

aged care will so improve the efficiency of the system that the United States can cut the rate at which costs increase and also provide universal coverage without raising taxes substantially. So little is known of the effectiveness of managed competition that there are only flimsy grounds for distinguishing that expectation from hope. Universal coverage will not come free. More seriously, if the plan as it stands were to be enacted intact, most middle-class Americans would either pay more for their current benefits package or lose some benefits they now enjoy. In a country in which the vast majority of people are used to choosing their own doctors and getting whatever services they want, that is asking a lot. But these are the rocks on which the Clinton plan is sure to be impaled in the months ahead. It will take all of a president's persuasive power to ensure it does not founder on them.

Nobody (probably not even the president himself) expects the Clinton plan to survive the US Congress in its present form. More than half-a-dozen congressional committees and more than a thousand special interest groups will have their say before any legislation materializes, at best a year or two from now. But some sensible reforms will emerge from the heated debate that will hold centre stage in US politics for quite a while. For that, Clinton deserves thanks.

Ending tribal wars

It is not too soon to plan how the rest of Europe will respond to the slow ending of the Bosnian fighting.

THERE are some positive things to say about the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, now being dragged to an end by the exhaustion of the combatants rather than the success of the peace negotiators. For one thing, the war has not spread to Macedonia or to Kosovo. And Slovenia, the northernmost member of what was the Yugoslav confederation and the first to break away from it, has been uncannily silent during two years of fighting. Voluntary agencies and troops (under the aegis of the United Nations) have also shown great courage, even heroism, under trying circumstances. Otherwise, there is no good news. The war has been and remains a shaming business for participants and bystanders alike. It will cast a shadow over Europe for decades to come. All sections of the intellectual community therefore have an interest in knowing what went wrong.

The nature of the conflict, first in Croatia, then Bosnia, is central. Early on, the use of the term "tribal" to describe what was going on prompted a torrent of complaint from readers whose lives were being turned upside down. But even the passage of time does not suggest a more appropriate term. It hardly requires DNA fingerprinting of the population of ex-Yugoslavia to tell that this has not been an ethnic conflict. Nor, for want of homogeneity, has it been a religious war. To be sure, religious Serbs are mostly Orthodox Christians, church-going Croats are mostly Roman Catholics, but the Muslims of Bosnia are indistinguishable from those who

used to live next door to them by the variety of slavonic language they speak.

The wellsprings of mutual hostility are rather to be found in the more familiar cultural attributes that tie some groups together, dividing them from others. Shared traditions (real or imagined), family ties and rural people's attachment to the land their forebears worked are both cementing and divisive; language and religion then confirm people's sense of kinship with members of their own group and their sense of being at odds with other groups. The past two years have horrified the rest of Europe and the world because of the general supposition that European civility is now powerful enough to damp down ancient antagonisms and, in particular, to prevent people killing other people simply on account of their group membership. Events, to everybody's dismay, have shown that not to be the case.

What is to be done? Mr George Soros, the financier-philanthropist (who is spending \$50 million for relief in Bosnia, not to mention \$100 million for assistance to research in the ex-Soviet Union) argues in a privately published pamphlet that the rest of the world's error over Yugoslavia is its willingness to accept the creation of numerous independent states whose basis is essentially ideological. He argues that military intervention in the crumbling Yugoslavia would have been justified to prevent such an outcome. The belief that ideologically motivated states tend to be illiberal is easily supported, but many are already so founded. There is, for example, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, not to mention Iran and the Sudan (or at least the northern part of it). These anomalies will not melt away simply because the rest of Europe is ashamed of what has happened in Bosnia.

The more immediate question is that of how the rest of Europe should deal with what is left of Yugoslavia when the war eventually drags to an end. It is a haunting question: revulsion at recent atrocities will blunt compassion for communities uprooted from their homes, robbed of breadwinners and turned into refugees. In Bosnia, all three communities have been responsible for acts of barbarism. But the rest of Europe's interest is that the past two years should reinforce as little as possible the tribal hostility, which argues for generous assistance with rehabilitation coupled with plain statements of the reasons why the illiberality of the recent war is offensive. The second ingredient is as important as the first.

A report on page 287 of this issue describes what Germany is already doing to rehabilitate research in Croatia. The motives are admirable: to focus research on the needs of Croatian industry and thus to strengthen the local economy. The open question is whether this assistance is tempered with the essential message that the tribal wars of the past two years themselves offend against the principle that science is an international enterprise. The University of Zagreb (the capital city of Croatia) used to be a polyglot university, for example. Will it be so now, and in the future? Germany could exert a beneficent influence on that important question, which will recur, as recent events in the Caucasus have shown.