

Part ONE

EXISTING WORLD 'ORDER'

Compelling reasons for change

Chapter 1

RICH WORLD, POOR WORLD

Since, at present, money dominates the world, the most obvious differentiation between its constituent regions is in terms of their comparative wealth. 'Rich World' could reasonably be applied to North America, Western Europe, Japan and Australia, even though they all contain significant segments of poverty. Similarly 'Poor World' could be applied to most of Central and South America, Africa and Asia, although they contain some segments of wealth. The rich world has been defined as the 'West' or 'North', and the poor world as the 'South', or 'less-developed countries'. However, the short-hand terms 'First World' and 'Third World' will be used for convenience in this book because they are most widely understood today. The term First cannot be taken literally because several great civilizations existed in the 'Third World' millenia before much of the First World was discovered; neither can it be taken to imply inherent precedence in quality.

DOMINATION BY THE FIRST WORLD

The historical perspective

When commerce and trade are on the agenda, Third World countries are treated as if on equal terms with the rest of the world. The First World, as a whole, conveniently overlooks the huge, incalculable debt that it owes Third World countries in respect of all the human and material resources plundered from them over five centuries. This plunder did not take place in the dim and distant past, but continued until quite recent times: for example, the slave trade was only outlawed in the British Empire in 1833. This unprecedented, incalculable world-wide debt comprises two main elements: profits from the sale of captured slaves and their subsequent labour, and the value of looted precious metals and a wide range of raw materials and products.

In her book, *The Creation of World Poverty*, Teresa Hayter says, 'The British started off their accumulation with piracy, but the biggest profits were to be made in the slave trade'. As Professor H Merivale put it in a lecture at Oxford University in 1840: 'What raised Liverpool and Manchester from provincial towns to gigantic cities?...Their present opulence is as really owing to the toil and suffering of the Negro as if his hands had excavated their docks and fabricated their steam engines'. And Walter Rodney says:

The profits were fabulous. John Hawkins made three trips to West Africa in the 1560s, and stole Africans whom he sold to the Spanish in America. On returning, his profit was so handsome that Queen Elizabeth became interested in his next venture and provided him with a ship. He returned with such dividends that the Queen made him a Knight; on his coat of arms he chose the representation of an African in chains.

Over the 400 years up to 1870 estimated totals of between 10 and 20 million human beings were 'shanghaied' from Africa and shipped across the Atlantic when approximately one sixth of them died; the survivors were sold as slaves. It is known that in the 18th century alone, France made profits of approximately £50 million and Britain £75m from selling slaves, and Britain made an overall profit around £250m from the production of sugar by slaves in the West Indies. (The sums are in the values of the time.) It must also be remembered that those 10 million men and women were picked for deportation deliberately, because they were fit and in their prime, and thus represented an unimaginable loss both to their families and to Africa. Finally, when this

revolting traffic was brought to an end, the British ‘merchants’ who had been involved were compensated to the tune of £20m. for their ‘loss of profits’.

Again from *The Creation of World Poverty* Hayter says:

In 1757 British attention shifted from the West Indies to India. The famous Bengal plunder began to arrive in London soon after, and its arrival coincided with what is generally considered to be the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in Britain. It has been estimated that the total British plunder of India between 1757 and 1815 amounted to £1,000m. Ernest Mandel adds up the value of gold and silver taken from Latin America up to 1660, the booty extracted from Indonesia by the Dutch from 1650 to 1780, the harvest reaped by France in the 18th century slave trade, and the profits from slave labour in the British Antilles and those from a half century of British looting in India. These, Mandel says, are the most substantial amounts for which figures, of a sort, are available; but they add up to over £1 billion or more than the capital value of all the industrial enterprises operating by steam which existed in Europe around 1800.

Apart from the straightforward looting, the First World interventionists of the time proceeded quite ruthlessly to reorganize agricultural production on a monocrop basis, so as to streamline production and profits. These interventions upset ecological cycles because, previously, ‘crops were harvested and consumed in close proximity to the areas in which they were grown, so sewage and other wastes could be returned to the ground, thus maintaining the organic content and trace minerals in the soil. The new organization meant transporting agricultural products over thousands of miles, rarely returning organic wastes to the soil, but allowing them to be dumped in rivers and oceans. Thus soils are being impoverished in an irreversible manner.’¹

The 18th and 19th century domination converted Third World countries into suppliers of raw materials for the First World, and markets for manufactured goods from it, thus undermining both their own industries and their ability to feed themselves. In the process, Europeans took much of the best land for themselves, especially in Latin America and Africa. In Kenya, for example, Lord Delamere obtained 100,000 acres of prime land for one penny per acre.

By 1914, colonies ‘belonging’ to certain European countries together amounted to over half the world’s total land area, and contained over one third of the world’s population. It would be not only impracticable, but also totally out of place to attempt to put a compensatory price tag on that long-running rape of the Third World’s people and resources. Instead, First World countries should acknowledge that the least they can do now is to give without stint to raise Third World people’s living standards into line with their own, and thus enable them to participate fully in the improved forms of world society proposed in Part Two. The very terms ‘First World’ and ‘Third World’ could then be consigned to the ‘trash-can of history’, where they belong.

First World Attitudes

Former World Bank President Eugene Black, drumming up support for aid in the 1950s said: ‘Our foreign aid programmes constitute a distinct benefit to American business. The three major benefits are [a] providing a large and immediate market for US goods and services, [b] stimulating the development of new overseas markets for US companies, [c] orienting local economies towards free enterprise systems in which US firms can prosper’.² In 1968, President Nixon said: ‘The main purpose of US aid is not to help other nations but to help ourselves.’³ In a manner reminiscent of the proselytizing missionaries, First World countries, particularly the US and UK, have sent their representatives around the Third World to try and influence countries to privatize existing nationally owned industries such as railways, communications, airlines and the like. US authorities in the 1970s referred to food as a ‘weapon...a powerful negoti-

ating tool' and to grain shortages as giving Washington 'virtual life and death power over the needy multitudes, thus making food primarily both a source of profit and a means of economic and political control over the world at large, and particularly its poorest parts.'⁴

The following Reagan administration statement, marked 'recently declassified', was exhibited at the 1986 UN International Year of Peace conference. It said:

We [the US] have about 50% of the world's wealth and only 6.5% of its population. Our real task is to devise a pattern of relationships which will maintain this. We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford the luxury of altruism and world benefaction. We should cease to talk about human rights, raising living standards, and democratizations. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are hampered by idealistic slogans the better.⁵

Professor Mullard, of Amsterdam, speaks of the European community 'now needing a firmer coherence, if it is to establish a real presence in the future. A reaffirmation of pre-war attitudes to the Third World, and a self-image of superiority may well be the glue that is needed for bonding.' However, Yasmin Alibhai argues that 'few non-whites could psychologically participate in the reconstruction of the myth of a superior whiteness and give it unconditional loyalty. Worsthorne has said their allegiance may be with the "enemies of the West", namely the Third World.'⁶

Promoting what they term 'lifeboat ethics' (meaning some have to be thrown overboard or we all sink), University of California academics Drs Hardin and Paddock have been advocating letting people starve to death in societies that fail to cut their birth rates. They were supported by a US National Security Council official, D Ellerman, saying 'to give food aid to countries just because people are starving is a pretty weak reason'.⁴

Economic Relations

Investment in most Third World countries showed a dramatic collapse in the 1980s, heralding further economic decline rather than recovery. During the period 1984-89 there was a net transfer of resources from poor to rich countries of \$137bn. The World Bank was set up ostensibly to assist the Third World, but is controlled by the major First World nations with 60% of the votes, and dominates Third World governments. For example, a Costa Rican economist, Maria Trejos, says 'our whole society is being transformed...the World Bank is undercutting our country's political independence by placing conditions on everything we do, setting our policies on pricing, money, subsidies, imports, exports, banking, agriculture, and so on. We are losing our sovereignty.'⁷ Due to international machinations, prices of the majority of Third World exports fell drastically, often as much as 30% during the 1980s, while prices of essential imports such as fertilizers and machinery rose. At the same time, it has become common for the First World to supply obsolete equipment, while charging heavily for up-to-the-minute technologies.

Ex-President Nyerere said in 1989:

The worst thing of all in Africa is a feeling of hopelessness - a loss of the will to fight - an intolerable feeling of dependence. We can't even scream. We are afraid that the aid we do get might stop if we do scream, or if we argue against the powerful in the UN or GATT.

First World countries erect 50% more import barriers against Third World countries than against each other according to a 1988 World Bank study, which concluded that this trade protectionism 'reduces Third World national incomes by almost twice the amounts of First World aid provided.' The *Guardian* (27/11/90) commented 'these measures are legitimate when aimed against foreign suppliers whose export prices are

below cost or subsidized, but not when aimed at harassing foreign suppliers who happen to be more competitive than domestic producers.'

In 1984, the UK gave only 17 cents per capita to UNICEF, as against \$3.75 to \$4.75 per capita from the Scandinavian countries. But in fact the UK actually gained, because although donating £6m, UK manufacturers received orders worth over £7m for supplies from UNICEF. A report by the UK Overseas Development Institute states that the February 1991 Gulf War affected the economies of at least 40 Third World countries as seriously as natural disasters, resulting in direct costs to them of well over \$12bn. 'Hundreds of thousands of imported workers from developing countries have had to flee the Gulf region, abandoning savings, possessions and livelihoods,...millions at home were dependent on receiving their financial support...now they have to be re-absorbed into their own countries, already suffering from widespread unemployment.'⁸

The multinational corporations

There are over 10,000 'multinationals' in operation, with around 100,000 subsidiaries. Between them they control approximately 90% of all commodities exported by the Third World; 12 or so of the largest together control most of the world's production of oil, petro-chemicals, tyres, glass and paper. The combined turnovers of just the 10 largest multinationals exceed the combined GNP of a large group of Third World countries. For every dollar invested, they recoup 2, 3 or 4 times over in profit. John Vidal (*Guardian* (8/5/92)) tells us that:

The top 500 companies of the world now control about 70% of world trade, 80% of foreign investment, and 30% of world GNP, or about \$300bn pa. Many now control larger development budgets than half of Africa and negotiate like nations. In many cases they control or influence whole industrial processes from demand to extraction of raw materials, through to manufacturing, banking and end use. Almost by definition they control the pollution and poverty that go with these processes.

Unilever, the world's largest food company, has annual sales exceeding the combined GNP of Ethiopia, Chad, Nicaragua and Mozambique. Just six companies dominate the world grain trade, handling around 90% of US wheat, maize and oats exports. The malign capacity of the multinationals to influence international bodies in their own interests is illustrated by excerpts from an April 1991 article in the *Ecologist*, which refers to the UN's Food and Agriculture organization as 'a famine machine...benefiting the rich and powerful at the expense of the poor...in effect creating the conditions for mass starvation.' The FAO employs 6,000 people and spends \$343m pa officially to 'raise nutritional levels and living standards and eliminate hunger'. The *Ecologist* claims it is in effect a front organization for the multinationals, dambuilders and agro-chemical firms to promote high-tech agriculture which boosts yields but benefits only a rich elite while it devastates the environment. The FAO is accused of 'dragging peasants into the market economy and promoting export-led development.' The 'green revolution' has replaced ecologically sound native systems with costly hi-tech methods which benefit only rich farmers and customers who can afford to buy the food. Poor farmers are made landless and driven into urban slums.

President Allende told the UN in 1972 that Anaconda, Kennecot and other companies exploiting Chilean copper had, by then, made over \$4,000m profits over the previous 42 years from an initial investment of under \$30m. The weakness, if they exist at all, of trades unions in the Third World is evidenced by the generally very poor wages and working conditions endured by employees of the multinationals, which are determined, as always, to maximize their profits.

Those working conditions are comprehensively and clearly explained by Teresa Hay-

ter in *The Creation of World Poverty*:

Multinationals take people at their fittest and cheapest and discard them when they become disabled, ill, old or merely exhausted through pressure of work. They hire apprentices and fire them when their 'apprenticeship' ends; they sack workers just before they are entitled to any security or minimum wage; increasingly, they hire children and sack them before they become entitled to adult wages; some 80 to 90% of workers are women who are cheaper than men, but both they and the men are hired young and fired when worn out, say at 30; the preponderant age of employees is 14 to 24; a 50% to 100% turnover of labour per year is common. In Hong Kong, a British colony, but ignoring British labour legislation, 34,000 children work, half of them a 10 hour day. Hours of work are in general very long; in Hong Kong 60% of adults work a seven day week. In South Korea the 84 hour week is common; bus conductors work 18 hour days and garment workers 14 to 16 hour days, and at peak demand 2 or 3 days continuously without sleep. Information on wages is scattered, but, for example, in electronics, hourly rates in Hong Kong, Singapore, Korea and Jamaica average 30 cents, compared with over \$3 in the US, a tenfold difference. In India, Indonesia, and Korea, wages range from \$2 to \$12 per week. As a result, for some large firms, wages bills account for only 7% of sales receipts, while profits account for around 30%.

The rock-bottom, indescribably terrible outcome of the multinationals' ruthless approach to maximizing their profits from the Third World was the industrial disaster, on 3rd December 1984, at Bhopal in India. Nearly 3,000 were killed immediately and 20,000 were injured seriously. Around half a million Bhopal residents continue to suffer the crippling after-effects of the methyl iso-cyanide gas; half of them will suffer permanently and resulting premature deaths still occur daily. 'The multinational concerned, the US company Union Carbide, had never warned the Bhopal City Council that the pesticide manufacturing process was dangerous. A similar plant in the US itself, had been deliberately sited in an isolated area.'⁹ 'There is much evidence to suggest that the Bhopal disaster was the result of cutting costs and safety margins to terrifyingly low standards. Yet Carbide has never been tried; the facts of what actually happened have never been fully explored in a Court of Law; and no liability has been established.'¹⁰

In spite of evidence of poor management and shoddy maintenance, Union Carbide (one of the world's ten largest chemical companies) denied liability and produced an 'independent investigator' to support their case; but the scientist concerned turned out to have been paid by them. The company was spared paying crippling compensation of up to \$15bn when they succeeded in persuading the US courts in 1986 that the case should be tried instead by the Indian courts, resulting in each claimant receiving the outrageously trivial sum of \$470 'in full and final settlement' for either suffering or bereavement. For comparison, an industrial disaster in the US itself which resulted in asbestos disease, resulted in awards of \$40,000 to each of the 60,000 victims involved.¹¹

If a disaster similar to that at Bhopal had occurred in the US itself, the compensation would have reached such astronomical amounts as to put the company into immediate bankruptcy. As it turned out, when news of the \$470 award became known on the New York stock exchange, Union Carbide shares immediately rose by \$2.

The enormously powerful pharmaceutical companies are in the forefront of attempts to tailor world patenting laws to the benefit of the multinationals as described by *The Nation* (18/3/91):

The proposal is to extend patents to all products and processes, which are new, useful, and unobvious. This would allow the multinationals to gain control over much of the world's genetic resources, most of which are embedded in seeds and herbs in tropical Third World countries. The multinationals hope to gather information from the Third World, manipulate it with rapidly evolving biotechnology expertise and then patent the new seeds, pharmaceuticals or other products. The Third World will receive nothing in

the bargain, because under the proposed regulations, naturally occurring organisms would not be patentable, though genetically altered ones would be....For example, a gene isolated from an African cowpea, when inserted into crops ranging from soya beans to maize, provide excellent resistance to insect pests...observers believe the gene will be worth hundreds of millions of dollars to its inventors. But the question is...who are the inventors?...those who isolated the gene or the West African farmers who identified the value of the plant holding the gene and then developed and perfected it? Forcing Third World countries to accept US-style patent laws would strengthen the monopoly powers of multinationals, drive up the prices of drugs and other products and devastate fledgeling Third World high-technology companies.

The dissolution of all the old ostentatiously held empires 'belonging' to the First World, and their replacement by so-called independent nations represented one of the greatest confidence tricks in history. Representatives of the multinationals have all too easily slipped into the places of the old colonial administrators, and straight political 'ownership' has simply been replaced by equally impoverishing economic domination which has been described aptly as 'recolonisation'.

Media thought control

First World leaders have spared neither effort nor expense to disseminate their ideology world-wide, in order to promote and consolidate the capitalist system. In *The Nation* (12/6/89) B H Bagdikian states:

A handful of mammoth private organizations have begun to dominate the world's mass media. Most of them confidently announce that by the 1990s they will control the majority of the world's important newspapers, magazines, books, broadcasting stations, movies, recordings and video-cassettes. Moreover, each of these planetary corporations plans to gather under its control every step in the information process, from creation of 'the product' to all the various means by which modern technology delivers media messages to the public. 'The product' is news, information, ideas, entertainment and popular culture; the public is the whole world. Combining the thrust of all these corporate forces produces economic power that dwarfs that of many nations. Time Warner, for example, has a total value of \$18 bn, more than the combined GNPs of Jordan, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Albania, Laos, Liberia and Mali. These lords of the global village have their own political agenda. All resist economic changes that do not support their own financial interests. Together, they exert a homogenizing power over ideas, culture and commerce that affects populations larger than any in history. Neither Caesar nor Hitler, Franklin Roosevelt nor any Pope, has commanded as much power to shape the information on which so many people depend to make decisions about everything from whom to vote for to what to eat.

In the *Guardian* (7/1/91) John Pilger recalled that at the height of the First World War, Lloyd George confided to C P Scott, editor of the *Manchester Guardian*: 'If people really knew, the war would be stopped tomorrow; but of course they don't know, and they can't know.' Seventy years later, the notion of the journalist as a teller of truths unpalatable to ruling elites, as a whistle-blower in the public interest, has been fatally eroded. This is in great part the result of the 'communications revolution' (as described by Rupert Murdoch) that has produced not an informed society, but a media society, in which vast amounts of repetitive information are confined to a narrow spectrum of 'thinkable thought'. The US sage Walter Lipman referred to this process as 'the manufacture of consent'.

Probably the most significant factor favouring the mind manipulators has been the wholesale spawning of television and other items of electronic audio-visual equipment - thus relieving millions of the trouble of reading or even learning to read. Over the past 25 years in the US, newspaper circulation per capita has fallen 30%, while TV viewing has increased 40%. At the same time, the US College Boards standard apti-

tude tests for high school reading and writing skills fell 62 points to their lowest level in 1991. Just one of the many detrimental effects of much of what is offered on TV was highlighted by a UK Broadcasting Standards Council study in 1990 which found that children cannot distinguish between reality and fantasy in TV drama, and often fail to identify the 'goodies' and the 'baddies'. The children were also found likely to take personalities, particularly those in authority, at their face value; for example becoming confused when a policeman became a 'bad person', assuming all policemen to be automatically good.

THIRD WORLD SUFFERING

An indictment of First World leaders

The world is overflowing with resources of all kinds, far too many of which are squandered on wars and other anarchic, wasteful activities. Yet, in spite of this plenty, two-thirds or more of humanity are doomed to live out their lives in conditions which most First World inhabitants could not even conceive of. In this context, statistics do not well suit the subject. We are not discussing bags of cement but human beings - all of them having the potential to lead as full and rewarding lives as those led by the more fortunate in the First World. Whether it is one or one and a half billion who live in absolute poverty, with all its attendant agonies, represents a diversion when it is clear to any fair minded person that it is insupportable for a single fellow human being to suffer such pain and misery. Let us simply record that many millions of people are born, 'live', and die, usually prematurely, in totally inadequate dwellings, and often in no shelter at all; over 600 million are estimated to be homeless. Interminably, they face hunger, lack of pure water, ignorance and illiteracy, not to mention numerous diseases unknown in the First World. In South Africa for example, the richest country on the African Continent, seven million people lack adequate shelter, and in the 'settlements' 200 people share one toilet.

The scourge of malnutrition and diseases

Humans cannot live effectively when chronically hungry; they cannot work or study properly, nor think beyond the immediate need for sustenance; *malnutrition stunts mental as well as physical abilities*. Over half of the entire populations of many Third World countries are malnourished; millions are driven to scavenging in rubbish dumps, eating animal foodstuffs or newspapers soaked in water. Twenty years ago the total of hungry Africans was 90m, now it is 140m and by the year 2000 is feared will be 200m; the greatest suffering is amongst women and children in rural areas. Taking Brazil as just one example: although it is a land of plenty, one third of all children are malnourished and 350,000 of them die annually. At least 50 million Brazilians are underfed, not for lack of food, but lack of money to buy it. The much respected priest, Dom Helder Camora, once said: 'When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist.'

If malnutrition does not result in death, it often results in mental or physical deformities, for example, over 10% of the whole African population suffer from some form of disability. Globally, there are at least a quarter of a million new cases of blindness in children annually, around half of which are due to lack of vitamin A, which could be provided, if not by fresh fruit or vegetables, then by a half-yearly pill costing a few pence. Being disabled in the First World is traumatic enough, but to exist in the typically harsh environment of the Third World with one or more permanent disabilities defies description. Many of the appalling diseases virtually unique to the Third World are caused by the complete absence of safe water supplies and effective drainage systems - both of which are taken for granted throughout the First World. Around 2bn

Third World citizens lack pure water and are driven to drinking contaminated supplies resulting annually in very many deaths. Even after contracting diarrhoea, the commonest killer, very high percentages of sufferers can be cured simply by 'oral rehydration therapy' which requires only sugar and salt with pure water.

On top of the age-long health struggles against the old established enemies such as cholera, malaria or bilharzia, the Third World now faces the shattering impact of Aids. Contributors to the 1991 international conference on HIV predicted that, by 2010, 90% of Aids sufferers, around 50m people, would be in the Third World. The disease is already wiping out whole communities in parts of Africa and has the potential to erode labour supply so badly that cultivation will be curtailed and mass starvation result. There are grounds for hope that Aids cases will level off in the First World in the 1990s. By contrast, in the Third World the previously predicted average life span in Africa, for example, of 62 years by 2000 is likely to be cut to 48 years. Aids will undoubtedly kill millions throughout the Third World, which is particularly vulnerable because of the universally poor infrastructure of the health services: in Africa for example, some countries total health budgets for all medical needs, not just HIV, amount to only \$3 pa per person.

Endless deaths from starvation

Of all the unendurable miseries of Third World lives, the slow, agonizing death through starvation represents the ultimate rebuke to the First World for allowing humanity to sink to such depths. Only when dramatic concentrations and migrations of starving people become labelled 'famines' does the First World pay limited attention. Apart from invariably inadequate support from Governments, this usually takes the form of appeals to the public for charitable donations, often supported by various entertainments. In early 1991, declining response to such appeals was given the distasteful tag of 'donor fatigue'. Such appeals have very limited impact in the context of ad hoc attempts to pump millions of tons of food suddenly through totally inadequate supply lines. Worse, the whole scenario of leaving each crisis for charities to solve assists First World Governments to continue shrugging off their collective responsibility to put an end forever to the terrible plight of the Third World in all its manifestations. The special attention paid from time to time to major famines, largely through media emphasis, also successfully distracts First World attention away from the fact that famines are only the 'tip of the iceberg' and that death from starvation is ever-present, on a huge scale. *Every three days, as many children alone die from starvation as the total death toll at Hiroshima.*

Few dogs or other pet animals in the First World would be allowed to endure the barbaric cruelties of starvation inflicted on millions of humans in the Third World. The *Guardian* (25 & 26/4/91) gives some idea of what starvation really means:

When normal foods disappear, the starving eat wild grain, tubers, wild berries, corn husks, coconuts, shrivelled blades of grass. Relief workers have seen men on camels eating leaves from the same trees the camels are feeding on, and migrant women boiling grass roots and leaves into a vile, frothing, repulsive green mass. The 5m now facing death in South Sudan are eating roots and bark, and some mothers unable to feed their children have been driven to suicide. Many are naked and it is cold at night.

Peter Hillmore explains that:

Death from starvation begins when metabolism is reduced and the body shuts down on unnecessary physical activity, producing familiar lethargy signs, and the heart slows down. In the Third World human bodies have little reserves of body fat to start with, so the onset of protein loss is rapid. For example, doctors estimate that a *Western child would have to starve for about three or four weeks before reaching the physical condition in which an African child starts.* Because of this protein loss, their guts atrophy,

vital organs are reduced in size, vitamin deficiency increases, raising the apathy. They lose any desire to move. Unable to produce glucose for the brain, the liver desperately produces an unsuitable chemical alternative. Death follows either from a disease, or from insufficient strength to breathe.¹²

Divisions in the Third World

By comparison with the immensely rich First World, the Third World countries as a whole appear extremely poor, but none the less there is sufficient wealth within most of them to sustain significant elites. With very few exceptions, Third World countries subscribe to the same capitalist, free market economies as the First World, which means that any form of equality amongst their citizens is not only not achieved, but is not even aimed for. All of which makes the prospects for the average, very poor people of the Third World doubly bleak: they face not only the dominating greed of the whole First World but that of their own elites as well. In Latin America, for example, the poorest 20% of the population have only 3% of the total income, and exist on a daily average of 600 calories below the minimum requirement. The richest 5% of the population absorb 30% of total income, and consume 2,000 calories daily in excess of the minimum. In Brazil, the incomes of the wealthiest families are 200 times that of the poorest. In the East, Thailand has a very high growth rate; but the benefits are not shared by its poorest 10% whose share of GNP has actually dropped to 2% while that of the wealthiest 10% has risen to 40%.

In India, society is divided into no less than some 13 different levels, from the 'Untouchables' at the bottom, to the elitist Brahmins at the top. This whole caste system is enshrined in, and perpetuated by, the Hindu religion. The stranglehold which that religion has over its adherents is illustrated vividly by the following almost unbelievable dispatch from Ajoy Bose in the *Guardian* (2/4/91):

Two lower caste youths and an upper caste girl, aged 15, were hanged publicly by their own fathers goaded by a vigilante mob, in an Indian village last week. The three were punished for defying the Hindu ban on inter-caste marriages. Roshni, the daughter of an upper caste landlord, ran away with her lower caste boyfriend, Brijayandra. The two lovers were helped to elope by another lower caste youth, Ram Kishan. The weeping parents were kicked and beaten into putting the noose around the necks of their children as the entire village watched. Rashni and Brijayandra did not die at once but were dragged alive along with the corpse of Ram Kishan on to a funeral pyre; they tried to drag themselves out but were pushed back with sticks by the mob.

Elitism in the Third World is not just home-grown, it is fostered deliberately by the First World. Supporting such capitalist elites, President Truman said: 'All freedom is dependent on freedom of enterprise....the whole world should adopt the American system - the American system can survive in America only if it becomes a world system.' In furtherance of this aim, First World countries, particularly the US, have invited representatives of Third World elites to visit them at no expense for training and indoctrination in the many branches of the free market system. Commenting on the tie-ups between local elites and First World interests Susan George says:

The economic choices made by these alliances bear directly on how the great majority of poor people in Third World countries live. They even decide, put crudely, whether or not they will eat. Unless we understand how and why the poor have been sold out through the joint efforts of their own privileged countrymen and their foreign cronies, we will continue to ascribe food shortages and even famines to 'natural forces', 'population pressures', and so forth.¹³

A further unhappy form of division in the Third World exists between the rural areas, still containing usually over 50% of the people, and those in the urban areas where fringe benefits are available to some, by virtue of living in proximity to the civil serv-

ants, the military, the merchants and other elites. It is, of course, through the latter's hands that any funds (whether income, loan or aid) entering a country must pass and thus risk being 'siphoned off' in various ways, leaving the rural populations as very unlikely recipients. Some economists have even questioned the whole ethic of aid giving, because of the dangers of misappropriation and the bolstering of local elites at the expense of the poor. Of \$47bn aid given in 1989, 10bn came straight back as deposits in First World bank accounts.

The ugliest aspect of elitism in the Third World is crude physical repression. Throughout the Third World, the ratio of soldiers to population is 1:250, as against 1:4,000 for doctors. In the First World, resources normally permit any demanding members of the population to be 'bought off'; in the Third World, resources are comparatively limited, and the potentially restive masses far more numerous. Therefore, to protect their wealth and privileges from their fellow countrymen, Third World elites have increasingly involved their armed forces, who regrettably, have been only too ready to oblige, in some cases assuming total control. One of the many terrible examples was the Pinochet dictatorship following the coup of 1973. An official Chilean Government report, published in March 1991, chronicles the death of 2,279 people - mostly innocent civilians, 49 of them children under 16 - in most cases after suffering appalling torture.¹⁴

Similar terror was inflicted on the people of Indonesia in 1965, following another military coup, in which a million people were massacred and President Suharto seized power. Following withdrawal by the Portuguese in 1975, the Indonesian army illegally occupied East Timor, and over the following years killed 200,000 of the population of 600,000. An exceptional report by Hugh O'Shaughnessy (*Observer* 7/4/91) states that the East Timor people live in permanent fear for their lives but that the young ones are defiant, saying: 'If we resist they kill us; if we don't resist they kill us; so we might as well resist.' Jakarta's appetite for East Timor is undoubtedly strengthened by its off-shore mineral and oil wealth, described recently by neighbouring Australia's Foreign Minister as probably worth 'trillions'.

A special UN study by a Kenyan lawyer revealed that, during the five year period up to 1982, over 2 million people were executed worldwide without proper legal proceedings. It named Iran, South Africa, Argentina, Guatemala and Colombia as some of the worst offenders at the time. An extreme example of elite edginess is provided by the Sultan of Brunei, reputedly the world's richest man, so concerned about possible unrest in his tiny country with under 250,000 population, that he ordered fighter aircraft, patrol vessels and other military equipment worth £500m from UK arms manufactures.¹⁵

Severe curtailment of human rights is widespread in the Third World. Writing in *The Nation* (11/2/91) Professor Edward Said of Columbia University says: 'I do not know a single Arab who would not readily agree that the monopoly on coercion given to the state has almost completely eliminated democracy in the Arab world: it has introduced immense hostility between rulers and ruled, placed a much higher value on conformity, flattery and getting along, than on risking new ideas, criticism or dissent.' In Africa, the *Guardian* (9/5/91) reports that 'summary execution, arbitrary arrest, exile or prolonged detention without trial, are the common experience of academics in many African countries; they form vulnerable targets as Governments have felt threatened by academics developing the spirit of critical inquiry.' Such persecution of intellectuals robs countries of the very people most desperately needed for planning against disasters, and contributing to fruitful development generally.

The ultimate, terribly wounding example of divisions within Third World countries is actual civil warfare between contending sections struggling either to retain or gain control, sometimes continuing for decades. These conflagrations are often fuelled by

outside support for reasons both of politics and of arms sales profits. Outcomes of such internal wars are naturally calamitous, resulting in economic ruin and dislocation, often ending in famine which in turn becomes more difficult to alleviate because potential food suppliers fear their aid will be diverted to armies rather than to the starving. In Africa, for example, at least half of the 40m people at risk from starvation, have been affected by civil wars. In Mozambique, the most acute case, 37% of children have been dying before reaching age five, compared with 1% in the UK.

In the 1970s, an International Labour Office report drew attention to the fact that, in the great majority of Third World countries, 'growth' was not resulting in a reduction of poverty, and went on: '*it is no longer acceptable in human terms, nor responsible in political terms, to wait for benefits to trickle down until they finally reach the poorest groups*'. Regrettably, divisions within the Third World countries have become, inexorably, even more entrenched since that report was written. However, it is noteworthy that in the very small number of Third World countries which have achieved more egalitarian societies, considerable advances have been made. In Cuba, for example, illiteracy has been largely eliminated; there is a ratio of one doctor per 480 population; child mortality has been cut to the best of First World levels and life expectancy increased to 76 years.

The inequities of land ownership

Worldwide, approximately 2% of all landowners, each having over 100 hectares, control 75% of all global land; just one quarter of owners control over 50% of the world's land. Immense inequities exist in the First World, but in the Third World access to land is critical to survival. In the case of the minority who own small plots, each famine forces the sale of part or all of them to buy food, and thus the discrepancies in ownership widen. Only about half the world's potential agricultural land is actually cultivated, because many large owners look upon land primarily as an investment. For example, in Paraguay only 3% out of the possible 20% of all land is farmed; and in Brazil, areas of farmland equalling the size of India remain uncultivated. In the Third World as a whole, an average of 70% of rural populations, ranging from 50% in India to 85% in Bolivia, own no land at all, not even the tiny plots their hovels stand on. They cultivate land owned by others, and pay 'rent' for doing so in the form of a proportion of the crops raised.

In Africa as a whole, 75% of rural populations own only 4% of all land. In Java, just one percent of farmers own over one-third of all land, leaving over half of all rural families with none. In the Dominican Republic, seven out of every 1,000 owners have half the arable land, while 300,000 families have none. In Bangladesh, the greatest obstacle to agricultural development is not the periodic floods, terrible though they are, but the inequitable access to land. Resources are in the hands of the few who have managed to benefit most from the various aid programmes. The 35% of Bangladeshis who were landless at the time of independence in 1971 rose to 60% by 1991.

In Latin America, only one third of the rural populations have any land at all, and even that amounts to only one percent of the total. In Brazil, half of all land is in the hands of 1% of the population, resulting in there being 20m landless peasants. A tentative Government proposal for land reform in 1985 resulted in the Brazilian big landowners spending \$5m on private armies to combat the peasants, and the trades unionists and priests who supported them. The *Guardian* (2/3/91 & 12/10/91) reported that more than 1,750 people have died in Brazilian land disputes, but only 24 trials have resulted; also that slave conditions persist on some ranches to which men have been brought from far away with promises of good wages, and are then held prisoner and shot if they try to escape.

Education, illiteracy and 'brain drain'

Compared with an average education expenditure per child in the First World of \$6,000 pa, in the poorest Third World countries an almost meaningless \$2 pa is available; the Third World has less than one quarter the number of teachers per child than in the First World. As with other aspects of Third World conditions, the situation is worsening; for example, educational expenditure per child in recent years has declined by one-third in Africa and two-thirds in Latin America. Less than half of all Third World children have the chance to learn to read and write; 250m five to 14 year olds lack any possibility of attending school at all: if they all held hands they would encircle the earth four times. Further, children commonly drop out of primary education for various reasons including expense, sickness, distances to walk and pressures to earn during school hours; rates of dropping out, compared with 5% in the First World, are 30% in poor, and 50% in very poor countries. Barely 20% of all Third World children obtain any secondary education, compared with 90% in the First World.

Not surprisingly, the appalling outcome of this terrible neglect of the young is that, worldwide, there are now around 1bn illiterate people, approximately half the adult population of the Third World, and this total is rising by 25m annually. Two-thirds of all illiterates are women. In the poorest countries under 40% of adults are literate; for example, in sub-Sahara literacy is 34% for men, 17% for women; in some countries illiteracy afflicts 90% of the people and 100% of the women. The catastrophic effects of illiteracy, both for individuals and their communities, defy adequate comment.

At the opposite end of the scale, some Third World countries have managed to establish various forms of higher education, resulting in the output of fully qualified doctors, engineers, and other professionals, some of whom remain to enrich their own communities. Many, however, are seduced away by the vastly higher salaries in the First World, and thus constitute the notorious South to North 'brain drain'. *The loss to the Third World of so many of their desperately needed skilled people has led to the process being likened to a sophisticated 20th century version of the slave trade.*

The value of the 'drained brains' to the First World, (estimated by the UN at \$50bn during the 1960s) in fact approximately cancels out the value of 'aid' given to the Third World. Whereas the First World sends technical advisers to the Third World on a temporary basis, the Third World loses double their number of qualified professionals permanently. During the 1970s, half the graduate nurses, doctors, surgeons and dentists left the Philippines. Between 1982 and 1985, some 100,000 skilled professionals are believed to have left Mexico for the US. There are more Ethiopian doctors in the US than in their own country.

The special plight of Third World women

Living conditions throughout the Third World are abominable for men, women and children alike; but for women they are especially severe. Having survived the odds against females growing up at all, women become, in most cases, burdened with the main responsibility for nurturing their families. In many places, women, often with children, spend half their waking lives fetching and carrying water and firewood, sometimes walking up to 15 miles daily in the process. Although women represent 50% of humanity, they contribute some 65% of the world's total working hours, yet receive only 10% of world income and own barely 1% of world property. A Tanzanian study in 1985 showed women working on average 3,069 hours per year compared with 1,829 for men. Women suffer appalling physiological trauma; annually, throughout the Third World half a million die during pregnancy and childbirth, and up to 80m illegal abortions are performed with a 15% death rate¹⁶. In South Africa, if a husband dies or walks away, the wife and children are evicted from the home with nowhere to go.

Despite Third World women contributing such heroic efforts, the scales are always tipped in favour of the males, whose greater physical strength is seen as crucial in all the varied battles for survival. That this preference for males often assumes grotesquely tragic forms is illustrated by examples from the world's two most populous countries. In China, in the early 1980s, the authorities admitted that, because of the determination to have sons, tens of thousands of mothers and midwives were murdering infant girls, with resulting imbalances as great as 5 boys to every girl in some areas, posing obviously severe problems for the future¹⁷. In India, the same bias towards males is aggravated by the traditional obligation of a bride's parents to contribute a significant 'dowry' to the bridegroom. One report states: 'The plain shocking fact is that India kills her girls. They die in infancy for want of medicine and food reserved for men and boys; and later in childbirth, their weakened, malnourished bodies are unable to cope with the frenzied urge for boy babies.'¹⁸

Another report states: 'Struggles for survival in the Third World mean that male children are vastly more welcome than females. This is particularly noticeable and recorded statistically, in India, where annually, 3m girls born die before 15, and of these, half a million die due to gender discrimination. A daughter is seen as a liability involving a dowry. 300,000 more female than male children die annually. Clinics doing prenatal sex-determination tests advertise shamelessly: 'Spend 500 rupees (£15) now and save 500,000 rupees (on dowry) later'. Discrimination against females continues into adulthood; in New Delhi alone, it is estimated that approximately 600 women are burned each year in 'dowry deaths', in which the husband's family kills the bride so they may be free to keep the dowry and demand afresh from the next set of in-laws. Numbers of women in India dropped from 972 per 1,000 men in 1901 to 933 in 1981. This is in stark contrast to the position in Europe, where women outnumber men.'¹⁹

Horrors of third world childhoods

Article 32 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Children stipulates 'the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing work likely to be hazardous...or to interfere with the child's education'. To the deep shame of world society, as with other excellent UN exhortations, this one continues to be flouted in the most despicable and heartless ways. Globally, over 100 million child slaves and countless millions more receiving pittance only, work in often appalling conditions, and many millions lack education completely.

That the use of child labour is truly international is illustrated by this report:

About 120,000 children (as young as eight years) live and work in the garbage dump known as Smokey Mountain in Manila, picking over the rubbish for items to sell and scraps to eat. In Colombia, children work in the mines for 12 hours daily. In India, they weave carpets and sweat in dangerous glass factories. In Brazil, Portugal and Italy, they sit in cramped factories gluing shoes together. Children have no trade union rights or industrial power, so are often worked even longer hours than their adult counterparts. Investigations have found cases of *children as young as 3 chained to the work-bench*.²⁰

Child labourers in Mexico are believed to number between 5 and 10m. In Bangladesh, most children have to work, sometimes 14 hours per day, every day, earning only one penny per hour. Malnourished and sick boys of 10 or 12 pull heavy handcarts collecting garbage. Girls are driven into prostitution, commonly at age 10, sometimes as young as seven years.

The following two reports relating to India present pictures of conditions which are regrettably to be found in many other countries as well:

In India, with over 80m adult unemployed, 55m children labour for pitiful wages and

sometimes for none at all. 50,000 children, for example, work in hideous conditions in the match and fireworks factories of Tamil Nadu. Countless tens of thousands labour in hellish conditions at brick kilns and in stone quarries.²¹

In the late 1980s, in India, only 46.5m children were in school, out of 175m. under 14. More than 45m were working in appalling conditions. In one area, children start work at the age of three and earn 6p for a 12 hour day, on glass making, diamond cutting, brassware and hand and power looms. Thus the labour cost of a carpet, retailing in London for £5,000, can be as little as 100 rupees (£3) if woven by children. They are virtual prisoners, malnourished, in cramped conditions, with poor light and often sleeping at their looms. Beating and torture are common, and lung disease caused by wool dust is endemic. In Aligarh can be seen children of seven or eight, covered in black dust, bending over polishing machines for upwards to 20 hour shifts, inhaling emery powder and metal dust the whole time. Typically, ramshackle buses and trucks set off at 3 am to tour outlying villages, where agents are employed to ensure the children are awake and ready to leave for work. Each vehicle picks up 150 to 200 children, some only three years old, mostly little girls, for a journey of up to two hours before starting work.²²

The *Observer* (6/7/91) reports that up to 1,000 children, aged 12 to 14 years, were being used to dig tunnels, because of their small bodies, in the Amazonian Rondonia tin mines. At an even lower level than those actually earning a wage (if under one penny per hour can be so described) are the millions of Third World children who are actually slaves, an estimated 75m of them in Asia alone. A common form of child slavery is termed 'bonded labour', in which children are forced to work to pay off their parents' debts. In Thailand there are some 2m child slaves, who can be purchased for \$10 per head, working under appalling conditions. The *Guardian* (16/8/91) reports that Peruvian Government officials saw the bodies of over 50 children in a mass grave 800 miles South East of Lima. The children, estimated to be 10 to 14 years old, are believed to be victims of exploitation by gold miners, sawmill operators and ranch owners. A local official said the abuse of child labourers had become so common that bodies floating in the river were 'almost natural, no one pays any attention'.

A pitiful, poverty-driven form of abuse of Third World children is the practice of selling young girls as brides or prostitutes. This is described in the *Observer* (26/1/92) in relation to India:

13 year old Zahida explains 'my father is out of a job; my family is poor; I have no choice'. She can be bought for 10,000 rupees (£250); a TV set costs more in India. Rani, 14, was bought for £15 when she was three and now works as a prostitute; her adoptive 'father' acts as her pimp and keeps her earnings. In Hyderabad there are some 100 marriage 'brokers' who can find a young bride in a few hours, arrange everything including documentation to circumvent any legal problems, and take commissions from both parties. When a sobbing little girl called Ameena was rescued by an Indian Airlines stewardess on her way to Saudi Arabia with her new 60 year old husband, her marriage certificate said she was 32; her school records showed she was 11. Her poor rickshaw driver father had sold her for £130.

The *Guardian* (12/2/92) reported that, all over the Amazon region of Brazil, 9, 10 and 11 year old girls, from poor families, sometimes sold by their fathers, were being enslaved by brothel owners, with newly arrived virgins being auctioned off to the highest bidder. The girls reported ill-treatment, torture, abuse and slavery, and beatings or killings if they attempted to escape.

Yet another category has to be added to the many forms of assault on childrens' rights in the Third World. A 1996 report from the Swedish Save the Children Fund states that there are now a quarter of a million child soldiers world-wide, some as young as seven. They fought in over 30 wars in 1995. They were used as executioners, assassins, spies and informers, and were often given drugs and alcohol before fighting. 90,000 child soldiers were killed in the Iran-Iraq War. An important factor is that mod-

ern light weapons enable children to kill with ease. An AK-47 rifle, often costing only \$6, can be stripped and reassembled by a child of 10. Warlords have found children in some ways better soldiers than adults - they are obedient, easy to coerce, do not demand pay and are less likely to run away.

Against the background of millions of children dying slowly from malnutrition and industrial diseases, must be seen the increasing numbers of children dying sudden, brutal deaths by execution, notably for example, in Brazil, as described in the two following reports:

These murders, rapidly increasing in numbers because not properly investigated, are carried out by 'para-police' groups with a self-attributed mission to 'clean up the cities' by executing 'kids who might become criminals'. There are at least 7m children living rough in Brazil, some in flimsy shelters, some in sewers.²³

The election slogan of a Brazilian policeman standing for Congress is 'a good bandit is a dead bandit'. But for many in Brazil the term 'bandit' applies not just to hardened criminals, but to the thousands of children who begin life on the streets, begging, pilfering, and sniffing glue to dull their hunger. In 1989 in Brazil, approximately 400 children, many under 10, were murdered by death squads made up of policemen, police informers or self-styled 'justice-makers'. Of approximately 60m children and adolescents, 40m live in poverty, and 13m in absolute misery.²⁴

Reporting the killing of over 470 children in Rio de Janeiro in the first half of 1992, the *Guardian* (7/6/92) referred to the local practice of killing children to preclude the development of criminal adults, or 'killing them before they mug you'. A child was found on a beach with a sign saying: 'I killed you because you have no future.' A young Brazilian told a TV interviewer that they had only one option: turn to crime or starve. Worried businessmen are reported as paying killers, one of whom said he had killed about 150 street kids, mostly nine or 10 years old; another had killed 90 children.

Similar atrocities against children in Guatemala are reported in the *New Internationalist* (June 1991), including the violent deaths of over 40 street children in just six months of 1990 in Guatemala City alone. Many were found with their faces disfigured and their bodies dismembered; the burning out of eyes and cutting off of ears is common. Volunteer rehabilitation worker Bruce Harris believes the police were responsible for at least 13 of these deaths and the abuse and torture of a further 50. To even hold such a belief is dangerous in Guatemala, where, since 1967, over 40,000 have disappeared after abduction by 'security' agents and over 100,000 killed. But to press for prosecutions of police officers is, in the words of one journalist, 'almost suicidal'. The above report describes the case of a 13 year old boy who died of a ruptured liver 10 days after being kicked senseless by four police officers. The inscription on the plaque above his grave reads: 'I only wanted to be a child - but they wouldn't let me.'

THE INTERNATIONAL DEBT CRISIS

Origins of the crisis

The most important factor originating the great debt crisis was the sudden quadrupling of oil prices in the early 1970s. This resulted in vast 'money mountains' which the producers invested, in the main, in the First World's banking system. The banks, in turn, almost forced it on Third World Governments at quite low interest rates, without apparently caring greatly who had control of it or how it was spent. Debts of billions were thus incurred by Governments which were often dictatorships, and rarely consulted their peoples about how the money would best be spent; on the contrary, they often spent it on arms to repress them. At the same time, large proportions of the loans

were squandered, or embezzled and sent out of the recipient country into private accounts in Swiss and other banks. By November 1982 the whole process had gathered such momentum, and become such an established part of international financial dealings, that the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, Jacques de Larosiere, appealed to the banks to continue lending to the Third World because if they stopped it would imperil the whole world capitalist system.

Debt - facts and figures

During the heyday of the lending spree, 1973 to 1982, the profits of the 7 largest US banks from Third World loan 'servicing' rose from 22% to 60%. These profits were at times augmented by their use of monies received back by them in the form of investments by corrupt officials. Since Third World countries have often been unable to repay either interest or capital amounts, these are added to their accumulated debts so the accelerating extent of indebtedness rushes forward. This is further complicated by the Third World countries having to obtain yet more loans in order to pay interest on previous ones. 'Debt servicing' can thus well absorb half of a country's export earnings, and in several African cases - if paid in full - would take several times their entire earnings. According to UN data, Third World countries make regular 'debt servicing' payments to the First World which amount to nearly five times the amounts received by them from the First World as aid; the interest rates involved with those payments are commonly four times higher than the current rates within the First World.

In round figures, the grand total of debt owed by all Third World countries to the First World bankers is now around \$1,500bn (equivalent to around \$300 for every living person in the world today), on which the annual 'servicing' obligation is around \$250 bn. Such astronomical figures all but defy comprehension, especially in the context of the desperate poverty of most of the debtors, and it is hardly surprising that the scenario of widespread debt repudiations is discussed increasingly. Predictably, the First World lenders do not take kindly to that prospect. With characteristic directness, a US banker commented to Paul Fabra of *Le Monde*: 'If any Latin American country repudiates its debts, we have the legal machinery all ready. It would be lightning-fast; we would seize all the country's assets on land, sea and in the air. We would black all bank accounts of its citizens; not a single one of its ships could dock or a single plane land anywhere outside its borders without being immediately sequestered.'²⁵ On 11/9/91 US Vice-President Dan Quayle said: 'African governments must face the challenge of paying off debts and not expect them to be cancelled.' Such threats ill-become those who created the problem, by pressing countries to accept vast loans, at fluid interest rates, without considering whether conditions were ever likely to enable those countries to repay the interest, much less the capital.

All the circumstances point to repudiation being the only realistic solution. Cardinal Arnolfo of San Paulo has commented:

When we borrowed, interest rates were 4%, now they are 8% and at one point were 21%. The people are expected to pay off these debts through low wages and hunger. But we have already repaid the debt once or twice over, considering the interest paid. We must stop giving the blood and the misery of our people to pay the First World.²⁶

The combined debts of all Third World countries amount in fact to less than 5% of all Western banks' commercial lendings; thus their total write-offs would hardly be noticed. First World insistence on both capital and interest repayments can only be described as both spurious and vindictive.

The unendurable burdens of debt

In her powerful book *A Fate Worse than Debt*, Susan George has articulated the

present crisis as follows:

The Third World War has already started. It is tearing down practically all the Third World. Instead of soldiers dying, there are children, instead of millions of wounded, there are millions of unemployed, instead of destruction of bridges, there is a tearing down of factories, schools, hospitals, and entire economies - it is a war by the US against the Third World. It is war over Debt, with its main weapon, Interest, a weapon more deadly than the atom bomb, more shattering than a laser beam.

Debt burdens in the majority of Third World countries have risen from around 10% to around 30% of their GNP, resulting in steeply increasing malnutrition, and infant mortality rates of 50% in the worst urban conditions. Inflation regularly causes dramatic food price increases, and diseases previously almost eradicated are returning.

A report by the European Network on Debt and Development shows that: 'Britain is squeezing cash out of the world's poorest countries by demanding levels of debt repayment which far outweigh new loans or aid, and has been a net recipient of cash from the Third World since 1981; only the US has a longer record of taking more money from the developing world than it gives out', (quoted in the *Guardian* 23/9/96.)

A study in Bolivia showed that those in employment had to work four times harder in the mid-1980s than in the mid-1970s, to be able to purchase the same amount of food. It is known that the effects of the debt burden in the poorest parts of Latin America have driven whole families to suicide; the parents first killing their children before destroying themselves. A dispatch from the Argentine reported that 'people are so poor here now, that they attack and rob one another; there is no community spirit left; mothers are bringing their 13 year old daughters to the brothels.'²⁷ During the 1980s, over 200m people have joined the 'absolute poor' - those who do not have enough to meet the most basic biological needs for food, clothing, and shelter. These now number 1.2 bn, almost a quarter of humanity, and two-thirds of them are under 15 years of age. Over 40 Third World countries ended the 1980s with average incomes 5% to 25% lower than at the start. 'Pressures on the poorest, from First World lenders, to fulfil monetary targets, cut spending, and promote privatisation, lead to massive environmental destruction which, together with the greenhouse effect, will increase the absolute poor to 5bn within 50 to 60 years, if present trends continue.'²⁸

One of the most profound warnings of the lasting damage to humanity arising from the wanton selfishness of the First World, as represented by the debt crisis, was given in this excerpt from the 1972 Report to the UN, by Ward and Dubois, *Only One Earth*:

But it is not only the pollutions and degradations of the atmosphere and the oceans that threaten the quality of life at the planetary level. There are threats, too, of disease spreading among undernourished children, of protein deficiency maiming the intelligence of millions, of spreading illiteracy combined with rising numbers of unemployed intellectuals, of landless workers streaming to the squalid cities, and worklessness growing there to engulf a quarter of the working force. An acceptable strategy for Planet Earth must, then, explicitly take account of the fact that the 'natural resource' most threatened with pollution, most exposed to degradation, most liable to irreversible damage, is not this or that species, nor this or that plant or biome or habitat, not even the free airs of the great oceans. It is Man himself.

THIRD AND FIRST WORLD COMPARISONS

Economic comparisons

At the time of the Industrial Revolution, the ratio between the average wealth of the richest and poorest countries was approximately 2:1. By 1900 the ratio had become 10:1, and by 1990, 50:1, on average. For example, World Bank figures for 1990 show

that the ratio between the US and the poorest (then Rwanda) was, in 1967, 82:1; by 1988 that ratio had widened to 142:1 between the US and Mozambique. From further World Bank statistics, it is also clear that between 1970 and 1980 every man, woman and child in the 17 richest nations, enjoyed individual income increases averaging \$900, while for the 1bn people in the Third World the increase was just \$3 over the same decade.²⁹

A breakdown of the global economic picture in 1991 shows approximately one-quarter of world population in rich or near-rich countries enjoying rising GNP; half in countries with static GNP; and a quarter in countries whose GNP is actually falling. The UNDP's Human Development Report for 1992 shows that by that time the richest 25% of the world's population were receiving around 83% of total world income, while the remaining 75% were subsisting on the balance of 7%. Sub-Saharan Africa, with a population of approximately 500m has a total GNP which is about the same as that of 10m Belgians, and less than that of the New York metropolitan area.³⁰ The annual incomes of some 1bn people in the Third World approximate to the cost of a couple of new tyres for a family car. More wealth is stolen in the US than the total wealth that many countries actually have. If their present 'growth' rates were to continue, it would take the poorest Third World countries three to four thousand years to catch up with present First World levels.

Other comparisons

Apart from the many economic disadvantages actually imposed on them by the First World, many Third World countries suffer tremendous natural disadvantages simply through being where they are on the globe. The majority of, and usually the worst, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, droughts, desertifications and other disasters occur in these countries; also many pests, unknown in the First World, such as locusts, malarial mosquitoes, flies and snails causing sleeping sickness and bilharzia, continue to plague them. All these and other destabilising phenomena add terrible burdens to already frail people and their economies. The world's demographic balance is shifting fast, with the proportion of the world's people in the Third World growing from around 70% in 1960 to around 85% by 2025. In the 1930s, one of Hitler's notorious grounds for his aggressions was Germany's alleged need for more 'lebensraum' (living space), but now, in the Third World, many countries are already genuinely packed to overflowing. Not only do vast and increasing numbers of people require space to exist on, but throughout many Third World countries, living space is already diminished by vast areas of jungles, deserts, swamps, and mountainous regions. In Egypt for example, 98% of the population live on just 2% of the country. Even now, the average Third World citizen has only around one hundredth of the amount of usable land available to him as compared to a citizen of North America.

In the First World the ratio of doctors to population averages 1:500; in the rural Third World the ratio is around 1:200,000; some 1.5bn people are completely without access to any form of medical care. Infant mortality rates in India in 1987 were 152 per 1,000, compared with 7 per 1,000 in Sweden or Japan. Average life expectancy in Third World countries ranges from 20 to 30 years less than in the First World. Third World countries have only about 7% of the world's scientists and engineers, and face overwhelming difficulties in trying to deal, by themselves, with their environmental and resource problems.

Around 100m people in the Third World, particularly in the cities, spend their entire existence like stray dogs on the pavements - without shelter of any kind. The International Labour Office reports that employees in the Third World work one-third longer hours but receive one-tenth of the wages for equivalent work in the First World. *The average US citizen eats twice as much protein as his body needs; to meet this demand,*

more grain is fed to US cattle than is consumed by China and India together. While the poorest 400m people are so undernourished as to suffer stunted growth, mental retardation and early death in the Third World, North Americans spend \$5bn annually on special diets to cut their calorie intake and reduce weight.

DECLINE IN THE FIRST WORLD

Increasing numbers in poverty

The most distinctive feature of the 1980s, particularly in the US and UK, has been the hardening attitudes of the ruling elites to their most disadvantaged fellow citizens. These have come to resemble more and more their well-established ruthless attitudes to the populations of most of the Third World countries. Their viewpoint has been 'every man for himself in a free-for-all market economy'; this was epitomized by UK premier Thatcher's notorious statement: 'There is no such thing as society - only individuals'. The result has been increasing polarization within First World societies. In the UK, for instance, between 1979 and 1989, the income of the richest fifth grew by almost 40%, while the income of the poorest fifth fell by 6%.³¹ In a 1985 lecture to students, US financier Ivan Boesky reassured those who felt embarrassed by business activities, saying: 'Greed is all right, by the way, you can be greedy and still feel good about yourself.'

An *Observer* report, (15/9/91), states that:

Recorded UK crimes for the period 1979 to 1991 have doubled to 5m, but with only 27% recorded, the real current figure is around 20m crimes. During this period the government held out no hope for the poor, and if we now have an underclass with little to lose by committing crimes, this is partly because of the way its members have been taught to regard themselves. The increase relates to increased poverty and inequality, and to sharp declines in consumption levels among the worse off.

Around 10m. UK citizens live on less than the Council of Europe's 'decency threshold' of £168 per week, and one in every four children will experience poverty. The *Observer* (12/7/92) reported that tuberculosis, in the UK, increased by 10% from 1987 to 1991, and by 15% among young women in just two years from 1987 to 1989. A leading consultant was convinced that the cause was the increase in poverty and homelessness.

In the aftermath of apparently aimless rioting on a housing estate, the Northumbrian chief probation officer wrote in the *Guardian* (2/10/91):

Here one can see - as in many of our cities - the crushing effects of deprivation, in housing, education, and employment amenities, with most people suffering from the effects of severe poverty. In such places there is a real sense of alienation for a minority within a society where the majority have been experiencing a kind of affluence. The creation of such separate minority groups in a society where the pursuit of money and possessions, the philosophy of self-sufficiency and the general absence of compassion, has led to the establishment of different norms and values in order to survive in an otherwise hopeless situation.

In the US, in 1985, 33 million people were living below the poverty threshold; 35 million had no health insurance at all; in one year 1 million families were refused medical care for financial reasons; infant mortality rates in inner cities ranked with the Third World; around 20 million lacked adequate nutrition and one-third of mothers on welfare were illiterate. *The Nation* (1/6/92) reports that *poverty kills 27 children every day in the US where 'home' has become increasingly a site of conflict and abuse*; where every year 1.5 m children run away from home, not because they want to but because they have to, even the streets being safer than the physical and sexual abuse they are

running from; over 5,000 children every year end up in unmarked graves.

The primary cause of First World poverty has been unemployment caused by the skewing of national economies. For example, in the US, in the decade 1977 to 1987, production workers disappeared from the following industries: machine tools 50%, farm machinery 60%, turbines 43%, construction machinery 42%, mining equipment 60%, textile equipment 43%, and oilfield equipment 68%.

In the US, infant mortality rates have been increasing steadily; for example, in Los Angeles, from 12 per 1,000 in 1983 to 18 per 1,000 in 1989. Numbers of births without pre-natal care have risen from 1 in 10 in 1981, to 1 in 3 in 1990. The structures of urban civilization are simply falling apart under the pressures of drugs, crime, unemployment, and a spreading insidious poverty which is driving the hearts of US cities back to Third World levels.³² A 1990 US National Commission on Children report pointed to 'the US producing underclass generations of illiterate, unhealthy, alienated and unemployable young people.' Malnutrition currently affects around half a million children in the US and 11 million have no direct access to a doctor. 1 child in 5 (1 in 4 in rural areas) lives below the poverty line and at least 100,000 are homeless. The racial divide is shown by 1987 poverty figures for children: Blacks 45%, Hispanics 39% and Whites 15%.³³

In the US in 1990 there were over 2m homeless, including approximately 80,000 in New York and 15,000 in Washington. Some 75,000 in New York, referred to by the *New York Times* as 'Calcutta USA' were sleeping rough. In contrast to the 20m who go hungry, approximately one-third of all US males 'suffer' from obesity. The problems of day to day living in First World 'constant growth' societies have led inevitably to increasing consumption of tranquillizers, breakdowns, and high proportions of hospital beds used by mental patients.

Worsening conditions of living

In the UK, both young and older women in inner city areas avoid going out after dark because of fear of crime. A survey during the 1980s of 1,600 people in a typical North London area, resulted in the following concerns about neighbourhood problems: crime, vandalism, dirty streets, unemployment, poor housing, air pollution, inadequate facilities for the young, poor health service, street lighting, drug abuse, racial tension, sexual harassment, poor public transport, poor schools, police behaviour, poor working conditions.³⁴ A February 1990 World in Action survey found a third of all UK wives had either been hit or threatened by their husbands, and US researcher Denise Andrews found that 40% of men considered it 'normal' to hit their wives. *The Nation* has described US society as one 'where the poor are getting poorer and the rich are getting richer, a country with a million millionaires, and with professionals, executives, and specialists comprising 25% of the workforce, surrounded by swarms of franchise operators, medical entrepreneurs and real estate speculators.'

The *Guardian* (2/5/91) reported that a recent study based on interviews with 2,000 US citizens, found that '91% of Americans lie regularly both at work and at home; 31% of married people have had, or are having, an affair; 33% of Aids victims have not told their partners that they are infected; 72% do not know their next-door neighbour, and a majority will not look after elderly parents.' The authors of the study conclude that the truth about the US is that 'a pernicious rationalization has begun to take hold in all areas of our lives; if everybody's doing it why shouldn't I?' A leader in *The Nation* of 21/5/90 describes the current US situation thus:

Standards of living and quality of life have been declining for most people for 2 decades. Public education is a shambles, health care is tragically inadequate, racism is rampant, corporate privilege is unrestrained, the environment is degraded, class divisions are wid-

ening, unemployment and under-employment condemn tens of millions to poverty; violence at home and in the streets is endemic, the criminal justice system is criminal and unjust. Profound cynicism accounts for the rock bottom level of political participation.

An important indicator of societal health is job satisfaction or contentment at work generally. In this respect too, First World societies presently leave much to be desired. A report in *New Internationalist* (December 1986) cites the following:

The average Canadian worker takes 3 hours 42 minutes weekly off work in various ways; industrial jobs in the US show annual turnovers of 35%; in Australia 1 in 5 'sick' days off are unrelated to any cause; a survey of nearly 10,000 US workers showed 28% involved in some form of property theft from their employers; the US Government estimates that between 10% and 23% of workers use dangerous drugs on the job.

The *Guardian* (12/5/91) reports that 'in the UK, the Samaritans received a record 2.6m calls for help in 1990, nearly a million more than in 1980, suicide being discussed in 72% of cases. As the number of long term unemployed grew in the eighties, so did the number of men between 15 and 44 taking their own lives. Suicides among under-25s, mainly teenagers, rose 31% from 1979 to 548 in 1989. It is feared the death toll will reach 600 this year.'

The stresses of growing up in the First World's leading nation are having similarly devastating effects on millions of young lives. According to an official of the Atlanta-based Center for Disease Control, about 1m US teenagers attempted suicide during a recent 12 month period, and an estimated 276,000 sustained injuries serious enough to require medical treatment. The Center further estimated that the suicide rate has risen from 2.7 per 100,000 teenagers in 1950 to 11.3 per 100,000 in 1988.³⁵ Social problems, generally, are exacerbated by increasing violence in society; for example, the most common cause of teenage death in Washington DC is from gunshot wounds. Bullet proof vests in appropriate sizes are now available for children to wear to school.³⁶ The *Guardian* (19/6/91) reported that the US has the highest jail population and it is growing at 13% pa. Prisoners totalled over 1m or 426 per 100,000 population, compared with (per 100,000) 268 in the SU, 97 in the UK, and 33 in South Africa. The total of 610,000 black men aged 20 to 29 in prisons compares with 436,000 black men of all ages in colleges, and the report notes that the current cost of the most expensive US college education at \$20,000 pa is approximately half that of keeping a prisoner in jail. US judges are protesting at the imposing of mandatory sentences; for example, Chief Judge Donald Lay said 'the criminal justice system is a complete failure and a disgrace to a civilized nation.'

One of the most sensitive indicators of the growing instability of First World societies is the high and accelerating rate of divorces. In the UK, for example, the rate has increased five-fold since 1960; well over one third of all marriages now fail, with particularly harmful outcomes for the children concerned. The resulting dramatic increase in the number of individual households is putting a severe strain on the already short supply of homes.³⁷

First World living conditions for the elderly have also deteriorated seriously. In the UK, for example, around one quarter of a million old people not only have to live permanently in residential 'homes', but often suffer abuse in them. A 1991 report by the Labour party health spokeswoman shows that such abuse includes: tying residents to chairs, residents sustaining inexplicable bruising and sometimes serious injuries, residents being left in damp smelly clothes, proprietors stealing from residents, insufficient provision of food and bad medicinal practices. A report on the problems of the elderly in New York City states that the 'war on poverty, the purpose of which was to uplift the poor, has been redesigned merely to contain them.' In one block 'grandmothers have been held hostage by their own drug-addicted grandchildren, who take over their apartments and their money...a notice gives the time of the weekly trip to the

local supermarket when they can go shopping with a police escort.’³⁸

Erosions of human rights

First World countries are almost invariably referred to as ‘parliamentary democracies’. parliaments they certainly have; politicians, lobbyists, and others whose careers depend on them see to that. Democracy is another matter. In the US for example, only half the population even feels sufficiently involved to vote at the occasional elections, and there has never yet been a political party even purporting to represent the interests of working people. Possibly the most significant contributory factor to the undermining of democracy has been increasing militarisation, including nuclear arming. Because of the lethality of plutonium (one-millionth of a gramme can produce cancer and 10 kilogrammes a bomb), it has been said that ‘a plutonium economy and a free democracy are a contradiction in terms.’ Leading UK and US legal experts state ‘plutonium provides the first rational justification for underground intelligence gathering against the civilian population.’

As a result, First World countries are tending to become ‘totalitarian democracies’, within which official bureaucracies, police and other legal authorities have considerable power over individuals. Leaders are increasingly depriving people of those very liberties they are supposed to be defending. This is well exemplified in the UK, where decisions of terrifying gravity, such as spending around £30bn on the Trident weapons system, are increasingly taken by an inner caucus - not even the full cabinet - and certainly not after parliamentary debate. In 1968 West Germany set about re-creating a police state by legalizing phone-tapping, and with its 1972 ‘Berufsverbot’ law, under which 3m trades unionists, peace activists, ecologists and other progressives have been investigated, and tens of thousands made redundant or refused jobs.

The US itself has one of the worst records of brutality and abuse of human rights on racial grounds, including the near-genocide of native americans, whose numbers have been cut from around 5m in the 17th century, to some 1.5m today. The US also has a bad record of spying on its own citizens. Corporations keep private security forces, in liaison with the CIA, and backed by vast resources to maintain dossiers on millions of innocent US people. The *Observer* (7/7/91) reports that ‘US states can impose laws whereby federally-funded clinics are forbidden even to discuss abortion with patients; any doctor doing so, faces a 10 year prison sentence and a fine of \$100,000’. In relation to its Central American ‘backyard’, the US has consistently rejected any suggestions that its military aid to right wing governments should be conditional on respect for human rights. In particular, for example, the White House continued to support the military elite running El Salvador, in spite of its having murdered many thousands of peasants, journalists, teachers, priests and others, over the years.

In the UK the right to privacy is abused by widespread phone-tapping. The US National Security Agency has a tapping centre near Harrogate, with the capacity to monitor a quarter of a million phones. Many overseas call from the UK have been recorded, together with millions of internal calls, assisted by voice-recognition equipment. To store ‘intelligence’ information about millions of UK citizens, MI5 has an outsize computer with a 20bn character capacity, equivalent to 50,000 paperbacks. This cost the UK tax-payer £20m: but this type of expenditure can never be questioned, much less answered, because all questions in parliament regarding MI5 activities remain unanswered. Britain’s record came under scrutiny at the UN Human Rights Committee in April 1991, particularly in respect of treatment of prisoners, telephone-tapping, political and press freedom, freedom of expression, and denial of full public access to facts on safety risks and accidents, to ‘protect commercial confidentiality’.

The immensely well-equipped UK Government Communications Headquarters takes

it upon itself to intercept an enormous range of commercial and other international telephone and telex messages, usually it seems, for no reason other than the need to justify employing numerous itchy fingers on dials and buttons. In June 1992, for example, the *Observer* revealed that the intelligence services had been spying on UK charities such as Amnesty International and Christian Aid, which are very concerned that recipients of their assistance could thus be endangered. GCHQ intercepts are regularly passed to US government agencies, which in turn pass them, for example, to extremists in Latin America, where local religious aid groups have been targeted by death squads.

According to a 1991 report³⁹ by the international monitoring group, Human Rights Watch, based in New York, there has been a 'marked change for the worse in the climate for liberty in the UK, with widespread erosion of civil liberties in the 1980s, in part due to the lack of a written constitution guaranteeing freedom of expression.' The group condemned Britain for detaining Arabs for deportation during the Gulf war, and explained its particular concern with Britain 'because many countries, particularly in the Commonwealth, justify their own repressive actions by pointing to the British example;...South African president Botha praised the 1988 ban on broadcast interviews with some Northern Ireland groups.'

In the last resort, the right of any people to elect a government of their own choice is compromised by the ill-concealed obduracy of the US elite. If, for example, any European country in particular, looked likely to elect a genuinely progressive, anti-establishment government, the US leadership would, in all probability, set in motion its contingency plan for such an unwelcome scenario. This could involve support by airlifted US troops for counteractions by indigenous

reactionary forces. The required, varyingly disguised but strong neo-fascist organizations already exist in major European countries.

In spite of occasional relaxations of dictatorships here and there, the world-wide trend is one of continuing domination by greedy elites. These almost exclusively unelected groups, with vital assistance from their compliant media, have the audacity to maintain their autocratic, life-and-death control over millions of fellow humans, and furthermore at their expense. The crowning indignity is provided by those elites managing to blanket a range of nefarious activities under the deepest secrecy, justified, if challenged, by 'national security'.

- 1 Third World Atlas, The Open University, 1983
- 2 *The Creation of World Poverty*, Teresa Hayter, Pluto, 1981
- 3 Ditto
- 4 *How the Other Half Dies*, Susan George, Penguin, 1976
- 5 Ex-Services CND Newsletter No. 28, May 1990
- 6 *Guardian*, London, 23/1/89
- 7 *New Internationalist*, Oxford, December 1990
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- 9 *Observer* 9/12/84
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- 15 *Guardian* 21/10/89
- 16 *Observer* 21/10/90
- 17 *Guardian* 15/1/89
- 18 Ditto 28/9/90
- 19 Ditto 4/12/90

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- 22 *Sunday Times* 30/9/90
- 23 *Guardian* 27/9/89
- 24 Ditto 21/4/90.
- 25 *A Fate worse than Debt*, Susan George, Penguin, 1988
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- 31 Ditto 28/3/91
- 32 Ditto 28/9/90
- 33 Ditto 28/4/90
- 34 Ditto 13/2/90
- 35 Ditto 21/9/91
- 36 Ditto 28/9/90
- 37 Ditto 24/8/91
- 38 *The Nation*, 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, 17/6/91
- 39 *Guardian* 28/10/91