

but out of the differences in the way opportunity is seized. We know that the Constitution does not mean that every person will fare equally well. Yet, when we evaluate a course of government action — at least according to constitutional traditions — we must ask whether a higher level of scrutiny ought to be exercised because of the very nature of the risk groups affected by the AIDS crisis. If AIDS were a disease that struck only a racial minority, we would have the machinery to see if, within it, there was careless regulation that fulfilled discriminatory impulses rather than proper legislative needs. But the group first affected by government policy concerning AIDS — gays — is not defined by race. Yet it is the kind of group where the wisdom of Justice Stone is instantly relevant: Those at risk of obtaining AIDS are subject to the kind of “prejudice against discrete and insular minorities” that tends to affect the operation of political process in a manner contrary to our basic values (13). The consequence of being so disfavored a group is the kind of prejudice, as John Hart Ely has put it in *Democracy and Distrust*, that provides the natural majority with “a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens” (14).

Unlike many books concerned with the social implications of AIDS, Price’s comments are most provocative for their implications for the future. If Price is correct, a sea change has occurred. Those interested in understanding the increasingly conservative tone of social thought will be rewarded by this book. □

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New in paperback

- *Immune Responses, Virus Infections and Disease*, edited by N. J. Dimmock and P. D. Minor is based on a 1988 symposium of the Society of General Microbiology. It is available in paperback from Oxford University Press, price £18.
- *Tectonics of Suspect Terranes* by D. G. Howell is the third volume in a series of four. Published in 1989, the series is available in paperback. Chapman and Hall, Vol. 3, price £17.50, \$35.
- *Evolutionary Dynamics of a Natural Population* by B. R. Grant and P. R. Grant has recently been issued in paperback. Published by the University of Chicago Press, price \$24.95, £19.95.
- *The Solid State: From Superconductors to Superalloys* by A. Guinier and R. Jullien. This translation from the French text is published by Oxford University Press, £15, \$29.95.
- *Introduction to Metamorphic Textures and Microstructures* by A. J. Barker has recently become available in paperback. Published by Blackie in Britain, £13.95; Chapman and Hall in the United States, \$29.95.

In paperback

- *Nuclear Power Development: Prospects in the 1990s* by S. M. Nealey, is a publication from the Battelle Press, 505 King Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43201, USA, price \$18.95.
- *Field Testing Genetically Modified Organisms* from the National Academy Press provides a practical guide for researchers, environmental organizations and policy-makers. Price \$19.95.

Cause and effect

John B. Whittow

Population and Disaster. Edited by John I. Clarke, Peter Curson, S. L. Kayastha and Prithvish Nag. *Basil Blackwell: 1989.* Pp.292. £40.

It is 25 years since Gilbert F. White’s *Natural Hazards, Local, National, Global* outlined the basic paradigm that has underpinned subsequent disaster research, namely a knowledge of the degree of occupancy of risk zones by people whose perceptions of hazard need to be tested in order both to predict their behavioural

that half the case studies in this volume involve the developing countries. One of the editors sets the tone by recognizing how “disasters have the ability to strip away much of the veneer of human life to reveal the basic patterns of human activity and behaviour”.

Such revelations are often clouded when they are published by being presented in a disjointed form. This is not so in the present volume, which is a well-integrated and tightly structured collection of essays by an international group of geographers. Moreover, the mass of new information that the editors have produced conveys to me a hope that the malthusian doctrine of a catastrophe-maintained balance between population

and resources need no longer prevail if we can learn from past mistakes. Disasters of human causation, whether they be in China (chapter 10), Uganda (chapter 12), Chernobyl (chapter 13), the Gaza Strip (chapter 17) or South Africa (chapter 18) are capable of resolution by political and economic means, and even some of those induced by a combination of man and nature need not be as catastrophic as they sometimes are. For example, stricter building standards in the Soviet Union, or in the urban fabrics of Managua (chapter 3) and Mexico City (chapter 5),

would dramatically reduce the number of earthquake casualties, whereas a cessation of hostilities in Ethiopia (chapter 8) and the Sudan (chapter 9) could, together with a return to a better-balanced subsistence economy, improve the chances of the starving millions in these countries, notwithstanding the continuing drought.

All these studies give valuable insights into the widely varying problems of risk-zone populations, and some offer blueprints for future survival. In addition, there are chapters that provide a much broader appraisal by analysing the impact of wars and disease on global mortality rates, including a topical review of the threat presented by AIDS.

There is little doubt that this latest contribution to the few books which give a balanced account of the demographic consequences of both natural and human-induced disasters has succeeded in achieving its aim. Both the editors and the authors are to be congratulated on their lucid writing, their informative references and good-quality diagrams. This impressive volume should stimulate much rethinking by planners and policy makers at national and international levels. □

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REASONS

Palestinian women carrying food are told by an Israeli soldier that they are breaking the curfew. Gaza Strip, January 1988. responses and to ascertain the effectiveness of public policies in predicting and selecting the optimum damage-reducing adjustments. Foremost among those who have attempted to find answers to the questions posed by disaster research are in the North American hazards school of Ian Burton, Robert Kates and Kenneth Hewitt. But although these authors’ investigations have been carried out throughout the world, they have almost always had the viewpoint of the industrialized Western nations.

Population and Disaster, by contrast, although adopting a similar framework, is written from a somewhat different perspective in so far as seven of its twenty-one authors come from developing countries. Indeed, it was the pressure brought to bear by Professor Kayastha, after his investigations of the Bhopal disaster in India (chapter 14), that led ultimately to the publication of this latest volume in the Special Series of the Institute of British Geographers.

Disasters that affect cities and transport links in the developed world are invariably newsworthy events, but famines, epidemics, wars and other catastrophes in developing countries receive far less media coverage. To rid us of our parochialism, therefore, one must welcome the fact