

Inward Investment

Importing radical ideas from around the world



Christopher Harvie, David Spaven, Jim Robertson

Helen Stevens on alternatives to war

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comment

Jimmy Reid

This issue of the Scottish Left Review comes at a time when the left around the world has more need than usual to make its voice heard. The 'war on terrorism' which sees the richest nation on the planet bombing one of the poorest has very little to do with terrorism and a lot to do with the very foreign policy and economic issues the Scottish Left Review was established to challenge.

And yet the theme of this issue concerns domestic politics. Why? On a practical level, events in this war are changing so quickly that a bi-monthly publication could not remain topical. Much has been written by those on the left and we do not want to simply repeat the debates we hear in our daily papers. But it is also important that domestic politics do not become another victim of this war. We have chosen as the theme of this issue the scope for Scotland and the Scottish Parliament to import the best of the radical policies which have proved successful around the world.

In the next issue, which will appear at a time when we can expect a lull in the assault on Afghanistan, we will a step back and explore what role Scotland has in global conflicts of this sort. Are we simply bystanders or can we influence events? As always, please email us your thoughts – feedback@scottishleftreview.org. Here are a few of my own to be going on with.

The IRA has existed for about 80 years. It might become irrelevant if current negotiations are blessed with success. A few years ago, the voices of Gerry Adams and his colleagues were actually banned from British television. Actors gave voice to their speeches, perfectly pronouncing each syllable, in strong, resonant voices. The words, without the nasal twang of Martin McGuinness, actually had more impact.

British governments would never negotiate with "terrorists", we were told I'd heard that song before, a million times or more, and they ended up doing precisely that, in every single case, from Michael Collins, Pandit Nehru, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Jomo Kenyatta, Archbishop Makarios to the Provos, to name but a few.

Recently, Tony Blair gave fulsome praise to Messrs Adams and McGuinness, without even mentioning the leaders of the SDLP, the non-violent party of moderate Irish nationalism in Ulster. The lesson, if British governments are anything to go by, seems to be that power really does come from the barrel of a gun.

In Britain, dissenters are urged to adopt non-violent protest action by those who simultaneously argue that

Britain must have an arsenal of technological violence at its disposal. Try non-violent protest. Try sitting down outside a nuclear base in Scotland and newspapers and politicians that urged you to make your protest without violence will denounce you as a subversive. Speak out about the carpet bombing of Afghanistan and you're accused of being an appeaser like those who wanted Britain to lie down to the Nazis in the Thirties. Those guilty men weren't liberal pacifists but neo-fascists within the English ruling class, like the then Prince of Wales and owners of the Daily Mail, who thought Hitler "a Christian gentleman".

There should have been no need to protest at carpet bombing in Afghanistan, for there would be none, we were told. The doves in Washington had prevailed over the hawks, we were told. Afghanistan would not be another Vietnam, we were told. This campaign would be a discreet and sophisticated search and destroy exercise with the ultimate aim of apprehending and bringing to justice those responsible for the 11 September atrocity, we were told.

That was the understanding on which the coalition was built. There is now, within weeks, round-the-clock saturation bombing. Carpet bombing by B-52 bombers. Cluster bombs, some of whose "bomblets" do not explode on impact but await the arrival of the human foot, of men or child, to explode and rip them apart.

Those who endorsed the 'coalition' were deceived. Afghanistan is to be a Vietnam without trees. It's poorer than Vietnam ever was. The Afghani people knew nothing about 11 September, even after the event. They have no televisions and few radios. They might have heard of Osama bin Laden, but I wouldn't bet on it. He is a son of a rich Saudi family. His cohorts are mainly recruited from the elite families of Saudi Arabia, the Yemen and Oman. There wasn't an Afghani involved in the attacks on the twin towers of Manhattan.

It's like bombing and flattening Chicago because Al Capone had his headquarters there. The citizens of that city at least knew Capone was there. Many took some pride in his infamy. The punters have a vote in Chicago, even though the Mob still seems to control the joint. Have the Afghanis ever had an election?

Mind you, it could be asked if the people of Florida had a real election for the presidency when votes there are still uncounted That is technically no longer true. A consortium of media giants, including the Washington Post, New York Times and CNN Television, put up the money to fund a count of these votes. The outcome is that Bush lost in Florida and therefore Gore, who had already won the popular vote, is now shown to have won a majority of the States. Bush is therefore president by democratic default, and that is putting it delicately.

Those who endorsed the 'coalition' were deceived. Afghanistan is to be a Vietnam without trees.

The sponsors of this count have decided not to make public the findings because of the current crisis. But the Pentagon has said that this war could last 50 years. If Ted Turner can handle this truth, without cracking up, why can't Fred Turner, motor mechanic from Detroit? Despite, all this, George W Bush still claims to speak for the democratic world

There is no doubt that the Irish Republic, at times, gave succour to the IRA, but the British never bombed Dublin, and rightly so. The problems in Ireland, even to this day, are residual problems of colonialism. While the electoral system in the north was so gerrymandered as to exclude absolutely the possibility of changing society in the province by peaceful means, through the ballot box, then resorting to violence was inevitable. Many in Britain considered it so. This was reflected in popular movies, where an IRA man on the run might be portrayed as a tragic, romantic, hero figure.

Throughout the Islamic world, people are shocked at the readiness of the West to vent its frustrations with terrorism on innocent people who were in no way complicit, and by dressing up the accruing atrocities in poisonous euphemisms, like 'collateral damage' and 'errant munitions'. It is well known that Osama bin Laden's status as a warlord was a product of Washington and not Kabul.

This is a stupid war, in the sense that it makes no sense. It will fuel rather than inhibit terrorism. With the onset of winter, it could lead to a humanitarian catastrophe. Do we consider the possible death of a million innocents in Afghanistan a reasonable response to the death of 6,000 innocents in New York? What kind of damnable exchange rate is this? ■

This article is adapted from an article which appeared in The Scotsman.

after the ball was over

Christopher Harvie argues that as the left has moved out of social policy in post-Cold War Britain and America, we have to look elsewhere for our models

Long ago in Edinburgh University Robin Cook was packing them in at the Union debates and managing an already complex private life. A couple of miles and a civilisation away, Tony Blair was banged up in Fettes. This was 1966. There outcropped in the Labour Club two harbingers of the far left. John Lloyd – duffle coat, lank, streaky hair, Buddy Holly glasses – had to do with the British and Irish Communist Organisation. Gavin Kennedy – Del-boy Trot, ASTMS union man – was infiltrating on behalf of the Revolutionary Communist League. Kennedy became a hot-gospelling management guru, Lloyd went through the 1990s obituarising socialism and chronicling post-socialist hell in Russia. Ex-Marxian capitalist roadies, determined to stay on the train of history, wherever it might be headed? Nowadays street-fighting Joschka is Germany's new Bismarck, Otto Schily, once counsel for the Baader-Meinhoff gang, is an equally fierce Interior Minister: cue Byers, Blunkett, Straw: all God's chillun got guns, as the other Marx said, and are trying to emulate Curzon and Kitchener. Surprised at this apostasy? The **Marxisants** were priests, not politicians: their economics was dogma. When it didn't work they ditched it for another dogma, not least because their grasp of practical economics was non-existent, and they avoided debate.

Half a career spent teaching *inter alia* British regional studies at Tübingen has kept me learning, productive and unrepentantly red, or these days red-green – and still grateful for First Ordinary Political Economy. I got plausible enough on economics to be a talking head on Will Hutton's **False Economy** TV series, explaining banking, widget-making and the **Mittelstand** in Baden-Württemberg. This was during the nanosecond when Hutton's 'stakeholder capitalism' flitted through British politics.

'Doing' the **Mittelstand** made me case the market economics joint. Close-up, it looked as decrepit as command socialism in 1988. Around 1996 I had a group of bright students covering the implications of automation for the Land's **Mittelstandlers**, and the impact of cuts in agricultural and health subsidies on country districts and spas. Could new technology, higher education, conservation and transport be combined into forms of entrepreneurship which would tap the savings of the '68 generation. Forget loon pants and miniskirts, these fiftysomethings were now headed for prosperous retirement, the lucky sods: a trillion Deutschmarks would change hands by inheritance, according to **Spiegel**, in the next two decades. Could a cultural microcapitalism organised by the local state

produce badly-needed jobs for humanities graduates and, using up spare university and tourist capacity, bankroll a new, learning-based **Mittelstand**?

This was a project of the sort with which this issue of **SLR** is concerned, but what intrigued me was what it said about the grand structure of the market. Tourism was just about the biggest thing in transnational economics but we found, after gutting the core economics journals – **Economica**, **The Economic Journal**, etc. – that it scarcely figured in them. It was exiled to regional economics, definitely the Isthmian League of the profession. The same went for the economics of retirement, intellectual property, information technology, the drug trade, pornography, prostitution, even financial services themselves: questionable 'goods' maybe but indubitably there.

I had always been leery of the pope of neo-classicism, F A von Hayek. Not only was much of his stuff utopian dottiness, but the old boy had retired to Freiburg im Breisgau, relaxing on an even bigger hotbed of red-green collectivism than Tübingen. Beneath the hype of the 1990s, economics was professional ritual, not social science: the sort of academic nitpicking that gets Nobel Prizes was being bankrolled from the gains and sweeping claims of the financial services, the bond being PR, not economic science: Andrew Neil, not Adam Smith. Short-lived manufacturing 'miracles' in Britain, shambolic 'marketised' transport, dot-com daftness, and complete bafflement over the direction of international markets, showed a 'political economy' far adrift from analysing the wealth of this or any other nation. The economists seemed to have marketised themselves, joined the snake-oil men instead of standing up to them.

'Twas always thus? Economists behaving badly are no different from Adam Smith's merchants in 1776 who 'seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public'. Did Smith, the trained rhetorician, have to visit a pin factory, when he could spot a metaphor at a hundred paces? But he had a canny regard for human nature and saw clearly enough how 'self-regulation' means – pronto! – government by cartel. If he returned on the Millennium he would find 'luxury and corruption' having a ball.

Academically, we have Readers' Digest Condensed Economics: a management ideology which slots its products into the more secure options of international capitalism. Students of pure economics are few, compared

with MBA men reared on a strange brew, part Californian psychobabble, part Bible-belt revivalism, often punched home by Kennedy-type ex-Trotskyites. Is the ultimate MBA not our countryman Irvine Welsh, manufacturer of 'books for people who don't read books', the J M Barrie of the satanic kailyard?

There is a history. Our new gurus – and the title is for once appropriate – are essentially apologists for an America victorious in the Cold War. Remember the 'threats' of the 1980s – communists dumping goods and services, pumping out 'socialist' higher education, offering 'fraternal assistance' to trade unions? Once shot of these, it would be remarkable if the USA wasn't doing well. The Victorian statistician Sir Robert Giffen argued that war victors couldn't win economically. To get recompense and reparations they would have to rebuild their opponents' economies. This seemed to hold good for 1914-18 and 1939-45. But globalisation made it possible to take over these economies, suborn their elites and repatriate their winnings.

Vietnam and later Star Wars – the mature military-industrial complex, not the free market – got the US's information revolution airborne. Vietnam was the last metal-bashing war; but it prepared the way for digital technologies to surge in, along with factory robots and near-automated oil production. With new technology went the co-option of the elites of rebels and rivals, from draft-dodger computer nerds to the wealthy of South America, the Middle East and of course Thatcherite Britain.

In the 1840s the great counter-thesis to the **Communist Manifesto** had been the rise of technologised communication, the railway and the telegraph, punched through by the British bourgeoisie's co-option of the Scots and Irish – the brains of the Carlyles and Kelvins, Dargans and Lardners, and the brawn of their navvies and miners. In the 1990s capitalism's triumph was the rape of the 'socialist' economies' huge raw material resources, through the corruption of their oligarchies. Victorian capitalism was constrained by nationalism and the socialist threat. But the eclipse of the nation-state and the death of 'new socialist man' in the 1980s may have been a victory too many. By removing two prudential checks on misbehaviour within the system, has it been

made terminally unmanageable? This is the conclusion of Ben Barber, author of **McWorld versus Jihad** in a recent **Financial Times** – why is it that the pink 'un is the only grown-up London newspaper? – and after 11 September seems to me unanswerable.

Blair and Brown have concentrated on American paradigms, when the real success stories have been the smaller countries - Ireland, Norway, Denmark, Holland and many European regions

The western market has three flaws: firstly, what Edward Luttwak has called turbo-capitalism doesn't just destroy the national frame within which wealth supposedly 'trickles down' from entrepreneurs and investors to workers and consumers, it eats at the building-block of capitalism, the firm, itself. Secondly, capitalism of any sort provides an inadequate basis for stabilising the control of new technology. Since about 1800 we have been living, in Patrick Geddes and Lewis Mumford's 'paleotechnic' world: we have liberated carbon-based energy without knowing how to control it. Failure to create an ecological economics isn't just dangerous in itself. It means that conventional 'goods' don't add up. Is individual mobility a good, for example, if it has lethal consequences if adopted globally? We're in a bad enough way with 15 per cent of the world's population owning 75 per cent of the world's cars. The consequences when 30

per cent get their hands on the things will be catastrophic. But the economist, like Prof David Pearce, who points this out isn't going to be popular in a market-driven profession. Finally, classical economics says little about how we apportion the social dividend if technology so reduces the labour force that orthodox wage bargaining simply fails to function. The welfare state (tax and spend) is the only way we have of doing this, yet the increasing ability of capital to escape taxation – DM 150 billion a year fled from Germany alone in the late 1990s, into one tax haven or another – has led in Europe to greater wage-derived taxes, which push up the cost of employment.

'Financial services' (roughly translated as tax avoidance) are not an expansion of enterprise but machinery fabricated by the privileged, protecting them from the poor and from any obligation to them. The fenced and protected suburb, the special train or cruise liner swanning through East Europe or the Third World: thus our lords of humankind observe and avoid their fellow-creatures. The behaviour of the Russian **nouveaux riche** – the most sinister criminal class imaginable? – is exemplary in its total detachment

from orthodox political economic goals. Have economists ever told us where the winners in the 'pyramid investment schemes' which have wrecked Romania and Albania have banked their cash? Have right-wing economic journalists ever admitted their earlier dealings with City darlings who fall from grace? Are such 'wild capitalists', social psychopaths, any different from the 'real' ideology of American turbo-capitalism?

The janus-face of this is the economics of insecurity, which affects the geographical community. Can there be stability if low-wage jobs don't yield enough, and welfare and health services have been reduced? In 1996 someone estimated the Glasgow drugs problem as costing £500 million a year. This sum seemed crazy (more than Scotland pays in industrial subsidies) but the Scottish Select Committee minutes showed it was actually £633 million. The thievery needed by the city's 10,000 heroin addicts to keep their habits going amounts to £400 million. The major consequence of a vast economic activity, systematically ignored by economists, has become a huge charge to the public purse, calculated to produce the usual cries for welfare retrenchment.

An economics stripped of universals means that the greatest number will wait in vain for the greatest good. Where value-added comes through trading, not through manufacture, financial services – amalgamations followed by 'concentration on core activities', management buy-outs, bank foreclosures, flotations – form a continuing sequence whereby strategic individuals are rewarded and workers and consumers exploited. Within multi-party politics bankrolled by economic interests, control is kept by the spin-doctor, the rigged plebiscite, the dumbed-down media, the advertising campaign; and the key elite figures can always migrate back to finance, or to the Dordogne farm, if the going gets too hot.

Outside this self-serving system are a lot of angry people. Marx thought they had only their labour to offer, but by organising, could combine and take it over. We know now that they can throw their lives at it, and wreck it.

The Anglo-American 'liberal market' economy, endorsed by the IMF and World Bank, seemed to have overtaken creaky old social marketism. But the lure of the 'post-modern multiplicity' of American society was deceptive. That odd sensation of moving geographically through different time-zones, from the 1920s to the present, didn't

conceal privilege among the few, and insecurity for the mass. (New York had its own **Jihad** men – radical Zionists, Irish paramilitary fundraisers – who were part of the city's elite). Things haven't changed much since Michael Harrington coined 'Keynesianism for the rich' to describe Reaganite economics in **The Next Left** over a decade ago. But the Clinton-Blair Third Way-ers gave up fighting: faced with the choice between insecurity through reform and a slice of the action from inegalitarianism triumphant, they settled for the latter.

Such compromises thrive on a continuing stock-market boom which, intriguingly enough, the economists could never explain. But even without bin Laden, the faltering markets and indefensible social imbalances threaten almost complete institutional collapse. Up to now, international financial services have ensured that the élite beneficiaries have made their escapes from the Middle East or East Europe or Hong Kong, while the 'useful idiots' of press and publicity have covered their traces. But have we now reached the stage where the solidarity of capital itself is breaking up?

This could take two forms. Speculators with a conscience can revert – George Soros-like – to some form of social market.

Soros has poured money into promoting the institutions of civil society in East Europe. An élite which has made its gains by authoritarian and semi-criminal means is, however, more likely to use soviet or fascist violence to get the state on its side. This Latin-American future impends in the ci-devant 'Little Tigers' and probably in Russia.

Look, in America, at the Social Darwinism propagated by followers of the Russian neo-libertarian Ayn Rand. Unknown in Europe, Rand was a radical rightist who rejected communism not because it was cruel but because it claimed to be altruistic. She influenced such figures as Alan Greenspan

of the Federal Reserve and the neo-racist Charles Murray – touted by our ain Andrew Neil – not to speak of Rupert Murdoch himself and his guru Irwin Stelzer. The anti-humanist consequences of her 'objectivism' (Adam Smith classicism minus 'sympathy' and plus eugenics) filtered through to Europe, and not just to the likes of **Forza Italia!** There was more than a whiff of it in Demos' symposium **After Politics**, and Stelzer has figured at seminars at 11 Downing Street.

New Labour's concentration on Middle England rather than those really suffering, but politically ineffective, parallels

The Docklands Light Railway, Jubilee line, Channel Tunnel and airport links alone add up to over £25 billion - 'Keynesianism for the rich'

the way that the American élite has been 'realistic' about the shrinking popular vote and how to manage it. J K Galbraith nailed this long ago as 'the culture of contentment'. Markets have populist limits: barriers to labour migration would be electorally impossible to drop, but a Hispanic helot class can always be kept under, as in California, by a combination of internal colonies for the rich and plebiscites on public programmes whose almost invariable effect is to reduce them.

The danger to the right, of course, is that where the nation states fails to redistribute, communities with a strong democratic voice will come up with their own explanations. The threat of a break-up of Britain is a case in point. In the case of Scotland's economic relations with the rest of the UK, New Labour has hemmed itself in by concentrating the anti-independence argument on Scotland's 'welfare surplus'. Scotland is a classic case of a manufacturing base secured by low wages and compensated for by the social wage. But little is known about whether subsidy outruns tax income. Tracing taxation in the world of the multinationals is difficult (surprised?) as is the metropolis's absorption of capital transfers and subsidy. At a time when London and the south-east accommodate 70 per cent of Britain's ultra-rich, the communications deemed to keep it competitive – the Docklands Light Railway, Jubilee line, Channel Tunnel and airport links – alone add up to over £25 billion. 'Keynesianism for the rich' will provoke campaigns to claim back funds from Scotland to deal with London's social problems, and the ratchet of separation will revolve further.

Post-cold war, post-millennial Europe shows social democracy – greener, more participative – in reasonable shape, although suffering from the decline of the state-sponsored equipment which steered it. Sociology has withdrawn from awkward and insoluble areas, and gone into paying concerns like market research, in which

the gains to entrepreneurs are maximised, without any disruption of the social status quo: the world of the focus group and the spin doctor.

Its language is English, which further explains why Blair and Brown have concentrated on American paradigms, when the real success stories have been the smaller countries – Ireland, Norway, Denmark, Holland and many European regions – whose instruments have been the classic tools of the mixed economy, social experiment, and civic patriotism. Here, welfare hasn't been 'thinned' to accommodate entrepreneurialism, but has been made the means of 'growing' public sector or 'social microcapitalist' jobs and a more interdependent society. There are parallels to this in Scotland and Wales, places where the slickness of Cool Britannia has evaporated.

As we run on to the rocks of recession, globalism looks a lot more toxic. The internet will start to charge, and ignite battles over its control. Transport costs will have to rise for the environmental reasons summed up in 'global cost accountancy' – pressure coming from the big re-insurers. These and the terrorist threat will impel power to be 'downloaded' from international corporations to local communities in areas like transport strategies, district heating-and-energy conservation schemes, and job creation. The other pieces in this issue show that a civic movement is recreating itself along Victorian Fabian lines, requiring a reassertion of planning and the public interest, and a new economics to suit. If that economics resembles Mill and Ruskin, Hobson, Geddes, Galbraith and Schumacher, then those of us who have remained impenitent ethical socialists will wag our dominie fingers and intone the insufferable: 'Weel, ye ken noo!' ■

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ASLEF calls for the Government to introduce a charter of workers rights that would include, the right to full employment, rights from day one of employment, the repeal of oppressive anti trade union legislation and positive laws encouraging trade unions to represent their members individually and collectively.

Mick Rix, General Secretary.

ASLEF, 9 Arkwright Road, Hampstead, LONDON NW3 6AB.

thinking beyond the private sector

Jim Robertson argues that the Basque Mondragon Cooperative movement is ideal for replication in Scotland

Working and living in our kind of society means we are touched continually by its complex and corporate nature. Few countries or societies have escaped the rapid change and insecurity of the last decade. Global economic forces have not only caused an upheaval in the field of work and wealth but have called into question many old certainties about social structures, institutions and how people live together.

In most European countries individualism has tightened its grip on people's lives. This is reflected in economic, political, cultural and social contexts: fragmentation and separation are dominant, social exclusion is on the increase. The potential threats of today and tomorrow lie in the decisions of the new elite to 'reconstruct' notions of community responsibility and interdependence between rich and poor, powerful and powerless. Across Europe over 50 million poor people and over 20 million unemployed bear witness to the rejection of collective caring, the illusion of individual responsibility for welfare and the increasing divisive society in most situations.

As commentators have noted, the recent eruption of protest, some of it violent, in Prague, Seattle, Gothenburg, London, Genoa and elsewhere, cannot be dismissed as an anarchist flash in the pan. The concerns of the protesters are echoed in the journalist and academic George Monbiot's **Captive State: the Corporate Takeover of Britain**. Monbiot concentrates on the UK context that is, he says, succumbing to unaccountable corporate control. He demonstrates how the traditional business of government, including planning, law and order and the protection of workers, consumers and the environment is quietly being wrested from it. The state, parts of the justice system, academia, health care and the media are rapidly falling into the hands of private enterprise, to the detriment of public interest.

Yet within this context and climate there exists a wide variety of situations that people experience together. People who experience problems and issues that are the same, and often act in ways that unite them rather than divide them from others. People who are managing the difficult task of simultaneously achieving economic competitiveness and measurable social cohesion. These examples consistently challenge the assumption that acting alone or selfishly can be considered to be the norm.

In the mid nineties, the leadership of the Mondragon Cooperatives was summoned to a ceremony in New York to

receive one of fifty awards worldwide which were handed out for an outstanding contribution, awards issued to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. During 40 years since its inception well over 100 cooperatives had been created, providing 30,000 jobs by the mid-1990's. Recent statistics show that the figure is now nearly 50,000 jobs.

Our motivation to visit Mondragon, in the Basque Region Northern Spain, followed a research and information gathering project looking at examples of community and social business and the contribution of the Third Sector and to the North East of England Regional Economy. Like others who have visited Mondragon we were interested to learn at first hand about their extraordinary record of developing cooperative systems, administering employee shared ownership companies and sustaining community economic development. Some broader themes relating to social economic issues also seemed important to explore in the Basque context.

Evidence suggests that one important cause of peoples' feeling of powerlessness is the belief that the economy runs according to natural 'laws'. The dominant view being that complex economic situations have their own 'logic'. In debate, if you wish to be taken seriously, you must keep to the purely economic arguments. Ethical, theological or other 'outside' viewpoints are often branded as 'moralising' and are therefore not to be taken seriously; they may even be ridiculed. Seriously considering alternative economic systems are diversionary and at best compensatory: no reversal is possible from the systematic deregulation of trade and finance that is creating a 'free market' delivering freedom and prosperity for the rich, but, too often oppression and misery for the poor.

In a recent consultation, **Global Capitalism and the Gospel of Justice; Politics, Economics and the Churches** it was strongly advocated that economic success needs to be balanced by social justice. This perspective argues that social justice and competitiveness need to encounter one another and any global vision of success requires a linking of spirituality and social concern. This would result, it is hoped, in more explicit caring about one another in day-to-day living, and an improved balance between efficiency and social cohesion in any preferred economic strategy.

The policies of the present Labour Government tend to confirm the view that globalisation is an inevitable process, that dictates of economic growth, in today's world, takes

precedence over people, local culture and tradition. There are few policies, supported by public funds, to suggest a profound recognition that ordinary people may have the capacity or means to meet many of their needs. One of the most critical issues we face in our modern world, together with environmental destruction, is the disappearance of community, both on a physical and spiritual level. In particular, many deprived people and communities are left to fend for themselves in an alienating, excluding, competitive and unjust society. As George Monbiot points out, there are some positive aspects of globalisation if more appropriately harnessed. It's just a question of looking at how the spoils are redistributed.

Mondragon is a primary model for economic justice-oriented business and worthy of wider replication. Paradoxically, Mondragon is also a destination for corporate executives seeking to restructure labour-management relations and reinvigorate profits. This incongruous convergence of interest in Mondragon raises important questions: Why the ubiquitous appeal of the Mondragon cooperative model? Why would multinational corporate executives, justice oriented activists, community-based economic developers lean toward the same business model?

The success of Mondragon has been influenced by two main factors: the unique nature of the Basque region and culture and the genius of the founder, Don Jose Maria Arizmendiarieta. Don Jose Maria, as a young priest, began his ministry in Mondragon in 1941. The history of Mondragon shows a period of 15 years promoting the vision and possibilities of worker cooperatives. Don Jose Maria and his followers adopted an approach that set out to integrate economic, social, political and cultural developments as part of a strategy of reclaiming and revitalising a part of their region as its primary aim. As the evidence shows, cooperation is not an ideology at Mondragon - it is a business strategy and it seems to work.

The scale of the Mondragon Cooperative Complex and its regional influence is considerable. Independent cooperatives extend from manufacturing to banking and from farming to retail distribution. It includes a centre for university-level education and an array of specialised institutions ranging from a research centre to its own social insurance and welfare agency. Within the industrial and manufacturing sector there is a wide span of activity. Domestic appliances are traditionally the more important

lines, but there are others including car components, machine tools, building materials, casting and dies.

Mondragon has such a long and varied experience that it provides a rich body of ideas for potential adoption and implementation elsewhere – not least to regions such as the West of Scotland or the North East of England. Such ideas apply most clearly to worker cooperatives and other employee-owned firms. Mondragon also provides fruitful lessons in regional development and how to stimulate and support entrepreneurship, whatever the form of ownership. International and much wider external developments now form part of the Mondragon Group's manufacturing and production activities.

Establishment of their own research centre was very significant and this provides the existing co-cooperatives, and potential cooperatives, with the stimulus, experience and guidance of 'high quality' industrial and commercial research advice. The complex has developed its own social security system and a cooperative bank that is growing more rapidly than any other bank in Spain. A world ranking of 38th position was quoted regarding the Bank's operational performance in the last year.

The management of substantially sized companies, while maintaining local autonomy and grass-roots democracy, is an important aspect for further research. More in-depth research is necessary to explore the elements and factors that have contributed to the sustainability of the Mondragon Cooperative. Lessons are to be learned from their experiences and how these relate to comparable developments in Scotland and other areas of the UK.

The Mondragon achievements are certainly impressive. The cooperatives and their supporting infrastructure arrangements have survived and coped with a series of potentially destructive forces and events. The cooperatives remain a dynamic force in the Basque region and beyond. The Mondragon Cooperatives provide employment for around 50,000 people and security of employment beyond the capacity of many industrial or commercial organisations. Industries and developments are diverse and the aim is to nurture and encourage local economic initiatives. External investment is minimal thus limiting the Mondragon Community's vulnerability to outside interference. Scotland has much to learn. ■

Jim Robertson is a member of the Iona Community and works at the University of Northumbria at Newcastle. He is involved in NEEF, the North East Employment Forum - www.neef.org.uk

britain doesn't know best anymore

David Spaven argues that if we are to restore Scotland's position as a world leader in transport we must learn from those that have overtaken us

The impending demise of Railtrack provides the Government with a unique opportunity to rethink the ownership and management of one of the key components of a civilised transport system for the future. However, the transport rethink should not be limited to our railway system.

A fundamental lesson from the sorry story of Railtrack is that the 'Britain knows best' obsession of the past 20 years has blinded both Conservative and Labour governments to the wealth of worldwide experience of better ways of organising and delivering high-quality transport which is both sustainable and socially-inclusive. In Scotland, with its continuing predominance of relatively high-density living in towns and cities, there are substantial opportunities to rebuild the role of rail, bus, walking and cycling in our everyday lives. Bizarrely, however, a "staggering" (to quote Professor David Begg) three quarters of the Scottish Executive's transport capital investment budget is devoted to the main road network, whereas in England the proportion is less than one third.

We are now all too familiar with the failures of rail privatisation – the fragmentation into more than a hundred companies, the vast administrative workload and cost associated with the myriad contracts between these companies, the conflicts between public interest and shareholder dividends, and the inflated cost of new rail developments. There have been success stories – not least substantial growth in passenger and freight traffic – but we might speculate how much these are a reflection of a period of sustained economic growth as opposed to the product of private sector skills. The cost of privatisation to the taxpayer has been enormous, and it is not unreasonable to suggest that the much-derided British Rail (which had delivered the most cost-effective rail network in Europe, including a high-quality InterCity passenger system) could have achieved much more with the amount of public money which has been poured into the privatisation project.

When Railtrack was hurriedly privatised by the Major administration, the model of separating the ownership of track and trains was almost unique in Europe – the only exception being Sweden, where, crucially, the track had remained in public ownership, with broad economic, social and environmental objectives. Since the news of Railtrack's demise there has been speculation that ScotRail might be used as a pilot project for 'vertical integration' of track and train operations. Such an arrangement has attractions –

not least to professional railway people who deplore the loss of integrated control of railway operations – but we should be cautious about throwing the baby out with the Railtrack bathwater. The Hatfield crash highlighted the more critical nature of the fractured relationship between Railtrack and its many maintenance contractors. We should also recognise that there is much more to Scotland's rail system than just Railtrack and ScotRail – the further three passenger operators (notably GNER and Virgin) and three freight operators may justifiably resist the control of train paths passing to the dominant operator. Last, but not least, the Swedish experience suggests that a rail track authority with non-profit objectives can deliver a safe, cost-effective and growing rail system.

Since the 1998 separation of track and train ownership in Sweden, a programme of major public investment in infrastructure, stations and rolling stock has yielded impressive results. The share of freight moving by rail in Sweden is the highest among EU railways, and with a population of 8.5 million people passenger journeys have reached an all-time high of 125 million a year. The train operators pay the track authority, Banverket, a fee for the use of rail infrastructure that takes into account the cost of accidents and air pollution. The same socio-economic calculation is used as the basis for investment in rail and road infrastructure, creating more of a level playing field than the traditionally easier criteria for road than rail spending in Britain.

Open access to the rail network has encouraged the development of a number of smaller independent operators who have proved able to provide higher-quality and more cost-effective operations than the centralised state train operator, SJ, on a variety of local and regional rail routes. However, SJ, has remained the core inter-city operator and the main rail freight haulier, so the excessive fragmentation of Britain's privatised railways has been avoided.

Public transport in Sweden is co-ordinated by the 21 county-based passenger transport authorities, which put their bus and rail service network contracts out to tender for periods of typically three or five years. So, unlike the uncertainties and sometimes chaos created by bus competition on the road in Britain, Swedish local government essentially operates a network franchising system, which delivers stability, high quality standards, and control of fares – a contrast to our deregulated system which has largely failed to stem the long-term decline in

bus use and has overseen a period of substantial increase in the real cost of bus fares.

Sweden is not alone in adopting a regional approach to the organisation of public transport. Germany has of course a strong tier of regional (or 'Land') government. The Lander have wide powers to intervene in regional public transport, often working in conjunction with the 'Kreis' (or county) tier of local government, each of which establishes a plan for transport, with routes contracted out to state or private operators.

In his recent book on Scotland's transport **Deep Fried Hillman Imp**, Christopher Harvie contrasts innovation in German transport with our history as "a country which was on the leading edge of European transport innovation at the beginning of the twentieth century [and] became a basket case by the end of it". Harvie rightly reserves special praise for Karlsruhe (population 268,000) whose policies have put the city, in the urban transport world, "where Glasgow was a hundred years ago: out in front".

Essentially Karlsruhe has taken an old tramway system and semi-moribund rail branch lines stretching into the surrounding countryside, welded them into a fast, efficient and integrated network, and thereby turned 8m passengers carried by public transport in 1988 into nearly 40m in 2000, with subsidy only growing from DM 30m to DM 50m. One of the keys to Karlsruhe's success has been its pioneering operation of otherwise street-running trams over suburban and main line rail routes, giving the rail system much improved penetration of the city centre. The lessons are there for Edinburgh in particular, where the failure to create a high-quality public transport system poses an increasing threat to economic development and quality of life.

In contrast to Germany, where many rural rail services survive, the Beeching era took a heavy toll of rural Scotland, except ironically in the Highlands, where political pressures ensured that most routes survived. The worst cut of all came in 1969 when the Edinburgh-Hawick-Carlisle railway was closed in its entirety, leaving the Borders as the only UK region without a railway station. Now, however, a strong grassroots campaign has propelled the re-opening of at least part of the railway higher up the political agenda.

While the prospects for a new railway as far as Galashiels look better than ever, a potential barrier to re-opening

is the relatively high cost imposed by a rail industry cost structure inflated by a mass of contracts and a 'gold-plated' approach to project management. The £73m for rebuilding some 30 miles of railway to Tweedbank contrasts with recent experience very close to home in Northern Ireland. The publicly-owned Northern Ireland Railways has re-built the 15-mile Bleach Green (near Belfast) to Antrim railway for just £16.6m, which as Paul Salvesen's recent **Beeching in reverse** report notes, "would be simply impossible under the British system".

Even the spiritual home of the car, the USA, provides Scotland with valuable lessons on better ways of organising transport. Cities throughout the USA are investing heavily in new suburban rail and tram systems, having learned the lesson that building more and more urban roads creates yet more traffic, rather than solving the gridlock crisis. Previously blighted inner cities are being regenerated by 'smart growth' based on high-quality public transport and proper provision for walkers and cyclists in a safe and sustainable environment.

Rather than building big new freeways to meet the insatiable demands of the roads lobby, leading edge cities such as Portland (Oregon) and San Francisco have actually

demolished urban motorways as a key measure of urban revival. In downtown San Francisco, the brutal elevated freeway which cut the city off from its waterfront, and was surrounded by economic decline, has been replaced by a landscaped boulevard with new tram routes, frequent bus services and a high-quality environment for people on foot. In such fertile territory, economic revival has followed.

The contrast could not be greater with Glasgow, where the City Council, together with the Scottish Executive and South Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire Councils, has found a mammoth £245m to bulldoze 5 miles of elevated M74 Northern Extension deep into the heart of the city. This destructive and traffic-generating scheme – the biggest urban motorway plan in Britain – will distort the Scottish transport budget for many years to come. It is powerfully symbolic of our misplaced transport priorities, and illustrates exactly why Scotland must learn from the experience of others worldwide. It's not as if we're short of good examples. ■

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a policy of time

Henry McCubbin demonstrates that, despite the apocalyptic predictions of industry, the 35-hour week is working out for France

In 1980 a group of French intellectuals called **La Révolution du Temps Choisi** wrote:

“The freeing of time is a form of revolution or incitement to revolution insofar as it leads, almost automatically, to calling the productive socio-cultural model into question... To a greater or lesser extent, all attempts to find an alternative model of development turn upon the question of time... Everything connected with ecology, decentralised sources of energy, conviviality, self reliance mutual aid and social experimentation is based upon different modes of managing time.”

As Danièle Linhart has pointed out industrial society “has created a vacuum around work”, to such an extent that, in the eyes of the young workers whom Linhart interviewed, “not going to work” could only mean “staying at home and doing nothing”. The idea that there might be a thousand and one things to do outside the constraints of work does not tally with the experience of many people. The freeing of time therefore also requires collective decisions of a new type, “an improvement in the social environment” and in the fabric of urban life, facilities that can be used and self-managed by individuals, neighbourhoods and small cooperatives. “A policy of time implies a vision for society. [It] cannot be formulated without a patient, cumulative search for a new model of development”. There can be no policy of time which does not call for new cultural, education and urban policies, new industrial and work relations and so on.

Twenty years on from these seminal publications the French Government of Lionel Jospin, a coalition between the socialists, communists, greens and Trotskyist deputies, have put in to force a 35-hour maximum working week. The report **Réduction du temps de travail** by Henri Rouilleault demonstrates that reducing working hours is by no means the calamity forecast by business leaders and orthodox market economists, both French and Anglo-Saxon.

The principle of a state-imposed reduction in the working week, from 39 hours to 35, without a reduction in wages, would be ruinous to French competitiveness, they said. It would discourage foreign investment. It would increase taxes and social charges because the government would have to compensate employers. It would destroy more jobs than it created. None of that has happened. French unemployment has fallen from 12.6 per cent in June 1997 to 8.5 per cent in June 2001, the lowest figure for 18 years. Almost one percentage point of this reduction should be

attributed directly to jobs created by the reduction of the working week, according to the report. It goes on to say that the mandatory 35-hour week, and its voluntary predecessor, had created 285,000 jobs in the past five years. By the time the law applies fully to smaller companies in 2003, it should have created 500,000 jobs, according to Le Plan, the French state’s strategic planning body. This is far fewer than the 700,000 new jobs forecast by Lionel Jospin’s centre-left coalition government when it came to power, promising a statutory 35-hour week, but the next phase of the legislation applying to smaller companies with up to 20 workers who will be given shorter working hours for the first time has yet to kick in.

As with most social legislation there can be unintended effects sometimes unfavourable but this particular act has had some welcome and unexpected benefits. The report says that the shorter working week has helped to dispel the atmosphere of “all-encompassing pessimism” which gripped France in the mid-1990s. It has increased consumer confidence and consumer spending, boosting rather than crippling the French economy. Foreign investment in France is booming. Social charges on employers have not been increased so far although a potentially damaging row is still in progress on how to pay the £1.5bn unbudgeted, extra annual cost of subsidising companies who have switched to the shorter week. Some business leaders point out that negotiations on reducing working time have permitted companies and employees to examine existing practices. In return for shorter, annual hours, workers have agreed to more flexible hours; to work longer days or to come into the office or factory on weekends; even, miraculously, to work during the month of August. The result has been a windfall of productivity.

The negotiations have also forced businesses to think again about who they employ and why. The result, according to Régisse Versaeud, head of the insurance services sector of the CFDT trades union federation, is that some of his members complain that they are being made to work too hard when they are at the office. “Overall, the response from members is that they approve of the changes but I think employers have, in some cases, taken the opportunity to load too many tasks on individuals. Something like 2,800 new jobs have been created in insurance offices by the 35-hour law in the last three years but we think the figure could still be even higher.”

The cost of subsidising employers who created new jobs was to be borne by lower unemployment costs, the existing

social security budget and extra taxes on alcohol and tobacco. The Jospin government now faces a shortfall of at least £1.5bn a year, which it proposes to take from a large surplus in the social security (health and pensions) budget. In the meantime, the government could be said to be, in effect, 'buying' the new jobs. The net cost to the French treasury of subsidising employers shifting to a 35-hour week is estimated in the report by Le Plan at £4,600 per new job. Orthodox economists might argue that the money might have been better used on reducing business taxes, or building more TGV lines.

At a social level, the 35-hour week is already a great success and will be one of Mr Jospin's trump cards in the presidential elections next year. President Jacques Chirac, his principal rival, criticised the idea as "ideologically obsolete". Two-thirds of people on a shorter week say that it has improved their lives. Working women, especially, say that a four-day week, or shorter working day, has made their lives tolerable for the first time. The representatives of the CDTF and CGT trade union confederations who are using this opportunity to negotiate long needed changes to working practices to reflect the feminisation of the workforce pointed this out.

According to a report in **The Independent**, "weekends now start on Thursdays or end on Tuesdays; many younger, working mothers choose to stay at home on Wednesdays, when French children are traditionally off school. Middle-range French executives, on a 1,600-hour working year, find that they have an average of two weeks' extra holiday (on top of the six weeks they already had). Leisure and DIY sales are booming. There is even anecdotal evidence that French male, blue-collar workers are doing the midweek shopping; or learning how the iron works. The law already applies to 7,096,143 employees in France, just over half the workforce. A number of categories, including senior business executives, doctors, lawyers, journalists and soldiers, are exempted."

Jospin's problems with the French employers at the start of this experiment have not altogether gone away and an economic downturn may see them resurface. But sadly he has had to fight against sniping from the UK Government at the European level with Prime Minister Blair taking time during his recent visit to South America to attack France for,

as he saw it, holding up progress in modernising the European economy. Modernise for whose benefit?

Weekends now start on Thursdays or end on Tuesdays; many younger, working mothers choose to stay at home on Wednesdays, when French children are off school. French executives find that they have an average of two weeks' extra holiday

The most recent survey, August 16 2001, points to the benefits of the 35 hour week. 197,696 establishments now apply the 35-hour week. That accounts for 83,985 enterprises with 7,096,143 salaried employee, and foresees the creation or preservation of 364,000 jobs.

Workweek reduction has substantially eased the precariousness of employment by making it possible for workers to move from interim or fixed-term contracts to permanent positions, and by promoting voluntary part-time work. A significant proportion of young people and hard-to-place unemployed adults have benefited from new hirings. Finally, the shorter work hours have increased the versatility and skills of workers and spurred new progress in skills-enhancement training.

Decentralized negotiations gave rise to improvements that were generally considered satisfactory by both sides, while offering flexibility to all parties and creating specific solutions in every case.

Negotiations have focused more sharply on ways to reconcile work schedules with social, family and school-related demands. Employee surveys conducted after workers have had a chance to adjust to the new hours indicate widespread satisfaction : 85 per cent of employees report that the shift to a 35-hour workweek was a good thing for them personally, improving their personal and family life (86 per cent), allowing them more time for personal growth and development (74 per cent), helping them better organize their schedules (68 per cent) and creating better morale at work (50 per cent). For companies, the ability to factor in fluctuations and seasonal changes in demand has enabled them to tailor the organization of their business to customer needs. 84 per cent of chief executive officers who signed a work hour reduction agreement under the first law of 13 June 1998 are satisfied with the results: 81 per cent report that the shorter workweek has resulted in better labour relations in their company and 65 per cent believe it has improved the way they organize their work.

Surely we cannot ignore this evidence in Scotland. ■

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rebuilding the ruins

Helen Stevens discusses Scotland's role in promoting non-violence in the current global conflict – and at home

In the aftermath of the tragic devastation of life on 11th September, and amid a context of round the clock air strikes on Afghanistan, with daily images of desperate people fleeing war, and a world in the process of unravelling towards catastrophe, it seems almost irrelevant and platitudinous even to mention a culture of peace. And yet the millennial optimism of last year declared 2000-2001 the U.N. Year for a Culture of Peace, and the World Council of Churches has just launched its Decade to Overcome Violence. It is in this context that the Scottish Centre for Nonviolence is seeking to promote the concept of nonviolence throughout Scottish society.

Many people said that the world would never be the same again after 11th September, and there is a sense in which this is true. At a most basic human level many people will be left with scarred lives, deep loss, and bitter memories. There is gnawing uncertainty and insecurity, and profound fear for the future. As one letter to the press said; the US is having to face two traumas – that of its vulnerability and loss, and also the realisation that there are people out there who hate US foreign policy.

In such a changing world, it would be wise to stand back and give careful consideration to some of the underlying issues. Instead of attempting to destroy and seek out a small number of desperate people, who see themselves not as terrorists but as freedom fighters (however much we may deplore their methods), and to use the weapon of terror in aerial bombardment, which will only serve to solidify opinion against the West and divide the world into irreconcilable camps, we should be seeking to discover the underlying causes motivating such actions. Justice, that is not simply vengeance, demands an exploration and a rectifying of the root causes of conflict.

Opinion in Scotland has always prided itself on being rather independent from that of the rest of the UK, and already the voices of caution are being raised. It is easy, however, to stand aside and criticise policy, and in the face of such a shifting world it can be hard to see what kind of difference a small country like Scotland could make. It could be that when all our securities are shaken, and when alliances and treaties are strained to the limit, this is precisely the threshold of opportunity that we need to re-assess Scotland's role in the global community.

The Scottish Centre for Nonviolence has as its objective "to make nonviolence a credible option in principle and practice", and we are attempting to work towards this

aim at all levels of Scottish society. More than ever in the current dangerous international climate the work of considering the alternatives is of vital importance

One of the more destabilising trends of recent years has been the move away from the United Nations, towards rapid response military action, usually dominated by US policy. Many of the recent voices urging caution, have been calling for a UN response and for perpetrators of international terror to be brought before the International Criminal Court. One of the weaknesses of this course of action is that the UN is dependent on the rapid response of contributing countries to provide the trained personnel. It is in this area that Scotland could make a direct and effective contribution. There is no doubt that the tradition of the Scottish regiments is a proud one, and any move to disband or downgrade them would be political suicide. So why not use this proud record in a creative and positive way by making a speciality of Scotland's contribution to the UN peacekeeping operations.

Moved by the pictures of young military men, sitting in white-painted tanks, often looking round in bewilderment, as their military training gives them no adequate preparation for the specialised role of peacekeeping, some members of the Centre for Nonviolence have made a study of the training given to UN peacekeepers. This included a two-week course at the Lester B. Pearson International Peacekeeping Training College in Canada. Although the course was impressive, there was still plenty of scope for much more in-depth training in conflict resolution, negotiation, mediation, and nonviolent responses to conflict. Cultural awareness, coping with fear, local knowledge, and trauma therapy should all be part of the training programme. There could be a much greater integration of the civilian sector in military training, using the wide skills acquired over many years in branches of the peace movement, and in the aid agencies, using, for example, some of the excellent material provided by the Working With Conflict course at Woodbrooke College in Birmingham.

It is our proposal at the Centre for Nonviolence that Scotland develop its own 'Centre of Excellence' in peacekeeping training, perhaps attached to H.Q Scotland, but making full use of the skills already evidenced in various sectors of civilian society. In this way Scotland could build a reputation comparable to that of the Scandinavian countries for diplomatic skills, and there

could be a well-trained permanently ready pool of expertise from which to draw skilled peacekeepers.

In addition, many of these talents could usefully be employed with the Organisation for Peace and Security in Europe (OSCE). Immediately prior to the bombing of Kosovo, there were about 1,000 OSCE observers in various crisis zones around the country. It was recorded that wherever these observers were present, the violence was significantly reduced, and conversely, when they were forced to leave because of the bombing, only then was ethnic cleansing able to take place. Skills required included election monitoring, building of civic society, policing, legal expertise, and administrative experience. The Scottish education system provides a good grounding in many of these skills, and this too could be developed into a major contribution towards rebuilding civic society.

The valuable role of civilians in peaceful intervention cannot be over emphasised. There is a growing movement to develop the concept of nonviolent civilian peace teams, who would undergo rigorous training to equip them to go into areas where conflict was developing in an effort to prevent escalation. Such an idea is not new, and groups such as Witness for Peace, Peace Brigades International, and Christian Peaceworkers have done courageous work over the years, acting as unarmed bodyguards, providing human rights observers, interpositioning along disputed borders, and many other tasks. Both the German and the Swedish governments have given support to such projects, but now the idea is growing into the wider concept of Global Civilian Peace Teams. The Centre for Nonviolence is closely involved with the development of this work, and is presently in touch with European Peaceworkers. The Centre also helped to promote a conference recently held in Edinburgh, sponsored by the U.N.A., Helsinki Citizen's Assembly, and Amnesty International, with strong backing from the Church of Scotland. As this idea develops, the Centre can provide workshops and training to equip international peace workers.

Recently the activities of Women in Black has been attracting media attention. Arising out of the Black Sash Movement in South Africa, women in Argentina, Israel, Bosnia, Serbia, Germany, Canada, and many other countries have been standing in vigil against violence. During the past few months, women from the U.K. and other parts of Europe have been living alongside Palestinian women,

often standing in front of the bulldozers or confronting the military, and such actions are growing. Groups of women are now being given nonviolence training to equip them for serious nonviolent confrontation, and the Centre has been invited to be involved in recruiting and training in Scotland.

There is still plenty of scope for much more in-depth training of peacekeeping troops in conflict resolution, negotiation, mediation, and nonviolent responses to conflict

However, if such acts of intervention in conflict situations only take place in other countries, the message it gives out is one of cultural arrogance. 'We have no problems of violence in our country; we've come to sort out yours'. One of the requirements for participation in an international peace team is that any worker should have experience dealing with violence and conflict resolution in their own community. In preparation for this, the Centre for Nonviolence has been conducting empowerment workshops for young women; we have run a pilot training programme addressing issues of sectarianism in Scotland, and are about to become involved in working with communities receiving asylum seekers, and in seeking ways of confronting the underlying causes of conflict in the structural violence of poverty and injustice.

Nonviolence is more than a series of techniques and methods; it involves a change of attitude and mindset. Thus it is necessary to develop a whole culture of nonviolence through our educational system, in schools, universities, colleges, and even in the myths and stories of our own cultural identity. To this end, the Centre has offered a module entitled **Nonviolence from Theory to Practice** as part of a Masters degree with the Centre for Human Ecology, in Edinburgh, in the belief that by gaining acceptance for nonviolence as an academic study, this will influence the whole educational establishment.

Someone once said "The tap-root of violence in our society is our willingness to use nuclear weapons". In the current frightening unravelling of all that has maintained world peace, the spectre of nuclear-armed Trident submarines on the Clyde is never far away. How can we talk of others as terrorists while we have the ultimate weapon of terror on our own doorstep? The total elimination of nuclear weapons, not only from Scotland, but worldwide, is an essential component of a more peaceful world. Without genuine moves towards nuclear disarmament, all other moves towards peace are vain hypocrisy. ■

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another america

Andrew Noble argues that the Blair government's obsession with the US's aspirations to empire are blinding it to other possible Americas

... but when the empire of America shall fall, the subject for contemplative sorrow will be infinitely greater than crumbling brass and marble can aspire. It will not be said, here stood a temple of vast antiquity; here stood a babel of invisible height; or there a place of sumptuous extravagance; but here, Ah painful thought! the noblest work of human wisdom, the grandest scene of human glory, the fair cause of Freedom rose and fell. Read this, and then ask if I forget America.

Tom Paine, **Letter to George Washington**, 1795.

Paine's words, especially since unread till after 11th September, struck me with shocking force. "Babels of invisible height" had tragically crashed. In Paine's terms, however, this smoking black hole, tangible and incredible, may be a prelude to an even greater catastrophe, the self-destruction of American democracy. The radical Englishman had committed everything and contributed so much to America, in total opposition to the hierarchical, corrupt Britain he had left behind him, being the site and source of a quantum leap in human evolution into democratic freedom. Like Blake and Burns, he perceived America as an anti-imperial republic living within its own extensive boundaries. As Burns wrote exultantly in his **Ode to General Washington's Birthday** about the American triumph over the Hanoverian king he so loathed:

... See gathering thousands, while I sing,
A broken chain, exulting, bring,
And dash it in a tyrant's face!
And dare him to his very beard,
And tell him, he no more is feared,
No more the Despot of Columbia's race.
A tyrant's proudest insults braved,
They shout, a People freed!
They hail an empire saved.

For Paine the notion that America was fated to be the glorious antithesis of British Imperialism lasted less than two years. The fiscal and political corruptions he thought safely left on the other side of the Atlantic quickly reasserted themselves. The malignant, ever mutating, tumour of Black slavery persisted within an allegedly democratic body politic. The initial stages of the decimation of the native Indians were underway. By the second half of the nineteenth century this profit-driven savage radicalism was a major American export. The great, agonised witness to this is Mark Twain. Twain, in Mexico, Cuba and, especially the Philippines, saw America embarked on an orgy of profit-making genocidal violence.

Twain gave witness to the nineteenth century awash with the blood of non-white, non-technological peoples, those benighted "persons sitting in darkness". Further he thought the Anglo/Americans the most predatory of all Western imperialists:

Our public motto is "In God we trust," and when we see those gracious words on the trade-dollar (worth sixty cents) they always seem to tremble and whimper with pious emotion. This is our public motto. It transpires that our private one is, "When the Anglo-Saxon wants a thing **he just takes it.**"

What happened in the course of the nineteenth century was that as Britain waned and America waxed, America, a task completed in the next century, avidly inherited the British Empire both in its commerce-driven political/military structures and in its racial assumptions and practises. Christopher Hitchens provides in **Blood, Class Nostalgia** a penetrating account of how America took up the alleged British 'burden' and continued to bring Anglo-Saxon constitutional order to a non-white needy planet.

The Second World War is, in this scenario, an exceptional and ambivalent phenomenon. At one level it was that rare thing, a necessary and partly moral armed struggle. Roosevelt did intend that it was not only to be about the defeat of Japan and Germany but that it also was the death knell for assorted European imperialisms, not least the British. What he perhaps did not conceive was that American corporatism, especially the military/industrial complex, would fill the vacuum. Gore Vidal is now probably the best known anti-imperial American writer and his lucid, persistent theme has been (FDR included) that America because of choosing imperial power will, like its Roman ancestor, inevitably self-destruct. It is, however, in that arguably greatest of American poets, Robert Lowell, that we get the most precise delineation of the catastrophic thrust of the American imperial will. As a teenager Lowell was jailed as a conscientious objector. He wrote a public letter to the president saying that American carpet bombing of undefended German cities was an act of national demonisation unjustified by the defeat of a demonic Germany. This national demon, raised by the war, became hyperactive in the subsequent nuclear troubled peace. With Cuba as a prelude to Vietnam, Lowell wrote this in 1965:

We were founded on a Declaration of the Constitution on Principles, and we've always had the ideal of 'saving the world'. And that comes close to perhaps destroying the

world.... We might blow up Cuba to save ourselves and then the whole world would blow up. Yet it would come in the guise of an idealistic stroke... it is the Ahab story of having to murder evil: and you may murder all the good with it if it gets desperate enough to struggle.

Hardly a word has been heard of Vietnam in the present crisis. Here an irregular, people's army brought the supreme modern technological power to its knees despite being subject to incessant airborne toxic fire on an unimaginable scale. Here America tore itself apart as a civil society. As Lowell wrote, "Pray for lost statesmen. One grows sick of stretching for their rhetoric, and coarse apocalyptic clamor: top-heavy Goliath in full armor...."

However, his Goliath survived and learned several lessons. Never commit American ground troops again unless in such overwhelming force (The Gulf) to massively overpower the enemy. Develop 'smart' missiles and bombs to be fired from a safe height and distance. Also, despite all Indo-Chinese evidence to the contrary, American economic, political and military policy can achieve 'full spectrum dominance' in a world devoid of counter-balancing Soviet power. With the advent of the second Bush, the extreme form of this policy is the ultimate crazed absolutism of Ballistic Missile Defence whereby space is to be populated by 'defensive' nuclear missiles. The Bush Administration's policy in the months leading up to the 11th September was totally self-interested.

The history of the twentieth century and, God help us, increasingly the twenty-first century should be read as the continuation of nineteenth-century imperialism by other, covert technologically accelerated and acerbated means. Polygenetic theories of racial superiority appeared on demand in the early nineteenth century as the ideological justification for the, at best, economic mass brutalities that followed. Professor Huntingdon's theory now repeatedly promulgated in the States about the inevitability of global conflict on racial/religious terms is our modern adaptation of racial rationalisation of global economic piracy. This, of course, is precisely how our **historyless** masters do not **see** the situation. We now live in the sequel of that revealing but awful Hollywood film, **Independence Day**, where a fighter-pilot American president saved the planet against intrusion from an outer-space evil invasion. Certainly George W flew fighter-jets over Texas but as a means of **not** serving in Vietnam. Who in governmental circles speaks of Vietnam now? The Allies' obsessive, exclusive historical analogy is derived from the Second World War with allusions to Roosevelt and Churchill again walking the earth in a simple black and white world. Nor is Suez mentioned, when Eisenhower had the good sense

to stop Eden in his tracks as we attempted to regain the canal by violence. Tony Blair should consider Anthony Eden. We should consider Tony Blair. The histrionic, transient coalition maker and would-be warlord is presently absurdly seen as having a good war. He is actually absorbed by a narcissistic media present with no sense of the desperate causality of actual past and potential future. Nor, especially, of the danger in which he now increasingly places his own troops and civilians. If he had a sense of the past, he might care to consider British terror bombing of Arabia in the 1920s whereby Harris's RAF trained to carpet bomb German cities in the unsuccessful later attempt to break the German will to fight. The British were then the world power controlling that most imperial of fluids, Arabian oil. By 1944, the American John Flynn was, however, writing this:

The enemy aggressor is always pursuing a course of larceny, murder, rapine and barbarism. We are always moving forward with a high mission, a destiny imposed by the Deity to regenerate our victims while incidentally capturing their markets, to civilise savage and senile and paranoid peoples while blundering accidentally into their oil wells.

It is this absolutist American element that Blair has not only shaken hands with but placed us indefinitely shoulder to shoulder. Blair, of course, will stress that The Twin Towers was a catastrophe of such nature that everything is both now necessary and justified. Like his American masters, he seems autistic to other voices, other experiences. This, that of the Indian novelist Arundhati Roy, writing in **The Guardian** (September 29), is one perhaps to which he should attend:

America's grief at what happened has been immense and immensely public. It would be grotesque to expect it to calibrate or modulate its anguish. However, it will be a pity if, instead of using this as an opportunity to try to understand why September 11 happened, Americans use it as an opportunity to usurp the whole world's sorrow to mourn and avenge only their own.

The grotesque nature of this American self-regard, pre-September 11, is encapsulated in Madeleine Albright's 1996 response to the fact of 500,000 Iraqi children dying as a result of American policies, she replied that "it was a very hard choice" but that, all things considered, "we think the price is worth it." Roy further notes that America's CIA recruited 100,000 radical mojahedin from 40 different countries to defeat the Soviets in Afghanistan. They sowed the teeth of the dragon that now breathes fire on their cities.

One of the most troubling factors in this potential catastrophe is the degree to which no attention in either Washington or London is being paid to warning Asian voices which are historically and politically perceptive and mature to a degree sadly lacking in the West. Nor of course are Western intellectuals attended to by our political masters. See, for example, the recent issues of **The London Review of Books**, McMillan, vainly, used to allude to the British as Greeks compared to the upstart, impulsive Roman Americans. Blair has reversed the roles. There is a personal pathetic neediness in him to strut the world stage; his reading of Ivanhoe does seem to have implanted a crusader spirit. This is not our war. Indeed Blair's corroboration that it is a war is a conceptual disaster. The Allies in so declaring it have delivered victory to Osaman bin Laden in spades. He has achieved global status (as a dead martyr he would achieve even more) and the present murderous pounding of the most impoverished nation on the planet with already ten million landmines and hordes of starving, orphaned amputees could not have been bettered as the trigger for the destabilization of the entire Moslem world and the anarchic takeover of extreme elements formed in bin Laden's own image. What **is** the Foreign Office telling Blair about Pakistan as I write? Nor does it seem to have entered his mind that the technological nature of Western society might make it indefensible to terrorism. Little thought seems to have been given, even before British Moslems started to head for the killing fields, about the febrile state of racial relations in Britain. A subsequent civil war fought between extreme Moslems and extreme British nationalists is now not unforeseeable.

We should be considering disengagement in the Middle East and resolution of the Palestine problem. Oil not only

politically but ecologically may be the death of many of us. The toxic overheating of the planet means nothing in Washington. As Bush has said: "we will not do anything that harms our economy, because first things first, are the people who live in America. That's my priority". This is nothing but the mawkish rhetoric of the 'Christian' New Right. The American government is dominated by corporate oil-executives, Cheney, the Vice in the van, and the policy is really about more for the already hyper-rich. The ultimate American tragedy is plutocracy overcoming democracy.

The obsession of the Blair government with American economic and military vices and its complete ignorance of the remnants of a finer, intelligent, compassionate liberal America, the one Paine and Burns so hoped for, is arguably its single greatest error. They have swallowed hook, line and sinker the Fukuyama thesis – it underpinned Blair's Labour Conference obscene speech – that Anglo-American 'free-market liberal democracy' represents the zenith of human evolution to which the rest of the planet aspires. The terrible truth is arguably the very reverse. The kind of hyper-stressed, materially abundant world we, as yet, enjoy can only be sustained by the predatory, impoverishing domination of much of the rest of the planet.

It does not look like London is going early or easily to lose its Anglo-American imperial mind set. What about Edinburgh? In the present spat over Scotland and the British Empire between Michael Fry and Professor Devine, little has been said about the volume of blood and loot on and in Scottish hands over the last three centuries as central players in the British imperial project. Our National Poet asserts "That man to man the world o'er,/ Shall brothers be for a' that." This, rather than a sentimental aspiration, may now represent the necessary condition for global survival. ■

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web review

Henry McCubbin

Here's the scene; deadline approaches, blank screen in front of you and a good story to tell but, can you insert some facts that will make it stand scrutiny? You can in the same way that the press and media do by looking at the hierarchy of sources from Government sources down to vox pops. The net, of course, provides ample examples of the GIGO theory, garbage in garbage out, especially the American conspiracy theorists' sites. But on the other hand it permits the searching of the sites of overseas governments thus giving access to reports which permit comparative studies to be undertaken at your own PC which would have been unthinkable a decade ago. But as always there is a snag. What on earth do all these governments have as their URLs?

Well I can help you with this. Here is my first site www.adminet.com. This is the most comprehensive listing of government and other official sites I have come across. Most countries provide English pages usually with summaries of recent announcements but the statistical information in the original documents is usually easily interpreted. Examples of the sites one can access through adminet include the ones used for background to the article in this edition of SLR on shorter working hours. For instance www.plangouv.fr which is the site for the Commissariat Général du Plan, a French Government site which publishes the work of groups charged by the Prime minister to take a critical look at policy outcomes. Further to this site the Ministry for Employment and Solidarity (our equivalent of the Department of Work and Pensions) has a URL www.35h.travail.gouv.fr with all the latest press releases.

And now for some thing completely different. Mr Tony and Dubya are worried about secret messages for terrorist groups being contained in poor quality videos from Osama. For such messages to be hidden in the video signals, recorded, re-recorded and then transmitted is stretching technical credulity too far. However coded phrases as used by our own SIS during WWII or hand signals would be entirely possible. Therefore it may come as a surprise to Mr Tony, who is into the white heat of IT, or so we are lead to believe, that you can view the outpourings of al Qaeda streamed on www.aljezeera.com free of charge. They have cunningly coded their messages in a foreign language known as Arabic which instantly makes them suspect in the eyes of that great intellectual duo Tony and Dubya. However I have inside information that when you see Osama on a video pulling his right ear he wants to know the SP for Sheik Abdullah's horse in the 3.30 at Kempton Park. ■

The Diary can exclusively reveal that Yasser Arafat's heart lies not in the West Bank but in the East End of Glasgow. The evidence for this is a highly incriminating photograph. On a recent visit from the heid honchos at the STUC the statutory photograph was taken with Chairman Arafat and the delegation of brothers from Woodlands Road. One of the delegation asked comrade Yasser if he would mind holding a small memento in front of the camera. A tenner will go the way of the first reader who can produce the photograph with a smiling PLO Leader holding a scarf declaring 'Hail, Hail, the Celts are here'.

Still on a footballing theme and despite a heavy parliamentary workload the members of the Westminster Celtic Supporters Club have still managed to enjoy the agony and ecstasy of the current Champions League campaign. Courtesy feeds have been organised from Scottish Television's Cowcaddens headquarters straight to the mother of Parliaments. Can this be related to the fact that, whisper has it, Rhoda MacDonald, STV's head of public affairs has just applied to join the people's party? Or is Rhoda contemplating a career move? Senior Managers have been the major casualties in the most recent cull at Cowcaddens where ninety five people have just been made redundant.

November means remembrance Sunday which is the perfect cue to tell a tale relating to the late First Minister Donald Dewar. Two years ago Mr Dewar was strenuously resisting civil service demands that he attend a service in the capital. Donald told them that he would attend the cenotaph in Glasgow as per usual. When one of the officials suggested that his Health Minister Susan Deacon would be an appropriate stand in, the First Minister opined sagely 'Good idea. The two minutes silence will do her the world of good'.



Last week saw the 'Business for Scotland' annual dinner, an event which hardly does much for the SNP's claim to be worker friendly. Over two hundred sat down to the £200 a head slap up which included smoked salmon, pepper and pesto soup and fillet steak in a Thai sauce. Speakers included Professor Ted Cowan from Glasgow University and Leaders past and present -Salmond and Swinney. But the star of the night was not a nationalist but a former Tory MSP. Time and again a beaming Nick Johnston was name checked by the SNP top brass, all of which indicates the relationship to get him into Nationalist ranks is definitely at the courting stage. Also embracing that night were Winnie Ewing and her MSP son Fergus. The occasion - Winnie had just drawn his ticket out of the raffle bowl. Without any shame Fergus claimed his weekend for two at the Glasgow Hilton Hotel where he can continue to dine in fine style whilst toasting the international working class.

The Campbell Inquiry into the Chhokar murder reveals that economy and truth sit well with the former Lord Advocate Lord Hardie. Readers will remember the judicial stooshie between Hardie and Lord McCluskey following the conclusion of the first murder trial. McCluskey expressed incredulity that only one man had been indicted for the waiter's murder. Hardie then accused McCluskey of being ignorant of all of the background facts. He went further. The way the prosecution proceeded was correct. And yet the official report makes it clear Hardie had NO personal knowledge of the case before the end of the first trial. In fact he and not McCluskey was the one who was truly ignorant. Worse still, correspondence weeks after the first trial between Hardie and the then Solicitor General Colin Boyd make it clear that the Law Officers conceded that more than one man should have stood trial for murder. Having seriously misled the public, Hardie simply appointed himself a judge. We hope he is more thorough in his present job than he was in his last. ■

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