

ANALYSIS

WINTER 1991-92

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The Aids Fraud

Marx's Theory of Knowledge

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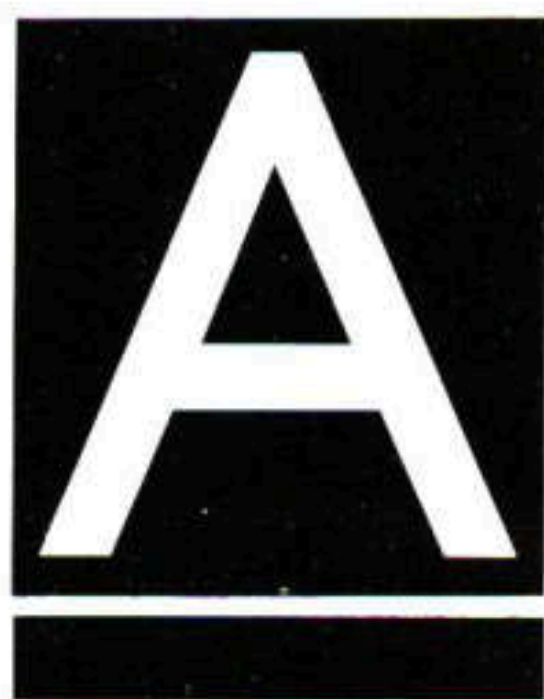
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After a decade of advance, the Green movement is now disintegrating.

Alison Costello argues that the very nature of the Greens' appeal meant the movement could only be a temporary phenomenon.

The Ecology of Failure

The Green Party's annual conference in Wolverhampton this autumn was an ugly affair. The current ruling elite, made up of 'personalities' such as Sara Parkin and the ubiquitous Jonathon Porritt as well as seasoned pressure group careerists, launched *Green 2000* - a plan to radically restructure the party. The proposal - which was passed by the conference - allows the present leadership to tighten its grip on the party, making it even less accountable to an already passive and confused membership. Supporters of *Green 2000* have argued that without a 'policy autonomy' like that of other party leaderships, the Green Party will always remain amateurish and will never become a credible political alternative. Democracy must be sacrificed in favour of efficient management.

The 'eco-socialists' and 'fundamentalists' (a diverse collection of refugees from previous unsuccessful campaigns) see the initiative as an underhand attempt to change the nature of the Green Party, from an active campaigning organization hostile to, or at least suspicious of, existing political structures, to one that plays the establishment game. They argue that the basis of the Green's appeal is precisely its unconventional, non-conformist and mould-breaking image. However, despite their anti-establishment propaganda, Green groups are limited by their own compliance and acceptance of the values and institutions of the established order. *Green 2000* supporters understood this dependency

and it allowed them to threaten to walk out of the conference if they did not get their way. They did. The victory elicited only a lame response from the 'eco-left', who unfurled a banner carrying the slogan 'all power corrupts' and promised a mass desertion of party activists. A similar confrontation has already shattered the German Greens.

Those who cringe at the sanctimonious preaching and moral arrogance of 'Third Way' merchants will no doubt relish the demise of the Greens as a moment of validation and amusement. Unfortunately green-type politics, which can be considered a type of secular religion, are unlikely to disappear. A post mortem of the rise and fall of the Greens can therefore provide useful and important insights. Firstly, although such populist movements are ineffective in conventional terms, they do legitimize many conservative and reactionary ideas. For instance, the issue of over-population and the need for severe

'third way' ideologies promise quick and easy solutions which evade the need for a difficult and protracted struggle for fundamental political change

birth control programmes to curb Third World 'fast breeders' would have little support if proposed by the IMF and western Governments alone. When the same ideas are repackaged in a Green garb, thoroughly reactionary concepts become acceptable, progressive and even scientific.

Secondly, the age of capitalist decay is also the epoch of catastrophic forbodings that foster an uncritical and hysterical attitude. In this political climate, 'third way' ideologies promise quick and easy solutions which evade the need for a difficult and protracted struggle for fundamental political change. Although the working class has traditionally shown a marked reluctance to join or support what are predominantly middle-class movements, such opportunist ideas do have an effect on it since they influence its more politicized members.

It is difficult to predict what doom scenario or apocalyptic fad will next grip the timorous imagination of the radical middle classes. The deterioration of politics and economics in all western nations tends to suggest that the state will go on the offensive and foster more traditional forms of ideological repression such as racism, nationalism, anti-sex hysteria, and a cult of aggression and violence. After more than 40 years of liberal pluralism and pressure group politics, we are seeing the 'remilitarization' of ideology. The echos of the 1930's are unmistakable. In this context, the basis for mass green-type

campaigns and the role of the ideological middle class is likely to dwindle. However, alternative politics will retain a powerful attraction in opposition to the increasing authoritarianism of the State. An analysis of the rise and fall of the Green movement is therefore vital.

Mother Nature

At the heart of Green ideology is the idea of a 'nature' with which mankind has lost touch and to which it must return in order to avoid destruction. Without exception, environmentalists put forward the view that humanity has alienated itself from the natural world and, as a consequence, is exploiting and destroying it in its obsession for control. Unless mankind can voluntarily return to a more 'natural' way of life, natural laws themselves will enforce themselves on him in some form of global catastrophe. The idea of 'nature' functions both as seductive ideal and as a threat in this way of thinking. On the one hand, there is the invitation to live 'naturally' and intuitively, rather than struggling to organize our world in accord with our rational capacities. This theme goes back to the Romantic reaction to the Enlightenment. On the other hand, there is the threat that if we dare to stray too far from nature's dictates, we will suffer an almighty punishment. In Rachel Carson's version of this vision, we are teetering on the edge of an abyss of our own making, through our reckless disregard of nature's limitations: 'A few false moves on the part of man may result in the destruction of soil productivity and the arthropods may well take over'.¹

With this second, punitive, connotation to the idea of 'nature', Green thinking has adopted what has been a central theme of right-wing thought since the end of the 19th century: the idea of a biological 'natural order' which human beings flout at their cost. For example: women differ from men biologically and can only be fulfilled in their natural role of raising children and looking after the home; racism is justified on grounds of natural black inferiority; greed and competition are natural human traits; Aids and cervical cancer are the legacy of an 'unnatural' sexuality.

Green Idealism

While some Greens propose 'ecological ethics' to safeguard the planet against the ravages of human pride and to bring humanity back into a 'natural balance' with its environment, others advocate a return to a simpler, pre-industrial 'brown-eggs-and-bicycles' way of life. However, romantic idealism is

Those who cringe at the sanctimonious preaching and moral arrogance of 'Third Way' merchants will no doubt relish the demise of the Greens as a moment of vadilation and amusement. Unfortunately, green type politics are unlikely to disappear

not confined to eccentrics on the fringes of political activity. It informs the discourse of much of the Green 'establishment' and now colours the wider political movement. The idea of a golden past in which man lived in a harmonious relationship with nature, working with it rather than abusing it, or its geographical equivalent, some far-off tribe that is supposed to live in this way, bear little relation to the facts. Human activity has always had an impact on the environment and it is only human control over the 'natural' environment that has enabled man to advance his understanding and created the possibility of existence above subsistence.

Whilst the notion 'nature = good, human = bad' can largely be dismissed as simple foolishness, it is indicative of an overriding sense of failure to influence the environment for human needs. The Green response is to turn on human needs and drives and castigate them. Universal prosperity, according to E.F. Schumacher, 'if attainable at all, is attained only by cultivating such drives of human nature as greed and envy'.² The Greens not only undervalue human potential and achievements but

for an ecologist, the debate between the protagonists of capitalism and communism is about as uplifting as the dialogue between Tweedledum and Tweedledee

Jonathon Porritt

also manage to ascribe every social ill to some moral fault inherent in mankind. In her opening speech to Green Party Conference, Dr Caroline Lucas used the Club of Rome Report *The First Global Revolution* published in September 1991 to stress that 'today's society is dense with information technology and lacking in morals and ethics'.³ She went on to blame materialism and lack of spiritualism for the Cardiff, Newcastle and Birmingham riots, 'this inability to measure well-being in anything other than GNP has been vividly highlighted over the past few weeks with the riots around Britain'.⁴

The 'Third Way'

'The divide between environmentalists and industrialists is of far greater significance than the notorious class distinctions'

Jonathon Porritt, *Seeing Green* p155

Obsession with anti-materialism and spiritualism obscures the economic and social divisions created by capitalist development which underlie human oppression, environmental pollution, and resource depletion. The Greens have been only too eager to take their lead from the right and condemn all those on the left as supporters of Stalinist-style bureaucracies. With their characteristic intellectual barrenness, it comes as no surprise that the Greens should dismiss any ideological backing for the working class as a continuation of 'old style' politics. Greens have no interest in class divisions, in fact they view these divisions as a threat to their own authority and positions within the established bureaucracy. Their only option therefore, is to condemn radical leftwing politics and ignore the working class completely.

Resorting to an apolitical strategy, many Greens have tried to portray the politics of the left and right, and the economics of communism and capitalism, as virtually the same. Jonathon Porritt argues that, 'irrespective of who owns the means of production, the unrelenting pursuit of growth and industrial expansion must necessarily degrade the planet and impoverish its people. Socialization of the means of production makes little difference. What are vices under capitalism do not become virtues under communism... From an ecological point of view, communism is merely an extension of capitalism by other means'.⁵ This passage is part of a strong but veiled attack on Marxist ideology, in which Porritt states that ideologies are part of the problem and 'for an ecologist, the debate between the protagonists of capitalism and communism is about as up-

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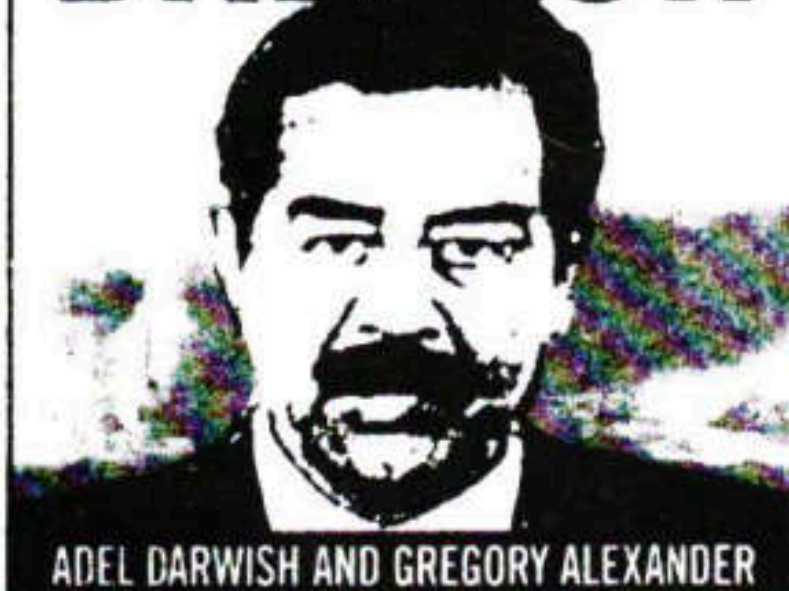
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*A few false moves on
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Rachel Carson

lifting as the dialogue between Tweedledum and Tweedledee'.

The liberal concept of 'the individual' has been consistently used to undermine the working class but the Greens go further with their simplistic notion of the similarity between capitalism and communism. They base this assumption on the fact that as pollution occurs in both capitalist and 'communist' countries there can be no difference between the two economic systems. No further attempt is made at analysis and a puerile identification of the politics of left and right as 'for industrialization and against nature' is achieved. The Greens are thus able to reject conflicts between classes and instead implement a universal conflict between humanity and nature. The Greens go on to propose a different 'lifestyle', the 'Third Way', which focuses on individual power and disregards any common interests of classes, and whose effect is to depoliticize. Rudolph Bahro, the German Green fundamentalist, has advised, 'For anyone who has passed without break from a communist party into Green politics, it might have been better if they had first become depoliticized for five years'.⁶

An even more remarkable strategy for society's transformation comes from Sara Parkin who wants to utilize contacts in high places. These contacts she refers to as 'the moles' whose task is to influence their organizations from within. According to Parkin, these organizations range from community groups, through political parties to 'the palace itself! The latter refers to Prince Charles' sympathies with environmental concerns, but to describe his stance amongst 'the subversive activities of the moles' is stretching the imagination a little too far. A subversive monarch? Yet such anomalies of thought are the consequences of concentrating on individual influence instead of collective action as a means of change.⁷

The Race Card

This 'apolitical' strategy leads the Greens into the ghetto of political moralism. It also allows the right to justify its reactionary policies which include anti-socialist propaganda, population

control and immigration restrictions. This is not the first time that the environment has been used to support anti-communist and racist propaganda. Lord Blesidoe, arguing for rural resettlement in the 1920's, stated 'contact with Mother Earth is the most powerful antidote to Bolshevism'. Jewish businessmen during this time were targeted and blamed for degrading the British countryside through land speculation. Later, the fascists of the 1930's used the 'back to nature' philosophy to extend anti-semitism and racism.

This racial undercurrent recurred in the 1960's when Enoch Powell delivered some of his more impassioned speeches on the British countryside and way of life and the need to protect it against immigration. Porritt himself has stated, 'The strictly logical position as far as ecologists are concerned, is to keep immigration at the lowest possible level while remaining sensitive to the needs of refugees, split families and political exiles'.⁸ This is a view endorsed by the Right who are preparing for stricter immigration controls to keep the Third World 'undesirables' out of Europe after 1992.⁹

Population Control

Population, or rather the reduction of population, is another reactionary concept legitimized by the Green Movement. The Green Party, in their 1973 Manifesto, advocated a Poll Tax on children primarily to reduce the British population! They are now less bold with their population policy and have moved from coercion to persuasion although the underlying position is still that there are too many people in the world. The Green's 1989 Manifesto called for a reduction in the British population by 15-20 million. This figure was removed in their 1990 Manifesto and replaced with the non-specific phrase 'whilst also encouraging ... a lower birthrate, to work for a gradual reduction in the UK population over a number of generations'.

Similar ideas were forwarded by Thomas Malthus who in the early nineteenth century blamed population growth for declining soil fertility. He welcomed the threat of poverty as a disincentive for having children and exhausting agricultural resources. Earth First, the US environmental direct action group, have recently argued that the perceived AIDS epidemic is beneficial because it will drastically reduce the world's population! Even moderate Greens exhibit complete naivety in their views in this area. To ignore the drive for profit and economic exploitation as a cause of poverty and environmental degradation and concentrate instead on

If we allow the population to go up, it will certainly fall through war, through famine and through disease because there are too many of us
Dr. R. Lawson

The strictly logical position is to keep immigration at the lowest possible level while remaining sensitive to the needs of refugees, split families and political exiles
Jonathon Porritt

invalid statistics of 'projected' population growth is to resort to arguments which are not substantially different from those used by fascist groups to halt immigration and increase racism.

The Greens are forced to resort to their age-old enemy, science, to counter such criticisms. Speaking at the Green's conference Dr Richard Lawson, introducing himself as 'a scientist', countered accusations of 'green fascism' over population policy, 'Any scientist, any biologist, any ecologist, and doctor even, they will say that if you study a population of animals, the population will go up and up and up in an exponential way and then it will crash. This is a fact. If we allow it to go up, the population certainly will fall through war, through famine and through disease because there are too many of us. We have the capability to flatten off that curve and we must do that'.¹⁰ While comparisons have their place, trends in human population can hardly be likened to that of the proverbial rabbit.

Focus has inevitably shifted to the Third World where famines, droughts, poverty and disease are all attributed to overpopulation (if there are no obvious governments to conveniently blame). Although most environmentalists are not pursuing compulsory population reduction programmes, they are in favour of increasing contraception use in the Third World. Poverty and ignorance are cited as the reasons for increased population, and therefore education is the vehicle for change: 'Education can... enhance a society's ability to overcome poverty, increase incomes, improve health and nutrition, and reduce family size'.¹¹ Education, predictably, has always been upheld as the means to change social realities by those who benefit from the political passivity of the working class rather than by any form of confrontation with the status quo.

Apocalypse soon

Instead of attempting a coherent analysis to explain environmental degradation and pollution problems, environmentalists prefer hysterical campaigns of the 'population time-bomb' type and dark prophesies which set humanity against itself and nature. These culminate in fatalistic predictions of a global catastrophe of biblical proportions, not only from the somewhat pathetic figure of David Icke but also from the supposedly moderate Greens who align themselves with the establishment. We have global warming, nuclear winter, population explosion, ozone 'holes' in the sky, poisoned seas and cancerous plagues to name but a few. Whether there is any substance to these claims is a matter for discussion, but that isn't really the point. That there is pollution and environmental degradation is not disputed but the tremendous leap from this to 'end of the world' predictions is more of an ideological jump than a rational prognosis.

The environmental apocalypse, so frequently predicted, harnesses the fear and discontent of people in a way that limits questioning. We are constantly urged to act now before it is too late. This is our last chance, we stand on the brink of disaster, we may be witnessing the end of the world, and so on. Panic tactics are common in environmental groups and some prominent Greens have even justified exaggerating the scale of environmental problems to motivate action. For instance, Narindar Singh has stated, 'But since the human race seems to be moving ever closer to what could turn out to be the most implacable crisis in all its evolutionary history - and this at least is not an exaggeration - a measure of overstatement may not only be permissible but is sorely needed'.¹² So much for the truth.

The Gulf War provoked the latest in the long list of prophesied environmental catastrophes. When the much-feared

oil slick finally materialized it was not the disaster we were led to believe. Early estimates of 10 to 11 million barrels of oil were later revised down to between one and four million barrels and despite claims it was the worst oil slick in the world, it was not even the worst oil slick in South East Asia. The one million barrels of oil which are accidentally spilt by the oil companies each year have caused more damage than 'Saddam's act of terrorism'. Similarly, the burning oil fields have not resulted in a planetary winter or accelerated global warming but, instead, have produced local air pollution which, although it has severe implications for the Kuwaiti and Southern Iraqi population, is not a threat to the rest of the world.

In a recent *Guardian* article Jonathon Porritt has admitted that Greens were wrong in their predictions of the consequences of the Gulf War but lacked the courage to accept blame; 'With the war won, environmentalists were promptly lambasted for unscrupulously exaggerating the environmental threats, notwithstanding the fact that most of their predictions at that time were based on strictly controlled military intelligence'.¹³ Two points are relevant here. Firstly, if you rely on MOD press releases as a basis for your facts about events in the Gulf then you are in no position to criticize when this information turns out to be 'misleading'. Secondly, environmentalists were predicting envi-

Instead of coherent analysis environmentalists prefer hysterical campaigns and dark prophesies which set humanity against itself and nature.

ronmental catastrophes before the Government and gutter press realized this was a good propaganda exercise against the 'eco-terrorist' and madman Saddam. When the press hyped up details of the oil slick, Greens were only too keen to point out that they were not surprised as this fitted their predictions of the environmental effects of the war from the onset.

Why the scaremongering? Fear is an easy way to get public interest and support with minimum effort. Scared people are less likely to question motives and authority. So environmental-

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ists used the war to boost their flagging media coverage and increase their public profile. As with most opportunist organizations, Greens parasitically adopt world tragedies as verification of their particular concerns. Thus the famous Brundtland report states: 'Environmental stress is both a cause and an effect of political tension and military conflict'. *Our Common Future* 1987, p290] Sara Parkin, in her appearance on *Question Time* during the Gulf War, argued (without any evidence whatsoever) that the war was caused by water shortages in the region. ¹⁴ Obviously this is not true. What is clear, however, is that the press had begun to lose interest in Green issues following the previous years' overkill and the Greens tried to hijack concern over the war for their own ends. Inevitably, this has backfired as a global environmental catastrophe plainly has not occurred and was never likely to occur. By attempting to divert attention from the true causes and consequences of the war, the Greens have only succeeded in discrediting themselves further.

However, such miscalculations do not warrant sympathy. The Greens will continue with their hysterical campaigns, their apocalyptic visions and their anti-communist, anti-human and anti-industrial notions, notions that either terrify or lead to despair and an increasing dependence on the legislative authority of the state. An understanding of the deep roots of the Green Movement is therefore essential. The last few years of Green hype may have seemed like a new phenomenon, arising to combat the horrors of industrial pollution but this is not true. The Green Movement was borne long before the discovery of nuclear power, CFCs or pesticides.

History of the Greens

The Great Depression of the 1880's transformed the optimism of prosperity prevalent in the middle of the 19th century and this, coupled with the intellectual barrenness of the bourgeoisie following the Darwin era, undermined the hope of improvement and progress for the human condition. Britain's declining economic power towards the end of the century fuelled discontent with industrialism itself. Environmentalism sprang out of this crisis because it expressed doubts about industrial development. The first environmental organizations were formed towards the end of the century as a reaction to the impact of industrial and urban expansion of the time. The National Trust, one of the oldest, was founded in 1895 and is now the largest private landowner in Eng-

Die Grünen

Year	Membership
1983	25,222
1984	31,078
1985	37,024
1986	38,170
1987	42,419
1988	40,768
1989	41,171
1990	40,010

Source: Die Grünen Press Office

land and Wales. Leading members of these environmental organizations included prominent right-wing and liberal social philosophers, such as Ruskin and Mill, who morally opposed industrialization because of its vulgarity.

The publication of Dean Inge's *Outspoken Essays* in 1919 showed the level of anti-industrial sentiment amongst the middle classes. The Essays dealt with issues of patriotism, the birth rate and the future of the English race. Inge condemned the vulgarity of industrial life arguing that the drive for accumulation was the cause of discontent in modern life. His position was far from radical; he attacked the Labour movement as a product of an 'unnatural and morally dangerous industrial system'. According to Inge, greedy materialism was the scourge of the industrial age. Yet the right were not alone in their condemnation of the industrial revolution. Even radical left intellectuals romanticized the role of agricultural workers as 'men working with their hands' against the dehumanizing monotony of factory work. Robert Blatchford went so far as to condemn the factory system as evil in origin, progress, motives and effect. The brutality of feudalism was seemingly forgotten.

In the succeeding decades political parties moved to capitalize on this fear and distrust. The Conservative Party opened their official party statement, *The Right Road for Britain*, in 1949 with: 'Conservatism proclaims the inability of purely materialist philosophies to read the riddle of life, and achieve the necessary subordination of scientific invention and economic progress to the needs of the human spirit... Man is a spiritual creature adventuring on an immortal destiny, and science, politics and economics are good or bad so far as they help or hinder the individual soul on its eternal journey.'¹⁵ Such a statement would not seem out of place in much of the Green propaganda churned out today under the misleading

Sometimes, when I'm abroad, it's almost embarrassing to me, how much faith people have in the German Green Party

Petra Kelly

guise of new radicalism. In fact, Dr. Caroline Lucas posed the question to fellow Greens, 'Where do you look for politicians with the courage to talk about ethical politics, based on human rights and global needs? Where else do you look for a political commitment to spiritual values and spiritual needs?' Look no further Caroline.¹⁶

It is in the context of disillusionment, economic decline and dissatisfaction that environmentalism and the myth of rural Britain arose and it is this same sense of failure that provides the origins for the present Green Movement.

Germany's Greens

Today's environmental groups have achieved prominence in the advanced capitalist countries of US, UK and Germany and have their roots in the student activist movements of the 1960's. Of these, the German Green Party has achieved the most popular support gaining seats and then increasing their number in the Bundestag in the 1983 and 1987 elections with 5.6% and 8.3% of the vote respectively. The success of environmentalism in Germany coincides with the absence of any working-class political movement.

After the Second World War, German development was dictated by foreign policy and western imperialism. The possibility of a socialist alternative was wiped out by the strategic alliance between Germany and the US during the 'Cold War' when anti-communism became the official state ideology. Increased economic prosperity during the 1950's and 60's, coupled with anti-communist propaganda, depoliticized a generation of German workers. Thus the Green Movement and later its Party, *Die Grünen*, expanded in a political climate where the working class had little to do with opposition. Initially a right-wing movement comprised of small farmers and the rural middle class, it was adopted during the 70's and 80's by left radicals (predominantly activists from the student and peace movements) who attempted its politicization.

The uneasy alliance of eco-libertarians,

eco-socialists, fundamentalists and realpolitik held until the Greens began to gain political power. Previous conflict came mainly from the right (eco-libertarians) who, according to Werner Hulsberg, had 'declared war on the socialists.'¹⁷ After the 1983 Federal elections, a succession of internal debates succeeded in polarizing certain sections and highlighting the factions within the Party. By this time, the realpolitik (the reformist element) controlled the direction of the Parliamentary Party and favoured an alliance with the Social Democrats to increase their parliamentary power. Leading fundamentalist figures, including Ruldoph Bahro, were forced to resign. Bahro's final criticisms of *Die Grünen* came in his letter of resignation in 1985 when he wrote 'the people who had placed their hopes in us realized ... that their course is not a sincere one. They are like everyone else only they are trying to kid both others and themselves they are different.'¹⁸

The Party has since split further, most recently at its conference in May this year when, after an aggressive interchange between the 'fundis' and the 'realos', the party divided into two distinct factions. The 'realos', who proposed a restructuring of the Party to consolidate their leadership positions, managed to dominate the conference. The fundamentalists, realizing their impotence, split from the party to form what they consider to be a grass roots ecology group which truly opposes industrial society. Rid of this unruly baggage, the new style Green Party has since declared its intention to form a coalition with the Social Democratic Party in the 1994 federal elections. A step which indicates that the Greens, far from being a radical and new social movement, are rather a continuation of consensus in a depoliticized society.

Greens in Britain

The UK Greens have a similar, but less successful, background. Stephen Cotgrove argues that 'the rise of 'green' political groups needs to be seen as a more widespread disenchantment with social democracy. But the dissent spans the political spectrum.'¹⁹

Unlike Germany, British environmentalism has been slow to translate into a political force and has stayed in the domain of large, non-politically aligned pressure groups. The two most influential environmental groups during the last twenty years have been Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace. Both were formed around the same time, in the early 1970s, reflecting a growing movement of eco-activists originating

UK Green Party

year	members
1979	550
1983	3,955
1989(July)*	14,432
1990(July)	16,798
1991(March)	14,950
1991(July)	11,852

* After successful Euro-elections
Source: Green Party Press Office

Die Grünen

% of Bundestag votes

1980	1.9%
1983	5.6%
1987	8.3%
1990	4.8%

Source: Die Grünen Press Office

from student radicals. Competition and rivalry exists between the two organizations, mainly for the media attention and publicity which both crave. Justifying two separate pressure groups, Greenpeace favours a more direct approach to campaigning whilst Friends of the Earth has been criticized for working with government officials in a somewhat cosy relationship.

Environmental groups have virtually no internal democracy, they are oligarchic and their leaders cannot be realistically challenged.²⁰ The internal politics of these organizations tends to be dominated by personalities and personality differences. The decision-makers are a small, elite group occupying a variety of positions. This gives rise to a 'prima donna' factor in the organizations, most recently demonstrated by the departure of Jonathon Porritt as Director of Friends of the Earth. It was a well-known secret that Porritt was reluctant to relinquish his power base to the new incoming director, David Gee. The result was a year of strained staff relations and internal disputes which did little to enhance the morale of the organization.

The political wing of the environmental movement, the Green Party, was largely treated with indifference and even ridicule by the media, the public and the environmental groups until the 1989 Euro-elections. First named the People's Party, the Ecology Party was formally launched in 1973 and achieved notoriety for its position on the legalization of cannabis. It became the Green

Party in 1985, hoping to mimic the success of European Greens notably West Germany's *Die Grünen*. With little political credibility, it was ignored by the wider environmental movement. But in the 1989 Euro-elections, the Greens succeeded in securing 15% of the vote. This public endorsement meant that both those working inside and outside the party began to take it more seriously. Consequently, the party has been forced to develop its politics and internal divisions have come to the fore. In what is almost a replay of *Die Grünen*'s recent history, a split has emerged between the reformist, or realist, section of the Greens and the more radical eco-socialists and fundamentalists.

The Decline of Green Politics

The similarity between the present internal fighting of the UK Greens and that of the German Greens over the past five years ago is striking. In their annual conference in Karlsruhe, December 1988, *Die Grünen* effectively split in the most unpeaceful manner. One of the delegates is reported to have said to a fellow Green, 'If I had a gun, I'd shoot you.'²¹ Not the discourse expected from a party of peace and grassroots democracy. A year after the conference, the membership of the Greens began its decline and electoral success has deteriorated. In Nurnberg, green votes slumped from nine or ten per cent to three per cent in the 1989 mayoral elections. The 1990 Federal elections proved an electoral disaster for *Die Grünen* who only managed to win 4.8 per cent of the votes and lost all their seats in the Bundestag. Their most recent conference this year, during which the split was finalized, has shown the Greens in their true colours - a mish-mash of confused and politically immature individuals whose politics have more in common with traditional liberalism than any form of radicalism.

Although the German Greens have been used by UK environmentalists to highlight the popularity of Green politics their success has been short-lived. Petra Kelly remarked, before their split, that 'I can't guarantee that the German Green Party will stay. Sometimes, when I'm abroad, it's almost embarrassing to me, how much faith people have in the German Green Party. We get so much credit and people are so enthused about us that I often feel I have to tell them to be a little bit more sober.'²² The UK Greens, wishing to follow *Die Grünen*'s success, appear only capable of emulating their failure.

Membership of the Green Party and environmental pressure groups in Bri-

The recent conference has shown the Greens in their true colours - a mish-mash of confused and politically immature individuals whose politics have more in common with traditional liberalism than any form of radicalism.

tain is declining. The Treasurer's Report for 1990-91 opened with 'I regret to have to report that this year has been financially disastrous for the Party'. Rapidly falling membership figures, low levels of donations and the collapse of 'Ecotrade' were held responsible.²³ According to the report, membership is still declining and, despite a trickle of new recruits, has fallen by a staggering 30% in the past financial year.²⁴ Press coverage of environmental issues has waned and politicians from the mainstream parties, save perhaps a few die-hard liberal democrats, are less frenzied with their green public images. Those who were only too eager to help the government with their green paper on the environment, 'Our Common Inheritance', and to advise them on their green policies are now experiencing a sense of betrayal. The euphoria of finally being accepted by the establishment has evaporated as public interest has lapsed.

The conference in Wolverhampton reflected the desperate plight of the Greens. The debate around *Green 2000* was aggressive, tearful and disorderly. Despite frequent 'attunements' (brief spells of reflective silence to calm rising emotions), jeers and boos accompanied speeches, particularly those from Sara Parkin and Jonathon Porritt. Unmoved by their colleagues' concerns, *Green 2000* supporters pressed ahead with their authoritarian 'vision' for the party and gave no concessions. Amendments to the motion were plentiful, totalling 142 of which only 17 were finally discussed. Most of these were non-controversial and were 'fast tracked' through the conference. Attempts to make the proposed executive accountable to the regionally elected Green Party Council were fought off. If the 'realists' were unable to win by a show of hands, a card vote was called for and the proxy votes carried by *Green 2000* supporters ensured they always got

their way.

Opponents of *Green 2000* argued that it would lead to defections from the party: 'Pass this motion and members will desert in droves and morale will plummet'²⁵ These arguments were outweighed, though, by earlier veiled threats from Jonathon Porritt that he would leave if he didn't get his way. Still, there was some questioning of Porritt's merits: 'I wonder how pale green it [the party] has to get before you have to start describing it as yellow. Have the movers of this motion not learned the lesson of the last party of the media, the SDP, although it's hard to tell whether Jonathon Porritt is supposed to be our David Owen or our John Cleese.'²⁶

The right adhered to their strategy of political pragmatism and swayed any dithering members with a tried and trusted financial threat: 'I have found in my attempts to get money out of people and companies, there is a lot of goodwill out there. They like us but they are not prepared to put money down the drain... Motion 25 is going to make our job a lot easier to provide the cash we need to do the job we're supposed to do.'²⁷ No-one seemed to care that the speaker was asking them to forgo democracy to please companies who may then be willing to provide funding, probably the very same companies they have spent the last fifteen or so years vigorously opposing. Such has been the demise of the party over the past eighteen months that idealism now plays second fiddle to realism.

The 'radicals', recognising defeat, made final pleas not to let their party destroy itself. Derek Wall (one of the prominent 'radicals') commented 'History repeats itself; first time is tragedy, second time is farce. It's intellectually interesting, it's interesting to see that we are going the same way that socialism went... we've become conservative, we've become centralist'. Whilst another delegate explained that her black attire marked the degeneration of the principles, values and ideals of her party. The chairwoman then called for the vote on Motion 25 with 'Whatever happens with this vote ... please be gentle with each other.' At the end of a bitter day for the Green Party, *Green 2000* was carried with the necessary two thirds majority, by proxy of course. Porritt and Parkin may have been victorious in the short-term restructuring of the Party but this will not alter the long-term prospects for the Greens.

The 'green awareness' of the last decade was, in fact, a product of conservative and anti-industrial ideology radicalized due to the absence of a left pol-

itical alternative. The countries where the Green Movement is most prominent, i.e. Germany, Britain and the US, are advanced capitalist countries which managed to destroy left-wing class politics through anti-communist propaganda during the 'Cold War' period. In the absence of a left alternative, radicals first aligned with the student protest movements of the sixties, then joined the peace movement in the seventies and early eighties and then moved to the environmental movement. Although it was initially a right wing movement, the anti-industrial position of the greens was mistaken for an anti-establishment one and attracted left-wing radicals and anarchists who transformed the appearance of the movement during 1980's. This radicalization, which superficially seemed very marked, could not alter the fundamental basis of green politics which are, at best, liberal. The Green Movement has never attempted to analyse class divisions prevalent in capitalist societies and to understand political dynamics accordingly. Instead it has dismissed any economic assessment of class as failed Marxist dogma and has concentrated on the politics of individual responsibility, self-realization and empowerment common to liberal ideology.

At the end of its period of radicalization, the Green Movement remains a reformist movement which has only succeeded in promoting 'environmentally friendly' products, raising the environmental question briefly and confusing the working class with its pious morality. As the failure of the Greens to transform society becomes evident, the radicals are leaving. If the Green movement follows the course of its predecessor, the peace movement, the departure will accelerate during the next few years and the movement will quickly and quietly return to its traditional roots. We are left with the green legacy of fear of over-population, the subordination of women into domestic 'earth mothers' and a sense of impending doom. Whether another 'radical' liberal movement will emerge from the ashes is uncertain as the impetus for liberal politics has been lessened by the ideological and military victories of the Right in eastern Europe and the Middle East. However, old habits die hard and the radical middle classes will undoubtedly try to seek out and organize around another 'worthy cause', picking up where the Greens have left off. The present strength of the right will surely mean that this will meet with less success than the past decade's 'Green Revolution'.

¹ Carson, 1982. p68.

² q. in David Icke, *It Doesn't Have to be like This - Green Politics Explained* (1990) p201.

³ [The Club of Rome's first report, *The Limits to Growth*, was published in 1973, and provided the foundation for many environmental groups whose concerns it legitimized. *The First Global Revolution* is the sequel to this report and concentrates on outlining 'a sustainable vision for the future'.

⁴ Caroline Lucas, opening speech to Green Party Conference Wolverhampton, September 20 1991.

⁵ *Seeing Green* p48.

⁶ *Building the Green Movement* p109, Interview for *Lower Saxony Grune Information*. 1983

⁷ Parkins' idea comes from a letter to Green Party members asking them to support the *Green 2000* motion at the 1991 Annual Conference in Wolverhampton. In it she divides the Green movement into four distinct factions: Pressure Groups working on all political parties; Lifestylers who practice a 'green' or 'alternative' way of life; Moles influencing from within; and the Green Party, the political wing standing at elections.

⁸ *Seeing Green* p190.

⁹ Restrictions on immigrations is a contentious issue for Greens; right wing environmentalists argue that immigration is undesirable because of the need for small, stable self-sufficient communities. More radical greens recognize the reactionary nature of such sentiments and the Green Party passed a motion at this year's conference which stressed the need to focus on the cause of widespread migration rather than excessive restrictions through border controls.

¹⁰ Answer to a question as to whether the Green Party would enforce population controls if voluntary methods failed, posed at the 1991 Conference during hustings for elections of six candidates for positions as national speakers of the Party].

¹¹ *Our Common Future; the Third World Commission on Environment and Development* p112.

¹² Singh, preface to the 3rd edition, 1989.

¹³ 'Extinguishing the fires, not the fears'. *Environment Guardian* Nov. 8 1991.

¹⁴ 31st January 1991. The *Question Time* panel included Edward Heath, Max Hastings, and John Smith. The main topic of discussion was the Gulf War and there was some conflict between Mr. Heath and Max Hastings about the causes of the war. Mr. Heath made his surprising stance on imperialism which upset Max Hastings who resorted to propaganda describing the evil machinations of Saddam Hussein. Sara Parkin and John Smith were very much on the sidelines and could only offer obscure references to environmental degradation.

¹⁵ Martin J. Weiner, 1985. p111

¹⁶ Opening Speech to Green Party Conference Wolverhampton, September 20 1991

¹⁷ Hulsberg, 1988, p142

¹⁸ Rudolph Bahro's letter of resignation to Die Grünen, 19th June 1985 from *Building the Green Movement*, p205

¹⁹ *Catastrophe or Cornucopia*, p72

²⁰ For a list of environmental groups in Britain see, P. Lowe and J. Goyder, *Environmental Groups in politics*.

²¹ Interview, *Living Marxism*, Feb. 1989.

²² *idem*

²³ Treasurer's Report for the financial year 1.4.90 to 31.3.91 published in the *Final Agenda for the Green Party Autumn Conference 1991*, Wolverhampton.

²⁴ Membership currently stands around the 10,500 level compared with nearly 17,000 one year ago.

²⁵ Alex Craig, member at conference speaking against Green 2000.

²⁶ Mike Woodin, Green Party Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Oxford West and Abingdon, speaking during the debate on Green 2000

²⁷ Stephen Games, member speaking in favour of Green 2000 at conference.

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For most on the Left, Cuba is the last bastion of Communism.

Francisco Gonzalez questions whether Cuba was ever socialist.

Socialism or Nationalism?

For the foreigner who ventures out of the protective cocoon of Cuba's 'tourist areas', attempting to buy one of Havana's famous *Coppelia* ice creams is often the first experience which raises suspicions that something is seriously wrong. If you only have dollars you are doomed. The manager must be summoned, for only he is authorised to handle foreign exchange. He is a worker himself and must change out of his overalls so that he may attend to business in his other capacity - from another window. As there are so few dollar purchases the appropriate receipt form cannot be found. Illegal possession of dollars can result in several years in prison. Eventually common sense prevails, something which blesses the transaction with legality is signed, and one can join the queue. On Saturday nights hundreds of boisterous youngsters join a snake stretching several blocks. They joke, tease, shout and give the police a hard time. La Coppelia, a small rectangle of park land overshadowed by the Havana Libre, once the Havana Hilton, is the capital's downtown rendez-vous. The ice cream facility is the product of the regime's commitment to provide, at an accessible price, what little luxuries can be offered. Few governments can boast an ice cream policy. Today, harassed, alienated and voiceless youth gather at Coppelia to make, by sheer numbers and the colour of their clothes, a collective and defiant gesture. Their presence is a weekly demonstration in a country where even the wrong 'attitude' will cause the police to open a file on you.

Meanwhile, patience does not bring ice cream, but a tattered chit which entitles the frustrated bearer to join an-

other queue where he can finally lay his hands on the desired product. Marx would have been intrigued by this novel form of circulation of commodities, M-queue- chit-queue-C. If you want to eat your ice cream sitting down, you must queue again. Behind each bar stool stands a dozen or so impatient people, making it impossible for the incumbent to gratify his delayed pleasure. Neither poverty nor the American embargo explain this idiotic arrangement. "In the name of socialism we nationalised ice-cream vendors" - complains Cuban sociologist Juan Valdes - "Now these same ice-cream vendors are encouraging people to question socialism itself." Jose Maria Delgado, a master confectioner who joined Castro in the early days and worked his way up to senior journalist on Granma, the regime's broad sheet, blames the past. "In every country the ruling class exploits, - he told me - but in your country the Minister of Education does not go to the National Bank with a suitcase and take away the education budget. The Defence Minister does not drive around the capital emptying the contents of

Even marxists with a more critical attitude are stumped by Cuba's many contradictions. Everything about Cuba is both good and bad, every question has a 'yes, but no' answer

parking meters into the boot of his car. That sort of thing leaves a cultural legacy in which such stupidities persist". One thing is certain, the ice cream is superb, and here the paradoxes begin.

It is not easy to criticise Cuba. Only a humourless bigot could resist being seduced by a plucky little island willing to take on the The Empire, by the obvious sincerity of 'los barbudos', by Fidel's charismatic personality, by the dedication, selflessness and internationalism of Che. For a generation of radicals and revolutionaries this *simpatico* socialism in the sun, with its informal style and creativity, seemed a refreshing antidote to the grey monolithic Stalinism of the Eastern Block.

Even marxists with a more critical attitude are stumped by Cuba's many contradictions. Everything about Cuba is both good and bad, every question has a 'yes, but no' answer. It is useful to start by briefly examining three areas which are common to most discussions on Cuba; living standards, foreign policy and democratic rights.

Living Standards

The standard of living of ordinary people is far higher than in any other Third World country and some of Cuba's social services are better than in many developed countries. The average Cuban's diet is unbearably boring as the bureaucracy's inability to organise proper transport means food production concentrates on non-perishables. Yet there is no hunger or malnutrition. The health service is superb. Primary health care is generally better than in Britain, and Cuba can be justly proud of its rural doctor network. Life expectancy is 72

years, trailing Britain by only one year. Almost every Cuban below the age of 30 can read and write. These are no mean achievements, particularly for a country which only 30 years ago was shamed by the highest infant mortality and illiteracy rates in Latin America.

Yes, but no. Such welfare programmes are the flipside of a paternalist system in which basic popular needs are catered for in return for total exclusion from any real decision making, which is the exclusive preserve of the nationalist middle classes and the state bureaucracy. In addition, such gains are not the product of Cuban 'socialism' since there has been no substantial growth in productivity nor expansion of the economy. Neither can they be accounted for by a redistribution of wealth. Without massive Soviet subsidies - bankrolling the Cuban economy to nearly 40% of its GNP - prestigious welfare projects could not have been possible and Cuba would have degenerated into a poverty-stricken dictatorship by the mid-1970's. Now that Soviet aid is rapidly dwindling, the welfare system is collapsing. Child mortality is increasing, and Cuba has been criticised for refusing to accept medical aid from the United Nations. In short, Cuba is not a viable social system

No, but yes. Many other nations have received large funds and have done nothing for their people. It is undeniable that the advances in popular welfare have also been the product of a genuine commitment by the Castro regime.

Foreign Policy

Cuba has always prided itself on being internationalist, and the Cuban nationalist middle class has always declared a Pan-Latinist commitment. Like many of its Latin-American nationalist counterparts, Cuba has a history of aiding liberation movements. During the 1960's and 1970's, Cuba aided guerrilla movements in Latin America, particularly in Venezuela and Guatemala, and thousands of revolutionaries on the run have found sanctuary in Cuba. However, such gestures were only prominent while Cuba struggled to protect her revolution. After the Missile Crisis in 1962, Cuban foreign policy slowly became as hard-headed and calculating as that of any small nation at the mercy of a world-dominating power.

The secret American-Soviet agreement that followed the Missile Crisis put an end to Cuba's Latin American ambitions, apart from the rhetoric. The agreement guaranteed Cuba's safety from US invasion (though not harass-

ment) in return for a Soviet undertaking that Cuba would be kept out of her beloved Latin America. As a result Cuba was to lose Che Guevara to Bolivia and Castro found an 'Africanist' vocation. Cuba's involvement in the continent is no more than acting as a subcontractor for Soviet foreign policy, providing a range of services from troops to 'good will' medical programmes. Cuba is paid so that Russian boys won't have to do the sweating, fighting and dying. *New York Times* journalist James Brooke explains why, "In contrast to Cubans, the Russians in Angola are poor mixers... a Russian military adviser, his slavish face ruddy and creased from the tropical sun, talked guardedly about his assignment. He came here two years ago. No, he had not learned Portuguese - there were always translators wherever he went. Meetings with Cuban, Angolan and East German comrades were conducted in Russian because the East Germans had not learned Portuguese, either. When asked if Angola was Russia's Vietnam, he laughed and replied: "No, the Russians aren't doing the fighting here."²

A gulf between rhetoric and reality characterises all Cuba's foreign policy initiatives, as it does with most radical Third World nations. Che Guevara's internationalism is no more part of Cuban reality than the image of a sherry-sipping ambassador is part of British foreign policy - just an entertaining mythology. To take a more recent example, while Castro bluffed and blustered about repudiating the debt, his officials continued to negotiate with western bankers - just like Peru's Alan Garcia.

Nevertheless, it is important not to be too judgmental. Nothing illustrates the humiliation of being a poor and oppressed nation more bitterly than the fact that Cuba does not even have the ability to aid its poorer partners. Grand gestures are the prerogative of the rich, who can clown around in red noses or colourful T-shirts while pretending to help others. Cuba's inability to live up to its claims is nothing compared to the *grotesquerie* which the West calls 'charity'.

Cuba is exhausted, and its people are tired of the endless succession of internationalist campaigns. People worry about their families and about the impossibility of finding those small luxuries, such as proper soap and toilet paper, which make life bearable. And yet, how many times is the foreigner, on introducing himself, confronted with the same story, 'Ah, my son is also abroad. He is a doctor in such and such

The gains of the revolution are not the product of Cuban 'socialism' since there has been no substantial growth in productivity nor expansion of the economy. Without the massive Soviet subsidies, prestigious welfare projects could not have been possible and Cuba would have degenerated into a poverty stricken dictatorship. In short, Cuba is not a viable social system

a place'. Out comes the crumpled photograph, 'This is him. And that's the medical centre. He helped build that himself, because there was nothing there when they went, you know.' There is a genuine pride here that no propaganda machine could generate.

State Repression

While the possibility of substantially raising the living standards is limited and there is very little that Cuba can do in the international arena, the systematic denial of basic human and democratic rights is less easy to explain away, and exposes the true nature of the Castro regime. Put simply, there is no democracy in Cuba. *Poder Popular* is a pantomime. At the top, the antics of a colourful *Maximo Lider* may entertain western radicals with an appetite for Third World messianism, but these are only expressions of the total usurpation of the working class' ability to do anything for itself. Far from being an embodiment of the ideals of the Revolution the Fidel cult is the lobotomy of the working class - something that can only be instinctively repulsive to a marxist. At the bottom, a thoroughly atomised and confused working class has been robbed of every political expression. Even that seminal political consciousness of a worker - a culture of rebellion - has been taken away through the fake 'rebelliousness' marketed by the Regime. This is a country where the bureaucracy even invents the jokes

Far from being the embodiment of the ideals of the Revolution, the Fidel Cult is the lobotomy of the working class - something that can only be repulsive to a Marxist

about the bureaucracy. As a result, the working class responds in the only way it can; absenteeism, petty crime and acts which the Regime calls anti-social behaviour.

Cuba has one of the highest prison populations in the world - one out of 340 Cubans is in some kind of penal institution (1 in 1270 in the UK). Around half of Cuban males under the age of 20 have a criminal record or are 'known to the police' for rowdiness, talking to foreigners, or 'attitude' problems. But the repressive nature of the Cuban regime is more fully demonstrated not by the enormous size of the prison population but by the fact that real crime - in terms of robbery, organized theft, serious violence, rape and murder - is very low. And yet Cuban policeman routinely carry a revolver, an aerosol teargas canister and an electric truncheon (made in China) which delivers a high voltage capable of producing an immobilizing stun. This is a country where theft from clothes lines is officially identified as 'a major problem' and corner-shop robberies are front page news. Everyday policing in Cuba does not require such equipment - Israel and South Africa are among the few countries which have such equipment as standard issue. However, it does illustrate how the bureaucracy sees its relationship with the working class.

The type of harmless and isolated dissidents which Cuba locks up is indicative of the repressive nature of the Castro Regime: poets, novelists, christians and human rights activists

Cuba has very few political prisoners (around 400), largely because political backwardness and confusion prevents organized contestation. But the type of harmless and isolated dissidents which Cuba locks up is indicative of the repressive nature of the Castro Regime; poets such as Manuel Diaz Martinez, a longstanding communist socialist and friend of communist poets such as Eduardo Gallego and Raphael Alberti; novelists, christians and human rights activists. Some of these people may have a liberal concept of individual rights, some may favour a return of market relations in food production and retailing etc, but they are neither working for the destruction of existing social ideals nor for a return of imperialism, nor are they in the pay of the CIA. The 'Revolution' is not in danger. In Cuba there is none of the enthusiasm for capitalism and Thatcher worship that is characteristic of eastern Europe. Most people, including most dissidents, simply want to reform the existing system, or see minor changes such as religious or artistic freedom. A system that cannot accommodate such people is defunct. The bureaucracy is unable to tolerate even the idea of dissent.

The repressive paranoia of the Castro regime effects every aspect of life. For example, the state TV network has a special channel for tourists to inform them of tourist attractions and provide some amusement in the absence of an entertainment industry. The broadcast is encoded - at much cost - so that ordinary Cubans cannot receive the signal. One wonders what kind of a security threat is posed by naff adverts for tourist resorts and pirated Hollywood movies. It is illegal to listen to foreign radio stations (which all Cubans do), and foreign newspapers - particularly Soviet ones - are impossible to buy. There is a law against using lifts in public buildings while food is being transported for fear of poisonings. While one government department will refuse to give you information and statistics, another will pester you to subscribe to its monthly publication which carries the same information. The Cuban telephone system is designed so that all local calls are routed through Havana, ostensibly as a precautionary measure against invasion, but even the Cuban contras must have figured out that an invasion which relies on the Cuban telephone system is likely to end up like the Bay of Pigs fiasco.

And again, yes, but no. While Cuba has many of the trappings of a Third World dictatorship, it is far from being one. Justice is rough and ready, but there are no brutal beatings, no syste-

matic torture, no generalized terror, no death squads. The Cuban police, though agents of a repressive state, are courteous and try to interfere as little as possible. Indeed, it is uncanny to deal with a police force that is not bullying and abusive. While fear of speaking out is almost universal - mostly a fear of social disapproval - there is a total absence of a culture of violence. Even the everyday aggressiveness and rudeness that the average Londoner would find 'normal' is absent. The regime rules by the confusion and demoralization of the working class, not by violence.

The Revolution

The contradictions raised by this sketch show that an impressionistic analysis of the Cuban Revolution will lead to few useful conclusions. Such an approach can only lead to either the supportive sycophancy which western liberals and radicals call 'solidarity', or the reactionary rantings of the Right. The absence of democracy in Cuba cannot be explained away as the inevitable product of backwardness, as something which the Cubans themselves must work on, without pompous foreign interference. Nor can criticism be dismissed as simply an attempt to impose inappropriate 'western' notions of political rights on Third World nations. When such experiments turn sour, the uncritical adherents of 'socialism' turn into very nasty anti-communists.

Neither can a critique of the Cuban Revolution be reduced to the question of individual rights. A critique of political rights abstracted from specific historical or social circumstances is pointless and leads only to conservatism and intellectual smugness. For revolutionary communists, democracy is not a 'human value' that transcends social circumstance but simply a practical problem. Experience has shown that democracy and participation are by far the most efficient forms of social organization, whether the aim is to raise the political consciousness of the working class or to create the most favourable conditions for the development of a socialist society. If this is true of advanced western societies, it is more so of industrially backward nations where people must learn quickly without the benefits of a modern cultural heritage.

There can be little doubt that the Castro Regime is finished. Even if Castro is able to pull a trick at the eleventh hour - and we should not underestimate his tenacity for survival - Cuba will never again be the same.

The object of this article is to explain the nature of the Castro Regime. Its proposition is this; quite apart from the

Cuba has not, and could not, create a socialist society because the 1959 Revolution was neither socialist nor the product of working class involvement. The demise of Castro's Cuba should not be mourned as yet another failure of Socialism

impossibility of building socialism-on-one-island and the American imposed embargo, Cuba has not, and could not, live up to the expectations of creating a socialist society because the 1959 Revolution was neither socialist nor the product of working class involvement. The demise of Castro's Cuba should therefore not be mourned as yet another failure of Socialism.

1. CUBAN NATIONALISM

The 26th July Movement

As revolutionary rehearsals go, the attack on the Moncada Barracks on 26th July 1953 was a singular flop. From a military point of view it was a badly organized and hopeless mission. While the museum display which is now housed at the barracks makes much of the assault, the still visible bullet holes bear testimony to a bungled and amateurish escapade. Some of the insurgents had second thoughts, others turned up late, or worse still, shot their bolt too early. The insurgents' political programme - if it could be called that - was replete with the vague but strident terms that characterize most Third World nationalist declarations, 'total and definitive social justice', 'absolute and reverent respect' for the 1940 Constitution, etc.

Nevertheless, one aspect of the Moncada raid towered above its failures; it gave notice that there was a faction of Cuba's nationalist movement which would no longer be held back by interminable party wrangles or plaintive salon discussions, and was prepared to take up arms for Cuba's freedom if necessary. Castro's skilful use of the subsequent trial placed the 26th of July Movement at the head of the nationalist struggle. However, while the Movement gained support and prestige, its political outlook remained undefined. In the concluding speech at his trial, which was later published as 'History Will Absolve Me', Castro declared the movement to be 'built on the principles of the social functions of property and of man's inalienable right to that decent living which large vested interests have prevented him from realizing fully.'

Sierra Maestra

After 2 years in Mexican exile, where Castro met Che Guevara, the 26th July Movement returned to Cuba aboard the pleasure cruiser *Granma* in December 1956. The ill-fated 80-man expedition was planned as part of an insurrection which would start in the traditionally rebellious province of Oriente, in the Eastern tip of the island, and would ignite the whole country. Again bad luck and bad organization - due to lack of political cohesion - led to failure, and the *Granma* revolutionaries had to beat a hasty retreat to the Maestra mountain range which dominates much of Oriente province. For two years, Castro's men lived a precarious existence and for a time their numbers were reduced to a mere 12 men. However by 1958, the insurgents were able to consolidate a base for operations from which to inflict significant defeats on Batista's army.

It was during the Sierra Maestra years that Castro and his men were supposed to have developed their political ideas. Castro had been a follower of Eduardo Chibas' Partido Ortodoxo, a middle class nationalist organization. When Cuba took a decisive turn towards the Soviet Union in the 1970s, party historians attempted to 'Marxist-Leninize' the period. Castro was supposed to have made a study of Marx and Lenin, and long fire-side discussions on Marxist doctrine are reported to have taken place. In 1975, Castro declared that 'Even though this [marxism] was not the way of thinking of all those who had embarked upon the road of revolutionary armed struggle in our country, it was that of its main leaders.'³

Hard evidence is conveniently scant and those accounts of the period that do exist are very contradictory. If anything, the level of defections and the ease with which new guerrilla recruits became demoralized suggests a low level of political discussion and training. Castro has attempted to explain the absence of socialist ideas during the Sierra Maestra period by claiming that his adherence was covert, 'the proclamation of socialism during the period of insurrectional struggle would not have been understood by the people, and im-

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the proclamation of socialism during the period of insurrectional struggle would not have been understood by the people

True, the extension of government ownership to certain public utilities, such as US power companies, was a point of our earliest programmes; but we have suspended all planning on this matter.

Even more important, any attempt at wholesale nationalization would hamper our principal point - industrialization at the fastest possible rate
Castro

perialism would have directly intervened in our country with its troops.¹⁴ The irony of this squalid statement is that when Castro was faced with foreign intervention he was forced to woo the support of the masses with an ideology which presumably they did not understand.

In 1956, Herbert Mathews, the veteran *New York Times* journalist who had reported the Spanish Civil War, told his American readers after a celebrated interview with the revolutionaries of Sierra Maestra, 'their programme is vague and couched in generalities, but it amounts to a new deal for Cuba, radical, democratic and therefore anti-Communist.'¹⁵ The following year the insurgents issued a *Manifesto of the Sierra Maestra*, signed jointly with Eduardo Chibas and Felipe Pazos, ex-president of the National Bank of Cuba who was later to be finance minister in 1959 and subsequently a virulent anti-communist. The *Manifesto* went no further than to call for the basic institutional structure of a modern liberal

democratic society, except for granting tenure to peasants squatting the land of absentee landlords.

In 1958, barely a year before the Revolution, Castro was telling the American press, 'we have no plans for the expropriation or nationalization of foreign investments. True, the extension of government ownership to certain public utilities - some of them, such as the power companies, US-owned - was a point of our earliest programmes; but we have currently suspended all planning on this matter. I personally have come to feel that nationalization is, at best, a cumbersome instrument. It does not make the State any stronger and it enfeebles private enterprise. Even more important, any attempt at wholesale nationalization would obviously hamper the principal point of our economic platform - industrialization at the fastest possible rate. For this purpose, foreign investments will always be welcome and secure here.'¹⁶

This is not to suggest that nationalization is socialism, but in the context of the 'recognition of the social function of property', of the systematic vagueness of much of the 26th of July Movement's politics, etc, there are strong indications that whatever policies were developed at Sierra Maestra, they did not go beyond the framework of traditional Latin American petit-bourgeois nationalism. Their banner was Patriotism, not Socialism, and their political programme was liberal, not socialist. In essence, what the Movement wanted was not a radical change in the socio-economic structure of Cuba, but to liberate her from colonialism as a prelude to rapid capitalist industrialization. As such, the 1959 Revolution was to have more in common with Nasser's nationalist, anti-colonial revolution than with the Bolsheviks in 1917.

Though the Revolution was to have the genuine support of the rural and urban working class - and there is no doubt that the Revolution was immensely popular - it was dominated by a hotch-potch of middle class nationalist groupings and activists who understood popular mobilization only in terms of passive support, a cover for military operations, or as the final phase of a revolutionary anti-colonial war. The first cabinet of the Revolution included president Manuel Urrutia, an honest but liberal-minded judge, prime minister Jose Miro Cardona, a lawyer and head of the Havana Bar Association, foreign minister Roberto Agramonte, a member of the liberal Ortodoxo Party, and finance minister Felipe Pazos, ex-president of the National Bank. Within 14 months of coming to power every one

of these men would defect to the US and become a Cuban 'contra'. As in the case of the Sandinistas of Nicaragua and the New Jewel Movement in Grenada, - all petit-bourgeois nationalist revolutions parading as socialist - the most ferocious opponents of the Cuban revolution were to come from its own ranks. Such reversals were not the product of some mystical historical law - the revolution devours its own - but arose out of the contradictory nature of a petit-bourgeois nationalist movement needing popular support: adherence to 'socialism' while it only means embetterment, but fearful of the working class; antagonistic towards imperialism, but always ready to accommodate to it.

End of the Batista Regime

While the Cuban nationalist middle classes had always been one of the most sophisticated in Latin America, the feeble-mindedness of the pro-imperialist upper classes was, and remains, proverbial. Imperialism had made them totally dependent on the United States; economically, politically and even psychologically. By the end of the 1950's, the Batista dictatorship's grip on the country was rapidly disintegrating as corruption and repression alienated more and more sections of the bourgeoisie. Assassinations, torture and bombings became daily occurrences. By 1958, the Batista army abandoned any serious attempt to flush Castro out of Sierra Maestra and receded into the safety of barracks in the large towns. If it engaged in any operations at all, it was to harass, plunder or terrorise defenceless peasants. Once violence and intimidation ceased to keep down a rising tide of strikes and protests, the Cuban bourgeoisie simply lost its bottle and decamped.

Unlike the Russian Revolution of 1917, which involved nine months of intense and constant political conflict, which touched every section of society, and which saw one political option after another rise and fall before the working class decided to take matters into its own hands, the Cuban Revolution was a series of raids on barracks which crippled the Batista Dictatorship's ability to defend itself, and a series of subsequent mass demonstrations and strikes which informed the upper classes that the game was up.

When Castro and his men entered Havana it was a celebration, not a takeover. In fact, Castro took care to give the upper classes ample time to vacate the capital and ensured that the sight of intimidating, bearded revolutionaries did not deter people wanting to make a

Though the Revolution was to have the genuine support of the working class, it was dominated by a hotch-potch of middle class nationalist groupings and activists who understood popular mobilization only in terms of passive support, a cover for military operations, or the final phase of an anti-colonial war

dash for the airport. Though Che's claim that the Batista Dictatorship collapsed under the weight of its own corruption and required little revolutionary intervention is somewhat of an exaggeration - and the efforts of the insurgency should not be belittled - it does underline a significant aspect of the 1959 Revolution. The Cuban Revolution was not the product of a political movement of the working classes but a series of 'actions' undertaken by predominantly middle class groups with the support of what Latin American politicians call a '*movimiento cívico*'; the popular classes mobilised as involved spectators in a radical but reformist mood. No popular class organization, either in terms of political parties or rudimentary organizations of class democracy or action, played any significant role in the Revolution and this absence is so obvious that even the 'creativity' of Castro's official historians have been unable to invent a proletarian past that never was.

This had profound consequences for the post-revolutionary situation. As Janette Habel admits, it was 'the speed of military victory and the effectiveness of a limited number of guerrillas, whose dynamism lay in their example and initiative' that conditioned the nature of the regime. 'The absence of a party, of a programme, of political conflicts, as well as of a tradition of working with the masses did not predispose the 26th of July Movement to an apprenticeship of political democracy.' In other words, it was not only that the revolution was led by a nationalist middle class with its own agenda, *but also the manner in which it was carried out*, that conditioned the nature of the subsequent regime, 'One cannot manage an economy in transition as if one were directing a guerrilla war'⁷

Politics Asserts Itself

'Rapid industrialization' was the one issue which united the different sections of the nationalist petit-bourgeoisie. Unfortunately, 'rapid industrialization' produced two major problems. Firstly, redefining the relationships between social classes in the domestic arena. It is

significant that the Castro regime reinstated the 1940 Constitution and did not dare abrogate it until 1976. Secondly, redefining Cuba's relationship with American imperialism, since no nationalist faction envisaged Cuba developing by itself. Both were highly contentious points. As the popular classes remained enthusiastic spectators they did not pose a serious threat. In the latter case, events were to be dictated by imperialism.

From the beginning, Castro considered that 'industrialization at the fastest possible rate' of an independent Cuba could only be possible with the help of American capital and commerce. Though it may seem ironic Castro, unlike many other Latin American nationalists, has never been anti-American. Castro was convinced that once the parasitical colonial bourgeoisie and its dictatorship had been removed, a new and more productive relationship to benefit both would be established. In April 1959, Castro visited the United States with the aim of arranging a development loan. He met with businessmen, politicians and had cordial conversations with Eisenhower's vice-president Richard Nixon. American multinationals were given assurances that they would not be expropriated or pressured. While the brothels and gambling houses were closed down and the Mafia booted out, the new government was at pains not to discourage American tourism and the first institution created by the Revolution was the National Tourist Office.

However, Castro's eagerness to reassure the US, should not be seen as another just another example of a Third World politician's accommodating zeal. Castro was adamant on one point; Cuban sovereignty would never again be compromised. To the Americans that was as bad, if not worse, than being Communist. It was an unflinching nationalist commitment - not Marxism - which made Castro a revolutionary.

The Limits of Policy

American diplomacy is littered with the regretful memoirs of officials who,

on retirement, have argued that American foreign policy is mistaken, that it should have pursued a more enlightened approach on this or that occasion, that propping up dictators does America no good, and so on.⁸ The consensus today is that the United States should have responded more positively to Castro's overtures, just as it should have listened to that other troublesome petit-bourgeois nationalist, Ho Chi Minh. This would have allowed the US to draw Castro into the American orbit by manipulating his desire to see Cuba modernized. To argue that the US could have acted in a more 'enlightened' way is to ignore the objective limitations of imperialist policy. At the very least, the business of imperialism generates a culture of domination, bullying, racism and arrogance which makes sophisticated alternatives unlikely, though they may seem viable in the abstract. After all, that epitome of sophistication and diplomatic skill, the British Foreign Office, has been just as ready to use force in dealing with such people as the affable Nasser or the feeble Mossadeq, as have 'brutish' Americans. In 1959, at the height of the Cold War and anti-communist hysteria in US domestic politics and with a rising tide of nationalism in Latin America, an 'enlightened' policy was not possible. Castro could not be 'handled' in any other manner but the traditional bullying way. Even before the Revolution, let alone with the nationalizations of American property, US policy had been to persuade Batista to 'capitulate to a caretaker government unfriendly to him but satisfactory to us, which we could immediately recognize and give military assistance to in order that Fidel Castro would not come to power.'⁹

Despite all Castro's assurances and attempts at accommodation, within a few months of the Revolution the Eisenhower administration had decided to destroy an independent Cuba. As the pressure mounted, the impossibility of a negotiated settlement, and the very threat of annihilation, provoked a rapid disintegration of the nationalist coalition that formed revolutionary Cuba's first two governments. The Revolution's initial optimism evaporated.

It was an unflinching nationalist commitment - not Marxism - which made Castro a revolutionary

VERSO

CUBA

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JANETTE HABEL

Translated by Jon Barnes



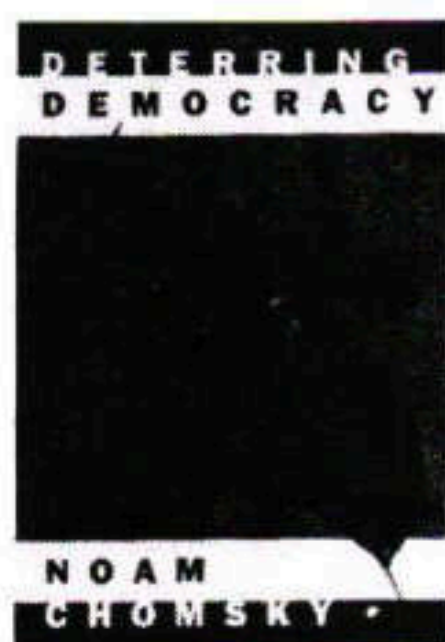
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Nasser minimised class tensions with a potent concoction of nationalism cum socialism - in the form of Pan-Arabic brotherhood - with a heavy dash of charismatic leadership and just a hint of popular participatory structures. Castro did the same.

Nasserism

The more radical sections of the nationalist middle classes, headed by Castro's 26th of July Movement, were faced with a dilemma similar to that which confronted Nasser in the early 1950s; either make concessions to imperialism so as to retain the support of the more conservative or cautious sections of the petit-bourgeoisie - those more prone to the pressure of imperialism and more ready to compromise for 'peace' - or proceed with 'rapid industrialization' by mobilizing the popular classes. This meant concessions to the working class, which, although they could be puffed up with rhetoric, would begin to eat away at the privileges of the middle classes. In particular, agrarian reform raised the vexed question of property rights which could easily provoke a break with significant sections of the middle classes. Jose Miro Cardona, revolutionary Cuba's first prime minister who headed the Revolutionary Council that was to replace Castro after the Bay of Pigs invasion, declared "We emphatically assure those who have been unjustly dispossessed that their assets shall be returned."⁹

In Egypt, Nasser minimised class tensions by developing a potent concoction of nationalism-cum-socialism - in the form of Pan-Arabic 'brotherhood' - with a heavy dash of charismatic leadership and just a hint of popular participatory structures. Castro did the same.

Cuba becomes 'Socialista'

Six months into the Revolution the nationalist consensus began to disintegrate rapidly. In October 1959, the liberal Felipe Pazos was replaced by Guevara as minister at the head of the National Bank (effectively the Treasury). In February 1960, an agreement to supply sugar to the Soviet Union was

signed, giving a clear indication that Cuba intended to break with the US-dominated sugar cartel and go solo. In response to economic sabotage, Castro took control of American-owned sugar mills and oil refineries in July. By the end of 1960, very few foreign owned enterprises had not been nationalized.

On the morning of 16th April 1961, at the gates of Havana's main cemetery, Castro declared that the 1959 Revolution had been socialist. A commemorative plaque now records Castro as having said 'What the imperialists cannot forgive us is having made a socialist revolution under the very noses of the United States.' It is indicative that at its imaginary inception, Cuban 'socialism' could not be defined outside a nationalist framework. Castro could not even bring himself to utter the word 'working class', "This is the Socialist and Democratic Revolution of the humble, with the humble for the humble."¹⁰ More important were the circumstances of Castro's speech; the aptly named Bay of Pigs invasion. The preceding day, US sponsored 'contras' had invaded Cuba and seven people had been killed by air raids. As with every move towards socialization, the proclamation of 'socialism' was the product of external pressure rather than an indigenous development. A popular belief among those who see Cuba as a model of socialist development and who are unwilling to ignore the nature of the 1959 Revolution, is that if Castro was not a socialist in 1959, the Bay of Pigs certainly made him one. The American invasion somehow deflected the revolution from its purely nationalist and liberal course and unleashed the process of socialist reconstruction. This seems a reasonable proposition, at least logically. There is no doubt that like many other nationalist revolutions under attack Castro's regime was forced to broaden its social base. Although 1961 was clearly a turning point, it was mainly in terms of a different development strategy. Like every other nationalist revolution, Cuba did not 'turn' socialist. To understand why it is necessary to look at the structure of Cuba's ruling elite.

Labels

All critical discussion on Cuba soon confronts the problem of defining its class nature, but discussion rarely progresses beyond the trite dichotomy of "it has to be either capitalist or socialist." Camus once declared that he understood the futility of suicide as a symbolic gesture when he realised that society could only comprehend one reason for suicide, and not two. Three la-

bels much favoured by the far Left, 'deformed', 'degenerated' and 'bureaucratic' worker's state, tell us little or nothing. Do workers rule in a deformed manner? Do deformed workers rule? There certainly is a bureaucracy, but to define Cuba as a bureaucratic state, is simply to point to the consequences of frustrated social development, not a social system. Since no amount of fiddling with Cuban history will unearth a period when the popular classes were firmly in the saddle, any term which includes 'workers' is false. To see Cuba as 'state capitalist' is plainly ridiculous. The term 'Stalinist' at least gives much of the flavour of the regime, but is a misused, superficial and 'sociological' expression.

It might be useful to examine the different components of Cuba's ruling elite.

2. THE CUBAN RULING CLASS

The impossibility of re-negotiating the terms of domination with the US dashed Cuba's hopes of accelerated capitalist development. Once this, and the social consequences of the first attacks of imperialism became apparent, the more commercially inclined sections of the petit-bourgeois began to pack their bags. Their departure left the 1959 regime's 'ruling circles' - for want of a more scientific term - with three main factions.

The 26th July Movement

At the top are the original members of the 26th July Movement upon which the rigours of the guerrilla struggle exerted a 'natural selection' which left only the best - the most altruistic and ideologically motivated. The primary motivation of this group is still the industrialization of an independent Cuba within the context of a Latin American economic concert. In frustration, it is inclined towards 'socialism in one country', though Cuban reality will not permit it.

The Bureaucracy

The 26th July Movement has proved too narrow a base for the regime. As the nationalization of the Cuban economy proceeded, the old Communist Party and the remnants of nationalist parties and associations slowly formed themselves into the state bureaucracy. It should be noted that the nature of the communist parties in most Latin American countries is very different to that of the CP in Britain. For most of its adult life, the CPGB has been little more than a faction of the labour bureaucracy, and a conservative one at that. In Cuba, the Partido Socialista Party, as the Stalinists preferred to call themselves, was pre-

All critical discussions on Cuba soon confront the problem of defining its class nature, but discussion rarely progresses beyond the trite dichotomy of "it has to be either capitalist or socialist."

dominantly a party of the nationalist but 'un-propertied' middle classes, buttressed by a union bureaucracy. The nationalization of the Cuban economy was a godsend to Cuba's Stalinists, particularly after their despicable role in collaborating with the Batista regime. The PSP had the necessary skills and influence to become the new state bureaucracy. This faction is said to be 'pro-soviet' although this expresses no particular ideological allegiance except that the Soviet model and involvement with the Soviet Union best suits its interests. The political agenda of this group is to have no political agenda since this would only obstruct its main aim - to guarantee its own privileges and survival. This faction is highly prone to corruption. The bureaucracy now believes that the restoration of capital is the only way to ensure its survival. To talk of Cuba as the last bastion of Communism is therefore doubly mistaken. It is neither a reality, nor a desire.

The Professional Middle Class

Finally, there is the 'professional middle class' - again an imprecise and deficient term - largely found in academia, scientific research, the manage-

The bureaucracy now believes that the restoration of capital is the only way to ensure its survival. To talk of Cuba as the last bastion of Communism is therefore doubly mistaken. It is neither a reality, nor a desire.

ment and supervision of welfare provision, the arts, etc. The Revolution affected this class in different ways. Some, like novelist Infante Cabrera, defected to the West. Others, who found the disturbances of 'socialism' and political hubbub in general unbearable and demoralizing, receded into a personal world frozen since 1959. Many of these people are still alive, providing a spooky glimpse of a bygone age. But in the main, the liberal intelligentsia has been amongst the most sturdy supporters of the regime. For the Latin American liberal intelligentsia, 'socialism' means all the ideals of the Enlightenment, and the regime has lived up to that - until now. Though the regime has not given it any real power, the ideological and liberal middle classes are subject to constant praise, adulation, prizes for distinguished work, touching little commemorative ceremonies, and of course, the privilege to work in one's own chosen field.

3. CLASS COHESION

It is obvious that by itself this is a rather flimsy social formation for a ruling class, and one prone to instability. There are three factors which keep this disparate *menagerie* together.

Fear of the Working Class

Nothing keeps a ruling elite together like a common fear of the workers, - particularly in a country where the working class has few genuine channels of expression and is therefore liable to spring nasty surprises. For the 'old guerrillas', whose central task is the domestic and international security of the revolution, the working class is a backward and unpredictable element which cannot be trusted on its own. The system cannot afford mistakes. For the bureaucracy, whose essential task is to manage the economy, the workers are an unwilling mass who must be constantly prodded and cajoled. For the liberal intelligentsia, the workers are at best the passive and distant objects of its life's work, but more often just a painful reminder of backwardness and the humiliation of living in an underdeveloped country.

The Fidel Personality Cult

Fidel is the pivot around which everything in Cuba turns. A hefty tome could not deal adequately with the role Castro plays in Cuban politics and life, and only those aspects narrowly related to this article will be touched upon.

The Fidel cult is omnipresent, yet it is not exactly a personality cult in the sense of the Stalin, Nasser, Hoxha and Ceaucescu cults. Firstly, Castro did

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Castro's hold over the working class keeps all sections of the ruling elite in business and in turn allows Castro to act as arbiter. The more the working classes suffer the consequence of the bureaucracy, the more they hope that the benevolent father will sort out *los burocratas*

carry out a revolution. Secondly, Cubans are quite able to distinguish between the human figure and the political one. It is this which gives the 'cult' its political power. Castro is the institutionalization of a particular concept of governance.

Janette Habel, like many critical socialists who recognise that there is a 'problem' with Castro, argues in favour of Che Guevara's concept of socialism which, being more inclined towards humanism, might have provided an antidote to both the Fidel cult and the bureaucracy. Yet Guevara's attitude to Fidel's role exemplified the problem. His famous essay '*Man and Socialism in Cuba*', considered a statement of the humanist values of the Revolution, approvingly describes Fidel's role in the following terms. "It is true that the mass follows its leaders, especially Fidel Castro, without hesitation, but the degree to which he has earned such confidence is due precisely to the consummate interpretation of the people's desires and aspirations... with incomparable enthusiasm and discipline, the mass carries out the task set by the government whatever their nature: economic, cultural, defence, sports, etc. The initiative generally comes from Fidel or the high command of the revolution: It is explained to the people, who make it their own. At times local experiences are taken up by the party and the government and are thereby generalized, following the same example" While Che admits that such a relationship is 'not sufficient to ensure a sequence of sensible measures, Fidel's personality forms a bridge between the leadership and the masses, 'Fidel is a past master at this; his particular mode of integration with the people can only be appreciated by seeing him in action. In the big public meetings one can observe something like the dialogue of two tuning forks whose vibrations summon forth new vibrations each in the other. Fidel and the mass begin to vibrate in a dialogue of growing intensity which reaches its culminating point in an abrupt ending crowned by our victorious battle cry.'¹¹

That this substitutionist concept of leadership has nothing to do with so-

cialist democracy, or humanism, is beside the point. Castro's hold over the working class keeps all sections of the ruling elite in business - particularly the bureaucracy - and in turn allows Castro to act as arbiter. The more the working classes suffer the consequence of the bureaucracy, the more they hope that the benevolent father will sort out '*los burocratas*'. Such illusions only deepen the depoliticization of the working class and make it less able to resist the bureaucracy. So, although the bureaucracy resents the power of Castro and his entourage, and Castro despises the bureaucracy for its incompetence and mendacity, both are forced to rely on each other.

Siege Psychosis and the Embargo

The idea that all Cuba's ills can be explained by the embargo, and that a brighter Socialism could have been built without it - a common theme among apologists for the regime - ignores some of the fundamental problems of Third World development. Other Third World nations have just as little control over the international market. Domestically, Cuba is subject to the same social and political division that have ruined other post-colonial nationalist revolutions.

Of course, this is not to suggest that imperialism is nothing more than an imaginary threat. But 'peaceful' relations with the United States would not see the flowering of Socialism. Firstly, it would smash the artificial cohesion of the regime, which would soon tear itself apart by infighting. Today, even talk of *desbloqueo* is having a corrosive effect as every faction and every bureaucrat looks for opportunities for the future.

The embargo has kept within manageable proportions the tensions within a nationalist movement made up of such diverse constituencies as Christians, radical nationalists, internationalist socialists, romantics, etc - not to mention sectional economic interests. In a sense, all real political discussion has been postponed until that distant day when the embargo ends. Without a repressive siege psychosis, it would become clear that there is no real development programme, just the daily business of sur-

vival. The nature of the regime - its impressive incompetence, the duplicity of every aspect of life, the farce of Poder Popular, the total negation of basic rights, the paternalism - would be exposed.

As a journalist and member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party put it, "The rhetoric of the embargo has got to such proportions that every Tom, Dick and Harry feels justified to use it to conceal whatever level of incompetence he likes. And there is nothing the government can do about it because it's official ideology. It's part of the culture. For example, a few years ago there was a problem with mineral water. The government official responsible responded in the usual way and blamed the embargo. This provoked complaints. The bottles are from the Soviet Union - the water from Cuba! Only incompetence explains that there can be sugar shortages in a country where sugar is half the economy."¹²

Though Cuba has suffered from the embargo, it is important not to exaggerate its economic impact. Firstly, the commercial embargo never took the form of an impenetrable Chinese wall. In fact, Cuba *does* trade with the United States via front companies, particularly from Canada and Spain.

In the early days, exporters demanded a premium for clandestine trade, but since the 1970s the terms of trade have not been very different from those of most small countries with a low volume of business and a bad credit reputation. With regard to exports, the embargo had dramatic disruptive effects in the 1960s. However, other Caribbean economies who have access to the free market have fared substantially worse than Cuba. There is no free market for sugar and Cuba has enjoyed relatively good prices for Comecon sugar exports. Cigars and tobacco products, which account for 15% of GNP, have not been hit by the embargo, though exports are diverted from the US to Europe. In fact, demand outstrips supply and Cuba has to secretly import Bulgarian tobacco as a filler for 'Cuban' cigars, which does little for their longterm reputation.

4. A DISTORTED ECONOMY

The distorted nature of Cuba's political structure has grave consequences for the economy. The three major components of the regime, Castro and his entourage, the bureaucracy and the professional middle class contribute to this deformation in a different way. Those relating to Castro's role are too complex and could not be adequately dealt with here.

The idea that all Cuba's ills can be explained by the embargo, and that a brighter Socialism could have been built without it, ignores some of the fundamental problems of Third World development.

The Bureaucracy and the Economy

A good example of how Cuba's problems go far beyond the embargo is the tourist industry, now the country's biggest dollar earner.

The tourist infrastructure is appallingly mismanaged. The kind of tourism Cuba is able to offer requires good hotel facilities and non-hotel services. In the hotels service is bad. In comparison with other jobs, long, unsociable hours and stricter supervision make hotel work unattractive. Hotel workers are paid marginally more, but workers have no use for paper money for goods that don't exist. In fact the only reason workers are lured into the industry is the possibility of getting dollar tips and access to dollar shops (both prohibited by law). For most there is little opportunity and so turnover is high. It is not surprising that despite extremely cheap labour, costs per hotel bed are higher than in the benchmark industry, Spain. The easiest solution would be to let workers run hotels themselves, allowing them to keep some dollar earnings and permitting access to the dollar shops. The bureaucracy cynically argues that such a policy would advantage certain group of workers. This is true. But the Cuban working class does not demand strict egalitarianism, only that

Constant personal sacrifices require constant collective 'triumphs'. Every day the official press carries news of yet another world break-through in Cuban science or technology.

access to better pay should be fair and based on merit (not on 'connections'). Wage disparities are already widespread and a dollar component is included in the wages of many key workers. The bureaucracy hides behind the pretence of being the custodian of social equality to avoid confronting the issue of worker's control.

Non-hotel facilities are also crucial. Gone are the days when tourists were content with roasting on the beach by day, and getting legless in the hotel bar by night. Tourists now want to know the country they are visiting, and those that visit Cuba - which is not cheap - tend to be sympathetic. The problem is that there are only a few (bad) state run restaurants, cafes, bars, venues or souvenir shops. In Havana, the closest thing to nightlife - apart from the scores of prostitutes - is La Tropicana, a grotesque Carmen Miranda cum Folies Bergères 'tit and bum' show, left over from the 1950s. The tourist dollar shops attached to hotels are full of tack such as fake Pierre Cardin ties and Dior shirts, and those naff seashell ash-trays found in every corner of the globe. Tourists are shunted about like cattle. Contact with Cubans is firmly discouraged (except supervised meetings organised by friendship associations). Chatting to hotel workers elicits disapproving glances from management. There is even a special tourist police to keep tourists and Cubans apart. Tourists can only ride in special taxis which Cubans cannot use.

The result is that tourism to Cuba is a once-only disenchantment. Only 1 in 16 tourists makes a return visit (the average return rate for British tourists to Spain is 9 times).

In the present circumstances tourist services can only be developed by individuals or small private businesses. There are plenty of enterprising Cubans, and no shortage of talent. Would such a development lead to the emergence of a retailing middle class that would threaten the Revolution? Hardly. This is a 'micro-capitalism' which is highly dependent on the state sector and, at most, would not be more threatening than the rampant corruption among bureaucrats in the existing state tourist sector.

Again, the political fragility of the ruling block - both internally and in relation to the working class - does not allow the bureaucracy to permit a controlled amount of petty capitalism which could benefit Cuba during a transitional period.

The end of the embargo will not see a dramatic change in Cuba's economic fortunes.

The Professional Middle Class and the Economy

Constant personal sacrifices require constant collective 'triumphs'. Every day the official press carries news of yet another world break-through in Cuban science or technology. Most of these stories are either entirely bogus, or are to be understood 'metaphorically'. At best they are Cuban adaptations of technology borrowed from abroad. The burden of coming up with a daily miracle falls heavily on the professional middle classes with drastic consequences for the Cuban economy and for science. Two examples illustrate the point.

The Melagenina Fiasco

In 1986, Dr. Miyares of the Calixto Garcia Hospital in central Havana announced that he had found a treatment for vitiligo, a hereditary skin defect that disfigures Black people with white patches due to lack of skin pigment. Cuba marketed a treatment, *Melagenina*, which was based on extracts of human placenta which stimulated melanin pigment production. Promotional leaflets, with 'before and after' photographs, pictured Sarojini Ariyanayagam, a south London woman of Sri Lankan origin showing startling improvements after 3 months of treatment. Both the research announcement and the decision to commercialise were premature.

It was later discovered that no proper (double blind) clinical trials had been carried out as claimed. The treatment was impractical; a malodorous lotion had to be applied to the whole body three times a day. Nevertheless, Cuba started to market the treatment aggressively in Africa, Latin America, and in Britain's Black community. A furious row blew up after the UK Vitiligo Society and a number of local councils organised for a group of children to attend a course of treatment in Cuba. Results proved very unsatisfactory. The treatment seemed to work on Black people from some areas but not others, and required a considerable amount of sunlight to be effective. The woman in the promotional leaflet had in fact been photographed after an intensive 6 month stay in Cuba. The vitiligo fiasco was the inevitable product of a scientific community under considerable pressure to produce both miracles and hard currency.

Castro's mania for scientific and technological achievement is damaging the economy. A developing country simply cannot permit itself the luxury of prestigious projects and experimentation. Does Cuba really need to spend millions of dollars on an Interferon programme rather than sorting out the production of low-tech ironmongery?

has led brain cells to lose their capacity to reproduce a few months after birth. In 1987 Cuban doctors claimed they had found a treatment for degenerative brain diseases such as Parkinson's disease by implanting foetal brain cells which were still reproducing. Operations were carried out at CIMEC, a top facility used by the bureaucracy. Cuba seemed to have scored twice when the Reagan Administration banned such operations under pressure from the 'sanctity of life' lobby.

The real story is somewhat different. A Swedish doctor, Anders Bjorklund, had pioneered the technique in Lund. After a series of tests he came to the conclusion that to be viable foetal brain transplants needed a great deal more research. In 1987, Ignacio Madrazo, a Mexican doctor, claimed to have performed the same operation, but with spectacular results. Madrazo began to market the expensive operations at his private clinic. The neurological community were puzzled. The *New Scientist* commented that "many teams of neurologists and surgeons have repeated the procedure, especially in the US. None has claimed as much success as Madrazo."¹³ Shortly after Madrazo's announcement, Cuba announced it had developed its own technique, with little public acknowledgement of previous research or the speculative nature of the treatment.

The Cuban press has also claimed for Cuba such advances as radial keratotomy, an optical micro-surgery technique which cures myopia, pioneered by the world famous (outside Cuba)

Professor Fyodorov at the Moscow Institute of Eye Microsurgery. It was at this Institute that many of the Cuban eye surgeons were in fact trained. There is no doubt that Cuba's research programme has had some impressive results for such a small and backward country. But as a legitimising propaganda institution at the service of the Castro regime, it has had as many failures as successes.

A Question of Priorities

Castro's mania for scientific and technological achievement is also damaging Cuba's economic prospects. Vast amounts of money have been spent establishing a research structure in the hope that this will give Cuba a strategic advantage, providing her both a fast lane for development and a way to weather a hostile world market. This is not possible. While dedicated and patriotic scientists can turn out good research, the vast cost of testing, production and marketing cannot be met by altruism. In the end, Cuba has to sell her primary research at knock down prices to meet her desperate foreign exchange deficits. Because the scientific intelligentsia is under such pressure to come up with miracles, research is often sold off cheaply in order to keep laboratories functioning and buy the latest equipment. Finally, without control of marketing it is not possible to make big profits. In the end, the same inequalities that operate to keep down a small banana producing country, also operate against one with a sophisticated research capability.

Given the large sums invested, high level research has probably retarded Cuba's economic development. A developing country simply cannot permit itself the luxury of prestigious projects and experimentation. It needs more basic technologies such as screws, nuts and bolts. It is calculated that Cuba needs about 600 million a year of these, yet she only produces a fraction of this amount. An attempt was made to set up a factory using Russian lathes, but no one had made proper provision for training operators to run the machines. By the time this had happened, the machines had been cannibalised for parts. The situation did not seem too serious since screws and bolts could be bought cheaply from Taiwan - until Cuba defaulted on her commercial credit. Cuba is now forced to import screws and bolts, losing thousands of dollars each year. Does Cuba really need to spend millions of dollars on an Interferon programme rather than sorting out the production of low-tech ironmongery? The result is huge disruptions to industry

The foetal brain implants provide an even less edifying example of the consequences of 'medical patriotism.' Unlike other human cells, specialization

and shoddy goods (Cuban TV sets have been assembled using wood screws). Such problems also affect the manufacture of the kinds of goods which Cuba could be exporting to other developing countries.

Towards a Definition

What then is the nature of the Cuban regime? Firstly, the nationalist petit bourgeois nature of the 1959 Revolution - both in terms of its politics and the class which promoted it - is beyond dispute. There is no evidence whatsoever that the Bay of Pigs invasion led to fundamental changes in political conceptions, although significant concessions were made to the popular classes. There must surely be few who would still argue that the adoption of the Soviet model in the 1970s - even if true - led to Socialism by osmosis. Secondly, the 'Cuban model' is plainly neither a viable social system, nor a society in transition, nor a model of a future socialist society.

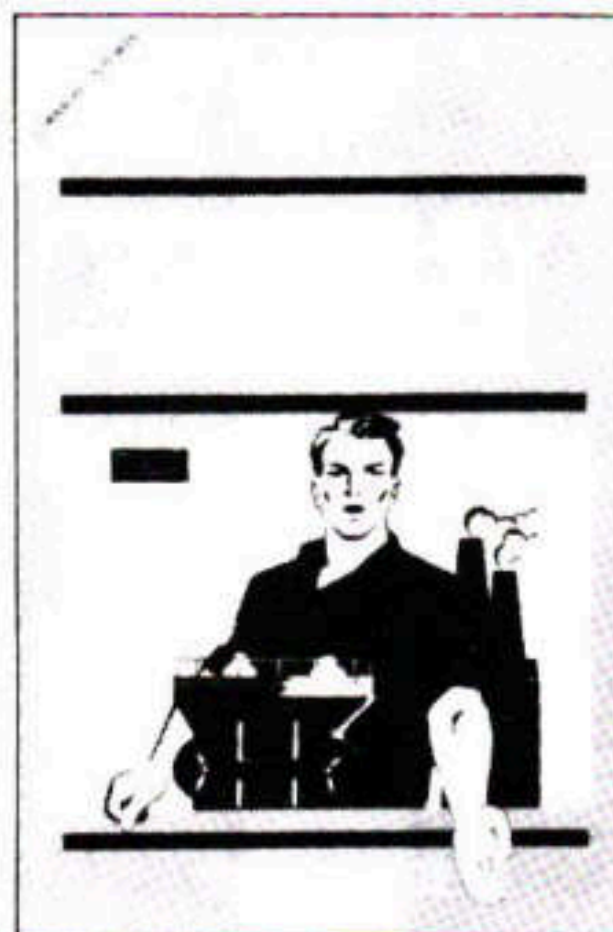
Cuba is the product of a stranded nationalist revolution whose aim was independence and industrialization. Such a strategy was not possible, and it left the Castro regime pincered between an imperialist power that would not let Cuba grow nor could destroy it, and a working class that could neither change the regime, nor really oppose it. A change to either factor will cause the regime to collapse.

Francisco Gonzalez

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In 1985 the Government estimated that by 1990 one in five adults would have Aids. Since 1981, 5056 people have contracted the disease. According to the Communicable Diseases Surveillance Centre only eight men and nine women were not in 'high-risk' categories. In August a report in *The Lancet* stated that, "there is no evidence for a major spread of HIV infection into the general heterosexual population."

In one of the first critical studies of its kind, *Susil Gupta* argues that the 'epidemic' is largely a fraud invented and sustained by moral re-armers and a burgeoning Aids service industry.

The Aids Fraud

In September 1985, Dr Devlin had something terrible to tell 1.2 million *She Magazine* readers. A threat was approaching that was about to change their lives: "In a few years, almost every family will be affected by the AIDS problem in some way... there is a rumour that British women are already in great danger. WELL OVER A THOUSAND British women are carrying the AIDS virus...and all of them are liable to infect the men they sleep with... it will go on in a terrible human chain... the number of AIDS cases in Britain is really rocketing... if this terrifying increase continues, the entire population would be dead by 1997...the *British Medical Journal* has recently forecast that British AIDS deaths will equal the number who would be killed if

a Jumbo jet crashed every month. Even more disturbingly a secret Government report is alleged to claim that the number of AIDS cases could eventually exceed the number of hospital beds in the entire country."¹

Dr. Devlin is a tabloid journalist, but his appetite for sensationalism, hysteria and scare politics is shared by government officials, the burgeoning Aids bureaucracy, the liberal left and much of the gay movement. Last year, according to government predictions in 1985, one in five people in Britain would have Aids.² Only a year ago - when deaths from Aids had just tipped the 2000 mark - one could still read in *The Guardian*, "Thousands, probably tens of thousands, of people in the UK

will die of Aids. Society might collapse under the weight of so many deaths of productive people, or the cost of their medical care."³

Even today, when medical evidence has shown conclusively that in developed countries there is no epidemic outside very narrowly defined high-risk groups, the state, the Aids bureaucracy and the media continue to churn out a steady stream of misinformation claiming that a mass epidemic is at hand.

Some of the reporting simply does not square. On 15 August this year, an editorial in *The Independent* complained that the course and nature of the epidemic had been over-estimated: "More than 80 per cent of those who died had been infected through homosexual activities. Of the remaining 20

per cent, 179 had been infected as a result of contaminated blood transfusions and 28 as a result of needle-sharing by addicts. Only 106 men had been infected by members of the opposite sex. Of the 130 women who died, only six had been infected by a "non-high-risk partner".⁴ Yet a month later, reporting on the unusual case of Dr Acer, a Florida dentist who infected five patients with HIV, *The Independent* could declare, "heterosexuals are at least as much at risk as gays and drug-users".⁵ A week earlier, Dr Richard Mayon-White, Oxfordshire Health Authority's epidemiologist had declared that "There is no doubt the heterosexual epidemic has begun. We are not talking about jet-setters... [but] people who live in council houses. This is across the board. It is affecting anyone who is sexually active." One might be forgiven for thinking that Aids had taken grip of this prosperous shire. In fact Dr. Mayon-Whites' own report showed that there were 135 people in the region with Aids, a rise of 24 on the previous year, and they fell into the same high-risk categories that have been typical of the epidemic since the beginning.⁶

Moral Crusaders

Rarely has there been an issue which has been so publicized and around which there is so much ignorance and contradiction. Take the nature of the disease. Aids has been a boon for homophobes. For Dr. Devlin, Aids is a disease of the bath-houses of New York and San Francisco, "where unfortunately it was possible for a man to have sexual contact with 50 different men within a couple of hours." Whether it is possible for these devilish gays to copulate every 2 and a half minutes for two solid hours is a moot point. Dr. Seale, a member of the Royal College of Physicians, is even more explicit: "In reality AIDS is characteristically a blood borne infection, which is only transmitted with difficulty during sexual intercourse." "The problem is 'sodomy' and 'homosexual activities.'" "Homosexual men frequently insert their fingers, fist, penis or tongue into the lower intestinal tract of their partners." "Normal" people need not worry for as every upright citizen knows, "sodomy is not sexual intercourse in the biological sense of the word".⁷ While bagging gays with Aids is handy, the problem for the Moral Right is that it vitiates the disease's usefulness as part of a more generalised campaign. But no matter. Once an atmosphere of hysteria has been generated, the wildest and most contradictory ideas can coexist. Just when you thought you were safe, Dr.

Even when medical evidence has shown conclusively that there is no epidemic outside very narrowly defined high-risk groups, the state, the Aids bureaucracy and the media continue to churn out a steady stream of misinformation claiming that a mass epidemic is at hand.

Devlin explains: "You may think it impossible that your own husband or boyfriend might have AIDS. But think again. Some women don't realise that vast numbers of apparently 'straight' husbands and lovers are *really bisexual*." And Devlin knows because, "I thought that bisexual behaviour was very rare until I started to work in VD clinics." As everybody knows, VD clinics are a good indication of what is going on in society generally. And if your hubby isn't bisexual you are still in danger because, "Over the next few years, husbands and boy-friends are going to bring home the virus as a result of sleeping with other women - especially prostitutes." Even if you are celibate you are still vulnerable because "there are rumours that it may eventually be transmitted through breathing or coughing." Dr. Seale claims that AIDS can be transmitted by "oral salivary contact between small children",

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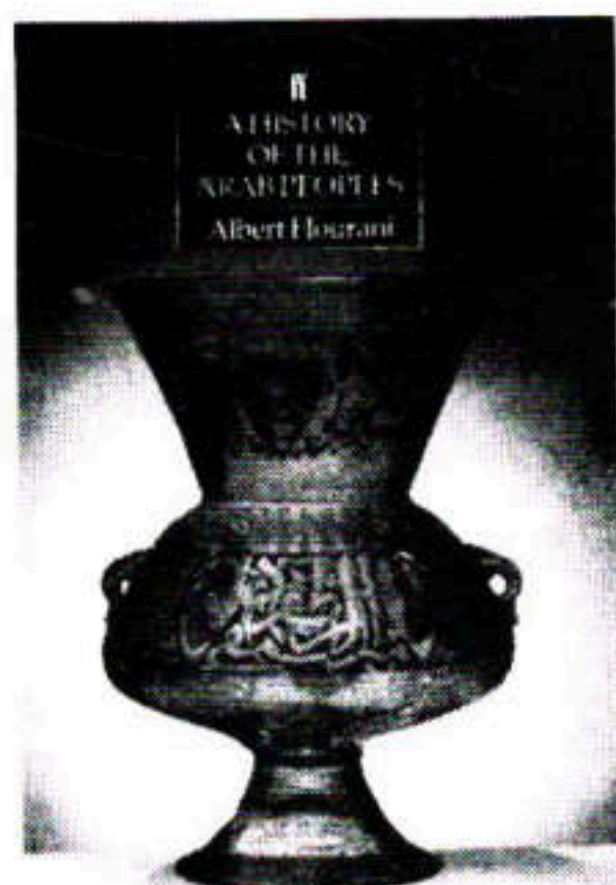
"chance contact of sores and abrasions", "social kissing" and even "inhalation of respiratory aerosols caused by coughing and sneezing." In other words, Aids is both the product of those 'homosexual practices' which are not part of 'normal' sex, and something as 'normal' as catching flu! However, this type of explanation is by no means restricted to the Moral Right.

Here is Judy Sadgrove, a 'penetration avoidance' consultant and masturbation enthusiast, writing in *The Guardian*.⁸ Her article begins with a long quote from a Brooks Advisory Centre booklet which is reminiscent of the sexual hygiene 'literature for girls' of past decades, "Bebi's a virgin, or almost [?!]. She's been going out with Jim for months and got carried away a few times - but he says he was careful. She knows Jim isn't gay and doesn't do drugs, so she doesn't listen to the stuff about Aids - he is clean, healthy and nice. Jim doesn't sleep around but he has had some fun with Suzy and Tracey. Suzy got drunk at a party and ended up in bed. Her steady boy friend, Mike, had lots of girl-friends before her, including Sherry, who's slept with two boys - Paul and a one-night-stand at a party (he didn't know her name) and Martin's ex-girl-friend used to go out with someone who was into drugs. As for Tracey, her boyfriend, Ian, used to go out with Sara, who's slept with Tom, who sometimes fools around in bed with his friend who is just back from Africa and the Far East where he had a very sexy time... Do you think it happens to other people?" What kind of mind produces this type of malicious trash, aimed at frightening young people and poisoning their lives with suspicion and doubt? One can only wonder what people in 30 years time will think of this moral propaganda.

Anti-Sex Brigades

"By 1989 having an affair will carry distinct risks" - warns Dr. Devlin. The only hope of avoiding the holocaust is that "by the early 1990s, the vast numbers of AIDS deaths must surely encourage people to live fairly monogamous lives." So "watch your sexual behaviour very carefully... by 1990, a 'one-night stand' (particularly in the London area) will take on all the appeal of a game of Russian roulette." To be spared you must "be sensible and aim to settle down with one partner over the next few years... make sure that your partner is 'straight'... make sure your partner isn't promiscuous." If "you stray from the paths of virtue with anyone other than your (hopefully) faithful partner use a sheath."

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Behind the 'responsible' image of 'Safe Sex', and the jolly 'Rubber Can Be Fun Campaign', the Aids bureaucracy and the cultural Left are also interested in fostering an atmosphere of national emergency, of modifying gays' sexual behaviour and imposing a repressive sexual morality on all.

While Dr. Devlin's pseudo-scientific 'advice' was aimed at terrorising women readers, Dr. Seale was concerned with the very survival of the British Nation. Seale belongs to that old fashioned 'permissiveness has led to national decline' school. Since we face "the ultimate virological nightmare" strong measures are needed. "Protection of the safety of its citizens is one of the major obligations of the state" and so "the actions required by the Government are comparable to those that need to be taken in waging a war of survival... restrict[ing] the freedom of homosexuals to infect each other and other people is essential if our society is not to be destroyed by the virus... We are facing a national catastrophe equal to any in the history of the nation. The life of every citizen is at stake". The underlying message is to isolate and restrict gays from 'normal' society while increasing moral repression for the rest.

Behind the 'responsible' image of 'Safe Sex', and the jolly 'Rubber Can Be Fun Campaign', the Aids bureaucracy and the 'cultural' Left are also interested in fostering an atmosphere of national emergency, of modifying gays' sexual behaviour and imposing a repressive sexual morality on all. Judy Sadgrove argues that youngsters have not discovered the fascinating world of mutual masturbation because of the conservatism of sex education in schools. "They may think mutual masturbation, for instance, means masturbating in front of each other" she complains.⁹ Alison Hadley of the Brook Advisory Centres thinks that "Men should take the time to masturbate when wearing condoms; this may help them get

used to putting them on and to the new sensations, hopefully making them more relaxed when they have sex."¹⁰ Commenting on Alan Bleasdale's *GBH*, Victor Van Watering, press officer at the Terrence Higgins Trust, is appalled by Barbara Critchley's refusal to use a condom. Remarkably, he uses the same terms that psychiatrists have traditionally used to describe the so-called homosexual 'psychological type': "When the woman refuses safe sex it is chilling and sinister. Only the most unsophisticated viewer would read it as a green light for unsafe sex. I had an instinctive feeling [!?] that this woman, like many men, just doesn't care. She doesn't exactly have a death-wish but she doesn't know who she is and she has no self-esteem."¹¹ Naomi Wayne, until recently Director of the Trust, chastises "film-makers who see condoms either as an interruption or a nuisance", and accuses them of "just reinforcing the attitudes that are causing the spread of HIV."¹²

This convergence between the Right and the Aids lobby has not gone unnoticed.

On the Right, one perplexed commentator, *Times* columnist Janet Daley, recently harangued Steven Green of the rabidly homophobic Conservative Family Campaign in the following terms: "I must say that I do not see much difference between the moral exhortation that he is advocating and the hygienic rules that the Terrence Higgins Trust is advocating. So I do not see quite why he was getting so hot under the collar about the Trust when the substance of his injunctions was exactly the same as theirs."¹³ And in the liberal corner, *Guardian* columnist Edward Pearce: "What bothers me about Mr. Green is that he has mixed up moral injunction, and Jesus, and a whole lot of other things, and prejudice, when it might otherwise have been common-sense practical advice"¹⁴

The Gay Movement

The Aids epidemic has had a devastating effect on gays and the gay movement. The optimism of the 1960s and 1970s has vanished. Apart from the human consequences of the epidemic, perhaps the most disturbing development has been the remarkable readiness of gay activists to cooperate with institutions that have traditionally been the worst enemies of gays; the state, the medical profession and the media. Indeed, it is often argued that the 'common' challenge posed by the Aids epidemic has at least led to a new rapprochement between gays and

'straights'. Such illusions are already fast disappearing in the United States as the state tools up for a major campaign against gays and high-risk minorities. In Britain, where the gay movement has always been far less political, and much more passive and pliant, there are virtually no gay organizations of any political colour outside the welfare provision or state funded 'voluntary' sector. This has happened during one of the most conservative, ideologically repressive and homophobic governments in British modern history.

Far from enjoying the glow of approval, gay and minority sexual behaviour has been under constant attack during the Aids decade. According to Jeremy Clarke of Gay London Police Monitoring Group (GALOP) the 1980's has seen a steadily rising amount of gay-bashing. Whereas gay-bashing had previously been mainly a case of sporadic assaults, the last decade saw a rising trend in systematic and planned attacks, a view backed by *Capital Gay's* editor, Michael Mason: "To judge by the phone calls we receive and the brutality of these attacks, it is getting worse."¹⁵

Only a naive fool would believe that front-page images of the Princess of Wales opening Aids clinics, hugging Aids victims, or rushing to the bedside of gay friend Adrian Ward-Jackson, legitimizes gays in the eyes of the public. They don't. If tabloids publish such pictures it is to shock, not to provoke sympathy. Such images appeal to the morbid voyeuristic fascination of the ignorant and the homophobic: the beautiful, pure and perfectly formed shaking hands with the ugly, the sick and the condemned. At best, Aids has made gays 'acceptable' only as victims. Homosexuality has become 're-medicalised' and gays are welcomed only in so far as they are willing patients. Peter Glover, information officer for the government funded Christian Aids charity ACET, describes his organization's attitude: "The ethos of ACET is that we do not translate personal views into judgmental their life-style? Jesus never moralised."¹⁶ Jesus never moralised?! People will say anything to get a government grant. The Church forgives gays their homosexuality like it forgives the Jews for murdering Christ. Not acceptance, just forgiveness of sins.

In most western countries the state has tired of the Aids epidemic. The epidemic has lost its capacity to shock. While it has been successful in fostering the desired ideological effect, carrying on with an epidemic that no-one ever sees can only be counter-productive. In the United States the government has dropped the 'liberal-gay-institutional'

Denying the very notion of high-risk groups allows a whispering campaign to develop among those who are looking for someone to blame and know who they want it to be... trying to conceal information out of some misplaced notion of political correctness is stupid Geraldine Bedell

consensus and thrown gays to the wolves in the midst of some very unpleasant scenes. In Britain the mood in Whitehall has also changed and the only thing keeping the 'gay/voluntary sector state' consensus together is Health Minister Virginia Bottomley.

No Defence

However, the greatest threat facing the gay community is not the state but its own inability to confront future attacks. In this sense the development of a self-perpetuating Aids bureaucracy is the biggest obstacle. The bureaucracy has totally mystified the Aids issue. Mostly this has been a case of keeping the show rolling in pursuance of next year's grant. But even honest 'front-line' activists have contributed to public ignorance and confusion. Most in the Aids industry ascribe to the arrogant 'cattle prod' theory of politics: Joe Public is an ignorant, unsophisticated red-neck brute incapable of understanding complex issues. He must be shocked into the right attitudes and responses. He cannot be told the real nature of the Aids epidemic since this would only provoke a pogrom. This approach dominates all middle class campaigns in Britain, whether liberal, 'labour' or 'trotskyist'. In essence, both Left and Right share the same tabloid outlook.

In one of the few intelligent - if rather obvious - statements about the Aids epidemic, Geraldine Bedell has remarked: "Denying the very notion of high-risk groups allows a whispering campaign to develop among those who

are looking for someone to blame and know who they want it to be....trying to conceal information out of some misplaced notion of political correctness is stupid."¹⁷

With an admirable absence of anger, Denis Altman has characterised Aids as 'a new and very dangerous epidemic disease for which no one could be held responsible in any real sense.'¹⁸ To say that no one is to blame does not protect gays, and lets a homophobic society - which is to blame - off the hook. At a time when anti-gay hysteria has gripped the American political scene and the idea of identifying, rounding up and quarantining gays has become legitimate, it is sad to re-read Altman's hope that at least Aids would provide an opportunity for dissolving homophobic prejudice: 'In many situations the gay/straight divide becomes absolutely irrelevant: no one stops to ask in the Aids ward of San Francisco General Hospital which staff are gay and which are not.' Altman wrote this in 1986 when the State-gay consensus was still alive.¹⁹

Festival of Reaction

The Aids decade has seen overtly reactionary ideas of every sort legitimised as natural and almost biological truths. The cosy world of liberal consensus and welfare has given way to a harsh world of uncertainty, fear and undefined threats. Under the guise of individual responsibility, authority and discipline have become the slogans of the day. Never has this been clearer than in the area of sexual morality. Whether it is Roger Scruton's celebration of celibacy, or the more 'radical' enthusiasts of 'non-penetrative' or 'substitutive' sex, the Anti-Sex League is thumping its tub through our lives, work places and bedrooms, under the banner of moral retribution or regeneration. Through the Aids epidemic millions of people have been corralled by fear and ignorance into accepting reactionary ideas: don't mess about, don't experiment, be suspicious of everyone, eternal vigilance, taking risks may cost you your life, only strict protective measures can save you and your family, trust only the State.

The most disturbing development is the remarkable readiness of gay activists to cooperate with institutions that are gay's worst enemies; the state, the medical profession, the media...

But the greatest threat for gays comes from the disappearance of any defensive organization and the passivity induced by the acceptance of Aids as a tragedy that could have happened to anyone. Aids has spawned a massive bureaucracy which has developed interests of its own. These interests are based on cooperation with the state, and are therefore inevitably opposed to any idea of political mobilization.

Before dealing with these issues in more detail, it is necessary to chop through the heavy under-growth of confusion, misinformation and hysteria generated by Aids propaganda.

A. THE FACTS AND FIGURES

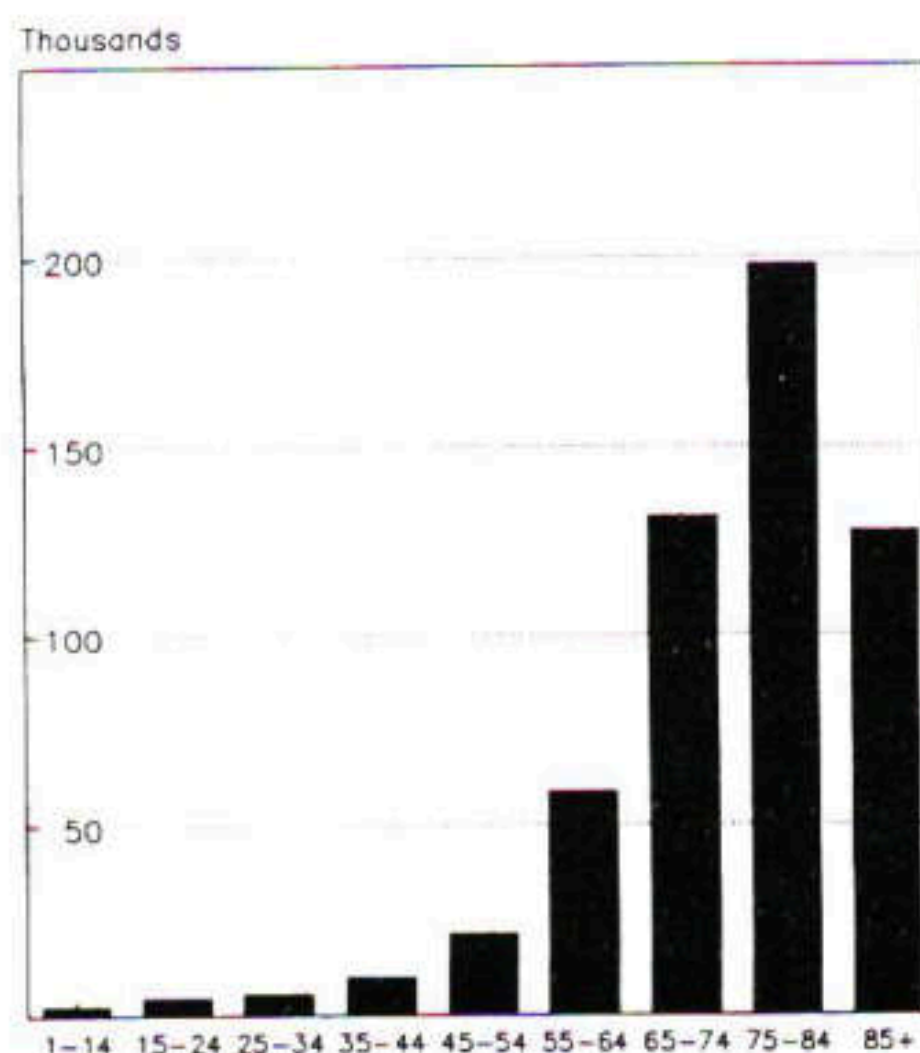
The word 'epidemic' does not mean much scientifically, since it is an ambiguous term which indicates no more than "a greater incidence of a diseases than one might expect find."²⁰ This includes anything from 5 regional cases of meningitis, to a flu epidemic affecting several million people. However, the Aids epidemic has been discussed in terms of a level of infection that is significant enough to be considered a major public health hazard and a threat to society needing a significant change in social behaviour. In this sense, there is neither an Aids epidemic in the UK nor in any developed country. Virtually all Aids and HIV cases are restricted to five very specific groups;

- a) a small section of gay men within an unaffected gay community who are engaged in what one prominent American gay activist has called 'fast-lane sex'
- b) a smaller number of bisexual men,
- c) intravenous drug users who share needles, many of whom are in contact with the previous categories,
- d) a handful of people from, or who have worked in, countries where heterosexual transmission is a major factor (i.e. Africa),
- e) a tiny number of people who frequently have sex with the above categories, but who are not in the categories, themselves.²¹

Despite the hysteria, people are not dying all over the place from Aids. Even within high-risk groups Aids, is far from being a major cause of death. *Most gay men will neither die of Aids nor know anyone who has.*

Since the 'epidemic' started in the early 1980's, 3,156 people have died of Aids and a further 1,909 have the disease, most of whom will also die. Additionally, there are 16,248 people with the HIV virus, of which 14,265 are men, 1,848 are women, and 135 whose sex is unknown.²² How many of these will develop Aids is not known since there is much dispute on the survival

Mortality by Age Group



DEATH IN THE UK 1981-1990

Infectious Diseases	23,251
Cancer	1,397,337
Metabolism	87,084
Blood	21,120
Nervous System	100,509
Circulatory System	2,760,806
Respiratory System	688,026
Digestive System	174,574
Genito-Urinary	77,975
Pregnancy	496
Skin Diseases	5,857
Accident, Murder	186,207
All Others	224,697
Total	5,747,939

AIDS 2549

SOURCE: Office of Population Census. Aids deaths to March 1991.

bility of HIV. Men, women, people of different age, class or ethnic group have different survival rates.

In 1987, the British Government estimated that Aids deaths and new infections would be running at 100,000 per annum by the mid 1990's. In 1988, the estimate was reduced to 30,000. By 1989, government was predicting a figure of 13,000 a year for 1990. A recent report by the Government Actuary cut the figure to 6,500.²³ Given that the rate of increase of Aids deaths and new infections is slowing down it will be unlikely that even the 6,500 figure will be reached by 1995. Since 1988, most western agencies have been revising their original 'doomsday' estimates downwards. Rates of increase are slowing down: "Although Aids has cut a terrifying swathe through the male homosexual community in the US, the rate of increase of the virus among gays has slowed dramatically".²⁴ The 'massive'

risers in Aids cases outside high-risk groups that have been bandied about by the Aids scare industry are largely bogus (below). Large percentage rises are possible because figures for non-high-risk groups are so small.

In many cases such claims are simply fraudulent. In the United States, as Aids progressed from the gay middle class communities of New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles into Black and Hispanic ghettos, this was presented as proof that Aids was non-specific. In fact, the majority of 'Black' and 'Hispanic' Aids sufferers are from the same high risk groups: gays and IDUs (Injectable Drug Users). In the October round of 'alarming rises' neither the Aids bureaucracy nor a single newspaper pointed out what the Communicable Diseases Surveillance Centre was at pains to indicate at the beginning of its monthly report: "The large increase of 255 deaths reported in September 1991 was due to the inclusion of 195 deaths ascertained through follow-up during 1991 for adult Aids cases diagnosed in September 1990 or earlier whose death had not been previously reported."²⁵ In Britain, the Aids bureaucracy has used high female HIV incidence figures for London to suggest that HIV is a grave threat to women. For almost two years the Aids bureaucracy deliberately suppressed the fact that these unusually high rates were related to people who had contracted HIV in Africa, or from Africans in Britain (below). As the reality of Aids becomes apparent to all, the Aids bureaucracy is finding it increasingly difficult to fiddle the facts. So it fiddles the concepts. All categories which are non-gay are now represented as 'heterosexual'; IDUs and other categories are re-classified under this heading although these cases are no more 'heterosexual' than a lesbian who contracts HIV through sharing needles with another lesbian is a 'lesbian' Aids case. The Aids scare industry relies on public ignorance.

The 3,156 Aids deaths during the last 10 years must also be seen within the context of mortality rates in Britain. For example, the claim that "Aids is the major cause of death among women between the ages of 25 and 44" (below) gives the impression that most women in this age group die of Aids (untrue) and that this is a substantial proportion of deaths in the female population. Last year 564,846 people died, but only 5,577 were women in the 25-44 age group. The simple fact is that people don't start dying in a significant numbers until they are 45.

Table 1 shows that Aids is a rare cause of death, even in comparison to

UK Aids Cases & Deaths January 1982 - September 1991

	Male	Deaths	Female	Deaths
Homosexual	3925	2475	-	-
Between men and women				
"high risk" partner ¹	14	7	29	18
other partner abroad ²	206	110	101	45
other partner UK	22	13	15	6
Injecting drug use	161	84	62	36
IDU & homosexual men	79	52	-	-
Haemophiliacs	268	193	4	3
Blood transfusion UK	15	12	16	10
Blood transfusion abroad	14	10	26	18
Mother to infant	17	8	28	14
Other/undetermined	56	39	7	3
Total	4777	3003	288	153

Source: *Communicable Disease Report* Vol 1 Nov 41 11 October 1991. CDSC.

¹ Men and women who had sex with injecting drug users, or with those infected through blood factor treatment or blood transfusion, and women who had sex with bisexual men.

² Includes persons without other identified risks from, or who have lived in, countries where the major route of HIV-1 transmission is through sexual intercourse between men and women.

mainly restricted to the same high-risk groups. After all, if Aids is about to break out of the high-risk groups and infect millions of people, why hasn't syphilis done so already? Readers might remember the Hepatitis B and Herpes scares of the 1970s. Both were the legacy of the 'Swinging Sixties' and were going to transform sexual relationships. According to Frank Judson, medical officer with World Health Organization's STD/AIDS Programme, 50% of Hepatitis B cases were sexually transmitted.²⁸ So why hasn't Hepatitis B, a viral infection 1000 times more infectious than Aids and with a similar high risk group profile, not engulfed either the high risk groups or the rest of society?

Epidemiological Theory

Increasingly on the defensive, the Aids bureaucracy now argues that its assessment of the epidemic was accurate but the 'Safe Sex' campaigns it launched led to a substantial change in risky behaviour. This prevented the expected

The Aids industry operates by deliberately confusing the *biology of transmission* with the *social probability* of actually being infected. This is the underlying and deceptive message of the 'Anyone can get Aids' slogan

epidemic so the Aids bureaucracy has been a victim of its own success. This view cannot be sustained by the evidence. Firstly, survey after survey has shown that after the initial condom panic provoked by the 'Tip Toe Through the Tombstones' campaign in 1985, heterosexuals have not significantly modified their behaviour. There have been some localised successes in needle exchange programmes. However, the fact remains that if the 'Safe-Sex' campaign was so influential in modifying behaviour then one would expect a drop in all sexually/IDU transmitted diseases such as syphilis, gonorrhoea, hepatitis B, herpes, etc. While all these diseases have been steadily declining since 1970 (except herpes), there has been no sudden drop in the

other infectious diseases. All western countries show much the same mortality profile. Even in the United States, with half the world's Aids deaths, the disease is rare outside very specific social groups and geographic locations. As two doctors have pointed out, "What is most extraordinary about the Aids epidemic up to now is the high level of fear in a very large number of people in spite of the relatively small number of cases and deaths so far. Clearly there is no simple correlation between risk and fear"²⁶

B. POSSIBLE OR PROBABLE?

The central argument of the Aids bureaucracy's scare campaign has been that anyone *can* catch Aids. A hysterical disinformation campaign has led the average citizen to fear that unless he or she undertakes stringent protective measures they *will* inevitably be infected with Aids. A whole counselling, advice and 'protective implements' industry has grown up around this fear.²⁷ Such claims are totally unfounded, and are based on a deliberate misrepresentation of the basic biological and epidemiological aspects of Aids. If you have sex with someone who has the HIV virus you stand a 1 in 200 chance of contracting the virus. If you regularly exchange blood with someone with the virus, through sharing syringes or blood transfusions, then you can be almost certain to get HIV. This is the inescapable *biological* reality of the HIV virus. However, epidemics and the

transmission of diseases are also social phenomena. All diseases and health problems are socially specific. Anyone can break a leg or catch the common cold, but more working class people do so because of occupation, housing, diet, etc. Sexually transmitted diseases are highly specific because sex is not a random, casual, activity.

The Aids industry operates by deliberately confusing the *biology of transmission* with the *social probability* of actually being infected. This is the underlying and deceptive message of the "Anyone can get Aids" slogan. Technically this is true. Anyone can get Aids since the HIV virus itself has no special preference for any human social or biological group. If you frequently exchange bodily fluids with someone who has the HIV virus you *will* catch it.

But by the same logic 'anyone' can get run over, win the pools, fall in love, pass exams, make the wrong decisions, etc. What makes life neither a fantasy nor a nightmare is that we know the specific circumstances and probabilities of such things happening. The relevant question to ask is: what is the real probability of exchanging bodily fluids with someone who has the virus? Outside the high-risk groups, there is virtually no chance of having sex with someone who has Aids, and even less chance of sharing a needle. How can we be so sure? Because there are many other sexually transmitted diseases that are far more infectious than HIV and they too are

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The highly localised nature of Aids means that a small group of people know lots of people with Aids, while millions of others will never have even a random encounter. The number of Aids cases you personally know is only indicative of how much overlap exists between your social circuit and that of the risk groups.

figures after 1985.

The *Anyone Can Get Aids* thesis flies in the face of basic epidemiological theory. The slogan - and it is only a slogan - appeals to commonsense thinking. The image evoked is of a society of individuals moving around randomly and without restriction, like atoms bumping into each other, and transmitting Aids. This is nonsense. Sex, in all developed countries, is not a random encounter because people live in very small and well-defined clusters. Consider who you are likely to have sex with. The chances are that the possibilities for your potential partners are also largely within the same group as your own. Because society is clustered in this way, sexually transmitted diseases find it extremely difficult to move through society. Sexually transmitted diseases are generally restricted to small groups and stay there. Only when extraordinary events make society much more mobile - for instance war and migrations - do sexually transmitted diseases suddenly rise. These are the reasons for a high degree of infection among a relatively mobile section of the gay community, IDU's and in countries in Africa.

Personal Inexperience

Finally, a common objection to the points raised is personal experience, "I personally know a lot of people who have got/died of Aids". The narrow and ignorant always cling to 'personal experience' by which or course they mean a reflection of their own selective prejudices. The atomised and narrow of individuals in modern society means that when it comes to social reality, personal experience is always a distorted

picture. Consider the following: if your personal experience of Aids is representative of reality, of what is going on in society beyond the confines of your little personal world, for every Aids death you personally know of in the last decade you should also know of 875 people who have died of circulatory diseases, 442 deaths due to cancer, 217 deaths due to respiratory diseases, 59 people who have died accidentally or have been murdered, and 7 deaths due to infectious diseases. In other words, unless you are an doctor, nurse or undertaker your experience of death is likely to be extremely unrepresentative. The highly localised nature of Aids means that a small group of people know lots of people with Aids, while millions of others will never have even a random encounter. In sum, the number of Aids cases you personally know is only indicative of how much overlap exists between your social circuit and that of the risk groups.

C. GAY PLAGUE?

Aids is in no way a 'gay plague'; biologically, epidemiologically, or even statistically. Despite decades of research aimed at finding a medical 'cure' for homosexuality, no one has been able to isolate a biological difference between gays and heterosexuals. Neither do gays constitute a 'psychological type' which might make them prone to particular diseases. Even in the much publicised area of sexual practices, anal (as opposed to vaginal) intercourse only marginally increases the possibility of HIV infection.²⁹ It cannot by itself account for the epidemic spread of Aids in very specific socially and geographically defined sections of the gay community. Gays do not constitute a biological community (or a social one for that matter), and most will not die of Aids but of the same things that kill the rest of society. Table 2 shows gay mortality estimated on the basis of 10% of male deaths. During the last decade, more gays have died of prostate gland cancer than of Aids. Even in the most affected age group - 25-40 year olds - Aids is not a major killer.

In all western countries, Aids is overwhelmingly restricted to a very small section of the male gay community (there are no reports of lesbian transmission) who are part of the 'gay scene', for want of a better term. American gay activist Dennis Altman describes some of the factors involved, "bathhouses and sex clubs, which facilitate numerous sexual contacts in one night...the emergence of sexually transmitted parasites as a major homosexual

Homosexually Acquired Sexually Transmitted Diseases March-December 1989

	Male	Homosexual	%
Infectious syphilis	269	50	18.5
Other acquired syphilis	587	111	19.0
Epidemiological Treatment of syphilis	52	10	19.0
All syphilis	923	171	18.5
Hepatitis B	504	300	59.5

Source: Forms KC60 & SBH60. Department of Health Statistics and Management Information (SM1 2B). Table 4. 1991. Available from CDSC.

The number of gay men is under-represented since figures are based on information volunteered by people visiting VD clinics. There is no follow up or counselling which in the case of Aids leads to the subsequent reclassification of about 15% of people in 'non-high risk' groups into high risk groups (most hospitals in high prevalence areas have a follow up nurse specifically for this task). See CDSU Quarterly Report, March p.5.

MORTALITY AMONG GAYS 1981-1990

Estimated as 10% of all male deaths.

	all ages	25 44 years
Infectious Diseases	1,211	99
Cancer	73,359	1,822
Metabolism	3,682	221
Blood	851	26
Nervous System	4,840	316
Circulatory System	134,788	2,259
Respiratory System	35,044	342
Digestive System	7,379	341
Genito-Urinary	3,640	51
Pregnancy	-	-
Skin Diseases	177	3
Accident, Murder	11,320	3,144
All Others	8,194	323
Total	284,485	8,921
AIDS	2,475	

SOURCE: Office Population Census.

health problem...and a boom in 'recreational drugs'...in conjunction with what came to be known 'fast-lane sex'".³⁰

It is among this very specific section of gays that Aids has reached epidemic proportions and has decimated whole groups of people and neighbourhoods. In Britain, Aids is almost exclusively restricted to London - particularly 5 inner city boroughs - and Edinburgh. According to a report by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, the incidence of Aids in inner London is 1 in 500 (1 in 200 for HIV), while outside London it is 1 in 16,000.³¹ In all western countries, Aids is highly localised to certain districts in large cities where

gays have found a less repressive atmosphere, and very poor, hopeless ghettos, inhabited by injectable drug users. In the US, where society is far more ghettoised than in Europe, the Aids epidemic, as it affects different high-risk groups, can be plotted street by street. In New York, the geographic distribution of Aids among well-off middle class gays can be separated from the predominantly 'injectable' epidemic of poor Blacks and Hispanics by as little as 50 yards - without there being any overlap. Three cities - New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles - account for the bulk of Aids cases.

Aids is a disease of ghettos and it can only be eradicated by eliminating the conditions of oppression that force men and women to live in miserable sexual and social circumstances. While men and women are persecuted, villified, continually harassed and ridiculed they will inevitably be forced to put their health at risk. It is not gay 'promiscuity' or a large number of sexual encounters *per se* that has allowed Aids to flourish, but the fact that the small percentage of gays who are not willing to live a closetted or abstemious existence are herded into a tiny ghetto called the 'gay scene'.³² In such a close community, it is not surprising to find that any communicable disease, whether flu or Aids, not only spreads rapidly, but also establishes a permanent presence. Thus certain diseases become 'homosexual' diseases. In fact they should be called 'diseases of oppression'. Their epidemiology is that of most diseases in closed institutions such as prisons and army barracks. The 'high risk' group distribution of other sexually transmitted diseases - which has rarely featured in public debates on Aids - supports the idea of Aids as a disease of ghettos. The geographic distribution of sexually transmitted diseases is similar to that of

Aids is a disease of ghettos and it can only be eradicated by eliminating the conditions of oppression that force men and women to live in miserable sexual and social circumstances. While men and women are persecuted, villified, continually harassed and ridiculed they will inevitably be forced to put their health at risk. It is not gay 'promiscuity' or a large number of sexual encounters *per se* that has allowed Aids to flourish, but the fact that gays are herded into a tiny ghetto called the 'gay scene'. In a closed community any communicable disease, not only spreads rapidly, but also establishes a permanent presence.

Aids and although the Department of Health does not collect statistics for IDUs, there is strong evidence to suggest that the 'high risk' group distribution is also similar.

The 'Safe-Sex'/Aids lobby argues that 'politicizing' Aids is counter-productive. Getting 'political' and fighting Aids as yet another aspect of gay oppression - as opposed to a tragedy that is no one's fault - will only scare away public approval and funding. The argument goes that dealing with Aids as a generalised threat may not be scientifically correct, but at least it takes the pressure off gays and ethnic minorities. At the very least, the Safe-Sex lobby is saving lives. Manifestos don't. These are persuasive arguments, as are all pragmatic answers to 'crisis situations',

but they evade the fundamental issues.

It is not suggested that gays and others should abandon all precautionary measures as useless, or to make a militant gesture. That is not the point. As long as gays and others continue to be forced to live in repressed communities, diseases like Aids will continue to kill them. 'Safe-Sex' will not provide a solution. The illusions generated by 'Safe-Sex' will only incapacitate gays from defending themselves politically. 'Safe-Sex' is also demoralising because it is a reminder of one's subjected position. Once Aids has run its course, as it will, other diseases will plague gays and the poor - as they have always done.³³ Refusal to confront the political reality behind this 'biological' fact only helps reproduce the conditions that perpetuate it. Finally, to insist on the specificity of Aids is not to be anti-gay. As Dennis Altman has argued, "It is not a simple matter of one theory being homophobic and the other not... To suggest that particular social conditions may have existed among certain groups as to make a particular virus lethal...is not in itself homophobic, anti-Haitian or whatever."³⁴

D. WOMEN AND AIDS

The preponderance of males in the Aids epidemic poses a considerable problem for the 'women's rights' section of the welfare bureaucracy. A lesbian Aids scare was out of the question given the lack of cases. Despite all the furore about dental dams and rubber panties, not a single case of 'lesbian' transmission has occurred in the EC out of 20,493 cases over the last decade. The two 'woman to woman' cases in the EC during the last decade both involved men who had changed sex.³⁵ Most lesbian organizations sensibly preferred not to get embroiled in the Aids hype, even if funding was available.

This has not stopped the Terrence Higgins Trust from claiming, in an 'information' pamphlet on *Women and Aids*, that "it is definitely untrue to say that lesbians are not at risk from HIV infection." Neither has it stopped *City Limits* journalist Cherry Smyth, from complaining that woman to woman transmission is not listed as an exposure category by either the US or UK authorities. "Dangerous myths have restricted information and research into lesbians with HIV and Aids" she says.³⁶ There are a few lesbians who are HIV infected, but this is likely to be due to contact with other groups. According to *City Limits*' own survey of the sexual habits of Londoners, "68 percent of lesbians have intercourse with men at

The simple truth is that outside the high risk groups there is practically no Aids threat to women. According to the CDSC's March 1991 Report in the last decade there have only been *nine* cases of Aids in women not in high risk categories.

some time (twelve percent in the past year) and four percent sold sex to men."³⁷

Therefore the Aids bureaucracy's attentions have concentrated on heterosexual women, where there is more funding anyway. The ambiguity of the early figures for HIV as opposed to Aids cases (examined below), allowed some scope for hyping up an epidemic. International Aids Day in 1990 was dedicated to women and initiated an intense scaremongering campaign aimed at women: "Aids is at some time likely to affect every woman in Britain... Aids is now the leading cause of death in women aged 20-40 in major cities" declared *The Guardian* in the warm-up to the campaign. The fact that 85% of Aids cases were gay men did not prevent the paper from claiming that "with, at present, more men than women HIV positive, a woman runs a much higher risk than a heterosexual man of encountering an infected partner."³⁸ The figures, according to Margaret Jay, director of the National Aids Trust, showed that "we are looking at an alarming trend".³⁹ Eve Martin, a member of the National Council of Women and leader of the Women's Health and Screening Delegation, claimed that "what hasn't sunk in is that even if Aids has no direct impact on their lives, it will affect their children and most certainly their grandchildren. It's time women woke up to the reality of Aids."⁴⁰

The simple truth is that outside the high risk groups there is practically no Aids threat to women, just as most women are unaffected by the major sexually transmitted diseases, though they are in fact more prone to genito-urinary ailments. Again, a distinction must be made between what is biologically possible and what is socially probable.

While women are *biologically* more prone to Aids, *socially* or *epidemiologically* they are far less likely to contract it.⁴¹ Lesbian women are extremely unlikely to be infected with HIV as there is little possibility of a dangerous exchange of body fluid during sex. As 'fluid receptors' hetero-sexual women are *physiologically* more at risk than men, but they are considerably under-represented in high risk categories such as IDUs.

It is no surprise to find that according to the Communicable Diseases Surveillance Centre's March 1991 Report in the last decade there have only been *nine* cases of Aids in women not in high risk categories. The mass HIV screening programme in Scotland and London (below) shows that the epidemic is not developing among women outside the high risk groups. Even among the high risk groups - mostly IDUs - the rate of infection is very low. Additionally, there seems very little evidence of the much publicised 'bisexual' threat. The figures for female Aids-HIV are small, so a small number of real cases can give rise to very large *percentage* rises. Scare propaganda aimed at women rarely uses actual figures, only percentages. Thus Frankie Lynch, health education co-ordinator for the Terrence Higgins Trust, can declare: "Last year [1989] we saw a 72 per cent increase in women with Aids."⁴² However, the CDSC records 26 female Aids deaths in 1989, compared to 11 the year before. More recently *The Guardian*'s Chris Mihill, who is in the habit of uncritically reproducing Aids bureaucracy hand-outs, claimed a 'ninefold HIV rise in mothers-to-be.' This sensationalist headline was based on 18 pregnancies at St. Thomas' Hospital.⁴³ As we shall see later, they also involved high-risk groups.

To counter the problem of small figures, the Aids lobby has promoted the idea that there are large numbers of women who are not represented by the government statistics. "We are seeing lots of cases of women with HIV who are not turning up in the statistics", Sophie Thompson of Positively Women told a recent press conference.⁴⁴ A variant of this argument is that women do see their doctors, but are not being diagnosed as HIV. Judith Mariasy, co-author of *Triple Jeopardy: Women and Aids* says "Many women with HIV are being missed by their doctors who do not realise that the chronic infections they are suffering are due to the virus. Most attention has centred on men and there is little research into the clinical picture of HIV in women."⁴⁵ Mariasy does not tell us how she knows that the

women with misdiagnosed illnesses are in fact suffering from Aids. At the same time Caroline Guinness claimed that 85% of HIV-positive women seen by Positively Women had been infected heterosexually.⁴⁶ Sheila Gilchrist, Positively Women's director, argues: "There is no pattern emerging: there is no group that is more at risk than any other. We're in contact with teenagers to grandmothers of every class and ethnic group. Over three-quarters of the women who contact us have acquired the virus heterosexually."⁴⁷

If Sheila Gilchrist is seeing lots of grandmothers, they must be precocious ones indeed. According to government statistics there are no women with Aids above the age of 40, and only 6 above 35 years. When we contacted Hope Massiah, also of Positively Women, to ask if there were any indications that significant numbers of women are not seeking medical assistance but approaching Positively Women directly because of the stigma attached to HIV, she told us: "To my knowledge no. There are a few anecdotal cases, but they are not the majority. The majority of women we see are in contact with the authorities." Massiah was honest enough to admit that her organization relied on government figures and had no special knowledge of the extent of Aids. Neither did Positively Women keep statistics on the 'mode of transmission' of its clients. It was against the organization's policy. Neither could she explain where Carol Guinness had got her '85% heterosexual' transmission rates from.⁴⁸

The Aids bureaucracy has developed the Women and Aids campaign for its own interests. The low incidence of female Aids questions the idea of a vast generalised epidemic, without which the Aids bureaucracy is out of business. This is why the bureaucracy is so desperate to target ordinary women, "the women we are trying to reach is that vast group of heterosexual women who have ignored Aids and HIV. The average woman does not see herself at risk because she is not a drug user and does not sleep around."⁴⁹ Suzanne Woolf, of the Sussex Aids Centre, is ready to spread a little suburban paranoia by claiming that a man who has sex with a prostitute is safer than a man who had casual sex with "the girl next door". Technically this is true if both carry the same risk of HIV infection since there is less chance of a condom being used in the latter. But how likely is the girl next door to have Aids?⁵⁰

Health Education Authority's 'Don't get Aids on Holiday' campaign this summer shows the miserable puritan-

The Aids bureaucracy has developed the Women and Aids campaign for its own interests. The low incidence of female Aids questions the idea of a vast generalised epidemic, without which the Aids bureaucracy is out of business. This is why the bureaucracy is so desperate to target ordinary women

ism of the Aids lobby. For many working class women holidays represent the only opportunity to escape a rigid sexual code and to experiment. The campaign set out to sow fear and apprehension among the working class, and women in particular. To its credit, the working class largely ignored the 'advice' of 'people who know best'.⁵¹ As the HIV figures show (below) no one has caught Aids on a Mediterranean holiday.

Another example of scare-mongering is given by the Terrence Higgins Trust. Its pamphlet on women warns that 'It is impossible to tell whether you or your partner has HIV or not from appearances, so why take the risk with each others life?' This is the propaganda equivalent of the three card trick. The fact that HIV carriers are obviously not identifiable by looks is linked to the untruthful assumption that every woman is at risk. More women will be murdered by their husbands this year than have been killed by HIV in the last decade, but it would be silly to suggest that all women should be constantly on guard and should take protective measures against their potentially murderous husbands. Why take the risk? Little separates the Terrence Higgins Trust from Dr. Devlin.

Finally, a little-quoted paragraph from the Communicable Diseases Surveillance Centre's *Quarterly Report* (March 1991) gives an objective appraisal of the Aids threat to women and men:

"Of the 308 Aids cases where the exposure category was between men and women, 36 had partners in a current major risk group, and 201 had partners in or were from countries where hetero-

sexual spread is common. Another 48 had heterosexual contacts in a variety of countries where spread is not at present thought to be common. Two women reported heterosexual contact in the UK with male African partners, and one with a partner who had worked in Africa. A further 23 cases (13 men, 10 women) denied a current major risk factor and were not sexually exposed abroad. One of the women was a prostitute who had contact with Americans and non-UK Europeans. Five men reported contact with prostitutes in the UK. Risk factors other than heterosexual intercourse were excluded for the other eight men and nine women." p.5.

In other words, out of the 308 Aids cases in the last decade involving sexual contact between men and women only 10 were women who had not had partners in high risk groups.

E. RACE

Vernal Scott, principal HIV/Aids officer for Brent who runs the Brent HIV Centre, told the *New Statesman* in June, "It wouldn't surprise me if in a few years time there were more Black and Asian people diagnosed as HIV or having Aids than white people."⁵² With Blacks and Asians approximately 4% of the population, it is obvious that Scott has not thought out the epidemiological implications of his statement namely, an incidence of HIV or Aids 50 times higher among Blacks and Asians than Whites. Operating in an atmosphere of hype, alarmism, dramatization and ignorance of the facts, and in an area where colourful statistics are the norm, the Aids bureaucracy takes little precautions when making outrageous claims. When contacted by telephone, Scott was reluctant to confirm his claim, and even suggested, but would not confirm, that he might not have said it. Neither could Scott give any figure for HIV infection among Blacks and Asians in Brent - not even a rough estimate, not even a non-quotable rough estimate. Most of the other ethnic HIV support groups, such as Blackliners, were also very reluctant to talk figures.

To its credit the working class has largely ignored the 'advice' of 'people who know best'.

Brent HIV Centre's annual report gives a clue to the reasons for Scott's reticence. It showed the following ethnic breakdown of HIV cases in the year from March 1990:

BRENT HIV CENTRE CASES 1989- March 91

Asian	1
African	27
Afro-Caribbean	-
Irish	20
White UK	67

Not a single Afro-Caribbean AIDS case, and only one Asian! According to the 1981 Census, Brent has 16,690 West Indians, 20,985 Asians, 17,878 Irish and 16,679 Africans. Table 3 gives details of Aids and ethnic groups, which are available for about 91% of cases. If the figures for HIV imported from high risk countries are excluded, then neither the Afro-Caribbean nor Asian community in Britain are significantly more exposed to AIDS. In fact, the incidence of Aids among Afro-Caribbeans and Asians should be proportionally higher since both communities are almost exclusively located in the urban areas where HIV rates are high.

The strongest argument that the Aids bureaucracy can muster to support a Black epidemic in Britain is the American experience. But the US is not the UK, and apocalyptic scenarios which

I am in quite close contact with black organizations and it is the case that the majority of black people they are seeing are of African descent. If there were a vast number of people from the Caribbean with HIV it would get out because the medical profession are only too quick to tell us when Black people are using up too much of their services. Hope Massiah, Positively Women

totally disregard the social context are deceptive. Although Blacks play a similar role in both societies, their condition regarding Aids is very different. Firstly, Blacks in Britain comprise roughly 2% of the population, whereas in the US they are around 12%-13%. Secondly, being Black in Britain is certainly no picnic, but the standard of living of Black Britons, their prospects and their access to health care, are far better than the appalling conditions of many Blacks in American inner cities. Thirdly, although Black Britons are marginalised, they are not as ghettoised as their American counterparts. Fourthly, despite the media hype, not many British Black people shoot drugs, and those that do tend to do it less frequently, in more isolated groups, and in a different drug culture. In the US, drug taking is associated with prostitutional sex within the same community and there is no needle exchange programme (see

below, 'Aids in the US'). Finally, in both the US and the UK, despite the proliferation of Blacks in the imagery of gay erotica, Blacks are excluded from the highly commercialized 'gay scene' by the same factors that exclude them from many other areas of society: racism and lack of cash.

The evidence for an Asian epidemic is even thinner. Only 57 Asians in Britain have died or contracted Aids out of a community of 1.5 million people.⁵³ Asian's cultural reluctance to talk about Aids is given as a possible explanation for alleged under-reporting of Aids and HIV infection. This may be the case for HIV, but not Aids. It is also suggested that Asians are middle class and so can spirit away Aids-HIV cases into private clinics. This is fantasy. The overwhelming majority of Asians in Britain are not shopkeepers or self-made businessmen but very poorly paid unskilled workers.

Table 3.

Aids and the Ethnic Minorities Cumulative Totals to 31 March 1991 (excluding visitors)

	White	Black	Asian	Others/ Mixed	Not Known	Total
Homosexual	3006	73	39	39	254	3411
Between men and women						
'High-risk' partner	29	3	-	1	2	35
Other partner abroad	66	122	10	3	7	208
Other partner UK	24	-	-	-	2	26
Injecting Drug Use (IDU)	56	2	1	2	5	66
IDU & homosexual						
Haemophiliacs/Transfusion	183	10	5	5	98	301
Mother to Child	12	13	1	5	3	34
Other/Undetermined	32	4	1	2	9	48
Totals	3565 (83%)	231 (5%)	57 (1%)	59 (1%)	400 (9%)	4312 (100%)

Source: CDSC Quarterly Report, March 1991. Table 26

Apart from high-risk groups and very specific communities of Africans in certain areas of London, there is no evidence to suggest a specific Black or Asian HIV problem. If anything, both communities seem almost immune to the epidemic. Hope Massiah, of Positively Women, told us, "I am in quite close contact with black organizations and it is the case that the majority of black people they are seeing are of African descent. If there were a vast number of people from the Caribbean with HIV it would get out because the medical profession are only too quick to tell us when Black people are using up too much of their services."⁵⁴

F. AIDS IN THE US

The development of Aids in the United States has virtually the same characteristics as that of most western countries except that a greater degree of ghettoization and a higher level of contact within the gay community has made the epidemic in the gay community more acute. The American experience, like the African, is often used by the Aids bureaucracy in Britain to back its 'generalised holocaust' scenario. The evidence is harder to check. Europeans are prone to believing whatever incredible stories are published about America. The implication is that as in pop-culture and technical innovation, Britain lags behind the US by a couple of years, and the American experience provides a picture of the future of the epidemic in Britain. Simon Watney, an advisor to the Terrence Higgins Trust, gives the following account of the epidemic in the US: "By the end of 1991 more young Americans will die from AIDS than perished in the entire Vietnam war. Indeed, Aids is now the leading cause of death for all American men aged between 25 and 44, and all American women aged between 15 and 33. In February 1990 the Centre for Disease Control reported a cumulative total of 11,189 women with Aids in the US, 52% of whom were originally infected through needle-sharing, and a further 19% through unprotected sex with injecting drug users. Indeed, 28 percent of all people with Aids in America have been infected through needle-sharing, and it is currently estimated that 70% of injecting drug users in some areas are already infected. Women with AIDS now make up 9% of the national US total, and heterosexual transmission which accounted for only 1.2% of the cases in 1982, is now responsible for 4.9% of the total case-load."⁵⁵

Apart from the attempt to dump the epidemic on largely Black and Hispanic

U.S.A. AIDS-HIV - 1989 GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

States with 1000 plus cases¹

		per 100,000
California	6,978	23
Florida	4,267	33
Georgia	1,283	19
Illinois	1,248	10
Maryland	1,037	22
New Jersey	2,361	30
New York	8,161	45
Pennsylvania	1,202	10
Texas	3,275	18

Top Nine 29,812

US Total 40,745 16
(US population 240 million)

Source: Monthly Reports, Centre for Disease Control, Atlanta.

¹ All other have less than 600, most less than 300.

drug addicts, who have far less political clout than the white middle class gay establishment, every sentence in this passage is designed to mislead. It is useful to go through this paragraph 'fact' by 'fact'. Watney does not remind his readers that the US has a population approaching 240 million which puts a different slant on absolute Aids figures. The sensationalist reference to the Vietnam war only plays on public ignorance which, because of the scale of the American defeat and the degree of violence, believes that a lot of people died in Vietnam. In truth, only 60,000 Americans died, three times the annual US murder rate. Aids is not the largest killer of people in the 25-44 age group (Watney missed the vital qualification "in some areas"). And, as has already been shown, people in this age-group don't usually die, so any disease can

Aids in the US is highly localised, socially and geographically, as in all western countries. Of the 6,978 Aids cases in California in 1989, 2,000 were in the Hollywood-Wilshire district of Los Angeles.

U.S.A. AIDS-HIV - 1990 EXPOSURE CATEGORY

Male Homosexual/Bisexual	88,391
Intravenous Drug User	28,894
Hemophiliacs	839
'Heterosexual' Contact	17,809
Blood transfusion	3,624
Other/undetermined	25,504

Source: Monthly Reports, Centre for Disease Control, Atlanta.

¹ Of the 7,809 in the so-called 'heterosexual' category, a third were from Haiti or Africa. Another third had IDU's as partners. A further 6% had bisexuals partners and 14% were in the other risk categories. 'Heterosexual Transmission of HIV in the UK' Dr. Anne Johnson, in James Chin, *et al.*, *HIV/AIDS: Is the Heterosexual Population at Risk*, 1990.

² 83% of those in this category are subsequently redivided in other categories, and many have a history of other sexually transmitted diseases. See 'Aids - United States, 1981-1988', Communicable Diseases (Scotland) Unit, *Weekly Report*, 20 May 1989, based on CDC, Atlanta figures.

have a big impact. Watney mentions a cumulative total of 11,189 Aids cases among women. Even assuming that all these cases occurred in the last 5 years, i.e. an annual rate of 2,237, this corresponds to an annual infection rate of 1 in 58,113 of the population! According to Dr James Chin of the World Health Organisation, more women in the 25-34 age group died from Aids in New York City during 1988 than from any other cause. However, it should be noted that (a) New York has the second highest rate of infection in the western world, and (b) 25-35 year old women account for more than 85% of female Aids cases because of the epidemic's connection to prostitutional sex and drug taking. The causes of death for 25-34 year old females in New York in 1988 were: 288 deaths from Aids, 102 from drug overdoses, and 97 from cancer.⁵⁶ The remarkable thing about these figures is how few people die at all in this age group.

To say that "in some areas" 70% IDUs are infected with HIV means little or nothing, particularly given the highly ghettoised nature of American society. Are such high rates accidental, or is some factor involved? In a mistaken attempt to defend gays against the politics of Aids as a 'gay plague', Watney attempts to 'de-specify' Aids. There is no doubt that trying to explain any social disease as the disease of a specific community is inevitably reactionary because any social explanation that is based on singling out a particular group

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of people as inherently different - which Lukacs called "zoologizing society" - is reactionary. However, any attempt to conceal the social conditions of Aids will convince no one and prove ineffective. A truer representation of the current situation in the US is that the rate of growth in gay Aids cases is declining whereas a drug and prostitutional sex related epidemic is rising in very specific areas such as Black and Hispanic ghettos. Research by one New York doctor gives some indication of why drug related HIV is rampant in certain ethnic ghettos: "The reason is the sheer frequency of injecting during binges of cocaine use - up to 15 to 25 times in a single day. Some people, injecting every 10-15 minutes, were reported to leave the needle sitting in their vein and to top it up every few minutes."⁵⁷ New York does not operate a needle exchange programme, while bleach bottles that have been distributed by support organizations have been used by the police in court as evidence of drug taking. In Spain and Italy, where the proportion of IDUs was very high, and is now on a par with gays, the introduction of needle exchange schemes led to dramatic decreases in all transmittable diseases.

Aids in the US is highly localised, socially and geographically, as it is in all western countries. Nine states account for just under 75% of all cases, and even within these states, Aids is restricted to certain large towns. For example, in the year to April 1989, there were 7,678 cases of Aids in California, but 2,000 cases were from the Hollywood-Wilshire district of Los Angeles, while figures for surrounding rural areas are very low or zero.⁵⁸ The breakdown of 'high-risk' groups is also similar to that of Britain. The epidemic, while devastating for very small and defined communities, is petering out: "The rate of increase has steadily declined, except in 1987, when the revision of the case definition resulted in an abrupt increase in reported cases."⁵⁹ Now that the disease has subsided in the white middle class gay community, "Aids has become routinised, tossed on a waste heap of social problems such as homelessness, drug use, violence and poverty."⁶⁰

G. AFRICA

There are two things that the British Aids bureaucrat on the defensive always relies upon when challenged on the epidemic. The first is "Virginia Bottomley said..." This is followed by a string of dubious statistics and catch phrases gleaned from Health Department press releases: "Aids is probably

AIDS-HIV IN AFRICA 10 MAJOR COUNTRIES

Uganda	21,719
Zaire	11,732
Tanzania	8,163
Zimbabwe	5,249
Zambia	4,036
Rwanda	3,407
Burundi	3,305
Ivory Coast	6,836
Kenya	9,139
Malawi	7,160

Source: WHO. 1 May 1991 update.

the greatest threat to public health this century," and so on.⁶¹ The other is Africa.

Unlike all the scenarios examined so far, Aids in Africa is a real epidemic in the sense that the word is used in public discussion. Aids figures for Africa are far worse than they seem because Africa is a sparsely populated continent. However, even here it is important not to exaggerate the impact of Aids.

Firstly, African 'Aids' figures include both people with Aids and those that have been diagnosed as having the HIV virus whether or not they have Aids. Secondly, the whole continent is not affected. Only 11 countries have more than 2000 Aids cases. Thirdly, the figures are both inaccurate and unrepresentative. Most studies are carried out in the large towns where rates are very high. Due to the difference between town and countryside, rural figures cannot be extrapolated from urban ones, yet many of the figures bandied about by the Aids bureaucracy are based on such extrapolations.

For example, if 1 in 7 patients tested at a hospital in Kinshasa are found to have Aids, alarmist headlines such as "As many as 4 million Zaireans may have the HIV virus according to recent study" are likely to follow. Studies tend to concentrate on localities where prevalence is high and data is often not collected in a proper statistical manner. Not a single African country has undertaken the type of large-scale randomized testing that could give an accurate picture of the epidemic. Rex Winsbury, editor of *Aids Analysis Africa* states that the authorities "simply do not know the extent of the problem: their meagre resources are too stretched even to monitor the disease."⁶² In addition, immuno-suppressive ailments are endemic to Africa due to malnutrition and 'immunological overload' caused by the proliferation of diseases such as

It is necessary to examine the specific reasons for the African epidemic rather than expounding hyped-up predictions. If for over a decade, western Aids has predominantly involved gays and IDUs, and Aids in Africa is predominantly heterosexual, then this difference must be explained. It is not legitimate to argue that the epidemic just happened to start in different ways.

malaria. These are easily confused with Aids.

Describing conditions in Uganda, Dr. Goodname is of the opinion that "for a variety of reasons, HIV testing is not available for routine clinical use in Uganda... Is some other chronic disease causing the symptoms and signs of immunosuppression? In both settings doctors and patients must learn to live with uncertainty.... Many treatable non-HIV-related illnesses, such as diabetes, infectious endocarditis, typhoid fever, brucellosis, pancreatic insufficiency and trypanosomiasis, are frequently associated with true seropositivity for HIV"⁶³

Despite the above, there is no getting away from the fact that there is an Aids epidemic in Africa. However, it is necessary to examine the specific reasons for the African epidemic, rather than expounding hyped-up predictions as to the future course of the disease in the West or the rest of the Third World. If, for over a decade, western Aids has predominantly involved gays and IDUs, and Aids in Africa is predominantly heterosexual, then surely this difference must be explained. It is not legitimate to argue that the epidemic just happened to start in different ways. We know that diseases, and particularly sexually transmitted diseases, are not random, casual, phenomena.

The African Holocaust

Africa is a continent dying on its feet. Slavery and the resulting depopulation provoked a social disaster which the continent has not overcome. The involvement of colonialism, and later imperialism, has wrecked the indigenous economy and totally disrupted African society. On top of all this, Africa is now at the receiving the world economic crisis. Millions of Africans are on the move, desperately seeking work, trying to eke out a precarious existence by roving trade, or rendered homeless by war or famine. Africa's health is now rapidly declining and she is plagued by all sorts of communicable diseases.

Poverty means that many women in towns engage in prostitutional sex with a very large number of men. These are not professional prostitutes, just ordinary women who supplement an inadequate income with an additional service. With so many women engaged in prostitution, the price of sex is very low and it has become a frequent recreation which is accessible to the average working class budget. It is not surprising that this is reflected in the infection rate of Ugandan high risk groups: barmaids (67%) and truck drivers (32%)⁶⁴ In the Ivory Coast for example, a prostitute earns £2 a day.⁶⁵ In most African countries the price of sex is cheaper than a condom. As thousands of men pass through towns looking for work, they outnumber women substantially and thus sexual diseases are highly concentrated in a smaller number of women.

In 1985-86, Dr Jonathan Mann estimated that 59% of prostitutes were HIV positive.⁶⁶ In addition, Africans are more prone to HIV infection because other sexually transmitted diseases are so prevalent and often go untreated.⁶⁷ More than half of African women undergoing gynaecological tests show signs of having had sexually transmitted diseases at some time in their lives, and "between three and 15 per cent of women attending prenatal classes in sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia and the Caribbean were infected with gonorrhoea" 'Aids Risk Increased by Other Sexual Diseases,'⁶⁸ War and political instability has also played its part. The disruptions of a 20-year civil war have contributed significantly to Uganda's 21,407 Aids cases.

Could the African epidemic be reproduced in the West? Not unless African conditions are reproduced first. While the prospects for the British economy are gloomy indeed, it is unlikely that tens of thousands of men will be forced to roam the country looking for jobs, and that thousands of women will have to take up prostitution as a source of supplementary income.

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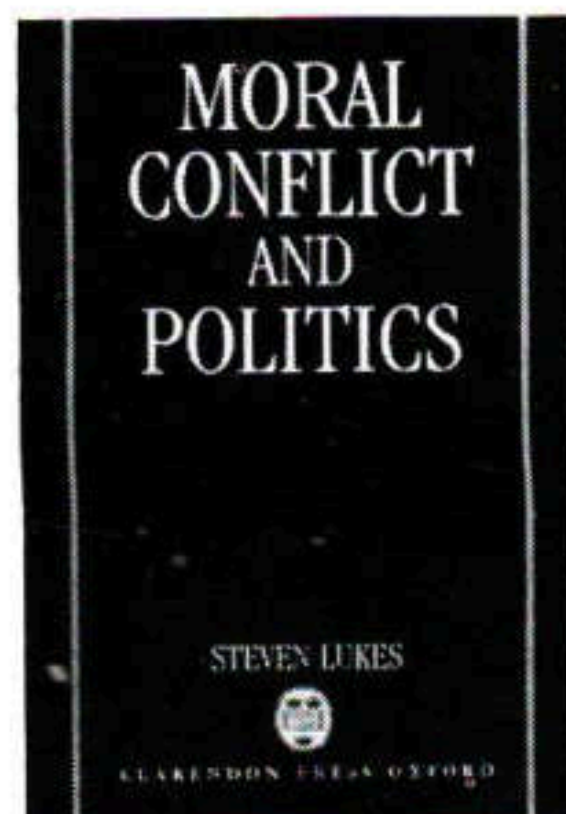
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HIV-1 By Exposure Category October 1984 to September 1991

	Male	Female	Sex unstated
Homosexual	9587	-	
Between men and women			
"high risk" partner ¹	39	220	1
other partner abroad ²	537	431	9
other partner UK	57	64	2
under investigation	129	155	-
Injecting drug use	1465	684	30
IDU & homosexual men	180	-	-
Haemophiliacs	1266	8	1
Blood transfusion abroad	72	74	2
Blood transfusion UK	46	49	2
Mother to infant	46	49	2
Other/undetermined	887	163	88
Total	14265	1848	135

Source: *Communicable Disease Report* Vol 1 No 41, 11 October 1991. CDSC.

¹ Men and women who had sex with injecting drug users, or with those infected through blood factor treatment or blood transfusion, and women who had sex with bisexual men. ² Includes persons without other identified risks from, or who have lived in, countries where the major route of HIV-1 transmission is through sexual intercourse between men and women.

Geographical distribution AIDS-HIV 1982 to September 1991 (HIV since 1984)

	Aids Deaths	Aids Surviving	HIV Cases
Thames Health Area	2207	1398	10010
England excl. Thames H.A.	705	384	4006
Wales	61	16	241
N. Ireland	22	4	85
Scotland	157	108	1906
Total	3156	1909	16248

Source: *Communicable Disease Report* Vol 1 No. 41 11 October 1991. CDSC.

H. THE HIV 'TIME-BOMB'

By 1989 enough Aids data had been collected to begin to seriously challenge the 'doomsday' scenario. As hard data began to back up traditional epidemiological theory - which suggested a less dramatic trajectory for the spread of the disease - the Aids bureaucracy found itself in a difficult position. As one Terrence Higgins trust official feared, "perceptions of AIDS as an urgent epidemic are waning."⁶⁹ The Aids bureaucracy responded in several ways.

An attempt was made to discredit the figures by suggesting a massive level of under-reporting. However, this approach created tension with the medical profession and the state as it suggested that sufferers were discouraged from seeking help due to fear of persecution or bigotry. In addition, the remarkable similarity of the epidemic in different

western countries, irrespective of prevalent attitudes towards high-risk groups, suggested that massive under-reporting was not occurring. The Aids figures gave an accurate, if incomplete, picture of the epidemic. Under-reporting is now only mentioned in conversation and not in Aids bureaucracy literature.

Anti-Science

Next, epidemiological theory and the sociology of diseases themselves came under attack. Aids figures, it was argued, only showed where the epidemic had come from, not where it was going to. The question to ask was not where you got the infection from but who you were likely to pass it on to, as if the two might not be related. Nick Partridge, a press officer at the Terrence Higgins Trust, calls Aids a 'fast-moving'

epidemic, to give the impression that the past history of Aids has had no bearing on its future course. Here commonsensical arguments are used to undermine science. Epidemiological science would not be possible if diseases just jumped around at random. While it is *logically* true that an Aids sufferer from a high risk group can pass on the disease to anyone, it is *socially* very unlikely.

Incubation

Another 'explanation' for the failure of the predicted Aids explosion was said to be its long incubation period. During the mid 1980s this was estimated at 5 years. When the expected explosion had not occurred in the late 1980s, a new figure of 10 years was plucked from thin air. At the VII International Aids Conference in Florence this year, the period was extended to '15 years or more'. However, given the age structure of Aids victims, an average incubation period of 15 years or more would mean that a substantial number of people contracted the virus between the ages of 5 and 10 years!

Shot in the Foot

As mentioned before, the latest argument is that 'Safe Sex' campaigns actually prevented the epidemic from taking place. It is difficult to prove the non-existence of something that did not happen. Yet, as the STD figures show, there has been no significant change in peoples 'protective' behaviour.

The only firm ground left for the Aids bureaucracy was HIV statistics, where the numbers are greater than those for Aids. Aids statistics became only the tip of an HIV iceberg (a favoured scare-monger's metaphor) which represented a future Aids time-bomb (another favoured metaphor) that would unleash a secondary and more generalised epidemic. The impression given was that HIV screening had trawled the larger community and a massive number of non-risk category cases had been detected showing that the Aids contagion had already gripped women, heterosexuals, blacks, babies, etc. This is entirely bogus.

The public is always given the impression that Aids and HIV statistics are the same, only at different stages of the disease, and that today's HIV figures are tomorrow's Aids cases. This is not true. In Britain, Aids figures are pretty accurate since the severity of the symptoms means that almost all cases - at least since 1984 - end up in the NHS system and are subsequently notified. Since HIV infection is asymptomatic, HIV figures are always the result of

The public is always given the impression that Aids and HIV statistics are the same, only at different stages of the disease, and that today's HIV figures are tomorrow's Aids cases. This is not true. HIV figures can rise and fall dramatically in a way that is relatively independent of the actual incidence or rate of infection.

screening or self-reporting. No screening, no HIV figures. HIV figures can rise and fall dramatically in a way that is relatively independent of the actual incidence or rate of infection.

As more mothers at ante-natal clinics undertook HIV screening it was hardly surprising that a dramatic rise in female HIV reporting also occurred. Because these ante-natal clinics are in health districts with the highest Aids rates in the country, it is easy to suggest that HIV is running rampant among pregnant mothers. As stated above, in one inner London district HIV infection is 1 in 200, but the national figure of less than 1 in 16,000 is rarely stated.

If research concentrates on particular groups of homeless and destitute IDUs in inner London who are prone to carelessness and needle-sharing, this gives free rein to sensationalist headlines such as "as many as one in two drug addicts may be infected with Aids - doctors say." But it gives no indication of what is going on among the majority of IDUs who don't share needles, and the majority of drug users who do not inject at all.

Even a cursory look at the HIV figures indicates that they are so erratic as to be useless for sound statistical purposes. In 1985, when HIV testing was restricted to patients attending VD clinics and people who had good reason to fear they might have the HIV virus, 2800 tests yielded 526 positives (1 in 5). Three months later the figure dropped to 1 in 29 as 27,000 tests yielded only 916 positives. In 1989, 141,100 tests produced 1772 positive (1 per 79.6). In the first three quarters of 1990, 121,500 tests gave 1660 positives (1 in 73).⁷⁰

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Does this indicate that HIV infection is declining? Not surprisingly Chris Murphy, press officer at CDSC, told *Analysis* that the only thing that gross HIV statistics demonstrate with any degree of accuracy is how many HIV tests have been done.

Not a single major publication in Britain, and certainly not the Aids bureaucracy, took the trouble to point out that HIV screenings did not use a representative random sample and are therefore not scientifically valid indicators of the level of infection in the population as a whole. Screening programmes were only introduced in areas where there was already concern about the large number of Aids cases. Thus HIV figures predominantly mirrored existing localised epidemics and not the extent of infection throughout society. Test results from London hospitals distorted the national picture since the Thames region accounts for roughly 70% of all UK Aids cases and within the North West Thames area the three regions of Riverside, Parkside, and Bloomsbury account for 45-50% of these figures. Add to this the different HIV testing policies of each health authority, and the inclusion of tests from STD and private clinics, and the result is a statistical shamble.

The best American mass HIV-screening to date is that carried out by the US Army. All new recruits are obliged to take an HIV test. Given that the Army has an over-representation of poor blacks (30%), and that the US has the highest rates of HIV infection, a high number of positives were to be expected. As people in high-risk groups were likely to exclude themselves, the tests promised to give some indication of non-high risk transmission. The rate of infection was found to be 0.15% out of 308,078 applicants tested.⁷¹

In Britain it was not until 1991 that two statistically valid HIV screening programmes were undertaken. Both have finally destroyed the myth of a future HIV time-bomb and of an epidemic outside the high risk groups. On 29 June 1991 *The Lancet* published the results of both surveys.

I. HIV IN SCOTLAND

The Scottish neo-natal screening programme has been possibly the best HIV survey undertaken in Europe to date. It was based on 65,773 blood tests which accounted for 99.6% of Scottish births in 1990. By labelling blood samples with postcodes, the Scottish research team were able to link every HIV infected baby to known HIV mothers in the same area and maintain the anonymity of testing.⁷²

The results conclusively show that (a) HIV infection is not spreading out from high risk groups, and (b) there is no 'epidemic' among IDUs, though figures for Edinburgh were high.

Almost all HIV antibody-positive babies were born to high risk mothers, 80% of HIV-positive pregnancies in Dundee were in high risk women. Of the 13 Edinburgh positives, "7 mothers were intravenous drug users, 5 were partners of intravenous drug users, and 1 had no high risk associations". The astonishing figure for Glasgow - none in 16,308 births! - is due to the low level of HIV infection among IDUs, "In Glasgow, HIV prevalence in anonymous and voluntary testing of drug addicts remains below 1.5%, whereas in Edinburgh and Dundee it is 38% and 40%".

The Scottish HIV survey showed the dangers of making global projections on the basis of studies which focus on high-risk groups, dangers which have been clearly acknowledged in the careful language of academic journals: "We feel that the gradient of prevalence referred to in earlier reports merely reflects poor discrimination of small high prevalence areas." Needless to say, the Aids bureaucracy and the press completely ignored the Scottish study. Instead they pounced on the other neo-natal survey in the same issue of *The Lancet*, the one for Greater London.

J. HIV IN LONDON

Unlike the Scottish study, the London HIV survey was of far less scientific value since it made no attempt to relate figures to transmission groups or behaviour. The Thames Region neo-natal screening programme was based on blood samples of 329,136 newborn babies in three health regions: NE, NW, and SW Thames, which account for 22% of the UK's population and 80% of Aids cases.⁷³ The survey confirmed that Aids in Britain is concentrated in the South East, with an infection rate of 5.9 per 10,000 in the Thames region, and 10.9 per 10,000 in inner London. Researchers found "an increasing trend in all areas [covered by the survey] but a statistically significant

Scottish Natal HIV 1990

	Tested	1/90	2/90	3/90	4/90	per 1000
Glasgow	16308	0	0	0	0	0.00
Edinburgh	5276	6	1	4	0	2.46
Dundee	2130	0	0	2	1	1.41
Aberdeen	2850	0	0	0	2	0.70
Others	39209	1	0	0	0	0.03

LONDON NATAL HIV

	Inner London HIV		non-metropolitan HIV	
	tested	positive.	tested	positive.
July-Dec 1988	9,087	2	16,690	1
Jan-June 1989	12,030	9	23,948	1
July-Dec 1989	14,161	9	29,158	2
Jan-June 1990	9,586	11	18,845	1
July-Dec 1990	15,338	21	30,373	3
Jan-June 1991	9,484	19	17,881	1
Total	69,686	71	136,895	9

increase only in inner London".

Unusually high HIV figures for pregnant women in certain London boroughs have always been used by the Aids lobby to suggest that a heterosexual Aids epidemic is in the offing. In March 1990, Dr Anne Johnson of the Middlesex Hospital, who is now remarkably silent given her past penchant for scare-mongering declarations, deceptively claimed that, "There is a steady trickle of women into our clinic who are infected with HIV and who don't know where from."⁷⁴ It is very doubtful that the women involved did not know where they contracted Aids, given the information that was to be subsequently made public (they had all either contracted Aids in Africa or from Africans in Britain). It is likely that despite her declared puzzlement, Dr. Johnson knew this as well. But for a while, the London neo-natal HIV study seemed a vindication for the bureaucracy's prediction of a looming HIV crisis among non high-risk groups.

As all pregnant women could be considered 'heterosexual', the Aids bureaucracy misleadingly classified them as 'heterosexually acquired Aids' thus giving the impression of a sudden rise in 'heterosexual' transmission was taking place. In fact, these 'heterosexuals' all turned out to be in non-gay but 'high risk' categories. As early as January 1991, the Aids lobby had been unofficially privy to the London results and knew perfectly well that a significant development in the London area which had not been reported publicly - i.e. a large proportion of affected Africans

was skewing the figures - accounted for all so-called 'heterosexual' HIV cases.

The outrageous misuse of the London statistics by the Aids lobby angered many doctors. Since 1990 there had been rumblings. Doctors complained that the CDSC's 'other partner abroad' classification was misleading since it gave the impression that people were getting Aids abroad. Knowing that a significant proportion of 'heterosexual' cases in Belgium and France were of African origin, we contacted the CDSC early this year, before *The Lancet* let the cat out of the bag in August. Our attempts to get more detailed information on the sources of HIV-infection in London proved unsuccessful. We were told that health district authorities were reluctant to give figures and that the 1987 Aids Act specifically prohibited disclosure of Aids figures at this level.

The Doctor's Revolt

On the 29th June 1991, *The Lancet* published a report from Dr Susan Mitchell and three other doctors at the Genito-Urinary Clinic at St. Thomas's Hospital giving a breakdown of HIV cases.

Mitchell showed that of the 39 people who caught HIV abroad, 34 were Africans (22 from Uganda), one was from the West Indies but had been living in Zimbabwe. Additionally, there was one American who had been living in Uganda, one UK national who had been working in Zambia and another in Thailand. In other words, almost all the 'heterosexual' HIV cases were in fact in high-risk groups.

HIV/Aids Cases St. Thomas' Hospital

	83-85	86-88	88-91	Total	
Homosexual	—	—	—	435	
IDU	13	24	15	52	32 foreign
Africa	0	11	23	34	
C UDI	0	8	5	13	
Other partner abroad	0	3	2	5	
Blood transfusion	0	1	2	3	
C UK	0	0	1	1	
C bisexual	0	0	2	2	
C blood transfusion	0	0	1	1	
Unknown	0	0	2	2	
Total (non-gay)	13	47	53	113	

C = contact of

HIV/Aids Cases Charing Cross Hospital

	85	86	87	88	89	90
IDU	3	2	6	0	2	3
Africa	0	0	0	2	3	8
C IDU	0	0	2	2	1	1
C bisexual	0	0	3	0	0	0
C Africa	0	0	0	0	1	2
Unknown	0	0	0	1	2	2
Total (non-gay)	3	2	11	5	9	16

C = Contact of

HIV/Aids Cases Royal Berkshire Hospital

	85	86	88	88-91	
Gay	—	—	—	72	
IDU	0	4	3	7	
C UDI	0	0	1	1	all foreign
African	4	4	6	14	all foreign
Caribbean	0	0	3	3	all foreign
Other partner abroad	0	1	1	2	all foreign
Blood transfusion	0	0	1	1	all foreign
UK contact	0	1	1	2	
Total (non-gay)	4	10	16	30	19 foreign

C = contact of

The large rises in female HIV in London could easily be accounted by people from or in contact with Africa, accounts for most of the country's Aids cases. As Dr. Susan Mitchell and her co-workers politely suggested, "it would appear that a significant contribution to the reported increase in heterosexual AIDS and HIV infection may reflect IDUs and other persons infected abroad rather than transmission in the UK."

The significance of the St Thomas's

report was sufficient to make the editors of *The Lancet* send a letter to the Communicable Diseases Surveillance Centre before publication. The CDSC did not dispute the points made by the St. Thomas team.

The St Thomas's report led to other doctors speaking up. Supportive reports showing a similar pattern came from Guy's Hospital, St. Stephen's Clinic, Charing Cross Hospital and the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

HIV/Aids Cases St Stephen's Clinic

Gay	96
IDU	156
Blood transfusion	10
Haemophiliac	1
Abroad	51
Non-risk group	15

At Guy's, "7 of the 11 seropositive women were from Uganda". At Charing Cross Hospital, Africans accounted for "50% of new heterosexual cases". At the Royal Berkshire Hospital, 19 of the 30 non-gay cases were foreign nationals. Dr. Godley of the Royal Berkshire Hospital, pointed out that the London HIV screening programme "demonstrat[ed] a weakness in anonymous HIV testing - namely, the lack of demographic and behavioural information linked to the results". While the London survey "show[ed] an increase in prevalence in inner London between 1988 and 1990/91, [it does] not tell us how many of these pregnancies were in women with, or partners with, major behavioural risk factors"⁷⁵ In another report, Dr Patrick Dixon, director of Aids Care Education and Training stated that "6 out of 10 women in London with Aids are from the African continent".⁷⁶ Nor can all African Aids cases be interpreted as 'heterosexual.' Doctors at St. Thomas's assumed that HIV infection among African women was heterosexual, and were not asked whether they had had blood transfusions or operations. Anxious to dismiss 'African sexual practices' as a cause of HIV in Africa, Hope Massiah told us "all these people are going into the hetero-sexual numbers without any investigation of whether it could be through other methods."⁷⁷

In other words, the impression that the Aids lobby had been giving of a significant rise in female and heterosexual HIV was entirely bogus. Since the Aids lobby had known the true situation in London before they initiated the campaign in March-April 1991, one can only conclude that they deliberately suppressed the facts and manipulation the 'evidence' for their own purposes.

The figures for London hospitals speak for themselves. Readers should note that inner London accounts for the bulk of the Aids epidemic in Britain and although the figures given are no indication of overall figures they do give a fairly accurate idea of transmission groups.

Implausible Denial

When we asked National Aids Trust to comment on the above reports, and whether they considered that they finally laid to rest the prospect of a massive non-specific Aids epidemic, we got an unexpected reply from press officer Julian Meldrum. Meldrum reminded us that the original epidemic had been imported into Britain from the USA, or by Britons having sex in the US, that IDU Aids had been traced to a drug addict who came over from Spain, and that infection of haemophiliacs had been from American blood products. Was he then suggesting that the predominantly heterosexual African connection might spark off a heterosexual epidemic? Reminded of the wider implications of what he was saying, Meldrum became heated and made a categorical statement arguing the opposite.⁷⁸

The self-deception and ignorance of the Aids bureaucracy was demonstrated at the Vth International Conference of People with Aids in September. Asked to comment on the Scottish and London studies, and *The Lancet* correspondence, a panel of experts and Aids bureaucrats declared to astonished press hacks that none of them had read the reports ("we were too busy preparing the conference"). Of course, this did not stop the panel from rubbishing *The Lancet* studies. Dr. Erik Sven, a WHO bureaucrat in charge of the European Aids scene, who sat chewing gum through the press briefing, bluffed and blustered: "It's only the reality in 1990. It doesn't necessarily tell us what 1991 or 1992 is going to look like. They have done these kinds of studies and one year everything is fine, the sea is calm, but next year it erupts. I say the study is a snapshot of reality in 1990 with very little predictive value in a volatile situation."⁷⁹ Of course, this does not stop the Aids bureaucracy itself making outrageous predictions.

If the past has no influence on the future of Aids, how can a future prevention policy be devised?⁸⁰ For John Mordaunt, who heads the IDUs Aids group, the Scottish natal-HIV study is bunkum, "I personally know of more children with HIV in Edinburgh than those mentioned [14] so there is obviously some major discrepancy in the study - I find it unbelievable". Again, personal anecdote replaces the scientific evidence of a team of researchers whose study is based on 50,000 Scottish births.⁸¹

The disclosure of the reality behind the London HIV figures marks a turning point for the Aids bureaucracy, the character of which must now be considered.

"In the last six years Britain has spent about £620m fighting the epidemic. Quite simply, Aids has become the biggest medical show in town... the Aids business recently drove one respected academic journal, *Nature*, to describe this year's annual international conference on Aids as a 'carnival'... with its side shows and sales booths, demonstrations and flag waving, the annual Aids conference has become a cross between a US political convention and a soap company sales trip."

Rex Winsbury, *Financial Times*, 31 August 1991.

"AIDS brought an educated, middle-class subculture into an unlikely encounter with the welfare state."

The Economist, 7 July 1991

K. THE AIDS BUREAUCRACY

The common prejudice among both right and left is that the Aids bureaucracy is dominated by gays or a gay mafia. Dr. Seale expresses a prejudice that is silently harboured by much of 'public opinion', "Homosexual men have been the most determined and effective group in distorting the truth about Aids. They have been so effective because there is a scattering of homosexuals amongst all key professional groups involved - scientists, doctors, medical editors, journalists, lawyers, politicians and priests... Many of the men who are particularly knowledgeable about and dedicated to Aids research, treatment, legislation, publication and education are homosexuals... Most in the professions are only identifiable as homosexuals to other men with similar inclinations, few have 'come out' and even the wives of those who are married are usually unaware of their habits. Hence they automatically form a type of secret society without even trying... The most urgent step to be taken is to break the pervasive grip of homosexuals on information and disinformation."⁸² Simon Watney, who is politically somewhere in the middle, believes that "Aids service organizations are run largely by and for 'white, middle-class gay men',"⁸³

At the front line this may be true, but the Aids bureaucracy is far from being a gay cabal. Unlike the women's health lobby, the gay community in Britain has never been well organised. In marked contrast to the situation in America, the British gay community is predominantly consumer and service oriented and has preferred to keep away from the problems of political representation and power. When the epidemic erupted, the gay community was therefore badly placed in the welfare provision circuit

and in those government run quangos which in Britain go by the polite title of 'the voluntary sector'. Others were better placed. The collapse of local authority and GLC funding led women bureaucrats in the London area to migrate to the greener pastures of the centrally funded 'voluntary' sector. Relegated by chauvinism to 'family and caring issues' this 'health' bureaucracy was ideally placed to make the most of the Aids gravy train.

This uneasy coalition harbours potential frictions between the gay 'frontliners' and the more established sections of the bureaucracy. As Gerald Connor, a FARO lobbyist has said, "We cast it as a public health issue to give it the broadest appeal. I'm not running away from the fact that it is a gay issue... But I have to make connections to the rest of the health lobby of this town."⁸⁴ During the bonanza years the coalition held together, but now that Aids budgets are being cut the bickering has started. The non-gay 'services' are gaining ground despite the fact that the epidemic remains predominantly gay. Terry Cotton, of the Hammersmith and Fulham council HIV unit, fears that the shift in Aids spending towards heterosexuals will make it easier to ignore the needs of homosexual men: "We have spent a lot of time ensuring that there is a balance between the needs of gay men and the needs of families and drug users, etc."⁸⁵ But Naomi Honigsbaum, who advises the National Children's Bureau on HIV and Aids, claims that the focus on acute services for homosexual men has marginalised children.⁸⁶ One gay activist told the press: "What is quite clear is that it is easier to raise money for kiddies."⁸⁷

Of course, the Aids industry is far more extensive than the collection of middle class busy-bodies that have al-

ways dominated the welfare circuit. As Dennis Altman has argued, "Once a disease become 'fashionable', it generates its own establishment and vested interests. Aided by politicians, lobbyists and the media, the money and attention focused on Aids...have ensured the development of an Aids industry, involving researchers, doctors, therapists, social workers and administrators, who have taken control of the definition and management of the disease."⁸⁸ Nobody could reasonably argue that this is not a feature of the Aids business in Britain. However, the main purpose of this article is to demonstrate how the self-serving interests of the 'liberal' health bureaucracy and Tory 'moral rearmament' have combined to completely distort the nature of the epidemic. After the terror 'Aids information' campaigns of the mid 1980s there can be few readers who are unaware of the ideological usage the Tories have made of the epidemic. But what's in it for the 'caring' Aids bureaucracy?

L. THE AIDS GRAVY TRAIN

Compared to the expenditure on educational campaigns on smoking, heart disease, cancer, and health and safety at work, the expenditure on 'Aids education' has been enormous. Table 5 shows Department of Health funding. The Aids bureaucracy also receives substantial funding from local authorities and other 'independent' bodies who themselves are publicly funded. Last fiscal year Regional Health Authorities spent £127 million (excluding health services) on Aids education. Local authorities spent £10 million.⁸⁹ In addition, the Health Education Authority was given £8.5 million to spread around. Groups also receive funds from the national Aids help line, about £1.5 million. Other government departments also spend on Aids. For example, the Education Department is spending £7 million on "training teachers and employing health education co-ordinators".⁹⁰

Thus the Terrence Higgins Trust has a budget approaching £4.5m, not just the £450,000 from central funds. The London Lighthouse has an annual budget of £4 million. Organizations funded primarily by local authorities, such as the HIV units and centres, are not listed either. This can involve large sums. Brent's HIV unit received £445,732 last year.

In case readers get the idea that these funds are going into the pockets of Aids victims - which are enough to make each one a pools winner - the parliamentary written answer that accom-

Aids service organizations are run largely by and for 'white, middle-class gay men'
Simon Watney

The collapse of local authority and GLC funding led women bureaucrats in the London area to migrate to the greener pastures of the centrally funded 'voluntary' sector.

panied the release of Table 5 concluded with the following statement by Health Secretary Virginia Bottomley: "These sums are intended as a contribution to the core administrative costs of the organizations concerned but not for specific initiatives or specific areas of their work."⁹¹ If every counselling service, information network, helpline, HIV unit, etc, is taken into account there is around one Aids support organization for every three Aids sufferers in Britain. There is a mind boggling proliferation of 'jobs' such as Safe-Sex advisors, condom project workers, HIV liaison workers, Aids ethnic outreach workers, local Aids health coordina-

Once a disease become 'fashionable', it generates its own establishment and vested interests.
Dennis Altman

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TERRENCE HIGGINS TRUST Health Department Grants.

Year	
1985-86	£35,000
1986-87	£118,000
1987-88	£300,000
1988-89	£400,000
1989-90	£450,000
1990-91	£450,000

Source: Department of Health. Hansard, 14/11/90 c177w

AIDS GRAVY-TRAIN Fiscal year 1990-91

Health Department funding of 'voluntary' AIDS organizations

Aids Ahead	£40,000
Acet	£140,000
Aled Richards Trust	£45,000
Bernardo's	£15,000
Black HIV/AIDS Network	£40,000
Body Positive	£40,000
British Ass. for Counselling	£69,000
Care & Resources	
for People with Aids	£15,000
Frontliners	£50,000
Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence	£38,000
Landmark	£60,000
Local Authority Ass. Officer	
Working Group on Aids	£19,000
London Lighthouse	£600,000
Mainliners	£40,000
National Aids Trust	£211,000
Positively Women	£40,000
Standing Conference on Drug Abuse	£41,000
Streetwise Youth	£10,000
Terence Higgins Trust	£450,000

Source: Hansard, c82-82W 15

tors. Prefix 'Aids' or 'HIV' to 'coordinator', 'liaison officer' 'worker' and link this to an area of welfare provision such as children, teenagers, women, IDUs, ethnic minorities, prisons, the deaf, disabled, etc, and you have a £17,000-£22,000 job. The big growth area this year is Safe Sex education in schools, which the bureaucracy want to provide for kids as young as 8 years old. The result is that even excluding the medical sector, there are more people employed in the Aids bureaucracy than there are Aids sufferers. It is not surprising that Simon Watney, himself closely associated with the bureaucracy, has complained of the duplica-

tion of services and has called for a central body on the Australian model to oversee spending.⁹²

It might be considered that everyone has to make a living somehow, and perhaps it is better that public funds are wasted in something as harmless as Aids welfare, rather than in making weapons or lining the pockets of Tory Party cronies. At the very least the bureaucracy must be saving *some* lives. However, the problem is that the parasitism of the Aids bureaucracy has very serious consequences for both gays and 'straights'.

"The gay movement is developing into a more professional and traditional interest group, with increasing numbers of activists who do not share the leftist politics of early liberationists... Aids is producing a fundamental shift... as new people, many of them previously apolitical, become involved and as the focus of the movement shifts from an emphasis on rights to the allocation of resources. For if demands concerning rights tend to be symbolic and call for expressive politics and expressions of solidarity with other groups, a focus on resources tends to make a movement more akin to a traditional interest group, more concerned with professional leadership and access to the back rooms of power... The development of a more professional and expert gay leadership carries with it the risk of isolating that leadership from those it represents, who are seen as sources of funds and recipients of advice rather than potential actors in a political movement."⁹³ These words were written in 1986 in a country, the US, where the gay movement was much more political than in Britain, and when their author could optimistically comment that "it is remarkable that the response from at least some sectors of government and the medical profession has been as positive as it has."⁹⁴ Today the situation is very different and one might ask what position the gay movement is in to confront future battles?

M. THE POLITICS OF AIDS

Gone are the days when an American president could gain mileage from hugging a HIV sufferer in public. For most Americans - and most Americans live in tidy suburbs - Aids is just another one of those problems of far away inner city cesspits. Bush has used the Aids issue and gays to "throw a piece of red meat for the Republican pit bulls to gnaw on."⁹⁵ Gone too is the consensus between the drug companies and the gay service organizations. For the drug companies the Aids epidemic held out the promise of an inexhaustible gold-

After years of going along with the state's moral terror campaign and hoping that emphasizing Aids as a general threat would prevent an illiberal backlash, the Aids bureaucracy is now scrambling to emphasize the opposite: the ordinary citizen has nothing to worry about.

mine at a time when profits were faltering. Aids was going to affect everyone. With 95 million Americans in the highly sexually-active age range desperate for a vaccine, and with the Government giving the campaign its full backing, there would be a bonanza for any corporation who came up with the right drug. In the race to the patent office, the drug companies realised that gathering as much information from Aids sufferers themselves would give them a competitive edge. The drug companies therefore adopted a very friendly attitude to gay organizations. Similar beneficences were bestowed on Africans where research might prove useful. In addition, the drug companies took on debt expecting big profits in the future.

However, research has been disappointing. It is now accepted that there will be no single 'magic bullet' for HIV and that treatment for the disease is likely to entail a complex combination of therapies. Even if a discovery were made in the near future, the drug companies would not rake in a profit for another 5 years at least. In the meantime the drug companies have turned their attention to HIV testing kits to capitalize on their research. These sell for around \$15, which produces far less profit than a costly vaccine. However, if testing is routinized, and millions of kits sold, the drug companies can still make a killing. The problem is that civil rights issues prevent health and federal authorities from adopting mass testing programmes. The drug companies have now turned on the gay movement and other minorities. The homophobic hysteria currently sweeping Congress is part of a campaign to introduce mass testing to isolate infected individuals. The result: "In 25 states and the District of Columbia sodomy in private is illegal - a law upheld by the Supreme Court in 1986. Anti-gay violence appears to be on the rise. Community centres in six cities reported a 42% increase in attacks on gays in 1990 compared with the previous year; the police said the rise was 70%. Nearly 20% of homosexuals say they have been physically abused. On July 24th the police in New York said a

series of shootings in Central Park probably had an anti-homosexual cause."⁹⁶

After years of going along with the state's moral terror campaign and hoping that emphasizing Aids as a general threat would prevent an illiberal backlash, the Aids bureaucracy is now scrambling to emphasize the opposite: the ordinary citizen has nothing to worry about. In the US, Secretary of Health, Dr. Louis Sullivan, one of the few people in the Bush administration of liberal inclination, is now at pains to argue that "Aids cannot be passed on through casual contact and is therefore not a public health hazard in the true sense". David Rogers, vice-chairman of the National Commission on Aids, now declares that Aids is "not a communicable disease in the classical sense. The only merciful thing about Aids is that it is so hard to catch".⁹⁷ Such assurances are unlikely to placate the bigots and the homophobes who, after years of pent-up anger at what they see as the government's pussy-footing with gays and ethnics, know they have both on the run.

In Britain the mood has also changed. The disclosure of the Scottish and London anonymous HIV testing marked a turning point. The publication of the figures in *The Lancet* led many national newspapers to carry editorials questioning why they had been misled. "Health educators are concerned that Aids is now perceived by the Press to have long passed its 'flavour of the month' period. News editors are consequently not giving the story the consideration the health educators feel it deserves."⁹⁸

The UK Aids bureaucracy is also back tracking fast. Simon Watney, who only a year ago was painting an apocalyptic scenario for the epidemic, is now at pains to argue: "If we look at the statistics in this country we see 5000 people with Aids to date. With sixty million people that means quite clearly that even among gay men there are not many who know someone with Aids."⁹⁹ Professor Michael Adler, the National Aids Trust's chair is also anxious to reassure the public that the epidemic is not breaking out of the high risk groups,

"If we were talking about a virus that was highly infectious you would see a completely different epidemiology, you would see clusters of outbreaks occurring among communities - that is not happening. The epidemic is developing in well established ways."¹⁰⁰ It is rich, and dishonest, for a prominent member of the Terrence Higgins Trust to now argue that "much of the work carried out by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is dedicated to the task of re-education, correcting the mistakes of 'official' campaigns" as if the Trust had not gone along with these campaigns.¹⁰¹

The HIV Charter

It is in this context that the British Aids service organization issued an 'Human Rights Charter for People with Aids and HIV'. The launch, which was more a publicity stunt than an attempt to mobilise, fell flat on its face when it was trumped by a counter 'charter of responsibilities' issued by the Conservative Family Campaign. The 'Aids Charter' fiasco illustrates the futility of attempting to defend the oppressed by appealing to abstract liberal notions of rights. Such abstract notions are the favoured rat trap of the ideological Right. In the last decade the state and the ideological Right have succeeded in turning every abstract right of the oppressed into its opposite; an eloquent premise for further oppression. The oppressed have never benefitted from individual rights formulated in an abstract manner because the meaning of such rights is imbued with the rationality and the common understanding of the dominant ideology. It is therefore not surprising that the oppressed have always fought to redefine rights and the ideological framework that gives them meaning. The Aids lobby's 'Two to Tango' thesis illustrates these points well.

Two to Tango

As the state has abandoned the Aids campaign in its generalised form, the hunt is on for who to blame. The response of the Aids lobby has not been to oppose any notion of guilt or to distance Aids from discussion of morality, but to apportion blame to individuals on equal terms. Kerry Hutton, of the National Aids Trust and chair of the Aids Charter working party, emphasizes it is "the responsibility of the uninfected to protect themselves...to be very blunt, when you are having sex with someone it takes two to tango... the onus of the responsibility of doing something about HIV and Aids, I am afraid, does not rest with the person who is HIV infected".¹⁰³ Such 'buyer beware' caveats may work in commercial law, but is

hardly the basis of a fighting strategy to defend gays.

Here is G. J. Woods, an American gay activist, "Any consenting adult who has been exposed to Aids education, but who nonetheless engages in unsafe sexual practices, is foolish and can hardly be considered a victim, regardless of that sexual partner's antibody status. It is impossible for society at large to assume the responsibility of this fact."¹⁰³ One can almost hear the shrill voice of a departed Tory leader.

Neither will the attempt to apportion blame or responsibility on an equal basis convince many liberals. Certainly, *Guardian* columnist Edward Pearce is not convinced, "If somebody has sexual intercourse possessing the knowledge that they are loaded with a disease - any disease - that they have a chance of transmitting, they are gravely, morally at fault for doing that".¹⁰⁴ As for the Right, it knows perfectly well that given the hysteria already whipped up, no one is going to split hairs over political philosophy. Dr. Seale is confident that "Once the public is fully informed of the true nature of the threat that faces us all, it will accept the measures essential to halt the spread of the virus, even though they will inevitably require curtailment of the liberty and rights of everybody - as in war time."¹⁰⁵

The Aids lobby is also fighting for the 'right' of Aids sufferers - and only Aids sufferers - to define the nature of their disease. In the context of a political struggle such a claim might be useful, if only to publicize the idea that diseases and the medical process are not as neutral as most people think. However, in the absence of such a struggle, which leaves the 'fight' to one idea opposing another, such strategy is counter productive.

Surely those who see themselves threatened by infection, i.e. White Straight Middle Class America, can equally claim a corresponding right to define what protective measures they should take. Would an unaffected person not have the right to refuse to send his or her child to a school which had a pupil with HIV? There may be no threat, but a parent could well argue that they, not doctors, scientists or government officials, have the sole right to define what threat they face.

Politically bankrupt, the Aids lobby has scraped the bottom of the ideological barrel to come up with the ultimate and sacrosanct bourgeois argument: money. An anti-gay, anti-minorities witch-hunt will cost too much, "The exorbitant cost of widespread testing will take valuable economic resources

away from public education, treatment, and research."¹⁰⁶ Value for money arguments rarely favour the oppressed. The average person expecting an epidemic that will engulf him and his dear family is likely to consider that any funds spent on identifying carriers is money well spent.

Acknowledgements

I owe an intellectual debt to Dr. John Fitzpatrick and Don Milligan, whose book, *The Truth About Aids*, though out of date, remains one of the few sensible accounts of the AIDS epidemic and is still well worth reading (Junius Publications, 1987). Jane Winfield gave invaluable help collecting statistics and hunting down medical journals. I also owe a personal debt to my friends, who I have bored endlessly with this subject.

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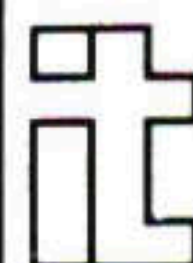
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Patrick Murray
Marx's Theory of Scientific Knowledge
Humanities Press

Is Marxist theory just a scientific description of capitalism or is it also intrinsically a call to overthrow it? In other words, would it be possible to accept the whole of Marx's theory of capitalism and still not feel obliged to do anything about it, or does accepting Marx's theory of capitalism automatically mean adopting his political stance towards it? This is the question with which Patrick Murray begins his book.

He points out, quite correctly, that those Marxists who think of Marx's social theory simply as a value-free science akin to the natural sciences tend to concentrate on his mature writings like *Capital*. On the other hand, those who think of it as a 'critique' which through its very account of the structure of capitalism gives us good reason why we should overthrow it, concentrate on the early writings, such as the *1844 Manuscripts*. Murray belongs to this latter camp of 'humanist Marxists' as opposed to the 'scientific Marxists'.

However, while a common strategy of humanist Marxists is to ignore the mature writings, or to suggest that they do not represent the 'real Marx', Murray takes the opposite line. He sets out to demonstrate that his humanist Marxism is just as evident in the *Grundrisse* and in *Capital* as it is in the early writings.

Scientific Marxism

'Scientific Marxism' has its origins in the academic Marxism of the late 19th century, and runs through the Althusserian structuralism of the 1970's to the 'Analytical Marxism' of the 1980's. Its basic outlook is quite simple. A scientific description of social reality and its inherent laws and movement is one thing, while a value-judgment as to whether to support or oppose that

movement is quite another. 'Is' is not 'ought', and no description of the way things *are* can by itself tell us what we *ought* to do about them. Recognising that the forces of history are driving towards a certain conclusion, even that this outcome is historically inevitable, does not mean that we *ought* to employ our own efforts to help bring it about more quickly.

What gives us reason to overthrow capitalism, for the 'scientific Marxist', is not Marx's objective description of capitalism but a set of subjective values which are external to that description. It is because we already adhere to values such as social justice and freedom that Marx's description of capitalism as a system of exploitation and coercion gives us a motivation to work for its destruction. The implication is that if we did not adhere to these values, then concepts such as 'exploitation' and 'coercion' would for us simply describe neutral facets of the capitalist system. Their discovery would no more give us reason to put an end to that system than discovering photosynthesis and osmosis would give us reason to put an end to plant life.

Marx as Moralist

According to this view, Marx is part of the modern effort to free humanity from the religious and moral illusions of the Middle Ages, and to reveal the universe as a morally neutral place in which it is up to human beings to decide what is for their own good and to act accordingly. In certain passages Marx did write about the laws of society in such neutralist terms. He also poured scorn on ideas like 'justice', 'right', and 'morality', describing them as simply ideological expressions of capitalist social relations. All this seems to support the 'scientific' interpretation of Marx.

However the difficulty with it is that he was so obviously, and especially in his early writings, a passionate advocate of the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement by a 'society of associated producers'. This fact gave rise to the debate on 'Marx and justice' among Analytical Marxists in the 80's, which concluded that Marx was a 'scientific' theorist who also happened to believe passionately in values like justice. It was just that he was so absorbed with the image of himself as a scientist of capitalism that he did not *realise* that he believed in these values. Like Moliere's *bourgeois gentilhomme*, then, he was a moralist all his life without knowing it.

The Humanist Tradition

By contrast, Murray's 'humanist Marxism' derives from that of Frankfurt School members like Adorno and Habermas, and before them the early Lukacs. Whereas the 'scientific Marxists' try to fashion Marx as an impartial political economist, supposedly similar to Smith or Ricardo, the 'humanists' see him primarily as a German Idealist philosopher following in the footsteps of Kant and Hegel. From this point of view, Marx's combination of description and advocacy is not a result of an admixture of science with value-judgments of which Marx himself was unaware. Instead, his work is the crowning achievement of the struggle in this whole tradition to overcome the gap between 'is' and 'ought', between the answers to the questions 'what is the case?' and 'what shall I do?' or, as Kant put it, between 'theoretical reason' and 'practical reason'.

Murray's book aims to show that Marx's unwillingness to separate the 'is' and the 'ought' stays with him from his early philosophical writings to his mature economic works. It is inherent in the very way that he examines capitalism in these works. So much so, that both the *Grundrisse* and *Capital* would remain inherently critical and revolutionary even if stripped of every passage explicitly condemning capitalism.

Hegel and the Enlightenment

Murray begins his thesis with Hegel's attack on the science and morality of the Enlightenment. For Hegel, science is a matter of discovering a rational pattern in the world and morality is a matter of endowing one's own actions with rationality. What he absolutely opposes is the Enlightenment idea that this rationality can be established '*a priori*', in advance of ordinary experience and action. While Murray refers to this way of thinking variously as the 'logic of essence' or the 'logic of *Verstand*', a more accurate term for it might be '*a priori* rationalism'.

It is important to distinguish '*a priori* rationalism' in science and in morality. In science, it means positing beforehand a set of abstract logical categories, such as 'force' and 'substance', and then attempting to fit empirical data into them willy-nilly. For Hegel, the inevitable failure of this strategy leads us to switch to the opposite position, 'positivism'. Here the scientist simply gathers and classifies observations and refuses to look for a rational meaning in them at all. Since we are rational creatures, this means in effect that we simply come to call whatever we find through this process 'rational'. When that does not satisfy us we switch back to '*a priori* rationalism'. These alternating approaches are two sides of the same coin. The same occurs in the field of morality. Here *a priori* rationalism contrasts an ideal 'ought', derived from pure reasoning, to the ways in which people actually behave, and calls on them to conform to that 'ought'. Again, failure leads to a switch to 'positivism': which here means the idea that whatever people do is right. Examples of the two positions might be the 'Continental' legal tradition based on the idea of an intrinsically valid rational Natural Law, and the English concept of a Common Law which is given validity just by the fact of long practice.

For Hegel, both *a priori* rationalism and positivism are mistaken. Either rationality (the 'ought') is absolutely counterposed to reality as it presents itself to us (the 'is'), or else it is directly identified with it. By contrast - Murray argues - Hegel's project is to discover rationality inherent in reality, as its hidden structure, whether this be the reality of the physical world or that of the world of human affairs.

Discovering the rational in the real

Murray provides evidence from Marx's earliest writings to show that Marx absorbed Hegel's critique of *a priori* rationalism and applied it to the Young Hegelians. But then Marx began

to realise that Hegel himself had succumbed to a new version of the very same *a priori* rationalism. When he had attempted to discover the rationality inherent in the institutions of the modern state, he had finished up by simply imposing on them a structure which he had worked out, *a priori*, in his previous work the *Science of Logic*. The result was that existing institutions were endowed with a spurious rationality and legitimacy. So Marx turned Hegel's critique of Enlightenment *a priori* rationalism, and of the positivism which follows in its wake, against Hegel himself.

Murray's argument is that Marx then went on to fulfil Hegel's original project - that of finding the rational in the real - by developing a novel conception of science. In it, the scientist has to look to the object not only for empirical data, but also for the 'logic' through which that data is to be made intelligible. In Marx's own words, he has to seek out the 'particular logic of the particular object' (*Early Writings*, p. 159). In Murray's terms, he has to become an 'empiricist in second intension'. This then is 'Marx's theory of scientific knowledge', which gives Murray the title of his book.

However, as Murray himself acknowledges, it does not add up to much of a theory. It does not provide a methodology for doing science, since an *a priori* method for discovering rationality in the world would mean making *a priori* assumptions about the nature of that rationality, so that it would be another form of *a priori* rationalism. All the advocate of this view of science can do is repeat the advice to seek out rationality in the world itself, and warn against the dangers of *a priori* rationalism and positivism. There is not much else to do but get on with the business of science itself.

Moreover, if this is all there is to Marx's conception of science, it is difficult to see how it can overcome the opposition of 'is' and 'ought'. Suppose that by eliciting the particular logic of the particular object we discover a peculiar logic inherent in capitalism, which is different to the logics inherent in feudalism, in biological organisms, or in interstellar systems. Why should discovering that logic provide us with an 'ought' to justify our efforts to overthrow capitalism? It is one thing to discover a 'rationality' which gives the reasons for which things happen in a physical or even social system, but it is another to discover a 'rationality' which will give us reasons why we should do one thing or another. Yet the difference between these two kinds of 'reasons' is

just the difference between the 'is' and the 'ought' that we began with.

A Priori Rationalism everywhere

However this is not all Murray has to say. The bulk of his book goes on to trace the development of Marx's thought after his discovery of *a priori* rationalism in Hegel. To his credit, Murray makes no concessions at all to a dichotomy between the Young Marx and the Old Marx. Yet the result is a rather odd picture of Marx's development. Essentially, all that he offers us is a Marx who identifies *a priori* rationalism in wider and wider areas of the thought of his contemporaries. He finds it in Proudhon and French socialism, then in Ricardo and English political economy, and finally in the structure of the capitalist economic system itself.

This last result is the most difficult to make sense of, and regrettably Murray does not spend as much time as he should examining its strangeness. The idea is that just as in *a priori* rationalism abstract ideas are set up over empirical reality, which is then forced into the moulds created by them, so in capitalism abstract entities like capital, money and value rule over the world of human beings and the things they produce and use. Human beings are forced into the moulds of capitalist and worker, and their products and productive capacity are forced into the moulds of commodity and labour-power. So the capitalist economic system has a structure which is analogous to that of the *a priori* rationalist mode of thought. In turn, those who live under this system tend to reflect its structure in the way that they think, in other words it gives rise to *a priori* rationalism in their way of thinking. This, according to Murray, is the core of Marx's theory of ideology.

Murray provides a mass of evidence for this line of thought in Marx. He goes on to elaborate the basic picture of ideology as a reflection of economic structures in thought structures. He suggests that for Marx the circulation of commodities and the circulation of capital are two different economic structures, and that they give rise, respectively, to two different forms of *a priori* rationalism: the classical Enlightenment form which Hegel criticised, and the more sophisticated form to which Hegel himself succumbed. He even suggests that they correspond respectively to the 'logics' of Judaism and Christianity.

Criticising capitalism

All this is intriguing, and some of it is persuasive. It is marred, though, by the extent to which Murray leans on paral-

rels between Marx's texts and Hegel's in order to make his point. Pointing out parallels between *Capital* and Hegel's *Science of Logic* may support the idea that Marx's project is an extension of Hegel's critique of *a priori* rationalism, but it also raises the question of how Marx can safely take over Hegel's logical figures once he has diagnosed Hegel himself as suffering from another version of the same disease. Yet Murray never addresses this question.

Furthermore, in the mass of elaborations and parallels, the central point that Murray is making about Marx's development tends to become obscured. It is that Marx has performed an enormous transformation on his original critique of *a priori* rationalism. It began as a description and critique of a mode of doing science, and it has ended up as a description and critique of *social reality* itself, with the mode of doing science seen as an ideological product of that social reality.

It seems feasible that a social system could have a structure analogous to that of a mode of thought, and even that the structure could somehow give rise to the corresponding mode of thought, although Murray does not explain exactly how this might occur. However, the real problem here is how a *critique* of a mode of thought, which is what we started with, could carry over to a *critique* of the analogous social system. *A priori* rationalism as a mode of thought might be criticised on the grounds that it is contradictory, in that it requires that rationality be both in the world and grounded independently of the world. In this case, Marx's job as critic would be to show how the social system is contradictory in the same way.

Yet Murray does not follow up this line of thought at all. Instead he has Marx simply condemning capitalism for the way it imposes its forms on humans as 'natural, sensual, objective and social beings' and for its incompatibility with 'expanding and enhancing the wealth of human experience' (p. 52). If this is Marx's intention then he is simply criticising capitalism by counterposing the values of naturalness, sensuality, and the wealth of human experience to capitalist reality. He is again simply opposing an external 'ought' to how capitalism 'is', even if it is now a Feuerbachian, naturalist 'ought' rather than a Kantian, rationalist one. We are back with the is/ought dichotomy.

Theory of history

This is not the only difficulty with Murray's interpretation. In his desire to

see Marx as free from *a priori* rationalism, he denies that Marx has a general 'theory of history' at all. Marx's historical materialism, he claims, is simply an exposition of the way that different social structures in history condition the modes of thought of those who live under them. In other words it is simply a theory of ideology. Marx becomes something of a post-modernist, pointing out the ways in which particular social structures limit and distort human life and thought, rather than developing any general theory of history.

Apart from the fact that this flies in the face of some of Marx's best-known statements, it lacks any justification in the rest of Murray's interpretation of Marx. Murray himself says that Marx is not against discovering a rational pattern to reality; he insists only that this be discovered and not imposed. After all, according to Murray, Marx has discovered a general pattern in capitalism - namely its '*a priori* rationalist' structure. But then why shouldn't he have discovered a general pattern in human history as a whole? Why couldn't human history be a 'particular object' with a 'particular logic' just as, on a smaller scale, capitalism is?

Furthermore, Murray's repudiation of Marx's theory of history deprives him of the means for solving the problem he began with, that of the reconciliation of 'is' and 'ought'. He is right to see this reconciliation as central to Marx's thought. Where he is wrong is in his belief as to how Marx has provided a solution. The critique of *a priori* rationalism only allowed Marx to define the problem, but it did not at the same time give him the solution, as Murray seems to think it did in the idea of an 'empiricism in second intension'. The key to his solution, as in Hegel, lies in the particular subject matter of his science, which is not just capitalism but human history. Yet Murray denies the existence of just such a science of history in Marx.

Towards a solution

In the *Philosophy of Right* and the *Philosophy of History* Hegel aimed to show how the patterns of human action that comprise the institutions of the modern state have an inherent rationality, and have arisen historically through the gradual realisation of that rationality. This process, however, is not obvious to the actors themselves. Hegel's exposition shows them the essential rationality in their activity, and so gives them good reason for continuing in it. His role is not that of a scientist looking on at human life from a neutral perspective, nor that of a moral-

ist telling people how they should live. It is closer to that of a psychoanalyst, making people conscious as to their own motivations. The difference is that where the motivations which a psychoanalyst brings to consciousness are irrational ones, Hegel aims to make people conscious of how their actions are *rational* in a way they had not seen themselves. So in the very act of showing them why they are doing what they are doing, he will show them why they should continue to do it. All he does is make their own reason apparent to them.

For Marx it is not the patterns of human action that make up the political institutions of a society that are fundamental, as in Hegel, but those that make up its economic structure. And the action whose hidden rationality he aims to expose is not that of citizens maintaining the status quo, but that of workers struggling against their conditions. Otherwise, though, his outlook is identical to Hegel's. Just as Hegel sees history as fundamentally the development of the modern state, Marx sees it as the development of capitalism and then of communism. The aim of *Capital* is to show the inherent rationality of that development, a rationality which is not apparent to the actors involved. This is neither neutral 'science' nor moralising. Its aim is to clarify to workers why they are doing what they are doing, and have been doing all the way through history, which is struggling to eliminate the conditions of their oppression, in order that they can do it, for the first time, successfully. If 'workers' were substituted for 'world', the following passage could stand as a manifesto for Marx's entire work:

"We do not confront the world in a doctrinaire way with a new principle: Here is the truth, kneel down before it! We develop new principles for the world out of the world's own principles. We do not say to the world: Cease your struggles, they are foolish; we will give you the true slogan of struggle. We merely show the world why it is fighting, and consciousness is something that it *has to* acquire, even if it does not want to. The reform of consciousness consists *only* in making the world aware of its own consciousness, in awakening it out of its dream about itself, in clarifying [*Erklären*] its own actions to it." (Letter to Ruge, 1843, *Collected Works* 3, p.144)

Making History

Marx's theory of history, like his theory of capitalism, has been seen as simply an account of the operation of vast impersonal forces, which excludes any

view as to what human beings should or should not do. But history is the story of human actions, and human action always has some element of rationality in it. To make that rationality explicit is at the same time to show the actors in history more clearly the direction ahead - a direction in which they are already pushing. This was Marx's view of his own role, one that Murray seems to have simply missed.

Murray's book makes a refreshing change from the preoccupation with functionalist and economic model-making that has characterised English-speaking Marxism since the rise of Analytical Marxism. He has had the courage to address the is-ought question head on, and his work has the merit of

showing the continuity in Marx's thought from his earliest to his latest writings. Above all Murray shows the richness of Marx's theory of ideology: the variety of ways in which Marx saw the very structures of thought as conditioned by social relations. Many of Murray's ideas have already been advanced before, especially by Habermas and Colletti. Others are simply mistaken. The variety of its arguments do not make this an easy book. Nevertheless its richness of detail, and the sheer quantity of provocative theses which it puts forward along the way make it well worth the effort. It deserves more attention than it has had so far from Marxists.

Andrew Chitty

leads her to examine those aspects which seriously question the regime's claim to be socialist or even progressive.

Habel's argument is this. As the Revolution settled down in the latter 1960s, Cuba was confronted by two development options within the restricted choices of an economy under siege. The option represented by Che Guevara - which Habel favours - was based on diversification from sugar and tobacco, voluntarism and moral incentives, worker participation, democracy, and cooperation with other Third World countries as a strategy to avoid excessive dependence on the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the old Communist Party and the state 'functionariat' favoured a technocratic policy based on material incentives, managerialism, and increasing productivity in existing sectors rather than diversification. The bureaucracy did not believe that Cuba could develop independently and thought that only Comecon could provide the trade and technology which Cuba needed for accelerated development. In the middle of these two options sits Castro, the final arbiter. Until 1970, when a huge 'Revolutionary Offensive' failed to produce the expected 10m ton sugar harvest, Castro was inclined towards a strategy based on 'idealism and voluntarism'. Failure gave the bureaucracy the upper hand. A highly centralised development agency was created, the Junta Central de Planificación (JUCEPLAN). Economic policy became coordinated with the Soviet Union and in 1972 Cuba joined Comecon. The centralised 'Soviet' planning strategy bore fruit because it coincided with a period of high international sugar prices.

Ironically, while Castro's voluntarist 'Revolutionary Offensive' had led to large scale nationalizations and the destruction of the rural and retailing middle classes, the centralising bureaucracy fostered the return of private initiative, particularly in food production. This led to the emergence of kulaks, spivs and chancers. By 1986 the situation was so out of hand that it threatened the very survival of the regime. Castro was forced to bring the shutters down on creeping capitalism by launching a 'Rectification' of errors. This, Habel argues, heralded a return to the moral incentives, voluntary work, etc, of the earlier 'idealistic' period. However, Habel is concerned that the process is being hijacked by less altruistic motives. Finally, Habel recognises that Castro is a problem.

And so to the contradictions. There is

playing second Fidel

Janette Habel
Cuba: The Revolution in Peril
Verso, 1991

Janette Habel is a member of the French radical organization, the *Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire*. The LCR is a section of Ernest Mandel's *Fourth International*, which has always had a soft spot for radical Third World regimes, from Ghana's Jerry Rawlings to Grenada's bizarre 'New Jewel Movement'. None has been so favoured as Castro's Cuba. Alan Krivine sums up the traditional attitude of western radicals to their Third World counterparts, an approach which is the main barrier to understanding the Cuban regime, "We have many things to say about democracy in Cuba, but it's for the Cuban people to sort these things out."¹ The LCR's sister organization in Britain, now trading under the *Socialist Outlook* label, argues that "While bureaucratic deformations exist inside the Cuban workers' state, they have not crystallised to the point that a distinct bureaucratic caste has risen whose interests are diametrically opposed to those of the Cuban people."² The reader should note that this is the very same bureaucracy which supported the Tianamen Square Massacre, which had supported the 1968 crackdown on Czechoslovakia, and celebrated the anniversary of the Hungarian uprising by declaring that the Russians did the right thing in 1956. Along with the Revolutionary

Communist Group, which is collecting donations to charter an oil tanker for Cuba, the 4th International sees Cuba as the last bastion of Communism.³ Both organizations regularly re-print large chunks of material from *Granma*, the organ of the Cuban CP, and from Castro's speeches.⁴

There are two basic problems with Habel's book. The first is Habel's refusal to admit - despite the evidence that she herself provides - that Cuban 'socialism' is well and truly dead. Picking through the ruins, Habel tries to salvage what she can. She wants the Cuban Revolution "to be a pole of attraction for all oppressed peoples and for an international labour movement racked by an unprecedented crisis of outlook". (p.2) A laudable, if misguided, idea which derives from another mistake: considering the Cuban Revolution to have been socialist, rather than anti-colonial and nationalist. Nowhere does Habel examine - except in fleeting snatches - the nature of the 1959 Revolution, or how this might have influenced the character of the subsequent regime. Cuba's problem, as she sees it, is essentially one of Third World socialist reconstruction. This leads to the book's second problem: constant contradiction. Unlike the organization she belongs to, Habel's intellectual honesty

space here only to deal with two major ones: the role of Castro and 'Rectification'.

El Lider Maximo

Habel's treatment of Castro's role is a real mess. She openly admits that "Fidel Castro's monopoly of power is an obstacle to any advance in the masses' self-organization. Unlike the past, the problem today is not just of maintaining links with the masses and basing support on their mobilization, but of enabling them to inform themselves first of all, and then to have an influence on both debate and major economic decisions. In other words, a policy opposed to the Castroite conception of power"... "a democracy where only the Commander-in-Chief asks the questions and gives the answers, and in which he alone can hold power and be the opposition, is not in the end compatible with the aspirations of the new generation."

But even this blunt statement is full of ambiguities. Unlike the past? Was there ever a time when the Fidel cult was justified? Is it just a question of allowing the workers to "have an influence"? Surely 'a democracy' where political discussion is restricted to one man answering his own questions is no democracy at all. And does this affect only the new generation? What really worries Habel - and is a constant concern throughout the book - is that a robust, healthy, critical generation of young workers has grown up who are not crippled by the Fidel cult, who see through the politics of the siege psychosis, and who are not willing to put up with Castro's antics and the stupidities of the regime.

Habel recognises that they have the power to destroy the regime. Yet her instincts are not to throw her lot in with the working class but to urge Castro to accept reform before it is too late. Having written off the working class as a solution Habel fears Cuba's Yeltsinites, "if Fidel Castro insists on turning a deaf ear [to reforms], he will strengthen the position of the supporters of market reforms by allowing them to wave the banner of 'democracy'". (p. 174)

This attempt to rescue Castro from himself leads Habel to establish a "duality of sorts between the bureaucratic apparatus and the pro-Fidel group" (pp. 79, also p. 62) "Fidel and his followers" are custodians of the ideals of the revolution, albeit with a concept of democracy which alienates the working class. On the other hand, everything associated with the Soviet Union, the pro-Soviet bureaucracy or

"officials trained in the Soviet school" is bad.

Indeed, Habel tries to exonerate Castro by attempting to convince us that the pro-Soviet bureaucracy have somehow hijacked the revolution, "The Castro leadership has needed to close ranks around itself in a difficult economic situation; and this social support has been all the more necessary because of the hostile reaction manifested in the apparatus" (pp. 62-65) The problem with Cuba is that the bureaucracy does not believe in revolution, while Castro thinks that he is the revolution.

But even here Habel cannot make up her mind, since reformist winds seem to blow from the East. She complains that "Castro has so far revealed his inability to meet the democratic challenge represented by Gorbachev" but then "the past experience of a certain perestroika led the Castro leadership to criticize Gorbachev-style conceptions" - as if Castro did not have good old Cuban reasons for rejecting reform. (p. 66) She refers to the voluntarism of the 1960s in glowing terms - "Everything that happened during the decade 1960-70 was possible because the Cuban Revolution did not owe anything to anyone," (p. 149) and decries the Sovietization of economic policy after 1971. And yet "It is undeniable that the social gains and the 'growth with equality' that has characterised the Cuban Revolution are due to Soviet aid... From this perspective no other country in Latin American bears comparison." (p. 28) But, "'Russification does not explain everything. Fidel Castro's own conception and practice of power must be challenged." (p. 173) With such to-ing and fro-ing the reader begins to feel a little sea sick.

Habel has to admit that the distinction between a voluntarist pro-Castro group and the bureaucracy does not express a fundamental cleavage but a division of labour, "The decisive control of Fidel Castro and his henchmen over major economic decisions, combined with the Communist Party's monopoly of power, have the effect of hiding responsibilities, concealing incompetence and corruption, and of favouring bureaucratic complicity. Effective organizational and political devices to correct dysfunctions do not exist: mechanisms of control are devoid of any power; mass organizations are mere echo chambers; and the political effect of the organs of people's power is non-existent... The idea that bureaucratic paralysis could be fought by voluntarism alone - and what is more, by an elitist

voluntarism limited to a few people - has been crumbling" (p. 163)

Bondage & Rectification

As mentioned, the bureaucratic planning policies of the 1970s slowly led to the emergence of an influential layer of kulaks and spivs. However, what really shocked the regime, and particularly Castro and his Sierra Maestra cronies, was not the emergence of a new class *per se*, but the fact that the bureaucracy itself was so deeply involved in 'enterprise' that it was beginning to waver in its support for the regime. Between the Spring and Summer of 1986, Castro organised elite sections of the Army, the Interior Ministry and trusted state officials in massive clampdowns. The Castro group became more involved in overseeing day to day policy. The early 1980s also saw a significant downturn in Cuba's economic prospects, both domestic and external. In 1984 the government was forced to admit that the Five Year Plan was in deep trouble. A special hand picked task force, the Grupo Central, was created to give Castro greater control. Sugar prices declined. The earnings from Soviet oil re-exports were hit by low oil prices. Cuba's foreign debt began to rise sharply along with rising interest rates. The need to reassert tighter political control at the top, and to impose a stiff austerity programme on the working class led to 'Rectification.'

Ostensibly 'Rectification' marks a return to Che's concept of socialism, based on "high moral principles". (p. 67) "Che's economic and theoretical writings are central to Rectification" - Habel tries to persuade us - "The Cuban leadership is involved in a reflection on the problems surrounding the transition to socialism... on the basis of the classical texts and most diverse experiences... Fidel Castro is engaged in an indictment of the 'technocrats, second-rate capitalists, and bureaucrats who hinder the construction of socialism... The Cuban leadership is searching for a middle way to avoid the pitfalls of bureaucratic planning on the one hand, and the damaging effects of reforms, on the other". (pp. 166-7)

While the Soviet-inspired 'material incentives' drive of the 1970's and early 1980's had "weaken[ed] the unity and cohesion of the workers and broken their revolutionary spirit and confidence," (p. 67) Rectification is "restoring a broader consensus between the Castro leadership and the masses", which Habel presumably thinks is a good thing. The "current ideological campaign is therefore not just a pretext"

but "a battle against a process of divisions and bureaucratization that would be fatal for the revolution." (p.68)

More recently 'Rectification' offers a way of "confronting the advocates of market reforms and supporters of Gorbachev with another conception of socialism." (p.62)

However, Habel is not entirely convinced. Rectification "is a battle being fought mainly from 'above', and to a small extent from 'below', within the limits set by the ruling group". (p.68) "It is already clear that the 'rectification of errors' has been unable to correct the system's flaws. The Cuban people have shown an ironical scepticism towards a process they have nicknamed the 'rectification of horrors'. The effects of a rhetoric combining verbal radicalism with appeals for effort - 'We must work hard, we must work a lot,' repeats Fidel Castro - may be to increase cynicism." (p.163-4)

Habel admits that "Patriotic rhetoric and appeals to a sense of duty irritate sections of youth and intellectuals, who see such discourse as a poor blanket for ideology and politics." (p.68) It also gets up the noses of the ordinary worker.

Like all national belt-tightening campaigns, it is the working class that always get squeezed. Incompetent or corrupt bureaucrats are dismissed, "but these are isolated cases; and dismissal occasionally amounts to nothing more than a transfer, due to privilege - which is more important than the material benefits - of having 'connections' in the state apparatus and enjoying the reciprocal protection that those belonging to it grant each other". (p.172) Habel does not question why "material privileges, particularly within the bureaucracy in charge of economic management, have been the subject of public denunciation by Fidel Castro himself," yet "the political privileges of power - those of the party apparatus and mass organizations - are never mentioned". Habel refuses to explore this connection.

Like all austerity programmes that aim to offload onto the working class the consequences of a situation which the proponents of sacrifice themselves have created, Castro promises jam tomorrow: "This is not the time for thinking about consumption. What needs thinking about is development which will provide for the consumption on a more secure and solid foundation later on."⁵ Castro even has the gall to argue that workers are pricing themselves out of a job: "Perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of Rectification has been to persuade the workers to give up the ex-

cessively high wages stemming from the implementation of outdated norms or erroneous criteria."⁶ Castro sees indiscipline at work as a problem. In 1985, there were 25,572 offences relating to work discipline. (p.169)

Finally, the claim that Rectification represents a return to the 'socialism' of the 1960s, and a rejection of capitalism and "mercenaries seeking privileges and profits", simply beggars belief. Habel, who admits that the period has seen the "the reemergence of inequalities", gives us only ambiguous 'sociology-speak'.

Rectification has led to "a stratification of an apparatus which is not just numerically larger than before, but is also more structured and thus difficult to control." (p.171) Anyone with the most cursory knowledge of Cuba knows that the Rectification has seen an unprecedented growth of petty capitalism, corruption of every sort. Gold, drugs and arms smuggling is rife. Drug money is laundered through the Italian Mafia's travel agencies and courier services. Prostitution, which is extensive in Havana and Varadero, is now organised as a business rather than a casual trade.

In Havana, the government has given Panamanian gangsters premises from which Cubans are fleeced of the few gold trinkets they may have in return for dollar coupons. The government, of course, takes a cut.

CUBALSE, the state organization in charge of servicing the needs of Havana's foreign and diplomatic community, runs a chain of stores from anonymous buildings for Cubans with dollars. Indeed, CUBALSE can get you anything for the right amount of dollars. CUBANACAN, a high profile state tourist development agency run by a Castro confidante, Eduardo Maciques, openly boasts to top foreign businessmen that it can ignore the state and 'get things done.' There are dozens of shadowy 'import-export' organizations, based mainly in the fashionable Miramar district, with foreign involvement.

A whole class of Rolex-sporting 'bureaucrat-entrepreneurs' has grown up, who have that unmistakable distant look of people who are up to no good. There is nothing surreptitious about such people. Until the clampdown provoked by the Ochoa affair in 1989, one could see them in the lobbies and bars of the more fashionable Havana hotels or upper crust restaurants such as the Floridita and the 1830, while outside, groups of bored drivers leant on limos. The bureaucracy has never had it so good.⁷

Foreign Capital

But it is not only this klepto-capitalism by bureaucrats that has mushroomed under Rectification. The intrusion of foreign capital has never been greater. In terms of labour conditions and profits, foreign companies can demand virtually anything they want and a dual economy now exists. However, there have been few tensions in labour relations. Even a miserly foreign company's pay and conditions are much better than Cuban standards. Officially workers in the foreign sector are paid by the Cuban government in worthless pesos. Though rates are higher, many workers would be willing to work in the foreign sector for nothing. A commercial liaison officer at the German embassy explains why: "The first thing that a Cuban worker will tell the employer on arrival is that for crap wages he is not willing to do any work. However, if he can accompany the employer's wife or someone else to the 'foreigners only' dollar supermarkets once a month, there will be no problems." In one such trip a Cuban worker can acquire sufficient dollar goods to earn himself a margin greater than his monthly salary.

Despite all the evidence, Habel continues to defend Castro. In an angry chapter - 'Revolution on a Knife Edge' - she displays her inability to know which side to come down on. "Does Rectification thus boil down to a kind of ideological radicalism at the political level, combined with a reinforced pragmatism at the economic level?" After all "appeals for voluntary work and references to Che would therefore be a way of getting workers to swallow the pill of austerity, without challenging the 'colossal bureaucratic incompetence' which is one of the principal causes of the current crisis." (p.169)

Is it this or is it that? Again, Habel is anxious to extricate Castro from any suggestion of complicity in the Rectification con-trick, "It is clear that a quiet battle is taking place to strip Castro's discourse of its initial content; and in order to get draconian measures aimed at increasing productivity introduced, voluntarism, moral incentives, appeals to revolutionary consciousness and ideological motivation are all being put to cynical use... unless he makes an effort to challenge the non-revolutionary methods of those in charge of the operating controls of the economy and the state apparatus and distances himself from them"... "Fidel Castro is in danger of awarding himself and the team surrounding him with a certificate of incompetence." (p.171) Dear, dear, we can't have that!

Habel's mistakes are mostly those of the political tradition to which she belongs. Others are the honest mistakes of a revolutionary involved with a real revolution, rather than just 'positions'. These add to the book because they provoke the reader out of the narrow 'for or against' interpretations that have always dominated writing on Cuba. Despite all of the criticisms made here, Habel has written a very worthwhile book, and one which will teach the critical reader much. **Francisco Gonzalez**

NOTES

¹ *Socialist Outlook*, 28 September 1991, p.11.

² *Socialist Action*, October 1990.

³ *Socialist Outlook*, 26th October 1991, p.7

⁴ *FRFI passim*, *Socialist Viewpoint*, 14/10r 91.

⁵ Castro. *Granma* 11/12/88 q. in Habel p.167.

⁶ *Granma* 12 Sept. 1988 q. in Habel, p.167.

⁷ Krivine returned from a recent visit to Cuba with a touching anecdote: "it was reassuring to sit down to dinner with a vice-minister at his house and hear him say, terribly put out, 'You know, with my ration book, I only have the strict minimum and can't invite people round'." *Socialist Outlook* 14 September 1991.

Barry Commoner
Making Peace With the Planet
Victor Gollancz £16.95 hb.

Michael Jacobs
The Green Economy
Environment, Sustainable Development & the Politics of the Future
Pluto Press £27.50 hb.

'Green' in a book's title could guarantee success two years ago. Things are not quite so easy now and environmental texts must have a little more substance than most of their predecessors if they are to be published. Commoner and Jacobs are at the more serious end of the green market. Both books retreat from the green gloss or 'end of nature'-type texts that have characterized the green movement over the past few years. Instead both try to give a more rational analysis of the problems and possible solutions to present environmental concerns. They even gamble with self-criticism, something extremely rare in the green movement.

Commoner tries to account for the failure of environmentalists, which may seem like a poor excuse for self-flagellation, but it does question why so little has been achieved by the green movement in the last decade. He examines the prevalence of common pollutants in the US, eastern and western Europe and finds that, in the majority of instances, there has been no improvement. In the minority of cases, levels have been reduced simply because the production or use of these toxic substances has stopped. He advises, 'If you don't put something into the environment, it isn't there.' Wisdom indeed.

In *Making Peace With The Planet*, his fifth major publication, Commoner reiterates the concept of 'preventative pollution' by taking us through an assortment of environmental nasties and explaining how we are better off with-

out them. Of course, no environmental book can really call itself green without a man-made enemy and Commoner attributes present pollution problems to the change in technology since the Second World War. In opposition to most environmentalists, he argues that population is not responsible for increased environmental damage and points out that food production is increasing faster than population. Short-term profit is identified as the underlying reason for environmental degradation and the failure to improve pollution levels. He shirks the responsibility of blaming capitalism directly but insists instead that the inequality in resource distribution will mean an increase in the number of people living in poverty proportional to population growth.

Commoner is bold enough to criticize the present environmental movement for being too insular, drawing a comparison with Martin Luther King's understanding of the need to align the Black Movement with wider class politics. *Making Peace with the Planet* is a more radical green book than its title suggests. Commoner recognizes that 'In a sense, the US and the Soviet Union have been fighting World War III by proxy - using Third World peoples like pawns in a war game.' But concrete analyses are scarce and the uninspiring conclusion he reaches is that in order to make peace with the planet we must make peace with the people who live on it.

In contrast, Michael Jacobs relies on

science and economics to outline his vision of the world. Using the Laws of Thermodynamics, (1) matter or energy cannot be either created or destroyed, and (2) entropy of a system will always increase as long as no energy is put into it, Jacobs attempts to explain the concept of sustainable development in an economic system. The book discusses orthodox proposals for dealing with pollution and explains why integrating environmental concerns into GNP is 'doomed to failure' whilst cost-benefit analyses are largely subjective, therefore inadequate methods to control pollution. Unlike advocates of 'Green Capitalism', Jacobs believes that market forces, instead of reducing pollution, encourage environmental degradation. He disagrees with members of the environmental lobby who call for integration of the environment into the economy via a pollution tax. Taxes, he argues, will unfairly discriminate against the poorest (note: not the working class) in society and should be treated with caution. But Jacobs does not hold with the concept of zero growth, instead he promotes an economy which minimizes waste, recycles and reuses resources in order to operate in a sustainable way and has a constant input of energy from the sun to reduce entropy - the circular economy.

The next task is how to arrive at this blissful state of affairs. Dispelling the popular myth that we can buy our way into a cleaner environment, Jacobs argues: 'It is in their role as citizens, not consumers, that individual people will create a sustainable economy. It is through collective political choices that sustainability will be achieved.' However, Jacobs isn't averse to employing strong forms of persuasion to ensure that people make the right political choices, particularly where reducing consumption is concerned. He defends the idea of forcing people to reduce living standards, justifying this regressive stance by calling for a redefinition of what is meant by the 'quality of life'. Like all green philosophy, this redefinition focuses on a shift away from material needs to a higher consciousness. Does he honestly expect the working class, seeing the erosion of any of the slight improvements of their fairly basic conditions, to be comforted by the fact that their spiritual needs are being considered? Jacobs is one of those liberal moralizers, the 'there isn't enough to go around' lobby, who try to shift blame from capitalist production to individual greed.

The Green Economy is a flawed attempt to apply some form of scientific objectivism to a subject that has been

removed from rationality. He fails to address the fundamental issue of whether capitalist economies are likely to make long-term commitments to sustainable development. Of course it is *theoretically* possible to install pollution-reducing technology into industrial processes, to develop an energy efficiency strategy, and to have a viable industrial economy which does not result in copious environmental damage. Yet this is *realistically* impossible. A capitalist system flourishes precisely because it does not operate in the long-term and certainly does not plan ahead for future generations. Nor is it interested in egalitarian concepts regarding 'the planet' and unless environmental improvements are also profitable in the

short-term, they are redundant.

Michael Jacobs, blind to this social reality, pleads his case for the 'Politics of the Future' by attempting to combine economy and environment. But even he can find little room for optimism: 'We do not know what it would take to encourage people to value the quality of life more highly... But that is not the point. For those concerned about the environmental crisis, the task is surely to find out.' Surely this has been the task of the environmental movement for the last two decades and they are still no nearer their conclusion. This latest effort in environmental pragmatism centres around the belief that we could live in a nicer world if only it wasn't so horrible. **Susan Woods**

Ross McKibbin

The Ideologies of Class - Social Relations in Britain 1880-1950
Oxford University Press. £7.99 pb.

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John Scott

Who Rules Britain?
Polity Press £9.95 pb.

There has been a move, amongst left radicals, to dismiss the relevance of class structures and, instead, concentrate on community action, single issue campaigns, minority causes and citizens rights. Both of these books could have helped to illustrate why this is misguided. Unfortunately, Ross McKibbin and John Scott prefer the descriptive tool of social observation to the scientific method of economic analysis. McKibbin's anthology of anecdotal sociology inclines towards working class nostalgia while John Scott concentrates on the social rather than economic evidence of a capitalist ruling class. The liberal notion of class as a social or cultural status - education, accent, habits and pastimes - dominates the arguments put forward in both books. And although this can be entertaining, it provides little insight into the economic relationship and conflict between different classes.

McKibbin uses his collection of essays to highlight the role of the state, working class culture and the impact of the two world wars on the development of party politics and class relations. He explains that Marxism was unable to gain support in Britain in the early part of this century because of the fragmented nature of the working class and the structure of the economy, which

was able to diminish any base of political collectivism by diffusing and absorbing working class consciousness. The working class had, according to McKibbin, inherited traditions which both burdened and liberated it, social values and ideologies shared with other classes which emphasized common citizenship, the fairness of the rules of the game and the neutrality of the state. But his explanation of why no Marxism existed in Britain leaves you uncertain as to whether McKibbin considers this a victory or a failure. Instead he questions whether an emphasis on 'community' politics might have been a more productive strategy for political organizations rather than concentrating on class divisions.

However, he does lay to rest the myth that the Labour Party is rooted in working class tradition by tracing the path from Liberal to Labour exemplified by Arthur Henderson's political career from a radical liberal methodist to leader of the Labour Party. He quotes Henderson from the *Ploughshare* (December 1912) to illustrate his point: 'Labour is in politics, not in the interests of a class, but to further the interests of the community as a whole. The Labour Party is... a national people's party'. McKibbin stresses that it was not until after 1945 that the Labour

Party managed to secure a large proportion of working class votes due to increased alienation during the war years. This, he shows, was not the result of a sudden recognition by the working class that the Labour Party was indeed their Party but of the disintegration of working class Conservatism.

McKibbin counters much of the liberal stereotyping of the working class in the first half of this century, including the psychology of unemployment, dole scroungers, poverty and working class gambling. He approaches these issues by criticizing middle class moralising and ideological bias. Middle class Britain is described as having 'a rather vulgar form of pre-war anti-collectivism' as one of its essential features, whilst it emphasized the ideological centrality of the individual in economic life and the family in social life. He disputes the (still) widely held belief that poverty was the product of the working classes own irresponsibility due to squandering wages on drinking and gambling. Gambling was considered one of the most evil vices by the church, Labour leaders and middle classes generally, but McKibbin shows that gambling was a minor working class occupation which had little impact on financial resources and was of no practical concern to the industrialists.

His treatment of the myths surrounding working class gambling provides the most stimulating chapter of the book largely because it best illustrates the insidious and dishonest aspects of middle class morality. But McKibbin's account of class ideologies is largely observational with little analysis of economic relations. Nevertheless, the constant (and subtle) belittling of middle class liberals inside and outside the Labour Party is entertaining.

The ruling class, which is only notable by its absence in McKibbin's collection of essays, is the subject of John Scott's book. Scott attempts to provide answers to the questions of 'What is a Capitalist Class?', 'What is a Ruling Class?', 'Is there still a Capitalist Class?', and 'Is there still a Ruling Class?' He uses the orthodox Marxism of Aaronovitch, Miliband's more reformist outlook and Fabian theory to describe what constitutes a capitalist and a ruling class, and to see if they still exist in contemporary Britain.

Scott concludes that there is still a capitalist class in Britain and this comprises the ruling class. He doesn't hold with the popular consensus that a managerial class, whose interests cross class boundaries, has displaced the old capitalists. Instead he argues that changes in the legal and financial struc-

ture of society have transformed, not eradicated, the capitalist class. Likewise this class is as much a ruling class as ever. After examining various theories as to what and who constitute a ruling class he concludes: 'It is now possible to clarify the meaning of the concept of the ruling class itself. A capitalist class may be regarded as forming a ruling class when its economic dominance is sustained by the operations of the state and when, alone or through a wider power bloc, it is disproportionately represented in the power elite which rules the state apparatus... To this extent, therefore, Britain does indeed, have a ruling class.'

Scott acknowledges that a prerequisite for the existence of a ruling class is both political domination and political rule by a capitalist class and in order for this to be possible certain structures must be present. Firstly there must be a power bloc dominated by a capitalist class, a power elite recruited from this power bloc, and mechanisms which ensure that the state operates in the interests of the capitalist class and the reproduction of capital. He disputes Miliband's theory that the dominant class is an alignment of the capitalist business class, the entrepreneurial middle class and the service class and insists that it is

the capitalist business class alone which holds a dominant position. However, he acknowledges that, 'Under some circumstances, members of the capitalist class may take a backseat within the power elite, relying on others to operate the state in a way that does not undermine its class interests.'

This may be taken as a criticism of the Labour Party whose role Scott recognizes, like McKibbin, to be one of governing the country for the capitalist class rather than acting on behalf of the workers. He argues that Labour has not altered the pattern of class political dominance and its attempts at meritocracy by increasing state funding to grammar schools after the war have only increased the popularity of public schools amongst the ruling and middle classes, up by 20% since the war.

Scott describes how class reproduction is sustained, through social networks resulting from wealth and privilege, with capital as the binding force in conjunction with the old boy networks of Eton, Harrow and Oxbridge. Scott's history of the ruling class covers the conventions of the 19th century 'Upper Circle' including High Society and the London Season, and the gradual acceptance of specific industrial capitalists into Society which enabled it to

preserve its elitism. He outlines how, from the 1930's, finance capital came increasingly to be organized around institutional share ownership and the system of impersonal property. This transformation of the economy led to a change in the structure of the capitalist class. Instead of being organized around an upper circle of status superiors, the capitalist class became organized around an inner circle of finance capitalists.

But his weakness appears in his introductory disclaimer where he states: 'I shall try to defend the relevance of the concept of a ruling class. But I do not wish to defend the whole framework of Marxist theory'. It is highly unlikely that anyone reading his book would think of him as anything but a sociologist yet by pleading not to be mistaken for an unfashionable Marxist, John Scott exposes his political prejudice.

True to reformist tradition, both authors flinch from any hard economic truths and consequently can offer no solution for the working class. They will no doubt appease the questioning mind of a politics/sociology undergraduate but fail to satisfy more rigorous scrutiny.

Anne deLacy

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