

FTT 13

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Special... For this issue only...
The return of an old friend...

FUCK THE TORIES!

Well, we had to say *something* about the election result -- and reviving an older title seemed the most appropriate possible comment. (Ken Lake need not bother to write a lengthy letter of complaint about so-called "bad language", since we all know he'll only be objecting to our disrespectful attitude towards the shade of The Blessed Margaret.) Next issue will as usual have the same set of initials, but as usual be called something different. (No one should try suggesting a title, since it is a point of honour with us that we use only those we've thought of ourselves; thus every title suggested by others only reduces the available stock.) Otherwise, *FTT* is nominally a science fiction fanzine which like most such barely mentions science fiction at all. It is available for any of the following:

- (a) your own publication in exchange (we trade all-for-all);
- (b) a letter of comment on the contents of this or previous issues;
- (c) a contribution for future issues (but please outline your article ideas to us before you set fingers to keyboard); or
- (d) £1 in coin or stamps.

Since we prefer an active to a passive readership, we'd ask that the fourth of these options be pursued only by those who have no time for the first three. Those who have failed to respond by any of the above four means to the previous three issues will find a splodgy mark of an indeterminate value in the margin adjacent to this paragraph; let them brood upon this accordingly!

All responses should be addressed to:

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The contents of this issue, published in June 1992, are as follows:

WHAT I DO AT WORK: TWO WEEKS IN THE LIFE OF TRANSPORT 2000 -- Judith Hanna	page 3
POOR OLD CHARLES: A MODEST PROPOSAL -- Abi Frost	page 10
SEARCHING FOR AN ENEMY? -- Joseph Nicholas	page 13
THE LETTER COLUMN -- Edited by Judith Hanna, with letters from Martin Gittins, Leigh Edmonds, G. M. Carr, Ian Gunn, Alexis Gilliland, Lloyd Penney, David Bratman, Brian Earl Brown, Andy Sawyer, Cyril Simsa, Martin Smith	page 19
THE QUACK DOCTOR	page 27

The illustrations, as is usual with this publication, have been lifted from various sources: *Ethical Consumer* (pages 13, 18), *The Guardian* (cover, pages 5, 7, 14, 26), *New Internationalist* (pages 16, 22), *NPC Newsletter* (page 24), and *Surveyor* (page 9).

WHAT I DO AT WORK: Two Weeks in the Life of Transport 2000

JUDITH HANNA

Monday evening to Pedestrians Association Executive committee, Tuesday afternoon our President Michael Palin drops in: we tell him what we're up to, he tells us about his North Pole to South Pole trip due to hit the screens here in October. On the way home, I go swimming in bright new municipal sports centre, with public library attached, opened before Xmas by our "loony left" Haringey council: only problem is that too many other people have discovered it. Wednesday, life hots up: it is just two weeks before Grey John Major is expected to call the Election, so everybody is launching their pre-election initiatives, including, as you will see, us. It is also, my schedule says, newsletter production time.

Wednesday 4 March: Playing with the Media

As people arrive at the office for a meeting on our Sustainable Transport Strategy (or "Britain Travelling Clean") research, I slip out, explaining that I've been sent to play with the media at the launch of British Rail's "Passenger's Charter". Playing with the media at press conferences involves making sure you stand up and ask a question, to identify yourself as a pressure group. This gets me nobbled by a couple of radio stations and the Thames News film crew. Hand out the press release bashed out before leaving the office to anyone wearing a "press" badge (Jane at the office will have faxed it through to the Press Association, who in turn fax it round their subscribers). Our headline is "BR Charter is Government Cop-out" -- they are offering a piece of paper as a substitute for the proper investment needed to keep trains running reliably; we are launching a report on financing public transport tomorrow.

Spot public transport minister Roger Freeman standing with Department of Transport (DTp) flunkies, hand him a press release too. One must be courteous: "I'm afraid we point the finger back at you," I murmur. "But we do welcome the emphasis on standards of service, which ought to be the basis for negotiating public funding." Freeman is actually a good minister despite his notorious remark about "cheap and cheerful trains for typists". He murmurs something that sounds like agreement that this could indeed be a way ahead, and goes on to chat about the joys of traffic-calming, a subject on which we are in agreement and which is not his responsibility.

Over at Church House, Pedestrians Association's launch of their "WalkWays" pack to help people get local councils to put in pedestrian crossings, footways alongside roads, or area-wide traffic-calming, has just wound up. Pick up press release for our newsletter.

Lunchtime meeting to plan for a "One Year On" glossy report to raise the profile of our Feet First projects. Last June, in partnership with the local authorities associations and with support (but no money) from the Department of Transport (DTp), we were able to announce fifteen demonstration schemes being undertaken by local authorities around the country to give pedestrians greater priority by use of area-wide traffic-calming. Over sandwich and orange juice in a local pub, Phil from the Local Authorities Associations and I work out that we need to ask each council for three paragraphs about progress on their scheme, and three photos, deadline just before Easter, and that we need to raise £1500 from somewhere to pay for it. Can we persuade the DTp to publish it as a Traffic Advisory Leaflet? Back to office. Instead of writing newsletter, put together Feet First mailing. Decide I cannot face evening of chatting with Green MEPs who are meeting in London, so go swimming instead.

Thursday 5 March: Westminster Again

To House of Commons to launch *Financing Public Transport* report, which shows that Britain spends less per capita on rail system than Spain or Portugal, and that other European countries base public finance for railways on a "contract plan", which specifies improvements and standards of service which the money is to fund. In Britain, government policy sets the railways cost-cutting targets, at the expense of service standards. Our report is co-sponsored by the Bow Group, one of the main Tory groups, with funding from Eurotunnel. Press conference has all the heavies: correspondents from the *Independent*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Times*, *Financial Times*, and various specialist journals. Efficient *Guardian* chap has written it up in advance.

Head to Liberal Democrat HQ, where press release faxed this morning mentions press conference at 12am promising revelations about Tory road programme. Lib Dem HQ deserted. Re-read press release and see date mentioned is yesterday: one likes the Lib Dems but could they organise themselves out of a paper bag? Grab sandwich, sit on steps of Wren church in Smith Square, gazing across spring crocuses at Tory Central Office and down Lord North Street where faded notices stencilled on the Queen Anne house fronts point down to World War II bomb-shelters in the cellars.

Back to Commons for launch of Women's Transport Charter. Drafting this has been a Manchester-based initiative, following the first national conference on the topic, so there's a coachload of Manchester women having their first encounter with the ornate neo-Gothic pile of the Palace of Westminster. I point out the one mural in the place that shows realistic weather of grey skies and sleeting rain. No press turn up: that transport policy ignores women is not News. Big money for long-distance links is News; safe local access, better buses and a call for efforts to involve more women in transport professions and planning discussions is not. But there are women from the 300 Group (which aims to increase women's representation in Parliament), the National Alliance of Women's Organisations and Women's Environmental Network. Good turn-out of Labour MPs, including the two Joans (Ruddock and Whalley) on the front bench transport team and even a couple of male MPs from the Manchester area. The males look abashed at being the only men in a roomful of women; the reverse is normal experience for the few women working on transport (other than secretarial staff). The Lib Dems have sent a researcher -- which given their small numbers in Parliament represents good support.

The Women's Charter team have got me a ticket for BBC TV's *Question Time*, to try to ask a question about that topic. Being on *Question Time* involves turning up at between 6-6.30pm. At 6.30 they start loading everyone into the studio, which takes about half an hour. Then a cheery chap comes on to warm you up with a briefing and a couple of discussion sessions. This included the information that it is broadcast as if live at 10.30pm, but they record it ahead of time so that if anything goes wrong -- a bomb scare forces evacuation or the equipment doesn't record -- they can keep you in and do it again. Neither the panellists nor the audience know the questions in advance. 8.00 in come Peter Sissons and the panel, and we do another warm-up discussion. On Clive Sinclair's new electric bike, this was the liveliest of the evening. 8.30-9.30 the cameras roll for real. Green Party's Jan Clark unconvincing on economic intentions; Labour's Joan Ruddock takes a battering on defence: she was Chairperson of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament during the Reagan era (I was her PA) and Labour's defence policy now differs from the policies she advocated then. I fail to get a question in on air (though I had in the warm-ups). At the end the guests are shepherded away, though Michael Howard (widely voted the creepiest Thatcherite minister still extant) comes over to congratulate the enthusiastic Young Tory sitting behind me (who already exceeds Howard in creepiness) on "keeping the side up". Unloading studio commences 9.30. Arrive home and decide too tired to bother sitting through it again.

On Friday the newsletter, *Transport Retort*, ought to be ready for the printer, but who has had time to do their writing? Monday, productive work is halted by a Board meeting. Office hectic with finalising, photocopying and mailing a Roads and Environment Challenge. Tuesday evening, train to Bournemouth, for Royal Society for

Accident Prevention (ROSPA) 75th Annual Conference. Placed at dinner between their Director and the after-dinner speaker, a solicitor who ran the local court circuit for 25 years. He explains the technical legal reason why the Home Office omits motoring offences from crime statistics -- they are not "indictable" offences. But, he estimates, they occupy five-sixths of court time. Lots of discussion about how handy cars are for committing crime, and whether the incidence of leaving a car unattended in a public place is "asking for it" and therefore responsible for the sharp rise in car thefts and joy-riding.

Wednesday 11 March: Unsustainable Speed

I'm down to perform first thing after breakfast, with a paper on "Road Safety and the Future of the Car". This runs through the environmental reasons car-dependence is not sustainable, then settles down to some principles challenging the established approach to road safety -- that is, the traditional ROSPA line. The traditional approach sees pedestrians and cyclists as "a road safety problem". It tries to protect them -- but often by putting in barriers that stop them from getting where they want to go. That is, forcing them to choose between an inconveniently long detour to reach a safe crossing, while making the convenient direct crossing even more dangerous and difficult to discourage short-cuts. Road safety officers themselves confess that they will nip across these dangerous short-cuts rather than go the long way around. But inconveniencing the local access basic to walking and cycling has been seen as easier than tackling the source of the danger: motor traffic.

Another argument is between those who accept "accident reduction" as a sufficient target, and those who don't. For a start, if you only look at the record of accidents that have happened, you get the scenario where the answer to the question "Do we have to wait for someone to get killed?" is "Yes, in fact, you need X sacrifices to get to the top of the priority list". Then again, we argue that you need a check that you are not getting rid of accidents just by discouraging movement: what people see as the most dangerous roads often have no accident record, because people simply don't cross them unless with utmost vigilance. Thus, there are no cyclist or pedestrian accidents on motorways not because they are safe but because there are no pedestrians or cyclists on them. Basically, neither preventing accidents, nor helping people gain the access they want, score at all when only "accident reduction" is the focus.

THE MOTOR CAR REDESIGNED

Bearing in mind the THATCHERITE DICTUM that there is 'NO SUCH THING AS A TRAFFIC JAM, ONLY INDIVIDUAL MEN IN THEIR CARS', current car design allows insufficient scope for SELF EXPRESSION.

The following modifications are suggested.

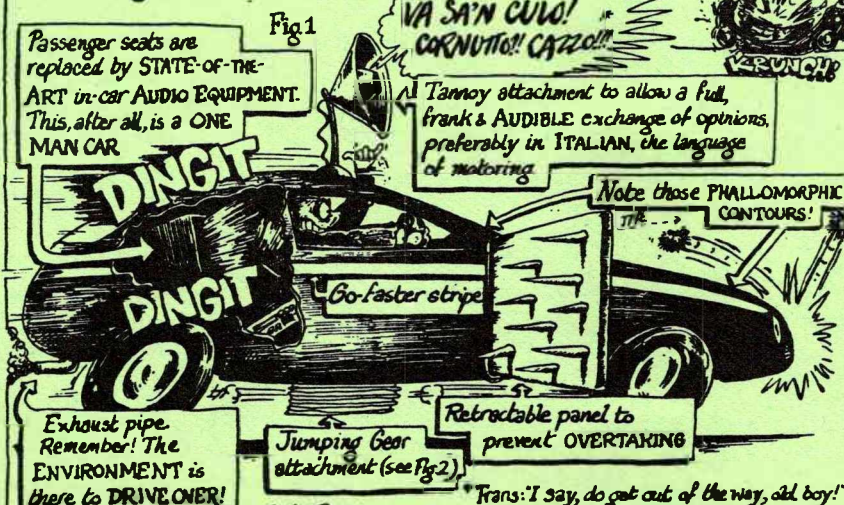
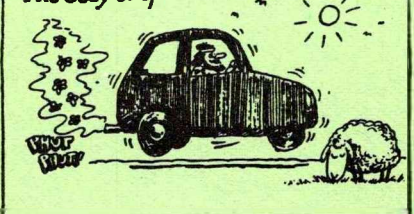


Fig2: THE JUMPING GEAR: Say goodbye to Traffic Jam Misery, Obstructive Learner Drivers, Imbeciles who stop at Pedestrian Crossings, slow down in Fog etc.



THE GREEN ALTERNATIVE: Instead of any of the above, ALL CARS are redesigned along the lines of the RELIANT ROBIN, with a top speed of 27MPH, and fuelled by JOJOBA NUT OIL from The Body Shop



NEXT WEEK: The WALKING SHOE as PHALIC SYMBOL

So, I argued, from the safety point of view, car-dependence is based on acceptance and encouragement of speeds unsustainable from the safety point of view. In fact, though, average urban speeds in this country are already below the safety threshold speed of 20mph. Traffic management and traffic calming to keep vehicles moving at close to that speed, instead of the present dangerous and polluting hard acceleration and braking patterns, would actually increase efficiency as well as safety of traffic flows. But, in any case, the amount of traffic, particularly in cities, needs strong reduction, which may mean there is only environmental capacity (in terms of air quality, noise, land use) for essential deliveries, buses and trams, disabled people's cars, and bikes.

Given that, particularly in towns and cities, most journeys are short local trips (in UK one third of journeys are less than one mile, half are less than two miles, three-quarters less than five miles), most could be done by walking and cycling or bus trips. In cities, where the problems of traffic are worse, the alternative of good quality public transport can most easily and economically be provided -- at less overall cost than providing road space, parking, let alone casualty and environmental clean-up. As far as the future of the car goes, Greenpeace has said "We see no future for the internal combustion engine". T2000 wouldn't go that far, but we agree with Volvo International's chairman that by the end of the century we expect cars to be banned from city centres in Europe.

The conference was wound up by Christopher Chope, Minister for Roads and Traffic, a bulldog of a fellow who thinks motorways are for driving at 90mph -- though he was dissuaded last year from trying to raise the motorway speed limit. Last time I heard him, his speech, to an audience of road builders, was all about how many more millions the government planned to spend on roads to meet forecasts of traffic levels doubling; safety got a mention, environment didn't. It was left to the president of the Institute of Highways & Transportation to remind the minister of his members' concerns that environment be taken into account. This time Chope flag-waved safety, his speech written by a sensible enough civil servant. But the bombshell he dropped was on roads and environment.

Waiting for SACTRA

Digression for background here: before Christmas, there were hot rumours flying around from "Whitehall sources" that the Government was about to publish three major transport papers, all in a bunch. One would be a White Paper on Rail Privatisation, a key plank in Tory policy. One would be a White Paper on Transport Policy -- this would be a novelty, clearly designed to tackle the charge that the Government did not have an overall transport policy, only a policy for pouring £16 billion into massive road-building based on forecasts of traffic increasing by 83-142% by 2025, while public transport was off at arms length and being told to cover its own costs without recognition of the safety and environmental savings it could deliver, let alone any belief that it was some sort of essential public service for enabling people to get about without cars.

Why was the Government suddenly trying to convince us it had a transport policy? It could be simply that there was an election on the way, and Rifkind, more of an intellectual than his predecessors as Transport Secretary, recognised the Tories were losing the argument on transport while Prescott for Labour was looking well on top of a useful set of policies with an impressive clutch of experts lined up behind them.

The third report waiting in the wings, for instance, was from an expert body known obscurely as SACTRA, or in full the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment. When economist David Pearce published the *Blueprint For A Green Planet* report on valuing the environment for then Environment Secretary Chris Patten (back when he was Mr Green Nice Guy), the DTp asked SACTRA to report on the environmental assessment of road building. They submitted their report about last July, which was understood to be jolly critical of current practice. Agreeing with troublesome groups like us, in fact. Dashed embarrassing for Government. Phony pre-election

FREIGHT DELIVERY REDESIGNED TO EASE TRAFFIC CONGESTION

As the **ULTIMATE GREEN ALTERNATIVE** to Road & Rail Haulage, all **FREIGHT** hereafter to be **CATAPULTED** to its ultimate point of distribution, *comme ça...*

Stage 1: From the **FACTORY, DOCKS, etc.** (*Balusta model*)



Stage 2: From the **DEPOT** to the point of sale (*Elastic model*)



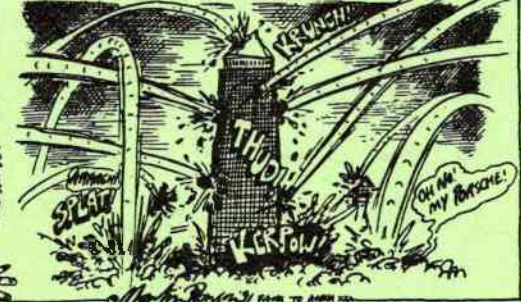
Stage 3: Point of Sale (*not recommended*)



Given the variable accuracy in aim between Stages (1) & (2), vast areas of **UNSOLD DEVELOPMENT LAND** in Milton Keynes, Telford, Peterborough, etc., will be converted into **HUGE TRAMPOLINES** for receipt of goods prior to secondary distribution...



The **DOCKLANDS** variation on the above...



fever already flying around, of course. Then in October, Ripa di Meana, the European Commissioner for Environment, sent the UK Government a note pointing out that a couple of controversial road schemes -- ancient Oxleas Wood and historic Twyford Down, both sites designated for special protection -- had not been subjected to proper environmental impact assessment. This (it was understood) was essentially what the SACTRA report said, in more general and far-reaching terms. Dashed embarrassment compounded.

When the Government failed to slip these three reports out under cover of Christmas, we decided we weren't likely to see them this side of an election. *The Guardian* -- after printing speculation about civil servants and DTp officials saying there was no practical way it could be done and disquiet from endangered Tory MPs about the effects for their local, unprofitable, rail services -- obtained a Government admission that rail privatisation would not be a White Paper but a clause in the party's election manifesto. This would avoid having to spell out precisely how they planned to break up the rail system. Whitehall sources assured us over drinkies that the grand Transport Policy document was dead. And SACTRA became even more potentially embarrassing when on 1 March Chope sent the bulldozers in to Twyford Down and a motley band of Friends of the Earth and local Conservatives appeared on the front page of *The Times* blockading them.

So I was more than a bit surprised to hear Mr Chope tell this obscure audience of safety officers that the Government had today published the SACTRA report along with the Government's response accepting its main conclusions. However, this did not mean that he had ordered the bulldozers out of Twyford Down, said Mr Chope in response to my immediate question.

Rush to phone the news through to the office, where Stephen and Jane dash off a press release relating this to the Roads & Environment Challenge we are launching tomorrow. Catch next train back to London. When I reach the office, Radio 4 news is announcing that Mr Major has just been to see the Queen and the election has been called. That is indeed effective cover: nothing else is likely to get reported for the next three weeks. Our hope is that the SACTRA publication will give our *Roads Challenge* a better chance of being picked up as a political election issue.

Once the election is called, pressure groups are out of the game -- the media are only interested in what candidates and parties say. That's the reason these two weeks were so hectically full of launches hoped to influence the election debate.

Realistically, transport and environment are both being crowded out of the headlines and the debate by an almost exclusive focus on the ailing economy. What influence T2000 has will be based on work over the years, supplying facts, figures, comments, talking to various meetings and giving advice and views when asked -- rather than on these last few weeks of flurry. But the nature of campaigning isn't to sit back and take it easy.

That evening I'm down to talk to Welwyn Business & Professional Women, an engagement made six months or more ago. In train, decide that giving them a run-through of these two weeks should make a pretty comprehensive picture of what T2000 does. These are not, I tell them, typical weeks, and thank goodness for that. Meeting is nice and friendly, as such local group meetings usually are; everyone very interested in traffic-calming and in Women's Charter. Reach home about 11.00 and fall into bed. Take a late morning to bash out letters to Lucy Huntzinger and Jeanne Bowman about their forthcoming visits, which hold out enticing prospect of days off. When I arrive, press conference launching Roads Challenge is underway: only one member of press has turned up, from *New Civil Engineer*. But next morning Danny on *The Guardian* has got a brief paragraph in. Often as not, the hacks who get a report into their papers aren't the ones who actually turn up at a press conference.

Next thing on Jane's schedule is putting together a briefing pack for candidates, to supply them with facts, figures and what needs to be done on transport and environment. We manage to get initial list of what ought to be in it down to half a dozen sheets; we will need to photocopy, stuff and mail about 1800 copies of it. That will occupy all of us most of next week. Ah, but I am excused: I still have the newsletter to put together. Spend the afternoon writing my bit of election pack, on "How to make roads safer": the main points are: 20mph general urban speed limit; any bypass or relief road scheme should include traffic-calming on surrounding roads; government funding shouldn't be limited to big roads for more traffic but be extended to include public transport and local roads; motorists legally liable if hit pedestrian or cyclist (which is the case in France and US at present, but not UK). This leaves an hour to look at what's on file for the newsletter: somehow, all of us have now managed to write almost everything we were lined up for. Just a matter of getting it to fit in: the original approximate page plan did not allow space for SACTRA.

Transport Fandom

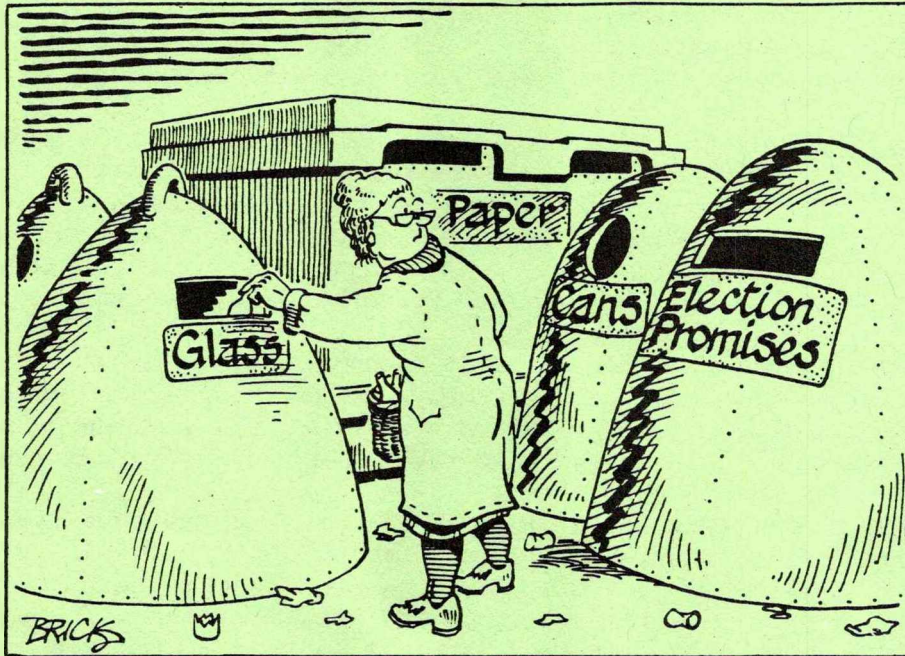
Most of the time, working as an environmental campaigner is much like any other office job: phone calls, writing stuff, talking to people, meetings. Three and a half staff, plus occasional volunteers, stuffed into two small rooms whose walls are crammed with box files. The worst thing about it is lack of resources and back-up: people ring up wanting to speak to a secretary, a department -- but we type our own letters, do our own photocopying, stuff our own envelopes, do not get time to do our own filing. Quite a let-down getting back to the paperwork after swanning round being treated as that lofty being, an expert.

The good things include autonomy -- my job, as Assistant Director, is to say what T2000's policy is on matters to do with local accessibility, and what people of different sorts need from transport policy. Also European and international matters. Stephen, Executive Director, deals with long-distance road and rail policy. You could say the contrast is between his historian's broad sweep view, and my anthropologist's socially based perspective. Jane P, Administrator, is our Information, Office Management and Publications departments all in one -- basically, the unglamorous work of actually keeping the organisation running; Jane R is part-time Finance department. Everyone writes for the newsletter; naturally, bearing out the fannish cliché, it's me who puts it together on the natty desktop publishing set-up Michael Palin treated us to from his *A Fish Called Wanda* loot. Then there's the satisfaction of doing something you can believe in, along with the warm support that comes in from others who share that belief.

Third, there's the sheer fun of it: not just the theatricals of being "an expert". It's a sub-culture like fandom, only it extends to draw in such bits of the real and

serious world as transport correspondents on the national media, academic and industry experts, the odd sympathetic civil servant as well as other environmental groups. So you read the transport news that appears in the press as you read a fanzine, for background gossip and personalities. Ideological divides have elements of fan-feud: off the platform at debates you hob-nob chattily with the agents of the road lobby. They tell you about their troubles with the trains they catch to work.

Sometimes, I think of it as applied science fiction. Faced with a scenario of terminal gridlock, lung-corroding pollution, runaway greenhouse effect, we're putting forward a set of ecotopian solutions. Only the rhetorical frame is that of current affairs and professional expertise rather than popular fiction.



Epilogue: Update

Roads Minister Chope not only had an egg thrown at him and got a black eye (from constituents, not roads protestors) but also lost his seat to a (Labour) ex-Friends of the Earth Air Pollution campaigner. This is some comfort. Freeman stays on as minister for trains. The new Transport ministers are all Bow Group members, which could be handy. Meanwhile, the cost of the Trunk Roads Programme has risen (thanks to inflation) to £20 billion -- which is £200,000 per hour.

At this point I should put in a plug for my new book, *Travel Sickness: The Need For A Sustainable Transport Policy For Britain*, edited by Roberts, Hamilton, Hanna & Cleary (Lawrence & Wishart, £14.99) with essays by a bunch of jolly good experts, including me on market forces and transport choice, explaining what needs to be done on all aspects of transport to get out of the current mess. You are urged to buy two copies -- one for yourself, and one for your friends.

The election over, T2000 and other pressure groups face four or five more years banging away at the same old set of policies. But not me -- metamorphosing from save-the-world campaigner to cynical hack, I move on to a new job editing *Local Transport Today*, the best magazine on transport news and developments in the UK. Fortnightly, from a small independent publishing company; UK subscriptions are £52 a year to 30 Cannon Street, Preston, Lancashire PR1 3NS. Each time I change jobs I hope the next will be just a bit less hectic than the last.... (And yes, this does mean postponing the move to Australia!)

The scene: a posh Knightsbridge delicatessen. "I want some dark pâté," comes the peremptory demand from an elderly Sloane. "Which dark pâté, modom?" asks the gel behind the counter. "The dark pâté," harrumphs the Sloane. "All our pâtés are dark," responds the wench. Stalemate. Helpful intervention by customer: "You know, dark, as in quark quark...."

POOR OLD CHARLES: A MODEST PROPOSAL

Abi Frost

In January, when I began this, it looked as though the Big Theme of 1992 had been set: Three Hearty British Cheers for Her Majesty the Queen! Though vaguely republican in theoretical sympathies, I quite like the Windsors, and am fairly sure that if it were put to a referendum the electors of this country would vote to retain the monarchy. (As to the Commonwealth monarchies, it would be up to them.) Elizabeth Windsor has evidently decided tht the smart way to handle the next few decades is to emulate her great ancestress, Victoria Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.

First, there was the Christmas announcement that We Have No Plans To Abdicate, Thank You Very Much. Then there was the fountain business. The Fountains Society were promoting a plan to celebrate Elizabeth's fortieth anniversary by putting an unbelievably naff (trust me, I've seen the drawings) fountain on the grossly inappropriate site of Parliament Square, to be financed by public subscription. The ghastly idea had been passed by Westminster Council, the Royal Fine Arts Commission, and even the well-known architectural pundit Charles Windsor; but then they asked Elizabeth. No way, she said. We think it inappropriate that Our Loyal Subjects should suffer further financial strain in this time of recession. (Well, she didn't actually use the traditional language, but give her time, she will, she will.) Did she also think: And we don't want it frightening the horses when we open Parliament?

East London Fannish Windsorwatch looks forward eagerly to the rows over the ECUs, the privatised or Euro-stamps (see Tony Benn's diaries for a preview), and the Golden Jubilee. But its loyalties are a little torn: its own situation inevitably puts it on the side of a fortyish person with masses of qualifications and energy but no immediate prospect of a satisfying job. And poor old Charles Windsor is worse off than I; it begins to look as if the job he's been promised all his life will never be his. Put crudely, he's only twenty-two years younger than his mother; and the genetic record is there for all to see. In his family, the men are lucky to make threescore years and ten, while the women go on for ever. I plan to live to 110, and be the last person alive to remember the Coronation of Elizabeth Windsor; I'm pretty sure the only other one I shall see will be that of Good King Willy.

But waste no time weeping; what is wanted is action. There is a vacancy, not yet advertised, but obviously there, and screaming to be filled, for which Charles is superbly, nay, almost uniquely qualified, and in which he could make millions of miserable and anxious people a little happier. What is more, with it goes the perfect job for his wife. I refer, of course, to the long-frozen post of Tsar of All the Russias.

You will object, of course, that some Romanov or other is already lined up. Indeed, there are even whispers of the job-seeker's bane, an internal candidate. Roz Kaveney has read of a rumour that they'd found the graves, but Anastasia and the Tsarevitch were missing; and that a lunatic asylum somewhere had a haemophiliac, one-testicled patient who was born in 1904, babbled incessantly of pre-1917 high society and certain other events, and died in the 1950s *leaving issue*. "A Perkin Warbevitch?" I gasped. "An attempt to prepare the ground for a candidate who's a citizen," said Roz.

However, this is the modern world, and plainly such an important job should be properly advertised and filled according to an equal opportunities policy by the best-qualified candidate. Besides, there is excellent precedent for what I propose. According to E. P. Thompson in *The Making Of The English Working Class*, when George Hanover (first of that name) ascended the British throne, there were twenty-eight people with a better purely hereditary claim. (Presumably they were barred for being Catholics.) As a descendant of Victoria S-C-G, Charles is well within the relevant

cousinage, and I submit that his training, range of interests, character and political background make him a far stronger candidate than any known living Romanov.

While the Romanovs have been fluttering around emigré society, directing dodgy companies and being GoHs at dismal monarchist dinners, Charles has been trained at the British public's expense to be a monarch. We risk seeing little or no return on our investment as things stand. The Former Soviet Union (FSU) would have to train a Romanov on the job, at enormous expense and risk of foul-ups, while it could have Charles's excellent training for free, now. What is more, while Romanovs no doubt dream of a return to the days of serfdom, Charles has been specifically trained as a constitutional monarch, and monarch of a number of administratively separate countries (the Commonwealth monarchies) at that.

If heredity need not be a bar, neither need religion. The Church of England and the Russian Orthodox Church have been in full communication for some years. Charles need not go through any conversion process to take communion in St Basil's on his first day in the job, or even while in Russia for his interview.

Charles is known for his informed interest in environmental issues. The pollution problems of the FSU make a bit of mucky water in the Duchy of Cornwall look like chickenfeed. In Tsar Charles, the necessary clean-up process would have an expert and enthusiastic promoter. His contacts within the architectural world include people skilled in converting unpleasant bureaucratic buildings into post-modernist decorative wonders: a boost for the construction industry, and for tourism, while making thrifty use of what the FSU already has. Finally, as Chairman of the Prince's Trust he understands the problems of new businesses in deprived communities. If any Romanov has expertise in a subject more useful than points of precedence within the cousinage or the relative merits of Crimean vintages, the world has yet to hear of it.

Charles is *self-financing*, surely a great advantage in the FSU's present economic situation. He could remain Prince of Wales (and thus Duke of Cornwall) for life, the title passing to any son of Willy's on his death, and continue to draw the Duchy's vast revenues, which already pay for his everyday needs and staffing requirements. (He draws nothing from the British Civil List.) Though this money would pass out of the UK economy, we need not feel the pinch: with Charles as Tsar, massive savings would follow in the defence budget, for there would be no possibility whatever of a "Russian threat". No Romanov has two beans to rub together, and some of them are probably already gleefully planning to nuke restaurants whose staff have not shown proper deference.

Rich as he is, Charles would be exceptionally cheap to run. He is believed to be a vegetarian, and as a Gordonstoun and Cambridge man is well used to life in draughty rooms with inefficient or no central heating. His mother has no doubt endlessly reminded him how the Family lived on rations during the Second World War. The long-suffering people of the FSU would not have to endure the sight of a ruler who could not manage without a marble jacuzzi or who guzzled fillet steak while they queued for tinned pilchards.

Charles's wife, Diana Spencer-Windsor, is widely admitted not quite to have the heart and stomach of a Queen of England. Indeed, future generations may well see tragedy in the fact that he married the chilly, ethereal Diana rather than the gutsy, witty and gloriously human Sarah Ferguson, who in a few short years degenerated under the pressures of minor Royalty to a national joke; newspaper columns made unguarded references to "snow" when considering her behaviour prior to her separation from Andrew. But the very qualities which make Diana iffy for a Queen of England would make her a smashing Tsarina. Was there ever a woman so patently made to ride in a gilded sleigh, wrapped in sable and hung with diamonds? (Elizabeth has diamonds to spare -- indeed, she's already spared them. Jewellery experts believe Diana is wearing gems not seen since the Delhi Durbar of 1911. The Duchy can pay for the sables -- if, indeed, there isn't a forgotten fridge full of pre-1917 gifts in the bowels of Balmoral. Or she might enjoy shooting her own.)

Pale fragile remote beauty, and a slight air of melancholy puzzlement at the world, are the primary qualifications for a Tsarina, and Di has those by the gallon. But her own CV bears looking at. She is known as a genuine fan of the ballet, an art-form in which Russia once reigned supreme; scope here for both cultural interchange and hard currency earnings. She also has contacts within the pop world, which might be turned to good use finding work and exposure for the garage-bands of the FSU. Most of all, though, her experience with AIDS charities could, regrettably, be of use to the FSU. Nobody knows the size of the AIDS problem in the FSU, or indeed throughout the Former Eastern Bloc (FEB). Official pre-1989 figures are so low as to provoke suspicions of deliberate under-reporting. Other countries besides Romania bought the dirty blood and plasma the West rejected; the FSU has a hard drugs problem, with who knows how much needle-sharing; and in other countries, a sudden influx of tourists and a hungry population have been known to add up to a prostitution explosion. (Indeed, low HIV figures may positively encourage sex-tourism.) Here, homophobic commentators give Di flak for the one thing she does which shows some strength of character; there, her knowledge and evident genuine sympathy might be appreciated.

There need be no loss of continuity in the British Royal line. Charles could renounce his personal claim to the throne, which would then on Elizabeth's death pass to his son. Were Elizabeth to become incapable of ruling in old age (which, if she takes after her mother, seems unlikely), the new heir-apparent, or if he were still too young one of Charles's three siblings, could be Regent. Charles has two sons, one for England (etc.) and one for the FSU; which got which could be decided by negotiation between the two countries, by the elder taking the first vacancy, by the sons' preference, or even by the toss of a coin.

If the British Royal Family were to supply the next Tsar, there would be many advantages for the UK, besides the defence savings already mentioned. Trading advantages go without saying. Our lot's pre-eminence in the Royalty field would be confirmed, and it would be a general boost to morale to be reminded that we are definitely best at something. Other countries of the FEB might decide to follow the FSU's example, thereby providing useful work for some of the more tedious Windsors, of whom we have far more than we could possibly need. At first, their Civil List payments might have to be continued, but what the hell, we're paying them anyway; as the new monarchies' economies picked up, payments could be tapered off, and in the long term we would be rid of the burden of keeping Victoria S-C-G's descendants in luxury forever.

The interesting possibility arises of the UK saying sucks to the European Community and the Special Relationship, and linking up with the new Windsor monarchies and the Commonwealth to form an economic bloc of truly awesome size, resources and mutually beneficial variety. Britain would once again be in a position of Total World Domination, and quite right too.

Even if this rosy prospect does not come to pass, at least poor old Charles would have a proper job and stop moping and making us all feel guilty. All true Britons should lobby the FSU to do the decent thing and advertise the post. That settled, all should be well. Unless....

With Charles's luck, his sister Anne might apply. Healthy, husband-free and of a sporting nature, she might fancy taking on the mantle of Catherine the Great. And a properly conscientious recruitment board, while sympathising with the long-term unemployed, might in the last analysis prefer the candidate with international administrative experience on Olympic Committees and with the Save the Children Fund. Against Anne's valuable hands-on experience, Charles can only offer a 2.2 in Archaeology and Anthropology. It's not, after all, as if he went to Oxford.

Poor old Charles. Foiled by a woman again.

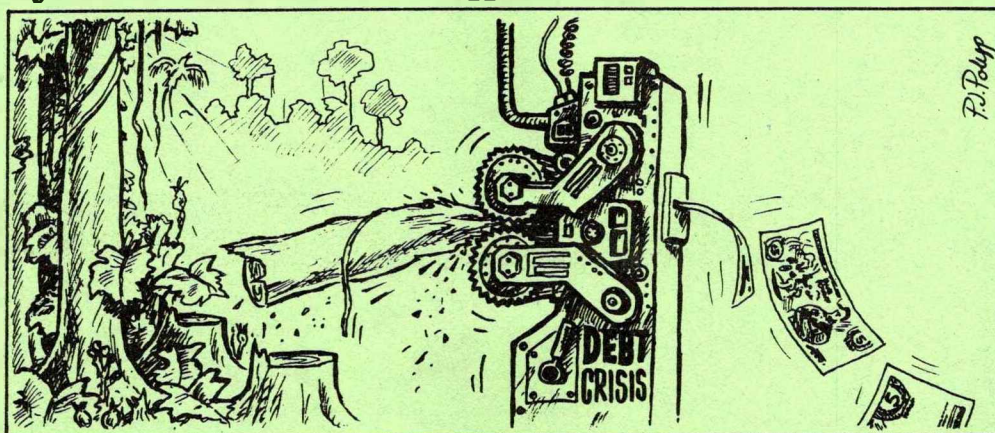
SEARCHING FOR AN ENEMY?

Joseph Nicholas

REDS UNDER THE GREEN BED?

We rarely go to SF conventions these days, principally because they cost too much and we tend to spend the money on travel and tourism anyway; but we did spend a couple of days at this year's Eastercon in Blackpool as a prelude to a short holiday in North Wales and the Welsh Borders. In addition, we'd been invited to debate Green issues on a couple of programme items; in particular, to argue that "being Green" is not an abstract statement of intent or a set of secondary activities tagged on to the end of everything else you do, but a philosophy which requires a fundamental re-ordering of socio-political priorities, commencing with one's own life-style and culminating with the wholesale reconstruction of the industrial state.

But you don't have time on a convention panel discussion to outline a complete programme for getting from here to there; all you can do (because if you say too much the audience will never take in any of it) is make three or four points which will give a flavour of your argument, and hope to extend the theme in the question period which follows. But my programme item -- nominally concerned with strategies for hauling the world out of the environmental hole into which it's sliding -- barely got beyond the first: the chair made little or no attempt to keep order or involve the audience, and those who interrupted the most inevitably dominated the discussion. I argued, nevertheless, that the resolution of our problems requires political will rather than a technological fix, and that unless we first address the inequalities in resource flows between North and South there will be no solution to the linked problems of environmental degradation, debt and poverty. The requirement, I suggested, is not that the Third World should bring itself up to the same level as the developed West (because the resources to do so don't exist -- as Maneka Gandhi once pointed out, for India alone to raise itself to the same level as the USA would require the resources of two-and-a-half globes), or that the developed West pours money into trying to mine the asteroids for more raw materials (thus postponing resolution of our problems and allowing existing inequalities to grow worse), but that the West should "de-develop" to release funds and resources for everyone else. In response, one panel member accused me of ignoring the aspirations of the Third World, himself forgetting that these aspirations are held largely by the military and bureaucratic elites, and have been nurtured by Western MNCs wishing to sell them goods and services; and his own definition of the Third World included Japan and the Pacific Rim. Another stated that the statistics I'd used to underpin my argument had reminded him of the certainty and self-righteousness displayed by Margaret Thatcher when arguing her case, which in turn suggested that I was a secret totalitarian: in



other words, the usual sort of "smear-by-association" response to all new ideas.

(This second panellist, who argued for ideas-driven technological fixes while admitting to their economic infeasibility, later had pointed out to him by a member of the audience that fuel usage and fuel pollution could be reduced simply by insulating British houses to Swedish standards. His response was a ranting attack on the Swedes for remaining neutral during the Second World War and growing rich by selling iron ore to both sides while Britain had stood alone against the Nazis. (I am not making this up -- but will suppress his name to spare him further embarrassment.) We are presumably to conclude from this that democracy means the inalienable right to have shoddy housing, and that a desire to insulate your home and reduce your fuel bills is evidence of secret Nazi sympathies.)

Or perhaps not so much the usual response to all new ideas as the desperate search for a new enemy now that the old one has so inconveniently dissolved itself. That this is certainly the case in some quarters was demonstrated late last year by a pamphlet published by the Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies, a Cold War think-tank established in the mid-eighties to promote the need for a "strong defence", including nuclear weapons, against a Soviet invasion of Western Europe. The pamphlet argued that because Green ideas would require the wholesale restructuring of contemporary society, they could only be implemented by a centralised dictatorship of the kind recently overthrown in Central Europe and the FSU; Greens were therefore simply Stalinists under another name. Subsequent correspondence in *The Guardian* (some of it from me) not unnaturally rubbished this argument; and the Institute defended itself by claiming that the pamphlet had not denounced all Green ideas but had tried to distinguish those which were "demonstrably worthwhile" from those which were "harmful and dangerous", since the latter were "security issues" which required "analysis". My response (also published in *The Guardian*) was to point out that this was the Establishment's usual method of dealing with its opponents: absorb the "acceptable" ideas (such as saving rare species and habitats), marginalise "unacceptable" ones (such as restructuring global economic relations), and thereby neutralise both. For the Institute to suggest that these were "security issues" only compounded its knee-jerk Cold War approach.

(A couple of months later, the Institute published another pamphlet, arguing that economic hardship in Central Europe and the FSU meant that there was an imminent danger of mass emigration to Western Europe, which in turn meant that all proposed arms cuts should be cancelled forthwith and the nuclear "deterrent" even increased. It had clearly never occurred to the pamphlet's authors that it would be cheaper and easier -- and promote greater security in the the longer term -- to hand out massive economic aid which would remove the need for people to emigrate in the first place; but then the authors were presumably weapons junkies desperate for their next fix. I would have written another letter to *The Guardian*, except that I read its summary of the pamphlet's contents while waiting at Heathrow for our flight to Jordan and our "long weekend" in Petra.)



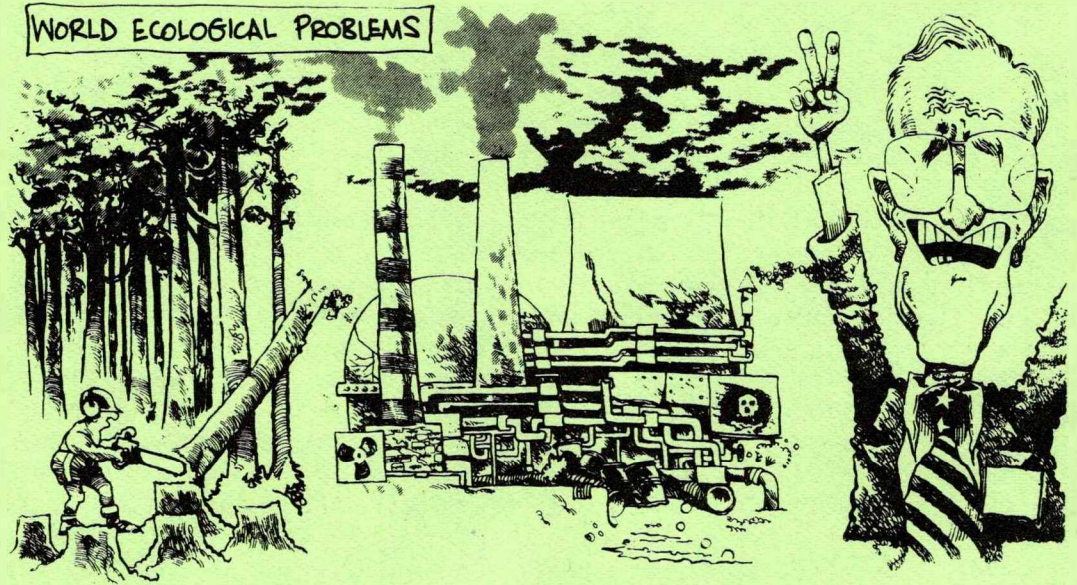
MORE BETTER DETERRENTS NOW!

In some quarters, of course, the end of the Cold War has left some groups of people inconsolably grief-stricken. The Stalinist zealots who now have nothing to show for their years of unremitting proletarian struggle to build the workers' paradise which would usher in the glorious new dawn of utopian socialism, etc. etc., are clearly one such group (but go on any demonstration and you can still see them peddling their jargon-ridden "newspapers" to each other with the conviction of the completely desperate); another is their ideological opposites, the ultra-conservatives. This group is less prominent here than the USA, perhaps because our rather different political culture makes them behave more discreetly, to avoid the mocking laughter that their less-than-sensible obsessions would immediately provoke; but relevant examples include Dr Julian Lewis, formerly of the (late, unlamented) Coalition for Peace Through Security and latterly author of a Conservative Party book detailing the "evidence" of Labour MPs' subversive behaviour (attendance at trade union conferences, number of times seen wearing a CND badge, whether a member of Amnesty International or Greenpeace, and so on), the Freedom Association, the (disbanded) Federation of Conservative Students, David Hart's bizarre Committee for a Free Britain (which once claimed that any Labour MP who contributed to the late *Marxism Today* did so because they were a secret communist), and others too loony to bother with. (*New Statesman & Society* once reported on a group of "anarcho-capitalists" who were promoting the idea that everyone should have the right to mint and issue their own their currency.)

In SF fandom, the standard of ultra-conservatism has been carried by the US fanzine *Fosfax*, which recently had the unique distinction of publishing unedited virtually every letter it received -- like a giant apa, without the contributors having to do any work themselves. Unreadable though much of *Fosfax* is (at sixty-plus pages of tiny type every other month), its "publish-everything" policy offered a clear opportunity to slip some alternative thoughts into debates which otherwise seemed to be taking place in a right-wing neverland characterised by awe-struck quotes from obscure Reaganaut newspaper columnists and what seemed a dangerous ignorance about the rest of the world. So in late 1990 (a few weeks before the US attack on Iraq), I sent a few pages of comment on the dissonance between the rhetoric about democracy and human rights that successive US governments claim guides their foreign policy and the dictatorship and oppression they habitually support; nothing terribly exceptional (or even original). The editorial response, by one Timothy Lane, was pure Cold War theology: I had criticised the USA; I had failed to mention the Soviet Union; this could not be an accident; therefore I must be a communist apologist. Not so, I demurred; we're non-aligned; we support neither superpower; we oppose their interference in the affairs of other countries in principle. The response was a claim that failure to mention the Soviet Union could only be construed as support for it -- thereby demonstrating that to voice criticisms of US foreign policy solely because one disagrees with it is a notion alien to the editorial worldview. When I argued that "left" was not synonymous with "communist", I was told "these statements aren't true, so saying them means nothing": the clearest possible evidence of the permafrost in which the editorial mind is frozen. (As D. West once remarked about someone else, this is the sort of argument which out-Descartes Descartes -- "I think, therefore it is so".) A later letter was censored on the grounds that I did not understand the difference between propaganda and discussion. Later still, a regular contributor named Joseph Major suggested that I am the moral equivalent of Burgess, Philby and MacLean -- indicating that, in *Fosfax's* eyes, I have not only apologised for the Soviet Union but spied for it as well!

Backing up this essentially paranoid worldview -- it obviously never occurs to those who attribute Soviet inspiration to everything vaguely "anti-American" that if the Soviet Union really had been as clever and as strong as this implies then it would have won the ideological contest decades ago -- is a cheer-squad of fellow ultra-conservatives venting a litany of far-right assertions. Such as (for example) that Nicaragua under the Sandinistas "was a typical left-wing regime, devoting itself to a war against its own citizens, and producing a great harvest of corpses" (meaning, presumably, that the contras, rather than sabotaging the economy at the behest of the CIA, were in fact defending the people against the government); that El Salvador (in

the midst of a US-backed civil war which killed over 70,000 people) was "a democracy" (from which we assume that the army death squads were therefore exercising their democratic rights to execute people without trial); that the war to evict Iraq from Kuwait was about principle, not oil (confronted with a report that the USA had allowed two-thirds of the Iraqi Republican Guard to escape with their weapons intact, Lane could only respond by claiming "that means at least one-third was knocked out", disgracefully ignoring the Kurds and Shi'ites the rest had gone on to slaughter); that Jeanne Kirkpatrick's convoluted distinctions between "authoritarian" and "totalitarian" regimes (meaning right-wing dictatorships we support and left-wing ones we don't) were *objectively valid* (the writer was clearly unaware of the derision with which the rest of the world viewed Kirkpatrick's absurdities). Even the US's gaping financial deficit and the hole in the ozone layer are dismissed as myths, while "90 percent of the greenhouse gases produced on Earth are from trees and other plant life" -- and the greenhouse effect itself remains unproven, although we'll have no trouble reversing any increase in global temperatures anyway. Not so much science fiction as complete fantasy....one covers one's ears, one flees screaming.



1. Trees

2. Plants

3. Bush

THE TRIUMPH OF ENDISM

For someone like Lane, the Cold War has clearly not yet ended (much though he might deny it). Others in his camp are clearly celebrating a crushing US victory, but are either still too hung-over to grasp that in the long term this means next to nothing or simply unwilling to confront the real world that lies in wait on the other side of the ideological mask behind which they still shelter. (Including George Bush, who last December claimed that the USA had won the Cold War in Vietnam. In *where?*) On a more cerebral level, and with a more complex set of ideological principles, we have Francis Fukuyama, waving a thesis that has now grown into a fat slab of a book entitled *The End Of History And The Last Man*, asserting that we stand on the threshold of a "post-historical" world in which things will continue to happen but in which there will no longer be any debate about ideas because we have all agreed that liberal democratic capitalism is The Answer. Cold Warriors presumably aren't satisfied with this because it deprives them of an ideological enemy; and people like me aren't satisfied with it because it's so simple-minded.

The book's argument is considerably more detailed than that of the original article, and differs from it in that it is built around a philosophical as opposed to a political core, suggesting that History (with a capital H and a sense of directive purpose) is driven on the one hand by the economic logic of modern science and on the other by what Hegel called "the struggle for recognition" -- which Fukuyama equates with Plato's *thymos*, the desire to be recognised in one's own right simply for what one is -- and that because the demands of both can only be satisfied by

liberal democratic capitalism it has naturally emerged as the final, supreme system of organising human affairs. The question for future generations, Fukuyama avers, is whether the absence of great ideas will provoke the appearance of a Nietzschean "last man" who, bored by debates about things and with no outlet to express his desire for mastery, will plunge us back into History (with a capital H and a sense of directive purpose). This is not a philosophical argument I feel competent to refute -- except to say that large quantities of the stuff about the "first man" and master-slave relationships at the beginning of history are entirely abstract and pay no attention at all to what we've learned about human society from anthropology and sociology.

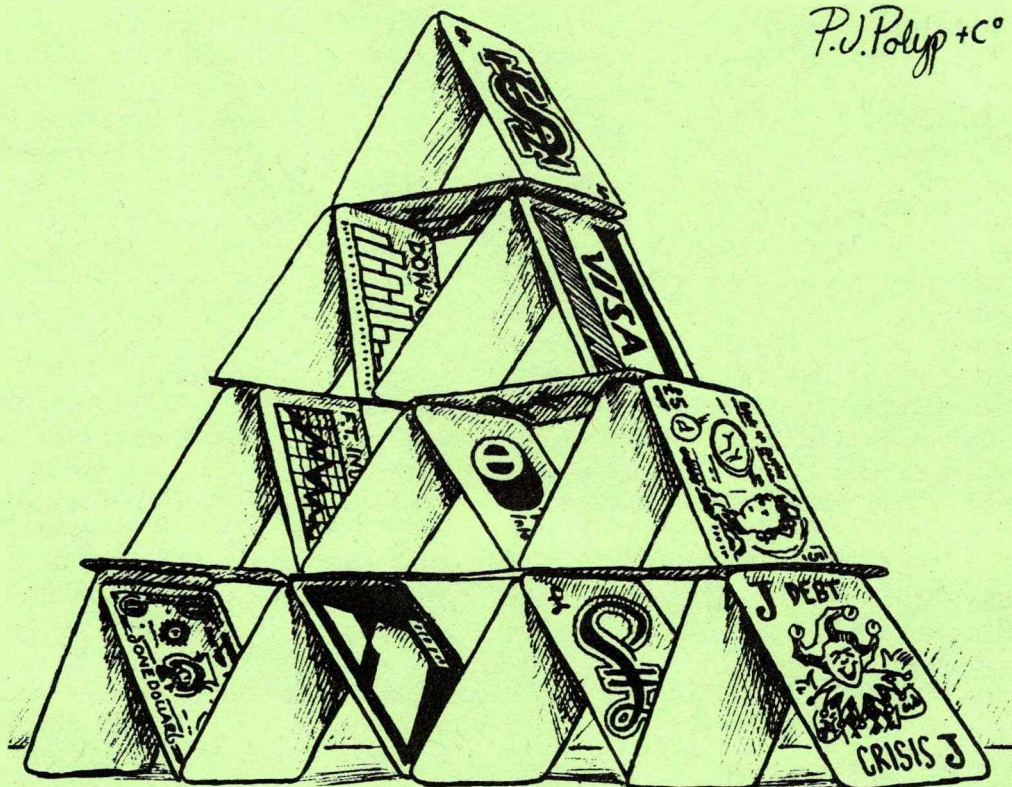
And if the book's philosophy seems naive, then the political argument it underpins is certainly no more sophisticated than that of the original article. In an early chapter, for example, Fukuyama summarises Jeanne Kirkpatrick's aforementioned distinctions between "authoritarian" and "totalitarian" regimes, but without any reference to the political context in which her essay appeared and taking entirely at face value her arguments about these regimes' relative tolerances for property rights and privacy of thought. Had he forgotten, or chosen to overlook, that Kirkpatrick's essay had no value in itself, but was intended to help justify the more militarised, right-wing US foreign policy of the early Reagan years? Fukuyama's failure to mention this only makes him appear even more detached from the real world of real politics. And if he is serious in claiming that liberal democratic capitalism is the only system that can satisfy the Hegelian struggle for recognition, then he must acknowledge that at present it does so only for the inhabitants of the developed West, and then only by denying the equality of everyone else. The assumption that as liberal democratic capitalism spreads then so will everyone be "recognised" is absurd, firstly because capitalism depends upon its ability to exploit others in order to sustain itself, and secondly because (as I pointed out in the panel discussion at the Eastercon) the physical resources to satisfy everyone's desires simply don't exist.

In addition, and as in the original article, Fukuyama fails to recognise the existence of any socio-political system other than capitalism and communism -- apart from rather grudging references to Islam, which he realises has a different cultural history to Europe but suggests will eventually adopt the democratic ideals derived from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment without losing its Islamic character. This is self-evident gibberish, since if Islam did adopt European democratic ideals it would no longer be Islamic. And what about Chinese, Indian, or African culture, which may one day re-emerge from beneath their present blanket of capitalist or communist ideas initially imposed on them from without? Discussing the lack of any historical evidence to prove that liberal democratic capitalism is indeed the kind of state that emerges at the end of History, Fukuyama has this to say:

"How do we know that an apparent lack of 'contradictions' in the apparently victorious social system -- here, liberal democracy -- is not illusory, and that the progress of time will not reveal new contradictions requiring a further stage of human historical evolution? Without an underlying concept of human nature that posited a hierarchy of essential and non-essential human characteristics,, it would be impossible to know whether an apparent social peace represented true satisfaction of human longings, rather than the work of a particularly efficient police apparatus, or merely the calm before a revolutionary storm. We should keep in mind that Europe on the eve of the French Revolution looked to many observers like a successful and satisfying social order, as did that in Iran in 1970s or the countries of Eastern Europe in the 1980s. Or to take another example: some contemporary feminists assert that most prior history was the history of conflicts among 'patriarchal' societies, but that 'matriarchal' societies, more consensual, nurturing, and prone to peace, constitute a viable alternative. This cannot be demonstrated on the basis of empirical fact, since there are no existing examples of matriarchal societies. And yet, the possibility of their *future* existence cannot be ruled out, if the feminist understanding of the possibilities for the liberation of the female side of the human personality proves to be correct. And if it is so, then we clearly have not reached the end of history."

To say nothing of Green ideas for organising society, such as Murray Bookchin's social ecology or E. F. Schumacher's decentralism; but for Fukuyama to go further down this road than he did in the above quote would destroy his argument altogether. Far better, clearly, to pretend that these ideas don't exist....although, when interviewed in *The Guardian* on 3 March 1992, he suggested that the "mixture of capitalism and paternalist authoritarianism" characteristic of South East Asian countries such as Singapore and Malaysia presented a clear challenge to his claim that economic success was a consequence of liberal democracy, and remarked that "in ten or fifteen years' time we may see in Japan an explicit rejection of the constitutional trappings of the post-war period". Perhaps he is trying to undermine his own argument....

P.J. Polyp + c°



LA LUTA CONTINUA

As I suggested in *FTT 11*, Fukuyama is as trapped in his paradigm as citizens of the mediaeval Age of Faith were in theirs; but perhaps he's now realised that there are more ideas in heaven and earth than allowed for by the cosmology of the eighties. I was reminded of my mediaeval parallel on our post-Eastercon holiday in North Wales, while visiting four of the castles Edward II built to control the Welsh -- Conwy, Beaumaris, Caernarfon and Harlech. All four are included in the World Heritage List because they are considered to be masterpieces of mediaeval military architecture; a style which reached its zenith in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and which the invention of gunpowder rendered completely obsolete. But even then, two of the castles (Beaumaris and Caernarfon) were never completed, because the money ran out and the threat disappeared; Harlech was partly demolished by Cromwell's forces in the Civil War; and Thomas Telford thought so little of Conwy that he demolished its watergate to make way for his London-to-Holyhead road. A hundred or so years from now, people won't think much of Fukuyama, either.

"The Baroness Chalker, ennobled by John Major to keep her as Minister of Overseas Development even though she lost her Commons seat at Wallasey, entertained a delegation of assorted African politicians the other day. She delivered a brief lecture to them on the subject of democracy, and the need to ensure that Third World governments were based firmly on the electoral principle. A voice from the back, so far unidentified, said: 'Ah yes, Lady Chalker, the way you do it in Wallasey'."

(From Ian Aitken's "Points of Order" column, *The Guardian*, 20 May 1992)

THE LETTER COLUMN

Edited by Judith Hanna

Sheryl Birkhead thought Fabulously Tasty Triceratops ought to be a cookbook but "everyone would have a terrible time just finding the simple pot to cook the blasted things in". I see other problems: first, catch your triceratops....then what do you do with the leftovers -- oh no, not triceratops again!

IS IT CHAOS OR JUST UNTIDY?

Dave Langford complained of our use of the "by now somewhat weary imagery of chaos theory" -- there speaks a man who reads too many computer magazines. What had struck us was how little chaos theory had been noticed in the general UK press -- as C. P. Snow pointed out half a century or so ago, Britain's literary-cultural elite is brought up to know and care nothing of science and they're the ones who run the government and the media. Still, career mathematician Pascal Thomas praised my article as "brimming with the complexity of life, giving such a subtle and pleasurable overview of its subject while modestly claiming not to be up to the task". Such a well-turned compliment, thank you, Pascal.

Martin Gittins took up vigorous cudgels against our "gross misappropriation of chaos theory" and in defence of modernist architecture:

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"Using scientific theory as analogy or metaphor is fair enough. But using scientific theory to explain or give credence to explanations of these phenomena is not. Such misappropriation was prevalent in the age of scientific reductionism you so rightly decry. Joseph recognises that the chaos analogy is glib, but that doesn't stop you from using it at an utterly superficial level. Don't get me

wrong, I'm not a Newtonian apologist and I think chaos theory is fantastic (in fact, I'm a sucker for any half-baked pop science theory), but the point is that chaos theory is just another theory to stir into the bubbling cauldron of ideas and possible explanations, a sweetener to help neutralise the bitter taste of all that scientific reductionism. Don't replace Cartesian Scientific Determinism with Chaotic Determinism.

"That 'twiddly bits' make buildings interesting is an example of the misappropriation of chaos theory to justify Judith's personal opinion on modern architecture. Don't forget that most of these 'twiddly bits' are superficial decorations as facades for large boxes, divided into smaller boxes as rooms (possibly with more superficial twiddly bits attached to them).

"Good modern architecture replaces this superficiality and simple composition with a dynamic composition based on the arrangement of space and light, better able to suit the uses of modern life. Of course, most modern buildings are as simplistic as the old buildings but without the interesting twiddly bits: banal, badly composed but much cheaper, of course."

We apologise to Martin and any other reader who may have been fooled into thinking that (a) we claimed to understand the abstruse mathematics of chaos theory, or (b) were using it as more than a picturesque analogy or cheap frill. Nor do we share Martin's sweeping loss of faith in good old Newton's stuff on gravity, entropy and so on. Linear science continues to apply to quite a lot of things. Nor was all linear science reductionist or determinist.

Martin is equally sweeping on architecture: though not all modern architecture is good, he seems to claim, only modern buildings feature "dynamic composition based on arrangement of space and light". Has he never stood inside a Gothic Perpendicular cathedral, its pillars soaring like tree trunks to the high arched canopy? What of the sweeping curves of a grand baroque staircase, with a painted ceiling by Tiepolo or Rubens floating deities on pastel clouds above one's head? Nor is it a choice between grand structure vs detail: Gothic cathedrals are enhanced by misericords,

gargoyles, a wealth of incident or, as I put it "twiddly bits". Baroque interiors, I admit, get a bit overwhelming -- the visual equivalent of ODing on fairy floss (US readers: candy floss). On to one of FTT's inter-continental ex-co-editors:

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"Both of you are having a nice time playing with theories, either the big ones or the little ones. I particularly like the Gell-Hanna theory of 'twiddly bits'. The macro is Wst micro and the micro is macro, depending on how big your telescope happens to be and which end you're looking through. Theories are lovely things for trying to make sense of all the chaos but one of the troubles I have in the tutoring I do is that most people seem to think that all theories are the same, so that Marx's theory is the same kind of theory as Einstein's or Newton's. The fact that Marx also thought this helps to confuse the issue. I am quite happy to use theories to work with appropriate aggregations of information, but often the same theory won't work at different orders of magnitude. For example, the Gell-Hanna theory works on the human scale of the streetscape and in areas such as geological time, but not others such as 100-page biographies and town planning maps. Perhaps the theory is also culture-driven, since it was concocted by a couple of Australians visiting Europe. I cannot imagine that it would work the same way on the Australian landscape as it would on the European one.

"The trouble with Chaos theory is that the vast mathematical and statistical edifice does not sit too well on the micro scale of an individual human life, although it might start to be applicable in an aggregation as large as the population of Asia. Except that large populations are not randomly acting factors but under the control of a much smaller number of people who also do not act randomly. This seems to me to be one of the reasons why monetarism is not on; it is statistical theory applied to factors which are not free acting because they don't have free will."

Not so much lack of free will as constraints on freedom of choice which produce different statistical patterns. In transport, for instance: how far to work, shops or schools? is it safe and pleasant to walk or cycle? is there convenient public transport? how many have a car? what does each choice cost, and can it be afforded? can you get there at all? These social, economic and geographical patterns set the choices available to each individual -- so if we want to change the observed incidences of different behaviour, it takes government action (local or central) to change locational incentives, street environments, public transport provision, and relative taxation burdens (such as polluter-pays carbon tax or road pricing schemes). (Detailed arguments about this may be found in the aforementioned Travel Sickness.) I'll skip the tricky questions on how this, or the Australian landscape, might relate to chaos theory. Leigh also comments on history:

Leigh Edmonds
(address as before)

"Joseph's statement in the previous issue about people's attempts to construct 'a new Europe' based on misreadings of its history puts the emphasis the wrong way round. What has happened, and is probably happening, is that history has and is being written to justify various ideals of 'a new Europe'. The main reason for writing history is either to justify a hegemony or to give strength to a new idea. A new hegemony is being created and a new history has to be written to go along with it. If you read history this way you'll find some very interesting things going on.

"Even in the far off corners of the world you will have heard that Kick-Start Keating (the great hope of the Australian Labor Party) has taken to misrepresenting the past of British-Australian relations (and touching-up the Queen) as a way of getting votes in the next election. (A smart newspaper journalist got on the telephone to a few prominent local historians who disagreed on whether Keating's summary of how the Brits have treated the Aussies over the past couple of centuries was right or not, thus demonstrating to the general public how useless history is because it can't provide simple answers to simple questions.) History, which is not much more than a reinterpretation of what happened in the past, is always taken over by those who wish to justify or argue against present day business. There is, of course, another use of history -- to keep historians in employment. In this regard, a bit of controversy is always useful, but that is another issue."

This seems an appropriate point to slot in Karen Fender-Gunn's comment about Prime Minister Keating: "He looks like a weasel and has the personality of a dirty sock".

COUPLEISM

A very weird letter from:

GM (Mrs FJ) Carr
8325 31st Street NW
Seattle
Washington 98117, USA

"Who,' you ask, 'are these primitive specimens who seek to deny women's participation in fanzines?' I do indeed wonder who they are and have come to the conclusion they are the female fans themselves. There are, admittedly, very few femfan pubbers in fandom in comparison to the spate of enthusiastic ampubbers generally. In fact, I've seen only two kinds: those females who plunge into fanzine publishing on their own without bothering to mention their gender, and thus are usually mistaken (at least until their sex is unmistakable in their writing) for ordinary fans, and those femfepen who enter fandom on the coat-tails of their current 'significant other'."

"Ordinary fans", it seems, are by this definition male. Flattering though the implication that all female fans are extraordinary may be, I think we ought to reject it. But then, GM Carr also says she likes the nice simple white shading into black notion of drawing the line; perhaps preference for simple pictures is what blinds her to the great number and variety of women active in fandom and fanzines. That, I hypothesise, is why she seeks to deny that women do play a full and equal role in fandom. Certainly, she's right that it is not necessarily men who put women down. Ian Gunn pinpoints the problem:

Ian Gunn
P.O. Box 567
Blackburn
Victoria 3130
Australia

"Coupleism is the theory that when two people form a relationship they instantly become one person, melding their personalities and brains into a single unit, presumably through some method resembling osmosis. Karen Pender-Gunn, my partner in life, attended a convention with me last year where the theme revolved loosely around

Gothic Horror. One of the categories in the art show was "Gothic Toy". Karen, being something of a wiz at stuffed animals, made a toy vampire bat. I did something sillier with foam rubber and grass roots: a brain in a jar. Ours were the only entries in that category.

"At the end of the con we were informed that the category had been cancelled. Not because there were insufficient entries or not high enough standard, but because there was only *one* entry. We told them that there were in fact two.

"Oh yes,' they said. 'But you're married.' Apart from the fact that we aren't married *per se* (Karen's deed-polled surname does confuse people), what really got my goat was the assumption that our sexual relationship in some way cancelled out our artistic abilities. We've been together some time now, but I still can't sew and Karen can't draw. We're a couple, yes, but we're still individuals."

PARADIGM SHIFT

Alexis Gilliland
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Virginia 22204, USA

"Judith discusses paradigm shifts from the point of view of the young, which of course she was when she experienced the phenomenon. For a senior worker in the field, the failure of the paradigm one grew up with is not unlike my loss of my wife Dolly. None of the advantages of the new paradigm will compensate for the loss of the old one. The reason that paradigm shifts take place in the sciences and not in politics or religion is that science is far more sensitive to empirical evidence than the other two.

"Thus we have the congregation (The Sacred Heart of the Failed Paradigm) dwindling to a tiny handful of true believers, grown grey in the faith but steadfast to the end. The political party (Good Old Paradigmers), losing first power and then influence as it shrinks to a rump and then a social club, and finally a few crusty old letter hacks who appear in the papers now and again. Scientists, even those most steeped in the now abandoned model, must embrace the new model (or at least accept

it, however reluctantly) lest they cease to be taken seriously -- which is to say, their peers will stop regarding them as scientists.

"Joseph's airy disregard for the empirical evidence of socialism's failure -- massive, unequivocal, the result of 74 years rigorous testing -- may not demonstrate that his faith in socialism is religious. What his adherence to the failed paradigm of socialism does demonstrate, however, is that his belief is not scientific."

Again you exhibit your preference for reading what you'd like us to have said rather than what we actually did. Joseph's "adherence to the failed paradigm of socialism"? Neither our response to Sherry Coldsmith's letter, which stated that we vote Green, nor the final paragraph of his article in FTT 12, which explicitly called for the reconstruction of Europe around Andre Gorz's "Third Way" between socialism and capitalism, support any such contention. (As he's pointed out to you before, what failed in the FSU was not socialism, but Stalinism, a different system altogether -- a point you continually ignore.) If you think that "peace", "ecology", "feminism" and "human rights" are all synonyms for "socialism", you must be using a different dictionary to everyone else.

It's ironic to note that, even as you accuse Joseph of being trapped in some socialist paradigm, you show no awareness of the paradigm in which you yourself are caught, or of the way your thinking has been conditioned by forty-odd years of state-mediated Cold War propaganda. You're clearly convinced that (regardless of what they say) everyone on "the left" must be a socialist (or a communist -- in Cold War theology the two are interchangeable) because there is no alternative ideology to capitalism; a simplistic world-view which can only sustain itself by pretending that these ideologies are internally cohesive (i.e., that there is only "one" socialism and "one" capitalism), in order that variations from them can be dismissed as sectarian splinters from the "core doctrines" rather than recognised as the re-interpretations and re-developments they actually are. (Without continual re-examination, their basic tenets would never be refreshed and renewed, and "capitalism" and "socialism" thereby adapted to changing conditions) Thus your failure to distinguish eco-socialism from socialism -- although at the same time (showing how Cold War theology manages to contradict its notion of "one capitalism" by making room for both the Anglo-American casino and the German/Japanese social market models) it's rather amusing to note that while US right-wingers such as yourself clearly have no difficulty accepting the existence of divisions on the right, they equally clearly have a terrible struggle to understand that there can be similar divisions on the left. And if Joseph's beliefs are "not scientific", then why should your own be any different?

There are no paradigm shifts in politics? Where have you been during the environmental revolution?



Lloyd Penney
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Canada

"George Bush's idea of this New World Order smacks more and more of imperialism. His recent actions have made this concept clearer. He's flown to Japan to demand a bigger share of the Japanese market in automobiles and other consumer goods, and he supports surtaxes and tariffs on Canadian goods that were supposedly covered by free trade agreements. Why? As he said himself not long ago, 'We have nothing to apologise for! We're the undisputed leader of the world! We're the United States of

America!" What ego....America shall not conquer the world militarily; that time has gone. It shall eventually conquer the world economically and culturally. Canada has been conquered almost entirely in these two ways, and futurists now say it will join the USA before 2005. America's final blow will be the free trade talks, bringing Mexico in to drag more jobs out of Canada. I can see the world being Americanised, except for the USA itself -- it will become Nipponised."

The USA was never really in a position to impose its military will throughout the globe; despite its constant rhetoric about "rolling back dictatorship", its actions were constrained by the possibility of superpower conflict and, except where the Third World was concerned, notably cautious. But even in the Third World, where the USA is well-practiced in applying overwhelming force to people without adequate means of resistance, such as Panamanians and Grenadans, since 1945 it has never won a full-scale war against a properly-armed and well-motivated state (such as Vietnam). But while there was certainly an era in which it could have imposed its economic will on the rest of the globe, this is now definitely drawing to an end, nowhere better demonstrated than by its feeble responses to the question of aid to the FSU and the Third World -- indeed, the Japanese have openly proclaimed their intention to assume the role of leading international aid donor from the USA. Bluntly, the USA doesn't matter any more -- the axes of global power and global significance (the two aren't the same) have shifted decisively away from Washington, and run instead through Bonn and Tokyo via Moscow: because what happens in the FSU will affect us all far more than the outcome of this year's US presidential election. The boom years that the USA experienced during the eighties were fuelled almost entirely by inward investment from Germany and Japan; but now Germany wants to rebuild mitteleuropa and Japan to exploit the mineral wealth of Siberia (the only thing stopping the Japanese cash rolling in is the four Kurile islands seized by the FSU at the end of the Second World War, so Yeltsin will probably reach agreement to hand them back by the end of this year); and whoever wins in November will have to cope with the huge hole left in the US budget by the outflow of German and Japanese funds from federal gilts....and as they contemplate that hole will probably wish that they'd never run at all.

David Bratman
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San Jose
California 95129-3124
USA

"You cannot imagine how much of a relief it is to learn that the USA doesn't matter much on the world stage any more. Possibly a loss of American prestige will convince US Presidents to spend less time posing with other world leaders, which is glamorous and lots of fun for them but doesn't get anything done, and more time working on the

domestic problems which have been ignored since Carter (and nobody listened to him). Domestic problems are less fun because they're less amenable to personal negotiations between heads of government, and because you have to deal with Congress, which doesn't accord the President the respect he thinks he deserves.

"I don't expect the economy to improve any time soon, although Bush seems to realise one essential point about economic problems: that unlike, say, the ozone layer, the economy is not a physical fact but a state of mind. If everyone is convinced that the economy is improving, then by definition it will be. Unfortunately, what he does not realise is that running around shrilly crying 'The economy is improving!' will not produce this effect, especially when everyone knows that he has an ulterior motive, viz. winning the election."

Brian Earl Brown
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Detroit
Michigan 48224
USA

"The re-invention of Europe looks as if it's going to cost the world plenty in the near future. Yugoslavia in near genocidal civil war; Russia unable to hold the rest of the former soviet states in some kind of Pax Povertii....with all those arms, nuclear and otherwise, floating about, this is not at all encouraging. One begins to wonder -- dare I

say it? -- whether imperialism wasn't such a bad idea, since strong central governments do seem to have previously suppressed the ethnic rivalries that now infuse most of eastern Europe and the northern Middle East.

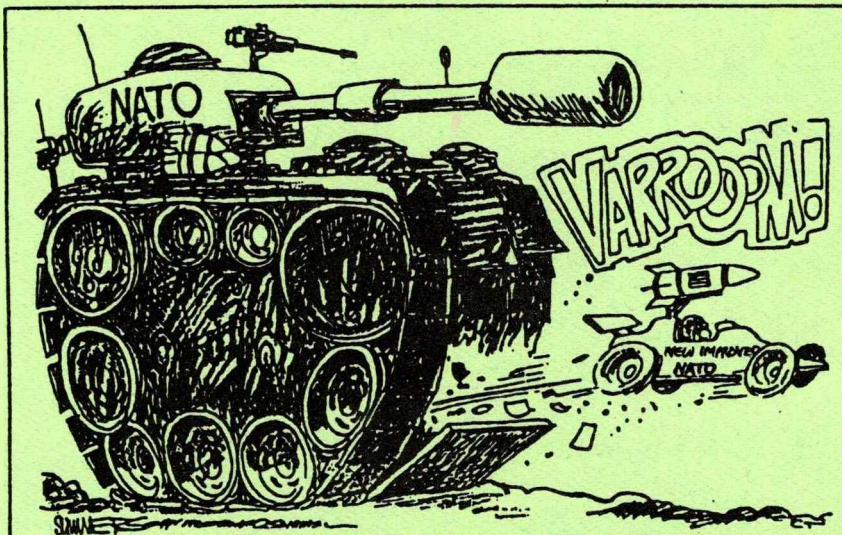
"The problem with letting Europe divide itself up into independent nations by ethnic group is that each region is so thoroughly mixed that each neighbourhood, even each person, might ultimately become their own nation. In any case, prosperity will only come when people are able to trade freely within a large nation, like all of

Europe. I still think George Bush made a mistake when he failed to propose that the US prop up the Soviet Central Committee so they could continue to pay their soldiers who would continue to hold the peace and allow the Soviets time to develop the democratic and economic skills needed before freedom could work. Then again, Bush had enough troubles of his own without asking for the Soviets' too."

Daring indeed, Brian, espousing imperialism, however tongue in cheek, in this forum. Nor are you alone in the suggestion that the West should have propped up the old monolithic East -- The Threat is, after all, what kept the hawks of the military-industrial complex in business (who in turn helped feed the hawks in the East). But Joseph wasn't suggesting that each ethnic group should form its own state; that was Mazzini's idea, which he argued against on similar "ethnic mix" lines to you.

Leigh Edmonds (address as before) "The juxtaposition between the end of Joseph's article about Europe and the latter part of the letter column with its description of future relations between North and South was pregnant with all sorts of ideas. Europe is getting its act together and the North American continent is also organising itself into a unified economic entity. From down here it looks as though an expanded NATO, which could stretch around the globe from one side of the Bering Strait to the other, could be in the best place to get the rest of the world to do what it wants. The struggle for a share of the rest of the world to exploit could be very exciting -- but that depends just how united Europe gets and how close the friendship between Europe and the USA remains. It also depends on how the globalising corporations feel about things, although I'm sure they'll keep their headquarters in the North as they exploit the South. It will be interesting to see what the rest of the world thinks of this, and if they can do anything about it. Just how robust will Japan and the Asian 'Tigers' be when the going gets really tough? Where will this leave the little economic union of Australia and New Zealand (with perhaps some of the closer Melanesian countries thrown in), and how will such an enclave of the North fare in the South?"

An expanded NATO of the kind you envisage is wholly unlikely. For one thing, the end of the Cold War has left it without a role; for a second, it doesn't wish to expand to include Central Europe and the FSU; for a third, domestic economic crises will lead to its progressive abandonment by the USA; and for a fourth, the Franco-German axis will eventually transform what's left of it into an insular European defence organisation.



Andy Sawyer
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"I would have loved to have seen the *I Celti* exhibition in Venice last year but as we were only there for seven hours it was not to be...although I agree with Joseph's comments about the various interpretations of the word 'Europe'.

"Experiencing the events of the attempted Russian coup through the Austrian and Italia media was fascinating. We missed -- because we were travelling with no access to news

broadcasts of any kind -- the resolution of events: life was normal, but underneath it was a sense that history might start going backwards. There was also a greater sense -- unlike reportage of such things in Britain -- that we were part of events, involved in them. The geography helps: when you travel from Austria to Italy and back in a day, and decide at the last minute on another day to go to Germany just to do some shopping, however touristy your original motives you're inevitably more aware of the connection between countries than we are most of the time here in the UK."

Cyril Simsa
2 The Hexagon
Fitzroy Park
London N6

"I very much enjoyed Joseph's article, and am broadly in agreement with it. It was also much appreciated by my Yugoslav friend Vesna, who expressed great astonishment that he wasn't writing this stuff professionally, and even took *FTT* away with her to a conference on European minorities in Nantes, for moral encouragement!"

Martin Smith
174 Ewell Road
Surrebiton
Surrey KT6 6HG

"Fukuyama's thesis suggests that it does not matter what happens in the FSU because the lack of an opposing power bloc is sufficient to vindicate his ideology and ensure US pre-eminence. But the USA needs an enemy. A faith such as capitalism has become needs an idea with which to contrast itself. While the War On Drugs serves some useful purposes, it does not provide a contrasting ideology (in fact, the drugs trade is based on the same principles of free trade and market forces as Western democratic capitalism). The Muslim Menace is far more productive for this purpose -- it is external, alien to US culture, and easy to portray as a movement of inhuman beasts who (for example) murder babies. Notions of a New World Order are clearly intended to unite the FSU and the older Western allies into a US-led coalition against this mutual threat. Given the problems that the FSU is experiencing in the former Soviet Central Asia, Germany's troubles with its Turkish *gastarbeiter*, the French National Front's success in building up race hatred against colonial immigrants, and the traditional English attitude to wops and darkies, the USA should have little trouble conscripting other nations into the game. Thus, as others have pointed out, the New World Order is just a rationalisation for a continuation of existing US foreign policy.

"But what is the dialectic that will replace the capitalist/communist dichotomy? Such changes take place over decades, if not centuries, so from here it's not possible to see what sort of conflicts might arise in the future. However, I hazard a guess; and that is that capitalism and communism are essentially materialistic: the argument between them is over the distribution and control of economic resources, and simply that. But there seems to me to be the beginnings of a resurgence of spiritual concerns -- not merely in the Muslim world, with radical fundamentalists gaining ground, but also in the West, where Christianity is changing its approach and making a dedicated attempt to gain new believers. The Green movement has an aspect of this religiosity (visions of Gaia, in particular, are an extreme representation of it); and while capitalism and communism argued over who would get the resources, Greens argue whether the resources should be used at all. This strikes me as a more fundamental attack on basic capitalist principles than communism ever was, and may have some appeal in the developing world, which faces an uphill struggle to become part of the world democratic capitalist club but might win by changing the rules."

WE ALSO HEARD FROM

Andy Andruschak, Pam Baddeley, Gregory Benford, Monika Best, Pamela Boal (a long reflection on "the People" who seem to be an informal New Age network exploring alternative lifestyles), Andy C, President Fernando Collor de Mello of Brazil (thanking us for our lobbying efforts on behalf of the Yanomani....us and several thousand other supporters of Survival International, actually), John Doucet (who'd been spotting large red-headed woodpeckers and coyote tracks), Mike Glicksohn (resigning from our mailing list), Eva Hauser (on her GUFF trip: "How could you bear to live in grimy grey England after this glorious sunny land?"), Colin Hinz, Rhodri James (reproducing his own fanzine's earlier review of *FTT*: "Politics is normally a subject wired directly to my sleep centres", and continuing "so it was a pleasure to read some interesting words on pertinent subjects. Not that I agree with all of the words, mark you..."), Ken Lake,

Adham Loutfi, Luke McGuff, Kev McVeigh ("Records not banned during the Gulf War included The Cure's 'Killing An Arab'"), Bruno Ogorelec, Darroll Pardoe, Sarah Prince, David Redd, John Rickett, Alan Sullivan, Martin Smith, Dale Speirs, David Thayer, Pascal Thomas and Christine (postcards from Russia and Slovenia), Sue Thomason ("I know all about failing to adhere the the Get Up Early And Write regime -- I do that too"), Lesley Ward, Pam Wells, and Taras Wolansky (advancing the less-than-credible theory that the 1984 re-election of Ronald Reagan was responsible for the elevation of Mikhail Gorbachev to General Secretary of the CPSU). Our thanks to you all.

Steve Bell

LF₀₀₀

NEW RIGHT THINK TANK POVERTY?
- 7-5-1992 -
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DON'T GIVE THE POOR MONEY - IT ONLY ENCOURAGES THEM!
THEY COVER EVERYTHING WITH FILTH!
EXTERMINATE THE FILTHY SWINE!!

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POVERTY? THERE IS NO POVERTY!
IF YOU'RE POOR THESE DAYS, YOU'RE POOR BY CHOICE!
EXTERMINATE HUMAN WICKEDNESS!

NEW RIGHT THINK TANK HOMELESSNESS?
- 8-5-1993 -
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SOME PEOPLE ARE GENETICALLY UNSUITED FOR DECENT HOUSING!
THEY COVER EVERYTHING WITH FILTH!
WE NEED LEBENSRAUM!

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HOMELESSNESS? THERE IS NO HOMELESSNESS!
IF YOU'RE HOMELESS THESE DAYS YOU'RE HOMELESS BY CHOICE!
LEBENSRAUM? DON'T JUST DO IT - B&Q IT!! JAWOHL!

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- 9-5-1994 -
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LET'S FACE IT - BLACKS JUST AREN'T "WHITE"
THEY COVER EVERYTHING WITH FILTH!
WE ARE THE MASTER RACE!

NEW RIGHT
THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS RACISM!
IF YOU'RE A VICTIM OF RACE-HATE THESE DAYS YOU'RE A VICTIM BY CHOICE!
WE ARE THE MASTER NON-RACISTS!

GREAT UNKNOWN FACTOIDS OF THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY: More people in Scotland speak Urdu than Gaelic.

(From *New Statesman & Society*, 14 March 1992)

THE QUACK DOCTOR

For I will consider the quack doctor, for his treatment cures every symptom known to humankind.

For this he performs in ten degrees.

For Firstly, he parades a flock of grateful patients who insist that they have been ill and misunderstood for years but now have been cured.

For Secondly, he works outside the medical establishment and the National Health Service, and weeps into his bank statements for grief that his treatment is not available to all sufferers.

For Thirdly, he claims that the National Health Service would save billions of pounds if it adopted his treatment.

For Fourthly, his treatment is not reimbursable by the private health insurance companies, though he may tell intending patients that it is.

For Fifthly, he adopts the posture of martyrdom when other doctors cast doubt on his methods.

For Sixthly, he never subjects his diagnoses or treatments to the scrutiny of his peers.

For Seventhly, he says he is kinder and more understanding than other doctors, who are brutes.

For Eighthly, he diagnoses his specialty condition in every punter who comes through his door.

For Ninthly, the nature of the treatment is such that the punter has to keep coming back.

For Tenthly, he fixes up articles about his miracle cures in the newspapers, contravening the General Medical Council's regulations on canvassing.

For he usually gets away with this.

For the GMC takes no action unless someone swears a complaint before a lawyer, which they rarely do.

For he will call himself a specialist even if he has the minimum qualifications required to practice medicine.

For he is a cuckoo who invades the domains of qualified specialists.

For his chosen territory may be allergy, cancer, neurology, aging, psychiatry, rheumatology, or neurasthenia.

For, whichever it is, he will prescribe a diet which is ghastly and quite impossible to follow.

For he understands the nature of placebo effects.

For, when the patient relapses, he can say that she didn't follow the diet properly.

For it is a sad fact that the patient is usually a woman.

For women who are put upon by their families and others seek refuge in sickness.

For when the punter is a man he is usually introverted and hypochondriacal.

For the quack's diets are considered avant-garde by everyone except nutritionists.

For he will prescribe absurd doses of food supplements, for which he is paid commission.

For he will dazzle his patients with pseudoscience.

For if he is a cancer quack, the patients spend the rest of their lives visualising their white cells and chopping up carrots.

For if the cancer returns he can say that they did not visualise their white cells clearly, or chop enough carrots.

For if his speciality is psychosomatics, the patients initially improve, and he puts them on a stricter diet and sells them more supplements when they relapse.

For if it is psychosis, the patient eats the diet and is still mad.

For if it is arthritis, the patient first attends when the pain is severe and improvement is therefore likely to follow.

For when the pain recurs they will return for more treatment.

For if it is neurology or aging, the patients will perceive themselves as stronger, or looking younger, for a few weeks.

For if he chooses food allergy he may give people appalling injections over large areas of their skin.

For this is certain to make anyone come up in weals.

For, in his pseudoscience, he may put their blood cells to fight foods in a test tube, or sell them bogus home-made neutralising vaccines.

For he may stretch his patients' credulity, putting food in their belly-buttons and seeing if their limbs go wobbly.

For he may suspend their credulity still further, diagnosing diseases by waving a pendulum over a sample of blood or hair.

For he may diagnosis hypoglycaemia, myalgic encephalomyelitis, electromagnetic sensitivity, or candida albicans for good measure.

For he will say their immune system is depressed.

For he will take unethical commissions by selling them vitamins, or minerals, or enzyme tablets.

For though his papers are rejected by journals that have high standards and pay no fee, he and his allies may start a journal of their own and distribute press releases about it.

For he makes good money writing paperback books, which are widely read and bring in more punters.

For his books are paraphrased from the works of his fellow quacks.

For these books are easy to write, and reinforce the message of the other books.

For though I have described the quack as he, some quacks are women.

For history shows that quacks often have the support of the highest in the land.

For the rich, the royal, and the famous seem often to take pride in folly.

(Written by one Dr Caroline Richmond, parodying an eighteenth century work by Jonathan Smart, and taken from a 1990 issue of *The Lancet*.)