
FOURTH WORLD REVIEW

*For Small Nations
Small Communities
Small Farms
Small Shops
Small Industries
Small Banks
Small Fisheries
& the Inalienable
Sovereignty of the
Human Spirit*

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CRISIS COMMITTEES: OUR WORLD IN CRISIS



Havana Harvest

WALTER SCHWARZ

*A New Paradigm of
Technology and Politics*

EDMUND P. FOWLER

All Change in Nigeria

Sir PETER SMITHERS

Editorial:

THE NEW RADICALISM

FOURTH WORLD REVIEW Nos. 115 & 116

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THE NEW RADICALISM

THE RADICAL MOVEMENT in every part of the world is confronted with a new problem: to the age-old battles for social and economic justice has been added a third, a battle for human survival.

The profit-questing economic forces which have largely created this problem have developed forms of power of global dimensions which are today destroying the ecological basis of organised existence; *en route* to this satanic achievement they are destroying both human and animal health, they are destroying to a savage degree human social structures, with TV programmes they are poisoning the well-springs of sane social consciousness and, not least, with armaments, they are destroying any prospect of a positive human destiny. This is a problem the like of which no former generation has ever had to encounter.

How is the movement responding to this crisis? It has to be said that very largely it is not responding effectively at all, and that when it does respond it is bringing to bear a mindframe of social concepts which have little bearing on the sheer scale of current realities. In former times radical reformers, under whatever label they travelled, had a strategy which was admirable in its simplicity if nothing else. We are confronted with massive misrule and oppres-

sion; well comrades, the answer is simple, we take over the power of rule ourselves, do we not? In the name of *liberté, égalité et fraternité* the French revolutionaries tried it, and after decapitating the hated monarch and other 'enemies of the people', ended up in decapitating each other and earning a niche in history as The Great Terror.

World War III

In 1917 the Russians tried it and ushered in one of the most revolting, cruel and barbaric regimes in the human record, one which starved and murdered more millions of innocents in a few decades than their former oppressors had dispatched over the centuries. The British Labour Party tried it and have ended up with Prime Minister Blair's 'New Labour', which is merely the old Tory Party with the lid off as he stands shoulder to shoulder with the most colossal capitalist power complex the world has ever seen, as they jointly embark on what are clearly the opening stages of World War III.

So what is the radical strategy today? More mass street demos? More petitions to the Prime Minister? More national organisations to promote 'workers' solidarity'? More conferences? More publications focussing on ending poverty, on halting the various wickedness as produced by economics-divorced-from-humanity and

showing every sign of insanity, on monetary reform, on personal development and 'spiritual fulfilment'? More God wottery and general fuddery duddery as the world continues to burn? Or what?

The old strategy was right in at least one respect, in seeing that the problem confronting people was not one of deciding particular social priorities but in deciding who was to decide. It was a problem of power, one crisply expressed in Lenin's 'Who, Whom?' Where the old strategy failed was in being unable to grasp that power problems are intrinsically imbued with the factor of scale. That on a small scale it is possible for the people to decide, whereas on a giant scale it is impossible for the people to decide, since the privileges of that role are confined to a ruling elite that controls the inevitably centralised governing apparatus. It failed to grasp that a mass democracy is an oxymoron.

A New Strategy

Well, we can all be wise after the event can we not? Unless of course we are members of The Green Party, who in this day and age are still campaigning for a *National Health Service* and a *National Education Service*, as they campaign assiduously for more seats in both Westminster and Brussels. But where do we go from here? There has surely never been a time when the need for radical action has been more urgent, but action based on the old strategy is worse than useless, if only because it simply plays into the hands of those currently controlling the levers of power. What is needed is a new strategy based on an awareness that the abuses of centralised mass power can only be extended rather than cured by any mass reformist movement. So that it will be

based on a world-wide movement of millions of radical activist centres. Centres whose efforts are focussed uncompromisingly on the goal of transferring power into their own village or neighbourhood communities.

Mass Disempowerment

Those who manipulate the workings of mass societies depend on the structure of the mass itself in order to maintain and deploy their power. History is eloquent that such manipulative power either absorbs would-be reformers or revolutionaries or, if the latter succeed, makes them even more ruthless as manipulators. Why? It is one of the standard adages of the subject that all power corrupts and that absolute power corrupts absolutely. For any radical movement the quest for the control of any form of mass power is simply the kiss of death to any radical objective.

This is why a strategy based on the repudiation of mass power is a *sine qua non* of any prospect of meeting the challenge of the prevailing global crisis. Today there is no need to ask if such an approach of localised community empowerment can work; it is already working in countless ways. It is the so-called 'developed' world, where mass manipulation and mass disempowerment is most pronounced, if only because in less developed areas the technology for it is not yet fully available and people still control much of their own farming, workshops and marketing, so that today there is hardly any part where people at village level are not beginning to bestir themselves and to group together for reform on various issues, particularly in relation to the environment and the supply of energy. As yet the radicalisation of these local organi-

sations has scarcely begun, if only because there has been no concerted radical thrust to accomplish it.

We are indicating here the need for a transformation of the approach to power as generally viewed even by radicals, one that sees the need for a new culture of power as expressed not by great leaders in centralised legislatures but in the everyday lives of people everywhere in their own neighbourhoods. That new culture will perceive that the adulation of great power structures, with their all-embracing policies covering almost every aspect of people's lives, is one of largely 20th Century vintage and stemming for the most part from seeking the gratification of the male ego. It goes hand in hand with a cultivated contempt for the small, the local and the personal, one which sees them as insignificant, unimportant and of no real consequence in the major affairs of state. This in fact is the real arena of radical concern, embodying as it does a struggle to elevate neighbourhood affairs to a summit of supreme importance, whilst relegating centralised legislatures to a subsidiary role of dealing with those few matters beyond the scope of local councils.

So the radical role today is one of cultivating a respect for the local, for awakening the local conscience to its responsibilities in the global crisis, for helping to make neighbours aware they *can* act, they can reject supermarkets in favour of local shops, reject cars in favour of community transport, reject devitalised and chemicalised food in favour of good health, reject commercial TV in favour of community controlled channels, reject consumerism in favour of conservation. Helping them to understand that democracy means it is they who decide and that if we are to survive we must rescue

democracy from the deep freeze of mass organisations.

It is a role which will reject governmental presumption to ordain local matters such as education, health, police or planning for example, matters which local people are perfectly capable of determining themselves, and will not hesitate to concert with other neighbourhoods, if need be, a sustained campaign of non-violent civil disobedience. It is a role which recognises that the chains which bind us to a doom-laden scenario of global pollution, global degradation and global war are voluntary ones; they consist of laws, regulations, fraudulent usages and bogus understandings which can be rejected and which imperatively must be rejected if we are to survive.

What needs recognition is that at various levels of consciousness people are aware of the gravity of the threat to human existence being promoted by globalised market forces, a fact which accounts as much for the way the Women's Institute gave Tony Blair the bird when he last ventured to address them as to the general contempt for all forms of authority now implicit in the conduct and cultural mores of the young.

Soft Underbelly

The radical world and the would-be radical world are awash with publications and national and international organisations, all hammering away with similar ineffectiveness at a wide variety of concerns. Can we not all get together on this, on a concerted clear-headed drive to fully empower the people of our local neighbourhoods? Such a drive would need its own informed support from a variety of sources, its own sustained awareness of political and economic reali-

ties, its own spirit of generous co-operation and its own moral high ground of idealism and hope, to say nothing of its own courage, conviction and determination.

This is really to assail the soft underbelly of the whole works in a way which can assure young people especially that

they do have a future and it is one they can help to create. To continue on our present course as the global storm-clouds continue to gather is to continue to condemn ourselves to futility and to betray everything the human spirit has sought to accomplish down the ages. The stakes are nothing less.

IS OUR EDITOR RIGHT?

Sir Richard Body

OUR INDEFATIGABLE EDITOR, *suspecting I would demur at his grandiloquence, sent me a copy of the above editorial, suggesting I contribute a rejoinder. I agreed (more or less) with his objective as most readers will, but his means to that end seems hopelessly impractical.*

His rhetoric ought to give way to two realities. First, there are not enough people who believe the human race has become a herd of Gadarene Swine about to hurtle into the abyss. In the parliamentary constituency I represented for many years, there were 72,000 adults. All lived below sea level, yet none raised a voice about the threat of the North Sea reclaiming every acre of the constituency, as global warming will do, although there were several single-issue groups such as agricultural pollution, farm animal welfare, and Amnesty International.

On the other hand there were massive lobbies for bigger and faster roads, as well as a powerful coalition in favour of the M11 being extended through the length of the constituency. For them, mass motoring was necessary and a pleasure! Of the sixty million in the UK, or the one billion in the developed world, we must doubt whether one-

tenth of one percent agree with the doom-laden scenario, then act as the Editor urges.

More serious is the second reality. We can agree it is about power (incidentally Lord Acton's dictum was not that power corrupts but 'power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely'). Power, we are told, is to be wrested from the so-called power elite with a head-on confrontation by the massed ranks of all sorts of people in a grand alliance. The elite will capitulate and hand over to lots of neighbourhood councils, which will run most of the nation's affairs. We might ask how this will actually come about. A million marching feet setting off for Downing Street, with the Editor up in front in step with the Purton Village Brass Band (to the beat of *We Will Overcome*) may not be quite enough.

A caveat ought to be added to this idealistic view of neighbourhood councils. In my constituency there were some seventy parish councils; more than half of them were dominated by petty tyrants. Some were just busybodies who liked to strut about, telling others what to do; many were plain bullies; while a large number were seeking solace from a nagging spouse or cantankerous boss. There were also plenty of life's failures

recovering their self-esteem. Blighted egos find comfort in politics even at the very lowest levels. So let's not be too starry-eyed about local democracy. Still, we can say wholeheartedly that it is better that petty tyrants should have a little power than their national counterparts have too much.

But confrontation is not necessary. The so-called elite is not absolutely corrupted by power, for its power is not absolute. What is more, they are beginning to understand the Kohr-Schumacher-Papworth message. There are civil servants in Whitehall struggling to see how the National Health Service can be managed efficiently, knowing that the thing is too big and must be broken down into manageable units. If County Councils or Regional Assemblies were to take over the role, what happens to our teaching hospitals? Do medical students pay the cost, as they used to, or the Lottery, or the tax payer? If the latter, who exercises control? Some countries and regions are poorer than others, so do they provide worse health-care? These are the sort of practical questions that *FWR* ought to answer in articles – they would be avidly read.

Then the message needs to be applied to our educational system. Won't Purton School have more money than those in Stepney? Again, *FWR* could be the forum. And again there would be many interested in the answers.

As for mass motoring and the whole mad system of transport, nothing is achieved by bleating about it. Just how do we get from A to B? We must doubt whether neighbourhood councils will achieve the transition. In other words, there is an urgent need for some hard thinking and serious research. *FWR* could play a major part in this. Surely many thousands want to know the answers; and the journal's circulation would soar upwards.

However, the really big issues today now cross national frontiers and individual governments cannot cope with them in isolation. This is where Simultaneous Policy comes in. John Bunzl's book of that name was reviewed in the last issue: he is opposed to the EUro plot as much as the Editor; instead, he argues that many of the ecological problems are now worldwide. To overcome them, the governments of the world should agree on common policies to be put into effect simultaneously. He argues that there does now need to be a kind of grand coalition that our Editor advocates. But it is not necessary for it to be confrontational, but persuade with sensible reasons that a Simultaneous Policy is the only way a host of problems can now be solved. John Bunzl's strategy is the alternative. ■

The author evidently believes that the global crisis is going to be resolved by acts of Parliament. Readers are urged to join the debate. Ed.

Fellow economist James K Galbraith of the University of Texas is similarly disenchanted with neo-liberal theory. According to him, the empirical evidence 'flatly contradicts' the major premises and findings of economic analysis. Galbraith takes this disconnect from reality as evidence of a '...nearly complete collapse of the prevailing economic theory... It is a collapse so complete, so pervasive, that the profession can only deny it by refusing to discuss theoretical questions in the first place.'

Monitored by David Weston

CRISIS COMMITTEES: OUR WORLD IN CRISIS

There seem to be two approaches to change, one to challenge the abuses of power, now so multiple and profound as they produce global economic fascism, global war, global climate transformation, global warming, destruction of trees or species, life forms endangered by genetic engineering, and there are up and running organisations active on each of these and other fronts; or to grasp that the abuses of power are more likely to be checked by tackling the problem of power itself, how is it to be restored to citizen hands?

It is a question which has prompted the emergence of a new strategy, one concerned to promote democracy in real, as opposed to formal and largely hypothetical, terms. Can a multiplicity of small local groups of concerned people around the world be both the catalyst and the spearhead of a drive to restore democracy before ultimate forms of insanity overtake us?

DISEASE, hunger, poverty, violence, sickness, crime, drugs, youth alienation, family breakdown, social collapse, all these are but the more immediate manifestations of something deeply amiss with our whole way of life.

Yet they are part of a bigger picture of a world where war is constantly being waged, where vandalism against the natural world is dangerously rife and which is savagely depleting entire species of flora and fauna, where industrial excess is causing a rapidly increasing melting of the polar ice caps, which in turn will drown many coastal cities and create unprecedented wind-storms and climatic disruptions, where economic forces are making life increasingly impersonal and divorced from the realities of genuine relationships, as well as our relationships with the natural order, where the same economic forces have become so large as to be beyond control and are now dominating political processes in ways which exclude moral, spiritual and aesthetic considerations.

We just cannot go on in this way. We have produced the first ugly civilisation and, for all its technical wonders, the first

boring one. Modern architecture has become a mere cost-effective exercise with results which demean us; the architecture of our modern state schools, which might be inspiring the imagination of the young with beauty and the joy of life, are bleak repudiations of any concept of human dignity or nobility and, like so many other public buildings, a repudiation of standards of excellence established centuries before.

Crisis of Values

What is to be done? We are not advancing civilisation, we are abandoning it, and unless we change course profoundly, extensively and rapidly, we are transmitting to our children a world which cannot fail, in the most literal terms to be, a hell on earth.

The traditional political and social institutions which formerly safeguarded our heritage have obviously ceased to function, they are not working except in ways which are promoting or consolidating an ever rising tide of evil mischief; they can no longer provide solutions because they themselves have become part of the problem, and a big part at that.

The crisis is, above all, a crisis of values and a crisis of democracy. Over the last cen-

tury or more many new forms of power have erupted, such as transport, communication and power supplies, for which established democratic procedures have failed to provide an adequate degree of citizen participation and control. This in turn has produced a quite colossal democratic deficit. As Parliament has assumed ever increasing control of these new forms of power the authority of Parliament itself has been greatly undermined by at least two factors.

One is the effect of the sheer weight of the legislative burden involved and the consequent oversight required of numerous matters, properly the responsibility of local councils, so that individual MPs have become *de facto* welfare officers for such matters as health, education, social security and so forth. The burden of correspondence and the general role of representation in such matters is at the expense of the proper surveillance of such important state concerns as foreign affairs, economic policy and questions of war and peace.

One effect of this enormous and quite needless burden is for an equivalent increase in the power of the administration so that today the citizen is not being governed by his elected representatives, he is being made subject to the power of administration by unelected officials.

The decreased power and status of elected MPs is reflected in the growing power of the Prime Minister, for it is he who, with the enormous consequential powers of patronage at his disposal, is able to establish important policies and initiatives which pertain more and more to an authoritarian ethos which is utterly at odds with ordinary democratic practice.

This is reflected in the other factor which has already made Parliament a

cypher of other forces and debilitated its authority to a quite extraordinary degree. After the bombing attack on the World Trade Center in New York on Sept 11th 2001, the US President embarked on a policy of war. The British Prime Minister, with no attempt to consult Parliament, at once presented the nation with the *fait accompli* of a war alliance with the United States. The rights and wrongs of this decision to 'stand shoulder to shoulder' with the USA need not here detain us; what needs emphasis was the unilateral abuse of office involved in hi-jacking the proper powers of Parliament to decide. The same high-handed policy is even more in evidence in the Prime Minister's approach to the question of Europe and its effect on Parliamentary prerogatives. His policy is one of full membership of a union of the states of Europe into an agglomerate which can only prevail by reducing the powers of Parliament to that of a parish council.

No Mandate

Again, the rights and wrongs of this policy are not here our chief concern. What needs to be noted is that he has no mandate from the people and no democratic authority to pursue this policy, which is indeed in defiance of the findings of a considerable number of opinion polls. What people want, especially when the power and the credibility of their own Parliament is at stake, is irrelevant, what is relevant is the power of a Prime Minister to deploy the powers of office and of a complaisant party machine to override the people's wishes and to destroy Parliament itself.

The theory that people elect representatives to execute policies they wish to see implemented by Parliament has been

upended so that the chief elected representative, the Prime Minister, now decides policy and uses Parliamentary prerogatives to impose them on people.

If there is to be a change of course it must come not from great leaders or the giant centralised forces operating on a mass basis which are doing so much harm, but from ourselves in our own local communities: communities able to establish a moral consensus which will take precedence over all other factors now dominating our affairs so disastrously. If we do not want war, massive economic disruptions, the mad industrialised assaults on natural life which are now imperiling all human existence, the boundless waste of resources involved in promoting economic 'growth' regardless of morals or aesthetics, the debasement of the quality of life, we must imperatively take our destinies in our own hands while there is time.

A New Radical Strategy

Attempts to create a broad-based, centrally controlled mass political organisation to counter the totalitarian drives of mass centralised governments and their global economic henchmen are not only futile, they betray a profound ignorance of the lessons of radical and reformist history and a failure to grasp the realities of the play of power when conducted on a mass scale.

That history is eloquent of the extent to which such movements whether revolutionary, reformist, pacifist or anarchist, on a mass scale, are foredoomed to failure on three grounds. They either cease to have any impact on the popular consciousness, if indeed they ever achieved any to begin with, or if they succeed they become victims of their success by being co-opted by the forces they set out to oppose, as the

record of European Social Democrat or Labour parties amply demonstrates. The third path to failure, as illustrated by the fate of the French and Russian revolutions, is that having destroyed the old order they become even more horrendous exemplars of its worst vices.

It is true that totalitarian governments of small states can be as repressive and ferocious as large ones. The point is they *can* also be benign and tolerant, whereas those of giant states have no option, they cannot avoid the need to create a murderous straightjacket of political repression. The gap between government and the governed is so enormous that it can only survive with a huge army of impersonal intermediaries who in turn must follow the book, the Führer or the party line if they are to gain promotion, or even just keep their jobs, to say nothing of their lives.

This factor of scale, so long neglected or dismissed as being of no account, has become *the* problem of the modern world. On a small, human scale governments can be abominable, but the same scale can enable human decency to flourish; it has indeed given us some of the greatest glories of human civilisation as, for example of the Renaissance.

But the spirit of the Renaissance went down the drain with the advent of the giantists – Cavour, Garibaldi, Bismark, Napoleon and others. The power, the independence and the pride of local city-state government was sucked into the mighty maw of giant states, into 'Italy', 'Germany' and other uncontrollable entities which led directly to monster world wars and global economic upheavals, so that today, instead of a honeycomb world of tiny city-states each giving the possibility of full citizen con-

trol and, in consequence, the genuine play of democratic power to determine moral objectives, the individual citizen has become a puppet animated by the controlling strings of giant centralised political and economic forces, which are now arming the world with thermonuclear weaponry and other monstrosities which, if not soon checked, will surely destroy all that human creativity down the centuries has accomplished.

So the principal problem confronting us today is not one of moral campaigning, whether in terms of 'peace', economic justice for the third world, GM crops, anti-globalisation, anti-nuclearism or any other eminently worthy objective, it is one of power. Power out of control, power running amok, power bent on militarism and economic aggrandisement at whatever cost to the environment, to human social structures or even to human destiny itself, because the scale on which it operates is too large to enable genuine democratic control to be exercised.

The problem of power cannot be resolved by mass revolutionary upsurges, nor by mass political parties, whether reformist, 'labour', Green or any other colour. Such mass approaches can only replicate or increase the dangers they ostensibly seek to counter. The problem of power can only be resolved by a new awakening, one that grasps the relationship between the centralised mass form of power and the abuse of power, and which perceives these abuses can only be checked by the rejection of the mass itself in favour of the small, the local and the human scale, if only because it is a scale which enables the citizen to exercise precisely those forms of democratic control the mass inevitably denies.

A strategy which accepts this principle

as being basic to its objectives will thus need to operate as a matter of course itself on a human scale basis, even if it is one which will incorporate in broad terms the aims of the many initiatives which have erupted across the world in response to the global crisis. Its aim will be nothing less than the re-empowerment of the citizen in small structures of localised government, structures which will embody the power of ordinary people to control and determine their own human-scale policies and destinies.

Milestone in Human Development

What is involved here is a charge on every person with a concern to counter the forces of the global crisis to act in a new way. It does not involve the individual joining an organisation but in starting his or her own! The global crisis threatens everyone and a new awareness of its dimensions and its import is making the ensuing transformation of consciousness one of the major unmarked milestones in contemporary human development.

It is this new consciousness which provides the basis for a new approach, one which increasingly recognises the scale factor as a major cause of the global crisis and will act accordingly by seeking new/old forms of local empowerment as a primary response. The need then for a crisis grouping in every locality in every land is thus the primary radical need of the day. It will, if it is wise, avoid forms of expression which smack of 19th Century lost causes which, with their sweeping, all-embracing import, divide rather than unite people, and to adopt a general title which will enable different forms of a potential local consensus to find expression.

Hence it will not be a campaign for

'socialism', or 'market freedom' or 'pacifism' or 'anarchism', it will be a campaign to unite people to confront the common danger of power overreaching itself and overcentralising itself in ways which are enabling every form of abuse of power to flourish at the price of liberty.

Liberty itself implies the freedom to act and decide, and the new consciousness is now increasingly aware that the power to do so can only meaningfully be deployed in local terms. Power cannot be in two places at once and the power of giant governments and corporations to wreck the environment, to embark on global wars and other insanities is power the citizen does not have.

Hence the primary policy objective of **CRISIS COMMITTEES** in every neighbourhood will be a need to assert the neighbourhood's own power and to deploy it for sane social purposes, and to seek to extend that power to maximum effect.

Central question

Perhaps the honeycomb principle is as meet an analogy as any. Some local 'cells' may opt to use their power to establish local socialist communities; others may seek to promote local free trade or local capitalism. Important as these questions may be they are secondary to the main one, who decides?

There is no point in arguing whether this can be done, it is now a matter of civilised human survival that it must be done, and done with a due sense of urgency. The signs of social disintegration are all around us, they are multiplying and they are the direct consequence of excesses being promoted by powerful topside forces out of control. The hedonistic and immoral play of market and political giantism, which behaves towards the

environment, towards animal life, towards the soil, the seas, the very sky, and towards the fragile traditions embodied in our social structures, with no regard whatsoever for moral principle or moral consequence, is amply reflected in the collapsing standards of moral behaviour in the general citizen body.

One of the most familiar political adages declares that all power corrupts and that absolute power corrupts absolutely. Part of the modern tragedy lies in the fact that it is also the most widely ignored. Our societies are everywhere dominated and saturated with corruption to an extent that the generality of people are largely unaware of its extent or the way it affects their lifestyle. So devout Christians will motor, perhaps from the necessity created by insane national transport policies, to church services, shop at supermarkets, campaign ardently for one mass political party or another, freely purchase chemically adulterated and devitalised foodstuffs, go on packaged holidays, or journey around by air, with no more awareness of the degree of moral corruption involved than a bird in flight may be aware of air.

Nevertheless that awareness is there, it pertains to a modest-sized minority, but it is a minority which has grown and is continuing to grow and the question before us is how can we impel it to grow more and faster.

This is why **CRISIS COMMITTEES** are important. Four or five people meeting in a coffee bar or someone's home to discuss the affairs of the day may appear of trifling consequence, but meeting regularly, with a direct focus on the global crisis, seeking to elucidate its causes and how they may be countered, multiplied around the world can yet, with clarity, vision, persistence, determination and no lack of moral courage, save it. ■

A NEW PARADIGM OF TECHNOLOGY AND POLITICS

Edmund P. (Terry) Fowler

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HUMANS, *to say nothing of other animals, have used identifiable tools to create food and shelter for millions of years. There is nothing new about technology.*

Nor is there anything new about humans' misconception that technologies can be neutral means for reaching a desired end. They are always a reflection of a culture's values and priorities. In the 17th and 18th Centuries, a succession of natural philosophers succeeded in spreading the notion that the natural world was essentially made up of lifeless particles of matter, obeying certain definable mathematical laws, and set in motion by a god sitting up in a heaven that was physically separate from Earth. This mechanistic world view spawned its own technologies, tied inexorably to the culture and society that spawned the philosophy of reality itself.

These technologies were abstracted from time and place, both of which were considered abstract qualities in the new mechanistic world view. Time, for example, was seen by Newton as moving steadily

and with measurable evenness, completely independent of human observation or perception. (In fact, Newton was describing a clock, which was a machine, not time, which is infinitely malleable.) Place was conceptualised in Descartes' analytic geometry as a set of co-ordinates that measured distance from an 'origin'.

This view of Nature was congruent with the development of machines that could be deployed anywhere, anytime. They were invented to perform abstract tasks – hauling water, transporting goods, manufacturing steel – that need not be related to the personality of a locality. For example, the steel produced in Damascus in the first millennium was so incredibly hard because the fire to temper it came from a local fuel unavailable to European crusaders – olive pits.

Appropriate Scale

As technologies became less connected to places and communities, they became more specialised, segregated, and prescriptive. The realm of technology, like science itself,

What good is the welfare state if the costs of its administration become larger than the benefits it yields?

Leopold Kohr

divided itself up into specialties ruled over by experts, not just in mechanical engineering but also in law, politics, and medicine. These technologies, offspring of a unique 17th Century European cultural and scientific worldview, were nevertheless considered (by Europeans, of course) to be universally applicable.

Mechanically-inspired technologies, divorced as they were from the exigencies of local cultures and communities, were not subject to the constraints of socially and environmentally appropriate scale. Short-term economies of scale, for example, were achieved by building very large mechanical looms, allowing a few Manchester entrepreneurs to make a great deal of money before their cumbersome giants were outperformed by lower-cost manufacturers elsewhere in the world. There was a symbiotic relationship between the growth of capital, which was and is itself placeless, and the new placeless techniques. And these large machines needed, first and foremost, ample capital. The mechanistic technologies were fed by this capital, making them inaccessible to most people, and setting in motion a centralisation of economic power soon to be mirrored in the distribution of political power.

Decision Making

In the 19th Century, for instance, large new printing presses were acquired by a few newspapers in England, enabling them to print tens of thousands of copies overnight for very little money. This capital-intensive technology put most of the small broadsheets out of business, and quickly centralised control of newspapers into the

hands of few.

Contemporary energy technologies illustrate the same principle. Large coal-fired plants, hydro-electric installations, and (especially) nuclear power plants combine technological sophistication with political centralisation and control of the energy supply. Nuclear energy is even shrouded in a culture of secrecy because of its link to terrifying weapons.

Of course, small hydro-electric plants are possible and do exist, all over the world, but the immense amounts of capital available for investment now dictate that such developments be huge, such as the Three Gorges Dam in China. Such is the coupling of large-scale economic, political, and technological power – all in the service of power generation, an irony that should not be missed. Franklin has noted that decision-making about large scale infrastructure tends to be undemocratic, and that is partly because of the technology involved.

In contrast, solar panels work better in decentralised installations and are thus far more democratic technologies, aside from being more economic in the long term. The same can be said for energy conservation measures and other passive technologies used in buildings to decrease their ecological footprint. Many other kinds of technology are amenable to decentralisation, so they can become appropriate to the place. John Todd's solar aquatic system for treating sewage, for instance, can be fitted into urban niches and cared for by local residents. Not only is this more democratic, argues Todd, but if there is a breakdown the consequences are far less severe. ■

When everyone is mad nobody seems to be aware that anyone is mad.

John Papworth



FORUM

You have reached the most important part of Fourth World Review, the part in which readers chip in. You may care to note that each missive is followed by the full address of the author, and there are important reasons for this policy. To truncate the address to simply, let us say, Jill Smith, Wolverhampton, is to render the writer anonymous to the reader. And it is obvious that in such communications the full address is an important part of the writer's identity.

A second reason is that the full address facilitates the important function of networking and, thirdly, that it makes the letters feature so much more interesting to read. Don't ask me why, it just is so and it is one reason why the letters page in The Times, for example, reads as though written by real people, whereas in papers where the full address is edited out the sound is of disembodied voices clacking away in an empty room. Inevitably some process of editing is often involved in any case, that is what editors are for, and this is legitimate so long as the views conveyed are in no way distorted. This is another way of urging readers to keep their letters to a reasonable length, and to convey the assurance that if they don't we, perforce, will.

– Ed.

TALKING SHOPS?

I AM fully in tune with the diagnosis and do very much admire the energy and effort you put into the search for a solution to be put into practice. I have no doubt there is increasing awareness that things simply cannot go on as they are, but this is very much a minority attitude. I am fairly confident it will continue to grow, but whether this will be fast enough is the real question. I expect we are on common ground so far. The difficulty I have is that we seem to be nowhere near a general perception of the overall crisis. Problems are of course identified and in general it is believed they can be

separately dealt with, usually by some sort of technical fix. I know this general attitude is quite inadequate, but in this situation 'Crisis Committees' can all too easily be written off as just doom mongering.

I have stuck with *FWR* so long because I have recognised the need for this new sort of thinking. Even when disagreeing I have admired your forthright use of the language. The Radical Consultation was a good idea and evidently made progress so I am pleased to send a small token of support.

Leslie Pope

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THE ANSWER?

READING your review for the first time I got no further than the editorial (*FWR*, 113) before being compelled to put pencil to paper to object strongly to your summary in which you say that 'there isn't a radical answer to globalisation, enlargement of markets and nation states'. Of course there is an answer!

Regionalisation following ethnic, geographical and political considerations is the answer. All the economic and social conditions that your editorial highlights are caused, as you rightly suggest, by increased centralisation. To use the word centralisation in a more clear context: schools are increasingly becoming 'Grand Central Stations' of education and it is no wonder that pupils can no longer relate to their surroundings and to study in an atmosphere that a system of such proportion dictates. Competition in small towns cannot stand the introduction of power-generated supermarkets in their midst. Regionalisation means that no national enterprises such as banks, supermarkets or financial operations will override local economics.

Graham Walker

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INCALCULABLE

THE consequences of recent developments with regard to Milosovic, Montesino and others who have so egregiously violated the public trust should not be underestimated. And the establishment of the World Court, the World Criminal Court, and the various Truth Commissions and Tribunals represent tremendously important steps in the right direction. In centuries past leaders could rape, loot and pillage at will with

impunity. Now those so inclined must have second thoughts about their actions, knowing that at some point in the future they may be held accountable. But for some, even this will not be a sufficient deterrent.

In most countries there are laws that allow those who are a danger to themselves or others in their communities to be apprehended, taken into court, examined by medical professionals, and, if it is deemed necessary, committed to institutions where they can receive help. We must begin to think about how this could be done in the international community. The difficulties in making such a thing possible would be great, of course. But the costs of not doing so, of waiting until the atrocities and plundering have already taken place, are incalculable.

Barry Childers

30 Rue Du Jura, Geneva 1201, Switzerland

THE BEST!

MAY I congratulate you on your editorial in Issue 113? It is, as always with your contributions, a great critique of the present world situation. I read it as your best ever. It is comprehensive yet balanced, credible yet expressed with impact. But most important of all, it is the first ever of your contributions which is 100% open as to what may be the solution. A most significant step forward. Good for you!

Alan Ecob

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NSW 2068, Australia*

ACADEMIC INN PROBLEMS

TO interest more people I think we have to offer activities which are interesting and sufficiently pleasurable to make them want to devote time to them.

Can you plot your readers and supporters on a map? That might reveal clusters or places other than Swindon and London. If it did it might be worth asking the existing people in those places to find, say, two to six more people each and then set up an Academic Inn in the cluster area. The problem would of course be to find speakers or discussion leaders. If lively and active people were recruited they might themselves be able to talk, or to lead discussions, or to find others to do so.

Of course Academic Inns are only yet more talking shops but as they stimulate discussion they might lead to some action at the local level, such as opposing undesirable developments exerting some influence on local political parties. I suspect that it would not be useful to ask people to join anything or to help to set anything up, so it would be necessary to give potential participants copies of the review and invite them to an initial Academic Inn dinner at which ideas or offers to get speakers could be solicited. What I don't know is the definition of 'local' in their context. The smaller they are the less the distances to be travelled, but bigger meetings would stand a better chance of getting better speakers.

Angela Bates

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Grantham, Lincs NG33 5LH*

EXPLORATION?

AS FAR as my art goes (so to speak), there may be some possibilities to make a documentary exploration on some of the worrying issues that your magazine so accurately identifies. Of course, given the current media climate, it would be unlikely to get much of an airing, especially if it really identified problems that are maintained in

the interests of the few, but it is, in my opinion, an important exercise to engage in. You can't let established interests do all the representing!

Dominic Elliot,

43a Cadogan Square, London SW1X 0HX

VIOLATION

I HAVE an urgent favour to ask of you, whoever seek for peace. As you may know, the present Japanese prime minister, Jun'ichiro Koizumi, belongs to the ultra right-wing, and intends to revise the Peace Constitution. When the US bombed Afghanistan after the Sept 11 terrorism, the Japanese Government at once co-operated with it, and laid out a Special Measure Bill against terrorism before the Diet. This allows Japanese forces to be dispatched to any place in the world where US forces attack as a terroristic country. After establishing the law forcibly, Japanese forces were sent to the Indian Ocean and Pakistan.

Of course, we are against terrorism, but it should be judged by law and the response to it should not be a revenge war which is prohibited by international law. Originally the Japanese Peace Constitution prohibited any armaments, so the Japanese army, named the Self-Defence Force, violates it, and furthermore, as it also prohibits any war, even self-defence war, the participation with the US war completely tramples it underfoot.

During the Second World War, Japan killed 20 million Asian people and forced people into unspeakable sacrifices, including sex slaves. 3.1 million Japanese people were killed, and the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – no more!

After this war, we established the Peace Constitution. The Sept 11 incident clearly

showed that the safety of people cannot be assured by armaments, however great they may be.

We accuse the Japanese Government of violating the Peace Constitution by establishing a Special Measures Law Anti-Terrorism and by dispatching Japanese forces abroad. About 1400 people, including Ms Takako Doi, chief of the Socialist Democratic Party, have agreed so far. We intend to enlarge the movement domestically as well as abroad. It is a world-wide problem, as the Japanese forces take part in the war with US forces, not only in Asia where Japan formerly invaded, but everywhere else in the world as well.

Ken Ogata

1-719 Nakazato, Kiyose City, Tokyo, Japan

PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES

I THINK we shall have to abandon enormous chunks of technology and industrialism if we are to be in with a shout of achieving the kind of democratic participating communities you/we have been aiming at all these years. The cars will likely have to go. Properly accounted, they probably consume 50% of all the fossil fuels we use. To manufacture and operate 50 million new vehicles a year, even if these are fuel cell 'clean' vehicles, is going to require an amount of energy such as solar technology cannot provide, so that particular route delivers us back to nuclear energy. Windmills and tidal energy are not going to generate the hydrogen necessary to power (or manufacture) a world stock of a billion fuel cell-powered vehicles (a billion is the current amount of vehicles on the road). In any case the oil is running out and the climate change catastrophe is with us. So necessity and morality lead in the same

direction – to autonomous, self reliant communities of modest size and deploying modest technologies – welcome back the railroad and the heavy horse!

Giles Relly

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7129, South Africa*

CRISIS COMMITTEES

WE have a tremendous number of organisations and NGOs here, all of which are doing their own thing. I suspect many are dissipating their time. There is a strong feeling that we should consolidate our forces and concentrate on the essentials. You've set those out very clearly. We would like to use your paper on Crisis Committees as much as possible to educate and promote discussion. It would be our intention to get as many NGOs as possible to print your paper in their mailouts calling for possible feedback. Any views? Patrons? I am hoping Dr Jane Kelsey will allow her name to go forward. Her latest book, *At the Crossroad*, is excellent.

Derek J. Wilson

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New Zealand*

MIDDLE PATH

THE Fourth World is barely to be seen, in Uganda engulfed as we are in First World globalisations. World TV channels are now watched in the rusting sheds of remote villages, and farmers summon suppliers of farm inputs on their mobile phones.

The Second World: did it ever exist, except as a chimerical antagonist of Western modernity?

The Third World of subsistence farming and drums talking at night and untouched bushland stretching for inaccessible miles is

all in headlong retreat. It exists most persistently in the mindset of the people. For though the ministers dress in grey suits, and suffer in collar and tie, a style aped by other ranks of Ugandan urban man, their minds are dogged by preoccupations so different from Western drift as frequently not to connect with it at all.

I would like to see these terms defined – if they are more than Fleet Street shorthand. It is generally assumed that the Model for Emulation is set by US lifestyles, what IBRD now calls its ‘development paradigm’. Defenders of the Fourth World faith may be groping towards some middle path that rejects the untoward components issuing from America, and rejects those cultural traditions in Africa that patently obstruct the removal of ignorance, disease and apathy.

Vivian Craddock-Williams

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Kampala, Uganda*

FACE TO FACE

FOR most of the time humankind has lived on Earth we have lived in a symbiotic relationship with the rest of nature. It took civilisation to begin the destruction of the planet, a process well under way. Looking around me I see all the signs of a society on the way to its noisy, nasty end. Just look at the misery on the faces of people you pass in the street! All the gadgets and toys and ‘affluence’ have brought no fulfilment. Their use is destroying us. Using ‘primitive’ to describe quite complex history-adaptive societies is just propaganda. What is rarely mentioned is that for most of our time on Earth, ‘Government’ was face-to-face discussion in local kin groups. It was later that despotic rulers lived as man-gods in palaces, whilst the slaves built the tombs.

The primitive societies needed no prisons or armies or banks. Even the surviving hunter-gatherer groups, living in what most would call hostile environments, didn’t seem to need psychiatrists or courts. What needs to be said about the local level societies of most of our time on Earth is that, unlike us, they did not drive the world to the edge of destruction.

Robert Taylor

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APOLOGIES!

FOR the past few months you have kindly sent a copy of your journal to my old address. I did nothing. In fact I threw them to one side intending to read them at a later date. But this later date never actually arrived.

However, I recently seriously damaged a lumber disc and found myself confined to bed. As if by magic, there alongside my bed was a pile of *Fourth World Reviews* waiting to be read. Even then I did not immediately reach for them, but when I did, wow! I was hooked! I read each one from cover to cover and could see what a fool I had been not to read them immediately. Such interesting articles and excellent book reviews. Please accept my apologies for not reading them sooner and thank you so very much for sending them to me in the first place.

Are back issues available? And if so, which? And how much do they cost?


Michael S. Norman

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Derbyshire DE56 1NR*

Back issues are available from No. 1 except for four issues out of stock. £1 per copy, plus p&p. (£5 for photocopies of out of stock issues.) Ed.

BOOKS

THE BREAKDOWN OF NATIONS, by Leopold Kohr, with forewords by Neal Ascherson and Sir Richard Body. GREEN BOOKS AND NEW EUROPEAN PUBLICATIONS. £9.95. ISBN 1-870098-98-6.

 Reviewed by John Bunzl

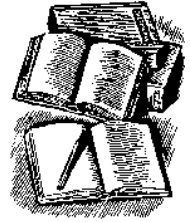
IN this imaginative and convincingly argued book, Kohr asserts that the larger a social unit becomes (i.e. a principality, region or nation), a 'critical mass' is reached where its propensity to aggression becomes inevitable and that, with larger scale societies, large-scale wars become the order of the day. His argument, therefore, is not that smallness prevents war but merely that the small-scale conflicts associated with the small nation state means that such conflict – as all other societal problems – is smaller, less complex and so more easily managed. Hence his call for today's nation states to be broken down and returned to the mosaic of small, pre-nation state regions more consistent with those of the Middle Ages.

But what Kohr only touches upon are the dynamics which underlie the evolution of human societies towards ever-larger units. He fails to unearth the dynamic by which the small state system of the Middle Ages came to be overridden by the large-state power blocks which characterise today's world. Interestingly, however, he unwittingly answers this question when he first asks, 'But what is the critical magni-

tude leading to abuse?' and then concludes that, 'It is the volume of power that ensures immunity from retaliation. This it does whenever it induces in its possessor the belief that he cannot be checked by any existing larger accumulation of power.'

But in these words one can identify that underlying dynamic. For while Kohr may be correct that a society's 'critical magnitude' or power may induce it to be aggressive, such power only occurs if it is relatively immune from the retaliation of a competing power. And from this, one can deduce that whenever a society sees itself as smaller than another, there is pressure upon it to become bigger, presumably by unifying or co-operating with other similarly threatened societies.

Although Kohr decries the fact that these newly-formed, larger social units became externally more aggressive, he gives scant regard to the fact that they also became internally more peaceful, choosing, instead, to pass over this interesting phenomenon. In ignoring it, Kohr misses an essential duality which others have long recognised: that the 'bigness' of some form of co-operation which is greater than the sum of its parts (be it unification or some other form of political co-operation) is a prerequisite for the 'smallness' of the internal component parts of the organism to function happily together.




Indeed, if the breakdown of nations were ever to happen, Kohr admits that: 'A division of the great powers alone ... would not be enough. With France, Italy, Germany and Great Britain dissolved, the present medium powers such as Spain, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Poland would loom disproportionately large in the new set-up of nations. This means that, if left intact, they would no longer be medium but large powers. Their sub-critical mass would have become critical and nothing would have been gained by dividing the others. So these must be divided too...'

Thus it is clear that a process of 'competition in reverse' would have to take place. But it could not possibly occur by individual nation states acting independently. After all, to do so when they could not securely count upon neighbouring nations doing likewise would be to court the very aggression Kohr highlighted! Thus if Kohr's 'breakdown' is ever to occur, paradoxically it could not happen without the 'bigness' of some form of international co-operation.

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MONEY. UNDERSTANDING AND CREATING ALTERNATIVES TO LEGAL TENDER, by Thomas H. Greco, CHELSEA GREEN, US, 2002, \$19.95, 295 pages. ISBN 1-890132-37-3.

 *Reviewed by J. Walter Plinge*

IT was in 1975, wrote Helena Norberg-Hodge in the January 2002 issue of *The Ecologist*, that 'the emergence of tensions' developed in the village of Ladakh in the western Himalayas following 600 years of peace and harmony. She attributes this sud-

den change to a shift in political and economic life caused by 'external investments', 'development', and, yes, 'globalisation'. Such a perceptive observation deserves an explanation and surely that explanation involves money, the title of Greco's book. In today's modern world (since 1971, and slightly earlier in the US) money is created by credit. Loans. Our money, 95 percent of it, is lent into existence. As Thomas Greco puts it, 'If there were no bank debt, there would be virtually no money – it's as simple as that'. Things were not always thus, and there are repercussions.

Look at it this way: suppose you are a plumber. You can earn \$15 an hour in Akron, Ohio, or \$35 an hour in New York. Now you are thinking about the cost of living, right?; it costs more to live in New York City so the pay is higher. Very good. But consider this. In Akron, if you go to the bank, the bankers will tell you your 'creditworthiness' is based on a \$30,000 earning potential and in New York your 'creditworthiness' is based on a \$70,000 earning potential. But you, in your dual Akron/NYC personality above, are eligible to create two different amounts of money simply by changing your address and nothing else. Furthermore your rates of savings, investments and pensions will be equally elevated in the inflated economy of New York. Because the 'cost of living' is so low in the Himalayas their 'creditworthiness' is virtually nil and, thus, they create no money by comparison. This explains why city people will always colonise rural and 'poor' areas – they have the money; they create it.

The best defence available to the people of Ladakh is to create their own currency and avoid inflated national currencies. If that is not a simple solution, at least it's a

realistic one, and that's where Thomas Greco's latest book comes in. This is the how-to manual of dozens of community currencies, past and present, with explanations of how and, more importantly, why certain steps are taken while other steps are avoided. For example, to the great relief of many community currency fans, Greco points out some patent flaws in the Ithaca Hours model and details corrective measures. This is important; there is a right way and a wrong way to issue money and a flawed community currency is not a long-term solution.

If you have always wondered what is meant when people say that capitalism requires continuous expansion, Greco explains it on page eight. A typical home buyer may take out a loan of \$100,000 but must repay some \$200,000 including interest. Since only the principal is lent into existence, the money to repay the interest does not exist. Thus the only way to put sufficient money into circulation is to lend more money. The net result is a continuous spiral of loans. Bankers call it growth but to the people of Ladakh it may seem more like colonisation.

For those of you who are concerned about the events in Afghanistan, Greco has some quotable quotes: 'The entire machinery of money and finance has now been appropriated to serve the interests of centralised power', and 'If governments were required first to come to the people to obtain the money to fight, there would be few if any wars.' That's what George W. Bush meant when he said (same *Ecologist* magazine, page 14), 'We fight the war on two fronts. Part of the war we fight is to make sure our economy continues to grow.' The point is that if US citizens had to work longer hours or pay higher taxes they

would be less enthusiastic about war, but since the US government can just issue bonds and Treasury notes and simply wish money into existence to save their flagging economy, the death and destruction in Afghanistan is as painless – even pleasant – as possible for the average US citizen.


Community currencies should not be passed off as a fad or as simplistic solutions; they offer a means to correct the way money is issued. The *wir* for example has been in operation since 1934 in Switzerland. Some observers have legitimate concerns about savings and investment and the ultimate usefulness of a community currency. Greco acknowledges this. While the *wir* successfully addresses this subject, many other currencies do not. 'At some point,' says Greco 'it should be possible to "network" community exchange systems together into a web extending over a wide geographic area and including a very large total population'. A lot more work needs to be done in this area but Greco makes some worthy suggestions, especially in his first two appendices.

In the end, you need to learn to walk before you can run. It's necessary to acknowledge the problem and focus on the solution; there is nothing to be gained by complaining about the solution. The problem is the undemocratic nature of today's money systems and the solution is for individuals to assert their rightful control over their own money. The correct way to create money for individuals to issue it; money, like free speech, issues from the individual.

As Greco says, 'The pinnacle of power today is the power to issue money. If that power can be democratised and focused in a direction that gives social and ecological concerns top priority, there may yet be hope for saving the world.'

J Walter Plinge gained a Masters degree in Fine Art at the University of Washington. He is Assistant Professor Emeritus (Art) at Stockton State College, Pomona, New Jersey, and Associate/Researcher for CCDEV (Community Currency Development).

LIBERATING THE LAND, by Mark Pennington. ISBN 0-255-36508-X.


 *Reviewed by Don Riley*

NOW a book at last lifts the lid on the catastrophe of Whitehall and the local government grip on our land use. The Town and Country Act of 1947 nationalised development rights and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) took away most farming decisions during the eighties and nineties. *The Archers* on radio and soaps on TV reflect our communities' remaining interests not taken over by Whitehall. (As a young computer specialist living in Moscow in the 1960s I was delighted to discover uninhibited, unregulated Soviet sex amid control of everything else.) As Mark Pennington points out in *Liberating the Land*, the key to communities reinventing their dynamism and destiny lies in regaining their land use rights. 'Market failure' arguments are used in support of land use planning. However, in this radical attack on the present regime the author shows that such arguments are misguided. Planners, even if altruistic, could not gather and interpret the information that would be necessary to run an efficient land-use planning system. In practice, planners have their own interests and are subject to pressure from special interest groups which benefit from the present regime. Fundamental change is required, according to Pennington. The system is over-centralised, there is too little experimentation, information is lacking and

incentive structures are inappropriate. The costs of enforcing property rights could be reduced by entrepreneurial action in a market. Private covenants, deed restrictions and the establishment of proprietary communities are the way forward.

For those who believe that much of the recent increase in property values is a disaster for residential have-nots this book is a revelation because it also explains how higher land costs raise our prices for food, through higher rents or building costs for local shops and even supermarkets. In his foreword to the book, Harry W Richardson, Professor of Planning and Economics in the School of Policy, Planning and Development, University of Southern California, writes, 'This is one of the most valuable dissections of land-use regulatory planning regimes to be published in recent years.'

THE PEACE BOOK, by Louise Diamond. CONARI PRESS 2002. \$30. ISBN 1-57324-770-7.

 *Reviewed by John Papworth*

IN the ordinary way there is little point in reviewing a book in which one profoundly disagrees with the basic thrust of its assumptions. One ventures to do so here because it expresses with superb accuracy the muddled thinking that still pervades so much 'peace' literature, to say nothing of 'peace' organisations the world over.

It is based on a simplistic form of 'ifonlyism'. If only lots and lots of people, perhaps even a majority, would, to quote some chapter headings, 'Breathe, Relax, Be Fully Present, Let Nature Nourish You, Relate to Basic Goodness, Play Together, Let Your Heart Break With the Suffering, Grow Food', and so on and on, then we would be advancing the cause of peace.

Would we? Oh dear! The assumption here is that war and violence in the modern world are primarily moral problems. If only they were, and if only everybody absorbed the moral teachings of this book, so the argument appears to assume, then peace would surely prevail.

It is an assumption which overlooks several imposing factors. One is that human aggression is as old as history and is not going to be sent packing either by acts of Parliament or Congress, or by moral preaching already several thousand years old. 'Peace' literature is generally significantly silent on just how we deal with the aggressive drives of the human psyche, especially the male one.

More importantly is the failure to grasp that 'peace' is not primarily a moral issue as one of political and economic structures. The overwhelming majority of the members of the human race ardently desire to live without war; they do not need a stream of books, pamphlets, magazines and other forms of propaganda to persuade them war

is evil and causes untold suffering. They, after all, are the ones who suffer. The argument for peace is already victorious! Then why don't we have peace?

The question raises issues which 'peace' propaganda is generally content to ignore, issues of political and economic structures so huge that it is quite impossible for ordinary people's moral drives to find expressions in their workings.

And their very hugeness creates the conflicts that ravage the world and which also, because of its devastating effects on social structures, promotes untold stress and misery in people's lives. It is the latter effects which lead to so much marital discord, broken homes, psychologically outraged children, and to the wave of criminality, drug addiction and general mood of bleak despair which is engulfing the modern world.

A lot of people who read this book will feel ever so much better, but the effects of their betterment on our general onrush to the collapse of civilisation will be about as significant as a birdsong.

THE LARGEST ECONOMIES

Statistics are liable to bore the toenails off any tortoise, but here are some which would rivet the attention of a titmouse.

A table showing the world's largest economies, whether governments or corporations, staggers belief. Of the top 50 of the largest in the world it is no surprise to see the USA head the league. But wait. In that same group of 50 there are no less than 18 which are not governments at all, but private corporations! And 12 of those 18 are Japanese. So Mitsubishi ranks number 18 in the table, larger than the economies of Sweden, Belgium, Mexico, Norway and three-quarters of the rest of the world's COUNTRIES!

To ram the message home, more than half of the top 100 of the world's largest economies are private corporations, and of these no less than 24 are Japanese companies.

Yet there are still those idealistic souls who persist in believing that we can check the mordant evil of global capitalism by writing to our MPs.

HAVANA HARVEST

by Walter Schwarz

Cuba has become a world-class laboratory for organic farming. Walter Schwarz reports on the city gardens where crops are grown to sell to local people.

NOTHING that lives and grows in Ricardo Sanchez's garden needs anything putting on it that comes from elsewhere.

He feeds his vegetables with compost from his kitchen, his catfish on worms and larvae, his rabbits on leaves and herbs. He makes natural pesticides to protect his produce. His tomatoes, guavas, avocados, mangoes, herbs and medicinal plants compete for space under the shadow of palm trees between his house and the neighbour's.

An organic gardening freak? No, this is one of Havana's 62,000 patio gardens – private urban plots of less than 800 square metres devoted to food production. All enjoy elaborate official support. A sign outside his house proclaims that Sanchez's garden is supported by three separate institutions: the people's patio movement for eco-organic production, the agriculture and pisciculture network and the municipal food development committee.

In Britain, eco-enthusiasts dream of state-sponsored organic farming, of farmers' markets supplying local produce for everyone, of city gardens feeding urban populations. In Cuba, the government orders this to happen and provides the means.

You see the veggie stalls on pavements, at street corners and under the covered

walkways of Havana's elegant, crumbling colonial buildings. Produce arrives all day in handcarts and lorries, and turnover is fast. Food grows in unlikely spaces between houses. Patios (or *huertos*) are the smallest unit. Over a million patios are registered in Cuba. Larger urban market gardens, growing vegetables on raised beds and selling them on site, are called *organoponicus*. In the Playa borough, at the corner of 25th and 14th Streets, the *organoponicus* boasts a hectare abundant with parsley, lettuce, Chinese spinach and tomatoes. Growing on 250 raised beds supported on tiles, the vegetables look as large, shiny, regular and immaculate as they would on a supermarket shelf.

Enlisting the Natural Enemy

Members were tending the plants as volunteers, alongside paid workers. Andreas Verdecia, the technical manager, is employed full-time by Granja Urbana, the government's urban farming institute. He said the produce was 100% organic. 'We are supplied with compost made by worms. Against fungi, we use other fungi; we try to find the natural enemy.'

Cuban food is what we would call 'organically grown'. There is not yet an organic certifying institution like our Soil Association. Most chemical inputs are banned in cities, but a mild, low-toxin pesti-

cide called cabaril is allowed, to protect seeds from ants.

'What matters for us is that it's sustainable,' said Leonardo Cirino, an assistant director of Anap, the association of small farmers. 'Look what happens in Latin America. Organic coffee, but there's no education, no health services, bad housing. For us, organic growing is part of a culture.'

The *organoponicus* at 44th Street and Fifth Avenue, one of the oldest in Havana, employs nine full-time workers and sells most of its produce on the spot. Prices are lower than in the mainstream markets but higher than the ration shops. The vegetables are not certifiably organic because cabaril is used. No other chemicals are allowed. 'When we came up against a soil parasite we tried every natural remedy, but the parasite is still there,' says the manager, Alvaro Garcia, a former physics lecturer. 'So we just plant short-harvest crops like lettuce; no tomatoes.'

The Cuban organic revolution has happened because there was no other alternative. Boycotted by the US, Cuba's communist economy had been tied to the Soviet bloc in conventional, capital-intensive chemical farming. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, most imports of food, fuel, tractors, fertilisers and pesticides were cut off.

'Our problems must be solved without feedstocks, fertilisers or fuel,' said Fidel Castro in 1991. Cuba's 'alternative model', a science-based, low-input sustainable agriculture, was launched – the largest such conversion in history.

Cuban agriculture has now become a world-class laboratory for non-chemical fertilisers and pesticides, farming in small units with highly motivated producers, and

growing food in and around cities. Traditional practices, such as the use of compost castings made by red worms fed on a diet of kitchen scraps, were revived and refined.

With 2% of Latin America's population, Cuba has 11% of the scientists. 'Barefoot' agronomists, just graduated, worked in rural co-operatives to invent organic fertilisers and pesticides. Farmers rediscovered sustainable techniques of intercropping and replacing tractors with oxen. The experiment continues to evolve. More than 200 bio-tech centres produce and distribute non-toxic bio-fertilisers and pesticides based on local micro-organisms.

Bucking the Trend

A crucial part of the drive to food sovereignty was the land reforms which switched 40% of farmland from state farms to incentive-based co-operatives. Farmers could sell to farmers' markets, offering better prices than the state. Remaining state farms were broken up into basic production units in which the state owns the land but the members manage the business. In the cities, patio gardeners can sell their surplus in approved stalls.

'Checkmate to neo-liberalism' proclaims a poster in the offices of Inifat, the national institute for tropical agriculture. Cuban policies have bucked the world trend. Other Latin American and Caribbean countries, forced to follow the prevailing model of liberalised markets and deflationary monetary policy, saw greater inequality, concentration of holdings and rural poverty as small farmers could not compete against cheap food imports. In the Cuban countryside, organic sugar, coffee and orange juice are becoming established with official support.

But the spectacular success story is city farming, which produces 60% of Cuban vegetables and provides more than the UN's recommended health quota of the 300 grams per day per person.

'The secret is in the high productivity of small urban units,' said Nelso Compagnioni, at Inifat – denying the conventional wisdom behind industrial farming. 'Every dollar of produce on a small plot costs 25 cents to produce; as soon as you increase the area you get higher costs – more workers, lower yields, more complex irrigation. And there's no need for transport: customers collect their food on the way home from work.'

At the start of the organic revolution, as the government gave unused city land to anyone who wanted to cultivate it, many first-generation city dwellers remembered their country childhood. Development officials encouraged their efforts, state shops supplied seed and tools. Under a 1996 bylaw in Havana, only organic growing methods are allowed.

Down in Ciego de Avila, Cuba's best orange-growing province, they claim yields from the organic plantations – still only a small area – are 20% higher. Instead of weed-

ing, organic growers encourage weed-killing legumes to grow around the trees, giving them an untidy look. Instead of chemical fertilisers, they apply compost from the wastes of rice, beans, bananas and sweetcorn.

Some day, US economic sanctions will be lifted. Cuba will be able to import chemical fertilisers, pesticides and fuel for tractors; foreign investors will want to buy profitable farmland, and urban land may become too valuable for mere gardening.

But Cubans engaged in the organic effort are confident that the essentials of their revolution will be preserved. 'Americans too want good food,' says Compagnioni. 'We'll export the stuff to them.'

Mavis Alvares, director of Anap and an influential figure in ruling circles, says: 'We've put an immense educational effort into sustainability. It simply isn't the policy of the government to have cheap imported goods. When the Americans lift the embargo, there will be tough negotiation. We want to attract investment rather than cheap goods. We fought the Americans for 40 years and they won't get the better of us now.' ■

This article first appeared in The Guardian.

Society - the entire human community - has now reached the point where it must decide whether it allows events to take their course, or if it manages the turning that changes the character and the content of development for the benefit all of humankind. But to make this decision, first we must become conscious that a turning is truly necessary, and then we must understand just what it is that we must do to avoid the worst, and how we must do it.

Mikhail Gorbachev

ALL CHANGE IN NIGERIA

by Sir Peter Smithers

The author here records a dramatic change of outlook after the development of the Nigerian Federation he helped to set up.

A*FTER being an 'umpire' for the Ghanaian vote on independence I was Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for the Colonies throughout the negotiations which established the Nigerian Constitution.*

In those far-off days the problems of setting up an independent political structure of disparate elements were little understood. The administrative structure of Nigeria was functioning under the Colonial Office with admirable efficiency. There were plenty of experienced and able Nigerian civil servants. This was an achievement which HMG wished to pass intact to the new rulers. So far as I can remember the breakup of the system into its separate ethnic parts or groups of such was never seriously considered.

In the post-war period we in Europe had much to learn about federation. Many people mistakenly thought that the model of the United States could be followed. Margaret Thatcher gives the difference between the establishment of a federation in the USA and in Europe as the existence in the former of 'a common language, culture and values', whereas in post war Europe none of the three were to be found. More important is the fact that immigrants to the US went there to discard their nationality of origin and intending to become Americans. I cannot think of any country in Europe of which this was true in 1949 or true now. Is it true today of the many very different ethnic communities which compose post colonial Nigeria? I do not know but I very much doubt it.

The model of the EU, the origins of which lie 52 years behind us, is particularly relevant to the future of Nigeria, and the question is, 'Is it likely to arrive at a fully functioning federal structure?' Dedicated federalists will say that the ultimate development of a fully fledged federation is necessary and inevitable. I do not share that opinion; I believe the process has already been carried

beyond the limits of what is practicable, given the existing differences in culture, language and society of its various component parts. The EU has, in my opinion, reached deadlock so far as completion of the federal structure is concerned.

There is, however, a new dimension in the world of today with which the EU, Nigeria and all national governments will be obliged to come to terms. For years I predicted that with the advance of technology governments would lose control of events. The vacuum thus caused would inevitably be filled by the evolution of a system independent of governments and over which they would have no control. They would be subsystems of it and therefore dependent upon it. The new system, global and based upon advanced electronics, in due course appeared, a spontaneous growth resulting from the activities of millions of businesses and individuals and governed only by 'natural law', of which the survival of the fittest is a principal rule.

The EU and Nigeria were both established when 'big was beautiful'. Nigeria, a composite of many elements, would be a big, powerful and wealthy state, an element of stability in post-colonial Africa. But on 11 September we saw that a private individual could oblige the world's remaining superpower to completely revise its defence policy and scrap much of its equipment and training at a cost of billions of dollars. Even so the ability of the US to prevent future attacks remains in doubt.

We live in a new world in which every government, business and many private individuals will be required to make radical changes to the way in which they operate. In the new circumstances where big is not necessarily beautiful and may be quite the opposite, small begins to look rather pretty. The assumptions under which post-colonial Nigeria was set up are no longer necessarily valid, and a radical re-examination of the options which are open to Nigerians in the new circumstances is now imperative. ■



FOURTH WORLD SPECTATOR

A SPIRIT OF CURIOSITY took me to a meeting of the Bruges Group held in the handsome Georgian premises of the Foreign Press Association just off Trafalgar Square. The large and somewhat airless room was packed, but hardly anyone seemed under 40, indeed it was rather like an Anglican church congregation, except that there were far more men than women.

The speeches focussed on the threat of a referendum to decide abolishing the British currency and becoming subject to an EUropean one. A Labour MP urged we focus on just that and warned against widening the area of debate to other issues. He also said that the EUro was unpopular with the under 25s, which was reassuring, even if it would have been more in tune if some of them had been present. The Tory chap declared a trade war was brewing up between EUrope and the

USA and that Britain was in danger of being caught in the crossfire. I liked his point that a common currency was akin to opening a joint bank account with one's neighbours. We are of course under an obligation to love our neighbours, but I wonder how much love would continue to prevail on such a basis? Who would open a joint account with Tony Blair? I was glad the speeches did not dwell overmuch on economic arguments, if only because the underlying assumptions of the subject are so totally immoral and untenable, and are in any case responsible for much of the mischief of the modern world. I can quite see the point of making economic calculations about objects, but human beings are not objects, they are the subjects of the whole exercise, and to talk about 'land, labour and capital' as though the divine wonder of the individual human soul is on a par with a share certificate or a cabbage patch seems to me to proceed just about as far along the

path of heresy as it is possible to go.

But those two MPs Frank Field (Lab) and John Redwood (Con) impressed me enormously with their calm, even gentle, reasonableness and it struck me how so often, despite the reputation that politicians tend in general to have, the few that I have come to know seem to share a common personal stamp of integrity and trustworthiness.

IT WAS CERTAINLY TRUE OF PETER SHORE, whose memorial service I attended in St Martin's in the Fields. He was not too long ago the Guest of Honour at one of our London Academic Inn dinners, but I had got to know him many years ago when, God bless us all, I was a student at the LSE and, God bless us even more, also secretary of South Kensington Labour Party, when I shared a platform with him at open air meetings I used to organise opposite Earl's Court Station. He was one of nature's incorruptibles.

IT WAS NOT TOO LONG AFTERWARDS, when I had acquired a reputation (justified, I fear) of being extremely left wing and a 'Bevanite', that Anne Kerr, a left wing Labour MP, spoke to me in the tea room in the House of Commons of a safe Labour seat going in the North of England and asked if I was interested. I demurred at my suitability and suggested that my chances of being selected were too remote to be seriously considered; to which she responded smoothly, 'Well, these things can be arranged you know.' Doubtless they could, but by then, mainly owing to my experience as a Labour candidate in a recent general election, I was in a state of turmoil and disenchantment with the way

the political game was played, and although she invited me to meet some colleagues to take the matter further, I was already on another track altogether, which led me, eventually with the help of Leopold Kohr, Sir Herbert Road and Fritz Schumacher, to found a magazine I entitled *Resurgence*.

ON THE STEPS OF ST MARTIN'S I saw a face I thought looked familiar. Yes, he agreed he was Iain Duncan Smith, so I let flow a few verbals on the need for community empowerment. He responded that it was precisely what he would be saying in a conference speech the next day and urged me to hearken. Well, I did so, but his community sentiments, eminently worthy in themselves, were so swamped by rather lesser concerns I rather fear they may well be washed overboard altogether. Afterwards a lunch in the crypt of this glorious church with Dick Body and John Coleman. We sat on comfortable chairs and owing to some amplified noise, which might have borne some relationship to music, we were reduced to conversing in shouts. The invention of sound amplification constitutes today a major threat to civilisation.

Dick made a sound point that the editorials in *Fourth World Review* tended to be too long and repetitive. I recalled that my friend John Bunzl, who is campaigning ardently to get international morality adopted simultaneously, had made a similar plaint so I promised to mend my ways and John Coleman promised to help. But I wondered what other readers might think. Problem here is that society today is afflicted with a malignant social disease called passivity. It afflicts even the best of us so that we are tardy in responding even

when our response might be valued and help to change things. Anyway I resolved, as I left with a headache from the unspeakable noise from those loudspeakers, that I would tell the management to turn it off so we can have a civilised conversation instead of an exchange of bawling.

I HAVE BEEN TO TWO MEETINGS in the village; one was to plan celebrations for the Queen's Jubilee and the other was the annual meeting of the Parish Council. In a couple of hours a dozen people at the first meeting settled all the details of a complex programme spread over a week and involving the co-operation of numerous other village organisations (of which we boast over seventy). It was chaired with quite cheerful competence by a lady in her sixties and the meeting was peppered with: 'Oh, I will do that' or 'So and so will help there' and so on and it seemed to be a model of how any meeting might be run.

The parish meeting was another cup of tea altogether. The chairman is a youngish high-tech whiz-kid whose opening report came up on a big screen connected to his laptop sentence by sentence as he spoke. Again a long and complex agenda, and this time with plenty of contributions from the crowded attendance. But it is surely worth noting first, that all this work was entirely voluntary and nobody was being paid a penny for doing it, second the considerable degree of competence and goodwill that was manifested, and third, the way it expressed the general high level of concern that prevails in the village for the public weal. But what struck me even more forcibly was how so easily these people could be running all the affairs of the village – schools, clinic, cops, and so on – mat-

ters now in the hands of armies of sprawling salaried bureaucrats and busybodies. All this growth of centralised control over local matters in recent decades has been justified by specious claims of efficiency, but I think it was Leopold Kohr who pointed out that if you double the size of any administrative unit you quadruple its problems whilst decimating the capacity of the individual citizen to influence matters, and with, of course, no increase in the competence of those running the show. Which means, it seems to me, that vast reserves of management skills and readiness to serve the public good are just being stifled or running to waste up and down the country because essentially local matters are being run by Whitehall ministries which need to be dissolved ASAP.

A FAMILY IN THE VILLAGE had a bit of a reputation for various dealings and was finally given notice to quit. So by noon on such-and-such a date all nine members were out on the street. I passed by and saw them sorting out their stuff in the front garden, with a grim-faced grandmother holding court and a police car and what may have been a bailiff's van in attendance. I came home for lunch but found I could not eat. It seemed an atrocious act of social vandalism, by an elected authority no less, to abruptly render a numerous family, including two children and a baby, homeless. Well, I went back and met some of them, including Granny who was pushing an antique pram full of children's games, and gave her a packet of tea and some money. I don't suppose it helped much but I just wanted them to know that they were not without neighbours who had some feeling for their plight. ■

Fourth World News



January, February and March of this year have been the warmest so far on record. • Penguins in Antarctica are dying because they cannot get enough to eat. Global warming has caused ice to break up, making it difficult for them to reach their food.

• A cruiseship has been created solely for millionaires, complete with golf course and art gallery. • Polish government census officials are refusing to include Silesian nationals. • It costs £200,000 to keep an 11–16-year-old locked up for a year. • High train fares are forcing people to switch to cars. It costs less to fly from London to most airports in Britain than it does to travel by train. • One in four of all 13–14-year-olds admit to regularly binge-drinking. • According to the Wellbeing Survey, people at retirement age are more likely to be happy and content than younger people. • Around 30 Labour MPs and several peers have set up LATE (Labour Against The Euro), to show that the Labour party is significantly against the EUro. • One in four of all boys aged 15 to 16 admit to carrying a weapon, and one in five admit to attacking someone with the intent of causing them serious harm. • It will cost £14 million to fix a pipeline which has leaked over 286,000 gallons of oil into the sea north of Alaska. It was hit when a local man decided he'd practice his rifle shooting on the pipeline. • The President of Pakistan has said that they are ready to use their nuclear weapons if they come under serious threat from India. • A study from Harvard University says that life expectancy is just as dependent on intellectual exercise as it is physical in old age. • There was chaos in Argentina as the government suspended all bank transactions for fear of a total financial collapse. • A senior Japanese politician has said that

Japan is capable of producing thousands of nuclear warheads overnight to counter China's rapid military build-up. • A report by the Food Commission has attacked some of Britain's largest medical charities for selling their names for use on highly processed foods. • BP has been accused of involvement in the murder of a Colombian environmental regulator who was about to blow the whistle on oil-company corruption. • Thousands of square miles of seas around Britain are to become marine 'national parks' where foreign trawlers, oil exploration and military activities will be restricted or banned. • The number of alligators living in New York's sewerage system has dropped dramatically because of pollution, according to the 'Save the Sewer Gators Coalition'. • The Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert, South Africa, have lost a legal battle against being evicted from their homeland, ending 40,000 years of a hunter-gathering lifestyle. • The Pope has rejected demands for an end to priestly celibacy. • Peace talks have collapsed in the Democratic Republic of Congo. • Since the flawed presidential election in Zimbabwe last month, 150 white farmers have been evicted illegally from their properties. • UK researchers have shown that Scotland could provide most of Britain's electrical energy requirements from wind power. • An exercise pill that allows couch potatoes to enjoy the health benefits of physical exertion without lifting a finger could be developed from American research. • Sweden has banned 140 chemicals and now uses 60% less pesticides. • A New Economics Foundation survey found that money spent on locally produced food generates twice the income for local economies than the same amount spent in supermarkets. – S.H.

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