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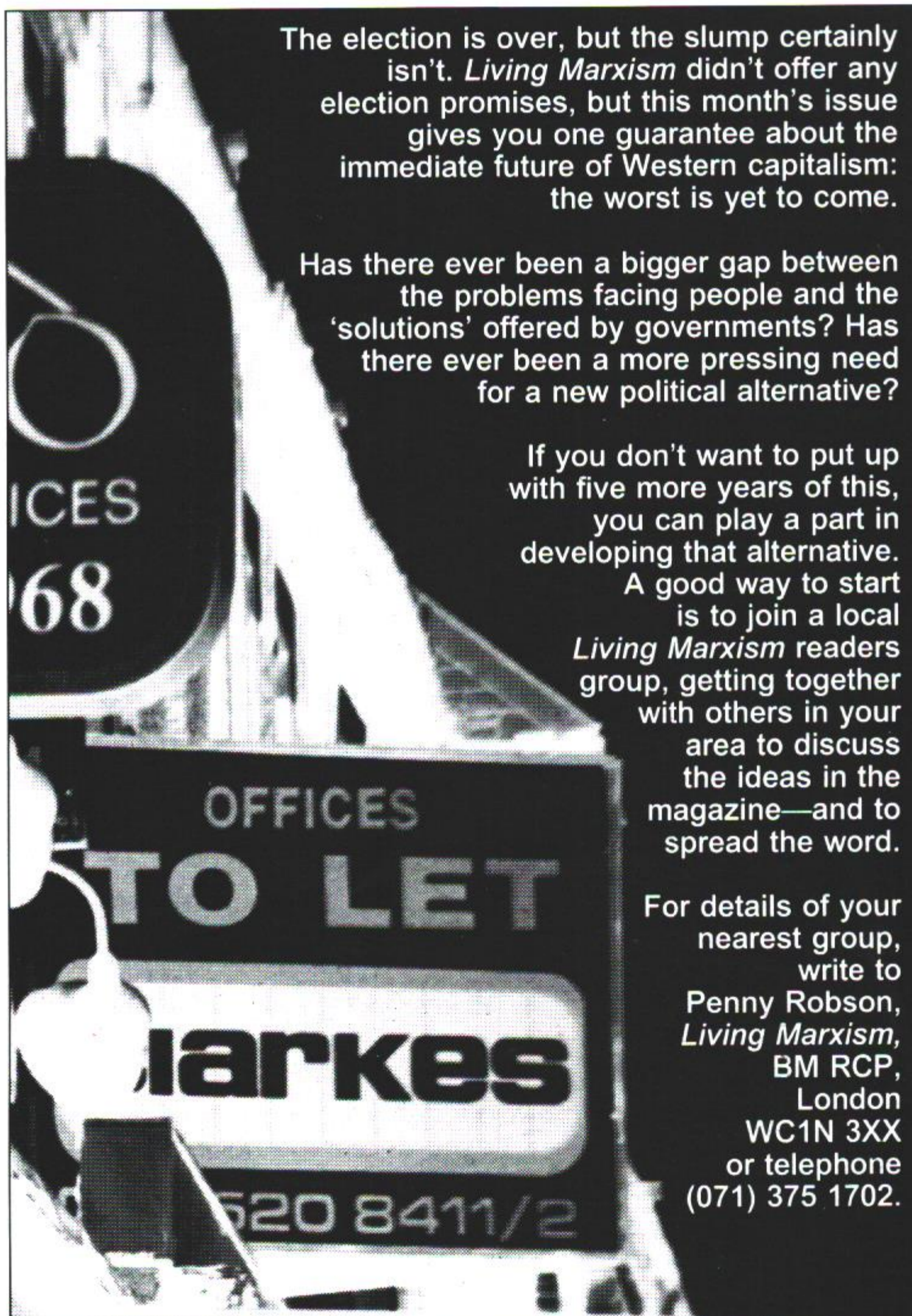
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COVER PHOTO: Michael Kramer



The election is over, but the slump certainly isn't. *Living Marxism* didn't offer any election promises, but this month's issue gives you one guarantee about the immediate future of Western capitalism: the worst is yet to come.

Has there ever been a bigger gap between the problems facing people and the 'solutions' offered by governments? Has there ever been a more pressing need for a new political alternative?

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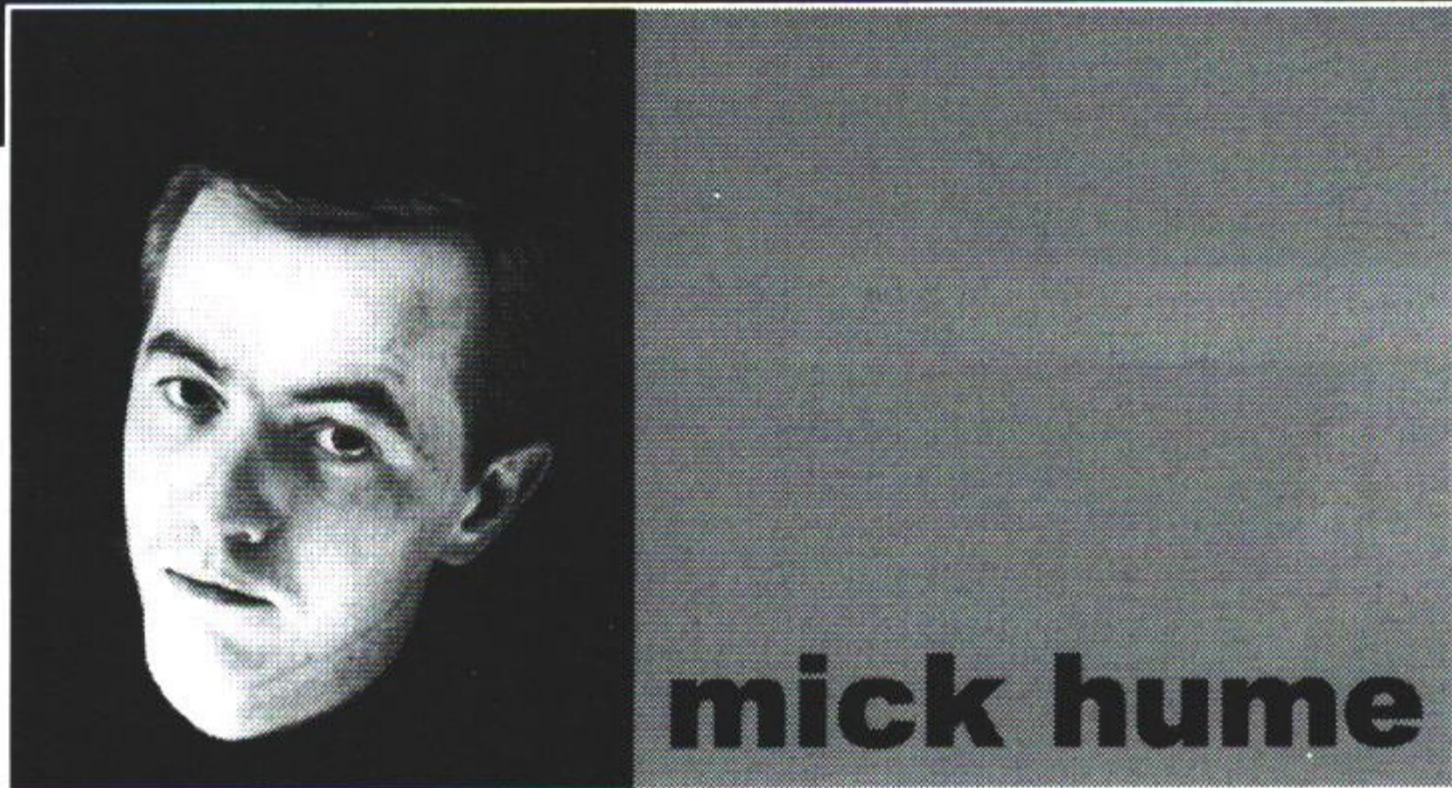
Five more years?

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mick hume

End of an era

'Nothing changes.' That is what a lot of people will conclude from the general election, in which the Tories won a fourth victory with the same 42 per cent share of the vote as they had in 1987. But those bare facts disguise the big changes taking place beneath the surface of British politics.

Across Europe, a spate of recent election results have marked the end of a political era. In Germany, France and Italy, the old parties of left and right have all suffered a loss of coherence and support. The closing of the age of Cold War politics which gave birth to them is coinciding with the arrival of capitalist slump. Under these combined pressures, the parties of the postwar order in Europe are coming apart at the seams.

After the Conservative victory on 9 April, things in Britain might appear to be more stable. And there are indeed distinctive national characteristics. Yet the underlying British trend does fit into a European pattern of the old order unravelling.

The crisis of European politics is starkest among the old parties of the left. The end of the Cold War and the Soviet Union has destroyed the Stalinist movement in the West. It has also accelerated

the decline of European social democracy by further discrediting the politics of state intervention.

The socialists and social democrats have tried to respond by turning themselves into alternative capitalist parties. The result has been to leave them devoid of any distinctive identity or credibility. In recent elections, the left in government has suffered serious setbacks through being linked with the recession. Elsewhere, the left in opposition has proved unable to exploit the economic difficulties afflicting the ruling parties of the right.

In the March regional elections in France, the Socialist government saw its vote collapse to 18 per cent. The once-powerful French Communist Party fared even worse. In Italy's general election in April, support for the Party of the Democratic Left (formerly the Communists) slumped from 27 to 16 per cent. The Italian Socialists, involved in the coalition government, also lost ground. And in the German regional polls, the opposition Social Democratic Party did badly even in its strongholds.

Set the British Labour Party's performance in this Continent-wide context, and the depth of its problem is

revealed. The 'modernisation' process through which Labour has abandoned its traditional policies has left it with no clear identity or dynamic. Like its European counterparts, Labour now stands for nothing; nothing, that is, except a pragmatic commitment to managing capitalism.

This is a major reason why Labour could not mobilise the support it needed to beat the unpopular Tories in April. Labour may have improved on its dismal showings of 1983 and 1987. But leaving those two routs aside, the 35 per cent of votes which Labour got this time still represents its worst performance since the 1930s.

Those who now claim that with 'one more push' Labour can win next time underestimate what has happened. The Labour Party has already lost everything. Far from going on to better things, it is likely to slide into the sort of crisis now fragmenting and consuming European social democracy.

The established parties of the European right are also in a state of crisis. For more than 40 years, Cold War politics held each of them together in an anti-Soviet bloc. The collapse of the old enemy has removed that ideological cement, and robbed the traditional right of its most

potent political symbols, at the moment when capitalist slump is exposing the holes in its economic programme.

So in Italy, the decline of the Christian Democratic Party parallels that of its main protagonist, the Communist Party. The 29 per cent which the Christian Democrats polled in April was their lowest vote since the Second World War. In Germany, the recent elections left the ruling Christian Democrats in a weaker position in the regional parliaments than any government since the war. In France, even the collapse of Socialist support could not prevent the vote for the mainstream conservative parties slipping back. And in all three countries, the parties of the 'respectable' right lost ground to far-right groups standing on openly racist platforms.

The consistency of the Tory vote may seem to set British politics apart from trends in the rest of Europe. Yet the Tories too are suffering the consequences of the demise of Cold War politics.

The Conservative Party has enjoyed a long history as the unrivalled political machine of the British establishment, while the European right has often appeared weak and divided. The Tory Party's legacy of stability and flexibility has helped it to minimise the electoral impact of the economic crisis so far. For instance, while the race issue has been used by the far right to draw votes away from Continental Christian Democracy, the Conservatives were able to exploit racism to their own advantage on 9 April (see page 14).

However, behind the comparatively healthy electoral statistics, the Tory Party shares most of the political problems of the rest of the old European right. It has lost its past identity, its sense of purpose and its political coherence. This explains the problems which the Conservatives encountered in the run-up to the election. It also means that, despite the post-election euphoria, they are about to run into serious difficulties.

On paper the Tories' share of the vote may have been unchanged, but in political terms their 1992 election victory does not compare to 1987. Back then, the Thatcherites galvanised an enthusiastic Tory constituency behind the banner of popular capitalism. This time, with the government beset by economic slump and having long since run out of ideas, John Major's soap-box and Citizen's Charter failed to enthuse anybody. The fact that the Tories finally dragged out an anti-Labour vote cannot disguise the lack

of a political dynamic behind them, so well illustrated by their incompetent and deeply unconfident campaign.

Many commentators have been puzzled by the gap between the campaign opinion polls and the final election result. Part of the explanation is probably that a lot of people felt too guilty about voting Tory to admit it beforehand, too begrudging in their support for Major to declare it publicly. That is a far cry from the bullish 'Ten more years! Tomorrow belongs to me!' mood of Thatcher's 1987 high tide.

Just as those who fail to situate the

can happen in the economically powerful one-party state of Japan, there are far worse times ahead for the one-party rulers of bankrupt Britain.

The new Major government has to manage a historic capitalist slump without any policies of substance or any sense of where it is going. The Citizen's Charter (now to be promoted by the charismatic William Waldegrave) is unlikely to afford the Tories much protection. The parallels between their true position and the crisis of the traditional European right are likely

The new Major government has to manage a historic capitalist slump without any policies of substance or any sense of where it is going

British election in the wider context of post-Cold War politics can underestimate the extent of Labour's collapse, so too they can overestimate the Tories' strength.

There has been a lot of worried discussion about Britain becoming a one-party state, like Japan. This misses the point about the recent past. Britain has effectively been a one-party state for a decade, and certainly for the past five years, when almost every big political debate has taken place, not between Labour and the Tories, but within the ranks of the Conservative Party itself. The one-party state debate misses an even bigger point about what has changed today. Far from suddenly emerging as an unchallengeable monolith, the Tory Party has a less secure grip on events than at any time in its 13-year rule.

Japan provides a useful example of a one-party state in which the one party concerned is now in a perpetual state of crisis. The Liberal Democratic Party holds a monopoly on power there. But that has not prevented the government being badly damaged by a series of corruption scandals and other problems that reveal its political weakness. These difficulties look set to get worse as the Japanese economy dips into recession. And if that

to become much clearer before too long.

Like the rest of Europe, politics in Britain has come to the end of an era. As the old arrangements unravel, the prospects for putting forward a new political alternative should be far better than many suppose. One problem is that the left, which would traditionally have been seen as the source of such an alternative, now seems intent on going down with the old order.

The fragments of the old hard left spent the election campaign pursuing the ever-more fantastic dream of a socialist Labour government. Meanwhile others, like Robin Blackburn of the *New Left Review*, proposed tactical voting for the Liberal Democrats. If this is the best 'alternative' that the left can come up with, the ruling elites will survive their political crisis one way or another—and capitalism can survive its slump at our expense.

Living Marxism supported the electoral intervention of the Revolutionary Communist Party. In terms of votes, the RCP candidates did badly, all losing their deposits. But the campaign achieved what it set out to do; to win new supporters to the ideas of anti-capitalism, and so put down a marker for the politics of revolution on the changing map of Europe.

The Columbus debate

Paul Thatcher (letters, April) challenges Paola Martos' characterisation of native American culture as prehistoric in contradistinction to the progressive development of the continent following Columbus' discovery ('Columbus: rediscovering America', Marxist Review of Books, March). Thatcher points out that the tribes of North America lived in a state of primitive communism before the destruction of their societies by white settlers.

When Lewis Henry Morgan first characterised Iroquois society as primitive and communal in 1851, from which Marx and Engels took their classification 'primitive communism', it was not intended as a celebration of native Americans. Rather he concluded that the absence of 'progress or invention' was the basis of their communal property, leaving them at 'the zero of human society'. Progress here means the development of technology and the social and cultural development arising out of it. Native North Americans were 'prehistoric' in that they had no written history, only folklore.

Capitalism develops technology at enormous human cost. Not just native Americans, but Scottish highlanders and German peasants were 'cleared' from the land so that the ruling classes could monopolise the means of subsistence. However, it is the technological development that follows which makes communism a possibility rather than a primitive penalty. Thanks to the development of modern cinematography and the eight-hour day, I too can romanticise the lives of noble savages without electric light or flush toilets. And, thanks to Thomas Edison and Thomas Crapper, I don't have to stay bound to nature when the film is over.

James Heartfield London

The Marxist Review of Books on Columbus confirms my view that like Marx himself, his followers who are non-black or non-Afro/Asian approach political economy and history with their minds clouded over with Eurocentric values and preconceptions.

In Europe capitalism played a progressive role in breaking feudalism and releasing the productive energies of the peoples, albeit at a cost. When triumphant capitalism went abroad it wasn't a progressive and enlightening force but a predatory adventurer intent on plundering and colonising the New World for the benefit of Europe. At the same time as the Marxist hates capitalist exploitation at home he defends its inhuman vandalism against the 'primitives' as liberating and progressive.

If a group of people wish to live in the Stone Age it is no part of your patronising duty to drag them screaming into the twentieth century in the name of science and progress. To discover one's true past can by no stretch of the imagination be described as inventing an alternative

past. Such a view is the result of unconscious racist arrogance and condescension masquerading as progressive Marxist thinking. Eurocentric historiography has falsified our history by rewriting it in subtle ways, and in the process devalued and dehumanised us. It is silly to describe a project to debunk deep-seated myth as itself a process of myth-making.

S Singarayer Plymouth

Paul Thatcher's attempt to deny the charge that the anti-Columbus lobby is reactionary actually strengthens the case put forward by Paola Martos. By trying to prove that 'progress is not exclusively found in the European tradition', Thatcher unquestioningly accepts what is a meaningless phrase. There is no such thing as a 'European tradition' any more than there is such a thing as 'Welsh civilisation'. These terms have been developed by right-wing propagandists to reclaim the moral legitimacy of Western imperialism at a time when it was discredited by national liberation movements in the Third World. Their project requires an artificial selection of the achievements of humanity for the purpose of creating a supposed 'Western' culture.

'Culture' is part of the history of learning of the whole of mankind. Thatcher would never have known about the Iroquois were it not for the forces which compelled society to seek out better methods of production. It will take another step to take humanity further, but one which rejects the backward-looking outlook of people like Thatcher.

Sinisa Brixton

Survival International

Ann Bradley has a cheek to criticise Survival International's work with tribal peoples by quoting selectively from our literature ('Why envy Yanomami Indians?', April). If she had consulted us she would have realised that far from keeping 'the benefits of penicillin and antibiotics to ourselves', Survival has been funding doctors to administer medicine to the Yanomami who are dying from diseases which they have never encountered before. Many indigenous peoples are not against development. What they do not need are paternalistic projects which have so often destroyed their lands. What they want is recognition of their land ownership rights and cultural freedom—basic human rights.

If Ann Bradley were to visit indigenous communities she could see for herself the hard reality which belies the romantic ideal she attributes to me. There are no 'picturesque photos' here—only human suffering, poverty and social dislocation. Survival International has actively supported indigenous peoples in their struggle for self-determination and their basic right to control their own lives. Entrenched and cynical attitudes like Ann

Bradley's perpetuate falsehoods and do a disservice to indigenous peoples who are struggling just to survive the onslaught of systems which certainly do not herald progress in their terms.

Fiona Watson Campaigns Officer, *Survival International*

A few notes on music

A few comments on Mark Reilly's excellent analysis of the 'Western cultural tradition' and the National Curriculum Council ('A classic deception', March). First, to claim that the pinnacle of Western musical tradition was in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries ignores the achievements of contemporary composers such as Messiaen, Ligeti, Stockhausen or Feldman. No classical composer of importance has ever claimed intellectual or musical heritage from Mozart. After all, Mozart hardly wrote anything original. Most of his famous pieces are 'classical' arrangements of popular tunes of his time. 'Ethnic' folk songs were his speciality.

Second, Reilly is behaving like a cultural imperialist himself when all he can come up with in regard to 'ethnic' music is rock and reggae. If you consider ethnic forms of art as an 'attempt to define an exclusive culture-spirit' within a much larger, more homogenous society then it deserves no more attention than is in agreement with the number of its followers. Ethnic music as part of a world tradition of diverse foreign cultures may someday be in higher regard and would indeed command an equal place on a curriculum which claims to be progressive and impartial.

Jeffrey Decker Frankfurt

Fear of the third world

The latest anti-third world propaganda is the invention of the 'Islamic Bomb'. I agree that 'the weaker the enemy, the more of a threat they apparently pose to the USA (Frank Richards, 'Invasion of the third world fanatics', April). These ludicrous Pentagon reports based on hypothetical scenarios, together with overzealous Western leaders willing to point the finger at the victims of imperialism, are obviously manufactured. Yet there are things that still frighten people, whatever the US hype about fanatics.

Third world countries are mostly ruled by military dictators who wouldn't hesitate to use a nuclear bomb if they got their hands on it. This is the only quick and easy source of power they have in a world system dominated by Western nations. It's no wonder that people put third world dictators on an equal par with Western imperialists. They're simply worried about nuclear war—whatever the source or the aggressor.

Andrew Tarrot Norwich

Scotland's model nationalism

Helene Gold says that Scottish nationalism is 'exclusive and inward-looking' and merely an expected manifestation of the negative traditions of Scottishness ('Why I am not a nationalist', April). But why is it that only Scottish nationalism is an attempt to 'tinker with borders and parliaments?' If it's true that all workers share the same interests, why is Irish nationalism acceptable to the RCP? To suggest that Ireland is different because it is some type of third world region subject to partial colonial rule from London sounds like any excuse to support a struggle simply because it is a violent one, and therefore more legitimate.

If an independent Scotland would develop into an 'inward-looking' nation, then this must be even more so for Ireland which is already so introverted and insulated that any woman looking for an abortion has to leave the country. Helene Gold's argument against an independent Scotland and Ann Bradley's description of how backward and poor the Irish Republic has become ('How much better is British law?', April) seem to suggest that the Irish Republic would be better off as part of Britain again. They are both wrong. Maybe the political form of Scottish disillusionment and apathy is at least benign enough to challenge the authority of Westminster—probably successfully—without having to kill people. Scottish nationalism should become a model!

Francis Huddy Brighton

Working class women breast-feed

Luckily for Bernadette Whelan the Medical Research Council came up with some dubious findings regarding the benefits of breast feeding to a child's intelligence ('The breast-feeding fraud', April). This made her decision to change to bottle-feeding instantly ideologically sound. I agree that breast-feeding for the first month or so can make you feel as if your life blood is being drained. But this passes, and anyway descriptions such as 'time consuming and boring' could be applied to many aspects of childcare.

I don't want to get into the breast v bottle argument, and I'm not going to wax lyrical about the joys and benefits of breast-feeding, which are many. But I cannot contain myself on

the ludicrous claim that it is impossible for working class women to breast-feed, or indeed that breast-feeding in a council flat is impractical. I breast-fed quite successfully in my council flat. A rich woman who breast-feeds is just as likely to get sore nipples or suffer using a breast pump, as a poor woman. Money won't buy sturdy nipples and confidence in your ability to produce milk. It is, however, essential for buying formula, bottles and sterilizers.

I do agree that the 'inclination' to breast-feed is essential for its success. If you do not want to breast-feed then formula will do fine. But saying it is 'out of the question' for working class women to breast-feed just perpetuates the myth of an underclass and would have the formula-makers rubbing their hands in glee.

E Watkins London SE24

Tyson and stereotypes

Congratulations on your move across the Atlantic. I wonder whether, now that *Living Marxism* is operating Stateside, there will be more articles on American politics and society? The start that you have made with 'The Rape of Black America' (April) is excellent. The forwarding of racist stereotypes, which Emmanuel Oliver outlined as typical of British press coverage of the Tyson affair, was also apparent in the US media, especially here in the Deep South.

The racist attack was, however, made doubly insulting by the way that stereotypes of women were used. Compare the Tyson case to the trial of Willie Kennedy Smith. Smith's victim was portrayed as a bare-legged slut in a miniskirt who had been out partying until the early hours. Tyson's victim was shown by the media to be a sweet and naive virgin, who trusted Tyson because she believed him to be a religious man. These contrasting images of women, whore and Madonna, do not only denigrate the women involved (and all women by extension) but were used to serve the vile cause of racism and to reinforce the establishment's case—in the attack on Tyson to suggest his (particularly horrific) guilt. Kennedy Smith's victim, on the other hand, clearly asked for it. The fact that Smith is neither black, nor of the ghetto, may have been incidental to his acquittal. But I doubt it.

Cheryl Benton Oxford, Mississippi

A steak in the system?

A friend of mine, a Green vegetarian, tried to convince me that communism would have to be vegetarian. He said that a rationally planned economy could only feed everyone if it didn't waste valuable land feeding animals, and grew crops which would yield more food. His argument made sense but I still have a problem with it.

I am virtually a vegetarian anyway because I'm on the dole and can't afford to buy meat. Steaks are a rare luxury, and I've never cooked a single roast since I left home seven years ago. So for me, the best place for a cow will always be on my plate and I don't think communism would be worth having without that. Who's right, me or my friend?

Eleanor McKenzie Newcastle

Designs on Living Marxism

Well Bailley, you've come down in the world old boy—Bradford is somewhat different from Kensington I fear! Now about your letter (letters, April). Your photographs may have as much life as a dead cat, however that doesn't stop us real photographers from capturing the irony of life. Adding photographs and unusual typesetting does not detract from the content of the articles as you would have undoubtedly found in your comparison with early LMs.

On the contrary, like any good artist, you would appreciate the experimentation in magazine design and the sense of dynamism that it brings which is so sorely lacking in contemporary art. I would like to offer my services to *Living Marxism*. If you need any photographs of the royals—don't hesitate to call me.

Lord Snowdon London.

Is David Bailley a mutant sub-species of the comic freaks who buy 10 copies of everything, seal them in acid-free bags and lock them in nuke-proof bunkers? I really like the new wide margins in the magazine. Giros don't stretch to smart stationary; so I get extra value for my two quid by writing all over every empty space in my copies whenever I feel like it. And sod the future resale value.

Ned Glasgow

We welcome readers' views and criticisms.

Please keep your letters as short as possible and send them to The Editor, *Living Marxism*, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX, or fax them on (071) 377 0346

The rise of Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National is a cause of grave concern for anti-racists everywhere. Kenan Malik suggests that many have misunderstood the danger

In regional elections in March, the Front National (FN) won the support of one in seven French voters. In the southern region of Provence-Alpes-Cotes d'Azur, a third of the electorate backed Jean-Marie Le Pen's openly racist party. The FN emerged as the second largest party in five of the country's regions, and may well have become the biggest in several areas had the two mainstream right-wing groups not run as a coalition.

The emergence of the Front National has led commentators on both sides of the Channel to suggest that France faces the spectre of fascism. They are wrong on two counts. Focusing on the threat of the FN exaggerates the dynamism behind Le Pen's movement. But it also underestimates the wider crisis of French politics, which is creating a climate in which *all* of the mainstream parties now advocate policies once confined to the fascist fringe.

Voters desert

The March regional elections revealed the depth of disillusionment with the major parties. The ruling Socialists won just 18.3 per cent of the vote. Support for the Communists, once the most popular party, slumped to eight per cent. In the decade since a Socialist-Communist coalition elected Francois Mitterrand as president in 1981, a quarter of French voters has deserted the left.

The public is barely more enthusiastic about the old right. The two mainstream right-wing parties—Jacques Chirac's Gaullist RPR and the UDF led by former president Valery Giscard d'Estaing—ran as a coalition in March. Yet, despite facing the most unpopular postwar administration, their support fell by about six per cent and the coalition barely scraped a third of the vote.

Le Pen has been able to exploit this situation to emerge as a national figure with considerable support. Yet the Front National is not the fast-growing fascist mass movement which some pundits describe. At around 14 per cent,

its share of the regional vote in March was slightly down on its share in the 1989 European elections—and well short of the 20 per cent which Le Pen had predicted. The leader himself polled quite poorly. And a week later, in the French equivalent of county council elections, the Front National vote fell to seven per cent.

'Les affaires'

The FN has so far failed to break out of its core support. Although Le Pen's emergence should be a matter of grave concern to anti-racists, he is not about to ride to power on a sudden upsurge of grassroots racism. Indeed, when voters in the regional elections were asked what issue most concerned them, only 15 per cent mentioned immigration. Twenty-four per cent picked unemployment. But no less than 41 per cent said that the most pressing issue was '*les affaires*'—the political scandals which have rocked French politics of late. '*Les affaires*' have come to symbolise for many people everything that is rotten about French society today.

From soaring unemployment to the collapse of the rural economy, from the revolt of public sector workers to the explosion of racial violence, France seems to be coming apart at the seams. There is an air of uncertainty and doubt about French society and France's place in a changing world. A more assertive Germany has created strains in the friendship between Paris and Bonn, and led many in France to question their nation's future role in Europe.

Market bible

This sense of national crisis has grown at a time when traditional political answers no longer seem relevant. While the left has ditched its heritage—'without anyone really saying so', noted the conservative newspaper *Le Figaro* recently, 'the market economy has become the bible of socialism'—the traditional right has become even weaker and more fractious than before.

The French ruling class has run out of answers about how to run society, while the left has run out of ideas about how to change it. The consequence is a crisis of legitimacy which has provided room for the emergence of the far right. Le Pen has adroitly exploited the mainstream malaise by attacking the postwar consensus as the cause of France's problems, and pointing to immigration and the multicultural society as symbolic of French decline.

Top of the agenda

The relative success of the FN reflects the decay of the old political establishment, rather than signalling the advent of popular fascism. Le Pen has certainly had an important impact on

French politics; but not by mobilising a dynamic movement among the masses. He has been instrumental in putting race on the agenda of politicians at the top of French society. The emergence of the FN has catalysed the process of making racism a respectable part of mainstream political discussion.

The crisis of French politics has led to the collapse of the liberal centre ground, and removed traditional constraints on overt expressions of racism. Under pressure from the FN, mainstream parties have adapted to its racist programme. Conservatives have tried to cohere themselves around the politics of race. And, in a bid to avoid being outflanked by the right, the ruling Socialist Party has embraced the anti-immigrant consensus.

Vichy revisited?

When the FN unveiled a new programme last October, British journalist Paul Webster observed that 'the plans recall the ideals of the pro-Nazi Vichy government in the Second World War'. The measures do indeed recall the policies of Vichy. But more shocking still is the realisation that almost every one of these measures has already been advocated or implemented by mainstream politicians. The FN's call for non-French nationals to be classified as second class citizens has been unofficially embraced by all the parties.

Gerard Dezenpte, mayor of Chavieu Chavagnon, near Lyons, acts like a Front National stalwart. In 1989, he bulldozed a local mosque with a dozen worshippers inside. Last October, he cut off the water supply to a new Muslim prayer hall. 'The Koran says that if one finds oneself in the desert one can substitute sand or stone for water', he told reporters: 'Let them do likewise.' Dezenpte boasts that his tactics have halved the local Muslim population.

'Moderate' pogroms

Yet Dezenpte is not a fascist. He is a member of the Gaullist RPR. When he was re-elected mayor, trouncing the FN with 66.7 per cent of the vote, he declared that, 'I have always appealed to the population to be moderate'. In France today, 'moderate' policies include the persecution of Muslims.

The FN programme calls for the closure of immigrant hostels. This policy was implemented back in 1980 by the Communist Party mayor of Vitry, near Paris, when he led a racist mob which attacked and wrecked an immigrant hostel in the town. The same hostel was recently stormed by 300 riot police, who arrested 168 immigrants and deported 19 of them within 24 hours.

Is France going fascist ?



The FN demands an 'immigrant quota' in schools. In April 1990, Pierre Bernard, the Gaullist mayor of the Parisian suburb Montfermeil, banned local nursery schools from accepting any more immigrants. The Communist mayor of nearby Clichy-sous-Bois defended the decision, and said he was 'faced with a similar situation'.

The FN wants to ban the building of mosques and control the teaching of Islam. Kofi Yamgname, the black Socialist minister for integration, told Muslims two months before the publication of the FN programme that they must restrict Islamic teaching, and give up traditional scarves for girls at school. Those who would not do as they were told 'should go back home'.

The FN promises mass expulsions of blacks and the retrospective removal of French nationality from many immigrants. Former Socialist prime minister Edith Cresson last year warned she would hire charter planes for mass deportations. Former president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing says that nationality should be conferred not by 'birth', but by 'blood'. Little wonder that Le Pen can claim that 'I am now the leader of the centre'.

94 per cent

The new racist agenda has been set by the political elite, rather than thrown up by the masses. But the fact that parties across the parliamentary spectrum now advocate openly anti-immigrant policies has led to a wider public acceptance of racism. Some polls show that 94 per cent believe that France is a racist country—and that 84 per cent 'understand racist reactions'. Three quarters of respondents in one poll thought there were 'too many Arabs in France', and one in two felt 'antipathy' towards them.

Bedazzled by the spectre of fascist extremism, many anti-racists have ignored the racist consensus now at the centre of French politics. SOS Racisme and other left-wing groups refused to back a recent anti-fascist demonstration in Paris for fear of upsetting the Socialist Party in the run-up to the March elections. But who needs Le Pen when a Socialist government is staging deportations and raiding immigrant hostels, while a black Socialist minister says Muslims can 'go home'? ●

Additional information from Louis Ryan and Richard Christiansen in Paris

'Clans' warfare



The Western media claims that the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh is a tribal feud caused by popular nationalism. But, as Rob Matthews reports from the Azerbaijani capital Baku, the 'clans' which are really behind the war are the ruling cliques of ex-Stalinists on either side

Khodjali was an Azerbaijani village in Nagorno-Karabakh. In early March, an Armenian attack left corpses strewn across the hillside. In reprisal, the Azerbaijanis shot down an Armenian helicopter carrying civilians. Many villages, Azerbaijani and Armenian, have been reduced to rubble. Survivors cower in cellars without water, gas or electricity. Events like these ensure a steady stream of irregular fighters joining the war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

As with so many other conflicts across the world, Western commentators offer facile explanations for the bloody feud between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Most often, they claim it is the result of an explosion of popular nationalist sentiment with roots deep in the past. The view from Baku is different.

There is no doubt that Azerbaijani nationalism has grown in popularity as a consequence of the war. But given the mounting toll of casualties, what is surprising is that people are not *more*

aggressive in their attitudes towards the Armenians. In fact, many express feelings of confusion about the cause of the conflict, and regret about the loss of life on both sides.

Among working class people, xenophobic attitudes towards Armenians are the exception: 'We're not fussed who we work with', said Tahir and Nadir who work on a rig in the Caspian Sea. 'Why should we worry about an Armenian? What's the difference? We've worked with Russians, Jews, Azerbaijanis—there used to be lots of Armenians with us too.' In a city like Baku, where people of both nationalities lived and worked side by side, and where mixed marriages were commonplace, the current conflict strikes many as a tragedy.

'Stirring it up'

Most Armenians have now fled Baku as fear and intolerance follow in the wake of pogroms. Samira, a museum guide in her early thirties, blames the authorities for promoting the conflict: 'If they wanted to settle it, they could. They're just stirring it up.' Samira and many like her in Azerbaijan believe that their government and the Armenian government are the only beneficiaries in a conflict which has claimed hundreds of lives in the past two years. Most people in Baku are now convinced that the anti-Armenian pogrom in Sumgait and Baku, in March 1988, was organised by people in government and security jobs, and led by the KGB.

They are right to point the finger at the political elites in both republics. Armenia staked its claim to Nagorno-Karabakh in 1988, and since then both governments have ensured that inter-ethnic tensions have remained high. Indeed, both governments have an interest in perpetuating the conflict because they are both suffering a crisis of legitimacy and see the war as a means of rallying popular support behind their respective regimes.

Prolonging the feud represents a survival strategy for the unpopular bureaucrats who run the two republics. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan and Armenia were just cogs in the Kremlin's machine. Now that they are independent, the two governments desperately need to establish some legitimacy. The promotion of an aggressive anti-Armenian identity is the answer for the regime in Baku. The same applies for its Armenian counterpart.

However, the Baku government has got big problems trying to divert popular animosity away from itself and against the Armenians. People are not going to forget the crimes of the past in a hurry. On 20 January, hundreds of thousands of silent mourners

commemorated the deaths of those killed by Kremlin troops during anti-government protests two years ago. At the memorial, police were edgy, aware that the finger of blame is still pointed at the Azerbaijani authorities who gave tacit support to the crackdown.

Perks of office

People are also angry that the old Stalinist clan system, with its network of graft and corruption, is still in place. The entire central committee of the former Azerbaijani Communist Party continues to hold the top government jobs and to enjoy the perks of office. The recently ousted president, Ayaz Mutalibov, had a new metalled road built from his Baku residence to the village of Mashtage, home to Mrs Mutalibov's family. Understandably, Mother-in-Law Road is not popular with motorists who have to avoid pot-holes as big as craters elsewhere in the republic.

But it is not just the crimes of the past and the continuation of the old nomenklatura system that are a barrier to the Baku regime overcoming its crisis of legitimacy. The problems of the present weigh heavily against it as well. No matter how hard it tries to create a sense of patriotic pride in the glories of the nation, a regime which cannot satisfy people's basic needs is not a going concern.

Talk of the rich heritage of the feudal Khans and Beys, and their ancient Turkic language, cuts little ice with Azerbaijanis. They have more pressing concerns—like unemployment, factory closures, and rising food prices—which make them cynical about anything the government says. 'With these lot in power we'll get five years of sucking our fingers', said oil rig worker Ashraf. 'We haven't got a market, we've got a huge bazaar.'

Bread and barter

It is ironic that in a republic with such rich resources of gas and oil—whose name is derived from the ancient Persian for Land of Fire—people have no heating and have to queue for petrol. Their factories have to barter for raw materials, and if they cannot get them they are shut down.

Bread used to cost less than one rouble. Now it costs at least two and a half roubles. Although lamb and mutton, at around 100 roubles per kilo, are cheap by comparison with Moscow prices, they still cost 10 times more than they used to. Milk is available, but you have to be first in the queue in the state shops, or else pay the old lady on the corner three times as much. A pair of shoes costs around 4000 roubles. Oil workers, among the best paid, get about 2000 roubles a month.

Most workers are as concerned

about how to eke out a living as about the war over Nagorno-Karabakh. Tamir and Nadir can't wait to finish work on the oil rig so that they can get back to tending their tomato plants. They grow tomatoes to sell, and the income more than doubles their wages. But, however much money they make on the side, it is of no use if there is no butter to be had. The prevalence of shortages in an area of considerable natural and mineral wealth makes most people furious with the government.

'Kill their children'

But, ironically, the greatest problem for the Azerbaijani state's bid to legitimise its rule is the war over Nagorno-Karabakh. The war strategy which the regime adopted to bolster its position is turning out to be a double-edged sword. The rising death toll has served its purpose in focusing people's minds on the war and distracting from the problems of day-to-day life or the persistence of the old clan system. But the bloodshed also means that the government is now coming under pressure to take more decisive action in the war and is losing credibility the longer it dithers.

At a Baku street meeting in February, speakers from Shusa, a village besieged by Armenian soldiers, called for the execution of government children unless extra military backing was provided. And in March, president Mutalibov was forced to resign during a big protest meeting outside the national soviet building.

Backward Front

The war may provide a focus for the assertion of an Azerbaijani national identity, but it also provides a focus for people to have a go at the government. 'Mutalibov hasn't put together a big force to smash Armenia because he fears it would be turned against him', said Djavid, an office worker. Instead, a fledgling Azerbaijani army was reduced in strength earlier this year, and a presidential guard created by decree.

Most people in Azerbaijan have no time for the government. But the opposition Azerbaijani Popular Front offers no alternative. The Front is the most aggressively pro-war party of all; most of the fighters in Nagorno-Karabakh are irregulars who support the Front. 'You can't trust an Armenian', declared Rufik, a Front activist. 'If you don't hold a hammer to his head, he'll crack yours open. They're a bit ill up here', he added, tapping his forehead.

With the opposition playing into the government's hands by promoting the war, the fighting grinds on. Without it, the cliques of bureaucrats who run Armenia and Azerbaijan have little credibility; but without a victory both are compromised. ●

PHOTO:
Frank Spooner/Gamma



Women in Chucha, Azerbaijan mourn another victim of an unwanted war

Who's to

Many have concluded that the Tory election victory reflects the conservatism of the British people. Eddie Veale thinks it says a lot more about the conservatism of the Labour Party

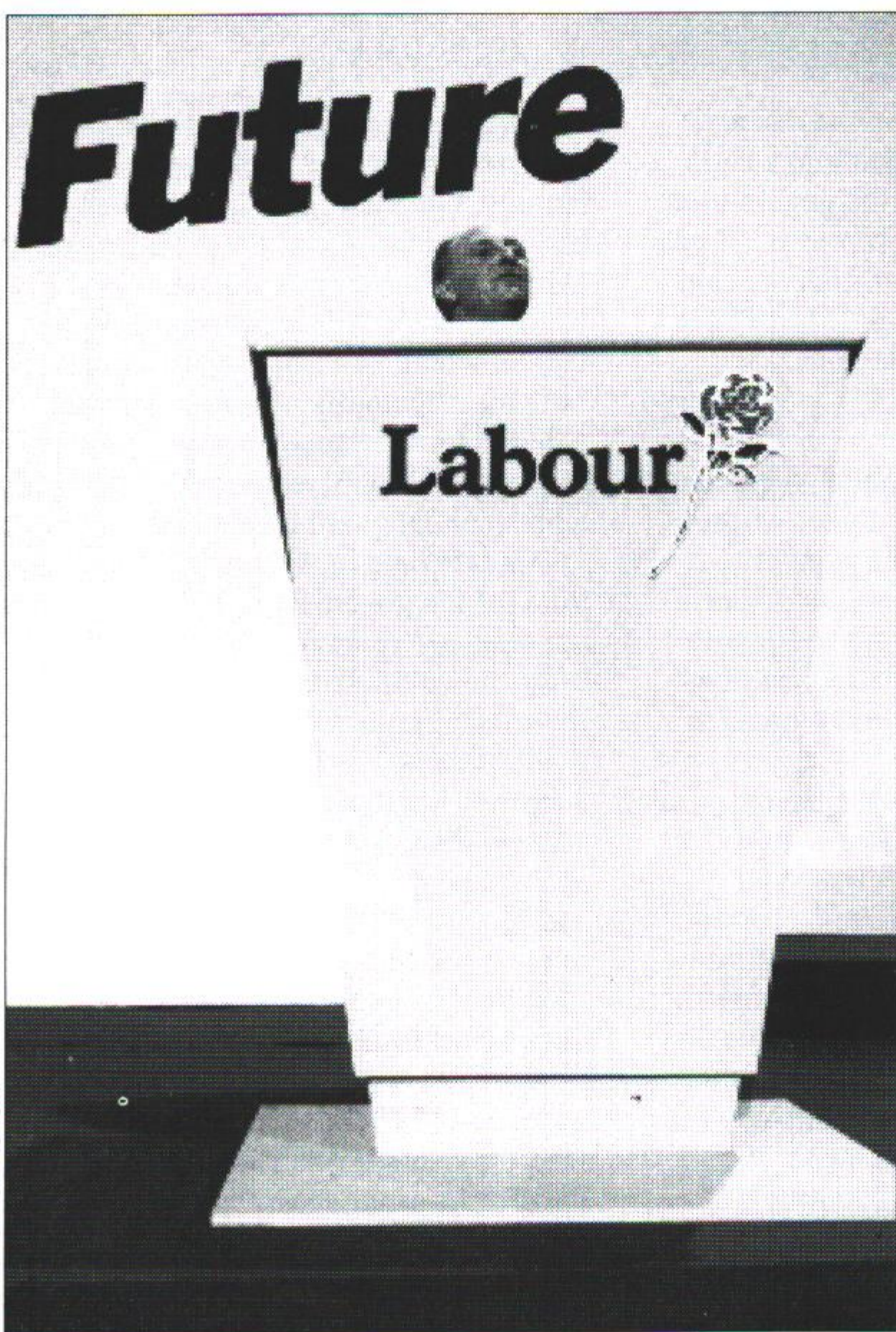


PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

'Britain is, above all, a conservative country. That is the verdict of the people....The shape of John Major's victory makes a strong case against the possibility of radical change of any kind.'

Hugo Young, *Guardian*, 11 April 1992

These conclusions, drawn by the top columnist from the pro-Labour *Guardian*, were widely echoed among other pundits and politicians, including Labour Party frontbenchers themselves. They all agreed that the 1992 election result reflected the deep-seated conservatism of the British people.

The Labour Party is always trying to find such external, 'objective' explanations for its defeats. After they were routed in the 1987 election, Labour spokesmen pointed to a north-south divide, and blamed greedy southerners who were benefiting from the Tory boom for betraying the rest of Britain. Even then the argument was tenuous; now it is unsustainable.

Hardest hit

The south-east of England has been hardest hit in the current recession, yet Labour made no serious inroads there in the April election. The notion of a solidly pro-Labour north was also undermined by the party's failure to break through in the marginal seats of the north-west, and its loss of impetus in Scotland.

Faced with these results, many Labour spokesmen now suggest that, in fact, the external barrier they face is much bigger than they thought; it's not just that southerners are greedy, it's that most of the British nation is naturally conservative-minded.

What all of these arguments have in common is the attempt to blame

the British people (and working class people in particular) for the failures of the Labour Party.

The election result was partly a consequence of conservatism. But not the allegedly 'natural' conservatism of people who live in Britain. It was a product of the conservative political agenda endorsed by every mainstream British party today.

Hugo Young's conclusion about the rejection of 'radical change' is based upon the media-hyped assumption that radical change was on offer in the election campaign. But it never was. The electorate was offered a choice of dull and distinctly unradical political programmes, almost indistinguishable from one another.

In a contest between such conservative parties, the true Conservative Party always had an in-built advantage.

Narrow ground

The blame for this state of affairs rests with the Labour Party. Labour has long put itself forward as the party of radical change. Yet it was responsible for ensuring that what little election debate there was took place within a narrow range of issues and arguments, most of them on the Tories' home ground.

Under Neil Kinnock's leadership since 1983, the Labour Party has been transformed into an openly pro-capitalist centre party. It has dropped old-fashioned Labourist policies like nationalisation or unilateral nuclear disarmament. In their place, Labour has publicly embraced the principles beloved of the British establishment, such as market economics, tight state spending controls, nuclear defence and so on.

The result of this process was that, when Labour launched its election manifesto in late March, even Paddy Ashdown was able to dismiss it as

blame ?

'a conservative manifesto, a pretty pathetic wimpish affair'. Indeed, Labour policy had shifted so far into the centre that on many social issues the Liberal Democrats looked like the most left-wing parliamentary party. Labour's conversion into just another capitalist party appeared complete when it won the endorsement of the *Financial Times* in the election.

Which banker?

All of the experts agreed that Kinnock's reforms had 'made Labour electable' again. What they meant was that Kinnock had made Labour largely inoffensive to the establishment. But in electoral terms, Labour had played into the Tories' hands.

Labour's determination to appear respectable and financially responsible meant it could only raise the most uncontroversial issues in the most conservative terms. Typically, it got trapped in an ongoing, mind-numbingly narrow debate with the Tories about the fine points of taxation policy. As a result the election campaign, noted one hardbitten observer, sounded a bit like a three-week long interview with a bank manager.

After such a campaign there could only really be one winner. Whatever Labour's pretensions, and whatever the Tories' economic blunders, the Conservatives remain the premier party of British capitalism with the support of the establishment; polls showed more than 90 per cent of business leaders backed the Tories. People asked to vote on who would make the best bank manager were always much more likely to choose Major than Kinnock. Labour's election results confirmed what you can expect when you try to be more conservative than the Conservatives.

Of course, the media and Labour leaders like Bryan Gould drew very

different conclusions. They said that the British people were too moderate to vote Labour—which is another way of arguing that the Labour Party is still too radical to win. Whoever becomes the next Labour leader, the party is set to move further still into the dead centre of conservative politics.

The rump of the old Labour left has seized on the failure of Kinnock's moderate election campaign to argue the opposite case; that Labour should return to the traditional policies on which it won past elections. This might sound like a radical alternative; but in its own way it is equally conservative, since it is an attempt to turn back the clock and recreate the conditions of 1945, fifty years on. Such arguments can only strengthen the already powerful feeling among many people that the left belongs to the past. And that is another factor which works in the Tory Party's favour.

A better life

Those who blame the conservatism of the British people for Labour's failures effectively deny the possibility of challenging capitalism. They are attempting to turn their own (entirely justified) pessimism about the Labour Party's future prospects into an argument against trying anything radical.

The fact remains, however, that working class people in Britain want a better life than they can expect from this slump system. That alone should ensure that it is possible to put the case for changing the way society is run back on to the political agenda.

But it will not be possible by acting like penny-pinching accountants, or by wishing that things were what they used to be. As the Tories enter their fourth successive term, it is surely time to accept that neither variant of Labour conservatism can be of any use today.●

How *Living Marxism* beat Mori

The embarrassed opinion pollsters of Mori, Gallop and the rest are trying to explain away their predictions of a Labour victory. If they had polled the opinion of *Living Marxism* over the months before the election, they could have avoided this unpleasantness.

For the benefit of these experts (and our own new readers), here is a reminder of what was said back in the October 1991 issue of *Living Marxism*, when the pre-election campaign was just beginning. It shows that a Marxist analysis of society provides a more reliable guide to politics than one or two hundred opinion polls.

'Whenever the general election is, one thing now seems certain; the Labour Party cannot win it.'

'Traditional Labourism is dead, and Neil Kinnock's party has found nothing with which to replace it. In the search for respectability, Kinnock has turned Labour into a bland imitation of the Tory Party. But, as always seemed likely, when it comes closer to election time more people will plump for the real thing.'

'Labour now has no distinctive policies, no radical appeal, nothing. Its problems illustrate the death of opposition politics in Britain.' *Living Marxism*, October 1991
Remember where you read it first.

Race *to victory*

There may not have been a public debate about racism during the election campaign, but Sharon Clarke suggests that it played a deceptively big part in deciding the outcome

The defeat of black Conservative candidate John Taylor in Cheltenham made the Tories look like the victims of racism. The *Sun* denounced Cheltenham for having 'shamed the country' by electing a Liberal Democrat MP on racial grounds. Everybody agreed that the white, hick voters of the Cotswolds had been the unpleasant exception in a general election where race was not a national issue.

But racism was a big issue in the British election. It may not have been shouted from the hustings. It was rarely so obvious as it was in Cheltenham. But it was there, just beneath the surface. And it proved to be the Tories' secret weapon in key areas.

Coded comments

John Major's Conservatives do not want to be openly identified as a racist party. They are still uncomfortable with public expressions of racial prejudice. That is why the leading Cheltenham Tory who spoke out against the nomination of a 'bloody nigger' as candidate was expelled from the party last year. It was also why top Tories moved to distance themselves from Scottish MP Nicholas Fairbairn on the eve of the election, after he had made a poisonously anti-immigrant speech.

The Conservative leadership prefers to see the politics of race put across more discreetly, with a nudge and a wink or a coded comment. Fairbairn was condemned for betraying the code by making an outright attack on all immigrants. Hours later, outgoing home secretary Kenneth Baker showed how

it should be done by delivering a speech about the problem of 'bogus refugees' abusing Britain's 'tolerance'. The words were different but the message was the same.

At his next morning press conference, Major himself was keen to distinguish between what he called 'Nicky Fairbairn's colourful remarks' and Baker's measured warning. 'I do not wish to see the sort of difficulties in race relations in this country that we had many years ago', said Major. 'There is a danger that could be caused if firm but fair immigration control was swept aside.'

Essex issue

The coded racism of the Tory Party played an important part in their fourth election victory. Look, for example, at what happened in some of the outer London constituencies populated by those whom the media has dubbed Essex Man.

The accepted wisdom among many pundits and pollsters was that these 'upwardly-mobile' working class people, who had voted Tory in the eighties and done relatively well out of the shortlived Thatcher/Lawson boom, would turn back to Labour in the recession. Yet, from the moment when one of the earliest election results showed the Conservatives holding on in Basildon, it was clear that many Essex men and women were still voting Tory. Why?

The race issue provides part of the explanation. Late last year, when the media was starting to predict that large parts of Essex would go Labour, Andrew Calcutt investigated the region for *Living Marxism*. He concluded that the Conservatives would win again; partly because people trusted Labour even less than the Tories on the economy, and partly because 'racism may well prove a useful issue with which Essex Tories can rally support' ('Better the devil you know', November).

'Dispossessed Afrikaners'

This view was expanded upon, on the eve of the election, in the right-wing weekly journal the *Spectator*. Reporter Andrew Gimson did a 'vox pub' story from the bars of Basildon. Gimson claimed that race was the question which excited most interest among

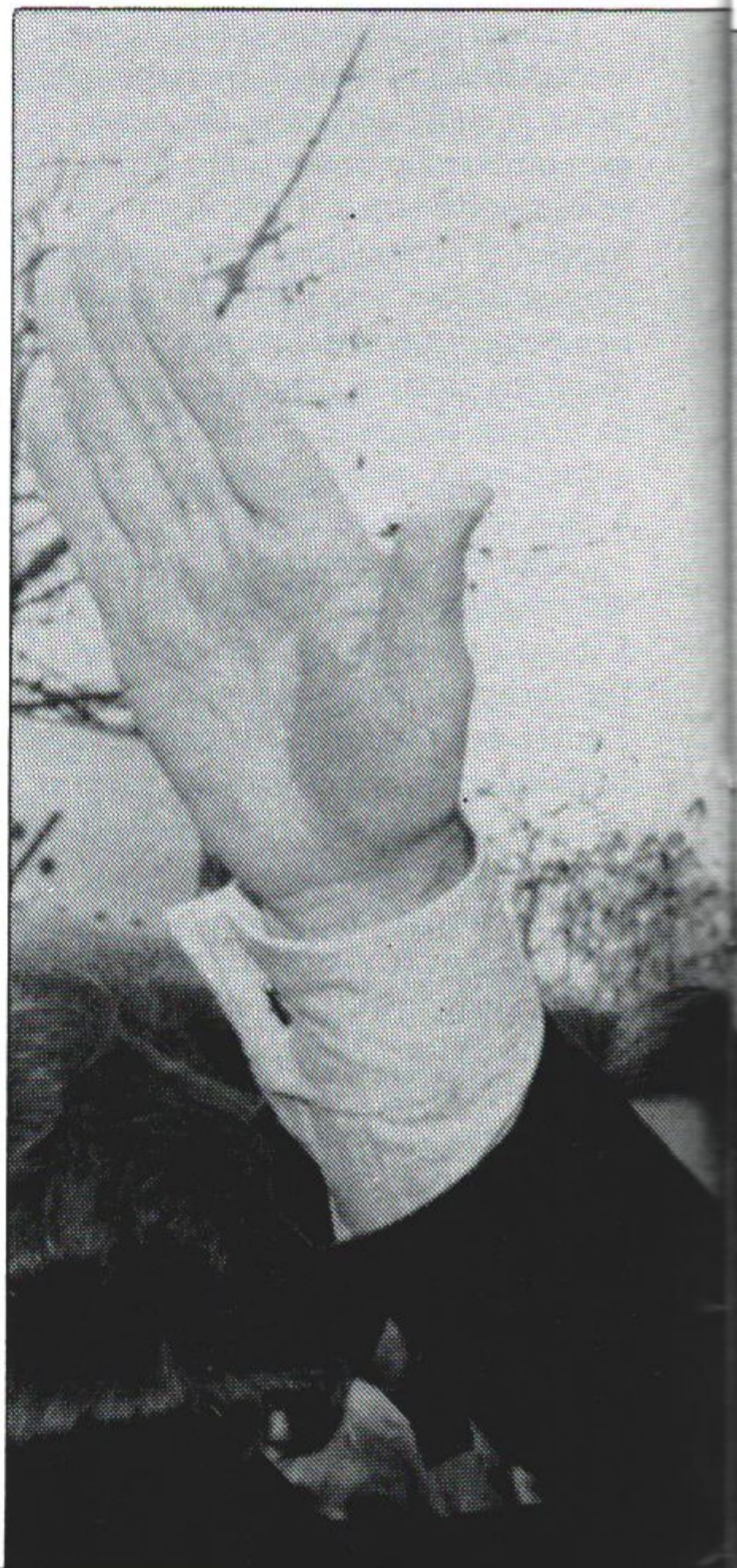
those whom he spoke to.

He summarised the views of one man who put the typical arguments most forcefully:

'He said I needed to understand that Basildon was the old East End. Everyone had moved out of London to get away from the blacks, whom they loathed. At times he sounded like a dispossessed Afrikaner or Palestinian, forced to leave his native land and full of unappeasable resentment. A Paki had tried moving into his road in Basildon and they smashed his windows every night.'
(*Spectator*, 11 April)

No doubt Andrew Gimson and the high Tory *Spectator* have their own prejudices about Essex Man. But it seems certain that the Tories' carefully coded racism, like the attack on 'bogus refugees', was instrumental in bringing out the votes they needed to win again in seats like Basildon and Billericay.

The Tories' use of racism was not confined to Essex or the south, either. During a 1991 by-election in



Langbaugh, North Yorkshire, the Tories had tried to play the race card against Labour candidate Ashok Kumar. Of course, they did not demand 'wogs out'; they did not need to. Instead, in the true Tory style of silent racism, they simply put out a leaflet bearing a big picture of Kumar's Asian face. That time, the race trick was not enough to stop a protest vote swinging the seat to Labour. But in April's general election, it worked better. The swing to Labour since the 1987 general election was cut to 0.5 per cent—far less than in some similar seats nearby—and Kumar's by-election win was reversed.

Elsewhere in Yorkshire, in the constituency of Dewsbury, the Tories played the race card in unusually high-profile fashion. A couple of days before the election, Conservative candidate John Whitfield came out publicly in support of Nicholas Fairbairn's anti-immigrant speech. That was always likely to be a potent message in Dewsbury, one of the many hidden backwaters of British society where racial tensions are high (see 'Apartheid in rural Yorkshire', *Living Marxism*, October 1989). The final swing to Labour was just 0.1 per cent, and the Tories came within a few hundred votes of winning the marginal seat.

No doubt there are many more examples of the race factor having an electoral effect. There are three seats in Ealing, West London, for example; two produced swings to Labour of five per cent and 8.1 per cent respectively, but

the third bucked this strong trend by showing a 0.7 per cent swing *against* Labour. That third seat was Ealing Southall—where the Labour candidate was Asian.

Against this background, the Tories and the *Sun* have little room to complain about being trumped by the race card in Cheltenham. The Liberal Democrats took a leaf out of the Conservative code book. Their campaign never mentioned the colour of John Taylor's skin. Instead, it emphasised that, unlike the Lib Dem candidate, Taylor the Tory was not a 'local man' with a feel for 'local issues'. In a semi-rural constituency where only two per cent of the population are black, it was not hard for people to interpret 'local' as white.

Labour's complicity

So both the Tories and, to a lesser extent, the Liberal Democrats profited from the race issue on 9 April. What about the Labour Party? It would be wrong to see Labour as the innocent victim of all this. It has been complicit in helping to create the all-party racist consensus which the others have now exploited.

In the run-up to the election, when rumours spread that the Tories would make immigration an issue, the Labour leadership took desperate steps to avoid being portrayed as soft on immigrants. First, Labour watered down its opposition to the Tories' anti-refugee Asylum Bill, promising to help speed it through the commons if the government would make some minor

adjustments to the new law. Then Labour included its own commitment to a similar measure in its election manifesto.

The Labour Party has seemed equally unwilling to challenge underlying racist prejudice at local level. I live in a marginal constituency in north-east London, and I happened to overhear a telling exchange between one of my neighbours and two Labour canvassers.

The neighbour in question is a pensioner and a bigot—a sort of cleaned-up version of Harry Enfield's old gits. When the canvassers knocked on his door, he said he couldn't vote Labour 'because of the immigrants'. Their response was to assure him that there weren't really many immigrants coming into Britain now, to promise that a Labour government wouldn't let any more in, and to suggest that the NHS was as important an issue as immigration.

In short, in their desperation to win votes at any price, these self-styled socialists accommodated to his bigotry right down the line. And then they wonder why racism is such a rich resource for the Tories to tap.

With much of the Tories' political programme in a state of exhaustion, racism is likely to be an increasingly important focus for the right in the period ahead. The need to break the hidden consensus on race which cuts across Tory, Labour and Lib Dem lines will be an urgent consideration for all of us who want to create a political alternative over the next five years. ●

The Tories lost token black candidate John Taylor in Cheltenham, but won with the race card elsewhere



The central theme of the Tory government's health service 'reforms' is the creation of an 'internal market' within the NHS. The idea is to introduce the supposed efficiency and consumer-orientation of the market by making a clear distinction between 'purchasers' of healthcare (health authorities, controlling centrally allocated budgets) and 'providers' (hospitals).

To promote the true spirit of competition and enterprise, the new legislation has encouraged GPs to become 'fundholders' controlling, on behalf of their patients, budgets allocated by the health authorities. By April 1992, more than 3000 group practices were running their own budgets, covering some 6.7m patients, 14 per cent of the population. The government has also encouraged hospitals to opt out of health authority control and become independent 'trusts'. At the outset of the scheme, in April 1991, some 57 hospitals opted out and in October a further 99 followed. However in London, where the first wave of trusts had run into serious financial difficulties, four hospitals were required to await the outcome of a special inquiry.

'Quasi-markets'

In fact, the 'internal market' is not a market at all, but simply a set of bureaucratic devices for imposing greater financial rigour and managerial control within the NHS. It is ironic that, far from presenting a model of free enterprise, the Tory health service reforms resemble nothing so much as old-fashioned attempts to reform the Soviet economy by decentralisation and the encouragement of local initiative.

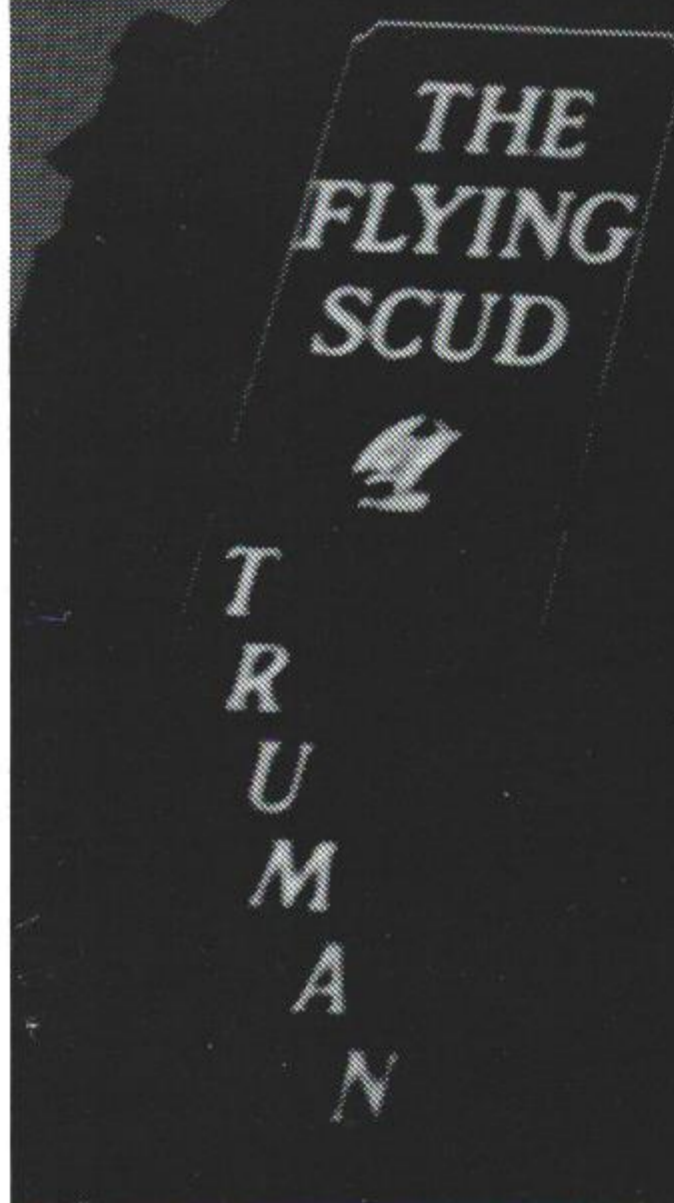
Academic commentators have noted that what now exist in the NHS are 'administratively designed markets', rather than 'real markets' (N Flynn, *Public Sector Management*, 1990); others refer cynically to 'quasi-markets' (J LeGrand, 'The state of welfare' in *The State of Welfare: The Welfare State in Britain since 1975*, 1990). In the healthcare market in Britain, prices are defined more or less arbitrarily rather than set by competition. Though patients may be restyled 'customers', in practice their GPs act as 'proxy-customers' buying operations, etc, on the patient's behalf.

The government's pre-election drive to reduce waiting lists according to the targets set in John Major's 'patient's charter' had all the hallmarks of the bureaucratic drive to raise productivity in the Soviet Union in the thirties. The Tories arbitrarily declared the goal of reducing waiting lists to two years and set up a special team headed by star Merseyside surgeon Anthony McKeever to lead a national drive to

The politics of health

While Labour may have won the war of Jennifer's ear, the Tories' election victory allows them to press ahead with their programme of NHS reforms.

Dr Michael Fitzpatrick, a GP in East London, looks at the past and future of the health service




reach the April 1992 deadline. Rather than trust the vagaries of the free market, the government threw £37m into the centrally directed campaign which inevitably fell short of the grand target.

It soon became clear that the two-year limit would be met by a number of classic Soviet-style expedients: by increasing the number of patients waiting for one year; by extending the time between the original patient referral and the outpatient appointment from which the waiting list time is counted; by removing *en masse* patients waiting for minor procedures; and by pushing forward patients who have been waiting a long time for relatively minor operations at the expense of those waiting a shorter time for more serious procedures.

In other words, the fact that the target was nearly achieved in

quantitative terms disguised what was probably a *qualitative* deterioration in patient care. The only way to achieve a real reduction in waiting lists is by employing more surgeons, more nurses, more operating theatre staff in more operating theatres in more or bigger hospitals—in short, by spending more money on real healthcare, rather than by chasing phoney propaganda targets.

The irrationality of the drive to make healthcare subordinate to market forces has been pointed out by former Tory health minister and pioneering free marketer Enoch Powell. Powell considers that the attempt to impose the market principle of 'delivering what the customer wants with the maximum efficiency and minimum effort' in the NHS (and in education) is fundamentally flawed, since 'where efficiency cannot be measured in money terms, the logic falters':



Tory Health Policy:
More Plastic Surgeons.

Labour

But would Labour policy have made much difference?

'Hence when the government tried to "privatise" outside the area where customers "pay as they go", they found themselves trying to measure education and healthcare, and desperately seeking a non-monetary unit of measurement which would enable them to allocate finance rationally while opting out of responsibility for management.'

(E Powell, 'Lost in a maze of hopeless change', *BMA News Review*, February 1992)

As Powell acknowledges, as long as healthcare is free at the point of use and statutorily financed out of taxation, then a monetary measure is ruled out—and it is impossible to devise an objective measurement of healthcare standards.

Despite the irrationality of the government's NHS reforms, they have won minority support among doctors, managers and others working in the

health service. They offer GPs financial independence and the prospect of holding the whip hand over hospital consultants for the first time. They offer hospitals autonomy from health authority control. Over the past two years, there has been a significant shift within the medical profession away from outright rejection towards a more conciliatory approach to the Tory reforms. The notion that the market offers doctors more independence from bureaucratic domination and financial strictures has attracted growing numbers of GPs towards fundholding, and hospitals towards opting out.

But, just as the free market in health is a myth, so is the notion that the reforms increase the autonomy of individual doctors and hospitals. Given the profound overall shortage of resources for the health service and the absence of any coherent method of

planning or allocating resources, the inevitable effect of decentralisation is autarky—every GP and every hospital out for themselves, competing for inadequate resources, squeezing down the pay of other health service workers, and rationing services to patients.

The rational kernel of the government's reforms is the drive to decentralise financial regulation to a level at which austerity measures can be most effectively imposed on the service. There are two aspects to this process.

One is to create a formal separation between managers and senior doctors, allowing the bureaucrats to establish the financial framework within which the professionals work and so make the health service 'more businesslike'. The second is to decentralise budgetary responsibility and turn GPs into managers and accountants, thus

encouraging those with direct control over spending decisions to exert discipline on service users: economising on spending on patient care. The fragmentation of the hospital service has the additional benefit of allowing managers to break the residual influence of the NHS unions. Already trust hospitals have withdrawn union recognition, introduced no-strike deals and pulled out of national pay agreements.

Would things have been any different if Labour, 'the party of the NHS', had got into government? Labour's response to the Tory reforms has been to romanticise the NHS as an island of caring socialism in a heartless capitalist world, and to denounce trends towards privatisation and the emergence of a 'two-tier' health service. In fact, 'the market',

The private sector has expanded with the sort of generous government subsidy that was an essential ingredient of Thatcher-style private enterprise: some 7m people, 11 per cent of the population now have private health insurance. But the two-tier service goes much deeper than the public/private divide. Middle class patients have always succeeded in getting a higher standard of care in the NHS, by putting more pressure on their doctors, by securing beds in quiet side rooms rather than in open wards, and through many other discreet and informal methods.

Worse to come

The Tories aim to increase the subordination of the NHS to market forces, which will inevitably increase social inequalities in standards of healthcare. They have already privatised hospital laundry, cleaning and other ancillary services, and they aim to push ahead with the drive to reduce the burden of public spending on private profitability. Yet the same commitment was accepted by Bevan and Healey—and by Labour's current health spokesman Robin Cook, who never missed an opportunity in the election campaign to emphasise that Labour's spending plans for the NHS depended on the revival of the British economy out of slump.

Despite Labour's belated election campaign declarations that it would reverse hospital opt-outs and GP budgets, in the course of 1991 there were clear signs that Labour's policy towards health was drifting in the same direction as its policy on everything else—towards that of the Tories. Thus the policy document on health endorsed at the 1991 party conference made no specific commitment to stop GPs holding their own budgets.

Rhetorical resistance

An editorial in the *New Statesman* in October argued that 'the purchaser-provider split might be Labour's best hope of breaking the provider dominance that so fetters service development and delivery today. The division is one that—properly exploited—could mean a questioning of health providers' priorities and practices by purchasers, and a real reorientation of services around the needs of individuals and communities'. It is strange to find a traditionally Labourist journal not only professing such a faith in the market, but also identifying as staunchly conservative a body of professionals as GPs as the agents of a socially progressive policy.

This argument reflects the views of an influential body of pro-Labour social policy academics. In January, for example, Howard Glennerster of the London School of Economics

published a report on GP fundholding. He declared that, though he had started out as a sceptic, he had been 'converted to seeing fundholding as one of the most innovative parts of the NHS reforms' (*British Medical Journal*, 1 February 1992).

In its sympathetic survey of Labour's health policy in February, the *British Medical Journal* noted the 'strong contrast between the political rhetoric and the specific proposals':

'The rhetoric is all about the elimination of "commercialisation" in the NHS, whereas the proposals themselves seem designed to salvage as much as possible from the reforms introduced by the Conservatives.' (29 February)

The *BMJ* was particularly struck by the fact that 'the crucial purchaser-provider split is to remain'.

It is clear that the Labour leadership made a cynical calculation of the electoral advantage to be gained by polarising the debate around the Tories' NHS reforms. It is equally clear that the voters were not impressed.

The *BMJ*'s major criticism of Labour's programme was that 'above all, it makes no specific financial commitment about the funding of the NHS'. The British Medical Association calculates that £6 billion is required *this year* to bring spending on health in Britain up to the *average* of OECD countries (Britain currently stands in twenty-second position of the 23 countries in the league table on health spending). However, on 25 March, in the second week of the election campaign, Labour spokesman Robin Cook finally produced a specific financial commitment: £1.1 billion over 22 months.

Behind all the debates about the internal market stands the problem of the chronic underfunding of the health service. Standards of maintenance in hospitals are shameful, the ambulance service, in London at least, is in a state of disintegration, staff at every level are underpaid, overworked and demoralised.

Corrupt and cynical

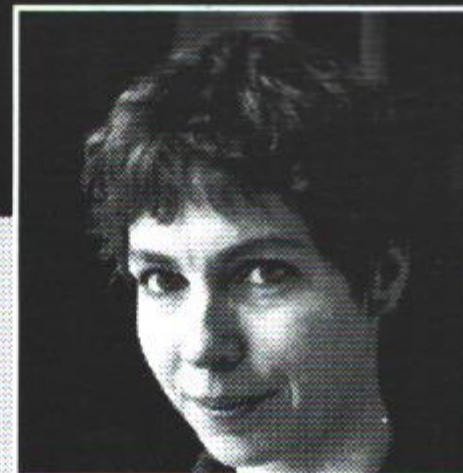
Before the election the Tories went so far in the corruption of the civil service as to set up a 'good news desk' in the health department, charged with churning out propaganda on the benefits of the reforms. The Labour Party equally cynically exploited the victims of the underspending it is pledged to continue in perpetuity, in its tear-jerking television broadcasts. Whichever party won the election, we were always going to have a fight on our hands to win decent standards of healthcare and decent pay and conditions for those who provide it. ●

The BMA calculates that £6 billion is required *this year* to bring Britain's health spending up to the OECD average

in the sense of the capitalist economy, has always dominated the NHS.

Ever since the foundation of the health service, the state of the wider economy has acted as an external constraint on spending. The postwar Labour government introduced cuts in the hospital budget in 1949, even before the NHS was formally inaugurated. Again, in 1976, Labour chancellor Denis Healey introduced drastic cuts in capital expenditure in the health service at a time of recession. Market forces have also operated within the health service: the postwar Labour government first introduced charges on prescriptions, dentures and glasses in an attempt to curb demand as well as to raise revenue.

There has always been a two-tier health service. Aneurin Bevan, the Labour minister who founded the NHS, made significant concessions to the medical profession and the middle classes. He agreed to keep private beds in NHS hospitals and allowed teaching hospitals to maintain a degree of autonomy within the system.



Origins of a speciesist

In 1990, more than three million animals were used in scientific procedures. They included 8307 beagles, 56 greyhounds, 3456 assorted cats, 1304 marmosets and hundreds of thousands of rats and mice. Many of the experiments were of the kind that make your toes curl when you read about them, and animal rights groups complain that 60 per cent of procedures are done without anaesthetic or pain relief.

Organisations like Animal Aid, the National Anti-Vivisection Society (NAVS) and the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV) think this is a disgrace. They campaign for a complete ban on all animal experiments, and have succeeded in mobilising a lot of young people behind them. The cause isn't new—NAVS and the BUAV have been campaigning for over a century—but while in their early days they were seen to be a bunch of cranky do-gooders, they now seem to be an essential 'cool cause'. All the examining boards offer an 'animal free' alternative A-level syllabus and World Day for Laboratory Animals, on April 24, was expected to be marked by one of the largest rallies for ages.

I think it's all quite perverse. Don't get me wrong. I'm an animal lover of sorts myself. I feed the birds in winter, lavish care on my pet gerbil and avoid treading on spiders. But the stupidity of objecting to research which could benefit humanity leaves me speechless.

Vivisection is not about nasty men in white coats torturing beagles for fun. In fact 91 per cent of animal experiments are conducted for medical reasons. They have helped in the investigation of dental decay; the development of antibodies to septic shock and of treatments for meningitis, infant pneumonia and Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy; and the testing of drugs for schizophrenia. In my opinion these are quite legitimate uses for mice and rats, and even marmosets or beagles.

The animal rights lobby claim that animal experiments are unethical and immoral. Peter Singer's seminal book *Animal Liberation* (which, when first published in 1975, kick-started the modern animal rights movement), claims that these experiments represent the 'tyranny of human over non-human animals'.

According to Singer, the differences between human and non-human animals are no more profound than the differences between different groups of humans, and so he believes that those of us who oppose discrimination against humans, and strive for social equality, must extend our concern to animals. In his eyes 'speciesism' is akin to racism or sexism. 'Racists', he argues, 'violate the principle of equality by giving greater weight to the interests of their own race....Sexists violate the principle of equality by favouring the interests of their own sex. Similarly, speciesists allow the interests of their own species to override the greater interests of members of other species. The pattern is identical in each case'.

'When rodents build something like the Parthenon, write a poem, or make a fire, I shall be happy to give them rights reserved for members of our own species'

Well no, Peter, it isn't. Racists and sexists discriminate against groups of humans who are quite capable of exercising the rights which they are denied. By contrast, self-confessed speciesists accept that mice, beagles (and even my gerbil) do not have the potential for equality with humans.

The gap that separates the human mind from that of any animal, even the chimpanzee, is a yawning chasm. And I wholeheartedly agree with Jamie Love of the Institute of Animal Physiology and Genetics Research that 'when rodents build something like the Parthenon, write a poem, or make a fire, I shall be happy to give them rights reserved for members of our own species'. Right now, however, they can't, so I won't. I'm not even convinced that my gerbil has a concept of freedom—I certainly don't believe it sits in its cage aching for the great outdoors.

It's ironic that the animals which inspire such sentiment are the creations of humanity. The beagle in the box or the little lamb frolicking in the field would not exist if it hadn't been for our manipulation of animal husbandry. It's not just the case that some animals are bred specifically for research—vast swathes of what we see as 'wildlife' or dub 'the animal kingdom' simply would not exist if

humans had not bred them and sustained them. The animal life that we recognise as wild is a product of a world shaped more by humanity than by the elements.

Of course humans are animals biologically speaking—but that's where the commonality ends. As human society has evolved and human language has developed, so the organisation of thoughts in the human mind has changed. We have evolved the ability to reason, to plan, to consider abstract ideas. We are unique in that we are able to develop our society, and ourselves.

Paradoxically even the capacity to extend interest and care to species beyond our own is unique to *homo sapiens*. It's hard to imagine beagles campaigning for the rights of greyhounds, never mind the rights of hamsters.

To claim that laboratory animals have equal rights to ourselves is to degrade humanity in general. To claim, as many animal rights activists do, that vivisection is equivalent to Nazi experiments on Jews is to degrade Jewish people in particular.

The arguments of the animal rights lobby raise many interesting philosophical and ethical questions: what do we mean by humanity and consciousness? why do we value human life? what checks should there be on medical research? But when you step out of the moral maze you have to decide on one issue above all. Should humans tolerate pain and suffering to protect animals, or should animals be used to find solutions to human suffering? For me, there's no contest. ●

The making of Great Depression

The current capitalist slump in Britain is not as bad as that of the 1930s; in many ways it is far worse.

Phil Murphy explains

Is the current British recession the longest, deepest or steepest since the Second World War? That was the discussion raised during the election campaign. But it missed the main point. The fact is that such comparisons are inadequate, because British capitalism is in a worse situation today than it has ever been in its history.

Domestic and international factors have combined to put Britain in a much weaker position to manage its affairs during this slump than it was during the

previous two great depressions, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and in the 1930s.

What sets today's economic downturn apart from most others is not just the length or the severity of the decline. It is the lack of effective ways to manage the current crisis and escape from the economic slowdown which has transformed this recession into a full-blown economic slump.

For months, *Living Marxism* has insisted that British capitalism is experiencing a slump. The term 'slump' does not simply mean a bigger-than-normal dip in the economic cycle. It signifies a protracted period of sluggish activity stretching into the future. Many would say that it is precipitate, unduly downcast and politically motivated scaremongering to talk about the 1990s as the third great slump or depression.

After all, past slumps have usually been identified only retrospectively, after they have been going on for a few years. So how can we be sure that the present and future are so bleak for capitalism in Britain?

Tory chancellor Norman Lamont was technically right to say that recessions must eventually come to an end, in the sense that national output will not keep falling for ever. But, as Lamont would never have said, the end of a recession is not the same thing as

the start of a recovery. Production levels will stop falling at some point but that doesn't lead to an automatic upturn; things will just trundle along the bottom unless there is a positive stimulus to economic activity.

In respect of this problem, two matters are clear enough. First, there is no possibility of the global economy staging the type of recovery which pulled Britain out of the recessions of the mid-seventies and the early eighties. And second, British capitalism itself has far fewer options than it had in the past. Let's look at these issues in turn.

Global locomotives

In the late 1970s and again in the 1980s, Japan and West Germany—the two most dynamic economies—acceded to American pressure to act as global locomotives, setting the world recovery in motion by buying foreign goods and extending international credit. The relative prosperity of these two nations enabled them to implement the appropriate monetary and trade policies. Today, Japan and Germany have more economic problems of their own; they are much less willing or able to make the same concessions to stimulate or finance recovery in the rest of the world. And no other economy is in a position to act as the world's locomotive. This more

of another



Chained Canary: the Canary Wharf tower in London's Docklands was meant to be a symbol of the 80s enterprise culture; now it's a 90s white elephant, with the construction company on the verge of bankruptcy and the building standing half empty



than anything else points to a future of extended depression.

The first major postwar slowdown in the world economy began in 1973. Ever since, international economic affairs have been dominated by cooperation among the major powers to keep capitalism going, to manage the crisis, to postpone the slump. The global measures which have kept the depression at bay for the past 20 years are now all but exhausted. The international route through which Britain has escaped from other modern recessions has effectively been closed.

Bleak prospects

If things look bad for British capitalism abroad, prospects for recovery are bleaker still on the home front. Debate about the British economy tends to centre on arguments about how many percentage points this or that economic indicator has moved over the last couple of years. But such a narrow focus fails to recognise the historic deterioration in the very foundations of British capitalism. What are the key structural changes?

The centre of profit-making in any major capitalist country remains the

manufacturing sector, the production of material commodities. Today Britain does not have much of a manufacturing sector left. At the time of the thirties' depression manufacturing still represented well over a quarter of national output. Today it accounts for about one fifth.

More significantly for the future, British companies are much less competitive internationally. Britain's share of world manufactured exports is only about one third of the level it was in the thirties. Britain will not be able to produce and export its way out of the nineties' depression.

The one positive factor here is Japanese manufacturing investment in Britain, concentrated in car plants producing for the European market. This is something of a boon for British capitalism, but cannot compensate for the breadth and depth of national industrial decline. Britain has gone from being the workshop of the world at the time of the first great depression a century ago, to being a shed for assembling Japanese car kits. Being a base for foreign assembly plant operations provides a most uncertain future, as the experience of many

a third world country testifies.

Britain's service sector has expanded, but it is not an adequate substitute for the decline of manufacturing. Much of the service sector, including all of the financial operations in which the City of London specialises, does not create genuine new wealth in its own right. Instead it is parasitic on the creation of real profits elsewhere in the world.

Dependency culture

The City makes its money in the form of dividends and commissions charged for investing, insuring and selling other people's assets. When the world economy appears to be going well, Britain's financiers and consultants can prosper. But in time of slump, when the global production of profits shrinks, Britain's dependent character is exposed.

If other capitalists are not making profits, there is less for British companies to service. Hence the difficulties reported by many British insurance companies, securities firms and banks. The sell-off of Midland Bank, until the fifties the world's biggest bank, is a significant milestone

British economyths

Politicians and experts have offered various excuses for Britain's economic woes. Jon Fryer takes apart four of the best

Britain's economic analysts did not predict the current slump. They did not know it had started, they predicted recovery just as things got worse and they have no idea when the slump will end. The reason is straightforward. A look at their most popular explanations for the recession shows that politicians and economists have little idea why it happened in the first place.

'World recession made British recession inevitable'

Leading Tories have tried to pass off the British slump as a foreign import. The lean and fit UK economic machine was supposedly dragged down by a worldwide slowdown. But the world economy grew by 0.9 per cent last year, while British output shrank by 2.6 per cent. In Britain the slump began earlier, has lasted longer and struck deeper than elsewhere.

During past recessions, British governments tried to blame oil sheiks or the banking gnomes of Zurich. This time round, there are no easy foreign scapegoats to hand. In March, Tory chancellor Norman Lamont's budget speech associated the British slump with the German economic slowdown. When the German embassy informed Bonn that Lamont was claiming Britain's troubles were somehow Germany's fault, frontbench Tories quickly had to change their tune. British governments might have been able to insult Arab oil sheiks in the seventies; they cannot get away with scapegoating the economic giant of Europe in the nineties.

And what if the Tory argument that Britain has been held back by developments in the world economy was true? It would make a nonsense of the other Tory argument about a British recovery being just around the corner. Japan and Germany, the world's two most dynamic capitalist powers, are only now moving into recession. A depressed international economy would, by the logic of the Tories' own argument, rule out a British revival in the foreseeable future.

in the further decline of UK Plc. So is the crisis in the Lloyds insurance market, the international jewel in the City's crown. Far from services offering a way out of the slump, Britain's share of world trade in this sector has been falling even faster than in manufacturing.

Britain also used to have international power and an empire which it could rely on in times of need at home. In the first Great Depression from 1873-1896, British capitalism used the gains generated from its vast overseas investments to keep its head above water. In the slump of the thirties, the Empire came into its own as a protected market for British trade and a continuing source of cheap foodstuffs and raw materials.

End of empire

Today, Britain has no empire to fall back on. Its remaining overseas assets cannot make up for the collapse at home. For example, Britain entered the 1930s with a long record of almost unbroken surpluses in its current account balance with other countries. This meant that its trade deficit was balanced out by 'invisible earnings'—

mainly profits on overseas investments and international earnings on the financial markets. By contrast, in today's depression Britain's basic trade deficit is so great that earnings from overseas investments are not enough to compensate.

In fact, the very existence of a basic trade deficit at this stage of a recession is unheard of. The slowdown in economic activity during past recessions always cut imports and so produced a trade surplus. Now British industry is so weak that it cannot even meet the needs of a home market shrunk by recession. So imports continue to outpace exports.

Also in the thirties, public spending by the state provided a big bonus to help stimulate the economy. Government spending was pretty insignificant before the thirties, equivalent to about one tenth of the whole economy. The doubling of public expenditure during that depression was a substantial injection of investment for the other nine-tenths of the economy. That is another option no longer open to the British establishment.

Today, Britain goes into the slump with an economy which is already

dependent on state activity. During the election campaign the mainstream parties promised changes in government spending equivalent to one or two per cent of national output. These are big figures for the government borrowing requirement, but they would have minimal impact so far as kick-starting the economy is concerned. British capitalism has become so reliant on state spending that it is almost immune to the wonder-drug of an earlier age.

No way out

Even if the new government wanted to start a big programme of public investment, it could not. The treasury is already overstretched just meeting the massive day-to-day costs of keeping the system limping along. As the *Guardian* newspaper revealed during the election campaign, the British government's current account spending now exceeds its income from taxes and revenues (23 March). Far from using state spending to stimulate recovery, the government is likely to have to squeeze the economy more tightly—and push Britain further still into the depths of depression. ●

'Economic slowdown was a result of Tory policy'

Labour and the Liberal Democrats have tried to depict the British slump as a direct result of Tory policies, which they claim could have been avoided under a different government. But the truth is that Tory policy has had only a marginal impact on the return of recessionary trends. The weakness of British capitalism would have made itself felt whatever any government had tried to do.

Take the matter of high interest rates, often pointed to by the Tories' opponents as a policy which helped cause recession. In the first place, a Labour or Liberal-run government would have kept interest rates just as high in a bid to avoid a sterling crisis and compensate for the weakness of the pound within the European Exchange Rate Mechanism—a system which all parties support.

In the second and far more important place, it is a myth to believe that low interest rates—even if possible—would have warded off the British downturn. Interest rates have been falling in the USA since 1989. But cutting them to the bone has had a negligible impact on the deep American recession.

What subdues economic activity under capitalism is not a high rate of interest, but a low rate of profit. If the returns are high enough, capitalists will always be willing to borrow and invest. But when their profits fall, they cut back. According to the Bank of England, profit rates in Britain were down from an estimated 10.5 per cent in 1988 to 6 per cent in 1991. Low

profitability, leading to stagnant investment and industrial slowdown; these are the real causes of capitalist slump, not the ups and downs of interest rates or the shifts of government policy.

'The British economy grew too fast in the 1980s'

Some economists argue that the British economy was really too successful for its own good in the eighties; it 'overheated' then, and has to 'cool off' now. In fact, if you refuse to be blinded by the brief credit-financed upturn towards the end of the decade, and look at the period as a whole, you will find that the eighties were the poorest decade for British economic growth since the war.

The economy grew by a paltry average of 1.5 per cent a year from the spring of 1979 to the end of 1991. Even this dramatically overestimates the true picture. Government figures for output or gross national product include as 'growth' investment which merely replaces worn out machinery, plant and equipment. With more realistic estimates, the credit-based boom of 1987-88 was just a flash in the pan.

Since the 1960s, there has been a worldwide slowdown in growth rates punctuated by brief and increasingly flimsy upturns. Economists may now try to rationalise this by talk of 'excessive growth' and 'overheating' in the eighties. But the idea of 'excessive growth' in the economy is irrational at a time when the basic needs of society have clearly not been

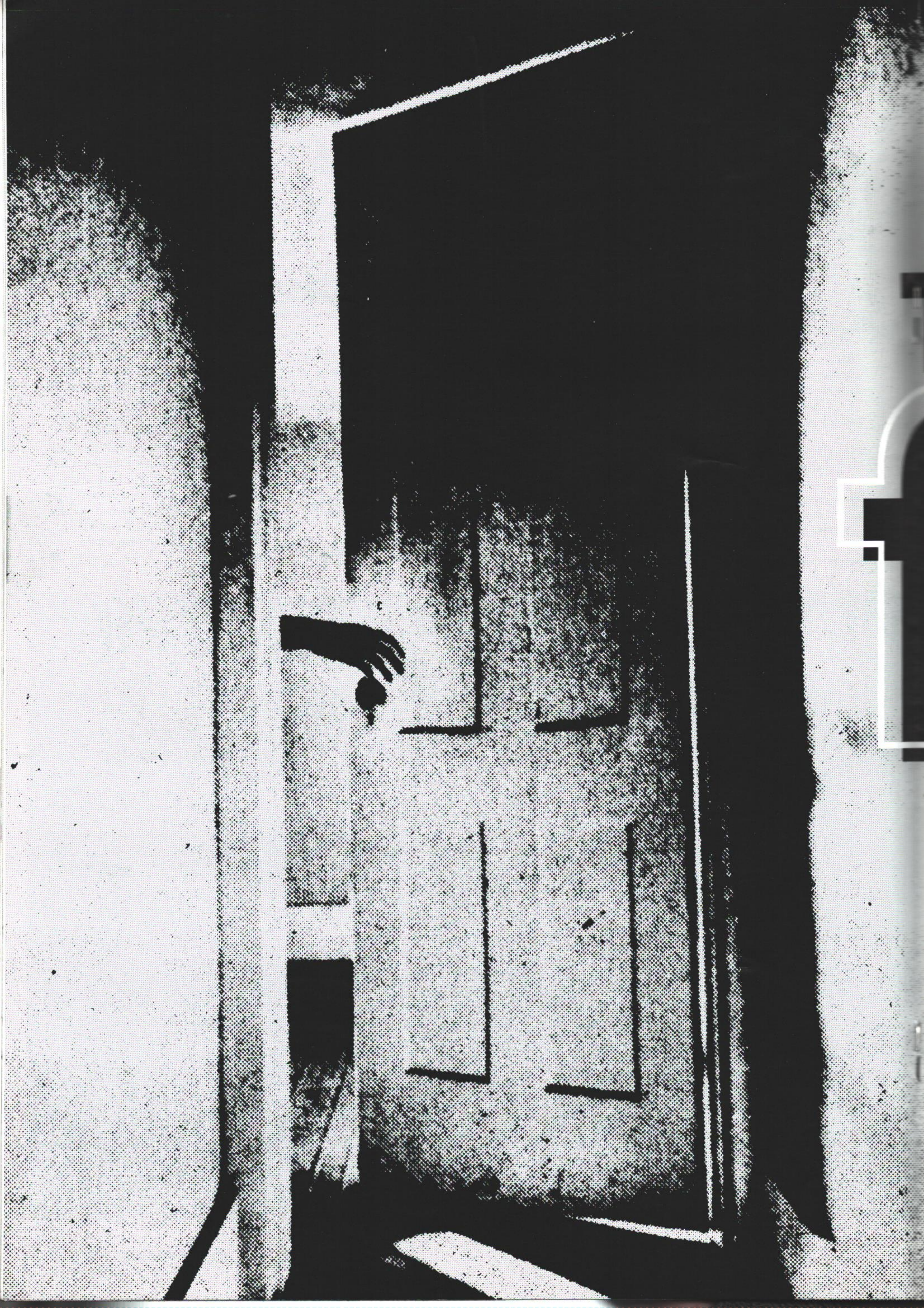
met. The real barrier to economic growth today is the requirement that production can expand only if it will increase capitalist profits.

'We borrowed too much in the 1980s'

Many economists now point to an eighties over-expansion of credit as the cause of the current slump. Financial deregulation supposedly stimulated an orgy of private borrowing, piling up debts which have dragged the economy down. In fact, far from causing the current slump, the credit explosion of the eighties was the one thing which postponed it for so long.

The City of London's leading position in the world credit and money markets enabled Britain to stave off recession through the 1980s. Rich pickings from servicing foreign capital and currency flows helped to offset the chronic trade deficit of British manufacturing industry. Now that City earnings are falling, and world capital flows contracting, London looks set to lose its eighties' international lifeline.

Similarly, it was only record levels of borrowing in Britain which enabled the decrepit domestic economy to keep going and even expand in the late eighties. Without the boom in corporate and consumer credit, the recessionary trends would have made themselves felt far earlier. The current shake-out of company and personal indebtedness signifies not the arrival of conditions for a new boom but the end of the old stop-gap measures for avoiding stagnation. ●



As the number of redundancies reaches new heights, the number of strikes sinks to a record low. Why is nobody fighting back against the consequences of this recession?

Frank Richards examines how the legacy of past let-downs helps make people reluctant to resist today, and suggests a political solution

The wages of fear

The crash of a helicopter, and the death of 11 of the oil rig workers who were on board, did not stay in the news very long back in March. It was just another North Sea tragedy. It is easy to forget that another three men died when their Bell 212 crashed last August. According to those who know the North Sea oilfields, fear is a permanent way of life for those who work in what are manifestly unsafe conditions.

The dangers faced by those who work in the North Sea are exceptional. But the experience of fear is now the norm for most people at work in Britain.

Unconscious fears

Fear is often an intangible quality. It is rarely so clearly focused as in the case of the oil rig worker who still recalls how the Piper Alpha disaster blew a rig apart in 1988. For most

people, fear is a far less specific sentiment. Yet it is always lurking in the background, and influences attitudes more than we might suspect.

It is the preoccupation with material survival that shapes the prevailing psychology of fear. Meeting the mortgage payment and having a bit left over to buy clothes for the kids are constant sources of anxiety. Above all, the dread of losing your job creates a climate of insecurity. As a result people are prepared to tolerate working conditions that they would have rejected out of hand not so long ago. That is why the experience of work has changed so drastically for so many people in recent years. They are working harder, for longer hours and putting up with whatever their employer throws at them.

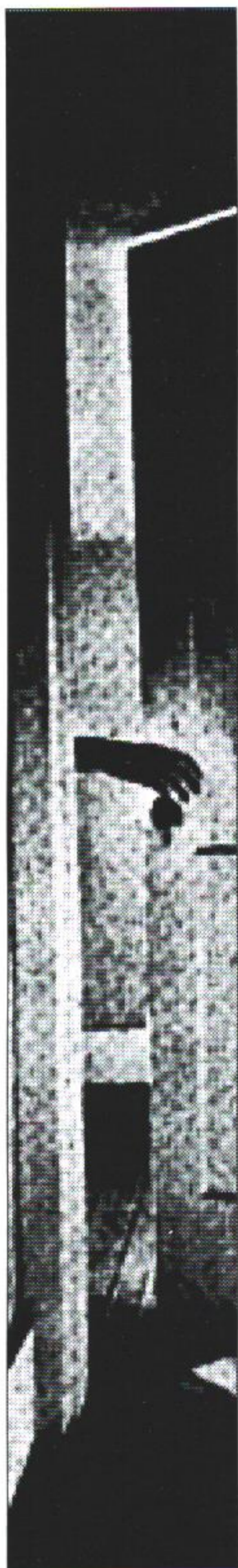
In the offices of the south-east, it is now common to work through your lunch break and stay behind after hours

and finish off some task, so as to demonstrate loyalty to the firm. Manual workers also suffer new conditions. The smoke and tea breaks are gone and in many cases overtime has become something you do 'voluntarily' and for free.

Empty shells

There are no trade union militants. In fact unions, in the traditional sense of working class organisations, no longer exist. That is why the officials who preside over the empty shells of the old unions spend so much energy agonising about being 'relevant' today. It appears that, in a desperate attempt to show that they still have some purpose in life, unions have opted for the role of circulating junk mail leaflets offering financial services to their members.

It happened in a school in South London, and it is a scene that has been repeated in many other places. ►



The cleaners and other ancillary staff were called into a meeting with management. They were informed that they had just been made redundant. But, if they reapplied in a week, and accepted a one pound an hour cut in their wages they would be re-employed. Management warned that if the workers breathed a word of this to their union or the media, then the deal was off altogether. And that was it. Management's ultimatum was effective. People who are scared and without much hope are unlikely to fight back.

Reducing the wages of already underpaid school cleaners is no more or no less difficult than throwing thousands of BT workers on to the dole. When it was announced recently that BT was to make 20 000 more redundant, nobody pretended that they were going to contest the decision. Unions do not bother to organise a response. It all has a kind of relentless inevitability.

And what has happened to the good old-fashioned British strike. The number of working days lost through industrial action during the year to January was the lowest since records began to be kept a century ago. But the number of leaflets offering special deals distributed by the unions is probably at an all-time high.

Second time around

The sense of insecurity is strengthened by the terms on which the new generation entering the workforce is forced to work. What new jobs there are now are either part time or temporary. Many have been forced to become self-employed and go to work for a sub-contractor. Others work on short contracts. Working no longer has that permanent feel about it. But it is those who have been in work for some time—and who have something to lose—who feel most vulnerable.

Many of these people experienced the recession of the early eighties. Either directly or indirectly, they have been acquainted with unemployment in the past. The desperation to avoid such a fate again is a powerful motive influencing everyday life. Many are keeping their heads down and silently praying that they will be spared from enduring a second bout of the jobless experience.

A private affair

Changing patterns of work and the new ruthlessness of employers are important influences on workplace attitudes. But they cannot entirely account for what appears as the political paralysis of working people today.

There is something peculiarly insidious about the experience of this recession. It is a very individual and privatised affair. People are bitter, yet their bitterness is seldom aired

in public. The experience of having your life messed up by the slump is becoming increasingly common. Yet there is no collective representation of these experiences in public life. The reaction to the recession is muted and appears to have no reality in the outside world. A grumble over a pint occasionally punctuates the sense of unease. But that is about all.

The fear is experienced privately for the simple reason that there are no functioning collective organisations or institutions through which people can come together for support and to seek solutions. As individuals, people feel far more anxious than they do as part of a group. Isolation heightens uncertainties and weakens the will. And, with the collapse of the old working class movement, isolation is all that seems to be available today.

On your own

In this situation people have no positive objectives. On the contrary, most just want to be left alone. If you work for BT, your main reaction to the announcement of mass redundancies is likely to be to hope that somebody else will lose their job rather than you.

People think like this because they have been let down in the past. The unions and other working class organisations have been exposed as out of step with contemporary times. More importantly, the old political policies associated with Labour have become an anachronism—as the New Model Labour Party's own general election campaign starkly revealed. People who would once have had a strong working class identity are now left politically naked.

Political paralysis goes hand in hand with the process of turning in on yourself, acting as an isolated individual. When people feel that they are on their own, problems often seem insurmountable. And every time another series of redundancies is announced, the sense of being on your own is reinforced.

Individual solutions

Without a collective movement or political identity that can make sense, people sense only the weakness of their own individual circumstances. Throughout the eighties some tried to make a virtue out of necessity. Having acknowledged the failure of collective solutions as represented by the old labour movement, people opted for individualistic ones. This was the trajectory of the so-called Essex man.

For a while it seemed that this individual option could work. Thatcher's generation would be amply rewarded for its hard work and entrepreneurship. The flourishing of the individualistic spirit probably reached its zenith in the aftermath of the Tory

election victory of 1987. But suddenly it all went wrong. The real fear is that, having seen the collapse of the old collective solutions, many now suspect that individual ones do not work either.

Of course even if individual solutions cannot be seen to work, they will still be tried. When all other options seem to be closed, the instinct of survival takes over and individual self-preservation becomes the dominant impulse. In such circumstances, calculated action, such as moving town in search of a new job, coexists with the sense of being out of control, of being unable to do anything much to change your situation.

Dated yuppies

In this position, human beings are particularly vulnerable. The kind of fear that haunts people today is not simply a reaction against collective solutions gone bad. It is the response of those who, having seen collective alternatives fail, have tried to survive on their own, but now find that they are isolated in an increasingly hostile environment.

Working class people do not have a monopoly over fear. The elite in capitalist society suffer from their own anxieties, and call it a confidence problem. When the experts produce statistics to show that rising numbers of businessmen lack confidence in the British economy, it is their way of saying that people are scared. The strident, swaggering yuppie of Thatcherite mythology looks distinctly dated already. To see the swift demise of eighties bullishness, go to your video shop and hire *Wall Street*. In every sense it seems to belong to a different era.

The ruling class has lost its sense of purpose. This internal impasse is expressed through a culture of pessimism which can only reinforce the fragmentation of society. Traditional symbols of authority are now too weak to neutralise the dynamic of social decay, the sense of things falling apart. In Britain, the scandals surrounding the monarchy are symptomatic of the mood of the times. It is in the sphere of party politics that the problem is most concentrated. A weakening of traditional affiliations, and the lack of positive loyalties and commitments to any political movement, is very much the order of the day.

Lesser evilism

As the general election campaign showed, political choices are now usually made on the basis of which party is the lesser evil. For some the Conservatives are the devil they know, they couldn't possibly be as bad as Labour. For others Labour is the obvious choice since they could not be as terrible as the hated Tories.

Commitment and affection are the absent ingredients in this equation. In such circumstances cynicism is the real victor.

The weakening of political loyalties is not merely a British phenomenon. Throughout the world the legitimacy of hitherto unproblematic institutions is now being put to question. Separatist parties are calling for the breakup of many of the key nation states of Western Europe. At the same time the traditional mainstream political parties suddenly find themselves lacking their old solid base of support. This trend is most advanced in countries such as France, where the electoral system makes it relatively easy for smaller parties to gain a foothold. But no Western nation is immune from the process.

All the election talk of possible devolution, regional assemblies and Scottish and Welsh independence

electioneering. In fact, there is also an unprecedented level of passivity, the product of a loss of belief in the traditional alternatives, which goes much deeper than a disgust with the parties' electoral tactics.

Old loyalties are weakening and the appeal of traditional symbols of authority is slipping. This is the ruling class equivalent of the decline of collective affiliations within the working class. They each have separate causes, which have been discussed elsewhere in recent issues of *Living Marxism*. The point to emphasise here is that the diminishing scale of loyalties in modern society affects not just class but also national identities.

The crumbling of national institutions seems to run alongside the decline of those associated with the working class. The upshot of all this is a growing estrangement from the whole, and an increased emphasis on

well-being, creates a climate which is hospitable to the narrowing of horizons. That which is more tangible or local seems easier to control.

The narrowing of horizons ultimately leads back to the individual. Our anxiety always returns to individual concerns, and it is at this level that it appears that something can still be done, even if the Thatcherite fantasy of individual prosperity is beyond our grasp. We can exercise, watch what we eat and try to live a long life. Individual fears lead to the individual obsessions with health, diet and psychology on which there now preys an industry of quacks and quack magazines.

Political breakdown

It is important to emphasise that the diminishing of political loyalties has not been caused by material changes in the way that the world is organised. Rather, it is a reaction to the breakdown of the political traditions which have prevailed during the past century. The process affects all classes in Western societies. It has a particularly devastating impact on the working class.

That which made workers feel that they were part of a class is gone. And workers now experience life as individuals, rather than as members of a class with collective interests and strength. The general disintegration of political life only enhances this sense of privatisation. This is what gives social fear its special late twentieth-century character.

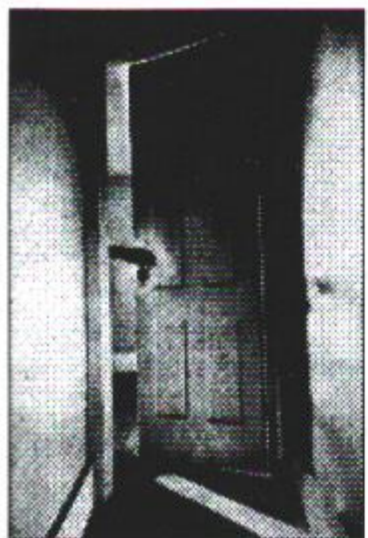
The existing state of affairs is the product of political causes. It must therefore be susceptible to political solutions.

People today are not suffering from a sudden collapse of imagination or from congenital panic. The mind is concentrated towards the self and away from others because it is far from clear what it is that binds us together in a collective whole. This is where the battle needs to be joined, to establish the contemporary case for taking collective action to gain control of each of our lives.

Taking control

People's very real fear of what outside forces are doing to them does contain a positive impulse; the desire to assume control over their own destiny. Drawing out that need to take control into our own hands can provide a powerful boost for anti-capitalist politics. The narrowing of horizons is the wages of fear. If that trend is to be reversed again, people will need to be convinced of the connection between embracing the wider politics of human emancipation and establishing individual control over their own life.

Individual fears lead to the individual obsessions with health, diet and psychology on which there now preys an industry of quacks



testifies to the difficulty of sustaining the existing scale of loyalties to the old institutions. This was the first mass general election in Britain where the existence of the United Kingdom as such was in any sense a serious issue. That it became an issue was not due to the sudden emergence of any powerful and dynamic spirit of regionalism. There is very little grassroots momentum behind any regional option.

Most astute political observers have commented on the growing distance between the majority of people's lives and the proceedings of the general election. This phenomenon is usually explained as the result of public cynicism about and exhaustion with

particular sectional interests. This added importance is due not so much to the intrinsic appeal of the fragments as to the discrediting of the old general conventions.

The tendency to narrow horizons and to focus politics on more and more parochial concerns will come up against real limits. At a time when the world is more interdependent than ever before, the parochial reaction seems more like a cry for help than a viable political response. But in a period such as this, the shrinking of the scale of political thinking can continue for some time to come.

The anxiety of the ruling class about the future of its system, and the fear of working people for their day-to-day

Job *insecurity* for

The threat of redundancy and debt has made the nineties' slump a nightmare for many people. And drastic changes in working practices have made the sense of insecurity worse still.

Elli Dashwood details the impact of unemployment and 'flexible' working on our lives today.

Andrew Calcutt's interviews reveal how, whether it's in the glamorous world of television or the squalor of the London underground, going to work is getting tougher all the time

Nobody is safe any more. It doesn't seem to matter what job you do, the threat of redundancy hangs over your head. And even those who can hang on to a job are not insulated from the climate of economic insecurity. People are having to put up with whatever working conditions their employers impose, for fear that their job might otherwise disappear altogether.

● Unemployment

By March 1992 official unemployment had risen for 22 consecutive months, to reach 2 804 000. The real jobless total, discounting all the Tory government's attempts to fiddle the figures, would be a million more.

Job losses are no longer concentrated in the traditional industries and manufacturing sectors which accounted for the rise of mass

unemployment in the early eighties. Now the sectors which grew in the short credit-financed boom of the late eighties are also shaking out jobs. Indeed the drop in employment is most noticeable in the sectors where there is furthest to fall.

In the eighties, the Tories claimed that service sectors like retailing, banking and finance, along with construction and hi-tech engineering, could compensate for the decline of traditional manufacturing industries in Britain. In the slump of the nineties, however, these 'new' sectors are among those in which companies are forcing through the most redundancies.

Many of the sectors which grew briefly in the late eighties were concentrated in the south-east, and their more dramatic decline is highlighted by regional patterns of job-loss. Total unemployment rates across the country were fairly even in

Life



THE TEACHER

'Because of the recession, three times as many people are going on teacher training courses. You're told there's a teacher shortage and a job at the end of the course. This may be true of some subjects, but in others the competition is fierce and many newly qualified teachers can't get a post.

'I started on £11 000. In future, how much you get paid will depend on how many of your students pass exams. Next year, schools will publish truancy rates and exam rates, like businesses issuing accounts.

'Under LMS [local management scheme], each school allocates its own budget. Many governors have decided not to pay for

supply teachers. So staff have become a general resource expected to fill in the gaps and teach everybody else's subject. Not so much "the teaching profession", more like being on a production line.

'The exact format of the national curriculum is still not finalised. Schools are using this as an excuse not to issue full contracts. Governors are only issuing yearly contracts, or they take junior teachers on for a term or half a term at a time.

'Everybody on short-term contracts is desperate to get a permanent job. When the *Times Educational Supplement* arrives in the staff room, everyone rushes for the jobs section. It's like gold dust.'

March 1992—10.8 per cent in the North and 8.3 per cent in the south-east. But the *rate* of increase shows a marked differential.

Since March 1990, unemployment in the north has risen by 16.5 per cent. In the south-east it has soared by 61 per cent. That region has accounted for more than half of the total rise in joblessness during the past two years. The boom towns of yesterday are the new unemployment blackspots.

Rising unemployment always has an impact on people's attitude to work. But today the sense of insecurity is being accentuated by the collapse of the sectors which were seen as the source of tomorrow's jobs. Many of those who did well out of the eighties' credit boom are no more likely to survive in the nineties than anyone else.

A job for life is a thing of the past, and those in employment are holding on for dear life.

One consequence of this has been to strengthen the employer's hand in the workplace. Through the eighties, the defeat of the old labour movement enabled British bosses to institute important changes in employment patterns and working practices. These are now compounding people's problems at work.

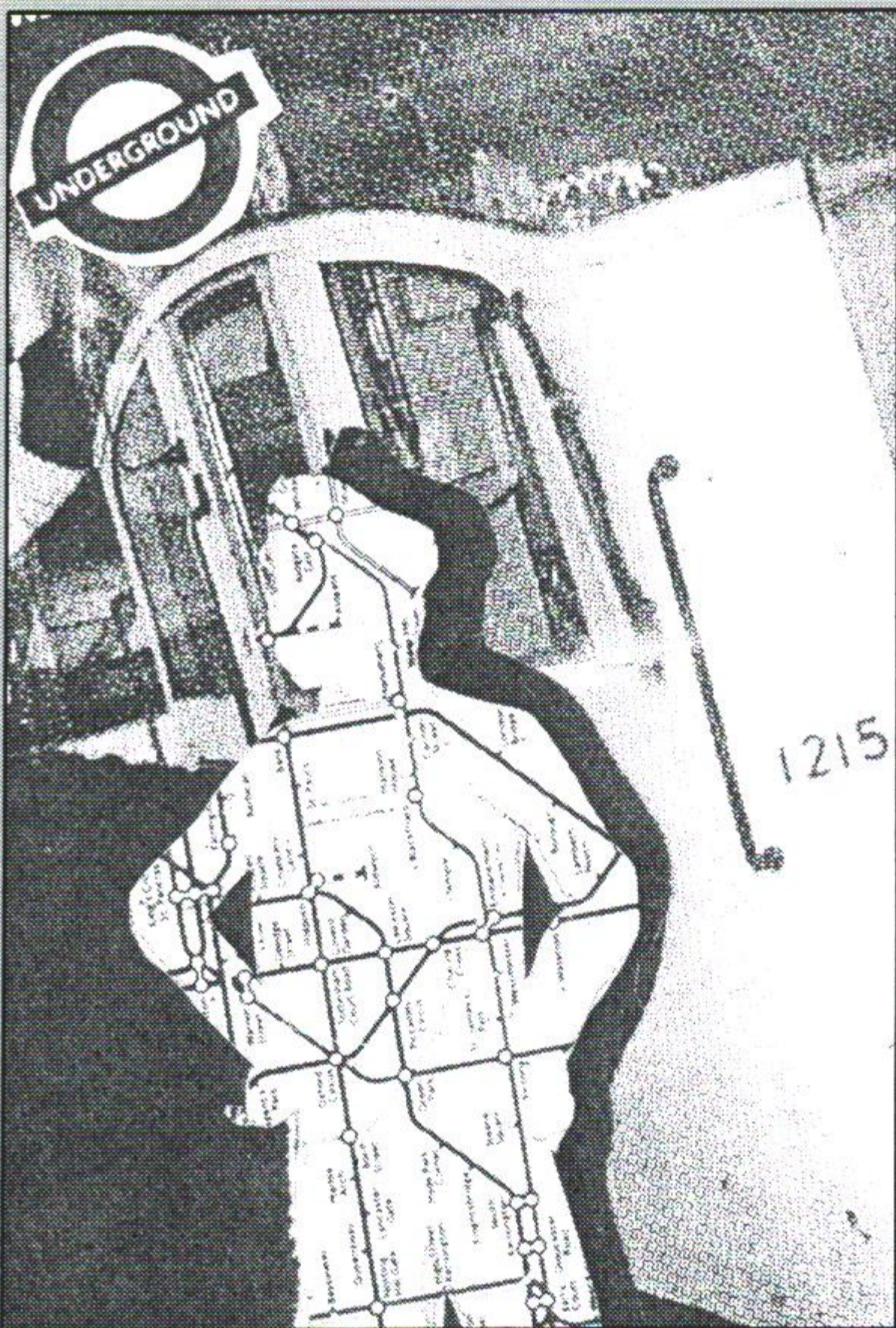
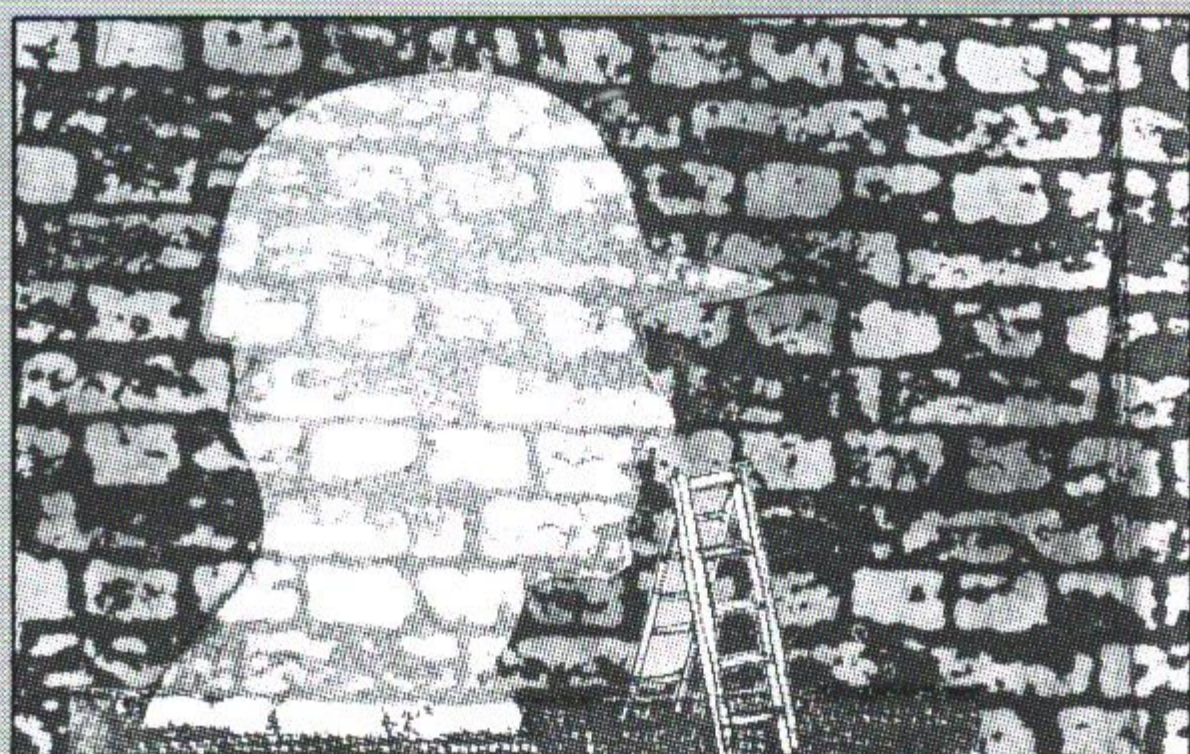
● **'Flexible' working**

One of the most significant trends of recent years has been the introduction of 'flexible' employment and working practices. The employers' aim is to create 'the so-called flexible firm in which variations in demand for

labour—they call it "numerical flexibility"—are absorbed by recruiting or shedding labour from the firm's "peripheral workforce". This comprises such workers as self-employed sub-contractors, directly employed temporary workers, agency temporary workers and part-timers' (*Employment Gazette*, March 1992).

As the table opposite indicates, the majority of the labour force now work 'flexibly' in one way or another, whether by doing overtime (often compulsory), working part time or by becoming self-employed. The common factor in all 'flexible' working practices is that they involve the employees bending to suit the needs of the boss at any one time.

Flexible working is certainly a bonus for the employer, who finds



**THE BUILDING WORKER/
CIVIL SERVANT**

'I started coming down from Liverpool to work on the sites during the long school holidays. When I was 15, I was taking home nearly £300 for seven days work. Now I'm 22 and I get half that.

'In the late eighties you could choose where you wanted to work. It all started to wind down in the summer of 1990. It took me three weeks to get a job and the wages dropped to £160. From then on, you'd have to put up with a bastard foreman, whereas previously you could punch him, walk off the site and into another job.

'There's no building work here now, and nothing in the States. Same story in Australia. And there's no point going to Germany because the East Europeans are trying to get work there.

'So I decided it wasn't worth the hassle and applied to the civil service. Eventually I started as an administrative officer in the Employment Service—a clerk on the frontline with claimants. I'm on a permanent contract but management are trying to bring in more casuals with no rights. Most of them are hanging on to get a permanent post, so they have to toe the line.

'Management are re-writing the contracts for permanent staff. The general feeling is they can do whatever they like. Already they've implemented dress codes and compulsory name tags as part of the Citizen's Charter. The charter is a device to make the workforce responsible for the

system's inadequacy, and it gives management more scope to discipline you and make you more insecure.'

THE TUBEWORKER

"London Transport guarantees you a job. We will never make you redundant." That's what they used to say to every new recruit. But it's shifted now. The feeling now is, hang on to it while it lasts.

'They are offering sovereignty—their new word for voluntary redundancy. They intend reducing the drivers by 900. We're all due to be interviewed for it. And there is a new L and A procedure—lateness and absence—so they can dismiss you more easily.

'There is a drive to discipline, with more duty managers checking that blokes are wearing hi-vi (high visibility) vests and not smoking in the depot. They promote the idea that there are eyes watching you all the time. They take you up to the control centre at Earls Court and tell you "we can see what you're doing on every train". That's how they caught two blokes napping at Heathrow one night. People think, bloody hell, you've got to watch yourself.

'Blokes are disillusioned with the unions. Everyone feels the insecurity and each is looking to his own. The attitude is very different from three or four years ago, when there was some defiance. Now people come into work and just switch off. It's wide open for them to do what they want.'

it easier to hire, fire and get more out of his workers as the company requires. The notion that flexible working is an advantage to workers themselves, on the other hand, is one of the biggest cons of the decade. Self-employment and part-time working are both cases in point.

Category of flexible work	% of workforce involved
Temporary/contract working	8
Self-employment	12
Part-time	21
Reservism(just work when asked/needed)	5
Work at home	4
Regular paid overtime	19
Shiftwork	15
Flexitime	8
Annualised hours	5
Compressed working week	4
Term-time working	0.3
Job-share	1
Flexible start/finish time	27
Present in at least one of the above categories	75
Not present in any of above	25

(Percentage sum adds up to more than 100 because respondents can be present in more than one category)
Source: *Employment Gazette*, March 1992

● Self-employment

Becoming self-employed—'being your own boss'—was promoted in the eighties as part of Margaret Thatcher's crusade for the individual. Encouraged by the government, self-employment grew by 57 per cent between 1981 and 1991, when it accounted for 14 per cent of all employment. But far from escaping the fear of unemployment, the self-employed now find themselves less secure than ever.

Most of the increase was in the south, where employed workers turned themselves into one-man sub-contractors or businesses in a bid to secure work in such unstable sectors as construction, hotel and catering, and other services. Even when the economy appeared to be doing relatively well, many of the self-employed found it tough to make a decent living; 25 per cent of self-employed women work more than 45 hours a week, while 25 per cent of self-employed men work more than 60 hours.

If the self-employed person's business has survived until now, it will be finding times tougher and tougher. Sub-contractors' livelihoods are dependent on whether bigger businesses are expanding enough

to hire them. In the current slump, when the big firms are suffering, the sub-contractors are going to the wall.

Using sub-contractors makes things easier for many employers, who can hire labour without giving any guarantees and get rid of it without paying any penalties. For the worker, self-employment probably means even less control over the future than before. They are at the mercy of others with no back-up or stability at all.

● Part-time working

The government and the employers tell us that working part-time provides more choice. Women in particular are supposed to benefit from being able to have a family and a job. In fact, many women have no choice at all; the lack of decent and affordable childcare facilities makes part-time work the only kind they can do. It is the employers who get the real choice. They are free to employ less full-time labour and more part-time workers, who are far cheaper and more 'flexible' (easy to lay off).

During the eighties, 70 per cent of labour force growth was due to women's employment, mostly part-time. Three quarters of all employed women work in the low-paid service sectors. Part-timers get little or no employment protection. The law makes a 16-hour working week the minimum requirement for any entitlement to maternity benefits, reinstatement after maternity or redundancy payments. More than a third of all women work less than 16 hours a week.

In June 1990, an Income Data Services report noted that 'families are becoming more dependent on income provided by part-timers. It is no longer pin money for extras such as holidays, but is now used for mortgage repayments, rent, etc'. Given the steep rise in redundancies among full-time workers since then, the trend towards families living on part-time wages must be increasing.

The availability of cheap, unprotected part-time labour gives the employers more leverage over the entire workforce. It makes full-time jobs on a decent wage harder to come by and hold on to.

● Unstable living standards

For those in work today, an apparently good job doesn't necessarily mean a decent standard of living. It has been estimated that annual growth in earnings is now at its lowest since 1967. The average rate of wages growth may still be above the official rate of inflation. But in real terms, maintaining living standards today often means working longer and harder. ►



THE TV CAMERAMAN

'A TV crew used to be three people—camera, lighting man and sound recordist. Now they're moving towards one-man banding: a camera operator working on his own from a car containing camera gear, lighting gear and sound gear. The new job description is "technical operator". This can be inside or outside the studio, operating cameras, lights, vision control, anything.

'All technicians are waiting to be re-interviewed for our own jobs. So no-one wants to object to new work practices which mean four days on, three days on call, and only one "protected" day off. Although you're not paid to work the three days, if you don't respond to your bleep they can dismiss you.

'We were always permanent staff. The BBC want to introduce a contract scheme whereby you are employed for one year. This year there will be 30 per cent redundancies. Some will set up as sub-contractors for the BBC. It means a drop in salary of about a third with no guarantee of any future after the first year.

'In the long term they will get rid of the category "BBC staff", and have everyone on individual contracts. We're already working under a scheme where producers choose whether they want a BBC crew, freelance or whatever. Of course they choose people who say yes all the time and don't charge for it. People are told, "however many hours you do, don't claim for more than 12". Each programme is budgeted separately, not as part of the BBC as a whole. Everybody's being set against each other to save costs.

'Management have created an atmosphere of worry and fear. People are always working out what deals they could get if they were made redundant, what their pension would be. People are totally disillusioned with Beta, the union. They just laugh at it. Most of us have done the same job all our working lives and there's nothing else we can do.' ●

Half of all employees now work some 'unsociable' hours for their money. If their employer doesn't need them to do so, their income falls.

The sense of instability is added to by other factors. The threat of home repossession and default on other

personal debt intensifies the sense that your life could easily fall apart.

● Debt worries

In 1992, a big proportion of personal wealth is tied up in housing, reflecting

increasing home ownership. But the slump in house prices and the continuing high interest rates mean that many people are now paying more than they can afford for property that is worth less and less. The spectre of mortgage arrears and possible repossession assumes even more importance, since most now have less cash savings available to fall back on.

Around 12 per cent of all households now have a debt problem of some description, two thirds of these involving mortgages. It's not surprising that most people now fear what tomorrow may bring. Their lives are less stable and offer fewer prospects than at any time in the last decade. So much for the 'Opportunity Society'. ●

	No of Mortgages Arrears	6-12mths	12+mths	repossessions
1982	6 518 000	27 400	5 500	6 900
1991	9 628 000	162 200	59 700	36 600

(Source: Social Trends 1992)



THE PRINTWORKER

'The gravy train jobs have gone. I worked eight hours on Saturday and I took home £25. Flexibility is the buzzword—an hour on one job and then on to something else. Overtime is paid at the ordinary rate. A few months ago the managing director said no more overtime rates and if you don't like it get a job somewhere else. There's pressure on you to do as much overtime as they want. This week I'll be working 70 hours. There was one guy who refused overtime so they sacked him. People are afraid to say no.

'If you're not working quick enough, they sack you. They target certain people, give them a nickname like 'snail'. Foremen come over and talk about someone, encouraging you to take the piss out of him. They offer you personally a rise if you take on somebody else's work so they can get rid of him.

'The trial period for new employees used to be three months. Now it's three weeks. If the guy doesn't fit, they let him go and get someone else. While they think about sacking someone, they'll train up another guy to do his job. There's no

redundancy pay. They are exploiting the fact that everyone's desperate for work. Some guys travel 20 miles before starting at six am.

'No-one's got any confidence in the union. Guys getting the push can't do much except leave ink in the ducts and unbolt the machines. One owner—a real cowboy—was shot in the knees. Sometimes resentment is directed against Asian managers in the trade.

'When I became a printer people said to me "you're set up for life", but now there's nothing going.' ●

Sixteen years hard labour

Johanna Carter recounts the delights of being a part-time teenage worker

If you go out for a meal, to see a film or even do a spot of late shopping, chances are most staff you will encounter are under 21, and a high percentage are under 18. This is the evening staff: young people whom companies employ part time to keep down the number of hours full-time staff have to work—not out of any sort of kindness but to ensure that full-timers don't go into the overtime pay bracket.

The twilight shift starts as everybody else goes home, and finishes as everybody is going to bed. There are two types of young twilight worker; the student who has to work part time to eat, and the schoolkid who needs a part-time job to give them a little financial independence from their parents. Both are desperate to earn some cash and will work for whatever wages they can get.

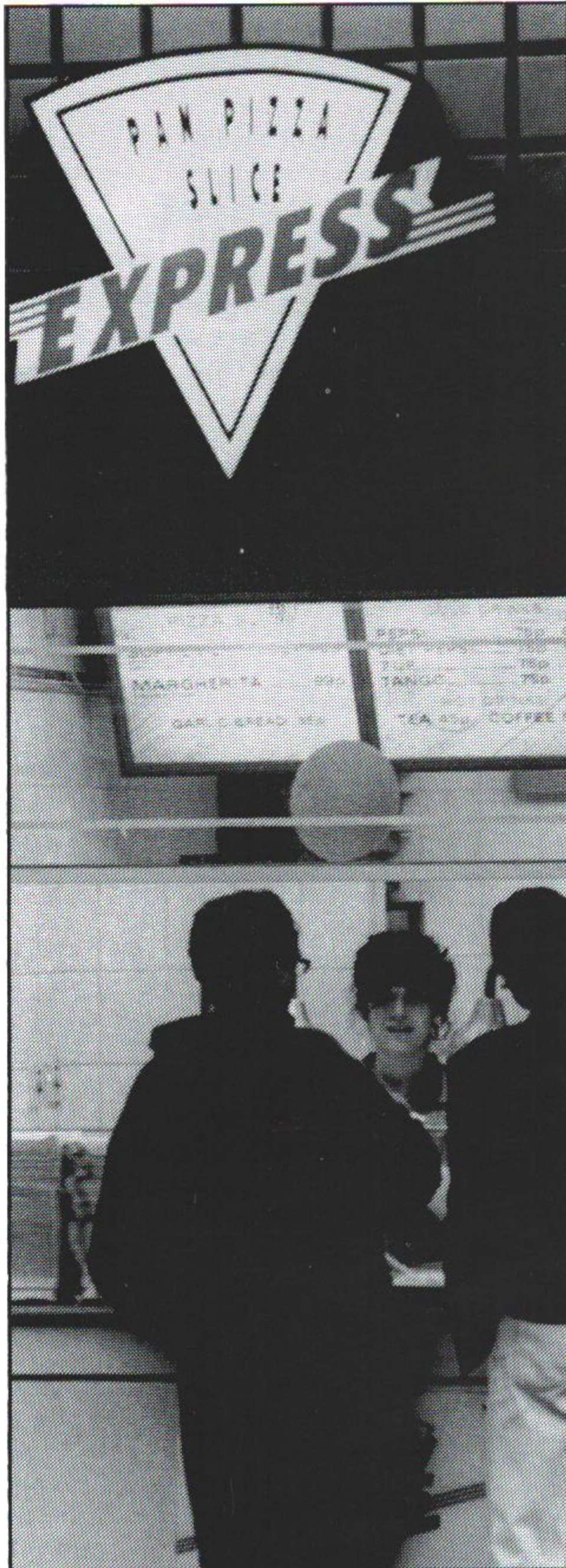
After hours

This vast source of cheap labour is widely used by any establishment which remains open after 'office hours'. At five o'clock the full-time staff will end their day and an army of part-time workers will take over. The same thing happens at weekends. Full-time workers tend to get Saturday nights and Sundays off, while the part-timers, who have only been at school or college all week, get the fun of working at the busiest time.

Here in Glasgow, wages for young part-timers can range from £1.57 an hour at Gateway to £2.51 an hour at The Pizza Place. The recommended minimum wage is £2.56. But wage tribunals refuse to touch your case if you're under 21. Part of a contract I had to sign stated in very small print (which I was encouraged not to read), that I was not and would not become a member of any trade union. It is compulsory for them to pay you more for working on a Sunday, but as the law does not state how much more it ranges from 'time and a half' down to 'time and a fifth'.

12-hour shifts

The law is equally useful when it comes to the hours you can work. It states that no child under 18 can work more than 48 hours per week, which is very reassuring. It says nothing about the compulsory 10 or 12-hour shifts on Saturdays and Sundays. The law is, however, more protective of those still at school, as long as you have not reached the school leaving age of 16. As



most employers won't employ anyone under 16 anyway, this piece of legislation simply gives them a free hand to treat over-16s however they want. Thankfully the law is there to prevent 'child' exploitation!

Last summer, short of funds, I got a job in a pizza restaurant in central Glasgow. Initially the money was a welcome addition to my two pounds a week pocket money. But pretty quickly it became obvious that it was not going to be an easy way of earning extra cash. My initial 16 hours a week grew until I was expected to work 32 hours. Of course it wasn't compulsory, but it was made clear that they needed someone

who would work the required hours, and if I couldn't then there was a queue of people willing to.

Of course I was hired as a part-time worker, and this status didn't change when my hours increased. They needed me to work so many hours so that all the full-time workers stayed at 39 hours a week and never ventured into that elusive overtime bracket.

Not content with maximising their profits from overworking underpaid schoolchildren, the restaurant's next task was to turn me into a conscientious, cost-effective worker. The first step in this process was a few compulsory, unpaid training courses to help me to do my job better.

Happy families?

The courses themselves are to teach you to get the most money out of people. I thought I was employed as a waitress to convey food from the chef to the diner. I was wrong. At these sessions I was told of how I was selling their goods to the customer and it was my job to convince them to buy more. Therefore I was required to learn the skills of a salesperson.

The sessions usually begin with an introduction given by one of the training managers in which you are told how you are all one big family and how you're happy when they (the owners) are happy, and that they're happy when the shop is bringing in big profits and you can all rest easy knowing that your jobs are safe.

The course then proceeds with 'the family' getting to know one another by taking turns saying, 'Hi, my name's X, I work in Y branch and I've been with the company Z months'. You are now ready to discuss why you are taught to do things the way you are. People have to stand up in turn and say what they like and don't like about the compulsory rules for selling.

Once everybody has opened their heart and exposed their true feelings, the managers inform you that any difficulties you may have are your problems, and not faults of the system. It was your fault that you didn't like telling customers that the tap water wasn't drinkable and therefore they would have to pay for the mineral water. It wasn't management's problem that you continually failed to coerce people into spending that little bit more money on their meals, by insisting that they buy desserts.

Grow up

With the exception of only a few, there is a nauseating sense of team spirit in the workplace. Everyone is given targets and quotas, and expected to meet them; if they don't they are letting the team down. Lateness or illness for any reason is not tolerated among the staff. (Management don't mind so much, as it means that they can pay one person for doing two people's jobs.)

By the time I left I was the longest-serving part-time waitress they had and I'd only lasted four months. Part-time staff are viewed as inferior and disposable. Complaining of course is out of the question, and will only be met by clichés such as 'it's a dirty job but somebody's got to do it'! There seems to be a sort of general acceptance that you haven't really grown up until you've been through hell at the hands of an employer. As if working gets any better when you grow up!

Germany has been rocked by revelations of how many establishment figures and celebrities worked for the old East German secret police. Rob Knight reports from Frankfurt on the problem of playing spot-the-Stasi agent

After German reunification in 1990 the files of the former East German secret police—the Stasi—came into the hands of the new government. It set up a commission, headed by former East German citizen Joachim Gauck, to investigate what the Stasi had been up to.

At the start of this year the files were opened. East Germans were able for the first time to see whether they were on the Stasi files, and who had been spying on them. Since then scarcely a day has passed without the press exposing people who spied on their workmates, friends and even spouses. Stories such as the tale of the East German football international who spied on his teammates are only the tip of the iceberg.

A quandary

The German government seems to be in a genuine quandary about how to handle the Stasi exposures. On the one hand it wants to make the most of them, in a bid to continue playing on the anti-communism which formed the foundations of postwar West German society. On the other hand it wants to stabilise the former East Germany (GDR) and incorporate it properly into the West. But this process of integration is being hindered by the way in which the revelations of who worked for the Stasi are continually discrediting important figures of authority in the east.

It is not surprising that the Stasi affair should attract so much attention. According to the files over 300 000 people were Stasi informers. That represents an awful lot of potentially broken relationships of one kind or another. At first the media pursued the stories avidly. But more recently the game of 'spot-the-Stasi' has turned sour. It has begun to seem as though anybody who was anybody in the old East Germany had some sort of connection with the Stasi. Among those who have been accused are top politicians from all the main parties, churchmen, artists, sportsmen and singers. The list began to seem endless.

Second thoughts

Events in February brought out the problems which the anti-Stasi witch-hunt could pose for the German government. First, Manfred Stolpe, the Social Democrat president of Brandenburg and one of the most popular politicians in the east, was implicated as a Stasi informer. As Stolpe is one of the few remaining east German politicians of any stature even some of his Christian Democrat opponents sprang to his defence. Soon after came the suicides of an east German judge and a member of the

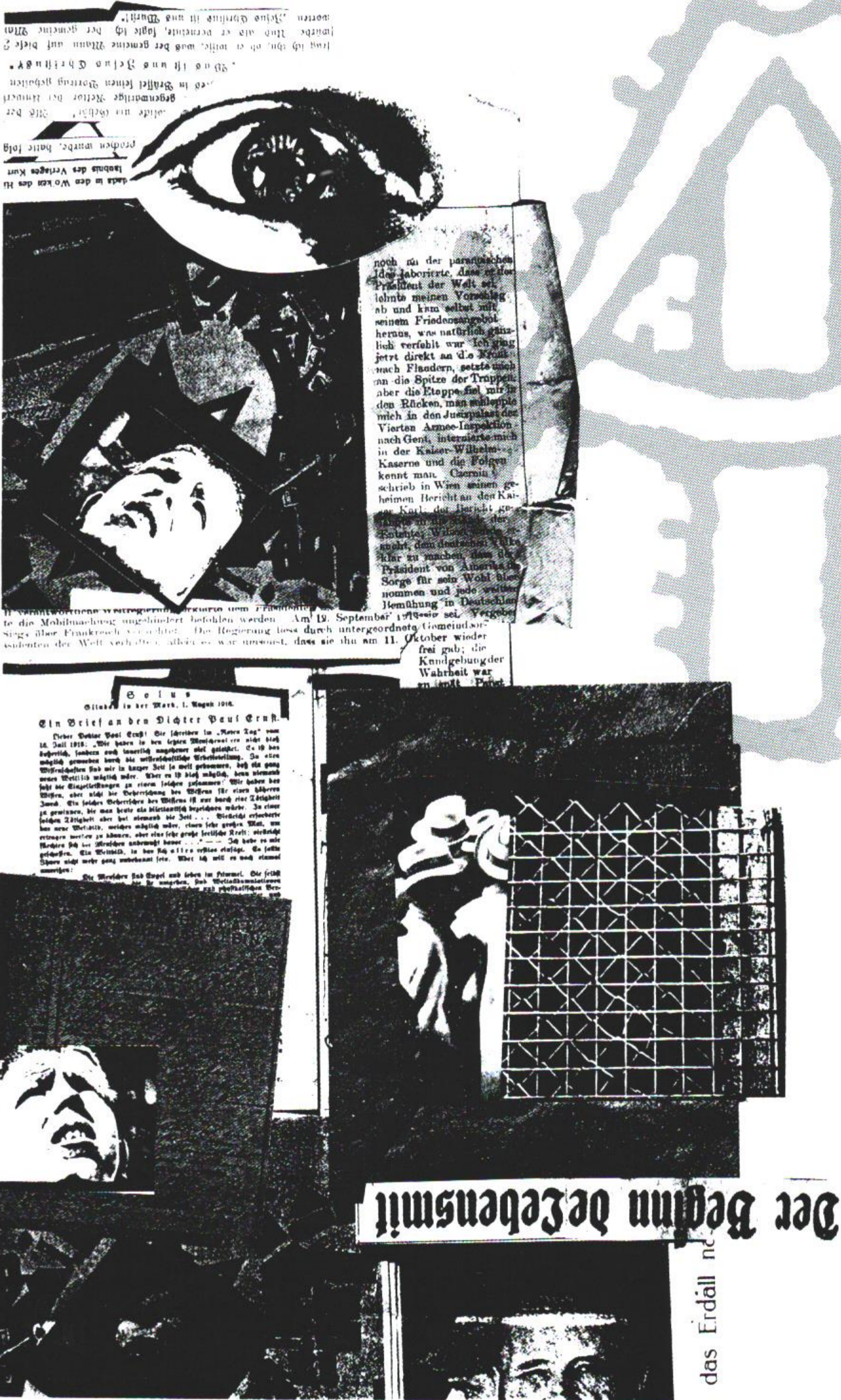


ILLUSTRATION: Grobnik

Night of a thousand Stasi

German parliament, after similar accusations had been made against them. The government and the press began to have second thoughts about the crusade against the Stasi.

Other factors too have given the government cause to reflect on how far it wants to push this 'coming to terms with the past'. It is well known that leading figures in the old GDR government had close links with the West German authorities. Yet many of these old Stalinists are now facing investigation or criminal charges, which could lead to embarrassing revelations about these same links. One potentially explosive case is that of Markus Wolf, the former head of the GDR spy service. He reputedly has in his possession the names of all those in the West who had formal or informal links with the GDR.

Rotten bloc

Another source of potential embarrassment is the case of Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski, the GDR official responsible for currency dealings with the West. He is being investigated for alleged fraud. When the investigators requested 1900 files on Schalck-Golodkowski from the Gauck commission, they were only given three. These had been carefully censored and the names of every West German with whom Schalck-Golodkowski had dealt had been crossed through.

The question of past relationships with the GDR is a particular problem for the government of chancellor Helmut Kohl. The eastern section of his party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), was one of the bloc of parties which governed the GDR. As such it is inconceivable that leading members of that party would not have had close links with the Stalinist state. The exposure of these connections has already caused the resignations of top CDU members, including the first head of the post-reunification CDU in the east, Lothar de Maziere.

De Maziere, and others like him, have been replaced through the forced influx of new CDU leaders from the west. This has fuelled the feeling among east Germans that they are being colonised by westerners. Nor has

it been forgotten that Kohl himself welcomed GDR ruler Erich Honecker to West Germany as a head of state as recently as 1987. To many Germans, particularly those in the east, Kohl's old West German government is itself compromised through its relations with the GDR.

Another Nuremberg

Given these difficulties, it might be expected that Kohl would call off the Stasi hunt. Instead of cooling things down, however, Kohl has gone out of his way to fuel the controversy around the Stasi issue. At the same time that even leading members of his own party were calling for the persecution of Stolpe to stop, Kohl made a highly publicised visit to the former Stasi prison at Bautzen. In addition, other CDU leaders have called for Nuremberg-style trials of all the top leaders of the ex-GDR.

Part of the explanation for this lies in the importance of the Stasi issue in bolstering the sense of identity and the authority of the German establishment.

When the German nation was divided by the Allied powers at the end of the war, the big businessmen and government officials of the new West Germany were badly discredited by their record of collaboration with the Nazi regime. They needed some new credentials as champions of freedom. They got them by institutionalising anti-communism in West German society.

Milking anti-communism

For 45 years the West German establishment based its authority upon the contrast between conditions in the prosperous West and those in the repressive GDR. Since 1990, the end of the Cold War and German reunification has removed this focus for social cohesion. But a new focus around which to cohere German society has yet to be found. As a result, the government still needs to milk anti-communism as much as it can. That is one reason for keeping the old Stalinist functionaries in the spotlight.

Another and growing factor in the equation is that far from being united, the two parts of Germany seem to be further apart than ever. The German

government needs scapegoats for its own failure to solve the economic and social problems of east Germany. A recent opinion poll in the weekly magazine, *Der Spiegel*, found that only 22 per cent of easterners thought that the government was doing enough to help the east to recover. Unable to offer east Germans a future, the government has to blame it on the problems of the past. As a result, more, rather than fewer, former members of the GDR regime are likely to find themselves in the dock.

However, continuing the anti-Stasi campaign also poses new problems for the government. There is deepening cynicism in the east about the whole issue. People there have not lost their hatred for the old Stalinist regime, but now complain that the capitalist newcomers from the west are just as bad. Last year, easterners tended to blame the lack of progress on the persistent influence of the old bureaucrats, the '*alte Seilschaften*'. Now they are as likely to blame the westerners, the '*neue Seilschaften*'.

East on trial

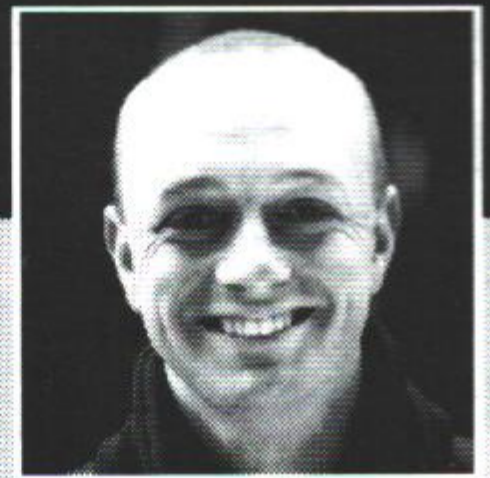
The persecution of former functionaries of the old GDR also hinders the creation of a stable political elite in the east. This in turn makes political integration more difficult. If the present deep division between east and west Germany remains, it will hold back the emergence of a new and confident all-German identity. The Kohl government is well aware that it needs such an identity to support Germany's re-emergence at the centre of world affairs. To try to resolve the problem, it has established a special History Commission to look into the whole question of what to do about the east German past.

Meanwhile the revelations continue. To east Germans, in particular, it seems more and more like a campaign to put the whole of east Germany on trial for the past. The CDU conference last December passed a motion stating that 'at the end of the necessary clarifications, reconciliation and social harmony must prevail'. The problem is that the 'clarifications' are helping to make the 'reconciliation' ever more distant. ●

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Who'll save the Queen?

I'm so ugly. No boy will ever want me.' Thus spoke Sarah Ferguson in an early scene from 'Andy and Fergie's Love Story', a *Sun* royal comic strip, in 1986. In the final picture the couple walk down the aisle arm-in-arm. Andy turns to the reader and says: 'Gotcha!'

I can't vouch for the authenticity of this version of events, as the BBC has withdrawn all copies of the souvenir wedding video on the grounds that it would be 'distasteful' to sell it. On that, at least, we can all agree.

If newspaper 'royal watchers' like Andrew Morton are to be believed, an updated 'Love Story' would have to include Fergie running around the first class cabin of a plane with a paper bag over her head, throwing bread rolls and sugar at her father. Nor could there be any avoiding the mock-knighting of a dog at a party, or numerous other tales of misbehaviour.

In one scene, staff would be seen muttering that 'the shouting and screaming were more appropriate to a block of council flats than a royal palace'. And one footman would say 'quite openly' that 'come the revolution', things will change. Personally, I expect to hear even more regal screaming and shouting when the phrase 'royal separation' once again refers to the head-from-shoulders variety, but you know what he means. And it's shocking to hear him say it.

It's shocking because for the past 50 years or so there has been an unspoken agreement that it is wrong to criticise the royal family, on the grounds that they can't defend themselves. Now, it's plausible enough to argue against criticising those who have no source of redress. But the reason the royal family 'can't defend themselves' is that their loyal advisors and ministers make sure they don't have to. In this respect the royals have a clear advantage over child molesters, gangsters and other indefensibles who are forced to explain themselves from time to time.

Experience has taught the royals that it pays to keep their mouths shut and get on with minding the family business. After all, they've got nothing to gain from a discussion of their position, and a whole country to lose.

But all good things come to an end, and the end could be nigh, if you believe the newspapers. You know something's happening when 'The *Sun* says': 'The royal [note that little 'r'] story will run and run. Until the day the people finally recognise that hereditary rulers are an absurdity.' Even the specialist royal publications have been giving the Windsors some funny looks. The *Elizabeth II Collectors Issue* compliments them on being 'the epitome of privilege and the antithesis of popular democracy', and explains that the recent BBC documentary *Elizabeth R* was made to 'remind us that the Queen's there and why she's there'.

Of course, every royal documentary is carefully planned to deal with whatever image problem currently besets the monarchy, but the problems have grown more tricky. The first one, at the end of the difficult sixties, tried to pass them off as a regular family (look—no neckties!). Later efforts have emphasised their 'working lives'. But

today the focus is restricted to the three members of the family who have not yet become an embarrassing liability: the Queen Mum, Gawd bless 'er, Princess Di ('the national dish') and the Queen herself.

Sir Alastair Burnett's portrait of the Queen Mother plunged to new depths of sycophancy, even by the standards normally inspired by this wonderful old girl. An offer of a rose to sniff was accepted according to courtly etiquette: 'Oh *Ma'aaam*, yes! Oh yes...yes...yes!' Later we see the ceremonial unveiling of a plaque. The cord snaps, but no problem—the Queen Mum skilfully opens the curtain by hand. Sir Alastair's voice coos dreamily: 'Makes it look so easy, doesn't she?'

That programme backfired disastrously, so the new film of a year in the Queen's life took a self-consciously business-like approach. 'You have a room of your own, do you?' HM inquires of an old lady in a nursing home, 'that must be rather nice, isn't it?'. A little later she is discussing the case of a prisoner who 'helped the authorities' during the Strangeways prison riot. 'I should think anything to do with Strangeways is rather interesting', she says, in the tone of a woman politely perusing a primary school nature table. We don't catch her

equerry's reply ('Indeed Ma'am. They share cells—I'm told it's rather nice').

The Queen is the last monarch to be completely cut off from the real world. During her Jubilee, curtains were painted on to the windows of derelict houses on her procession route. When she visited a place where I used to work, a special toilet was built for her. It had a red

velvet seat and nobody else was allowed to use it. When the great day arrived, the real 'royal watchers' were out in force. Not the debonair press 'insiders', but the loyal subjects who queue all night with tartan blankets and camping stools for the privilege of pressing their faces against the railings for a glimpse of the royal hat.

No doubt some of them will queue for The Victoria & Albert Museum's new exhibition 'Sovereign', subtitled '40 Years of Service'. But as services go, only British Rail is getting a worse press. *You've Been Framed* thrashed *Elizabeth R* in the TV ratings. Perhaps the future lies with those who also serve by sitting and waiting outside the gates. Although for many of them this service is its own reward, there are others who crave public acknowledgement. So they've begun to privatise one of the Queen's services—the Fount of Honour. 'Recognition for devoted monarchists' is now available—at a price—through the classified pages of *Majesty* and the rest. Buy yourself a title—you've earned it. Some may say this cheapens honours, but remember, not everyone can afford them under the official system.

Queen Victoria and Edward VII both expected to see the end of the monarchy in their lifetimes, and now the same concern seems to be concentrating royal minds once more. The Queen's Royal Anniversary Trust is funding a 'Royal Things To Do' education pack. The Queen Mother now has her own kettle, so she can spare her staff the trouble of fetching her tea. Grand gestures both, yet still the nagging feeling remains that it may be too little, too late. ●

You've been Framed thrashed Elizabeth R in the TV ratings

Scandal

A spate of pre-election sex scandals have hit politicians on both sides of the Atlantic.

Sara Hardy exposes the moral of the story

In Britain the election campaign is over, while in America it is grinding on. For voters bored to death by the election circus, only a series of sex scandals involving prominent politicians has added some spice to politics. It says a lot about the dismal state of politics in the nineties that the private life of a man like Paddy Ashdown can excite more interest than the slump policies of the major parties.

The 'Paddy Pants Down' affair (involving the shock horror revelation that the leader of the Liberal Democrats had an affair with his secretary five years ago) hasn't been the only election campaign sex scandal. In the States, the sex life of Democratic Party presidential contender Bill Clinton became the number one issue in the election primaries, after singer Gennifer Flowers revealed that she had a 12-year affair with the senator. Meanwhile, back in Britain, Sara Keays won a libel action worth £105 000 against *New Woman* magazine, which had accused her of being a kiss 'n' tell bimbo for writing a book about her affair with Cecil Parkinson for financial gain. For a few weeks, sex seemed to have replaced politics as the main debating point of the elections.

There may have been a surfeit of sex scandals of late, but they are nothing new in British politics. Over the years, there have been dozens of revelations about the sex lives of MPs, some of which have scandalised the nation—such as the relationship between the minister for war, John Profumo, and the call-girl, Christine Keeler, which came to light in 1963 and forced his resignation.

Some have attracted less notoriety. Few people probably remember the incident in 1981, when the jilted lover, and secretary, of Tory MP Nicholas Fairbairn tried to hang herself from a

lamp-post outside his London flat. These titillating stories—Ron Brown's trial for stealing a pair of his former lover's knickers, Colin Moynihan's relationship with Pamela Bordes—have been the stuff of the tabloids for a very long time.

The politician usually responds to the sex scandal by denying everything. If he is forced to admit anything he claims that it's all over, and that he ended the affair for the sake of his family. He then appears with a wife as fragrant as possible, as often as possible. If he's lucky, other politicians will rally round him and make statements about his right to privacy. If he's very lucky, he may even win some votes from a public which thinks he's more interesting than they had previously imagined.

But how seriously should we take sex scandals? Some purists have claimed that having an affair makes a politician untrustworthy. Anyone who breaks the marriage vows cannot, they argue, defend the welfare of the British public. This is nonsense. You would have to be a bit strange to think that Kenneth Baker or John Gummer, who I cannot believe ever to have strayed from the straight and narrow, are trustworthy individuals on whom we can rely to take care of our interests. Politicians such as these are not to be trusted whatever the state of their married lives.

What is important about sex scandals, however, is the way they are used to promote traditional, conservative moral values. Admitting an affair, for the politician, is admitting that you have broken the code of family values. Every 'guilty' man presents himself as a sinner returning to the bosom of his family. The most abiding image of every scandal is that of the politician photographed with his wife and family.

PHOTO: Palace Pictures

Paddy Ashdown made sure that his wife took a photocall with him the day he made his announcement. Jeffrey Archer took the press to court over the accusation that he had paid off a prostitute. He won because his wife was such a good witness. Mary Archer was so 'fragrant', commented the judge, that it was impossible to imagine her husband wanting to have sex with a prostitute. Bill Clinton's wife appeared with him during all the embarrassing interviews, and declared that their marriage was strong, that they loved each other and that they would stay together. Cecil Parkinson ended his affair with Sara Keays 'for the sake of his family'.



It can be embarrassing for an establishment which presents itself as the guardian of our moral health to have its representatives breaking the rules. It is an important part of political campaigning today to ensure that prospective candidates are family men. The idea that only those with strong family values are fit to rule is central to government propaganda. To have politicians admitting they were wrong to have extra-marital sex can be useful in promoting an atmosphere of moral conformity.

It's also worth remembering those whom the politicians and the press have refused to forgive. Cecil Parkinson was let back into the cabinet; Jeffrey Archer

never left it; Nicholas Fairbairn's career doesn't seem to have suffered; and Bill Clinton might still make the Democratic Party nomination.

But Jeremy Thorpe, forced to resign from the Liberal Party leadership because he was exposed as a homosexual, has disappeared from public life. Harvey Proctor, who resigned as an MP for the same reason, has never been let back into the establishment fold. On the eve of the general election, Tory MP Alan Amos had to resign in disgrace after being arrested with another man in a car on Hampstead Heath. Adulterers can be accommodated by the establishment,

but those publicly accused of being homosexual are beyond the pale.

And another thing. Every sex scandal throws into sharp relief the role that women are expected to play in political life. They are thrust into the political limelight and paraded in front of the cameras in the role of lusty mistresses or loyal wives. For all the talk of sexual equality and the New Woman, the major roles which women play in British and American politics today are still those of 'Smoking Bimbos' or fragrant ladies, wheeled on either to bring down or prop up a powerful man. That is really scandalous. ●

An extraordinary film about how one Jew survived the Holocaust has caused a national controversy in Germany. Emmanuel Oliver looks behind the row about Agnieszka Holland's *Europa Europa*



A Jew, a communist and a Hitler Youth

the last time round. And what it really does not need is a film that has taken the American box office by storm and achieved international recognition by winning a Golden Globe award for best foreign film of 1991.

Europa Europa would have had a better than even chance of winning this year's Oscar for best foreign film. But the jury responsible for nominating Germany's Oscar entry decided that no film was worthy of being nominated. There can be little doubt that the decision was politically motivated. But if the powers that be in Bonn thought that they could bury *Europa Europa*, they were wrong. The German panel's decision not to put the film forward for the Oscar nominations sparked a fierce debate inside and outside Germany.

Artur Brauner, the film's German producer, himself a concentration camp survivor, castigated the jury members. Brauner argued that Germany's leaders are so desperate to promote a new image of Germany and to put the past behind them that they have resorted to political censorship. The film's Polish director, Agnieszka Holland, accused Germany of allowing national arrogance to become official policy by blocking the film. Brauner and Holland were supported by all the major German filmmakers, including Volker Schlöndorff, director of *The Tin Drum*, the last German film to win an Oscar in 1979. The attempt by the German establishment to bury the film thus had the opposite effect. It became the centre of a fresh debate about Germany's present attitude towards its past.

The content of *Europa Europa* has also aroused controversy. It is a far from conventional treatment of the period. The film does not dwell on the popular images of Nazism, such as SS uniforms, swastikas and concentration camps: images which can be assimilated with ease because they are so familiar. Nor

There is a great irony in the reception given to Agnieszka Holland's new film, *Europa Europa* (showing in Germany under the title *Hitlerjunge Salomon*). This is a film about the problem of identity. It tells the true story of Solomon Perel, a teenage German Jew who, in order to survive the Holocaust, is forced to hide his Jewishness and pretend he is an Aryan. The irony is that a film which explores the identity crisis suffered by a victim of the Holocaust has served to focus attention on the identity crisis of the nation which presided over the Holocaust.

At the end of the film, Solomon Perel's identity crisis is resolved, when he finds himself in Israel after the war, singing a refrain from a song about 'how good it is to be among one's own'. Germany's national identity crisis, however, which is the legacy of the Holocaust era, is not so easily resolved. The difficulties of establishing a legitimate national identity in a country where such terrible things were done in the name of nationalism are readily apparent.

For Germany's modern-day rulers, however, forging a viable national identity is a matter of necessity not choice. If Germany is to play a political role in the world commensurate with its economic leverage, it must overcome the legacy of a past which continually acts as a restraint on its ability to assert its world leadership. This explains why Germany's rulers have spent the past decade trying to bury the past or at least to explain it away.

It seems that whenever the German establishment thinks that it might at last have erased the horror of its past experiment with fascism, something happens to bring the Nazi past, which acts as a barrier to the free promotion of a German national identity, back into sharp focus.

There have been many German films dealing with the Holocaust, but none has caused such controversy as *Europa Europa* (a joint German-Polish production). A timely new book by Anton Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat: the Return of History as Film*, provides a useful commentary on how the German film industry has dealt with Germany's stigmatised history and on the shifting preoccupations of the New German Cinema since the mid-seventies. After reading Kaes' book, it is clear that the furore over *Europa Europa* has at least as much to do with the political context in which it has been released as with the content of the film.

From the point of view of the German establishment, *Europa Europa* could not have appeared at a more inappropriate time. Today, when a reunited Germany is once again becoming a powerful player in Europe, the last thing it needs is a film that reminds everybody what happened

does the film conform to the traditional depiction of the Jews as noble but passive victims of fascism. Instead, Holland's film focuses singlemindedly on the dilemma of Solomon Perel, who survives the Holocaust by concealing his Jewish identity and becoming a Hitler Youth.

From the moment that he is separated from his older brother as they flee over the Polish border into the Soviet Union, Solomon is forced to respond to whichever way the wind blows in order to escape the fate of his fellow Jews. At home in Germany, he is a Jew among Jews. As an orphan in the Soviet Union, he becomes a communist among communists. When the Wehrmacht invades the Soviet Union, he becomes Josef Peters, an Aryan among Aryans. At an exclusive school for Hitler Youth, he becomes a Nazi among Nazis. In Israel after the war, he becomes a Zionist.

The trauma experienced by Solomon in having continually to conceal his identity (especially his circumcision) is the centrepiece of the film. In order to survive, he is forced to adopt a different persona to the extent that his own identity is endangered. When Solomon does reveal his identity, first to a gay German soldier and then to the mother of his Aryan girlfriend, we are all aware that he has placed his life in the hands of someone who may well betray him.

Whatever the director's intentions, *Europa Europa* is not simply a film about how identity is tested by adversity. Agnieszka Holland said that she wanted to tell this extraordinary story of an ordinary young man in order to illustrate a central theme of our times: humanity's lack of control over its own destiny.

Solomon Perel's personal story is indeed extraordinary; so extraordinary that were it not true it would seem preposterous. But in one important respect, it is a story which accords with the experience of millions in the twentieth century. It is the story of a young man whose fate was determined by forces beyond his control. It is the sense of humanity being on the receiving end of history that makes Solomon Perel's story so compelling to people whose overriding experience is of having no control over their lives and no say in their fate.

* *Europa Europa* opens on 15 May at Screen on the Hill and Odeon Kensington in London

* Anton Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat: the Return of History as Film*, Harvard University Press, £10.25 pbk



Wrestling with mother

I was brought up to think that any day now capitalism would exhaust itself. The antagonism of its own contradictions was, apparently, its fatal flaw. Of course, that was before the days of The World Wrestling Federation.

Last year alone, apparently, capital generated \$1.7 billion by selling plastic models of fat men in make-up and shiny shorts to small children. Now I will admit that the arms of these models do move up and down, making a pleasing salaaming motion but even so, this is quite a heist. In my Co-op, you can get Hulk Hogan biscuits and Captain Slaughter bed linen for your nursery.

It is probable that you have never heard of either of these gentlemen (or of The Undertaker—who hands his opponents latex tombstones with their names on before each bout) because WWF wrestling can only be seen on Sky. Sky TV is full of those exhausting contradictions which were supposed to lead to Jerusalem. People who have Sky tend to have nothing else. Let's face it, only someone who is totally alienated from the aesthetic of the property owning democracy would ever disfigure their real estate with the Badge of Murdoch just so they could watch *The Love Boat* all over again. Both the organised left and the bourgeoisie have made a pariah of Sky and so—for perhaps the first time in history—the international lumpen proletariat has a visible cultural identity, of which the WWF is a key factor.

With the general election under way, I got very into American wrestling. Being taped three thousand miles away there seemed little chance of having to watch a swingometer or hear a celebrity endorsement (though it would be good to know which way The Undertaker swings). Of course, I haven't got Sky. I have to make do with *World Championship Wrestling* on Granada Nighttime instead. The World Championship is a cheap rip-off of the World Federation. If a wrestler appears on *Championship*, you can bet he is not available in blown plastic or on bed linen.

I was first introduced to wrestling by my English teacher. That was in the days of Mick McManus and Jackie Pallo, a straight contest between Good and Evil which went out on ITV just after *Crown Court*. It was aimed explicitly at the elderly and institutionalised. From the minute 'The Freebirds' tag wrestling team enter on *World Championship Wrestling* you know that times have changed.

The Freebirds enter in a blitz of heavy metal, accompanied by bimbos and roadies. Their leader is Michael PS Hayes a man with a long, dry vestigial perm who does a little moonwalk every time he decks the opposition—in this case, Big Josh. The crowd loves this. But when Big Josh decks Hayes, they love that too. Hayes responds by encouraging the crowd to applaud his opponent and offering to shake Big Josh's hand. Amazingly, Big Josh falls for this one and is soon back on the deck. When he gets back to his feet, he is thrown out of the ring. Both Freebirds follow him and start kicking him round before throwing him into the audience while the referee protests with theatrical ineffectuality.

Soon, The Freebirds' bimbo Lady Blossom is at the ringside trying to scratch out Josh's eyes. Then The Freebirds are declared the winners and all the anger and outrage evaporates, and the audience turns its attention to The Hardliner versus Rapmaster PM News—a blubbery

blimp whose speciality is climbing on to the top rope and divebombing his wide buttocks on to his opponent's head. Thus seated, and decked in gold like an ancient fertility idol, he shouts the illuminating phrase, 'Yo baby Yo baby Yo' at the audience and they shout it back. The commentator says, 'And the Hardliner is toast'. He also says that the Rapmaster moved like a cat. If your cat ever sits on your toast yelling 'Yo Baby' and shaking his chains, do let me know.

The spectacle of oiled fatties flying through the air and sitting on each others' heads has obvious appeal. The great rise of interest in wrestling is more or less entirely down to the fact that Vince McMahon—head of the WWF—decided to pitch it at children instead of geriatrics. He encouraged the wrestlers to dress up like comic book superheroes and grafted on the MTV rock and rap presentation. The merchandising success was only a matter of time and it is interesting that the franchise on Hulk Hogan's likeness is held by Marvel.

But the most important skill a wrestler can master is the manufacture of moral outrage. The rules of wrestling really are there only to be broken. Chasing a wrestler out of the ring gives the impression that the fighter is really angry and things are getting thrillingly out of control. The reason that this is so entertaining is that the bout itself is a kind of balletic pantomime. Everybody knows they

aren't really fighting. The paradox is that when they get out of control, it looks even more camp than the 'real' fight. It's a more human, more sophisticated version of the crowds that hang around the most dangerous corners in a motor-racing circuit, hoping for a crash.

In the days of Jackie Pallo, there were good guys and bad guys. The bad guys were the pantomime dames. They cheated, wore make up and were too big for their silver boots. In the end, they always lost. Now both sides cheat, both sides strut and preen and the most marketable side wins. The contest between Good and Evil has become a formalised, spectacular but empty ritual. There is nothing riding on victory. The audience does not care who wins as long as on the way they get the chance to shout their synthetic outrage and as long as the loser is truly humiliated (there is no victory on points in wrestling).

When the last contestant swanked off the 'square circle', the *News* came on. I couldn't find the remote to switch it off with. The story was another instalment in the War of Jennifer's Ear. Where the last election had been fought out on TV, this one was fought about TV, and more specifically about the ethics of investigative journalism. There was lots of moral outrage. This I hasten to point out was about the Bennetts getting late-night phone calls, not about the little girl's ear.

Then the Bennetts appeared in person. They looked cheerful and slightly chuffed with themselves. Their questioners soon lost interest in the health service and started in with some bemused questions about how a Tory lady ended up married to a Labour man. And how the man got on with his father-in-law (a Tory of such obnoxious hue that he referred to his own granddaughter's distress as a 'sob story'). 'It doesn't bother us, John [Patten]', said Mrs Bennett, now, on thrillingly, first name terms with a minister. 'Why should it be so surprising?' And I wondered if I would be surprised if Lady Blossom up and married Big Josh instead of a Freebird, and I thought, probably not. The general election was a WCW bout without the kinky boots. ●

Both sides cheat and the most marketable side wins

Loss of faith

The Tate gallery has been hosting a retrospective on Otto Dix, a leading German artist of the interwar years. Craig Barton questions the notion that he was a political artist

Otto Dix's potted biography has usually been slotted into the familiar mould of the Weimar 'political' artist: shock of the First World War, scathing social commentary of the degenerate Weimar years, persecution by the Nazis, and final contentment in the postwar years. The Tate exhibition is comprehensive enough to raise doubts. In commemorating the centenary of his birth, the gallery has assembled an impressive overview of the artist's works, particularly his most famous works of the twenties and early thirties. Looked at as a whole, they reveal him to be engaged in a project different to that imagined by many critics.

Dix entered the First World War as an enthusiast—war was an episode to be 'experienced'. Throughout those years Dix was a detached observer of a world being torn apart. His landscapes are slashed with jagged, discontinuous lines, both the sky and the battleground below converge into continuous jarring explosions. In the middle of this was the human subject, victim of a world that was out of its control. Where soldiers are depicted, they appear crawling and insignificant while the storm rages about them.

For Dix the human subject never emerged intact. For the rest of his career, he saw the human subject as degraded and disfigured. From the end of the war to the early thirties, Dix explored several themes to express this problem.

First came what are sometimes called his 'political' pictures. The depiction of dismembered war veterans and the inclusion of contemporary political culture are often used to justify categorising

Dix as a radical artist. Yet taking Dix's work as a whole, it is apparent that he was more interested in the degeneration of the human subject rather than political commentary. His crippled war veterans provide such an example. Dix locates the source of degradation not in society, but within the subject itself.

Dix also used prostitutes as subjects. Here two themes were explored: the woman as marketable commodity, and the futility of sex and beauty before death and decay. By portraying the individual as a commodity, Dix highlighted its 'nothingness'. In the 'Sex Murder' series this is explicit. Dix depicts the mutilated body of a prostitute in circumstances which emphasise that the corpse had become no more significant than the other objects of the grim surroundings.

Several of these themes are combined in the famous Metropolis triptych completed in 1928. The centre panel represents the rich at play and Dix pays great attention to their elaborate patterned clothes. For the rich, the point of life was the search for pleasure. The costumes and poses were to suggest that for them appearance was all

human experience is represented by either mocking the attempt to stem decay through lusting after the body of another, or the allegory of confronting the body's own inevitable degeneration.

Lastly there were the 'society' portraits. Dix's growing reputation by the mid-1920s was earning the attentions of the Weimar elite. However, even these clients did not escape Dix's critical eye. The portraits approached caricature through exaggeration of their oddities. Not surprisingly, the paintings did not fulfil the self-flattery required of the bourgeois portrait and some were never displayed by their buyers.

If Dix found the human subject such a disappointment, it seemed inevitable that he would reach the point where it no longer seemed worthy of investigation. It is possible that Dix's work was running its course even before the Nazis came to power. Nevertheless, Dix's earlier works of degeneracy made him unpopular with the new regime. Paintings were confiscated and destroyed. Dix was removed from his chair at the Dresden art academy.

Dix turned to allegorical paintings, often with biblical themes, as well as landscapes. In addition, he produced several sympathetic portraits of his family which he began painting in the late twenties. Commentators have often pointed out that many paintings from this period were subtle social commentaries within the restraints of Nazi censorship. This change in direction to more asocial and ahistorical subjects also summed up the obvious disillusionment with the changes in Germany. But as is obvious from looking at Dix's career, his loss of faith was hardly new.

It was a loss of faith that was not restored by the fall of the Nazis. In fact, contrary to the usual idea that Dix's subject matter was forced on him by the Nazis, liberation brought no major change in the content of his paintings: biblical themes and landscapes predominated in his work post-1945. Dix concentrated on innovation in style rather than content. The results of this final period are not very interesting and it is no great shame that the Tate exhibition has devoted only one room to his last 20 years.

Where does the retrospective place Dix in the century's art? In his heyday, Dix stood out in a time and place rich in innovation. Yet his works are disturbing because they show a profound lack of sympathy for his subject. For the modern portrait painter, portrayal of the subject has been affected by the uncertain status of the individual itself. But while some artists saw the subject as requiring excavation to reveal its hidden 'essence', in the course of his career Dix seems to have reached the conclusion that it was hardly worth the effort. ●



'Dead Sapper at his Post', Collection: Trustees of the British Museum

and content nothing. On the left panel, crippled war veterans stare after prostitutes with one prostrate on the ground in an attempt to look up their skirts. More expensive prostitutes parade in the right panel, with the clothing of one woman suggesting the entire body as female genitalia.

The body as the object of both lust and decay came to be a growing pre-occupation for Dix. The futility of the

THE

MARXIST REVIEW OF BOOKS

James Heartfield looks at two very different approaches to historical thinking, from Francis Fukuyama and Frank Furedi

History with a capital H

Books discussed in this article include:

The End of History and the Last Man, Francis Fukuyama, Hamish Hamilton, £20 hbk

Mythical Past, Elusive Future: History and Society in an Anxious Age, Frank Furedi, Pluto Press, £35 hbk, £10.95 pbk

'People say it's the end of History, but I say we ain't out of History yet!' Captain James T Kirk of the starship Enterprise put the case against Francis Fukuyama in *Star Trek VI* for space cadets everywhere. It is a rare honour for a former adviser to the American State Department to be taken up in a box-office hit, but it is characteristic of the splash made by Fukuyama's essay on international politics after the Cold War. Back in 1989, in an article entitled 'The end of history', Fukuyama argued that History had come to an end with the collapse of the ideological challenge of communism (*National Interest*, No16, 1989). Now in his follow-up book, *The End of History and the Last Man*, he returns to his theme, and to his critics, with a meditation upon how we got to the End of History and what we can expect there.

The original thesis of the End of History is part of a debate with the traditional viewpoint of American foreign policy shaped by Henry Kissinger and Jeane Kirkpatrick. Under the traditionalists, international relations were determined by the 'balance of power', under which the Soviet Union and the United States dominated their own spheres of interest. Then American hegemony was underpinned, morally and strategically, by the Cold War. So critics of the USA were accused of aiding the enemy, while the human rights abuses of allies, like Chile's General Pinochet, could be dismissed: 'He may be a son of a bitch, but he's our son of a bitch', was Washington's unofficial attitude to third world dictators.

Fukuyama's insight was that the Soviet Union was no longer in any position to act as a foil to America's mission abroad. Castigating the pessimism of those traditionalists who thought the Cold War would go on forever, Fukuyama trumpeted the final victory of American capitalism over Soviet communism. However, in the face of new anxieties about the tensions and rivalries among

the Western powers themselves, Fukuyama's thesis has a definite apologetic intent: as we enter a new era of international instability, *The End of History* calmly expounds the inevitable triumph of the market system.

The End of History presents not one, but two versions of a Universal History that progresses inexorably towards liberal democratic capitalism. The first is a technological development, which in Fukuyama's view presupposes a market system as the only way to cope with an advanced division of labour. Identifying technological progress with capitalism is an old trick, but one that Fukuyama is obliged to set to one side as faulty. It is worth examining why.

'A true Universal History of mankind would have to be able to explain not only the broad and incremental evolutionary trends but the discontinuous and unexpected ones as well.' (p134) The view that there is no unproblematic tendency towards the future written into technology is an intuition of the conflict inherent within capitalism. But rather than address the limits that capitalism places upon the development of modern industry, Fukuyama drops his technological model of progress. In its place he favours a cultural progress, loosely modelled on the work of the nineteenth-century German idealist, GWF Hegel.

Fukuyama's Hegelianism has surprised English and European thinkers more used to a philistine pragmatism and materialism that explained social change as being so much natural instinct. But the cause of Fukuyama's idealism is all too material. Like his teacher, Allan Bloom, author of *The Closing of the American Mind*, Fukuyama is looking for a cultural model of social cohesion where the promise of material progress seems less plausible. Hegel, with his philosophy of an ideal progress fits the bill. ►

At the end of the last century Hegel enjoyed a brief revival in Britain and Germany for similar reasons. TH Green in Britain and Wilhelm Dilthey in Germany made use of Hegel's idealised version of progress as a way of disguising the way that the forward march of the capitalist economy was faltering. Hegel's conception of progress—as something larger than the market, being embodied in political and cultural institutions—served as a cover. Then the problem for Britain was America's challenge to British domination of world trade. A cultural sense of an imperial mission beyond mere trade shored up Britain's increasingly militaristic grip on the globe.

Today, Fukuyama draws on the same intellectual resources to ward off the apparent failure of the American economy. Instead of a naturalistic or technical principle of history he substitutes the Hegelian 'struggle for recognition', premised upon *Thymos*, or 'spiritedness'. This compelling need for self worth is claimed to be the governing principle of human conduct and an alternative to naturalistic explanations of history.

The cultural explanation of human history is not only an apology for American decline, it is also an apology for social division in just the same way that naturalistic explanations once were. Fukuyama rejects natural explanations of racial division, only to translate those explanations into the new language. So America's blacks are no longer genetically inferior, but 'culturally hobbled' (p238). The same approach is taken to the backward capitalist countries whose uneven development and repressive regimes are explained by an attachment to

its citizens and determining what sort of technological development is appropriate to post-Historical needs. Sounds familiar?

As for political rights for those unfortunate enough still to inhabit History, Fukuyama warns against equal recognition: 'A league of nations...would have to look more like Nato rather than the United Nations—that is, a league of truly free states brought together by their common commitment to liberal principles.' (p283) Combined with the imperative of governing the economics of the Historical world, this contempt for the political right of equal recognition among nations is a recipe for continued Western—sorry—*post-Historical* domination of the Historical (third) world.

Most radical critics of Francis Fukuyama recognise that the End of History is a formula that fixes the status quo for all time. Critics on the right have resented the way that the thing they most cherish, 'History', is drawn to a close. Left and right have responded with a Captain Kirk flourish along the lines of: History lives! Leftist Alex Callinicos even promises *The Revenge of History* in a recent book on Eastern Europe.

Frank Furedi, in his new book, *Mythical Past, Elusive Future*, explains the wrongheadedness of this approach. For Fukuyama and his critics, left and right, History has been adorned with a capital 'H'. Whether Fukuyama's Universal History has come to a close, or that of his critics soldiers on, History is treated as a power in its own right, lording it over men and women, spurring them on with new determinations. For Furedi, however, 'history too is a human construction' (p266). That is to say that the apologetic nature of Fukuyama's culmination of Universal History, as with any other History with a capital 'H', is that it degrades the role of human agency. Instead, we need 'historical thinking' that is sensitive to the possibility of change.

Furedi's starting point is the debates about the need for an inspirational History that are currently raging in all the major Western nations. Treating each in turn, from the German debate about the fascist legacy to British anxieties about the corrosive effect of multiculturalism in our schools, Furedi draws out the common link. All the major Western powers are suffering from a demand for tradition. Uncertain relations between the powers emphasise the shared need for a History that can serve as a source of affirmation. At the same time, Germany's desire to downplay its disreputable past, in order to walk tall again in the world, sits uneasily with a declining Britain's desire to relive the glories of the Second World War.

Through this critique of History, Furedi gets an unusual angle on the debate raging between relativists and traditionalists. While relativists call for the recognition of the cultures and histories of the oppressed, traditionalists see this as compromising the coherence of the host culture, insisting, as in Britain for example, that children are taught British history over those of other countries. Rather than accept the simple counterposition of these two outlooks, *Mythical Past* seeks to uncover their origins.

The absolute values sought by the traditionalists, Furedi argues, suffered a near fatal blow in the Second World War. The widespread association of capitalism first with slump, then militarism and finally the Holocaust was

Left and right have responded with a Captain Kirk flourish along the lines of: History lives!

'totalistic' religions like Islam (p217). Where once the pseudo-science of eugenics would explain human behaviour by reference to natural factors, like your thyroids, Fukuyama prefers *Thymos*. Both explanations serve to mystify society, putting its problems beyond the intervention of human reason.

The apologetic intent of Fukuyama's cultural version of a Universalistic History is clearest in his division of the world between the Historical and Post-Historical nations. The former remain caught in the ideological struggles that precede the final ascent of liberal capitalism in the latter. This is a new version of the old East-West divide between the 'civilised' and the 'uncivilised' countries.

While the ideological conflicts between East and West are finished, the remaining conflict between Historical and Post-Historical societies is alarmingly reminiscent of what went before. Fukuyama counsels solidarity in the post-Historical world against the Historical societies, envisaging conflicts around oil, immigration and 'unregulated technological proliferation' (p278). In other words, the post-Historical world will need to force the Historical world to surrender its natural resources, while excluding

FA Hayek

Prophet and loss

Friedrich Hayek, defender of the free market faith through the long years of Keynesian orthodoxy, died on 23 March 1992, having lived to see the fruits of his ideology, East and West. Hayek's most famous book, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), made the case for unalloyed capitalism when everybody in his adopted British homeland thought that only state management could overcome the chaos of the free market. Now Hayek is celebrated by Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher, as the 'slayer of the sacred cows' of state socialism.

The background to *Road to Serfdom* is the utter discrediting of capitalism in the years of depression and war. Hayek's chief antagonist in economic thinking, John Maynard Keynes, rose to prominence by counselling state-directed investment to overcome the anarchy of the market place, finding a ready audience at a time when the status of the free market was at an all time low.

When Winston Churchill fought the 1945 general election on a platform that drew upon *The Road to Serfdom*, his Labour opponent, Clement Attlee, made a withering reference to 'the Austrian Professor Friedrich August Von Hayek', and won the election by a landslide. Attlee was implying that the free market was an alien system in Britain, its birthplace, and, worse still, the British people agreed with him.

Hayek's apparently quixotic stand upon a market so free that even the currency was privatised had a long-term significance. Hayek understood instinctively that you cannot save capitalism by apologising for it. Taking on board the doubts about the

market, as Keynes had done, could only promote challenges to the system while paralysing its supporters with a corrosive scepticism. Above all, Hayek sought to break the identification of the market with fascism, stressing that Nazism was just another form of state socialism.

While Keynesian economics better described the piecemeal measures needed to keep capitalism going in its monopoly phase, Hayek's free market rhetoric was closer to the soul of the system.

Hayek's moment came with the collapse of Keynesian economics in the recession of the seventies. Panicked by the failure of the Keynesian orthodoxy, the establishment was looking for something to take its place. Hayek's anti-statist polemic shifted the blame for the crisis away from capitalism and on to the Keynesian policies that had served as a crutch for the system in the postwar period. In particular, trade unions could be blamed for unemployment as their 'monopoly' was held to have priced workers out of a job. Hayek's formula fitted the need to blame the workers for the crisis and make them pay for it by reducing welfare commitments and forcing down wages—all in the name of the free market.

Attacking the Keynesian orthodoxy became a focus for attacking the trade unions as they hung on to the old postwar set-up. 'There will be no more urgent need than to erect new defences against the onslaughts of popular Keynesianism', wrote Hayek in 1975, anticipating the Tory struggle to 'curb trade union power'.

Like many right wingers ►

a massive defeat for all those who wished to promote the values of capitalist society. Nationalism was considered dangerous and the free market an anachronism. Throughout the Western world, ruling elites clawed back their authority only by affecting to take on board the criticisms of their system.

Dressed in the clothes of pluralism and social democracy, the capitalist class presented itself as steering a course between the systems of communism and fascism, left and right. However, useful as this more modest self-image was in the postwar years, it stored up problems for the future. A reliance on state intervention encouraged new social demands, while suggesting that capitalism was inherently imperfect. More pointedly, pluralist politics eschewed one dominant point of view, compromising the authority of the powers that be. As Füredi points out, pluralism laid the basis for today's relativists, while the reaction against relativism is the principal motivation for the recasting of national histories.

Having set out the basis of the disagreement between traditionalists and relativists, Füredi then indicates their common ground. Looking at the growth of local history among both relativists and traditionalists, he argues that both sides of the debate treat History as a source of affirmation or identity, in a way that can only hypostasise History into something greater than mankind. Who we are becomes a given, shaped by the patterns of behaviour handed down from the past. Whether it is black History, labour History or British History, the point of agreement is that the past must dictate the future.

Füredi does not argue for a collective amnesia, however, but rather that in place of an affirmative History with its capital 'H' we need 'historical thinking'. By this he means a sense of history that emphasises its human centredness and its potential for change. This is to adopt Heraclitus' motto: 'Nothing permanent, but change', or to say 'don't ask me where I'm from, ask me where I'm going'.

In many ways this concluding point of the book seems the most tenuous, and necessarily so. For, although Füredi sets out all the elements of historical thinking—reason, human potentiality and change, as against tradition—he argues these points against the grain. What Füredi calls the 'closure of the historical imagination'—the apparent exhaustion of viable alternatives to capitalist society—reinforces the sense of futility so corrosive of the case for change.

It is in consideration of the practical limitations upon a voluntaristic leap into historical thinking that Füredi sets out a programme for a critique of History. In doing so, he does not challenge the overhauling of traditional Histories on their own terms, as is done with the left's discovery of alternative Histories. Rather, the project fixes upon the need for tradition felt by societies that have exhausted their progressive potential. The emphasis upon tradition as a cohering factor in society indicates the social conflicts that threaten to revolutionise the status quo. By drawing out the trajectory of national History as the attempted self-identity of capitalist society, *Mythical Past* lays the basis for the intellectual challenge to that identity, as a prelude to the practical challenge to that society.

who favoured a naked promotion of capitalist interests, Hayek grew less interested in the sort of democratic rhetoric that had informed his earlier campaigns against state interference in the rights of private property. He complained of the 'politician, acting on a modified Keynesian maxim that in the long run we are all out of office' (*New Studies*, 1978, p223). Democracy was worthless unless it was circumscribed by the market: 'I must confess to preferring non-democratic government under the law to unlimited (and therefore essentially lawless) government.' (*New Studies*, p154).

As Hayek's own version of public policy became the norm under the Tories, he was less given to the liberal, even Enlightenment arguments that he had turned against 'state socialism'. The rationality that he embraced was always individual rationality, since knowledge of the whole of society was impossible according to Hayek. But by the time of his final book, *The Fatal Conceit*, rationality itself was subordinated to tradition. Even the 'methodological individualism' he had adopted earlier was set aside, as the individual only existed through traditional society.

Hayek was one of the few intellectuals produced by the right in the whole of the twentieth century. His main point was that the only defensible capitalism was an unapologetic capitalism. Looking at the consequences of the market today—recession in the West, social collapse in the East—and looking at the extent to which Hayek's own eventual recognition that capitalism is incompatible with rationality and democracy has been borne out, the need for an equally unapologetic anti-capitalism has never been more clear.

James Heartfield

Out of the Ghetto: Joe Jacobs, Phoenix Press, £9 pbk

Lessons for the left

When you pick up this book, don't expect a literary masterpiece. This is the story of Joe Jacobs in his own words. It is overlong, often repetitive and sometimes rambling. It is also compulsive and exasperating at the same time.

Out of the Ghetto is the story of a young Jewish militant in the Stepney branch of the Communist Party of Great Britain in the 1930s. Through Joe's recollections, we relive the confusion he experienced being on the receiving end of the political betrayals of the Communist Party.

After a decade out of print, this new edition is timely. In a period of working class retreat this story of solidarity, courage and contempt for the bosses is salutary. The disdain for the forces of law and order should be read especially by those anti-racists today who spend their time appealing to the state to do something about fighting racism.

It has long been assumed on the left that the Communist Party organised the defence of the East End against Oswald Mosley's fascist blackshirts on 4 October 1936—in what has become known as 'The Battle of Cable Street'. Far from it. True, Joe and the young activists in Stepney were in the forefront. But half their energy was devoted to preventing their own leadership from organising a diversion.

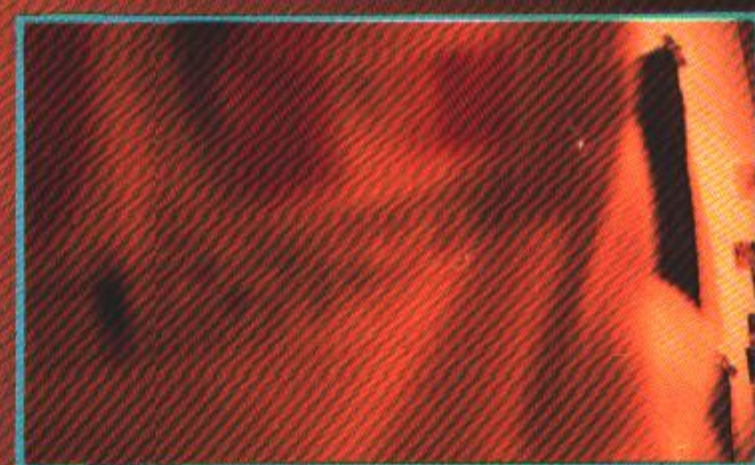
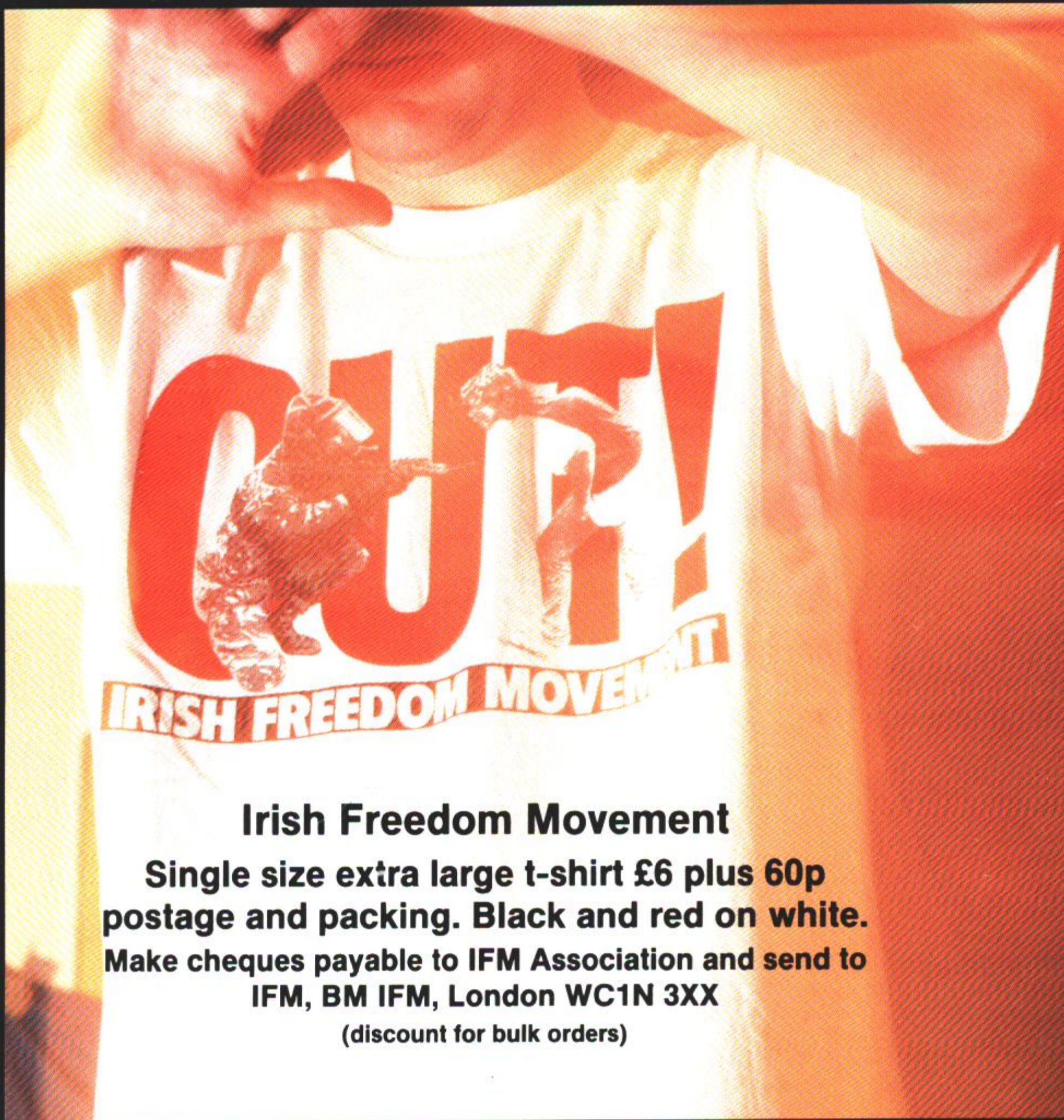
The Central Committee wanted to hold a rally against fascism in Spain at the same time far away in Trafalgar Square! This craven tactic

was better suited to keeping in with church leaders and parliamentarians than street fighting. Only at the last moment did the line change—and out of pragmatism rather than conviction, as the leadership sensed that the party could not be absent from what was going to be a popular struggle.

The most powerful episode in the book is the scene of the attempted eviction. In this terrible decade, thousands of families were dumped on the streets if they couldn't organise a moonlight flit first. Jacobs tells the story of how he and his comrades physically stopped the eviction by bailiffs of a known British Union of Fascists sympathiser. Jacobs says there was no sympathy for the fascist. His political outlook would be dealt with by the working class and the working class alone. The point was that no interference in the lives of working class people would be tolerated.

In the 1970s the British left went one better than the Communist Party in the 1930s. When called upon to defend the East End from the far right, it decided to boogie with bishops in Brixton's Brockwell Park. In the 1990s it makes no pretence of organising the working class to defend itself—but instead invites the state to pursue evictions and sackings. Well Joe, I should say that it's to this that we say 'never again!'

Alan Harding



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