored by the five nuclear powers. They claim that they have destroyed thousands of warheads but in reality all they have done is get rid of obsolete stock while replacing it with more powerful and more accurate weapons.

The most discriminatory aspect of the treaty is also one of the most contentious. The five nuclear weapons states are, under the rules of the treaty, not subject to the same inspections as every other nation. The weapons programmes of both Britain and the USA are completely exempt from any inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). For differing reasons, China, France and Russia all have to open their arsenals to some inspections.

Meanwhile, each of the non-nuclear weapons states are not only subject to rigorous inspection regimes, but have to adhere to a new concept: nuclear transparency. This means that ▶

ILLUSTRATION: CLIFA

◀ the nuclear weapons states (through the IAEA) demand the right to inspect and control any technology or industry that could be even remotely associated with an alleged nuclear potential. Meanwhile, the all too real nuclear weapons in their own arsenals are hidden behind very opaque doors.

By the time the conference started on 19 April the debate had boiled down to a straight argument between those who wanted to extend the treaty indefinitely (backed by the nuclear weapons states) and those who preferred to extend it for a fixed period while problems were ironed out (backed by sections of the Non-Aligned Movement and many Non-Governmental Organisations).

However, the day before the conference was due to end, on 11 May, peace suddenly broke out. A consensus was reached in which the treaty would be extended indefinitely with just a few minor conditions attached. So what changed during the course of the conference? It might seem that the final agreement was harmonious. In fact, the tactics employed by the USA and its nuclear allies during the conference were an exercise in creative arm-twisting rather than negotiating.

The way in which the US administration fixed matters at the conference symbolised the real character of the NPT. It is a weapon used by the nuclear states (led by the USA) not only to further their own foreign policy aims, but to divide the world in two. In so doing they have managed to portray what is a racial double standard—where 'respectable' white powers are allowed to own nuclear weapons and 'irresponsible' third world nations are not—as a device for humanitarian peacekeeping.

A key turning-point in the run-up to the conference was a meeting between Clinton and Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in Washington on 5 April. Egypt had been a staunch critic of the NPT on the grounds that no pressure was placed on Israel, a known but officially undeclared nuclear power, to sign the treaty. The USA had said that it was 'inappropriate' to link Israeli acquiescence to the treaty and the issue of extension. After the meeting, Clinton made some vague commitment to persuading Israel to give up its Bomb 'in the future', but it was clear that the basic American position had not changed. Mubarak, however, emerged from the meeting to assure the world's media that he had never linked support for the NPT to Israeli disarmament. Egypt and the other Arab critics of the treaty had been silenced by American pressure.

Then, halfway through the conference, on 30 April, Clinton announced a total trade embargo on Iran. The Iranians were accused of trying to build nuclear weapons after the Russian decision to sell them four light water nuclear power reactors. This was a project well within the terms of Article IV of the NPT, which allows every nation to acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. The Iranian *chargé d'affaires* in London immediately announced that Iran was willing to open its plants for inspection at any time to prove their peaceful intentions. It made no difference to the US decision.

Clinton's imposition of sanctions on Iran was cynically timed to impact on the NPT conference. Although the Russo-Iranian deal was announced in February, Clinton waited until the NPT conference was well under way to announce sanctions. It was like throwing a shrapnel grenade into a crowded room. As Clinton raised the spectre of the 'Islamic Bomb' again, everybody ran for cover and emerged supporting the indefinite extension of the NPT. When the decision was questioned a senior American diplomat said: 'We don't want to change the subject here from Iran which is what this is about, to an argument about US application of extra-territorial jurisdiction.' Game, set and match to the USA.

Support for Clinton's embargo was widespread. The *Financial Times* commented that the move 'might give the US more moral stature to preach to other countries about their links to Iran'. The *Daily Telegraph* said that the Clinton administration had 'finally devised a policy that is morally right'.

Confirmation that the sanctions were about asserting the moral authority of the USA on nuclear matters, rather than preventing any real threat, came two days later. The International Atomic Energy Agency announced that the deal between Russia and Iran included the most stringent set of non-proliferation safeguards ever voluntarily accepted. The IAEA should know, since it helps police the most stringent set of sanctions the world has ever known, in Iraq, which have been responsible for the deaths of several thousand Iraqis every month for the past five years.

Blaming some of the weakest nations on Earth for threatening world peace turns reality on its head

Blaming some of the weakest nations on Earth for threatening world peace turns reality on its head. Even if these impoverished states had the considerable wherewithal required to develop a nuclear arsenal, the West would know about it. During the Gulf War in 1991, a senior US army official boasted of the power of their global surveillance system: 'When Saddam sneezes, Washington is the first to know.' The idea that any country could conceal a nuclear weapons-building programme today is absurd. Unless, of course, they do it with the full support of the IAEA—which is exactly what Britain is currently doing.

Article VI of the NPT calls on all signatories 'to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament'. On 3 April the RAF announced the scrapping of its nuclear force, with an estimated 100 WE177 freefall bombs to be decommissioned by the end of 1998. This was Britain's act of 'good faith' in the run up to the NPT conference.

However, in December last year HMS Vanguard, the first of four Royal Navy Trident submarines was launched. The British government said it was a straight swap for the obsolete Polaris submarine programme. In fact Trident represents a fourfold increase in available warheads (from 128 to 512). And the new missiles have almost twice the range (up from 2500 to 4500 miles) and a far bigger destructive capacity. Hiroshima was destroyed by a 14 kiloton bomb. Each warhead on Trident represents 11 Hiroshimas, giving in total about 5500 times the power of the first atomic bomb and 15 times that of Polaris.

Despite Britain's open violation of both the letter and the spirit of the NPT, we are constantly told that the threat of militarism today comes from third world nations trying to build a bomb. No state has, since the Soviet Union in the 1950s, developed an independent nuclear weapon. This fact does not prevent the nuclear powers demanding more and stricter controls over the transfer of nuclear technology and imposing stricter sanctions on any nation they deem, usually without any evidence, to be a potential danger. Despite the IAEA's intensive searching, it has never found a nuclear bomb, nor has it caught any nation within years of building a bomb. Never. Anywhere.

Again and again, however, the problem is restated: nations in the third world must be prevented from acquiring nuclear weapons. Every day, the threat of sanctions, bombing raids and even invasion hangs over the heads of third world countries.

The IAEA can monitor nuclear energy plants and other establishments to ensure that nothing untoward is going on. It carries out inspections to regulate the amount of fissile material present and to ensure that none of it has been diverted to build weapons. The IAEA constantly demands more resources and more powers. As one official recently pointed out, screwdrivers could be regarded as part of the weapons-building process, so shouldn't they monitor the worldwide movement of screwdriver supplies?

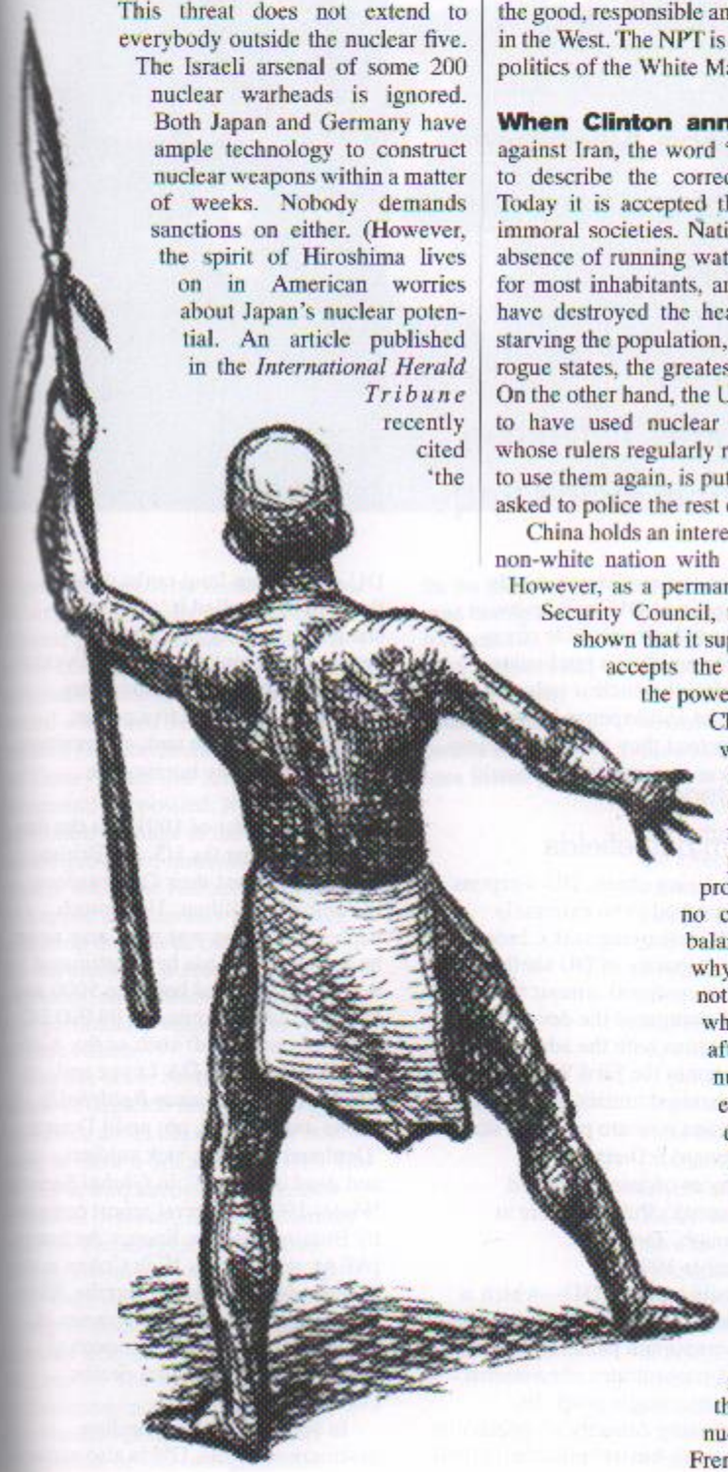
Reading the *IAEA Bulletin*, you could be forgiven for thinking that it was some sort of philanthropic society. The Spring 1995 issue, out just before the NPT conference, was entitled 'Atoms for peace' and examined the relationship between the IAEA and the NPT. On the inside front cover was a picture of a miniature ploughshare made out of material from a dismantled nuclear device. This symbol of peace was given to the IAEA by South Africa, marking its decision to reverse its illicit nuclear weapons programme. The message is that the IAEA promotes peace and develops expertise in nuclear technologies for all.

However, a closer reading of the *Bulletin* reveals a different story. The overriding themes are the need for the IAEA to gain better access to information and to nuclear sites, and most importantly, nuclear transparency. 'Wider access', we are told, 'is a key for a strengthened safeguards system' and 'should be without prior notice to

the state'. In other words the IAEA should have the power to bulldoze its way into any national industry without notice or permission—except in the nations which legally have huge nuclear arsenals, of course.

The IAEA's goal is nuclear transparency: the ability to see and control every aspect of the nuclear process. This includes the use of closed circuit cameras, seals and on-site inspections. And the IAEA surveillance system is backed up by American firepower. If any nation is suspected of stepping out of line with the NPT, the consequences are clear. As US General Colin Powell warned North Korea over its alleged nuclear weapons programme earlier this year: 'If we ever think that you're going to use one, or if you ever do use one, you'll become a charcoal briquette.'

This threat does not extend to everybody outside the nuclear five. The Israeli arsenal of some 200 nuclear warheads is ignored. Both Japan and Germany have ample technology to construct nuclear weapons within a matter of weeks. Nobody demands sanctions on either. (However, the spirit of Hiroshima lives on in American worries about Japan's nuclear potential. An article published in the *International Herald Tribune* recently cited 'the unhappy history of Japanese militarism', calling for the Japanese to come clean about their nuclear intentions and for the USA to stop exporting weapons-grade plutonium to them.)



The double standard inherent in the NPT's division of the world between nuclear haves and have-nots ultimately rests on a racial divide. The assumption underlying the treaty is that some nations can be trusted and others cannot; some are responsible and others are not; some nations are good and others are bad. The irresponsible and dangerous states are always 'over there', in the third world and the East. So the good, responsible and trustworthy nations are in the West. The NPT is the form which the racial politics of the White Man's bomb take today.

This year General Colin Powell warned the North Koreans that the USA would turn them into 'a charcoal briquette'

When Clinton announced the sanctions against Iran, the word 'moral' was widely used to describe the correctness of the embargo. Today it is accepted that there are moral and immoral societies. Nations like Iran, where the absence of running water is of primary concern for most inhabitants, and Iraq, where sanctions have destroyed the healthcare system and are starving the population, are branded as immoral, rogue states, the greatest threats to world peace. On the other hand, the USA, the only nation ever to have used nuclear weapons in anger and whose rulers regularly reaffirm their willingness to use them again, is put on a moral pedestal and asked to police the rest of the world.

China holds an interesting position as the only non-white nation with a legal nuclear arsenal. However, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the Chinese regime has shown that it supports the status quo and accepts the moral divide between the powerful nations and the rest. China is now the honourary white man in Asia (a role that has rotated between China and Japan at different times during the past century), and has proved that it will brook no challenge to the global balance of power. That is why the major powers were not too perturbed in May when, only three days after they agreed to sign a nuclear test ban before the end of next year, China exploded a test bomb in Xinjiang province. Only Japan imposed any form of sanctions, withholding a few million dollars of loans out of a total package of $4.1 billion.

Since May the US government has hinted that it too will resume nuclear testing, and the French government has publically announced its plans to carry out eight test explosions in the Pacific.

Many recognise the double standards in the NPT. Radical NGOs and peace campaigners often demand that Britain and the USA fulfil their side of the bargain by disarming. In the final analysis, however, their conclusions chime with those of the US and British governments; the threat to peace comes from third world states, and the West must prevent them from getting the Bomb.

Take the arguments for Western disarmament put forward by both Greenpeace and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in their critique of the NPT. The emphasis of their case is that the Western powers should disarm, not so much because their nukes are a threat in themselves, but because if the West has them, others will want them too. The overriding fear is of nations in the third world acquiring the Bomb.

Martin Jones, CND's vice-chair, states that 'the example and attitude of the nuclear weapon states conjures up a vision where any nation with a fear of external aggression will seek to protect itself by acquiring nuclear weapons' (*Blueprint for a Nuclear Weapon-Free World*). Greenpeace feels the same: 'The nuclear weapons states continue to develop, modernise and deploy nuclear weapons. This has led to increased regional tensions and driven other countries to seek entry to the "nuclear club".' (*Questions and Answers on the NPT*)

The message from these prominent NGOs is that the USA, Britain and the other nuclear powers should disarm in order to set a good example to the less mature states of the non-Western world. The problem is that this kind of friendly criticism of Western militarism does nothing to challenge the notion of a moral divide in the world. Indeed, by effectively accepting that divide, the NGOs play into the hands of the nuclear powers. The US and British governments can argue that, since it is accepted that the primary danger of nuclear war comes from 'over there', it is surely imperative to maintain nuclear arsenals 'over here'.

The indefinite extension of the NPT consolidates the idea that the moral authority to police the world lies with the Western powers. Through the treaty, they can maintain their monopoly on nuclear weapons and their capacity to hold the world to ransom. It is now an article of international law that the USA and its allies, through their proxy, the IAEA, can interfere in the sovereign affairs of other nations at will. While the days of imperial adventure may be over, they have been replaced by a more insidious danger: a permanent threat of war to be carried out in the name of peace and non-proliferation. ●

The real nuclear threat in Iraq

...does not come from Saddam Hussein's non-existent Bomb. It comes from the contamination caused by the all-too-real depleted uranium shells which the Allies used in the Gulf War—and from the United Nations sanctions which still prevent the Iraqis from coping with the problem.

Hugh Livingstone and Kayode Olafimihan of the Edge Gallery report from inside Iraq

The Gulf War of 1991 was publicised as a 'clean' war on the Allied side, yet highly toxic and radioactive 'nuclear bullets' were used by the American and British forces. These weapons are a new generation of anti-tank shells made from depleted uranium, a waste product from the nuclear industry. They have contaminated Iraq's soil and water table with toxic and carcinogenic dust which it has been estimated will last 4500m years.

The dust released from these uranium-tipped shells as they explode is suspected of causing genetic damage. It has been linked to rises in childhood cancers in Iraq since the Gulf War. The population of Iraq has never been informed of the hazard, nor offered compensation or measures to protect themselves. America and Britain have continued to cloak the development of these weapons and their hazardous nature in secrecy. And the facts about the impact of depleted uranium shells in Iraq remain hidden behind the system of United Nations sanctions which continue to cut off Iraq from the rest of the world.

Depleted uranium (DU) is the waste product from the uranium enrichment process which produces reactor fuel and nuclear warheads. The stockpiles of DU built up by the nuclear industry provide cheap material for munitions production, while sparing the nuclear industry the headache and expense of long-term storage. Instead they are able to dump their nuclear waste on a third world country.

Uranium battlefields

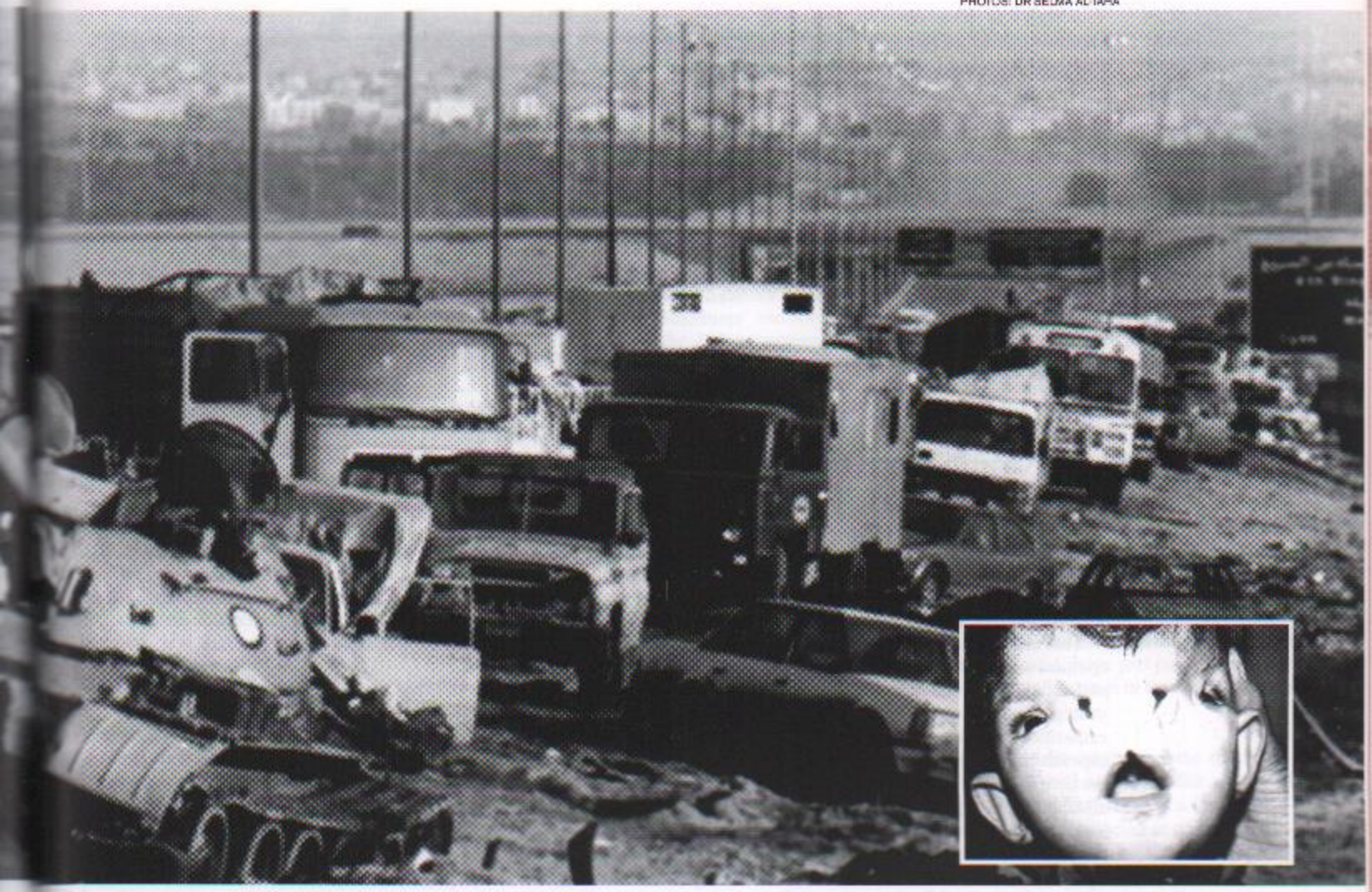
As well as being cheap, DU weapons have also proved to be extremely effective in destroying tanks. Indeed such is the capacity of DU shells to cut through conventional armour that one expert has compared the development of DU weapons with the advent of the machine gun in the First World War—'The mechanised armies of all third world nations now are potential scrap iron' (Leonard S Dietz, 'Some consequences of using depleted uranium metal', Public lecture at Jonesborough, Tennessee, 12 November 1994).

A missile made of DU—which is two and a half times denser than steel—provides maximum penetrative power because it concentrates phenomenal weight on to a single point. Its armour-piercing capacity is spectacular. US A-10 'tank-buster' pilots who fired DU missiles on Iraqi tanks during the Gulf War called it 'plinking'—slang for shooting tin cans. On penetrating a tank or armoured vehicle, a DU shell fragments and ignites, enhancing its destructive power by setting alight the tank ammunition and fuel, probably burning the crew alive.

The Gulf War of 1991 was the first opportunity that the US and British forces had to test their DU weapons in combat conditions. How much depleted uranium was used may never be known, but it has been estimated that the Allies fired between 5000 and 6000 DU tank rounds and 94 000 DU bullets from aircraft such as the A-10 (see G Bukowski, DA Lopez and FM McGhee, *Uranium Battlefields Home and Abroad*, p6; and I Doucet, 'Depleted uranium, sick soldiers and dead children?', in *Global Securi* Winter 1993). A secret report compile by Britain's Atomic Energy Authority (AEA), revealed by Nick Cohen in the *Independent*, estimated that the Allies had left behind at least 40 tonnes of DU in Iraq and Kuwait, enough to cause '500 000 potential deaths' (10 November 1991).

In addition to its immediate destructive effects, DU is also accused

PHOTOS: DR SELMA AL-TAHA



On the Basra road fleeing Iraqi vehicles were stopped with 'nuclear bullets'. Since the war genetic defects have soared (inset)

f creating long-term health problems. DU explosions create microscopic irborne particles which can spread cross kilometre-wide areas. They are fficiently soluble to contaminate soil, round water and surface water. When gested DU accumulates in the bones d kidneys and, like lead, is rmanently deposited. It can cause versible damage to the kidneys d the growth of tumours. When haled, toxic and radioactive particles e trapped permanently in the lungs creasing the risk of cancer. DU can cross the placenta during egnancy, and fetuses are thought be particularly vulnerable to toxic effects.

Iraq has never been informed of e use of depleted uranium, nor given y advice about the dangers or how fely to clear it up. Since the Gulf War ctors in Iraq have noted increases unusual diseases, especially among ildren. The suggestion that these dings are linked to the use of DU the Gulf War was investigated by group of doctors and environmental entists who heard about the secret EA report. The Iraqi Society r Environmental Protection and provement (ISEPI) has verified e presence of DU contamination in southern Iraq. They have also published medical studies which record a rise in cases of childhood cancers, birth defects and abnormalities, and increases in male infertility—especially in the contaminated south of the country.

Genetic defects

Collecting hard statistical evidence of the effects of DU in Iraq has become increasingly difficult amid the chaos created by the wartime destruction and the UN sanctions which are still strangling the country. Health studies are made harder still by the fact that far fewer people seek medical care than did so before the war, when 97 per cent of urban Iraqis and 70 per cent of those living in rural areas had access to modern healthcare (Medical Educational Trust, *Continuing Health Costs of the Gulf War,* February 1992). Today, economic sanctions have brought the healthcare system in Iraq to the point of collapse. Why go to a hospital or clinic suffering from severe shortages of equipment and drugs, especially when the cost of travel has become astronomical?

Nevertheless, a study by Dr Muna Elhassani of the Iraqi Cancer Registry claims that between 1989 and 1993 there has been a rise in reported cases of leukaemia in Al-Qadisyah province of 183 per cent. In Basra, leukaemia rates have risen by 56 per cent and in Al-Muthana by a staggering 350 per cent—these are all areas with DU contamination. By contrast, the level of cases in Najav and Kerbala, nearer the centre of Iraq, remained steady. Another study by Dr Barnouti and Dr Al-Tawil has identified a significant increase in seminal fluid abnormalities in a group of patients tested at their clinic before and after the war. Geneticist Dr Selma Al-Taha has pointed to increases in genetic abnormalities in newborn babies since the conflict. In particular, limb reductional abnormalities, of the sort once associated with thalidomide and eradicated in the 1960s, are now reappearing

The Western allies are well aware of the potential health risks DU poses. In May 1991, the US defence department admitted that the military use of DU results in 'the potential to cause adverse impacts on human health, primarily through the water pathway'. In the early 1980s a DU munitions manufacturer, National Lead Industries of Colonie, ▶

New York was closed down by the state government after airborne emissions of DU particles had been found over 26 miles away. Other DU munitions plants in Ohio and Oklahoma have been scheduled for shutdown after contamination was discovered. In both 1987 and 1991, the US Army issued guidelines on the handling of DU munitions and DU-contaminated vehicles. No such guidelines have been passed to Iraq.

Washington and Whitehall feel free to blame the Iraqis themselves for the devastation caused by the UN embargo

This callous disregard for Iraqi civilians and their environment was part and parcel of the Allied Gulf War strategy. To the American and British authorities the Iraqi population was expendable. During the build-up to the Gulf War, the US authorities were making plans for the destruction of Iraq. In October 1990 the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a political think-tank that included former top US officials Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Alexander Haig and George Shultz on its Board of Advisors, published a paper examining how the US-led alliance could best undermine the Iraqi government.

In a chilling premonition of the Allied war strategy, the paper noted that 'the industries which must concern the Iraqi government are those in which any shutdown is felt immediately by consumers':

'Three principal industries fit this bill. First are the oil refineries, without which Iraq's transport system would come to a halt in weeks. Second are the dozen major electricity-generating plants, without which industry will have to come to a screeching halt and food distribution will be complicated by a loss of refrigeration. Third and perhaps most sensitive are the water-pumping/filtration stations in Baghdad, without which the city's population would be forced to spend many hours a day finding and purifying water.' (P Clawson, 'How vulnerable is Iraq's economy?', Washington Institute for Near East Policy, October 1990)

Within hours of the start of the air war on 17 January 1991, 90 per cent of Iraq's electricity production had been destroyed. The allies bombed four out of seven major water-pumping stations and 31 municipal water and sewage treatment facilities. Oil facilities were crippled—even food warehouses and grain silos were hit. A US air force planner was quoted as admitting that targeting civilian plants was intended to tell the Iraqi people that 'we're not going to tolerate Saddam Hussein or his regime. Fix that and we'll fix your electricity'. What wasn't admitted was that the Allies dumped nuclear waste on northern Kuwait and southern Iraq in the process.

Man-made famine

Washington's contemptuous attitude towards the health and welfare of Iraqis continues today. The USA and Britain remain the firmest supporters of maintaining UN sanctions against Iraq. By preventing the Iraqis from selling the oil they need to pay for food imports and medicines, and by barring the import of most essential goods, these sanctions have created a man-made famine and health crisis in Iraq (see the authors' previous report, 'The UN: new dictators of Iraq', *Living Marxism*, February 1995). Only this year, spare parts to repair and maintain the water system have been blocked by the sanctions committee.

The continuation of the UN embargo has also blocked facilities for further study of the effects of DU contamination: there has been a 67 per cent decrease in laboratory investigations by the Iraqi ministry of health since 1989. Severe shortages in cytotoxic and other cancer drugs hamper the treatment of suspected victims of DU. And the shortages created by sanctions are preventing Iraq from properly clearing up the contamination.

UN shame

The Anglo-American campaign against Saddam Hussein's Iraq has been conducted under the banners of a crusade for human rights. But the moral authority claimed by the Western powers is wildly at odds with the tragic reality of what their actions mean for the Iraqi people. The consequences of continuing sanctions are becoming increasingly difficult to justify. Today many UN aid organisations working in Iraq will privately express deep reservations about the sanctions and UN policy towards Iraq. 'I am now ashamed to be in the United Nations', one head of agency told us, 'I am embarrassed to be driving round Baghdad in a car with UN number plates'.

However, while the Western powers' moral pretensions may have been dented, they are still able to ignore the suffering of the Iraqi people. Washington and Whitehall even feel free to suggest that Iraqis themselves are to blame for the devastation caused by the UN embargo. The world still accepts that the problem is Saddam's faltering regime, rather than the powerful new dictatorship set up in Iraq by the USA through the UN.

Despite the lack of any evidence, the West is still able to raise the spectre of hidden caches of Iraqi nuclear, chemical and biological weapons to justify maintaining sanctions. The need to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has been a central argument in the demonisation of Iraq over the past five years. Yet while Iraq has persistently been accused of having a (non-existent) nuclear arsenal, the real nuclear threat in Iraq, from the nuclear bullets which the Allied forces fired during the Gulf War, is ignored.

Embargo on truth

Because their word is accepted as international law, the Allies are still able to define DU as a conventional firearm. Yet by any criteria it fits the definition of a chemical and radiological weapon. In Britain and America when DU is produced as a by-product of uranium enrichment it is classified as nuclear waste. When it is turned into a shell and fired at Iraq it becomes 'conventional'. The Iraqi people continue to suffer the consequences.

Under UN sanctions it is impossible accurately to assess the extent of DU contamination and its effects, let alone do anything about it. The pariah status of Iraq means that the findings of Iraqi doctors are never discussed, and remain within the country. In turn they have little access to international medical debate and innovation. That is why the Edge Gallery is inviting the Iraqi Society for Environmental Protection and Improvement to Britain for a symposium in the autumn, to highlight the consequences of using DU weapons. The hazards of DU can only be evaluated by free discussion and debate among scientists and doctors. Iraq's international isolation and the UN blockade are not only preventing the movement of essential goods and foreign currency. They are also blocking the truth.

The Edge Gallery's new exhibition From Nuclear Bombs to Nuclear Bullets: Secret Nuclear War in the Fifties and Nineties opens on 12 July 1995 at the Edge Gallery, 2 The Circle, Queen Elizabeth St, London SE1 2LP. If you would like to help the Edge to organise the autumn symposium on the effects of DU weapons, phone (0171) 403 4198.

Law of the jungle

The latest round of the Lockerbie bombing affair confirms that might is always right in international law. Kate Margam reports

After months of controversy, in May Channel 4 finally screened *The Maltese Double Cross*, a film investigating the bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie in 1988 which killed 270 people. In the studio debate that followed, Sir Teddy Taylor MP made explicit the view shared by many: that the US and British authorities had set up Libya as their main Lockerbie suspect in 1990, because they did not want to embarrass the more likely suspects, Iran and Syria, at a time when those states were backing America in the Gulf War.

It begins to look like we are entering the political twilight zone when a right-wing Tory MP openly accuses his own government and the USA of conspiring to cover up the truth, of making false accusations and subsequently imposing sanctions against Libya on false pretences. But Taylor is not alone. Labour MP Tam Dalyell, Dr Jim Swire of UK Families Flight 103 (whose daughter Flora died in the bombing) and various other individuals have been making these accusations for some time. Yet all that has happened during that time is that the USA has sought to extend the sanctions against Libya, and the FBI has offered a $4m reward for the capture of two named Libyan suspects.

The Maltese Double *Cross* seeks to substantiate claims that the facts surrounding Lockerbie have been covered up and Libya has been framed. The film itself has recently become almost as controversial as the incident it investigates. Last year it was withdrawn from the London Film Festival and investigated by the FBI. The film's makers and those who have shown it privately, such as the Angle Gallery in Birmingham, report being threatened and intimidated by unknown sources (see 'Unanswered questions over Lockerbie', *Living Marxism*, January 1995). After Channel 4 agreed to show *The Maltese Double Cross* in May, a new media campaign was launched against it.

Before the screening, David Leppard wrote a hatchet job in the *Sunday Times*—'FBI exposes documentary on Lockerbie as a sham' (7 May 1995). The article focused on two accusations made against the film. First, since there was Libyan money involved in making the film, it cannot be an objective account; second, key witnesses in the film cannot be trusted since they are 'known fabricators' and some are criminals indicted by the US government on charges of fraud and drug-dealing.

In other words, never mind the facts in the film, one whiff of Gadaffi's gold and it must be a pack of lies. The campaign to discredit *The Maltese Double Cross* is based on the assumption that Libyans and their allies are all paid-up liars, while Rupert Murdoch's *Sunday Times* and the FBI are independent beacons of truth. In the same way, if the US government says that the film's witnesses should be ignored because they are frauds and drug-pushers, that is good enough for Leppard. The fact that they were only indicted in the USA after they blew the whistle on a drug-running operation *run by the CIA*, an operation which the film claims facilitated the bombing, is apparently irrelevant.

It has been easy for America and Britain to blacken the film's name by exploiting the propaganda capital which they have built up during years of branding Libya a country of terrorists and Colonel Gadaffi himself a madman. Defenders of *The Maltese Double Cross* point out that even if all David Leppard's assertions are true, the film asks questions and provides clues to the truth which make it a worthy investigation that we can judge for ourselves.

The Lockerbie cover up is a clear example of how honesty and justice have no place on the agenda of international politics. There are no rules in international jurisdiction except the ones that powerful countries like the USA make up as they go along.

With regard to Lockerbie, UN Resolution 731 of 1992 set a legal precedent. America and Britain demanded that Libya hand over two accused men for trial. Given that no extradition treaty exists, this demand has no legal basis. Under the Montreal Convention of 1971 suspects should be tried in the country to whose laws they are subject—Libya. Despite that, the UN Security Council has demanded that the two be handed over and has threatened further punishment against Libya for not obeying its orders.

It seems that the USA and other Western powers can have their cake and eat it. They can enforce resolutions that have no legal precedent; yet Libya's offer to hand the men over to the International Court of Justice was dismissed because it has no precedent. International law is really the law of the jungle, under which might is always right and the angels are assumed to be on the side of the big battalions. That is why any trial of the two Libyans anywhere in the world would be a parody of justice.

In June, the press reported that a frustrated President Bill Clinton had effectively abandoned efforts to get the two accused Libyans extradited to stand trial in the USA. This story was presented as a 'victory for the terrorists'. In fact the USA and Britain have already achieved their propaganda aims in the Lockerbie affair; to cast a third world state like Libya in the role of international criminal, and establish the West's moral credentials as world judge and jury. Whether or not anybody actually stands in the dock is neither here nor there.

The campaign to cut through the dirty dealing that surrounds the Lockerbie affair and reveal the truth has been championed by a few individuals. They have been pilloried as eccentric trouble-makers, and the strain is telling. In Channel 4's discussion after the screening of *The Maltese Double Cross*, Jim Swire faced Oliver 'Buck' Revell, leader of the FBI investigation, and asked how it was that Revell's own son had so luckily escaped flying on flight 103, when he had been booked on it. The film claims that key personnel knew there was a bomb on the flight and cancelled their bookings. Flora Swire was not one of those key people, so she boarded the plane and died.

Jim Swire is an ordinary bereaved father backed only by six and a half years of campaigning for the truth. Oliver Revell has the full weight of the US state behind him. According to the international law of the jungle, that means Revell is always in the right. His alibi for his son's escape was that he had been given leave two weeks earlier than planned, and so missed the fateful flight. Everybody agreed it was a fortunate coincidence. ●

In Beijing in September a major United Nations conference will confirm that women's issues and gender politics are now at the centre of international affairs.

Helen Simons suggests that the work being done by international agencies in the name of women in the third world is not all that it seems

A hidden

The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing in September, is set to be the biggest-ever event of its kind. More than 170 governments and all the top international institutions have signed up for the official conference, while 20 000 representatives of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) from around the world have applied to attend the parallel forum 30 miles down the road in Huairou.

Beijing will focus almost exclusively on the problems facing poverty-stricken women in the third world. Equality, Peace and Development are the designated conference themes. Some might think it suspicious that Western politicians and World Bank officials should suddenly show such concern for poor third world women. After all, Western governments have rarely shown any interest in the plight of impoverished women in their own countries. In fact we are all very familiar with their attempts to demonise poor women as immoral single mothers or benefit scroungers. As for an institution like the World Bank, its Structural Adjustment Programmes have devastated the lives of countless women in third world societies by forcing health and welfare services to be cut, privatised or abolished altogether.

Feminists and NGOs, however, seem to have few such reservations about Beijing. The UK Women's National Commission, one of the leading British groups attending, sees the conference as 'probably the single most important event to affect women this decade. Its decisions will have a wide-ranging impact on the actions of governments throughout the world'. Gertrude Mongella, the secretary-general to the conference hopes that Beijing 'will make a difference' in the 'complete revolution that is needed to transfer a fair share of resources into the hands of women'.

The Beijing organisers want attending governments and institutions to agree upon a 'Global Platform of Action' that can guide their future policy. A draft of this platform has already been discussed at the preparatory conference (PrepComm) which took place in New York this spring. The battle lines for the Beijing conference were drawn up in New York, where the questions of women's social rights and reproductive rights were hotly contested. Feminists in NGO circles now anticipate that the main struggle in Beijing will be a battle against the combined forces of the Vatican and the Islamic fundamentalists.

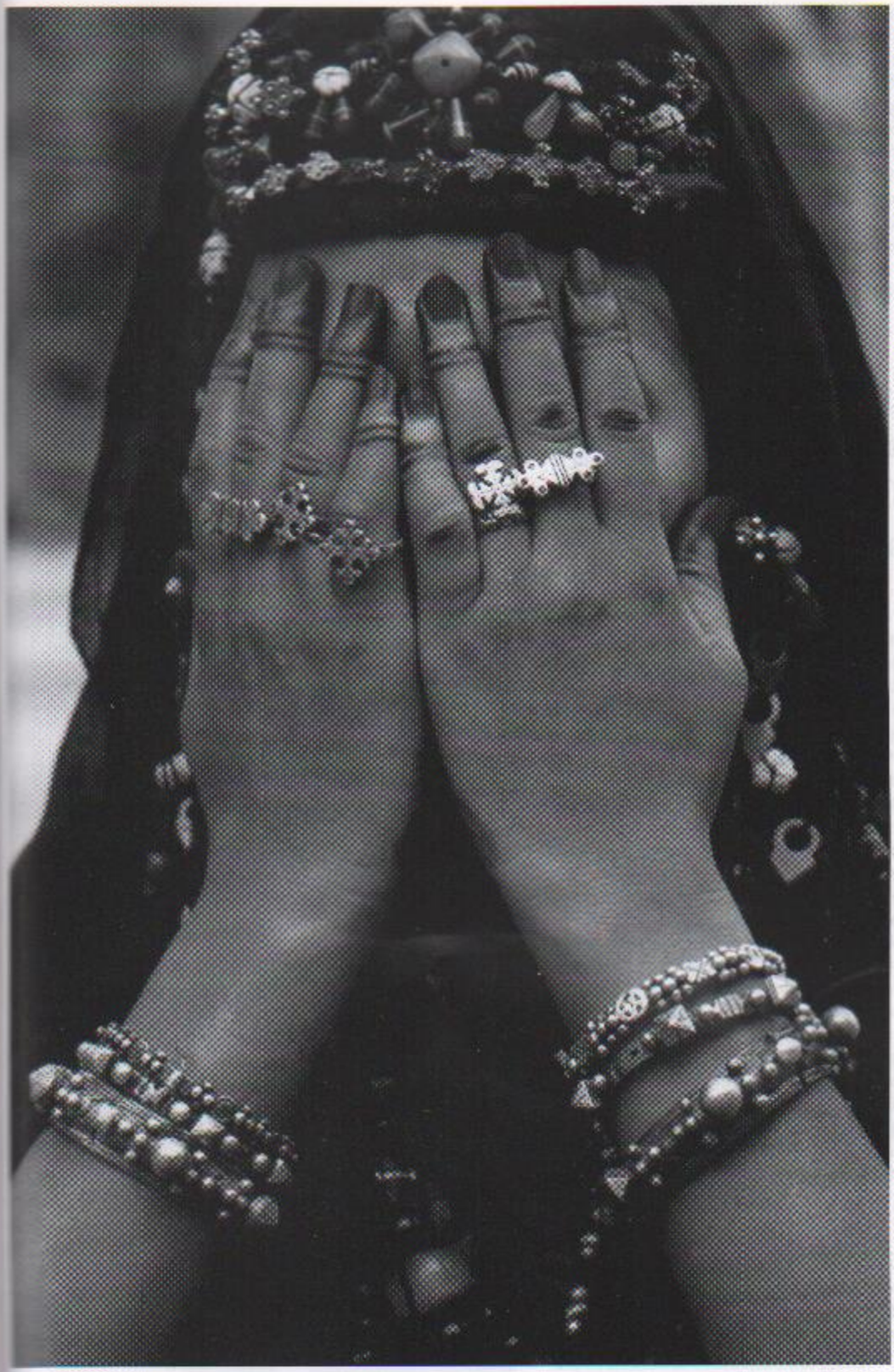
Affirmative action

The Beijing conference is the culmination of a long campaign within the UN to force what are considered to be women's issues and gender politics on to the agenda. The first UN women's conference was held in 1975. The UN then declared a Decade for Women, dedicated to bringing women's concerns into the centre of development politics.

Over the next 10 years many paper commitments on women's issues were passed by UN agencies. When the UN women's decade came to an end in 1985, however, many of its aims remained unfulfilled in practice. Yet 10 years later, the campaign to refocus development politics on the issue of gender has really taken off. Suddenly, what has come to be known as gender planning is no longer tacked on to UN activities as an afterthought. It has become a central plank of development politics in the nineties.

Within the UN there are now affirmative action programmes to increase the number of women working in each department. In the third world, women's issues have become a preoccupation of UN agencies. In Bangladesh, for example, the best-known face of the UN is a cartoon character called Mina, a little girl invented by the UN children's agency Unicef who features on primetime television in South Asia. Mina wants to go to school but her parents and elders won't let her. Unicef uses her to demonstrate the 'value of female education to poverty-ridden parents and a prejudiced society' (*New Internationalist*, December 1994).

The increased importance of gender issues is also reflected in the big UN conferences. In the past, the feminist agenda was largely ghettoised within the UN's women's conferences. Today, by contrast, women's issues have been brought out of the closet to take centre stage at every major international gathering. The Beijing conference is the latest in a line of major conferences



that have raised the profile of women's issues in the 1990s. Most importantly, the feminist agenda played a key role in shaping two major UN assemblies: the Vienna conference on human rights in 1993, and the Cairo population conference in 1994. Many prominent feminists believe that these two conferences achieved more than all of the previous UN women's conferences.

Feminist converts

The Vienna World Conference on Human Rights endorsed women's rights as basic and universal human rights. The feminist NGOs feel that this means women's rights can no longer be sidelined by Islamic regimes and other reactionary governments without incurring the wrath of the UN. At the Cairo conference on world population, feminists felt that the recognition of the importance of access to abortion and contraception for third world women was another big step forward. Their aim in Beijing is to defend their gains against the religious zealots.

Amid the flurry of activity around Beijing, however, nobody seems to be asking one obvious question. Why are Western governments and hardnosed international financiers suddenly prepared to endorse the importance of gender and women's rights in international politics? Feminists might claim that it is as a result of their lobbying. But that does not explain why powerful people who ignored the feminist agenda for years will embrace it today. A more critical examination of the Beijing conference reveals that the work being done by international agencies in the name of women in the nineties is not all that it seems.

The draft platform put forward at the New York PrepComm contains recommendations to improve the status of women in 12 areas of concern, relating to the impact on women of poverty, education, health, violence, armed conflict, economic structures, power-sharing and decision-making, mechanisms to promote the advancement of women, human rights, the media, the environment, and the situation of girls. The conference also promises to link gender issues and third world development. ▶

agender

A closer look at this agenda for women's rights in the third world reveals a peculiar factor. It has not been determined by ordinary women of the third world demanding a better lot for themselves. Rather it is clear that Western feminists and Western politicians have been the key players in setting the women and development agenda to be debated at Beijing. This is most striking when examining the issues that the UN and everyone else in development circles have chosen to highlight.

What use a domestic violence hotline will be to millions of Peruvian women without telephones is anybody's guess

The primary preoccupation of women living in third world societies is the struggle to survive in degrading and impoverished conditions. Poverty is the single overriding factor that devastates women's lives in the South. The lack of basic resources means that women have to struggle from dawn to dusk for their families to survive. The lack of agricultural technology means that subsistence farming in which many women work is back-breakingly primitive. The lack of welfare provision means that women look after the weak and the sick in society. It also explains why half a million third world women die due to complications in pregnancy every year. On the other hand, women in many third world societies have little option but to bear a large number of children (and to hope that more of them are boys), since poverty means that people rely upon their children to work and look after them in their old age.

Western preoccupations

Poverty is by far the biggest problem facing women in the third world. Yet the campaign against poverty is only a tiny part of the new feminist agenda for the third world. It is also the least attractive element for Western feminists. At the New York PrepComm, British NGO delegates showed little or no interest in attending the sessions discussing economic policy. In fact at the London report-back meeting, nobody could be found to report back on these PrepComm discussions. In contrast the sessions on reproductive health and violence against women were packed out.

Rather than focusing on the most pressing concerns of women in the third world, it is apparent that Western feminists have projected their own preoccupations on to the campaign. Every major Western NGO is obsessed with the question of domestic violence. A whole section of the draft programme is devoted to the issue of violence against women, given about the same weight as the section on poverty. Many NGOs have diverted substantial funds to southern hemisphere projects that focus on this issue. Womankind Worldwide, for example, boasts in its 1994 report that it has helped finance a hotline for women who suffer domestic abuse in Peru. What this can mean to the millions of impoverished Peruvian women living in shanty towns and villages without access to a telephone is anybody's guess.

Emily's list

The same Western feminist preoccupations permeate other NGO projects. The development agency Oxfam, for example, thought it appropriate to help fund a Mexican NGO set up by a Belgian feminist. One of the key activities of the group was to publish a book called *Cuerpo de Mujer—A Woman's Body*—which explores the theme of women's sexuality and relationships. No doubt this is a crucial concern for the women of Islington, but it is difficult to imagine that it is the most pressing priority for the women in the shanty towns around Mexico City.

Western feminists even impose their preoccupations on to women in the refugee camps of Africa. In Tanzania Oxfam has established gender projects among Rwandan refugees, focused on the perennial Western feminist preoccupation of female representation. Rwandan refugees may be desperate, hungry and homeless but at least they can take comfort in the fact that women are represented on the organising committees of the camps. Representation takes up another entire section of the draft programme, superimposing the Emily's List concerns of middle class Western women on to the third world. Nor is it surprising to find that concern about the environment and women's representation in the media are substantial issues in the programme. These are the issues that Western feminists know and love.

Question the priorities of Western NGOs, and they will point to groups of women from the third world who are echoing the demands of their gender-based projects. A more realistic appraisal of matters, however, shows that these women are simply dancing to the West's tune. If you want funding from development agencies today, you have to include a fashionable gender angle to your project. It is unsurprising that those applying for funds have learned to dress up their claims in the new language of gender. The fact that these projects may not be the most pressing areas of concern for women in the third world or the most appropriate areas for development seems unimportant to the Western agencies.

If the emphasis of the Global Platform at Beijing was simply inappropriate, the conference could be dismissed as a waste of time. But unfortunately things are more serious than that.

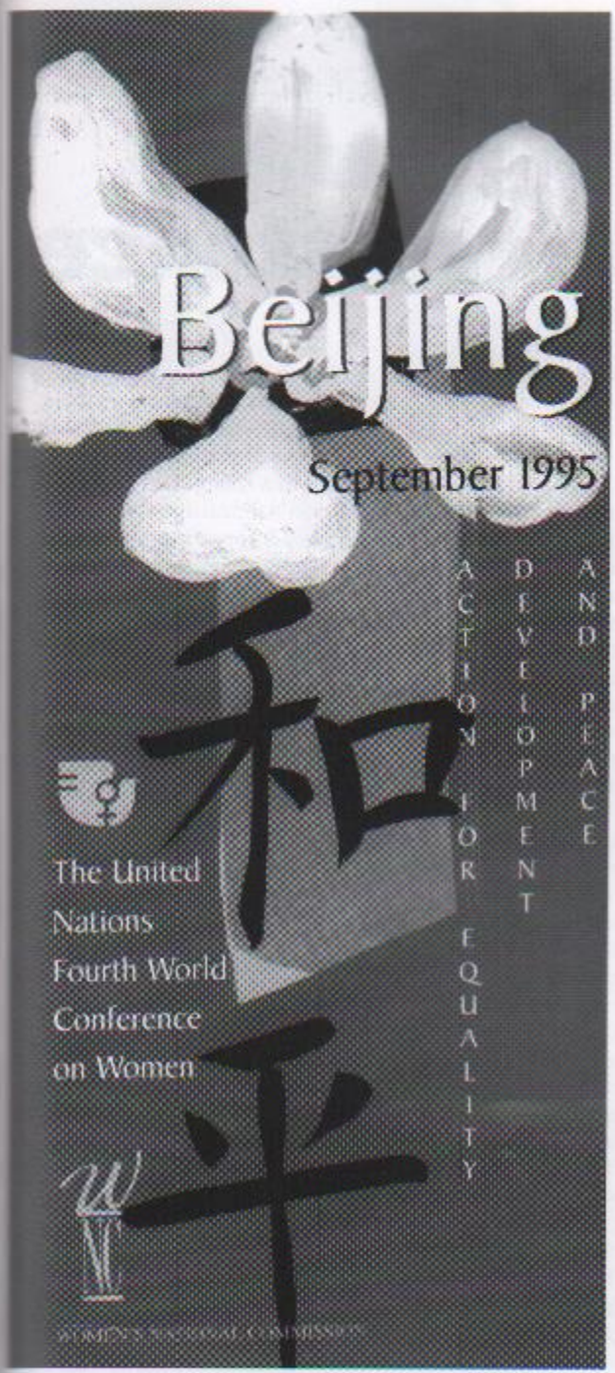
The message being promoted through the Beijing conference, and all of the UN's work on gender issues, is dangerously misleading. It suggests that the problems facing women in third world societies result primarily from the backward cultural practices of those societies. This narrow focus ignores the way that the exploitative and oppressive world system imposed by the West destroys women's lives. Worse still, the message of Beijing is that, far from the West being a central cause of women's problems in the third world, more intervention by Western agencies could actually provide the solution.

Blaming men

The theme of combating barbaric cultural practices in third world societies comes up time and again in the NGO discussion around Beijing. Womankind Worldwide, for example, states that it is keen to 'support projects that eradicate suffering caused by harmful traditional practices'. Agencies such as Oxfam have published studies arguing that it is backward cultural and religious practices that keep women down in African, Asian and Latin American societies (see, for example, JC Mosse, *Half the World, Half a Chance*, Oxfam, 1993, Chapter 5).

The same anti-third world tone can be found throughout the draft programme. Section D states that 'violence against women derives essentially from cultural patterns, particularly the harmful effects of certain traditional practices'. Section I of the programme condescendingly calls for a human rights education programme for third world nations.

In this discussion, the cultural practices of third world countries are entirely divorced from the social and economic conditions which give rise to them. The degradation of women ceases to be a consequence of living in a degraded and impoverished society, and becomes instead a function of the unsophisticated attitudes of men in the third world. This is a line of argument guaranteed to win warm applause



The Beijing agenda twists women's demands into a programme for intervention in the third world

in Western capitals. So long as it is third world culture and traditional practices that are blamed for women's position, the Western governments and money men can use the discussions at Beijing as an indirect form of flattery for their own systems.

'Down with growth!'

The Beijing agenda not only mystifies the cause of women's problems by endorsing an anti-third world message. It also discredits the one thing which could do more than anything to alleviate those problems: economic and social development. It is now becoming the accepted wisdom that development itself is one of the major problems facing third world women, as one feminist writer spells out:

'It has become increasingly clear in recent years that development, which has been conceived as a Western project to modernise the post-colonial societies, did not bring the improvement in the living conditions of the people in the South. Instead, the development process contributed to the growth of poverty, to an increase in economic and gender inequalities and to the degradation of the environment which further diminishes the means of livelihood of poor people, particularly women.' (R Braidotti et al, *Women, the Environment and Sustainable Development*, 1994, p1).

These pernicious ideas are reflected in the environmental section of the draft programme for Beijing. The feminist rejection of development is a bitter irony. Development is the one thing that could help women in the South. If societies became more technically advanced then women could get a better deal. Without development women will remain the most wretched people in the most impoverished societies. It is legitimate to point out the failure of Western programmes to develop the third world. But if development itself is rejected then poor third world women are condemned to a life of misery for ever. And Western capitalists are offered the perfect alibi for their role in the impoverishment of much of the globe.

It is not suprising that politicians and financiers are falling over themselves to be associated with Beijing since they know this discussion will not blame them for the plight of impoverished third world women. In fact they can now pose as the champions of women's emancipation in backward third world societies. That process can lend a new nineties-style legitimacy to old-fashioned Western intervention in the affairs of other peoples and nations.

At Beijing, feminists will be cheering on Tories like Lynda Chalker against the Islamic and Catholic fundamentalists. Womankind Worldwide is so impressed by the British government's efforts that it invited Baroness Chalker to write the foreword to its annual report. The British government returned the compliment by giving the CBE to two of the leading campaigners in Womankind.

Mad mullahs and priests

Western politicians will love Beijing. The calls for their governments to defend women's rights in the backward corners of the world will be deafening. The bogeymen will be the mad mullahs and Catholic hierarchy. This is tragic for the women and men of the third world. It means that the force responsible for their plight, Western imperialism, will not just be treated uncritically, but will be given a free hand in the future to intervene in their affairs and push them around, so long as it is done under the banners of gender politics.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of all is that the possibility for a real campaign of solidarity with the people of the third world has been destroyed by the Beijing agenda. A generation of women who feel passionately about the third world have been duped by this gender and development discussion. Instead of exposing the real motives behind the new expressions of official Western concern for women, most feminists and NGOs will be caught up in the proceedings. This will give the event an air of radical credibility that neither the UN, the Western governments nor the World Bank could hope to have achieved on their own.

Of course the fight for women's rights in the third world is important. But it cannot be separated from the struggle to emancipate the whole of society from economic impoverishment and political domination. By contrast, focusing on a Western-imposed 'women's agenda' in the way that is now fashionable can only set back the cause of liberation, by promoting an anti-third world and anti-development message. Western feminists and some of their middle class counterparts in the South will no doubt find the Beijing conferences uplifting. The rest of the world would be better off without such a circus. ●

Helen Simons is co-convening a conference to debate some of the issues raised by the Beijing conference, on 16 September 1995 in London. For details, write to Jennie Bristow at BM GenderWatch, London WC1N 3XX, or e-mail Helen.Simons@junius.co.uk

In Germany the wartime anniversaries have been used to turn anti-fascism into a code for a new elitism. Sabine Reul from the German magazine *Novo* reports

Hitler's heirs join the resistance

Gone are the days when chancellor Helmut Kohl felt the need to drag then US president Ronald Reagan to SS graves in Bitburg, to show the world that Germany could honour its war dead like any other nation. Ten years on such provocative breaches of anti-fascist protocol are a thing of the past. Barring a handful of traditionalists, Germany's conservative Christian Democrat elite united with the opposition to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of 8 May 1945 as a day of liberation from tyranny.

Kohl set the tone at the beginning of the year, saying that 'we will remember the end of Nazi barbarism and the whole misery visited on others in the name of Germany'. Not so long ago Kohl thought such apologetic language unsuited to his declared objective of 'normalising' the relationship between Germans and their history. Yet this year barely a day goes by without some leading German statesman proclaiming his deeply felt shame for the crimes of Nazi Germany.

This shift has been remarkable, but more remarkable still is how much of its significance eludes even critical commentators. There has been much international scrutinising of German politicians' anniversary speeches, searching in vain for some sign of historical revisionism that plays down the horrors of the Third Reich. The trouble is that the scrutineers are looking in the wrong direction. German history *is* being revised today; not by disguising the sins of the past, but by putting as much distance as possible between Nazism and Germany's ruling elite.

Nazi prosecution

This method of historical revisionism was first tested with great success last year, on the fiftieth anniversary of the botched attempt to assassinate Hitler. In the summer of 1944, a few members of the German army's aristocratic officer caste, which had been one of the strongest pillars of the Nazi regime, made a half-hearted attempt to kill Hitler in order to avert the impending surrender of Germany. In the summer of 1994, these fascist turncoats were suddenly and officially transformed into anti-fascist heroes.

At the same time, the memory of those who really fought Nazi barbarism before and after 1933—almost all of them socialist and communist workers—was dragged through the mud. This was done most spectacularly with the showtrial of the former East German secret police boss Erich Mielke last autumn; not for anything he ever did as chief of the Stasi, but for the murder of a Berlin policeman which happened in 1932 when Mielke was a young communist, and for which the only criminal records available are those concocted by Nazi judges.

Not very long ago every German schoolchild knew that there was some difference between high-ranking Wehrmacht officers, who noticed that Hitler might be a liability after Germany's defeat at Stalingrad, and anti-fascists at whose torture and murder in the concentration camps those same officers never batted an eyelid. But, in today's climate, the concepts of fascism and anti-fascism have become so meaningless that the scope for distorting the real history of the Nazi era seems unlimited.

The vocabulary of anti-fascism has now been appropriated by right-wing German politicians as a code for the formulation of a new authoritarian ideology. The central theme of this new ideology is that Nazism was a movement of the brutish German masses, while anti-Nazism was the preserve of the enlightened German elite. The implicit message for today is that those at the top of German society need more power to educate and control those at the bottom, in order to prevent any Nazi revival.

Speaking of German youth, Christian Democrat president of Germany Roman Herzog recently said: 'these new generations are of the honest opinion that what happened to their grandfathers or great-grandfathers could never happen to them. This is why there is a need for more education. How do anti-Semitism and totalitarianism come about?' Apparently the Third Reich was the result of some mental aberration which befell ordinary Germans. Herzog's conclusion, that the state as educator should step in to prevent a renewed outbreak of the disease, is very popular today.

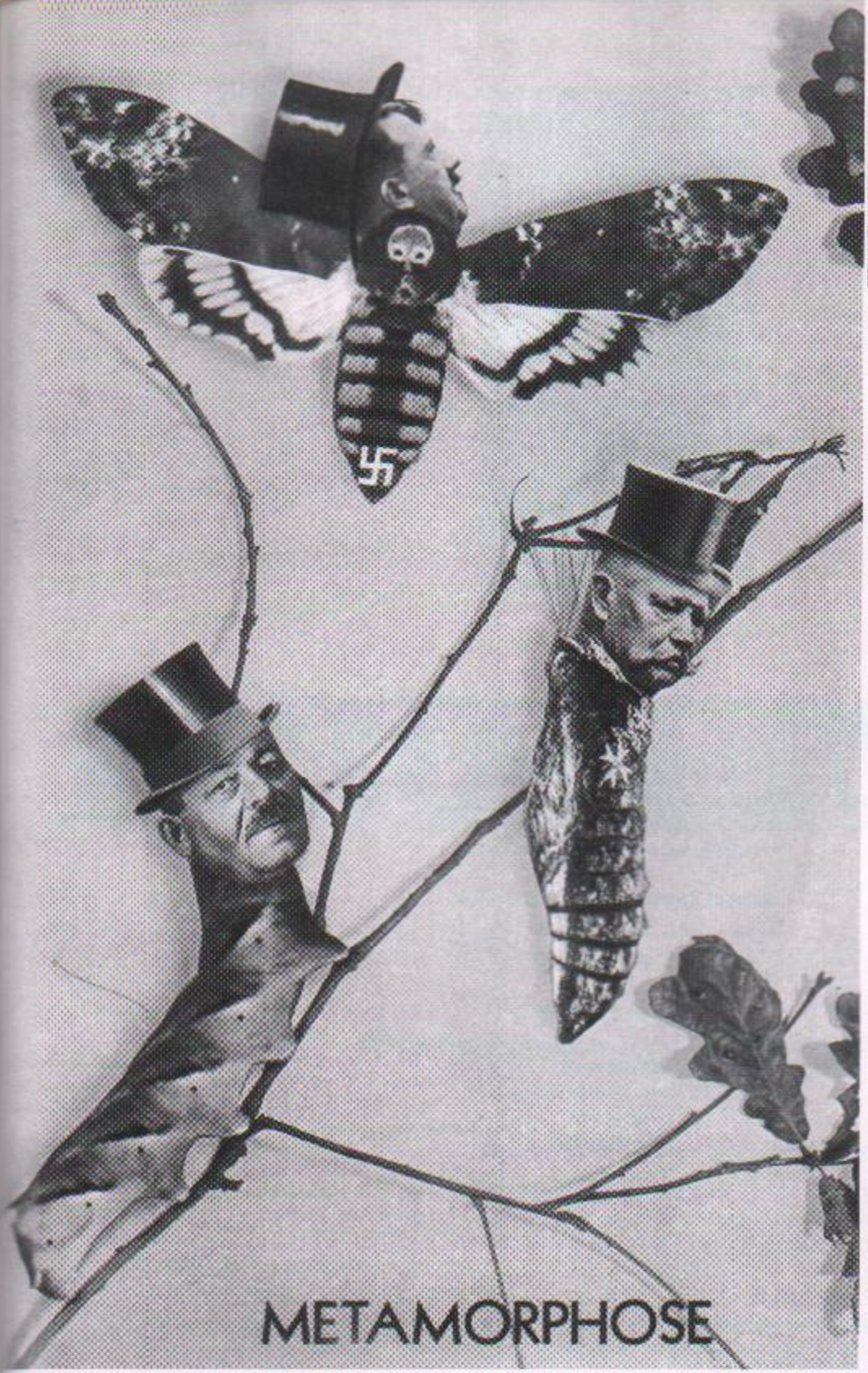
Anti-fascism used to imply some recognition that the barbaric regime established in Germany in the 1930s had something to do with the needs of a ruling class facing a profound political and economic crisis. Now it appears as the work of collective dementia on the part of ordinary German people. German conservatives who once viewed professions of guilt about fascism as detrimental to the contemporary interests of the German state now cannot get enough of them. This is so because the whole notion of German 'guilt' has been transformed.

All to blame

The idea that all Germans were 'collectively' guilty for the crimes of the Third Reich—above all the Holocaust—was first put about by the Allied powers in order justify the postwar division and occupation of Germany. It was always quite wrong in suggesting that every ordinary citizen who obeyed orders or simply minded his own business under Nazism was as guilty as the people in command of the state, army, judiciary and industry. Now, however, the distortion of history has gone even further. Those who owned and controlled the commanding heights of German society before, during and after the Nazi era are being dissociated from fascism altogether. The remaining guilty party is ordinary people, who are now lectured from above that they should feel perennial shame at what their 'fathers or grandfathers' did. There could be no more profound 'revision' of the historical truth than that.

The facts about the Third Reich may not be well known to everyone 50 years on, but they are well documented enough. Throughout its 12-year rule, the Nazi regime was supported not just by the army generals and top state officials, but by the big wheels of German industry, many of which remain household names today. Indeed, the record shows that these elite forces were instrumental in creating the Nazi dictatorship in the first place.

That the leading representatives of German finance and industry decided to put Hitler into power in December 1932, at a time when the National Socialist Party had just lost millions



MONTAGE: JOHN HEARTFIELD

'German Natural History' John Heartfield pictured Hitler as the natural outcome of the ruling class politicians Frederick Ebert and Paul von Hindenberg

of votes at the polls, is recounted in numerous testimonies and memoirs. During the 1947 Nuremberg war crimes trials, the banker Kurt Freiherr von Schroder told the judges how he arranged a meeting of leading industrialists and bankers with Hitler and chancellor von Papen in his villa in December 1932, at which the decisive steps were taken to set up the Nazi dictatorship:

'The general striving of the men in industry was to see a strong leader come to power in Germany who would form a government which would stay in power for a long time. When the NSDAP [Nazi Party] suffered its first recoil on 6 November 1932, and thus passed its zenith, support by German industry and finance became particularly urgent. A common interest of industry was given through the fear of Bolshevism and the hope that the National Socialists—once in power—would create a stable political and economic situation in Germany. A further common interest was the wish to put Hitler's economic programme into practice....The economic programme of Hitler was generally known in industrial circles and was welcomed by them.'

A deal was done and Hitler was duly installed as chancellor of Germany in January 1933. A few months later, all trade unions and political parties were smashed, all known socialists and communists were either dead, imprisoned, exiled or in hiding, and the Gestapo regime of surveillance and terror was in place. This was how the 'economic programme' chosen by the cream of German industry and finance was put into effect. They reaped the benefits in terms of increased exploitation of the working classes.

Anti-fascist authoritarians

Those are the facts about who propped up Nazism. But historical truth does not seem to count for much today. History is instead being manipulated as a weapon in the present. The aim is to provide the powers that be with a new ideological hold on society, now that the old certainties of the Cold War have vanished and Germany faces new challenges in the world.

It is not about history. Dissociating state institutions like the army from their Nazi past is really about lending new legitimacy to the German government's plans for foreign military interventions today. Dissociating aristocratic officers from the horrors committed under their command is likewise not about history, but about getting across the idea that an elite raised above ordinary folk is a good thing for society. And hauling old ex-communists up in court is less about settling scores with the past than making clear that working class people who challenge authority and fight the police in the streets are the real criminals—and never mind who drew up the charge-sheet.

Germany's new official anti-fascism serves to upgrade the idea of authority and to downgrade ordinary people. They are now viewed as the unpredictable and menacing force in society—one which needs careful observation and control in order to avert havoc. This idea finds widespread acceptance today. Social problems, whether national or international, are now widely viewed as due to individual irresponsibility and depravity. It is this consensus around a pessimistic and distrustful view of the masses which underpins the new code of elite anti-fascism in Germany. ●

Before the terrifying prospects now available to humanity, we see even more clearly that peace is the only goal worth struggling for. This is no longer a prayer, but a demand to be made by all peoples to their governments—a demand to choose definitively between hell and reason.

Albert Camus, 8 August 1945

Don't let them drop that atomic bomb on me
Oh Lord!
Don't let them drop it
Stop it
Bebop it.

Charles Mingus, 1972

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International Anti-War Conference

Central London

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Illustrations courtesy of the Maruki Gallery for the Hiroshima Panels

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- **Frederik L Schodt**, specialist on Japanese *manga* comics, author of *Inside the Robot Kingdom*
- **Professor Frank Barnaby**, author of *Role and Control of Weapons in the 1990s*
- **Joan Hoey**, director of the London International Research Exchange and author of *Images of Japan*
- **Professor Glenn D Hook**, professor of Japanese Studies at the University of Sheffield, author of *Internationalisation of Japan* and *Militarisation and Demilitarisation in Contemporary Japan*

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Recommended reading

K Marx and F Engels, *The German Ideology*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1991

H Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution* (Vol II: The politics of social classes, Chs 1-11), Monthly Review Press, 1978

F Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, Fontana, 1969

Understanding Japan

Convenor: Daniel Nassim

Are the Japanese a race apart? This course looks at the formation of Japanese national identity, and explores the relationship between Western images of Japan and the Japanese perception of themselves.

Japan v the West • The Japanese: a race apart? • The cult of uniqueness • Are the Japanese racist? • The Pacifist superpower

Recommended reading

I Buruma, *Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*, Jonathan Cape, 1991

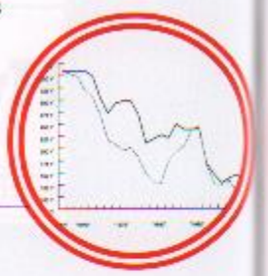
I Ozawa, *Blueprint for a New Japan*, Kodansha, 1994

E Wilkinson, *Japan Versus the West*, Penguin, 1990

Capitalism at an impasse

Convenor: Phil Murphy

Does economic growth create more problems than benefits? This advanced economics course challenges the orthodoxies on global economic problems, environmental restraints and ageing populations.



Problems of a global economy • The environmental constraint • Burdens of an ageing population • What has happened to productive activity? • How capitalism tries to cope

Recommended reading

H Grossmann, *The Law of Accumulation and Breakdown of the Capitalist System*, Pluto Press, 1992

P Kennedy, *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century*, Fontana, 1994

R Reich, *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for Twenty-First Century Capitalism*, Simon & Schuster, 1991

Genes and behaviour

Convenor: Helene Guldberg

Are we simply a product of our genes? With genetic theories back in vogue, this course aims to demystify the relationship between genetic make up and human behaviour.

Natural born killers? • Is variation all in the genes? • Sex and society • Biology as ideology • Changing our genes, changing ourselves

Recommended reading

M Gribbin and J Gribbin, *Being Human: Putting People in an Evolutionary Perspective*, JM Dent, 1993

J Harris, *Wonderwoman and Superman*, Oxford University Press, 1992

LS Vygotsky, *Mind in Society*, Harvard University Press, 1978

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Recommended reading

G Keppel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World*, Polity Press, 1994

BB Lawrence, *Defenders of God: Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age*, IB Taurus, 1990

MC Moen, *The Transformation of the Christian Right*, University of Alabama Press, 1992

The sociology of contemporary capitalism

Convenor: Frank Füredi

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Market and society • Conceptualising change • Social structures • Culture and society • The new etiquette of capitalism

Recommended reading

G Mulgan, *Politics in an Anti-Political Age*, Polity, 1994

C Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, WW Norton & Co, 1995

A Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, Blackwell 1994

The medicalisation of society

Convenor: Michael Fitzpatrick

The spectre of death haunts society. While effective medical care is rationed, medicine has become a major regulator of behaviour with everybody urged to modify their lifestyle to avoid disease.

Illness as metaphor • Prevention and cure • The cult of health promotion • Non-alternative medicine • The marketing of healthcare

Recommended reading

M Lockwood, *Moral Dilemmas in Modern Medicine*, Oxford University Press, 1985

P Skrabanek, *The Death of Humane Medicine and the Rise of Coercive Healthism*, Social Affairs Unit, 1994

S Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor/Aids and Its Metaphors*, Penguin, 1991

In search of belief

Convenor: Suke Wolton

This course is an investigation of anti-humanism in modern thought. While rejecting religious or natural theories, new postmodernist influenced ideas blame human consciousness for the problems of the age.

Modern morality • Alienation • The new absolutes • Anti-humanism • The secular religion

Recommended reading

K Marx, 'On the Jewish Question', in *Early Writings*, Penguin

F Engels and K Marx, *The End of Classical German Philosophy and Theses on Feuerbach*, Foreign Languages Press, 1975

F Jakubowski, *Ideology and Superstructure in Historical Materialism*, Pluto Press, 1990

Evening Courses Evening Courses Evening Courses Evening Courses Evening Courses Eve

Reinventing humanism

Convenor: Alan Hudson

• The measure of man • The great leap forward • The sleep of reason • A Brave New World?

HIROSHIMA THE WEEK

The future of international relations

Convenor: Norman Lewis

Are nation states finished? What will be the balance of power in the twenty-first century? The course will focus on globalisation theories and their claim that sovereign statehood will become unviable.

Sovereignty and capitalism • Globalisation and the real world • Legitimacy crises—what's new? • 'Non-governmental' states • The new balance of power

Recommended reading

F Halliday, *Rethinking International Relations*, Macmillan, 1994
P Dicken, *Global Shift: The Internationalisation of Economic Activity*, 1992
EJ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, Cambridge University Press, 1994

The new authoritarianism

Convenor: Rob Knight

Are we all at risk? This course investigates why we live in an anxious age and how the state has responded to the demand for order.

What is the new authoritarianism? • The question of rights • The surveillance society • A case study in new authoritarianism • An at-risk society?

Recommended reading

U Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, Sage, 1992
S Fish, *There's No Such Thing as Free Speech, and It's a Good Thing Too*, Oxford University Press, 1994
M Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Vintage, 1979

The feminisation of society

Convenor: Ellie Lee

Family breakdown is in the news. Is there a new women's agenda? This advanced course considers changing attitudes towards women and the family.

Is the family changing? • State intervention and the family • Women and work • Gender roles • What happened to 'Victorian Values'?

Recommended reading

M Anderson et al, *The Social and Political Economy of the Household*, OUP, 1994
J Davies et al, *The Family: Is It Just Another Lifestyle Choice?*, IEA, 1993
L Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*, Virago, 1990

Politics and the state

Convenor: James Heartfield

This course examines how the state is being reorganised to overcome disenchantment with politics and the absence of mass consent.

Narrowing the public sphere • Rights and power • Voluntarism and civil society • The myth of social justice • Risk society and the custodial state

Recommended reading

Social Justice, Report of the Social Justice Commission, Vintage, 1994
P Whiteley et al, *True Blues: The Politics of Conservative Party Membership*, OUP, 1994
M Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, HarperCollins, 1995.

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The media: who stole the news?

Convenors: London International Research Exchange

• Who stole the news? • The laptop bombardiers • History as news • Who's afraid of TV?

Afternoon Courses

Youth and change

Convenor: Deborah Thompson

Today's youth are called the 'slacker generation'. Is Generation Y conformist? This course asks why the image of teenage apathy is seen as a problem, and assesses the claims of rave and protest movements to represent nineties youth.

Youth at the end of history • Youth and social decay • Education: engineering conformity • Rave and beyond: anatomy of loss • Causes without rebels

Recommended reading

J Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain*, Athlone Press, 1990

K Keniston, *Young Radicals: Notes on Committed Youth*, Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968

S Redhead (ed), *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture*, Avebury, 1993

Myths of Confucian capitalism

Convenors: Sheila Phillips and Lynn Rawley

The Far East economic miracle is supposed to be the product of an Oriental work ethic, free trade and hands-off government. This course looks behind the myths of Confucian capitalism.

The miracle of the East • Hard work • Free trade • Minimal government • The Confucian model

Recommended reading

JC Abegglen, *Sea Change: Pacific Asia as the New World Industrial Centre*, The Free Press, 1994

B Emmott, *The Sun Also Sets*, Simon & Schuster, 1989

C Hampden-Turner and F Trompenaars, *The Seven Cultures of Capitalism*, Piatkus, 1993

The politics of limits

Convenor: John Gillott

Are there natural limits to human ambitions, or are we just victims of limited vision? This course will examine the politics of restraint through a critique of concerns about the environment, development, and the effects of globalisation.

An age of limits or abundance? • Environmental problems—real and imagined • Left, right, limited visions • The 'sustainable development' fraud • Fighting the politics of limits

Recommended reading

T Benton, *Natural Relations*, Verso, 1993

L Brown and H Kane, *Full House: Reassessing the Earth's Population Carrying Capacity*, Earthscan, 1995

A Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, Polity Press, 1994

The new ideology of imperialism

Convenor: Helen Simons

Relations between North and South are supposed to be governed by a new humanitarianism. But is the promotion of empowerment and democracy as imperialist as its precursor? This course will expose the moral premises of the New World Order.

Imperialism today • The international bodies • The NGO explosion • The gender issue • The moral crusade

Recommended reading

Our Global Neighbourhood, The Report of the Commission on Global Governance, Oxford University Press, 1995

F Furedi, *The New Ideology of Imperialism*, Pluto Press, 1994

I Smillie and H Helmich, *Non-Governmental Organisations and Governments: Stakeholders for Development*, OECD (Paris) 1994

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Empowering Africa

Convenor: Barry Crawford

• The return of pan-Africanism? • Challenging structural adjustment • Rwanda: a case study of NGO's and media images of Africa • Feminisation of African politics

Tickets and information

Ticket prices

	School & FE students	Students & unwaged	Waged	Discount for 10 or more
To 27 July	£20	£38	£65	10%
On the door	£20	£40	£70	—

Special discounts for students

Students booking in groups of 10 or more get a week of thought-provoking discussion on international relations, cultural studies, sociology and much more at special discount prices. Groups of school and FE students paying in advance of the conference will only have to pay £18 each. University students in groups will only have to pay £34.20 each. It's cheaper still if you persuade your school or college to pay!

Group booking discounts

Whether you are working or unwaged, it's cheaper to book tickets as a group. Before the conference starts, tickets are only £34.20 each (unwaged) and £58.50 each (waged) if you book tickets as a group of 10 or more. Ask people you know to join a group booking to bring down the price.

How to get there

There will be coach transport to Hiroshima: The Week from most British, and some European cities.

Where to stay

We can advise you on accommodation in London, and may be able to provide you with somewhere to stay.

Childcare

A free creche will provide a full programme of activities for children of different ages, but places are limited. Book early!

Entertainment

Music, dance, comedy and films will be provided free every evening throughout Hiroshima: The Week.

For tickets or more information about the conference, phone Amanda Macintosh on (+44) 171 278 9908, write to her at Hiroshima: The Week, c/o No More Hiroshimas, BM NMH, London WC1N 3XX, fax (+44) 171 278 9844, or e-mail: hiro@camintl.org

Booking form

Please send me ..... tickets I enclose a cheque for £.....

Do you need accommodation in London? yes/no
Do you need creche facilities? yes/no
Are you are applying for a group discount? yes/no

Name
Address

Postcode
Telephone e-mail

If you are applying for a group discount for 10 people or more, please also fill in the following:

College/university/school/institute/other
Contact name (lecturer/teacher/other)
Address (if different from above)

Postcode
Telephone (if different from above) e-mail (if different from above)

Please make cheques payable to **'No More Hiroshimas'** and send with this booking form to the address above.

TOBY BANKS

En-ger-land goes PC

'It may have slipped your notice but this year we celebrated VE-Day. Fifty years ago our country, along with our allies, defeated Nazi Germany. Fighting alongside us were Americans, Canadians, Australians and a host of others, including thousands of black servicemen from the Commonwealth.'

Who said that? John Major? Richard Littlejohn? No. Here's some more...

'Many of those who died defending our liberty were black soldiers from countries under no direct threat from the Axis powers. When widespread black immigration occurred in the fifties many Commonwealth servicemen returned to make a home in the country they'd once defended.'

Hmm....The Campaign for Racial Equality? No...

'It says something about the brain of your average racist that they insist they "love their country" but hate a lot of people who live in it, and a lot of people who died for it. They also support the philosophy of the very man we fought against all those years ago: a short German guy with a daft moustache and a love of Alsatians.'

'People will think you are a rent boy'

The Anti-Nazi League? Good try, but no. Here is the final sentence...

'What better way to celebrate the end of the war than by kicking the fascists out of football!'

Ah, *football*. Didn't see that coming did you? The above piece is in fact quoted in full from a new football magazine entitled *England*, which announces itself as 'The official magazine of the national team'. But this is no ordinary football mag. According to the *Guardian*, *England* is infused with an 'anti-yob stance that celebrates the country's diversity and history'. The editorial exhorts us to 'reclaim the game' from the 'yobs in Dublin', and points out that Olde England was 'a meeting point for histories, cultures and races. Angles, Vikings, Saxons and Normans were all just the immigrants of their day'. The editorial ends with 'our new slogan': 'England expects every fan to do his duty'.

This slogan is also the title of a special feature, which explains what that duty entails. It means being 'a decent human being' and reporting hooligans to a steward or police officer, or calling a special confidential phone line. 'You're not being a grass, you're doing everyone a big favour', it adds. 'Ten reasons not to be a racist hoolie' offers such gems as 'You'd never get a date with Naomi Campbell', 'You don't look good with cropped hair', 'People will think you're a rent boy', and 'You enjoy a good curry'.

Coincidentally the letters page (remember this is the first issue) shares these preoccupations. One suggests replacing 'IRA' with 'BNP' in the 'No Surrender' song. A second ponders whether John Barnes is booed for racist reasons or not. A third discusses the relative merits of the Union Jack and the cross of Saint George, and a fourth bemoans that we have nothing to celebrate now that VE-Day has been and gone. Pages 16 to 19 debate the need for a new politically correct national anthem for England. The remainder of the magazine is fairly straightforward stuff, with a quick reminder in 'Reasons to be cheerful: 20 solid reasons for supporting England' that 'If you don't support England, then the yobs will have won', and a back-page advertisement from the Football Trust which trumpets the virtues of close-circuit television surveillance in the fight against hooliganism.

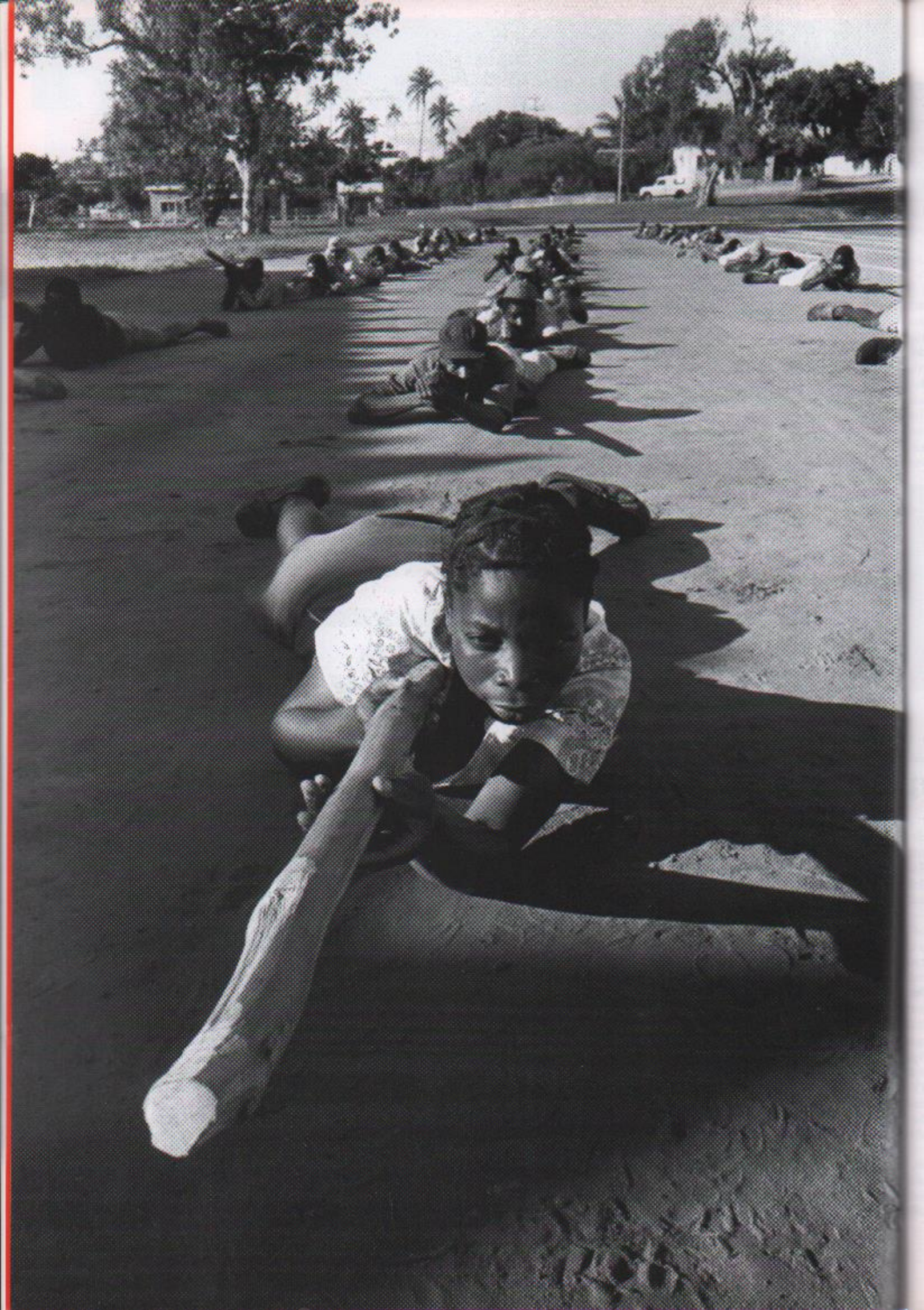
This kind of preaching and patronising 'argument' will of course do nothing to stop racism, although it may win a few new recruits to the law-and-order crusade. What is most striking is the vision it puts forward of an ideal world in which Wembley is full of proud, cheerful, law-abiding citizens reliving VE-Day in perpetuity. The last time this kind of crowd assembled was in 1966, when the BNP did not exist and the absence of 'Commonwealth' participation in English football meant that racism was never mentioned. Yet England's World Cup games at Wembley that year against the Argentinian 'animals' and the old enemy Germany managed to stir a level of nationalistic hatred in the tie-wearing flag-waving crowd that makes today's England followers look positively timid.

I am not going to give '20 reasons for not supporting England' because—apart from the dubious quality of the side itself, which has never stopped anybody supporting any team—there are not really any important reasons. Personally, I will not be purchasing tickets for Euro '96, but if I was, I would rather sit with a few hooligans than with 79 999 PC patriots singing paragraph 3 of the 1991 Football Offences Act to the tune of Jerusalem.

A Canadian organisation called the North York Women Teachers Association has produced an excellent pamphlet on *Non-violent Language*, which offers acceptable alternatives to the 'violent and militaristic' imagery of everyday expressions. So 'hit the [computer] key' becomes 'press/tap the key'; 'take a stab at it' becomes 'go for it!'; and 'kick it around' becomes 'discuss it'. Other outlawed phrases include 'crash the party', 'shoot yourself in the foot', 'uphill battle', 'getting away with murder', 'kill two birds with one stone', and 'more than one way to skin a cat'.

It occurs to me that *England* magazine might like to emulate the pamphlet, and produce an acceptably non-violent football vocabulary. A red card would be shown to such inflammatory phrases as 'shoot', 'trap', 'attack' and 'dead ball situations'. 'Cross' could prove offensive to Christians. And now that non-penetrative intimacy has been redefined as 'non-goal-oriented sex', this is surely a perfect opportunity for the England team to celebrate (in a non-assertive manner) its superiority in the field of non-goal-oriented football.

NB: This column was written before England's 4-0 victory over Brazil.



Soldiers sent back to school

Vanessa Adams explains what is wrong with Unicef's campaign against the use of child soldiers in the third world

'The bandits killed my mother. And my brothers too. They took me to their base camp. Yes, I was with the bandits. I had a gun to kill. I killed people and soldiers. I didn't like it. I killed. I killed.' (quoted in N Boothby, 'Living in the war zone', *World Refugee Survey*, 1989)

Child soldiers like this Mozambican boy are at the heart of a campaign launched by the United Nations and international aid agencies. Unicef, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Henry Dunant Institute raised the issue last year with a major report, *Child Soldiers: The Role of Children in Armed Conflicts*, written by Guy Goodwin-Gill and Ilene Cohn. The study examines the plight of child soldiers and suggests how to strengthen international law to make their recruitment illegal. At the same time, a UN working group is preparing a draft amendment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to raise the minimum age of recruitment to 18.

Human rights reports cite how children as young as six have been forced to enlist in the civil wars in Mozambique, Liberia and elsewhere. It is estimated that between 4000 and 8000 of Renamo's force in Mozambique were children. The arguments for the use of child soldiers to be made illegal seem compelling. However, before applauding initiatives to ban the recruitment or deployment of children, we need to look at this issue in the context of the lives of children in the third world.

Children are frequently depicted by aid agencies as passive victims, as for example in a recent Save the Children campaign poster, which stated that 'the only international language in the world is a child's cry'. Underlying the views of campaigners is a universal model of childhood, which sees all children as vulnerable and dependent. They imagine that this model can be applied to children throughout the third world, who could somehow be helped to live like children in the West, sheltered from the reality of life and war in their country.

However, as Ben White points out in his recent study on 'Children, Work, and Child Labour', it is misleading to impose on the third world a Western model of childhood which sees children as passive dependents (*Development and Change*, October 1994). As his research has shown, children in the third world are considered productive members of society from an early age.

Children in Mozambique, for example, do not have the advantage of Western-style childhood dependency into their late teens. Only 40 per cent of those who start school complete their primary education and only 14 per cent go on to secondary school (figures for 1990 quoted by the UNDP's *Human Development Report*, 1994). Survival is the priority in an impoverished society where infant mortality is as high as 148 per 1000 live births and life expectancy in 1992 dropped again to 46.5 years (*Human Development Report*, 1994).

Better off

Only 39 per cent of the Mozambican population has access to health services, 22 per cent to safe water and 20 per cent to adequate sanitation (*Human Development Report*, 1994). People have to rely on their own resources. In these circumstances, Mozambicans who would be considered children in the West are highly valued as workers.

The Western model of children as vulnerable dependents does not in any sense reflect the reality of the lives of these Mozambican 'child soldiers'. Research sponsored by Save the Children in the district of Milange in Mozambique showed that children from an early age are seen as important contributors to their family's income. What is more they found that war, which leads to the death or mobilisation of many adults, further increased the social responsibilities of children (see S Gibbs, 'Postwar reconstruction in Mozambique', *Disasters*, September 1994).

The United Nations agencies and non-governmental organisations all see their intervention as necessary to protect children from recruitment into the army. However, international initiatives to make the recruitment of child soldiers illegal, have nothing to do with addressing the real problems faced by children in the third world.

Life is a struggle to survive for most Africans, and, far from being passive victims, children often join up to fight as a way of surviving. Jo Boydon describes how 'despite the moral outrage of relief workers at the enlistment of minors into Museveni's National Resistance Army in Uganda, interviews with child soldiers revealed this to be—from their perspective—an extremely practical survival mechanism' ('Children's experience of conflict-related emergencies', *Disasters*, September 1994).

Research repeatedly shows that child soldiers are largely volunteers and that young people enlist because they feel more secure as part of an armed force. While Guy Goodwin-Gill and Ilene Cohn condemn the use of child soldiers, they have to admit that children often volunteer to join up: 'Time and time again, we found young people who saw their own personal security as greater inside armed opposition movements than outside, with the other orphans, street children, refugees and displaced persons.' (*Child Soldiers*, p173). The army provides them with food, shelter and protection.

Even those abducted and forced to join the army, often conclude that they are better off. For example, Juliano ▶

PHOTO: CARLOS CUARITA/REPORTAGE

Picardo, now a senior official in the Renamo opposition in Mozambique, explained that as a boy he was abducted into Renamo from the streets: 'As kids we were always being picked up in the streets by police and harassed. When Renamo took me and explained their philosophy it seemed to make sense. Thanks to them I was educated in South Africa and Portugal.' (*Sunday Times*, 6 November 1994) This greater sense of security explains why many of the child soldiers in Mozambique are reluctant to be demobilised.

Child soldiers are seen as fearsome symbols of third world savagery in need of a Western education

Agencies like Unicef acknowledge that the issue of child soldiers cannot simply be treated at the level of international legislation. At the launch of *Child Soldiers*, Dr Samir Basta, director of Unicef in Geneva, pointed out that the motivations of child soldiers are 'often determined by harsh social and economic realities'. He stated that, 'it is important therefore that we really do more to tackle the root causes of participation than working on optional protocols, however essential they may be, [or] try to impose our own moral values' (Speech to the Henry Dunant Institute, 31 October 1994). However, in practice it is clear that campaigns to demobilise child soldiers do nothing to confront the 'harsh social and economic realities', and a lot to impose the Western agencies' 'own moral values' on third world societies.

Moral policeman

For example, social welfare provision has virtually collapsed in Mozambique, with the civil war and the imposition of the International Monetary Fund's structural adjustment programme in 1987. Unicef's current programme for children in difficult circumstances in Mozambique has no answers to deal with their poverty. It proposes 'utilisation of the extended family system and community responsibility in the reintegration of children affected by the war' (Unicef, Report NoE/ICEF/1994/P/L7, 23 March 1994). In other words, Unicef knows that Mozambican ex-child soldiers cannot expect to receive state aid and will have to rely on their own resources or those of their family and friends.

When international agencies admit they have no alternative for child soldiers it is clear that their campaigns are not really concerned with children's welfare. Instead the debate is about establishing a moral framework through which it is accepted that the West decides what is right and wrong for third world societies.

The focus of concern among those campaigning against child soldiers is the savagery of war in the third world. In contrast the Western powers and the international agencies they run are presented as upholding moral values by monitoring the conduct of third world armies. *Child Soldiers* recommends that international donor countries should make aid conditional on compliance with a ban on child soldiers, and should impose sanctions against non-compliant states. This image of the West as moral policeman of third world armies conveniently ignores the fact that most of these forces have been trained, armed and supported by great powers at one time or another. The Renamo guerrillas in Mozambique, for example, pilloried for their use of child soldiers, originated in the seventies as a mercenary gang backed by South Africa and the CIA to undermine the radical Frelimo regime.

Killing machines

International organisations say they are concerned for children, yet their literature is full of scare stories about how dangerous child soldiers are. Recruitment apparently turns passive victims into ruthless killers. Goodwin-Gill and Cohn assert that 'young, impressionable children can be turned into the fiercest fighters through brutal indoctrination' (p27). They claim that children were not just used because of manpower shortages in the civil war in Mozambique, but were actually preferred to adult soldiers. *Child Soldiers* quotes a US Defence Intelligence Report of a Renamo deserter in March 1991, forcibly recruited at the age of 10, who said that 'Renamo does not use many adults to fight because they are not good fighters...kids have more stamina, are better at surviving in the bush, do not complain, and follow directions' (p26).

Implicit in this discussion is a condemnation of third world societies as Frankenstein-like creators of ruthless young killing machines. Perhaps the West is still smarting at the way that the youthful Somali militias fought back against the American-led UN occupation of their country.

Where third world states are held to be morally lacking, Unicef and other international agencies relish the prospect of taking over. Third world societies are condemned for failing to promote peaceful values among the young. Outside intervention is seen as necessary to instil moral values in these societies. Hence, as well as international legislation and sanctions, the answer is 'value advocacy based on a moral agenda' (*Child Soldiers*, p80). Instead of seeing child soldiers as a symptom of the brutal conditions of life imposed on Africa by a divisive and exploitative world system, the child soldiers themselves are seen as fearsome symbols of third world savagery, in need of a Western education.

Once upon a time 'Peace Studies' was an object of derision in countries like Britain and America—at best it was a misguided idea, at worst an attempt at subverting the young. But today, Western donor governments and institutions are pushing moral and peace education initiatives. These education programmes become a means of asserting the moral superiority of the West, and imposing a new form of ideological slavery on the third world.

Hearts and minds

Unesco's Culture of Peace Programme, formed in March 1994, has set itself the task of building a culture of peace in Mozambique. Unicef's Peace Circus of educators travels around rural Mozambique preaching to children. Unicef's quarterly *First Call for Children* describes how 'the circus uses music, dance, film, theatre, games, art and journalism to expand the skills of Mozambican children, their sense of themselves and encourage them to be active in the national movement for peace and reconciliation' (January-March 1994).

This is modern-day missionary work among the immoral, a 1990s' equivalent of the sermons which European clergy would have given the Godless natives a century ago. Fearing that its missionary efforts might be rejected as outside interference, Unicef warns that it is 'a sensitive and controversial issue in many countries and, therefore, public information and media relations are critical both in raising awareness and advocacy, and also in avoiding misunderstandings that can damage organisational relationships and affect the public image of Unicef' (Recommendations to the Unicef executive, 5 February 1993).

Nineties peace educators all talk about the need to be culturally sensitive and about how initiatives should be 'derived from local traditions'. International interventions on child soldiers may be fronted by somebody from the country concerned but that should not disguise the fact that today's projects are no less draconian and oppressive, nor the assumptions behind them any less racist, than nineteenth-century concern with civilising the savages. In the meantime, adults and children in countries like Mozambique will still have to fight and struggle for their survival. ●

Ceri Dingle talked to members of the School Campaign Against Militarism about their peace exchange with Japan

'We are not taught the truth'

In August, a group of 16-18 year-old students from schools across Britain are off to Japan. They will be staying with Japanese families in Hiroshima to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the atomic bombing.

Alice (16 years old) from Liverpool explains why she is going.

'The exchange is about expressing support for people who suffered the atomic bombing and making sure people in Britain know about what happened to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. At school, we learned nothing about Hiroshima. In fact I don't believe young people like me know anything much about Japan at all. We are just supposed to believe that these are a different sort of people, robots. We want to challenge the idea that they're so different to us, because that's how the bomb was justified. We'll be in Hiroshima for VJ-Day, to make friends—unlike the government and the media back in Britain which I'm sure will be busy making Japanese people into enemies again.'

The VJ-Day commemorations in Britain look set to continue the flag-waving of D-Day and VE-Day. Unlike the earlier anniversaries, however, there will not be much talk of friendship and reconciliation with former enemies. The Japanese have been excluded from VJ-Day events in Britain. Prisoners of war have been dragged out as government stooges to present an image of the Japanese as so uniquely terrible that inviting them to Britain would be rewarding torturers.

The government's double standards have not been lost on the school students planning the exchange. Stuart (17) is scathing about the official British version of history.

'We're taught very little of the truth. In A-level history I have been taught that Pearl Harbor was unprovoked, Hiroshima was terrible but necessary and that the Japanese were so warlike and different they wouldn't surrender. How can anyone say the Japanese were the most warlike when Britain not only supported the bombing, it sent scientists out with the bomb-run over Hiroshima to photograph the effects. Hiroshima and Nagasaki were such barbaric acts and cooly calculated to wipe out thousands.'

Penny (16) from Nottingham agrees.

'How can killing 200 000 people ever be justified? My generation weren't responsible for the bombing and I've got no time for people who think it was OK. There's a whole generation in Japan today who weren't responsible for war either. It's completely amazing to be able to go and meet them. So few people ever go there or talk about Japanese people as if they are like us with the same kind of problems. A lot of people think it's just a place full of slitty-eyed short people who deserved everything they got during the war.'

Alice, Stuart and Penny are members of the School Campaign Against Militarism (SCAM), a school-based campaign with a modern-day peace message for young people across the globe. Charlotte (18) is SCAM's national secretary.

'I think in SCAM, because you are doing stuff with people who think like you and are the same age, you don't feel isolated and it doesn't matter if all your relatives are really horrendous or you can't speak your mind at school. Organising the exchange has made this even more obvious because a lot of parents obviously do go along with the government. We've been able to give an anti-war view which most people our age won't get otherwise.'

Stuart joined SCAM 'because we can do something positive and not just criticise. I think we'll learn a lot in Japan too, like what do Japanese people our age make of all the VJ-Day stuff, or nuclear weapons or what Westerners say about them. It's the chance of a lifetime really.'

On 14 August SCAM members fly to Kansai airport in Osaka before taking the Shinkansen (bullet train) to Hiroshima to stay with Japanese families for 11 days. Their visit ends with a two-day stay in Tokyo. On their return SCAM is planning a nationwide tour of schools for the new term to report back on the trip.

SCAM members on the exchange have won widespread support for their project and raised nearly £17 000 to do it. Charlotte encouraged some creative fundraising.

'I did a kiss-a-thon which involved kissing as many people as possible in 24 hours, though I did get some offers from horrible men with beards. My friends and family have supported me a lot as well. I think another SCAM member, Michael, was really brave doing a jelly bath and Stuart did a parachute jump. We've all done some pretty wacky things to fundraise. Going to Japan will be cool.'

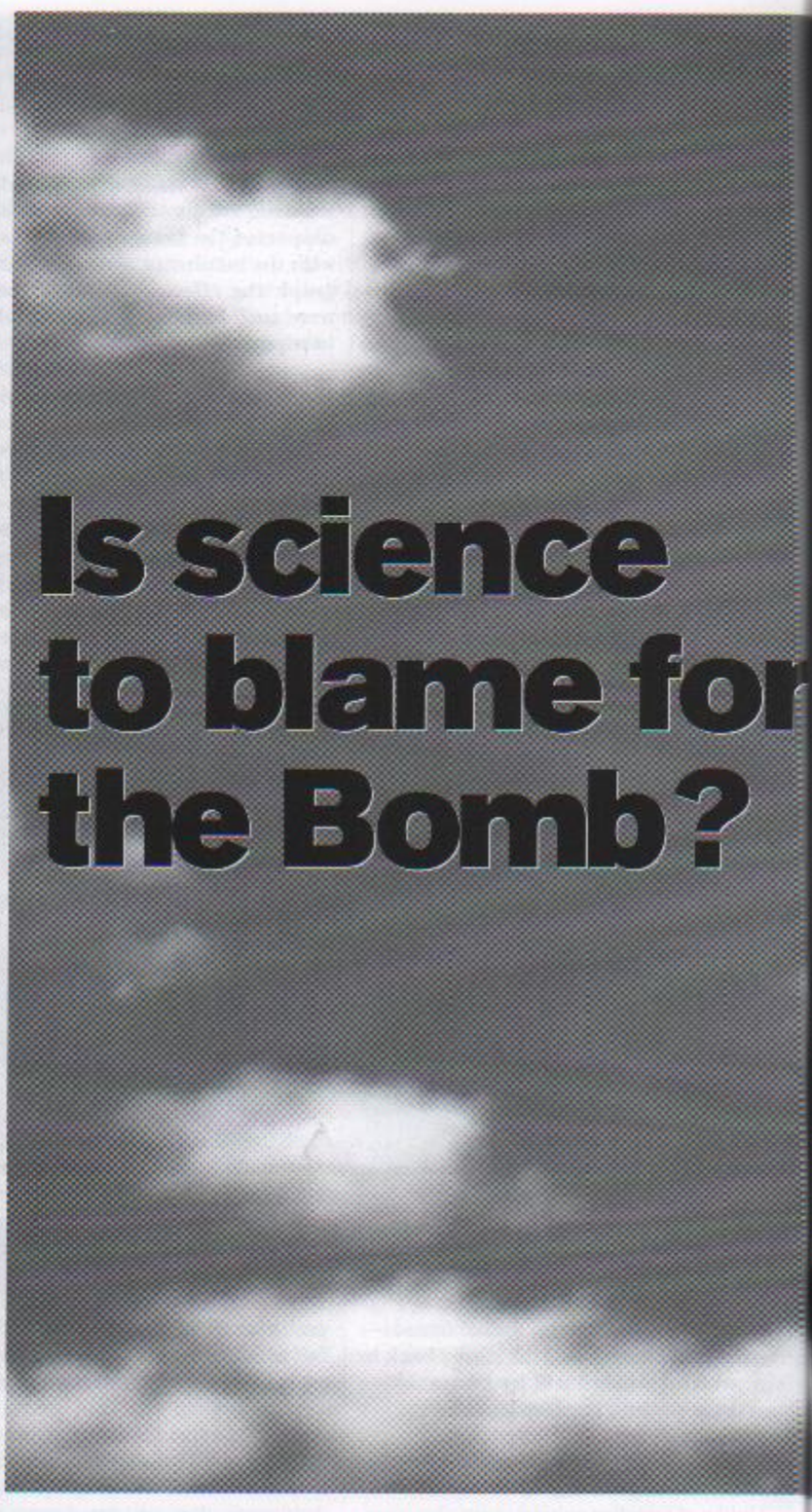
Sarah says her friends think going to Japan will be 'amazing, but they don't agree with why I'm going there. My mum has helped out, she thinks it's a good idea, my gran says she can't agree because she doesn't like the Japanese'.

SCAM members going on the exchange expect nothing from the British government except more of the same attempts to rerun the Second World War. They want to make links with young people themselves to guarantee peace in the future. They are convinced they are not the only ones. ●

If you would like to help finance the Japanese trip, or you want more information on SCAM, contact Charlotte at the SCAM office on (0121) 233 0970.

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

FUTURES

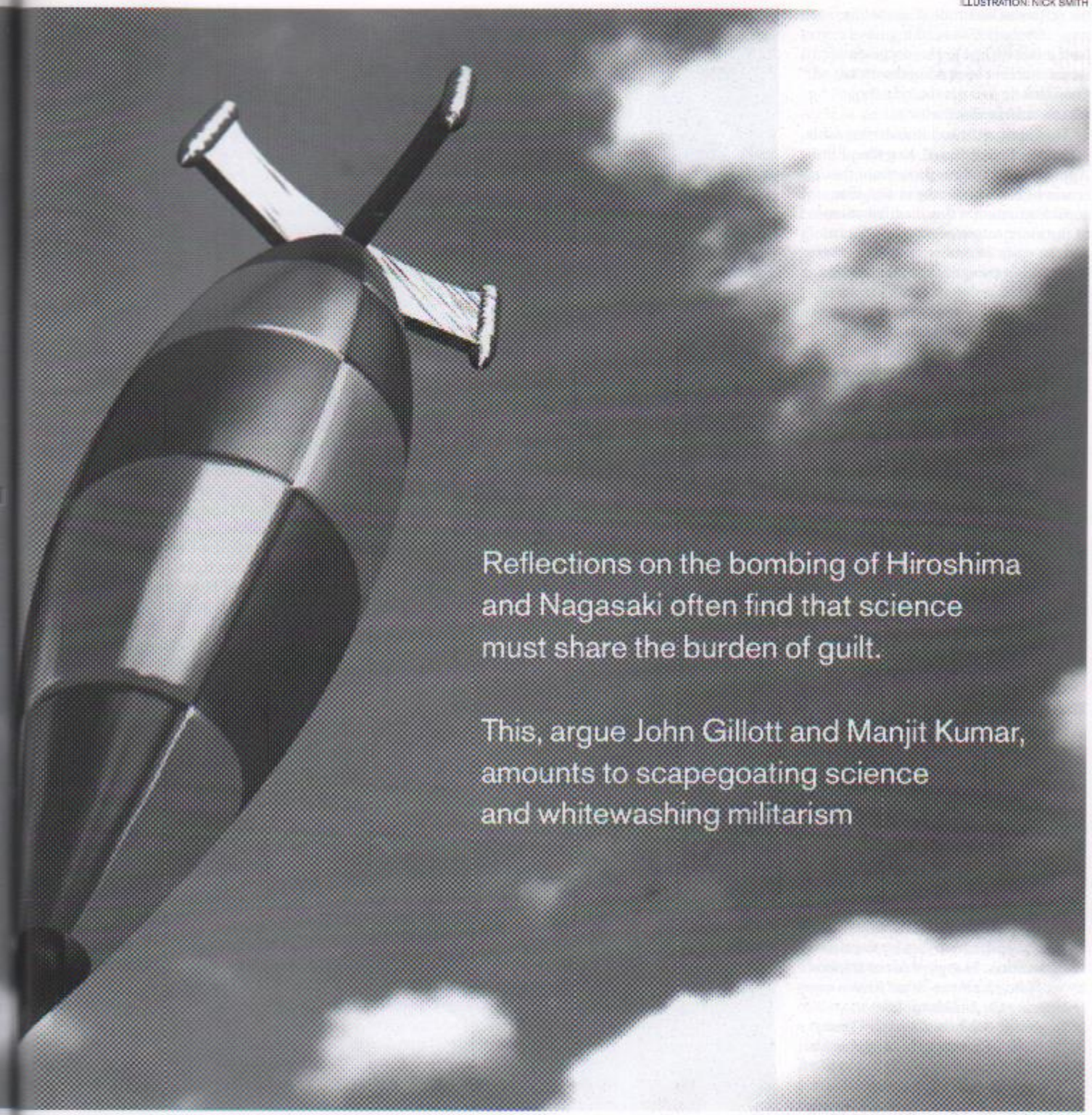


Is science to blame for the Bomb?

When Robert Oppenheimer, the scientist in charge of the Manhattan Project to build the atomic bomb, witnessed the awesome power of the test explosion on 16 July 1945 at Alamogordo in the New Mexico desert, a black thought flashed through his mind. He recalled a line from the *Bhagavad Gita*, the sacred text of the Hindus: 'I am become death, the shatterer of worlds.'

By the 1950s, Oppenheimer's moment of self-doubt had become a widespread loss of confidence within the scientific community. Richard Feynman, the great American physicist, spoke of scientists' fear of their 'God-like' power. In place of the arrogance which he believed had led to the bomb, Feynman recommended 'intellectual humility in the face of the unanswerable secrets of the universe'. In *Brighter than a Thousand Suns* (1958), his famous account of the Manhattan Project, the historian Robert Jungk pulled together the views of scientists to register the passing of an age which had begun 300 years before. Identifying progress 'almost unanimously' with progress in science and technology, that age had culminated in the development of 'absolute weapons'. For Jungk, if

ILLUSTRATION: NICK SMITH



Reflections on the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki often find that science must share the burden of guilt.

This, argue John Gillott and Manjit Kumar, amounts to scapegoating science and whitewashing militarism

ot quite for Feynman and his fellow cientists, the Bomb stood as an awful arning to abandon or limit the mbitions of science—for humanity as not equipped to handle the owerful potential it offered.

The postwar era was marked by tendency to blame the ambitions of odern science and rationality for the estructiveness of nuclear weapons. eason, argued the conservative mmentator Arthur Koestler, 'begins ith Galileo and ends with the hydrogen mb'. Not only was modern man capable of handling the power science ve him, ran the argument, but there was also something in the arrogance and technical-mindedness of modern science and culture which positively encouraged nuclear war. 'The technological man', wrote Jacques Ellul, 'is fascinated by results....He cannot help admiring the spectacular effectiveness of nuclear weapons of war'.

Since that time, these reflections on the dawn of the nuclear age have become entrenched. The feeling has grown that humanity and science, in general, must share the burden of guilt with military planners for those terrible acts of 50 years ago. In the postwar world, writes Bryan Appleyard, 'science was scarred'. Science 'was either potentially evil of itself, or it led human beings into areas of knowledge we could not control' (*Understanding the Present: Science and the Soul of Modern Man,* 1992, p123).

The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki quite rightly arouses strong feelings of revulsion and fear. Certainly, Feynman's personal loss of confidence is understandable. He had bongo-drummed the night away in celebration of the bombing of Hiroshima, after watching a celebratory rally at Los Alamos at which Oppenheimer was cheered to ▶

the rafters as he strode down to the stage. By the 1950s he felt guilty; he felt that he had got so drunk on the excitement of making the damn thing that he had not thought about what would be done with it.

However, what is not understandable is the conclusion Jungk, Koestler, Ellul, Appleyard and others draw from the horror of Hiroshima: the notion that such destruction was a manifestation of the inner nature of reason, science, and the spirit of modern society. By ignoring the quite specific motives and calculations of all those involved on the Bomb project, this claim removes science from the social and historical context in which it is applied.

Consider first the scientists. What was the motivation of the scientists who built the atomic bomb? It was anti-Nazi feeling. And what motivated the leading players in the subsequent H-bomb effort: Edward Teller, John von Neumann, and Stanislaw Ulam? Anti-communism. In neither the A-bomb nor the H-bomb project was the prime motivation of scientists an abstract urge to expand the powers of human reason. Their motivations had much more to do with politics and war. Of course, they were fascinated by the science—but that did not lead to Hiroshima.

The motivations of the American government—the people who made the real decisions—are discussed elsewhere in this issue of *Living Marxism* (see p17). They were militaristic motivations arising from economic and strategic conflicts with the other major powers, and racial conflict in Asia. Atomic science was just a means, if a very effective one, to an end.

Nor was there some kind of automatic slide or slippage from inquiry to science to destruction, as argued for example by ex-Nato employee Brian Easlea (*Fathering the Unthinkable: Masculinity, Scientists, and the Arms Race*, 1983). Central to his argument is the fact that scientists continued to work at making a bomb, at an increased rate if anything, *after* the anti-Nazi impulse was surely removed by the German surrender in May 1945.

His argument makes a number of irrational jumps. Crucially, scientists did not carry on making the bomb as a result of some purely scientific impulse. They carried on for the same reasons American soldiers continued to fight—a mixture of patriotism, anti-Japanese feeling, and the simple momentum of being caught-up in war. Of course there was an element of scientific curiosity about whether they could make a bomb, but that was satisfied by the test-fire on 16 July at Alamogordo. Moreover, even if scientists like Feynman were too carried away with success to think,

Oppenheimer, the military, and the American government were not. Not only did they have clear, and non-scientific motivations, they also planned everything painstakingly. There was no unstoppable 'slide' from science to destruction. Rather, there was a very precise *mobilisation* of science for military purposes.

It is also irrational to argue that humanity in any way had to use nuclear science in a destructive way. The greater our knowledge, the greater our potential to do good—or bad. And this is the crucial distinction: there is no necessary progression from knowledge to the bombing of two cities. There was nothing intrinsic to nuclear science that meant it necessarily led to destruction.

> There is no necessary progression from knowledge to the bombing of two cities

Atomic science, like all science, can be used peacefully or for military purposes. As the French physicist and Communist Party member Frédéric Joliot-Curie quite rightly argued, atomic forces are 'forces liberated by Man, and Man has complete power to direct their use exclusively for peaceful ends. The situation would be quite different if we had to deal with a brutal threat from natural forces such as that offered by the forecast of an imminent collision between our planet and an immense meteorite'. Even the construction and testing of an explosive device is something that could be used for peaceful purposes—such as deep-underground mining. From this point of view Emilio Segrè hit the mark when he described the test detonation at Alamogordo as 'one of the greatest physics experiments of all time'.

To reinforce this point, consider a historical comparison. Just as the Second World War has been called 'the physicists' war', so the first is often called 'the chemists' war'. In that war chemistry was used by all sides to make poison gases—used to terrible effect on the Western Front. But chemistry has also given us countless drugs and compounds which have improved our well-being. Chemistry, like physics, is neither good nor bad in itself—it all depends on what you do with it.

Of course, atomic science was developed *in order* to make a bomb. But that is neither here nor there. Radar was developed for military purposes in the same war—but it is also a great tool for safety in civilian aviation today.

All in all, it is only in the perceptions of commentators, not in reality, that atomic science and destruction are forever directly linked.

One result of drawing science and humanity into the frame in accounting for Hiroshima over the past 50 years has been to encourage public suspicion of science, and a low opinion of humanity. By equating scientific knowledge with the misuse of that knowledge in the service of militarism, the reactions to Hiroshima cast a long shadow over science.

In 1905, Nobel Prize-winner Pierre Curie, co-discoverer of radium, noted that 'in criminal hands radium might prove very dangerous, and the question arises whether it would be to the advantage of humanity to know the secrets of nature'. However, reflecting the relative optimism of the period, he declared that he was of the opinion that 'humanity will obtain more good than evil from future discoveries'. Writing 40 years later, Curie's son-in-law, Frédéric Joliot-Curie, also saw science in a positive light. Just days after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he argued: 'I am personally convinced that, despite the feelings aroused by the application of atomic energy to destructive ends, it will be of inestimable service to mankind in peacetime.' Joliot-Curie was clearly taking the long view. What is depressing is that his reaction to Hiroshima was exceptional, where his father-in-law's optimistic opinion had been mainstream in his day.

After 1945, scientific achievement was never simply celebrated as it should have been. In 1992, the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* felt unable to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Enrico Fermi's achievement of the first controlled, self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction—because of the application to which this was put. That Fermi's work was explicitly part of war work ought to be irrelevant to scientific judgement. It was a great achievement, and should have been marked as such. But it was not—to the detriment of science.

Furthermore, pushing back the bounds of knowledge was frowned upon after the war because people did not trust in humanity's ability to use knowledge for good. At root, this attitude was anti-scientific in that it encouraged limits to scientific inquiry. Whatever criticisms we might have of Oppenheimer's role in the war, on this point he was absolutely right. As he argued in November 1945, 'it is not possible to be a scientist unless you believe that the knowledge of the world, and the power which this gives, is a thing which is of intrinsic value to humanity, and that you are using it to help in the spread of knowledge, and are willing to take the consequences'.

This 1947 comic illustrates a more optimistic age of nuclear power

Of course, we might not agree with Pierre Curie's notion of good and evil, nor with Oppenheimer's idea of what to do about 'the consequences'. But at least they believed humanity could make rational choices about how to apply its knowledge. That makes it possible to argue about the legitimate uses of science. By contrast, the contemporary conflation of knowledge with use and misuse leaves little room for a discussion—the only option is a fatalistic rejection of scientific inquiry, accompanied by curbs and regulations on the work that is done.

The argument that science and human ambition as a whole are responsible for Hiroshima falsely denigrates humanity and its scientific achievements. Worse still, it also serves to shield militarism from exposure.

However offensive traditional conservatives might find scrutiny of the Allies' motives in dropping the bomb on Japan, they are prepared to feign horror at Hiroshima. They understand the apologetic potential of conflating scientific knowledge and its misuse by the military. For if science and humanity in general are to blame for the Bomb, then militaristic governments and generals cannot be held responsible for the slaughter. Appleyard's claim that 'the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki suddenly revealed science itself as an uncontrollable extension of the human will to destruction', sums up his anti-humanism. It also serves to let militarism off the hook by spreading the blame about. Hiroshima ceases to be the result of a struggle for global domination among capitalist powers in a specific historical context, and becomes instead a general indictment of human nature and scientific knowledge.

The idea that science is responsible for Hiroshima serves both to denigrate human advance and knowledge, and to whitewash the true causes of war. Combating the militarism that gave rise to the Bomb then becomes impossible. After all, if militarism is a manifestation of 'the human will to destruction', the responsibility of all and therefore nobody in particular, then what can we hope to do about it?

After the Second World War, some scientists sought to redress the misuse of science in the cause of war. When II Rabi asked whether the effort at Los Alamos was to be the 'culmination of three centuries of physics', the question was meant to imply action to make sure that it was not. Einstein took the bold step at the beginning of the Cold War of arguing that America was the biggest cause of militarism in the world; and he called on American scientists to take a stand against the arms build-up.

But the opposition was too weak. In the postwar period, the enterprise of physics came more and more to be linked to military research. As Daniel Kevles relates, during this period, 'all roads' seemed to 'lead to the Pentagon'. Those physicists opposed to militarism came to despair of preventing the misuse of their discipline. As a result, a generation of the more radical physicists abandoned the field for chemistry and biology—or left science altogether. In desperation, Einstein himself came to regret the role he had played in the development of atomic science, and, despite being a great humanist, he declared at one point that if a more extensive nuclear conflict was to erupt, 'in the end men will get what they deserve'.

The frustration of Einstein and others is understandable. But one thing is clear: blaming science or humanity for the problems caused by militarism neither helps humanity nor assists the fight against war—indeed it has the opposite effect. The moral of the story is that a concerted fight against militarism should go alongside a promotion of scientific inquiry without limitations. ●

Japanese Nobel Prize-winner Kenzaburo Oe tells Daniel Nassim how the memory of Hiroshima has shaped his literary and political imagination

'I have to carry the burden of our age'

When the Japanese novelist Kenzaburo Oe won the Nobel Prize for literature last year there were mixed feelings in Japan. Many conservatives view Oe with suspicion for what they consider to be his anti-Japanese attitudes. Oe confirmed such prejudices when he turned down the *Bunka Kunsho* (The Imperial Order of Culture) that is traditionally awarded to Japanese Nobel Prize-winners. Oe says he feared that Japanese cultural nationalism could have dangerous consequences. 'I did not accept the award because I am afraid this cultural hierarchy can easily be turned into a political hierarchy.'

Oe's work, and his political attitudes, are rooted in the experience of the generation that grew up during the Second World War. Like other Japanese authors, such as Kobo Abe, Yukio Mishima, Yutaka Haniya and Hiroshi Noma, who came of age in the forties and fifties, Oe's work has been shaped by the trauma of the war, and in particular the experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. 'In my existence as a writer', he says, 'no choice remained for me but to take upon myself the burden of our age as if it were my own fate'.

Not surprisingly, a central theme in Oe's writing is the dangers of militarism. *Prize Stock*, one of the early short stories that helped make Oe's reputation when it won the prestigious Akutagawa prize in 1958, tells of the relationship between a Japanese boy and a black American airman captured during the war. Oe's first novel, *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids*, concerns the plight of reformatory school boys imprisoned in an isolated village as an unseen war rages in the distance. *The Silent Cry*, which Oe regards as one of his most important novels, is set against the background of the widespread riots against the renewal of the US-Japanese Security Treaty in 1960.

Oe deals even more directly with the dangers of war in his non-fictional work. *Hiroshima Notes*, first published in 1964, is based on interviews with *hibakusha*, the survivors of the A-bomb. With the research for the book began Oe's lifelong relationship with, and advocacy for, the *hibakusha*.

Not content with introducing such themes in his writings, Oe is politically involved in the anti-war movement. 'I am a member of the movement to ask our government to pass a "No war" resolution on the fiftieth anniversary of our defeat', he says. Oe believes that Japan should apologise to China, Korea, the Philippines and other Asian countries, and pay compensation to war victims, such as Korean 'comfort women' who were forced into prostitution by the Japanese Imperial Army. Oe is a vocal opponent of the way that the clause in the national constitution renouncing war has been reinterpreted to allow Japan to send troops on UN peacekeeping missions. 'We must keep our so-called "Self-Defence Forces" within our country.'

Oe rejects the view that Japan was simply a victim of the atomic bomb. In his view Japan, whose aggressive actions played a large part in starting the Pacific War, had to take a share of the responsibility for the horror of Hiroshima. 'We were both aggressors and victims', he says. It is hard to imagine a British intellectual figure of similar standing making such an attack on Britain's official view of the Second World War.

If Oe is critical of Japan's role in the war, he has equally harsh words for the Allies. He is incensed at the Western powers' attitudes towards Hiroshima, and in particular president Clinton's recent justification of the decision to drop the A-bomb. 'I want the US and Japanese governments to admit their mutual responsibility for the war', he says. Oe does not believe that it is the responsibility of the Clinton administration to apologise for the actions of its predecessors. Rather, he believes that America should apologise to the world for its current militarist policies. 'I do not think that Clinton needs to apologise to the Japanese people or government', Oe says. 'But he needs to apologise to the children of the world for his policy on nuclear armaments.'

Oe was dismayed by the political campaign in the USA against Washington's Smithsonian Institution, one of America's premier museums, when it tried to mount an exhibition depicting the impact of the bombing of Hiroshima. The *hibakusha*, he says, were upset by the row over the exhibition. 'They didn't want to ask the USA to apologise', he says. 'They only wanted to explain the dangers of nuclear weapons to the world.'

Oe's political convictions square with his view of his role as a bridge between Japan and other cultures. While most intellectuals in the nineties indulge in rampant relativism, celebrating whatever parochial identity they choose to adopt, Oe positively relishes the possibilities of adopting influences from outside the Japanese experience. As a student, Oe studied French literature, and he is sometimes referred to as Japan's Jean-Paul Sartre. He is quick to acknowledge his debt to writers from the West and the third world and his advocacy of cosmopolitanism is clear both in his novels and in his political essays.

In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech (published in the collection of essays *Japan, the Ambiguous and Myself*), which he delivered in English, Oe said that he felt greater affinity with Yeats than with Yasunari Kawabata, the only other Japanese winner of the Nobel Prize for literature. Among other influences he identified in his speech were those of Mark Twain, Korea's Kim Chi Ha, and Chon I and Mu Jen of China.

But perhaps the non-Japanese writer whose concerns are closest to Oe's is Germany's Gunter Grass. Grass, who is eight years older than Oe, served as an adolescent soldier in the closing days of the Second World War. His novels, such as the *Tin Drum*—which Oe describes as 'one of the most significant novels of the

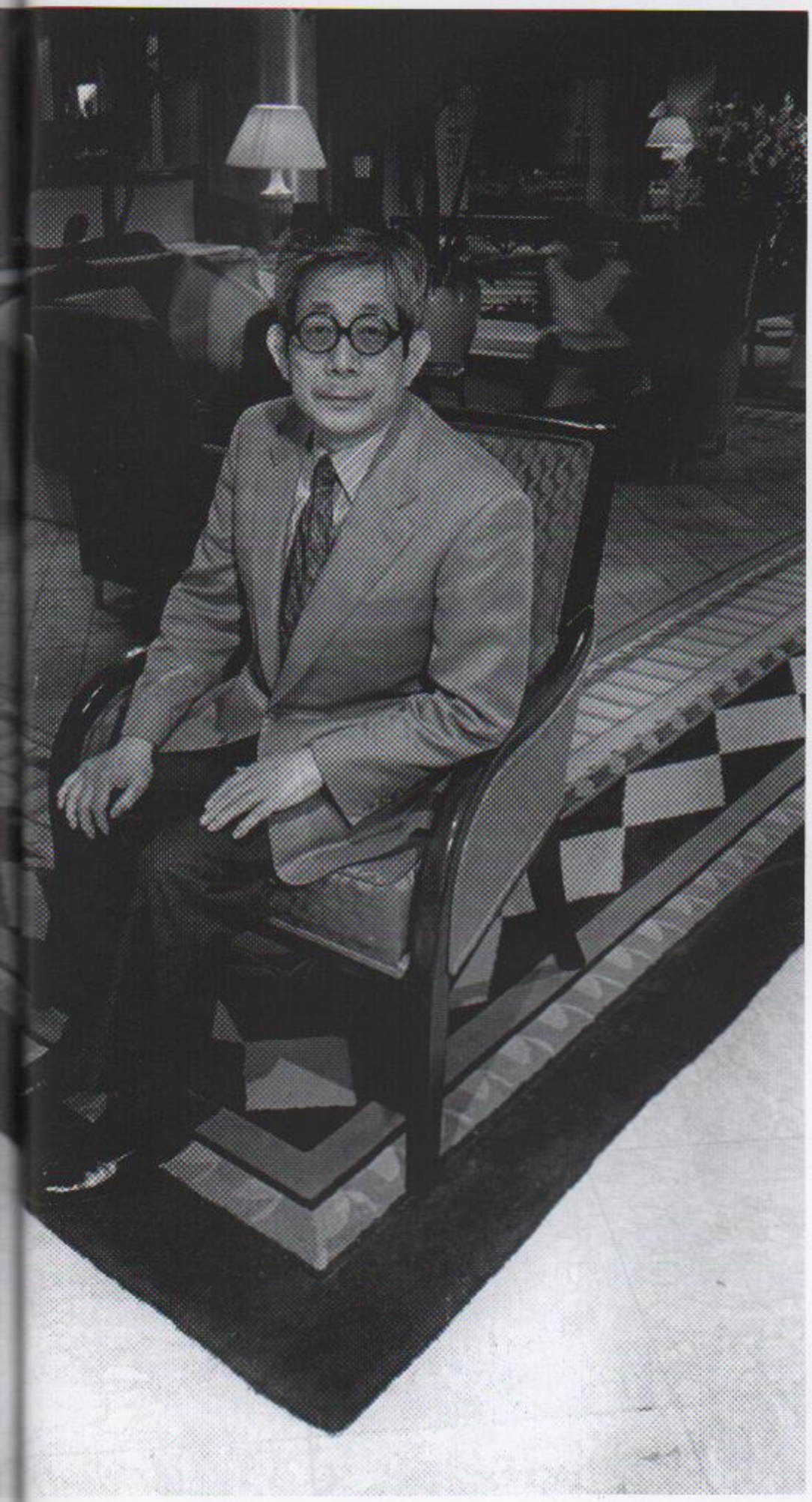


PHOTO: MICHAEL WALTER

second half of this century'—are also haunted by the memories of his country's troubled past. Given the affinity between these two authors, it is not surprising that they have recently exchanged letters about memories of the war, some of which have been published in the *Guardian*, the *Frankfurter Rundschau* and *Asahi Shimbun*. The letters express the authors' sense of the importance of the war in shaping their own literary and political imaginations and their common fears for the roles that Japan and Germany may play in the New World Order.

There is a common sense of pessimism about the possibilities for political progress, and a fear of the past reasserting itself today in the work of both Oe and Grass. Despite such fears, however, Oe clings to the notion of a universalist democracy as the hope for the future. He rejects both the idea of Western superiority and the idea that there exist specifically 'Asian values'.

At a lecture during his recent visit to London, Oe rejected the notion put to him that Japan was 'like a banana—yellow on the outside, but white on the inside'. The implication was that Japan should give up its forlorn attempt to imitate the West and become a truly Asian nation—yellow all the way through. 'I don't like the banana metaphor', Oe replied. 'I can't understand the concept of "Anglo-Saxon democracy" or "Asian democracy". The word democracy is universal in my opinion.' ●

Kenzaburo Oe's works in English:

- *Hiroshima Notes* (Marion Boyars, 1995)
- *Japan, the Ambiguous and Myself* (Kodansha International, 1995)
- *Nip the Bud, Shoot the Kids* (Marion Boyars, 1995)
- *Teach Us to Outgrow our Madness* (Serpent's Tail, 1989)
- *The Silent Cry* (Serpent's Tail, 1988)

PAINTINGS: MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

Easy viewing

Louis Ryan on why Impressionism has become the acceptable face of modernism

The golden rule for British galleries seems to be that if you want a popular exhibition, haul out the Impressionists. The Barbican's spring show on 'Impressionism in Britain' was its most successful exhibition for three years. The Royal Academy, which covered Belgian Impressionism last year, has just opened a display of Impressionist and post-Impressionist works from Swiss private collections. The Hayward Gallery on London's South Bank is currently running an exhibition entitled 'Landscapes of France: Impressionism and its Rivals'.

Impressionism is the school of painting to which people can most readily relate today. Its immediacy to everyday life makes much of the art that preceded it seem remote, while its characteristic tranquility lends it an idyllic quality when compared to the tortured and fractured avant-garde that was to follow.

Such contemporary appreciation stands in stark contrast to the disquieting impact made by Impressionism when it first emerged in France in the 1860s. Its proponents were branded as anarchists and extremists by the official critics and artists of the time. The Hayward exhibition, which shows works by Monet, Sisley, Pissarro and their colleagues, in parallel with state-sponsored 'Salon painters' of the same period, helps us understand why Impressionism was so unsettling.

The avant-garde of his day: Claude Monet's 'Rue de la Bavolle' (above) and 'Fisherman's Cottage' (right)

The typical Salon painting was a big, ponderous wall-hanging, depicting themes intended to edify the viewer. A good example from the Hayward exhibition is the 'View of Chartres' by Alexandre Ségé, showing a flock of sheep following their drover back to a peasant village. Through a gap in the low buildings looms the distant silhouette of the great cathedral, as if it were magnetising shepherd and sheep alike. The whole image evokes obedience to authority, temporal and spiritual. And just in case you might have missed the point, Ségé has painted the evening sky bathed in a supernal light of an improbable character.

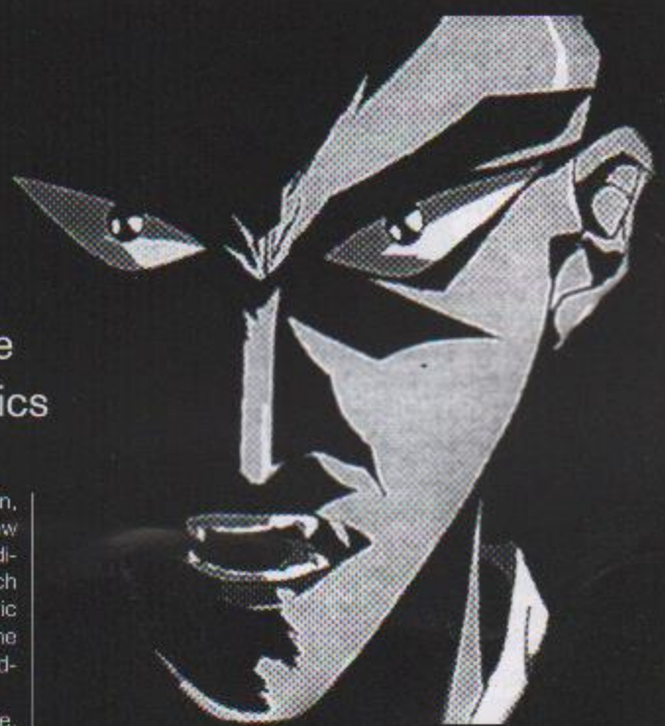
Move from a room of such self-consciously high-minded compositions into an adjacent one with Impressionist paintings and you begin to understand how small, unfinished and above all insignificant these latter must have appeared at the time. Here is none of the kitsch *mise-en-scene* of the Salon painters, but instead unassuming rural scenes: a man walking down a pathway, a row of village houses, a few boats at anchor. But above all there is no message. The scene is just 'there', a visual *impression* made upon the artist, a fleeting moment rendered for its beauty rather than for any claims to some higher truth.

This is the key to understanding why these unprepossessing canvasses mark a turning point in the history of art: visual reality is here rendered purely from the point of view of the abstract individual. The only value is the visual impression, and the realisation of its momentary beauty is the only norm. In this sense their opponents were right to describe the Impressionists as anarchists. Politically the Impressionists were no anarchists—with one or two exceptions their views ranged from mildly conservative to downright reactionary—but the term caught the sense in which Impressionism represented a broader dissolution of established hierarchies and traditional beliefs.

In its emphasis on a purely individual standpoint Impressionism anticipates the relativistic outlook of today, but it does so with a unique charm. Impressionism is the poetry of passivity; it is the preference for mood and atmosphere over the rational structuring of the visual field. As such it appeals to our current sense of limitations, to the withdrawal from active engagement in the world. These paintings delight the senses, but they fail to embody the higher unity of sense and intellect which is the hallmark of the greatest art. ●

'Landscapes of France: Impressionism and its Rivals' is showing at the Hayward Gallery until 28 August.

Manga mania



Frederik Schodt explains the Japanese craze for manga comics

The next time you think of Japan, forget Mt Fuji, geishas, new management methods, Zen meditation, or your favourite hi-tech toys. Think of *manga*, or comic books, for they are one of the most striking features of modern Japan.

Manga magazines are everywhere. They are sold in bookstores, train station kiosks, and tens of thousands of outdoor vending machines. They are read by nearly everyone today: kindergarten children and retirees, girls and boys, men and women. Company presidents read them on the way to work. Housewives read them in beauty parlours. On jammed streets where traffic moves at a snail's pace, it is not uncommon to see truck drivers reading manga while driving. Japan is said to have one of the highest literacy rates in the world, but one of Japan's best kept secrets is that nearly 40 per cent of all its books and magazines are now manga—in magazine, paperback or hardback format.

The manga business is a more-than-five-billion-dollar per year industry, yet sales of manga themselves represent only the tip of a giant iceberg. The manga industry exists in a symbiotic relationship with television and other industries. Popular stories are first serialised in fat magazines, then compiled into a series of paperback or deluxe hardback books, and then made into an animated television series or a theatrical feature. And in the meantime merchandising of characters from the story continues in a blitzkrieg fashion, taking the form of licensed toys, stationery goods and clothing. Often manga stories are turned into computer games, novels, plays, operas, and manga-inspired music CDs.

What are the stories in manga about? If generalisations are possible of such a gargantuan phenomenon, it would be that boys read stories featuring bravery, competition and adventure—sports stories abound, especially baseball and, recently, soccer and basketball. Adult men read tales with similar themes, except far racier; sex fantasies are common, as are gambling stories. Girls read love stories. Women read the same, but their romances are again far racier and frequently involve illicit office love affairs.

Foreigners visiting Japan are often shocked by the level of sex and violence in manga being read by men, women and even children. In manga for men in particular, blood-spatters abound. Rape scenes are common. There is nudity and violence even in many so-called children's comics. In magazines for girls and adult women romanticised tales of homosexual love among males are extremely popular.

Japan is not a Judeo-Christian culture and it is entitled to its own views of what is proper and what is not. Furthermore, the views that foreigners, especially Americans and British, have of manga tend to be coloured by cultural preconceptions of what a comic book should be like, and many of these preconceptions do not apply in Japan.

In the United States, which is often thought of as the 'comic book capital of the world', comic books were heavily stigmatised in the 1950s by the lobbying activities of conservative pressure groups, and subsequently heavily censored and nearly emasculated as a creative medium. This means that when Americans see comic books in Japan with relatively uncensored stories, they are just as shocked as citizens of a highly puritanical society would be if they walked into a video rental shop in America.

Manga are also a legitimate medium of artistic expression. Short cartoons and four-panel comic strips have long existed in Japan, but after the war manga artists discovered that the 'Western' comic book format—of sequential panels of illustrations that tell a story with word balloons—had as much potential as pure text novels or film. Osamu Tezuka (1929-89), the greatest Japanese comic artist of all time (referred to in the Japanese media as 'the God of manga'), realised that by expanding the number of pages in his stories he could create a much more 'cinematic' format, and depict nearly anything he pleased visually. The result was the form of manga most popular in Japan today—the often-thousands-of-pages-long, saga-like 'story comic'. The best in Japanese comics today therefore come close to the best of the world's literature in their depiction of the human experience, and their creators increasingly win adulation and awards formerly reserved for novelists. ●

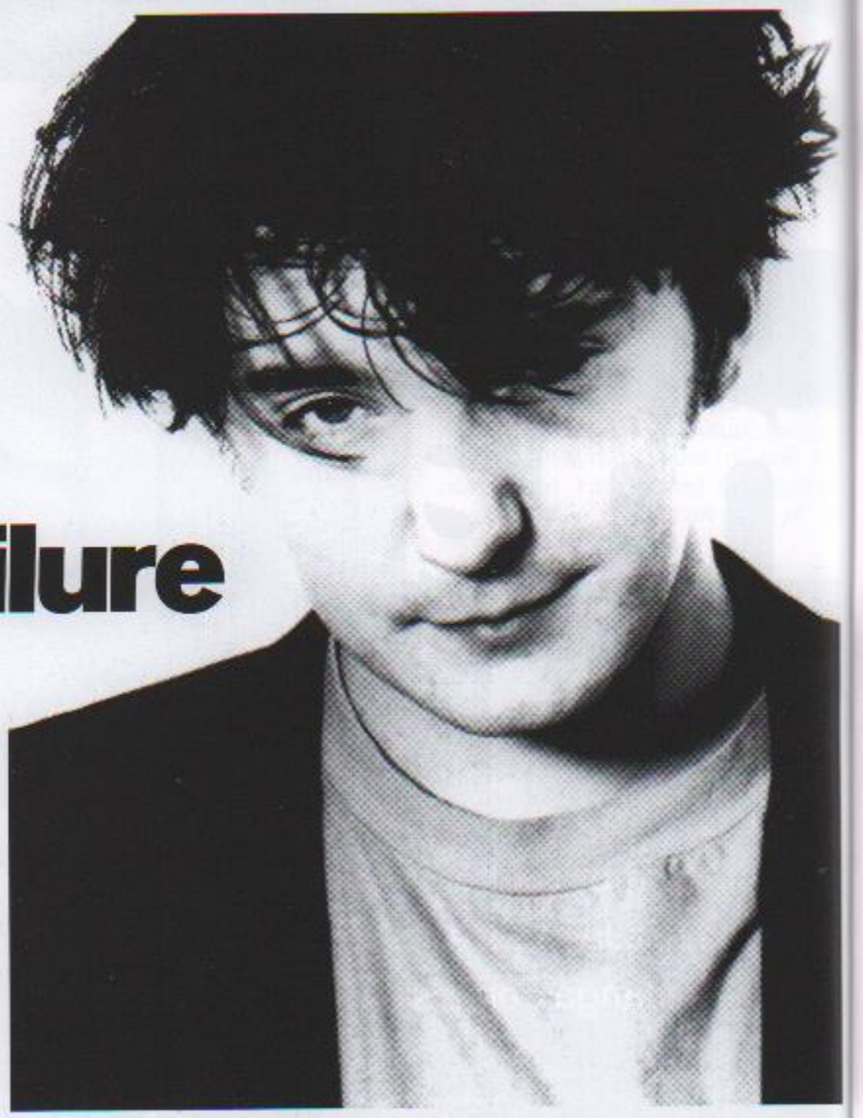
Frederik L Schodt is author of *Manga! Manga! The World Of Japanese Comics* (Kodansha International, 1983), *Inside the Robot Kingdom: Japan Mechatronics and the Coming Robotopia* (Kodansha International, 1988), and *America and the Four Japans: Friend, Foe, Model, Mirror* (Stone Bridge Press, 1994)

He will be speaking about manga at Hiroshima: The Week, see page 40

ILLUSTRATION: FUMIHIKO HORIGHOUCHI/AMANA

Irish comedian Dylan Moran tells Timandra Harkness why he likes performing at the Edinburgh Festival, which opens in August

Bizarre ramblings and liver failure



'Everybody goes to Edinburgh because you get to stretch yourself. It's a way of whipping yourself into doing something, of getting down to the work you always said you would do. Awards and prizes don't actually mean that much, though winning the newcomer's award was useful to me at the time because I didn't really know anyone over here.'

Two years ago a surreal Irish comedian who had been in Britain barely a month won the 'So You Think You're Funny Competition' at the Edinburgh Festival. This year Dylan Moran is back at the Festival with his own hour-long show, one of the hottest tickets on the Fringe.

Moran is returning this year not just because the promise of an hour alone on stage, which would be difficult to get elsewhere, is irresistible, but because Edinburgh is a welcoming place for comedians. 'Audiences here tend to be more genteel than on the London circuit. I won't have to just keep running gags past them so I don't get bamboozled by some angry guy in the audience. They're not there just to laugh, their minds are a bit more open.' Edinburgh, Moran says, allows you to experiment with your routine more than the London circuit does. 'Everybody's doing shows they hope will sell, but it should be a platform also for innovative and challenging work for people in the business. Some people remain true to that, like Harry Hill, and some people stick to doing mainstream gags that will work anywhere.'

Moran's own act is 'a load of rubbish' (his description) made up of gently bizarre ramblings along neglected or undiscovered pathways. Audiences laugh with surprise and bemusement as his likeable drunken stage persona muses on life's odder details.

But Edinburgh is not just about performing. It is also a chance to see others perform, to meet up with friends from last year, a non-stop cultural and social lucky-bag. This is Moran's second festival, so what is he most looking forward to this year? 'Liver failure. No. The feeling that I can do an hour. Probably. A good hour. And maybe make it a bit theatrical rather than just telling jokes.'

'What do I dread most? I'd hate to think that I was just another comedian trying to hitch a ride with a TV station to produce a mediocre TV series. I'm very ambivalent about TV. Maybe I'm too snobbish about it, but it tends to take away the original idea behind things and turn them into pap.'

Does he think that the comedy scene in this country is too safe at the moment? 'Oh definitely yes. And I'm also guilty of that. Sometimes I'm amazed that someone in the audience doesn't stand up and scream, "I've seen this load of shit a thousand times before".'

Comedy in Britain, Moran fears, is becoming more and more like wallpaper, patronising the audience, sacrificing everything for a quick gag and an easy laugh. So what does he consider to be good comedy?

'If you look at *Fawlty Towers*, for example, it's not just funny, it's also true. It's about what it's like to be alive. Some people regard comedy as a way of escaping from their lives, but some people realise that it can be an expression of life. I just think the latter is infinitely more attractive.' ●

Dylan Moran's *Selected Drivel* previews at the Battersea Arts Centre in London on 31 July. It will play nightly in the Attic at the Pleasance, Edinburgh, from 10 August to 2 September.

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THE MARXIST REVIEW OF BOOKS

Daniel Nassim examines how contemporary Western prejudices against Japan are dressed up as cultural anthropology

Shaming the Japanese

The Wages of Guilt, Ian Buruma, Jonathan Cape, £18.99 pbk
Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam, Gar Alperovitz, Pluto Press, £40 hbk, £12.95 pbk
The Japanese Today, Edwin O Reischauer and Marius B Jansen, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, £11.95 pbk
Understanding Japanese Society, Joy Hendry, Routledge, £12.99 pbk

'It is told of Count Katsu who died in 1899 that when he was a boy his testicles were torn by a dog. He was of samurai family but his family had been reduced to beggary. While the doctor operated on him, his father held a sword to his nose. "If you utter one cry", he told him, "you will die in a way that at least will not be shameful".'

That quote comes from Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (pp104-105). Although it was first published in 1946, it still retains enormous influence both on academic studies of Japan and on popular journalism. It has sold 350 000 copies in the USA and more than a million in Japan, despite its origins as a study for the US Office of War Information started in 1944.

Benedict's tract is still the model for Western writing on Japan, and the prejudices it voices have remained the standard for 50 years. Many of the core concepts used in discussions of Japan today can be traced back to *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword.* Take, for example, the popular concept of 'groupism'—the idea that Japanese society is based on the group rather than the individual. Although she does not use the term, the assumption of Japanese groupism is implicit in Benedict's famous distinction between 'shame cultures' and 'guilt cultures'. She believed that in 'guilt cultures', such as the USA, behaviour is regulated by individual conscience. By contrast, in shame societies, such as Japan, people are worried mainly about looking bad in front of the group. 'True shame cultures rely on external sanctions for good behaviour, not as true guilt cultures do, on an internalised conviction of sin.' (pp156-57)

This was Benedict's point in the story about the boy with torn testicles. The idea is that the Japanese are taught above all else not to bring shame on their family or nation. This demands a degree of stoicism that other nations would regard as masochistic. In pointing to this as a Japanese national trait Benedict predates by half a century British TV's fascination with Japanese game shows in which contestants go through incredibly uncomfortable feats of endurance.

The same distinction between guilt and shame underlies Ian Buruma's *The Wages of Guilt.* Buruma, an Anglo-Dutch writer from the *Spectator/Daily Telegraph* stable, examines the difference between Japan and Germany's view of the Second World War. The implicit argument is that Germany has come to terms with the war but Japan has not. The idea is that Japan cannot apologise because, as a shame society, it has no sense of guilt.

Buruma does not put the argument in such forthright terms. Nevertheless it is Buruma's work which best codifies the attitude of the British and American authorities to Japan today. The orthodox criticism of Japan is that it refuses to apologise for its crimes during the war. Anyone who has followed Japanese diplomacy in recent years knows that this is nonsense—the organising principle of Japan's diplomacy towards East Asia since the late 1980s has been to apologise for the war at every opportunity. But the mainstream critics of Japan are not put off by mere facts. They know that Japan cannot express regret for what it did because, by definition, it is a shame culture.

Despite the imperviousness of some of Benedict's modern disciples to facts, her own work at least seems to be based on reality. From the very first sentence, her method is simply to draw attention to the cultural differences between Japan and the USA: 'The Japanese were the most alien enemy the United States had ever fought in an all-out struggle.'(p1) In Japan great emphasis was placed on hierarchy while in the USA equality was a key value. And for Japan the state was the supreme good ▶

while in the USA it was always seen as a potential threat to liberty.

Understanding Japanese Society by Joy Hendry, a professor of social anthropology at Oxford Brookes University, updates *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* for a contemporary audience. Hendry shares Benedict's concern with the points of divergence between Japanese society and the West, but focuses on other cultural differences. For example, Hendry sets great store by the distinction between *uchi* and *soto*—roughly translated as those 'inside' and 'outside' a particular group.

At first sight the idea that there are significant cultural differences between Japan and the USA or Britain seems straightforward common sense. As Benedict says in 1940s terminology: 'Those protagonists of One World have staked their hopes on convincing people of every corner of the earth that all the differences between East and West, black and white, Christian and Mohammedan, are superficial, and that all mankind is really like-minded. This view is sometimes called the brotherhood of man. I do not know why believing in the brotherhood of man should mean that one cannot say that the Japanese have their own version of conduct of life and that Americans have theirs.' (p10)

Benedict and Hendry's idea of culture is at root a natural, racial one

To understand what is wrong with the social anthropologist's view of Japan it is necessary to examine their method of analysis. Both Benedict and Hendry say that their first aim is to reconstruct the view of Japan as held by its own citizens. According to Benedict: 'The ideal authority for any statement in this book would be the proverbial man in the street. It would be anybody.' (p11) While for Hendry, 'the aim is to introduce the world as it is classified and ordered by the Japanese people'(p2). So far, no problem.

However, both authors state that they are keen to go beyond appearances. Benedict defined the aim of her study as 'to describe deeply entrenched attitudes of thought and behaviour' (p11). While for Hendry, 'it is one of the aims of an anthropological approach to penetrate the deeper levels of operation behind the familiar facade' (p187). For Benedict and Hendry, 'deeply entrenched attitudes' means ideas that have existed in essence since time immemorial. Their idea of culture is at root a natural, racial one, since the distinctive essence of a national culture remains unaltered. So Benedict could argue in 1946—after half a century of rapid industrialisation, political upheaval and a world war—that 'Japan has not changed fundamentally since the 1890s' (p213). This is also the view presented routinely in introductory textbooks such as *The Japanese Today*.

Both Benedict and Hendry take care to avoid racially loaded language. They only come close to spelling out their assumptions when associating Japan with other non-white societies. For Benedict: 'There are many social arrangements and habits of life in Japan which have close parallels even in the primitive tribes of the Pacific islands.' (p6) Hendry is more explicit: 'much of the effectiveness of mechanisms of social control relies, in the Japanese case, on principles which are more commonly found in small communities of Africa and South America than in the industrial societies with which Japan is usually compared.' (p223)

It is the very fact that the racial assumptions behind these works are never stated explicitly that makes them so dangerous. Both Benedict and Hendry would undoubtedly recoil from crude stereotypes of the Japanese. But their work presents essentially the same ideas, of fixed differences between peoples, in the liberal language of cultural relativism. This is the key contribution of Benedict's social anthropology to mainstream thought. It puts the politics of race that were discredited by the Nazi gas chambers into politically correct language. The anthropologists live in a kind of Orwellian world where everyone is different but some people are more different than others.

The effect of Benedict's work has been culturally to cleanse America's war record against Japan. During the war the US authorities and media routinely portrayed Japan in terms of animal images—apes, monkeys, termites and so on. Benedict rejected such racial images, only to recast the differences in cultural terms. By cleaning up the record of anti-Japanese racism, she helped the US authorities to present the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as acts designed to save Allied lives, rather than to perpetrate a racial war against the Japanese people.

Benedict's cultural relativism has proved so influential over the past 50 years that few academics or writers have challenged the bombing of Hiroshima in its proper context. A rare exception is John Dower, whose *War Without Mercy* looks at the different racial perceptions held by both sides during the war. Ian Buruma, on the other hand, dismisses the idea of the A-bomb as a racist experiment in one paragraph (p98). Despite Buruma's criticisms of Japan's amnesia towards its war atrocities, the idea that the West should consider apologising for killing 200 000 Japanese does not even occur to him. Buruma seems to be suffering from an acute case of amnesia towards Western war crimes himself.

Given the racial subtext in Benedict's work it might seem perverse that it has been so popular in Japan

Gar Alperovitz, the president of the National Center for Economic Alternatives in Washington DC, deserves credit for trying to challenge the orthodoxy in his work *Atomic Diplomacy*, now updated and reissued. His main argument, developed during the Cold War, is that the A-bomb was primarily used not to defeat Japan, but to counter the emergent power of the Soviet Union. That is true, but it is only part of the truth. The bomb was a demonstration of America's superiority over the rest of the world, including Japan, the USSR, the third world and the other Western powers. It was the opening shot of *pax Americana* and the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were its victims.

Given the racial subtext in Benedict's work it might seem perverse that it has been so popular in Japan. But as Tamotsu Aoki, a professor of cultural anthropology at Osaka University, has noted, 'the reason lies in the relativist paradigm she adopted' ('Anthropology and Japan: attempts at writing culture', *The Japan Foundation Newsletter*, XXII(3), October 1994). In other words,

Japanese readers can accept the cultural differences as easily as American ones, but put a different value judgement on them. A typically American reading of cultural differences is likely to take the argument as confirmation that the American way is best. A Japanese reading of the same text may not reach the same conclusions.

There is a relationship between Japanese proponents of *Nihonjinron* (the cult of Japanese uniqueness) and Western liberal critics of Japan. Western critics point to cultural differences, and use this implicitly to reinforce a view of Japan as inferior to the West. Japanese theorists take these same distinctive characteristics as proof that Japan is a uniquely cultured society. Where one puts a plus sign, the other puts a minus.

Characterising Japan as racist is a convenient way of whitewashing the record of American and European armies in Asia

Nihonjinron is cited as the basis of the greatest Western myth about Japan; that the Japanese are the real racists in international affairs. Reischauer, who was US ambassador to Japan in the sixties, and Jansen, a Princeton Emeritus Professor specialising in the Far East, are the authorities for the charge of Japanese racism. Interestingly, this charge is usually made with one eye on the West's own bad reputation:

'We often think of racial prejudice as being a special problem of the white race in relations with other races, but it actually pervades the world. Nowhere is it greater than in Japan and the other lands of East Asia.' (*The Japanese Today*, p396)

The sleight of hand involved here is clear. First racism is not particularly Western, but pervasive, then it is nowhere greater than in Japan and the other lands of East Asia (a large and heterogenous part of the world). Two pages later Reischauer and Jansen dismiss the reputation of 'so-called racist America' in an aside (p398). Characterising Japan as racist is a convenient way of whitewashing the record of the American and European armies in Asia, from the suppression of the Boxer rebellion through the bombing of Hiroshima to the slaughter of the Korean and Vietnamese wars. In fact, the substance of the accusation that the Japanese are racist is, ironically, that they do not accept that whites are superior.

What then would be an alternative way of understanding Japan? The starting point must be to reject any notion of historical continuity. The behaviour of a nation cannot be understood as just a legacy of the past. For example, Britain today is a very different place from what it was in the 1950s—let alone in the Victorian era.

The differences between Japan today and in the past are particularly marked. In the space of a century, Japan has emerged as a global player, become a colonial power in Asia, lost a world war, been occupied by a foreign army and undergone the most rapid economic growth of all time. The differences between Japan before and after 1945 are dramatic. In the years of occupation following the war, the USA refashioned all of Japan's political and social institutions. During the war, for example, Japan was dominated by the military caste. Afterwards, the US-written constitution officially defined Japan as a pacifist state.

Japan's behaviour this century, which often seems peculiar to Western commentators, makes perfect sense in the context of its unique historical experience. Japan's emergence as a non-white power early this century left it in an awkward position. Japan was desperate to become a colonial power just like its European peers and the USA. But the white powers would not let Japan play such a role since it challenged the assumption of racial superiority on which their own empires were based.

This was the context for the conflict between Japan and the West over China in the 1930s. The Japanese troops who invaded China from 1931 were trying to turn Japan into a 'normal nation' by the standards of the established colonial powers. But neither the USA nor Britain was prepared to let Japan establish a hold over China. Both backed nationalist Chinese forces against Japan through the 1930s. This was the real start of the Second World War in Asia—not Japan's 'surprise' attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

The peculiar position of Japan also explains the difference between Japanese nationalism and the racial outlook of American and European powers. While the white powers had already established a colonial division of the world between them, the Japanese latecomers were never accepted into the club.

Japanese propaganda was often framed in terms of opposition to the colonialist West, however oppressive Japanese rule turned out to be

National pride in Japan always took on the defensive character of an excluded people, reacting to the racial notions imposed by Western imperialism. In the first half of the century, Japanese propaganda was far less about denigrating other races as inferior than about building up the self-image of Japan as a special, unique nation. As John Dower describes, 'to an immeasurable degree, there was a reactive cast to the anti-Western rhetoric of the Japanese during the years under discussion—a clear sense of revenge for past indignities and maltreatment which, again, has no precise counterpoint in the racism of white supremacism' (*War Without Mercy*, p204). Japanese military propaganda was often framed in terms of opposition to the colonialist West, however oppressive Japanese rule in East Asia eventually proved to be. After 1945, Japan, as a non-white nation defeated in a world war, could not claim superiority. Instead the emphasis of the Japanese nationalist was on the distinctiveness of Japanese institutions.

Western scholarship on Japan today may be cloaked in the dispassionate language of social anthropology, but its underlying assumption is one of the racial inferiority of the Japanese. Part of the cultural stereotype of Japan is that the Japanese are uniquely racist. In reality Western racism has invariably proved the most destructive force in Asian and world affairs. And, as Ian Buruma's *Wages of Guilt* shows, Western scholars are still the world leaders in historical amnesia.

Free Ireland: Towards a Lasting Peace, Gerry Adams, Brandon Books, £7.95 pbk

'To sue for peace is a noble thing. The IRA's initiative was a brave one, and the 31 August commitment was made by a confident, united and unbroken army.'

With this statement Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams opens the last chapter of his latest, much publicised book, *Free Ireland*. Written in the aftermath of the IRA ceasefire, the book is an update of *The Politics of Irish Freedom* written in 1986, with two new chapters on the 'peace process'.

It seems that Adams' main aim in the book is to claim credit for the peace process. In doing so he has turned reality on its head. The IRA has laid down its arms without having achieved its goal of an end to British rule, but Adams manages to present this unconditional surrender as a sign of strength: 'The side which broke the stalemate would have the initiative.' (p195)

Pointing to the political settlements involving the PLO and the ANC, Adams claims that the post-Cold War international situation favoured liberation struggles and forced the British to sue for peace. Yet the reality is that the collapse of the Soviet Union had a profoundly demoralising effect on national liberation movements, all of which have been forced to abandon opposition to their opponents and accept compromising settlements.

Reading *Free Ireland*, it is clear that it is the dramatic lowering of the republican movement's horizons, rather than any weakening of the British determination to rule in Ireland, which has allowed the peace process to come this far. While in the earlier version, *The Politics of Irish Freedom*, Adams described the Dublin government as stooges slavishly running a neo-colony on behalf of their British masters, in *Free Ireland*, the same governments are identified as the key force in bringing about a united Ireland (p206 and p237).

The British government, once clearly identified as the imperialist enemy, is now described as the potential, 'persuader of Unionists for a United Ireland' (p203). The pro-British Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) were for many years contemptuously denounced by all republicans as the Stoop Down Low Party. Today Adams refers to them respectfully as 'fellow nationalists'. For Adams, the talks with SDLP leader John Hume were the catalyst for the current peace process.

Possibly the most galling evidence of Sinn Fein's about-turn on imperialism is the glowing terms in which Adams speaks of his new friend Bill Clinton. In the past, the republican newspaper *An Phoblacht/Republican News* ran a weekly column denouncing American imperialism in all its guises. Today Adams looks to the world's most vicious imperialist power to act as peace-broker in Ireland.

Free Ireland is worth reading if only for an insight into the shifts in republican policy. While Adams pays lip-service to the goal of a united Ireland in the future, the short-term goals fall far short of this. A recognition of Sinn Fein's electoral mandate, inclusion in all-party talks and 'parity of esteem' are the new goals of Irish republicanism. Given that all but the most intransigent Unionists are quite happy to concede these demands, it seems that having lowered their horizons so dramatically, Adams and his colleagues may have some basis for claiming victory. It is less easy to see how the joy of watching your leader rubbing shoulders with all the old enemies can continue to be cause for celebration for the nationalist working class community of Northern Ireland. After 25 years of resistance against the British army, they deserve better.

Kevin Kelly

Prozac Nation: Young and Depressed in America, Elizabeth Wurtzel, Quartet Books, £10 pbk

'*Prozac Nation* is a collective cry for help....It gives voice to the high incidence of depression amongst young people, who are fully entrenched in the culture of divorce, economic instability, and Aids.' In fact, *Prozac Nation: Young and Depressed in America* is a harrowing account of depression. It charts Wurtzel's life, in and out of therapy, on and off different sorts of medication, constantly on the verge of suicide, until finally she is stabilised with the new anti-depressant Prozac.

The book is powerful because it is dramatic rather than mundane; the narrator is interesting because she is not ordinary, but completely weird. Yet a book which relies so heavily on its unusual subject matter has come to be seen as representative of a whole culture. Wurtzel remarks on this in the epilogue: 'It seemed that suddenly, some time in 1990, I ceased to be this freakishly depressed person who had scared the hell out of people for most of my life with my mood swings and tantrums and crying spells, and I instead became downright trendy.'

Reading *Prozac Nation* will make you want to slit your wrists: not because you sympathise with the author, but because there is something very worrying about a screwed-up middle class neurotic being hailed as the voice of the new generation.

Jennie Bristow

The Faber Book of Pop, edited by Hanif Kureishi and Jon Savage, Faber & Faber, £16.99 hbk

This book is asking for it. Issued under the imprint of what was, when poet and critic TS Eliot presided over the firm, perhaps the most elitist publishing house in the English-speaking world, it is a weighty compilation of supposedly important writing about pop music. If this is not sufficient warning, the *Faber Book of Pop* also happens to be introduced by that highbrow commentator, Jon I'm-not-going-to-include-anything-by-Julie-Burchill-in-this-anthology Savage. Predictably enough, some critics have torn this tome to shreds for being pretentious, portentous, pompous, etc.

All of which misses the point: pop music always was pretentious. Without art school, pop would never have been more than high school. Pretending that four boys and a Vox AC30 really mattered, investing unwarranted significance into the 48 hours of a speed-driven weekend ▶

◀ so as to compensate for the intractable banality of the working week—these are the conceits which have always been at the heart of pop music. To put it another way, what is a poser if not pretentious, and what would pop music be without posers? Indeed complaining that pop has become pretentious is itself just another pose, and a very tired and old one at that.

In my estimation, Kureishi and Savage have done us all a service by compiling an enormous tableau of pop poses, most of which are also accurate reflections of their time. Some of the writing is just plain excellent—Ray Gosling, Lester Bangs, Greil Marcus, the young Tony Parsons. The king of *NME* writers, Nick Kent, is strangely absent—a startling omission this, since Kent more than anyone else could breathe real life into the virtual reality of pop culture. But this is a relatively minor gripe against an otherwise major source of evocative and sometimes penetrating literature.

Andrew Calcutt

Bonn and the Bomb: German Politics and the Nuclear Option, Matthias Kunzel, Pluto Press, £40 hbk, £14.95 pbk

'Power today is military power. Military power is atomic power. Without atomic armaments, Germans will supply only the bakers and the kitchen boys of the forces of the other allies.' CM Kelleher (p14)

After the awesome sight of a vaporised city at Hiroshima, everybody understood that the possession of nuclear weapons was going to be not only militarily important, but even more so politically. It was a sign of being one of the club of world powers. This was especially the case as the five permanent members of the UN Security Council were also to become, with the advent of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1970, the only nations permitted under international law to possess the Bomb. Right from the end of the war, the German authorities recognised the international power of the Bomb. They used every lever at their disposal to acquire a nuclear potential, as part of boosting Germany's status in postwar Europe. For example, the sharing of nuclear technology was one of the main tenets of the alliance between France and Germany.

In the late 1960s the West German government stymied every attempt to introduce a global non-proliferation regime. Forcing Germany to renounce nuclear weapons was called 'an act of discrimination against Germany by its allies' (p5). Negotiations on the NPT were delayed for 11 months by German prevarication. German chancellor Kurt Georg Kieslinger was tempted to welcome the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 because the Soviets 'have relieved us for the time of having to make a decision about the NPT' (p117). The previous year the German government had doubled its spending on the nuclear industry, posting a warning about its willingness to develop nuclear weapons.

When it became clear that West Germany would not be allowed an independent nuclear arsenal, or even one in collaboration with France, Germany was offered a carrot: Nato nuclear weapons on German soil would guarantee Germany from the Red Menace. There was no alternative but to accept.

Today, as Germany strives to achieve a political presence in line with its economic might, the issues of a permanent seat on the UN Security Council and an independent nuclear weapons capability are back on the agenda. As a signatory to the NPT, Germany is forbidden from developing a nuclear weapons programme. Despite those supposed safeguards, Germany could now build a Bomb in weeks if it chose to.

This nuclear capacity, however, will never raise the kind of opposition that the alleged attempts by Iran, Iraq and North Korea have: an implicit sign on the part of the other nuclear powers that Germany is one of the 'trusted' states which will help police the world. The lengths that the nuclear weapons powers go to today to ensure that nobody else acquires a nuclear potential shows how important the Bomb remains as a symbol of authority. Germany's new role in the world may not result in an acknowledged nuclear potential but its place at the top table is assured.

David Nolan

Mapping Ideology, Slavoj Zizek (ed), Verso, £39.95 hbk, £13.95 pbk

Once central to every social science student's education, the concept of ideology is suspect to those schooled in our incredulous postmodern age. Ideology and falsehood are no longer so easily countered by science and truth. Enter the man from Ljubljana, Slavoj Zizek. Zizek's collection of essays charts the debate since the heyday of arch-ideologist Louis Althusser. It includes the latter's best known essay on the subject, and Lacan's 1949 work 'The mirror-phase' as well as some more recent contributions from Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson and Peter Dews. It is as good a summation of the debate as any.

American pragmatist Richard Rorty makes the right point when he says that the discussion of ideology used to be about change, but today, as he says, the left is preoccupied with aimless criticism. Calling for a freeing of the political imagination, Rorty should perhaps start with himself: the only alternative to capitalism he can imagine is nationalised industries.

The best essays in the book are Zizek's own. He opens with a point made by Fredric Jameson that it is easier for people to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine such a modest change as the end of capitalism. Zizek contrasts Althusser's concept of ideology with that of the Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukacs. He points out that Althusser's concept of ideology—of ideological state apparatuses (universities, television)—rests on external, contingent features. By contrast Lukacs' emphasis on the way that the market mystifies human relations, the fetishism of commodities, looks at the internal and spontaneous way that ideology is generated by capitalism. Althusser's model of ideology based upon control, the state, is contrasted with Lukacs' understanding of a process that is out of anyone's control, the market.

Russell Pearson

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