F F A R A N C E  I S  C R I S I S  I N  C E R T A I N  g r i p p s  o f  ‘ s o c i a l  K a t h a r i n a . ’ C r i t i c a l l y  a s  i n  t h e  U n i t e d  S t a t e s , t h e  f i r s t  r i s e r p t i o n  e v e n t s  w a s  c h a r a c t e r i s e d  b y  s h o p p e r  a n d  a b s e n c e .  I t  i s  n o w  o f  p r o u m o n a n t  i m p o r t a n c e  f o r  e v e r y o n e  t o  r e s p o n d  t o  a v o i d  t h e  r e t u r n  t o  ‘ b a d  o l d  w a y s , ’  t h e  i n v i e w  s t a t e  o f  c o n f u s i o n  a n d  a b d i c a t i o n .  

Haemorrhage

When faced with a major haemorrhage, the priority is to save the patient, and to a certain extent this has been done with the response to the riots in France. But the situation has taken on such a dynamic of its own that any haemorrhage must be evolved to go beyond damage limitation. The question is what should these strategies be? Experience shows that four main questions must be searched for and found.

Firstly, what is the nature of this crisis? As in all ‘out of the box’ crises, the riots in the French suburbs lie outside of both our mental maps and our established codes of governance. Obviously there are some well known ingredients: Creased suburban estates with down tower blocks, poverty, unemployment and desperation. However, a double threshold has been crossed, that of the unacceptable – marginalised neighbourhoods – and that of the non-negotiable – confiscation of certain areas of the Republic. Drawing the problem is not an option, given the real danger that parts of the population are threatened by a total loss of a framework of values, starting with the loss of authority – a fundamental founding principle of democratic society. We are clearly faced with a situation of collective responsibility.

It is in this well known breeding ground, currently stirred to a ferment in France, that new trends are erupting and pulverising existing schemes of interpretation and planning. We are confronting events that occur within a worldwide context of excesses: uncertainty and major, even brutal changes. We are also facing the construction of a personal identity based on violence and death.

These issues are by no means restricted to one particular country or region. It was in this double bind that the world watched as the desolate and deprived people of New Orleans fired at St Bernard, South America, sent to help and rescue them, forcing Washington to take action which seemed more appropriate to a country on the brink of chaos than for the world’s superpower.

The context for these events is a world of endlessly proliferating networks, which are prone to triggeringkey chain reactions, where whole units of society can be smashed to pieces or subject to massive and instant coagulation and where extremes become the norm.

What are the pitfalls? ‘Unthinkable’ crisis situations provoke structural responses which very quickly turn out to be serious dead ends. First, negative words were used to describe some of the youths in these areas of France. An inappropriate response could also include sanitised speeches, limp consultation or the rubber stamping of groups determined to impose a framework of violence.

Secondly, the cultural trap – faced with a critical need to invent, the major risk is that we fall back on archaic models. Diversity can and must be converted into riches, it is not – and must not be seen as an insurmountable obstacle.

Lastly, it is in this well known breeding ground, currently stirred to a ferment in France, that new trends are erupting and pulverising existing schemes of interpretation and planning. We are confronting events that occur within a worldwide context of excesses: uncertainty and major, even brutal changes. We are also facing the construction of a personal identity based on violence and death.

Why are these pitfalls? ‘Unthinkable’ crisis situations provoke structural responses which very quickly turn out to be serious dead ends. First, negative words were used to describe some of the youths in these areas of France. An inappropriate response could also include sanitised speeches, limp consultation or the rubber stamping of groups determined to impose a framework of violence.

Secondly, the cultural trap – faced with a critical need to invent, the major risk is that we fall back on archaic models. Diversity can and must be converted into riches, it is not – and must not be seen as an insurmountable obstacle.

Lastly, it is in this well known breeding ground, currently stirred to a ferment in France, that new trends are erupting and pulverising existing schemes of interpretation and planning. We are confronting events that occur within a worldwide context of excesses: uncertainty and major, even brutal changes. We are also facing the construction of a personal identity based on violence and death.

What are the pitfalls? ‘Unthinkable’ crisis situations provoke structural responses which very quickly turn out to be serious dead ends. First, negative words were used to describe some of the youths in these areas of France. An inappropriate response could also include sanitised speeches, limp consultation or the rubber stamping of groups determined to impose a framework of violence.

Secondly, the cultural trap – faced with a critical need to invent, the major risk is that we fall back on archaic models. Diversity can and must be converted into riches, it is not – and must not be seen as an insurmountable obstacle.

Lastly, it is in this well known breeding ground, currently stirred to a ferment in France, that new trends are erupting and pulverising existing schemes of interpretation and planning. We are confronting events that occur within a worldwide context of excesses: uncertainty and major, even brutal changes. We are also facing the construction of a personal identity based on violence and death.

What are the pitfalls? ‘Unthinkable’ crisis situations provoke structural responses which very quickly turn out to be serious dead ends. First, negative words were used to describe some of the youths in these areas of France. An inappropriate response could also include sanitised speeches, limp consultation or the rubber stamping of groups determined to impose a framework of violence.

Secondly, the cultural trap – faced with a critical need to invent, the major risk is that we fall back on archaic models. Diversity can and must be converted into riches, it is not – and must not be seen as an insurmountable obstacle.

Lastly, it is in this well known breeding ground, currently stirred to a ferment in France, that new trends are erupting and pulverising existing schemes of interpretation and planning. We are confronting events that occur within a worldwide context of excesses: uncertainty and major, even brutal changes. We are also facing the construction of a personal identity based on violence and death.