

LIVING MARXISM

October 1989 No12 £1.50

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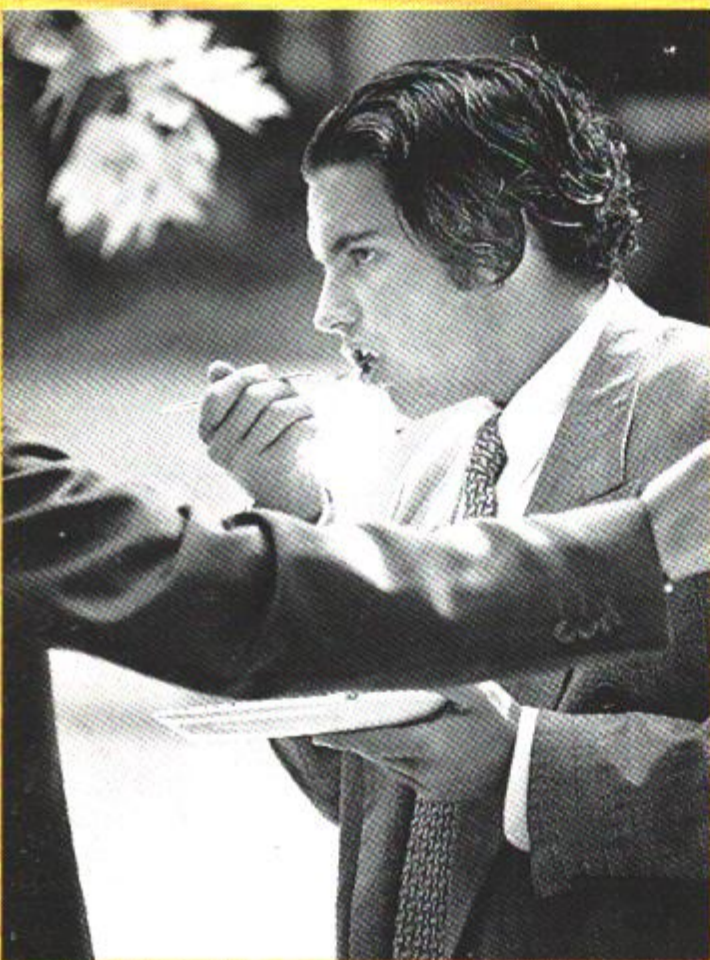
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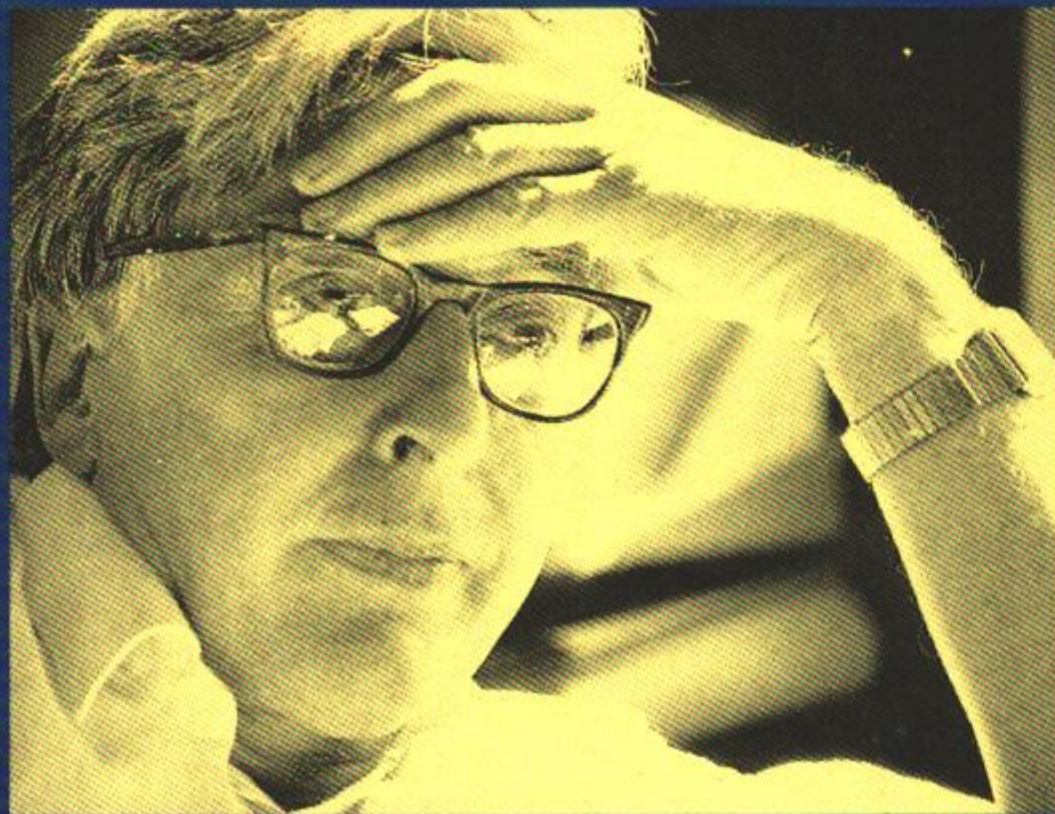
Inside Poland:

'Their flags
will be
stained red
with blood'



Strikers v stockbrokers

Meet Thatcher's
Children and the
New Militants



Inside:

Test-tube baby pioneer

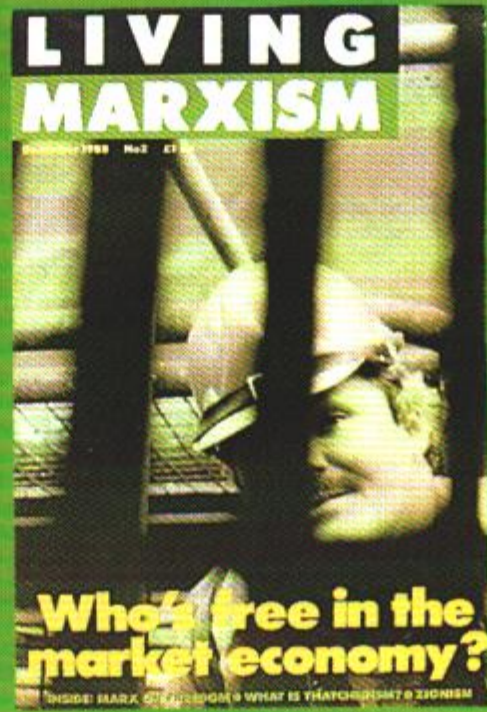
Professor Robert Edwards

Embryo experiments

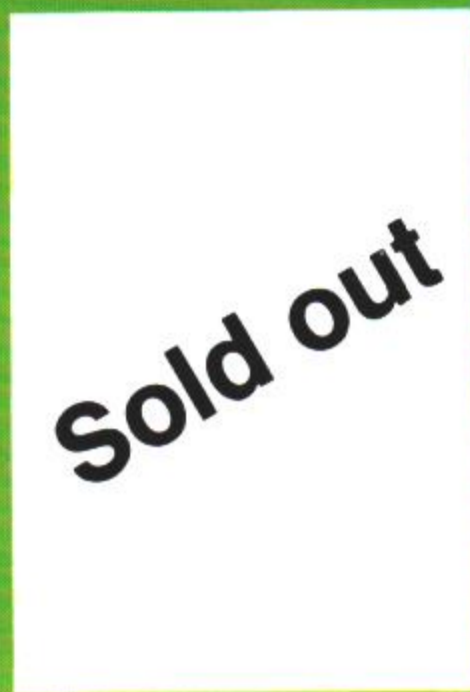
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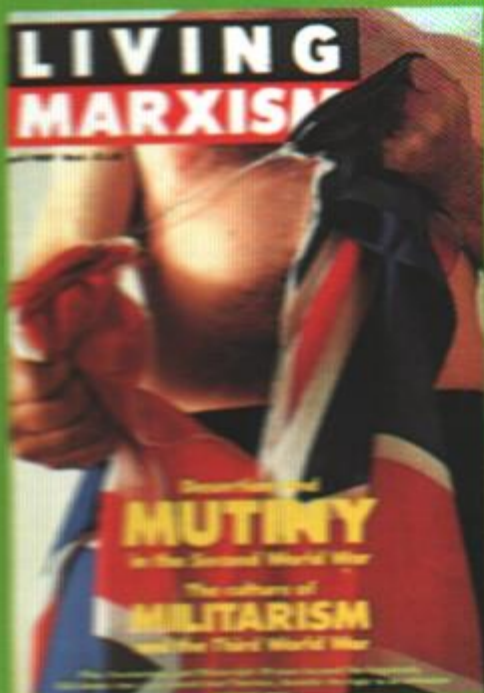
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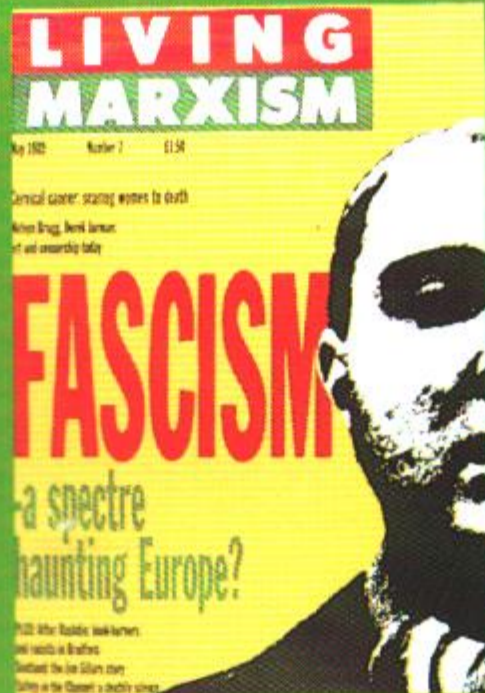
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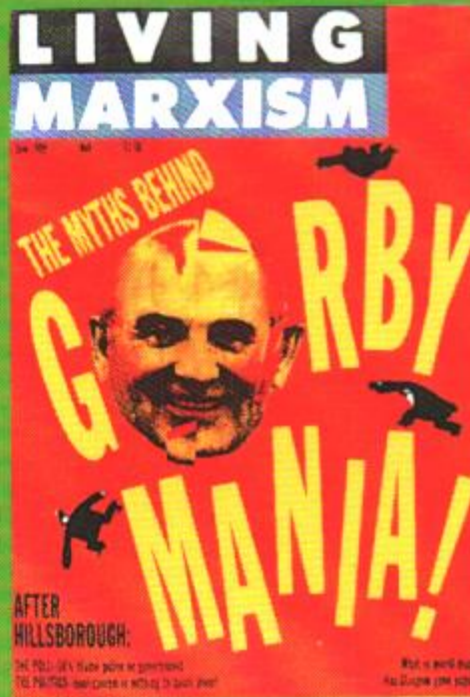
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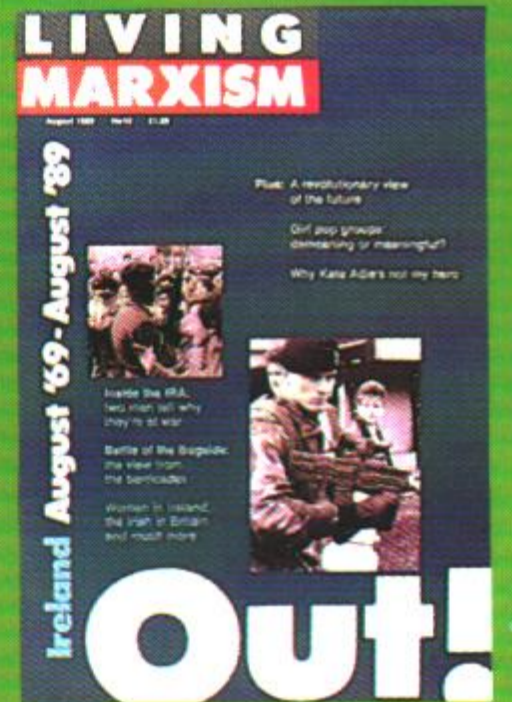
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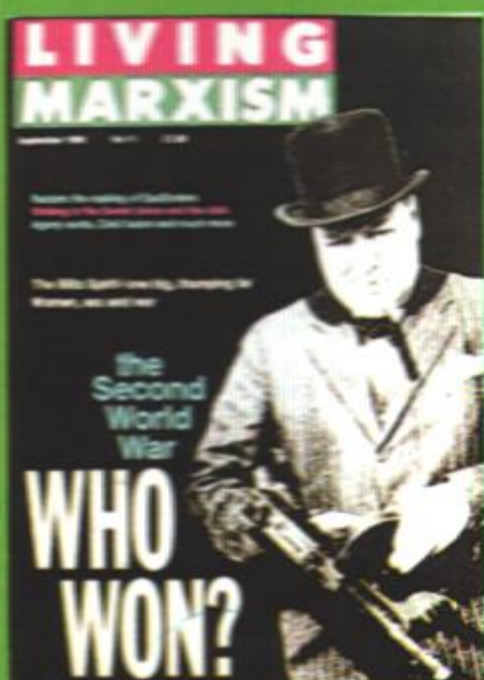
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PHOTO: Frank Connor/Blowup

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There is no such thing as a free lunch, businessmen and politicians are fond of telling us. Yet they expect us to believe that a society which can't provide food without demanding a favour in return should be called the Free World.

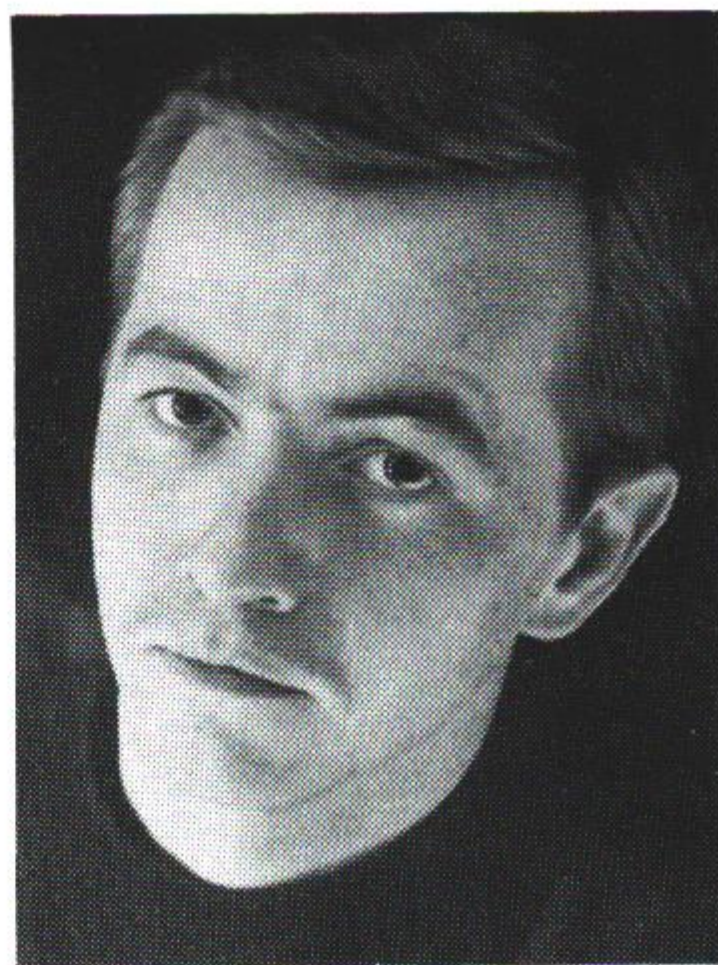
They had another opportunity to remind us of how lucky we are to live in the Free World in September, when the exodus of East Europeans began. The refugee issue is indeed a timely reminder of just how free is the world today.

The Free World welcomes all refugees—so long as they are white Europeans leaving the Eastern bloc. If they are smart young Germans with blond hair, who can be filmed saying that the West is 'fantastic' as they cross the border out of Hungary, and promising to vote for the West German equivalent of the Tory Party at the earliest opportunity, all the better.

The Free World does not welcome other refugees—the 'phony' ones from funny foreign places like Vietnam and Kurdistan.

●
Never mind that the American leaders of the Free World carpet-bombed Vietnam into rubble, and then cut off all aid to the ruined country the moment that their stooge regime was overthrown in the seventies. That does not give Vietnamese the right to run across the Free World's carpets in their dirty shoes. Those who turned up without an invitation at Hongkong (an outpost of the Free World which is also a British Crown colony) were stuck on prison islands where they were free to eat grass, live (literally) in pig pens, sleep in their own shit and contract cholera.

Never mind that Britain and the other powers in the Free World have supported the Turkish generals who are waging a war of genocide against the Kurds. That does



MICK HUME
EDITOR

FREE US FROM THE FREE WORLD

not give Kurds the right to come cluttering up another lucky corner of the Free World, east London. Some of those who did so have already been deported; others have exercised their freedom to go on hunger-strike in protest.

The 'war on drugs' is another fashionable way of telling people in places like Britain and America to count our blessings and be on our guard, because the Free World is under threat from unscrupulous foreigners. But the rulers of the Free World don't object to drug trafficking, so long as it is done in the cause of their freedom.

Ronald Reagan's favourite freedom fighters, the Contra terrorists in Nicaragua, were backed by cash from the

Medellín cocaine cartel in Colombia. The rebel Islamic guerrillas in Afghanistan are fighting their war thanks to the aid they get from the USA and the money they get from heroin trafficking. These drug-running operations are overseen by such champions of the Free World as Colonel Oliver North and the CIA.

It is only when a third world country slips out from under its heel that the Free World gets righteous about drugs. General Noriega of Panama was officially hailed as a crusader against drugs in the days when he organised his trafficking to suit the requirements of the CIA director, a Mr George Bush. Now that Noriega won't dance to president Bush's tune, the Free World brands

him a drug-running outlaw.

And as Colombia slips further out of Washington's control, the Contra-sponsoring Medellín cartel falls from favour with the Free World. Making war on his erstwhile allies serves as a convenient pretext for Bush to ship American arms and maybe troops into Latin America again.

A century ago the slaveholding empires of the Free World claimed that they were sending gunboats to capture colonies in order to abolish slavery. Today the drug barons of the Free World claim they are sending the helicopter gunships to threaten villages in order to wipe out the drug barons of the third world. Whatever it says about itself, the Free World remains a source of

corruption, violence and suffering around the globe.

At home, too, the Free World doesn't live up to its self-styled image. On every issue the standard response from Free World governments today is repression: they repress dissident thought and action with censorship and the police; they repress scientific and social experiments with a strait-jacket of puritan morality; they repress anything new with the prejudices of the past.

Margaret Thatcher has vetoed plans for the biggest ever investigation of Britain's sexual habits. Her own medical officers believe that such a survey is urgently needed for furthering research into the prediction and prevention of Aids. But Thatcher is not concerned with freeing people from the threat of a deadly virus—especially people who have broken the taboos of the Free World by being homosexual.

● Thatcher's reported concern is that her government might be 'tainted' by being associated with a survey that could result in 'unseemly speculation' in the gutter press. In the Free World of 1989, preserving the narrow-minded values of the corner-shopkeeper and keeping your name out of the *News of the World* are considered far more important than saving lives through trying something new and controversial.

Embryo experiments are another case in point. In this issue of *Living Marxism*, Professor Robert Edwards gives some inspiring glimpses into the potential for relieving suffering if people like him are left free to pursue this work. But the Free World authorities don't like the idea of such frontier-breaking science.

They are happy with things as they are, and happier still with things as they used to

be—even when the thing in question is Parkinson's disease. Thus the Thatcher government prepares its embryology bill to restrict Edwards' research. It will claim to be defending the freedom of embryos—a concern which it has rarely extended to human beings after birth.

In the hands of the likes of Thatcher, the Free World reacts to each advance that raises the possibility of freeing humanity either by stamping on it or twisting it into a repressive device. The restrictive climate of debate even influences many experimenters themselves.

Doctor Simon Jones recently told the British Association for the Advancement of Science that his team at the University of Wales had made an important breakthrough in the search for a 'thinking' computer. But their work was at risk because the authorities won't fund such new-fangled research. Looking for an argument with which to prise open the government's purse, Jones hit upon a line which fits snugly into the conservative climate of Thatcher's Britain: this computer, he said, could watch your house and ring the police station itself if it saw any suspicious characters. It is an infuriating sign of our backward-looking, fearful times that technology which could help

to free millions from drudgery is instead promoted as a surveillance gadget for the police and the Neighbourhood Watchers.

The values of the Free World hold humanity back and down at every turn. Our rulers are only able to get away with using the label 'Free' thanks to the efforts of the collapsing and corrupt Stalinist regimes in the East. Those bureaucratic systems have so thoroughly discredited anti-capitalism that anything could look invitingly liberated by comparison.

If we want to overcome the limitations of the Free World,

of freedom. The possibilities of such progress can be seen all around us today. A society which can send a spaceship to Neptune and have it arrive one second late ought to be more than capable of freeing the Earth from want.

Computers which can operate Star Wars systems and hold police files on an entire nation could also do the work of millions. It is not long ago that test-tube babies were thought of as the stuff of science fiction. Now in-vitro fertilisation is an everyday event. There ought to be no limits to the advances scientists can make in the future.

A society which can send a spaceship to Neptune and have it arrive one second late ought to be more than capable of freeing the Earth from want

we need first to popularise a new vision of freedom, to be gained through unrestricted progress in science and society.

Living Marxism subscribes to a vision of a free world in which Colombian peasants don't have to grow coca to feed their families, and the youth of Western inner cities don't need narcotics to free them from squalor and hopelessness. A world in which medical science can conquer diseases we now call incurable, technology can lift the burden of labour from our backs, and people can live their lives as they see fit, without the threat of economic hardship, moral condemnation or state repression hanging over their heads.

This is no utopian dream

The ultimate barriers which stand between us and such a free world are not natural or technical, but social, springing from the way that society is organised. The capitalists who rule and exploit the Earth and its people for their own benefit are incapable of taking us into a free future. Indeed they are turning the clock further back all the time. Those who shout loudest in praise of the Free World are precisely the people we need to deal with in the struggle to break our chains.

We are against the Free World, the tried and tested and the good old days. We are for freedom, the new and unknown, and the future.

Apartheid in rural Yorkshire

'We're black and British and that's bloody hard'

Kenan Malik reports from Dewsbury on the problems facing Asian youth in the aftermath of the Rushdie affair

Driving from Bradford to Dewsbury we got lost. Trying to find our way through the sleepy villages with their limestone cottages and gloomy churchyards, it was hard to believe that we were travelling through an area caught up in what some are calling a 'race war'. But behind the façade of rural peace, there is an intensity of racial tension and violence that would not be out of place in the urban squalor of Bradford, Brixton or Brick Lane.

I learnt very quickly how deceptive that façade is. In Dewsbury town centre I stopped to ask directions from an elderly white man. A young boy watched the conversation quizzically. 'Why's that man talking to a Paki?', he asked his mother.

'The whites' attitude towards us is diabolical', says Fiaz Ahmed. 'They give us the shit-eye all the time. Like yesterday, down Ravensthorpe, I was walking with my cousin and this bunch of white lads came up. One goes "Have you lost something?". I says "No", and he says "Well fuck off out of here then". Then another one pushed my cousin and says "What are you looking at?". My cousin said "Nothing". "Then move it you black bastard". And we had to leg it. They chased us all the way, we were lucky not to get our heads caved in.'

Racist violence in the area hasn't yet reached the peak of 1983 and 1984, when fire-bombers drove Asian families out of their homes in the Healey district of Batley. But attacks are on the increase. And today the town is polarised between black and white as never before. As in Bradford and east London, the year-long Rushdie affair has brought underlying racist tensions to the surface, and provided a new focus for racist thugs.

Even Savile Town, the heart of Dewsbury's Asian community, isn't free from racist attacks. 'It's not as bad as elsewhere', says Asif Iqbal,

'but when they come, they come mob-handed. I remember one time about 30 came down about midnight, with iron bars and bricks. The local paper claimed it was a "gang fight", the police said there was no racial motive. As far as they're concerned racism doesn't exist'.

In outlying areas such as Batley and Ravensthorpe there is not even the protection that comes from numbers. 'If you walk the streets of Batley today', said Asif, 'you're going to get into a fight. You're looking over your shoulder all the time'.

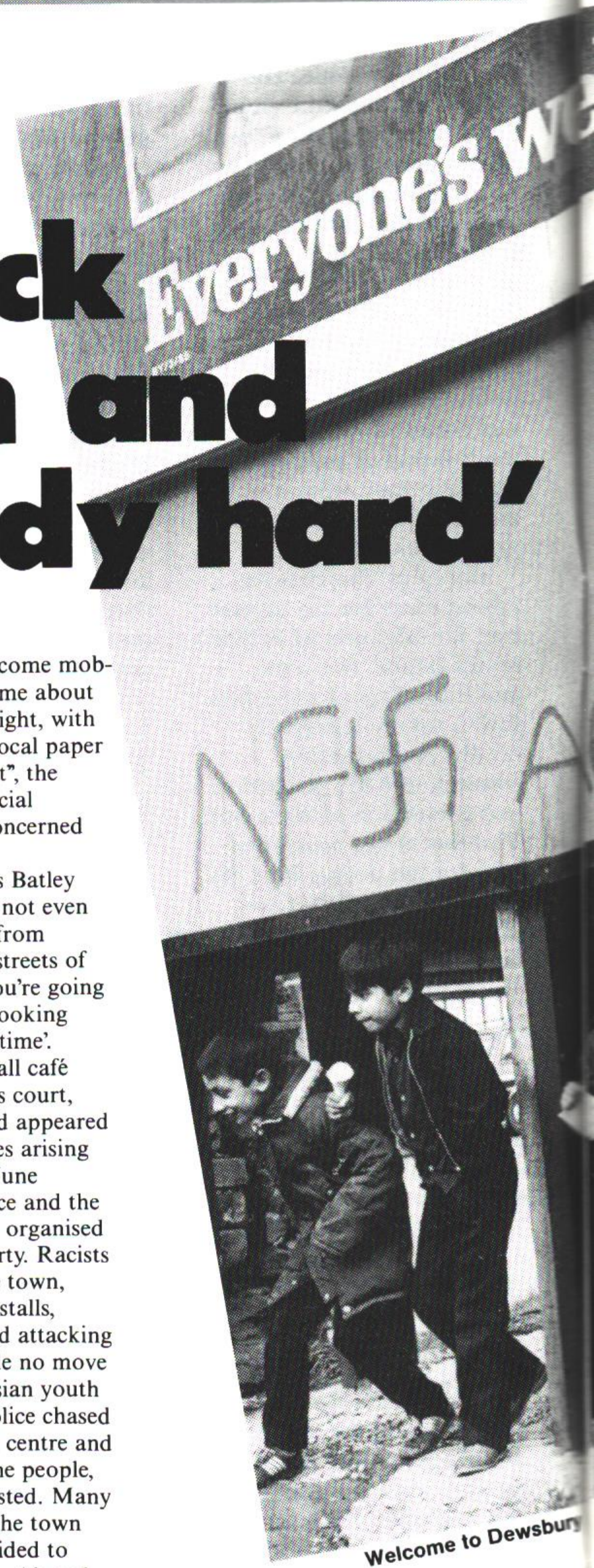
We were talking in a small café near Dewsbury magistrates court, where Ahmed and Asif had appeared that morning facing charges arising out of a confrontation in June between Asian youth, police and the racists at the end of a rally organised by the British National Party. Racists had rampaged through the town, overturning Asian market stalls, abusing black shoppers and attacking passers-by. The police made no move to stop them. But when Asian youth took on the fascists, the police chased the Asians out of the town centre and into Savile Town. Fifty-nine people, nearly all Asian, were arrested. Many simply happened to be in the town centre when the police decided to make it an Asian-free zone. Ahmed was one:

'I was working for a friend of mine on a market stall. About one o'clock I went for my dinner break. I was sitting on a wall with some friends when we heard lots of shouting. We got up and as we went round the corner we could see the police running towards Savile Town.

'All of a sudden four or five police officers came up behind me and one was kicking me and punching me in the back. So I turned round and said, "Look you can't do this, I've got rights". And he said, "What rights? Move it you black bastard!". So I just stood there looking at him. My mate

says, "Don't bother, there's no point". So we just carried on walking. And then he kicked me, really hard. And I got really angry and I turned round and said, "I want your name and number". And he pushed his shoulder into my face and said "There's my number and now you're nicked".'

Since then the police have arrested another 23 people. Nine were picked up in Batley Park a few days after the rally. Asif was among them. 'A young Asian lad was set upon by a gang in the park. We went to defend him and got into a fight. The police turned up and arrested all the Asians.' They were charged with causing 'violent



Welcome



PHOTO: Tim Smith

together and organise against their oppression. In Kirklees the black community is scattered. The only concentration of Asians is in Savile Town. This has made organisation difficult and tended to stifle the establishment of a militant black voice, especially from the youth.

In 1980, while many black communities in Britain were in a state of revolt, a local newspaper noted that Dewsbury was different: 'The Asian section of our population, and in particular its vocal and active younger element, have demonstrated that they want to remain within the law. Our fears that in this case anger could spill over into violence were shown to be wrong.' (*Batley News*, 11 September 1980)

'Fire with fire'

This is not to say that youth in Dewsbury have lacked a determination to resist racism. Many, like Ahmed and Asif, recognise that simply being Asian today means that they have no easy option: 'We're black and we're British and that's bloody hard.' The street fighting in June made plain the courage of young Asians. 'We've got to fight fire with fire', argues Ahmed. 'We've got to stand up to them. If we just sit still in one place it's going to get worse—more riots, more fire attacks, more attacks on our women and children.'

The heightened tensions generated by the fall-out from the Rushdie affair has impressed on many young Asians the need for a *political* response to their situation. The problem they face now is how to pursue this, to overcome their isolation.

In Kirklees, a handful of 'community leaders' and business families dominate the black political scene through their control of traditional organisations such as the Pakistan Association and the Community Relations Council. The power of this clique is sustained through the patronage of the local council and Labour Party. Community leaders are co-opted on to the council's 'ethnic' committees, the governing bodies of schools and social centres and often on to Labour Party committees too.

This patronage gives a few black politicians control over their community, while allowing the Labour Party to ignore the black community. In Kirklees the Labour Party has been too concerned about alienating white voters even to make the token equal opportunity gestures adopted by councils elsewhere. Less than two per cent of the council workforce is black. Of the 72 councillors in Kirklees, only three are Asian and one Muslim.

It's little wonder that most Asian youth have no time for the Labour Party, and refuse to be led by

community leaders whom they see as tame machine politicians. 'They've got their own way of doing things', says Ahmed acidly, 'and we've got ours'.

The corrupt practices of the old guard have made many young Asians more receptive to the ideas of left-wing activists who have been arriving in Dewsbury since the summer. Following the June confrontation, activists from Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield and London descended on Dewsbury to set up a defence committee.

These are people who, over the past decade, have moved away from their militant roots and developed close relationships with the Labour Party and local authorities elsewhere. They have gained entry to the corridors and quangos of local power, but in the process have lost a lot of their contact and credibility with local communities. The way in which left-wing anti-racists have become preoccupied with Labour-oriented affairs and detached from struggles outside has discredited them in the eyes of many younger blacks; this has been an important factor, for example, in attracting angry Asian youth from Bradford into anti-Rushdie demonstrations as an outlet for their frustration and their antagonism towards the police (see 'The sleeping demons awake', *Living Marxism*, May).

The left's approach to anti-racism may have lost its appeal in the cities. But Dewsbury is virgin territory for the activists, and some young Asians there see them as an attractive alternative to the existing set-up. Unfortunately, the defence committee's strategy holds no solution to the problem of isolation.

The committee has made little attempt to organise the local Asian community and put any plan for defence into action. Indeed it met for two months before it made any contact with the defendants! Nor has it taken on the pressing task of campaigning for support within the white working class. The committee has called a national demonstration for October, but relied on its friends in the Labour Party and on the left to turn out rather than trying to mobilise local white people. When their banners have gone home, the Asian community in Dewsbury will still be standing alone against the racist backlash.

The situation in Dewsbury is a vivid illustration of the dilemma facing young Asians in post-Rushdie Britain: which is the way to hit back at the racists? Until an answer is found that can overcome the limitations of both the traditional and radical brands of machine politics, it will continue to be bloody hard to be black anywhere in Britain.



disorder'—not for the fight in the park, but for taking part in the anti-fascist rally a week before.

Many defendants face a curfew from 7pm to 7am. Some have had their passports confiscated. 'They put banning orders on black people in South Africa', notes Asif. 'Well it's no different here, is it?'

The black community in Kirklees faces many of the same problems as those of any inner city—discrimination in housing and employment, racist attacks, police harassment, immigration raids. But compared to Bradford or Brixton, it has found it much more difficult to assert itself politically.

The concentration of black people in inner-city ghettos is the product of racism. But it also provides black people with an opportunity to come

Solidarnosc in government, no goods in the shops

Will Poles pay Walesa's price?

Lech Walesa's Solidarnosc now heads a Polish government presiding over a country in crisis. Russell Osborne and Julian Laslo report from the land of shortages and inflation on the prospects of Solidarity delivering the sausage

East Berlin station. The half a dozen Polish migrant workers sharing our carriage crack jokes and pass around the vodka. Their mood changes abruptly when we notice a train loaded with Soviet tanks and armoured vehicles on its way back east. 'We have to break our backs toiling to pay for that!' Now the talk is of Gorbachev ('a failure') and Polish president Jaruzelski ('an idiot'). 'Jaruzelski's useless' remarks the oldest of the group who had told of his time in the Polish army during the Cuban missile crisis ('they kept us in for a whole bloody year extra!'). 'We workers are the only real economists.'

We enter Poland just as Solidarity enters government, with the new prime minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki preparing to take over after 40 years of Stalinist rule. The failures of the Stalinist command economy have reduced the country to a state of economic paralysis. East and West, all the experts agree that the only remedy is a return to a market

economy. Yet the first moves towards a market have made matters worse still. Even bread and cigarettes are in short supply as speculators and black market operators take over. Spivs crowd city streets, offering to change your dollars or pounds for fat wads of near-worthless zloty notes. The 10-zloty coin is now commonly used as a roofing washer: it's cheaper than the real thing.

Time warp

Poznan station, changing trains to go south. The grey station stinks of boiled cabbage, the best that the state-run café can offer. A few private stallholders sell apples and tomatoes in the forecourt. A man surreptitiously sells us bottles of beer from a cloth bag: 1000zl apiece. It may sound a lot, but with a going rate of more than 9000zl to the US dollar, you can pass out for the price of a cup of British Rail tea.

Travelling south towards Silesia, Poland appears like a country caught in a time warp. In the countryside,

people ride on horse-drawn wagons which Constable could have painted. Women wearing headscarves toil among ragged patches of corn and cabbage, or swing scythes with an unchanging rhythm. They still gather the hay with wooden rakes crafted by hand.

Nearing Poland's industrial heartland, we are struck by sights and smells that are history in much of Britain. Gliwice, Zabrze, Chorzow, Bytom and Katowice; steelworks, coal-mines and heavy industry all concentrated in a strip of towns along the railway. The tall chimneys of the massive factories and forges belch acrid smoke—now black, now shocking orange—into the sunset. The stench and smoke is everywhere, covering the grimy houses and newer estates crowded right in among the industrial plants. Three and a half million people live and try to breathe here in Poland's biggest population concentration.

The taxi driver taking us from Katowice to a mountain village

PHOTO: Living Marxism



'THEIR FLAGS WILL BE RED WITH BLOOD'

'There is less and less time. Only empty shelves. We get more and more money but it doesn't cover inflation which will reach three figures this year. This is dangerous. No one can account for the financial situation. There is not even enough money for wages. There is no money for modernisation and expansion.

'Solidarnosc is to blame. What are they doing behind closed doors? Strikes are growing amongst transport, health, rail and shipyard workers. People want to earn more. There is less and less trust in the leaders of Solidarnosc. Many young people want to know how long they have to wait. They grow impatient. They don't want to bear the burden of higher prices and reforms which for them are so often not understood. It annoys people when they see Walesa and Jaruzelski together. Many are turning to radical solutions. Many are emigrating.

'Many will take to the streets, not to beg but to grab and to fight. No Zomo [riot police] will hold them back. Neither will any appeals from Solidarnosc. All they will ask us to do is to hope again. Solidarnosc are playing their own game with the communists. If Solidarnosc can't give these restless wonderful young people a vision which can assure them, they will come out of the shadows and go against you. Don't be surprised if their flags will be red with blood.' (Leaflet distributed by the radical Fighting Solidarity group on a demonstration in Zory)

converses in broken German, comparing car prices in Poland and Britain and moaning, inevitably, about the Communist Party. By Polish standards he is doing alright for himself, and hopes soon to buy a new car—a real success symbol. Luckily he has a diesel car. Drivers with petrol engines face a wait of up to two days to buy petrol. We pass a queue about half a mile long snaking down a hard shoulder. The taxi does break down along the way, but the driver expects that and fixes it quickly.

Our hosts greet us with traditional hospitality and a full table, but don't try to deny that times are very hard. Food is short, prices are rocketing and the prospect of rapid change under a new Solidarnosc government worries everybody. People are not going hungry yet. They have stocked up, anticipating the price rises and shortages that come with the extension of a market in food. But nobody knows what the coming months hold.

We were in Poland only a few days, and some prices had doubled before we left. Even Polish vodka was out of stock. Life is a perpetual struggle for survival. Where the hopeless command economy fails the family must substitute. Poles have gained the reputation as a nation of hustlers, developing ingenious informal networks to stay alive in a collapsing society.

Family connections in the countryside are crucial. Nearly half of Poland's population still lives on the land. City dwellers drive out to see their country cousins and return to

town with a car full of produce. When goods do arrive in the shops, they buy more than they need. Often a strategic backhander or 'lapowka' (pronounced 'wapoofka') is required to get goods from under the counter. So much for the free market.

Even in the relatively well-supplied country villages a shopping expedition is an arduous trudge from shop to shop just to get a basic meal together. Bread is off here, elsewhere there is no ham or sausage. Shelves are often embarrassingly empty. Clothing, though expensive in relation to the average wage, is shoddily made and old-fashioned. The goods people want, such as foreign-made trainers, are like gold dust. We found only one pair for sale, costing the equivalent of a week's wages. A choice cut of meat can cost up to half a weekly wage, and people have to economise more and more.

So what solutions can the new administration offer to the problems facing Polish people? This is the question being debated by Solidarity activists at the many commemorative

ceremonies that have become a central part of the movement's tradition.

Solidarity leaders tend to emphasise their movement's past glories, national anniversaries and near-mythical figures of Polish history rather than talk about its programme for today. They are always keen to associate themselves with the days of 1980-81, when the union emerged on the back of a strike wave as a mass working class organisation. Yet today's Solidarity is not the organisation of the early eighties. While there is a large passive support for the movement, the euphoria has gone. Battered by years of martial law and grinding austerity, many Poles take a wait-and-see attitude to the new government.

The anniversary of the August 1980 Gdansk agreement which legalised Solidarity coincides with the anniversary of the start of the Second World War and of what Poles call 'the fourth division' of their country under the Stalin-Hitler pact. Television transmits hours of



PHOTO: Living Marxism

RIGHT: Bishop Zimon lays down the line while consecrating Solidarity's new Jastrzebie office; Solidarnosc spokesman Alojzy Pietrzyk smiles along



Katowice: 'popping down to the shop' Polish-style

excruciating commemoration ceremonies starring religious figures from around the world, Stalinist bureaucrats eager to improve their image with a bit of religious gloss, and Solidarity leaders. Activists are particularly embarrassed at the sight of a uniformed president Jaruzelski, the general who imposed martial law to crush Solidarity, flanked by Mazowiecki and Walesa.

At the ceremonies we attend in the mining towns of Zory and Jastrzebie, trade union tradition has been overlaid with Catholic ritual. The clergy officiate at meetings which have the feel of a subdued church service rather than a political event.

Zory nestles among giant pithead buildings, but local miners are spectators for the ceremony, filing into church while the priests take charge of shepherding official guests and Solidarity senators and MPs. The new Solidarity men are learning the politicians' art of public handshaking. Three of them are former miners; one, Henryk Sienkiewicz, still wears heavy working boots with his dark suit. The miners wear their impressive dress uniforms, with pillbox hats topped by feathers: black for face workers, white for management.

Outside the ceremony, a few young miners are picketing with a banner, members of the right-wing nationalist KPN. Inside the church the congregation sings a religious anthem, their hands raised in a victory sign. There is confusion over the words which traditionally lament

an unfree Poland. This time the priest changes the lyrics midstream to take account of the new Solidarnosc government.

Another day, another commemoration in Jastrzebie, a town which ranks second only to Gdansk in the pantheon of Solidarity's history. Solidarity bigwig Alojzy Pietrzyk and various MPs attend a round of processions and rituals, only to be upstaged by Bishop Damian Zimon of Katowice. He consecrates the new Solidarnosc offices, and lays down the political line from the pulpit at a mass for 2000 people in Jastrzebie Cathedral. Mining activists in their black uniforms are reduced to reading the lesson.

Count your fingers

While in Jastrzebie the Solidarity union has a new office for the old priest to consecrate, the new Solidarity parliamentary group for Katowice region (where there are 30 Solidarnosc MPs) has no office at all. Solidarnosc has the prime minister and a central role in the government, yet it is only now setting up the machinery of a political party. Its officials are also coming to terms with the novel experience of explaining their programme at meetings of workers.

We find some MPs and senators doing just that at a meeting in Zory's House of Culture. Our Solidarnosc guide jokes that the House of Culture was the only place without any culture under Stalinist rule; others point to the busy bars as unofficial

houses of culture which have thrived in the hard years. Our guide is a militant in the still illegal student movement the NZS, and a staunch Catholic. She is typical of those drawn to religion as an expression of their antagonism towards the regime that called itself communist. The church is for her inseparable from Solidarity and the struggle for national freedom: 'The church was always the bearer of Polish culture. Priests preserved it and brought it down to us.'

Outside the House of Culture there is another small KPN picket, chanting 'Jaruzelski, Wielowieyski'; Andrzej Wielowieyski is the Solidarity senator who signed the deal for Solidarnosc participation in the government. He is speaking at the meeting, attended by about 100 people, mainly middle-aged. The young people who have displayed their anger in riots and strikes around the country are noticeably absent, apart from the KPN supporters at the front demanding to know why Solidarnosc compromised and allowed the communists to keep control of key ministries.

'Why did you give your hand to the commies?' asks one. Wielowieyski jokes about needing to count your fingers after such a handshake, but insists that he had to do a deal with Jaruzelski, since 'he is able to keep the police and army in check. After all it was the general who set up the round-table talks between the party and Solidarnosc. If he wasn't around we would only have to put up with someone worse'. A man in the audience supports the senator: 'The KPN only want to destroy. Older people want to build—they have seen the war and know the meaning of revolution and they don't want a revolution for their families.' Nobody else seems to have much enthusiasm for the debate. The subdued meeting about political reform contrasts with the vocal discussions about how to survive taking place among ordinary Poles everywhere.

The arguments get more heated when they move on to these matters at a meeting between Solidarity spokesman Alojzy Pietrzyk and union activists at a mine in Jastrzebie. There is much resentment at the way members of the 'nomenklatura'—the Stalinist bureaucracy—have been allowed to go private and buy up the enterprises which they previously ran for the state. The activists claim that these bureaucrats-turned-capitalists have made fortunes by cornering the market and charging monopoly prices. Speakers from the floor demand that a Solidarnosc government should take action against the profiteers.

Tenants who turn out to hear Solidarity MPs on Jastrzebie's bleak high-rise estates are also more concerned with immediate economic

'How can we accept the doubling of the price of milk from one day to the next?'

'WALESA IS UNIQUE'

Gienek is in his thirties, a full-time official in the regional Solidarnosc organisation. He used to be a miner, and says local miners are part of Solidarnosc. But since there was a strike days earlier, against the national Solidarity administration, can the miners be described as enthusiastic supporters?

'The miners believe Walesa' argues Gienek, 'you can say they love him. If he says he needs to speak to the communists then he must do it'. He dismisses Walesa's critics in the radical Fighting Solidarity and the right-wing KPN as a joke, who say no to Walesa but never to his face. 'Walesa always knows what to say and how to get an ovation even when people are angry.'

Gienek defends Walesa against accusations that he has refused to allow elections for the Solidarnosc leadership. 'Walesa was ready for an election, but he is unique, there is only one Walesa.' He sees Walesa as a national symbol, above trivial politics, comparing him to Poland's pre-war dictator General Pilsudski, who held power without holding formal office. 'Pilsudski wasn't prime minister or president. This was an unwritten law and Walesa obeys the same law today.'

Gienek warns against being taken in by TV pictures of Polish people cheering Margaret Thatcher: 'People in Poland always cheer Western leaders. It goes back to the years when we had to cheer leaders from the East. Now we are trying to say that we want the West not the East. We know about the British miners' strike and Thatcher's role in it. We do not have a fascination for Mrs Thatcher, merely a fascination for the West.'

The miners, meanwhile, have more pressing concerns. 'The working week is six days but to earn more many work seven days. Face workers do get privileges: a year's work counts as one and a half years towards their pension. But this kind of work is not fit for human beings. A man who works underground for 25 years is like a worn-out machine. Ten miners die every week in this region and there are many accidents with loss of limbs. The local hospitals are always full.'

Gienek agrees that the Communist Party's continued control over the police and army is a serious problem. Solidarity aims to win over the regular police force, the militia, by giving them the resources which currently go to the feared Zomo riot police. He accepts that there is not quite the same enthusiasm as there was in 1980-81: 'Like Walesa said, there was a lot of enthusiasm but too much emotion. Now is the time for hard work.'

'WALESA IS A PIECE OF MEAT'

Lech is a miner and a regional organiser for the Confederation for a Free Poland (KPN), probably the largest right-wing nationalist group outside Solidarnosc. A mainly middle class group, they hail pre-war dictator Pilsudski as their hero but they are not alone in this; many Solidarnosc activists wear Pilsudski lapel badges. KPN is virulently anti-communist, demanding that the old regime be destroyed and the market restored at once.

Lech says that KPN is not in Solidarnosc because 'we are at war with the communists. We don't listen to Walesa or Solidarity because it is red'—that is, because 'Walesa talks to the communists' and has given them key government ministries. Lech was a member of the strike committee during the strikes of 1988 which shook the regime. For him, the problems facing Polish miners are an indictment of the Communist Party and Solidarity alike, and the KPN is the only alternative. 'Nobody looks after the miners. We can't go to the doctor because we work too many hours. We don't get decent food and we wait 15 years for a house. We have waited too long.'

Lech says that his mine, Morcinek, came out on strike days earlier 'to wake up Walesa. Walesa is a piece of meat'.

problems than with the process of political change. They are even less impressed with the poetry readings which embarrass our activist companions. We ask some young women what they think of the new government: 'We're not really interested. We're only here to see what's going on.'

A young miner, the Solidarnosc leader at his pit, tells us he is for the government, but worried about what it will do to the economy. 'I support Mazowiecki, but the market should not be introduced too quickly. How can we accept the doubling of the price of milk from one day to the next?' However, he feels that strikes are no answer—to keep his family he will only have to work more overtime later. He points to Britain where miners struck 'for four months' and didn't get paid. 'If we have to strike for two months we'll starve. Strikes are not the way.' Nobody knows whether the mass of miners, with their record of militancy, will take the same attitude.

The Pope knows

The estate meeting breaks into life when one of Solidarity's veteran heroes, Adam Michnik, makes an unexpected appearance in jeans and trainers and starts exchanging banter with the audience. He tells the crowd that he has just breakfasted with the Pope in Rome: 'I can't repeat what we talked about in private but I can assure everyone that the Pope knows everything about Poland and can feel the people's problems.'

Michnik jokes off critical questions about the deal with Jaruzelski, assuring everybody that 'the army belongs to the people. Jaruzelski shares my opinions on this. I am certain that things will be alright in six months. Here I am an optimist'. Sensing that many may not share his optimism about controlling Jaruzelski's armed forces which have brutally put down strikes and protests, he pleads for workers' patience 'in these troubled times' and

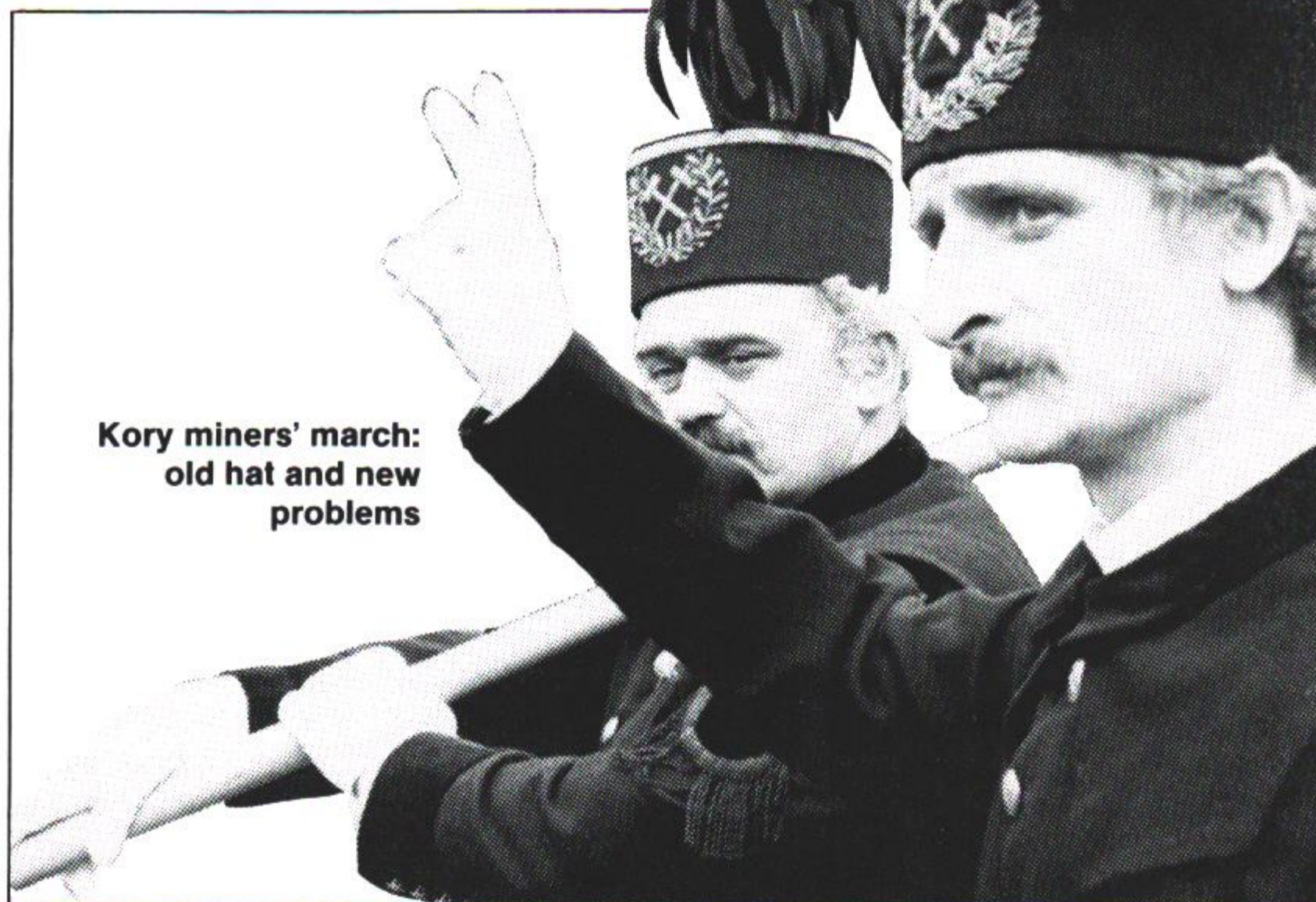
quotes the proverb 'haste comes from the devil'. The heavens promptly open, and a cloudburst ends the meeting.

Michnik's bravado cannot hide the seriousness of the central problem facing their movement: how to reconcile Solidarity's role as a trade union with its avowed aim of introducing the capitalist market to Poland. In a room dominated by a red Polish eagle banner we discuss this with the leader of the Silesia region, Alojzy Pietrzyk, and Solidarity 'adviser' Gabriel Kraus from the Catholic intellectual group KIK. There is clearly tension between Solidarity's old working class wing and the free market intellectuals who dominate its parliamentary caucus.

Everybody present agrees, with ironic laughter, that there is a slight problem in the fact that the Communist Party still controls the army and the police. They also agree on the need for the new government to impose 'hard' economic measures. But differences soon arise about the speed and severity with which the market should be introduced.

Pietrzyk says some within Solidarnosc want to take 'the long way' and some favour 'shock' tactics—a quick end to price subsidies and wage indexation. The shock approach 'could make a strike, could make a revolution' but it's not certain that strikes can be avoided by taking the long way either.

So what will happen if workers' resentment at price rises causes them to ignore Solidarity's pleas for patience and strike, as they did last



Kory miners' march:
old hat and new
problems

PHOTO: Living Marxism

'My workers eat too much. Unemployment will be good'

year? Pietrzyk blames Communist Party sabotage for recent discontent, arguing that the bureaucrats allowed rapid liberalisation of the market as a provocation to cause problems before Solidarity took over. Pietrzyk seems to be in the camp of the gradualists: Solidarnosc's new programme must be hard but kind, everybody must agree to it. He fears that the party hopes to precipitate a crisis which could bring down the Mazowiecki government and finish off Solidarnosc. If that happens, he warns, it will mean revolution or a military coup.

The intellectual Kraus now steps in to assert his position, banging the table while he insists that 'complete change is demanded: of managers, political structures and from workers—every member of society. It must be done'. He is with most Solidarnosc MPs in supporting the implementation of the Sachs Programme, named after a US economist, which urges a rapid, harsh transition to the market, but he thinks it will require 'a lot of fuelling' through Western finance. Kraus says it will be possible to do this without provoking strikes, although he does not say how. He believes that, while the bureaucratic state sector needs to be eliminated, mass unemployment can be avoided by creating a Western-style service sector. To us

outsiders, the prospect of a booming retail trade seems slightly remote in a society which cannot put bread on the shop shelves.

The row between Kraus and Pietrzyk, about the right balance to be struck between protecting workers and privatising the economy, is reaching a pitch when it is ended by the intervention of the working class—in the form of a cleaning woman who orders us all off the premises. As we leave Pietrzyk swings a small pendulum, as a symbol of Poland's uncertain future.

The market has already created a nucleus of home-grown Polish capitalists, the new entrepreneurs whom the Solidarity government and the Western authorities are so keen to embrace.

Bogdan and Danuta run a clothing factory in Katowice set up with American money. They live in a state-provided flat, but have completely rebuilt the interior: the walls are wood-panelled, the sitting room stuffed full of expensive leather furniture. But Danuta complains that whatever they do at home they still can't escape the nasty reality of Polish life. Even the walls of their flat are dangerous panels of crumbling asbestos.

A giant teletext TV screen flashes the latest foreign currency exchange rates while American music plays on

a powerful sound system. We are offered ice cream, said to be very good as it is made by a new private business; the quality is expected to deteriorate markedly as soon as they're doing well. Our hosts dispense rich snacks, vodka and some homespun economic wisdom.

Their company buys in foreign cloth and exports the finished product, mainly to West Germany. Danuta complains about having to pay 30 per cent of her hard currency earnings to the government which gives it back to her in zlotys at one ninth of the market rate. She pays her 70 employees 220 000zł a month. It might be higher than state sector wages, but it is still only equivalent to about \$25. But Danuta is not satisfied with her lazy, greedy workforce: 'They eat too much and take too many breaks. Every time I look they're eating! They don't know how to work. Unemployment in Poland will be good.'

In championing the cause of these entrepreneurs, Solidarity signals its transformation from the days when it led mass strikes to defend workers' living standards. The question remains, how many of its supporters will be prepared to tolerate the harsh consequences of the change—and for how long?

Hungary: full shops and empty pockets

Budapest is a deutschmarket town

PHOTO: G Simmons

Laszlo Kelemen reports from the new Hungary, an insecure society of entrepreneurs and the unemployed



Istvan had just lost his job. 'What am I going to do?', he asked, hands raised to the sky, 'whatever turns up I'll take it'. 'A year ago', he said, 'another bus driver who was made redundant went back to the garage in the middle of the night and slashed all the tyres. Not one bus went out next morning. I was playing round with the idea of doing something similar—but he got two years in the nick for it'. Istvan is not alone. In the new post-glasnost Hungary, unemployment is making a big comeback.

From a distance Budapest looks relatively prosperous. There are no food shortages. The shops are well-stocked and everything can be bought—for a price. Finding the foreign currency to buy it, and finding a home to put it in, are the problems.

Eva, a nurse, and Judit, a radio station secretary, count themselves

lucky. They have just managed to get a flat. It's only two small rooms and a kitchen, on the eighth floor of a highrise on the outskirts of Budapest, but by comparison with their friends they are extremely fortunate.

'Most people our age'—Eva is 20 and Judit is 21—'find it next to impossible to even think of leaving home, you need money and connections'. Eva got the flat by looking after an old lady for the last 18 months. 'The crack is that you can sign a contract with the old person who you are looking after so that you inherit the flat after they die. I was prepared to wait five, six years. It's the only way to get your own place.'

God and George Bush

Istvan, Eva and Judit are very much products of the new, reform-minded, pro-market Hungary. Except for the red flags that still decorate many public buildings there is little evidence that this is meant to be a socialist society. Speeches on religion by George Bush and Billy Graham are on sale at every underground station. The health system, still supposedly free, is run through patronage and bribes. Security of employment means little to the tens of thousands made redundant in recent years. Except for prosperous

Job-hunting—another Western import

groups of new entrepreneurs and party bureaucrats, making ends meet is a struggle. On the street everyone talks of rising prices and falling living standards.

Gyuri has just qualified as a chemical engineer, for which important job he is paid around £65 a month. He shares a bedroom with his brother in his parents' home and his one big luxury is the Vespa scooter he bought secondhand two years ago. According to Gyuri, Hungary is the mirror image of Poland. 'In Poland all the shops are empty and there is nothing you can do with your money but put it under your bed. In Hungary all the shops are full but no one has enough money to pay for what you want.'

In fact there are people, at least in Budapest, with lots of money. Private entrepreneurs have taken advantage of the pro-market orientation of the Hungarian government. Hungary now has its share of deutschmark millionaires. Unfortunately for the rest, the market does not need many more private entrepreneurs. In the meantime, for every successful businessman there are thousands living below or near the poverty line.

'None of my friends are interested in politics' is the predictable response of most young Hungarians. 'Politics is for the bigmouths', according to Ildiko, a final year high school student. Ildiko and her friends went to a demonstration commemorating the rehabilitation of Imre Nagy, executed by the Stalinist regime in the late fifties. 'That's not politics, that's a protest' she says. Young Hungarians do not trust politicians, especially those associated with the present regime. A strong mood of cynicism pervades society. The dozens of new opposition parties that have sprung up in recent years are shells, a handful of would-be leaders in search of a constituency.

It is as if every thinking Hungarian is waiting for an impending crisis. The older generation remembers the crushing of the 1956 revolution, and the repression that followed. They are scared that if the situation gets out of hand history will repeat itself. The youth do not believe that the changes taking place will make their lives better.

The joker in the pack is the Hungarian working class. Anger and frustration are dominant sentiments

in the working class districts of Hungary. The new entrepreneur culture is not for them. Until now they have been marginal to the development of political opposition. But their sullen mood has been noticed by the intellectuals who lead the opposition organisations.

Pista and Jundor are two would-be entrepreneurs, intellectuals active in the opposition movement. They worry that Hungarian workers may erupt and vent their hatred against the system. 'That would be a disaster', Pista argues. He thinks that so long as the working class remains orderly, reforms can transform Hungary to his advantage. But if they start to strike, things will get out of hand. Pista and Jundor envy the Polish Solidarity leaders. Although they didn't say it in so many words, they too would like to win political influence on the back of the masses.

Hungary will never be the same. Yet its future direction remains unresolved. Istvan was not really sure but he had the impression that there is no story to tell—not yet, anyway. 'The action hasn't started.'

Dinner with Gaspar

In Budapest, we went in search of the opposition intellectuals whom we had heard so much about at home. Thirty of them were gathered at a cinema, deeply embarrassed because the public had failed to show up for their cultural film show, even though it was almost the only event publicised in the city that night.

The film, *Lulu*, was advertised as a short piece on screen goddesses, set to 'new music'. It turned out to be a tacky Hollywood-style compilation, of the sort that ITV broadcasts at 2.30am, set to wacky atonal piano music. After the show, the artist proudly informed me that this was 'an important operetta by a contemporary of Schönberg'. I don't think he was joking.

The party

As a reward for staying awake and not laughing, we got an invite to an oppositionists' party. It was held in the Hungarian equivalent of a yuppie apartment block, very Channel 4/Chanel No 5. A dusty marble staircase took us up half a dozen floors (the ancient wrought iron lift is too noisy to use at night), to a big, opulent apartment, a world apart from the ordinary family flat we were staying in across the city.

Westerners visiting Budapest get a chance to experience how ordinary Hungarians live at first hand. People

who are desperate for foreign currency (especially deutschmarks), which you now need to buy anything beyond the most basic staples, have to rent out rooms in their homes to tourists via the state accommodation agency. The flat we were staying in houses three women, three children and up to four tourists. The whole place would have fitted into the dining room of this party venue.

Gathered around a gorgeous antique banquet table and the remains of a sumptuous meal was an almost caricatured cross-section of the Budapest intelligentsia: writers, artists, an architect, a psychologist, all members of the opposition Liberal Democrat group. Holding court in the centre was Gaspar Tamas, leading thinker of the Free Democratic Alliance, fellow of St Anthony's College, Oxford, and columnist in the right-wing British weekly, the *Spectator*.

Thatcher fan

Tamas was keen to argue with us, explaining how tiresome it was that 'everybody agrees with me here'. Like just about every Conservative hack in the West, he claims to have been left-wing in his salad days. Maybe it was the drink, but he had a job keeping his story straight: first he was an ex-Trotskyist, then he became an ex-anarchist. Whatever, he retains some

sympathy for Trotsky, 'because he was such a good anti-communist'. But his naive youth is far behind him. Now he is 'to the right of David Owen, who is far too socialistic, and I'm a great admirer of Margaret Thatcher'.

Ten minutes of this and it's obvious why the Budapest 'radicals' are feted in the West. Tamas talks like a Tory who has learnt a little Kinnockite language. Thus Hungary could become 'a democratic socialist society, but only with the full introduction of the market'.

What crisis?

What about the inevitably gruesome effects of restoring capitalism—mass unemployment, austerity—which the pro-market reforms are already bringing about? Tamas simply denies that this is true; he seems to have learnt something from the professional liars in the Stalinist regime. Indeed he goes further: 'There is no such thing as capitalism, only the market.' No doubt the jobless, homeless and deutschmarkless people of Budapest will be glad to hear it. But then, as Tamas the doyen of the dinner party circuit says of the Hungarian working class, 'they do not really exist any more' either.

Mark Wilder

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HISTORY IS NOT BUNK

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'No need to worry', I thought, 'this is entertainment'; like the *Flintstones*, or Raquel Welch watching helpless and horror-struck while her hunter wrestles with the dinosaurs. But, apparently, I'm wrong.

Did you know that more than half of school pupils drop history by the time they are 14? Worse than that, 'integrated humanities' has resulted in the dissolution of history and geography into a sort of timeless waste; a featureless, trackless steppe without facts or frontiers.

The consequences, according to a recent Gallup survey, are that six out of 10 young people do not know who the Virgin Queen was, or how many wives Henry VIII had. Nine out of 10 do not know that it was Farmer George who lost the American colonies or which Charles lost his head. Things are so bad that hardly anybody today would get the jokes in *1066 and All That*.

Books are for wimps

As education secretary back in January, Kenneth Baker took swift action to correct this alarming deficiency in our national life. Erring in favour of tradition, he decided against pampering the kids. There were to be no trendy educational gimmicks like new textbooks, more teachers and better buildings. A decent committee would do the trick: the national curriculum history working group.

Commander Saunders Watson was appointed to chair the working group. As the former captain of a warship, the owner of Rockingham Castle, an Old Etonian and the chairman of the Heritage Education Trust, it was felt that Saunders Watson was just the chap to set the record straight.

After some initial confusion the commander now has a clear brief from the cabinet. At least 60 per cent of the syllabus must trace the

achievements of the British people and state. Against the wishy-washy liberal teaching technique of empathy—'imagine what it was like to burn King Alfred's cakes'—the cabinet and its allies want facts.

Like Dickens' Mr Gradgrind, the new education minister John MacGregor thinks 'facts is facts'. In this he is ably supported by historian Robert Skidelsky, who thinks that subjective history invites totalitarian history. As the man who attributed Sir Oswald Mosley's fascination with Italian fascism to his Latin temperament and dark good looks I suppose he should know. However, I suspect that all this argy-bargy about facts and objectivity (on the right) or empathy and method (on the liberal left) can seriously throw us off the scent.

The history debate is not about a struggle between objectivity and empathy. After all, the same authorities which now claim an undying affinity for facts have often tried to

In so doing, the radicals leave the field clear for nationalist and racist opinion to deal with the dazzling and awesome events of history. In the struggle for children's hearts and minds, between 'what did it feel like to be a sixteenth-century weaver?' and 'the Story of England's Glory in the First Elizabethan Age', I have a sneaking suspicion as to which side will win.

No matter how scrupulous or worthy its peripheral projects may be, progressive opinion is outclassed and outmanoeuvred by the supporters of MacGregor, Thatcher and Mr Gradgrind. The right knows that popular school history (and what else could it be in a double-period of teaching?) must provide a clear, concise, account of how the British created the best of all possible worlds. Against the power of this patriotic clarity, no meandering and fragmented approach will do.

A liberal rearguard action has been attempted: Margaret Thatcher's

The return of what might be called 'Our Island Story' is canvassed as the only antidote to the denigration of all things British by *Guardian*-reading teachers

pass off myths as historical truth (from little things like the arrow in Harold's eye and Drake's Plymouth bowls to bigger matters like the causes and conduct of Britain's recent wars). Instead, I think the debate is about which vision of Britain's past shall prevail in the nation's classrooms.

Over the past 30 years liberal and left-wing historians have retreated to the Celtic 'fringes' in opposition to the 'English' bias. They also wax lyrical on the role of 'labour' history, 'local' history, 'community' history and even 'oral' history. It appears that radical opinion would rather do anything but counter the broad canvas approach of the right; the new historians eschew the big picture and stick to carefully crafted miniatures of obscure struggles and issues.

interest in the history working group is political, and as such, is unacceptable. The reason it is unacceptable? It creates a precedent for prime ministerial interference. Were Neil Kinnock elected he might rig the history syllabus too!

Now, I must admit, this is a shocking prospect. The thought of someone equally as philistine and anti-working class as Thatcher shaping school history 'from a socialist perspective' is grim. But I don't think we can save ourselves or the kids by trying to keep politics out of history. Mathematics is mathematics, but history is politics. The subject is the study of society and how and by what processes it assumed its present form.

The liberal denial of politics or the left-wing retreat into more and more

'micro' and fragmented historical concerns has fooled nobody. As schoolteacher Chris McGovern put it: 'Up to now only a minority of schools have been studying British history and the syllabuses have been very biased. They concentrate on the struggles of the working class and the rise of the trade unions.' According to this right-wing fantasy a debilitating Marxism stalks every school rendering white children at best ignorant, and, at worst, ashamed of their national heritage. The return of what might be called 'Our Island Story' is canvassed as the only antidote to the denigration of all things British by left-of-centre *Guardian* readers.

Like it was

There is no tenable moderate position in this debate. The right knows this and it is about time that the other side shaped up. We should tell the schoolchildren that the Royal Crescent in Bath and the elegance of Regent's Park was paid for from the trade in cargoes of black slaves. We should tell the children that Great Britain was forged in a series of bloody wars, mass evictions and the cultural annihilation of the Celtic peoples.

We should make sure that all 14 to 16-year olds know that while Edmund Burke was screeching about the Great Terror in France, British forces were killing thousand upon thousand of Irish peasant farmers. At the same time, every schoolchild should be aware, the British Admiralty despatched one hundred warships to the Caribbean to defend the institution of slavery against the Jacobins.

Margaret Thatcher might think that the Magna Carta drawn up between a bunch of feudal barons and a king is more significant than the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen in France. But we know better. The real irony is that the great achievements of bourgeois society are safer with us than the philistines of the department of education and science.

Our schoolchildren do not need to feel pride in the grisly history of the British state. Neither do they need empathy. They need a vision of the historical struggle for progress that is breathtaking, and rather more grand than anything conjured up by the shopkeeper's cabinet.

Test-tube baby pioneer defends embryo research

Playing God or helping humanity?

Test-tube baby pioneer Professor Robert Edwards has been accused of playing God, being Frankenstein and abusing women's bodies. Ann Bradley read his new book, and talked to the author

Sitting in his office at the Physiological Laboratories in Cambridge, Professor Robert Edwards does not look like a mad scientist. Beverly, his over-worked secretary, describes him as 'a lovely man who is down to earth and, well, ordinary'. She has never seen him in a white coat and thinks he's more like a genial grandfather than an eminent scientist. She tells how at a recent party for the families helped by Edwards, 'he sort of disappeared. We couldn't find him. Journalists from all over the world were waiting to do interviews and he'd been swallowed up among all the children. It was lovely. But that's the kind of man he is'. Even the publishers of his new book describe Edwards as 'a very cuddly man'.

Many people take a quite different view of Professor Edwards. To some, he represents an embodiment of evil. When the *Sun* ran a headline screaming 'Frankenstein tests to be banned', Robert Edwards was one of the Frankensteins they were panicking about.

Edwards experiments on embryos, and that is not a popular job. His work has been described as 'repugnant', 'immoral' and 'offensive to human decency' by people across the political spectrum.

'Egg-snatcher'

Patricia Spallone, a biochemist turned feminist writer, describes him, in her new book on reproductive politics, as an 'egg-snatcher' trying to further the interests of male-dominated science at the expense of women's bodies. Religious spokesmen accuse him of trying to play God and interfering in the 'natural order'. Politicians don't know what to think. The government has avoided introducing guidelines on embryo research for years, Edwards wishes they'd get on with it, because at least then scientists would have a clear idea of what they can and can't do. He jokes that his work is the one thing that unites Protestant Ian Paisley, Catholic John Hume and a large number of atheist feminists.

Outside medical circles, Edwards is best known as the 'co-creator' of

Louise Brown, the world's first test-tube baby. That was over 11 years ago. In-vitro fertilisation is now a relatively commonplace procedure. Over 4000 test-tube babies have been born in Britain, and it's estimated that around 5000 women a year undergo IVF treatment. Test-tube babies have become so widely accepted that Gail in *Neighbours* is trying for one (so I'm told).

The notion of test-tube babies had its critics from the moment news of Edwards' research into the fertilisation of human eggs outside the body first broke almost 20 years ago. In his new book he recalls the headline reactions to some of his first experiments: 'Ban the test-tube baby' (*Sun*, 25 February 1970), 'Chief rabbi attacks test-tube stud farming' (*Sunday Express*, 1 March 1970), 'The obsolescent mother' (*Atlantic Monthly*, May 1971). Cartoonists were kept busy producing variations on the theme of banks of bottles containing identical babies. There were countless warnings about the dangers of the creation of genetically identical children—cloning (Edwards says he calls it 'cloning'), and lots of allusions to Nazis.

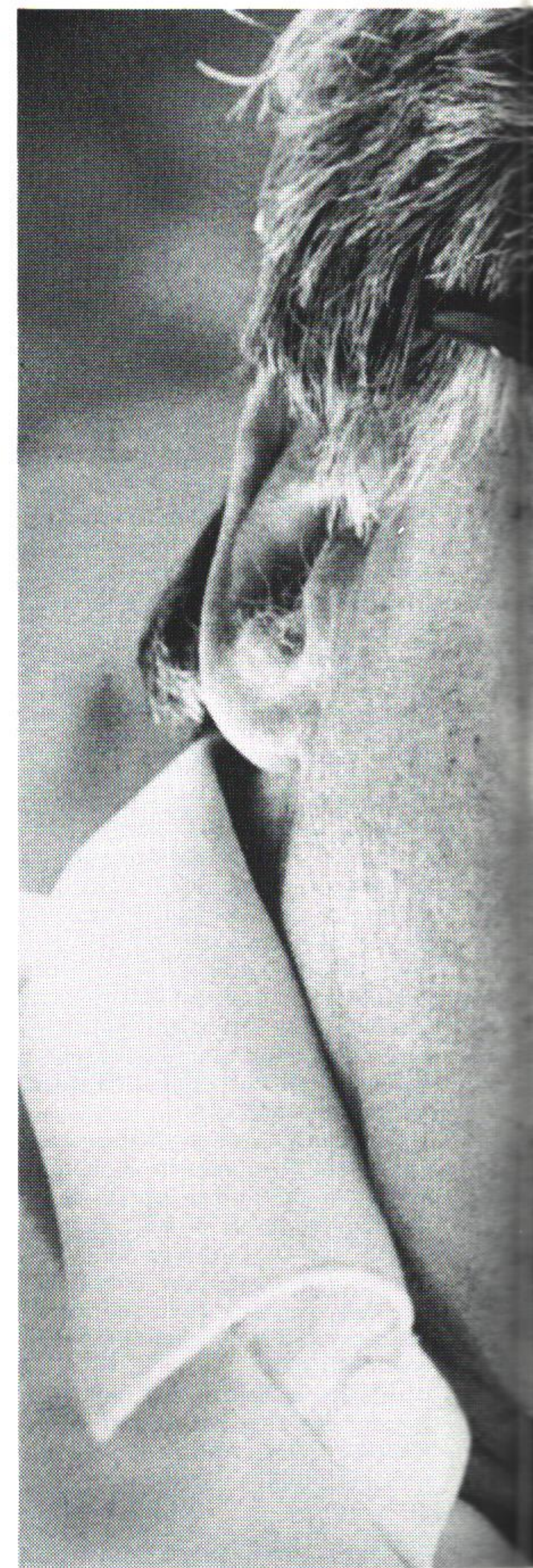
Mail ethics

The entire project was plagued by lack of funds. Unable to get funding for projects from the authorities, he was originally backed by the American Ford Foundation and the *Daily Mail*. He was grateful for their money but admits that as a staunch Labour Party man 'it was ironic to have to turn to foreign capitalists for funds'. Both of them suddenly pulled out, worried by the ethical controversies.

With the arrival of Louise, Edwards' work was given the benefit of the doubt. He was, after all, helping women to fulfil the role that society carves out for them—that of mothers. As Edwards asks, pointing to a photograph of some of the children born as a consequence of IVF at his own clinic, 'Who can argue that these children should not have been born?'. It's a strong moral argument, but once the uses of embryo research moved away from

pictures of dewy-eyed mums with newborn babies, it no longer held. And controversy broke out with a vengeance.

The rights and wrongs of embryo research have dominated debates on medical ethics throughout the eighties. Edwards has lost count of



the number of times he has been forced to put pen to paper to defend his work. He is certain that over the next year the debate will reach its climax. 'The government have promised to introduce legislation to control embryo research, and Mary Warnock's recommendations are before parliament, so this could be it.' He is particularly worried by the considerable support which Enoch Powell received for his bill calling for a ban on research.

Edwards insists that stringent curbs on embryo research would be a significant blow to medical science. He believes a study of embryonic material can provide answers, and possibly solutions, to a wide range of problems facing humanity. His book puts a convincing case for his work.

The most obvious area that benefits from embryo research is research into infertility. To those of us who have spent years trying *not* to

get pregnant, it may come as a surprise that human fertilisation is extremely inefficient. As many as one in 10 couples are believed to be infertile. In many cases there seems to be no reason other than that the sperm fails to penetrate the outer membrane of the egg. Nobody knows why. Edwards believes that in the future it may be possible physically to inject sperm into an egg to help fertile men become fathers. And he points out that once we learn more about how to fertilise eggs 'the reverse may also apply: such research may also teach us how to develop new contraceptive techniques, sparing men and women the intrusiveness of present methods'.

Further research is needed to discover why so many human embryos fail to develop beyond an early stage. Work by the Medical Research Council has shown that nearly two thirds of all fertilised eggs

fail to develop normally beyond a couple of days after fertilisation, and around half of all fetuses abort spontaneously in early pregnancy. Today embryologists are efficient at fertilising eggs, but they know that once the fertilised eggs have been re-implanted there is only a 15 per cent chance that a pregnancy will result.

Curing cancer

Edwards believes that research into the way fetal cells develop could provide vital insights into the development of cancerous cells (which develop in a similar way). And from this therapies for the suppression of cancer could follow.

Research into genetic material in embryos also holds the promise of new clinical breakthroughs on physical and mental disabilities. Before we can avert genetic problems in embryos we have to know what causes them. Edwards maintains that research on ripening human eggs at the moment when chromosomes (23 in normal conditions) are reorganising can reveal a great deal about what goes wrong in some human eggs. Chromosomal defects alone are responsible for many forms of abnormal development including Down's Syndrome. Edwards was first able to study chromosome patterns in mouse eggs over 30 years ago; work on human eggs is now common, but it has a long way to go.

Several genetic problems cannot, at present, be identified until 10 weeks of gestation, or even five months of pregnancy. If these problems could be detected in the first few days of embryo development it would be a major breakthrough. The control of Lesch-Nyhan Syndrome is a case in point. Lesch-Nyhan Syndrome is a congenital abnormality which only affects boys. It inflicts spasticity of the limbs, involuntary movements, gross mental retardation and compulsion towards self-mutilation. Fortunately it is extremely rare.

Mice and women

Currently, parents at risk of having a Lesch-Nyhan child have to start a pregnancy, wait until it is sufficiently advanced for an amniocentesis, and then, if the fetus is found to be afflicted, choose between a late abortion or a child condemned to a tragic life. Given that the chance is one in four of an 'at risk' parent producing such a child, the prospective mother may have to undertake several late abortions.

Researchers have recently found a way of diagnosing the condition in mouse embryos when they have developed to only eight cells. They tested for the presence of a protein, an enzyme known as HPRT. If it is not present it means the mouse suffers from the genetic defect that is



Lesch-Nyhan Syndrome in humans. Work is now under way to see if the same principles can be applied to human eggs. There is no logical reason why not, but mouse embryos are different, so much more research has to be done—on human embryos. If this is successful it will open the way for genetic screening. The mother would simply take a fertility drug to ensure that she produced a larger number of eggs than usual. The eggs would then be washed out of her womb before they had a chance to implant. A doctor would test the eggs and re-implant those which were not afflicted.

The work that Edwards is most excited about today is the transfer of fetal tissue itself. This is already well under way in the treatment of Parkinson's disease; fragments of brain from aborted fetuses are inserted into the brain of Parkinson sufferers. The fetal cells can replace the chemicals necessary to control

is abstract and rarified one day may very easily become urgent and relevant the next'. Genetic engineering is a good example of this.

'At this very moment', Edwards writes, 'mice in laboratories all over the world are carrying genes that were injected when they were microscopic, newly fertilised eggs—human genes perhaps, or cattle genes, alien substances which instruct their metabolisms to produce growth hormones, antibodies or novel medicines of one kind or another....These animals are called transgenics, and transgenic mice and pigs are tailored, for example, to produce the human growth hormone used in several child clinics, mostly in the USA'. Near Edinburgh, a flock of transgenic sheep are apparently capable of supplying enough human blood clotting protein in their milk to treat all the haemophiliacs in Europe. Edwards thinks the benefits of work like this represent the reason why

good you can get out of research, people are immediately suspicious. It seems to be the ethics of *Dr Jekyll*, *Dr Strangelove* and *Brave New World* that inform opinion on these things. It is very backwards looking.'

He thinks the arguments that fetal research should be banned because it is dealing with the creation of life are misinformed. He begins his book with the observation that 'Nobody can create human life artificially, not in a test tube, a Petri dish or anywhere else. Such claims are ridiculous, pathetically arrogant....The most any of us can do is to help make life possible and to make it healthy and good. And that was what I wanted to do—to help make human life possible, and healthy and good'.

Edwards insists that his motivation for driving back the frontiers of science is to improve humanity's lot. He is deeply offended by the 'Green feminists' who are opposed to his work, and the growing sympathy for their argument that male-dominated science is being used to abuse women's bodies.

'Hyper-emotional'

Since the mid-eighties, groups like the Feminist International Network of Resistance to Reproductive and Genetic Engineering (FINRRAGE) have become increasingly influential in Europe, especially in Germany where Green politics have deeper roots. They argue that the methods pioneered by Edwards are suspect because they 'were not invented to serve *women's* interests, but the needs and desires of medical scientists, and the state, to further technological progress and to aid population control aims' (P Spallone, *Beyond Conception: The New Politics of Reproduction*, 1989).

Edwards is scathing about their claims, and their characterisation of him as an abuser of women's bodies. He admits that research has not always been used wisely but points out that this 'only tells you about the kind of society we live in, not that science is inherently bad'. He brandishes a photograph of some of the women who have been involved in his IVF programmes. 'Look at the happiness of those women. They wanted this treatment. I am fighting for these women. Feminists should be arguing for more of this kind of help for women, not less of it.'

Edwards is even more worried about the broader consequences of their anti-science and anti-technology arguments than their attacks on his personal motives. 'People who call for bans on fetal research are people who would take us back to the dark ages.' He believes that humanity has a duty to try to solve the problems it faces. 'People have problems and we have to do our best to overcome those

PHOTO: Chris Beresford



Mary Warnock: 'She says "ethics are about emotions". But emotions are about politics'

physical movement. Edwards now wants to go back to the foundation cells of the body—stem cells—and look at the opportunities for transplant work with them. He thinks we can go so much further than the medical methods used today: 'When you think of the primitive way in which we do surgery at present—a chap whips a kidney out of someone, puts it in a box, transfers it by plane or whatever—we have to do better than this. What we need is to put new cells in.'

To grow a new heart...it sounds like science fiction, but Edwards insists that, as science develops, 'what

'even at its most abstract no line of study should be lightly abandoned'.

Edwards is worried that when the government does get around to legislating it will impose restrictions to prevent necessary test-tube research being carried out. He has frequently called for legislation on research to be introduced. But he's worried about the climate that surrounds discussion on embryo research today. He detects a rising hostility towards the very idea of scientific progress. 'The climate is moving more and more towards people being suspicious of scientific advance. Instead of looking at what

problems. That's what makes mankind what it is. We struggle to overcome problems. I cannot accept this hyper-emotional stuff that says that some areas are simply out of bounds and cannot be touched. People say that we scientists are trying to play God, and that man shouldn't interfere in these matters. But it is possible to look at it another way. If we know we *can* do something to prevent terrible things like Parkinson's disease or Alzheimer's disease, and we *don't* because we choose not to, who's playing God then?

'What I say is these things are determined by man. All the issues facing us are man-made and man-decided. We've created medical

PHOTO: Pandora Anderson



Enoch Powell: won a worrying degree of support for his bill to ban embryo research

technology, drugs, the means to intervene. Now we have to decide what to do with them. There's no saying God should decide. You have to put it right yourself.'

It is easy to understand why those in the establishment are so unsettled by embryo technology. The techniques pioneered by Edwards don't just challenge scientific boundaries, they challenge existing moral and ethical boundaries too.

IVF techniques provide the potential for a separation between

reproduction and the family. Professor Edwards always stresses that he sees his work as strengthening the family, but he recognises that it also raises the possibility of alternative arrangements. In his book he argues against the notion that marital sex is the natural way to reproduce, created and ordained by God: 'It was evolution rather than a one-off act of God, that bound the transmission of life to the sex act, and...the connection is therefore always open to modification or abandonment.' IVF offers the chance for modification and abandonment. It provides an effective way for lesbian couples to have children without the direct involvement of a man, single women could have children without a partner, frozen embryos would allow a woman who so wished to have her partner's child after his death. It is easy to see why those in authority who have promoted the 'sanctity of family life' for so long are ambivalent about the development of these areas.

Whose embryos?

Storms still regularly break over the moral validity of the possibilities offered by fetal technology. In Tennessee, Mary Sue Davis is battling out a custody case over her right to implant embryos now that her marriage has ended and her former husband no longer wants to father her child. Two years ago, the Voluntary Licensing Authority (the unofficial watchdog on such matters) ruled that it was unethical for an 18-year old woman to donate eggs to her 45-year old mother who had remarried. Had the operation gone ahead the woman would have given birth to her own granddaughter, and the child would have been raised as the stepsister or brother of its genetic mother.

Edwards is sensitive to these ethical rows, although he thinks much of it is mystified. Wrapping up a debate over surrogacy in his book, he muses 'The British Medical Association has recently been reported in the *Times* as concluding that "the interests of the [infertile] couple are outweighed by legitimate social conditions". I honestly can't see why. Do doctors consider "legitimate social conditions" before they swap bone marrow or kidneys between consenting adults?'. He concludes that 'it seems unlikely'. One reason why he wrote the book was to cut through the mystifications and inform people about the 'facts of the matter'.

Politics of ethics

Edwards is not in favour of a total scientific free-for-all. 'In every profession you get people who are out of control, and who worry you, but you can't judge any profession by

the wild element. You have to establish with the body as a whole what are the laws of control. The vast majority of us are sincere, concerned about our patients, stimulated by our research and want to do more to help.' But he is concerned that, even before the government brings forward an embryology bill, there are already things that can't be properly researched because of current restrictions.

'The problem is that you have to work problems out on the basis of rational discussion, and with issues like this people work on emotion. Mary Warnock has done a very good job shaping her report [which is expected to provide the basis for legislation] but even she encourages this. She says, I think she's quoting David Hume, "Ethics are about emotions". We have to ask, what shapes Mary Warnock's emotions? Emotions are about politics. They're shaped by your current circumstances.'

Edwards argues that, if those seeking to hold back science prevail, the dangerous ramifications will go way beyond the issue of research and affect society. In his book he explains that 'moral laws must be based on what man knows about himself, and...this knowledge inevitably comes from science'. Ask him to expand on this and he becomes impassioned. 'Today we are directly in conflict with widely held moral laws. This is like Darwinism all over again, in a battle of judgement over what is right and what is not. But we cannot afford to give way and allow the Catholic Church to stand in the way of logical development.'

Look forward

'If only people would look forward to what could be done through responsible scientific research, rather than conjuring up Frankenstein images. We need a bit of vision.' His book holds up the vision of an Italian scientist, Mantegazza. In 1850 he predicted that semen from farm animals would one day be frozen and transported over long distances for subsequent artificial insemination. Amazing foresight, especially since the temperatures needed to store spermatozoa did not become available for another 40 years. It took almost a century for science to make Mantegazza's prediction come true.

Professor Robert Edwards would like to see a little more of Mantegazza's forward thinking and a little less philistinism about science. 'Once you turn your back on progress, it's back to the dark ages.'

● Professor Robert Edwards, *Life Before Birth: Reflections on the Embryo Debate*, Hutchinson, 1989, hbk £14.95.

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Social change or personal survival?

Red and Green won't go

**Frank Richards
challenges the
idea that to be
Green is to be
radical**

Not long ago nobody wanted to be thought of as green; today many people call themselves Green with pride. What was once an insult denoting wetness behind the ears has now become a popular political identity.

As we enter the last decade of the century, blue-rinsed Tory ladies stand shoulder to shoulder with mohican-haired anarchists in affirming their commitment to Green issues. Young and old entrepreneurs are busy producing Green products. Advertising agencies self-consciously draw attention to the environmentally friendly character of the products they promote. There is even talk of transforming the image of the Miss World contest, by making contestants explain what they have done to improve the environment.

At its most grotesque, the new Green culture has been appropriated by politicians for their own cynical purposes. Probably the most enduring image of human hypocrisy in the eighties was the public relations stunt launched by Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev to save a couple of whales trapped by ice in Alaska. As the bemused locals stood in the background, international news reporters gathered around to cheer on the whales and give the world a blow-by-blow account of the rescue operation. Encouraged by the PR success of this venture, the two powers are now planning a joint national park and wilderness reserve, already dubbed Glasnost and Glaciers, on both sides of the Bering Strait, where Soviet Siberia and US Alaska are but 80 miles apart.

All together now

Today nobody seriously questions the legitimacy of Green objectives. Some might balk at paying the price for cleaning up the environment, but even the most robust industrial polluter professes concern for Green issues. The very mention of the word environment will guarantee an outburst of fervour once reserved for declarations of loyalty to the flag or faith in God.

The sudden expression of almost universal concern with the environment should at least cause us to pause for reflection. What is the source of it—and what is it likely to achieve?

It is impossible to talk about 'the environment' as something with an independent existence. What happens to the environment is determined by what human beings do to it—consciously or unconsciously. And what human beings do to the environment is determined by the kind of society in which we live.

Different worlds

In a society like ours, where production is governed by the forces of the market, there is no mechanism for alleviating the damaging effects of industry on the environment. In a capitalist society all productive activity is directed by the dictates of profit. Profitability can only be sustained by lowering costs and overheads regardless of the consequences for workers, society and the environment.

Critics of capitalism have long recognised that it produces a society which is out of control. From one day to the next, interest rates go up and down, factories are forced to close and millions are made unemployed. Trade wars, political upheavals and military conflicts are seldom planned in advance. These are reflex reactions to unexpected events. Economic competition and the pressure of private profit undermine the possibility of making decisions based on the interests of society as a whole.

In fact, under capitalism it is only possible to talk about conflicting interests and not the general interests of society. When Margaret Thatcher says that there is no such thing as society, she is not entirely wrong. The entrepreneur, company director and merchant banker live in a different society from that of the nurse, council worker and bank clerk.

The chaos of the market and the social conflict it generates make it impossible to plan ahead. Those who are fixated by the struggle to

accumulate a profit are indifferent to the long-term damage inflicted on the environment. So far as they are concerned, that is somebody else's problem. Capitalists calculate that on balance it is worth their while to desecrate the environment, because they will reap the profits while the bill for the damage will be distributed among the taxpaying public.

In future the British public will have to pay more for water on the grounds that the consumer is responsible for polluting the water supply system. Most consumers can be forgiven for failing to understand how the act of turning on a tap constitutes pollution and makes them liable for a bigger water bill. Nobody ever suggests that consumers should receive a share of the profits made on the products they consume. Yet they are expected to enjoy the privilege of paying the price for the polluting activities of the authorities.

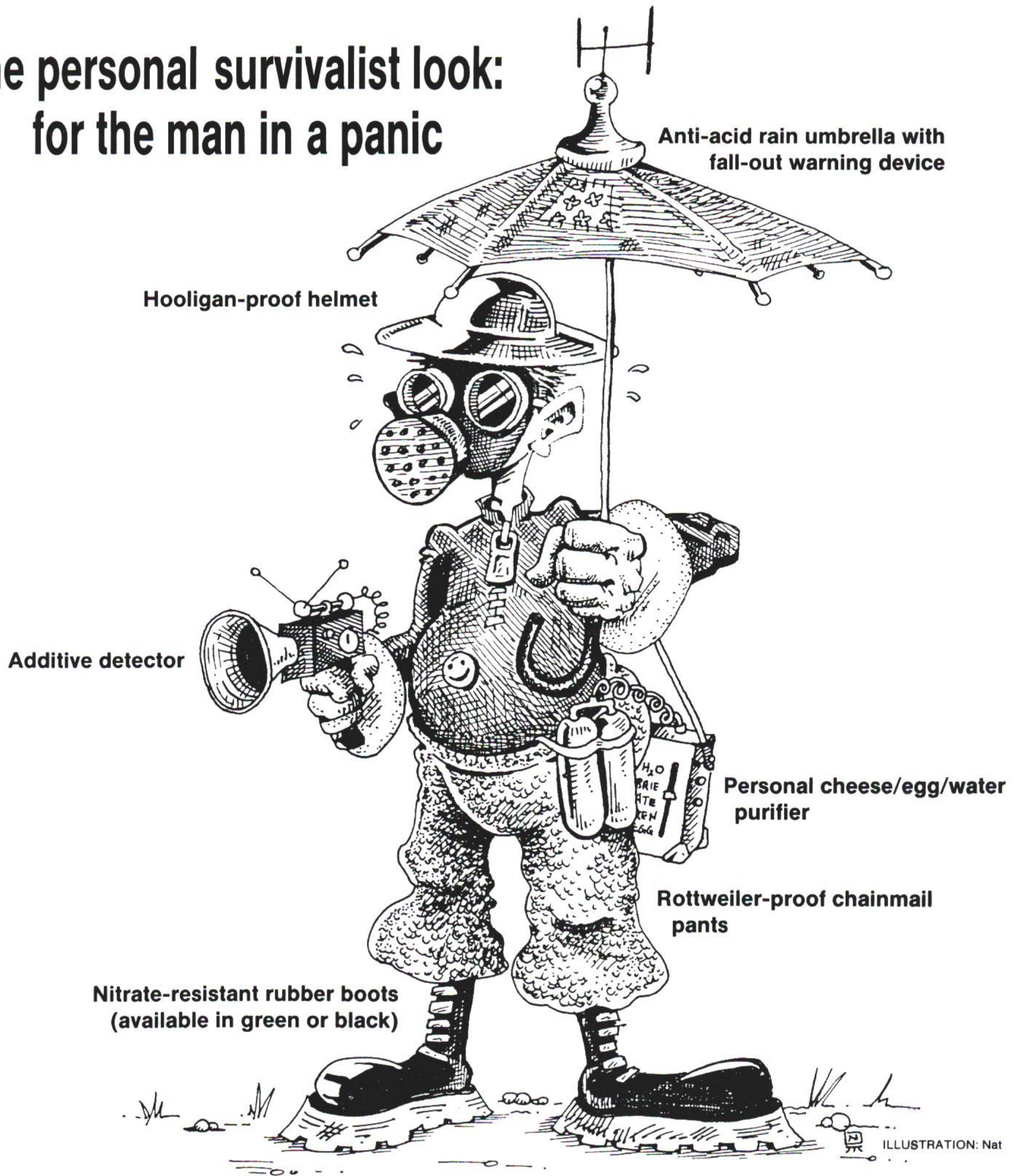
Free-for-all

If there is little control over environmental degradation within a nation like Britain, on the world stage there is a complete free-for-all. Third world countries become dumping grounds for toxic waste. Half of Africa is allowed to turn into a desert while Europe lectures Brazil about the importance of protecting its rain forests. Capitalist anarchy is reinforced by national rivalries and international institutions are notable only for their irrelevance.

At a time when many people are getting carried away with the Green project, it is important for us to face facts. There is not the remotest possibility of effective action to curb the despoliation of the environment as long as the world economy is dominated by the capitalist market and the drive for profit. Some might say that this is a dogmatic assertion, an easy alternative to working for national planning and international cooperation in defence of the environment. But what have the authorities ever achieved through national planning or international cooperation?

Despite dozens of arms agreements

The personal survivalist look: for the man in a panic



there is more military hardware available today than there was two or even 10 years ago. What has been done to end famine in Africa? What has the United Nations done to prevent wars? What steps have been taken to prevent Antarctica from becoming a hunting ground for greedy predators?

An international system that cannot even organise an Olympic Games without political boycotts is unlikely to be effective in taking steps to protect the ozone layer. There are endless examples of how environmental concerns have become

a focus for national rivalries. Even within the EEC, nations routinely accuse each other of causing acid rain and refuse to take responsibility for their actions.

The only conclusion to be drawn from an appraisal of the operation of capitalist society is that Green concerns can have little practical consequences. Green concerns are like the Ten Commandments. Everybody can profess a commitment to them, as a prelude to breaking at least a few on more than one occasion. A society that is out of control cannot take the long-term

view that is the precondition for preventing the degradation of the environment. It is as simple as that.

Some Greens would agree with a lot of this, but would recoil from facing up to the consequences. It is common for Greens to accuse Marxists of being ultra-materialistic. The typical argument against the Marxist position is that it is unacceptable to state that nothing much can be done for the environment until after the revolutionary transformation of society. But what can be done?

A system that is prepared to sell



PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

Ken Livingstone: out of favour with Labour and looking for something else to latch on to

off its supply of water to the highest bidder is unlikely to do very much for the public good. As long as wealth and resources are not at the disposal of society as a whole nothing worthwhile can be done for the environment. One entrepreneur may be less indifferent than another to the disastrous impact of profit-making on the environment. But even the most enlightened capitalist will struggle to the bitter end to defend the market. Since a market-based society cannot plan the use and distribution of its resources, there is no way that it can take the steps necessary to protect the environment.

Green issues are different from other causes which have excited public concern: they can only be translated into token gestures and have no practical consequences.

Right meets left

Most social and political issues are inherently divisive and potentially a source of conflict. There is no social consensus on questions such as militarism, state spending or racism. Society is divided, for example, between those who think that trade unions are evil and those who think that they are necessary for the protection of workers.

The environment is an altogether different matter. Who says that the environment is bad or that it must be destroyed? Individuals who stand at opposite ends of the political spectrum often express a common concern for Green issues. In Britain, the National Front and the far left exist in a permanent adversarial

relationship. Yet they can agree on one issue: the need to protect the environment.

Some would argue that the universal awareness of the importance of protecting the environment proves that the Green perspective is so powerful that it can overcome old political differences. On the contrary, the widespread concern with Green issues reflects the general sense of powerlessness which prevails in society. Unable to tackle social problems and struggle for human liberation, people have turned to Green politics to evade political realities.

Green politics are sometimes characterised as the politics of protest—the politics of evasion would be a more apposite description. The Green perspective is evasive because, by claiming to rise above traditional political conflicts, it avoids taking sides in battles over the shape of human society. It thus ends up acquiescing to the status quo. This explains why even the most radical exponents of Green politics are profoundly conservative. The fundamental premise of Green politics is a concern with survival, with hanging on to what exists. A Marxist perspective, by contrast, is grounded in an understanding of the need for social change, for progress.

The emphasis on survival gives Green philosophy its widespread appeal. This orientation appeals to the individual—after all, survival is the ultimate personal concern. So Green politics have made most headway in societies where individual consciousness exists in its most overdetermined form. It is not surprising that Green politics first emerged in some of the most prosperous regions of the world—areas such as California and West Germany where ideas of class are weakest, and where there is a strikingly low level of collective consciousness and action.

The prelude to the emergence of Green politics has been marked by the development, in various guises, of a preoccupation with individual survival. This often begins from a genuine concern about drugs or other unsafe consumer products. But gradually it turns into an obsession with personal problems of health, food and pollution.

Food frights

In its most extreme form this obsession with dieting, exercising and eating certain types of food becomes a religion. Suddenly food products that people have eaten for thousands of years are declared unhealthy, leading to a wholesale shift in consumption habits. The consequences of this preoccupation have become apparent in Britain over the past year or so, as food scares have often dominated public debate.

It is understandable that people should be concerned about individual survival. However, once this concern becomes obsessive, it tends to serve as an alternative to action. Such a state of mind is always indicative of a retreat from social issues, since *survival* is a powerful substitute for the impulse to bring about *change*. Yet even in its own terms, a preoccupation with individual survival is counterproductive. Survival is never an individual matter; nobody can take personal steps to prevent capitalism causing wars or producing bad food. These are problems of survival that can only be solved through collective action in society.

Green with envy

Green politics are necessarily conservative because they shift the focus of human activity away from a concern with society towards a preoccupation with nature. Most Greens would claim that this is nonsense since they are also concerned about society. However, their programme is designed to adjust society to the ecological system, not to bring about social transformation. It does not question the right of a small minority to exploit the majority or the right of the capitalist state to dominate our lives.

The popularity of the Greens has inevitably aroused the envy and interest of the British left. One of the most characteristic features of the left has always been its fierce determination to resist developing as an independent force. It has sought instead to act as an adjunct to another movement. Traditionally it has looked to the Labour Party as the vehicle around which to organise. Sometimes the left has sought refuge in CND or the women's movement or in whatever happened to be popular at the time. Now that the Labour Party has become inhospitable for the left, its radical hangers-on have migrated towards happier sanctuaries.

Today the very mention of the word Green at a left-wing event is guaranteed to produce enthusiastic applause. Most left-wing activists believe that the solution to overcoming their isolation is to go Green. They are convinced that this will be sufficient to win respectability and avoid the old accusations of extremism and militancy. The precedent for this political trajectory was established in West Germany, where most of the left went over to the Greens in an effort to overcome its isolation.

A similar process is already under way in Britain, so far on a much more modest scale. A recent article in the *Guardian* by Ken Livingstone and Ann Pettifor was a sign of the times. Livingstone and Pettifor are well-known figures on the London

While the capitalists get on with the business of exploitation, we are allowed to express strong views on baby seals and blue cheese

left, which is increasingly out of touch with the Labour leadership and has been marginalised under Neil Kinnock. Today Labour's radicals are sensitive to the fact that in so far as the party is making a comeback it is at their expense. Bashing the left has become the means through which Kinnock has attempted to establish a reputation for leadership and respectability.

In a desperate attempt to prove that there is still a place for left-wing politics in Labour's electoral calculations, Livingstone and Pettifor point to the success of the Greens in the June Euro-elections as proof that left-wing policies win votes: 'For the first time a major vote was cast for a party with key policies to the left of Labour—the Greens.' (14 August) From this they conclude that Labour should aim to expand its constituency by adopting the policies of the Greens and becoming a Red-Green party.

Even by the traditional standards of self-deception of the British left, this analysis is breathtaking. There is no need to quibble about whether or not the Greens are more left-wing than the Labour Party. These days it is difficult for any party to be to the right of Labour. However, all the electoral arithmetic and opinion polls have revealed that the constituency of the British Greens is at the centre of

the political spectrum. That is why the leadership of the Greens would be the first to protest against their association with left-wing policies.

The most striking feature of the Livingstone-Pettifor article is how they have given a new meaning to the word left. The term can be applied to the Greens only because it has lost all association with human liberation and social transformation. The left would do well to ask themselves when they ever saw the Greens mobilise support in defence of a group of striking workers, or where the Green Party stands on the struggle against British rule in Ireland, or if they have ever seen the Greens campaigning against immigration controls or standing up to police violence against black youth.

The irony of the Livingstone-Pettifor analysis is that the success of the Greens is always paralleled by the neutralisation of the left, as individual concerns come to outweigh social problems. This is particularly striking in the area of political debate and intellectual discussion.

In Britain in 1989 there is no debate about racism, no discussion about social alternatives and no political experimentation. The issues that provoke discussion are eggs, liver pâté and toxic waste. While the

capitalist class gets on with the business of exploitation, oppression and domination, we are allowed to express strong views on subjects such as the future of baby seals, the pathology of rottweiler dogs or the merits of blue cheese.

Livingstone and Pettifor are attracted to the Greens not so much because of their allegedly left-wing policies, but because they provide a focus for a form of respectable protest that can win support. These left wingers never entertain the possibility that the Greens might have become so popular because they pose no threat to capitalist society.

Red and Green do not mix. The politics of survival and the politics of social transformation are antithetical. Environmentalism cannot be tagged on to an orientation towards human liberation. The focus of Red politics is on social questions. The objective is to change society.

Marxists have no need to be defensive on this matter, since the Marxist project provides realistic hope for protecting the environment. The elimination of the anarchy and chaos of the market is the precondition for taking the long-term measures necessary to establish a balanced relationship between society and the environment.

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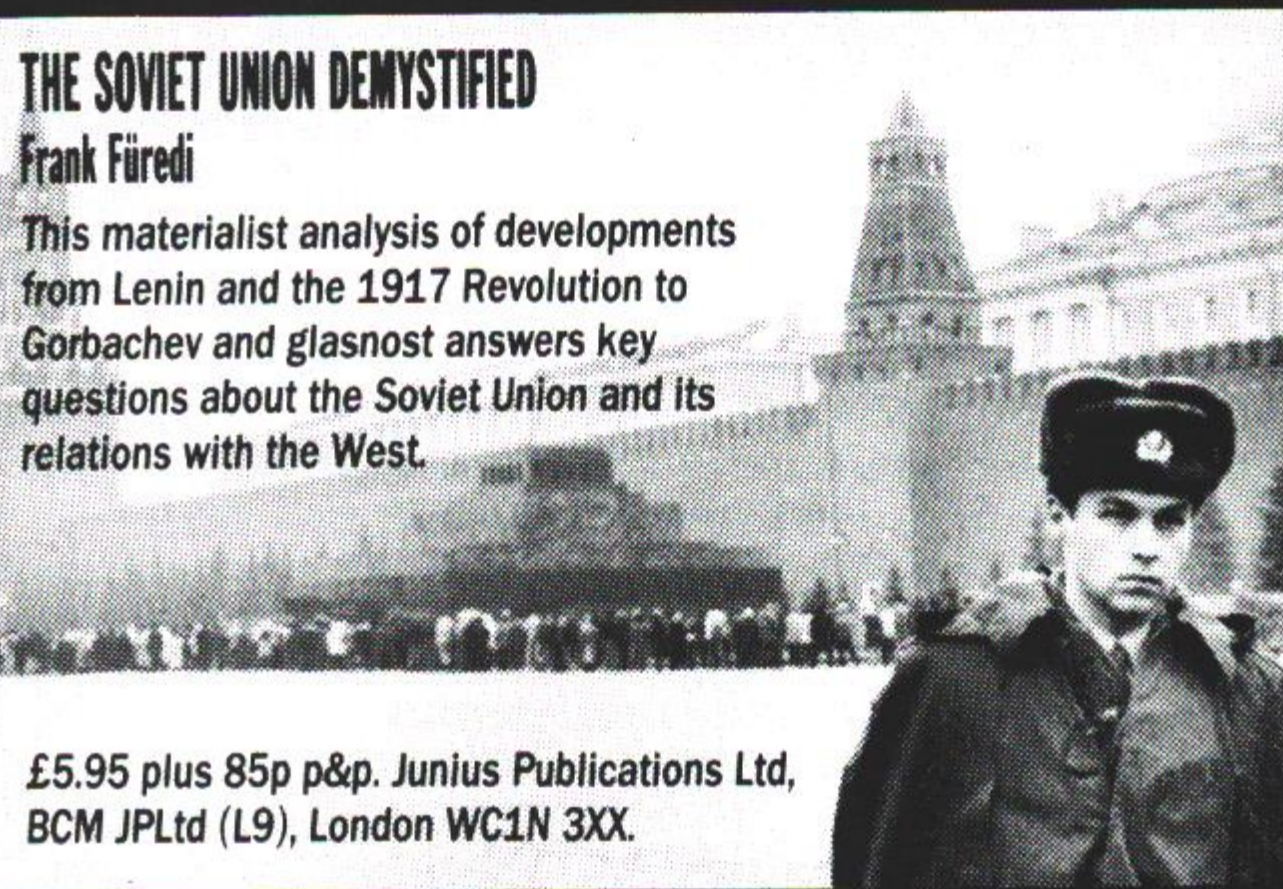
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George Bush shows the world a bag of cocaine 'bought across the street from the White House'; he could have got it for free from the CIA

The announcement of a new US 'war on drugs', focused against the powerful Medellín cocaine cartel in Colombia, has impressed many people in the West. President George Bush has sent money and arms and military advisers to the Colombian government, Margaret Thatcher has sent her best wishes, and the impression has been created that the civilised nations are determined to rid the third world of the scourge of drug trafficking.

But many who live at the sharp end of this battle, in Colombia, don't quite see it that way. One of them is a defence lawyer (who wishes to remain anonymous for obvious reasons), involved with banana workers who are terrorised by the drug barons' private death squads.

'The United States is not interested in fighting drugs. It always participates in drug trafficking when it wants—just look at Ollie North. The US military aid to Colombia has much more sinister motives. We all know about US interference in Latin America. The USA judges each country according to how it serves US foreign policy interests. That is why Colombia suits the USA today.

'Colombia is of great strategic importance, the USA said as much in November 1986 at a meeting to discuss counter-insurgency plans in Latin America. Just think, Noriega's Panama no longer serves the US interests, but Colombia shares a border with Panama and Peru and the island of San Andres looks on to Nicaragua. All the trouble-spots covered.'

He points out that both the Republican administrations of Reagan and Bush in Washington and president Barco's government in Colombia have, in the recent past, cultivated relationships with the same drug barons whom they now condemn. A \$10m contribution from the Medellín cartel to the right-wing Contra guerrillas in Nicaragua was laundered for Colonel Oliver North. A third of the ruling Liberal Party MPs in Colombia are financed by drug money.

A view from inside Colombia

'BUSH IS NOT AFTER THE NARCOS'

Many Colombians are cynical about the motives behind George Bush's 'war on drugs' in their country. Stefanie Boston spoke to a defence lawyer for banana workers in Urabá

The banana workers' lawyer sees a major motive behind the new crack-down as fear, not of drugs, but of the instability caused in Colombia by the burden of poverty and austerity measures. This instability has certainly been exacerbated by the brutal activities of the drug cartels. But, for Bush and Barco, the most worrying consequence is the growth of popular resistance organisations. Large areas of the country are controlled by the guerrilla movements M-19 and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). They are prime targets for the new wave of state repression.

'The authorities say that the guerrillas have links with the narcos. This means that they can justify rounding up guerrillas and their sympathisers on the pretext of drugs. All it takes is planting a bit of cocaine on somebody.

'If you look where the greatest areas of conflict are, in Magdalena Medio, Urabá and the Llanos Orientales, where the guerrilla movement is strongest is where the main sectors of the economy are: oil, cattle, bananas and coffee. These

zones are the most militarised, where repression is most intense. Either the army and police repress directly, or the cartel's paramilitary groups are allowed to operate under the army's protection. Urabá was used as the testing ground for social control, to guarantee the conditions for foreign investment. A state of siege was imposed there in 1988 to wipe out opposition to the authorities.'

The events in Urabá illustrate how much the authorities and the drug barons have in common. In March 1988, 29 banana plantation workers and left-wing activists were assassinated by an unofficial death squad, acting on intelligence gathered by the state forces. The killings served the interests of the landowners (the cartel) in breaking the union, and of the army in undermining the strength of the left.

'The narcos over the last few years have been investing their money into agro-industry: bananas, coffee, as well as cattle, construction and tourism. The government and the army are part of the same structure, they also want to get rich with the help of the paramilitaries. In the

zones where the big landowners are the drug traffickers, the victims are the guerrillas and ordinary people. The narcos can carry on investment in land while the paramilitaries protect their interests, which of course coincide with those of the ruling class.

'The Colombian government is involved in narco-trafficking at the highest levels. The president from 1979 to 1984, Turbayo, allowed trafficking to go on freely under government protection. He authorised the banks to change drug money into dollars. Even in 1987 the Banco de la Republica changed \$4m of drug money a day, that is why Colombia is better off so far as its foreign debt is concerned.'

So why should the Colombian authorities apparently turn on the Medellín cartel today? 'The reason why the Medellín cartel is the focus of this drugs war is because some of them are not acting in the government's interest any more. They are perhaps becoming a bit too independent. They have a monopoly on big business but there are plenty of other cartels, for example, the Cali, Bogotá or Atlantic Coast cartel, all ready to compete. All we are seeing is different competing sections of the middle class who want to manage business in Colombia.'

700 killings

The new emergency measures announced in August and backed up by US arms have been welcomed in the West as a blow against the drug traffickers. But, as our lawyer friend points out, the authorities in Washington and Bogotá have other targets foremost in their minds.

'The decree hardly talks about drugs. Instead it prioritises "public order". Armed groups which attempt to overthrow the government or challenge the constitution in any way will be imprisoned. The narcos want to do a deal with the government not substitute it. The decree is clearly aimed at the guerrillas and their sympathisers.

'The wording of the laws is ambiguous and all-embracing. Anyone with "links" to narco-traffickers can be arrested. According to the government the guerrillas have these links. Today the fight is ostensibly against the narcos. Tomorrow it will be the guerrillas, trade unionists, etc. Already 11 000 people have been arrested in the raids. This year there have been 700 political killings by the army and paramilitaries. This is not a fight against the narcos but a pretext to hit other sectors like the workers and peasants, to suppress social conflict.'

In that fight, the authorities now have the aid of US firepower. 'The USA needs to justify its intervention in Latin America and it has done so today using its apparent fight against drugs. It has found justification for its counter-insurgency plans.'

Thatcher's disaster theory

KILLED BY THE GOOD LIFE

Sharon Clarke on matters of life and death

Why are so many people dying in disasters? Because their standard of living is so high. The wages of rising wages is violent death. This novel socio-economic analysis was presented by Margaret Thatcher, during an impromptu press conference held on the banks of the Thames at the end of August.

While her aides and TV camera crews got in the way of rescue workers searching for survivors and bodies from the sunken pleasure boat *Marchioness*, somebody asked Thatcher why there had been so many costly disasters lately. So she told them:

'Is it that we know more of every single disaster, or is it that the standard of living is higher and more people go out and do things than ever before? Possibly a combination of the two, and of course the disasters all the time on the roads.'

Strangely, amid all the multi-page *Marchioness* features which they produced next day, newspapers that normally hang on Thatcher's every word could not find an inch of column space to print the prime minister's Thameside remarks in full.

Thanks, Rupert

Is it, asks Thatcher, that we know more of every disaster? That must be it. There is nothing new about these incidents of carnage; it is just that before Rupert Murdoch's media revolution, we didn't hear about them. It has probably always been a common occurrence for hundreds of people to be blown to pieces on an oil rig or roasted alive in an underground railway station or spread over the M1 in a plane crash. But when the *Sun* and satellite TV were not around to record them in such ghoulish detail, these events went unnoticed. Hurrah for the new age of mass communication, without which our access to information would still be at the level of village gossip.

Strange, then, that so many other accidents and near disasters don't get into the modern, omnipresent media. It is only *after* each one of the current spate of sinkings, crashes and fires that reports have seeped out of how close we have come to similar incidents in the recent past.

The *Marchioness* had been bumped by a Thames dredger on another

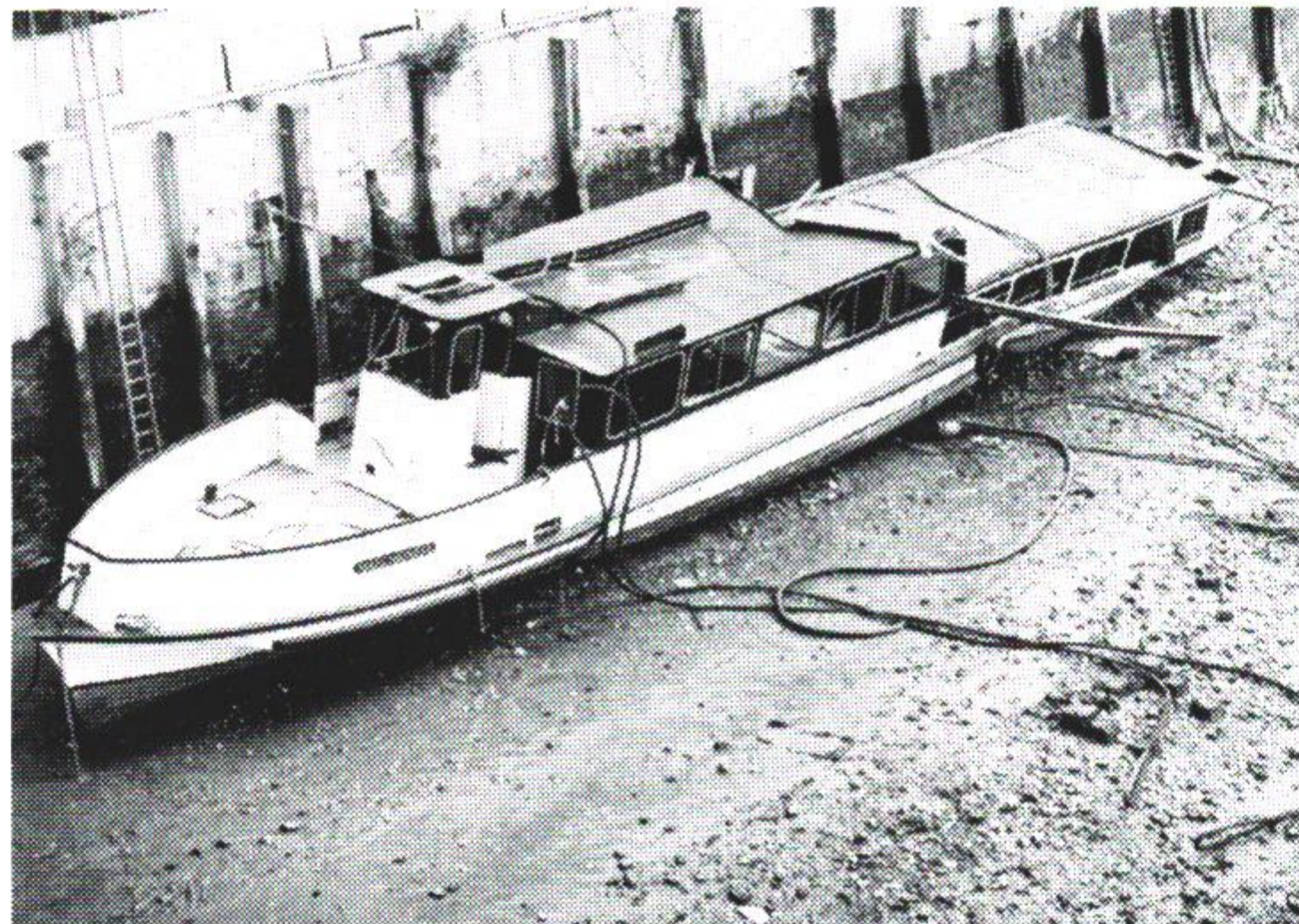


PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

night; crushing behind 'safety' barriers at big football matches had been commonplace before Hillsborough; the oil rig Piper Alpha had suffered a previous explosion; the Clapham Junction signalling system had failed before; there had been many fires on tube stations pre-King's Cross; roll-on, roll-off ferries had often got into trouble before the *Herald of Free Enterprise* sank outside Zeebrugge; and so on.

Workers from the industries concerned had been complaining for years about the potential death-traps in which they had to work. Yet there were no exclusive newspaper exposés, no prime-time TV documentaries on the dangers, nothing—not until disaster had struck and the dead were being miscounted. The fearless reporting style and powerful projection techniques of the modern media make an unconvincing explanation of why we have been inundated with disaster stories over the past five years.

It's a miracle

Even Thatcher seemed to sense the vacuousness of this remark, since the second stage of her disaster theory conceded that there was something distinctly new about the disasters themselves. Yes, she said, they are a product of our times: not of the decrepitude of public services or cuts in safety standards, you understand, but of the British economic miracle.

'Is it perhaps', asks Thatcher, 'that the standard of living is higher and more people go out and do things than ever before?'. In other words the

slaughter is just another one of the 'problems of prosperity' which Conservative commentators assure us is responsible for all of Britain's difficulties today. What are the 'things' that people were going out and doing in booming Britain when they were killed in the disasters of the eighties?

At King's Cross and Clapham Junction, they were travelling on public transport, mostly commuting to and from work. Admittedly it takes a certain level of income to afford tube and train tickets today, inflated as they have been to compensate for cuts in government subsidies. But being jammed nose-to-nose into dirty, sweaty carriages, while trains creak and crawl their way into the dirty, sweaty City of London, along networks that would have shamed the Victorians, to arrive, already exhausted, for an eye-straining, neck-ricking session in front of a VDU, is nobody's idea of the good life.

On Piper Alpha, the men's standard of living was so high that they felt compelled to 'do things' like abandoning their homes for weeks on end, to stay in a cramped wooden shack perched directly above a potential bomb. They lived it up in perilous seas, extracting explosive minerals with faulty equipment. Their rewards were pitiful; the only boom they experienced was the one that blew the oil platform apart.

Thatcher's shameless argument seems to be that these people's standards of living were so high that they could afford to go out to work. It would be hard to think of a more perfect inversion of the truth. They

could not afford to refuse to endure the discomfort, strain and danger involved in selling themselves to the employers.

What of those whom disaster struck away from work? What were they going out and doing? Thatcher's remarks about living standards were no doubt intended to fit in with press reports that the *Marchioness* victims came mostly from among the 'beautiful people' of London's fashion and modelling set. But the fact that even these young trendsetters were reduced to being beautiful on a leaky old tub in the Thames just about sums up the dismal quality of life in Thatcher's Britain.

As for the rest, they were killed while indulging in such luxurious pastimes as catching a cheap and far from cheerful late-night ferry from Belgium, flying on a shuttle to that well-known centre of British peace and prosperity, Belfast, and going from Liverpool (another famous Thatcherite boom town) to be herded into cages at a football match in Sheffield. Truly, we have never had it so good.

Dangerous world

If Thatcher wants to be held responsible for creating the conditions which led to these disasters, we should have no objections. Those conditions are not ones of boom and mass merry-making, but of impending economic crisis and social collapse. Every major disaster bears the imprint of a hard-nosed government more interested in saving money than lives, and of ruthless employers who pay far closer attention to profit and loss figures than to body-counts. From the Channel to the North Sea to the Thames, from the Charing Cross embankment to the Hillsborough terraces, these people are prepared to protect the standard of living of their class by sacrificing the rest of us.

Finally, we can only agree with Thatcher that going out and doing things is a dangerous business in Britain today. Apart from the perils of public transport (fear of which considerably adds to traffic and thus to the 'disasters all the time on the roads' which she is so concerned about), the public also faces the danger of being protected by the modern police force. These days you cannot go out to a carnival in London, an acid house party in Hertfordshire or a football match in Yorkshire without running into a wall of riot cops. You cannot cross the road without running the risk of being hit by a speeding police car in hot pursuit of a stolen bicycle.

Is it that we never hear the truth about potential disasters because the media colludes with official cover-ups? Or is it that the state of the system is so poor that more things go wrong and kill people than ever before? Or is it perhaps a combination of the two?

The thoughts of Thatcher's children

Christine Kelly (unemployed) borrowed some clothes, bit her lip and went to listen to some champagne-setters who have grown up on the profits and prejudices of the Thatcher years

WHY SOME ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS

Nigel Fellows: It's not the fault of this society that some are well off and some aren't. It's not the fault of any society. Some people work for money, some people are born into it, some people don't have the chance and some people don't have the initiative. Some people are rich and some aren't. That's capitalism. That's democracy.

Andrew Tinney: Some people have clearly inherited their wealth, no doubt about that and all well and good to them. There's nothing wrong with inherited wealth per se because it takes a level of ability to hang on to that wealth. There's nothing wrong with wealth at all. It should be encouraged. But why are some poor? Sometimes it's circumstances, but

people have the ability to affect their own circumstances. Many people do, others don't bother. Some people choose jobs that are less well paid because they get more job satisfaction out of it. That's a choice people make right through their lives.

Simon Prendergast: Why do I think some people are rich and some people poor? I'll answer that with another question. Why do you think some people are cleverer, prettier, have nicer legs, nicer chests, bigger dicks? I mean why? There's no answer to that. It sounds feeble I know. But that's the way it is. Some people are born dukes, and some people are born dustmen. I don't see that any insight can be gained from pondering that question.

Kate Douglas is 23 and works as an analyst in a management consultancy firm.

Simon Prendergast is 28 and works for a merchant bank in the City.

Andrew Tinney is 27 and is chairman of the Young Conservatives.

Emma Murchison is 25 and works for a public relations company.

Alistair Burt is 34 and is the Conservative MP for Bury North.

Caroline Stoddart is 29 and works as a management consultant.

Nigel Fellows is 27 and works in a computer back-up firm for merchant banks in the City.

PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

HOW TO DEAL WITH 'ENEMIES WITHIN'

STRIKERS: 'sack them'

Caroline Stoddart: The government should have dealt with the recent disputes more strongly. Strikers should be very severely dealt with. The tube strike was incredibly disruptive to business. It's terrible for the image of Britain. We should say: 'Fine, if you don't want to work here, you're fired.'

Emma Murchison: I don't need to tell you that I have absolutely no sympathy for the strikers on London Transport or the trains. These people

were intent on bringing things to a standstill. One man even admitted on the news that their actions were *designed* to bring businesses and the banks to a standstill. I think that is utterly disgraceful. If I were the government, the first thing I would do is privatise the public sector. You'll notice there are very few disputes in the private sector for this simple reason: strikers are sacked. Pronto.

Andrew Tinney: The recent round of disputes prove once again that state

sector workers don't have the same concern over their jobs—they have the luxury to strike knowing that the government will bail them out. Some of those people's days are numbered. If you are faced with a situation like the miners' strike when the law is not being upheld, you've lost everything which civilised society, to my mind, represents. During the miners' strike the police upheld the law very well during very stretched times.

THE IRISH: 'shoot them'

Simon Prendergast: Shoot-to-kill? Oh yes, certainly. We're not faced here with a bunch of radicals going on a march. We're talking people who think nothing of attempting to blow up the legitimate government of this country. At times like that it's time to stop pussy-footing and time to do some serious shit. It's the only language these people understand, gov. The situation in Ireland cannot be resolved. The best anyone can hope to do is contain it. It is a grand tradition that any caucus of Irish politicians, including the IRA, is going to be as corrupt as God help us. This is not the same as making a Paddy joke, this is making an observation.

Emma Murchison: The only thing the Irish understand is force. I don't agree with eye-for-an-eye vendetta

killings, but when you're dealing with terrorists, it's a simple question of civilisation or barbarism. If defending civilisation means the bullet for bombers, then I'll support it. Right down the line.

Kate Douglas: With the Irish, you have very fiery, passionate personalities and they don't think much of authority. I don't believe there's much the government can do other than what it's doing. The government won't let violence rule its policies.

Andrew Tinney: Terrorism is designed to create terror in the minds of the population and you spend so much money preventing it. At our party conferences we have sniffers and everything else. And even those people who are extremely well known

in the party wear these special passes and end up going through security checks and being frisked and being sniffed for explosives—the party chairman included. It may seem farcical but it's happening; and that's to prevent a reoccurrence of the '84 Brighton bomb. These people are, frankly, murderers. There is no such thing as a shoot-to-kill policy in Ulster.

Nigel Fellows: Terrorism should not be allowed. Full stop.

Caroline Stoddart: I have absolutely no problem with them being shot. There's nothing to make me compassionate towards those people. So yes, I do support a shoot-to-kill policy.

IMMIGRANTS: 'keep them out'

Emma Murchison: Britain is an immensely civilised, immensely tolerant society. But there are limits. Many immigrants find it so difficult to become part of British society. Parts of the East End are like a third world country, absolutely dirty and decrepit. Of course, it's not the fault of the people who live there but it must be an immense burden for them living in a foreign country with a different language, different social mores, different codes of conduct. Illegal immigrants? Flush them out and deport them.

Simon Prendergast: I've lived in areas

where there's been lots of Indians and the women, always the women, couldn't speak a word of the language and they were in purdah and shit like that. To be perfectly honest, as an Englishman I think I would be entitled to ask: 'Do you want to be here, or do you want to be there? Because if you want to be there...'

Kate Douglas: In Britain you can't go five feet without bumping into another person. Do we really need millions more people? It's a small island and more immigration would create terrible economic problems.

Britain just can't deal with a great onslaught of people looking for jobs and places to live and everything.

Alistair Burt: I'm not aware that illegal immigrants are a problem, but there are over-stayers. If there's no good reason for them to stay here, then they should go home.

Caroline Stoddart: The question of illegal immigrants is a difficult one. Half the people in London have an illegal immigrant cleaning their houses.

THE UNEMPLOYED: 'conscript them'

Simon Prendergast: A person who does not work is the most useless, superfluous, unnecessary thing in any given society. A person who's unemployed takes out and gives back nothing. People who have never worked, single families and so on; people that are so dependent on welfare and likely to stay dependent on welfare ad infinitum, indeed ad nauseam, are in a poverty trap. The point is to break that cycle. Yes, by all means help those people who are in schtuck but it is also important to get them back into work. So why not combine the two things? 'OK, if you've been unemployed for a year we're going to put you in an ET scheme.' That's the spur to get people back on to the job market.

Emma Murchison: We have to face up to the fact that some people choose to be unemployed. Scroungers. And we should take a very sharp line on this because we simply cannot afford to prop up people who can't be bothered to get out of bed in the morning. I go along with some of the ideas of the Americans—we should get people to work on community schemes in exchange for state benefits. That way both the community and the individual gain from the arrangement.

Caroline Stoddart: I support the dismantlement of the welfare state; it's a positive thing because otherwise there's no incentive to do better.

HOW THE TORIES MADE BRITAIN GREAT AGAIN

Emma Murchison: The government has resurrected our sense of pride, of ourselves as a nation. I don't mean that in a tacky way, like those dreadful touristy 'I Luv Britain' mugs. I mean that Britain has regained its sense of being a nation with a place in the world, rather than being the third-rate third world republic it was becoming under the last Labour government.

Andrew Tinney: People have developed a greater responsibility for themselves. They do not say: 'I want to be a local authority tenant'—they are saying 'I want to own a house'. They are not looking to the government to make it all happen for them. They realise they've got to work to make it happen. Governments are good for very little. There are some things they have to do and frankly, they do the best job possible. For example, the government should run the armed forces and the police force—those are the functions it would be wrong to put in the hands of the private sector, because they are the organs of effective power. If you externalise the police and armed forces you lose political control.

Simon Prendergast: The fundamental thing that has changed over the past 10 years is that it is now legitimate to say that the individual is what

matters in society. The myth of collective solutions to problems has been debunked. The 'ratchet-effect of socialism', as someone called it, had been tried over a period of 35 years, and to my mind had been an abysmal failure. We had inflation, falling productivity in industry, lack of international competitiveness. People have forgotten that 15 years ago this country was really on the skids. Even the bloody gravediggers were going on strike.

Now I think that the individual has become the centrepiece of society, as opposed to the mass. Us right wingers are so smug because we've won the argument that collective solutions are no solutions. They lead to the greater poverty of the greater number of people. Individual solutions are the thing. If there is a key tenet to Thatcherism it is this: Mrs Thatcher has reintroduced the United Kingdom to capitalism, and its cult of the individual.

Alistair Burt: There has been a rightward shift in political gravity. The Labour Party is now mouthing social democratic platitudes that were unthinkable even five years ago. The prime minister has moved the centre of political gravity to the right. I think that's an enormous change. Clearly there has been a change affected with the trade unions which I think is for the better. It has placed



PICK-UP LINES AT PARTIES

Subtle: You just stand here being beautiful and I'll bask in your radiance

Less subtle: How many boyfriends have you got? I don't mind being number 11 in the team, just so long as I can choose the days I come and play

DRESS
Emma Murchison:
Hermes scarf;
houndstooth jacket;
cream silk shirt;
baggy navy skirt;
navy court shoes;
single strand of pearls
(real); large pearl
drop earrings (paste)

Simon Prendergast:
navy blue pinstripe
suit; navy blue
pin-spot tie; Saville
Row shirt; silver
cufflinks; Italian
leather shoes



PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

power in the hands of individual trade unionists; it is then up to them. I don't think our laws have been anti-trade union; I think they have been pro-individual trade unionists.

It's a long process to educate people that money is not on tap for everything they wish for. I think it is good to begin to wean people away from the belief that anything that goes wrong has to have the state stepping in to compensate somewhere. The welfare state poses dangers for the development of our society—the overdependency which you see on some of our estates—and

I think the government is right to tackle that.

Kate Douglas: Ten years ago I remember there were piles of garbage on the street, and there seemed to be a lot of strikes on. There are still a lot of strikes on—but we've seen significant changes. Britain has a very good image abroad. Margaret Thatcher is not to be fooled with; the Falklands crisis—she handled that extremely well. The cabinet reshuffle looks good, she's trying to show it's not the same old machine: innovate it, bring it up to date, keep it in high

profile. And what she's done in terms of changing tax rates and so on, it's good for me. Everything she's done has suited people more like me that come from more well-off families.

Nigel Fellows: The unions needed a kick up the arse; they did get a bit over the top. They got out of line and they needed to be put in their place. To go out on strike these days you've got to watch your Ps and Qs, you've got to tread carefully, and you've got to play it by the book.

WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT MARGARET THATCHER

Kate Douglas: I have great admiration for Thatcher. She is a very charismatic woman. She has de-emphasised her masculinity in a very masculine job. I've never met her but I know people who have and they say that you just have to know how to handle her. Heseltine, Parkinson can both do it. They're not afraid of her and she enjoys the intellectual challenge they offer her.

Andrew Tinney: I don't know the prime minister extremely well, although we do meet from time to time. She's an extremely strong character and where others may fear to tread she will not. She will say: 'This policy is important, we want the solution.' Ted Heath had similar policies to Margaret Thatcher in the seventies, but two years in he bottled out. She stuck with it.

Alistair Burt: I have a feeling that Mrs Thatcher has part created, part

ridden the revolution. There was a change in Western European economics in the seventies which she perfectly captured by 1979, by being able to apply it to a country which was bankrupt. She both created a mood and rode it. I think that mood has some way to go. People have very strong views either for or against Mrs Thatcher. But the same things that make some people shudder also make other people clamber on the back and say 'Thank God we've got someone who's prepared to stand up and stick to her guns'. I don't think you can change Mrs Thatcher and I don't think you need to change her.

Simon Prendergast: Mrs Thatcher, for all her brilliance, cannot last 10 years without starting to be bossy, to be a nanny. Part of the reason for that is because Mrs Thatcher's social revolution has left quite a lot of Tories behind. They are still very much *'noblesse oblige, we know best*

what is good for the common man, we must give guidance, we must be gentle, we must do this, we must do that'. Mrs Thatcher's instinct is to trust people to do these nasty things for themselves.

Emma Murchison: Mrs Thatcher has recreated a sense of national identity for the British. She's tough, she's forceful and she's got a lot of guts. When the Argentinians invaded the Falkland Islands, while all of her ministers were wringing their hands and falling at her feet *begging* to resign, she stood up and said: 'Those islands are ours and we have to fight for them.' I was in Portsmouth seeing my boyfriend when the ships were pulling out. I was on the pier and I was weeping. I couldn't help myself. Yes, it was pride, because we were doing what had to be done. It was Mrs Thatcher who created that.

THE FUTURE OF THATCHER'S BRITAIN

Simon Prendergast: People are getting to the point now with the government where they say: 'Oh come on, haven't we been hectored enough? Haven't we been told that we're taking all this pain for our own good?' Now people want the divvy, they want the goodies. But the government is telling them: 'Oh no, you may no longer depend on Uncle State, Santa State or Nanny State, you have to fend for yourself.' Some people have done just that and more grease to their elbow. Snobs may not like the people who've pushed ahead; they may call them spivs and wide-

boys. But these people have got off their butts and done something.

What I see happening is Mrs Thatcher running out of steam and allowing the—I don't want to use the word *weaker*—the *gentler* souls, the *wets* in parliament to push her in directions she shouldn't really go into. Her instincts tell her that these days politics is about keeping one step ahead of the mob. But Mrs Thatcher is being tempted back into a fatal mistake, which is to go against her instincts. My biggest fear is that we're going to see a much, much more watered down Conservatism

than we have seen over the past 10 years.

Kate Douglas: Now that Nigel Lawson has raised the interest rates people are critical of the government because they aren't as well off as they used to be. But I don't take much notice of criticism of the government any more because I think the Conservatives will be in for a lot longer yet—most of the next 10 years. Labour might get in, but for only a short time. They'll pop up their head just to remind everybody how dreadful they are, then the

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OUT NOW!

CONFRONTATION

Conservatives will be back. There is a growing upper and middle class in Britain and basically, they've never had it so good. They're earning more and there's no good reason they wouldn't want the Conservatives to stay in.

Alistair Burt: I think we'll win the next general election. I think the one after that will be very, very close. There's just a limit to how long the government can go on and if the Labour Party is sensible, I see them

carrying out a shift to the right. If they want to be foolish and back out of that then they'll be in big trouble. I see no future for the centre ground in British politics. Certainly the Conservative Party, after Mrs Thatcher's leadership, will move back towards the centre ground, but in any case the centre has moved towards us.

Andrew Tinney: I see the long-term demise of socialism over the next decade. You'll find the re-emergence

of the more moderate socialists whose commitment to the free market is somewhat greater, because the free market undoubtedly delivers the goods. The Conservative Party will carry on; it always does. It's marvellously resilient, it will change and adapt to new issues. It's not terribly dogmatic, despite what some people have alleged, it is very flexible. I think we'll carry on with popular capitalism.

FOR DINNER
Chablis (1983);
Parma ham and
melon; veal with
crispy game shavings
and wild mushrooms;
red mullet and
hollandaise sauce
with new potatoes
and vegetable
bouquetiere;
chocolate and
chestnut mousse
cake; parmiers and
kumquats in sugar

WORK, REST AND PLAY

Caroline Stoddart: I'm a management consultant. We sort out worldwide strategies for making other companies competitive. My average day is 10-12 hours. I get paid between £40 000 and £50 000 a year. We have two mortgages. The house in Clapham is a wreck at the moment, it

hasn't been renovated since 1910. It's one of those lovely double-fronted terraced houses but it needs to be gutted and rebuilt. We're living in a two-bedroom flat in Earls Court. It's filled with a lot of sculptures, and embroideries and tapestries from our travels, a lot of it Far Eastern.

During the winter we go to Switzerland quite a lot to ski, usually Bengen, a quiet little town with no cars, I love it. In summer we do a lot of antiques.

Andrew Tinney: I'm the national chairman of the Young Conservatives. I'd describe myself as a mainstream Thatcherite. My own background is not from the landed gentry—I went to comprehensive school and personally worked my way through, and frankly, I think there's a lot of merit in that. I think I'm someone who's gone out, seen the opportunities and hopefully exploited them to the best of my ability. I live in Surrey, Woking. With my parents. The best description of the place was given in this month's *Tatler*, actually.

Simon Prendergast: I'm a strategic analyst. I advise people on whether they should have their money in German equities or German bonds. Whether they should switch from ICI to Ferruci. That sort of thing. My average week is about 60 hours long, sometimes 70 hours. There are very few perks—a car and Bupa. And my bonuses, which are pegged to performance. My salary? I'm *certainly* not telling you that! That's an X-subject. It's not on.

I rent a two-bedroom flat in Wimbledon. A conversion, the finish isn't what it could be. It's very quiet, near the common so I can take nice little strollers on Sundays. I pay £110 a week which is ridiculous. The house is an old Georgian maisonette. The wallpaper is my landlord's taste, nasty, especially in the spare room—

it's got honeysuckle on a background of baby blue, disgusting. But we have the most absolutely charming dining room furniture, 1930s art-deco. And we have a drawing room with immensely uncomfortable furniture. Now that I come to think of it I don't actually like it very much. I hold dinner parties—I think they are fun. My idea of a good party is people come over at about eight, after I've been slaving in the kitchen for hours. I suspect that's why my girlfriend left me, because I wouldn't let her into the kitchen. Then I choose some really good wines and sit down and talk for six hours.

Kate Douglas: I'm an analyst at a management consultancy firm. Today I had a particularly short day: I started at about nine o'clock and ended at six thirty. Yesterday I got in at quarter past eight and stayed until one in the morning. It depends on what your deadlines are. How much do I get paid? Ooo...I don't know if I should say this. I get paid about £20 000. How about that?

I live in Fulham with three other people. It's a great house—some friends of mine found it through an ad in the *Times*. We pay £325 a month each, with bills on top of that. That's really my only financial commitment. It's got three floors, four bedrooms and an entertaining room, and two bathrooms. It's got a postage stamp terrace at the back, big enough to put a table and about six chairs. It's quite an interesting house, all done up in pine, with pinewood floors and lots of French antique furniture. We all share the soap, one of the less pleasant things about my mornings. On the weekend I usually sleep a lot. Play a bit of tennis, or I visit friends who have cottages in the country. My last holiday I went skiing for a week in Mirabeau. Do you ski?

PHOTO: Simon Norfolk



The strikes of 1989

The new militants

Compiled by Kirsten Cale. Interviews by: Toby Banks, Andrew Calcutt, Kirsten Cale, Kerry Dean, Claire Jordan, Ragne Miles, John Pearson, Denis Ryan, Helen Simons, Mick Spencer, Ceri Tully

Enough is enough. After 10 years of Tory success against the unions, management's drive for lower wages and worse conditions provoked a new outburst of strikes this summer—often involving people with little experience of traditional trade unionism. This is their side of the story, told during and after the disputes

THE TUBE WORKERS

Issues: Drivers demanding an extra £64 a week to compensate for the introduction of one-person-operated (OPO) trains; privatisation, redundancies and the imposition of 'flexible' working practices were also issues.

Action: From April, drivers staged unofficial one-day strikes. In May, the unions took official control of the action. Weekly one-day stoppages continued through June and July.

Outcome: In August, leaders of the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) and the drivers' union Aslef accepted an increase of £16.73 a week. Drivers held an unofficial one-day strike in disgust.

Tube driver on the Metropolitan Line, 33, London.

I went to the first meeting that was held. Since then, everyone seems to be just talking about the £6.43 per hour pay that we're after, but it was about conditions as well. I remember at that first meeting, this 45-year old guy standing up and saying: 'I don't want to do this fucking OPO job, the stress and strain of it is killing me.' Drivers feel they are being treated like shit, supervisors think they can ask you to do what they like.

We have OPO already, which is very stressful. No guards so the drivers have to watch everything that's going on with hundreds of passengers using the train at each stop. Since then, we've had new proposals that would mean more unpaid travelling time, compulsory overtime, and another proposal about the use of spare drivers to cover absence. Normally a spare would do eight hours, say two hours waiting for a call and then six hours on the train. Now they said if you were two hours waiting, you still had to do eight on the train. You could work an 11-hour day and they want to make this compulsory. It would also allow them to cut jobs.

When I came on the job, safety was drummed into us—not just for the passengers, but for ourselves as well. Five years ago they got rid of a lot of the guards. Saving money became a priority and you've seen the results with King's Cross.

Our hourly rate is £4.72 and we want £6.43. That's what you'd need to live in London these days. I have a mortgage, my girlfriend works and we have no kids, so I'm doing alright, but there are lots of people on the breadline. Especially the guards that are left—they just survive from week to week. Younger drivers have it real tough with mortgages, but this is why one-day stoppages carry everybody with them, they can just about survive on one day out.

Initially I was arguing for all-out action. But the Aslef leadership were arguing for one-day strikes. It's easier to argue for that so they won. People see it as sustainable because it's not risking their mortgage or family life or their jobs.

But the strike has also transformed people's attitudes. Six months ago morale couldn't have been worse. The mess rooms were silent. Now they're like Speakers' Corner. People are confident, people feel they have some control over their working lives, it's a totally different atmosphere.

Tube guard on the Central Line, 27, London.

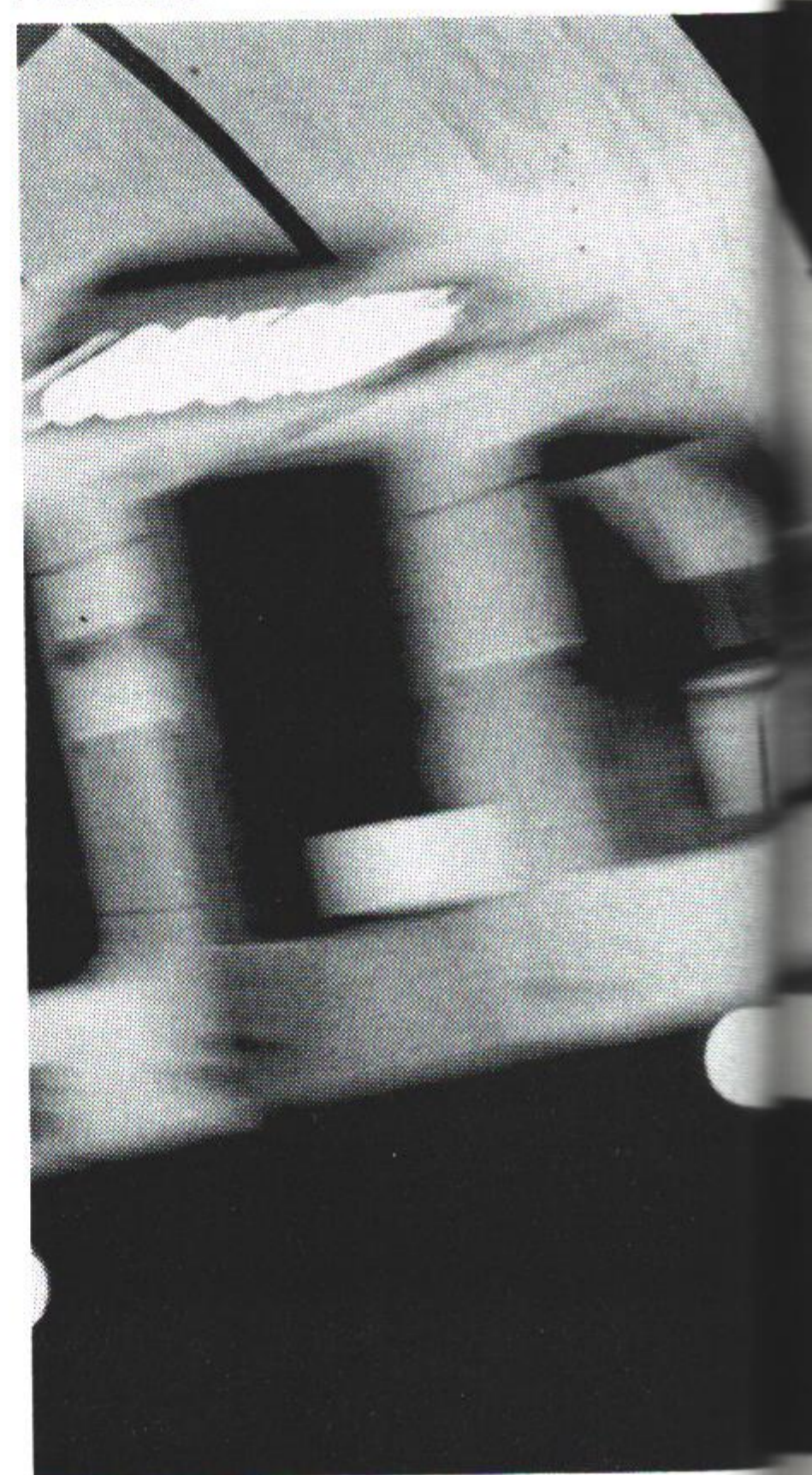
If they got their conditions through I would have to leave London Transport. With the strikes I'm losing about £115 a month. Without me and my wife both working, we couldn't survive, strike or no strike. We have not been on holiday for six years and I can't see us having one. But even so I will still go on strike. I want to work in a safe industry with a decent wage.

Leaders have had as big a shock as anyone by the way we've organised things. We are calling the shots. As far as I'm concerned NUR and Aslef

have had a well-deserved kick up the arse. Aslef's response to our dispute has been cowardly. We were winning and they were prepared to accept 8.8%. On the plus side I think we have shown the management and the union leadership that we can do things ourselves, that we are not just tools or bits of equipment to be shunted around. We've got lives to live and we want to live good ones.

The Labour Party's response to our strike has been, in a nutshell, nothing. That's better than Kinnock's response to the BR strike. I don't want that bastard telling me to go back to work. I see the future with great foreboding. We're going to have to fight a lot harder. I would say that over the past 10 years, working people have had their confidence knocked to hell. The recent action is great but we shouldn't start jumping up and down yet. It's got a long way to go to shake off 10 years of defeats.

PHOTO: Simon Norfolk



Issues: In May British Rail imposed a 7 per cent pay rise, along with plans to end national pay bargaining and for new working conditions.

Action: Railworkers staged five national one-day strikes in June and July.

Outcome: On 27 July, the unions accepted BR's raised 8.8 per cent pay offer and returned to Acas to discuss national bargaining structures.

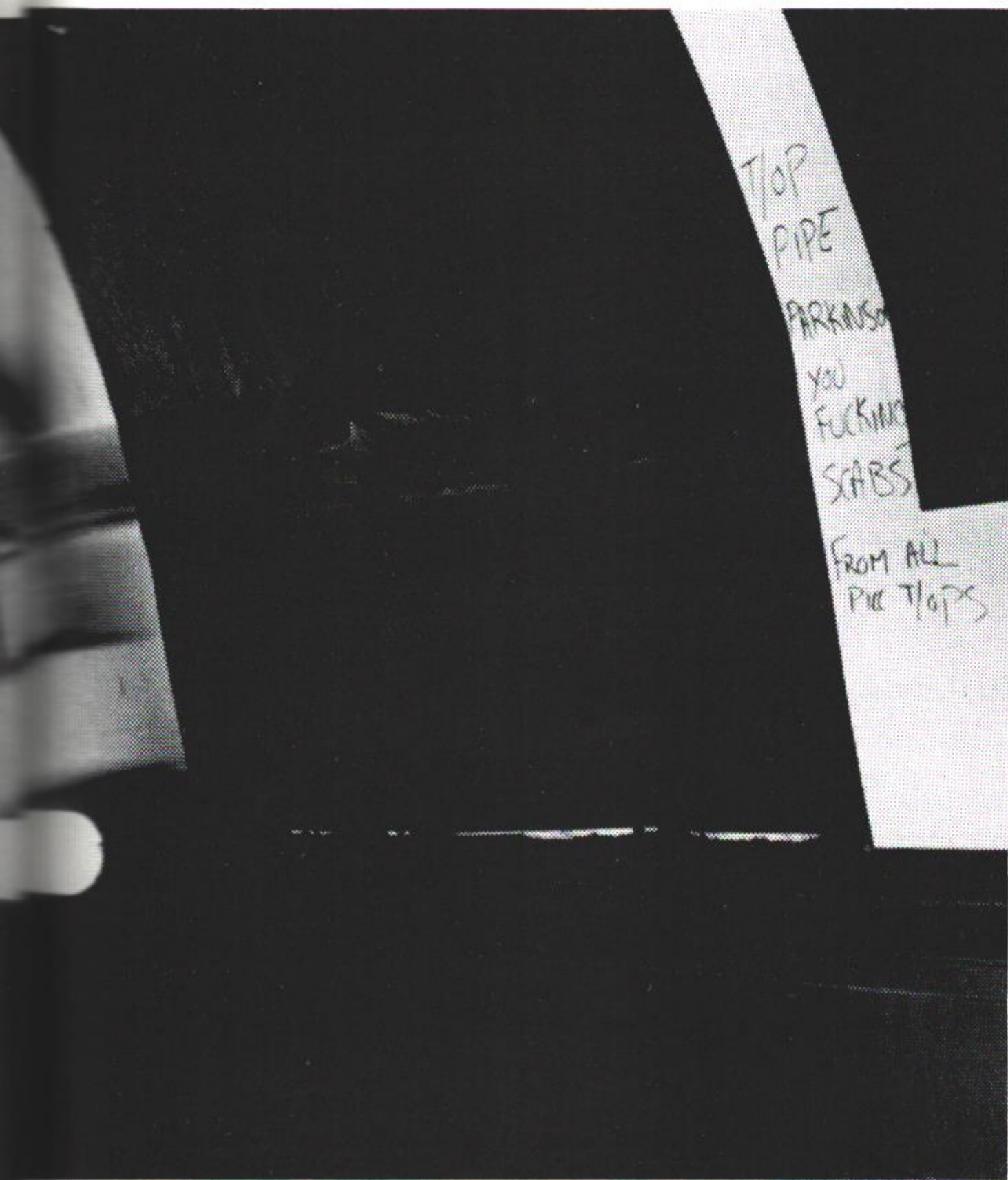
Railworker, 33, Liverpool.

The thing that really sparked the strike off was when they put the seven per cent in our pay packets. Imposed, for the third year running. Then they announced £300m profit—that was the last straw. We just said: 'That's it, we're not having it.'

The money comes first in this dispute. We've got mortgages and we're paying for cars. And inflation, if you're station staff earning £104 and taking home around £80 you notice it. The whole system works on overtime, and that's kept basic pay down. In the stations everybody's working seven days a week. In the workshops they clock up 55 hours regularly.

It's wrong that the local district committees haven't organised any mass meetings. It's just been left to the branches to do whatever. As for the national executive—we never see them, although they've pulled out all the stops against local pay deals because if national pay bargaining is

A message from the Underground movement



THE RAILWORKERS

dropped all their jobs go with it. What's the point of having a national HQ in London if what matters is done locally?

You look at our people and you might think, everyone's been taken in by a different way of thinking, it's too late for politics, socialism is out of date. And then the strike happens. The big question now is where it goes from here?

Carriage cleaner, 32, Birmingham.

This must be the worst job I've ever done. It's not just the money, it's the conditions. The chemicals. They don't give you protective clothing unless you ask for it and you're down on your back. This guy was sick for a week and brought in a doctor's note. Management said next time they'd send him to their doctor in Crewe for a second opinion. It's that bad down here.

Railworker, 29, London.

Pay is a big issue, but people are also pissed off with the working conditions and the way management treat us. The other week I was told to go out to Ilford to bring a train down to London. So I go at one o'clock in

the morning and I find the train is back at Liverpool Street. I asked the supervisor why I wasn't told. He said 'We only do it as a favour'. Then he put the phone down on me. People have to put up with this all the time. Management's attitude is 'It's not my problem, it's your problem. I'm not here to help you, so just disappear'. They don't treat you with a modicum of respect. You're part of the machinery.

The least thing you do wrong in their eyes, you get a letter called a 'Please Explain'. 'Please explain why you were absent from duty', 'Please explain why did you do this on such and such a day'. And they shower these things like confetti. If you ever write to *them* about something you want, they don't even acknowledge it.

The railworkers were very pissed off that the settlement came when it did. The members wanted more than 8.8 per cent. What annoyed me most was that the union leadership declared that they had settled because the *members* thought the key issue was the machinery of negotiation, not pay. That's just a lie. The thing which motivated people throughout the strikes was pay.



picket line. It was the first picketing I'd ever done in my life. You see people you sit next to at work and you have to call them scabs. I couldn't do that the first day. As it wore on I found it easier. You get more worked up, and you learn different arguments. Like if people say they can't afford to strike, you tell them inflation is eight per cent and the offer is seven, so they'll lose money by not striking.

I can't really say if things have changed because I've only ever worked under a Tory government. I think Thatcher will have to come to an end, finally, but you keep saying that. You think: 'She's gone too far this time', but she still seems to be there. If I had the money, I'd be off to Australia tomorrow.

Environmental health officer, 28, Leeds.

I'm on £630 a month. Compared to a lot of people those wages don't seem bad. I have a video and a phone—OK, they're luxuries but so what? I like luxuries. But you could get a lot more doing my kind of work in the private sector. Take some advice: if you want decent pay don't work for local government.

THE COUNCIL WORKERS

Issues: Management made 'final' pay offer in May: seven per cent with punitive strings attached.

Action: After ballot, white-collar union Nalgo called one, two and three-day strikes in July, then started indefinite, selective action among key workers. Blue-collar union Nupe told members not to join Nalgo actions.

Outcome: On 22 August, branch delegates voted to accept improved offer of an 8.8 per cent average rise. Workers in some local authorities continued action over victimisation of strikers.

Housing department worker, 22, Bristol.

At first I found it difficult to talk to people when I went down to the

The police came down here and said they wanted to see fewer pickets. Quite a few people were frightened. We can't confront the police but we'd make far more of an impact if we had more people out here. We have to be here to aggravate other people who are going to work. I don't think we should listen to the police like sheep then run away and hide.

Council clerical worker, 24, Cardiff.

I've never been out on strike before, or had any contact with the union. I paid my subs and that was all. Nobody can really afford to be out on strike but we're fighting a good cause. I've taken a part-time job in the evenings to cope otherwise we'd

A different brand of town hall politics

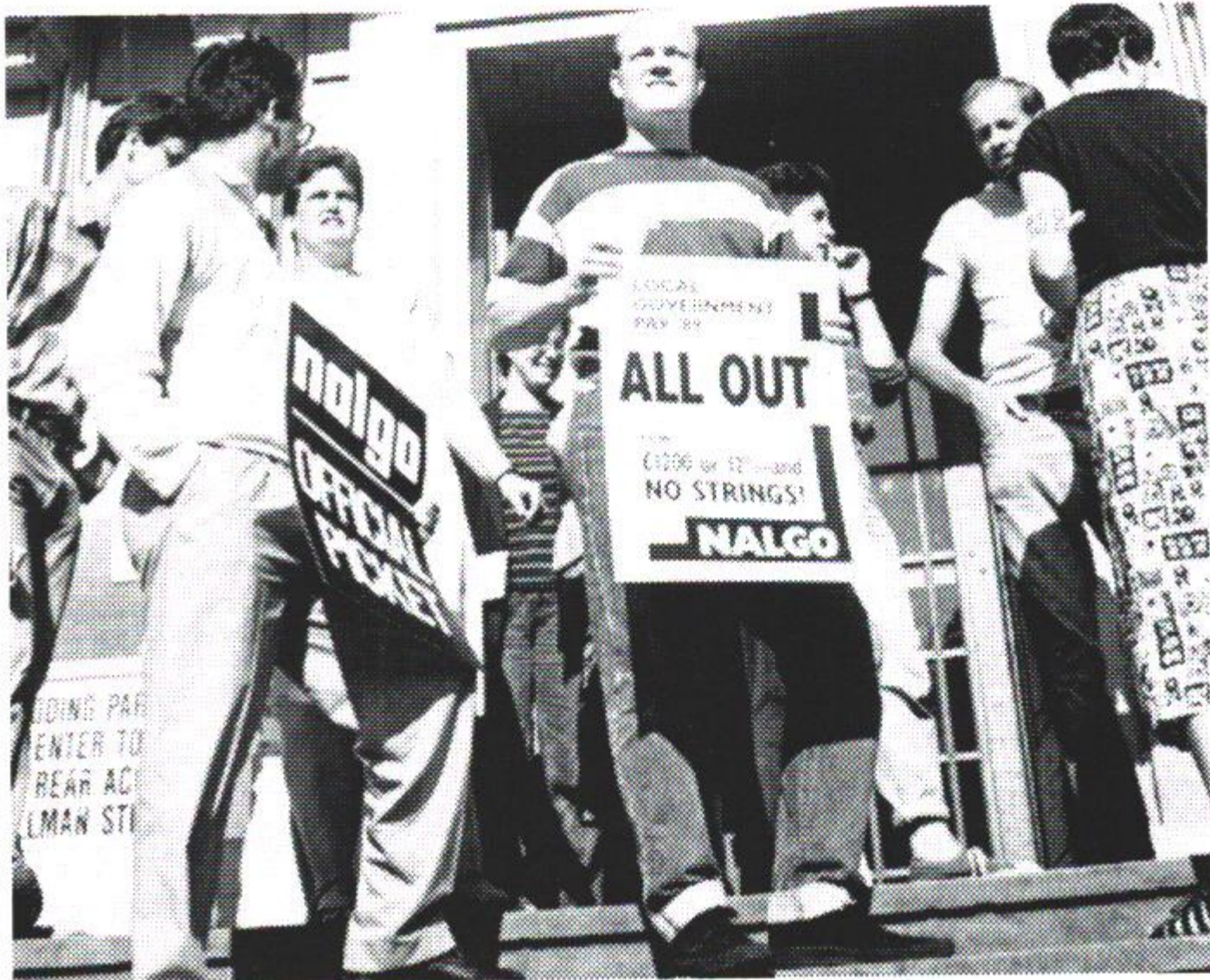


PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

Issues: Unsafe working conditions, falling wages, an end to pay for travel time, unpaid overtime, forced no-strike deals and union recognition.
Action: Strikes in June and July; 6 July, stoppages and sit-ins on 35 rigs to mark Piper Alpha anniversary.
Outcome: Contractors Association offered 14 per cent wage rise but refused to recognise the unions on the rigs. On 21 July the unions told oilworkers to accept the pay offer.

Oilworker on Beryl Field, 35, from Middlesbrough.

Over the years they've dwindled the rates away, used us as cheap labour. You get a lot of lads working up here from down South: Newcastle, South Shields; I'm from Middlesbrough. People have this idea that offshore workers have got loads of money. We are ordinary working men who work offshore. We haven't got little pots of gold stashed away. We all have mortgages to pay and families to keep, so a strike hits us as hard as anybody.

The biggest barrier to organising effective action has been lack of communication. We're all scattered,

lose the house, but I still believe in what we're fighting for.

Benefits assistant, 26, Leeds.

I take home £140—that's for us and two kids. I can't claim family credit now, my income is £10 too high, but a lot of women claim it in this office. We just can't live on this money.

I've just resigned as a Nupe steward because of the officials. It's widely known that the union officials work hand-in-glove with managers in the council. They are barely sympathetic to the pay claim, never mind industrial action. But the unions do have a role to play—people belonging and taking action themselves. There's definitely a change coming—the tide is turning. A lot of unions have gone to sleep for 10 years. Now people are losing that feeling that there's nothing they can do. But a lot of things have happened that are hard to change; pay and working conditions are worse and it will be hard to get them back.

Benefits visitor, 28, Leeds.

We recently moved from a two bedroom back-to-back into a four bedroom house. We expected our standard of living to go down, but now I can't even go out for a drink without feeling guilty.

Nalgo hasn't been very honest. All they're interested in is saving face.

They'll present the outcome as a victory even though it won't be. Nupe are more interested in scoring points over Nalgo than getting a deal for the members. The unions are just going through the motions. People in their position want to preserve their own power and the financial stability of the union rather than the rights of the members.

Worker in old people's home, 22, Birmingham.

We don't like striking but we feel strongly about it. This is the first strike I've ever been on and I don't want to go on another. I consider it the ultimate thing we have to do, we're talking about people's futures, my brothers who haven't got jobs yet.

My manager is in the same union branch as me. When the ballot papers were sent out he said: 'We're meant to be caring staff and we're not', then he ripped his paper up. If the likes of him had voted we probably wouldn't be out.

I don't like sounding like the voice of doom but it's the 1930's, everything's being privatised. If you get knocked over, they'll ask you if you've got a pension plan before they scrape you up. Thatcher says 'If you don't like it, outlaw it'. We won't take it lying down. Beat Thatcher? Give me a whip—I'll do it.

THE OILWORKERS

rag-tag and bobtail units; between the rigs and between different unions, and a lot of people who aren't in any union. We need to get the whole North Sea organised, so they can't victimise the workforce because they'd get no more workers.

The oil companies tried to bring scab labour on to the rigs to break the strike, workers who don't have the right certificates, even though that is meant to be law in the North Sea. So our sit-ins are to stop people taking our jobs and undermining the whole industry, from the worker's point of view.

Oilworker on Beryl Field, 28, from Glasgow.

The pay's shit. We work 105 hours a week, seven in the morning till 10 at night, seven days a week. In nine years my wages went up about £1.60 an hour. When the Piper Alpha blew up the *Sun* was saying that there were men on a thousand pound a month. They were really asking men to go out for four pound an hour! The only thing that puts our wages up is the amount of hours we have to

work—they tell you you're working a 15-hour shift. If you don't work the hours you won't be back.

Maintenance worker on Forties Field, 45, from Glasgow.

The thing we object to is lack of safety on the job. This is the first time I've been on an offshore strike, the first time anything has been organised, and that's been by the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee, not the full-time union officials. The committee are oil rig workers, they know the problems. The full-timers have never been offshore.

You'd be surprised at some of the guys organising the strike. They're not hardline, they're not militant, not the blokes who do the bullying and the shouting. Most of them are level-headed. That's why I think it's been reasonably successful.

Margaret Thatcher created an economy full of house-buyers. There was a need not to go on strike. I think people took that for so long. Now the summer of discontent is a-calling.



PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

Tilbury dockers: sacked for striking

Roughneck on semi-submersible in Beryl Field, 31, from Aberdeen.

Conditions are getting worse and worse. A few trips ago I was working in wind-speeds of 105 mph. 105 miles an hour! The rig was shuddering like this. And I was out in this because the senior tool pusher wanted to get this job done. If I'd have said: 'I'm not working', I'd have been sacked. They're a law unto themselves out there. They run the show. You can't lay down and let them walk all over you all the time can you?

Roughneck on semi-submersible on Beryl Field, 24, from Dublin.

There's a lot of selfish people on rigs, people who come from working class backgrounds but think that because they get a helicopter to work that gives them the right to vote Conservative and fuck up people's lives. But they're out with us because they don't want to be called scabs. There's no physical intimidation but verbal. They know they're stuck there for two weeks in the same accommodation, eating at the same table. You don't want to get a name for yourself as a scab when you've got the rest of your life on the North Sea.



THE DOCK WORKERS

Issues: The government announced the abolition of the 45-year old national dock labour scheme in May, and dock employers prepared to impose redundancies and harsh conditions.

Action: Transport workers' union won ballot for action, but backed off when faced with court injunction. After second ballot, on 9 July registered dockers stopped work in 60 ports. Despite flying pickets from Liverpool, drift back to work started after sacking threats; 16 shop stewards were sacked at Tilbury.

Outcome: On 1 August, the TGWU executive voted to end national strike. Liverpool dockers voted to fight on. Union leader Ron Todd told Liverpool strikers that they would get no help from the TGWU. The following day, 870 Liverpool dockers signed draconian new contracts; 300 took voluntary redundancy.

Docker, 37, Liverpool.

There are a few dock workers getting £30 000 a year—just enough of them for the media to make a meal of it. But no one asks what they have to do

to get it, non-stop 12 or 16-hour shifts. In Liverpool, most people get £150-£160 before stoppages. Last year I earned £11 000. That's doing nights, and being on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

I have a nice house and car because I've worked for them. But my kids—they're not kids, they're adults now—are sitting at home and driving me and themselves mad because there's nothing for them here. Thatcher wants to crush Liverpool. She set it up as a political strike. Management have served writs, photographed people, the police came down and took our registration numbers. It's all meant to be intimidating.

TGWU drivers have crossed our picket lines and nobody's been disciplined for it. Because the union is only concerned about the dues money coming in. I said to one driver 'Does this mean you're tearing up your union card?'. 'Oh no', he said, 'I get lots of benefits from the union'. In other words, I'm in the union but I'm not a trade unionist. What use is that?

We do need capitalism, even Gorbachev needs it. Socialism may well be a thing of the past, let's face

it. We need incentive—but those parasites who own all this are *too* greedy. They stay in bed in Southport and only get up to take a crap, and they can do that because they've got shares in the dock company. If Labour gets back in they should renationalise the lot.

**Docker, 37, Seaforth,
North Liverpool.**

Our union man Jimmy Nolan called the return to work settlement 'a sugar-coated bullet'. What I'd like to know is this: where's the sugar coating?

**Docker, 40, Seaforth,
North Liverpool.**

After the mass meeting where we decided to stay out on strike, Ron Todd and his sidekicks let it be known that us gobshites around here would be on our own, left us completely in the lurch. So the same people who voted overwhelmingly to stay out voted by the same majority to go back. It was our only way of staying in work. If it happened again

it will still be the gobshites from around here who will be at the front of it. We will always be ready to fight for a fair crack of the whip, whether Ron Todd and his sidekicks are with us or against us.

When we went back, we had to sign the contract or we'd get the sack. They hit us with a list of dos and don'ts—mostly don'ts, but they also want us to do more work. I used to work with seven other weighers plus three checkers—now it's down to five and one. Have you seen the eyes in the back of my head? I've also got a brush tied to my backside—I'm supposed to do a cleaner's job as well. You're not allowed off the dock estate at any time. We asked the Pakistani in charge when we could get to the bank. He said: 'Get a plastic card or get walking.'

They used to call us RDWs—registered dock workers. Now we're port operative workers. POWS, that's exactly what we are.

Sacked Tilbury docker, 34, Essex.

Todd had this idea that you could beat the government and the port

authorities at their own game, going to court, etc. Lunacy. It's like if I play Steve Davis at snooker I could beat him. If we were going to win we had to play our own game, not theirs.

When we went back to work there was tension between the men who went back last and the men who went in first. The real tragedy now is that people are blaming the people who went back rather than blaming Todd and his friends in the leadership. These blokes went back because they had no confidence in the leadership.

The people who were victimised at Tilbury were stewards, ex-stewards and anyone who'd had a run-in with the employer. I myself am an ex-steward. One bloke who was targeted was a steward 17 years ago! They were having a clear-out of anyone they didn't like. We're appealing for unfair dismissal, but it's going to get us nowhere—you know what the courts are like. We're probably on the Economic League's blacklist so it's only casual jobs and that for us now. There's not much chance is there?



THE BBC WORKERS

Issues: In April, BBC management offered a seven per cent pay rise. The unions wanted 16 per cent.

Action: A series of one-day strikes from April to July.

Outcome: The BBC offered 8.8 per cent. At the time of writing, the ballot result has yet to be announced.

Assistant film editor, 31, London.

When I tell friends what I earn at the BBC it's embarrassing. They think because you're in television that you lead a glamorous life. I earn £11 000 a year.

At the start of the strike there was a feeling that things were happening, that the time had come when if we went out on strike we'd see some results. But other strikes have had much more effect. The problem even with lightning strikes is that nowadays they don't blank the screens out. Programmes are stockpiled. When we were on strike they ran old Ronnie Barker programmes and viewing figures went up! People ask me when I'm going on strike again!

The country's lost its soul, it's just an empty shell. The economy's strong—but only for a certain few, those in control. Thatcher talks about the individual having ownership, not

only of gas, electricity or water industries, but your own home even if it's a council house. But what about the people at the bottom? Most get nothing out of it. They're trying to delude us.

Thatcher's running out of steam. So they use the Gilbert and Sullivan: 'Let's all stand round the flag.' But once the Tories start hitting people in the pocket, like the poll tax, they'll have problems. People aren't stupid. They want political ideas, that's why they bought Thatcherism to start with.

Assistant film editor, 29, London.

For me this strike's strictly a case of wages. I'm looking out for my future, not the BBC's. With Beta being a company union, we've all been encouraged to think of ourselves as on the same side as management, one big, happy family whose job is to provide 'good public broadcasting'. The real issue of us and them is clouded. The strike has made people more aware of this, especially the way management behaved, awarding themselves a 30 per cent rise, then hiring Peter Sissons for half a million. Now people talk about 'the management' for the first time: the distinction has become sharper.

I'd hardly been to union meetings before the first mass meeting. I'd

heard how only five people would turn up. I was amazed to see the hall packed out. I had a row with some guy about the strike: I said if we hit the Wimbledon final halfway through, that's power to our pay deal. He was saying I was so fucking naive—the BBC contract with Wimbledon is about to run out and they'd use this to blame us for the BBC losing out. In other words: 'We're only hurting ourselves.'

Assistant film editor, 27, London.

Traditionally Actt was the film union—very strong and it won high rates of pay. Beta was weak, only employing ordinary BBC workers; and it was hand-in-hand with management. That's why we're in the state we're in at the moment. It would be better to have one union only. When people were made redundant when the canteens were privatised, nobody went out on strike in support of those workers. We need more solidarity. Isn't that the principle of trade unionism—united we stand, divided we fall?

It is assumed that you are working in the BBC as a vocation. Management are distant figures who work in a different building and who you never see. But you identify with the team you work with, so the conflict with the BBC seems quite abstract. In that sense the strike here is not like the miners' strike or other disputes. Here we have a commitment.



WALL STREET: THE PREQUEL

Sixty years after the Wall Street Crash and two years on from Black Monday, Gemma Forest points out some unlearnt lessons

Thursday 24 October 1929 was the first day of all-out panic on Wall Street. By night, nearly 13m shares changed hands. Within three weeks, the index of *New York Times* industrial shares fell from its all-time high of 542 in early September to 224. Three summers later, it stood at 58.

What began 50 years ago was not simply a stock market crash, with its images of sudden calamity and stockbroker suicides. It was a lengthy sky dive for a system that was out of control. The crisis behind the Crash took a couple of years to manifest itself in full-blown economic recession. By the summer of 1932 the trade magazine *Iron Age* was reporting that US steel plants were operating at 12 per cent capacity. A year later, America's gross national product was a third less than its 1929 level.

The delayed impact of Black October, and the depth of the Great Depression which it precipitated, should warn all those who see in today's record-breaking Dow Jones index the final passing of our own Crash of 1987. Back in 1929, there were plenty of post-Crash bids to bail out the markets and push share prices back up. Both the giant share-dealing house JP Morgan and the president of the stock exchange, Richard Whitney, pledged money to reverse the collapse; and in November 1929, the Rockefellers promised to back the value of Standard Oil shares with hard cash. Yet all three promises finally came to nothing. Nobody could even explain the Crash, still less control it.

So sharp was the contrast between the 'roaring twenties' and the bleak decade that followed it, all kinds of reasons were invented to account for the fateful turning point of 1929. Like the US Democratic Party and British Labour critics of Wall Street and the City today, commentators focused on the greed and sumptuous lifestyles of insider traders like Richard Whitney, who was later sentenced to more than five years in Sing Sing. Other experts

pointed out that ticker-tapes, running hours late because of the volume of trading, made a bear market still less confident—an insight into the workings of money capital about as profound as that which holds computer-programmed trading responsible for today's stock market lurches.

The economists had a field day. The most complacent held the view that 'what goes up must come down'. Obscure 'business cycles' and economic 'overheating' were also blamed. Keynesian theorists contended that rising profits had not been invested in machinery fast enough, while the left held both the banks and 'over-production' responsible.

Although today's world economy is much more integrated than that of half a century ago, capital was sufficiently internationalised for the fall of Wall Street to reverberate around the planet. The Great Crash prompted a one-third cut in world trade. It provided Europe with the conditions for the fall of Britain's Labour government (1931), and Hitler's ascent to the chancellorship (1933). It also gave Stalin access to scores of Western firms desperate to export to the Soviet Union. The Americans were as quick to blame foreign capitalists in Europe for their crisis as British capitalists were to blame the Japanese and other villains after 1987. But none of the 1929 commentators identified the real culprit: the stagnation of American manufacturing.

Open for business

America emerged from the First World War as a creditor nation and, once it had put the Great Steel Strike of 1919 and the recession of 1920-21 behind it, embarked on a massive boom. These were years of anti-Bolshevism, Prohibition, the Ku Klux Klan, 'Americanisation' of newly arrived workers and hysteria about crime waves. A sign of the times was the scab ethos of 'industrial freedom', the 'open shop' and of what Republican president Harding called 'back to

normalcy'. In these conditions, workers were cowed and divided. Capital flourished.

In the twenties Prohibition made every worker a police target, picket lines were broken up with maximum violence, and, in many plants, wages were directly tied to profits. US capitalists could count on stagnant wages, accelerating productivity and a minimum of levies exacted by the state. Yet the very things America became famous for in this period—investment in belt-driven machinery, assembly lines, advanced metal-working—also proved its undoing.

Profit problems

Throughout the twenties production of capital goods rose by a mighty 6.4 per cent a year. But by substituting machinery for manpower, American bosses narrowed their source of surplus-value and had to measure it over a larger and larger investment base. Thus while the *mass* of profit rose dramatically, the effects of a declining *rate* of profit were evident quite early.

Re-equipped factories churned out products ever faster, and the price of goods fell, allowing better-paid workers to buy radios and kitchen appliances. But high rates of unemployment in the twenties showed that the tendency towards stagnation was present even in the jazz age. While workers were more exploited than ever, capitalists were forced into new stratagems to try to offset dwindling profitability.

In cars, General Motors tried to find more buyers by making design changes each year. In utilities and retail, local operations formed nationwide holding companies. Advertising expenditures passed \$1 billion and skyscrapers full of accounting clerks shot up as sales competition became more fierce. Both, however, compounded the squeeze on profits.

By early 1926 the game was up. Between January and March, industrial shares dropped from 181 to 143, and those firms not caught in

debt or bankruptcy took their investments out of industry and into the money and share markets. In 1927 US Federal Reserve Bank deposits rose \$17 billion. As Ford closed his Model T plant, a prolonged burst of speculative fever distracted attention from the plight of American manufacturing. But when paper share prices run so far ahead of the real wealth being produced, the bubble must burst. It did so in October 1929.

The Crash of 1929 was not a reflection of the laws of gravity in economics, or of any mysterious 'long waves' of upswing and downturn. Nor was overheating the problem: a full 20 per cent of industrial capacity remained unused. The American left, led by the Communist Party, blamed banks such as Chase for the Crash. But the entire capitalist class was implicated in the financial wheeler-dealing: by early 1929 loans to the market from non-banking sources such as Electric Bond and Share equalled those made by the banks.

Wrong targets

The left also blamed overproduction: bounding increases in factory production in the twenties seemed, by outstripping people's ability to pay for them, to have brought on the crisis. But the problem which 1929 revealed was that America needed more, not less production; indeed the US department of agriculture's bureau of home economics pointed out that families needed a 75 per cent increase in national production if they were to enjoy a decent standard of living. Likewise, what the soup kitchens of the thirties showed was how ruthlessly the capitalists had to cut levels of working class consumption, not increase them, if they were to revive profitability.

Unable to fathom the underlying reasons for the crisis, the US left seized on the avarice of the elderly yuppies of 50 years ago. This gave president Franklin D Roosevelt a powerful tool for diverting popular anger into safe waters. When Roosevelt put JP Morgan up in front of the courts, the left cheered—letting the rest of the US ruling class off the hook.

History never repeats itself precisely. But in misunderstanding the basis for today's shenanigans in financial services, the Anglo-American left of 1989 makes an old mistake. It fails to locate the source of the crisis in the process of production under the profit system, and to see that financial speculation and corruption are inevitable results of capitalist industry's decline. Instead, by concentrating fire on the behaviour of a few greedy stockbrokers, the left tacitly accepts the foundations of a system that, within 10 years of the Crash, brought the world to war. It is an oversight we cannot afford.

Sir James Goldsmith is not on Enterprise Allowance

How to make money

Forget all that enterprise culture stuff about getting on by starting a small manufacturing firm. The people who make fortunes in Britain today, say Jon Fryer and Tony Kennedy, do it without making anything

Not all British bosses receive the six-figure salaries which have made the headlines this year. Look hard enough around industrial estates, and you can find a 'managing director' or a 'company chairman' getting £40 a week from the government's Enterprise Allowance Scheme. They work in draughty prefabricated units, trying to turn out some obscure product which they hope will fill an imagined market gap, gambling on success in Thatcher's enterprise culture. Most lose.

Twilight zone

All of the government's enterprise schemes, adverts and glossy brochures cannot hide the fact that small businesses and self-employment are neither the solution to Britain's economic problems, nor the way for individuals to make their fortune.

The Tories claim that the rise in the number of self-employed in recent years is evidence of the emergence of a booming Britain built on individual initiative and innovation. In fact it suggests the opposite. The spread of self-employment is normally associated with bankrupt third world countries, where the mainstream economy cannot provide and people have to go scavenging for themselves in the commercial twilight zone. This trend has far less to do with starting new manufacturing outlets than with doing odd jobs and a little illicit trading. Britain has now joined this set of Arthur Daley economies.

The EAS scam

The Enterprise Allowance Scheme is a case in point. Many of the unemployed people who sign up for the 12-month scheme are already having to work illegally, in the black economy, to make ends meet while signing on. Going on the EAS allows them to declare that they are earning, and still get benefits, without risking the unwelcome attentions of the increasingly intrusive dole snoopers. Those who make a serious attempt to launch a business on the basis of EAS have little or no chance of success; around half go bust within three years, while many of the rest struggle along on a miserable income.

Even staunch supporters of the self-employment sector have to admit

that it is not the dynamic powerhouse which government ministers are always going on about. Here's John Stanworth, director general of the Small Business Research Trust:

'Ten years ago the politicians used to think all small firms were engaged in manufacturing, that they employed people, and that they were innovative. Now we know that most do not

manufacture, have no employees beyond the owner, and are not very innovative.' (*Financial Times*, 8 May)

The politicians may know this, but they are not letting on. The myth of a frontier-breaking, money-spinning small business sector is an important component of the government's claims to have achieved an economic miracle. The Tories are trying to keep



RIGHT: The BAT men: Goldsmith (centre) with fellow predators Rothschild (left) and Packer

PHOTO: The Guardian

Goldsmith
calls it
'unbundling'.
Most people
would call it
asset-stripping

it going for purely political reasons.

Meanwhile, Thatcher's supporters in the big business class have taken their capital out of the inefficient manufacturing sector. They are making their millions by setting up dodgy buying and selling deals on an immeasurably larger scale than the boys from the black economy.

You will not find Sir James Goldsmith messing about with a greasy lathe in a prefab. Goldsmith is fronting the record £13.5 billion bid to buy up the corporation British American Tobacco (BAT), the most dramatic of the many takeover bids made in recent years. He is perhaps the outstanding example of the modern British capitalist; and his consortium's bid for BAT demonstrates the real way to get rich (or richer) quick today.

Goldsmith is the tenth richest man in Europe. He does nothing useful. His wealth is based on genes, gambling and good fortune. He inherited a fortune from his Tory MP father. He won £8000 on the horses when he was 17. And he married into a \$17 billion fortune when he hitched up with the daughter of a Bolivian tin magnate. He was also lucky enough to sell up his stock market holdings just before the Crash in October 1987.

Heads he wins...

During the share speculation boom of the eighties, Goldsmith built a reputation as a corporate raider in the USA which made him the model for Sir Larry Wildman, the British predator played by Terence Stamp in *Wall Street*. He launched six major takeover bids in America, but completed only three. Yet win or lose in the battle for control of a company, Goldsmith always came out financially ahead.

If he fails to get enough shares to take control of a targeted corporation, Goldsmith can adopt plan b, known in the trade as 'greenmail' (gentlemen don't blackmail each other). The unsuccessful raider greenmails the company into buying back those shares which he did obtain, at a hefty premium of course. For example, Goldsmith snapped up an 11.5 per cent stake in the US company Goodyear. Then he sold it back. For all the strenuous effort involved in this transaction, he made a mere \$90m profit.

If a speculator like Goldsmith does manage to capture his corporate prey, the tills really start ringing. The normal practice is to break up the corporation you have just bought, and sell off its component parts at a profit. For example, BAT's tobacco business is not doing too well. But the subsidiary concerns it has acquired, in paper, retailing and insurance, are potentially lucrative. If

cut free from the lethargic parent company, their market values would rise and they could be sold at a big profit. This is the aim of Goldsmith and his fellow bidders. In his eyes, the US insurance group Farmers is the real plum in the BAT basket.

This method of money-making is now all the rage in business schools, where it is called 'active asset management'. Goldsmith calls it 'unbundling'. Most people would call it asset-stripping. Goldsmith, however, poses as a champion of the free market rather than a self-seeking profiteer, claiming that he is only 'taking companies which are being stifled under the bureaucracy of large conglomerates, and liberating them and their management'.

But demerging BAT would have nothing to do with increasing efficiency. It would be the fastest way to a fast buck. And anyway, for Goldsmith and the other billionaire Hoylake bidders, breaking up BAT would be a necessity—one which they are trying to dress up as a virtue. This is because, like other big takeover attempts, the BAT bid is what's known as a highly leveraged buy out. Predators can only assemble sufficient capital to mount such a mega-bid by borrowing heavily, using the assets of the target company as security. By accumulating such debts they get sufficient 'leverage' to prise open a vast conglomerate such as BAT. If the bid goes through, Goldsmith has no choice but to 'unbundle' BAT. Breaking it up and selling off the assets is the only way that he can pay off his creditors.

'Takeovers are for the public good', says Goldsmith, 'but that's not why I do it. I do it for the money'.

Not a penny

As manufacturing industry knocks up record trade deficits, such sharkish speculation is just about the only way that British capitalists can make big money today, and they are all at it. Having sold off the assets of the SCM group for more than he paid for the whole, Lord Hanson is about to do the same with his latest \$3.5 billion acquisition, the mining giant Consolidated Goldfields.

The takeover boom of recent years has been phenomenal. Official figures show that the value of British takeovers and mergers rose from £14.9 billion in 1986 to £15.4 billion in 1987 and £22 billion in 1988. British predators laid out an additional £19 billion on gobbling up American companies last year. If the massive BAT bid gets through the courts and the markets, it will establish a new record high. The big boom in speculative takeovers, rather than any vibrant reawakening of 'popular capitalism', is responsible for the apparent recovery in share prices since the 1987 Crash.

Goldsmith and the rest are living the high life on the profits of these deals. Yet not a penny's worth of real wealth has been created. On the basis of credit backed by temporary market confidence, the paper prices of existing capital values have simply been bumped up. It is parasitism of the first order, a world apart from the images of endeavour and enterprise which the Tories tell us are the key to success in their economy today. It is also a highly dangerous game of bluff and hype.

The first time that the financial institutions lose confidence in the ability of the speculators to do the deal and meet their credit commitments, the whole fragile set-up could collapse. 'If that happens', warns the voice of British business, 'LBO [leveraged buy out] debt might prove as big a headache for banks as third world debt has been in the nineties' (*Financial Times*, 13 July).

Nobody could pretend that Sir James Goldsmith is a nice bloke. But it would be wrong to reduce the problem of parasitism to the personalities involved. What they do is the only way to make a fortune from British capitalism in the late eighties.

Man of the year

More traditional businessmen and manufacturers may dislike Goldsmith's methods; at a recent high-powered Bank of England seminar on the takeover boom, some complained about the 'spivvy and corrupt' undertones of spectacular buy-out bids. Yet the decline of manufacturing means that these pillars of the establishment have also had to indulge in financial speculation to make a profit. For example, GEC boss Lord Weinstock is one of the loudest critics of the view that Britain must depend upon the City and the service sector, preying on wealth produced elsewhere in the world. This did not prevent his company linking up with the Germans and the French in a takeover bid for Plessey, or stop him taking a stake in the BAT bid.

Today's industrialists lack confidence in their ability to revive the economy. Thus Goldsmith & Co won the vote at the Bank of England seminar in favour of hostile mergers (ie, takeovers)—and Sir John Banham, director of the traditionally anti-City Confederation of British Industry, voted with them. Far from being a 'rotten apple', Goldsmith is a man of his capitalist times—unlike the MD on the Enterprise Allowance Scheme.

And no, in case you were wondering, the financial institutions don't back leveraged buy outs led by people on £40 a week.

Oscar Wilde on stage

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING IRISH



PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

Stephen Rea (left) waltzes through rehearsals with Trevor Griffiths

Saint Oscar, a play about Wilde by Terry Eagleton, has just opened in Derry and should be here soon. During a break from rehearsal in London, director Trevor Griffiths spoke to John Fitzpatrick

I'll tell you a tale of an old
Irish bard
Who feared that old Ireland was
Europe's backyard
So he donned a cravat, wrote a
lyric or two
Like a cross between Byron and
Brian Boru

The cast had just started to belt out the opening number (music by Philip Chevron and Terry Woods of the Pogues) in rehearsal room three at the National Theatre when the door flew open and a frantic whisper informed them that the performance of *Hedda Gabler* next door (the Olivier Theatre) was

reaching its climax, so could they please be quiet. The actors seemed to relish the idea of giving a Celtic twist to the Ibsen matinee, but Trevor Griffiths called a halt and busied himself instead in a search for the etymology of the word inebriate.

The rehearsals were at the National not because this is their play, but because Stephen Rea has been performing there in Dion Boucicault's *The Shaughran*. Rea plays Oscar Wilde, which may have something to do with the fact that he is (a), an accomplished actor, who is well-suited to the part, and (b), a director of the Field Day Theatre Company which is producing the play.

Eagleton, best known as a cultural critic, has turned his hand before to drama (*After Brecht*) and fiction (*Saints and Scholars*), and his work on Walter Benjamin wantonly straddles the critical-creative divide. The interplay between identity, language and imperialism has long been of interest to him, and the story of Oscar Wilde's brutal treatment by British society is a potent source of reflection on such themes.

The play begins in 1895, the year of the trials which led Wilde, on account of his homosexuality, to two years' hard labour, broken health, exile and death in 1900. The celebrated aesthete and wit, the man who wrote the novel

Dorian Gray, plays such as *Lady Windermere's Fan* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the essay 'The soul of man under socialism', and much more, was brought low. He was killed by a vicious and hypocritical establishment for flaunting before them his talent, his desires and above all his contempt for late Victorian values.

Saint Oscar is not the narrative of these events. It is a play of ideas in which the ideas are very much at play. Eagleton captures well (using only one direct quote) the fluid dialogue, the ingenious turn of phrase and the pleasure with words which we associate with Wilde's own work. And darker meanings fall like shadows across the flippancy of every line; undercurrents of irony, fear and hate forever threaten to sweep Wilde away, although he somehow always manages to retain his balance.

It is a celebration with music and song, but there are hard questions too which are kept at centre stage. Why didn't Wilde commit himself to

nationalism in Ireland or socialism in England? How did he justify his individualism and his idiosyncrasy? Why did the enemy feel it necessary to destroy him? (Significantly the enemy is personified here by the baleful Loyalist Edward Carson, rather than by Queensberry, the outraged father.) Eagleton's answers overestimate the destabilising potential of Wilde's use of language and the subversive power of the prefigurative gesture which his whole life and work is said to represent. But his play (on the page at least) gives much to chew on, restores Wilde to an integrated artistic and political context, and makes me laugh.

Trevor Griffiths has an impressive record behind him in the theatre, on television and in the cinema, with work like *The Party*, *Comedians*, *Occupations*, *Oi for England* and the script (with Warren Beatty) for the film *Reds*. He has just finished a script for a major film about Tom Paine, and is glad to be back with actors. 'This is the first time that I've directed somebody else's play.' So why is he doing it?

'I've known Terry for years. This piece is extraordinarily well-written and is formally very interesting. The exchanges between Oscar and Lady Wilde, Richard Wallace, Edward Carson and Bosie operate by and large within a realist mode. What they're framed by is Oscar camping it up on stage. It's an evening with Oscar Wilde as well. What holds the

exchanges together is Oscar monologuing to the audience.

'This formal tension is incredibly difficult to actualise in performance on stage. I'm speaking in the middle of rehearsals, and everybody feels it, especially the actor playing Oscar. One moment you're straight out to the audience in a wholly Brechtian way, the next you're trapped in a discourse which is intellectually very interesting but is not what the English think of as particularly theatrical. Now I've always maintained, and my plays bear witness, that we decide what is theatrical, not history and tradition, because we know what that means.'

Luckily for Griffiths the writing seems to carry the arguments. Take this, after Wilde refuses to demonstrate in Trafalgar Square because of 'those moronic-looking lions. You know I can't stand naturalistic art'.

Wallace: 'There's not much to choose between an aristocrat and an anarchist.'

Wilde: 'The upper classes are anarchists because they have supreme confidence in themselves; I'm an anarchist because I have no confidence in them whatsoever. Well no, that's not true: I'm hardly anarchistic at all. I break rules as a rule: there's logic in my licentiousness.'

Wallace: 'Or maybe you're just an old-fashioned individualist.'

Wilde: 'I'm a socialist because I'm an individualist. How can anyone be an

individual in this cesspit of a society? In my saintly devotion to my own ego I'm prefiguring the New Jerusalem, in which everyone will be able to be purely themselves. That's why I'm so bone idle: to bear witness to a time when nobody will need to work.'

Wallace: 'You can't run socialism as a private enterprise. Until everybody's free, nobody is.'

Griffiths was also drawn to the play by Field Day, and their concern for 'the play-making craft': 'The last 15 years of British theatre was dominated in terms of real quality by the marginal, radical groups, the 7:84s, the Red Ladders, the Monstrous Regiments. They've been wiped out as a deliberate act of cultural policy by this administration. Against the grain of all that Field Day was born and has thrived. Well, they're broke, but they keep on doing the work.'

There are personal-political reasons too for Griffiths's involvement. 'This was an opportunity to address an Irish audience, and to recover an Oscar Wilde from the depredations of a bad history, a history which is basically lies about crimes, British imperial history. I've got personal reasons, too, never having embraced the Irishness of my own shaping. I was raised as a Manchester Irish Catholic. My family are Connors from Clare. I wanted to do something in Ireland, of Ireland, about Ireland. So I've cast an all Irish company, the

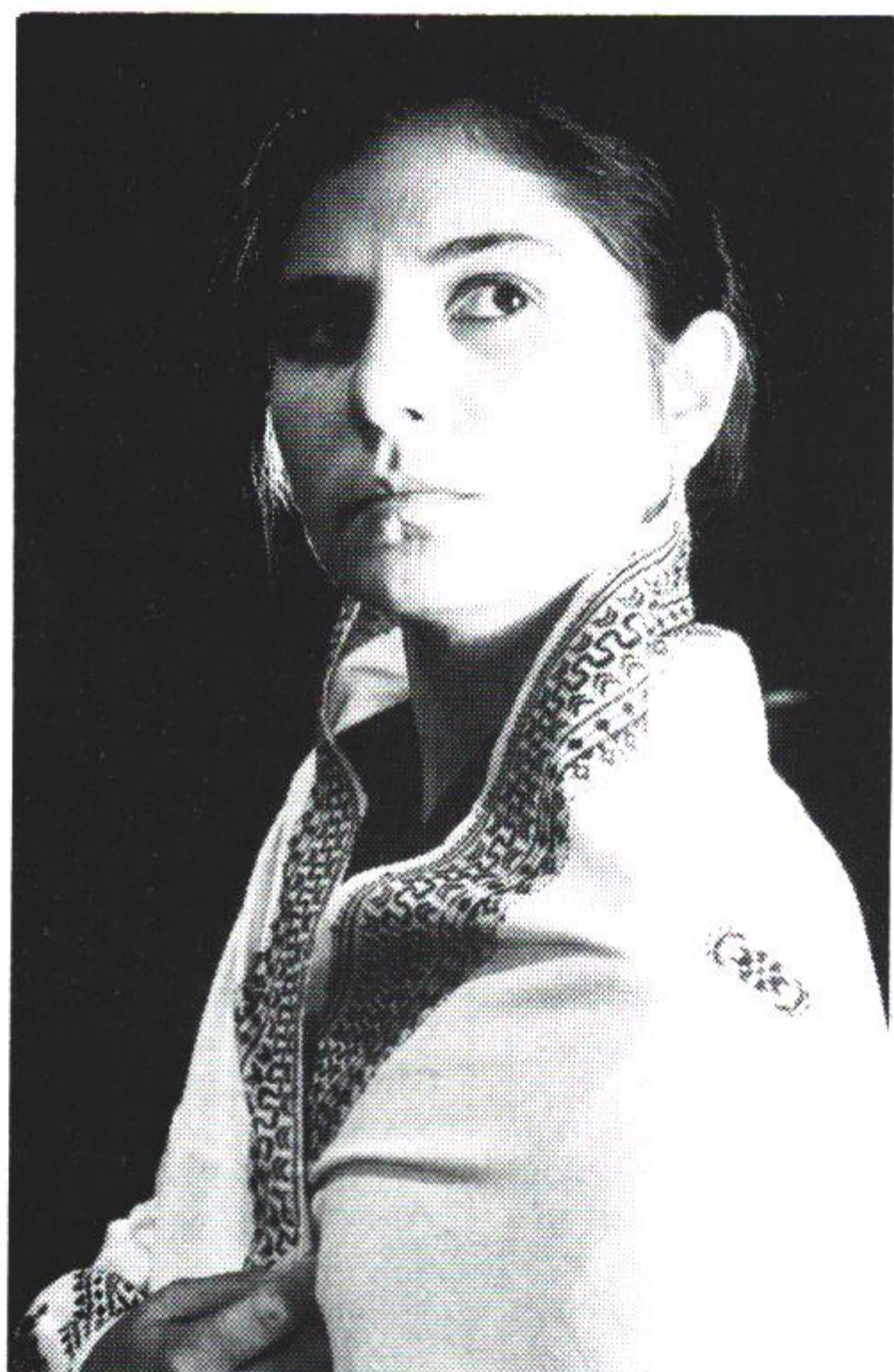
actors, technicians, everybody. It will be interesting, not just because we're playing to Irish audiences, but because to play the English characters with Irish actors empowers Irishness over Englishness in an important way. At least that's my theory, we'll see how it works.'

With Steven Berkoff's production of *Salome* being the toast of Dublin and Edinburgh recently, and the posthumous appearance in 1987 of Richard Ellmann's fine biography, the play may be well-timed to connect with a growing interest in Wilde. Carson tells Wilde in the play that 'the people need their fictions of order and all you give them is chaos....But we must keep your wit out of Ireland. I saw a chance to shut your mouth forever and I moved fast'. Eagleton and Griffiths and Field Day are trying to ensure that Wilde's voice is still heard above that of Carson. The Irish people will certainly need more than wit and chaos to see them through against Carson's heirs, but I am sure they will be glad nevertheless to have this fellow-traveller back on-side.

● *Saint Oscar* is at the Guildhall, Derry from 25-30 September, and will tour 21 other venues in Ireland before the end of November, when it comes to Britain.

● Terry Eagleton, *Saint Oscar*, Field Day Publications, £3.95.

● Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, Penguin, 1987, £6.99.



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Comic controversies

BASH STREET KIDS ROOL

The world of comics has always been fraught with ideological conflict, controversy and censorship. James Heartfield talked to Leo Baxendale, creator of such legendary subversives as the Bash Street Kids and Minnie the Minx

Comics, in case you hadn't noticed, are back. They're reading them, they're making films of them, they're even writing books about them. *Viz* sells 700 000 copies an issue. **Batmania stalks the land. Martin Barker is busy deconstructing *Bunty and Jackie in Comics: Ideology, Power and the Critics* (developing no doubt Dorfman and Mattelart's *How To Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*).**

● Comics have never been far from controversy, ever since Alfred Harmsworth put out his true-blue *Comic Cuts* in 1890, as part of the campaign against the supposedly corrupting influence of the Penny Dreadfuls on the Victorian working classes. In 1939 George Orwell, in his 'Boys' weeklies' essay, attacked *Magnet* and *Gem* from Harmsworth's Amalgamated Press, and *Wizard*, *Rover* and *Hotspur* from DC Thompson Ltd for their espousal of right-wing propaganda.

Governments on both sides of the Atlantic passed laws against the American crime and horror comics of the fifties. In the sixties the 'underground' comics such as Robert Crumb's *Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers* were at the centre of attention. A media panic in 1976 forced IPC to suspend the violent but popular *Action* after just a few months.

● The great survivor is the *Beano*. Founded in 1938, by the late fifties it was selling two million copies a week. One of the main reasons for that was Leo Baxendale, the man who in 1953 created Minnie the Minx, Little Plum and the Bash Street Kids, characters which sustain the *Beano* today. Baxendale worked flat out for 10 years before leaving in 1962. Now he writes, and his latest book, *On Comedy: The Beano and Ideology* is a fascinating memoir of his work in that decade. In it he stresses how his 'sets' avoided the traditionally disciplinarian comic schema of punishment and reward—whacking and feeds.

Leo Baxendale is in his late fifties now, living in Stroud, Gloucestershire, a long way from Bash Street. But beneath his full head of grey curls, his eyes still flash with enthusiasm as he talks in a soft Lancashire accent about his old friends, Minnie, Little Plum, Danny, Smiffy, Plug and the rest. The sense of mischief is still there—his new book reveals that Bash Street's Teacher and Minnie's Dad were loosely based on George Moonie, conservative editor of the *Beano*.

Baxendale was drawn to the *Beano* by David Law's 1951 creation Dennis the Menace: 'It was the attitude of the piece, the atmosphere of the sets and the sheer energy. It was so different from what had gone before. There was a different mood after the war. Sharper. Daffy Duck, the Goons, Hancock. Some of the stuff on the radio had been very spiky. The market was there. There were people out there in large numbers who liked uninhibited stuff.'

Editor Moonie was worried that the Bash Street Kids were a bit too uninhibited. 'He didn't seem to mind what Dennis did as long as he was whacked in the end. The Kids were an army and he obviously envisaged an army of police keeping them in order. I didn't envisage them being kept in order. I realised there was this punishment thing in Dennis. Dennis went further than comics had before. The whacking at the end became very obvious. I wasn't into the idea of punishment. Anyway it was alien to what I could do with comedy.'

Twice in the first three issues Moonie asked Baxendale to draw in a posse of police 'to keep the Kids in order'. Baxendale obliged, sort of. 'The police were approaching in formation two by two. The Bash Street Kids were preparing booby traps, really horrendous ones, for them. I had the police armed with all kinds of fearsome weaponry. George then asked me not to have them armed. After that I simply dropped the police. The Bash Street Kids had to be uncontainable.'

Baxendale also avoided practical jokes of the tin-tack on the seat variety, which he saw as put-downs, diminishing somebody's personality.

He liked combat though. 'I was congenitally unable simply to have Teacher talking to the kids to start the theme. While he was talking one kid would be pulling his pants forward and pouring ants in, or itching powder or treacle, somebody else would be sawing through the floor around his feet, somebody else would be snipping his tie off and somebody else would be squirting him with something. Very intricate choreography, but not a tin-tack on the seat.'

'What made the comedy was never quite the same. It could be a kind of war say between Minnie and her Dad, or Minnie and an army of boys trying to frustrate her ambitions. Or it could arise from mutual incomprehension—about how the Bash Street Kids saw the world and what should happen in the day, and how Teacher and the rest of the adult world saw what should happen. I've got a Bash Street here from 1960 where it isn't the teacher it's the very powerful, very arrogant figure of the medical examiner—the school doctor—who was brought down to psychological destruction by the Bash Street Kids. You can't really tell whether they meant it. It could just have happened that way.'

'Gormless self-assurance'

Perhaps the most eloquent comment on his work is his own conclusion to *On Comedy*: 'The worlds of Plum, Minnie and Bash Street were made, not as worlds of conformity, of certainty, but as worlds of complexity, change and sudden gusts of wind, with characters who did not know their place, but were full of gormless self-assurance in their own state of being.'

In the end it was very nearly Baxendale who was brought to physical and psychological destruction by a punishing schedule. 'I was working at a dead run seven days a week since 1953. Then in 1959 I started working through the night. In 1960 I took on the Three Bears. I don't think it was much coincidence that immediately after I took on that extra page I had a very dramatic illness, pneumonia, at Christmas.'

Baxendale did it for the money, but there was also what he calls the 'seduction'. 'It's very pleasurable to take your stuff to the *Beano* and first

of all have these guffaws of laughter from the staff and then later have the fan letters from the readers. It's also seductive to draw the stuff, the intensity and the sheer enjoyment of drawing. Even when it became obvious that I should ditch something it became psychologically impossible to cold-bloodedly get rid of them; it would be like discarding a child from your own family. In 1961 the Bash Street Kids were visiting the Parade of Guards. I would draw the entire regiment, hundreds of guardsmen, one by one. That was a daft thing to do. In the end I blew up. I left. I became very psychologically disoriented, but I don't want to overstate the case. I wasn't ga-ga.'

Two years ago Baxendale settled, amicably and out of court, a seven-year case for copyright on the *Beano* characters he invented. 'I believe that people should own the properties they've created. That's a very subversive idea given the nature of our capitalist society. It has implications for every facet of our society. I don't regard artists and writers as sacred cows.' During the case he wrote *The Encroachment*, an idiosyncratic study of 'the process of accumulating power and control', from enclosure to imperialism, from physical control first by the army and police, to ideological control by the print media and the education system. 'I've described the supplanting of task-oriented time with modern capitalist production time, and of course my experience with the *Beano* was a particular personal experience of that.'

Last year Baxendale organised the Stockport Festival of Cartoons with Alan Moore (*Watchmen* and *Brought to Light*, the comic book rendition of the Irangate scandal), Pat Mills (*Crisis*) and Steve Bell. The convention was a great success and gave rise to a touring exhibition, though Baxendale feels some of the punters take it too seriously. 'A lot of them are into mysticism. It's a wonderful and fascinating world and I've never felt like Disneyfying it by mystifying it.'

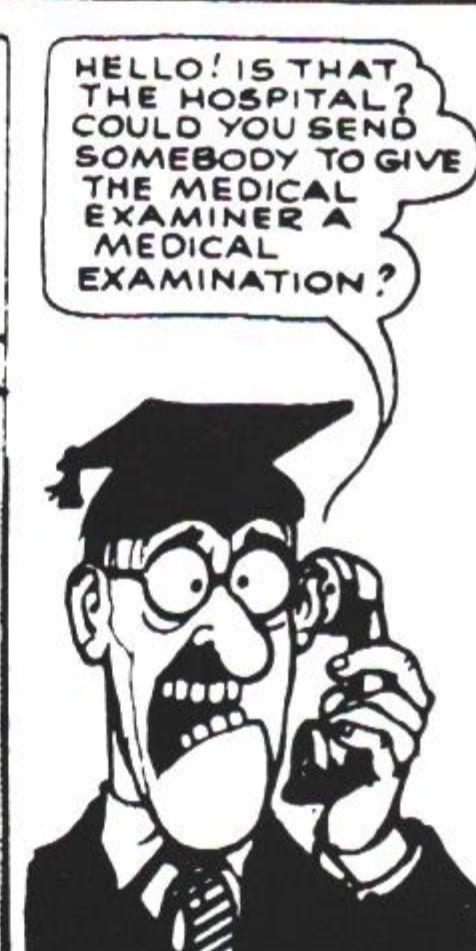
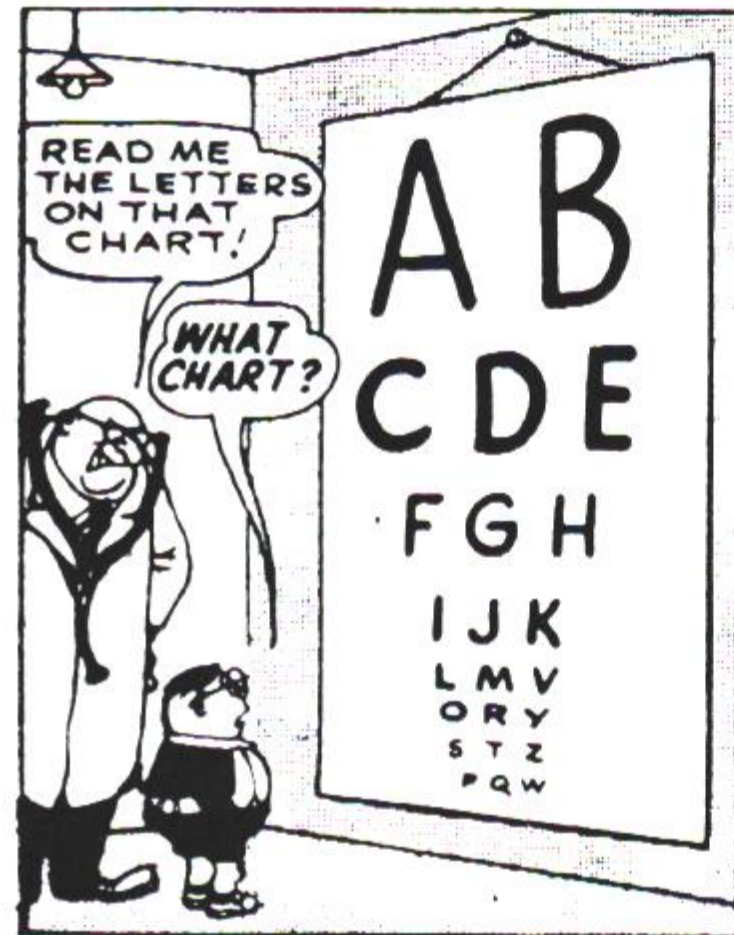
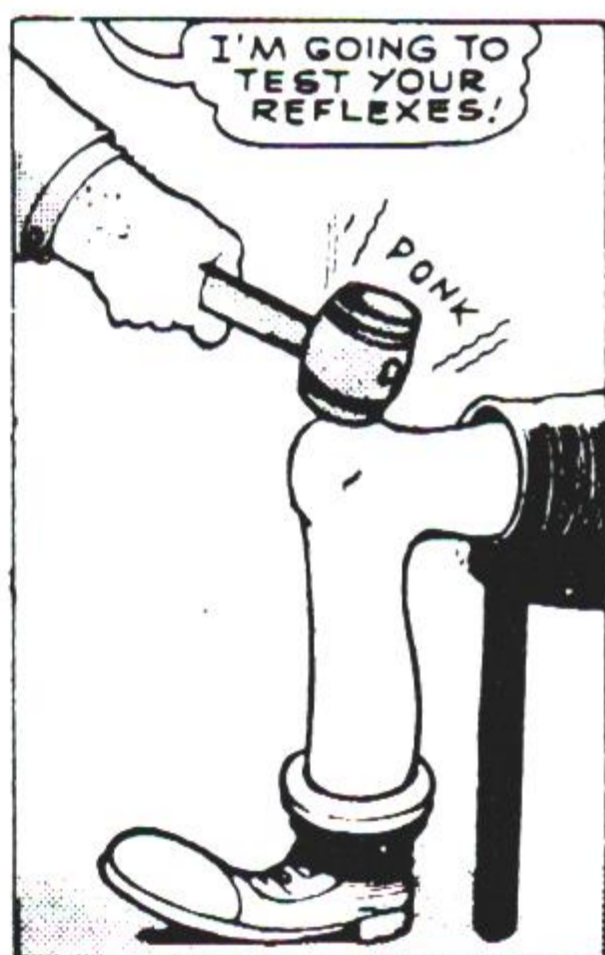
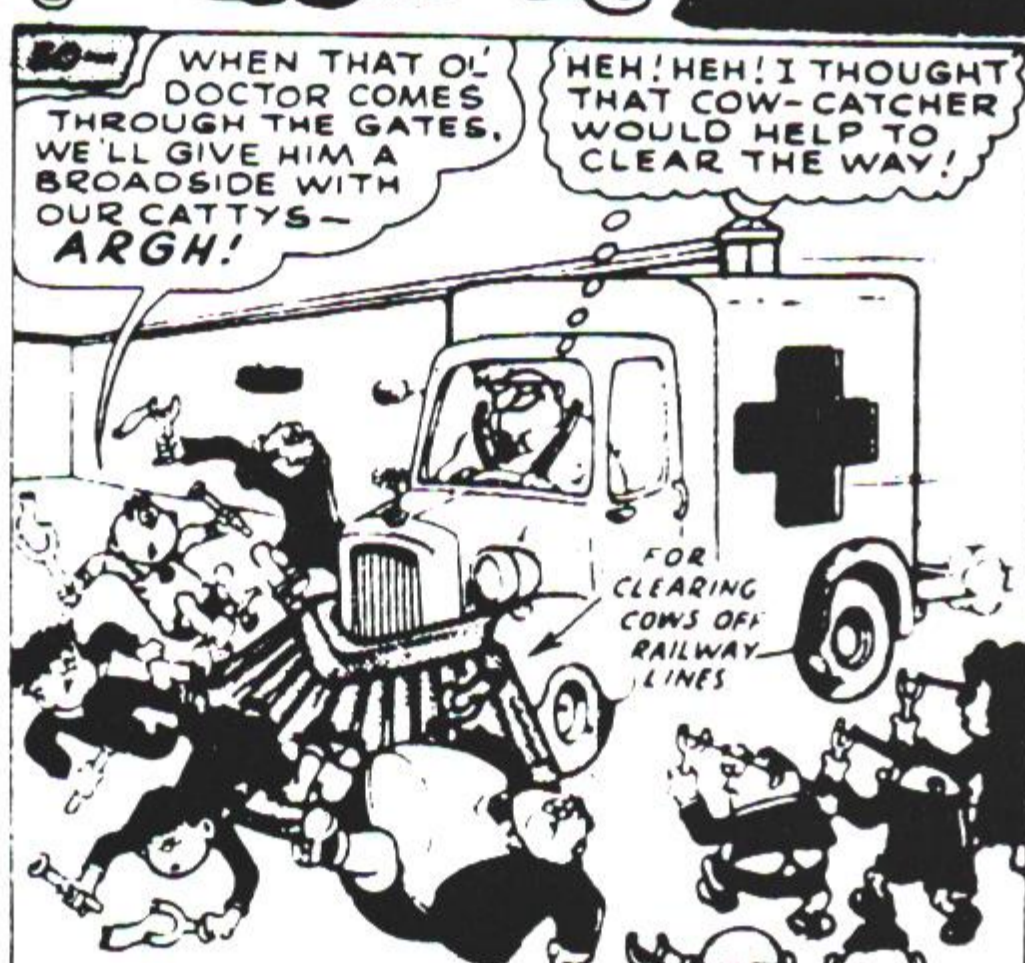
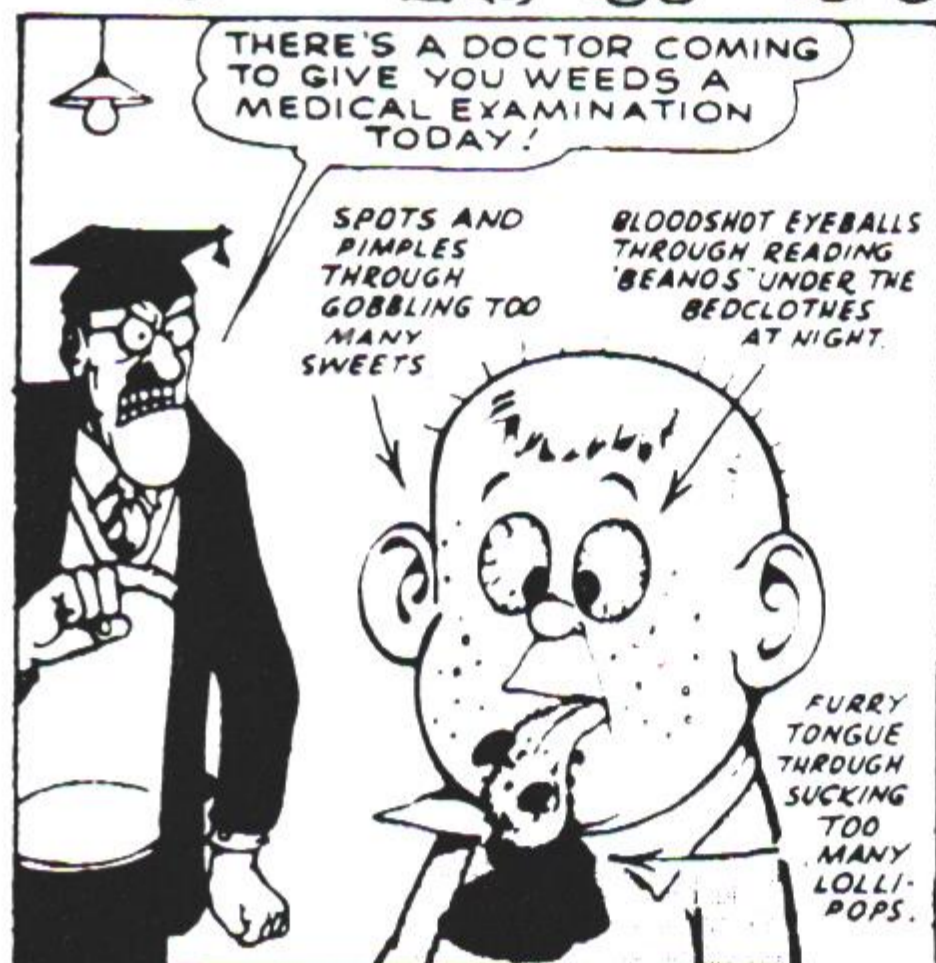
What about other comics? *Viz*? 'The *Beano* with knobs on. Geordie humour.' *Batman*? 'I never read that superhero stuff. It's a different tradition.' *Crisis*? 'I'm glad they've done it. But again, it's a bit serious.'

● Leo Baxendale's books *On Comedy: The Beano and Ideology* (1989) and *The Encroachment, Part One*, (1988) are available from Reaper Books, 11 Brockley Avenue, Eastcombe, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL6 7DU; £5 each, plus 67p postage.

● Martin Barker, *Comics: Ideology, Power and the Critics*, 1989, Manchester University Press, £40.

● The Celebration of Comics and Cartoons exhibition is at Preston from October to December, when it travels to Glasgow and then to London.

Bash Street Kids



Leo Baxendale

Film: *Spring in Paris, 1871*

COMMUNARDS

PHOTO: Frank Connor/Blowup

John Fitzpatrick spoke to director Ken McMullen as he puts the finishing touches to 1871, a film about the Paris Commune

I met Ken McMullen as he was discussing some final dubbing with Ana Padrao, the Portuguese actress who plays Severine, the central character in *1871*. He was very excited about how the film had gone. She was a little less enthused by one battle scene when a special effects charge, concealed in her dress to simulate a bullet striking home, went off rather too realistically. But the worst is over now. The bruise has faded, the seven weeks worth of film shot in Portugal is finished, and McMullen hopes to have it released in London next February. He talks a good film, and if it looks like he makes it sound, it should be worth waiting for.

'I first read about the Commune in 1980 when I was in Paris preparing *Ghost Dance*. I read Marx and Lissagaray and Alistair Horne. It had a very profound effect on me. The terror of the so-called forces of law and order against the Communards in one week was worse than any so-called revolutionary terror over the whole span of the French Revolution. I was so shocked and angry. That was the fundamental trigger for me to make the film. To stop it happening again. To learn the lessons. The Napoleonic period in France for example has a lot of resonances and similarities with the Thatcher period in Britain. People always imagine that the society that they are in is there for all time, that this is the order of things, and clearly that isn't the case.'

Death of innocence

McMullen sees the main lesson as the naivety and innocence of the Communards, summed up by their failure to take over the banks. 'If idealism is blind to objective reality you are very much at risk. You have to take the thing through to its conclusion and take the reins of state power without any attempt at indulgence with it.'

Despite his motives, he says he has tried to avoid making 'a politically didactic picture'. 'I believe people move to a political position out of circumstances, not out of revelation. The accumulated experiences of their lives guide them in a certain direction. A film has to work at the same level.



Ana Padrao as Severine: 'tantalising'

You accumulate the experience which guides the audience to a certain position. Those with doubts can sympathise with the things going on and with the confusions within the characters. Of course the film guides them to support the Commune and be shocked. Gallifet [one of Thiers' butchers] is brilliantly, sadistically played. You hate him, but he's fascinating to watch. He epitomises the extreme of the notion of the forces of law and order.'

Love and war

'There are three phases in the film, the first decadent period around the court is shot in long lavish shots, seductive and sensual. The second phase is war, the Franco-Prussian War lost by France, leading to the siege of Paris and its starvation. The form of the film changes. The shots are tighter, and have a slightly bleaker visual quality. The tracks are slower, one of them is at the endurance of the camera operator's nervous system. It

is very tense and explores space in a different way.

'The third phase is the Commune. This is lavish in a way, because I wanted to express the idealism of it. But as we move towards the end the method of editing becomes like Eisenstein's montage and starts fragmenting and using juxtaposition of images rather than tracking shots to say something. So there is a stylistic development going on.'

For plot, McMullen has used the standard device of a triangular love affair as a focus for examining the Commune's rise and fall. This raises an obvious danger. The big-budget movie *Reds* ostensibly adopted the same method in relation to the Russian Revolution, but ended up reducing the historic events to incidental background music for a conventional Hollywood romance. Has McMullen's £1.2m film escaped the trap? We await the results, but his track record and his intentions here suggest that there is a good chance it has.

'Severine is a young actress, based loosely around Zola's Nana. She is tantalising, sexually flirtatious, fascinating. At the beginning she is flippant and decadent and thinks that sleeping with the emperor is the way to social status and wealth. Throughout the film she becomes radicalised. The anger latent in her unconscious about the system which exploits her manifests itself. She becomes an active member of the Commune and fights for it. There are two men in love with her, an English aristocrat who procured her for the Prince of Wales and an Irish Fenian, a technician in the Paris theatre, a refugee. There is an exacerbated rivalry, sexual, class and national.

'The relationship between the Irish Fenian movement and Parisian revolutionary circles I have a particular interest in, having an Irish background. The discovery that the military commander of the Commune, Cluseret, had also been the military commander of the Irish Fenian movement was a profound historical element to use in the picture.' This is one of the links with the present day which McMullen is keen to emphasise. Another is 'Napoleon's edict "Capital must flow and flow. There must be no stop on capital. Go forth and enrich yourselves". The speculation and the Haussmannisation of Paris are so similar to the Docklands development and the mentality today. The debate today on how history should be taught in schools is exactly the debate that takes place in the film between Napoleon and Marx (played by the black actor and film director Med Hondo). Napoleon is having his portrait painted dressed as Julius Caesar. Marx appears in the mirror and begins to speak "Men make their own history but they do not make it just as they please".'

'Wholesome terror'

McMullen is excited too about the way the film sounds. There are six songs written for it, some sung by Jacqueline Dankworth, and he has used the same musical team of Barry Guard, David Cunningham and Simon Heyworth who assisted him on *Zina*, his film about Trotsky's daughter. There is a stirring rendition of the 'Internationale', (which he says was written very shortly afterwards) and the climax is also accompanied by parts of Shostakovich's 'Siege of Leningrad'.

Let's hope that the film lives up to expectations, and bears out the concluding words of Engels' introduction to Marx's *Civil War In France*: 'Of late, the social-democratic philistine has once more been filled with wholesome terror at the words: Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Well and good gentlemen, do you want to know what this dictatorship looks like? Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.'



PHOTO: Frank Connor/Blowup

Communards' last stand

THE COMMUNE

On 2 September 1870 Louis Bonaparte, Napoleon III, surrendered to Bismarck's troops in the Franco-Prussian War. On 4 September a republic was declared in Paris, under a Government of National Defence. The Prussians besieged the city but met heroic resistance from the Parisians; every person capable of bearing arms had joined the National Guard. But the government, led by Adolphe Thiers, was more fearful of the armed workers of Paris than of the German troops. It capitulated to Prussia on 28 January 1871. The National Guard, however, kept their arms, and the victorious Prussians kept their distance.

On 18 March Thiers sent government troops to seize the Guard's artillery. Paris rose against them and Thiers fled to Versailles. Civil war was declared in France. On 26 March elections took place in the city and on 28 March the elected councillors formally proclaimed the Paris Commune. It was to be a model for a nationally organised free federation of communes throughout France. What had started as a desperate patriotic, anti-monarchist protest had turned into a revolution.

For the first time in history the working class held political power—for two months. The Commune made a fatal mistake. It underestimated the barbaric ferocity with which the bourgeoisie would react. It did not pursue Thiers to Versailles when it

had the chance to wipe out the enemy. It did not seize the Bank of France, to hit the enemy where it hurt. Thiers regrouped, with Bismarck's help, and on 21 May his troops re-entered Paris. 'I shall be pitiless', he promised, and was as good as his word. For eight days there was a frenzy of slaughter in which thousand upon thousand of the Communards were killed, young and old, men and women, prisoners and non-combatants.

The Commune was gone, but what it had achieved could not be obliterated. It had shown that the working class could govern, and proved in Marx's words that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes'. The existing apparatus has to be smashed and a new one built in its place. The Communards' first decree abolished conscription and the standing army, and institutionalised the arming of the people as the only way in which the working class could retain power. They decreed the separation of church and state, and the freedom of education. All administrative, judicial and educational posts were to be elective, responsible and revocable. No official or member of the Commune would receive more than a workman's wage. Two days after its last gasp Marx wrote: 'Working men's Paris, with its Commune, will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society.'

Banned Irish video

BEHIND THE MASK

You may have seen the headlines recently about Brendan 'Darkie' Hughes being in the USA, with the usual speculation and misinformation about this 'top', 'near-mythical' Irish republican, and photographs bearing no resemblance to the man. See and hear the real Brendan Hughes in *Behind the Mask*, now being shown around Britain. It features interviews with former leading members of the IRA and was a highlight of the recent Irish Freedom Movement film festival **As Not Seen On TV**.

We reprint here an edited version of a review of the film by Gráinne MacDara, first published in *Andersonstown News*: **Andersonstown is at the heart of republican West Belfast**.

As the Twentieth Anniversary syndrome marches across our screens, analysing us, telling us about our struggle and why we still need the troops here in a variety of slick formats, but all with carefully concealed biases, it is a refreshing change to hear ordinary people speaking for themselves, clearly, simply.

Behind the Mask is a low-budget film made by Activision, a collective of independent film and video makers based in London. Whilst the collective never received Channel 4 workshop status, material from *Behind the Mask* was actively considered for transmission on the prime-time *Despatches* series. The ban soon took care of that and the programme, like *Mother Ireland*, joined a still-expanding list of the unseen and the unheard.

Reluctant recruits

The film gives a rare insight into the reasons behind the birth and sustained existence of the IRA over the past two decades. It begins to answer why anyone would or could endure such levels of privation and why such palpably ordinary men and women would voluntarily put up with all the beatings, the years in jail and the loneliness with such little romanticism or social glory (more representative than Shane Paul O'Doherty but less convenient for the British establishment, unfortunately).

Brendan Hughes is clearly "the star" of the video, a reluctant recruit to the IRA in his youth—dragged, like many others, into an Armageddon not of his own making, his life irredeemably

transformed by the litany of ghastly events which characterise our collective past. He speaks without rancour, with humour and with a compassion that comes from those who have suffered loss and have struggled to make sense of why. He speaks quietly of the "loving comradeship" which bonds prisoners together, of nights spent discussing sex, and politics and the stars in the endless black nights of the hunger-strikes. A rare glimpse of men in desperate circumstances, told by a man without embarrassment.

"We were all weak and frightened. None of us wanted to die." Haunting images of a prisoner with listless, hungry eyes staring pitifully at a camera from a comfortless bed in a white cell. This picture of Brendan Hughes after weeks and weeks on hunger-strike, and the image of him standing at the peace-line between the Falls and the Shankill saying how much he wants the wall to be taken down and how much he abhors violence are conveyed with authenticity. I believed him and I agreed with him when he said "this wall symbolises the British presence in Ireland—division".

It's an imperfect film too in many ways. Personally I thought the inclusion of Gerry Adams and Danny Morrison was superfluous, though others may disagree. I found the black backdrop against which most of the interviews were conducted rather dull, bordering on the sinister at times, and the archive footage overly interspersed in parts.

Perhaps the most fundamental flaw was the lack of coherent strength of a women's perspective and what it meant from a woman's point of view not only to have been in the IRA, but also what it was like to have had to live with someone who was. But that wasn't necessarily the film makers' fault. Perhaps somebody else will make that video in the future, and I hope it will be as absorbing as *Behind the Mask*.

● During October, *Behind the Mask* is being shown around Britain by the Irish Freedom Movement. For details ring (01) 375 1702.

● *Behind the Mask*, an Activision Irish Project, available from Activision, c/o BM IFM, London WC1N 3XX. Individuals: £25, organisations: £40, institutions: £70 (includes p&p, cheques payable to Activision).

Is it a dog's life?

PUPPY LOVE AND PET HATE

Kevin Young secedes from our 'nation of animal lovers'

A windswept hillside; a young girl pours out her heart to an unseen confidant, bitterly reproaching the entire male population for her ex-boyfriend's behaviour. 'You're the only one I can trust', she says, and the camera pans on to her lolling-tongued collie dog, giving her the 'I-understand-and-sympathise' look that made the producers of *Lassie* very rich.

Dog food commercials like this are big business. Fourteen million dogs and cats occupy privileged positions on Britain's hearthrug, in hallways and even in their owners' beds. These pampered, unproductive members of society eat almost £1 billion worth of petfood a year. In return they cause damage costing hundreds of millions, bite one million people a year, foul pavements and parks (annually causing several children to lose an eye through infection), and have sex with unsuspecting trouser legs.

Is the joy of pet-owning worth scraping the estimated (I hope it's estimated) 1m kilos of dogshit deposited every day off our shoes? Most British people would say yes. George Orwell described the British national characteristics as an obsession with sport, suspicion of foreigners and sentimentality over animals. Even in America (where there are two pets for every one child), they regard the British as a nation of animal lovers.

Perhaps this is because Britain was the first nation to develop emotional attachments to animals. Before industrialisation the masses used animals strictly to provide food and clothing and to work. The enclosures which drove people off the land ended their working relationship with animals. As many were forced to seek work in the new cities of British capitalism, nature ceased to be the threatening force that they had struggled against to survive. Instead, the countryside and the life and animals associated with it came to be looked upon as welcome relief from the dirty, crowded cities.

Dogs and cats acquired a new value as the apparent embodiments of natural values—warmth, loyalty, constancy—that were sorely lacking in the cold, uncertain and fast-changing world of the industrial revolution. Pets had arrived. In 1802 the first maudlin dog book, *The General Character of a Dog*, was published, followed by many similar



Alienated individual (left) and object with instincts

works describing dogs as uniquely gentle, loyal, etc.

This outbreak of compassion did not extend to people. When Britain was winning its reputation as a nation of animal lovers it was also, in Ireland and the other colonies, becoming the greatest nation of human-killers the world had ever known. While the middle classes pampered their pets, the working classes in Britain suffered terrible degradations. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was launched in 1834, and warned

schoolchildren to be nice to animals; the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was not formed until 1884.

Modern Britain is alienated from nature more than any other society. Well over 90 per cent live in urban areas, there is no peasantry, and animals play a productive role for only a handful of people. For the rest of us, they are idle pets. Yet this alone cannot explain why people become so attached to animals.

People are not just alienated from

nature today; they are also atomised and alienated from each other. And even though their lives may no longer be controlled by natural forces, they are now controlled by other people and by money. They use pets as a device to alleviate all of these problems.

Of course, if you ask pet-owners why they allow animals to mess up their homes, nobody will admit to relying on their cat for emotional support or to keeping a dog because they feel socially inadequate. They will give you all sorts of spurious reasons why their pet is a useful addition to the household.

'My pet guards the house.' Even cat-owners will try this one on, claiming that their 10-year old Siamese is 'sensitive' to the presence of strangers. In fact only a few breeds of dog make good guards when highly-trained. If they could, most pets would lead a burglar to the silverware for a piece of meat.

'I value my pet because it's aesthetically pleasing.' Some pet-owners wax zoological as if they really have a scientific interest in their cocker spaniel's bone structure. Others say off-handedly that they just like the feel of their cat's fur. Suggest that they stuff it, so that they can have the sensation without the fuss, and this excuse flies out of the window (followed by the suggester) in a flurry of expletives.

Mr Napoleon

'My pet is amusing—it does tricks.' This is the best one. Have these people never heard of television? How many hours of amusement can you get from watching a dog roll over? Lately, videos of your favourite pets engaging in endearing activities were put on the market. They did not sell. Why? Because the real reasons people keep pets are not utilitarian at all.

Probably the most important reason for pets is that they make the owners feel important in a world which denies most people any status and influence. Relationships with pets are easy to enter into, uncomplicated and direct. A dog or a cat doesn't care whether you're bald or have varicose veins or can string a sentence together. It may even appreciate you more if you smell. All you need do to communicate is to pat its head, stroke its fur and get out the tin-opener. Your social standing, what you do for a living, doesn't matter; you are the master.

This is why more than half of all American hospitals use animals in a therapeutic capacity. Those who are wholly dependent, those who are shunned by human society, can regain some self-esteem through relationships with animals. Many reports have documented the therapeutic value of pets to everybody from emotionally disturbed children to elderly heart patients. As Aldous Huxley said, to his dog, every man is Napoleon.

A pet can also be a source of

physical and emotional warmth, countering feelings of being lonely and left out. Try giving your workmate or neighbour an unsolicited pat on the head or cuddle and you may end up receiving rather more than a pat back. Nights on the tiles permitting, pets are always there when you need them. They won't gossip about you, laugh at you, make bitchy remarks about your clothes or leave you for another. No matter what happens to you, the relationship doesn't change.

The true reasons for keeping pets relate to deficiencies in relationships between people. Affiliative needs, loyalty, the satisfaction gained from a gesture of patronage—these are missing from our human associations but can be artificially created through

pets. Isn't this a positive reason for encouraging pet-keeping? Absolutely not. It simply illustrates human alienation. The relationships we build with pets are not real. They are a reflection of the needs of the owners.

Animals are objects. They react instinctively to their environment and to their owners—they cannot attempt to understand or change their relationship to either. They have no consciousness—the ability to reconstruct reality in the mind and then act upon the thought. This is the difference between the best of hive-building bees and the poorest of architects. The bee acts on unchanging, unconscious instinct, while the architect first invents a model and then puts his thought into practice.

In this sense dogs, cats and the rest are surely closer to trees than they are to us. They have no moods or emotions in a human sense, they cannot be good, bad or sympathetic—these are just characteristics assigned to pets by their owners. Pets are simply a part of nature which humanity has transformed and made subservient and dependent for a purpose. Only people can transform nature and leave their imprint on the world. Consciousness sets humanity above all other species.

Work like dogs

The confusion about pets arises because capitalism treats people like animals and animals like humans. We are denied the opportunity to use our

consciousness to change society and ourselves, and told instead to work like dogs. Isn't the struggle to transform our social environment, by making people more conscious of the source of our problems and of our potential for solving them, more worthwhile than celebrating the ability of capitalism to reduce us to the level of animals?

When the existing constraints on human behaviour have been removed, when we live in a society that does not enforce competition and alienation among people, there is unlikely to be much need for pets. The concept of a furry, fanged bundle of instinct being 'man's best friend' will seem as odd in the future as 'pet rocks' do today.

SELLING THE FUTURE SHORT

Frank Cottrell-Boyce on the future—as seen on TV adverts for financial services

I was always being told to have a bit put by in case of a rainy day. Saving up was part of the general doomsday scenario. There's a hint of Noah and vengeance from heaven in that rainy day. Your nest egg should be stored with your distress flares and cagoule; and incubated by the Man from the Prudential—a reassuringly lugubrious figure who collected his premium at the door, like Death. Most of the savers I knew were putting by for their own funerals—afraid that their loved ones would go before them or turn against them and leave them in a pauper's grave.

Death-in-life

These half-formed fears and chill forebodings are the kind of things a nifty adman would normally play on like the keys of a cash register. But the current crop of building society and pension fund adverts are humming a more measured tune. The standard approach is to lay the seven ages of man before us as a stately progress towards the pension fund pay-out.

In one we follow a young couple from parenthood and *thirtysomething* prosperity through middle age into a conservatory and a kind of *Fresh Fields* death-in-life. Forty years in the future the kids still love them and they still love each other. They still have the same rocking chair. All is well. Another shows people at different stages in their lives saying, I want to be... John Barnes/Green/a Dad. Their wishes mature with age, like their policies. This must have looked quite sassy on paper (I want to be

somewhere else/I want to be in goal), but each scene is offered with the same sacramental gravity and underscored with the same old stringy English melancholy. The tone is the Book Of Ecclesiastes (a time to live, a time to die) with all the nasty times edited out.

Both of these ads have the same unstated premise: as you go on you will go up. The rocking chair will still be there, but it will be moved from a flat to something approaching a country estate. The young man who wanted to be Dad in a municipal park finally achieves parenthood in a designer ceramics gallery. All these of course promote the nuclear family and the sweaty clamber up the property ladder as inevitable, effortless and fulfilling, almost a part of nature. In fact one campaign uses a kind of swirly semi-abstract account of life on a mid-European peasant holding as a kind of metaphor for this Home Counties dream. Abbey Life uses the planting of crops, the implication being that the building societies provide the manure.

Where's Stingray?

It is easy to see why the financial sector affects an Olympian composure. The studied lack of hard sell reinforces the confident assumption that growth—of your family, your policy and your bedding plants—is natural and safe. The further the high street investor is kept from the volatile, disaster-prone world of the City (where these firms operate) the better. The laid back, cabbage patch approach is far better than being

pushy or trying too hard. That could undermine confidence.

The overall effect though is curiously unsettling. The projections of the future have an unconvincing similarity with the present. Forty years from now, nuclear war will not have broken out. Ecological disaster will not have smitten us. Even interior decorating will be pretty much as it is today, even if a bit up-market. Certainly there'll be space for your IKEA rocking chair. There was a time, in my youth, when we all thought technology was moving so fast that we would have *Thunderbirds* and *Stingray* before we were 21. Suddenly, we look into the future and we see only the past—the nuclear family, the garden suburb, the peasant gathering the crops.

Fear is the key

These adverts have been produced by a society that cannot envisage any destination for itself—whether a brave new technological paradise, or a post-nuclear hell. The current Norwich Union ad goes out of its way to point out that the external threat to the West—the Red Menace—has withered away. This is the one with the cheery Soviet offering us a fancy new sports car. It is the only one of these adverts with a hint of science fiction, and that is nothing more than a few new optional extras on your Nissan Bluebird. As I watched I kept thinking—is this a society that fears nothing, not even Soviet warheads, any more?; or is it a society that is so paralysed with fright that it cannot

contemplate the future at any level?

Certainly at a personal level people in the West would rather get a surgeon to mutilate them than face up to age and death. It is impossible to imagine an insurance advert which said—get insurance because one day you're going to die. On a social level what does it mean when a society cannot imagine either its ultimate goal or its own destruction? I remembered Cavafy's poem, *The Barbarians*, where the Roman citizens are floored by the failure of the barbarians to come and destroy them: 'Now what's going to happen to us without the barbarians? They were, those people, a kind of solution.'

You filthy devils

If you want to see the beginnings of the new 'solution' look at the recent petrol adverts. Green capitalism is proposing that the enemy has been you all along, you are the filthy devil who's been pumping filth into the rivers and the air. I see a future in which long lines of motorists will wander over the land, bewailing their past sins, like the mendicant flagellants of the middle ages who thought to save all mankind from the plague by punishing themselves. They will chain themselves to their steering wheels and burn off penitential quantities of the green elixir. The foxes in their holes will gratefully inhale their fumes. Children will put their noses to the exhausts and breathe in the life-giving odour of lead-free petrol.

Labour MP Brian Wilson thought it 'extraordinary, a great change for Scottish football and Scottish society'. Scottish National Party MP Jim Sillars declared himself 'delighted' by this demonstration that 'Scotland is a multi-religious, multicultural society in which everyone should be considered without reference to their background, race or nationality'. Scotland's biggest-selling newspaper, the *Daily Record* called it 'a brave blow against bigotry which has besmirched all Scotland's reputation for so long', and covered the story on pages one, two, three, 17, 18, 19, 20, 34, 35 and 36 (out of 36).

The momentous event which caused all the fuss was that Maurice Johnston, footballer, changed his mind about rejoining Celtic (a club supported largely by Glasgow Catholics), and signed instead for Rangers (a club largely supported by Glasgow Protestants). It is not strictly true to say that Johnston is the first Catholic to play for Rangers since the First World War. Don Kichenbrand, a South African Catholic, did don the blue shirt in the fifties; but since he had to keep his religion a secret and join the Masonic Lodge before being allowed on to the pitch at Ibrox Park, he doesn't really count.

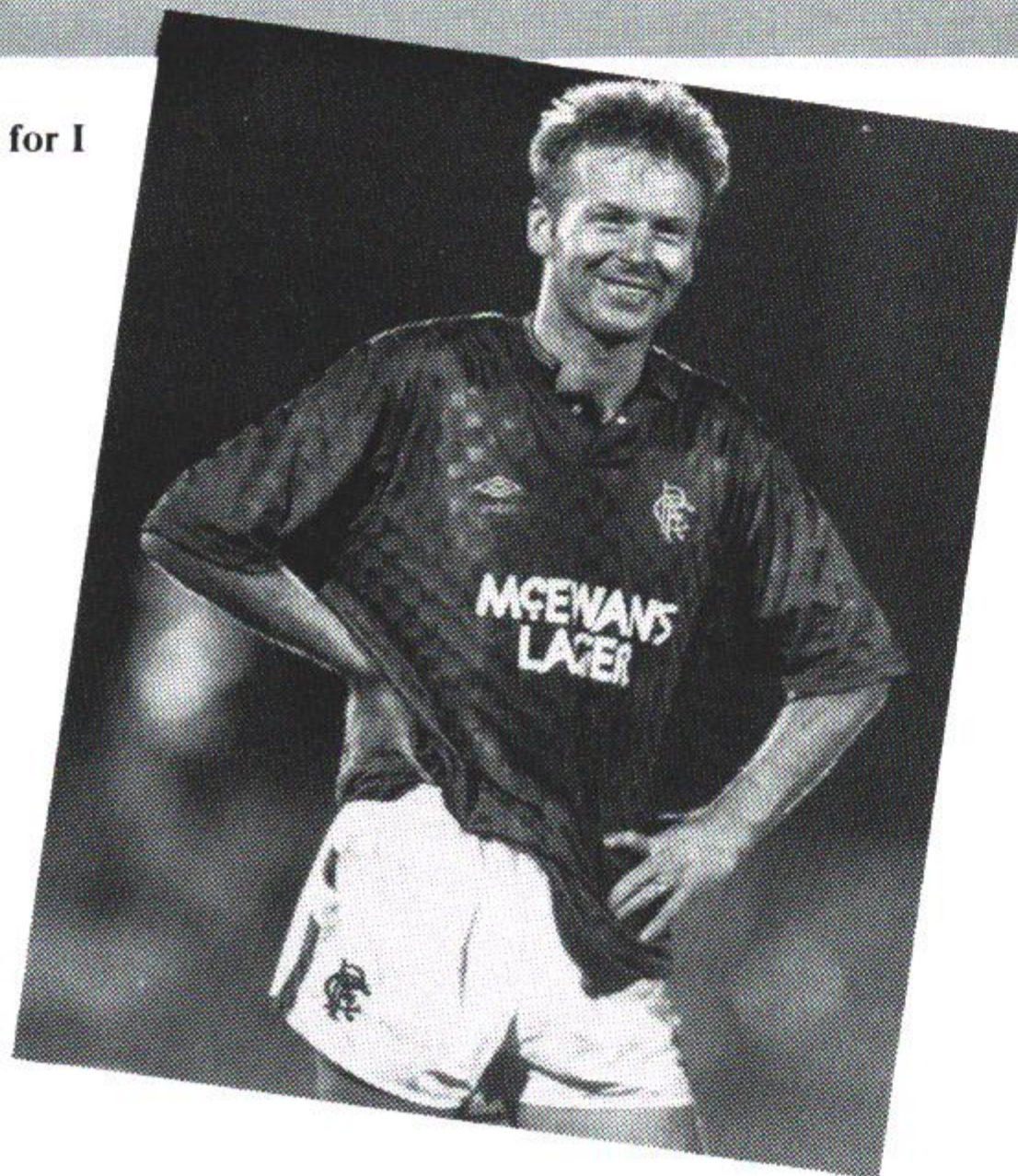
£1m and a castle

Whether they are imposed in a shipyard or a football stadium, sectarian employment policies are a bad thing. But let's keep the Johnston affair in perspective. Contrary to the impression given by the Scottish politicians and press, he was not signed to deliver a 'blow against bigotry'. And nor will his appearance in a Rangers strip have that effect.

Johnston and Rangers came together for commercial reasons. In May he was all set to leave the French club Nantes and return to Celtic, his home club. 'Deep down', he said, 'I've always wanted to be back with Celtic'. He was even paraded before Celtic fans at the cup final against Rangers. By the end of June, rumours were going around that Johnston would, in fact, be going to the other side of Glasgow. But the player seemed keen to scotch them. 'Certainly I won't go to Rangers', he said on 25 June, 'they don't sign Catholics and anyway I don't want to go to Ibrox'. Then, on 1 July, Celtic issued a statement on Johnston, announcing that 'there is no room at Parkhead for someone who does not want to play for the club'. Ten days later, 'MoJo' signed for Rangers.

Johnston's motives in changing tack seem to have been strictly financial. Celtic were set to pay Nantes £1.2m for his services. He would get £250 000 for himself. But he wanted £600 000. Celtic couldn't afford it, Rangers could. They gave him £750 000 for signing on, which was topped up to £1m by his wages. In his book published last year, Johnston said that he would only sign for

'Bless me Father, for I have signed'



The Maurice Johnston affair

'RANGERS CANNAE SIGN A CATHOLIC...'

goes the old refrain among Glasgow Rangers fans.

And the arrival of Maurice Johnston, suggests Derek Owen, is unlikely to change their tune

Rangers if they gave him £1m cash and bought him Stirling Castle to live in. He got the money and is living in a mansion belonging to Rangers manager Graeme Souness—which, surrounded by 10-foot high razor-spiked walls and surveillance cameras, is probably considerably more secure than the castle.

So much for Maurice the mercenary. But why did Rangers sign him? It was, as the Mafia say, strictly business; nothing personal. In November 1988 when David Murray bought Rangers for £6m, Souness the manager became a director with a personal holding of £600 000. These are new-style businessmen; they want a club that wins on the field and thus makes money off it. To this end, Souness made it clear that he would sign the best players available, regardless of local tradition. Before signing a Catholic, however, he bought a black player, half a dozen England internationals, South Africans and an Israeli.

Murray and Souness finally took the plunge and went for Johnston as a proven goalscorer—and as a sound business move. Rangers are already one of Britain's biggest and richest clubs but Murray is looking further afield. There is much talk of a European super league being set up, and Rangers could not take part in this major money-spinner with their Catholic bar intact; the big clubs in Catholic countries like Italy and Spain would not be too keen to entertain them. More immediately, it

was rumoured that the club could lose sponsorship deals worth £5m unless a Catholic was signed. Recruiting Johnston was a way, not to sweep sectarianism off the Ibrox terraces, but to polish up the club's corporate image. As one relieved Glasgow journalist put it, 'now we can all be Rangers supporters'.

Old habits die hard. Having decided to sign a Catholic, Rangers then did it in a manner which caused the maximum outrage and embarrassment over at Celtic. A key player in this game was Bill McMurdo, Johnston's agent. He got £200 000 out of the deal—and, no doubt, a great deal of satisfaction. For McMurdo is a well-known Loyalist who only takes off his sash when doing lucrative business with Catholic players like Johnston. He was a founder of the Scottish Unionist Party, formed in 1987 to stand against the Tories in protest at their 'betrayal of Ulster' in the Anglo-Irish agreement. His Uddingston residence is painted red, white and blue. McMurdo seems to have worked hard at shafting Celtic; it was later revealed that he had been negotiating with Souness as early as 21 May. It seems safe to assume that the agent was not counselling the manager on the need to bridge the sectarian divide.

The media notion that Johnston's arrival would dampen the sectarian ardour of hardline Rangers fans was immediately put to question by their reaction. They burned scarves and season tickets, laid wreaths at Ibrox which read '116 years of tradition

ended', bought t-shirts bearing the legend 'Fuck off Mo, Rangers and Catholics don't go', and rang up newspapers threatening to kill Johnston and burn down the ground. As a drinker in the Masonic Arms, Larkhall, an infamous Loyalist den, told reporters, 'Rangers are for blue-noses, not for Catholics'.

These passions might have cooled for the moment. But the idea that the colour of Maurice Johnston's shirt could have any impact on the divisions in Glasgow society is plainly ridiculous. If those divisions were only about football, Rangers' Catholic bar would have passed into history years ago. But the sectarianism that is so starkly shown up at 'auld firm' games comes from outside football—indeed, from outside Scotland.

'Fenian blood'

Ireland is the biggest factor. Two-way emigration between Scotland and Ireland created strong affinities between the Catholics and Protestants of Glasgow and their respective counterparts in Ireland. Since the nineteenth century, the twists and the turmoil of the Irish conflict have found reflection on the streets and in the workplaces of Glasgow. Football has not been immune. From their foundation, most Scottish football clubs were predominantly Protestant, like Scotland itself. The major exceptions were Celtic, Hibernian from Edinburgh and Dundee Harp, which were set up as Irish (Catholic) associations. Rangers' Catholic bar was imposed when further exchanges of workers between Glasgow and Belfast took place during the Irish Home Rule crisis before the First World War.

Today, Rangers fans remain predominantly Protestant. Most, to one degree or another, support the Union Jack, the Queen, anti-Catholicism, 'Ulster' remaining British, and Loyalist paramilitaries in Northern Ireland. Celtic fans are mainly Catholics, with a strong tradition of support for Irish republicanism. If they pulled down Ibrox and Celtic Park, that division would remain so long as the Irish conflict continues. It cannot be bridged through football, or religion, but only through politics—by a secular campaign for Ireland's democratic right to self-determination, that could isolate the immovable sectarians.

The Johnston affair does not have the significance which has been claimed for it. But like many other Celtic supporters, I do feel betrayed. Maurice Johnston has lived and played in Glasgow long enough to know the score with Rangers fans. No doubt many of them will cheer him this season (so long as he scores goals, that is). But in between the claps for the Catholic, the blue-noses from the Masonic Arms will still be singing songs about being 'up to our necks in Fenian blood'.

John Barnes

'THE WHITE NIGGER'

Dave Hill, 'Out of His Skin': The John Barnes Phenomenon, Faber & Faber, £10.99/£4.99

My first visit to Anfield was unforgettable: 1975, Liverpool v Leeds. Since coming to England it had been my ambition to stand on the Kop. 'We hate Pakis', came the chant as I went through the turnstile to be met by a hail of gob. 'There ain't no black in the Union Jack, that's why the Pakis can fuck off back.' For 90 minutes I had to defend myself against what seemed like the whole of Liverpool. I was then chased out of Liverpool 4 by a gang of supporters chanting 'Kill the coons'.

National game

Racism has always been part of terrace culture. As Britain's national game, football embodies Britain's national values. And nowhere is this more apparent than in Liverpool. The famed Scouse parochialism has helped to ensure an intensity of racism, which finds reflection in the city's best-known institution, Liver-

pool FC—a club with the additional problem of an Orange background and all of the intolerance that implies.

Scouse and chips

Racism on the terraces is little different today. But unlike 15 years ago, black spectators can be found in most grounds, and black players now grace the highest reaches of the game. Except, that is, in Liverpool. Go to Anfield and there are as few black faces on the Kop today as in 1975. And the playing staff at Liverpool has remained virtually all-white.

Only two black players have donned the red shirt—Howard Gayle and now John Barnes. Gayle was a local lad from Liverpool 8, whom everyone agrees was a player of immense skill. Yet he played a only handful of games for the club. Why? 'Howard suffered from a black man's attitude to the white man', says Tommy Smith, the Liverpool captain of the time. 'Every-

body thinks whites have got an attitude towards blacks. In reality blacks have got a problem towards whites.' So we've all got chips on our shoulders. Smith dubbed Gayle the 'white nigger'; 'It was the highest compliment I could have paid him', he said. That sums up Liverpool's relationship to its black community.

Barnes arrived in 1987, the very antithesis of the Liverpool player. Not only is he black, he is a consummate individualist. He possesses ballskills that most English players only dream about. His goal for England in 1984 when he single-handedly took apart the Brazilian defence in Rio de Janeiro was typical. But he is also irritatingly inconsistent—witness his anonymous performance for England against Sweden last month. In short he embodies a popular prejudice about black players—lots of 'natural' ability, but no staying power.

Eyebrow raiser

Liverpool have built their success on the basis of teamwork and character. So when they bought Barnes from Watford for almost £1m in 1987 they raised a few eyebrows. Yet Barnes became the instant darling of the Kop, the most potent figure in the swash-buckling Liverpool side of 1987-88.

Journalist Dave Hill decided to use the Barnes story to illuminate racism in the game and in society. 'Out of His

Skin' follows Barnes from his native Jamaica, through his first amateur games, his time at Watford and finally his triumph at Liverpool. Around this biography, Hill weaves a discussion of the problems faced both by black players in football and black people in British society. Hill is a talented journalist with a love for the game and an empathy with the black struggle.

Sublime saunter

Occasionally, however, Hill lets his romanticised view of football trip him up. He wants us to believe that Barnes has single-handedly silenced the racists in the Kop, and that in his skills lies the way to a better future: 'When Barnes gets the ball at his feet, takes it, Jamaica-style, past one man, two men, three men, and bears down on goal he does more than merely threaten to score—he carries with him not just the hopes of a better game, but of a better nation too.'

To most fans in the Kop Barnes is still their 'white nigger'. It is ridiculous to suggest that Barnes could change society. Nor should we expect him to. It is quite sufficient that he is a sublime footballer who, as my video of a game against Coventry demonstrates, can take the ball through two defenders as if he was sauntering through a swing door.

Kenan Malik

Understanding Japan**A PECULIAR PEOPLE?**

Karel van Wolferen, *The Enigma of Japanese Power*, Macmillan, hbk, £16.95

Peter Tasker, *Inside Japan*, Penguin, £5.99

The Japanese, we are told, are a funny lot. They work themselves to death for the company, bow to each other and eat raw fish. They have salarymen who sleep in plastic bubbles at Tokyo hotels, geisha girls who serve tea and sleep with government ministers, and they used to have kamikaze pilots. Clive James specialises in using Japan's own television to reinforce the prejudices. Channel 4's Sumo wrestling series and Karaoke Klub are much more positive but still project the Japanese as, well, peculiar.

In *The Enigma of Japanese Power* Karel van Wolferen, a Dutch journalist who has lived in Japan for 25 years, has worked the idea of the peculiar Japanese into a coherent thesis. He believes that beneath the veneer of Western-style democracy there is a very Asian kind of society, and that old political habits sit uneasily with the imported power structures.

They used to be inscrutable, now they're enigmatic. The enigma of Japanese power for van Wolferen is that there is no centre of power in Japan. 'The frustration of many a foreign negotiator, meeting the umpteenth mediator sent his way, can be summed up in the single cry "Take me to your leader". Japan does not have one. It is pushed or pulled, or kept afloat, but not actually led, by many power-holders in what I call the System.'

What he calls 'the System' is a myriad of autonomous power-centres including the bureaucracy, business, the farming lobby and politicians. He painstakingly chronicles conflicts of interest and lack of coordination, and even sees the Second World War as a consequence of a rudderless Japan—Pearl Harbour was apparently the result of rivalry between an expansionist army and a navy too proud to admit that it couldn't beat the USA.

With a lot of solid information, van Wolferen can sound convincing. The current anti-Japanese mood in the USA has made him the leading 'revisionist' giving intellectual respectability to the case for protectionism against Japan. The problem with his thesis is simple: the exact opposite of what he argues is true. Japan is a highly centralised society. The state plays a very direct role in running the economy, both shoring up inefficient sectors and managing the most dynamic areas. Despite sectional conflicts the 'power-holders' are united in their aim of developing Japanese capitalism.

Longer legs

Japan's real peculiarities are a product of its recent history. Having lost the war, it modernised much later and faster than the other major capitalist powers. The people have come through huge changes in a very short period. Just 30 years ago some 45 per cent of the population was employed in agriculture, today the figure is seven per cent. Most of the features seen as peculiarly Japanese—authoritarianism, hierarchy and social discipline—exist in the West. Japan's rapid and traumatic development has simply forged them in a more extreme form.

Peter Tasker's *Inside Japan*, a straightforward introduction to

Japanese society, brings to life the enormity of these changes. Consider this: improvements in nutrition have made the average male student six inches taller than his pre-war counterpart. Legs have got longer and skin lighter as a result of a more Western and urban lifestyle. The average lifespan has increased by 50 per cent in the past 40 years.

The most important peculiarity of Japan is apparent from both books. Japan's rulers have managed to subordinate the working class to an unprecedented degree for a major industrialised country. In the world's richest country only a third of homes are connected to sewers. Van Wolferen tellingly quotes a Japanese professor teaching in New York: 'The average Japanese earns about the same income as his or her American counterpart. But the Japanese must work almost five times as long to buy half a kilogram of fish, five times as long for half a kilogram of rice, nine times as long to buy half a kilogram of beef, and three times as long for four litres of gasoline.'

In Japan there is no effective political opposition. Despite the existence of other parties Japan is, as van Wolferen correctly argues, a one-party state. As we in Britain know, that is not a problem peculiar to Japan.

Daniel Nassim

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.

HAPPY FAMILIES?

Margaret Rundell (letters, August) is right that men benefit from women's oppression; if men weren't better off, women wouldn't be oppressed. Her conclusions, however, present social change as though it takes place in separate compartments; the working class beat the ruling class, meanwhile the men oppress the women.

If Margaret is right that 'men are at their happiest in nuclear families' then her pessimism is understandable. If this is the greatest happiness any of us can aspire to then why bother? But however much better off the guy in the armchair is than the woman at the kitchen sink, they are both forced to work longer than is necessary, for wages less than they would need to be happy, in a society they didn't choose.

So men need to be 'persuaded to take their share of the responsibilities', but how? Surely the best approach is to clarify the way in which the capitalist system is a barrier for progress for all of us. The idea that it is possible to do this whilst coyly ignoring the essential role that domestic work plays lest women should get too uppity is patently ridiculous.

Margaret is also right that access to contraception, abortion and nurseries will not in itself create equality, but these are the prerequisites that are denied under capitalism.

Paul Johnson
Bristol

LESBIANS AND LOOSE MORALS

Ann Bradley ('What did you do in the war, Mummy?', September) reminded us that at times of war when the social fabric is torn apart possibilities exist for sexual experimentation that normal capitalist society does not allow. Indeed it is possible that not all women were losing sleep in

excitement at the prospect of American GIs arriving in England. The freedom from many family and social constraints gave some women a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to explore sexual relations with each other. As with other flouting of moral codes, necessity meant that officialdom often turned a blind eye to lesbian relations in the forces.

However, as soon as the war was over, the clampdown began. In the USA the McCarthy show-trials not only purged communists and radicals, but also 'sexual deviants' from government jobs and the forces. Lesbianism was an important part of the loosening up of morality during the war, so why the omission?

Craig Barton
London

GREEN GIANTS

I normally find that *Living Marxism* provides a well-worked through analysis of the nature of power in our society. However, the article on 'The politics of protest' (August) bore no relation to reality in its explanation of the Green Party's success in the European elections.

Polls since the election have shown that over 80 per cent of Green voters regarded it as a positive vote, rather than being a protest vote as you suggest. The combined membership of the Green and environmental movement is now as great as that of the trade union movement. It has its own organisations, culture, ways of doing things and agenda. To say that it doesn't exist is political blindness.

Having outlined how the left v right debate is on the decline throughout Europe, you assert that it will re-emerge in the next few years. The Greens' view is that many aspects of the left v right debate are in fact a monologue, eg, your allegiance to growth and ideas of leadership. The Greens challenge the status quo in a much more fundamental way than the traditional left.

The final insult is to accuse the Green Party of wanting to go backwards. The Greens are about stopping humanity committing global suicide. This is the biggest challenge anyone has ever faced. The future is either Green, or there isn't one.

Ian Wingrove
Association of Socialist Greens

FIBBING MARXISM

Your August issue makes great play of factual errors in Paul Foot's recent pamphlet on Ireland. Strangely, however, the same process seems to repeat itself in Charles Longford's article. Marx and Engels argued that the Irish

question was key for the British labour movement because of the way the employers were using Irish labour to divide and rule the working class. Anti-Irish prejudice arose as a result of this material reality and not the other way around as Longford seems to argue.

Secondly, Marx did not support the Irish outrage as Longford seems to suggest. Indeed he wrote to Engels on 14 December 1867: 'The last exploit of the Fenians in Clerkenwell was a very stupid thing. The London masses, who have shown great sympathy for Ireland, will be made wild by it and driven into the arms of the government party.' This, of course, did not stop Marx giving full support to Fenian prisoners.

Thirdly, Marx and Engels were not able to build a mass solidarity movement. They were, as Longford shows, able to arouse considerable support among sections of the working class for the Fenians. But the inability of these sections to rebuild an independent workers' party on the basis of class politics meant that the internationalist current remained a minority.

Terry McCann
London

WINNING THE WAR

Jane Williams (letters, September) believes that the editorial in August's *Living Marxism* 'glorified' the war in Ireland and 'went overboard in stating the case for freedom'. I do not see how anyone can go overboard in stating the case for freedom in Ireland or elsewhere. As for striking 'the right balance', should there have been an interview with Ian Paisley?

Ms Williams states that we 'should remember that we are trying to end the war and bring peace, not urge people here to follow the IRA's lead'. I am definitely in favour of ending the war—as long as Ireland is on the winning side—but do I want people here to follow the IRA's lead? Over the past 10 years the British opposition has done nothing to resist what the government has been doing to us. It is the people who support and join the IRA who say: 'We have had enough'—and *do* something about the position they are in. That is a lead well worth following.

Whether we take sides in the Irish War or not, we can be sure that Thatcher and her cronies will. Every time we call for troops out, the government will point its finger at IRA 'terrorism'. If we want to win this argument we will have to show that the true terrorists are British and not Irish—and we must give our full backing to the Irish nationalists who fight against such terrorism. The 'potential supporters of Irish freedom' will have to be shown why

Irish freedom is a necessity. There are no easy short cuts in politics, and only those who are prepared to take the long, hard roads will eventually get anywhere.

Robert Leader
Leicestershire

PARTITION'S IMPORTANCE

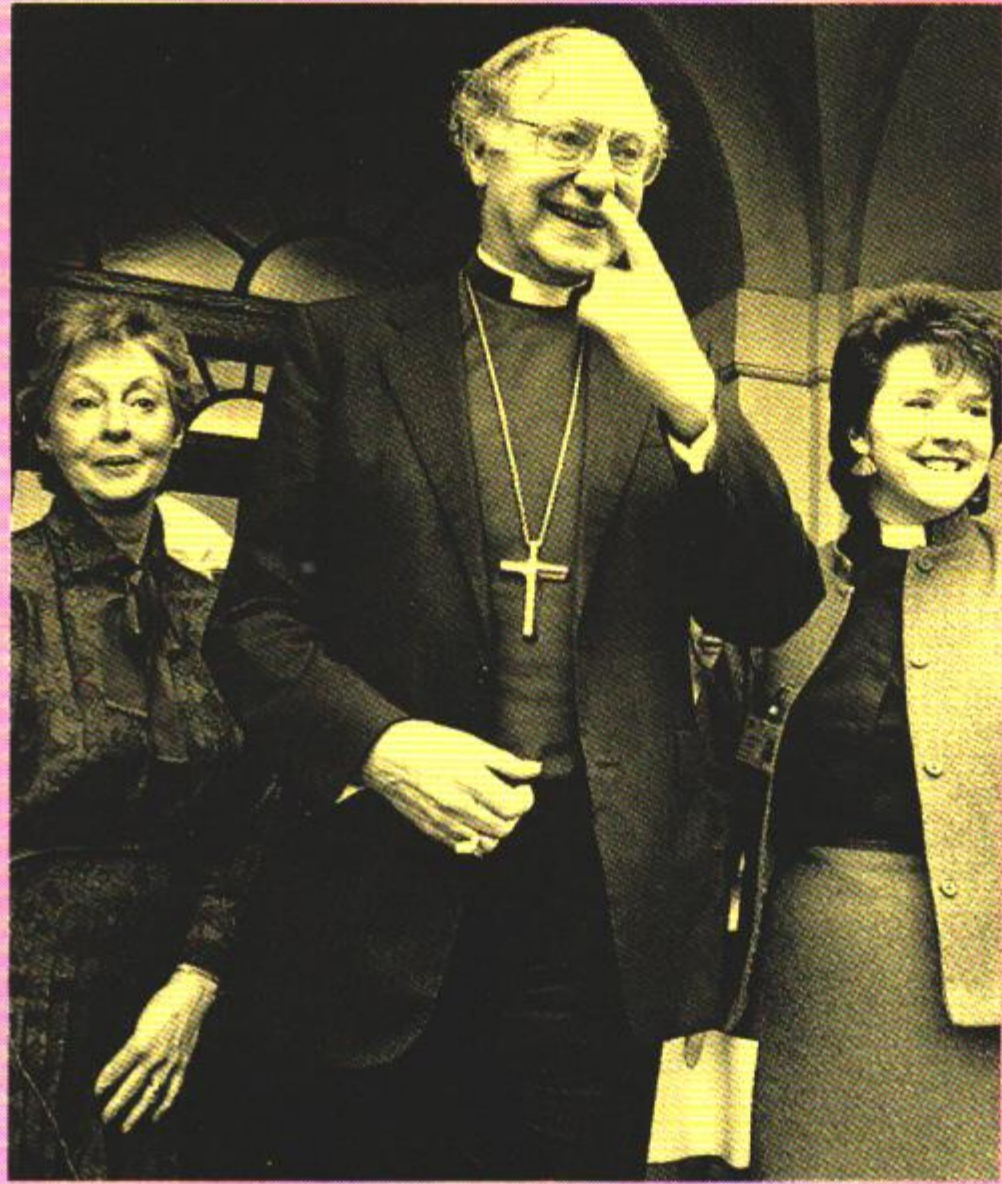
What Martin Clifford misses (letters, September) is the significance of the redefinition of the territory of the British state that took place through the partition of Ireland in 1920-21. The subsequent formation of the 'United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland' marked the resolution of 20 years of instability in Anglo-Irish relations that amounted to a serious threat to the authority of the British state.

Dublin and London have subsequently colluded in promoting the mythical independence of the 'Free State'. For the Dublin government this has been necessary to enhance its legitimacy in the eyes of Irish people. Thus in the twenties, when it was particularly apparent that the Free State government was a collection of British stooges, its leaders were most assiduous in promoting their national identity, notably through their campaign to revive the Irish language. Dublin's posturing as a 'neutral' power in the Second World War and after and the declaration of the Republic in 1949 mark the continuation of this theme.

The British government colludes in the myth of Irish independence because of its concern to maintain the stability of a partitioned Ireland. Partition defines the Six Counties of Northern Ireland as part of British national territory—hence instability here is a direct threat to the British state which must be contained whatever the cost. By defining the Twenty-six Counties as independent, partition delegates political power to the Dublin government, which is accepted as legitimate by the vast majority of the population. The subjective chauvinist hostility of successive British leaders towards Irish politicians, from Churchill and de Valera to Thatcher and Haughey, has helped to enhance Dublin's independent status.

The crucial point is that partition is the means through which Ireland as a whole is dominated by Britain. Direct rule in the North and independence in the South are simply mechanisms through which imperialist domination is secured. It is ironic that virtually the entire left in Ireland and Britain has become captive to the illusions fostered by Lloyd George's ingenious solution to the Irish question.

Mike Freeman
London



**In the November issue
of Living Marxism we ask...**

Why do women go on the game? Prostitutes talk about the pressures that force them into 'the oldest profession'.



Are we a God-fearing people? Our survey tests British people's attitudes to all things religious, from church weddings to Islamic fundamentalism.

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