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Editor's Choice

Poverty and environmental destruction

Next week sees the beginning of the earth summit in Brazil. Inevitably some will see the meeting in apocalyptic terms. The world's leaders are assembling in a country strongly associated with environmental disaster to discuss the destruction of the globe. In our first editorial Donald Acheson warns that the summit must be taken seriously and regrets that its radicalism has been watered down (p 1391). The editorial that follows explores the links between world poverty and the environment (p 1392), linking together articles on how Third World debt kills (p 1423) and on the harmful effects of military expenditure in the developing world (p 1421). Meanwhile, a news story (p 1398) and two letters (p 1440) discuss the role of drug companies in the developing world.

It has now become customary when talking of the world's poor to link eastern Europe with the Third World, and Karin Chopin, a medical student from Bristol, has been back to her roots to look at the health services in Poland (p 1429). Her ability to speak the language and understand the thinking of Poles and her chance to travel with the Polish health minister allowed her to get much deeper into the country than most visitors—and one of her main conclusions is that the Poles are suffering from too many advisers and too little aid. Tony Delamothe reached similar conclusions on Russia from the relative comfort of a conference at the King's Fund College (p 1432): he draws comparisons between Russia now and the Wild West of old, with carpetbaggers arriving by every train.