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Is Peace Enough?

The debate on the Gulf War has so far been characterised by a high degree of certainty and self-righteousness on all sides. Both pro- and anti-war campaigners seem sure that they have the 'solution' to the crisis. For those on the extra-parliamentary Left, who form the bulk of the active anti-war protesters, recent history suggests that they of all people should be wary of trying to appear omniscient. If they learned only one thing from the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, it should surely have been that the Left does not have all the answers to the world's problems.

The anti-war protesters' insistence that they are acting strictly according to the highest principles is dubious. While the US is rightly lambasted for its cynicism in supporting Saddam during the Iran-Iraq war, few on the Left have seen fit to criticise the brutal, reactionary and undemocratic regimes which dominate the Arab world. Nor have the anti-war campaigners done much more than pay lip-service to the idea that Iraq is the principal aggressor in the war. Where have been the protests outside the Iraqi consulate?

That the protests have so far concentrated on 'US imperialism' is not a surprise. There certainly is a compelling case to be made against American policy in the Gulf. However, it is the knee-jerk reaction against Israel which shows how little thought has gone into the political objectives of the demonstrations. Of course, the Gulf War is 'linked' to the Palestinian issue, because the West's glaring double standards on UN resolutions condemning Israel have given Saddam the opportunity to present himself as the avenger of the Palestinians.

What, however, is the message of an 'anti-war' protest outside the Israeli consulate in Sydney? At a time when Israel's only direct part in the war has been to suffer repeated attacks from Iraqi missiles, the only conclusion one could draw is that the protestors deny Israel's right to respond to such attacks. This is tantamount to denying Israel's right to exist, something which even the PLO has until recently conceded.

This is an attitude warped by years of commitment - and commendable commitment - to the cause of the Palestinians. Support for the ANC, the PLO and the Sandinistas has become the litmus test of Left credibility in the same way that defending Stalin was in the 1930s, and the result has been a similar ossification of Left positions.

When the true nature of Stalinism and then Brezhnevisim became apparent to everyone, most left-wing groups in the West quietly forgot about Eastern Europe, or tried somewhat sheepishly to point to the supposed 'achievements' of East Germany or Czechoslovakia. The same tunnel vision and lack of self-criticism are evident in a response to the Gulf which is capable of dismissing or ignoring the atrocities committed against their own people by the governments of Syria, Iraq and others.

In truth, it's only for genuine pacifists that the Gulf issue is clear-cut. Most of the anti-war protestors are not pacifists, however. While they are revolted by what war means, and rightly sceptical of the benefits of pursuing this one, few would deny the right of the ANC, or other guerrilla groups to armed struggle. This majority of non-pacifists has largely failed to come up with any response to the war beyond 'US Out of the Gulf' and 'Bring The Frigates Home'.

It's not clear who, if anyone, would be left to pursue the alternative, 'peaceful' policy of enforcing sanctions on Iraq, if these demands were to be unexpectedly met. In effect such a position implies that in future the world will simply have to accept actions like the invasion of Kuwait, because war and 'US imperialism' are always greater evils.

Nor is it good enough simply to point to the mistakes made before 2 August. It is certainly true that the war is the immediate result of spectacular foreign policy failures on the part of the West. Nevertheless, crises such as this are bound to occur again. And withdrawal by the US from its current position of power over many parts of the world would not necessarily make regional conflicts any less likely.

There is a dire need for a more sophisticated approach to international tensions, and an escape from the crude politics of opposition. Where, to take one example, is any new analysis from the Left of the way in which the UN should intervene in future disputes? The shrill cry of 'Bring The Frigates Home' suggests not only an unwillingness to address the unpleasant nitty-gritty issue of how to get Saddam out of Kuwait, but also an isolationism which denies that Australia should have any engagement with the rest of the world, UN resolutions notwithstanding.

The demonstrations against the war are honourable and, I personally believe, right in seeing war as an unacceptable solution, or no solution at all to the present crisis. But if the political ideas behind them remain naive and complacent, the Left is condoning itself to remain on the outer fringes of Australian politics for the foreseeable future.

MIKE TICHER is a member of ALR's editorial collective.
Iran, which added that the planes had been impounded for the duration of the war. Time was clearly unimpressed by such assertions and went on to suggest: "By helping out Saddam, Rafsanjani is assuaging the feelings of radical Islamic factions with Iran's parliament, who are unhappy to see Iran ignore the pummeling of fellow Muslims by Western forces."

It is true that the radicals, or the more fundamentalist elements of the parliament, are far more enthusiastic than the moderates about promoting Islamic universalism, but nobody in Iran appears—notwithstanding unconfirmed reports that some revolutionary guards fired off missiles in the direction of Saddam, Rafsanjani is assuaging the feelings of radical Islamic factions with Iran's parliament, who are unhappy to see Iran ignore the pummeling of fellow Muslims by Western forces."

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UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar certainly welcomed Rafsanjani's offer of 4 February to mediate. "I think Iran is in a good position to produce a formula which could put an end to the present situation," he said. The media generally reported that Washington was less than impressed with the initiative. It is an understatement to say that the US is still deeply suspicious of Iran: it hasn't, and probably can't, forgive Iran for the US hostage crisis of 1979-80.

News that 100 Iraqi planes had fled to Iran broke within 24 hours of Rafsanjani's mediation offer. This event seemed to confirm US suspicion of Iran's duplicity. Time suggested that Iran and Iraq had arranged the "migration" of the planes well in advance at a meeting in Tehran on 8 January, a claim denied by Saudi Arabia—prepared to go to war. And experts have dismissed Rafsanjani's pledge committing Iran to the Gulf war in the event of Israel's active involvement as mere rhetoric. Iran is still hurting badly from its eight year war with Iraq: unemployment is high, the economy is shattered and Iran has a much depleted arsenal and its people want to get on with the business of reconstruction as soon as possible.

After the death of the radical Ayatollah Khomeini in mid-1989, 80% of the Assembly of Experts, some 70 religious leaders whose task it is to appoint Iran's president, voted for the moderate Rafsanjani to lead the country. While their interpretation and stances on issues may have differed, their fundamental vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran remained the same. Rafsanjani, a trusted supporter of the Ayatollah since his student days, fared very well under the Ayatollah: soon after the revolution he was appointed to the Ayatollah's secret Revolutionary Council, after the overthrow of President Bani-Sadr he became one of the Presidential Council triumvirate and later speaker of the Majles, the Iranian parliament. Since coming to power, Rafsanjani has pursued policies of his own, mostly with the general support of the Majles. He rescinded the Ayatollah's call for the death of Salman Rushdie, only to reinstate the threat following objections by the radicals.

While it is possible to specify the major policy differences between the radicals and the moderates, it is not easy to quantify the strengths of either camp, since factional alliances remain highly fluid, reforming around single issues.

In economic matters, because of their close association with the middle classes, the moderates favour a dominant private sector, foreign financing of the reconstruction, and limited land reforms. They place more emphasis on the professionalism of personnel, rather than the ideological purity demanded by the radicals. It is their policy too to seek rapprochement with the West and to allow a relaxation of the moral code. By contrast the radicals prefer a state-run economy, limited use of foreign finance and widespread land reform. They would seek to extend the domain of Islam and to enforce a strict moral code.

None of this is to suggest that Iran has suddenly become a paragon of liberal democracy; rather it is to suggest Rafsanjani's willingness to reinvolve Iran in world affairs and to re-establish a dialogue with the United States. It is to suggest also that for the moment Iran's leaders share a common desire for peace and neutrality. It is not in Iran's interests to enter the war. If anything, the status of Iran and Israel, as the two non-Arab states in the Middle East, will be enhanced as a result of the war, since deep and long-lasting rifts among the Arab nations are inevitable afterwards.

Kitty Eggerking
Bye Bye Gorby

It was in November 1990 that Gorbachev took his wrong turn and ceased to be a major progressive historical force. This does not by any means deny the significance of what he has achieved so far; indeed, it would probably be too much to expect any individual to go further than he has. There is a limit to what individuals can achieve—even if they are Nobel Laureates.

The logic of Gorbachev's position required him to work with the existing forces in an attempt to achieve consensus. The need to make compromises with the conservative forces always carried with it the risk of being captured by them. Gorbachev is to be congratulated for pushing the old-style conservatives as far as he did. But ultimately there was always a limit to how far the conservative forces would go, especially when they were renewed by younger forces. It was clear that, at some point, Gorbachev was going to have to make a choice.

Many people, possibly including Gorbachev, had underestimated the political sense of Boris Yeltsin, leader of the democrats. They thought Yeltsin a demagogue who could only succeed in opposition. When Yeltsin was elected chairperson of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Republic last May, many thought he would expose himself as the charlatan they had always felt him to be. They argued that he would never be able to develop positive policies and would soon be rejected by his disillusioned followers.

That has not happened. Yeltsin has grown in stature. And he is offering an alternative model of state power that more and more thinkers are finding attractive: a confederation of sovereign republics which only could to the centre those powers which they voluntarily wish to cede.

Many top Gorbachev advisers have gone over to Yeltsin's camp—where they feel that their advice will be heard and acted upon. These include the leading agricultural economist and president of the co-operative movement, V Tikhonov, and the leading economist and economic reformer Shatalin. Many other leading democrats are in the process of going over to Yeltsin—this may include Alexander Yakovlev and possibly even Edvard Shevardnadze.

Gorbachev's sharp turn to the Right was probably greatly influenced by the recognition of the success of Yeltsin and the realisation that Yeltsin was becoming an increasingly viable threat to Gorbachev's power. It looked last October as if Gorbachev would be prepared to throw in his lot with the democrats and take a mainly ceremonial or diplomatic role equivalent to the Queen of the Commonwealth. But, ultimately, the thought of being queen of a commonwealth dominated by Yeltsin seems to have been too much for Gorbachev and he appears to have decided to defend the powers of the centre at all costs.

Personal factors were certainly not the only ones behind Gorbachev's decision. Other considerations included the increasingly conservative orientation of the economy and the difficulties in launching real economic reforms, growing concern over increased ethnic unrest, increased pressure from the army leadership and other elite groups and general concern about the growth in crime and disorder.

The Supreme Soviet of the USSR is the body through which Gorbachev legally exercises his power. This All-Union parliament is considerably more conservative than the separate republican parliaments, especially that of the largest—Russian—republic headed by Yeltsin. The reasons for this difference are fairly clear. The deputies of the Congress of Peoples Deputies, who ultimately elect the Union Supreme Soviet, were elected earlier than their republican counterparts, at a time when the general atmosphere in the country was less radical. A third of their number were also made up of unelected representatives of various social organisations which were selected at a time when the Communist Party was the only legal party. Finally, there has been a systematic boycotting of this assembly by the radical Baltic representatives; this is a move which strengthens the more conservative forces. For all these reasons, conservative forces in the All-Union parliament are particularly strong. Recently these conservative forces have combined in the Soyuz or 'Union' group which has been placing considerable pressure on Gorbachev through the threatening statements of its major spokesperson, Colonel Victor Alksniss.

The economic situation is also very disturbing. The latest official Soviet statistics indicate that in 1990 national income fell by 4%, labour productivity by 3% and exports by 12%. The growing budget deficit had been covered by printing money, creating a crisis which has finally been tackled by the draconian and highly unpopular act of withdrawing 50 and 100 rouble notes. While the reformers argue that this disastrous collapse of the economy is a consequence of the old administrative style of running the economy, the conservatives and centralists argue (with some justice) that part of the disruption is a result of the transition process itself.

The scale of ethnic unrest has horrified many; especially horrible have been the bloody disputes between Azerbajians and Armenians, the Georgians and Ossetians, and the Moldavians and Gaugaze. The centralists and conservatives explain this in terms of a general decline in law and order, while the democrats often...
blame local conservative interests who wish to threaten the reforms, and insensitive policing.

The situation in the Baltic states is somewhat different, since here the ethnic strivings have so far taken on a more political, and less anarchistic and violent, form. Yeltsin has consistently moved to defuse the ethnic conflict here. Immediately after his election he broke Gorbachev's blockade of Lithuania by negotiating a trade treaty between the Lithuanian Republic and the Russian Republic. More recently he has extended the trade treaty to cover political matters and has negotiated certain rights for Russian ethnics in Lithuania. However, he does recommend that they learn Lithuanian.

The position of the army, where there are many different groupings, is very complex. Many regular military leaders seem to be deeply disturbed by the use of troops for policing activities. They had been highly critical of the use of troops in Tbilisi and Baku, even before the recent action in Vilnius and Riga, and they believe that the army should stay out of politics.

The large number of military deputies in the political system naturally have a different attitude. These are the individuals who make up the backbone of the Soyuz group and it was following Gorbachev's stormy five-hour meeting with military deputies last November that Gorbachev took his first major steps to the Right. Gorbachev reorganised the government and authorised the military to fire on civilians if threatened. The liberal Minister of the Interior, V Bakatin, was sacked and replaced with hardliners B Pugo and General Gromov. Several highly disciplined divisions of paratroops and KGB forces were transferred to Gromov's control in the Ministry of the Interior. And joint military/police patrols were authorised in the cities. It was these and similar moves which led Shevardnadze to resign and warn of the threat to democracy.

However, Gorbachev's collapse before the military hardliners is not complete, and, much to the disgust of the centralists, Gorbachev has failed to endorse their use of violence in the Baltic. Alksniss predictably described Gorbachev as indecisive and called for his removal.

The balance between the military conservatives—who wish to engage actively in politics—and the military democrats—who wish to stay out—is unclear. Gorbachev's position is driving him reluctantly toward the former, while Yeltsin is appealing desperately to the latter.

Finally, the law and order issue has now become the chief policy plank of the centre. It has been the ultimate justification for the military involvement in the Baltic, for the military patrols in Moscow and other cities, and for increased KGB powers to inspect the accounts of private businesses. The political struggle in the Baltic and the entrepreneurial pursuit of profit are both interpreted by Gorbachev and his new allies as disobeying Union legislation and as breaking the law. Yeltsin, however, sees it differently: he accepts Lithuanian independence and has already passed radical free enterprise legislation in the Russian Republican parliament.

While a case can be made that Gorbachev is still simply engaged in making necessary compromises with conservative forces, the reasoning for such a case looks more and more strained. The problem is that the forces around Gorbachev are becoming increasingly conservative—and it appears Gorbachev is becoming increasingly reliant upon them. More and more of his progressive advisers are coming to the conclusion that the future of democracy in the country would be best served by a clear break with the conservative forces at the centre. Unfortunately Gorbachev appears to be resolved to defend the Union at all costs. It is for this reason that more and more people are concluding that Gorbachev's progressive historic role is finally coming to an end.

STEPHEN WHEATCROFT is head of the Soviet Studies Centre at Melbourne University.
Mikhail’s Baltic Rubicon

Justas Paleckis is a member of the Lithuanian parliament and a founding member of the liberal Democratic Labour Party of Lithuania. He was elected in February 1990, one month before Lithuania declared its independence. As deputy chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, he visited Berlin shortly after the Soviet Army’s mid-January assault on the Lithuanian television station in Vilnius, which left 15 people dead. He was interviewed by Paul Hockenos in February.

Things seem to have quieted down in Lithuania. How would you describe the mood there, some three weeks after the bloodshed?

In Vilnius the situation is still very tense. Although they live with this fear and insecurity, the mood isn’t pessimistic. The recent events have radicalised the people. Whereas before there was a good deal of criticism of the [Lithuanian] government and parliament, now both have unprecedented support across the political spectrum.

Before the army’s intervention, there were two conflicting positions within parliament over the best course to achieve independence. One camp advocated a step-by-step approach to breaking away from the Soviet Union. Another group backed a much faster, radical track. The second approach is now much more popular. After the bloodshed, the people want to leave the Soviet Union with as little delay as possible.

That’s understandable. But is that plausible within the context of the present political scenario in the Soviet Union?

Perhaps when Gorbachev was much stronger, he might have been in a position to give the Baltics their freedom. Now, it’s clear, he’s completely incapable of this. Nevertheless, on principle we object to the slower route to independence. The people’s patience is at an end.

Some critics argue that the rejection of the step-by-step approach has only bolstered reactionary forces, in effect setting back the inde-pendence drive. Tactically, is full-speed-ahead the best policy?

It’s debatable. But the Germans didn’t wait years to dismantle the wall piece by piece. Lithuania isn’t a power like Germany, nor do we have oilfields like Kuwait, and therefore we receive no great support from the West. We, however, have a right to independence, and how flexibly we pursue that goal will be a critical issue.

Whatever our course, we were bound to run into resistance from conservative corners. Latvia and Estonia, for example, have followed a less radical independence policy, yet their situation is not less precarious than ours.

The treatment of the Polish and Russian minorities in Lithuania over the last year was used as one justification for the army’s intervention. How do you see this? Where do the minorities stand?

It’s a fact that the Russians especially were unhappy with some of the new measures that parliament had passed. But since the violence erupted, it is clear that the overwhelming majority of both Poles and Russians have thrown their support behind the independence movement. Last week I spoke with some Russian engineers and technicians at a Vilnius factory. They said that nobody, regardless of nationality, could in good conscience condone the army’s bloody intervention. They said that Russian lives would also be lost—although in Vilnius only Lithuanians were killed. However, they tend to back the more cautious path to full independence.

Is there any basis to charges of discrimination and human rights violations against the minorities? Have Lithuanian nationalistic measures fuelled animosity among the minorities?

Mistakes were made, although these shouldn’t be exaggerated either. Naturally, the new expression of Lithuanian nationalism was felt by the Russians. For the Lithuanians, it was in part a reaction to 50 years of Russian domination over and oppression of the Lithuanian people. Many Russians were bitter about losing their privileged positions.

At the same time, the government also erred in its insensitivity toward the non-Lithuanian peoples. The legislation that made Lithuanian the republic’s official language, for example, was unrealistic and perhaps too nationalistic. All Poles and Russians were to learn Lithuanian within 2-3 years. Less than half of the minorities can speak Lithuanian. For the older generations in particular, this as an impossible demand. Secondly, there were also too few radio and TV programs in other languages. The opponents of independence concentrated effectively on this grievance. Lastly, there was far too little preparation work done to assist the minorities, including the Russian military personnel stationed here, with the transition.

In the week preceding the army’s assault there were surprisingly big demonstrations, consisting mostly of Russians, against government-backed price rises. Were the protests manipulated?

The demonstrations were spontaneous, but it was difficult to provoke the Poles or the Russians onto the streets. The economic measures were poorly prepared and Lithuanians, too, were angry. The protests were indeed manipulated by the conservative forces that stood behind them.

Both in Latvia and Lithuania the conservative forces that oppose independence consolidated them-
selves within organisations under the name "The Committee to Save the Nation" [CSN]. It was the CSN in both republics that called for the army's intervention. How much support do these groups have? Who comprises their membership?

At the moment, it's unclear exactly who's in their ranks. In Latvia, it's been officially made known that the secretary of the Moscow-loyal Latvian Communist Party is in the Latvian group's leadership. In Lithuania, the organisation included 15 or 16 Russian and some Polish groups that were critical of the Lithuanian government and parliament. But since the intervention, almost all of those groups have distanced themselves from it, strongly condemning both the organisation and the intervention. Only a handful of very conservative, Moscow-oriented elements remain within it.

When you say that the Vilnius events have "radicalised" the Lithuanian population, can one assume that this also means a surge in nationalist sympathies? How would you describe the republic's nationalist parties? What is their relation to democracy?

It appears that radical nationalist groups, such as the League for Lithuanian Freedom, whose support had been very limited, now enjoy much greater backing. I would describe these organisations as Right-oriented, authoritarian and extremely nationalist.

While almost all political forces are now united behind the fastest possible exit from the Soviet Union, there are some that would sacrifice the process of democratisation for immediate independence. Others, such as myself, favour pursuing both goals simultaneously, even under these very difficult conditions. The policies that affect minorities, for example, must be re-evaluated and the minorities better incorporated into the political process.

One gets the impression that the army was not entirely united on the action in Vilnius. Is there a conflict between the army personnel in the Baltics and the central high command?

I'm not an expert on the Soviet military, but there is no doubt that deep divisions exist within the armed forces. One thing is clear: the soldiers stationed in Lithuania would not open fire on demonstrators. Special non-Lithuanian units were brought in for the job.

This, then, would lend credence to the charge that the command came from above, perhaps from Gorbachev himself...

Yes, my feeling is that general arrangements were okayed by Gorbachev. He gave the army the go-ahead for definite action, although without specific details. I'm afraid that some very inaccurate information found its way to Moscow, information that conditions were ripe for a putsch. I think that this information was planted by reactionary forces intent on pushing through a harder line at any price.

Gorbachev's role in the military action, as well as other recent events have cast serious doubts over the Soviet leader's ability to carry out political and economic reform. Is the reform process at an end?

The chance for real democratic reform is now extremely slim. Two years ago I was very optimistic. Today I believe that only a miracle can save democracy and perestroika.

The only chance is for Gorbachev to make a decisive shift toward democratic reform, that is, toward people like Boris Yeltsin. That, of course, is easier said than done under the present conditions. The conservatives in Moscow can act even more ruthlessly than they have, and will certainly do so if Gorbachev takes that course.

Do you mean a military putsch? The possibility is very real.

But is this "reform camp" a feasible alternative? Can they push through democratic changes without sparking civil war, economic chaos and ethnic conflict?

Hardly. I don't want to be overly pessimistic, but there would have to be very favourable conditions for them to pull it off. The leaders would have to be very astute, the economic situation must stabilise, the republics would have to act much more reasonably and there would also have to be strong support from the West. All of these factors must be present.

What are the next steps for the Baltics?

Negotiations with Moscow are the key now. We'll have to see if the central government is still functioning and if it is in a position to make concessions. If not, we'll have to wait and see how things develop in Moscow. Western assistance—diplomatic recognition, admission into international organisations, and so on—is also crucial. Of course, economic aid is also necessary although I'm not sure how realistic that is now.

There is still a lot of sympathy for Gorbachev in the West, especially in Germany. Germany, above all, should not forget that it was the Hitler-Stalin Pact which authorised the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states in 1939. That was the onset of our recent tragic history.

There will be a popular referendum in March on a new union treaty that would open the door to full independence.

That is a Moscow-backed all-Soviet Union opinion poll which would only spell the terms for a new confederation between the republics. We are not voluntarily part of the Soviet Union and we will decide our status in our own way. Lithuania's own referendum in February dealt with another question entirely—whether the minority agreed to a fully independent and democratic Lithuanian state. Almost 90% of the voters backed it. That number wouldn't have been so high a few weeks ago.

What now?

Moscow won't be happy with this result, but it will be a factor abroad, proof of the consensus in Lithuania. It will also rally more support for the Baltics from the democratic forces in the bigger republics. Now those forces are our only hope.

PAUL HOCKENOS is a freelance journalist based in Budapest.
The 500 or so Australian women known to be HIV positive are the forgotten sufferers in the Aids tragedy. Unlike many gay men, the women have lacked the support of a cohesive, sympathetic and organised community. Frequently they have felt alienated, isolated and stigmatised by erroneous labels.

"Women with the virus are still thought to be IV drug users or prostitutes," said Sarah, a Melbourne spokesperson for Positive Women, a support group based in several cities. "In fact the women come from incredibly diverse backgrounds."

The very diversity of class, background and education is another obstacle for the women to overcome. Yet the disease has often proved a leveller when women finally come together. The suburban housewife who has never used drugs or cheated on her husband can find a friend in a heroin user.

"It doesn't seem to matter how they became infected; the fact they are infected is what matters," said Amelia Tyler, HIV support officer at the NSW Aids Council.

A lot of women, terrified for their children's well-being, talk to no one but a telephone counsellor or doctor about their predicament. They cannot tell their children, immediate family or closest friends, and they won't attend support meetings lest their secret is revealed. Motivated to protect their children from possible persecution at school, the women's understandable behaviour often serves to isolate them further.

The failure of many general practitioners to diagnose the virus correctly in women is a serious problem. Like many in the community, some doctors are blinded by preconceptions of "Aids victims". Ms Average can present with rampant thrush, nausea, pains in her arms and legs, continual headaches and lethargy, and swollen glands but never be treated for the virus as such symptoms would indicate.

"She is treated as just a tired, stressed-out woman," said Amelia Tyler.

A lot of women are not correctly diagnosed until they present with opportunistic infections such as meningitis or pneumocystis carinii pneumonia when their immune system is so depleted it is hard for them to build themselves up again.

Diagnosed at an earlier stage, people with HIV can be offered a range of medicines to help prevent pneumonia, herpes and thrush. Some evidence also suggests that the earlier the drug AZT is taken the better.

A survey by the WA Aids Council also highlighted the lack of sensitivity. Aids organisations and other health care agencies have shown to women with HIV.

With gay men predominant among the infected, the sick and the dying, it was perhaps not surprising that counsellors and doctors were frequently at sea when they encountered a woman with the virus.

The report said it was important that the Aids Councils, who had the most experience in Aids prevention, widen their jurisdiction to include women. They were a valuable resource but women with HIV saw them as gay organisations, not relevant to their needs.

Women with the virus often face dilemmas which gay men do not experience. For example, childbearing is a critical issue for some women with HIV. Asymptomatic women with the possibility of a long life, sometimes desperately want to have a child for the same reasons any woman may want to have a child.

Yet doctors and family may be horrified by a woman's "selfishness" and persuade her the risk of the baby contracting the virus is too high. Pregnant women may be coerced into having an abortion on the basis of misinformation.

Sarah said one woman had an abortion after a doctor told her the baby had an 80% chance of being HIV positive.

Amelia Tyler said that there was a one-in-four chance of a child contracting the virus from an asymptomatic mother. The baby's immune status was unclear until the age of 18 months or so.

"Women are made to feel wicked and guilty if they go ahead with a pregnancy. It's a hell of a big decision women don't take lightly," said Amelia Tyler, "but if they have a healthy baby their lives could be fabulous."

Sarah said women who decided not to have children often suffered pain and grief, and could not tell the truth to many people. As well, if they did not already have a partner, they faced a difficult social life.

"At what stage do you tell a potential partner? It's frightening for a woman to broach the subject because of the assumptions that may be made about her lifestyle," said Sarah.

Some women at last August's 4th National Aids Conference in Canberra felt strongly that women have been overlooked in the Aids prevention and health care campaigns.

It is clear that HIV positive women have been marginalised until recently, given scant recognition for the particular problems and prejudices they face. Sarah, for example, has lived with the virus for nearly seven years...
but it is only in the past year that official attention has been paid to women in her situation.

Recently the federal government has allocated funds for several Women and AIDS projects, including a grant to the Positive Women group to formulate an information package and a video based on the experiences of women with the virus.

As well, the Social Biology Resource Centre, in Melbourne, is devising two videos for wide distribution which aim to make women more assertive in sexual situations. Based on a lot of fieldwork which shows that even the most assured woman may be passive in bed, the videos will help women learn to negotiate sexual practices.

"A lot of women don't practice safe sex because they don't feel brave enough," said Geraldine Thomson, co-ordinator of the project. "The most appropriate skills can be taught through assertiveness training."

Few would dispute that women need to be encouraged to carry condoms, and insist they be worn, or to avoid intercourse if condoms are not available.

However, some people question whether singling out women with special programs and campaigns is a good strategy in the fight against AIDS. Too much special attention on women may have the effect of placing the responsibility and the guilt on them.

Susan Kippax, associate professor in behavioural sciences at Macquarie University, advised the federal government against enthusiastic participation in the World Health Organisation's Women and AIDS Day last November. "I said, 'hang on, let's direct any campaign to men and women'," she recalls.

It is easy for women to be cast again into the role of controller of men's mythic rampant urge to penetrate. The early condom campaign with its message, "It's not on, if it's not on", was directed at women. Yet to expect women to have power over men in a sexual situation, when they are usually less powerful in every other situation, may be putting women into an impossible bind. Certainly men should not be considered as hopeless and irresponsible and cast aside in any future advertising campaigns. Men, as much as women, need to be educated about heterosexual transmission and convinced to take equal responsibility for practising safe sex.

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The loudest Left response to the Gulf crisis has been a non-political 'no' to war in general. Yet the Left also commonly endorses violence in world affairs. For Colin Mercer, this is a watershed in Left belief. The death of communism has left the politics of critique rudderless, and ushered in a new politics of policy.

The war in the Middle East will probably, sometime, be seen as a threshold in the development of Left political culture in Australia and, for that matter, many other countries. The war has an exceptional status, not just because of the features which are unique to it—the role of the United Nations especially—but also because it occurs in the context of a massive reorganisation of international relations of power and the effective geo-political disappearance of communism as both a government and oppositional force.

Well, yes, if you were writing a long-term history of relations between the Western powers and the Middle East, this is certainly a pattern which would plausibly emerge as a general explanation. This is a compelling and effective account: the West has little to be proud of in its historical and contemporary policies, attitudes and relations towards the Near, Middle or Far East.

It is an account, however, which, no matter how plausible it might be in the grander sweep of 'historical time', and no matter how useful it might be in informing decisions on the shape and nature of a post-war settlement, does not necessarily help a great deal in the much shorter span and messier context of 'political time'. There are different mechanisms and quite specific logics which apply to long-term historical and political analysis on the one hand and shorter-term political decision-making on the other. Grand histories of class, of social structure and, in general, of those patterns of dominance on which much political analysis rests, pose the same sorts of problems.

As a response to this there is no need, according to some prevailing political and moral precepts, to concede priority to pragmatism over principle (the opposition is frequently a false one anyway). Rather, it is to recognise that there is a real and effective difference between the sort of analysis
which gets applied to the longer historical span and the decision-making procedures which determine policy in and for the present. Sometimes these orders overlap. More frequently they don't. The point is that they don't have to and it's a peculiarly pure mode of political analysis which can align its policies and decisions at every stage with the general precepts of its guiding doctrines.

The waters of political time are muddied in the case of the current conflict in the Middle East by, among other things, United Nations agreements and treaties on political sovereignty and the implications of invasion, by the fact of a 28 nation agreement on the United Nations resolution on Kuwait, by domestic and international law and obligations, by the presence of chemical and biological warfare capacities beyond all treaty parameters, by the fact that Saddam has used these capacities on Kurdish and Iranian populations and has said that he will also do so on a nation which is 'technically' non-combatant in this conflict—Israel—and, finally, by differing levels of public support for various forms of involvement. These are difficult and complicated, 'present-tense' policy matters which are not well-addressed by the certainties of some forms of historical explanation currently being used as argument for non-involvement.

So, this is not an argument about expediency but, rather, about recognising that there are real differences between the types of analysis and explanation that are relevant at the 'grand' level of historical, social and geo-political development and those that are pertinent in the domain of everyday policy considerations. The non-Labor Left has been good at the former but has had some problems with the latter, notwithstanding the advice to think globally and act locally. This has to do with political and intellectual affiliations with various forms of grand social theory, particularly, though not exclusively, with marxism both as a theory and as a credo of government. Grand social theory, whether in the form of marxism, the variants of sociology often adopted by political radicals in arguments about class, some theories of patriarchy or the environmentalist use of the idea of the 'planet' as a prime mover, tends to be accompanied by grand explanatory principles or causes from which effects can easily be read off. In this sense they are, more or less, 'total theories' in so far as they attempt to explain how things hang together, how they interact and how certain outcomes are pretty much inevitable.

At the political level, grand theories can operate quite comfortably in an 'I told you so' attitude. Readings of the Gulf War which view it only as an outcome, through a
grand theory of imperialism, of an historic pattern of exploitation, or as the effect of masculine forms of aggressive behaviour, or as the predictable outcome of human exploitation of natural resources fall into this category. These explanations may be comforting retrospectively and they may also, at this level of explanation, be true, but they do not provide many of the necessary tools of engagement in policy in the here and now. From the side of resources, is it possible for governments to ignore the effects of the invasion on the supply of oil by consent and trade to those it possible for governments to ignore the effects of the invasion of a sovereign territory? If we are willing to cite the cases of East Timor, Grenada and Panama as examples of when this policy has been shamefully ignored then surely the argument is that they should not have been ignored and something should have been done about it. What should have been done? Might it not have involved the United Nations, sanctions and some form of intervention by a UN approved force?

There is a question, then, of how content we can be with the general slogans of 'Peace' or 'Anti-War' as political principles. While they can have definite and measurable effects as slogans in specific campaigns—Vietnam, nuclear disarmament, etc—they cannot work as policy frameworks, and nor should they be intended to. To say that you are for peace and against war is not a political position but an ethical stance to which pacifists and others are entitled but which is destined not to have much political clout in a country which has a non-conscripted defence force, is a member of the United Nations and party to other treaty arrangements. What would you do in these circumstances? In your day-to-day practice you would need to be asking little questions rather than big ones. Peace in what and on whose terms? Which war? Vietnam? Cambodia? Nicaragua? El Salvador? Romania? To be pacifist in relation to these conflicts is surely meaningless in political terms. It is not possible for the Left to 'heroise' some conflicts and denigrate others simply because of the nature of the key antagonists.

These are constrained policy questions which trouble the general critical and ethical position—the critique position—of 'anti-war' and they have been posed in this journal and elsewhere recently. In the November issue of ALR, Fred Halliday, well known for his associations with the intellectual far Left in the 60s and 70s, a respected analyst and writer on the Middle East and now Professor of International Relations at the London School of Economics, argued broadly in favour of 'the West doing something about it'. In Australia, Albert Langer, doyen of the far Left in the Vietnam Moratorium period, put it this way (in The Australian): "I cannot follow the US example of selective indignation. I cannot support armed struggle against US aggression in Vietnam and armed resistance to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and fail to support armed opposition to the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait". Bernie Taft has also argued, in The Age, that "...we have a moral obligation for a limited participation, in order to make this military action, as much as we can, a United Nations and not simply a United States affair." This requirement—along with appropriate monitoring of Australian involve-

ment, pressures to strictly observe the UN mandate, and to avoid the bombing of civilian populations and infrastructure, to move at every stage and wherever possible towards ceasefire arrangements, to make sure that the pieces and players are in place for a long-term settlement and to ensure adequate media reportage—represents a plausible and achievable response to the crisis.

The slogan 'No blood for oil' is an exemplary form of critique politics but is not much help in these circumstances. Dirty, smelly and environmentally unfriendly as this fossil fuel may be when extracted and burnt, it is nonetheless still a vital resource in running households, industries and economies in First, Second and Third World countries—more dramatically so in the latter than in the former. These are the 'little' but vitally important issues which get in the way of big stances and complicate the drawing up of a big picture in which we can all witness the truth. Access to vital resources is something that people usually fight for and go to war over. The Left has usually supported these fights. The ANC fights for such resources in South Africa. The Sandinistas fought for commodities such as coffee, bananas, cotton and fish in Nicaragua. Human rights are rights of access to basic physical resources as well as to principles of political liberty and democracy. These are wars too, and to be anti-war in these circumstances is politically vacuous.

The slogan 'No blood for oil' wouldn't mean much to the poverty-stricken urban populations of the Philippines or India who are increasingly and dramatically feeling the effects, in terms of consumption and family income, of the rising prices and scarcity of oil produced by Iraq's military occupation of Kuwait and the subsequent conflict. To make oil sound like a superficial substance compared with the emotive qualities of blood is about as meaningful as suggesting to remote Aboriginal communities that blood is more important than water. Zappy little phrases which trip easily off the tongue on street marches don't always translate into politically achievable objectives. In other words, great causes but few effects. Dirty little difficulties and policy conundrums get in the way of totalising theories and smart slogans. Nothing against slogans here: they are intended to be economic and emotive in their effects, but let's recognise that they are a quite distinct theoretical use of language, addressed to particular audiences in specific circumstances and not an embodiment of a general truth.

Totalising theories and smart slogans are the province of minoritarian movements who are content to remain minoritarian. This is a key problem both in relation to the present Gulf War and to longer term problems of Left and democratic politics: who is being addressed? The 70-80% of the populations of Australia, the US, the UK or France who are 'in favour of but do not necessarily support (this is an important distinction from the point of view of policy) the actions of the coalition countries? Does the politics of critique have a language which can address these majorities or is it happier to speak only to its own constituents? There are few signs, in some of the present stances on the war from the non-Labor Left, of the emergence of the sort of language and political stance which can effectively address the real problems of oil shortages, the
new role which the United Nations is assuming, the issues
which follow from the new relations between the USA and
the USSR, or Australia’s defence policy and commitments.
The history which led to the conflict is clearly visible and
many have a clearer idea or set of hopes about the nature
of the settlement after the conflict including a significant
presence for the Palestinians but, between this looking
backwards and looking forward there is a blank spot at the
site of the politics of the present. This is a problem.

This is not, however, an article about the Gulf War. It is,
rather, about a ‘lag’ in political culture between the
generalities and certainties of critique, a legacy of an older
order in politics, intellectual practice and, indeed, the
world, which the Gulf War increasingly serves to highlight.
It is about the need for democratic Left political culture to
complete—or effect—a transition from the domain of criti-
que to the field of policy: from the purely oppositional to
the plausibly governmental.

We can be assisted in this if we will recognise what’s going
on at the level of training in political and other competen-
ties, both formally in the education system and informally
in bureaucracies, workplaces and communities. A few
months back I got a phone call from a reporter at the Sunday
Age in Melbourne which reminded me of the large gap
between the two types of political behaviour at issue here.
He asked me, as a “social theorist” (I became instantly
suspicious) whether I regretted the demise of the
“maverick radicalism” so prominent in the 1960s and early
1970s. I wasn’t in Australia in the 1960s and 70s and all I
could think of were Tariq Ali and Robin Blackburn. This
didn’t help. The gist of my answer, in any case, was: no, I
didn’t. I suggested, politely, that many of those people who
might have fallen under the unfortunate heading of
maverick radicalism were now gainfully employed in
various agencies, both public and private, of social,
economic and cultural policy and that this should not be
held against them. They were probably, I suggested,
achieving more now than they ever did in the media-
visible domain of public protest.

This is the same sort of question as ‘why aren’t students
radical any more?’ which we are always being asked—
mostly by ex-students from the 60s and 70s now working
for newspapers and doing pop socio-psychologies of lost
tribes. As a generality, students aren’t any more or less
radical now than they were 20 years ago. They are just
doing different things which happen not to take place in
the streets, and are therefore not public or, at least repre-
sentable, critique. A policy adviser or a bureaucrat at
the Trade Development Commission, the Human Rights
and Equal Opportunities Commission, the Affirmative Action
Agency or the National Board for Employment, Education
and Training is not, after all, good copy. These people are
responding, in their chosen career paths, to both a reality
and conditions which some of their teachers from another age may have failed to recognise: that
government—or ‘governmentality’ as some have called
it—is not confined to the legislature or to the central ap-
paratuses of the State. One key lesson that was learnt from
the 1960s and 70s from feminists, from the work of writers
such as Gramsci and Foucault and many others, is that
government happens in lots of places and that it is not
necessarily experienced as forms of oppression or in-
trusion. It has its positive and productive dimensions too
and this is one of the reasons for a change in political
culture among a whole generation of people initially
trained in the orders of critique but now operationalising
those capacities effectively in the machinery of govern-
ment and quasi-governmental organisations.

This has little to do, then, with some universal principle of
pragmatism in hard economic times which makes people
turn their eyes from the light on the hill to the economic
realities on the doorstep: it is the implementation of the
capacities in which they have been trained. Many of those
students trained in the critical analysis of the dominant
culture, in the critique of political economy, in the critical
analysis of the social structure are now making their skills
operational in advertising agencies and journalism, in the
treasury, taxation offices or other economic instrumenta-
talities, in social policy and welfare agencies and so on.
This is not a problem. It is why they were trained in those
skills in the first place: to get a job, not a priestly calling. It
is surely profoundly elitist to complain retrospectively—or
to put up the idea in order to sell copy—that there has been
a ‘sell-out’ or a conservative turn in the culture of student
expectations and career paths. This is a nonsense which
thrives on the idea that there was a moment, a Golden Age,
of radicalism in which the universities were the prime
movers and the students the exemplary cadres.

Universities occupy an important but profoundly am-
biguous position in the culture of protest and opposition,
providing, as they do, both the key cadres for the actual
implementation of government policy and the symbolic
opposition. This is one of the reasons why we keep getting
asked why students aren’t radical any more. The reason for
going to university, after all, is to get trained professionally
in various skills. It is not intended as a novitiate in prepara-
tion for the orders of pure critique. Those endowed with
the capabilities to occupy this position through historical,
philosophical, literary or economic training, and to be
named and published as such, are perhaps one in several
thousand. The skills that are taught may also be critical
ones of analysis, argumentation, the presentation of a criti-
cal position and so on, but, whether in the humanities or
law, the social, pure or applied sciences, these are only
components of a more general program of training and not
its ultimate object. Dawkins-esque as this may sound and
horrible to behold as it may be for a whole generation of
radical intellectuals, it is nonetheless the case that univer-
sities have no special privileges in the domain of what
Marx once called, disparagingly, “critical criticism”. As
Pierre Bourdieu has pointed out in relation to the par-
ticularly hierarchically-structured French tertiary educa-
tion system, there is absolutely no reason why we should
expect universities to be the natural repositories of critique.
Political intellectuals are, in fact, much more likely to
emerge now, and especially in Australia, from trade
unions, community and welfare organisations and the
legal system than they are from the assumed critical ether
of the universities. It’s as well to put this icon of protest and
opposition in its proper place.
In addition to laying the ghost of critical icons, there are—forgive the phrase—'world-historical' reasons for both the reality and desirability of a shift from critique to policy. Marxism in government—the historical reminder to both the left and the rest of the world that however new, struggling and downright grubby, a systemic alternative was possible—has been seen to be an almost entire failure, as a form of government, in any of its evident forms. This is not to say that in a whole range of fields, from foreign policy to agrarian reform, literacy, equal employment opportunity and the treatment of ethnic minorities, there is nothing to be learnt from this history: simply that, domestically and internationally, as a plausible form of government, it did not work. After scanning the world for acceptable communist models—China, Cuba, etc—and finally ending up with the formula of 'actually existing socialism' it is clear that there is nowhere else to look. To hiss 'social democrat' no longer counts as an insult except at a few academic conferences and, presumably, at meetings of the few ultra-leftist rumps that still exist. It is clear, I think, that the integrity—meaning 'wholeness', not 'honesty'—of socialism as such, including the actions, theories and cultures of the communist and mainstream social-democratic traditions, is no longer very clear to any but the most resolute optimist and clarity will only be achieved in these circumstances by developing a 'politics of the present' fairly quickly.

In Australia, a Labor ascendancy since the early 1980s, the emergence of the various social justice bureaucracies in multiculturalism, human rights, EEO and Affirmative Action have provided fertile ground for cautious but often career-based alliances with the machinery of the State and the various formal and informal, public and private institutions of government from schools to trade unions and community organisations.

But does this mean that when Labor gets thrown out of office we will see again the emergence of the maverick radical? I don't think so: the return of the repressed is not on the agenda and, in any case, there is no space for such a figure to operate any more. Not even the environmental movement—which is where most mavericks and radicals are likely to emerge these days—is likely to mortgage its hard-won presence within the field of public policy to the image of Joshua at Jericho. The walls are still standing after all: it's the battlements which have changed in a thorough transition from, as Gramsci put it, a war of movement (which never actually moved anywhere) to a war of position. The metaphorical language of war, battles and, most of all, struggles, is something of a legacy of the earlier moment. We are now more in the era of tactical engagements, strategic development, flexible specialisation and conflict resolution procedures.

Should we be worried about this? Not too much. There has been a steady process of settling of accounts and of erstwhile philosophical consciences accelerated in Australia by that older tradition of 'fabianism' in critical intellectual thought. Australians have more readily and rapidly assumed a little portion of the mentality of government than their Anglo-saxon counterparts else-

where in the world. There is an increasing osmosis between those agencies responsible for the production of intellectuals, broadly defined, whether in the trade unions, community organisations, political parties or universities, and the general domain of government.

In this context, the shift from Critique with a big 'C' to Policy with a big 'P' which has been going on in political and academic culture over recent years cannot be represented as just growing up and out of a Young Turk period. This is a newsy way of representing the situation but also quite wrong. Political, intellectual and governmental culture have changed drastically over the past 20 years. Grand theories have nose-dived and along with them have gone many of the certainties about the nature of society and social structure, of social power and, above all, the ability to identify effective single causes of the effects that we see around us. The cult of the postmodern as an era of fragmentation, of dispersal of the firm foundations of knowledge and experience is simply an effervescence in the academies, publishing houses and advertising agencies but the bubbles do, in fact, suggest more profound movements in the substrata of political culture.

These movements are caused precisely by the levels of 'political professionalisation' of those cadres who might hitherto have been happy in the era of critique. With this political professionalisation goes a level of specialisation, a narrowing down of concerns and a more precise targeting of political and policy objectives. Not war as such but the conduct of this war. Not racism or sexism as such but this instance of malpractice or discrimination. As important is to teach and disseminate information about the general problems of war, racism and sexism, it is equally important to teach the 'tactical' ways of handling these problems in everyday life by constantly posing the question, "What do you do now?" The politics of critique only completes the first stage of this process. It is more difficult, but absolutely necessary, to move to the stage of positive but complex elaboration.

With this professionalisation and specialisation goes a necessary recognition of the sheer complex pluralism, density and complexity of social relations: the recognition that what we call society is not a transparent social structure where things and people can be ordered and harmonised according to the principles of far-sighted doctrines or historical lesson-teaching. People working in the areas of law, social and economic policy know this well.

If we remain committed to social change, social theory and social analysis, then it seems important to begin to move in a little closer and to turn our attention more systematically to that present complexity and to the politics of the present. This also means policies for the present. Otherwise it is likely that, despite the best intentions, as somebody once said, we will be confined only to interpreting the world while others, perhaps less sympathetic, will go about changing it.

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The debate over the Gulf has been presented on all sides as a cut-and-dried affair: Left pacifism vs the pro-American Right. In the process, the debate over principle has been lost. Here, as a contribution to the debate-that-wasn’t, ALR publishes the very different views of a variety of voices from the wider Left.

Smart Bomb, Dumb Aimer

The war is wrong, says Mike McKinley. But even if it weren’t, you wouldn’t want to get too close to the Americans while they were fighting it.
but an accessible and published body of data and commentary freely available to those who can read. I therefore begin with two open questions about Australia’s policy advisers, and policymakers: how do they get away with it?; how have they got away with it for so long?

My point is this: notwithstanding the need I feel to resist this war at the level of principle, there is the question of US military competence to consider. Or, to be more precise, the demonstrated military incompetence of our major alliance partner and leading power of the anti-Iraq coalition. In other words, I am advancing the prudential argument that even if Australia’s Gulf policies could ever be regarded as unproblematic, their standing is compromised by the company they keep.

This pessimistic conclusion is informed by an analysis—indeed the realist analysis so beloved by the policy-making community—of US involvement across the whole spectrum of conventional conflict over the last 41 years. 1950 is significant here since it located what one typical, recent study by US scholars recalls as “the last major victory for American arms”. In the subsequent four decades we find that US military efforts have been, and are, no model of competence. From the record, which includes the overall debacle in Indo-China and also the more than 120 specially designated rescue and other operations in that conflict, through still more rescue missions such as those in support of the Mayaguez, and in interventions, such as those in Grenada and Panama, the US armed forces performed in a manner which allows neither confidence in themselves nor on the part of allies co-operating with them.

The basic data and an analytical literature attesting to this have been available, cumulatively, since 1950 and are, moreover, marked by four characteristcs: 1) the data-base is broadly agreed on; 2) the analyses are provided by specialists from a wide range of the political spectrum; 3) there is broad agreement among their findings; 4) their judgments are reached on criteria established by the US military itself and on which there is a consensus among similar analysts outside the US.

Since space precludes a detailed excursion into any of the events in question I will mention only that the Middle East has provided some of the richest and most embarrassing examples of incompetence. Among these we must include operation Desert One—the failed hostage rescue mission in Iran—and the interventions in Beirut, including the criminal negligence which led to the loss of over 250 marines in a single one-man attack on their accommodation and the equally criminal, indiscriminate use of US naval firepower against the non-combatants of the Shouf mountains and other locales. Probably the most dramatic example, however, was the April 1986 bombing of Libya where 15 F-111 fighter-bombers equipped with a laser guidance bombing system, and carrying a combination of cluster bombs and 2000-pound bombs could not accomplish their mission of assassinating Colonel Muammar Al-Ghaddafi. This example is particularly poignant in the context of cost per outcome as well. It was attempted two aircraft carriers costing $5 billion each which were, in turn, defended by escort ships worth around $12 billion as well as their aircraft complement, each aeroplane costing $30-50 million—all in order to support a failed mission which was reducible to the equivalent of hitting a tent at a football field inhabited by one man, who was, even then, an irritating but hardly substantial enemy.

The Gulf, nevertheless, is the true pons asinorum (bridge of fools, site of all its embarrassment) for the US military. We have witnessed the May 1987 Iraqi attack on the USS Stark after which the US punished Iran and placed American flags on tankers belonging to Iraq’s ally, Kuwait; the patently absurd Gulf convoy operation which saw the US Navy have the 400,000-ton supertanker Bridgeport deployed in front of three American warships that were supposed to be protecting it; the April 1988 aborted attack by the USS Merrill using Harpoon anti-ship missiles against a Soviet Sovremenny class guided missile destroyer in the mistaken belief that it was an Iranian Saas class guided missile frigate; and the July 1988 shooting down of Iran Air flight 655 by the USS Vincennes.

Even in the period of the build-up for Desert Storm so many US service personnel were needlessly killed—nearly 100 in my estimation—that by early October 1990 all US Gulf training flights were cancelled so that a ‘safety awareness’ study could be conducted instead. I hardly need add that this comes only one year after the US Navy was stood down for similar reasons for a period of 48 hours.

And although I could continue to catalogue other incompetences in the field of weapons and material, doctrine and morale, to name just four, I will resist the temptation to do so in favour of citing Richard Gabriel’s quite typical conclusion to his study of the overall phenomenon: “The American military is in serious trouble. Its recent historical performance...has been marked far more often by failure than success. Its military plans have been unrealistic and unsuccessful. The officer corps, by any historical standard, is lacking in the spirit and expertise that have characterised the more successful officer corps in history. Worse, it is infected by habits and values which are characteristic of many of the worst officer corps in history. The record is clear that the [American] officer corps has failed the single test of a successful army, the ability to perform well on the field of battle.”

I write this as the war nears the close of its fourth week, with the US lost for a strategy other than bombing, and its ground force commanders uncertain whether 70,000 sorties is sufficient to allow them success. And of all the Americans confirmed dead in Desert Storm to date, 90% have died in non-combatant incidents or from “friendly fire”.

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An Absence of Debate

Jo Vallentine looks to a new world order built on justice rather than tanks.

One of the most ironic aspects of the Gulf War has been the way in which the industrialised nations have chosen to present the crusade against Iraq as a warning to future potential aggressors in the name of their projected New World Order.

At the same time, they have refused to acknowledge their own role in creating the problem over the last ten years, a period which saw some 30 countries sell $46 billion worth of arms—plus technology—to the regime of Saddam Hussein, making it the world's largest importer of arms by the second half of the last decade.

According to Western intelligence officials and a variety of military experts, Saddam Hussein was able to amass the most powerful items for his arsenal by appealing to two strong emotions among his foreign suppliers: their hunger for Iraqi petro-dollars and, in the West particularly, their fear of an Iranian victory in the 1980-88 Gulf War. On top of weapons, the US approved the export to Iraq of US$1.5 billion worth of items with dual military and civilian use, including powerful computers, precision machine tools and advanced electronics. Asked why this was possible, an anonymous intelligence official said: "Frankly, until the invasion, there was no political will to stop the Iraqis."

Michael Maloof, director of technology security operations at the Pentagon’s department for trade security policy, admitted: "The reality is that our guys in the desert are now facing sophisticated American technology sold to the Iraqis over the years by the Commerce Department."

Australia did place an arms embargo on Iran and Iraq during the war but lifted it when the war ended and was on the point of concluding a deal in spare parts for Iraqi Air Force trainer aircraft worth $850,000 when Iraq invaded Kuwait.

By February this year, Senator Robert Ray as Minister for Defence, was admitting to the National Press Club that he saw a need to control and reduce the international arms trade. However, he has yet to announce what Australia will do to stem the arms trade and so far has declined to withdraw official support from Australia's International Defence Equipment Exhibition (AIDEX 91), scheduled to be held in Canberra this November, or to abandon the goal of doubling military exports, recommended in the 1986 Cooksey Report.

Twenty or so years from now, the Gulf War will be seen primarily as a resource war but much will depend on whether countries like the United States have learned by then to curb their appetite for cheap oil. There were efforts to improve energy efficiency and conservation after the first oil shock in 1973 but as OPEC's power declined, the world slipped back into its old ways. So far the Gulf War has not driven up oil prices but the long-term problem of oil dependency remains.

One of the more ludicrous arguments over the war concerns "linkage"—or should we acknowledge the Arab world's concern over the UN's selective indignation concerning Kuwait but not Israel's continued flouting of UN resolutions on the Occupied Territories since 1967?

There was talk of a general conference on Israel/Palestine before the Gulf War and there is talk of one after it's all over, but no connection can be acknowledged in the meantime, in case it is perceived as rewarding Saddam Hussein.

Yet the war has already strengthened the bond between the United States and Israel, and boosted Israel's attempts to isolate the PLO diplomatically. At the same time, extremist forces on both sides can only gain support whatever the outcome of the war—Israeli extremists, such as those who want to expel all Arabs from within their borders, and Moslem fundamentalist groups like Hamas (Zeal) which is already drawing support away from the PLO in places like the Gaza Strip.

In most other countries in North America and West Europe there has been a lively political debate, despite the commitment of the NATO members to the war effort. In Australia, as a result of the bipartisan foreign policy position of the ALP and the coalition, any meaningful political debate has been stifled while only 4% of federal politicians represent the 30% of Australians who are opposed to Australia's involvement in the war.

Even this does not satisfy the war party who have now turned on the ABC for giving reasonably balanced coverage of the war itself and played into the hands of
those conservative forces who were out to curb the ABC's independence even before the war began.

With the Soviet Union passively supporting the US position, the peace movement can no longer be labelled “communist”. The latest abuse by supporters of the war option derives from the 1930s when charges were laid against the peace movement of wanting appeasement and “peace at any price”. One letter writer to the Launceston Examiner (12 February) wanted to intern all critics of the war to segregate them from loyal Australians.

There is no acknowledgment of the fact that no one in the peace movement is advocating that Iraq remains in control of Kuwait. The argument is over how to get Iraq out of Kuwait—continued sanctions and negotiations or war.

Once a war is under way it is hard to stop. After the initial rallies, the peace movement will have to develop a long-term strategy, with particular focus on bridge-building and reconciliation when the war ends, just as pacifist groups did with the people of Germany and Japan after World War Two.

Clearly we need to learn more about the Middle East, the Arab World and Islam. We have to come up with creative suggestions to give the United Nations a constructive central role in settling disputes and peacekeeping rather than acting as a rubber stamp for US military power.

There also needs to be an awareness of how the war has allowed the rehabilitation of unpleasant repressive regimes like China, Syria and Turkey, as well as letting the forces of reaction gain the upper hand in the Soviet Union. Once more the Baltic States may be the victims of world indifference while the UN wages its Holy war in the Gulf in an eerie parallel with the events of 1956.

As for the New World Order, there is nothing new about using military force to get what you want and we have yet to hear any details of what else it involves. A real New World Order would be based on non-military solutions to conflict, an end to the global arms trade, the equitable distribution of resources, a just price for commodities and the establishment of international forums to resolve global problems like the Greenhouse effect and other problems that transcend national boundaries.

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An Orrery of Errors

John Langmore argues that, although there were numerous opportunities to stop short of war, the war itself is not unjust.

There is no doubt that Iraq had no justification for invading Kuwait, which was an independent country with internationally recognised and accepted borders. Saddam Hussein is a megalomaniac and a ruthless dictator and nothing in his behaviour or policies has suggested that he has any willingness to act reasonably in accordance with international norms.

Nevertheless, throughout the Gulf crisis US actions have been presented to us as inevitable. Yet at every point alternatives were possible, and commonly preferable. Following the UN Security Council’s imposition of the trade embargo in mid-August, the US quickly began a massive military build-up in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf waters, describing such action as necessary to defend Saudi Arabia. But deployment occurred under US, rather than UN, control. The US should have adopted the proper procedure under the UN Charter and secured a resolution under Article 43 to create a United Nations force under the United Nations Military Staff Committee. That would have provided a more effective command structure, but would not have prevented the US from providing the general-in-command of overall operations in which the US has been by far the largest contributor.

Australia’s involvement should certainly have been more carefully considered and conditional on deployment under a UN Military Staff Committee. In that way, procedures for dealing with reasonable conflict in a post-Cold War world could have been established which would have
enhanced the collective restraint on individual aggressive action and international co-operation in opposing and penalising aggression. As it now stands, the global community has regressed from its position of 40 years ago in Korea.

It is essential for Australia, too, to independently and rigorously review our response to our allies' policies because for much of the post-war period there has been a tendency for Australian governments to accept US policies. Such a stance denies Australians the opportunity to make up their own minds about Australia's long-term best interests. Hence one lesson from this crisis must be that we completely break the habit of consenting to whatever policies any US administration chooses to adopt.

President Bush said in his announcement of war against Iraq that there was "no choice but to drive Saddam from Kuwait by force". That was simply not true. Sanctions were working. Certainly his deep concern about attempts by Iraq to develop and enhance the effectiveness of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons was justified.

Yet sanctions would have denied the Iraqis much of the equipment and material they needed to make those weapons or make them more effective. There would have been a risk in delaying the alliance attack that Iraq could have armed itself with more awful weaponry. Yet it is the judgment of many experts and many political leaders, including 47 US senators, that reliance on tight, effective sanctions would have been preferable to the current war.

The CIA estimated that sanctions were 97% effective. Paul Nitze, who was President Reagan's special adviser on arms control, wrote in January: "under the current international embargo, only a trickle of goods is getting in or out of Iraq; oil exports and earnings are nil and civilian production is estimated to be down by about 40%. In time, lack of spare parts will erode Iraq's military capabilities, and civilian and production will fall further."

What should have Australia done? I think that despite the misjudgment at several crucial points in the evolution of the crisis, it was our responsibility to complete the task in which we were involved. The UN had authorised military action. Our government had committed us to this involvement. To withdraw unilaterally would have been destructive to the alliance and would have appeared cowardly. Therefore it was essential that we acted in concert with our UN allies.

We can now urge those allies to limit the war to the eviction of Iraq from Kuwait and to do this with a minimum of destruction — including, for example, limiting the attacks to targets of military significance in Iraq.

One constructive task is to look ahead to prepare for the post-Gulf world. One goal must be to make the Middle East a nuclear, chemical and biological weapons free zone. That means not only disarmament by Iraq but that Israel also give up its nuclear weapons. As long as any country in the region possesses such weapons, there can be no final resolution of conflict. That resolution also requires a complete US withdrawal, though this will not occur until stable relationships have been forged between Middle Eastern countries. That in turn requires some agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. So, one step towards permanent peace in the Middle East must be a conference on the future of Israel and the Palestinians.

War of itself will not provide the solution to those conflicts. At best it can simply force the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait and ensure that would-be aggressors do not profit from invasion, coercion and force. The future security of the globe depends on enhancing the effectiveness of cooperative opposition to aggression from whatever source it originates.

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For Bob Howard, there's no serious alternative to collective security, with all that implies.

Statements by Labor members during the Gulf debate in federal parliament indicate that the 'UN factor'—that the allied action was endorsed by the UN—was an important element in mobilising and holding support within Labor's parliamentary ranks both for the war and for Australia's Gulf commitment. Few should be surprised by this. In emphasising the 'UN factor', Labor members were drawing on sentiment deeply embedded in ALP thinking on foreign policy. The ALP platform details at some length the party's strong commitment to the aims and work of the UN. It is part of ALP folklore that one of the party's 'greats', Dr Evatt, played an important role in negotiations leading to the establishment of the UN and, in recognition of this, became the first president of the UN General Assembly.

What is surprising is that some Labor members were not moved by the UN argument. (Shortly after the initial commitment of Australian naval vessels in the early days of the crisis, some members of the parliamentary Left protested that they could only support Australian involvement if it was part of a UN endorsed action. But this undertaking did not hold, following a string of UN Security Council resolutions endorsing action against Iraq.) Moreover, it would appear that disenchantment with the UN on this issue is even more widespread in the Left outside of parliament. This indicates an important development in Left thinking on international security issues and is worthy of examination.

Rationalisations for the Left's disenchantment abound. Many have argued that the allied force in the Gulf, though acting with the sanction of the UN, is not a UN force as such; as Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar keeps reminding us, the allied forces are not under the control of the Military Staff Committee of the Security Council and the blue helmets and flags of the UN are nowhere in evidence. Also, many are no doubt offended by what they see as US domination and manipulation of the Security Council and are troubled by the apparent double standards of the world body—its eagerness to take action against Iraq, but not against Israel, Indonesia, the US, and so on.

These are powerful arguments and are worthy of close consideration. But my purpose here is to look at something else—to examine the Left's attitude to the UN role in the Gulf, the implications for Left thinking on international security issues.

To many on the Left, the UN has long had a benign image; to the extent to which they have thought about the world body at all it has usually been with regard to issues such as the decolonisation process, the promotion and monitoring of human rights, the work of UNESCO, famine and disaster relief, global and environment programs, and the resettlement of refugees. Any acknowledgement that the UN has had a security role to play—that it has actually used armed force—has been softened by the perception that this has usually been for 'peace-keeping' purposes. Underpinning all this are understandable feelings of revulsion towards war and to the idea that armed conflict is an acceptable means of resolving international disputes. Many on the Left clearly regard the use of massive armed forces in the name of the UN as doubly offensive. It would make little difference to these folk if the allied operation in the Gulf was under the control of the Military Staff Committee of the Security Council. There would still be objections to the Security Council taking military action in support of its resolutions. The revulsion would remain.

This scepticism about the UN's role in the Gulf represents a significant development in Left-liberal thinking about international security. Collective security—the principle of 'all against one', the entire world against the aggressor—was a central feature of the League of Nations created after World War One. When the UN was created from the ashes of World War Two there was the view that the world had suffered dearly because of its appeasement of aggression. The aim was that the great powers, acting collectively through the Security Council, would be sufficient to overwhelm would-be aggressors and save future generations from the 'scourge of war'.

It is important to emphasise that these ideas were far from unacceptable to a whole generation of leftwingers. Many,
like Australia’s Dr Evatt, must have felt uneasy about the authority accorded the great powers in the new world body (Britain, France, China, the USA and the USSR were made permanent members of the Security Council and each accorded the veto). But all this must have seemed a small price to pay for an arrangement that held out the promise of a peaceful future. It was recognised that aggression was a problem in world politics, that something needed to be done about it, and that collective security was preferable to the alternatives. This approach to what might be termed the international security problem was something the Left was able to live with.

The political tensions of the Cold War, dating from about 1949, largely crippled the UN in the exercise of its security function. But the end of the Cold War changed all that. The string of resolutions adopted by the Council since Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait represents an unprecedented display of consensus in the world body. For the first time, the Council has undertaken an act of enforcement within the full meaning of the expression and of the UN Charter’s provisions. (Because the Soviet Union was temporarily boycotting the Security Council and hence did not participate in the decision in 1950 to support South Korea, the UN’s action then cannot be said to have involved collective security within the full meaning of the Charter.)

The real significance of the current controversy about the UN’s role in the Gulf is that, on the occasion of the Council’s first exercise of its security function within the full meaning of the Charter, large sections of the Left have questioned the legitimacy of the UN to act in this way.

This raises the question of what the Left might now regard as a proper and legitimate response to international security problems. The question is an important one, not least because the problem of international security will not go away. In the immediate aftermath of the end of the Cold War there was perhaps the view that, at long last, we might be entering a period of peace. But it would be foolish to assume this is the case. Factors which in the past have been causes of conflict are abundant in our contemporary world: irredentist causes; ethnic and nationalist rivalries; religious fervour; injustice and denial of human rights; competition for resources; weapons proliferation and militarism; legitimate national security concerns; great power chauvinism; and gross inequality between nations and regions.

The Left has a responsibility to address itself to the international security issue. The challenge remains: how to find an effective mechanism for limiting the role of force and violence in world politics. In view of the apparently limitless potential for weapons proliferation and military technological innovation, peace activists do us all a service in reminding us that there is no future in war.

But is the Left equal to the challenge? Issues of war and the exercise of force have always been a problem for the liberal conscience. The rejection, by large sections of the Left, of the legitimacy of the UN role in the Gulf crisis, no doubt has many causes. But it is difficult to believe that it does not have a lot to do with a deeply felt disinclination to countenance the use of force, even by a body like the UN, and even when the use of a small amount of force now might obviate the need for greater force later. The point was nowhere better demonstrated than with regard to the sanctions issue. Sanctions are widely and rightly regarded as preferable to the full-scale use of military force. It is a tragedy that the problem of Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait was not resolved through the use of sanctions. But effective use of the sanctions option in this case required not only a willingness on the part of the allies to give them time to work, but also, meaningful enforcement. In practice, this meant an air and naval blockade of Iraq. But large sections of the Left, even while protesting that sanctions were not being taken seriously, were demanding that Australia’s naval contribution to the enforcement of those sanctions be withdrawn.

The point is raised, not in any sense of enthusiasm for the use of force, nor even in support of sanctions, but as an indication of the intellectual difficulties the Left might experience in meeting the challenge of the problems of international security problem.

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ABUSED and abandoned

Child abuse fortified by the mystique of satanic rituals has become an epidemic in several Western countries, and now in Australia. But once saved from the clutches of their tormentors, the children are seldom believed. Yvonne Preston asks why a horrifying crisis has failed to excite the passions of the Left and public authorities alike.

In the West we take a decidedly jaundiced view of Pakistan’s Moslem laws which require a woman charging rape to produce four male Moslem witnesses to the act before her story is accepted. If, as is more than likely, she can produce no witnesses to her ordeal, she risks landing in jail herself, accused of the ‘crime’ of adultery. Primitively as this sounds to us, our supposedly ‘superior’ Western cultures are rather less than enlightened when it comes to the truthfulness of women and children.

Freudian notions have perpetuated the slander. The word of a woman has had to be proved and the testimony of a child has carried even less weight. Where the charge has been physical abuse by a male, and the culprit, as is often the case, is the woman’s husband or the child’s father, the boundaries of belief have been pushed to the limit. Personal testimony has seldom been enough by itself. Corroborative evidence, preferably provided by a male has been required.

The law no longer sees women and children as male property, but it still sees them as lesser beings. All too often the female or child victims of men’s violence and sexual abuse in Western society find themselves transformed by a blind and disbelieving system into victimisers, accused of bearing false and malicious testimony against innocent men. All too commonly hysteria is said to be at the root of allegations of abuse by women and children. Victims of the newly acknowledged and horrifying fact of organised abuse of children, of sex rings which depend on recruiting children for the gratification of abusers, and of ritualised sex abuse with its cult of sexual terrorism and sacrifice are accused of fantasising, or cruelly dismissed as liars. Should the evidence of these victims of organised and ritual abuse be taken down by social workers or police and should it come anywhere near being heard in a court of law, it may be dismissed as “contaminated”, while the child tormentors go free.

A Sydney woman who alleged that her two small children had suffered ritual sex abuse at a Christian Sunday School was told by child protection agencies that the children’s stories of oral and anal abuse at gross satanic rituals were the result of “vivid imaginations”.

The mother claims that the girl was forced into oral sex, the boy anaally abused in macabre ceremonies which have echoes in cases from countries as far apart as Britain, the United States and the Netherlands. The alleged abuser’s elderly mother took part in the ritual which included the sacrifice of animals. The children called her “the hag”.

Their horrified mother took the story to the Department of Family and Community Services and now alleges that officers of the department questioned her mental health. Her allegations were rejected by the Minister for Family and Community Services, Robert Webster, but the mother and her de facto husband, the children’s stepfather, under-

went psychiatric examination to prove their mental stability, so strongly did they believe their sanity was being questioned.

The children were six and seven at the time of the abuse. How had they learned this stuff, the mother wants to know. She says there is evidence they had been drugged. They talked about being given “magic crystals” and feeling sleepy. At first police refused to take up her case, arguing that the dismissal of charges against a couple accused of ritually abusing small children in a northern beaches kindergarten before the magistrate even heard the children’s evidence, deeming it to be “contaminated”, would make prosecution impossible. The so-called Mr Bubbles case did not establish legal precedent, nor set any age restriction on the victim in any police investigation, lawyers say, but the fact that it is perceived to have done so, sending to the community the message that children under seven cannot be considered competent witnesses, has served to inhibit prosecution in abuse cases, extending still further the boundaries of disbelief, compounding society’s refusal to accept that “such things go on”. Police eventually took this mother’s allegation seriously enough to give the family a whole new identity and move it to a distant address for its own protection.

The Minister for Family and Community Services wrote to the woman expressing his sympathy for the personal difficulties she and her children faced in coping with such a traumatic experience, commenting that “child sex ritual abuse is an extremely complex and distressing form of abuse of children for everyone involved”. Police Minister Ted Pickering wrote of his understanding of “the trauma being experienced by you and your children”. But if the establishment at least was inclined to believe her—one step in the right direction—it failed totally to act. The Public Prosecutor informed the outraged mother that he would
not be proceeding with the case because of "insufficient evidence". Her son was too young to stand up to cross-examination; he said. He would be easily confused and the case would be lost.

Thus is the fact of ritual abuse officially if reluctantly acknowledged, the trauma accepted and the suffering of children admitted. Yet the perpetrators remain free, a threat, as the mother rightly says, to other innocent children to whom no-one seems to give a second thought.

Over the last two decades child protection workers have had to come to grips with the phenomenon of child battering and then to acknowledge the fact of widespread sexual abuse and the need to act against it. Both crimes are committed most frequently within the family, where all children are most vulnerable. Whole structures of care were put in place to deal with "normal" or "ordinary" sexual abuse, though frequently they broke down and failed to provide full protection for children. In the notorious Cleveland case in the UK, the dedicated people who sought to protect innocent young children, many of them only babies, were pilloried by society, attacked as fanatics and destroyers of families, their professional lives left in tatters.

In the last few years a further discovery has been made, more horrifying even than the crimes of child battering and "normal" sex abuse. The uncovering of evidence of organised or ritual abuse of children has revealed a theatre of sexual terrorism, a discovery which is providing "a real measure of the balance of power in society, not only between adults and children, but between the institutes and the children's advocates," writes Beatrix Campbell, feminist and long-time campaigner for the rights of women and children. "It puts to the test our promises to protect children," she says, unconsciously echoing the bitter and angry sentiments of the Sydney mother who says the evidence of her children's abuse ought properly to galvanise society into action to protect other children still at risk while the perpetrators remain at large.

In the United States where the existence of satanic cults systematically recruiting, abusing and even sacrificing the lives of small children to their bizarre rites has long been recognised, a mountain of evidence has accumulated. An ex-FBI agent has conducted a lengthy, and often dangerous investigation into practising satanic cults, in interviewing adult survivors of abuse rituals who tell gruesome tales of animal sacrifice, child murder and sexual assault on children. Many cases of such abuse occur in kindergartens, documented in the standard text Nursery Crimes by David Finkelhor. The FBI investigator says the crimes inflicted by these people are comparable to the crimes of the Nazis in World War Two. He claims that in the United States children are kidnapped off the streets, or picked up from among the homeless fleeing orphanages or children's homes. Tens of thousands of people disappear every year in America, he says, never to be heard of again. Satanists in the United States come from all professions and have infiltrated all walks of life. There are links with drug dealing, prostitution and the rich pornography and snuff movie "industries". "Occult crime is a reality."

Decent citizens would prefer to believe such things do not happen. How to credit that adults dress up and practise arcane and brutal ceremonies in this civilised day and age? The ritual of war in the Middle East, where morality is subverted and overwhelmingly destructive force unleashed on hapless civilians in the name of God and democracy points, if such pointer were needed, to the limitless capacity for man's inhumanity to man. Beatrix Campbell adds her own distinctive explanation: "People pray in front of grown men wearing frocks, and presumably to find both peace and power, they consume, metaphorically, the body of a man. So is it so difficult to believe that inversions of that established religion are to be found at large? If grown men are capable of dressing up in pinnies and sharing secret signs with each other in masonic lodges and down the country, what is so hard about contemplating the prospect of grown men dressing up in daft costumes to invert the meanings of the dominant faith; organising rituals to penetrate any orifice available in troops of little children; cut open rabbits, cats, or people, and drink their blood; to shit on silver trays and make the children eat it?"

A member of a special investigating unit in the United States said occult crime should be seen as the outcome of the decline in rationalism, disenchantment with traditional religion, the influence of Eastern religions, parapsychology, the popularity of pseudo-satanic heavy metal music and the proliferation of occult literature. He said cult investigators have found evidence of human behaviour so degraded and disgusting that any right thinking person would be sickened.

The ritual and the abuse of the satanic cultists is designed to terrify, confuse and, above all, exert power over the powerless. Many cases have been reported in Australia. Most victims present initially too terrified to tell the tale, which leaks out slowly, if at all, over long periods of time. Some abused children find refuge in the fragmentation of personality which enables them to switch the burden of intolerable suffering away from themselves and on to somebody else. Most victims have been warned that they will be killed, like the animal or even human sacrifices they say they have seen, if they tell. There are special "kindergarten threats" against small children who are told they have a bomb in their tummies and if they tell the bomb will explode. The problem of acceptance may be less implausibility than a case of the consequences of these practices being unbearable. Even to think of them is intolerable.

In Australia, where acceptance of the unacceptable lags behind America, and scepticism is still widespread, some authoritative voices match those coming out of the United States, claiming the horrors to be fact not fantasy. At the 11th Congress of the Australian and New Zealand Association of Psychiatry, Psychology and Law, held last year in Melbourne, a doctor of forensic medicine said criminal cults were providing a milieu for "evil" people to carry out disgusting and bizarre acts for which they would probably never be prosecuted. Dr Edward Ogden, of the Victoria Police Force office of forensic medicine, is doing an MA thesis on satanic cults. He told the congress about children having abortions, infants whose births were never
registered being used as human sacrifices, and adolescents being hired for sexual exploitation or used in sexual rituals. He reiterated the major contributor to the scepticism which greets allegations like those made by the Sydney mother; the offences are so bizarre people have difficulty believing them.

A Sydney policeman involved in satanic cult investigation has found a correlation between the high days of a satanic calendar and increased incidence of missing children. David Poulton, a retired federal policeman who has been investigating cults for 15 years and has interviewed 200 people, either cult victims or participants, says there are many covens, a high degree of child abuse, children abused with alcohol and drugs, and many child sacrifices. Children are kidnapped, babies born into covens, their demise needing no death certificate because their birth is never registered. A north coast clergyman and former military intelligence officer independently confirmed this view, though he stresses people should not become paranoid, but be on guard. Of society’s scepticism he said: “How does a two-year-old describe fellatio? You might say one child had a vivid imagination, but when there are five children in one group, ten more in Holland and five in Belgium, any rational thinking person would say we must act to protect them.”

To say it is one thing. To act quite another. Abused children are regularly denied justice in Australia’s courts and a successful case has yet to be mounted to prosecute the occult criminal. Indeed, the idea of a successful prosecution of ritual abusers is almost a contradiction in terms, given the difficulty of collating, accepting and presenting child testimony, the absence of eye-witness to the crime, the cleverness of the criminals, the terrorisation of the victims, and the fact that it is easier to turn victim into villain fabricating falsehoods than to take his or her word. Above all is the inappropriateness of the adversarial court system for hearing these cases.

The very language of the court militates against the abused child. A study conducted by Mark and Roslin Brennan of the Riverina Literacy Centre in Wagga reports that “the language barrier is being exploited for the benefit of the defendant rather than safeguarding ways in which children can best express their knowledge and understanding of what is happening to them”. Defence lawyers use tactics to undermine child witnesses during cross examination. Judges dismiss charges after arbitrary tests of a child’s competence to understand truth from falsehood. Do you know what perjury means, they ask a ten-year-old, when most adults would be hard pressed to define an acceptable answer in the intimidating atmosphere of the courtroom.

The Brennans report a nine-year-old who was asked by a defence counsel: “Well I know, I understand that you say you have been talking to her today but you see what I am asking you is this, that statement suggests that you said those things that you now say are wrong to the police. Now did you say it to the police or did you not?” The befuddled child, not surprisingly, answered: “I don’t know.” The study concludes that children are not used to questions being asked with the idea in mind that their responses can be manipulated for someone else’s benefit, and that the someone else is the alleged offender.

How much more difficult for a child to appear a credible witness when his or her testimony alleges being forced to eat excrement or cat food, or seeing a baby killed or a live chicken have its legs and wings cut off, or being anally penetrated by a man wearing a black pointed hood, or lain on an altar and forced to have oral sex. It takes enormous courage for the terrorised child to tell at all. The problem is not, writes Beatrix Campbell, “that the stranger in the park is being resurrected in a new moral panic.”

“How to credit that adults dress up and practise arcane and brutal ceremonies in this age.”

“The problem is that unless and until some communal resistance is mobilised on the side of children and their advocates then their disclosures will always be disavowed.”

As things stand, satanic rituals in a secular culture like Australia’s are not taken seriously, and anyone who respects children’s accounts of satanic or ritualised abuse are not taken seriously, either. There are special police investigating units, and glossy manuals of advice on child abuse investigation and management; evidence is accumulated and concern expressed. In fact, there should be a social outcry that these things are being done to our children, for at the self-interest level alone, they are storing up problems for the future at which we can only guess. But all too often, as Campbell says, the cries for help are not heeded. Any outcry there is tends to come from male columnists who warn, not against the terrorisation and brutalisation of our next generation, but against “witchhunts” which are only too ready to see “a male conspiracy to abuse the female, with every man guilty until proved innocent (preferably by castration”).

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Farewell to the SWEDISH MODEL

Sweden was the exemplar for the thinking labour movement in the 80s. Now, it seems, the model's come apart at the seams. Andrew Vandenberg and Geoff Dow observe the rise of economic austerity, Swedish style.

The last 12 months have not been good for Sweden's Social Democratic Party (SAP). In February, the government resigned after failing to obtain support in the riksdag (parliament) for a series of measures ostensibly designed to control inflation but which included a proposal to prohibit industrial action among public sector unions. Support for these measures had been garnered from the trade union leadership—to the surprise and consternation of those who recognised the departure from Swedish policy-making traditions. After a few weeks, the government was reinstated, with a different treasurer and diminished credibility.

When the party commenced its September 1990 congress, its self-proclaimed task was to convince itself that it had the vision and administrative acumen to guide the country and social democracy in the decade ahead. Party officials had prepared not only a platform but a much more substantial Program for the Nineties. This 285-page document purports to be as important as the 1944 Post War Program associated largely with Ernst Wigforss and Alva and Gunnar Myrdal, which legitimated the "industrial efficiency through social security" model that has since characterised the Swedish welfare state. Complete with quotations from Socrates, the program reiterates the labour movement's commitment to equality, full employment and collectivism and includes a detailed discussion of environmental, worklife, public sector and economic policy issues.

Despite the congress atmosphere, including red banners and a final rendition of The Internationale in Stockholm's Folketshus, the party failed to convince an increasingly hostile electorate or its increasingly disillusioned trade-union wing that it understands 'the Swedish model'.

The February crisis had an even more austere sequel in October. The government now seems willing to adopt the orthodox measures urged upon them by employers, the OECD and many of their own economic advisers. These emphatic policy reversals were quite unheralded at the party congress a month earlier. With hindsight it is apparent that they must have been long contemplated by the leadership group.
Paralleling the changes in post-Cold War Europe, Sweden is recharting its political and economic course towards an orthodox conformity with the world economy. The government's policies in recent years mirror the international trend towards liberalisation, deregulation, decentralisation and competition.

Publicly, SAP politicians continue to proclaim a commitment to full employment and equality, but the trade union movement is concerned that full employment and social welfare might be sacrificed in the near future. The party has departed from its former preparedness to guarantee, via institutions, high levels of economic activity, and therefore low levels of inequality. The industrial sector now predicts (or threatens) unemployment of 4% or more as it reorients its operations towards the new Europe. The government has announced a definite intention to seek membership of the EEC. It is presenting this, and the introduction of competition into the social welfare delivery system, as indications of its decisiveness, realism and flexibility. For the unions, the break-up of centralised wage negotiation forums, employer recalcitrance and the loss of influence on government policy represent a new political climate.

Domestic conditions in Sweden have become much less conducive to an exceptional set of standards and expectations than they were even as late as the 1970s. The Social Democrats, who have governed for 52 of the last 58 years, lag seriously in opinion polls. Even worse, the party has lost its inclination to contemplate distinctive programs of socialist reform, preferring to steer the party platform towards conventionality. Conservative voices, particularly the influential and aggressive employers' federation (SAF), have managed to seize the initiative in public debate from the social democrats and the trade unions. Such changes have occurred in the past five years or so after several decades of unusually coherent policy development by the labour movement which successfully combined high material standards with distributive equity.
Social democrats should be aware from history that a commitment to permanent full employment may provoke reaction and opposition, yet the politicians have been content to mouth slogans without discernible concern for their institutional requirements. Disappointment of supporters' expectations by mass parties of the Left is, of course, not a uniquely Swedish phenomenon, but the recent disregard of non-inflationary full employment has still angered many in the party, especially those like Gösta Rehn and Rudolf Meidner who have spent most of their adult lives refining a social democratic policy model which worked without resorting to repression or deflation.

Very little discussion of principles occurred at the party's congress. Instead, debate concentrated on several specific, controversial policy issues. The congress dismissed recommendations by the party executive on visits by nuclear-armed warships; it amended the executive's suggestions to adopt only vague compromise resolutions on childcare and on the dismantling of nuclear power; and it gave the leadership an open mandate to settle the controversies over advertising on broadcast television, over a bridge instead of a tunnel to Denmark and, perhaps most important of all, over membership of the European Community.

It is difficult to explain entirely the motivation and pressures behind this change of direction. Is the pertinent question: why have the Swedish Social Democrats abrogated past commitments? Or is it: why have neo-liberal ideas had such an impact on policy-making since the mid-1970s—first in the Anglo-saxon countries and now in Scandinavia? How do we explain the paradoxical propensity of contemporary government to produce policies that systematically undermine national economic capacity, while threatening in the process their own electoral survival? There is, after all, plenty of evidence that domestic policy priorities can affect domestic outcomes, for good or ill, regardless of what is happening in the international sphere. Sweden is not the only source of this evidence. There seems to be both more narrow and broader structural forces at work.

In Sweden the immediate reasons for what seem to be recent reversals of an effective model is the unexpected influence of conservative academic, governmental and international economists. Corporate pressure to join the European Community has been especially strident, challenging even the country's long-standing tradition of neutrality. Organisations like Volvo and L M Ericsson now employ more workers outside Sweden than inside and have lost the commitment they once had to a strong or stable Swedish domestic economy. They would be happy to shift production to Belgium or Brazil and rarely miss an opportunity to remind the government that social democratic health, employment and workplace standards exceed those in other locations.

Politically, the employers' new strategy is to eliminate what remains of a distinctive model in Sweden by refusing to engage in any form of policy co-ordination with the unions or the government. The central employer organisation (SAF) is even closing down its research apparatus and disposing of the data once used for wage bargaining. An altered domestic strategy is therefore being forged in the context of the increased internationalisation of the world economy, and the government's recent machinations reflect this new situation.

The labour movement's own strategy has been faltering for at least 20 years and perhaps, as Winton Higgins has maintained, since the 1950s. There has been little ideological leadership—and certainly none to match Ernst Wigforss' reformist Marxism—since the 1970s. In the 1950s and 1960s, the first generation of trade union economists were responsible for policies and institutions like the National Labour Market Board (AMS) for dealing with inflation, unemployment and wage solidarity problems. Since then, too little attention has been paid to the slowly festering tensions between the party and the movement on implementation of distinctive economic policies.

A major failure has been the under-development of industry and investment policy in Sweden which, as a result, is dangerously reliant on about 100 export-oriented engineering firms. Selective interventionism has operated in principle, especially with respect to employment policy, but investment and product development decisions are still made outside of public policy and with little regard to the national interest.

It is always difficult for leftist politicians to ignore the mainstream of policy advice and to pursue experimental policies opposed by the entire professional orthodoxy of economists. To do so involves the construction of an alternative accumulation strategy—which, in turn, means an entirely different pattern of institutional power and conflict. Swedish Social Democrats showed themselves, during the wage-earner funds campaign, to be unequal to such a struggle. During 1990 they lost whatever residual credibility they retained after their earlier routing by the employers.

By tradition, the SAP leaders take a strong interest in social democratic ideology. During a very polarised 1982 election campaign dominated by the wage earner funds issue former leader Olof Palmé proclaimed, "Yes, I'm a democratic socialist". But to the same question, the leader and prime minister since 1986, Ingvar Carlsson, subsequently responded, "I'm a social democrat and that's enough for me".

In the party's theoretical journal Tiden and again in one of his three major congress speeches, Carlsson has tried to put his own stamp on the party's ideology by arguing that social democracy cannot be regarded, fundamentally, as a matter of public administration and economic regulation. It must be a system of values: freedom, equality, fraternity and solidarity.

An eyebrow or two was raised at the congress when Carlsson attacked "the true believers, the supposedly real socialists". "Early on," he argued, "the social democrats realised that it was not who owned but who controlled the means of production that was decisive." He argued, therefore, that control over production has been constrained by legislation, a strong trade union movement and economic
policy. This view of a gradual expansion of democratic influence over the private owners of capital makes the SAP indistinguishable from the Swedish liberals; it is indicative of the party's apparent renunciation of a distinctive profile. Carlsson's view of social democracy is also at odds with the more explicitly socialist ambitions developed by the SAP-affiliated Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) in the mid-1970s.

The LO's democratic socialism evolved independently of the SAP's ideology during the 1950s and 1960s. A distinct LO position crystallised in 1976 when the union economists presented their wage earner funds proposal. The LO's argument was that ownership of capital could not be ignored by a movement trying to take a responsible approach to macroeconomic conditions. Collective ownership would change the unequal distribution of wealth and income, the anti-social and anti-democratic organisation of production and the chronic instability of economic activity. This stance challenged employers' rights to such an extent that they began a campaign to dismantle the Swedish model.

Whereas Palme tolerated some inconsistencies between the SAP's rhetoric and its actual policies, Carlsson and his confidants have sought greater correspondence between the government's actions and the party's ideology—perhaps to appease the business community internationally. But the Prime Minister's arguments against trade-offs between freedom, equality and efficiency do stake out a strong rhetorical position opposed to liberals—perhaps largely for the sake of quelling disquiet in the ranks.

The party's failure of resolve has arisen at a time when a number of independent issues have forced themselves onto the political agenda. While not uncontroversial, these are not at the core of social democracy. Nonetheless, how they are being handled by the party is affecting the way in which the government itself is able to define and redefine broader ideological matters.

The labour movement is deeply divided, for example, on the issue of nuclear power. By obligation to its members in the energy-intensive forestry and paper mill industries, the LO is wary of the government's sympathy for calls to close all 13 existing nuclear power plants by 2010. In 1985, after Chernobyl, the government declared that the closures should be completed by 2010 and that the oldest plants would cease operation by about 1995. Furthermore, the government also undertook not to allow any increase in the country's dependence on imported oil and gas, any increase in carbon dioxide pollution, or the damming of the last two wild rivers in the country.

A few days before the Gulf war started, the prime minister and the leaders of the liberal and centre parties announced that they had reached a compromise on the vexed issue of when to start closing down the nuclear power plants. They agreed on greater spending for research into alternative energy sources and they agreed that—one way or another—Swedish electricity prices must retain parity with international prices. The details disappeared, of course, in the flood of dramatic war news so it is difficult to gauge whether the issue has gone into hibernation or whether voters and unionists worried about their jobs will support the government for its decisiveness.

Important divisions remain too in a policy arena which has become a crucial indicator of the social democrats' commitment to the "folkhem"—a powerful and longstanding image of the welfare state as 'the people's home'. Parental leave and childcare are important parts of the Swedish welfare system that have been somewhat mishandled by the SAP recently. In 1985, the government promised childcare places ("dagis") for all by 1991. However, Sweden's birth rate has jumped to the highest in the West and female participation in the labour market continues to increase. Chronic shortages of trained personnel in the major cities as well as local government budget constraints frustrated the high expectations.

The SAP originally promised to solve the problem of childcare by extending the system of public insurance for parental leave from work. After a volte-face, the government eventually decided to lower the school-entry age, transfer seven-year-olds from the dagis to the schools and so create sufficient places for one and two-year-olds.

Notwithstanding this rather clever solution, the debate over childcare seems to indicate a reluctance by social democracy to continue the process of socialising family responsibilities. The issue should have been an easy one for Swedish Social Democrats to resolve: they have, after all, an enviable record on women's wages, women's participation in the workforce and the extension of societal responsibility for care of the elderly and children. The upshot of the prolonged party debate and tensions between central and local governments (which provide most welfare and childcare services) is that electorally significant numbers of working parents have been provided with ready access to high quality day care centres. But there is also a lingering distrust about the social democrats' willingness or ability to honour election promises.

Despite all the policy preoccupations of the moment, the integrity of the social democratic model stands or falls on its claims to have a distinctive and successful approach to industry and the economy. It is now possible to argue that economic rationalism has affected economic policymaking in Sweden in a way that permanently impairs social democratic arrangements. Kjell-Olof Feldt is no longer treasurer, but his endeavour to purge the party of what he saw as its ideological anachronistic sacred cows continues.

What has differentiated the Swedish approach to full employment and equality from lip-service acceptance of similar goals by labour parties in the Anglo-saxon world has been the Swedes' preparedness and ability to translate the ideals into effective policies and institutions. The difficulty of the struggle, over many decades, makes the Social Democrats' current retreats all the more disheartening.

Inequalities of income always happen in times of unemployment and it is at such times that orthodox economic advice can readily stampede governments into contradic-
tery policy positions which only make things worse. Full employment demands what Ernst Wigforss, social democratic activist from 1904 to 1974 and treasurer (1926, 1932-49) referred to as 'open-ended intervention'. In practice, this meant counter-cyclical macro-economic policies in the 1930s, separate institutions to facilitate relocation or retraining of displaced employees in the 1950s, and a commitment by the trade unions to organised restructuring of the economy all through the post-war period.

Swedish economic policy would never have become a 'model' if the highly unionised and centrally organised workforce had not been so influential in economic policy debates. Veteran strategists Rehn and Meidner still figure prominently, though joylessly, in discussions on how to secure full employment without inflation. Their efforts led to the unions' adoption in the late 1950s of a 'wages policy of solidarity'. Uniform increases, calculated by reference to the profitability of firms in the most profitable sector, were to be paid to all workers according to the principle 'equal pay for equal work'. Firms with a low capacity to pay would be forced out of business. Profitable firms, whose workforce exercised considerable 'market restraint' in wage negotiations, were to prosper and so provide a private market impetus to structural change. Employers participated in these arrangements in order to avert government involvement in incomes policy and to reduce the strike rate.

The Rehn-Meidner model was successful in producing an efficient private sector and distributive equality because unions were able to insist that the government adopt supportive social welfare policies and establish institutions in the employment and industrial relations arenas. Essential, too, are high taxes and the associated non-discretionary incomes which have been able, especially since the 1970s, to 'decommodify' (that is, disentangle from market dependence) many of the services that contribute to Sweden's living standards.

The 'Swedish model' should therefore be characterised as social welfare universalism—that is, generous entitlements to all citizens, not just the needy—and specific, selective, interventions in the economy. Its opposite is the 'Anglo-saxon model': targeted and discriminatory welfare supports with indiscriminate assistance to industry usually unrelated to performance.

Employers since the 1970s they have undermined the central elements of the Swedish model. For example, they have used the profit windfalls they secured as a result of the 1982 devaluation to bid up wages for highly skilled on highly favoured workers. There is now a worrying profit-led, wage-drift inflation of around 10%. SAF has changed its function, since the wage-earner funds campaign, from an industrial relations negotiating body to an anti-socialist propaganda machine.

Public scepticism about the Social Democrats' economic policy performance derives as much from internal labour movement squabbles as from the highly publicised breakdown of the centralised negotiation processes. In response to complaints from employers that Swedish wage and employment conditions cost too much, and to their threats to reinvest, or even relocate, elsewhere in Europe, LO has recently advocated successive currency devaluation to restore competitiveness for Swedish-based producers. Treasurer Larsson then accused the LO economists of abandoning the fight against inflation. This was ironic, since it was LO that had given the slogan 'hate inflation' considerable prominence in the 1950s. The government position is now to urge, in threatening tones, 'the labour market partners' to accept responsibility for stabilisation but without a supporting wages policy. This situation led, in December 1990, to a stinging public attack by LO's chairperson Stig Malm on the government's approach in general and on the treasurer in particular: Malm was forced to apologise but then received criticism from within the unions for his apparent accession to the government view.

The employers pointedly abstain from any discussion, let alone binding agreement, with LO. So they reap instead the propaganda rewards that accrue from their own non-involvement. LO's authority is weakening as many of its constituent unions and their members are wooed away from centrally decreed restraints by employers' individualised offers. Subsequent demands for catch-up increases from other employees then exacerbate the problems that any solidarity wage policy must address. The unions know that pronouncements they might make along these lines would be ineffective because, given high profits, individual employees can easily bargain for individual wage increases and ignore their own organisation.

The impossibility of expecting unions to bear responsibility for profit-led inflation is precisely the 'old problem' that Gösta Rehn and Rudolf Meidner addressed in the 1950s. It has returned in the 1980s and 1990s partly because the government failed to implement the 'profit squeeze' aspects of the model even in its heyday and partly because the government's acceptance of a distinctive approach to economic stabilisation has always lagged behind the LO's.

It should be remembered that most of these problems due to the departure of Swedish policy from the Swedish model, not because it is following the model. Policy never has followed the model, completely. As Rudolf Meidner recently said: it always was difficult, there always was internal conflict, the party always held back public debate. Perhaps there needs to be a period of electoral opposition before LO is able to reassert itself; but it seems unlikely that Ingrid Carlsson's command of social democratic principle is sufficient to allow him to avert the slide towards liberalism and impending electoral loss. Full employment remains a genuine achievement in Sweden, but there are few left who remember how it was done.

The farce has become tragic because there was once a coherent alternative to economists' cynicism: it was called the Swedish model.

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Self-determination has been at the heart of Aboriginal aspirations. As a slogan, it echoes through the twentieth century. But Garth Nettheim argues that sovereignty is rarely defined, and often misunderstood.

The term ‘sovereignty’ has several technical legal meanings as well as a less specific general or political meaning. When aboriginal people in Australia, or elsewhere, assert their sovereignty they may be using the phrase in either a legal or a political sense or in a sense that represents some amalgam of the two. Communication becomes difficult if those attempting dialogue use words in different senses. The same sort of problems beset references to ‘treaties’ and discussions about the claim of indigenous peoples to ‘self-determination’. These problems arise in debates about law and policy, at the national and the international levels.

Peoples have been encroaching on other peoples’ territories for millenia but it is perhaps sufficient to go back only 500 years to the rise of the modern state, the beginnings of European colonial expansion—1992 marks the 500th anniversary of Columbus’ ‘discovery’ of ‘The New World’—and the birth of modern international law.

Themes emerged five centuries ago about the relationships between colonisers and indigenous peoples that continue to resound today. Satisfactory resolution seems as elusive today as then.

The fundamental question is, inevitably, by what right a people from one land take over territories occupied by other peoples. In modern international law such conduct is clearly unlawful in terms of the United Nations Charter, Article 2(4), which states:

All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

While this prohibition has been honoured more in the breach than in the observance, it is the basis for the UN Security Council’s response to Iraq’s takeover of Kuwait. However, in earlier centuries colonial expansion was a matter of “might is right”, and any international dispute tended to revolve only around the question of which European power had the superior right to colonise a particular territory and its people. Nonetheless, questions of moral and legal entitlement were always present, even within the colonial power.

In a period of colonial expansion there is no shortage of people ready to find justifications. The sheer self-interest in the acquisition of territory and resources may be dressed
up in references to the Christian mission of conversion. This will often be linked with a denigration of the existing inhabitants. Such a denigration of the colonised peoples may refer to their ‘primitive’ forms of land use compared to such ‘advanced’ practices as cultivation or forest clearance or mining. It may refer to ‘barbaric’ or simply non-Christian beliefs or practices. It is not only Christians who may denigrate those of other faiths and lifestyles, as can be seen in more recent non-European examples of imperial expansion in places such as Tibet, West Papua and East Timor.

The classic debate along these lines took place in 1550-1551. The Valladolid disputation was convened by King Charles V of Spain and the Council of the Indies in an attempt to resolve the continuing contention within Spain over the morality and legality of the wars of conquest against the Indians. The case for the colonialists was presented by Juan Gines de Sepulveda. The case for the Indianists was presented by Bartolome de las Casas. Las Casas refuted Sepulveda’s several justifications for conquest and insisted that the political and legal sovereignty and jurisdiction of the Indian nations had to be respected. He was not, of course, successful in averting the impact of Spanish colonialism, but his writings (and those of his contemporary, Francisco de Vitoria) represent a strand in thinking in international law from that early period which is of continuing relevance in debates about sovereignty, self-determination and indigenous rights today. In particular, the colonialist device of denigrating the colonised was strongly repudiated.

Denigration may go even further. It may extend to denying the inhabitants the status of occupiers of the land. Hence the statements, common in European juristic writings of the 17th and 18th centuries, that peoples such as hunter-gatherers who neither till the soil nor live in settled villages, do not ‘occupy’ or ‘possess’ the land at all, but simply wander across it. However, the practice of European States, including Britain, during this period was to acknowledge the political status of indigenous peoples and to negotiate treaties to regulate their relationships with them.

Cook’s instructions from the Admiralty were that he should obtain “the consent of the natives’, if there be any, to establish “convenient stations”. But discussions about Australia in the period between Cook’s first voyage and the departure of the First Fleet proceeded to a large extent on the belief that Australia was literally uninhabited. Sir Joseph Banks’ testimony to the House of Commons’ Select Committee on Transportation surmised that there were thin populations on the eastern coastline but that the inte-
rior was quite empty. On the basis of this misinformation, and also on the basis of notions of cultural superiority, the English treated the land as terra nullius—land belonging to no one—and regarded themselves as entitled to take over the territory and to settle the land without regard to any rights of the prior inhabitants. The contrast with contemporaneous British policy in North America, New Zealand and elsewhere was quite marked.

Soon after settlement in Australia, it became quite clear that all parts of the country were in fact populated, and that particular peoples had very strong attachments to particular territories—sufficiently strong to induce them to engage in prolonged guerrilla warfare in their defence. By the 1830s the British Colonial Office deemed it appropriate to recognise prior Aboriginal rights, specifically in regard to the settlement of South Australia, but it proved too late in the day to alter the assumptions and practices of the colonies themselves.

By the middle and later 19th century, European justifications for colonialism and the denigration of indigenous peoples were reaching their most extreme form. Even in the lands where treaties had been negotiated, the fortunes of the indigenous people were little better than in Australia. In the United States, Canada and New Zealand indigenous peoples argue that their pre-existing rights and their treaty rights have been ignored or eroded by the settler societies, and they continue to press claims in terms of sovereignty, self-determination and self-government.

Increasingly, governments in these several countries are beginning to acknowledge the proposition advanced four and a half centuries ago by Las Casas, that the relationship between colonising peoples and indigenous peoples has to be perceived in political-legal terms. There are, in addition, moves (also echoing Las Casas but currently resisted by national governments) towards treating the relationship as one to be defined by international law.

By the early part of the 20th century a Eurocentric conception had evolved which perceived international law as concerned almost exclusively with the mutual rights and obligations of States and their governments. The States themselves seldom coincided with peoples or nations but frequently divided them, or grouped various nations and peoples within their borders. How the governments of those States dealt with their own subject peoples was regarded, with few exceptions, as of no concern to international law.

Since the end of World War Two the scope of international law has dramatically broadened to incorporate a concept of human rights. The Charter of the United Nations, in Article 1, defines the purposes of the organisation as including not only the maintenance of international peace and security but also respect for equal rights and self-determination of peoples as conducive to friendly relations among nations and “promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion...”. The subsequent development of international law on human rights has been through such instruments as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a series of treaties, conventions and covenants ratified by the governments of many states.

These new international standards, together with the (still rudimentary) implementation procedures, have been of value in addressing some of the claims of indigenous peoples, but not all of them. In particular, international human rights law has proved inadequate to meet ‘group’ or ‘collective’ claims advanced by indigenous peoples in respect of culture, territory and autonomy, particularly the autonomy claims. The term ‘autonomy’ here refers to any sort of status under which a people have effective political control over the matters that concern them. The word ‘sovereignty’ is sometimes used in this popular sense.

Whatever popular meaning that the term ‘sovereignty’ may have had or may still have, it now has a quite technical meaning in international law as denoting

...the basic international legal status of a State that is not subject, within its territorial jurisdiction, to the governmental, executive, legislative, or judicial jurisdiction of a foreign State or to foreign law other than public international law.

Within contemporary international relations the government of the Commonwealth of Australia is regarded as having sovereignty, in relation to other sovereign States. Can a rival or competing sovereignty in this specific legal sense be claimed on behalf of Australia’s indigenous peoples? Such a claim was argued in Coe v Commonwealth (1979) but the High Court held that such a proposition was not arguable. Justice Jacobs pointed out that such issues are not matters of municipal [ie, national] law but of the law of nations [ie, international law] and are not cognisable in a court exercising jurisdiction under that sovereignty which is sought to be challenged.

Can such a claim be argued in the International Court of Justice? The problem here is that to be entitled to argue a case in that court you have, generally speaking, to be a State. Hence, a classic “Catch 22”: the only forum that may adjudicate whether you are a sovereign State requires, before it even listens to you, that you be a sovereign State! There are slightly better prospects to argue a non-rival sovereignty or sovereignties within the overall sovereignty of the Commonwealth of Australia. Indeed, the notion is already familiar within our federal system in which the six states claim to be sovereign entities, subject to the Commonwealth Constitution.

United States law has long acknowledged a subordinate sovereignty in individual Indian nations in terms first articulated in the 1820s and 1830s by Chief Justice Marshall. They are subject to the authority of the United States government but they have a right of internal self-government and a degree of sovereign immunity, especially with regard to matters arising on Indian lands.

In New Zealand, Maori argue that the proper interpretation of the 2nd Article of the Treaty of Waitangi, 1840,
preserves internal sovereignty or self-government to the Maori. In Australia a similar proposition has most frequently taken the form of claims for a degree of immunity from the jurisdiction of settler courts. Such claims have been asserted since the early years of European settlement. While some courts were ready to accept such arguments (eg, Willis J in Bonjon) the view that has generally prevailed has been that of the Full Supreme Court of New South Wales in **R v Murrell** (1836), followed in **R v Wedge** (1976), that Aboriginal people were fully subject to the introduced legal system. But the issue continues to be raised.

The word 'treaty' is another term that once had a quite general meaning which included any sort of agreement. In modern times, however, these other usages have come to be regarded as obsolete and the term is confined to formal agreement between two or more independent States. It could be argued that the act of a colonising government in concluding a treaty with an indigenous nation represents an acknowledgment of the independent status of such indigenous nation, of its legal capacity to enter into such an agreement and, hence, of its sovereignty. Many of the earlier North American treaties, for example, took the form of treaties for peace and friendship, for alliance, or for trade, and clearly acknowledged not only the capacity of the indigenous nation to enter the treaty but also the continuation thereafter of that independent nation status.

However, the treaties characteristic of the 19th and 20th centuries made provision for non-indigenous land settlement and for governmental rights of the colonising power. If the act of entering such a treaty was an exercise of sovereign power, was the effect of the treaty to relinquish sovereignty? The critical fact is that such treaties have fallen to be interpreted by the courts of the settler society, and the clear trend has been to deny such treaties any international status whatsoever; ie. one party to the agreement has used its institutions to restrict the original meaning, as understood by the indigenous nation. This has been the pattern in the United States, in Canada, and in New Zealand. In Australia, where treaties have been conspicuously absent, modern proposals to negotiate some sort of instrument of reconciliation have tended to avoid any use of the word 'treaty' (though Prime Minister Hawke has not hesitated, on occasion, to use the term).

Self-determination is a relatively modern concept in international law, though only in the sense that it connotes the right to recover political autonomy; conceptually, it is clearly linked with much older principles that peoples ought not to be deprived of such autonomy.

The right of self-determination finds expression in the Charter of the United Nations and in the two International Covenants that developed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into treaty form: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Both Covenants have an identical Article 1 which commences:
All peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development....

This was the primary basis, especially after 1960, for the massive process of decolonisation, presided over by the UN’s Decolonisation Committee, whereby former European colonies in Asia, Africa and elsewhere progressively achieved independence as sovereign States. But one major category of colonised people who have not enjoyed the benefits of decolonisation are those indigenous peoples subordinated within the borders of independent States. United Nations practice has been to confine the right to self-determination to people in the ‘classic’ colonial context of governance from a distant European power. Anything beyond that is perceived as a potential threat to the territorial integrity of established States.

That threat has been overstated because, in the heyday of Third World decolonisation, ‘self-determination’ came to be regarded as virtually synonymous with ‘independence’. But ‘self-determination’ is a process; it does not necessarily indicate one particular outcome of that process, independence. It contemplates the right of a “people” to make a free choice about their political-legal relationship with a State. A variety of relationships may be possible which meet the legitimate needs of the indigenous people ranging from full integration, at one end of the spectrum, to full independence, at the other. The latter may be politically unachievable in many cases, and certainly faces major political difficulties in Australia. But a variety of other forms of autonomy may be achievable within the overall sovereignty of the State. It is quite likely that the future will see some creative development of the concept of self-determination in a way that may serve to meet the aspirations of many indigenous peoples.

In many States where indigenous peoples have been colonised, the settler society has attempted to deal with them in a variety of ways. Extermination has been tried, and the more modern techniques of destruction of habitat or relocation have similar consequences. Assimilation has often been pursued, generally without success. Governments have frequently treated the problems of marginalised indigenous peoples as problems of welfare, to be dealt with by funds and programs and bureaucrats—also usually without success. The application of human rights standards, nationally and internationally, has produced some benefits, but problems persist in the relationship between the indigenous people and the settler society. National governments are beginning to acknowledge that the issues have to be addressed in fundamental terms that go to the legal and political basis of that relationship.

This became evident in Canada in the 1982 “constitutionalisation” of aboriginal and treaty rights and in the subsequent attempt, through a series of First Ministers’ Conferences, to define an aboriginal right of self-government. It emerged in New Zealand with the statutory underpinning, since 1975, of the Treaty of Waitangi and the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal as a forum for hearing Maori claims. It has even been evident in Australia in discussion about a treaty or makarrata or instrument of reconciliation and in some of the rhetoric about the new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). All these governments, however, continue to view the relationship as one which is to be defined as a matter of national law so as to leave the peoples ultimately at the mercy of national governments.

Indigenous peoples are arguing strongly that their relationship to the enveloping State should be treated as a matter of international law. The principal forum in which such claims are being developed is the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations which, since its establishment in 1982, has opened its deliberations to indigenous peoples from around the world. The working group is in the process of drafting a Universal Declaration on Indigenous Rights. The current draft contains a number of strong statements about the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination even if within the context of a non-indigenous State. Indigenous claims of this nature are unlikely to be completely palatable to States, but it is quite feasible that international law may well develop to the point where there are reasonably firm standards to meet indigenous aspirations, together with some form of international monitoring of State conduct.

For some indigenous peoples such developments will be insufficient. They will continue to seek full decolonisation and recognition of their independent nationhood. The people of East Timor, for example, have shown their persistence in resisting the recent substitution of a new Indonesian colonisation for an ancient and retreating Portuguese colonialism. The Six Nation Iroquois Confederacy in North America has continually asserted its international sovereign status.

For Australia’s indigenous peoples, the Torres Strait Islanders may have a stronger chance of achieving independence through existing decolonisation arrangements (which are, arguably, too restrictive), being geographically separate from Australia and having been subject to relatively minor non-Islander settlement. For mainland Aboriginal peoples, however, achievement of a complete, independent sovereignty faces considerable political and procedural problems. But some measure of sovereignty in a popular sense, some degree of self-determination and self-government, is not only feasible, it is essential for the recovery of Aboriginal communities from the impact of two centuries of continuing colonisation.

It will take a major act of creative statesmanship for Australian governments to sit down with representatives of the indigenous peoples in an attempt to negotiate a redefinition of the political and legal basis of the relationship. But without such an attempt the relationship will continue to cause grave difficulties for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and, indeed, to Australian society as a whole.

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1. Encyclopaedia of Public International Law, Vol 10 (North Holland, Amsterdam, 1987), 297 at 408.
At a time of confused direction in the Australian arts, the arrival of a new, half-a-million-dollar theatre company devoted to the works of Shakespeare has not been received with unfettered enthusiasm.

Is the Bell Shakespeare Company part of a retreat from the commitment by major theatre companies putting on 50% or so local product when there’s little new writing—and when the recession anticipates an audience preference for the big and the conservative? Do we need more Shakespeare anyway? And if we do need the Bard, then in what style should he be played...Ozzified, poetic, highly interpreted, or what?

To begin, some personal bias. It is hard to imagine too much Shakespeare in an English-speaking country. It is not, I believe, a sign of cringe to delve into plays which offer a wealth of interpretation suitable for any time or place. Of course, we need to tell our own stories too. But it’s significant that one of the most memorable successes of the Adelaide Lighthouse Company’s two-year existence was Neil Armfield’s localised, beach-side Twelfth Night. Perth’s revitalised Swy Company plans a Broome-based multi-racial production of the same play later this year. And feeding the Bard into such local works as Michael Gow’s Away and David Malouf’s Blood Relations adds a dimension to them, though it relies on a familiarity with the original, which can only come from a greater exposure to the original than is offered at present.

Not that John Bell is seeking to emulate either the Royal Shakespeare Company—with which he acted under Peter Hall in the 60s—or the English Shakespeare Company—currently touring—in imposing strong interpretations on his chosen texts. Not for him a Romanian setting for Coriolanus or a magical garden for The Dream. It’s almost as though he wants to take us back to basics in Australian relations with Shakespeare. “Our aim is to rediscover the shock value and direct earthy colloquy which the original productions had with the audience”, he states in his outline for the BSC.

This outline played a major part in establishing the company. It brought him initially together with businessman Tony Gilbert who’d been seeking ways of boosting Shakespeare in Australia and who...
was linked to Bell by the Elizabethan Theatre Trust which now manages the company. It went on to win the financial support of an amazing 85 individual donors who, in the characteristic American style of supporting the arts, have given half of the necessary money to a project the only return for which will be the warm feeling of cultural contribution. It also wooed the more hard-nosed sponsorship of Natwest Australia Bank (seeking to link itself to British quality) and Daikyo Australia (which may be said to have image problems in Queensland, where it is the largest Japanese investor in the leisure industry, and is facing investigations by the Foreign Investment Review Board and the Trade Practices Commission). Finally, the outline won the imprimatur of the Shakespeare Globe Centre in Australia.

It took John Bell and the Trust just six months to set it all up. Bell himself has enormous personal standing—he chose the perfect moment to return from the English stage and found the famous Nimrod Company. This was Sydney's stake in the Australian theatre revolution of the early 70s, offering local works in a variety of popular styles and lively versions of the classics, including Shakespeare. Since Nimrod folded Bell has maintained his reputation as the actor most likely to make sense of great parts from Cyrano to Arturo Ui to Prospero.

The Trust is now doing what it was set up to do 30 years ago—before it was waylaid into over-optimistic entrepreneurial ventures like Sugar Babies and Lennon. In the same way that it brought business expertise to the nascent Australian Opera, Ballet and various orchestras before launching them as established entities, it has used its political, social and business contacts to bring the BSC to life. "We're pretty battle hardened," says Trust director and BSC Chairman, Adam Salzer, "aggressively cheese-paring in administration and able to call on a network of deeply caring, influential people. John, who's fabulous at raising money, was able to bring in the Labor lawyers like Wran, Whitlam and Horler, who are part and parcel of his background.

"But it's hard work...lunching and dining for weeks on end. The US way of fund-raising is so cold...it's hard not to cheapen a product, especially in a buyers' market.

"But we knew we couldn't ask any government for half a million dollars without depriving other arts bodies. Government, anyway, gives too little and expects too much...But, having got an unsubsidised company, we're marketing it differently too - aiming to get two thirds of the audience from 'events-based' shows like Aida and Carmen, the arena operas."
Is this the way John Bell really wanted it? Playing on a raised circular stage in the centre of a hot tent with lousy sightlines and no scenery to a couple of rows of punters paying $45 to subsidise the rest at $29, and kids expected to stump up $19? Can this be the "widespread and unconventional audience" that he set out to find in his outline—and can this audience be found anyway by a company which also has to be a business?

The BSC will certainly have to raise more money in the future to subsidise seats on the small town and western suburbs visits it plans; and, more importantly, to find the million dollars needed for the demountable Globe-style theatre which has always been an essential part of Bell's dream for achieving the intimacy and touring capacity needed to present Shakespeare in his chosen style.

And what of the first two productions—Hamlet and The Merchant of Venice? It has to be said right away that they were personal triumphs for John Bell. If all his actors came anywhere near matching his Shylock, then he'd be home and hosed. And in his direction of Hamlet, I believe he has laid down the pattern for his overall goal of the "theatre of thought-out words". Hamlet is a detective story in which a teenage Hamlet struggles to find his way through the complexities of human relations and the mysteries of politics. Actor John Poison is rarely beautiful; he's acne and wholehearted, suffering with his character, and only lapsing occasionally in that huge part from thinking his way through lines that so often are merely spouted.

Apart from Bell's Shylock, the attempt in the Merchant at simple story-telling had just enough interpretive graftings by director Carol Woodrow to reveal the flaws in the play without sweeping me along with the plot. What is the "love" between Antonio (the merchant) and Bassanio; and why is the latter described as a "soldier and a scholar", yet dresses like a pop star and acts like a gigolo? And why does Susan Lyons's delightful, intelligent Portia fall for him and put herself completely in his charge? And what was the Jew's daughter, Jessica, saying about her feelings of guilt over her father's flesh-craving behaviour or at having deserted him by wearing a bewildering series of lycra cycling outfits?

Shylock is just so watchable that the others hardly need to be on stage. From his entrance, eased by Hatton Garden Jewish jokes, through the episodes of Christian intolerance emphasised by the loss of Jessica (and his ducats) to a gentile, to the opening of the court case, one follows him with inexorable logic. And then - shades of Saddam Hussein - when one expects him to pull back, he calmly produces a knife, a whetstone and the scales to weigh Antonio's pound of flesh, and one realises that those myopic glasses there is a man one doesn't understand. And as he sidles crablike and broken offstage between pillars of Christian hatred, one is incapable of weighing him on the normal scales of justice - as one is incapable of judging so much of the morality in this play. Perhaps that's what Shakespeare intended - and perhaps that justifies the Bell Shakespeare Company's continued existence?

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The Bell Shakespeare Company visits Melbourne's Athenaeum Theatre (the city's impoverished condition did not encourage the full tented version) from 6 March, and Brisbane—in the tent on the riverbank by QPAC—from 3 April. Every capital is promised a visit during the first three seasons. Negotiations are already in train with Japan for a tour in 1992.

JEREMY ECCLES is a Sydney film and theatre critic.
Almost alone among the chief intellectuals of the old GDR, Heiner Müller refused to accept the ruling myths. Paul Hockenos spoke to him in his Berlin flat.

1 990 was a rough year for intellectuals in the now-defunct German Democratic Republic (GDR). However curbed under the dictatorship, culture functioned as one of the only mediums for social critique and protest.

During the fleeting days of last autumn, the population and its artists appeared united on the streets of Leipzig and East Berlin. But the hopes of the country’s foremost intellectuals were quickly dashed. The outpouring of resentment against society’s privileged elite shocked the painters and authors, directors and poets. They retreated to their desks, ideals shattered.

Even for arch-sceptic Heiner Müller, known as the GDR’s Beckett for his grim, apocalyptic plays, the depth of embitterment proved a rude awakening. A notorious outsider, the playwright stayed mostly on the sidelines while the Christa Wolfes and Barbel Bohleys petitioned their visions of a new society. But when the most celebrated dramatist-director since Bertolt Brecht made his appearance on the revolution’s stage, he fared no better than the rest. Before he had stumbled through a text prepared for him by the Initiative for Independent Trade Unions at a November rally, the crowd booed him.

Müller’s reticent political debut was as out of character as it was ill-timed. Although loose and congenial in the confines of his East Berlin flat, the 61-year-old writer is obviously uneasy with the crowds of critics and fans that now swamp him in theatre lobbies. In his output of plays, poems and essays over three decades, the tragedy of cultural elitism and revolutionary utopias have been dominant themes. In press interviews, the often caustic Müller has come down hard on the naivety of the Wolfes and Bohleys.

"One aspect of State policy was to drive a wedge of privilege between the intellectuals and the population," Müller explains in his raspy voice. "You may travel, the other may not. The privileged cannot speak for the under-privileged."

Last autumn, the people who had been silenced for 40 years finally had the chance to speak for themselves. As usual, he argues, the intellectuals tried to formulate goals too early in the name of the people. "They always want to build something, when first the masses must tear it down," he adds.
On the 14th floor of a uniform cement tower block, the author’s flat looks hardly like the abode of privilege. Toppled stacks of books and aging newspapers lie scattered across the yellow-brown lino floor. Muller grins. He lights another 8-inch cigar. An open bottle of scotch sits on the kitchen table. He locates his guest—a clean glass. In his standard attire of a black T-shirt, jeans and polyester jacket, he reflects on his own complex relationship with the GDR. As the son of a textile worker imprisoned in 1933 for his work with the Social Democrats, the young Müller first saw the socialist state through the eyes of his anti-fascist upbringing. “I was raised in one dictatorship and then came the anti-dictatorship,” he says. “It was the liberation from ‘the other’, but I couldn’t identify with that system either.”

After a short stint as a journalist for the weekly *Sonnattag* and *New German Literature* journal, he concentrated on his creative work from the early 1950s. The 27-year-old writer’s first plays reflect his own internal struggle over the goals and the realities of the new state. As his tone became more abrasive, his works were banned for their “perspectiveless defeatism.” In 1961, he was finally expelled from the Writers Union. Four years later, his wife and co-worker, the poet Inge Müller, committed suicide.

Even during the hardest years of Stalinism and neo-Stalinism, intellectuals like Müller enjoyed a modicum of freedom to write and produce. Then, as now, the dramatist drew heavily on the classics and, above all, upon Shakespeare. It was impossible to write a piece directly about Stalinism in the early 60s, he explains above the city din. “One needed these models when one really wanted to pose questions.” In this way, theatre had an immediate, vital function in the GDR. Pieces may have been censored or banned, but when one finally got two or three hours of stage time, it was free. It was similar in Shakespeare’s day, he contends, with the monarchy and the proletariat: “For the proletariat theatre was actually the first attempt at democracy.”

Yet for Müller, the relationship between theatre and democracy, between politics and culture, is far from clear cut. “The problem with theatre is that it is allowed everything and can do nothing,” he grins again. Smack in the middle of the heated debate over the role of art and the artist in the new Germany, the maverick finds himself still at odds with the establishment. The playwright scorns the idea that ‘high culture’ or the fashionable concept of a German Kulturnation can somehow prevent a relapse into the political atrocities of the past. In fact, he maintains, high culture itself is deeply complicit in the legacy of modern barbarism. “As long as freedom is grounded on violence and art on privilege,” he argues, “art works will have the tendency to serve as prisons, the masterpieces themselves complicit with the ruling power.”

The 80s brought Müller from relative obscurity to the forefront of European theatre. Since the wall’s removal, his pieces are the most played in Germany, running to overflow crowds from Freiburg to Rostock. Muller’s subject seems an unlikely one for box office records: his problematic is history, above all German history. The condition of the Deutsche Miserere and the continuity of tragedy and violence in history thread their way as common themes through every play. His works deconstruct the modern condition, exposing the conscious and unconscious structures that have perpetuated themselves from medieval Prussia to the newly united Germany. Like an archaeologist, the director-writer uneathers layer after layer of ossified lies and silence. At the bottom, the structures of modern socialism, as well as those of post-industrial capitalism, rest on the same foundations that justified Auschwitz and Bergen Belsen.

From his earliest pieces, Müller’s work has been a polemic with the master of socialist drama himself, Brecht. In the 1956 play *The Wage Squeezers*, he juxtaposes the new-found ‘socialist consciousness’ of the party-truth worker in the late 40s to the resistance he meets from his former Nazi colleagues. The piece, done roughly in the style of Brecht’s didactic theatre, won him the stage’s highest prizes in the GDR. But the regime soon soured on the playwright’s increasingly bleak evaluation of the East German state. His art’s form moved steadily away from the Brechtian model, becoming ever more surreal, obtuse, fragmented.

While his focus shifted from the building of German socialism to the larger dilemmas of contemporary Europe, the German questions have always served as Müller’s reference point. “There never was a Zero Hour and there never will be,” comments Müller from behind his thick, black-framed glasses. The West German politicians are peddling the fiction that the ‘post-war’ chapter of their history has finally come to an end. “Politics survives on dispossession and forgetting,” he elaborates. “The Federal Republic is simply using the 40 years of the GDR to bury the 12 of the Nazi era. But Auschwitz existed and will always exist—whether the Germans want to forget it or not.”

Müller’s views on politics and culture must be difficult to reconcile with his new position as president of the still-East Berlin Academy of Arts. For decades compromised with the cultural policies of the old regime, the institution looked hard for a clean name to put it back on its feet. “I had only one argument against it: I don’t have the slightest desire to take this post. And that’s no argument,” explains the freshly-elected president. The new chief wants to convert the former bastion of provincialism into an international organisation with a rotating presidency occupied by a non-German. No less contrary to his decades-long themes, he hopes to cultivate a “state and ideology free space” where innovation in all the parts may occur.

Müller’s unlikely position is, in fact, the ultimate statement of his art’s form. Neither his plays nor his politics offer the ready-made solutions that people await so eagerly from their public figures. Müller’s dialectic of contradiction is an initial impulse toward confronting the vicious cycle of history. “Naturally art must disturb,” he argues, reflecting on the united Germany. “And now we must determine how and what it can and must disturb.”

**PAUL HOCKENOS**, a regular contributor to *ALR*, is based in Budapest.

The Australian health care system, like that of many Western countries, has been the site of pitched political battles throughout the 20th century. Time after time, conflict has raged between the major political parties and between governments and a range of vested interests including the medical profession, hospital boards, private insurance agencies and private hospitals. Consumers of health care have not been an organised force and their input into policy development has been negligible.

The fundamental point of dispute is the extent to which governments should intervene in the provision and financing of health services. Opponents of the welfare state argue that health should be left primarily to the market, like any other commodity, with doctors and other producers retaining as much economic freedom as possible. Conflicts erupted in New South Wales (1904-1914), Tasmania (1914-1919) and in Queensland in the decades after 1915, as governments tried to take control of hospitals. Intense controversies surrounded unsuccessful attempts to introduce national social insurance in 1928 and 1938. The Chifley government’s efforts to set up a national health service in the 1940s contributed mightily to that government’s downfall. More recently, the Whitlam and Hawke Labor governments have found themselves embroiled in serious confrontations with doctors and other interest groups over the introduction of Medibank and Medicare, systems of national health insurance. Health policy, then, is an intensely controversial area, with the potential to give rise to high political costs for interventionist governments.

Clearly, these circumstances are not conducive to comprehensive, thoughtful consideration of health policy options. The more that issues are exposed to scrutiny, the more obvious will be the embedded conflicts of interest. Controversial questions such as the way the health system is organised, the way doctors are paid and the kinds of services that are produced are therefore avoided as far as possible. Government intervention, since the 1940s, has focused primarily on different ways of paying for an existing set of institutions and services. The prior question of what sort of institutions and services would constitute a good health system has not been examined by mainstream policy-makers.

As the title suggests, Dr Sax’s book discusses a range of policy options and their implications for the public purse, a timely contribution since control of public spending is a high priority issue with the potential to determine the kinds of health services made available. Two very important assumptions underpin the analysis: first, that the structure of the health system will remain unchanged and, second, that funding levels will not be increased.

The first set of arguments addressed are those for and against the welfare state. Dr Sax concludes that we need “a synthesis of the two value systems”, the one based on individualism and free enterprise and the other on collective responsibility for provision of certain public goods. Next, health status and strategies designed to overcome health inequalities are discussed. As has been known for many years, there is a strong association between poor health and poverty and low levels of education.

Dr Sax sees the responsibility for dealing with social and environmental hazards as falling largely outside the purview of health authorities. He is highly critical of “the priests of the new public health faiths and fads” who argue that “health” expenditures are heavily skewed towards treatment services for sickness rather than towards prevention and holistic primary health care. ‘New public health’ advocates undervalue the contribution of conventional medical services, he argues. The solution is not to transfer funding from curative to preventive programs. Rather, a much more comprehensive approach should be adopted within the present structure. There should be more emphasis on training and education of health professionals, rigorous evaluation of existing services, better monitoring of the environment, more support services especially for the aged and a greater research effort.

There cannot be equal access to services, of course, unless the better off and wealthy are somehow prevented from buying services not provided free or at low cost by collective means. Such services include private hospital and nursing home care, non-insured services such as those provided by nurses, nutritionists, naturopaths, podiatrists, dentists, physiotherapists, counsellors and so on, various aids and appliances and home help and other support services. The question is rather that of deciding upon an acceptable standard of care to which everyone has access. Dr Sax argues that the present system of universal insurance, Medicare, is more equitable than the private insurance systems of the past.

Most of the remaining chapters of the book deal with costs and the implications of cost control or closely related issues. Contrary to a common claim, often put forward by opponents of the welfare state and others opposed to government intervention in health, the provision of free services does not induce people to rush out and demand unnecessary services. In any case, only general practitioner services are initiated by patients. Most services (specialist, radiology, pathology, hospital admissions and so on) are initiated by doctors. The use of medical services did increase in the first two years of Medicare. Indeed, this was one of the main objectives of introducing the scheme. It was intended that the 19% of people without insurance cover under the voluntary
system should not be faced with financial barriers to service use. In recent years, where service use has increased, it is in the area of doctor initiated services, particularly high cost high technology diagnostic services.

Health service evaluation is an unexplored concept in Australia but one that Dr Sax recommends be given serious consideration. There has been little examination outside medical circles of the kinds of services which ought to be provided; debate has focused on systems of financing the services which have gradually evolved. However, there are legitimate concerns about the appropriateness and value of many services, Dr Sax argues. Medical science, while effective in treating many conditions, has done little to prolong life in recent decades and costs have increased dramatically. There are large variations between services provided from area to area and from country to country, as well as big differences in per capita expenditures on health care. As policy-makers in Canada and other OECD countries have realised since the 1970s, high levels of spending do not necessarily result in better health outcomes. Dr Sax argues that rigorous evaluation processes and continuing education schemes should be instituted not only to ensure quality of care but also to ensure that cost containment does not result in “arbitrary reductions in access to care or in its quality”. The public, patients and governments want evidence of quality and appropriateness. The medical profession is challenged to put its house in order. The alternative might be “officious intrusion by outsiders”.

Within the constraints set by the (realistic) assumptions that present structures and funding levels will be retained at least in the medium term, Dr Sax’s prescriptions offer the prospect of considerable improvements in the health system. However, many of the problems identified by the new public health and women’s health movements would remain. These include the impact of the fee-for-service system of remuneration and the focus of the present system on medical and hospital services with few resources devoted to primary health care and prevention. Structural change would be needed to address these issues.

The fee-for-service system of remuneration promotes the production of insured services. This is so whether the insurance system is a national publicly run system or a private system. Unless governments or insurance agencies are willing to extend the range of insured services to those provided by other health professionals such as physiotherapists, naturopaths and so on the range of affordable services available will remain very narrow. Doctors, of course, vehemently oppose such an extension.

The second undesirable aspect of fee-for-service is that the more patients doctors see, the shorter time spent with each patient, the higher the income earned. Thus, the system works against extended consultations which might include counselling selling, information provision and so on.

Again, private practice on a fee-for-service basis leaves doctors free to decide where to locate practices. Such systems are characterised by a serious mal-distribution of services, particularly specialist services. Under the present Australian system where doctors, unlike their Canadian counterparts, are allowed to charge patients a fee that is higher than the benefit level, it is economically advantageous to practise in an area where people have the means to pay the co-payment.

The community health program introduced by the Whitlam government was an attempt to overcome many of these problems. Centres employing teams of health professionals on a salaried basis were established in all states. Ideally, these centres would provide a very wide range of services, including primary, secondary and tertiary preventive care and people would gradually come to participate in decisions affecting their health through a process of community development. Decisions about where to locate centres were influenced by the mal-distribution of services, so that the program was a means for overcoming geographic inequalities. As Dr Sax has argued elsewhere, the community health program was far more radical than national health insurance, which merely provided better financial underpinning for the existing system. Therefore, it was bitterly opposed by the medical profession.

During the Fraser period, funding was gradually reduced, meeting the budgetary objectives of that government and gaining the approval of the medical profession. The Hawke government promised to restore funding to 1975 levels and this it did in 1983, except that the interim increase in population was not allowed for. As under the Fraser government, funding for community health services was incorporated in the identified health grants but no conditions were placed on use. The Hawke government, like its predecessor, has therefore chosen not to play a role in policy development for community health. Between 1983 and 1988, tight constraints were kept on increases in the identified health grants: funds were escalated by a formula based primarily on increases in award wages which were, of course, lower than increases in the CPI.

Those who hoped that new life would be breathed into community health under a Commonwealth Labor government have therefore been disappointed. From this perspective, the 1980s represents a lost opportunity: even a modest annual increase in Commonwealth funds over the eight-year period would have resulted in a far wider choice of services than currently provided in private medical practices. A slow but steady expansion of programs at the community level is probably the only feasible way to alter the focus and structure of the system. A head-on confrontation with the medical profession such as in the 1940s when the Chifley government tried to introduce a salaried medical service would probably produce very little change. An incremental expansion of community health services, however, would not only give consumers a choice of providers and a much greater choice of services but would begin to orient the system towards health promotion, involving people at the local level in decisions which affect their health and the health of their environments.

Advocates of the new public health and other critics of present arrangements charge that the term ‘health system’ is a euphemism. The system is so heavily geared towards the...

Processed World is a wonderful little magazine, available mostly from anarchist bookshops. It combines stories, graphics, humour, satire, with an eclectic blend of far-left thinking. It is, for the most part, written by and for office workers. In a nutshell it tries to be a forum in which a Left culture might emerge—one of, for and from the white collar working class.

There is not much heavy rhetoric or jargon in Processed World. It is not a magazine given much to preaching a party line. There are many first-hand accounts of office life and political struggles in the workplace. There are stories which are amusing and with which anyone who has worked in similar circumstances can identify. There are other stories from which one can learn. This anthology is both entertaining and useful. If a justification is required for the heavy emphasis on gags, comics and
witty slogans in *Processed World* and in this fine anthology, it lies in the fact that many office workers are cut off from earlier forms of working-class culture and the resources for resistance and leverage they provided. The transformation of the American economy from one which employed people mostly in agriculture and manufacturing to one employing people in services and paperwork, while not as complete or inevitable as theorists of the 'high-tech path' make out, is nevertheless a fact of life. Something similar has happened to working life in Australia, too.

Given this transformation, cultivating working-class culture in these new pockets of employment is as important as trying to organise them industrially or politically. Perhaps in the long run more important. No union will ever last long as a genuine expression of working class interests and aspiration if it is not organically connected to its membership by cultural mores, practices, beliefs and attitudes. The criticisms *Processed World* makes of American unions on this score sound chillingly familiar.

The kind of culture which tends to coagulate around the loose editorial practices of *Processed World* is not without its faults. Its anarchic glee at childish pranks and petty sabotage is perhaps an understandable outgrowth of the alienated experience of temporary workers who have no need to get along with any particular company and no stake in the productivity of the firm which a full-time worker might feel. *Processed World* is not able to make the conceptual separation between power within the work process and the power to stop the work process.

They are right, nevertheless, to question the sacrifice of any and every human value to productivity, to the endless production of more and more bits and bobs of a processed world. On the positive side, their critique extends out from pointless work to the pointless things pointless work produces: toxic food, cancerous suburbs and the endless search for the perfect weapon.

Not all of the rich mix of Californian alternative culture in *Processed World* translates into Australian terms, but there is a lot to learn from here. This magazine is really a very thoughtful experiment in alternative communication.

Every trade union and community group publication should have a copy of this book. There are plenty of cartoons and graphics which could be reused. At $29.95 it's expensive but pretty good value, so get your local library to order it for you. It is the sort of thing that should be treated as a community resource.

McKENZIE WARK teaches in computing at Macquarie University.
Dear MM of Q

I went off for an evening hair appointment leaving MM to cook his own dinner. I returned and asked MM how he had got on with his culinary adventure. MM explained that he had grilled his steak and then decided to add satay sauce. But to his dismay the dinner tasted very strange. It was only then that he realised he had spread the steak with apricot jam.

Lorna, Q.
(New Idea Mere Male Column, 15.9.90.)

Lorna of Q (Queenstown? Queanbeyan?) it is time to do something about this MM (misogynist moron? machiavellian manta-ray?). He is obviously doing it on purpose to keep you from the wild pleasures of Doreen's Salon de Cutt.

Explain to this MM that until he cooks you something nice at least three times a week, you will not do the same for him. Leave recipes for sweet and sour dishes around the house, such as that below, and see if he can't improve on the Cottees special.

I was recently discussing gender and housework with a friend who has been involved in the union movement for many years and who believes that very little has changed over the years in terms of who does the cooking. She sees secretaries half her age in union offices scurrying off to get hubby's tea, even if hubby is already off work by the time they leave work.

I am not so sure that nothing has changed although even(!) among supposedly progressive people it is generally women who do the less highly regarded work. Not the occasional 'whiz-bang wait till the friends come around for a dinner party and make a chocolate cheesecake' type meal but the everyday boring stuff of checking what is in the fridge, restocking it and making something after work. Who soaks the beans, in other words.

There are statistics to show that spending on fast food (and indeed all 'out of home' food, including restaurants) has more or less doubled over the last few years, at the very time that women's participation in the paid workforce has increased dramatically. Does this mean that the huge part-time wages of women are being converted into Kentucky fried or MacFeasts, rather than hubby doing more around the home?

While on this line of thought, I know of at least one avowedly leftwing collective where the women do the bulk of cooking for functions and are not reimbursed for ingredients, but where the alcohol is arranged by the blokes and they are reimbursed. Shame, collective, shame. That said, let me hastily proceed to the recipe which is dedicated to MM of Q, who has perfected the art of the inventive protest, if not the art of the kitchen.

Chicken and Cashews
Sweet and Sour

I use free-range chickens. They actually have muscles due to such unnecessary acts as flapping of wings and walking, and the flesh doesn't slop away from the bones like ice cream from a stick on a hot day. I recently had wonderful cashews from Mozambique, courtesy CAA mail order, although I'm sure that the plucky Aussie cashew would do fine.

Take le chook and cut into smallish serving sized pieces (eg, each leg into two pieces). Heat oil in a pan and throw in the poulet. The oil should be quite hot. Let the fowl brown all over, turning as necessary. When it is golden brown, pour about half a cup of white wine over the segments and let the fumes evaporate for about one minute. Pour over the following mixture:

1/2 teaspoon grated root ginger
1 to 2 cloves crushed or finely chopped garlic
1 large tablespoon honey
1 to 2 tablespoons vinegar
1 to 2 tablespoons soy sauce/tamari
large half a cup orange juice
juice of small lemon or lime

a tiny sprinkling of powdered mace (optional)

This will sizzle like mad. Turn down heat. Stir, cover pan. Cook about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally and making sure it does not burn. Mix in a handful of cashews a few minutes before it's done. Serve with salad and rice. Serves 3 or 4. Good cold.

I think that we have merely opened the sticky and irresistable jampot of gender today, and we will return to it at future dates, like an army of Amazonian ants.

Penelope Cottier.
The weakness, and it is a serious one, is the complete lack of analysis offered in the film of the union movement's relationship to the changing political and economic environment, not just in Australia, but concerning Australia's insertion into the world economy. One does not expect a film to substitute for a thesis, but one should expect more from a film of this nature than an exercise in labour history. The discourse of labour history, with its fetish for isolated incidents, chronicled in sequence, has blinkered the vision of this film.

Labour history can offer only a partial perspective on the present political economic conjuncture. Lacking a grasp on the politics of the present, the film flounders in trying to trace a line through the past. In this respect the film is more, not less, scholastic than it need be.

There is practically nothing in the film on the present economic crisis—the one we have been suffering for the last couple of decades. There is no analysis of the response of the trade union movement to changing conditions in this period, or even an acknowledgment of the need to change many old practices in industry and in the trade union movement. The history of trade unions is the history of the working class. The history of the working class is the history of capitalism. In failing to grasp these connections fully, Zubrycki has made a conservative film, not one which poses a radical challenge to the leadership of the trade union movement. One suspects that the ACTU's annoyance with it stems not from its biting criticisms but from its irrelevance to present issues.

Take, for example, the section on the Robe River dispute. This is presented ambiguously as a 'defeat' for the unions. But one cannot isolate the unions from the class which composes it or the economic relations which define both class and union. If Robe River was a setback for the unions, was it really a victory for capital? Did productivity rise or fall after Peko-Wallsend went in with the big stick? It fell. Robe River might have been a defeat for the unions, but the working class can still resist, silently, from within the capital relation. If anything, Robe River shows why the flexible, tactical bargaining approach to work practice reform might be preferable for the unions, workers and for some sections of capital. At other mines in the region where a review of work practices took place as a joint exercise involving the workers, the unions and management, it was possible to increase productivity, maintain union authority and reform work practices. Such an approach is vital in many areas for the survival of workers, unions and capital alike. All three have to see their situation in international perspective now. The economic conditions which reigned historically from Federation to the Whitlam era are gone.

In the good old days, high export earnings from commodities financed our imports. Manufacturing developed behind tariff barriers as a substitute for imports. Wages were indexed through the arbitration system to a cost of living based on local consumer goods costs, regardless of world prices. When a local price rise led to a wage rise through arbitration, tariffs could be hiked also to protect the system from global price competition. This system was designed, following the depression of the last century to insulate us from global price movements. As such it worked reasonably well. It was no match for the debacle of the 20s and 30s depression which pulled the rug out from under our commodity export prices. Nor is it any help now that those prices are in long-term decline. This is the crisis which unions, workers, capital, the nation as a whole has to confront. This is the crisis on which Amongst Equals is curiously silent. Regardless of whether one supports the Accord, Australia Reconstructs, Simon Crean or none of the above, one cannot dodge these issues without running the risk of irrelevance.

Zubrycki ran that risk and made an irrelevant film. His eye is too firmly fixed on history. Not only on the history of the movement but on the place his own film might have for posterity, as a lasting document of labour history. This is why the film refuses to discuss the present crisis, and it is a pity that Zubrycki has not made a committed film in the sense of committing itself to helping people grasp the present crisis of trade unionism, which is a crisis for the working class itself as well as for capital. We need a film which deals with these issues now. Not a scholarly exercise which speaks to and for posterity. That will be cold comfort if the unions fail in the present crisis.

McKenzie Wark.
DEAR DR. HARTMAN

Sperm Wails

Hello patients,

Patients, psychic storms are currently shaking the lesbian community and the underlying cause can be summed up in two words—baby hunger!

There are signs of it everywhere. Separatist women who haven’t even let a man inside their house for years are now running around Sydney with empty Vegemite jars looking for sperm donors.

These are the lucky ones. At least they’ve made the decision to try. It’s the ambivalent girls I really worry about. I had a little lesbian lassie arrive at my Newtown clinic in Sydney just the other day in a shocking state. She was an ex-Catholic who’d been in the clutches of the nuns from the cradle to Year 12. She told me she’d now ‘overcome her guilt’ and ‘accepted her sexuality’. You know the type, a real worrier.

She now lives with her girlfriend in a non-sexist, non-smoking, sperm-free zone. “But all I really want is a baby!” she wailed. “I know lots of women are self-inseminating these days,” she told me, “but I find the idea a little odd.” And then she threw herself across my couch and wailed, “Doctor, what should I do?”

At my Carlton clinic in Melbourne the girls with very short hair and very big leather coats start queuing up in the waiting room as soon as we open the doors. They’ve all got dogs waiting outside. The really desperate ones have started to dress their dogs in clothes. The ‘dog dressing’ phenomenon is one of the advanced symptoms of the baby hunger syndrome.

‘Dog dressing’ usually begins innocently enough, perhaps a simple scarf tied rakishly around the neck of a tough bull terrier. A few months later you see that same bull terrier at a street march or in a shopping centre and you notice it’s wearing a carefully made little waistcoat with a woman’s symbol embroidered on the pocket. It all seems like a cute joke at this stage. A little eccentric but nothing to worry about. But when you see that same bull terrier being pushed down the street in a set of short pyjamas, you begin to realise that something is terribly wrong. To the professional eyes of the psycho-sexual therapist, this is a clear case of baby hunger!

Patients, if you are bottle-feeding your poodle while you read this magazine, might I offer you this simple advice: make the decision to do it right now and get down immediately to the all important job of sperm acquisition.

Now you hear a lot of stories these days about how “the boys don’t like to part with their precious seminal fluid”. I had a terribly bitter lass in group the other day who’d worked her way through university as an usherette in a suburban movie theatre. She insisted that “the bastards squirted it all over me immediately to the all important job of sperm acquisition.”

Frankly, patients, this emotionally scarred usherette has just been going to the wrong films in later life. Every male with a gold pass to the Sydney and Melbourne film festivals is a known donor.

Follow these simple instructions and soon your only problem will be deciding which of your friends to have at the birth:

1. Most importantly, get it quickly. Some lassies spend months of their lives with thermometers up their love canals trying to work out the precise moment of ovulation.

2. Get that bloke and his jar into your house. Make sure you provide him with a range of appropriate literature. Remember this is no time for ideological purity about what constitutes pornography. Give the chap a fighting chance. After all, just how aroused would you feel left alone with a jar in a strange bathroom?

While he’s busy with the magazines, you should be in the kitchen preparing a light snack and a refreshing beverage. After all, even the blood bank gives its donors a cup of tea and an Arnott’s assorted cream.

One final word of warning: don’t be surprised when he comes out of the bathroom and sheepishly offers you a tiny blob. It might have felt like buckets down your leg in years gone by, but when you see it in a jar in the cold light of day, you’ll be surprised how little it looks. Grab it and get it in—then send me a cigar.

I’ll deal with the psycho-sexual implications of the actual birth in a future consultation.

Send your problems to Dr Hartman’s secretary, Julie McCrossin, care of ALR.
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