LIVING MARXISM

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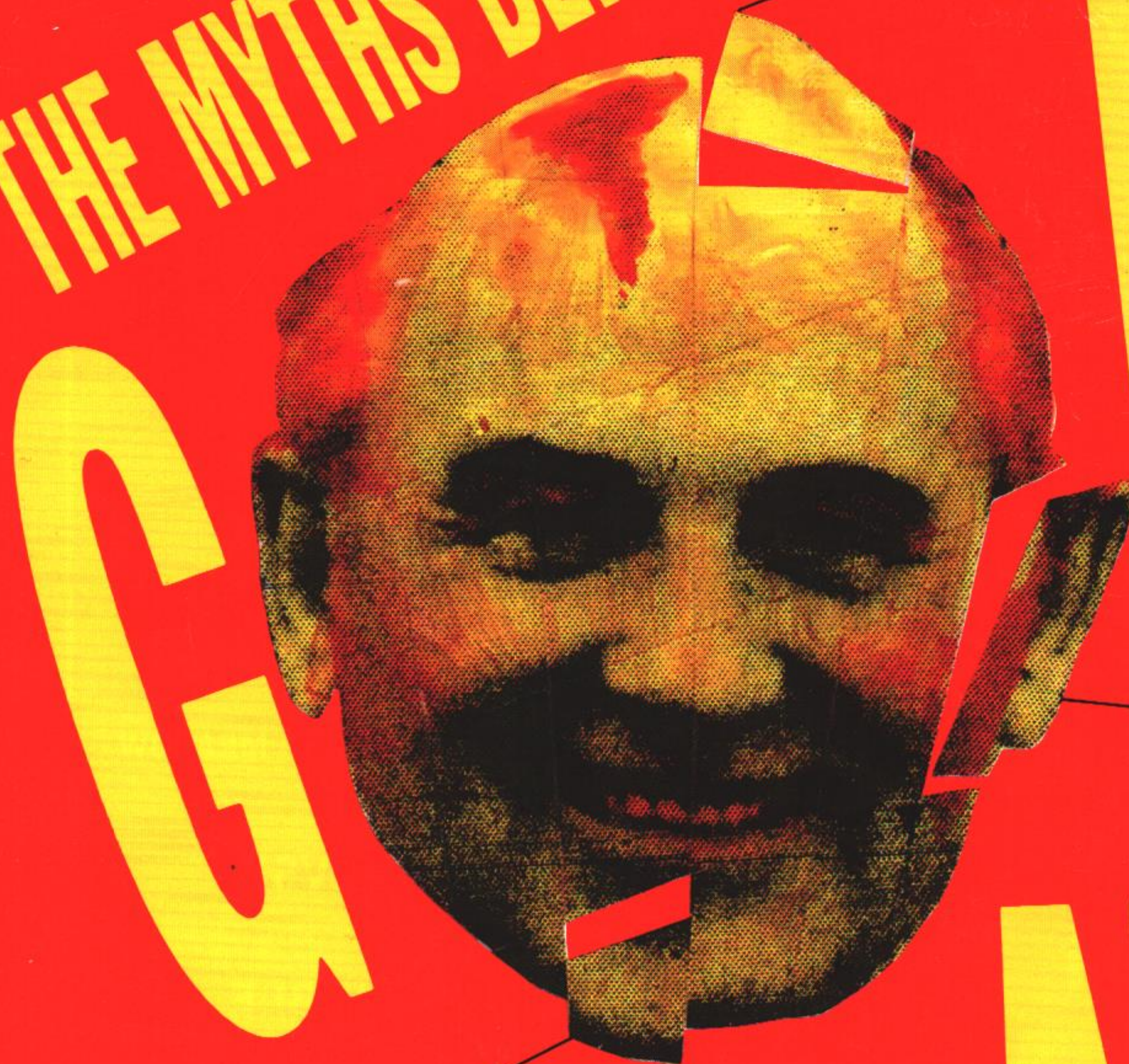
THE MYTHS BEHIND GORBY MANIA!



AFTER HILLSBOROUGH:

THE POLL–56% blame police or government

THE POLITICS–hooliganism is nothing to panic about

What is world music?

Has Glasgow gone yuppie?

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RUSSIAN CLASSICS

BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN

STRIKE

OCTOBER

TIME IN THE SUN/BEZHIN MEADOW

ALEXANDER NEVSKY

IVAN THE TERRIBLE

THE BOYARS' PLOT

MOTHER

END OF ST. PETERSBURG

STORM OVER ASIA

FALL OF THE ROMANOFF DYNASTY (DOCUMENTARY)

TEN DAYS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD (DOCUMENTARY)

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themes

Gorbymania

Margaret Thatcher praises him, Labour leaders love him, crowds mob him, the media treat his wife like Princess Di. Mikhail Gorbachev is everybody's man of the moment in the West today. For those who think it all sounds too good to be true, we devote most of this month's *Living Marxism* to examining what Gorbachev truly represents at home and abroad.

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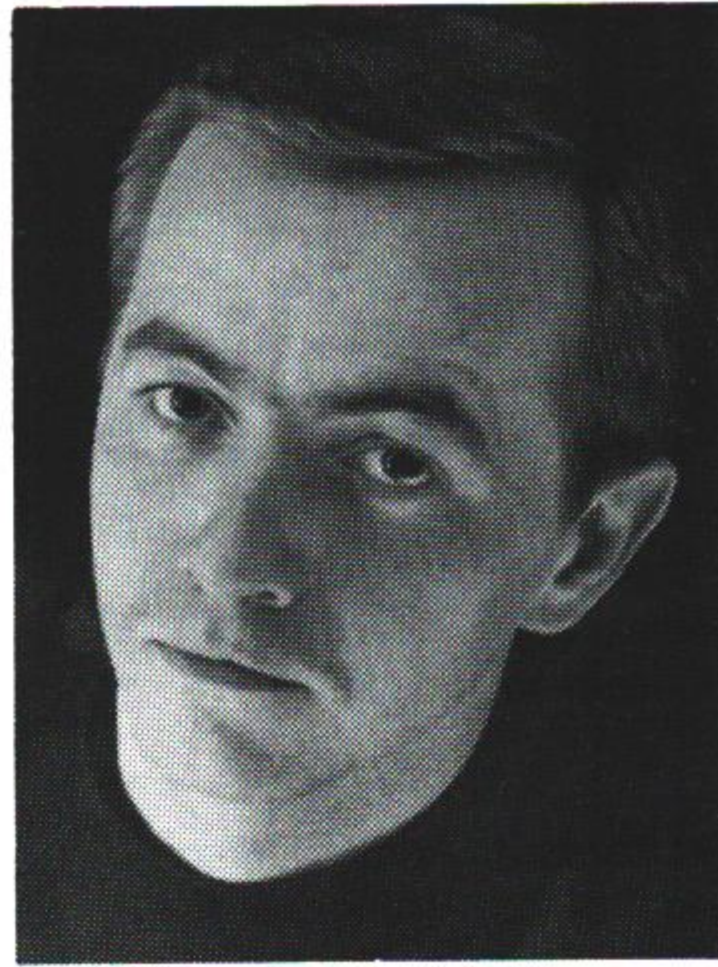
Red Terror is out of fashion this summer; Blue Terror is in.

'The Marxists always said they would bury us, but we are burying the Marxists.'



MICK HUME: EDITOR

WE ARE TALKING TERROR

Margaret Thatcher liked the intimidatory ring of this line so much that she repeated it in every one of her interminable tenth anniversary interviews last month. Teeth grinding like a spade on graveyard gravel, she was not speaking metaphorically.

Thatcher was doing more than pass judgement on Gorbachev's perestroika. Everything she says is primarily for our benefit. When she boasts about burying Marxism, she tells us that the political boot is now on the right foot in Britain as well, and warns us that the capitalists mean to have things all their own way here.

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Marx never said he would bury anybody. What he said was that capitalism had created its own gravediggers—the working class. These are the people whom Thatcher was threatening with the wooden overcoat. She has already dug a decent-sized hole.

Today we cannot run a legal strike under anti-union laws. We cannot protest without police permission under the Public Order Act. We cannot vote without paying the poll tax. We cannot reveal anything the government does without risking jail under the new Official Secrets Act. We cannot claim benefits without getting the third degree and an offer we can't refuse: to work for £10 a week under the social security rules. And we won't be able to watch football without signing up for a computerised surveillance scheme under the ID card law.

All of this and more the authorities have done to discipline and demoralise people in a situation where they have faced little organised opposition. How far will the government go when it does confront some serious resistance?

Terror is always implicit in the actions of the ruling class and the state today. It is the thing which ultimately holds capitalist society together. It is not the strength of Thatcher's personality which persuades angry people to put up with unpopular policies. It is the strength of those who stand behind her: the police chiefs, the judges, the prison governors, the generals, the civil service mandarins, and the armies they command.

Of course, the authorities assure us that they never start trouble. They only respond to the violence of others. So when riot police batter strikers, they are not dealing out brutality to defend the employers, they are dealing with picket line bully boys and defending the right to work.

When they occupy an inner-city estate they are not oppressing a community to keep an archaic social order intact, they are suppressing a riot to protect elderly residents. When the SAS shoots unarmed Irish republicans, it is not executing the political enemies of the state, it is engaging in a gun battle with the men of violence.

The Thatcherites now have a criminalising label for anybody who steps out of line: hooligan, rural rioter (a young white male), mugger, drug pusher (a young black one), skiving scroungers (the unemployed), industry-wreckers (they want a pay rise), irresponsible parent (she wants to escape the kitchen), murderer (she wants an abortion), suspected terrorist (an Irish or Arab immigrant), passport-forging polygamist (an Asian one), Aids time-bomb (a homosexual), enemy within (anybody at all).

And once the label is around your neck, you know you are on the conveyor belt to the chopping block.

The authorities have a hypocritical attitude to violence. It is all a question of whose hand is swinging the cosh, squeezing the trigger, twisting the knife. So police charged with beating up pickets outside Rupert Murdoch's Wapping plant

can be let off, without ever being detained, because they are adjudged to have suffered enough waiting for the case to come to trial. But let the men held at Risley remand centre for long months on end awaiting trial smash their cells and scale the roof in frustration, and they are branded as violent criminals.

The irony is that, at a time when the British state is using political violence and victimisation on a scale unseen in modern times, all of the debate among media and academic experts is about the problem of Red Terror in the Soviet Union.

●

Western governments have an old habit of waving their arms around and shouting about human rights in the Soviet Union to distract attention from the rights their own feet are stamping on. This tactic has helped America, home of the lynch-mob and the Oliver North school of diplomacy, and Britain, mother of the concentration camp and, in Ireland, keeper of the oldest colony in the Western world, to look like peace-loving democracies. The West has asserted its innocence by finding the Soviets guilty.

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Today this tired line of defence is being reinvigorated by the Soviet new thinkers. Under glasnost, Soviet and East European intellectuals have rushed to agree that the Russian Revolution of 1917 was a mistake, and that the Red Terror imposed soon afterwards started the degeneration of Soviet society.

British conservatives have seized upon this development in hypocritical style, as proof that subversion is the source of all violence. Terror, announced right-wing columnist Mary Kenny last month, is a method which has characterised every radical movement from the French Revolution of 1789 through the Russian Revolution of 1917 to those struggling 'in the name of liberation today'. She defines it thus: 'Kill one; frighten ten thousand.'

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Perhaps Kenny prefers her terror statistics to be calculated on the grander scale used by the Western powers: wipe out a Vietnamese village, torpedo an Argentinian cruiser, open fire on an Irish civil rights march, bomb a Libyan city. Do whatever you think necessary to frighten, not ten thousand, but the oppressed millions of the third world.

We have no need to be defensive when our violent rulers accuse the working class or a third world state of causing trouble. Nobody with a mind likes violence, or would back it for its own sake. But people have always had to struggle against the system for their living standards and their dignity.

When we are faced with a state which denies us these things through legal and policing powers, what is the alternative to forceful and, where necessary, illegal resistance? It is to accept defeat without a struggle.

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The Red Terror we hear so much about in current discussions of the Russian Revolution was introduced when the Bolsheviks were faced with just such a choice; fight or lose all. They used repression, certainly; not to keep down the masses, but to defeat the capitalist minority and the Western powers' armies which were trying to put the exploiters back in power.

Leon Trotsky, commander of the Red Army, did not become a Marxist because he wanted to spend more than two years living on an armoured train and fighting a running battle across the Soviet Union. He became a Marxist because he wanted to free himself and humanity from the threat of violence, poverty and oppression. But in a world dominated by a cut-throat class, such aims cannot be achieved in an academic's study or a polling booth. After 1917, the precondition for progress was the defeat of the Western-backed armies which had launched the civil war.

As Frank Richards argues elsewhere in this issue, the subsequent Stalinisation of Soviet society is not an argument against fighting in the first place. Instead, the Red Army's victory over imperialism, against overwhelming odds, remains a source of inspiration showing what can be achieved if people are unwilling to bow to the powers that be.

Many in Britain today are intimidated by the combination of state repression and the propaganda which brands all opponents of the authorities as violent criminals. But despite the Tories' tough talk, the working class still has the strength of numbers on its side. We got a glimpse of how much the state fears popular resistance in the aftermath of Hillsborough. The police are cocky enough about herding and caging a few thousand football fans. But when the whole of Liverpool erupted in anger at the accusations of drunken debauchery made by South Yorkshire police, the Merseyside Force issued an unprecedented criticism of its colleagues in Sheffield—because it knew it could not cope with a city full of people if they turned against the police.

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Let us adopt an attitude to terror which is as selective as Thatcher's, and judge it according to who is doing what to whom and why. We should condemn force used to protect the privileges of a capitalist minority, and force used to protect the power of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. But the forceful resistance of people fighting for their liberation or their livelihoods is an entirely different matter.

The only way Thatcher can bury the working class is if we lie down and allow her to. If we stand up for ourselves, we will find that reports of our death have been greatly exaggerated.

'For the authorities, it is all a question of whose hand is swinging the cosh, squeezing the trigger, twisting the knife'

On Saturday 15 April 1989, 95 people were killed when Liverpool fans were crushed in the wire cages at the Leppings Lane end of Hillsborough stadium, during the FA Cup semi-final against Nottingham Forest.

In this magazine's opinion, the primary responsibility for the Hillsborough deaths lies with the Conservative government and the police.

With the assistance of the media, the Tories have witch-hunted football supporters as hooligans. The police have translated the government's attitude into action, treating the football season as a nine-month long riot, and all but imposing martial law at every big game.

Hillsborough happened because of this policy of treating those who stand on the terraces as a public order problem. Just as the police tried to stop the Liverpool fans escaping from the cage at Hillsborough, so we should not allow the authorities to escape the blame for the carnage.

Here we reprint the results of our nationwide Hillsborough poll. On the pages that follow, we enter the post-Hillsborough debate about football hooliganism, and give a fans-eye account of the treatment away supporters get in 1989.

We welcome further contributions to the discussion.

Who you blamed

In the aftermath of Hillsborough, an overall majority of people held either the police or the government responsible for the deaths. That is the result of a nationwide survey of more than 1000 people, conducted by *Living Marxism*.

Asked whom they blamed most for the tragedy, more than twice as many people named the police as any other body. And both the Football Association and the government scored higher on the guilt register than did the Liverpool fans themselves.

The same pattern of anti-authority responses was evident when we asked which factor you thought contributed most to the deaths on the day. A third of respondents named the security cages (erected by Sheffield Wednesday FC on police instructions). A quarter named the ticket allocation which packed Liverpool fans into the smaller Leppings Lane end (a decision made by the FA on police instructions). One in five named police tactics on the day (from the panic decision to open the gate, to the order which lined officers up in riot formation on the pitch while people lay dying around them). Taken together, these three factors were picked out by more than three quarters of those interviewed. Just 10.9 per cent blamed the fans' behaviour.

The most dramatic results came when we asked how you reacted to the scandalous police and gutter press accusations about the fans being drunk, urinating, stealing and so on. Half believed none of them; almost all of the rest believed 'few' of the accusations. A mighty 1.3 per cent believed every word that the police uttered and the *Sun* printed.

And just as our poll shows public revulsion at these slurs, so it reflects a shift of opinion against the government's plan to introduce a compulsory membership card scheme at football ground turnstiles. In the light of Hillsborough, those who said they strongly disagreed with the scheme outnumbered its strong supporters almost four to one. Those who either agreed or disagreed with the government 'on balance' were evenly matched; but adding the categories together, there was a clear majority of almost two thirds opposed to the Tory ID cards.

Lastly, we asked whether you thought hooliganism or the policing measures introduced to counter it were a bigger problem with football today. A clear majority said hooliganism was worse than, or at least as bad as, the high-profile policing. No doubt at any time other than the week following Hillsborough, the majority picking hooliganism would have been much bigger. This confirms the success of the Tory propaganda campaign about hooliganism in influencing public opinion, which could have long-term consequences after the anger over Hillsborough has abated. These attitudes are addressed over the page.

Nevertheless, the overall results of our poll show the instinctive anger at the authorities and support for the fans which Hillsborough provoked, despite the best efforts of the police and the press.

A final aside on the age factor. Younger people are more likely to go to football matches today, and to be confronted by the newly militarised police force in their day-to-day lives. Thus they were generally the most likely to blame the police for Hillsborough and to side unequivocally with the fans. Look at the proportion of each age group which picked out either the police or the fans as being most responsible for the disaster:

Age	Blamed police	Blamed fans
16 to 20:	48%	10%
21 to 25:	45%	10%
26 to 35:	39%	14%
36 to 45:	32%	23%
Over-45s	22%	37%

Even at its worst, the figures show that in the immediate aftermath of Hillsborough, the anti-fan feeling never reached the heights of hostility to the police.

THE HILLSBOROUGH POLL

1. Which of these do you believe was most to blame for the Hillsborough disaster?

The government	16.2%
The police	40.3%
The Football Association	17.6%
Sheffield Wednesday FC	3.3%
Liverpool fans	15.3%
Don't know/can't single one out	7.4%

2. Which factor do you think contributed most to the deaths on the day?

Ticket allocation	25.0%
Security pens	33.0%
Police tactics	20.2%
Fans' behaviour	10.9%
Lack of medical equipment	3.9%
Other	6.9%

3. What was your reaction when the police and newspapers accused Liverpool fans of being drunk and disorderly, robbing the dead, etc?

Believed all of the accusations	1.3%
Believed most of the accusations	5.9%
Believed few of the accusations	41.1%
Believed none of the accusations	50.5%
Don't know	1.2%

4. In the aftermath of Hillsborough, do you agree or disagree with the government's plan to make football ID cards compulsory?

Agree strongly	11.4%
Agree on balance	22.9%
Disagree strongly	42.5%
Disagree on balance	21.7%
Don't know	1.6%

5. Which do you think is a bigger problem with football today: hooliganism, or the policing methods and security measures introduced to counter it?

Hooliganism	44.2%
Policing/security measures	38.7%
Don't know/both	16.9%

PANDORA ANDERSON

The politics

Don't panic about hooliganism

Mick Hume looks at the problems raised for us all by the post-Hillsborough debate

The initial reaction to the carnage at Hillsborough is well-captured in the *Living Marxism* survey. There was a high degree of hostility to the police (for all sorts of reasons, but healthy nonetheless). A significant and more political section of opinion blamed the government. Others took a more introspective view of the problems and accused the Football Association. And an encouragingly small minority turned on the fans themselves.

Then the mood changed, at least so far as the public discussion was concerned. Two main factors were involved here. First, those who were furious at what the authorities had done at Hillsborough, and at what they had said afterwards, had no way of turning their feelings into action. They could burn a couple of copies of the *Sun* in Liverpool, they could write to the papers. But what else? Nobody organised mass protests outside police stations in Sheffield, called marches down Whitehall, or got football crowds to carry banners blaming the authorities.

PANDORA ANDERSON

'Yob society'

So the angry thousands could only file through Anfield with their wreaths, watch the funerals, stand for minutes of silence, and let their fury turn into passive grief. Much of this was moving but it was far too maudlin. Meanwhile, the bishops, the *Mirror* and Jimmy Hill gave sanctimonious sermons about us all being guilty and how we needed more love in the world.

With those who wanted justice for the victims of Hillsborough deprived of an effective voice, the way was clear for the reactionaries to monopolise the discussion. This became the second factor in altering the climate.

A stream of articles and editorials in the popular, quality and football press insisted that the root cause of the tragedy was hooliganism. They railed against the 'yob society', the 'tribalism' of the fans, the 'bestial' behaviour of the 'lager generation'. They were able to exploit the fear of the football hooligan which the authorities have so successfully implanted in a large part of public opinion over the last few years, a fear which finds reflection in our survey results.

The post-Hillsborough focus on hooliganism is very dangerous. It provides the government, the police and the football bosses with a way of getting off the hook so far as the cause of the deaths is concerned. In the longer run, this focus poses a danger to us all. The hooligan panic will be used, as it has been for years, to distract attention from the real social problems we face, and to legitimise the granting of even tougher policing and legal powers.

Let's deal with these in turn.

The fanatical holy war on hooliganism run by the Tory government was the primary cause of the Hillsborough deaths. The authorities have gone to great lengths to depict all young football fans as the scum of British society; why else would they be singled out as the one group who have to carry ID cards? During one of the football hooliganism trials which collapsed last year, after revelations of police infiltrators inventing evidence, a judge told the jury that if they failed to convict the accused they would be 'handing this country to the devil'.

The police and the football bosses have followed the lead given by the government and the judges. When you convince yourself that you are dealing with the devil, you worry about bottling him up, not about whether he can breathe. This was what happened at Hillsborough, where the police acted as if they were facing a riot rather than a rescue operation, pushing fans back into the killing cages (which the club put up on police orders), threatening to arrest fans who tore up advertising hoardings for stretchers (protecting private property comes first) and so on.

That was the week

The government and police crusade against hooliganism, coupled with the football capitalists' preoccupation with executive boxes and disdain for safety on the terraces, meant that Hillsborough could have happened almost any week. As Toby Banks noted in *Living Marxism* back in February, 'The dwindling bands of supporters pay too much to stand in grounds which resemble derelict aircraft hangars....They are fenced in like cattle and treated as such by the police'. Keith Tompson's report this month on the experience of being treated like a prisoner of war will no doubt ring true with countless travelling fans. We cannot allow the revived debate about hooliganism to obscure the fact that the authorities' attitude caused the carnage in Sheffield.

There are even bigger matters at stake here. The hooliganism panic is

a political device which the government uses to get us worrying about the wrong problems in Britain today, and to encourage us to support the wrong solution—tougher policing.

What is 'the hooligan problem'? In the first place, it is greatly exaggerated. Even with all their hi-tech surveillance gear and orders to pinch anybody who swears or smells of beer, official figures show that the police only managed to arrest 2216 of the 8 065 103 people who attended English first division games in the 1987-88 season—a rate of around one in four thousand.

In the second and most important place, what trouble there is at football pales into insignificance as a social problem, compared to the threat posed by the 'security' measures introduced on the pretext of dealing with hooliganism.

At its worst, football hooliganism cannot hold a candle to state violence

Police state

Young men taking it out on each other is a constant feature of capitalist society. We live under a system which alienates people by depriving them of any real influence, power or control over their lives. It is hardly surprising that some seek to assert themselves over others through violence, to make their mark and become respected as a local 'hard man'. The peculiarly central position of football in British working class experience means that it has provided a focus for this aggression. In other countries the same things often find another outlet.

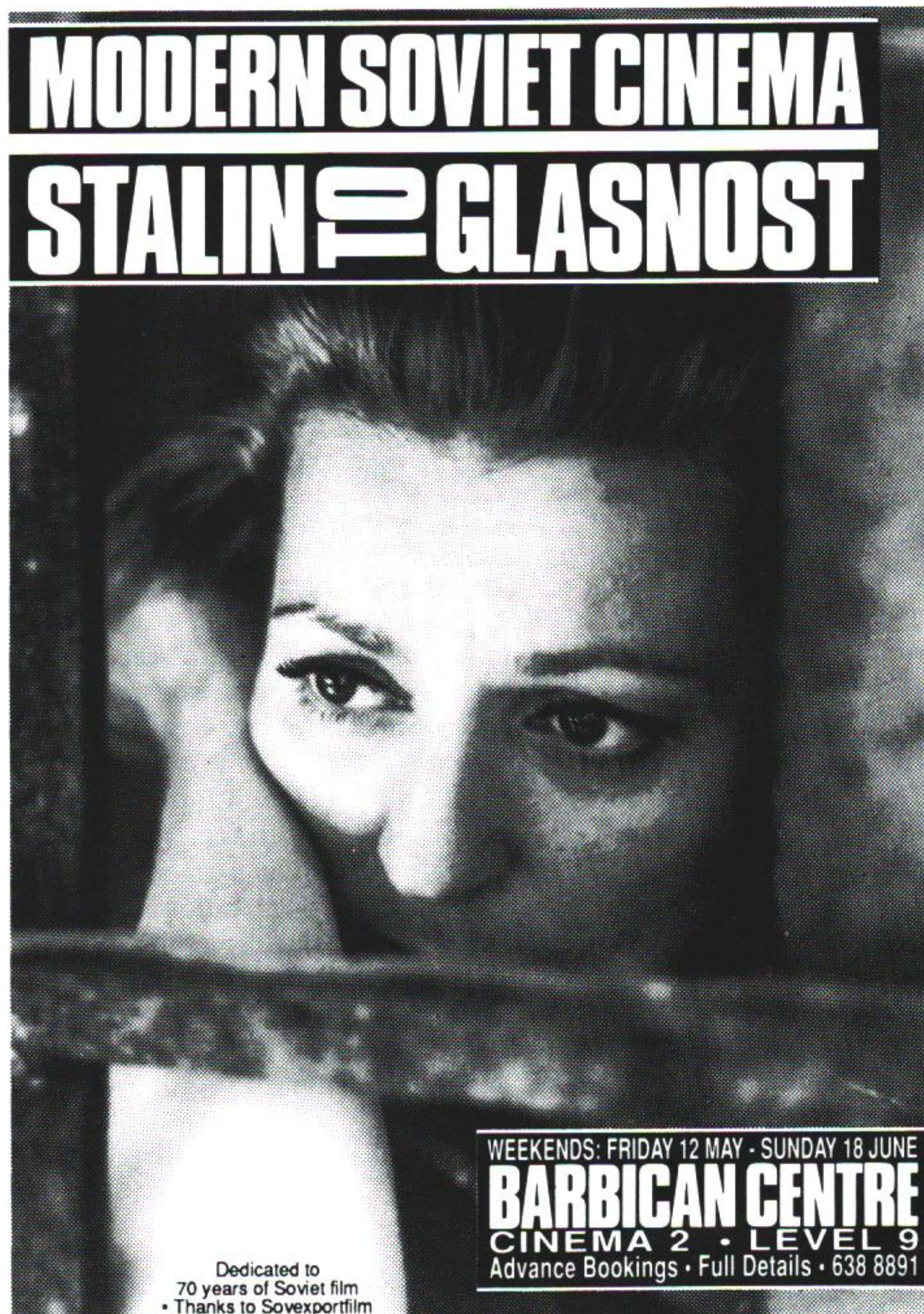
Such negatively directed aggression is certainly an indictment of a brutalising social order. But who could seriously say that it is a major threat to 'our way of life' in the way that the authorities make out? Which civilisation was ever brought down by the boorish behaviour of boys on a Saturday afternoon? Many a society has been reduced to barbarism, however, by the organised introduction of the methods of the police state. And these are the methods, from nationwide dawn raids to military-style crowd control, which the British authorities are now bringing in, bit by bit, under cover of the anti-hooligan crusade.

Even at its worst, football hooliganism cannot hold a candle to state violence as an issue that should concern us. The Tories often cite the Heysel stadium riot of 1985, when a charge by Liverpool fans left 39 Italians dead, as the prime example of the problem. Yet those who shouted 'kill the wops' as they stormed across the terraces were voicing the anti-foreign chauvinism which is official government policy. The uniformed thugs of the British army put those sentiments into practice from the South Atlantic to Northern Ireland, with far more devastating consequences than their civilian imitators at Heysel.

Or look at South Africa. In that most violent of capitalist societies, there is trouble at football matches which would make a hardened British hooligan turn tail and run. But if you were to suggest that this is a bigger problem than the systematic terror perpetrated by the apartheid state machine, you would be laughed down, and rightly so. There is a lesson there for Britain.

The threat to our liberties comes from the growing power of the state. The policing weapons and techniques used at football today are on a trial run, getting ready for when the government needs to use them against the people it truly regards as public enemy number one—its political opponents in the working class. That's why combating all of the panic propaganda about football hooliganism, and pointing to where the real problem lies, is our major concern in the post-Hillsborough debate.

The immediate reaction to Hillsborough showed that there is an audience for these arguments. As our survey confirmed, contrary to a widely held prejudice, working class people do not believe all that they read in the *Sun*.



PANDORA ANDERSON

A gang of Millwall fans at the Den

Speaking up for supporters

Andy Lyons, editor of *When Saturday Comes,* the biggest national football fanzine.

'The deaths of 95 people at Hillsborough were not just another tragic accident. They were a predictable consequence of the fact that the people who run English football have lurched from one crisis to another without developing a rational approach to any specific problem.

For the sake of curbing the violent excesses of a small minority, the police choose to regard all fans as one disruptive mass of potential troublemakers. The result is that both sides are deeply suspicious of one another's intentions, which precludes their working effectively together to ensure that a Saturday afternoon spent watching a football match is able to pass off peacefully.

The government retains a similarly simplistic belief in the punitive approach, as exemplified by the identity card scheme, which will serve only to drastically reduce the number of people prepared to attend matches. The general principle involved seems to be to remove football from its position as a staple part of the national culture.

The football authorities and those who derive personal prestige from holding positions of power within the 92 League clubs actively distance themselves from the mass of the game's followers, and make no attempt to listen to the numerous problems that confront the average spectator. We have been saying for years that grounds are unsafe and that the facilities available inside (food, toilets) are woefully inadequate, but no one pays any attention save for a short-lived superficial response generated by media attention in the wake of a crisis.

We expected a knee-jerk response and have not been disappointed.'

Rogan Taylor, of the Football Supporters Association

'Hillsborough has to be crucial. If supporters haven't paid the price now for the consultation and involvement that their role already required, then the game's not worth the candle. The administration of the game has utterly failed it. The football league is six Marks & Spencers and 86 corner shops. Getting an outfit like that to work is not easy. Administrators have failed to see the advantages of supporter involvement. Their reaction is that another voice at the table only complicates matters.

ID cards are a typically English solution—more control, more trouble, more and more control. We've seen this at grounds with policing and the closed-circuit TV and so on. But CCTV has probably been the most effective tool in dealing with crowd misbehaviour. Behaviour inside the ground has improved enormously, which is why the ID card scheme looks irrelevant.

It's impossible to discipline crowds from the outside. Self-discipline, peer group pressure, is the most effective. Whoever the men standing at the edge with the sticks are, they can't get to the middle in time. It's down to all of us, but supporter stewarding is an area which can be investigated. Football crowds behave in a heightened state, there is a kind of religiosity in the occasion, which means there will always be a need for careful control. But the accent needs to be on care for the crowd, not control for the sake of those who do the controlling.

Football is an accurate microcosm of British values. The views of the "worst elements" of the crowd—the racism, the violence, the our-patchness, those same values are displayed in the boardroom. It's just that on the terraces they are displayed more vigorously than by people who hide behind a gin and tonic.

The repressive response towards supporters is in line with other repressive responses. Decayed stadia standing in decayed urban sites, that is England. One reason why football has the power to emote as Hillsbrough has done, is because the soul of England is mirrored in this game which we gave to the world. But we are a declining power with the left-overs of a lot of very nasty behaviour. We have to struggle with the game, as we had to struggle with the nation to become civilised.

It's all plugged into the British atmosphere. In Brazil, you see people piling into a game with no segregation. You couldn't imagine more intense feeling about the game—they love to win and hate to lose. But it's sambas, everybody's on the way to having a good time. It's not teeth-gritted, I've-got-to-be-there. Let's samba a bit to the semi-final, rather than bite the bullet all the way.'

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A view from the train and the terraces

THE AWAY FAN'S TALE

Keith Tompson went to watch Arsenal play at Middlesbrough

Arsenal fan: I'm getting some brown trousers for next week's game.
Arsenal fan's mate: Why's that?
Arsenal fan: 'Cos I keep shitting myself.

This wasn't an expression of fear about the overcrowded terrace or violent rival fans, but a comment on the way Arsenal were playing, late in the game, with the score still 0-0. Arsenal had to win to keep up their championship challenge. Middlesbrough had to win to be safe from relegation. Neither side looked capable of doing it. But let's start at the beginning.

You have to get up at 7.30am on your Saturday off to catch the match-day train to Middlesbrough; at least 4000 Arsenal fans were dedicated enough to do it. The police were up early, too, squads of them surrounding King's Cross station with vicious-looking alsatians that growled through jaws dripping with slime. A tourist would have been baffled as to the reason for this display of brute force. Had a mass murderer escaped? There was nothing in the station to suggest the need for it.

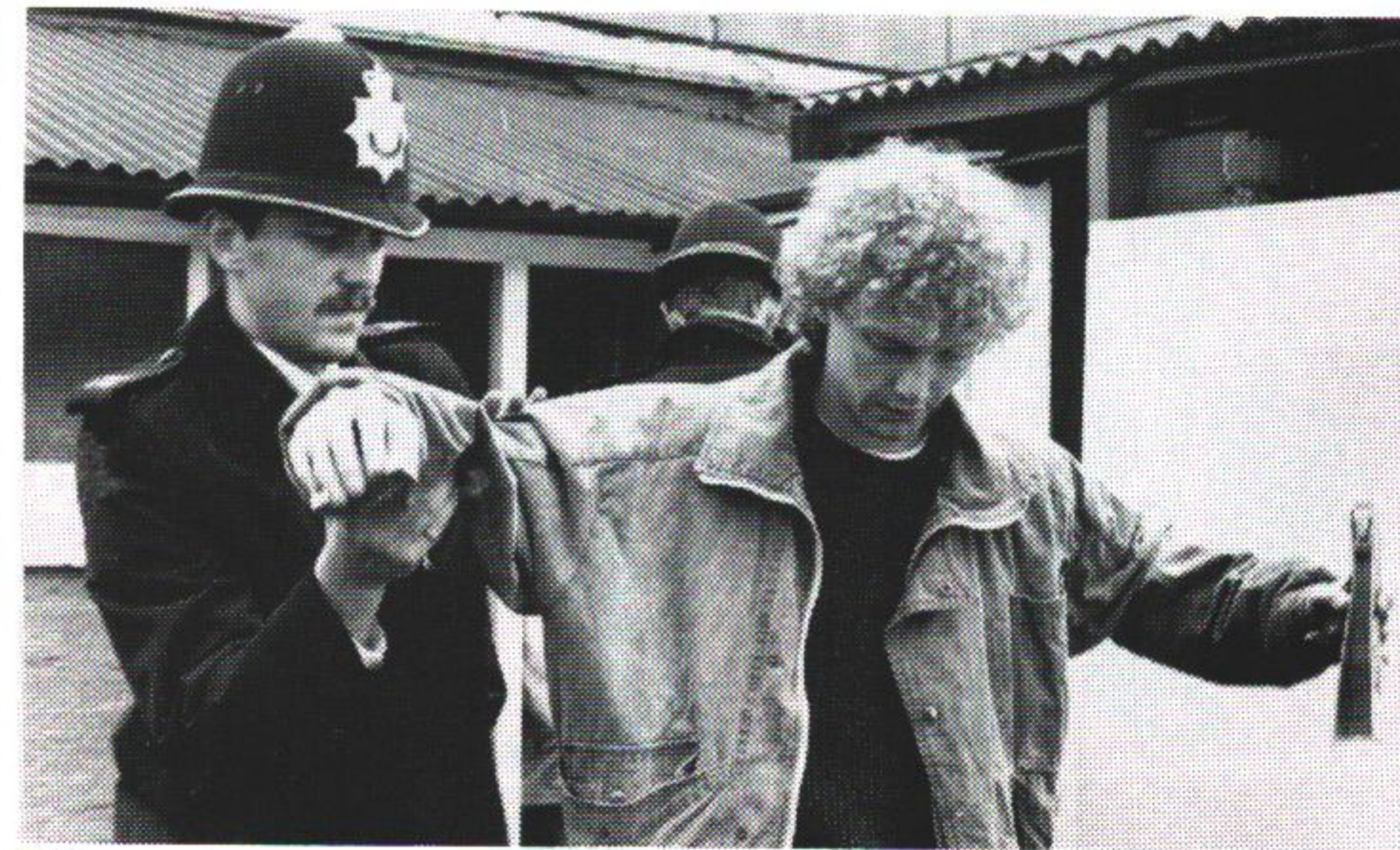
Meeting Millwall

There was one violent-looking t-shirt: 'Congratulations, you have just met Millwall'. Its owner was a 15-year old flyweight whose unimpressive frame robbed the t-shirt of its implied threat. Next to him was a big man. Hadn't he been on Kilroy last week, explaining that weighing 22 stone was no drawback in attracting a partner, because personality is what matters? I had liked him. Now I discovered that he was a Millwall fan.

Millwall were playing Newcastle. Their train was leaving half an hour before ours, so the fans were mingling. Lots of banter but no sign of the Third World War. One Millwall fan shouted 'hope you win the league'. Everything we hear about Millwall would make you suspect this was a trick to lull the police into a false sense of security. But he looked like he meant it to me.

The train left half an hour late. It took two minutes for the first police patrol to pass my seat. The guard came on the tannoy: 'This train has been declared dry. There will be no alcohol allowed.' The buffet did brisk business anyway. There wasn't much choice of sandwiches—Chinese chicken with spring onion or prawns in cocktail sauce—but the Arsenal gourmets ate three at a time, washed down with naturally carbonated Malvern water.

We changed trains at Darlington, and the boys in blue changed with us. The 'animals' all read the sports pages quietly. By 1.20 we were in Middlesbrough. The local police were waiting for us. 'Right you lot, stay here. No Arsenal fans beyond this point.' They shepherded us to the ground and stuck us behind barricades, at the visitors' entrance.



Welcome to our town

There was still an hour and a half until kick-off and the gates were still closed. Fifty police manned each side of the barricade along with mounted men with riot sticks. By 2pm the gates were open, but it was a nice afternoon and nobody wanted to crowd on to the terraces yet. But they had to. Police officers began to inspect tickets. If you had one you went in, if you hadn't you stayed put. I pretended not to have one. Most went in. An hour until kick-off with nothing to do but read the match programme. These do not normally make entertaining reading.

The Middlesbrough programme features a column by George Hardwick, who is meant to be 'provocative'. That week George managed it. He complained about all the post-Hillsborough 'mud-slinging', then chucked a big handful himself:

'I haven't heard of the real culprits being accused by either police, the press or television and there is only one group of mindless illiterate inconsiderate louts which were the unquestioned cause of the death and destruction of so many people, and those are the ones who created the necessity for those lethal barriers, the cause of death for most of those poor Liverpool fans.'

Inside, the ground was the usual ramshackle affair, all corrugated iron roofs and crumbling concrete terracing. There were only men's toilets, the women just had to wait. The visitors' terrace was stuck in a tight corner, fenced in on all sides. By 2.45 the section was nearly full but another trainful of Arsenal fans had yet to arrive. Surely, after Hillsborough, they would open the empty terraces? The stewards at the top asked us to move forward. Everybody looked at them as if they were mad. By 2.53 they were letting the others in. They would not open any more terracing. We were going to be squeezed.

The game was as boring as football legend says all Arsenal games are. The fans' minds turned to other matters. 'We hate cockneys and we hate cockneys, we are the cockney haters'. Arsenal fans gave the standard reply. One pulled out a £20 note and waved it at the Middlesbrough fans. Suddenly there was a sea of paper money; although the fact that fivers heavily outnumbered twenties suggested that most of the Arsenal boys were not quite as affluent as they wanted their rivals to believe.

Then, to the tune of 'You'll never walk alone' they sang: 'Sign on, sign on, and you know in your heart that you'll never get a job', followed by 'You poor sods, we've got wads'. The north-south jokes never stopped. One black Arsenal fan wanted to buy his tea with luncheon vouchers, another wanted a hot dog with 'loadsaonions'. It was all pretty tame, not a sign of real aggression. Arsenal scored a scrappy goal to win a poor game.

After the match the ground emptied, apart from our section. We were locked in from 4.45 until 5.30, when the police decided we could go. We had had a three and a half hour train journey, a one and a half hour wait before the match and now a 45 minute wait afterwards. In the middle of a freezing February, these after-match ordeals are unbearable. At least this was a warm May afternoon. And we had some entertainment to break the boredom.

Flare up

A high-ranking police inspector wearing medals and braiding was trying to address us through a broken megaphone. The first time he sounded like a mouse squeaking into an amplifier. The Arsenal crowd all laughed at him. He tried again. Same sound, only louder. He gave up and went to hide. The crowd cheered.

Then Lionel appeared. Nobody knew his name but some wit decided he looked like a Lionel. Lionel was the son of a Middlesbrough steward, about 15 and wearing the baggiest jeans you ever saw. They were also flared. Baggie flares. The song went up: 'Where did you get those flares, where did you get those flares...' Lionel smiled sheepishly. Cue for another song, to the tune of 'We'll support you ever more': 'Have you ever seen your shoes, have you ever seen your shoes.' It was very funny. 'Lionel Lionel give us a wave, Lionel give us a wave.' He did and got a big round of applause, just like the stars do when they wave to the fans chanting their name.

PANDORA ANDERSON

On the way back I thought about it all. Here were 4000 people. Not one stepped far out of line. They were the subject of a mighty military operation. I saw at least 500 police during the day. And this was happening around the country.

Family game

The image of these fans as 'mindless illiterate louts' is only maintained because it serves to legitimise police state methods of population control. Would people so readily accept the patrolling of trains, a ban on having a drink, the curtailing of freedom of movement, not to mention the other goodies proposed in the Football Supporters Bill, if they had not been warned about the terrible football hooligans? Football fans are a modern scapegoat for tougher policing.

The authorities blame young fans for everything and go on about making football a family game. But which family would endure the waiting and locking in and being pushed around by the police? Football is followed by die-hard young people because they are the ones who think it's worth the trouble to watch, even when it's played as badly as it was in Middlesbrough that week.

The advertising banks

IT'S ALL HUNGARIAN TO WALTER

Tony Kennedy examines why financiers are banking on adverts

Personal Pensions

ABBEY NATIONAL

Something for everybody?

'Any minute now he's going to start speaking Hungarian.' 'That's one f in preferential.' 'Remember the horse.' 'Do you want tea or coffee Walter?' If you can identify where these lines come from, you have been watching too many TV commercials. (If you've got better things to do with your evenings, they are adverts put out by Friends Provident, Midland, Lloyds and National Westminster).

Banks and financial companies offering personal credit and investment packages now seem to dominate media advertising. We are bombarded with ad-man's images of popular capitalism, claiming there is something for everybody in the wonderful world of plastic money, overdrafts, mortgages and equity plans.

The ubiquitous yuppie crops up time and again in these commercials. The model seems to be the flirtatious next-door neighbour from the Gold Blend coffee adverts/soap opera. His lookalikes have been busy asserting consumer power in one commercial after another, ever since one of them made Midland Bank managers break their pencils until they agreed to invent Vector bank accounts, complete with interest-free everything.

Pensioners, too, especially the well-off 'woopies', are now being courted by all manner of financial and investment companies. The advertisers are also after the future pensioner, promising that we can retire early and spend 30 years playing golf on the Algarve or pottering about the garden, if only we allow the Prudential to invest our money today.

Snobs and cyclists

If you are a snob, young or old, then Lloyds have signed up Crumpled of the Bailey and the revolting Charmer to bring you to the sign of the black horse for all your credit and financial needs. Aspiring Arthur Daleys and Del Boy Trotters are encouraged to take their dodgy business to the Leeds and Abbey National building societies respectively: even if you can't tell a lacrosse stick from a tennis racquet, you can send your daughter to a top private school thanks to these institutions.

An 'ordinary bloke' dining out with a woman can either ring up the TSB for an overnight overdraft if he gets caught short in a flash restaurant, or more modestly take out a Halifax Xtraloan because 'I want to take my girlfriend out for a curry'. Those with a social conscience can go to Friends Provident and Scottish Equitable, which pledge not to invest your cash in Chile, South Africa or environment-unfriendly enterprises. And the socially incompetent can join Walter the umm-err-oooing cyclist and let the local branch of Nat West make their financial decisions for them.

All of these financial ads endorse the view that society is split into classless consumer segments, defined by age, lifestyle and market requirements. No segment is more important or welcome than another. The adverts create an image of abundant choice, a financial sector catering for every whim and fancy. In promoting this image, the advertising industry has finally achieved the standards of honesty set by estate agents.

The irony is that it is now becoming *harder* to gain access to many of the services offered by the banks and other institutions. For instance, the number of mortgages on offer has halved in the past year. Robin Leigh-Pemberton, governor of the Bank of England, has appealed to the private banks to restrict consumer credit, and warned that rising interest rates could turn the recent growth in personal credit into a Latin American-style debt crisis. The banks are cracking down accordingly.

One sign of the banks' fear of a bad debt crisis is the debate over raising the limit of cheque guarantee cards from £50 to £100. Barclays, Lloyds and TSB are against the move. Unlike credit cards, cheque guarantee cards are widely available to the low and modestly-paid, enabling them to run up debts because shops cannot check their customers' credit ratings. Those banks which accept a £100 limit reserve it for wealthier customers.

The main trend is to cut back the use of the cheque guarantee method altogether. The banks are experimenting with direct debit systems which, through computer linked terminals in stores, can debit a personal account at the point of sale. Customers who have not been granted an overdraft beforehand would thus be unable to buy on a credit card. Predictably, people on lower incomes are the ones who will lose their limited access to bank credit.

Plastic money and personal investment plans are not a panacea for making individuals equally powerful as consumers. They reflect and reproduce the income and class divisions already prevalent in society. Barclays' ad for its new 'capital advantage' investment plan—'As long as you've got 10 grand to spare...'—shows that the audience it is addressing is much more select than most adverts would have us believe. The less money you have, the less chance you have of getting any more.

Advertising images aside, the banks and other institutions know that there is not a limitless supply of customers. The much-vaunted small investors have been all but absent from the stock markets since the crash of 1987; unit trust schemes launched since then have generally fared poorly. Most people have also come to the end of their credit limits; for the first time ever, outstanding personal debt has now risen to 100 per cent of after-tax incomes. As a result, half of all credit card users now pay off the full amount of their debt each month—thus avoiding interest charges and cutting out much of the banks' profits.

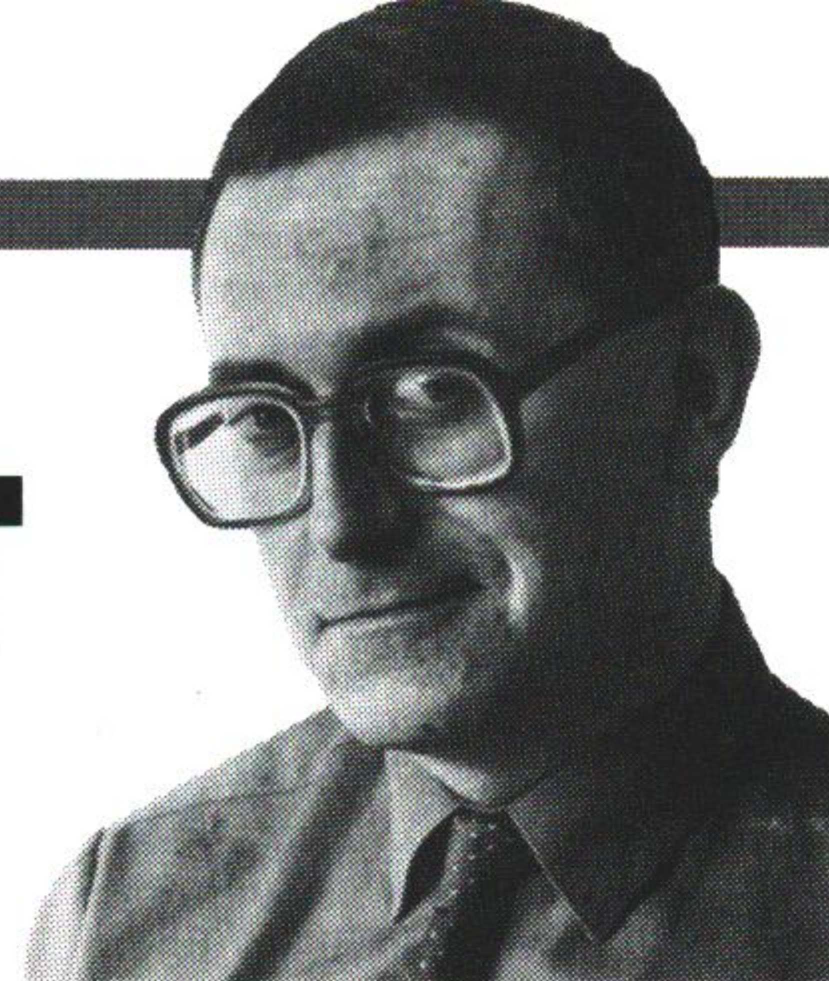
Not habit-forming

The relative dearth of individuals with the financial clout to take advantage of the more lucrative schemes has led to more intense competition to sign them up. This race to get the handful of high-earners, rather than any realistic prospect of seducing the masses, is why high-profile advertising has assumed a new importance. And since there is little to choose between the rival financial packages, the emphasis has to be on style and getting a better celebrity than your rivals. What price Madonna singing 'Material girl' for the next Nat West campaign?

After a national advertising campaign, millions of savers and borrowers voted 'yes' in the ballot on whether Abbey National should be floated on the stock exchange. But that had less to do with enthusiasm for the markets than with the offer of free shares—effectively a bribe to vote yes. Expecting these postal voters to turn up for a meeting to debate the issues and hear the result, Abbey spent £700 000 renting 42 000 seats in Wembley Arena and Stadium, hiring 500 staff and erecting three giant video screens. Less than a thousand showed up. The snack bar shifted six cokes at the worst attended and, at over £700 a head, most expensive show staged under the twin towers. The 5.6m people holding money and mortgages with Abbey had failed to get the habit from Del Boy.

Don Milligan

WINSTON SILCOTT FOR PRESIDENT



In April Winston Silcott, a black man from north London, was elected honorary president of the London School of Economics students' union. Silcott was jailed for 30 years in March 1987 after being convicted of killing PC Keith Blakelock during the police attack on the Broadwater Farm housing estate in October 1985. Many students obviously thought he was the victim of a miscarriage of justice and sought to draw public attention to his case. This they certainly did. Jack Straw, speaking for the Labour frontbench, was appalled by the students' action, Kenneth Baker thought it despicable, the college governors were horrified. Honouring a convicted killer is just not on.

Or is it? I have never noticed any queasiness on the part of the establishment when it comes to honouring killers. On the contrary, streets and squares are named after them. Their exploits are recounted as part of 'our' proud tradition of killing foreigners. Marble plaques encrust the walls of abbeys and minsters. Rearing bronze horses and men of martial aspect carved in stone are more common on our streets than public toilets. In Whitehall Earl Haig, the First World War commander who presided over the death and mutilation of millions and then launched the 'Poppy Day' appeal for disabled soldiers, sits astride his horse. At Hyde Park Corner a bronze figure camply leans on his sword and gazes up Park Lane; a gorgeous classical figure glorifying the memory of the machine-gun corps.

Bomber & Mad Mitch

Not all official killers are honoured in this Olympian way. Some are given engaging nicknames and enter national folklore as resourceful or swashbuckling iconoclasts, prepared to buck the system to get the job done. In the 1940s 'Bomber' Harris arranged for Bomber Command to burn German civilians alive. On good nights old 'Bomber' could fry up to 150 000 men, women and children. Mad Mitch was another real 'character'. In the sixties Lieutenant Colonel Mitchell of the Argyle & Sutherland Highlanders led his squaddies into the Crater district of Aden to torture, maim and kill the opponents of British rule. Then he went to Northern Ireland to do much the same. Then he became a Conservative MP.

Sometimes, of course, people who kill for the state go too far. They embarrass the authorities and have to be convicted of excessive zeal. But the punishment does not exactly fit the crime. In 1919 General Dyer ordered British troops to fire on an unarmed crowd at the Sikh city of Amritsar. They killed 379 and wounded 1200. A commission of inquiry 'severely censured' the general and asked for his resignation. During the Vietnam War, US Lieutenant Calley organised the killing of the entire population of the village of My Lai in 1968. Calley was charged with the murder of 109 of around 500 villagers raped and butchered in four hours. He was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment. He spent three days in jail, a bit longer under house arrest, and was then released to manage a jewellery store in Georgia.

> *'The authorities shower honours upon dutiful killers and show leniency towards over-zealous soldiers'*

I do concede that 1919 was a long time ago and Lieutenant Calley is an American, but Private Robert Reid Davidson was a serving British soldier when he shot Theresa Donaghey at Strabane in April 1980. Davidson was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to 12 months in a young offenders centre—the sentence was suspended for two years. Another young offender, Private Ian Thain, shot Thomas Reilly dead as he ran away from an army patrol in West Belfast in August 1983. Thain became the first (and only) British soldier to be convicted of murder on active service in Northern Ireland. He was sentenced to life imprisonment. But the young man's career was in good hands; two years and one month later he was released and allowed to rejoin the Army.

The authorities shower honours upon dutiful killers and show leniency towards over-zealous soldiers. That attitude, however, should not be confused with the election of Winston Silcott as an honorary president of a students' union. The killings perpetrated by politicians and military men are matters of public record. Everybody acknowledges them to be true. Indeed that is why they are honoured. Winston Silcott did not admit to the killing. No witnesses could be found to testify against him. The prosecution produced no photographs or forensic evidence. They could not even prove he was in Tottenham on the night Blakelock was killed.

Of course none of this matters. A white riot policeman was killed and the authorities had to find a black murderer. After Blakelock's death thousands of police occupied Broadwater Farm, raiding one in three homes and arresting 10 per cent of the estate's entire population—virtually every young black. This was at the end of a two-year period (1984-85) in which, a recent home office report reveals, 51 per cent of all young black men in London were arrested and tried for serious offences. In such circumstances it was not hard for the police to fit a black face into the Blakelock frame. They volunteered Silcott for the job, and threw in Mark Braithwaite and Engin Raghip for good measure—'You, you and you'. Beatings and a spot of creative writing in the police canteen at Wood Green provided the 'evidence'. A showtrial running for 44 days at the Old Bailey did the rest.

I think the students at LSE who elected Silcott president deserve a medal. By provoking the authorities in this way they have revealed the cowardly hypocrisy of their own leaders. Maeve Sherlock, leader of the National Union of Students, denounced Silcott's election and apologised to Keith Blakelock's widow. Concern for the sensibilities of the white widow was, apparently, what prompted all the hoo-ha. Those who defended Silcott's showtrial and attacked his election expected us to believe that they were motivated by sympathy for Mrs Blakelock.

Jack Straw and Maeve Sherlock seem to have forgotten that when the police and the press wanted to nail responsibility for the mayhem on Broadwater Farm on to the entire black community, worrying about upsetting Blakelock's widow was the last thing on their mind. Concern for Blakelock's family did not stop the press from going into great detail about his death during the trial. Blakelock's body was reduced to a 'rag doll' by anonymous rioters who pecked at it 'like vultures'. His head was almost 'hacked off' by machete-wielding blacks. A seething mob of dark men wanted to 'parade his head on a pole'. These details were reprinted from statements made by young people, even though the judge had to admit that the police had physically and psychologically beaten them into inventing these stories.

A mob

Mrs Blakelock's grief is deployed very selectively indeed. This cannot be said for the grief of the black families involved—that doesn't seem to exist at all. The death of Cynthia Jarrett during the police raid that sparked the Broadwater Farm clashes was attributed to the fact that she was 'overweight'. The fact that she awoke to find her flat being invaded by a mob of policemen had nothing to do with it. The fact that they pushed her aside and when she collapsed dying from 'overweight' they did nothing to assist her did not matter either. We were not invited to feel sympathy for her daughter, or her son, who at the time of his mother's death was at Wood Green police station accused of stealing his own car. The police involved were promoted.

Anything which justifies the crimes of the state and the criminalisation of black people is OK by the authorities and their cronies. They are not troubled about honouring killers. They are quite prepared to release the guilty and jail the innocent. Causing suffering and distress to the relatives of their victims does not result in the slightest anxiety. Nor has cruelty to the loved ones of the black people whom the police brutalise and kill ever unduly concerned the Straws and the Sherlocks, let alone the *Sun* journalists.

Scotland's 'City of Culture'

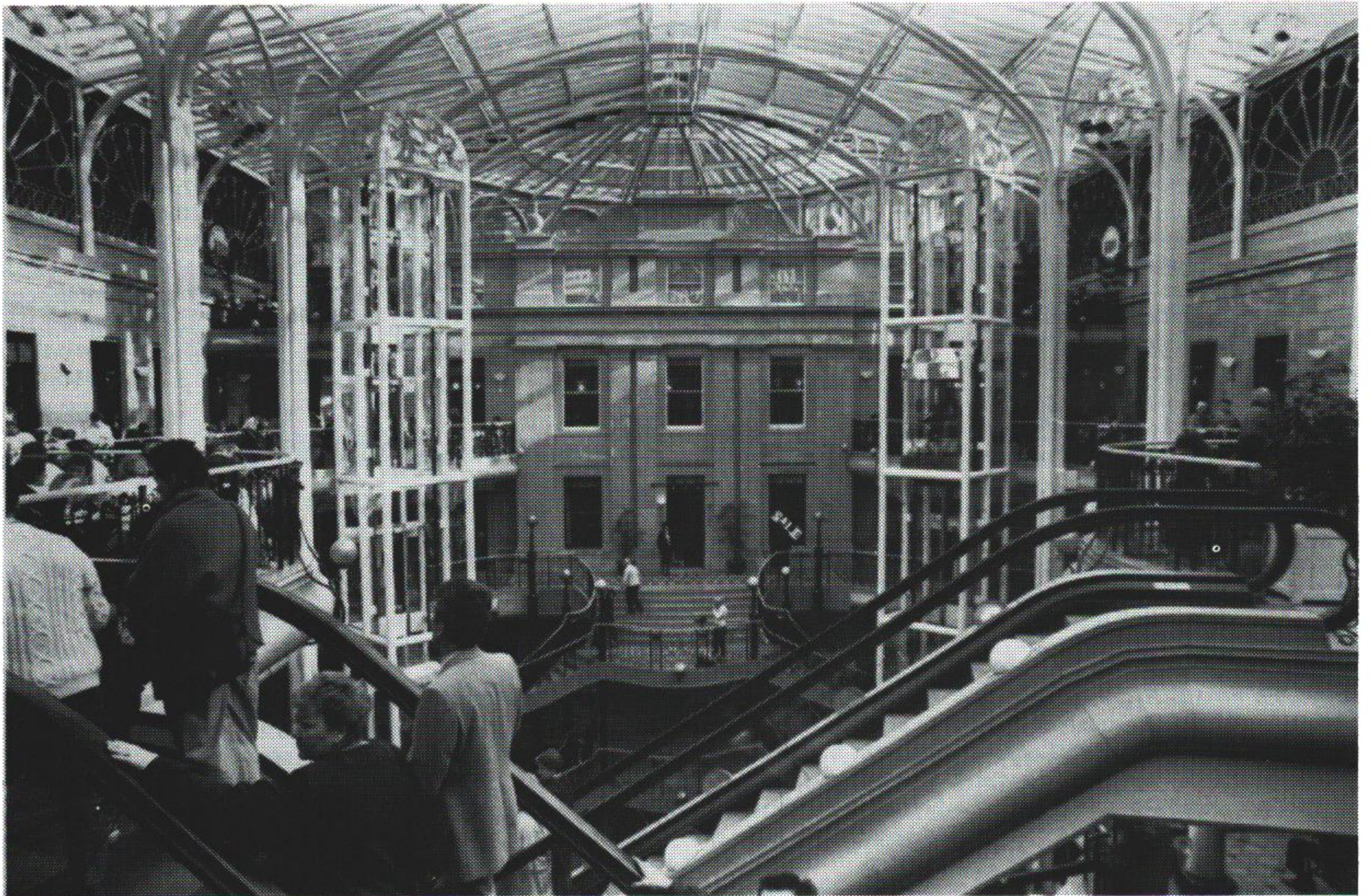
Has Glasgow gone yuppie?

'Scotland is advancing and prospering. You see it in the highest standard of living after the south-east of England—a level of prosperity which is enabling much more to be devoted to protecting the weak.' (Margaret Thatcher, Glasgow, 3 February 1989)

'Glasgow smiles better than
the wee lassie
that tells me ma giro's
in the post.'
(Alex MacSporran, 'Jimmy Sez')

'You think of Glasgow....You've got the biggest housing scheme in Europe here....Just architectural dumps where they unloaded the people like slurry. Penal architecture. Glasgow folk have to be nice people. Otherwise they would have burned the place to the ground years ago.' (William McIlvanney, *Laidlaw*)

DEREK OWEN



Derek Owen puts an alternative view to the hype about booming Glasgow

The city which gave its name to the 'Glasgow kiss' (head-butt) is now meant to be the showcase of a commercial and cultural renaissance in Scotland. The district council's 'Glasgow's miles better' campaign is said to have brought business pouring into the city in recent years. Now Europe has named Glasgow 'City of Culture 1990', following in the footsteps of Paris and Athens. What does it all mean for the people of 'No mean city'?

The centre of Glasgow has certainly changed a lot in a few years. Twenty-five years ago we had the destruction of old communities like the Gorbals, and the Irish Catholic diaspora to the distant schemes in the city's four corners. The new tower blocks, like Hutchy E, soon boasted hot and cold running water on the walls. The Labour-run district council established an interesting record on housing, as several councillors have testified—in the sheriff's court. Now the high-rise modernist monuments designed by Sir Basil Spence to rehouse the working class are being redesigned by the demolition experts.

Today big new housing projects are sprouting up around the city centre. The 'Docklandesque' Waterfront project overlooks the Clyde, with no nasty shipyards to spoil the view. The Merchant City, one of the oldest parts of Glasgow, has been rejuvenated with the conversion of disused warehouses into flats. Then there are the sparkling glass shopping malls in the Princes Square development and the new St Enoch's centre.

Thatcher's claim about the prosperity of Glasgow seemed to be echoed in a recent survey conducted by *Scotland on Sunday,* which found that Scotland has more washing machines and colour TVs per head than other regions. The Tories also point out that, in some sectors, Scotland tops the earnings league.

In the recent BBC drama, *The*

Justice Game, an investigative journalist said he wanted to find out where the money was coming from to smarten up Glasgow, when there was no visible sign of economic regeneration. It's a good question.

The businesses attracted into Glasgow of late are not big-employing industrial concerns, but Body Shop, Next and the rest of the chain-stores found in every British city. This is testimony to the big shopping chains' faith in Glasgow's future—or so they say. Others might say it simply showed their faith in the fact that the 2.5m people who live within 40 minutes' travelling time have to shop somewhere. Even then, much of the business has been done on credit. And whatever a survey might claim, buying a colour TV on HP is hardly a sign of affluence.

Oil on Easterhouse?

The Glasgow boom has brought few jobs to compensate for the collapse of old industries. Nobody ever believed the Tories' fixed unemployment figures, which showed the total falling sharply in recent years. Today in Scotland, things are too bad to fix; even the official jobless figures now show a rise.

As for our supposedly soaring incomes, the 'average' wage statistics boasted about mean nothing to the average Glaswegian. For instance, one of the few sectors in which Scotland leads the wages field is energy. That simply means that somebody is still making money from North Sea oil; but there aren't many oil rigs on Easterhouse or the other big housing schemes here. For the vast majority of young Scots wages are little more than benefits, and the gap is narrowed further by the cost of travelling from a housing scheme to work in the shiny new city centre.

Nor do most Glaswegians live in Merchant City. The council boasts about the recent renovations to run-down properties. The residents of Maryhill, meanwhile, are organising a protest campaign about these same 'improvements', which are cheap, slipshod and have left their homes in an even worse state. The district council building department has recently issued an internal circular stating that certain repairs are no longer to be considered a priority. These include little matters like broken tiles and toilet seats. The residents are now receiving their first poll tax bills, courtesy of the Labour council.

Most of the new money in Glasgow is being made by a few people in service sectors, especially those in the expanded financial sector, who sit faxing figures from one office to another. They are making salaries that sound like pools winnings to the rest of us. The majority have seen little sign of economic success, and are hostile to the prosperous 'new breed'. They use yuppie as a swearword, and complain about southern Thatcherism in their city. There is nothing wrong with being angry about inequality. But there is a problem with the way the complaints are posed.

There seems to be a general feeling of nostalgia for the old days and distaste for the 'softening' of Glasgow's image. For years Glaswegians complained about the 'No mean city' label, but many privately enjoyed being associated with the hard-drinking, hard-fighting reputation. The 'wee hard man' is a real part of Glasgow's history; but the nostalgists tend to forget that the reason Glaswegians were an average of three inches shorter than their Edinburgh neighbours was malnutrition.

The divide between the majority of the working class and the wealthy few Glaswegians is widening. But it is a divide that has always existed in Glasgow in one form or another. Listening to some yuppie-baiters today you would think that our city has a history of egalitarianism, where everybody lived in a 'single end' and was happy with it until the Thatcherites arrived. A walk around Bearsden, Newton Mearns or Clarkston dispels that myth. The middle classes have always resided in relative splendour in such parts. And the Labour council was making life hell for most people here before anybody had heard of Margaret Thatcher.

Self-destruction

There is no point getting nostalgic about most of Glasgow's traditions. Much that has been distinctive about life in our city is the consequence of the degradation of the working class, from the time when Glasgow was the furnace of the 'workshop of the world'. The work was long and hard, the shelter was several families to one room of a rat-infested slum, the food was potatoes and the water was full of lead. Many sought solace in the bottle. Alcohol abuse has long been a problem in Glasgow, but is it surprising that some prefer a haze to Possilpark?

We may be the City of Culture 1990, but a more appropriate title might be the city of self-destruction. We have the highest rates of consumption of alcohol, tobacco, fats and sugars in Britain. This is the legacy of the conditions Glaswegians have had to tolerate for years. It ought to be a cause of anger, not nostalgia. At least we don't just live on potatoes now; we eat more takeaway curries than anybody in Europe.

If we are to solve our present problems in Glasgow, the last thing we need is political nostalgia. The Labour Party has monopolised Glasgow politics by playing on the militant traditions of the people, talking about the days of Red Clydeside while it helped turn modern Clydeside into a black hole.

The first challenge to Labour's control has come from the Scottish National Party, which won Govan last November and is planning a big push in the Glasgow Central by-election this month. But there is nothing new in the SNP's politics. As SNP spokesman Kenny MacAskill put it in this magazine in March, 'we're representing the old Labour line'. That's the line which led to the building of the housing schemes, to name but one of the old Labour Party's achievements.

Saatchi socialists

What of the new Labour line? The Labour Party in Glasgow is moving further and further away from the working class. Just as Thatcher has created the myth of a British economic miracle by hyping up superficial developments like credit booms and share speculation in the City of London, so the Labour councils here concentrate on publicising the sort of flashy redevelopment that can attract more chain-stores and financial firms. The district council has even hired Thatcher's image-makers, Saatchi & Saatchi, to give the city a new hairdo and sell it to the world. Labour has already decided that harsh Glasgow accents don't fit in with its new image as an opera-going *Guardian*-reader. So it has dropped the accent.

In this month's Glasgow Central by-election the SNP candidate is Alex Neil, a close ally of new Govan MP Jim Sillars (who lives in Merchant City). Labour eventually selected the moderate Mike Watson.

Linda Murdoch, the Revolutionary Communist Party candidate, believes most Glaswegians are unimpressed with the choice on offer from the major parties: 'Glasgow district council is cutting housing repairs, Queens Park and Crosshill are sinking into the ground, the few remaining industries are packing up. And the SNP and Labour sit arguing over which can do most to encourage the small businessman, and which is best able to beat the poll tax—which both of them are responsible for implementing already. It's an insult to our intelligence.'

The Glasgow working class faces old problems like the slums of the Gorbals and the Orangeism of Bridgeton, and newer ones like the poll tax everywhere and the racism in Govanhill. It has no time to waste on reminiscing about the past, or hoping for a share in a fictional present invented by the council's ad-men.

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June 1969–Stonewall

Out for twenty years

Twenty years after the birth of the lesbian and gay movement, Kerry Dean asked two activists about lessons and prospects

On 27 June 1969 police carried out yet another routine raid on a gay bar in New York, the Stonewall Inn. The customers' reaction was far from routine. They drove the police out. The riot squad arrived, and four nights of hit-and-run fighting ensued. The Gay Liberation Front (GLF) was born.

The GLF marked a crucial break with the tradition of quiet lobbying by homosexual groups. Being 'Gay proud and angry' became the order of the day. Within six months radical lesbian and gay groups were being set up across America and Europe. On the first anniversary of Stonewall, 10 000 demonstrated in New York. A public demonstration of that size was shocking, almost unimaginable.

Twenty years on, much of the élan, the militancy and the unity seems to have gone. Many activists now burrow away inside the Labour Party or council quangos. There is little sign of a liberation movement. Yet as moral pressure and legal repression mount, lesbians and gays continue to operate openly on a scale that was thought impossible in 1969. We spoke to two of them.

Sean Moore
Born Belfast, 1960
Helps run a gay switchboard in Bradford

Is the switchboard a way of fighting for gay rights?

Yes, but it's not political. I suppose we're helping to create a kind of community, so that people can have some pride in being gay and more people can come out. If more people were out I think it would make a big difference.

So is coming out a strategy for advancing gay rights?

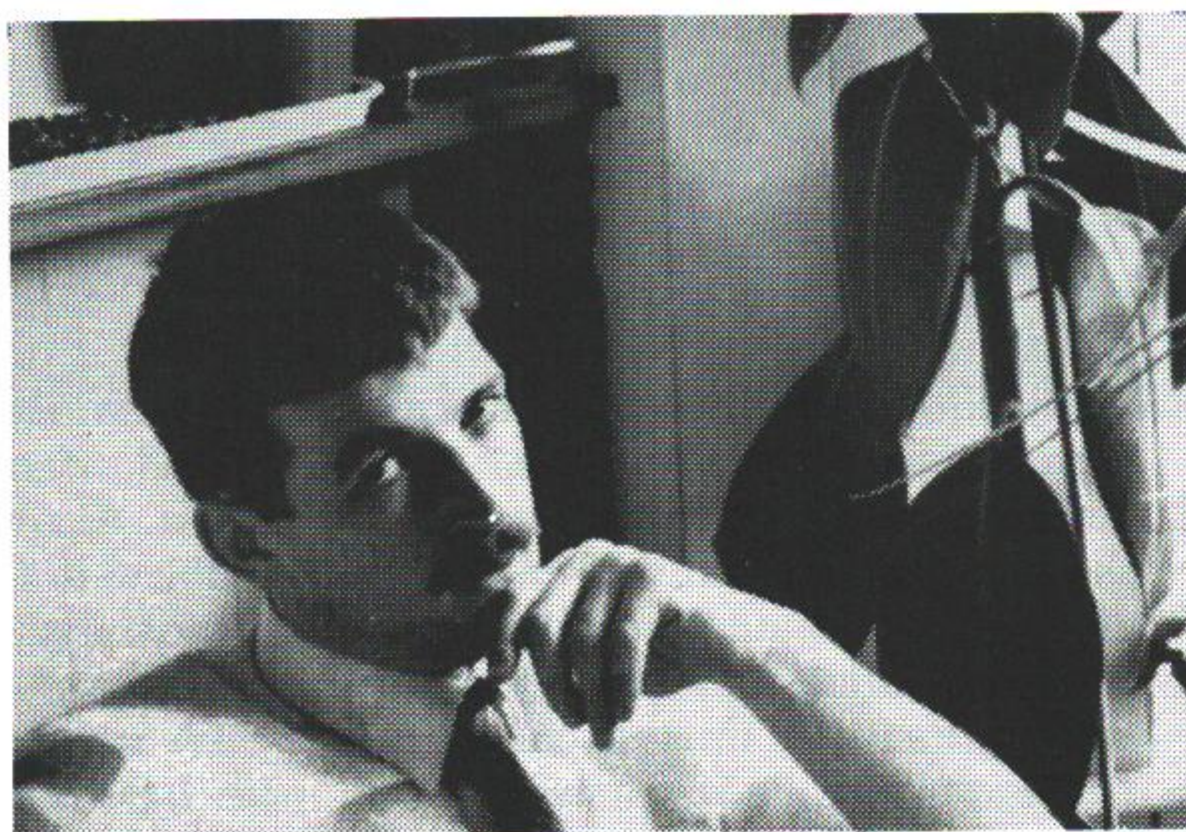
Being out won't change things if it's centred on pubs and clubs, but being out to have some political clout could. In Bradford the height of liberation was considered to be having a hundred gay pubs. This seems to be what everything has degenerated into.

I think the tactics after Stonewall, of shocking people into thinking being gay was the norm, failed. But if it had been discussed with people then perhaps things could have been different. Take all the Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners groups during the strike. It was sickening really. Give the miners money and they'll tolerate you. You can't buy esteem or shock people into it. You have to argue with people.

You put the onus on lesbians and gays themselves. Aren't you asking them to come out and stick their necks on the line?

Yes, but there's no other way. People aren't going to come knocking on your door saying 'We're fighting for gay rights'. You have to be a good part of an organisation and then perhaps they'll take your ideas seriously. The Labour Party is one vehicle. Yes, it's a slow process and a matter of trudging along, but then there are very few out members in the Labour Party.

That's a hangover from the Stonewall days. There's a healthy cynicism about parliamentary and party politics, but many of those


JANE WILD

people have just ended up doing nothing. So many of my friends who were active in the sixties seem to be spent forces, all washed up. I've bashed my head against the wall too. Perhaps if Labour doesn't change in 10 years I'll be cynical too.

What makes you think the Labour Party would make any difference to homosexual people, given its past record?

The Labour Party wouldn't make a difference so long as gay rights aren't on the agenda, and I don't see them putting it on the agenda even if they got in tomorrow. It's true that the Labour Party doesn't represent a challenge to the establishment on gay rights at all. I swore I wouldn't join them but I needed to channel my energy and, foolish as it may seem, I think it has made a difference in my constituency anyway.

Why do you think that the campaign against Clause 28 failed? The Labour Party wasn't much help, was it?

That's true. It's an incredible shame. There were such big meetings to start with but the campaign got bogged down in bureaucracy. There were six people left in it here at the end. The march in Manchester brought out thousands and they weren't just out in the pub. They had something to believe in. At the same time lots more were pushed back into the closet.

There was no focus to really grab people's imagination. It didn't take on wider issues like the age of consent. And it was so defensive. I think that the best form of defence is attack. Not only do we want to get rid of Clause 28 but we want all our rights, to be equal. The campaign let the homophobia lobby determine the terms of the debate. Perhaps we should have counter-attacked with something like a gay rights charter. But it always astounds me that people think the gay community is left-wing. I know many more who are part of the loony right.

JANE WILD

Rachel Taylor
Aged 22
Member of the NUS Lesbian and Gay Committee

What does Stonewall mean to you, and what has changed?

Stonewall meant the beginning of some kind of fight for lesbian and gay rights. The emphasis then was very much on gay men, and I think now, if you can say there is a lesbian and gay movement, lesbians play a much bigger part. Then it was all very middle class and about men sleeping with men. Now broader questions have been taken on board like racism, class and gender.

Do you think there is a lesbian and gay movement today?

No, not a coherent movement. Clause 28 did force more people to become active who hadn't been before or who hadn't even considered their sexuality before. Organising in general is very difficult in this country. People are not prepared to put themselves on the line because of what the consequences might be. And before Clause 28 lesbian and gay organisations had made major gains in demanding and getting funding from local authorities, which has now suffered a major setback.

Don't you think that the preoccupation with getting resources from local authorities limited a serious fight for equality?

No. Our demands were for very concrete things like getting centres. They made a big difference to people's lives, I don't think you can negate that. I don't think it did anything to change people's attitudes but often that was because local authorities weren't prepared to justify what they were doing. But the Labour Party passed policies like equalising the age of consent and granting positive rights, and only because of the strength we got from gains in the councils.

But if they were such gains how come Labour dropped them so fast when the Tories made homosexuality an issue? Doesn't this suggest that the gains were really paper ones?

Yes, but I don't think that the Labour Party turned tail as much as people make out. Clause 28 was Tory legislation which most rank and file Labour Party members campaigned against. I think the Labour Party will win the next election. I think they'll repeal Section 28 and attitudes will change.

What makes you think that Labour will win, and that it would repeal Section 28? A lot of Labour MPs voted for the clause.

Glamorgan shows we can do it.
I think people realise that the only option is to vote Labour. We have to ensure that the fight for lesbian and gay rights and decriminalisation becomes an integral part of winning the next election.

Like it was an integral part in winning Glamorgan?

But Labour is all we've got in terms of changing government. I admit we've got a lot of work to do.

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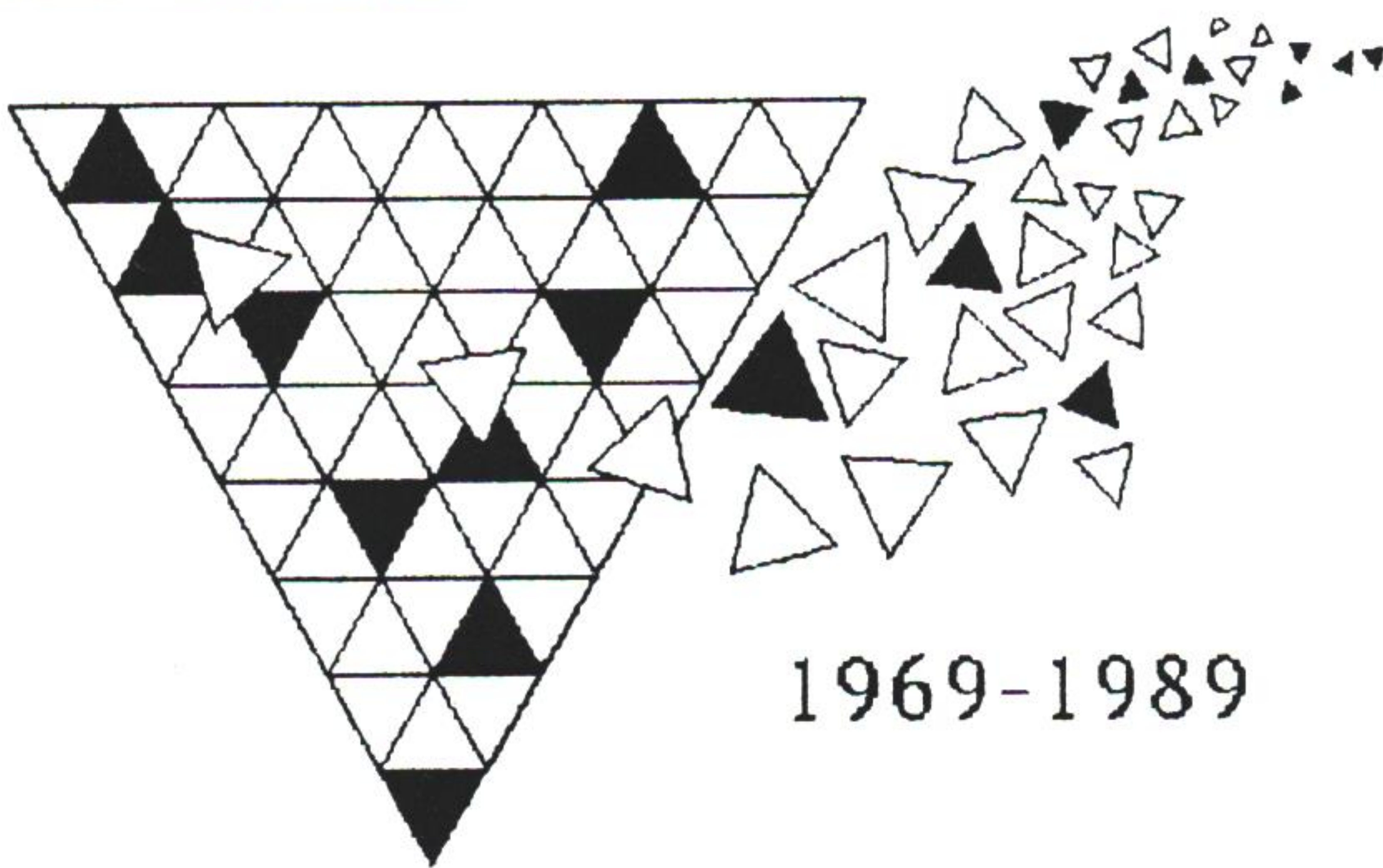

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Marxism and the Soviet Union

The myths behind Gorbymania

Frank Richards puts the Marxist case against Mikhail Gorbachev and his Western admirers

The Soviet Union has posed the greatest challenge to Marxism for more than 60 years. Over the decades, the very existence of the Soviet Union came to constitute the strongest argument for capitalism. When the Western elite found it difficult to put forward positive arguments for the perpetuation of its own system, it could always hold forth on the failures of Moscow. Demands for changing capitalism could be dismissed with throw-away remarks about 'red terror', 'lack of freedoms', gulags and Berlin Walls. Communist totalitarianism was portrayed as comparable to Nazi Germany; the fact that millions were fleeing from the East readily confirmed this stereotype.

Since the ascendancy of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 the Soviet Union has had a better press in the West. The media discuss his policies of glasnost ('openness') and perestroika ('restructuring') in neutral and sometimes glowing terms. Gorbachev himself has become something of a hero. Thatcher's response to his recent speech at the Guildhall sounded like the sort of eulogy she once reserved for soulmate Ronald Reagan: 'Mr President, we recognise in you one of those rare people who has the vision, the boldness and the sheer power of personality to change the whole future of his country, and to have a profound effect on the wider world as well.'

With the rehabilitation of the Soviet Union in the West, many have concluded that the Soviet experience is no longer such a powerful argument against those who seek the overthrow of capitalism. Such a conclusion misses the essential source of Gorbachev's popularity. The strong affection of the Western establishment for glasnost has little to do with any concern for human rights. It likes glasnost because events in the Soviet Union appear to vindicate capitalism and all of the ideas that defend this system.

A confession

Under Gorbachev the Soviet Union has, if anything, become an even greater problem for Marxists. Every pronouncement by the Soviet bureaucracy today sounds like an admission of guilt. Its 'new thinking' is really a code for conceding that Western capitalism has been right all along. As the *Financial Times* put it, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) 'is making an open confession of ideological, economic and financial bankruptcy' (28 February). If the bureaucracy was just confessing to its own bankruptcy, it would be no problem for Marxists. However, the criticisms the Soviet bureaucracy makes of its own system are immediately identified as the self-negation of Marxism and communism.

It is not surprising that the Western right draws comfort and inspiration from events in the Soviet Union. Roger Scruton, a leading thinker of the British right, sees in the content of well-known Soviet publications like *Novy Mir* a 'stunning vindication of Tory values' (*Sunday Telegraph*, 2 April). Soviet figures are now often quoted in the British right-wing press because they can be relied on to celebrate conventional Tory prejudice. In a sense the open confessions of the Gorbachev administration provide the most powerful arguments against Marxism and communism. The argument that 'even Gorbachev admits that communism is a failure' has even greater force than the old-fashioned Cold War denunciations of the Soviet Union.

Whose failure?

Whether or not Marxism acquires practical relevance in the contemporary era depends on its ability to develop a coherent alternative explanation of events in the Soviet Union. In particular it is essential to confront the claim that Marxism bears responsibility for the bankruptcy of the Soviet Union. It is fashionable to argue that the Soviet Union of today is the inevitable consequence of the Marxist project. This has always been central to the writings of right-wing ideologues. Recently, however, leading Soviet experts have joined this consensus. Accordingly, it is not just Stalinism which is being blamed for the deformations of Soviet society. It is suggested that Stalinism was already inherent in Lenin and that the problems of the Soviet Union can even be traced back to Marx.

The attempts to discredit Lenin and Marx have acquired grotesque proportions. The usual procedure adopted is to point to some contemporary development and say that, because Marx did not write about it, his theory must have been wrong. Thus the *Independent* cites approvingly a Soviet academic who told the conference of the International Studies Association in London that 'Marx and Lenin were wrong because they failed to anticipate many of the key developments of recent history, in particular the nuclear age' (7 April).

Now it is undoubtedly the case that Marx 'failed to anticipate' the nuclear age before his death in 1883. In the same way he failed to predict the coming of satellite television, Aids and the creation of designer jeans. It is also clear that these criticisms are only made against Marx. Who predicted the nuclear age in the nineteenth century or, for that matter, in the inter-war period? Nobody has yet claimed that Max Weber or John Maynard Keynes were wrong because they did not anticipate the Bomb.

That such ludicrous criticisms of Marx are accepted as products of reflective thought is testimony to the climate of anti-communism in which anything goes. It also results from the defensiveness of the left—a defensiveness that has been transformed into a state of paralysis as a consequence of the new 'open confessions' of the Soviet bureaucracy.

After Marx, the favourite objects of guilt are Lenin and the Russian Revolution of October 1917. It is suggested that the methods used in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution under Lenin's leadership are responsible for the subsequent evolution of the Soviet Union. According to Soviet sociologist Igor Klyamkin, the root problem lies in the 'doctrine of War Communism', a system under which authoritarian measures were used in economic and political life.

PAULA McCABE

RIGHT: Glasnost rings the changes, but can it make the phones work?

The period of War Communism is widely used as proof of the inherently anti-democratic content of Leninism. If Lenin did indeed possess a 'doctrine of War Communism' there may well be some plausibility in the charges levelled against him. However, nobody has yet produced a book or even an article written by Lenin on this interesting doctrine. In fact War Communism was not a doctrine but a response to an emergency, forced on the new Soviet regime by the military threat from imperialism.

Western capitalists experienced the Russian Revolution as the greatest disaster to befall humanity

THE DAVID KING COLLECTION

The West did what it could to destroy the Russian Revolution. Britain, France, Germany, Japan, the USA and several lesser imperialist powers combined to defeat the Russian Revolution by force of arms. Their troops invaded the Soviet Union in large numbers. Moreover they financed and armed the 'White' armies of counter-revolution. The result was devastation, famine and the collapse of the economic infrastructure. It was comparable to what imperialist intervention has done to Nicaragua and Mozambique today.

In the end the Red Army was able to defeat its opponents. But at a heavy price. Virtually all of the Russian working class was destroyed or displaced. Extraordinary measures had to be used to prevent the disintegration of the Soviet Union in a life or death struggle. It was not a doctrine but the question of survival that provided the impetus for War Communism.

In the abstract it is possible to criticise certain policies associated with War Communism. But such criticisms have little force when the overall situation is taken into consideration. For example, Mozambique is facing destruction from the devastation wrought by South African-inspired forces. It takes a malevolent mind to blame the government of Mozambique for the situation facing the country. Only the most incorrigible reactionary would suggest that the doctrines of the leaders of the Mozambican liberation struggle are responsible for what is happening there.

In Western literature it is fashionable to portray War Communism in the Soviet Union as the typical Leninist form of social organisation. Imperialist intervention merits only a small footnote and the collapse of the economy is depicted as the product of the incompetence of the new regime. This criticism is about as legitimate as accusations concerning Marx's failure to predict Hiroshima.

Exception as rule

When Western capitalism is discussed, nobody ever suggests that the period of the War Economy, between 1939 and 1945, is the typical form of bourgeois society. The subordination of society to military considerations—through conscription, rationing, the suspension of elections, etc, is always treated as the exception to the norm. Such elementary logic is missing from discussions of the Soviet Union. There, what is treated as an *exception* in the case of the West—a militarised country fighting a war—becomes the norm. The acceptance of these illegitimate comparisons again reflects the strength of anti-communism in Western society.

The defeat of the Russian Revolution had nothing to do with doctrines or with Marx or Lenin. From 1917 to 1921, the Soviet Union faced a struggle for survival. Military interventions and civil war created

an economic disaster. The revolutionary regime also paid a high political price. The working class constituency of the revolutionary movement was physically all but destroyed. By 1921 the Bolshevik Party was made up of a core of revolutionary leaders without the rank and file who had made possible the October Revolution. In such circumstances it was extremely difficult to build a revolutionary society. As Lenin argued, all that could be done was to hold on and wait for support from working class revolutions elsewhere in the world.

The Western powers did this to the new revolutionary state–then blamed the Bolsheviks

In this period it was always touch and go. As the prospects for revolution in Europe receded, a mood of conservatism became prevalent in Soviet society. Stalin reflected this mood well. After Lenin's death, Stalin succeeded in mobilising the party and state bureaucracy around a programme of cautious reconstruction. To realise the objectives of this programme Stalin needed the cooperation of administrators and bureaucrats, and not the mobilisation of workers. The emergence of the Soviet bureaucracy as a distinct privileged group in the mid-twenties was realised through the usurpation of power from the working class.

The emergence of the Stalinist regime was based on the conditions created by foreign intervention. But before it could triumph, the Stalinist bureaucracy had first to defeat the working class. The Stalinist regime was not the inevitable consequence of the Russian Revolution, but a product of its defeat. In a sense it owed as much to the devastation caused by Western imperialism as to anything else.

The myth that there is a continuity between Stalinism and the Bolshevik tradition is a powerful one and influences most writers on the subject. The power of this myth derives from the influence of those with an interest in perpetuating it.

Western capitalists experienced the Russian Revolution as the greatest disaster to befall humanity. The image of workers expropriating their exploiters and taking charge of running society haunts the capitalist class to this day. From the outset the Western bosses sought to criminalise the Russian Revolution. In the aftermath of the Stalinist period they worked to discredit the very idea of revolution by associating it with this bureaucratic regime.

Name-dropping

The myth which links Stalinism with the traditions of October 1917 has also been fostered by the Soviet bureaucracy itself. Those responsible for the counter-revolution in the Soviet Union did not renounce Marx or Lenin. On the contrary, Stalin used the prestige of the Bolshevik tradition to win the support of the international working class.

The fact that Stalin could claim the traditions of the Russian Revolution meant that his version of Marx and Lenin would be taken very seriously indeed. Consequently, during the past 60 years most communists have understood Marxism only in its Stalinist form. As a theory of human liberation through the emancipation of the working class, Marxism became marginal; Stalinist dogma came to influence the left. So, ironically, the right-wing view that Stalinism was organically linked to Marx was paralleled in the outlook of the left.

The strength of the Stalin myth prevails to this day. The absence of an objective assessment of the nature of the Soviet Union explains the wildly fluctuating appreciations of this society. One day the Soviet Union is the homeland of progress, the next it is a prison camp. One moment it is the 'evil empire', the next the symbol of hope. Even today, when Stalin is mentioned as a warped individual and as the originator of a system that has been discredited, the myth retains its influence. The capacity of the Stalinist experience to discredit Marxism and working class liberation remains undiminished. The results of a counter-revolution continue to be confused with the ideals of a revolution itself.

The Gorbachev administration is in general favourably contrasted with the previous bureaucratic regimes in the Soviet Union. It is worth examining the positive claims made on behalf of glasnost and perestroika.

From the point of view of Marxism, the Soviet Union possesses no positive features (see the discussion on this subject in F Füredi, *The Soviet Union Demystified,* 1986). Unless a society is run by the working class it is not possible to realise progress beyond that achieved by capitalism. For Marx, a communist society represented a step forward from capitalism because it could bring under control the anarchy of the market. A workers' state could plan society and gradually the principle of human need could operate above that of private profit.

The triumph of the Stalinist bureaucracy put paid to the possibility of developing a planned society. With the exclusion of the working class from power the regime could only run society through mechanisms of administrative control. The Stalinist regime had to be exceptionally coercive if it was to retain a grip on the economy and on society. Under capitalism, the force of the market disciplines society most of the time; having destroyed both the market and workers' democracy, the Stalinist regime had no instruments of control other than direct coercion.

Waste of wealth

The inherent instability of the Stalinist regime remained obscure for decades, thanks to several special circumstances. Before 1917, Russian capitalism had been quite barbaric and inefficient. So even the modest achievements of the Stalinist regime could look progressive by comparison. More importantly, the Soviet Union is one of the most richly endowed areas of the world. Even though the system is inefficient, by mobilising tens of millions of people and huge reserves of natural resources the Stalinists could ensure some kind of growth. The bureaucracy learnt the art of mobilising resources and succeeded in transforming the Soviet Union into a global power. In relative terms, given the mass of labour and raw materials deployed, the improvements were modest. But in absolute terms the huge mobilisation of resources established the Soviet Union as a major industrial state.

The defects of Soviet society were also obscured by the weakness of the

capitalist system, especially in the thirties. While the capitalist world went through the Great Depression, with tens of millions unemployed, Stalin's Soviet Union boasted industrial growth. The crisis of capitalism cast a positive light on developments in the Soviet Union.

However, it was only a matter of time before the inbuilt problems of the Stalinist system would subvert its claims to represent progress. It has become more and more difficult to rely on the wasteful use of resources. Over the years, this system has created a labour shortage in the Soviet Union, making it impossible to mobilise millions of workers to build new industries. There is also a more fundamental problem. As society becomes more complex, administrative controls become less effective. Consequently, since the late fifties the Soviet bureaucracy has found it increasingly difficult to maintain even absolute growth.

One of the great ironies of the Soviet Union is that, despite its totalitarian reputation, it is a society out of control. A command economy run by a mixture of bureaucratic management and repression cannot be controlled properly from above. Such a system relies on providing sanctions after the event, rather than dealing with problems anticipated beforehand.

The Soviet system is only administratively unified. In reality the economy is fragmented. Industries improvise to get by. There is little to link different industries together—their only relationship is with the centre. This is why the Soviet Union continually faces shortages. There is little communication between units of production. Even transportation breaks down under the impact of local considerations. Thus the widely discussed food shortages reflect not so much the problems of agriculture as those of transportation and distribution.

Most of the 'reforms' involved in perestroika are designed to make the working class work harder for less money

Unfriendly neighbours

Economic fragmentation is reflected on the political level. The different regions and republics of the Soviet Union strive for self-sufficiency. Often the Kremlin does not even know what is going on in its republics. The republics do not cooperate with each other but meet formal targets set by the centre. For example it has been revealed that in the Transcaucasian area, scene of bloody conflict, the governments of the republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan have not even talked to each other for years.

The Kremlin traditionally responded to the problem of fragmentation by prioritising one or two sectors for special consideration, to ensure some kind of growth. Thus areas like the defence and space sectors are entirely controlled from the centre, with the result that these industries become more efficient than most. But, by definition, the centre cannot prioritise everything. Most sectors of industry are left to drift under formal administrative control.

PAULA McCABE

Since the late seventies the Soviet bureaucracy has realised that it cannot carry on in the old way. Society is less and less responsive to administrative controls. Terms like 'market', 'profit' and 'entrepreneurship' have come back into fashion as the state of the Soviet economy becomes too desperate to ignore. Gorbachev's rise to power represented a recognition by the bureaucracy that its society had reached an impasse.

Many observers try to discuss glasnost and perestroika as part of a ready-made programme. This ignores the realities of Soviet life. The only 'programme' Gorbachev has got is to revitalise the Soviet Union by any means necessary. He is fighting for the survival of the system. The failure of one set of reforms leads to a search for another. In principle Gorbachev is prepared to countenance any measure that is consistent with the preservation of the power of the bureaucracy. How is he doing?

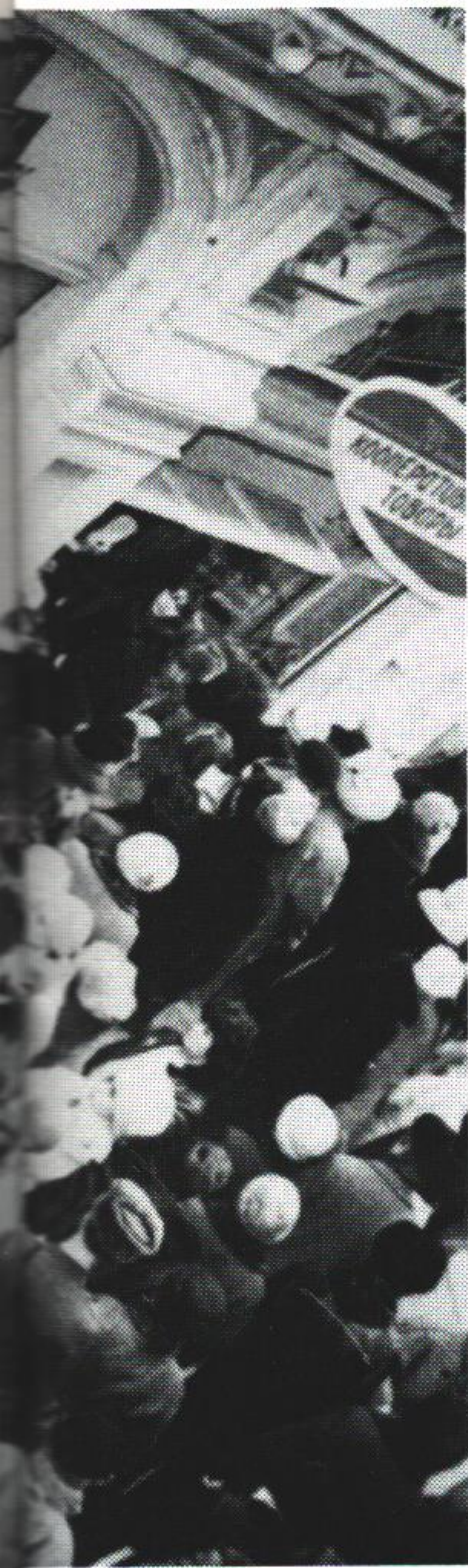
By any criterion, Gorbachev's policies have been a resounding failure. After four years of his rule, the hundreds of articles about perestroika are not worth the paper they are written on. The economy continues to stagnate and shortages of goods are getting worse.

There are two reasons why perestroika cannot work. First, it is not possible to implement individual reforms in a society that remains unreformed. For example, it is difficult to introduce the market in one sector while the rest of the economy remains under administrative control. The logic of starting this process is to introduce the market as the dominant mechanism for distributing resources over society as a whole. But such a step would amount to the reintroduction of capitalism. That would destroy the power of the Sovet bureaucracy, and is therefore not an attractive option for Gorbachev and his colleagues.

Soft soap

The second obstacle to perestroika is the Soviet working class. Most of the 'reforms' involved in economic restructuring are designed to force the working class to labour harder for less money. So price reforms aim to raise consumer prices, to provide an incentive for harder work. One reason why these price reforms have been postponed is the fear that they could provoke working class unrest.

Gorbachev and his colleagues appear to have lost their enthusiasm



Reforms or no, the queue remains a symbol of the Soviet system

for transforming the Soviet economy. All the measures they have proposed—reform of agriculture, encouragement of private enterprise, etc—are designed to play for time. At best, these measures might improve the availability of goods and services for some and create the impression that more changes are in the pipeline. Gorbachev is reported to have agreed to pay £500m for foreign consumer goods like razor blades and soap as part of his stop-gap policy.

Above and below

Gorbachev's failures on the economic front stand in sharp contrast to the innovations in the political and cultural spheres. Unlike perestroika, glasnost has had practical consequences. The past four years have brought a relaxation of controls on political and cultural life in the Soviet Union.

Any relaxation of repression and any increase in the availability of rights is welcomed by Marxists. It is possible that Gorbachev is genuinely committed to political reform. But his personal motives are really neither here nor there. The changes that have taken place in the Soviet Union cannot be explained by an individual's passion for reform. Political reforms are the product of the bureaucracy's recognition that its policies need some legitimacy and support. Such reforms provide a framework for a limited degree of public involvement and have some potential for winning wider support for the aims of the system.

Gorbachev's policies are often described as a revolution from above. This is fair enough, so long as we remember that revolutions from above are contradictory. In history revolutions from above always aim to prevent revolutions from below. Gorbachev is happy to make any concessions so long as the structure and status of the Stalinist bureaucracy are preserved.

Lone crusader

In analysing contemporary trends it is essential that the discussion is not reduced to the subjective intent of the Soviet bureaucracy. Revolutions from above have a habit of taking unanticipated turns. So too with glasnost. Every concession seems to call into question the basic institutions of Soviet society. The main beneficiary of glasnost, the intelligentsia, becomes ever-more strident in its criticisms of the system. A stage has been reached where anything can be said and nothing shocks.

Gorbachev's policies have unleashed two conflicting trends. It is not yet clear how these tensions will work themselves out. Let us examine them in a little detail.

Gorbachev has allowed conflict to come to the surface of Soviet society. His style is that of a crusader against the old guard. He has adopted the habit of blaming every problem on some conservative bureaucrat or enemy of perestroika. The image of the lone crusader battling against heavy odds still prevails. So long as the blame attaches itself to others, Gorbachev is content to let the conflict continue. Thus the setbacks suffered by leading CPSU members in the March elections could be presented as a blow against the opponents of perestroika, but not against glasnost itself.

The form that political conflict has assumed even strengthens Gorbachev's position. It doesn't much matter what the different bureaucrats and groups say, so long as Gorbachev is above the petty disputes. Even the emergence of the national question can be seen in this way. Many of the national conflicts are potentially destructive. But at present these conflicts tend to be one ethnic group against another, rather than against the Kremlin. While it is the Latvian versus the Russian or the Armenian against the Azerbaijani, the Stalinist regime can ride the storm.

Time will tell

In effect glasnost has created a framework for political conflict that the Soviet bureaucracy can live with. Until now Gorbachev's own legitimacy has only been questioned in exceptional circumstances. In addition, Gorbachev's diplomatic triumphs and his frequent summits with Western leaders have helped to strengthen his reputation as a statesman and consolidated his public standing at home.

However, while one trend points towards the stabilisation of a reformed political order, another suggests impending social disintegration. It is only a matter of time before Gorbachev's habit of blaming conservative bureaucrats for the failures of the system becomes transparent. It is already having less of an effect in Georgia than it had last year in Armenia. Moreover, with the passing of time it becomes harder to blame the old guard.

There comes a point where real choices have to be made. The intelligentsia wants more pluralism and bigger steps towards a market. The working class opposes perestroika. Recent reports indicate that workers have attacked private enterprises selling goods at a price beyond their means. It is already clear that the pro-Gorbachev intelligentsia blames the working class more than it does the conservative bureaucrats. Gorbachev is not in control of either of these forces.

Even the Soviet bureaucracy is not certain about its future direction. It is becoming pessimistic about the fate of economic reforms and yet it knows that there is no turning back. Sections of the bureaucracy are ready to experiment with capitalist solutions while others want to hold back. Still others dream of returning to the pre-glasnost days.

One of the most important developments of recent years is the intensification of the divisions within the bureaucracy. All sorts of political trends which would elsewhere be organised in distinct political parties—from social democratic to liberal capitalist—are gradually developing within the CPSU itself. The political trends are further compounded by parochial and national loyalties. The trend towards the disintegration of Soviet society finds reflection inside the bureaucracy.

Take it back

At present the forces of stability and those of disintegration are evenly matched. But as the pressures towards fragmentation gain momentum—whether in the form of national or political conflict—the Soviet bureaucracy will face a major problem in retaining its grip. Only their common fear of the working class endows the Stalinists with any degree of coherence today.

Despite its social significance the working class plays a passive role in Soviet politics. It can react and act as an important obstacle to others, but it is not yet in a position to initiate. For now, the bureaucracy holds all of the political options. Although it is not in complete control of the situation, it is able to give shape to the new developments in Soviet politics.

The direction of the Soviet bureaucracy is uncertain, because its future depends on forces which it does not control. However, so long as the Stalinists retain the initiative the results will be reactionary and destructive for the working class. We may be seeing the beginning of the end for the Stalinist system. That is to be welcomed. But is seems likely that one of the last acts of Stalinism will be to discredit Marxism further, to lend legitimacy to capitalism and inject a bit of life into bourgeois thought. That is why a politician whose every economic policy has failed can be so popular in the West.

Marxists have to prepare for the negative fall-out from the Gorbachev experiment. The working class will pay a high price for the legacy of Stalinism. Let us hope that its collapse comes sooner rather than later, so that we can reclaim Marxism for those to whom it truly belongs.

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The changing face of anti-communism

'Get back to Russia'

Kirsten Cale takes issue with those who see Gorbachev as the saviour of the left in the West

'Get back to Russia' has been the catchphrase of the Western right for years. It is used as the first-strike verbal weapon against anybody who criticises the capitalist system. If you don't like the way we do things here, demand the right wingers, then why don't you go and live in the land of the prison camp and the food shortage?

This sort of anti-communism has played a big part in the right's attempt to discredit anti-capitalism by referring to the unattractive Soviet experience. In a bogey-filled world, the Red Menace has been promoted as the biggest bogey of all.

Gorbachev agrees that communism's time is up

Today, in the age of Gorbachev and 'new thinking' in the East, there is an additional problem. While Western rulers tell left wingers to get back to Russia, the Soviet leadership itself tells us 'Get back to the West—socialism doesn't work'.

Gorbachev's endorsement of market relations and open renunciation of the revolutionary tradition has taken the edge off the old Cold War rhetoric about Soviet domination. But it has also allowed the Western right to launch a new brand of anti-communism. Instead of relying on crude 'evil empire' rhetoric, the right can quote the Soviet new thinkers themselves on the benefits of capitalism and the bankruptcy of communism.

The arguments may have changed, but the purpose they serve remains the same: the right uses the Soviet experience to discredit anti-capitalism, to engineer the connection between capitalism and freedom, and so to uphold the Western powers' right to 'promote and defend democracy' around the globe. Now that Gorbachev gives tacit endorsement to this enterprise by his admission of the Soviet Union's failures, Western anti-

communism has assumed an even more insidious and powerful form.

It is useful to look at the current discussion as a development of the tradition of anti-communism in the West.

Communist cannibals

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, anti-communism was a genuine expression of panic in the ruling circles of the capitalist world. The revolution destabilised the international order, and inspired working class movements around the world to challenge capitalism. The Western authorities were desperate to defeat the new revolutionary regime, and to discourage others from following the Bolsheviks' example. They poured vitriolic abuse on the Russian revolutionaries, accusing the communists of everything from cannibalism to 'having their women in common'.

The anti-communist hysteria at the end of the First World War was an instinctive reaction to the threat of revolution in the West. In contrast, the Cold War climate created at the end of the Second World War was a much more calculated and cynical affair.

By the late forties, the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union had effectively made its peace with the Western powers. It had agreed to a final carve-up of Europe, made clear that it had no ambition to export revolution, and become one of the world's status quo powers, dedicated to stabilising international affairs. Yet the West chose that moment to escalate its anti-communist propaganda drive. The disparity between the Western Cold War rhetoric about the Red Menace, and the Soviet Union's non-aggressive attitude, confirms that anti-communism was being pumped up and used largely for ideological purposes.

THE GUARDIAN

'CTs' and 'gooks'

The manipulative character of anti-communism becomes clear when we examine the uses to which it has been put over the past 40 years. From the start of the Cold War, anti-communism was mobilised to serve various ends, none of which bore much relation to any real threat posed by the Soviet Union.

The USA used anti-communism to cohere the Western Alliance under American leadership. The creation of Nato in 1949 was justified by the alleged need to contain Soviet expansionism in Europe. Elsewhere in the world, the Western powers legitimised their imperialist invasions and interventions by branding their opponents as Soviet surrogates. Once popular liberation movements in the colonial world were seen as Kremlin agents, then Western wars of oppression could be depicted as democratic crusades against Soviet empire-building. In the forties, Britain dismissed the Malayan liberation movement as a gang of 'CTs'—communist terrorists—and in the early fifties the Americans disguised their acts of barbarism in Korea behind a racist propaganda campaign against the communist 'gooks' of North Korea.

Anti-communism also served as a cover for stamping out opposition at home. The McCarthyism witch-hunt in the USA was only the most prominent of the Red scares used to root out 'subversion' in most major capitalist countries. The Stalinist Communist parties represented no real danger to the Western states. But running a hysterical campaign against them proved a useful device for Western rulers to hammer all dissent, by branding liberals and social democrats as fellow travellers.

From the early eighties, Cold War-style anti-communism returned to prominence in a different context. At a time when the USA had begun to lose its grip on world leadership, Ronald Reagan used the idea of a communist conspiracy to justify displays of American political and military power in the Middle East and Central America. In 1983, for example, the world's mightiest military machine crushed the tiny Caribbean nation of Grenada. In a televised address to the nation, Reagan wheeled out the old anti-communist bogey to explain the attack:

> 'Grenada was a Soviet-Cuban colony being readied to export terrorism and undermine democracy...we got there just in time.'

Before the invasion, Nicholas Ridley, then a Tory foreign office minister, put the same sentiments in Whitehall-speak:

> 'Grenada is in the process of establishing the kind of society of which the British government disapproves, irrespective of whether the people of Grenada want it or not.'

Ridley's statement illustrates the narrow parameters of the West's love of freedom and democracy. If imperialism disapproves of any real or perceived activity of a third world country, 'irrespective of whether the people want it or not', it is branded as a Soviet proxy and threatened with the possibility of invasion by thousands of marines.

Anti-communism remains a powerful weapon in the hands of the ruling class today. Playing up the threat of communist subversion not only transforms British or American aggression in the third world into a democratic mission, it also gives the right ammunition to use against its rivals at home. Even the mildest attempt to question the status quo in Britain today can be condemned as the work of the 'loony left'. The old McCarthyite project of hammering dissent by creating a red scare is still being reworked in new ways.

The importance of anti-communism to the Western establishment was reflected by outgoing US president Ronald Reagan's main speech during his farewell visit to Britain last year. He paid Thatcher the highest compliment he could think of, by praising her 'anti-communist credentials':

> 'Through all the troubles of the past decade, one such firm, eloquent voice, a voice that proclaimed loudly the cause of the Western Alliance and human freedom, has been heard. A voice that never sacrificed its anti-communist credentials or its realistic appraisal of change in the Soviet

Union, but...one of the first to suggest that we could do business with Mr Gorbachev.' (Quoted in *The World Today*, August/September 1988)

Reagan's reference to Thatcher's statement that the West could 'do business' with Gorbachev (another high-powered compliment coming from a capitalist) raises the issue of the recent changes in East-West relations, and the impact these have had on the climate of anti-communism.

Since the advent of Gorbachev, the mood seems to have changed. The new, liberal image of the Soviet leadership has led many on the left to conclude that the Solzhenitsyn factor will abate, making it easier for left wingers to promote their ideas in Britain and the West. For example, the Communist Party of Great Britain has announced with relief that 'the Cold War is over'. Martin Jacques, editor of *Marxism Today*, believes that 'the left is now presented with a historic opportunity', as 'Europeanisation and the end of the Cold War are serving to weaken Thatcherism' ('Coming in from the cold', *Marxism Today*, April). Many other left wingers have been similarly carried away on the wave of Gorbymania.

If the Soviets are to be readmitted to Western civilisation, they have to play the game: more market and no 'Marxism-Leninism'

Perceptions of the Soviet Union have certainly altered in the four years since Gorbachev came to power, but not in a way that could benefit the left. In fact these new developments have given anti-communism a sharper focus. Before, Western propagandists drew their own anti-communist conclusions from the Soviet experience. Now, it is no longer necessary for them to point out the Soviet Union's shortcomings—the Soviet leaders are doing it themselves. Small wonder Gorbachev and his advisers are quoted in the Western press with such lip-smacking relish.

Unemployment is in

Leading Soviet bureaucrats now argue that the only cure for economic stagnation is a strong dose of capitalism. Gorbachev himself alluded to 'planned regulation and the market' in his London speech in April. His economic advisers have gone much further. Vadim Medvedev, the Kremlin's chief ideologist, argues that the market is now 'an indispensable means of gearing production to fast-changing demand, and a major instrument of public control over quality and cost'. Fyodor Burlatsky, one of Gorbachev's political advisers, calls for the development of 'people's self-governing socialism'—'a planned, although market economy, based upon profit and loss accounting'.

The Soviet exponents of a mixed economy see labour discipline and driving down wages as a key component of perestroika. During a factory walkabout last year, Gorbachev told Soviet workers they would have to accept the dictates of market economics:

'It is vexing...and unpleasant when workers receive less. But how can we pay full money if it is not earned? And all because previously things worked according to the principle: whether you turned out the goods or not, of good quality or bad, you still got the money. And what was the result? Resources were used up, labour was expended, money paid out and there were no goods. Is this the way to live? Of course not.' (*Times*, 11 March 1988)

Nikolai Shmelyev, an influential economic adviser in the Kremlin, champions unemployment as an excellent purgative for labour indiscipline: 'We must have a fearless, business-like discussion of the possible benefit of a small reserve army of labour...as a good remedy for laziness, drunkenness and irresponsibility.' (*Problems of Economics*, February 1988)

Some reward

The Soviet bureaucracy's conversion to the discipline of the market is the most compelling vindication of the right's argument: only capitalism works, and the working class has to obey its rules. The Kremlin's embrace of capitalist values is an important ideological victory for the Western authorities. They can now say that the Soviet system not only means 'Red Terror', purges and labour camps. It also means poverty, stagnation and waste. Mix the ingredients and you get a potent anti-communist cocktail, as summed up by one American commentator:

'Stagnation is the price of tyranny, prosperity is the reward of freedom.' (*International Herald Tribune*, 4 October 1988)

The Western proponents of this thesis conveniently ignore the millions of unemployed people reaping the 'reward of freedom' on the poverty line in all capitalist economies. But when the Soviet experts are agreeing with them, it is hard for many to refute the view that communist tyranny equals economic collapse.

The Soviet new thinkers are not content with criticising the practical operation of their system. They are linking the failures of the Soviet economy to the very idea of interfering with the market. Thus they blame not just Stalin, but Lenin and Marx for the crisis in the Soviet Union. Lev Loseff, a Soviet émigré, is one of many conservatives who have noted this development with satisfaction:

'Ideological censorship is almost abolished—except for the Lenin taboo. You cannot say "Vladimir Ilyich went gaga in 1922" because it may offend the sensibilities of some old folks.' (*International Herald Tribune*, 2 April)

In fact, 'the Lenin taboo' has been broken on many occasions. The idea that the revolution, 'Red Terror', and other Leninist policies were mistakes which paved the way for today's problems are now seen as common sense by many Soviet intellectuals.

Western anti-communists have had a field day with Soviet denunciations of their revolutionary tradition. It has given them plenty of scope to indulge in an orgy of Marx-bashing. Even that noted scholar Ronald Reagan has voiced his opinion on the problems of revolutionary theory:

'In a way Marx was right when he said the political order would come into conflict with the economic order—only he was wrong in predicting which part of the world this would occur in. For the crisis came not in the capitalist West but in the communist East.' (*The World Today*, August/September 1988)

The current climate of Soviet discussion allows an anti-communist philistine like Reagan to pose as an objective intellectual. That should be enough to destroy any illusions about Gorbachev's new thinking being a positive asset for the left in the West.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, a veteran US foreign policy expert, has further drawn out the consequences of the new East-West consensus that communism does not work. 'The original idea of communism', says Brzezinski, 'was essentially utopian in nature. It called for the working class to govern itself' ('The crisis of communism: The paradox of political participation', *Washington Quarterly*, Autumn 1987). And the Soviet experience, of course, proves that the working class is incapable of doing any such thing; so it had better accept its lot and allow its exploiters and betters to run the world.

Play the game

The Americans and British have even tried to use the Soviet concessions on arms and ideology to justify the West's militarism. In January Thatcher admitted that East-West relations are improving, but only because 'the West has staunchly stood up for freedom and has been prepared to defend it always'. She is using developments in

the Soviet Union as 'proof' of the benefits of Nato remaining well-armed and being prepared to wage war anywhere in the third world.

The people of Libya, Grenada, Nicaragua, Iran and many others must be mighty relieved that Thatcher and her Nato allies have been on hand to protect them from the perils of communism. Now, the Western powers have taken on the additional burden of saving the Soviets from themselves.

As the Soviets retreat, the West seeks to press home its advantage. With the world capitalist system lurching towards crisis again, the Western rulers want to create an image of dynamism by driving the Soviets further into a corner. If the Soviets are to be readmitted to Western civilisation, they have to play the game: more elections, more market, less weapons, and no 'Marxism-Leninism'.

The *Financial Times* has made a project of pointing out that a mixed economy is not good enough, and exhorting the Soviet Union to go further and faster down the capitalist road:

> 'Mr Gorbachev plans to introduce some form of market socialism. But successful market socialism has never existed, which is hardly surprising. A market is not even feasible, let alone efficient, without clearly defined property rights, the clear requirements being exclusivity and transferability. But such property rights are, of course, the essential characteristics of capitalism.' (28 February)

One lever which the West proposes to use to wrest more concessions is the Soviet Union's desperate need for credit. Everybody from Sir Geoffrey Howe to the liberal *Guardian* agrees that you can't trust the Kremlin with Western bankers' money, because the Soviets will use it to buy extra weapons. The West wants more arms cuts and an even more conciliatory foreign policy before it can consider treating the USSR like a normal country. When Gorbachev announced during his April visit to Cuba that the Soviets were 'against doctrines which export revolution and counter-revolution', the USA responded by demanding that he turn his words into deeds by telling Fidel Castro to buckle under to Cuba's imperialist neighbour. And so it goes on.

The whole tone of this discussion is to treat the Soviet Union as a wayward borstal boy, who must prove that he will do as he is told and admit to all of his past communist sins before he can be allowed to join the adult world where the capitalists live. Peter Young, from Britain's right-wing Adam Smith Institute, is enthusiastic about the Soviets' improved behaviour: 'Now, for the second time this century, there is a real prospect of Russia joining the rest of Western civilisation.' Young displays the magnanimity of the victor when considering the price of readmission to the human race:

> 'It would be preferable to avoid large-scale, indiscriminate massacres of communists. A judicial approach similar to that adopted at the Nuremburg trials should identify and punish those guilty of crimes against humanity.' (*Guardian*, 16 January)

Such confidence from anti-communists today should serve as a warning to those naive enough to believe that the changes of the Gorbachev era will work to our advantage.

Glasnost and Soviet new thinking have certainly undermined many of the premises of the old Cold War propaganda. But they have still helped to boost the right, rather than the left, in Western politics. The anti-communists now have confirmation of their arguments 'straight from the horse's mouth'; all that socialists have is advice from the Soviet Union to give up and go home.

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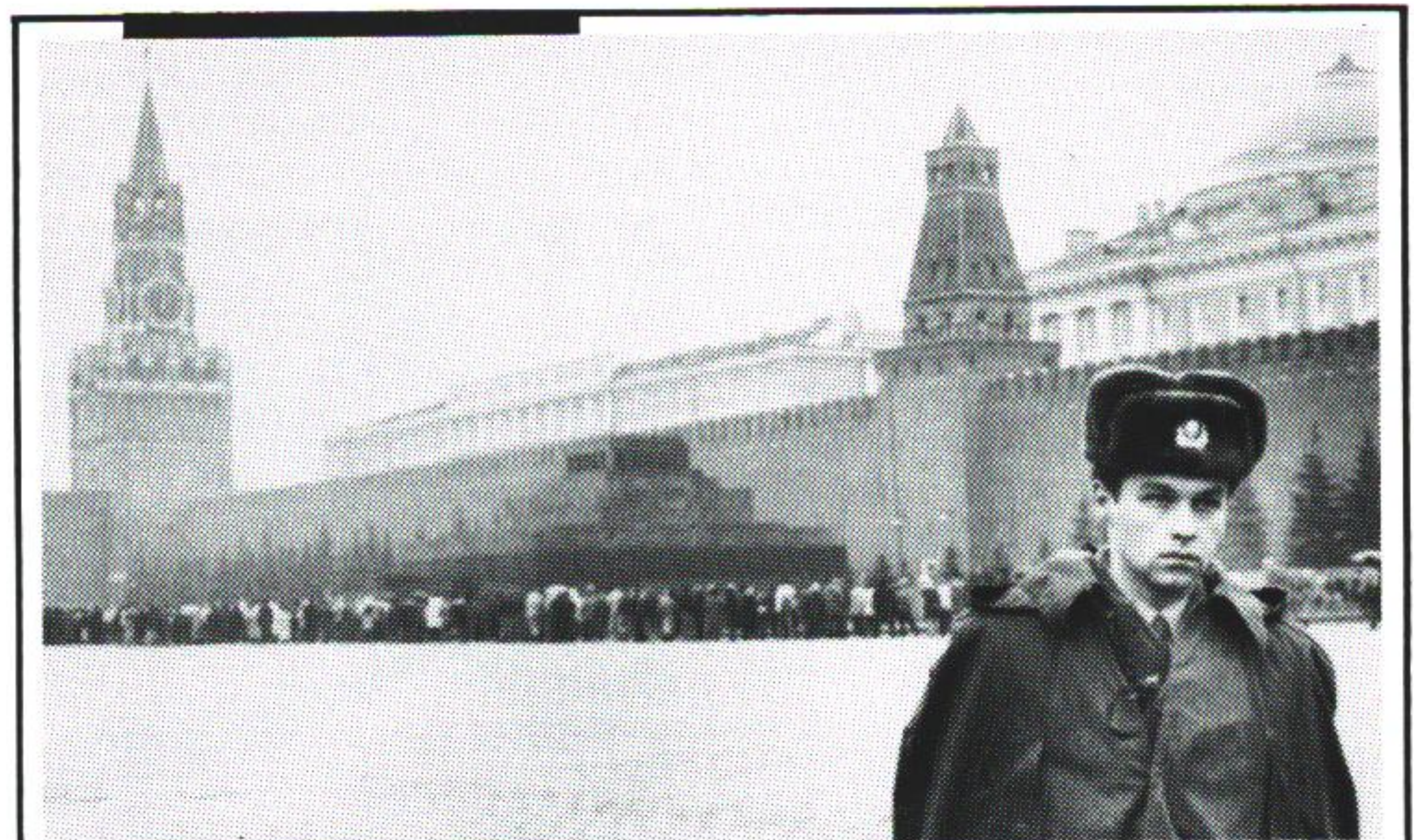

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East-West cooperation in the third world

PEACE AT WHAT PRICE?

Adam Eastman on the bitter fruits of Gorbachev's diplomacy

Has a new era of peace broken out in world affairs? After all, Mikhail Gorbachev has been cooperating with the Western powers to find a solution in international troublespots from the Middle East to southern Africa. Instead of banging his shoe on the table at the United Nations, Gorbachev is busy working alongside the USA behind the UN banner.

A cursory glance at the consequences of Gorbachev's diplomacy suggests that the new era of peace has passed the people of the third world by. In Namibia, the Soviet/Western intervention sparked an immediate massacre of Swapo guerrillas by South Africa, and has created a neo-colonial framework for continued South African domination. In Afghanistan, the Soviet withdrawal has only escalated a bloody civil war, as the USA and Pakistan seek to regain control through the mujahideen. The 'Lebanonisation' of Afghanistan is the likely consequence.

Carve-up

The example of Namibia is instructive. The major powers' intervention had nothing to do with humanitarian concern for the Namibian people. The Americans aimed to extend their influence in southern Africa, particularly in Angola. South Africa wanted a free run in Namibia. The Soviet Union wanted to rein in the Cubans fighting South African-sponsored forces in Angola, and win its spurs as a 'responsible' world power. The result? A carve-up of southern Africa, ratified by the Soviet Union, and carried out under cover of the United Nations.

The Soviet Union put pressure on Cuba to withdraw its troops from Angola, leaving that country open to more American interference. The USA agreed to a sham independence for Namibia under close South African supervision. And Moscow used its clout among the black nationalist movements to persuade them to accept this arrangement. The Angolan MPLA government was left isolated, and Swapo walked into a South African ambush.

Gorbachev's involvement simply lent moral authority to the rape of southern Africa by Western imperialists. As Swapo guerrillas are slaughtered in the bush, Gorbachev is toasted in Washington, London and Cape Town for his contribution to world peace. Even apartheid foreign minister Pik Botha, one of the most racist, anti-communist statesmen on Earth, commended the Kremlin for its new 'constructive' role in southern Africa.

The Soviet Union's promotion of international cooperation under the auspices of the United Nations has given the Western powers carte blanche to impose their solutions on the third world. It invests Western imperialism with a legitimacy it lacked in the past. Every imperialist intervention backed by the Kremlin can now be presented as an act carried out by the global community on behalf of humanity.

The United Nations has long acted as a cover for Western militarism from Korea to the Congo. Now the Soviets are handing it added authority. Moscow has invited the West to oversee Vietnam's pull-out from Kampuchea, and has advised 'firm international control to be exercised over the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops' (Novosti Press Agency, 6 February). Eduard Shevardnadze, Soviet foreign minister, has told the masses of the Middle East to forget about fighting imperialism and to 'rely on the UN and entrust it with acting as a mediator' (Novosti Press Agency, 2 March). The Arab world has had plenty of experience of UN mediation, from its role in the original partition of Palestine and creation of the Zionist state of Israel after the Second World War, to the time in 1982 when UN troops stood aside and allowed the Israelis to invade Lebanon.

The new international consensus has been used to force third world movements and regimes to buckle under to Western requirements. The imperialists have gratefully accepted Soviet assistance. Radical movements which would not give Thatcher, Mitterrand or Bush the time of day are much more likely to give Gorbachev a hearing. And he is prepared to use Moscow's status to promote compromise as a virtue among movements which can ill afford compromise of any description.

The Soviets have, for example, played a key role in pushing the PLO towards renouncing violence and recognising the state of Israel. The Kremlin's influence among liberation movements makes it a highly sought-after partner in Western circles. France has been trying to increase its influence in Lebanon—on 'humanitarian' grounds of course—and has specifically requested talks with the Soviets to give its intervention the stamp of international approval.

South Africa: the oppressed can forget about getting support from Gorbachev

The Soviet Union's collaboration with the West has further compounded the isolation of third world states targeted as 'terrorist' regimes. Gorbachev now joins with the West to condemn countries which upset the status quo. This can only help to set these states up for further Western attack. The Kremlin stayed silent when Britain and the USA launched an air-strike on Libya. But the Soviets have sworn to 'rid human civilisation of terrorism'—'terrorism' being understood as the modern euphemism for Middle Eastern resistance to the West (*Radio Liberty*, 1 March).

Civilising witch-hunt

After leaving Nicaragua to fend for itself against the mighty USA for 10 years, Gorbachev used his recent Cuban visit to lecture the Sandinista regime on the evils of exporting revolution. When the Soviet Union itself turns on a state which the West has branded a Soviet satellite, it underlines that country's pariah status and puts it under immense pressure to submit to imperialism. Should the Western powers choose, with tacit Soviet acquiescence, to launch another witch-hunt against a troublesome third world regime, the enterprise is invested with fresh authority. Imperialist oppression is magically transformed into an international crusade on behalf of civilisation. That is the consequence of the Kremlin's modern diplomacy.

Bloodshed and wars have escalated since Gorbachev launched his diplomatic offensive. It is now much easier to identify the real source of conflict in Africa, Central America and the Middle East. When we see Gorbachev in league with the West against the Namibians or Nicaraguans, it is clear that third world conflicts have little to do with 'Soviet subversion'. They are the battle of the oppressed against Western imperialism.

For decades, the Stalinists in the Soviet Union have exploited the internationalist credentials of the Russian Revolution to win influence among radical movements in the third world. They have manipulated that influence to serve Soviet foreign policy aims, often at dreadful cost to those movements which followed the Kremlin's lead. The one good thing that could come out of Gorbachev's collaboration with the Western powers would be if those struggling for liberation from imperialism finally accepted that Stalinism is their enemy, not their ally.

America's dilemma, Nato's divisions

WHY WASHINGTON NEEDS THE RED MENACE

Gorbachev has given George Bush a headache, says James Malone

Gorbachev and glasnost have posed an extraordinarily difficult problem for American foreign-policy makers. On one hand, they are happy to accept Soviet assistance in southern Africa and the Middle East, and to use the withdrawal from Afghanistan as evidence that they are 'rolling back the tide of communism'. On the other, however, Gorbachev's initiatives have called into question the very foundations of US foreign policy.

From the late forties onwards, the Red Menace provided the pretext for Washington to initiate the arms race. America's claim to Western leadership rested on the premise that only its power could hold back Soviet expansionism. Nato's existence was justified with the argument that Western nations needed close military co-ordination to counter the supposed danger from the East. The fact that that danger did not exist in any real sense was irrelevant; the Soviets were cold and distant enough to make the Red Menace propaganda credible to many in the West.

Reagan's mistake

Anti-communism and militarism have become a way of life in the West, the dominant principle of foreign policy. So where do Western statesmen go after Gorbachev's peace offensive?

It now looks as if Ronald Reagan's handling of Gorbachev was a major mistake. In the short run Reagan was able to bask in the glory of East-West summitry. He tried to demonstrate that he was a world leader capable of winning concessions from Moscow. However, by doing business with Gorbachev he was forced to question the traditional Cold War myths about the Soviet Union. Reagan shocked his conservative friends in April last year, when he suggested that Gorbachev had abandoned the goal of global domination. In October, Reagan passed verdict on Gorbachev's policies: 'The things he has suggested are very progressive.'

Reagan's approach boosted his popularity in the short term. But it created a major dilemma for Washington in the long run. If the Soviet Union is no longer a threat, then how can Reagan's successor George Bush justify massive expenditure on defence? What is the point of sustaining Nato? These are serious matters for Washington. America's economic decline relative to Japan and West Germany means that military power is now its major claim to global leadership. Washington can only retain its domination of the Western world by militarising international affairs.

'I'm a believer'

Washington's response to this dilemma has been contradictory. Leading figures in the Bush administration vacillate between welcoming Gorbachev's policies one day and warning about the Soviet threat the next. Defence secretary Dick Cheney is typically schizophrenic. In January he denounced 'Gorbymania'. By April he had become a convert: 'I started out as a real sceptic, frankly, about Mr Gorbachev, but I've become a believer in the notion that Gorbachev wants fundamentally to reform Soviet society economically.' (*Washington Post*, 1 April)

The conflicting signals from Washington reflect the difficulty of projecting a plausible foreign policy. If Bush is seen as too strongly anti-Soviet then he risks alienating his European allies. If he is too reasonable then the case for Nato and Cold War diplomacy will be undermined. Either way, Washington will have major problems sustaining the old Western Alliance.

They want more

So far it appears that Bush has opted for the business-as-usual approach. Washington is likely to maintain an adversarial stance towards the Soviet Union, but in a more muted form. The message coming out of Washington now is that Gorbachev has made some positive concessions, but that the conflict of interest between East and West still divides the world.

In May, secretary of state James Baker set the scene for the new direction of US foreign policy. Baker's 'new realism' is designed to force the maximum concessions from Gorbachev. Baker and Bush have drawn up an agenda for Soviet diplomacy in the Middle East, Central America and South East Asia. The aim is to force the Soviet Union to support American initiatives or risk being branded as an unworthy partner in arms negotiations.

'We hold it accountable', Bush has warned the Soviet Union over Central America, 'for progress towards peace in the region and towards democracy in Nicaragua'. He accused Moscow of fostering a 'Nicaraguan assault on regional democracy' (*Guardian*, 4 May). This new realism repackages the old Cold War mythology: Washington attacks imaginary Soviet subversion to justify the real assault on democracy in Central America which the USA has launched through the Contras, Oliver North, turning Honduras into an armed camp and so on.

Missile battle

The new realism is unlikely to carry much conviction this time around. It may keep up the anti-Soviet consensus within the USA. But unless Bush provokes Moscow into taking a strong stand (a development which Gorbachev will seek to avoid at all costs), he will find it hard to highlight Soviet aggression in Central America. Nevertheless, the attempt to reinvent the Red Menace over trivial matters (like the sale of six Soviet aircraft kits to Libya) will be an important component of US foreign policy.

Washington's real concern in all this is not Soviet aggression in Central America but the survival of Nato. Most European nations now consider the costs of following US leadership through Nato too high. Major capitalist powers on the Continent, especially West Germany, have little interest in perpetuating the myth of Soviet expansionism. Cold War diplomacy forces them to submit to Washington's will to a degree which is no longer justified by America's economic status.

With Thatcher's aid, Bush has sought to counter the disintegration of Nato and enforce US dominance by turning the modernisation of short-range nuclear missiles into a key issue. This modernisation programme is an artificial device for forcing Nato allies into line. As Ian Davidson of the *Financial Times* has noted, 'to pretend, in the middle of the Gorbachev revolution, that nuclear modernisation is our top political priority is quite unbalanced' (4 May).

From a military point of view, Davidson's argument makes sense. There is no pressing need to modernise short-range nuclear missiles in West Germany. But military considerations have little to do with it. By placing modernisation on top of Nato's agenda, Washington hopes to keep alive the myth of the Soviet threat. The Thatcher government's May white paper on defence goes in the same direction, restating conventional Cold War assumptions.

Drop dead

So far as nuclear modernisation is concerned, Washington has overplayed its hand. The West German government of chancellor Kohl is not progressive or pacifist; Kohl shares many anti-communist and militarist beliefs with Thatcher and Reagan. But no West German government can afford publicly to agree to siting these missiles in the present climate. The row is unlikely to lead to a formal split in Nato. Some behind-the-scenes deal will doubtless be worked out to ensure that nobody's pride gets hurt in public. But the days when Washington's bullying tactics can succeed in Bonn are gone. West Germany is now more confident of operating as an imperialist power in its own right.

Whatever happens over nuclear modernisation, Washington will push for more Cold War policies. It cannot afford to lose its grip on Nato. The differences within the Western Alliance may be papered over at the summit at the end of May. But it is only a matter of time before Nato members go their own way.

The Christian soldiers in the Bush administration must be praying every day that Gorbachev drops dead or puts an end to his diplomatic initiatives. Washington needs the Soviet Union to retain a strong military presence in Eastern Europe. It needs the Berlin Wall and desperately hopes that the Soviet Union will do nothing to undermine the Warsaw Pact. Without these symbols of a world divided between communist tyranny and capitalist freedom, US foreign policy would lose its justification. The White House yearns for the days when Reds were Reds and anti-Soviet rhetoric was sufficient to legitimise imperialism around the world.

Nationalist unrest in the republics

The problem of Soviet disunion

Andy Clarkson argues that the current conflicts in the Soviet republics are more complicated than Western reports of a 'popular struggle against totalitarianism' would suggest

When Soviet troops armed with spades butchered dozens of people in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi in April, the regime of Mikhail Gorbachev exceeded any atrocity of the Brezhnev years inside the USSR. Within weeks of Gorbachev's announcement that the Soviet Union would dump its chemical weapons, nerve gas was dumped on nationalist protesters. This return to Stalin's methods is always an option for the Soviet bureaucracy. But it can only temporarily contain the forces behind the nationalist fervour sweeping the Soviet republics.

The national question has exposed the tendency towards disintegration in the Stalinist system. The nationalist upsurge is a preliminary stage in the overall collapse of sovietisation, the system created by Stalin in the thirties. Currently limited to the more peripheral republics of the Soviet Union, the ferment points towards the possibility of a full-blown crisis in the Soviet heartland itself. The more immediate problem that these nationalist revolts pose for the Kremlin is that of growing divisions within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, as sections of the ruling bureaucracy pull in different directions.

Loosening ties

The Soviet crisis has appeared first in the form of national rebellions. This is because the degeneration of the Soviet Union has undermined the economic system which previously tied the national republics to the centre. The tendency towards economic autarky in the republics has widened divisions in the Soviet bureaucracy and reinforced parochial attitudes among local elites.

The local republican leaderships used to rely on the link with Moscow as the source of their authority. But the accelerated decay of the old system in the eighties has forced the republican bureaucracies to fend for themselves. They face pressure from the centre to accept cuts, and pressure from the local population to deliver the goods.

The local regimes have cultivated a nationalist constituency in their territories to increase their bargaining power in demanding more resources from Moscow. Throughout 1988, nationalist movements sprang up in most of the Soviet Union's more marginal republics. Last November all but seven of the 158 Russian deputies in the soviet of the Baltic republic of Estonia voted to adopt the right to veto new legislation from Moscow. Similarly, the soviet of the Caucasian republic of Armenia sided with the movement to retrieve Nagorno-Karabagh from Azerbaijan.

Getting the nod

In contrast to the situation in the Baltics and the Caucasus, apathy reigns in Eastern Ukraine and the Central Asian republics. There, national movements are still frowned upon by the local bureaucracy. The differential response to the national question shows that the attitude of the local bureaucracy has been decisive in the development of nationalist protest. Genuine national grievances exist throughout the Soviet Union, but the mobilisation of protest in recent years has required at least a nod and a wink from the local bureaucrats.

Bureaucrats in the republics see the national question as a potential vehicle for creating a base of support. The nationalist intelligentsia and the petit bourgeoisie have proved receptive to working with local bureaucrats in many regions. This alliance provides the social base for the contemporary forms of nationalist protest. Workers and peasants tend to play a marginal role, since their primary concern is economic survival.

Nationalist aspirations have assumed different forms in different parts of the Soviet Union. They have acquired a sharper focus in those regions where the denial of democratic rights is directly associated with the experience of Russian domination. Thus the nationalist movements in the Baltic republics and Georgia tend to be strongly anti-Russian, and the aspiration for national independence is always implicit in their demands. In contrast to this anti-Russian sentiment, the local hostility between Armenians and Azerbaijanis has ensured that the demands voiced in these two republics are more limited.

Nationalism in the Baltic republics is strengthened by the relative success of their economies. The Communist Party bureaucrats and the nationalist intelligentsia share the belief that their local economic superiority could be enhanced through more autonomy. This has consolidated a working relationship between the two groups.

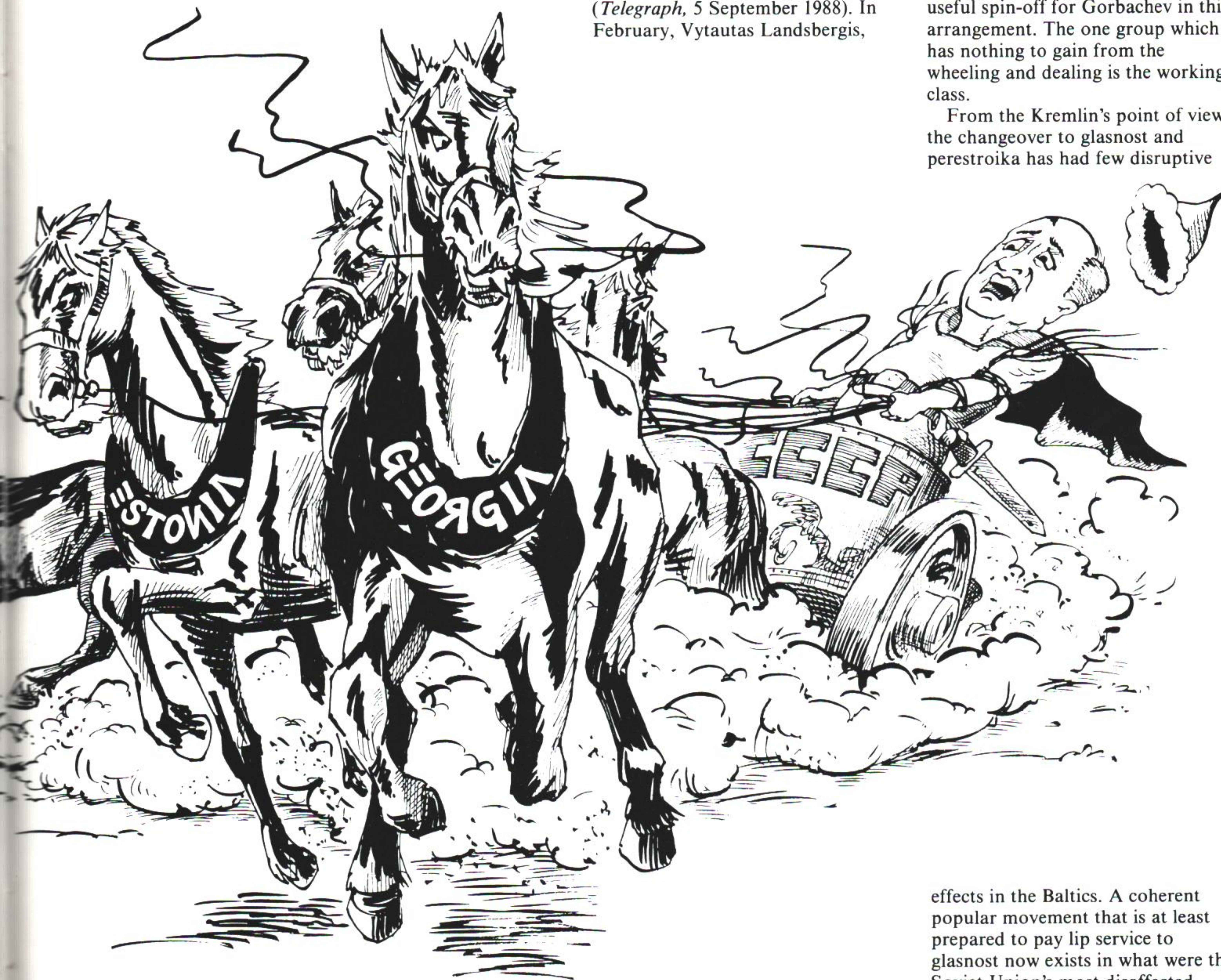
The recent elections to the Soviet parliament proved that there is a broad layer of middle class support

for the nationalist popular fronts in the Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. These republics were only partially incorporated into the Stalinist 'command economy' after the Second World War. Even in the fifties, for example, three quarters of a Lithuanian 'collective' farmer's annual income came from his private plot. Compared to the changes in Russia, sovietisation in the Baltic republics has remained superficial, and market relations are much stronger. Defending this arrangement provides the point of common interest between the local

bureaucrats and the middle class nationalists in the Baltic republics.

Every Baltic communist party still contains a 'Moscow loyalist' group fearful of the nationalists. These are strongest in Latvia where the party is evenly split between those who sympathise with the nationalist popular front, and those who back the pro-Moscow 'Interfront' group. In Riga, the capital city, the Latvian popular front's candidate won just 34 per cent of the vote in the March election, compared to 51 per cent won by the Latvian Communist Party's first secretary. Nevertheless the nationalists won 24 out of the republic's 29 first-round seats.

The influence of the nationalist popular fronts is strongest in Estonia and Lithuania. The Estonian movement was sufficiently confident of its alliance to back party candidates in the March poll for the Soviet parliament. Fifteen out of the 23 party candidates they backed won their seats. Lithuania's 'Sajudis' movement won 30 out of 42 seats.



The Baltic popular fronts have welcomed the chance to cooperate with their former rivals in the local bureaucracy. They view the climate of 'openness' introduced by Gorbachev as providing the opportunity to chart a relatively safe route towards independence, avoiding the risks involved in trying to mobilise a mass movement against the Soviet state. As Estonian popular front leader Edgar Savinsaar put it, 'Perestroika gave us the chance to fight for our Estonian cause....It wouldn't be won in a cavalry charge, but in long trench warfare' (*Telegraph,* 5 September 1988). In February, Vytautas Landsbergis, chairman of the Lithuanian popular front, said that his movement rejected 'rebellions, force and mass disobedience'. Referring to Lithuanian forest guerrillas who had fought sovietisation in the forties, he claimed they 'often turned into ordinary bandits' (*International Viewpoint,* 17 April).

In turn, some Baltic bureaucrats find the nationalists' willingness to compromise appealing, since it seems to offer them a stake in the future of the republics. 'We can achieve almost anything', an 'ideological' expert in the Estonian Communist Party told the *Telegraph,* 'if we work quietly and avoid confrontation' (17 April).

The attempt to 'avoid confrontation' is probably doomed to failure in the long run. The nationalists and the party bureaucrats have radically different final objectives: the former want secession, while the latter ultimately rely on the Stalinist system for their status. However, in the short term, both the Baltic bureaucrats and nationalists can derive benefits from collaborating. There may even be a useful spin-off for Gorbachev in this arrangement. The one group which has nothing to gain from the wheeling and dealing is the working class.

From the Kremlin's point of view, the changeover to glasnost and perestroika has had few disruptive effects in the Baltics. A coherent popular movement that is at least prepared to pay lip service to glasnost now exists in what were the Soviet Union's most disaffected republics. The Estonian people's front's platform explicitly endorses Gorbachev's perestroika:

> 'A condition of participation in the activity of the people's front is active and businesslike support of the CPSU's course of restructuring.' (Quoted in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press,* 20 July 1988)

Given such sentiments, it is not surprising that the Kremlin has been tempted to cheat by promoting the Baltic republics as a showcase for the

'success' of perestroika. But it is because the Baltics were never fully sovietised in the first place that there is so much high-level support for economic reform and the further extension of the market economy today.

The Baltic popular fronts have been the most open in championing the market—and thus in advocating attacks on the working class. They demand an end to the further immigration of Russian workers, and even call for repatriation. For Baltic workers, the popular fronts favour a return to Stalin's Stakhanovite methods—that is, working harder and faster. Last June the Tallinn people's front support group took one evening to dig a 1700 metre trench and lay an electricity cable. According to the local press, this job would 'normally have taken two months' (*Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 20 July 1988).

In the system

In the Caucasus, the Kremlin faces a very different problem. That region has been fully integrated into the system since the thirties, when the republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia experienced the complete sovietisation process. Market relations were wiped out, agriculture collectivised and industrialisation commenced. Alongside these immense changes, 'national' versions of the new Soviet elite developed. But the centralised, bureaucratic system quickly showed it was incapable of regulating the distribution of resources and producing efficiently. In many ways, it was to prove to be an even more anarchic system than capitalism.

Whatever the form of nationalist protest in the future, it is certain that only capitalism can benefit from the dismemberment of the Soviet Union

The Caucasian republics did try to compensate for the deficiencies of the system through local initiatives. From the Second World War onwards, some Caucasians became involved in informal efforts to meet the gaps left by the official system—in particular, its inability to provide consumer products. During the Brezhnev years of the sixties and seventies, Moscow proved willing to turn a blind eye to these developments in the Caucasus, in the hope that the 'black marketeers' could provide the incentives to restore falling productivity.

Private wealth

Between 1960 and 1971 Georgia's national income officially grew by 102 per cent—the third lowest rate in the Soviet Union. However, in 1970, the average Georgian savings account was nearly twice as large as the Soviet average. According to American academic RG Suny, the explanation for the discrepancy is 'a vast network of illegal economic operations and exchanges, which produced great private wealth for some Georgians while their republic grew insignificantly according to official statistics'. These operations were 'carried out by people in the [Georgian soviet] government or close to it' (*The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 1988, p304).

These informal 'secondary' activities are less developed than the officially sanctioned market relations in the Baltics. Whereas the Baltics stand aloof from the sovietised economy, the Caucasian secondary traders are closely linked to it. Thus the disintegration of the system in the 1980s has been far more disruptive in the Caucasus than in the Baltics.

Heavy toll

Since the Caucasus is more fully integrated into the system, its fragmentation has had more direct effects there. Whatever protection the Caucasian bureaucrats may have gained from their connections with the secondary market, the crisis of the central economy has taken a heavy toll on the working masses. This has brought a greater volatility to nationalist upsurge. Mass movements play a much more significant role in the Caucasus than in the Baltic republics, where they are little more than stage armies manipulated by the local elite.

Compared to the Baltics, market relations are as yet poorly developed in the Caucasus. Since it remained only an informal addition to the dominant system of production, the secondary market in the Caucasian republics brought few advantages to anybody except the privileged bureaucracy. This is why, unlike the Baltic popular fronts, Caucasian nationalism has little or no 'natural' constituency outside of the intelligentsia. Consequently, as the crisis of the system gets worse, the bureaucratic elite in the Caucasus has been unable to find a broad conservative layer that could help to stabilise the situation.

The people of the Caucasus have suffered the direct consequences of the decline of the Soviet economy. They have come out on to the streets to protest. But there is no solution for them in the manoeuvring between Moscow and the local authorities. Instead they are being battered by KGB shovels, and used as pogrom-fodder in the bloody ethnic conflicts cynically stirred up by the bureaucrats and the nationalists in the Caucasian republics.

Baltic break?

Although they are more volatile than those in the Baltic republics, the protest movements of the Caucasus are for the time being less of a threat to Moscow. Ethnic tensions within the region allow Moscow to pursue the policy of divide and rule. Moreover there is little economic incentive for demanding the right to independence. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia pose Moscow with an immediate problem of political control. In the Baltic republics the underlying trends point towards a final break with the Kremlin. Although at present Baltic nationalists are relatively moderate, their interests may well push them towards far-reaching change.

Of course it is always possible for the forces of nationalism to gain momentum and develop outside the control of the local bureaucracy everywhere. Events in Georgia have shown how fast a situation of apparent stability is transformed into one of tension. The present pattern of convergence between local bureaucrats and nationalists could explode, and the future cannot be predicted.

But whatever the form of nationalist protest in the future, it is certain that only capitalism can benefit from the dismemberment of the Soviet Union. The Stalinist system over which Gorbachev still presides is responsible for exacerbating this trend. The machinations of the party men and the petit-bourgeois nationalists in the republics provide no alternative. The need now is to unite all Soviet workers against Kremlin domination, while defending the integrity of the Soviet Union against Western interference. The demand which fits that bill is for political, cultural and religious autonomy for the Soviet nationalities.

The 1917 resolution

The 1917 Russian Revolution and the subsequent establishment of the Soviet Union created the framework for resolving the national question. The Bolsheviks demanded full rights for all national groups within the Soviet state, under a socialist system which could improve the lot of the workers and peasants. As a consequence, the revolution won some of its firmest supporters from among the non-Russian nationalities. That potential was destroyed by the Stalinist regime from the twenties onwards. The Stalinists imposed centralised repression, exploited national rivalries and tensions, and created an inefficient economy which ensured shortages and so led to a desperate battle for a bigger share of resources. In short, they laid the basis for today's national unrest.

The final resolution of the national question in the Soviet Union lies in the destruction of Stalinism and a return to the revolutionary attitude of 1917. That will only be possible once the immediate conflicts and divisions are dealt with through popularising the demand for autonomy.

●

Women and glasnost

GORBACHEV'S VICTORIAN VALUES

Ragne Miles on the lessons the Soviets have learnt from Margaret Thatcher's moral panics

'Socialism has freed woman from economic and social oppression, and has created for her equal opportunities with men to work, receive an education and take part in public life. The socialist family is built on the basis of full equality of man and woman and their equal responsibility for the family.'

This surreal vision of women's position in Soviet society was put forward by Mikhail Gorbachev in his report from the central committee to the twenty-seventh congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in February 1986.

Two and a half years later at the nineteenth CPSU conference, Gorbachev came a little closer to reality in the two paragraphs which dealt with women in his 31-page speech:

'Things have turned out in such a way that despite unquestionable gains, women have been left with concerns which still in many ways prevent them from using to the full the opportunities granted by society.'

Gorbachev's modest confession was rather tartly taken up by a woman worker delegate, who expressed herself 'very grateful' to the leader for 'his remarks about women's lot' and then asked what else women had to be grateful for:

'But excuse me, what question can there be of my development as an individual when I spend much of my time as a housewife standing in a queue?'

The changing tone of Gorbachev's reports, and his exchange with that delegate, show what glasnost has meant for Soviet women. They still suffer inequality; the only difference is that now their position can be commented on and even complained about.

Glasnost has extended the debate on women's issues, taking in such hitherto taboo subjects as prostitution in the Baltic ports and the self-immolation of Central Asian women. Most significantly, new research has been published, and new questions asked, about women's 'double shift' as workers and housewives.

Domestic work is a particularly heavy burden in the Soviet Union. The poor availability and quality of consumer goods make housework more arduous. Just 15 per cent of rural families had vacuum cleaners in 1986. There is no such thing as 'just popping down to the shop'. Shopping usually involves queuing for hours, often to find that what you want has all gone anyway.

The bulk of this burden falls on women. *Women and Russia*, the first feminist *samizdat*, claims that men only queue for alcohol. Even official sociological studies concede that women spend more than twice as much time on housework as do men, and have half as much leisure time. Glasnost has made Alexandra Biryukova the first female politburo member since Khrushchev's time; it has made no difference to the grinding reality of life for millions of Soviet women.

The Soviet authorities are now expressing concern about the impact of women's double shift on family life. The rise in the divorce rate has been a particular source of consternation in recent years, as leading demographer Victor Perevedentsev explained on Soviet TV in July 1987:

'There are very many divorces here—according to the latest figures, 35 per hundred marriages throughout the country, and in the big towns up to 50 or more—and people who have had a taste of family happiness often don't want a repeat.'

One study found that, while 71 per cent of divorced men wanted to remarry, only 50 per cent of divorced women felt the same. Most divorces are now instigated by women; more than 40 per cent cite their husband's alcoholism as the reason.

The major factor behind all the worrying about the breakdown of the family is the Soviet Union's low, and declining, population growth. The population increased by an average of 0.9 per cent a year in the seventies, as compared to an average annual growth of 1.3 per cent in the sixties. This is a widespread trend in developed countries, and is not generally considered a big problem. But the Soviet Union is not like other industrialised states.

The bureaucratic Soviet economy has grown not *intensively*, by raising the level of technology and so increasing the productivity of labour, but *extensively*, by the wasteful use of more and more workers and materials. As a result, a country containing 300m people now has a labour shortage. Population growth is thus a necessity. So the authorities are singing the praises of motherhood and women's role in the family.

The Soviets seem to have picked up some handy hints from their closer links with the Western governments. They are now using Thatcher-style arguments and moral panics to emphasise the importance of a woman's role as a wife and mother. Tat'yana Zaslavskaya, influential president of the Soviet Sociological Association, summed it up last year:

'Men are more diverse in their inclinations and abilities, they are innovators in organising life. Women are more conservative and stable because they are the transmitters of life.' (Quoted in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 6 April 1988)

The Pope couldn't have put it better. Zaslavskaya has also helped to set the trend for blaming social problems in the Soviet Union on irresponsible mothers—an argument which is all-too familiar to women in Thatcher's Britain:

'Such negative phenomena as juvenile delinquency are largely explained by the inadequate attention shown to children by their parents.' (*Radio Liberty Research Bulletin*, 27 July 1988)

Zaslavskaya is particularly worried that working mothers spend only 30 minutes a week in 'spiritual communication' with their children. The increased moral pressure on women to be better and more fruitful mothers is one of the most reactionary developments of the Gorbachev era.

Despite the official desire to encourage the values of motherhood and start a baby boom, however, the authorities cannot afford to drive women out of the workforce. After all, they make up 51 per cent of the working population. The need to mobilise every woman worker possible explains why there is still no serious discussion about limiting the right to abortion—currently free to all working women, and cheap for everybody.

The balance of women's two roles at work and in the home is the big question for the academics and the ruling bureaucracy. The focus of that debate has now shifted to put more emphasis on encouraging motherhood and feminity, pressurising women to work harder in the home and have more children while keeping up their role in the workforce. There is much talk of what Zoya Pukhova, chair of the committee of Soviet women, calls 'the new type of Soviet woman' who will be 'the worker, the mother and the citizen' (*Summary of World Broadcasts*, 9 July 1988).

Despite all the speeches and reports, however, no substantial change in women's position is possible under the Soviet system. The Soviet authorities need women to bear the burden of housework just as much as the Western capitalists do, because their inefficient economy is incapable of providing adequate childcare services and other facilities to free women from the domestic trap. The concern of the bureaucracy is not to liberate women, but to pressurise them to do even more. As in other areas, glasnost has led to a broadening of the debate and an increase in information available, rather than material change.

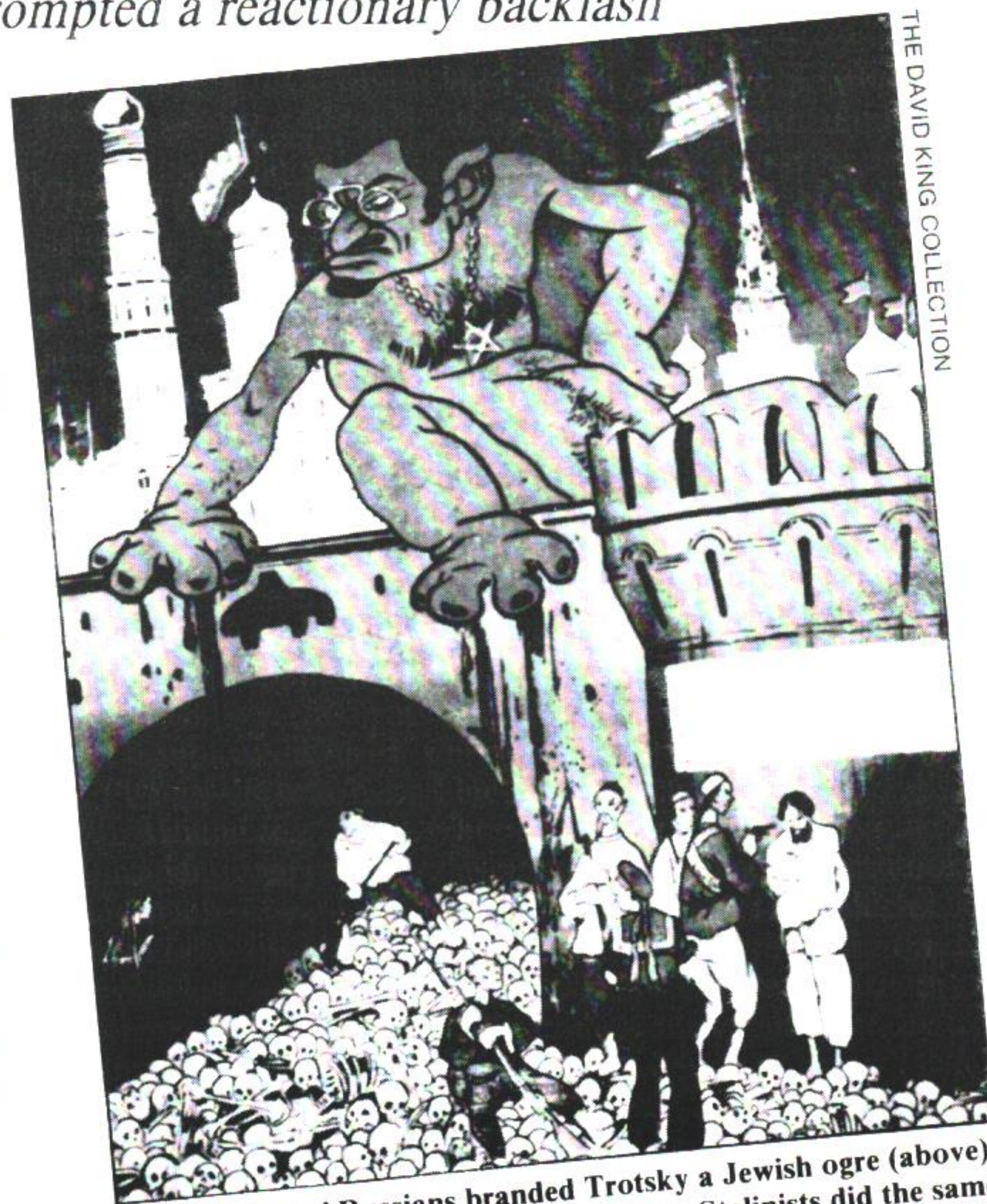
It is a basic proposition of Marxism that the progressive quality of a society can be judged by the position of women within it. The Stalinist system, both pre-Gorbachev and now, fails the test. Lenin's words from 1919 remain true today: a woman will remain 'a domestic slave' while she 'wastes her labour on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-racking, stultifying and crushing drudgery' in the home:

'The real emancipation of women, real communism, will begin only where and when an all-out struggle begins...against this petty housekeeping, or rather when its wholesale transformation into a large-scale socialist economy begins.' (*Collected Works*, Vol 29, p429)

The Pamyat factor

UNPLEASANT MEMORY

Rob Knight on how Gorbachev's token political reforms and total economic failure have prompted a reactionary backlash


THE DAVID KING COLLECTION

The 'White' Russians branded Trotsky a Jewish ogre (above); then the Stalinists did the same

Vitaly Korotich edits the popular Soviet political magazine *Ogonyek*. He is the most outspoken of Mikhail Gorbachev's liberal supporters in the Soviet media. A meeting to discuss Korotich's nomination for the March election was broken up by supporters of an organisation called Pamyat (Memory).

Abel Aganbegyan is a close adviser to Mikhail Gorbachev. He is the most prominent of the economists who are looking for a market solution to the problems of the Soviet economy. Aganbegyan is an Armenian. Pamyat says he is really a Jew called Hoffman.

Yevgeny Yevtushenko is a famous Soviet poet and supporter of Gorbachev. He wrote a report on a Pamyat rally he attended in the liberal *Moscow News*. Yevtushenko noted that the anti-Semitic slogan 'down with rootless cosmopolitans' was much in evidence, and that the banner of St George the Victorious was the official emblem of the meeting. St George the Victorious was the patron saint of the Black Hundreds, the right-wing movement responsible for many pogroms against Jews and socialists in Russia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These slogans and emblems, says Yevtushenko, 'taken out of mothballs, can be turned into a fighting arsenal of reaction'.

Yevtushenko's article expresses the Soviet reformers' fear of a reactionary backlash against glasnost and perestroika, as the Soviet economy runs into ever-deeper trouble.

Elders of Zion

In the early eighties Pamyat was a discussion circle in the ministry of aviation. It achieved notoriety in 1985 when members quoted publicly from the classic anti-Semitic text, 'The protocols of the elders of Zion'. In 1987 Pamyat took control of the Moscow section of the quaintly named All Russian Society for the Preservation of Historical and Cultural Monuments—VOOPIK for short. Glasnost has allowed most freedom of expression in the cultural sphere, and it is here that Pamyat supporters have been most outspoken. The Russian Writers Union has been dominated by Pamyat since the mid-eighties.

There are two kinds of Pamyat supporters in the writers' union. There are those like Valentin Rasputin, the Village Writers, whose work looks back to a mythical golden age in Russia under the tsar. And there are those who look back to a mythical golden age in the Soviet Union under Stalin. Both wings have been conducting a vitriolic press campaign against liberals. They combine the fears of old-timers worried about losing influence under glasnost with a mystical yearning for a mythical past. In the growing crisis of Soviet society it is a potent mixture.

Pamyat supporters stage frequent demonstrations in Soviet cities. They do not get attacked and broken up by the police. Nor, unlike other 'unofficial' political groups, do they have trouble booking halls for meetings. The organisation remains shadowy, but its claims of widespread support, reaching to the top of the ruling bureaucracy, sound plausible enough. The most conservative member of the politburo, Yegor Ligachev, has personal links with leading reactionaries in the writers' union.

Slav nationalism and anti-Semitism were influential in Russia both before and after the October 1917 Revolution; but the cause and character of these sentiments has changed with the circumstances which produce them. At the end of the last century Slav nationalism became the ideological banner behind which the emerging Russian capitalist class imposed its authority on society. In the name of Russian nationalism the Black Hundreds hounded and hunted down Russian Jews, forcing many hundreds of thousands to flee the country.

The Bolsheviks conducted a vigorous campaign against Russian nationalism and anti-Semitism. In response their opponents depicted them as a Jewish party. However, by the late twenties Stalin had abandoned the internationalism of the Bolsheviks and himself adopted Slav nationalism, to help consolidate the rule of his bureaucracy during its worst crisis.

Anti-Semitism played an essential part in Stalin's strategy for consolidating support among backward sections of Soviet society, and for isolating his opponents. Stalin's supporters used it in their campaign against Leon Trotsky and his allies, branding the Left Opposition 'the Jewish opposition'. After the Second World War anti-Semitism became an explicit state policy, as the slogan 'down with rootless cosmopolitans' was made official. Anti-Semitism persisted in a less virulent form in party circles after Stalin, and has contributed to the policy of preventing Jews leaving the Soviet Union to go to Israel.

The worst

Pamyat stands in the worst tradition of Slav nationalism. It is anti-Semitic and anti-foreign. But those who see Pamyat as simply the latest resurgence of an age-old anti-Semitic instinct are wrong. Anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union today is the product of today's conditions. It is gathering strength as Gorbachev's economic reform programme runs out of steam. It is fuelled by the growing sense of crisis in society, and the fragmentation this has caused within the Stalinst bureaucracy itself.

Until now opposition to the consequences of Gorbachev's reforms has been muted and incoherent. The March election results have placed a new strain on an already fragmenting Soviet bureaucracy. The reform wing of the party has been given a new lease of life, and this enabled Gorbachev to purge more of the old conservatives from the central committee. But this move also gives more weight to the elements in Soviet society who are threatened with losing out through perestroika. The new prominence of Pamyat is an expression of their disquiet.

Shovelling dirt

As Gorbachev's economic reforms run into increasing difficulties the opposition is likely to grow. Disaffected bureaucrats, army veterans and the KGB may find the calls for a return to the relative stability of the past more attractive. If this movement gathers pace, it will not just be the Georgians who feel the edge of the KGB's sharpened shovels. The entire Soviet working class could be plunged into a bloodbath of reaction.

Any progressive revolution will inevitably provoke a counter-revolution. But Gorbachev's so-called revolution from above has managed to stir up a hornets' nest without achieving anything progressive. The emergence of a group like Pamyat shows the dangers of Gorbachev-style tinkering with the system. So long as the Stalinist structures of Soviet society remain intact, and internationalism remains a dirty word to be used as a term of abuse by anti-Semites, the forces of reaction will always be more than a memory.

The Hungarian opposition

THE THATCHER-CHURCHILL FAN CLUB

Joan Phillips on the Hungarian 'progressives' who campaign 'For God, country and private property'

Budapest is fast becoming the favourite hang-out of Western right wingers. Tory propagandists such as Roger Scruton and Max Hastings have visited the Hungarian capital this year and reported excitedly on the resurgence of opposition to the Stalinist regime. Thev celebrate the flowering of civil society in Hungary, a mushrooming of debating clubs, civic associations, intellectual clubs and political groups, and suggest that a powerful movement for Western-style democracy is on the march.

In fact the influence of the opposition has been exaggerated by Western commentators. Membership of opposition groups, which were legalised in December 1988, has grown pretty slowly. The largest movement, the Hungarian Democratic Forum, has an estimated 12 000 members. Other fledgling political parties, such as the Smallholders and the Social Democrats, have considerably fewer followers. Ferenc Köszeg of the Free Democratic Alliance is disappointed that it has attracted just 2000 members: 'I am afraid people believe the new parties will not lead anywhere.'

The true size of the opposition is even smaller: it amounts to a few hundred activists at most, doing the rounds of intellectual gatherings and social events. All the main opposition groups are empty shells without active support or effective leadership. They arouse as little popular enthusiasm as the ruling Hungarian Socialist Workers Party itself. The spectacle of two octogenarians heading the resurrected Social Democrats and Smallholders inspires little confidence among potential voters. A poll commissioned by Thames TV's *This Week* revealed that only 11 per cent of people would vote for the Hungarian Democratic Forum, eight per cent for the Smallholders and 18 per cent for the Social Democrats.

The opposition is composed almost entirely of members of the Budapest intelligentsia. The old Central European distinction between the intelligentsia and the people is forcefully articulated by the Hungarian opposition. These intellectuals consider themselves the representatives of a crucially important stratum. There is a tendency to treat the work of the dissident intelligentsia as inherently significant, regardless of the fact that there is no mass audience for it. This inflated sense of importance is apparent in the pomposity which pervades opposition circles.

Right instincts

When Western pundits say the opposition's politics are progressive, they mean pro-capitalist. It is not surprising that Hungarian intellectuals should be hostile to Stalinism, but their fierce anti-communism is what has endeared them to reactionaries in the West. Almost all of them favour a European-style multi-party system and the restoration of the capitalist market. It would appear that their most cherished aspiration is to pass out as graduates of the Harvard Business School.

Gáspár Miklos Tamás, a leading figure in the Free Democratic Alliance, is typical of the new breed of opposition politician. The Free Democratic Alliance contains what it calls a social liberal left wing, which is to the right of David Owen's SDP, and a whiggish-conservative right wing, which must presumably be to the right of Margaret Thatcher. Tamás is a fervent devotee of the prime minister, on whom he heaps lavish praise: 'You cannot imagine what effect Mrs Thatcher had when she visited Poland. She has all the right instincts: they are her best part.' Tamás is an out-of-work philosopher, now an honorary fellow of St Anthony's College, Oxford. He divides his time between opposition activity in Budapest, and writing articles for the *Spectator* in which he has recommended High Toryism for Eastern Europe.

For years Tamás was regarded as an eccentric bourgeois intellectual; today he is in his element as these ideas acquire a wider appeal in intellectual circles. Ivan Baba, a leading member of the Smallholders, calls himself a Hungarian Tory, as is fitting for a party which campaigns under the slogan 'God, family, country'. Tibor Hornyak has revived the Independence Party, the former party of Hungary's grand bourgeoisie, which rejoices in the slogan: 'For God, country and private property'. The Social Democrats meanwhile want nothing so much as a capitalist economy. And even the left-leaning Hungarian Democratic Forum has adopted as a hero a British statesman close to Max Hasting's heart: 'We need a national consensus,' one of its historians told the editor of the *Telegraph*: 'The question is whether we can find ourselves a Churchill.'

Today every flag, slogan, and prejudice of the Western order is held aloft in Hungary by the opposition which stretches from Christian democrats, liberal democrats, apostles of free enterprise and monetarists to social democrats, populists, radical sociologists and Christian socialists. With Margaret Thatcher and Winston Churchill as role models, it is easy to see why the opposition is feted by the British establishment.

Intellectual opinion of all shades agrees that a substantial fall in the nation's living standards is essential to the progress of the economic and political reforms. 'One can scarcely welcome economic crisis', confessed one Democratic Forum supporter. 'But without the economic crisis, there would be no chance for political reform.' The intelligentsia is intellectually predisposed towards market reforms, and extremely reluctant to oppose even those which have a devastating effect on working class living standards. As a result, the Hungarian opposition, so popular over here, remains isolated at home.

Not at home

It is also being encouraged by US policy-makers, who are sending money and advisers to Hungary. America's ambassador to Hungary, Mark Palmer, argues that the West should help the opposition 'learn politics': 'These new parties have very little experience, and very few international connections. The AFL-CIO [the American TUC] should [continue to] establish ties with emerging independent trade unions. The Democratic Party is sending a delegation to Budapest next week. The idea is to provide training in political campaigning, finance, publishing and poll-taking.' (*Newsweek*, 3 April) Palmer has organised direct help to non-communist political parties by the US National Endowment for Democracy.

British tributes and American money might transform Hungary's oppositionists into Western-style politicians, but it will not make them more popular with the mass of people who are deeply cynical about politics. The intellectuals are constantly bemoaning the passivity of the working class and its refusal to take up the cause of political reform. Yet it is not difficult to see why few people share the intellectuals' concerns: for most, the economic reforms which the opposition favours mean raging inflation and plummeting living standards.

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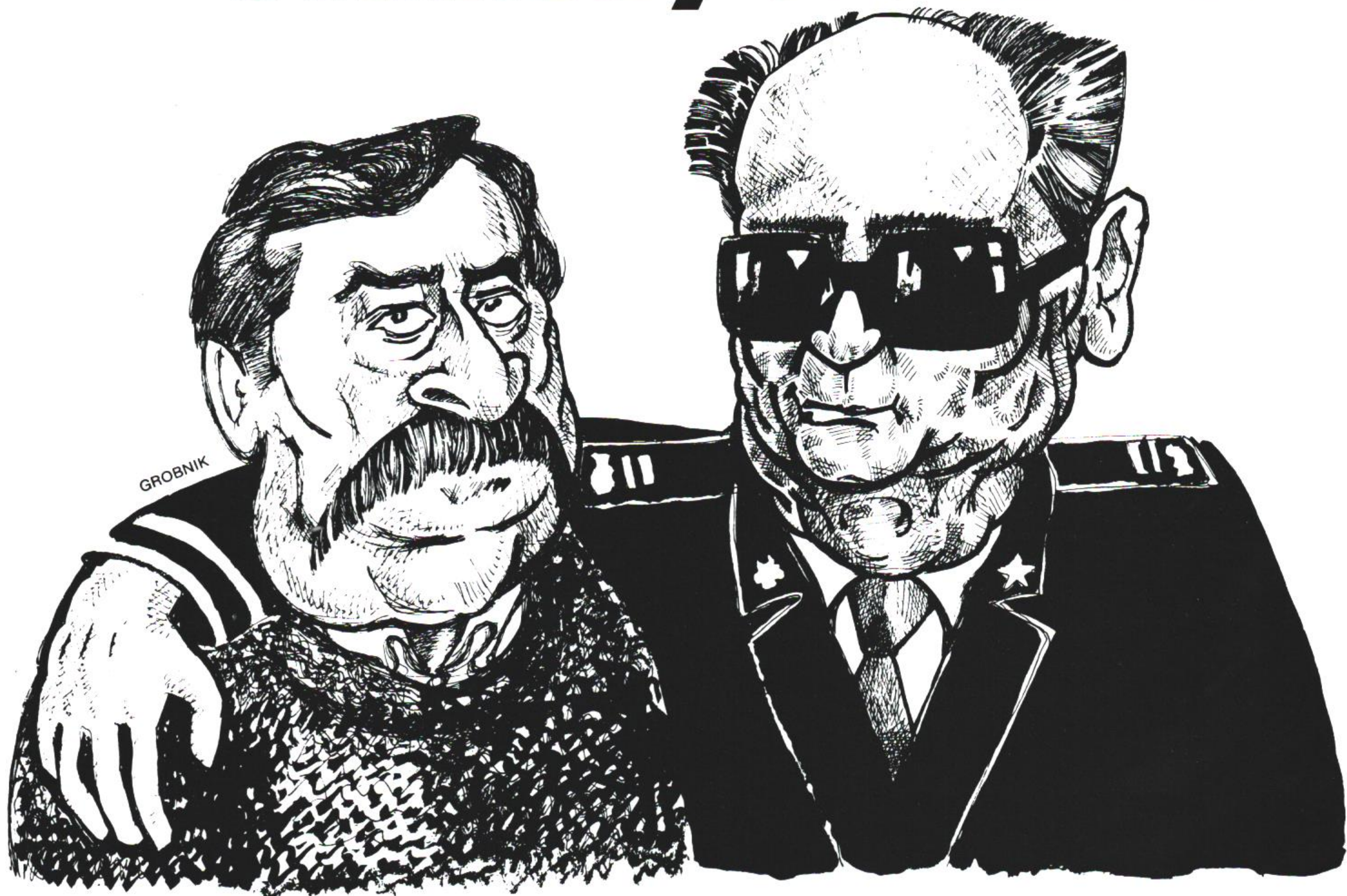
Poland: the opposition enters parliament

Solidarity or sell-out?



As Poland goes to the polls, Russell Osborne explains why the Western world's enthusiasm for Solidarity is no longer shared by many Polish people

Since it took centre stage in the Polish crisis of 1980-81, the underground trade union Solidarity has been championed in the West. Dedicated union-busters like Reagan and Thatcher have praised Solidarity as a symbol of the struggle for freedom in the East. Now, under Poland's glasnost-style reforms, Solidarity has been legalised and will dominate the opposition slates in the liberalised parliamentary elections this month.

The capitalist powers have signalled their approval of what Solidarity leader Lech Walesa called a major step down the road towards 'pluralism and democracy'; US president George Bush has given Poland a big hand-out in reward. The results of eight years of conflict in Poland might please the West. But what does the acceptance of Solidarity today mean for the majority of Poles?

Not 1981

Solidarity was legalised by a court decision in April, following round-table talks between the ruling Communist Party and the opposition. That meeting also produced the plan for elections to a new parliament, which will guarantee seats for opposition groups while ensuring the party remains in control.

The round-table brought Walesa face to face with Poland's president, General Wojciech Jaruzelski, who jailed him under martial law during the protests and strikes at the start of the eighties. They last met in 1981, in a final attempt to settle the crisis. The tanks were about to roll in and Walesa faced imminent arrest. This time the cast of characters looked much the same: the general was still inscrutable behind his sunglasses, although he had changed into civvies; Walesa was still ebullient, if more portly than when he leapt to the world's attention by vaulting the gates of the Gdansk shipyard to lead an occupation.

In the wings, the army of bit-players seemed to have changed little. Arch-fixer Cardinal Glemp couldn't make the meeting, but the Catholic hierarchy remains an 'adviser' to both the government and Solidarity. There are plenty more old faces among the fledgling opposition groups, which have been jostling for the approval from Solidarity that would allow them to stand for the 35 per cent of parliamentary seats allotted to non-party groups. Among the first candidates chosen were Walesa's veteran assistant Jacek Kuron, and Princess Radziwil, a member of Poland's defunct royal family and, by marriage, of the Kennedy clan.

Yet the context in which this cast now acts is very different. Today, as in 1980-81, things have been brought to a head by protesting Polish workers. Superficially they look the same too—young and militant. But there the resemblance ends.

Young and bitter

In 1980-81, the working class carried Walesa shoulder-high behind Solidarity banners, confident that Poland was about to change for the better. Eight years of martial law and grinding austerity later, the new generation of militants is bitter, cynical and desperate. Most were only children in the heyday of Solidarity. The movement which meant so much to their parents is history to them. Life is a struggle to survive against raging inflation and shortages of basic goods and decent housing. Young workers have had

enough. As a pamphlet issued recently by the radical Fighting Solidarity faction put it, 'We can't go on living like this!'.

These young workers were in the van of two massive strike waves which shook the regime last year, prompting Jaruzelski to hold the round-table talks. They have already given notice that the partial reforms which so delighted Walesa and Bush will not satisfy them. The contrast between the attitude of the official opposition leaders, and the mood among the workers, was well-illustrated in the run-up to the round-table.

'Pay psychosis'

On 4 February Walesa's advisers informed the authorities of their priorities for discussion at the forthcoming talks: legalisation of the union, freedom of association, independence of the courts—and the restoration of the capitalist market. Walesa asserted that Solidarity was now stronger than it had been in 1981; not because of the movement in Poland, but because Gorbachev was now Soviet leader. On 5 February on Soviet TV, Jaruzelski announced that he would let opposition forces exist openly, if they accepted the party's leading role.

One group behind the demonstrations says Solidarity 'talks a lot and does little'

On 6 February internal affairs minister General Czeslaw Kiszczak opened the round-table by telling the 57 delegates that Solidarity could be legalised provided that there was agreement on a package of economic and political reforms and participation in a 'non-confrontational' parliamentary election. The US state department welcomed the talks and Polish premier Mieczyslaw Rakowski sought divine approval for a deal by holding talks with the Vatican envoy.

Important sections of the working class, however, remained unimpressed by the luminaries' lectures about promoting the market and avoiding confrontation. As the talks began, 2500 coal-miners promptly went on strike at Belchatow mine demanding that their wages keep pace with inflation.

At a Warsaw press conference next day, government spokesman Jerzy Urban was outraged. He claimed that there had been 173 pay-related protests and 39 strikes in January alone and warned of a 'pay psychosis' in Poland. Worried that the round-table might be called off, Walesa despatched Solidarity executive member Alojzy Pietrzyk to Belchatow to try to end the strike. Pietrzyk is a young miner who emerged as a leader during last August's strike wave, and he has some credibility among the militants. After more than 24 hours he wore down opposition from both sides; the strikers got an interim wage increase, and the round-table went ahead. But it was a timely warning that today's Polish workers are far from being in Walesa's pocket.

The new militants are getting further beyond anybody's influence. The situation at Belchatow is typical. By the mid-eighties Solidarity had just 200 dues-paying supporters at the mine. The union recruited 2500 new members on the first day of February's strike, but Solidarity officials have little control over them. Walesa may be a polished media performer and seasoned globetrotter, but his popularity rating with militants is low. Premier Rakowski has commended 'the Lech Walesa of today' as 'a citizen who understands the need for compromise'. That same willingness to compromise limits Walesa's influence over the determined young workers.

When Walesa told a Gdansk rally in January that he would participate in the round-table, youths shouted 'down with the traitor' and 'no talks with murderers'. A thousand young people then marched through the town and pelted police with stones and firecrackers. Solidarity spokesman Janusz Onyszkiewicz dissociated the union from the protesters—and met a barrage of criticism. Opposition commentator Dawid Warszawski warned that Solidarity could ill afford to alienate those whose strike action had forced the authorities to meet Walesa. He pointed to 'increasing evidence' of Solidarity 'shifting away from fighting [government policy] and toward compromise with those responsible for it' (*Przeglad Wiadomosci Agencyjnych*, 23 December 1988).

All talk

Criticism of Solidarity is becoming more strident. One group behind recent demonstrations argues that Solidarity 'has nothing to offer to young people. It talks a lot and does little. And when it does act, all it does is extinguish people's fervour' (Gdansk Anarchist Movement, quoted in *Przekaz*, September 1987).

Against the background of this deteriorating situation, the government deal with Solidarity is designed to allow a controlled transition to a different form of rule. The ruling bureaucrats are painfully aware of their alienation from most Poles. The partial incorporation of the union is meant to stamp government plans for economic reform with the Solidarity seal of approval. Party leaders hope that legalising the union, combined with a 'renaissance' within the party, will enable them to use Solidarity's name to legitimise their own unpopular policies, without handing over too much real power.

Politburo member Marian Orzechowski has spelt out what the 'renaissance' means: the adoption of a market economy, separation of party and state and steps towards parliamentary politics. State enterprises are already being privatised, and members of the party elite are out to compensate for any loss of political clout by getting a stake in the growing market.

Industry minister Mieczyslaw Wilczek is typical of the new breed of party man. A zloty billionaire who grew rich in the cattle feed and fur trades, he wants to reform the Polish economy by disciplining workers. He claims that they strike just to get a good suntan, and warns that they must make enterprises profitable or face redundancy. New laws allow joint ventures with Western companies and the black market dollar has been made legal tender. The government hopes that a rejuvenated private sector and foreign investment will rescue the stagnant economy. This is what has made the reformers so popular in the West.

A messy affair

The demand to introduce a market economy was on Walesa's shortlist for the round-table and is also key to government economic plans. But it is easier demanded than done. Jaruzelski still faces opposition from hardliners. Solidarity has even greater problems embracing the market. Walesa agrees that tough management is needed, but has had to push for wages to be indexed to inflation to satisfy the militants. The round-table agreement finally stipulated 80 per cent indexation. This is unlikely to satisfy the militants for long. Solidarity is in danger of losing its monopoly on opposition to the regime.

Significant changes are taking place in Poland. The state is adopting the black market as an economic model and market relations are achieving increased importance. All this means further hardship for embittered workers. Jaruzelski hopes that his deal with Walesa will guarantee a truce while major changes are forced through. Polish workers may yet prove him wrong.

Polish politics are inevitably a messy affair today. The name of socialism has been dragged through the mire by corrupt Stalinist bureaucrats. It is hardly surprising that Polish workers came out to cheer Margaret Thatcher last year and will no doubt vote for all sorts of reactionary candidates this month, simply as a gesture against the party. But however confused the debate may be, many Poles have demonstrated by their actions that they reject the market-oriented economic reforms which Western commentators tell us will be of such benefit to the East.

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TEACHING THE WORLD TO SING?

World music; what's that all about? Emmanuel Oliver goes exploring

Ask Derry Watkins, manager of the roots department of the Virgin Megastore in London's Oxford Street, which section has expanded most in the past couple of years, and he will say 'world music'. Then he'll tell you that African music is by far the biggest component of world music, and is now categorised separately. Then he'll remember that they're just reorganising the whole section. Things are moving fast in the roots department, which covers rock 'n'roll, rhythm'n'blues, blues, soul reggae, gospel, salsa, folk, country (including bluegrass), cajun (including zydeco and texmex), African and world music. For some reason jazz, rock, avant-garde, new age, classical and easy listening don't count as 'roots'.

Watkins acknowledges that the world music category is a handy marketing device to deal with the increasingly broad and specialising interest of the music buying public. The term itself was sponsored by record companies who, in an otherwise quiet period, were trying hard to sell the little-known and hugely diverse indigenous music of different countries. As a result, artists from every corner of the globe are now in the same bin in high-street record shops: Pazardjik folk songs, or Qawwali, the devotional music of the Sufis, or Balkan musicians like the Trio Bulgarka, as well as a host of African performers.

If world music artists have anything in common, it is that their music displays obvious links with the traditional music of their country of origin, even if they are quite experimental or don't use the traditional instrumentation. Womad (the world of music, arts and dance) has, with the help of people like Peter Gabriel, been sponsoring festivals of such music since 1982. They are delighted that fashion has now caught up with them. For Elfyn Griffith, currently writing Womad programmes for 10 festivals this summer (three in Britain, seven abroad), 'it's very gratifying to see the development of world music, to see the broadening of people's attitudes, and the pleasure and excitement they get out of it. It was bound to happen. People are disenchanted with Western music. It's commercialised and vacuous. People want something more alive and vibrant and rootsy'.

Africa at last

As the Megastore situation reveals, the term has its arbitrary and anomalous aspects. It doesn't have much purchase on musicians like Hugh Masekela who have been busy building up a Western audience for years. Nor does it take on board Latin dance music which had established a tenuous foothold in the market before anybody heard of world music. Latin sounds are now coming under the umbrella, along with recent developments like zouk (high energy dance music from the French Caribbean) and bhangra (a fusion of house and traditional Punjabi music). It has also proved elastic enough to encompass local sounds like Scotland's Dick Gaugan and English roots outfit The Oyster Band. When bands like The Pogues or Fairground Attraction are included, even though they also sit on the rock/pop shelves, it is usually a case of established names using their roots to boost some newcomers.

African music has made the biggest impact, in its own right and by being incorporated into mainstream pop. It's been a long time coming, having been tipped since the early eighties as next year's big thing. Island Records with Sound D'Afrique and Virgin with an album from Nigerian King Sunny Ade were quick off the mark in 1983. So were Malcolm McLaren (using South African township music), and his protégés Adam and the Ants (with their Burundi drummers). Then there were the feeble Africanisms of the Thompson Twins and Kid Creole's slightly more convincing 'tropicality'. This trend culminated in the brilliant saccharine pop of Paul Simon's 'Graceland', a virtuoso blend of white boy alienation and the magic of black South African popular music. The balance seemed finally to have been tipped when the Bhundu Boys from Zimbabwe, after a gruelling two-year tour, began to achieve serious record sales on both sides of the Atlantic. This may have been another false dawn, but nobody bats an eyelid now when Wedding Present put out an album of Ukrainian rock and the hip-hop duo Eric B and the Rakim use Middle Eastern sounds.

In parallel to this, many British-based African bands were working hard to establish a local audience. The first to make a significant impact were Orchestre Jazira playing Ghanaian highlife. Since their demise there has been a shift towards central African soukous style among bands and audiences. The combination of in-

Remmy Ongala of Orchestre Super Matimila

STUART NAPIER

tricate intertwining guitar lines, long linear passages of harmony singing and a four to the bar bass drum beat makes this music intriguingly complex and very danceable. And such heavyweights from Zaire as Tabuley and Kranko are drawing large and enthusiastic crowds.

The fashions within African music itself also shift continuously. Ghanaian highlife was the first to be popular, followed by King Sunny Ade's juju and Fela Kuti's Afrobeat, both from Nigeria. Now the other West African states of Senegal and Mali are at the centre of things. Brilliant artists such as Salif Keita have emerged playing styles which incorporate different musical traditions. Paris operates as the centre of the African record business, and is home to many top producers, musicians and singers. The melting pot of Islamic singing, traditional griot kora music, Wolof tribal drumming and even Latin music has been further enriched by contact with Western studio technology.

There is no doubt that we have been enriched by the influx of all these sounds from abroad. But let's not forget the unsavoury aspects of the whole business. The music industry, like the tourist trade, is exploiting the exoticism of faraway places and the urgent desire of many people to escape to them. The industry is promoting a bogus one-worldism, obscuring the gap between the first and third worlds by glibly posing a common humanity through a common musical language.

As the industry preens itself, through events like Live Aid, for its humanity and charity, it is easy to overlook the origins and meanings of much of the music of the world (born in struggle against imperialism, and not heard at Live Aid concerts). Significantly perhaps, the category has been very resistant to reggae, a highly political and angry sound back home, with a very black audience. World music is targeted at a white audience.

The 'independent' record labels have taken up world music with enthusiasm. Normally the indie sector promotes the avant-garde, difficult and unappealing music, to take up an oppositional cultural stance. By definition world music is usually very popular with the people of its country of origin. It is obscure only in Britain, but unfortunately that is precisely its value for many here. In Africa music is a more integral part of social life; in Britain it occupies a more commodified, fetishised role. It can derive a certain social status among the in/indie crowd simply by being unknown or a rarity to most. All of this makes it hardly surprising that the makers of some superb sounds are currently being patronised to pieces.

ADRIAN BOOT

Salif Keita

'A GOOD SAUCE'

Salif Keita, the musician and singer from Mali, was in Britain last month for a short tour. Kunle Oluremi spoke to him before his first concert at the Brixton Academy. (Translated from the French by Virginia Wiseman)

What do you think of the category 'world music'?

I agree with it. I think my music should be a part of world music. World music is simply the music of the world. It's music that concerns the whole world, that talks about society. It embraces all world cultures. Everyone mixing up with everyone else makes a good sauce. Of course, you can't make one kind of music for the whole world. There is no one world music. But everybody together listening to the same melodies, makes the whole world more sensitive to changes. They are motivated by the cause of music. That's a good reason to call it world music.

Why is your music more popular in the West now?

I think people have heard so much sophisticated music they want to hear something now which is more natural and also more demanding. They like ethnic music because it's more natural. Musically it's simple, but rhythmically it's complicated.

African music has been a big part of world music, how will it develop?

There is a lot of music which has African music as its roots. My feeling is that it is a baby that will grow. A growing child can assimilate influences from many sources but has to keep his own personality, not copy somebody else's. The future of African music depends on African musicians.

Which Western music has influenced you?

Everybody. You name it. Pink Floyd, the Eagles, Bad Company, Jackson Five, Jimi Hendrix, Louis Armstrong. The whole lot. We've been listening to it for 20 years. Western music is very similar to African music. Jazz is like Bambara. Funk, rock, reggae are tailored versions of African rhythms. When I listen to American or English music only the language is different. They strip away the details of African music until the basic rhythms are left. The core of the rhythms is the same.

Are your religious beliefs important for your music?

Music is like a injection which runs through your veins. It makes you more sensitive, and everything that is sensitive puts you in touch with God. Music is not cerebral though; it's a physical sensation. Man is like an aeroplane taking off. He disappears but leaves a noise behind. The noise is what he's spoken. His moral impact will be in what he has said, the speech in the music.

Has your popularity in Europe changed your music?

Yes, a lot, because when you want to talk to a lot of people you try to be what you're telling people to be like. The more people who listen the more responsible you have to be. Millions of people listening to you changes your music because you don't know the people you're playing to any more.

Do you see your music as political in any direct way?

Everything is political. When you do everything you can to avoid politics, that's still political. I'm interested in politics that help people. In South Africa politics is about fighting racism. That's a legitimate politics.

Womad festivals this summer:
16-18 June–Morecambe, Lancashire
14-16 July–Bracknell, Berkshire
25-27 August–St Austell, Cornwall

Terry Eagleton on Raymond Williams

'CULTURAL MATERIALISM'

John Fitzpatrick talked to Terry Eagleton about the legacy of the late Raymond Williams, in the context of the publication of Resources of Hope, *a collection of Williams' essays*

Raymond Williams, the foremost cultural critic in Britain, died in January 1988, aged 66. From a working class background in Wales he eventually became professor of drama at Cambridge University. He wrote novels such as *Border Country* (1960), and political commentary such as *Towards 2000* (1983) of a gradualist and utopian bent. He made his most important contribution as a critic, first writing on drama, then on English literature more widely, and finally on culture generally.

Williams became well-known with the publication of *Culture and Society* in 1958. *The Country and the City* (1973) and *Marxism and Literature* (1977) showed him developing a more Marxist approach to his subject. As he said later, he was now looking at writers and their works 'not only in their historical background but within an active, conflicting historical process, in which the very forms are created by social relations which are sometimes evident and sometimes occluded'.

If anybody can be expected to fill the large gap left by his death, it is Terry Eagleton, a close friend and former student of Williams, who is now a lecturer in critical theory at Oxford. Like Williams he is a tough, prolific and intelligent writer, whose books include *Literary Theory, The Function of Criticism, The Rape of Clarissa, Criticism and Ideology,* and *Walter Benjamin*. His latest, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic,* is due out in the autumn.

I visited Eagleton in Oxford, and began by asking what influence Williams had on him. 'At Cambridge I was very much following in his footsteps. Later on when I moved away I rather sharply reacted to the "culturalism" of his work. As part of the early New Left movement he was overreacting to a certain kind of reductive Marxism. He was rightly reinstating the importance of culture and communications, but a sharper political and economic analysis was being lost. Even so, I've always felt deeply indebted to him. He opened up almost single-handedly a whole new area of study—not quite sociology, not quite political theory, not really literary criticism. The nearest is cultural studies—what he finally came to call cultural materialism.

'I've always had criticisms of the idea of cultural materialism. In one sense no Marxist would want to criticise the term. It means looking in a material way at cultural practices as well as other kinds of practices. On the other hand the phrase in Williams' later work signified a certain guarded distance from traditional Marxism. It would carry the implication that economic determinacy is no longer a central doctrine, that cultural practices are as central as others, and a more traditional kind of Marxist like myself would have disagreements with that.'

What did he think was Williams' most important legacy? 'He shifted the emphasis from a rather narrowly conceived literary criticism, which is where we all started, into the whole field of culture not just in the simple sense of high culture but in the sense of all of the symbolic processes and signifying practices of society. It is interesting that towards the end of his life he began to see the relationship between this and the work of Gramsci, about which he was very enthusiastic; both were saying that if you don't attend to the way in which political issues actually shape up as lived experience then you're not going to crack it. It doesn't necessarily mean that this is the most central area, that would be a kind of culturalism, but I think you could say, at least negatively, that a lack of attention to this is going to stymie any other political development. I think that was the major message of Williams' work.'

Williams: 'He moved to the left as he grew older, reversing the familiar movement of left-wing intellectuals'

Bored by Bolshevism

The essays collected in *Resources of Hope* bring together Williams' more political interventions. Of course the broad cultural concerns are here but they are focused around subjects like Marxism, Labourism, the British left, ecology, the peace movement, the miners' strike and so on. I asked Eagleton how he would characterise Williams' position in political terms. 'It's an intriguing question. There's always been something rather difficult to decipher about that in Williams' work. The one striking thing about him is that he moved more and more steadily to the left as he grew older, reversing the

tediously familiar movement of left-wing intellectuals in our society.

'When I first encountered him I would say he was left Labour. He then came much closer to Marxism during the seventies, and yet always kept his distance. There was no way in which a classical revolutionary model appealed to him—he seemed to be bored by traditional debates about Bolshevism, Trotskyism and so on. I don't think he was very well-informed about them. On the other hand as he grew older, and in the essays in the book, he took a sharp and cold distance from Labourism. When I interviewed him after the third Thatcher election victory he was very dismissive of and alienated from the Labour Party which he had been a member of in the late sixties.'

Reluctant Labourite?

I put it to Eagleton that although Williams was very critical of the Labour Party he never really made the break from it, in the sense that he never argued for an independent movement. 'Well I wonder about that actually, because I think that's what he was probably edging towards in the very late years when he talked of a kind of left alliance politics of radical nationalism, anti-nuclearism, ecology and so on.'

But having argued for that coalition in the book didn't Williams hurry on to say 'it would be dreadful for the left in the Labour Party to try to break it up, weaken it even further, and there's no simple question of a breakaway'? 'You're right, there was that ambivalence always. I think he was saying, OK, for some extremely modest purposes electorally speaking one retains that nominal commitment to the Labour Party. But the real political business is elsewhere. There was a residual commitment to a kind of left parliamentary democracy which doesn't seem to be compatible with other emphases in his work.'

To me Williams always seemed very reluctant to be specific about the political implications of his arguments. 'I would agree entirely. Williams always stops short of cashing what he says in organisational terms, or if he does cash it in organisational terms it tends to be left Labourist ones. There was a gathering clarity and a gathering hardness to his political thought which I would date from the early seventies. A new tone enters his work which is very different from the rather courteous and sometimes circumlocutory, oblique stand of the earlier work. But it didn't eradicate those ambiguities, that is certainly true. Partly the question is what sort of status you ascribe to his work.'

Robin Blackburn introduces the volume by naming Williams as 'the most authoritative, consistent and original socialist thinker in the English-speaking world'. Eagleton wants that qualified. 'If you take that to mean a strategic, programmatic thinker, no way, in my opinion. No way. If you take it to mean somebody who produced new kinds of concepts, new possibilities of work, opened up new horizons for people then I think the statement is more adequate. If you approached Williams for specific political strategies, you would be disappointed. But that would be to take him in the wrong way. To use a term he would not have liked, Williams was a philosopher. He had the ability to take on an astonishingly wide range of areas, and to see the interconnections between them. He could move from revolutionary action to notions of biology to language and so on. That's what I would value him for.'

Williams was involved with the May Day Manifesto, he was a founder of the *New Left Review* and a sponsor of the recent Socialist Society, but how involved was he at a practical level? 'There was a sense in which he was throughout his career at a distance from practical politics. He accepted, and accepted too quickly, the academic sequestering of his work from practical politics. Ironically, in my view, and I was very close to him, he was a superb organiser. The irony is that he lived through a period where the problem of the relation of a left intellectual to a practical political movement was a very urgent one but one that he certainly didn't solve in his own personal life. How aware of it he was I don't know.

'Another irony is that if there is one term which recurs throughout Williams' work it is connection. What Williams insisted upon was the connections between areas of activity which were isolated and fragmented by modern capitalist society. So far as the theory went that was an immensely important emphasis. Williams opened the eyes of a lot of people to the way that cultural processes locked into other processes, the way they couldn't be discussed in isolation. There's a gap between the theoretical emphasis on that connection and the achievement of it in some practical political way.'

In the sub-currents

In his later years Williams emphasised the potential of the women's, peace and ecology movements, overestimating, Eagleton agrees, their size and political coherence. 'On the other hand I don't think it's right to make Williams out to be some kind of souped-up *Marxism Today* character. He wasn't. Certainly in the later essays he insists upon the centrality of the working class in any process of revolutionary political change. He is very difficult to categorise either with those who effectively abandon the working class as political agent and simply chase anything that moves outside it, and those who would dismiss those movements as irrelevant or marginal.'

Eagleton thinks that what appealed to Williams about these movements was that they put on the agenda, alongside immediate practical difficulties, long-term problems and perspectives. 'If you look at the history of socialist struggle you find sub-currents posing questions more ultimate than is possible in the heat and dust of immediate practical politics. Very often, and here I may sound very incorrect, that current has been an anarchistic one.' Today, Eagleton believes that current is feminism, 'In a deeper or more philosophical sense feminism can address questions about the very nature of bourgeois rationality and the bourgeois subject, and pose questions about the whole forms of our subjectivity which are much less easy to see than, say, inequality of employment'.

'Romantic' Marx

While critical of many trends within ecology, Williams found there a real echo of his own criticisms of the heavy emphasis upon production in the Marxist tradition. Eagleton shares some of Williams' misgivings on this point, and believes the problem stems from imbalances in Marx's work. 'Within certain currents of late nineteenth-century Marxism ideas of the domination of nature were pretty much taken over from the bourgeois enlightenment, where an instrumental attitude between humanity and nature is taken for granted. If you look at the model of humanity in Marx, there is a case to say that Marx inherits a Romantic humanist notion of self-production. If you ask Marx what is the ultimate value, he says something like this: ceaseless production of and realisation of powers, capacities and forces.

'There are lots of problems with that. For example, there is the problem of where you derive the criteria which will discriminate between various powers and capacities. Romanticism is unable to answer that question. It says, more or less, if there's a power realise it. The power comes readily equipped with the moral imperative to realise it. I don't think that's adequate and I think that Marx is weak very often in thinking that a kind of endless self-productivity is the political and moral norm.

'Marx does not give enough attention to passivity. In a very Romantic humanist sort of way he takes over an activist conception of humanity. Now that has a great deal going for it, but there's also another dialectical moment. Certainly Marx understands passivity in the sense of being acted upon by history, and certainly the model of the unification of humanity and nature in the early writings is not a dominative one. Indeed if anything it can be accused of being too Hegelian and idealist, of imagining some final merging of subject and object.'

I put it to Eagleton that he was misrepresenting Marx. Marx's point is that it is necessary for humanity to dominate nature in order that we can move from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom. That is a certain, unromantic and non-idealistic view of the practical path to progress. 'There's nothing wrong in itself with a dominative and instrumental relation to nature. Typhoid and typhoons are things you want to dominate and bring under human mastery. The problem, and this is what Williams was surely getting at, is the generalisation of that particular model to all of our multifarious relations with nature. Certain currents of Marxism have tended uncritically to take that approach over.'

The sensuous

'You can find in Marx other ways of relating to nature, as, for example, in his differentiation between exchange-value and use-value. In the concept use-value there is outlined a different possibility of relating to an object, a relationship to the particular sensuous qualities of an object which does not involve the instrumental abstracting of the object. Marx is not saying that this is cancelled out by exchange-value; use-value of course continues. There are contradictory ways of relating, but if Marxism forgets about that very insistent concern of Marx for the sensuous, the non-instrumental in the name of some dominative rationality then it seems to me open to Williams' criticism.

'The difference here between Marx and some libertarian is that Marx says in order eventually to transcend a merely instrumental relationship to the world you have to go in for some pretty instrumental thinking and action. I think that Williams would entirely agree with that, but in his own way he found in ecology a way of reinstating the importance of what I call the moment of use-value.

'Marxism can specify what material conditions will be necessary to transcend the present inadequate rationality, but if it thinks that it can have those conditions now, that's a bad form of utopianism. If on the other hand, and this is Williams' point, it thinks that anything beyond that dominative rationality is just idle, idealist speculation I think Marx himself would disagree with that. Marx is trying to point to certain kinds of relation with the world which do in that sense adumbrate an alternative. Even now because we have use-value we are inevitably aware of the specificities of the world in a way that exchange-value tries brutally to negate. That contradiction will carry on, and one can't relax the tension on either side. The bad kind of ecology, which I think Williams sees, is relaxing it on one side. The more Second International, positivist kind of Marxism is relaxing it on the other. It is very difficult to live in the middle of that tension and refuse simultaneously a utopian anarchism and a utilitarianised form of Marxism. I'd like to think that was what Williams was trying to do.'

Raymond Williams, *Resources of Hope*, Verso, £9.95

Sleeping Peasant Woman by Zinaida Serebriakova, 1917

100 years of Russian art

ONE GOOD THING ABOUT GLASNOST

Francis Walsh on an exciting exhibition of unknown art

Culture is one area where glasnost is working in the Soviet Union. According to the catalogue, even two years ago the exciting exhibition now showing at the Barbican would have been an impossibility. The majority of the works on show are relatively unknown in the East, never mind the West, so for once you have the added pleasure of getting your own judgement in first.

There is no particular theme other than 'the essential narrative' of Russian and Soviet art over the last hundred years, as represented by a wide range of artists. The organisers, David Elliott of the Oxford Museum of Modern Art and Valery Dudakov of the USSR Club of Art Collectors, have gathered over 250 works from the private collections of 38 Soviet citizens. Most are paintings, alongside some posters, sculptures and agit-porcelain.

Presumably because the contents of the state museums have been left at home there is very little by way of the straight-lined Soviet realism on show. Stalin himself only makes one appearance, in Pyotr Belov's claustrophobic Hour Glass (1987). A cropped close-up of the famous face contemplates time dribbling away in an hourglass in which the grains of sand have been replaced by tiny human skulls.

Absorbing artists

Two things stand out from the paintings—the way in which Russian and Soviet artists absorbed and adapted the great movements of European modernism (especially impressionism, symbolism, post-impressionism, cubism and fauvism), and the enduring influence of folk or primitive art. A third thing stands out from the catalogue—how furiously these artists arranged and rearranged themselves into groups and schools: the suprematists, the constructivists, the futurists, the neo-primitivists, the Knave of Diamonds artists, the Blue Rose group, rayism and so on. They took themselves seriously, not just as artists but as active participants in society.

Mikhail Larionov was the founder of neo-primitivism. He sought to incorporate folk toys, primitive icons and popular art with European influences. His Fishes (1907) is an intriguing painting: are the half-dozen vertical golden fish caught or not, do they hang against water or foliage or both? His beautiful Portrait of Natalia Goncharova (1910), his partner and collaborator, reveals the influence of Henri Matisse in the ordering of its strong black lines and broad strokes of white and blue.

Vladimir Mayakovsky, the man of many movements and none, has seven works exhibited, showing extraordinary range from the touching portraits of Osip Brik in pencil and Indian ink, and Lily Brik in charcoal and pencil (both 1916), to the much grander Self Portrait (c 1915) an exercise based on cubism, to his mischievous comic-style 'patriotic broadsheets' or *lubki* (1914) such as the snappily titled 'A red-haired uncouth German flew over Warsaw, but a Cossack, Danilo the Savage, pierced a hole in him with his bayonet and his wife, Pauline, now sews pants for him out of the Zeppelin'.

Coarse peasant

There is much to recommend—Lyubov Popova's cool cubist (or is it cubo-futurist?) Guitar (1914), Marc Chagall's minor comic masterpiece, Soldiers with Bread (1914), two Schweikian figures before their time, and Ilya Mashkov's stunning Still Life with Poppies and Cornflowers. Kazimir Malevich, 'a key figure of the avant-garde' according to Valery Dudakov, is represented by his early post-impressionist work the Flower Seller (1904) and his late figurative portraits of his mother and brother, the latter (1933) superbly balanced. The brother stares out, quiet and apprehensive with a calm, unflinching intelligence behind his metal-rimmed spectacles.

Zinaida Serebriakova's Sleeping Peasant Woman (1917) shows a buxom lass with flushed cheeks and blood-red headscarf lying with her arms almost awkwardly flung back. But the rich colour and sensuous subject are belied by the coarse, bright surface of the painting. It is flanked by two equally thoughtful paintings from Serebriakova, a highly-strung Self Portrait with Children (1917-18) and a startling Portrait of Sergei Ernst (1922). This is remarkable for its mastery of the technique whereby a vague sketch becomes increasingly sharp towards its centre, until it achieves almost photographic clarity around the subject's eyes.

Political plates

The constructivists are not heavily represented, but Aleksandr Rodchenko's fascinating Construction (1919) certainly justifies Dudakov's claim that they 'broke down painting into its primary elements, so that composition, texture, and colour were independent from subject and figurative form'. Many of these artists including Rodchenko, Lissitzky and Mayakovsky moved into design and advertising so that their art could be more immediately useful to the revolution. One spin-off of this movement was 'agit-ceramics', surely the most political (and some of the most beautiful) plates in the world. Long Live the Third International (1923, by an unknown artist), and the Suprematist Dish by Nikolai Lapshin (1923) really are too good to eat off.

There are of course some magnificent posters with uncompromising slogans such as 'Comrades, we shall celebrate Red October with the rifle and the hammer' (unknown artist, 1920). But what could compare with Aleksandr Rodchenko's poster for Eisenstein's film *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) bearing the legend 'The spark of the revolution'. It shows in two circular, binocular-type panels revolutionary sailors flinging an officer into the sea and then edging around the massive gun turrets of the battleship. It isn't the greatest work here, and it started life as a humble film advertisement. But who could fail to be moved by the wealth of associations it now carries, bringing together such important moments in the history of agit-prop, film, art and revolution.

100 Years of Russian Art, Barbican Gallery, London, until 9 July;
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Refugees

KEPT OUT

Carole Kismaric, Forced Out, *Penguin, £12.95*

According to the United Nations, there are some 14m refugees in the world; others say it's more like 30m. The UN defines a refugee as somebody with a 'well-founded fear of persecution' because of their 'race, religion, nationality, group membership or political beliefs', and declares that every country has a moral obligation to provide asylum for them.

Two years ago home secretary Douglas Hurd tried to send 57 Tamil refugees back to Sri Lanka, where their people were the victims of a pogrom. He told the appeal court that allowing them into Britain would 'leave us open to a great deal of exploitation and abuse by people who are simply trying to get around the immigration control' because there are in the world 'very large numbers of people who are footloose'.

Produced by Carole Kismaric for the international charity Human Rights Watch, *Forced Out* is a largely pictorial record of the suffering that refugees endure. The photographs are moving, accompanied by recollections from refugees and commentaries, most notably from journalist William Shawcross.

East and West

Forced Out lumps together as refugees everyone from Soviet intellectual Alexander Solzhenitsyn to Guatemalan peasants, from Vietnamese boat people to South African exiles. But as Hurd indicated, all refugees are not the same. For the West Soviet dissidents are refugees. Third world people are footloose immigrants; 99.8 per cent of refugees admitted by the USA in the last 30 years came from 'communist' states.

In the early Cold War years the Western nations made good propaganda by opening their doors to those fleeing Stalinist persecution. That was when, and why, they wrote the UN definition. By the seventies however, most refugees were black people fleeing repression and war in the third world—problems for which the Western powers were largely responsible. The West changed the rules, claimed that the new refugees had left home for economic, not political reasons, and shut the door.

'We're not talking about those who are moving around for economic reasons', Kismaric told me at the press launch, 'they're muddying the water'. Douglas Hurd would probably agree.

Kenan Malik

Black music

FUNERAL BLUES?

Nelson George, The Death of Rhythm & Blues, *Omnibus Press, £6.95*

Nelson George, author of *The Michael Jackson Story* and *Where Did Our Love Go* (about Tamla Motown), here tries a more political theme, looking at the tension placed on black music by the desire to achieve mainstream success.

Two conflicting trends have influenced black life in America this century—assimilation and independence. George believes each has been reproduced in black music, for example, by the fiery brilliance of the 'independent' Aretha Franklin and by the more contrived 'assimilationist' divas of today like Whitney Houston. George sees the victory of the latter in the eighties as a death blow to black music as a powerful, innovative art form.

George stops short of arguing for separatism: 'The interaction between blacks and the mainstream culture are too intimate for a total separatist philosophy to work in the US.' But he is clearly not happy at a situation in which George Michael is considered the number one r'n'b singer in America (by the grammy award givers), and MOR stars like Sheena Easton are pampered by LA Babyface, Jellybean and Prince.

The book is a fascinating, anecdotal account of the changes in black music over 50 years, set against the changing circumstances of black people. He starts in detail with the New Deal thirties; zoot suits, conked hair and saxophonist Louis Jordan selling five million 78s. About the fifties he is typically sardonic: 'In the 1950s "rhythm and blues" like "negro" meant blacks. Calling it rock and roll, didn't fool everybody...but it definitely dulled the racial identification and made the young white consumers of Cold War America feel more comfortable.'

In the sixties and seventies he links the emergence of the civil rights movement and black power to the changing fortunes of independent black record labels such as Motown, Philadelphia and Atlantic. In Reagan's eighties he identifies the problems created for black artists by the policies of radio stations, film and video companies. MTV, the biggest music video station in the USA, refused to feature r'n'b artists for years. This is a thoughtful book, and timely too; these tensions are getting worse.

Kunle Oluremi

South Africa

BLACK VOICES

Francis Meli, South Africa Belongs To Us: A History of the ANC, *James Currey, £5.95*

Shirley du Boulay, Tutu: Voice of the Voiceless, *Penguin, £4.50*

Jacklyn Cock, Maids and Madams: Domestic Workers Under Apartheid, *The Women's Press, £6.95*

Any information about the struggle of black South Africans is to be welcomed. These three books all contain valuable detail about life in the apartheid state and the resistance of a risen people. However, the main concern of Francis Meli and Shirley du Boulay is to promote the flawed perspectives of the African National Congress and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Dr Meli edits *Sechaba,* official organ of the African National Congress. So perhaps it is understandable that his history of an heroic struggle is also an uncritical eulogy to the ANC and its sister-cum-sponsor organisation, the South African Communist Party. You will not find here, for example, how the ANC and the SACP told black workers in the forties to postpone their demands for democratic rights as their contribution to South Africa's war effort. Or how, after the war, the SACP helped the petit-bourgeois ANC leaders to harness the power of the emerging black proletariat for their own narrow ends. That power to break apartheid had been revealed in the 1946 miners' strike, but by the fifties the ANC had channelled it into a quest for reforms where meaningful reform was—and remains—impossible.

A book more obvious in its shortcomings is Shirley du Boulay's meticulously researched biography of Archbishop Tutu, written from a liberal Christian perspective. Tutu, the public critic of apartheid, emerges as an energetic, eccentric and egocentric opponent of oppression. Tutu, the general secretary of the South African Council of Churches and Archbishop of Johannesburg, emerges as a pragmatic, opportunist politician with a considerable commitment to an apartheid-free capitalism in South Africa (an impossibility). He has collected honorary degrees and peace prizes from Western countries even faster than deaconries and bishoprics back home, but hasn't yet persuaded one of them to impose sanctions. On one issue he is completely clear: 'I hate communism with every fibre of my body.'

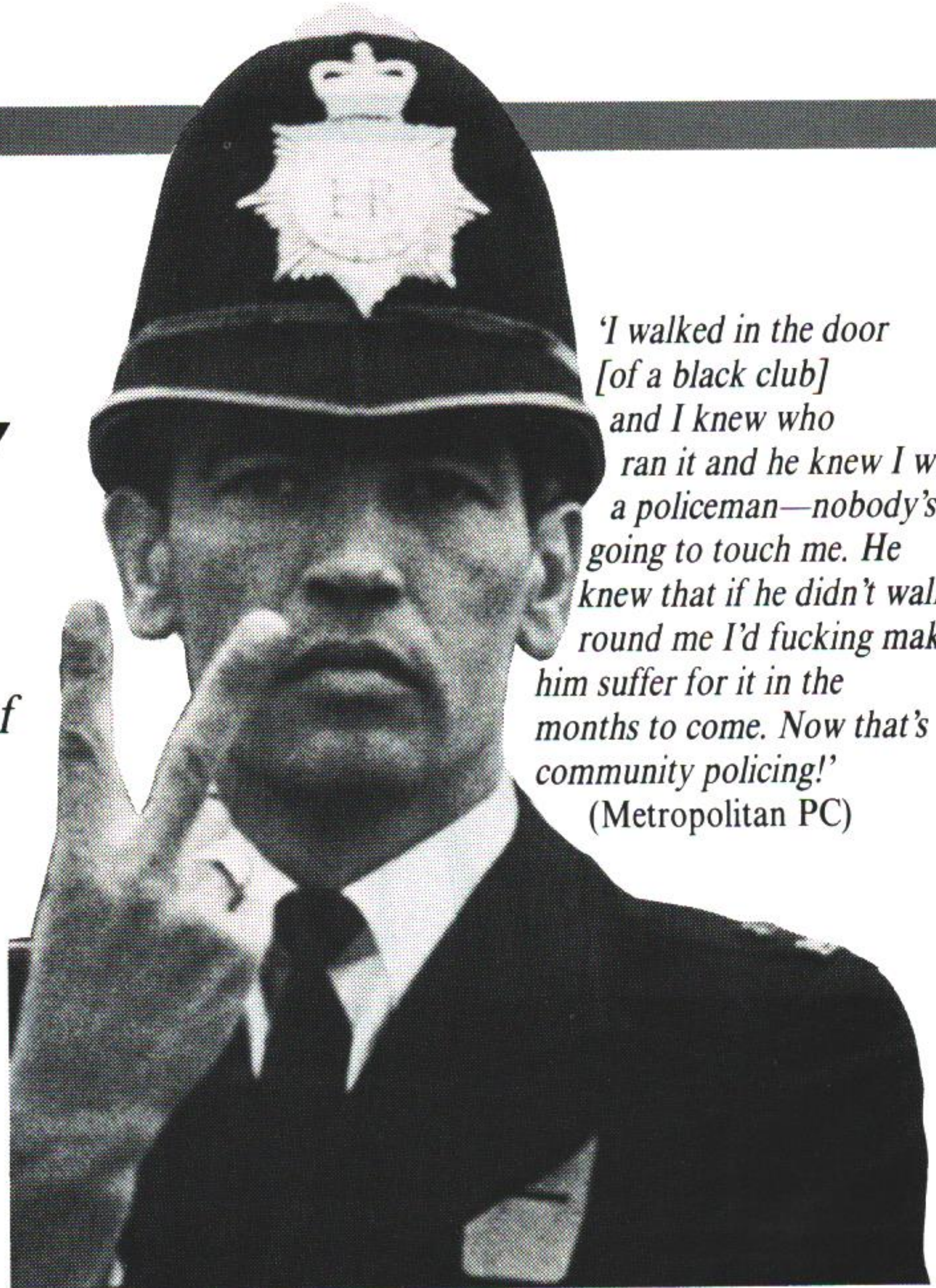
The most interesting of these three books is the account by Jacklyn Cock of the terrible plight of domestic servants in South Africa. The lack of educational opportunity or alternative employment (for any member of the family), and the legal restrictions on the movement of blacks, keep a vast army of black maids serving white madams. Cock has interviewed both employers and employees. 'She loves us', 'she adores the children' say the madams when asked what the maids think of them; 'I would also make her eat in the toilet when it rains', 'I would not do what she does to me to anybody' say the maids when asked what they would do if the roles were reversed. Deference is only a strategy. It masks resentment and wherever possible resistance. One writer quoted by Cock, E Mphahlele, calls the servant 'a seeming black automaton. But it is a menacing automaton'.

Barry Crawford

Confessions of 500 policemen and women

A DIRTY JOB THAT NOBODY HAS TO DO

Toby Banks reviews Talking Blues *by Roger Graef*



DAVID ROURKE

'I walked in the door [of a black club] and I knew who ran it and he knew I was a policeman—nobody's going to touch me. He knew that if he didn't walk round me I'd fucking make him suffer for it in the months to come. Now that's community policing!'
(Metropolitan PC)

Next time you are criticising the police and somebody says 'Yes I know, but they're not all bad', show them this book. It is a collection of the opinions of more than 500 police officers from chief constables down to rookie PCs. Anybody reading could only conclude that it is the opinions of 500 bastards: clever, stupid, educated, ignorant... every kind of bastard. Roger Graef was well-placed to compile it, having seen the Force at close quarters during his Thames TV series *Police*. He has put together a uniquely intimate view of the impenetrable 'canteen culture'.

'Everybody in our country is supposed to be innocent until proven guilty, but as police officers we don't have to hold that view. As far as I'm concerned, if I lock someone up, they're fucking guilty.'
(Northern sergeant)

The book consists of anonymous quotes, divided by topic, with Graef giving only a brief summary of the current issues relating to each subject, and adding a quick thought of his own to each chapter. The police are left to speak for themselves, and they bar no holds. In hundreds of verbatim statements in a 503-page book, there is not a single positive or optimistic sentiment. There isn't even the esprit de corps of the armed forces. Instead, the police are bonded together by a twisted camaraderie based on negative pressures: nobody else wants to know them; they have to maintain a close conspiracy of silence about their misdeeds; and they need to plot together to get 'results' to advance their careers.

The freedom granted by anonymity elicits astonishing frankness. The police explain what they get up to in a matter-of-fact way, a daily cycle of verbals, fitting up, graft, giving it some welly, being on the take, cowboys, naughtiness, and so on. This is seen as the way to get 'results' in the real world. Political sensitivities and the niceties of the law are ropes that tie their hands and prevent them getting on with the job.

Time and again they talk of the excitement and satisfaction to be had from getting a free run at 'public order' operations, especially during riots in black areas. One graduate sergeant agonised about his sympathy for Hitler's approach to getting rid of the 'slag' element (blacks):

'You see all this, well, I'd call it slag or whatever—they're not slag, they're human beings, but to me in my professional capacity they are slag. You think: "What the hell are we doing? Why don't we get rid of them?" But I don't know whether I'd be capable of doing it.'

In the meantime, others dream:

'I had a dream about all of us, about the Section going round in a car. We were in plain clothes and we were indiscriminately murdering everyone in the daytime that was causing so much trouble in the night-time. I've never enjoyed a dream so much in my life.' (Northern PC)

Satisfaction is exacted through the courts as well. Fabricating evidence is the norm: 'There are a lot of side-steps in the police. They rarely stick to standard practice. The classic case is verbals. One of the magistrates actually said "Well, it's very hard for this court to believe that the PCs, the sergeants, the inspectors all collaborated to produce this evidence". Of course, this is precisely what they'd bloody done.' (Northern PC)

A lot of people are now sceptical about police witnesses. This is the price the police are paying for what one WPC describes as 'a reputation for being persistent and not very good liars in the witness box'. The trend of juries acquitting against police evidence is spreading beyond inner-city courts to the more conservative rural areas. For senior police officers, the refusal of jurors to believe police lies only confirms the need to change the system:

'The jury system wants updating. Hundreds of years ago it was ratepayers, responsible citizens. Now the average jury seems to be made up of unemployed 18-year olds. Have they the right to sit and judge a fellow man?' (Midlands superintendent)

Especially, he might have added, if that man is wearing a blue uniform.

The chapter on 'fitting up' is a good example of the bankruptcy of the system the police uphold, with its cynicism and sham democracy. It is also a good example of the book's major flaw: the parts written by Graef. He concludes the chapter with the statement that 'for police evidence to be taken seriously in the courts, the public must believe that things have changed for the better. Sadly, a recent opinion poll indicated that half the country believes the police are prepared to lie under oath'. The fact that he has just reprinted dozens of admissions which prove that the public is quite right to believe this, and suggest that the really sad thing is that anybody still believes the police, seems to have passed Graef by.

Graef is no fool. But he can't accept the obvious anti-police conclusions which his research points to. Instead he scratches around for happy portents. At times his chapter endings seem to belong in a different book. At the end of the chapter 'Justice and the courts' he says 'Fitting up is reported to be on the way out because of Pace [the Police and Criminal Evidence Act], although the interviews suggest that the practice still goes on'. What the interviews really 'suggest' is that 'Pace simply codifies a lot of standard police practice. Pace gives us the authority to search a person's house after he's been arrested. We always did it anyway' (Northern detective sergeant).

'You have to make the first move, use your vehicles, drive the landrovers straight at the bastards. Then they scatter. You deal with the rest with your sticks. No problem. I don't give a fuck about the kids who got hurt. What were they doing on the streets in the first place in the middle of the night?'
(Northern PC)

At times Graef's wishful thinking is truly bizarre: 'The moral climate of the Met is changing as the intake has begun to include more graduates.' Even ignoring the graduate disciple of Hitler quoted above, there is nothing to distinguish the moral views of the graduates interviewed from any of the other officers.

Graef won the confidence of his interviewees, and was clearly disarmed by their candour. In the end, he makes more allowances for their prejudices and callousness than they do themselves. The value of the book lies in the interviews themselves, and for that reason the editor of *Police Review* is right to describe it as 'probably the best book on the British police for the last 20 years'. It could have been even better if Graef had remembered to take a long spoon when dining with the devil.

Roger Graef, *Talking Blues*, Collins Harvill, £15

letters

We welcome readers' views and criticisms of *Living Marxism*. Please keep your letters as short as possible and send them to The Editor, *Living Marxism*, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX.

AGAINST ALL CENSORSHIP

Chris Hall (letters, May) thinks that *Living Marxism* is going too far in opposing all censorship and calls instead for 'self-censorship' and an 'independent body' which could regulate offensive material. The left has always tried to outlaw views it finds objectionable—such as fascism, racism and pornography—while opposing the censoring of anything of which it approves.

The problem is that what is 'offensive' is ultimately defined, not by us, but by the authorities. And what really offends them is anything that challenges their right to lord it over us. It is naive to imagine that the state will limit itself to banning what we want it to ban. History shows that, whatever the pretext for introducing censorship, any banning powers the state possesses will be used to silence workers and the left.

The 1936 Public Order Act—ostensibly introduced to keep fascists off the streets—was first used against striking Notts miners. The first person charged with inciting racial hatred under the Race Relations Act was black power leader Michael X. Censorship will inevitably be used for reactionary ends.

Hall wants to get around this problem by appointing a 'completely independent non-governmental body' to handle censorship. But every official body works under capitalist laws, reflects the dominant mores of society and is accountable to the capitalist state. Some independence! There is no sitting on the fence over the question of censorship. You are either for state interference or you are against it.

Hall even argues that the *Spycatcher* case 'ended an age-old tradition of voluntary self-censorship by the media, thereby removing the autonomous freedom that the press has enjoyed for a long time'. And there I was thinking censorship (voluntary or otherwise) imposed a restriction on freedom.

The press was hardly 'autonomous' of the right in the good old days when the *Mail* backed Mosley's Blackshirts and all the papers reprinted government wartime propaganda. The 'voluntary self-censorship' which Hall extols was in reality the ruthless suppression of anything considered subversive. All that has changed is that the Tories have made censorship explicit. This isn't so much to bring newspaper editors to heel—the man at the forefront of the *Spycatcher* court case is *Sunday Times* editor Andrew Neil, hardly an anti-Tory—as to create a climate in which censorship becomes publicly accepted as the norm. Against this background, it is all the more important that we take a stand against all censorship

Kenan Malik
London

CENSORING THE SYMPTOMS

Chris Hall misses the point about censorship. Under certain circumstances, the state may be prepared to take action against extremes of sexism or racism while guaranteeing the conditions within which respectable racism and sexism can thrive. In this way it can present itself as a neutral body protecting women and blacks. But it can never take any action which would address the root of their unequal position.

So the state may outlaw certain forms of pornography while continuing to reinforce Victorian family values, thus separating the symptom from the cause. The oppression of black people and women is an essential part of capitalist society. To appeal to the state to take action on their behalf is to strengthen its control over that oppression.

Reactionary ideas have some resonance in the working class. These ideas must be politically exposed for what they are, rather than being suppressed where they can continue to ferment. In certain circumstances, people will need to take action against matter that offends. But this can never be done through a body empowered by the state. Rather they must keep in mind that the real problem is the all-too prevalent existence of socially accepted, state-sponsored racism and sexism.

Finton McKenzie
Liverpool

RED, WHITE AND GREEN

After reading your review on militarism (April), I noticed that nationalism doesn't only manifest itself in the traditional flag-waving manner we know and expect. It is now very popular for the Greens at my college to defend immigration controls. These radicals argue that if too many foreigners enter the country they will destroy our resources. This is something Margaret Thatcher will be pleased to hear.

This new nationalism is also popular among people, like my family, who would see themselves as middle-ground. They do not consider themselves patriotic or pro-British, but the Rushdie affair has allowed them to label the Muslim community as uncivilised, anti-British and undemocratic. In the eighties you don't have to wear a Union Jack on your lapel to be a nasty nationalist. The Greens and the liberals pose a new problem if we want to challenge patriotism.

Sue Willis
Wolverhampton

KRAUT-BASHING IS BACK

Pat Roberts dealt well with the increasing racism towards immigrants throughout Europe ('Fertile ground for fascism', May). But you could also have mentioned the growing tensions between Europeans. The rows over Nato and the EEC have revived anti-German abuse in Britain.

Since the war, good British patriots have always had a laugh at the Europeans. Frogs, krauts, Itis, dagos and wops are all fair game. The French are lecherous onion-eaters. The Italians are cowardly. The Spaniards are animal abusers.

But the real villains of the piece have always been the Germans. World War One gave us the 'Hun' and old men wearing silly spiked hats. World War Two gave us the 'Jerry' and the hundreds of war films that are still the staple of Sunday afternoon TV. And World War Three? The *Sun* declared it two years ago, against the 'krauts' who hogged all the pool-side deckchairs at holiday resorts.

With 1992 looming, anti-German chauvinism has been reclaimed from the war comics and given new respectability by Margaret Thatcher in the debates about the single market and Euro-defence. Instead of the Huns attacking us in Messerschmidts, they are said to be blitzing us with Deutschmarks. This resurgence of anti-German abuse is chilling and should be stopped. What begins as an insult about krauts has ended, twice, in war.

Judy Hunt
London

HANDS OFF GORBACHEV

Mick Hume's attack on Mr Gorbachev (editorial, May) seems to me to serve the opposite purpose than he intended. You say that glasnost and perestroika are compliments to market economics and the Western parliamentary system, which will strengthen anti-communism. I think that what will strengthen anti-communism is exactly articles like this about Mr Gorbachev.

He has embarrassed the Reaganites and Thatcherites by acting like a decent, likeable man and showing the peace-loving peoples of the world that it is the right-wing sections of the ruling parties in the West which want nuclear war. This can only help progressive forces everywhere, as it demonstrates that it is the socialist countries which are looking to the future and imperialism which hangs on to the Cold War.

Then a left-wing magazine like yours comes out and criticises Gorbachev for giving in to imperialism. Whatever your intentions, you sound like unreconstructed Stalinists. Then the Thatcherites can say, see, we told you, things haven't changed, the left is just as dogmatic and undemocratic as ever.

Do us all a favour, leave the Soviet Union alone and stick to attacking the right. By the way, I do think that parliamentary democracy is superior to one-party domination. But I suppose you would say that it depends who runs the party that is doing the dominating.

George Glencross
Glasgow

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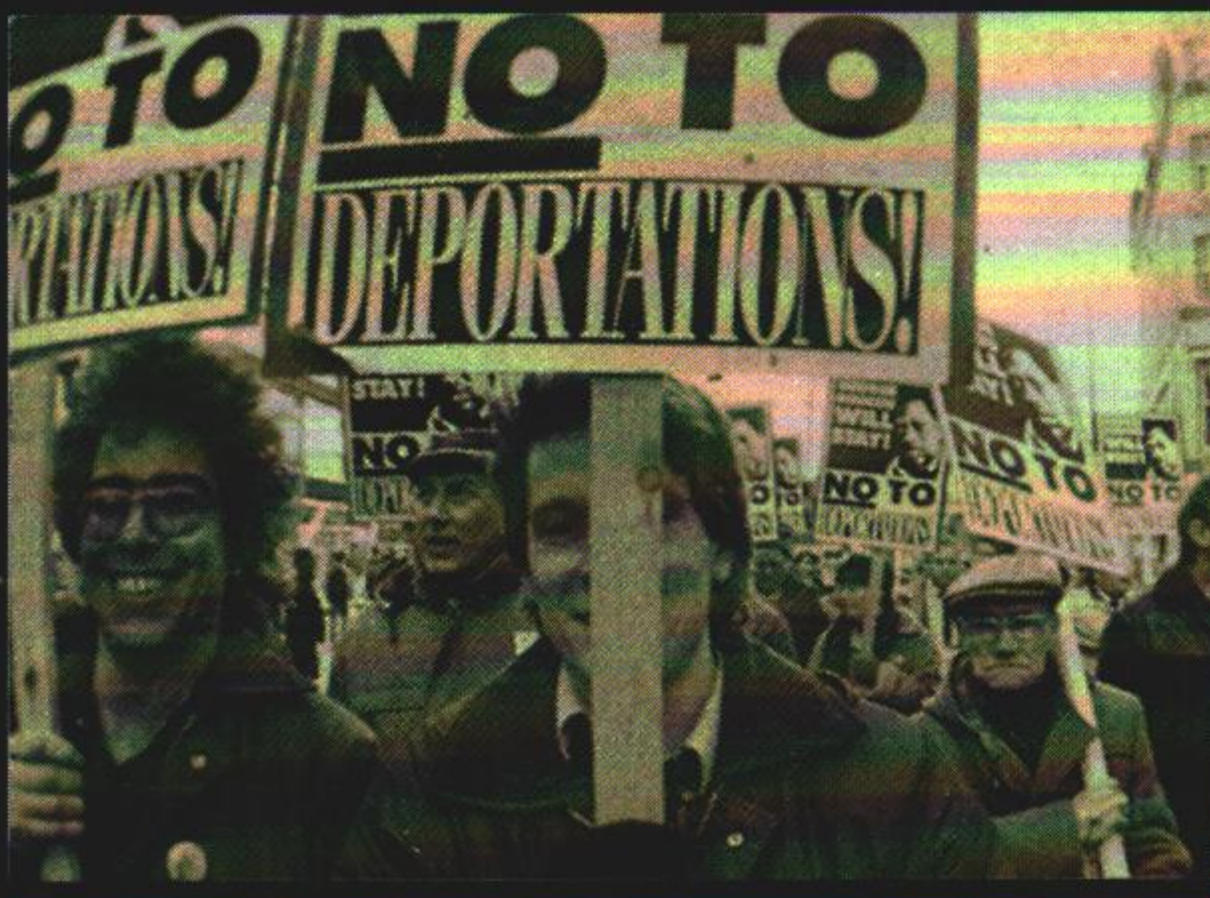

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