LIVING MARXISM

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HAS 'SAFE SEX' CAUSED AN ABORTION BOOM?

DEBATE ON THE SCOTTISH DIMENSION

The dictator in Downing Street

Plus: That Petrol Emotion, injustice for the Irish in Britain, ozone-free zones, rent boys-villains or victims? and much more

contents

BRITAIN'S SECRET CONSTITUTION

The Thatcher government is strengthening its grip on society by centralising power and removing democratic rights. This month's *Living Marxism* focuses on the debate about civil liberties and the British constitution today.

COVER PHOTO: JOHN STURROCK/NETWORK

LIVING MARXISM

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Cooking the books

HOW A CAR-PARK BECAME FOUR HOSPITALS

Kenan Malik suggests that statistic-fixing is one of the few genuine growth areas in the economy

Edwina Currie finally finds somebody who will believe Tory health spending figures

When the Kremlin recently published the first ever figures on the total strength of the Soviet armed forces, the British government took one look and announced that the numbers could not be trusted. There spoke the voice of experience. Nobody knows more about massaging, making up and mutilating statistics than does this Tory administration.

Sometimes the Tories simply show an acute sense of timing. They released figures about NHS cuts and the effects of radiation from British nuclear power plants on the day of the last royal wedding, in the certain knowledge that the mass media would be fully occupied gushing over Fergie's bridal gown. Other figures which cannot be disguised have been abolished. Under the Tories, the number of people living below the official poverty line has risen faster than at any time for 30 years. The government has responded by refusing to publish any more statistics about poverty.

28 changes

But the most common trick is to bend the numbers until they fit into the Tory view of the world. The unemployment statistics have been beaten beyond recognition. The new Social Security Bill will introduce four further changes to the way that the jobless total is calculated; that will make 28 alterations altogether since Thatcher came to power in 1979. The net effect of all the rubbing out and recalculating has been to reduce the official figures drastically. The Tories are now preparing to celebrate the dip below the two million mark. The 'invisible' unemployed have less to shout about.

Three times table

The government insists that working out the jobless total is a complex business that the rest of us cannot understand. Others might think it relatively straightforward to get a fairly reliable figure. Why not just subtract the numbers in work and on government schemes from the total workforce? This is the method adopted by a team from Glasgow University, led by Dr John MacInnes. Their recently published report dismisses as 'illusory' the official fall of 900 000 in the unemployment figures from June 1986 to June last year. Instead, they found that the true total fell by only 100 000—and even that was entirely accounted for by the expansion of low-paid government schemes.

In addition to the 'falling' unemployment figures, the government makes monthly announcements of an impressive total of job vacancies in the economy. This is a useful way of implying that the unemployed are work-shy wasters who could get jobs if they only got up in the morning and went looking. How do you suppose the Tories calculate the number of vacancies? Through computer models, a comprehensive register of employers, or some other sophisticated technique? Not quite; they add up all the vacancies advertised in Jobcentres, and then *multiply the number by three.* Pretty high-powered stuff.

Official figures for the health service are subjected to equally intensive surgery before they are allowed out into the world. The Channel 4 current affairs programme *Despatches* recently did a useful exposé of how the Tories have juggled the political hot-potato of NHS spending. It focused on a speech made by then health secretary Norman Fowler to the 1987 Tory Party conference, in which he sought to answer his critics and to deal with accusations of NHS cuts.

Among other things, Fowler claimed that the government had increased NHS spending to record levels, and that 380 new hospital schemes were in 'various stages of completion'. 'Let the *Daily Mirror* photograph this!' trumpeted a triumphant Fowler, holding up a four-foot long computer run-out of schemes supposedly under construction. It made dramatic television. It also made a mockery of the truth.

Fowler's record level of NHS spending was the result of some highly creative accounting. Under new regulations, whenever a hospital is closed down and sold off, the sale price is credited as additional spending on the NHS. For example, Fowler's plans included the possible sale of one hospital to a developer interested in building luxury flats on the site. According to Tory calculations, this would not reduce the number of hospital beds, but would 'add' £2.5m to total health service spending. In Fowler's looking-glass world, the best way to increase spending would be to shut down the health service altogether.

The health budget is also boosted out of our pockets. According to Tory arithmetic, every time we spend £2.30 on a prescription at the chemist's, that is really £2.30 extra the government has spent on the NHS. Hospital austerity measures, too, are counted as extra government support. Every penny that the hospitals manage to prune through compulsory 'efficiency savings' becomes another penny spent on the NHS.

That car-park

Most breathtaking of all was Fowler's claim to have initiated 380 new schemes. Of these, 242 had not been started, and work on 89 was not due to begin for at least another three years. Fowler counted any part of a hospital that would cost more than £1m as a separate scheme, thus allowing him to include the same hospital several times in his list. Medway Hospital in Kent appeared four times. The only scheme that had been completed there as he spoke was the car-park. In Fowler's hands, this slab of concrete was magically transformed into four new hospitals.

The government is now turning its attention to fixing other statistics, complaining that Britain's record trade deficit is partly due to poor calculation, and looking for ways to reduce the rising inflation rate at the flick of a computer switch. Even facts and figures are not neutral in the Tories' war. The fixing of statistics is becoming an effective and comparatively subtle form of government censorship; a lot of data are still released, but are of no use to the Tories' critics.

Today it is hard to know what is going on in important areas of the British economy, as the inbuilt anarchy of the capitalist market combines with extensive book-cooking to produce conflicting sets of statistics. But we can be sure that the more they try to cloak the truth, the more they have to hide.

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PHOTO: PANDORA ANDERSON

MICK HUME
EDITOR

THE ONE-PARTY STATE

If you think the idea that we live in a one-party state is far-fetched, try naming a non-Tory party which plays any effective part in British politics today.

The leaders of the opposition parties certainly seem unsure of what they are here for. 'What is happening to the house of commons?' asked one of them recently: 'What is wrong with it? Why are we allowed to pass such legislation with hardly any serious scrutiny?' When even Doctor David Owen is shaken out of his Harley Street bedside manner and prompted to make such an exasperated outburst, it suggests that the wounds which Margaret Thatcher's authoritarian government has inflicted on old-fashioned parliamentary debate are close to becoming fatal.

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The legislation which so upset Owen was the Official Secrets Bill. The circumstances which aggravated his condition were that just 42 out of 650 MPs attended the debate during the committee stage of the proposed law's passage through parliament. Such a miserable turn-out for any major bill would be a sure sign of the sense of powerlessness which MPs feel in the face of the Thatcher regime's unflinching advance. Their failure to show up for a bill as important as this, however, indicates that many opposition parliamentarians have no sense of powerlessness or of anything much else any more. They have been knocked senseless by the government's sledgehammer tactics.

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The Official Secrets Bill contains many startlingly repressive proposals. Once it becomes law it will forbid the disclosure of information about covert state operations, which may range from reading the mail of trade unionists to plotting the overthrow of uncooperative third world governments. It will cloak the violence of agencies like MI5 and the SAS in shadows as black as a bruise. It is a most telling sign of the Thatcherite times. Yet it has provoked little real controversy; Tory MPs have been whipped into line to force it through, while opposition MPs either ignore the debates or ask Owen-style rhetorical questions about the meaning of life in the house of commons today.

The aspect of the bill which has most upset traditionalists like Owen and Edward Heath is the assumption which underpins it; that the interests of the government and the 'national interest' are one and the same thing. Or, to put it another way, that Britain is a one-party state. This offends the old-timers' sense of democratic decency. Yet it is no more than an honest appraisal of the current state of play in British politics.

As the central articles in this month's *Living Marxism* argue, the Thatcher government has effectively monopolised power over the past decade. It has dominated every debate, placed its active supporters in key posts which would once have been considered non-political, and established Whitehall's influence over new areas of society.

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Top Tories treat parliament with casual contempt; Edwina Currie's attempt to give her account of the egg debacle in paperback rather than in front of a commons committee was typical. Thatcher is even fussy about which cabinet members she allows to participate in making real policy. It has been revealed, for example, that the government's health service review, which it claimed as the result of 'wide-ranging discussions' with all concerned, was in fact largely cooked up within a little kitchen cabinet comprising Thatcher and her pet junior ministers. Nor does the prime minister make any secret of her preference for consulting capitalist organ-grinders rather than their political monkeys. Rupert Murdoch's frequent visits to Downing Street, and Thatcher's decision to shun the BBC by giving his Sky TV a major interview to mark the tenth anniversary of her election in May, confirm that she is far more interested in seeing eye-to-eye with the *Sun* baron than in observing convention.

Elsewhere, Tory ministers have little time for the supposed independence of such institutions as the media or the legal system. Via the sycophantic parliamentary press lobby, Thatcher's press secretary Bernard Ingham more or less writes the political coverage in many national newspapers. Her people make pointed interventions in court cases; Northern Ireland secretary Tom King went on TV last year to announce the abolition of a suspect's right to silence, on the very day that three Irish people accused of conspiring to kill him were exercising that right in Winchester crown court. And so it goes on.

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The new wisdom that the interests of the Tory government and the national interest are inseparable has far-reaching implications. It follows, for example, that anybody challenging the Conservatives' will can be persecuted as a subversive, an enemy of society. This doctrine too is being enshrined in law, as part of the Secret Services Bill, which will specifically legalise the use of bugging, burglary and telephone tapping against 'subversives'. The bill defines a subversive in sweeping terms, as anybody involved in a group 'whose aims are to undermine or overthrow parliamentary democracy in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland by political, industrial or violent means'. Since 'undermining parliamentary democracy' is now equated with opposing the Thatcher government, the bill gives the security services a free hand to operate against those engaged in an industrial dispute with the government (be they miners or nurses), or in any radical political activity, as well as more usual targets such as Irish republicans. The one-party state will brook no resistance to its diktat, however moderate the resisters may claim to be.

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Of course, talking about the Thatcher government as a dictatorship does not mean that the Tories have achieved their supremacy through the use of jackboots and jails alone. They have not imposed their views on society in the style of a military junta. Rather, as Frank Richards explains elsewhere in this issue, they have exploited the inbuilt strengths of the British state's secret constitution to

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centralise power in their hands. So far as dealing with the opposition parties is concerned, Thatcher's 'revolution' has been bloodless. Weighed down by the historical baggage of respect for constitutional conventions and support for the capitalist state, Labour and the centre parties have proved incapable of sustaining a serious challenge to the government over the past 10 years.

The Tories' political victories against the weaklings on the other side of the house have been vital in paving the way for the one-party state. They have established their dominance by marginalising the opposition parties. In the one-party system, meaningful political debate is confined within one party. Thus the conflicts given most prominence today are not between Labour and Conservative, but between the hardline Thatcherites and Tory 'wets' who are unhappy about the speed with which the government is ditching old traditions.

The debate on the Official Secrets Bill has been instructive in this respect. When it passed through the committee stage, all of the headlines were grabbed by the fact that 18 Tory MPs had voted against the government; 161 opposition MPs did likewise, but they are considered unworthy of mention these days.

Or take the issue of leaks from government offices. These now seem to provide Labour Party spokesmen with their only opportunity to embarrass Tory ministers. Yet the press recently revealed how many of these leaks have been deliberately planted by the Tories themselves. Sometimes the government leaks outrageous policy proposals, so that when its real and slightly less shocking plans are officially announced people breathe a sigh of relief. On other occasions one top Tory will sneak uncomplimentary revelations about another into the public domain, as part of the jostling for position and status within the cabinet. In either case the Labour frontbenchers, who can be relied upon to read out whatever papers they are handed, are simply being used as bit players in the Tories' personal power games. Even when the Labour Party manages to get on to the stage, we can be sure that the Tories have written the script.

The apparent invulnerability of the government has invoked panic among many opposition figures. They are now searching for tricks which could advance the non-Tory parties, such as an electoral pact. Mike Freeman has some pertinent things to say this month about the reactionary political programme around which any such alliance would have to be formed. More broadly, we ought to recognise that no combination of the existing opposition parties can offer us the prospect of relief. These parties are largely responsible for the mess things are in today. They have always accepted that political debate in Britain should be confined to a narrow terrain; namely, a discussion of how the capitalist system can be made to run most smoothly. All Thatcher has done is to narrow the agreed terms a little further, by ensuring that only bona fide capitalists can participate. The only sort of opposition capable of shaking up this state of affairs is one which refuses to restrict itself to the Tories' chosen ground, and is prepared to question the capitalist premises on which Thatcher's authority rests.

It is deeply ironic that the opposition parties should choose this moment to deny the relevance of class issues in British politics. The Thatcher dictatorship has shown up, more starkly than at any time in memory, the power and privilege of wealth in our society. The by-passing of parliament, the government-by-clique, the politicisation of the media, courts, etc, are not signs of a conspiracy by a few evil individuals. Rather, they signal that the capitalist class is now exercising its control over society in a more public fashion, with fewer inhibitions and disguises–such as the fiction of parliamentary sovereignty.

The class bias of the British authorities stares us in the face today. The government is even prepared to write it into the statute books, as with its recent attempt to introduce a law allowing company directors to make political donations to the Tory Party without telling their shareholders. All the Tories' talk of freedom and democracy now stands exposed as a flimsy cover for tightening central government's grip on the country. The latest proposals for controlling trade union activity, for example, suggest that no union can consider calling a strike unless it has the support of 70 per cent of its members in a ballot.

'Modern history is littered with examples of concrete regimes reduced to rubble by resistance from below'

Nobody could pretend that such an extravagant demand is justified on the grounds of formal democracy. It is a no-nonsense capitalist proposal, the blatant intention of which is to stop workers going on strike in any conditions.

The Tories have elevated class power into the central issue of British politics. They have the might of the state machine and the wider establishment behind them. The logical way to try to counter the capitalist dictatorship is by mobilising the other major force in this divided society–the millions of wage-earners who make up the majority of the population, and who have no stake in the status quo. Trying to organise working class resistance in this way might be anathema to the established opposition parties. But given their record of impotence against the government, that should be a recommendation in itself.

A one-party state may look like a daunting opponent. Yet nobody has yet invented one which can retain its unchallenged authority in face of militant popular opposition. Modern history is littered with examples of concrete regimes being reduced to rubble by an upsurge of resistance from below. The overthrow of the dictatorship in Portugal in 1974, and the subsequent upheavals which prompted the Spanish ruling class to relax its stranglehold on society the following year, are just two. Still closer to home, events in Northern Ireland exactly 20 years ago confirmed that even a comparatively small opposition movement can destabilise an authoritarian regime, if it refuses to abide by the rules the regime lays down.

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The Stormont administration in the Six Counties was literally a one-party state–the Unionist Party–backed by draconian laws for which South Africa's apartheid rulers expressed public admiration. Yet when a few thousand nationalists rose up in support of the demand for civil rights, the Stormont regime proved unable to cope. It was only saved from total destruction by the supportive intervention of the British Army; and 20 years on, even that force has failed to quell nationalist unrest. The professional Thatcher dictatorship may present a more impressive barrier than the corrupt old Unionist regime. But its potential opponents in the British working class outnumber the nationalist community of Northern Ireland many times over. This is the constituency to which we should look for a new opposition, not to the empty benches of a parliament which has been rendered redundant by the rise of the one-party state.

What future for South Wales?

DOWN IN THE VALLEY

Five years after the start of the miners' strike, Sara Llewelyn reports on the mood in the Rhondda

The Rhondda Valley is rich in working class history, one-time home of the 'Little Moscows'—mining villages where the Communist Party was as central to the community as the pit. But the pits are closed and history provides little comfort for the people left behind.

On a bleak afternoon in the Rhondda, a handful of men sought solace in pints of Best at the Maerdy miners' institute. Some still had jobs, others didn't, but none could consider their futures secure.

They had heard that two more pits were to close in South Wales, putting nearly 1500 miners at Cynheidre, Llanelli and Marine, Ebbw Vale, out of work. And the breakaway Union of Democratic Mineworkers was claiming that British Coal had granted it exclusive negotiating rights for 800 jobs at the new Margam superpit down the road. The prospect of the scab union heading up the valleys is the latest bitter legacy of the defeat of the 1984-85 strike, which began five years ago this month.

Margam dilemma

Since the end of the strike British Coal has closed 80 pits around the country. When Cynheidre and Marine go, there will be just nine left in South Wales. Mid Glamorgan has already lost two thirds of its mining jobs since 1985, and management recently demoted the shrinking South Wales coal industry from an 'area' to a 'group'. Now there is Margam on the horizon, a planned £90m development due to employ 500 miners to set things up over five years, and 830 during the 15 years that the mine is expected to produce coking coal for Port Talbot and Llanwern steel works.

The catch is that British Coal wants a return to 'flexible' six-day working at Margam. The bosses have been flirting with the UDM to ensure that they get it one way or the other—either by pressurising the National Union of Mineworkers into accepting their terms, or by cutting the NUM out of the deal. This poses a dilemma for unemployed miners: do they break the loyalties of a lifetime and go to Margam, or stand their ground and suffer on the dole?

'If they want to work six days a week, they can have it', said Fred: 'Maerdy was solid during the strike. There's no room for scabs here.' But Haydn, a father of two young children, said he would have to consider taking a job at Margam. 'I'm all for the NUM but I need work. There's no choice. I worked at a private drift mine—up to my waist in freezing water. I left after a week. Lots of blokes like me will have to think about Margam.'

Haydn's feelings were echoed by his fellow drinkers. They spoke of sons and brothers working for £46 a week in factories down the valley. Since the strike Maerdy had been abandoned, they said, left to support itself. Just about the only South Wales miners who have found new mining jobs work in small private pits, picking the bones of the old seams closed by British Coal. It's back-breaking work using archaic methods like pickaxes and pit ponies. Compared to that, Margam must seem an easy option for many.

The men had plenty of complaints about South Wales NUM president Des Dutfield and his failure to put up a fight. The NUM's response to the UDM recruitment drive in South Wales has been pretty pathetic. A small picket did gather outside the UDM's temporary office in a Swansea shop. But the train carrying the awayday recruiters from Nottingham was late, and the half-hearted protesters went home. Labour city councillors tried—and failed—to block the Tory shopowner's welcome to the UDM by claiming he had breached planning regulations.

While the NUM and Labour Party officials were making desperate attempts to tie the recruiters up in red tape, the UDM was getting on with the job of persuading jobless miners to cross the line. Their office, which opens once or twice a week, claimed that 40 miners signed up on the first day, with 200 more wanting further information. The UDM's boasts that it is on the way to winning the Margam deal have put South Wales NUM officials on the defensive.

The NUM officials have been faced with a situation where thousands of their members have lost jobs and need work; yet a national NUM ballot has voted to reject six-day working. They have resolved the conflict by adopting a moderate approach, hoping to clinch a deal with British Coal at Margam by avoiding confrontation over other pit closures and accepting low pay deals. Tensions between the union's South Wales and national leaderships have been exacerbated. The miners in places like Maerdy have lost out all round.

Trehafod in the Rhondda: the pit is now a 'heritage museum'

PHOTO: SIMON NORFOLK

'Cut and cut and cut'

Those who still have jobs suffer deteriorating pay and conditions and an increasingly dictatorial management. Those who don't are caught between staying on the dole or going to the bosses cap-in-hand and asking to work a six-day week at Margam. A former NUM official like Kim Howells might be able to escape to a new career in the Labour Party, but the rank and file have no such way out. Their local leaders have left the South Wales miners on the sidelines, while they pursue backroom wrangles with the NUM's Sheffield HQ and try to wheedle their way back into British Coal's good books.

In its willingness to do British Coal's bidding the union plumbed the depths last year, when management at Blaenant colliery informed NUM lodge secretary Phil Bowen that the pit was uneconomical. He offered to sort out the problem. Choosing the best teams in the pit, Bowen reduced them from five men to three and ordered them to 'cut and cut and cut'. He later boasted to the *Financial Times* that productivity had been raised 'by convincing workers that the new methods were against what the management wanted: if you tell them that they'll do anything' (23 September 1988). When union officials show such contempt for their members and enthusiasm for solving the employer's problems, it's hardly surprising that British Coal can claim to have forced up national productivity by 60 per cent since the end of the strike.

New ideas

Instead of looking to the real needs of its members, the NUM leadership in South Wales has accepted that unprofitable pits mean job losses by the thousand and that miners will have to step backwards into the sweatshop conditions at Margam. In its publicity for the superpit, British Coal boasts of Margam as 'a new mine with new ideas for a new century'. South Wales miners need a new and forward-looking strategy of their own if they are to counter management's offensive and reverse the defeats of the past.

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Injustice for the Irish in Britain

The killing of Marie Kane

Penny Robson met an Irishman who has seen his wife's murder whitewashed in a Birmingham court

A middle-aged Irish couple, Michael and Marie Kane, were attacked by a knifeman outside a Birmingham pub a year ago this month. Marie, stabbed through the heart, died on the street. Michael, stabbed a dozen times, just survived. They were the final forgotten victims in a violent chain, the links of which reached from Gibraltar through Belfast and across to the Birmingham suburb of Quinton in the space of a fortnight.

The events which led up to the killing of Marie Kane began in Gibraltar, on 6 March 1988, when an SAS squad trapped and shot dead three unarmed IRA members; Mairead Farrell, Dan McCann and Sean Savage. Ten days later their bodies arrived at the republican plot in Milltown Cemetery, West Belfast, for burial. Before they were in the ground, three of the mourners had died at the hands of Loyalist assassin Michael Stone, who attacked the funeral with guns and grenades before being overpowered.

One of Stone's victims was Kevin Brady, another unarmed IRA member who had chased the gunman across the cemetery. Brady's funeral was held on 19 March. As the cortège moved along Belfast's Andersonstown Road, an unidentified car drove into it at speed. The mourners, fearing a repeat performance of Stone's assault, surrounded the car; the two occupants pulled guns, and one fired a shot. The mourners attacked the car and disarmed the interlopers. Both were executed by the IRA soon afterwards. They turned out to be British Army corporals.

Last orders

Two days later, on 21 March, the scene shifted to Birmingham, where Michael and Marie Kane were returning home to Quinton after a night out. They stopped off in the Old Village Stump for last orders. Inside the pub, where the Kanes were known as Irish and the barman was a former British soldier, a row started over the killing of the corporals. When the Kanes went to leave, they were attacked from behind by 37-year old Philip Downes, whose knifework left Marie dead and Michael in intensive care.

If the story ended there, on a bloody pavement in Birmingham, it would be bad enough. The killing of Marie Kane was a brutal reminder that the Irish War is not confined within the Six Counties of Northern Ireland. The 20-year conflict there has also kept old prejudices on the boil over here, creating a climate in which Philip Downes or any psychopath with a sharp instrument and an Irish target can feel free to do their bit for the British war effort. But the story did not end there. In many ways the handling of Downes' case, which came to court in December, provided even more startling evidence of anti-Irish bigotry in modern Britain. It revealed how these sentiments are endorsed from the top down in British society, given the official stamp of approval by such representatives of the establishment as legal dignitaries and leading newspapers.

Victims on trial

One remarkable feature of the court case was the bipartisan policy adopted by the defence and prosecution barristers. Both QCs seemed keen to express a low opinion of the Kanes, the victims, and an understanding attitude towards Downes, the killer. When Downes pleaded guilty to Marie Kane's manslaughter, prosecuting barrister Desmond Fennell agreed to drop the seemingly more appropriate murder charge, voicing the opinion that a jury could well have refused to convict Downes anyway. 'There might indeed have been some sympathy towards Downes', said Fennell, 'and none for his victims'. Defence barrister Brian Escott-Cox backed up his learned friend: 'The sense of public outrage at the loss of this particular life will be a very great deal lower down the scale than other cases.' Which sounds suspiciously like 'All are equal before British law, but the Irish are less equal than others'.

Anybody listening to Fennell's presentation of the prosecution case could have been forgiven for thinking that the Kanes themselves were on trial. Here is a taste of how he set out the Crown's evidence against Downes:

'Mr Kane is Irish by birth and both he and his wife had strong republican sympathies. Mrs Kane was known to the police for her active support of the IRA, and both had convictions for it.

'They were both extremely abusive to a barman who had served in the Army—and to the English in general. She told the barman: "You are going to get what the two Brits got." '

With a prosecution like that, Downes' defence lawyers hardly needed to leave their seats. Escott-Cox simply added that Downes abhorred violence, but had been under 'intense provocation'. The picture of aggressive Irish criminals pushing a normally placid Englishman over the edge was complete.

That's not how Michael Kane remembers the events of 21 March 1988. 'It was a Monday, we'd had a good weekend. Marie met me for a drink in Harborne after work. We were both late so we only had a couple of pints. We got back to Quinton about 10.25 and nipped into the Old Stump for one last drink.

'The barman, he's an ex-Brit, he wouldn't serve me, he didn't like me. Marie got half a pint, she drank some and so did I. We weren't drunk. Then the story came on the telly, about the Brits that ran into the IRA funeral. They were all going on and on about it. The barman was collecting glasses and he said something to Marie, I don't remember what. And she said, "They were off their beaten track". That's all she said. And they were.

'The Brit made a big song and dance about it. All she said was they were off their beaten track. So we drank up and left. Next thing I knew the man came from behind, stabbing me. He put me out then went for Marie. I woke up in intensive care and they told me "Marie's dead, Mick".'

20 minutes

This is the first time Michael Kane has been able to tell his side of the story. Nobody bothered mentioning his evidence in court. Perhaps that wasn't surprising, as the prosecution lawyers never even bothered talking to him beforehand, and nobody bothered telling him that the case was coming up.

'After I left hospital I had no contact with the police, the solicitors, nobody. The first I heard about it was in the papers on the Saturday and the case was on the Monday. Me and Tommy Osborne, Marie's first

Marie Kane (right) at the grave of her son, murdered by Loyalist gunmen

husband, went to the court on the Monday. First they told us it wasn't on until the New Year. Tommy made a fuss and then they said "Sorry Mr Osborne, it is today, 10.30". I went to the court at 10.15 and it was already under way. It was all over in 20 minutes. I don't think they wanted me there, everyone kept looking at me. They said it was manslaughter. I say it was murder. It's all lies, you know.'

British 'citizenship'

With the victims deprived of any voice in court, the legal men (and later the press) set about encouraging a sympathetic attitude towards the killer. The defence said Downes had a strong 'sense of citizenship', and much was made of the fact that he had given evidence at the 1975 Birmingham pub bombings trial. (Contrary to the impression this left, Downes had not been a victim of those bombings; he was one of 100 minor witnesses who just happened to be in Birmingham on the night of the explosions, and whose evidence served as irrelevant background noise to the proceedings.) They emphasised the sense of patriotic outrage Downes had felt about the killing of the corporals, conveyed in court by a statement from Downes himself: 'When I was stabbing them, all I kept thinking about was the British soldiers getting mutilated. I would have died for them.'

Shot in the head

This highly selective background sketch helped to set Downes up as the truly injured party in the affair. Those who wanted to put the case in proper context would have done better to examine the experience of Marie Kane; for if anybody had a right to be angry about violence and injustice connected with the Irish conflict, it was her.

Marie Kane was a Catholic nationalist from Belfast. She had a son from a previous marriage, Thomas Osborne. He was murdered by the Loyalist assassins of the Ulster Volunteer Force, one of 11 Catholic civilians who died after a spate of sectarian attacks on 2 October 1975. Armed members of the UVF (an organisation which insists that there is 'no essential moral difference' between its attacks on nationalists and those carried out by the British security forces) burst into the Belfast bottling plant where Osborne worked, and where all the employees were Catholics. They told Osborne and his workmate Gerald Grogan to lie on the floor, then shot both in the back of the head, before shooting two sisters working upstairs. Grogan died immediately. Osborne managed to stumble into the street, gushing blood. A passing motorist took him to Matar Hospital, where he lost his left eye. He was released from hospital a fortnight later. On 23 October he suffered a relapse and was rushed back into Matar, only to die there. He had no connection with any political group.

'Irish go home'

Marie and her second husband Michael Kane, a Dubliner, left Ireland for Britain and Birmingham about eight years ago. She soon discovered that she had not escaped from the hostility to all things Irish that had motivated the masked men who murdered her son. Homeless, Michael and Marie slept on the freezing floor of a building site shed in Birmingham. A passing policeman took pity and took them to the station for a cup of tea. 'The sergeant asked where we were from. I told him Ireland. He told us to go back: "The Irish think they can come here and get a house just like that—well they can't." Then he put us out in the cold. We spent the night in New Street railway station. "It might

The Kanes in happier days

never happen" said the woman in the tea shop. "I'm sorry, but it already has" said Marie. Marie never liked England.'

This is the untold story of Irish people like Marie Kane; brutalised by the British forces and Loyalist gangs in Northern Ireland, deprived of their dignity in Britain. Yet when this 52-year old woman was stabbed to death by a 37-year old man, she was dismissed as an abusive IRA criminal.

Michael Kane was shocked by the bias of the press coverage of the Downes case—'not just the cheap papers here, but the fine papers back home as well, they must have got their stories straight off the British papers'. Even the supposedly liberal wing of the British quality press, the *Guardian,* reprinted the barristers' courtroom statements without comment or qualification, including the accusation that Michael Kane had convictions connected with the IRA. Kane insists that this is a lie, and is considering legal action.

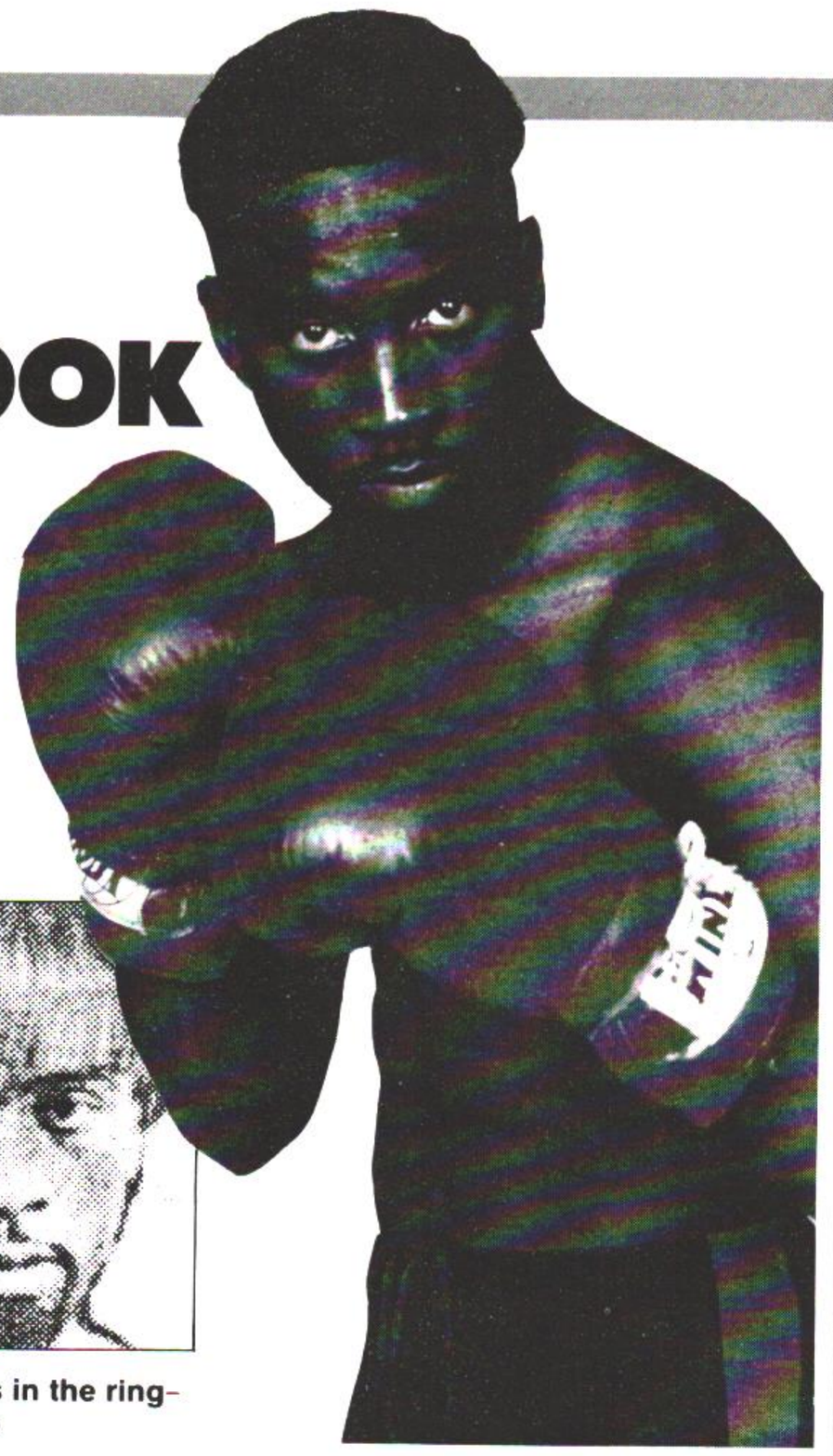
Philip Downes, the killer with 'a sense of citizenship', escaped a murder conviction. He got 13 years for the manslaughter of Marie Kane, and 13 years for the attack on her husband, the two sentences to run concurrently. If his treatment by the prison authorities and parole board matches that he received in court, he will be out in no time. Michael Kane has lost his wife and his job. He is living on £32 a week and hoping to return to Dublin. 'You try to forget it, you know, but you can't, if I go into a pub or listen to a record I think "Marie would like this". So I don't, I just stay inside. I can't do anything.'

The Kanes are two of the many victims of injustice among the Irish community in Britain. Those framed for the seventies pub bombings are still in jail: the Birmingham Six were convicted in the travesty of a trial to which Downes gave evidence; the Guildford Four were convicted, after another courtroom charade, the day before Thomas Osborne died. The British legal system will go to any lengths to help keep the Irish down on both sides of the sea. 'I'm a marked man now' says Michael Kane. And he is far from the only one.

Nigel Benn and the Burkes

'THEY ALL LOOK THE SAME TO ME'

Keith Tompson looks at police photo-fits and frame-ups



'Twenty Fights. Twenty Wins. Twenty Knock-outs' announced the publicity posters for Nigel Benn's defence of his Commonwealth middleweight title last month. It's a pretty impressive career record. But it didn't prepare Benn, the 'Dark Destroyer', for the day when 14 opponents took him on in quick succession—not in the ring, but on the streets of London.

The 14 assailants who confronted Benn were responding to a story in the *Evening Standard* which suggested that he was an armed robber. Police had asked a witness to a robbery to describe the culprit. The witness pointed to a handy picture of Benn and said he looked something like that. Scotland Yard sent a supposed photo-fit down to the *Standard* offices.

How Benn looks in the ring—and in the frame

Not Steve Davis

The paper, always willing to put aside a page for a Scotland Yard photo-fit, particularly if the mugshot is of a black suspect, splashed it over its early editions. Only it wasn't a photo-fit. It was a photograph of the boxing champion himself, sporting a badly-drawn woolly hat across his forehead. Before you could say 'seconds out', 14 *Standard* readers had stopped the bemused Benn and accused him of the hold-up. One reportedly attempted a citizen's arrest, and Benn damaged a knuckle in the ensuing discussion of legal matters.

Both Scotland Yard and the *Standard* apologised for the cock-up, but Benn rightly wants recompense. The Met acknowledged making a 'terrible blunder', but refused to admit that the case proved they think any black face will fit 'in the frame' as well as another. It was just, said the Force, a genuine mistake which could have involved anybody, famous or otherwise.

This set me wondering. Imagine the following scenario. One morning a gang of hoodlums raids a branch of Barclays Bank. A cleaner who witnessed it is called in to give evidence. He spots a picture of Steve 'interesting' Davis in his copy of the *Sun* and decides it looks like the sickly youth with the shotgun. He points the amazing likeness out to Inspector Sniffer at the Yard. Sniffer grabs the lead, draws a trilby hat on to the picture of Davis and sends it round to his pals at the *Standard,* who publish it that afternoon. Davis is then set upon by 14 Romford residents who want to arrest him.

You're right, it could never happen to Davis the police cadet lookalike. Nor to Sebastian Coe, Eric Bristow, Nick Faldo or any other all-white British sporting hero. Benn got the full treatment because he is black. His ordeal gives a glimpse of the extent of racism in British society.

Another mugger

No matter how well-known or popular a black person might be, they are just another potential mugger/rapist/robber in the eyes of the police and the Neighbourhood Watch schemers. Benn's case made headlines because he is a champion boxer. But his story will ring a bell with many other young black men who have been picked up, and often beaten up, because their face fitted a policeman's idea of what a criminal looks like, or didn't fit the local racists' idea of how their neighbours ought to appear.

Nor is Benn the only famous black sportsman to undergo such an ordeal. Linford Christie, Olympic 100-metre silver medallist, is one of the best-known black athletes in the country today. Last year he was stopped by police and accused of stealing his own car—one of the most common forms of harassment which black people encounter. You may recall that this was what happened to Floyd Jarrett of Broadwater Farm in October 1985. Police arrested him, stole his house key, and used it to enter his home; his mother Cynthia died in the raid, and the Broadwater Farm riot began.

The Met's 'they all look the same to me' attitude is popularised by the media—and not just by a rag like the *Standard.* After a recent football match, ITV asked to talk to Nottingham Forest's black forward Franz Carr. Brian Clough, Forest's media-baiting manager, sent down a teenage apprentice to pose as the star. Nobody noticed the difference. The youngster was black and he played football for a living, so he passed the TV people's scrupulous research standards.

Video vendetta

When it comes to black people who aren't public figures, the police employ even more dubious methods of identification. If they target a black youth, they will ignore all the rules to get him. After the fighting on Broadwater Farm, Floyd Jarrett was the victim of a police vendetta. They tried to fit him up for armed robbery, using a 'computer-enhanced' video picture which, experts later proved in court, had been clumsily doctored. Linford Christie's brother Russell has twice been charged with threatening to kill the same police officer; on both occasions the jury cleared him in a matter of minutes.

Pensioners raided

Then there is the Trevor Monerville saga. He is the young black man who emerged from a three-day stay in Stoke Newington police station, east London, with a clot on his brain in January 1987. 'Who did this to Trevor Monerville?' still screams out from posters around the country. The police, meanwhile, have done their best to silence those asking the embarrassing questions. Trevor Monerville has been arrested three times since his release from hospital in March 1987. On each occasion the charges against him have not been proven. In December, fearful of further harassment, Monerville left the country pending the outcome of his case against the police. Deprived of his company, Hackney police have turned their attention to his family.

At 9.30 on a Sunday evening in January, 12 police officers descended on the home of the Burkes, Trevor Monerville's grandparents, in response to a phone call from Mr Burke informing them of a road accident. Seventy-year old Mrs Burke opened the door, only to be held while the police insisted on breathalysing her husband. Mr Burke refused to take the test because he had been ill in bed all day. The police dragged the 76-year old from his sickbed in his underclothes, and got him into a van outside. Mrs Burke was also seized and thrown on to the floor of a police van while four officers pinned her down. Mr Burke was later told he would not face charges. Mrs Burke was strip-searched and charged with causing actual bodily harm to a police officer.

Whether you're a champion boxer, a medal-winning sprinter or just a Hackney pensioner, if you're black you are guilty until proven innocent; and even then you or your family are likely to suffer a repeat performance. Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Police are spending a fortune on a new publicity campaign to improve their 'anti-racist' image. No doubt the *Standard* will publish pictures of smiling police officers playing with black youngsters—and then keep them on file for the next time they need a 'photo-fit' of a mugger in a hurry.

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Keith Tompson is the author of ***Under Siege: Racial Violence in Britain,*** *published by Penguin at £3.99*

German Greens in crisis

The problem with 'anti-party parties'

The candid interview with German Green MP Petra Kelly in last month's *Living Marxism* startled many British readers, as it exposed the depths of the crisis in the world's best-known Green movement. Christina Braun looks into the reasons for the Greens' fall from grace in West Germany

The German Greens are used to success; or at least they used to be. In less than 10 years the Green Party has become a significant force in West German politics, winning hundreds of seats on local councils and sending representatives to sit in state, federal and European parliaments. Even though the Greens have been divided for some time between clear-cut factions—the more radical fundamentalists and the moderate realists—the old mainstream parties have had to recognise them as a threat.

Yet last year the Greens' fortunes took a dramatic turn for the worse. The most obvious sign of their problems is the public exchange of insults between the factions today. In December a conference called to nominate candidates for the coming European elections turned into internecine warfare. It broke up amid bitter infighting as the fundamentalist party leadership was forced out of office. German TV carried the tearful scenes as live drama. The cameras homed in on leading fundamentalists comforting each other like shocked disaster survivors. It was hardly the face of a party on the road to power.

This humiliating episode followed in the wake of a financial scandal, sparked by accusations in the weekly *Spiegel* that Green Party funds had been siphoned off for private use. The rest of the press reported every grimy detail with relish. The scandal has been a big blow to a party which always claimed to be different from the materialistic and corrupt political machines. It is especially embarrassing for the fundamentalists, since some of their own leading figures stand accused of the rip-off.

Public rows between Green personalities, and financial scandals, are only the most visible aspects of a deep malaise. The Greens have always boasted of being a party of activists with real links to their base and membership. Today it is hard to sustain that claim. Party membership and participation has plunged. According to a realist manifesto published last June under the dramatic title 'To be or not to be?', party life has become moribund:

'While the party leadership in Bonn seems to be practising self-destruction, the rank and file are fading away. We receive the same horror stories from everywhere: no motivation, no political discussion, people don't come to meetings, we do not have enough candidates for our local election slates.'

Even allowing for the factional axe-grinding in this statement, it seems an accurate assessment; in Hamburg, a fundamentalist stronghold, Green Party meetings have been unable to take decisions because only 60 of the 2400 local members turned up.

To understand the crisis facing the German Greens, we need to reassess exactly what their alternative politics have meant.

From the first the Greens saw themselves as the 'anti-party party', a movement which would avoid the manipulative power politics of the established parties. They did more than emphasise their ecological policies; they sought to offer a fresh approach to all those disenchanted with traditional German politics. It is difficult to give a definitive description of what the Greens meant by the anti-party party, since there are always so many different interpretations among them. But the general consensus was that the call for a 'qualitative' change in life required greater public awareness, to be achieved through education and consciousness-raising.

The Greens projected their party as the all-new alternative to the tired political structures of the Federal Republic. The party's charter allows for the 'greatest possible autonomy' for its local and *Land* (state) organisations. All party meetings are declared open and minorities among the membership are allowed to air their views. To prevent the emergence of a bureaucratic

ENDANGERED ENVIRONMENT

German Greens in crisis

The trials of Petra Kelly

The recent conference of the West German Greens revealed a party losing support and deeply split between radical 'fundi' and moderate 'realo' factions. In Bonn, Sabena Norton spoke to leading Green Party MP Petra Kelly about the crisis of the world's foremost Green group

Sabena Norton: The December party conference in Karlsruhe seemed to confirm that the Greens are in very bad shape: consumed by internal conflict with little sense of direction or purpose. I wonder, is this still the kind of party you had in mind when you helped found the Greens 10 years ago?

Petra Kelly: No. It's very depressing because we have moved very far away from my idea of an 'anti-party party' which was meant to be a movement, like Greenpeace. We have become terribly bureaucratic. We have enormous inter-personal problems ... a whole number of people simply don't even communicate any more ... and we've become very intolerant.

I imagined we'd be a party of internationalism and solidarity, a party that can look beyond its own little patch. But now I get very angry when I see, just to give an example, how stingy we are with our monies. We are the richest Green party in the world. But all we do with the money is distribute it to our own voters and groups we associate with, instead of using more of it for international campaigns and solidarity.

We have become a party with all the bad features parties usually display ... including financial scandals, a credibility crisis and an inability to resolve problems in a constructive way. This is really not the kind of party I wanted us to be.

Sabena Norton: Why do you think things have turned out this way?

Petra Kelly, born in 1947, is now a Green MP for Freising, Bavaria. She played a key role in founding the Green Party in 1978, and in 1979 was its leading candidate in the European elections. From 1980-82 she was one of three joint party chairs. Internationally, Kelly is the best-known radical Green. She is still associated with the fundamentalist wing of the German party, which was ousted from leadership amid much acrimony and scandal at the end of last year. But she has not taken sides in the current internal conflict, and could now be considered part of the 'third wing' seeking reconciliation between the warring Green factions.

Petra Kelly: We've got to change the way we constitute our leadership. You can't have one wing in control, like it was up to now. We had a fundamentalist party leadership and a realo-controlled parliamentary fraction. That was a kind of balance. But obviously it doesn't work, because the party doesn't feel represented by the parliamentary wing and vice versa ... and in the middle you get a whole lot of members who just don't understand what's going on and become very apathetic.

To be frank, we are experiencing a serious decline in membership. In my constituency, Freising, for example, we now have only five or six people. There used to be 70 or 80. I can give you another shocking statistic. In Nürnberg, which is still my party branch, we used to get nine or 10 per cent of the vote, including at the last federal elections. In the latest mayoral elections the Greens slumped to three per cent ... and that in a local election where the SPD had a very poor candidate. Obviously that shows a big loss of confidence. Even with local issues, where we're usually pretty good, and with a female candidate, we slumped. That's pretty frightening.

Sabena Norton: So if you had the chance to start again with the Greens, what would you do differently?

Petra Kelly: One thing is, we could have saved ourselves a lot of trouble if we'd never introduced this idea of rotating MPs. I was always against it because you can't just hand over the work to new people after two years, if you've got a four-year parliamentary cycle. That really gave us a lot of trouble. But as you know, we've abandoned rotation in the meantime.

The other problem I see is that our programme, which I still consider correct and necessary, was not really absorbed by the membership. Take the question of non-violence. To me non-violence doesn't mean being passive or that you don't do anything dangerous. What it means is not to harm anyone. If that's understood, then you've got a clear philosophy which helps you organise better and more activities. What makes me sad is that many Greens say 'We're a non-violent party' ... but if you ask how many of them have still got court proceedings, how many are still involved in civil disobedience, you find it's fewer and fewer. It feels odd when my colleagues in the parliamentary fraction complain 'Oh God, she's got another court case!' It's like it's become a nuisance that I still do these things.

Things have calmed down in a very negative way. We've stopped being unpredictable. That's very bad, because our job is to intervene in all sorts of situations and be unpredictable to the establishment. But now we have a situation where a Hans-Jochen Vogel [SPD leader] can say, 'I can talk with Otto Schily or Joschka Fischer [leading Green realos] because they're predictable.' We now have an internal division because our opponents can divide us into predictable and unpredictable, responsible and irresponsible, good or bad Greens. That's not right.

You can see the same problem with women's rights. First we had this enormous solidarity among women in the Green Party. Every one of them, from the farm women to the feminists, shared one goal: more women into politics and more

'It feels odd when my colleagues in the parliamentary fraction complain "Oh God she's got another court case!"'

oligarchy, leadership is meant to be exercised collectively and officers don't get paid. Green parliamentarians are supposed to bow to the principle of mid-term rotation, whereby elected deputies periodically resign their seats in favour of candidates lower down the party list.

The Greens emphasise the need to adopt such democratic structures throughout society. They argue for greater local participation in economic and political affairs—decentralisation and self-administration involving citizens at the grassroots. They want big enterprises to be broken up and supervised by local popular committees. According to the Green perspective, this is the path to raising public consciousness. It would lead people to broaden their outlook and consider qualitative issues such as self-fulfilment, instead of focusing their energies on accumulating greater quantities of wealth.

The Greens' emphasis on democratising society, self-administration and improving the quality of life has considerable appeal. Yet it has an inherent weakness: it outlines the goals, without indicating how these objectives are to be realised. Thus the Greens' perspective remains nothing more than a nice idea without practical consequences. And, as with all Utopian schools of politics, there is an ever-present danger that the goals have little meaning for day-to-day political practice.

Since 1980 the Greens have discovered that involvement in the German political system necessarily implies compromise. The attempt to win tangible gains through official channels is often achieved at the expense of principles. As one Green deputy in the Hesse parliament noted, 'We all came in as fundamentalists, but we soon found ourselves in working relationships with other deputies, particularly left social democrats' (quoted in EG Frankland, 'The role of Greens in West German parliamentary politics 1980-87', *Review of Politics*, winter 1988).

The anti-party party project has failed because it attempts a technical solution to what are in fact political problems. The tendency towards bureaucratisation in political life is not a consequence of the way the old parties organise. It stems from specific political practices. In particular, accommodating to the rules of parliamentarianism elevates compromise into a philosophy. The Greens' attempt to establish new organisational methods was rendered meaningless by their absorption into old-fashioned parliamentary politics. This goes a long way towards explaining the demise of the anti-party party.

In the beginning the Greens sought to expand their influence without falling prey to what they called 'the parliamentary embrace' incorporation into established German politics. However, Green politicians soon discovered that, if they were to make further gains, they needed to abide by the rules of the game. Parliamentary politics is a strictly-regimented contest between professional fixers, carefully insulated from society. As the political fixers manoeuvre to get one up on their opponents, the role of extra-parliamentary movements is negligible and the party membership is assigned the role of a passive audience.

During the past few years many Green leaders have been transformed into conventional political fixers. Green parliamentary deputies now argue against the principle of mid-term rotation and some have refused to resign. At state level Green politicians have collaborated with other parliamentarians at the expense of their own policies. In Hesse, Green ministers remained in the SPD-led coalition government even when its policies on nuclear power directly contradicted one of their party's founding principles.

The principle of organisational autonomy for party bodies might

sound impressive, but experience shows it is meaningless. Within the capitalist system, only those with influence can aspire to any degree of autonomy. Thus it is those with access to resources—in the Greens' case, the well-paid Bundestag deputies—who matter in conventional politics. Consequently the only true autonomy within the Green Party is the autonomy of its Bundestag deputies from the control of the party membership. A growing number of Green deputies have become professional parliamentarians. This is what Petra Kelly was complaining about in last month's *Living Marxism* interview, when she noted that many Green deputies had forgotten their links with grassroots activists and adopted 'the attitude that this is parliament and that, out there, is the street'.

Noise and power

The anti-party party project has tended to obscure the real relations of power. Whatever the apparent balance of forces within the party's democratic structures, the realists always prevail when it comes to deciding what the Greens do in public. The realists have behind them the full force of respectable opinion and conventional practices. They can always claim that they are only doing what is possible under the rules of the parliamentary game. By contrast, the left and the fundamentalists are compromised by their inability to project an alternative that is workable within the existing political context.

The fundamentalists are thus reduced to the role of giving the Greens radical credibility. They can make all the noise they want at a local level, because the real decisions are made by individual parliamentarians. The growing awareness of the irrelevance of the fundamentalists prompted Petra Kelly's remark that 'sometimes I feel like I'm in a different party', while another leading radical, Jutta Ditfurth, has asked the big question: 'Does it still make sense to work within the Greens any more?' (*Spiegel*, 12 December 1988)

The Green Party's present crisis is above all a crisis of its radical fundamentalist wing

But for most fundamentalists and eco-socialists, the answer to Ditfurth's question is still a resounding 'yes'. They fear political isolation more than anything else. The German left long ago gave up any pretence of having an independent existence, and invested all its hopes of influencing society in the Greens. This gives the realists a real advantage. They can do whatever they want, in the certain knowledge that the desperate left will eventually give way and remain behind the Green banner. The fundamentalists are the prisoners of their own creation. They cannot counter the hard-headed realism of their opponents, nor can they launch an organisational alternative to the Greens.

The Green Party's present crisis is above all a crisis of its fundamentalist wing. The reality of the German political system has exposed the rather naive Utopianism of the fundamentalists. Their paralysis is reflected in the fact that only the realists, and the new reconciliationist wing of the party, are making new policy proposals.

The Greens have prided themselves on their tolerance of conflicting views and autonomous action with the party. This tolerance is based on an informal agreement not to bring differences to a head. Since all schools of thought can coexist inside the party, political views are just opinions with no practical consequences; everybody can say their piece without the issues being resolved. But the apparently equal status of conflicting views is illusory. Within the parameters of capitalist society, capitalist ideas will prevail. The Greens are not immune from the influence of the system. The realism of capitalist society will win easily against a set of disparate opinions.

Consensus among conflicting views can only be bought at the cost of principles. The experience of the Greens confirms that giving priority to sustaining a consensus requires a willingness to negotiate away basic policies. For example, the 1986 Green programme quite rightly included a demand for the abolition of all legal restrictions on women's right to abortion. In Bavaria, hysterical right wingers attacked this policy. The Greens feared that the row could upset their voters with more conservative social views. Thus they retreated and fudged their position in campaign literature which declared that they were 'defending the born and unborn life'. This abandonment of a principle for the sake of electoral expediency is far from unique.

Negotiable principles

After Chernobyl in 1986, the Greens called for the closure of nuclear power stations. However in Hesse, where the Greens were in a coalition government with the SPD, this policy became negotiable. The Social Democrats would not accept closures and instead made vague promises about nuclear power being phased out over 10 years. Today, the realists' manifesto even characterises the call for the closure of nuclear power stations as naive.

Despite all the rhetoric about grassroots initiatives, Green leaders are now less than enthusiastic about demonstrations and public protests. When demonstrators clash with police, Green spokesmen go out of their way to denounce violence and to present an image of solid respectability. After one violent demonstration, a leading Green lectured his supporters in language usually associated with the right, insisting that only the state had the right to take forceful action: 'On the question of the state monopoly of force I am not prepared to compromise one inch.' (W Hülsberg, *The German Greens*, 1988, p175) It is ironic that, for some Greens at least, the one issue on which there can be no difference of opinion is the authority of the capitalist state. As Petra Kelly revealed in *Living Marxism*, it is now considered a deep embarrassment for leading Green radicals to become involved in court cases.

The Greens have often promoted their ideas as an alternative to class politics, which they deem to be divisive. Greens have denounced trade unions and business with equal vigour. However, they reserve a special disdain for the 'materialism' of the unions. The Greens have even supported calls to reduce working class living standards, by introducing a shorter working week with proportionately lower pay. Apparently such a reduction in living standards is supposed to be compensated for by an improvement in the quality of life. In reality, this major victory in the struggle against materialism would simply leave Germans with more free time to spend trying to make ends meet.

An embarrassment

Whatever the Greens might like to believe, they cannot exist above the class divisions in society. Their conversion to the realism of capitalist politics has led them to uphold the values of conventional respectability. Party leaders now argue explicitly that policy should be aimed at winning support from the middle classes. The realists' manifesto insists that their moderate approach 'will find support within wide sections of the middle classes, and above all we will not be able to do without them if we want to pursue our policy of reconstruction'.

The orientation towards the middle class has provoked the Greens' current crisis. Their old image as a protest movement is an embarrassment to a party courting middle class respectability. To win favour with their chosen audience, the Greens must renounce their own past. Many Greens are content to make their peace with the German political system; many others have given up and dropped out. The minority of radicals who remain active are depressed, and also paralysed. They can do little to halt the drift towards the middle ground, because the realists are only drawing out the inevitable conclusions of the anti-party party project which the fundamentalists launched a decade ago.

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Pill scares, condomania and abortion booms

How safe is 'safe sex' for women?

Anne Burton asks why unwanted pregnancies are on the increase

Q What do you get when you combine a scare about the spread of Aids among heterosexuals with a panic about the safety of the contraceptive pill?
A A rise in the number of abortions.

In the first three months of 1988, 44 545 women in England and Wales had abortions—an increase of 6535 or 17.2 per cent on the same period in 1987. Women aged between 16 and 24 accounted for much of the increase. The recently published figures for the period from April to June last year also show a rise, to 39 881. This shows an increase of 5.2 per cent over the same three months of 1987; not quite so headline-grabbing as the earlier leap, but sufficient to demonstrate that the rise in the abortion rate continues.

Figures published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) have shown a substantial increase in abortions every year since 1983. Right wingers blame the increase on the breakdown of morality, the easy availability of abortion and women's cavalier approach to it. These views permeate the medical profession. Dr Gordon Avery, district medical officer for South Warwickshire, told a local paper that irresponsible women were to blame for the rise in abortions last year: 'I know this will sound chauvinist but we do think some of the women are becoming a bit lackadaisical about contraception and are using abortion as the contraceptive.' (*Warwick Advertiser*, 8 November 1988)

£200 contraceptive?

It does sound chauvinist; and stupid. What woman would *choose* abortion as an 'easy' means of contraception? With the inconvenience, worry, pain and stigma that go with abortions, and the symptoms of pregnancy (morning sickness, etc) that often precede them, who could consider abortion preferable to *preventing* the pregnancy in the first place?

It's equally ludicrous to say that abortions are more 'popular' because they're easier to get. Abortions have increased in circumstances where getting one has become more difficult. NHS cuts have hit gynaecology and obstetrics wards hard. Many medical authorities now refuse to carry out an abortion on a woman more than 12 weeks pregnant unless her health is at risk or the fetus is handicapped. The rest have to 'go private'. OPCS figures for the first half of 1988 show that nearly 60 per cent of abortions on women *entitled* to NHS healthcare were done in the private sector. With private abortions often costing £200, it's a pretty expensive contraception choice.

The argument that women choose to have abortions also forgets that we do not have access to abortion on demand. The 1967 Abortion Act confirms that abortion is illegal unless two doctors agree that the fetus is seriously handicapped, or the pregnancy will endanger the woman's physical or mental health or that of her children. Doctors are under no

For the overwhelming majority of women, the chances of contracting Aids from sex are negligible, while the risk of getting pregnant is rather high

legal obligation to refer a woman for abortion even if she meets the act's criteria.

Unintended increase

Then there is the considerable—and increasing—*moral* pressure on women not to terminate unwanted pregnancies. Last year's campaign by Liberal MP David Alton to lower the legal time-limit on abortion failed for technical reasons (the bill ran out of time), but won widespread agreement on the need to curtail abortion rights. Yet when the pro-Alton campaigners were at their most virulent, with the popular press carrying horror stories of aborted fetuses left to die, the highest number of young women ever were seeking abortions—not as a matter of choice, but as the only resolution to an unwanted pregnancy.

The abortion rate has risen in the eighties because the number of unwanted pregnancies has increased. A medical journal recently carried a study of a random sample of women giving birth to live babies in 1984. Just over a quarter described the conception as 'unintended'. Ann Cartwright who carried out the study concludes that if you combine this ratio with the ratio of legal terminations to live/still births, the figures 'suggest that about two fifths of conceptions are unintentioned' (*Social Science and Medicine,* August 1988). And 'a Berkshire GP' who conducted a two-year audit of pregnant women in his practice found that 36 per cent were unplanned. Young women were most at risk; 54 of the 187 women with unplanned pregnancies were aged between 15 and 19 (*Family Planning Today,* final quarter, 1988).

Most doctors seem to agree that, while many unplanned pregnancies (especially among young people) result from unprotected sexual intercourse, there is a large number of unwanted pregnancies among women who 'do all the right things'. They get caught because of problems with the method of contraception, or because they use it wrongly. Agencies concerned with family planning feel that the quality of contraceptive advice and provision is declining; more women now rely on less effective methods of birth control than in the seventies and early eighties, when the contraceptive pill was more popular.

The pill is the most effective method of contraception (see table), and it cannot be coincidental that the rise in unwanted pregancies has shadowed the tendency of women to turn away from the pill. This trend, which started in the early eighties, has recently increased, particularly among young women. The Brook Advisory Centre, a network of birth control clinics, confirm that their figures for 1987 alone show a four per cent drop in contraceptive pill use among their clients, mainly aged 17-23. So why the mass exodus from the pill in the last few years?

Madelaine Tearse of the Birth Control Trust thinks that the shift is mainly down to two things: 'All the talk about Aids made more young people think about using condoms. Health scares have also made women think about coming off the pill. If you change from the pill to using a condom you get protection against sexually transmitted diseases, and you don't have the worry of newspaper reports about pill and cancer links.' Alison Hadley of the Brook Advisory Centre sees the same trends: 'A lot more women are disenchanted with the pill, they know it's not the miracle drug it was made out to be in the sixties—and they realise that we have to take a lot more care against Aids, and using a condom can help. More women now vary methods according to their age and the kind of relationships they're in.'

Pill scares

In the seventies higher dosage pills were linked with heart attacks and strokes. By 1983 even lower dose pills were being associated with breast and cervical cancer. It seems certain that health warnings about the pill—and a healthy mistrust of the medical profession—lead many women to panic and choose methods of contraception which are not always being linked with cancer.

The increasing unpopularity of oral contraceptives has followed the pill scares. The drop in the pill's popularity in the eighties was recently documented in a *Family Planning Perspectives* report, 'What do women use when they stop using the pill?' (November/December 1988). The authors, William Pratt and Christine Bachrach, found that 'despite the improvement in oral contraceptive technology between 1973 and 1982 the current use of oral contraceptives among married women declined from 25 per cent to 13 per cent'. In most cases there was no good medical reason for the change, and only a third of the women who changed were advised to do so by their doctor. Unless they opted for sterilisation, those who threw away their pills settled for a less effective method of contraception—mostly the condom.

The trend away from the pill means more women being exposed to the risk of pregnancy. Even the pill is not 100 per cent safe, but doctors still consider it to be the most effective reversible contraceptive by a factor of 10 (*British Journal of Family Planning,* July 1987). For example, after the biggest scares yet, in 1983, when two reports linking the pill with cancer of the breast and the cervix received enormous and often hysterical press coverage, many women deserted the pill; the following year, abortions leapt by 9013—a seven per cent increase.

Today, hardly a month goes by without somebody linking some brand of pill to some form of cancer. Things are now further complicated by commercial considerations. The increased range of contraceptive pills has led to different brands jockeying for market position; a well-publicised scare about one brand can benefit its rivals. Confusion and suspicion abound. An International Health Foundation study found that 'nearly two thirds of women think the pill causes infertility, cardiovascular disease and cancer' (*Doctor*, 26 June 1986).

Condom culture

'What is a poor girl to do?' is the question. 'Use a condom' is the most popular answer. The London Rubber Company claims to have increased sales of Durex by 25 per cent in the last two years. It agrees with the birth control agencies that it owes its new prosperity to the trend for young women to be suspicious of the pill, and for men and women to opt for condoms 'because of the additional protection against HIV infection'.

'Taking a condom on holiday won't save your life—using one might', say the government adverts. But will it stop you from getting pregnant? After all, despite endless publicity about the spread of Aids among heterosexuals, the total number of reported cases of HIV infection where neither partner is in a high-risk group was just 312 (England and Wales) at the end of last year: 129 were women. For the overwhelming majority of women, the chances of contracting Aids from sex are negligible, while the risk of getting pregnant is rather high. So if women are switching to condoms, their ability to protect against pregnancy ought to be a prime public concern.

One in 200

Do condoms prevent pregnancy? The evidence isn't entirely encouraging. A *Which?* report published last year claimed that *15 per cent* of women whose partners use condoms as the only means of contraception will become pregnant in one year. In September 1987, *Self Health* magazine subjected 35 brands of condom to the British Standard pin-hole test (samples are filled with a third of a litre of water and checked for leaks). Most brands passed easily enough, although with one, Aegis anti-VD (ironically promoted as an anti-Aids condom) 32 out of 100 failed. It has since been taken off the market, but it shows how much we have to rely on the producers' quality control.

In fact, even with those that pass the test and bear the 'BS kite-mark'

we can't be too sure. British Standard allows up to five condoms in every 1000 to fail the test for holes. That's one potential pregnancy in every 200 condoms. As Graham Barker, consultant gynaecologist at London's St George's Hospital, told the *Sunday Mirror:* 'If a fertile young couple are making love four or five times a week, even a small failure rate is going to get them in the end.' (20 November 1988)

Sarah Williams of Durex insists that condoms are very effective if used properly: 'If 100 women use a condom for a year only two or three will become pregnant and that compares favourably with the pill or mini-pill.' But she admits it's difficult to monitor the true effectiveness of the condom because it's not very user-friendly and is 'frequently undermined' by improper use: 'Often people using condoms are young people who haven't a clue. They don't squeeze the air out of the teat which means that the condom is put under extra stress and so can burst, or they don't put it on early enough at the start of intercourse, or they don't withdraw quickly enough afterwards and the condom slips off. That's why we put instructions in so people know what to do.' It doesn't seem that easy. Condom PR agents must have shuddered when trendy TV presenter Mike Smith displayed how to put a condom on his thumb on a show about Aids aimed at young people. Yes, Mike Smith, too, forgot to squeeze the air out.

Alison Hadley of the Brook Advisory Centre advises that 'condoms are only really effective with a back-up. We recommend that young women use a low dose pill to guard against pregnancy and a condom to protect against sexually transmitted diseases and Aids'. In the current circumstances, it doesn't sound a very realistic campaign. So what do we need to change our situation?

● Adequate, informative sex education: 'There's a lot that the government could do if they wanted to' explains Alison Hadley, 'but the approach they've got now is worse than useless. All this media-influenced hype about Aids doesn't inform anybody about anything. Young people need clear explanations about contraception and sexually transmitted diseases—that's a hundred times as effective as scare posters—but the government won't do it. They've even taken contraception out of the core science curriculum because of pressure from religious bodies.'

Madelaine Tearse from the Birth Control Trust believes that education is crucial to demystify sex and contraception for young people: 'There are so many things that people are confused about—like the morning-after pill, there's minimal publicity about it. Not many women know that it's freely available and effective for 72 hours after unprotected intercourse. If people just knew these things it would make a difference.'

● Freely available, safe contraception: Although we've highlighted the problem of unwanted pregnancies in response to pill scares, and despite the fact that some scares are unjustified, women are right to be sceptical about the pharmaceutical industry's attitude to their health. The pill does cause many genuine side-effects and thousands of women can't take it as a consequence. So why aren't there safer, better pills?

The drugs industry, like any capitalist concern, is primarily interested in profits. It directs research where most profits can be generated, rather than to areas of most need. It's ironic that we live in a society that can create Star Wars programmes with the potential to wipe out humanity, but can't produce a pill to kill sperm without side effects. And if condoms were produced to the standards which the authorities demand of their arms industry, presumably they wouldn't have holes in or fall off. The technology exists to improve contraception if it was a priority for society. Currently it isn't; motherhood is seen as women's natural role, and if it's unplanned then that's tough.

Despite all the panic reports, the authorities' lack of real concern about the safety of the pill is obvious. At the end of last year Medical Research Council support was withdrawn from a Manchester study on the long-term use of the pill. The unit director, Dr Clifford Kay, concedes that he will now have to turn to the pharmaceutical industry for 'a large slice' of his funds (*Pulse*, 17 December 1988). Are we really to believe that Wyeth or Schering or the London Rubber Co will put up funds for studies which show their products in a bad light? The knowledge that research is funded in this way will only make people more suspicious and cynical of the results.

Government cuts in the health service are also reducing the number of family planning clinics, and the number of sessions run by those which survive. Barbara Kenmir of the Family Planning Association says it's hard to put a precise figure on the cuts, 'but if I tell you that 25 per cent of district health authorities are making cuts, planning to make cuts or have made cuts, you'll get the picture'. FPA figures for 1986, the latest available, show that 1.4m women rely on family planning clinics for contraceptive advice and provision.

The authorities justify cuts by saying the clinics duplicate services provided by GPs. But Barbara Kenmir thinks that the cuts will hit those most at risk: 'The Snowdon report shows that GPs are usually used by women spacing pregnancies, while family planning clinics are used by women delaying their first pregnancy. The reason is obvious. Young unmarried women often feel intimidated by their family doctor—and a lot of doctors won't prescribe contraceptives for younger women anyway.'

● Free abortion on demand—as early as possible and as late as necessary: Today all fertile women in sexual relationships with men are only a burst condom or a missed pill away from pregnancy. Under these circumstances, women need access to abortion as a back-up. For most women abortion is not an issue of morality, it's a question of what's practical. We need society to make available the resources to end pregnancies we do not want.

The authorities may shriek about increased abortions, but they are to blame. They have branded women as second class citizens whose role is to reproduce, and lumbered us with second-rate contraceptive provision and advice. You can't encourage people to give up more reliable forms of contraception and expect to stop unwanted pregnancies, even if you dress it up as safer sex.

●

First-year failure rates for some birth control methods

Method	Failure rate in typical users (%)
Oestrogen-progesterone pill	2
Progesterone-only pill	2.5
Intra-uterine device (IUD)	5
Condom	10
Diaphragm (with spermicide)	19
Coitus interruptus	23
No method	90

Source: RA Hatcher et al, *Contraceptive Technology 1984-85*, 1984

How Thatcher plays to the system's strengths

The dictator in Downing Street

Frank Richards examines the past and present features of British politics which explain the Thatcherite ascendancy

Parliamentary politics have become a remarkably staid and predictable affair. In the course of the past decade the Conservatives have emerged as unrivalled masters of the British state. With each passing year, the Thatcher government consolidates its hold over Britain's political institutions. Almost two years into Thatcher's third term, the opposition can make no credible claim to be alternative parties of government. By-elections have become a routine, provoking little interest except when Labour loses another 'safe' seat. The SDP/Liberal Alliance, which once threatened to break the mould of British politics, has itself been broken. The centre parties can still pick up the votes of the disaffected, but their leaders would be laughed at if they repeated past exhortations to their members to 'prepare for government'.

The Labour Party is in the midst of its greatest political crisis. After three successive election defeats, Labour has become a party without purpose, direction or distinctive policies, hanging around in the hope that it might benefit when the government slips on a banana skin. Neil Kinnock's main concern is not winning an election, but ensuring that Labour remains the main opposition party.

Peculiar politics

A look at other Western nations reveals the peculiarity of British politics today. The British establishment is solidily united around Thatcher and faces no serious political threats. By contrast, most Western governments appear weak, riven by rivalries and scandals. In France and Spain divisions on the right have allowed Socialist parties to take power, only to be confronted by crises of their own in the shape of mass strikes and financial scandals. In Germany the governing Christian Democrat/Liberal coalition is on the defensive and the coalition partners cannot even agree on how to defend their state. The Italian and Japanese governments face major corruption scandals, while for the past two years the USA has had a lame duck for a president. It is not surprising that Thatcher can get away with claiming to be the premier leader in the Western Alliance.

Electoral arithmetic cannot fully explain Thatcher's special status. True, the Tories have won three elections. Yet their support has remained pretty stable at around 42-44 per cent. The majority of those who vote, and a vast majority of those who don't bother, oppose the Thatcher government. And yet a government backed by a minority of the electorate dominates society more than any other this century. The explanation lies, not in voting figures, but in the balance of political forces in the real world outside parliament and the polling-booth.

Thatcher can count on the firm support of the British establishment. Her government has used this base as a launching pad for imposing its authority across society. The unity of capitalist interests around the Tories contrasts sharply with the equivocation and divisions that plague their opponents. This imbalance explains why the government's strong grip on affairs is so out of proportion to its shaky electoral support.

In limbo

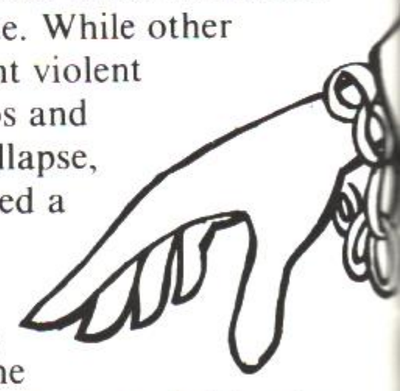
The Tory ascendancy has been paralleled by the decline of protest, dissent and political debate. Thatcher's prestigious triumphs over various forces, from the miners and the local councils to the Argentinians and the BBC, have unnerved the opposition parties. Seemingly paralysed by the fear of another drubbing, they can offer no alternative policies that threaten Thatcher. For the time being political debate and conflict remain suspended in limbo. The opposition can no longer even raise a coherent public voice against something like the poll tax, which has caused such anger in Scotland. Instead the headlines are dominated by disaster stories and an endless series of health panics. Discussion of social problems is out, and the 'medicalisation' of the news is in, putting the emphasis on individual concerns about what we eat and so on. As reality is trivialised into scare stories, society becomes depoliticised, party conflict is pushed into the background, and the Tories can carry on without having to look over their shoulders.

How can we account for this unique stability in modern British politics, and the strange silence which prevails in important arenas of debate? And what is it all leading to? It is not possible to produce definitive answers as to what will come next. But if we look back at the factors which have shaped the present state of political limbo, it should be possible at least to raise the right questions about where Britain is going.

British evolution

Britain has a well-deserved reputation for centuries of political stability. There are many reasons for the relative absence of violent conflicts, constitutional crises and fundamental dislocations in the system. For the purposes of our discussion, the most significant theme of Britain's modern political history has been the ability of the establishment to adapt its policies and institutions to meet the challenge of new circumstances.

Since King Charles I lost his crown and his head in the English Civil War of the seventeenth century, there has been no major break in the evolution of the British state. While other nations underwent violent revolutions, coups and constitutional collapse, Britain experienced a steady evolution in its institutions and conventions.



The ferment of the seventeenth century was ended by the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, which was a bloodless coup in England. (Ireland, as always, was another matter.) The incorporation of Scotland into the British state in 1707 was achieved on a voluntary basis. In the mid-nineteenth century, and again in the first two decades of the twentieth, while the Continent was wracked by revolt and European states disintegrated, Britain (although experiencing unrest of its own), remained calm by comparison.

Of course, the British political system has changed since Oliver Cromwell. But these changes have usually been effected on the foundation of the existing constitutional framework. British state institutions have proved remarkably durable. In the nineteenth century the establishment reformed them to accommodate the conflict within its ranks between landed interests and industrial

CARTOON: GROBNIK/NAT

capitalists. Britain became the first European country where the propertied classes united around a single system of political institutions and values.

The cohesion achieved by the British ruling class in the 1830s and 1840s created the conditions in which it could deal with those who challenged its system from below. The British state was adapted in response to the emerging working class, to integrate the volatile forces of labour into the existing order. The basis of parliamentary representation was gradually widened; by 1885 most male workers had the right to vote and 43 years later the British state conceded universal adult suffrage.

Nobody voted

The creation of a formally democratic system has played a key part in stabilising affairs. It has given the impression of representative government, and thus given people a link with the status quo. At the same time, the continuity of constitutional arrangements has ensured that real authority remains concentrated in the hands of the capitalist class.

The apparent democratisation of British politics is founded upon an inherently undemocratic, 'unwritten' constitution. This secret constitution is a collection of informal agreements on how the power of propertied interests can best be maintained. So long as the legitimacy of these informal agreements is not questioned, the establishment has often been prepared to compromise and even to modify its institutions. This does not alter the fact that British politics are based on a constitutional framework which nobody voted for and which is not accountable to society.

What passes for political debate in Britain has only been about how the accepted rules of the game should be interpreted. Nobody outside the ruling circles is allowed to question the fundamentals. By making constitutional matters its private concern, the establishment has been able to separate affairs of state from participatory politics, and to make up or amend the rules as it goes from one problem to the next. Thatcher's obsession with 'official secrets' is not paranoia, but the understandable response of the agent of a ruling class determined to protect its monopoly over the conduct of affairs of state.

The sovereign

The British constitution has evolved in a way that allows for the greatest flexibility, while retaining the dictatorship of wealth intact. The evolution of this arrangement has endowed the system with its famous stability. It has maintained the important balance between the authorities' power to decide on key matters without reference to anybody else, and the apparent involvement of the people which lends popular legitimacy to the state. The issue of sovereignty illustrates how the ruling class retains its monopoly on power, while encouraging the impression of representative government.

Conventional wisdom has it that sovereignty in Britain is invested in the people, through parliament. In fact the British constitution does not recognise popular sovereignty. Government is conducted from above and has little to do with popular participation.

The foundation of the British constitution is that the monarchy is still sovereign; this sovereign right has simply been transferred so that it is exercised through parliament. The annual state opening of parliament by the Queen may be a quaint ritual. But the monarchy still has the right to dissolve parliament, and to appoint anybody from parliament to form a cabinet. According to present convention this right is exercised in such a way that the Queen asks the leader of the largest parliamentary party to form a government. But the convention is not absolute, and in principle there is nothing to stop the monarch inviting whichever parliamentarian she chooses to assume power, regardless of election results or public opinion.

A front

The monarchy also has considerable residual powers. The unelected aristocrat in Buckingham Palace can usurp the role of parliament in emergency situations. Of course this does not mean that the Queen is in a position to seize power personally when it takes her fancy. Instead, the constitutional authority of the monarchy serves to mystify the true nature of political power. The monarch is only a figurehead. But in critical circumstances, where the political system fails its masters, the Crown can be used as a front for the capitalist class. When the powers that be need to declare a state of dire national emergency, and to call on all loyal Britons to rally behind the flag, we can expect to see MPs shoved aside while the monarch appears on TV to mouth the instructions of the establishment.

This constitutional device means that the power of capital is ultimately guaranteed indirectly through the fiction of the sovereignty of the Crown-in-parliament. The mobilisation of the medieval institution of the monarchy to safeguard a modern 'democratic' state endows capitalist rule with the legitimacy of historical tradition. This legitimacy helps to insulate the state machine from popular political pressure—an important factor in ensuring the unique stability of the British system.

It is obvious, however, that this

PHOTO: HOUSE OF COMMONS PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

stability can only hold if all the major players in the game accept the ground-rules. Thus it has been important for the authorities to train new opponents to follow the old ways. Karl Marx wrote that 'the more a ruling class is able to assimilate the foremost minds of a ruled class, the more stable and dangerous becomes its rule'. The British experience confirms Marx's argument. By incorporating the leaders of the Labour Party, widely recognised as the representatives of the working class, the British establishment managed to turn a potential threat into a source of positive support.

Writing in her diary when Labour first took government office in 1924, Fabian leader Beatrice Webb observed that the party's leaders were preoccupied with court ritual:

'"Are Labour privy counsellors to appear at court in uniform?" is one of the questions. "Are cabinet ministers' wives to attend evening courts?" is another. And then there is the mark of civility—the curtsy! It's all very ludicrous: though not altogether unimportant. Altering the form may easily transform the substance.'
(N and J MacKenzie (eds), *The Diary of Beatrice Webb*, Volume 3, 1984, p442)

No doubt the Labour Party's early acceptance of the petty traditions of British politics had its comical aspects. But this was serious business. By submitting to these humiliating rituals, Labour signalled its acquiescence to the rules of the game.

The unquestioning acceptance of Britain's constitutional framework by the emerging party of the working class fulfilled the essential condition for stability. Labour's integration into a political system dominated by institutions upholding the interests of the propertied classes further reinforced the legitimacy of the British state.

Lib/Lab pact

The incorporation of Labour into the prevailing institutions of political rule is itself a testimony to the flexibility of the British ruling class. Although sections of the establishment had serious misgivings about allowing Labour a place in the political system, the spirit of compromise prevailed. An agreement was worked out whereby, in return for accepting the rules, serving the state and taking the oath of allegiance to the monarch, Labour could participate in the political system.

The British establishment left little to chance. It carefully supervised and nurtured the leadership of labour movement organisations. Nothing better illustrates the themes of continuity and stability than the fact that an ostensibly working class organisation—the Labour Party—was itself the product of nineteenth-century Liberalism.

Leading Liberal politicians, whose party had been the representative of industrial capitalists, took it upon themselves to teach the labour movement the values of British constitutional politics. Even when the demand for working class representation became overwhelming, and Labour was founded as an independent party at the turn of the century, many of its leading members and thinkers were former Liberals who changed their hats, but not their politics. The Labour Party, born under the watchful eye of the establishment, represented the continuation of Liberalism by other means. Once again, the authorities had adapted their system to ensure that there was no dramatic break with the past.

Facts of life

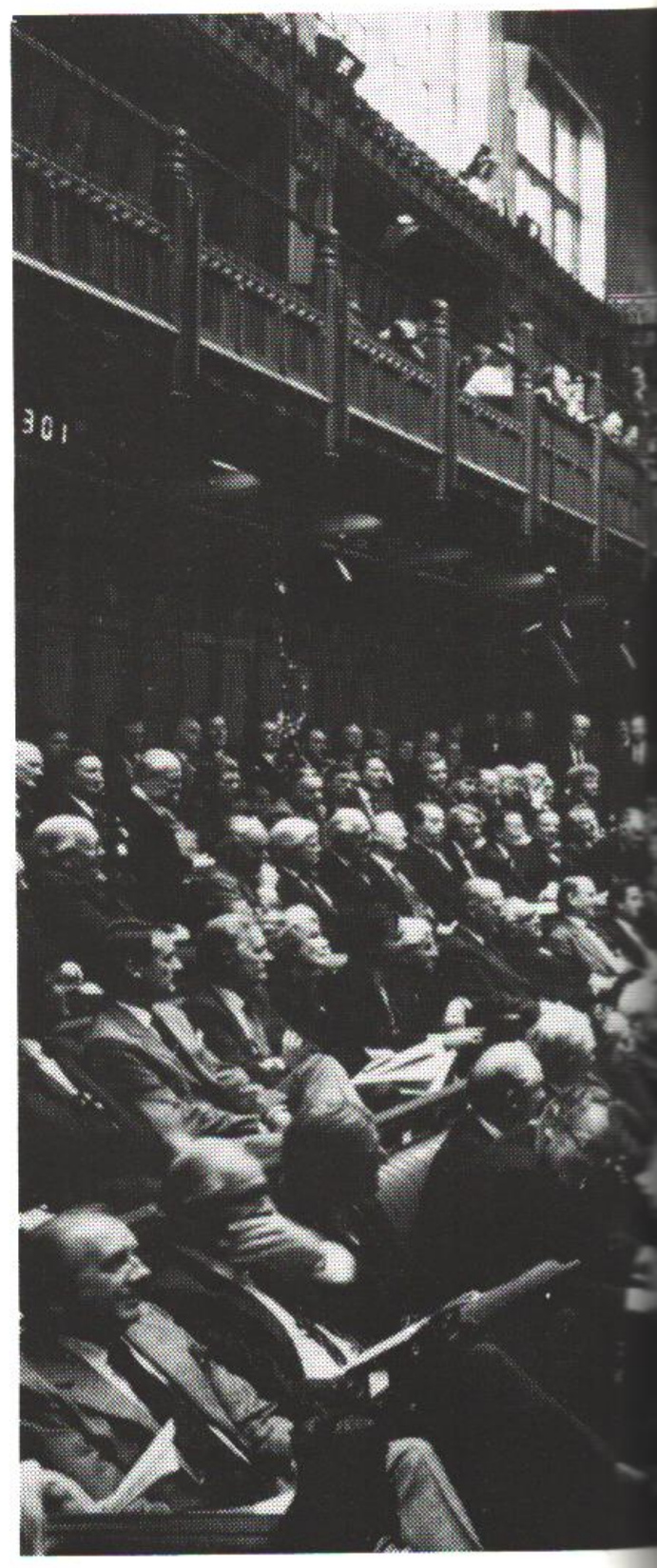
In most European countries the emergence of working class parties created major political crises; in Britain it caused only minor disruption. Labour smoothly replaced the Liberals as the main alternative to the Tories, illustrating the considerable capacity of the political system to accommodate new forces. More far-sighted Tory leaders even saw it as their job to win the leaders of the Labour Party and of the trade unions to accept the existing constitutional framework. In the twenties and thirties, Tory prime minister Stanley Baldwin took pains to teach Labour leaders the facts of British political life.

The care with which the establishment handled Labour leaders was to be fully rewarded. The leaders of the official labour movement became loyal collaborators. The Labour governments of 1945-51, 1964-70 and 1974-79 were to serve the Crown faithfully. As most observers recall, there is little to distinguish these governments from any other. The Labour Party thus became a positive asset for the establishment. In times of trouble, when the Tories could not win popular support, Labour could be relied on to step in and hold the fort. Labour's socialist image proved valuable in reconciling popular aspirations for change with the continuation of British capitalism. Mass pressure could be contained with a minimum of fuss by a unique British creation—a party nurtured by the establishment for the express purpose of maintaining working class acceptance of the status quo.

The peculiar character of the British system has helped to make moderation the dominant feature of twentieth-century politics here. The ability of the establishment to adapt to changed circumstances and remain in control has allowed it to avoid the extremes; thus it neither had to suffer an attempted communist revolution at the time of the First World War, nor resort to fascism in the inter-war years. The careful education of the Labour leadership helped to create a consensus around support for the institutions of the British state. This provided a common ground far larger than areas of political disagreement. When party differences are restricted to secondary issues, political debate necessarily becomes moderate.

Mods past the post

British moderation is underwritten by a network of political practices and institutions. The electoral system, based on the 'first past the post' arrangement, is designed to discourage the emergence of new radical parties which might succeed under proportional representation, and to prevent 'extremist' candidates from winning. The British system requires candidates to appeal to the middle ground to get enough votes to win. The state takes a hostile attitude towards militants and left wingers, and encourages moderates. The success of moderation requires that labour movement organisations fully accept the legitimacy of the state and its institutions. Support for the primacy of the British national interest, and the subordination of



RIGHT: Kinnock at the despatch box, playing the game again

class demands to the Union Jack, are essential prerequisites for the perpetuation of a moderate political system.

The moderate character of British Labourism has ensured that conflict is limited to secondary issues and that the ruling class seldom faces any fundamental challenge to its monopoly over wealth and power. Labourism has often been presented as a strand of socialism with strong progressive policies. In reality it is so moderate that it does not even match the progressive impulses of nineteenth-century republicanism. Labour leaders uphold the sovereignty of the Crown and bow and scrape to the monarch. They have never questioned the legitimacy of the British state and have fully supported its imperialist policies abroad. A bipartisan consensus prevails on national security and foreign policy, which are generally considered too important to the state to be used as 'political footballs'.

Most political debate is restricted to a 'me, too' discussion about who can best represent the British nation. The conflict between different classes within the nation seldom emerges in parliament. Throughout the century, all sides of the House have claimed to be the best representative of the nation, and the tradition continues to this day. Thus the opposition never challenges the rampant chauvinism of the Thatcher regime. It prefers to criticise Thatcher for abandoning the British tradition of moderation, and to attack her strength of conviction and unwillingness to compromise. Against such flabby opponents, the Tories have little to fear.

British political stability in all of its manifestations—the continuity of state institutions and constitutional arrangements, the ability to incorporate opposition, and the culture of political moderation—is quite remarkable. To complete the equation, we need to consider the role of the Tory Party.

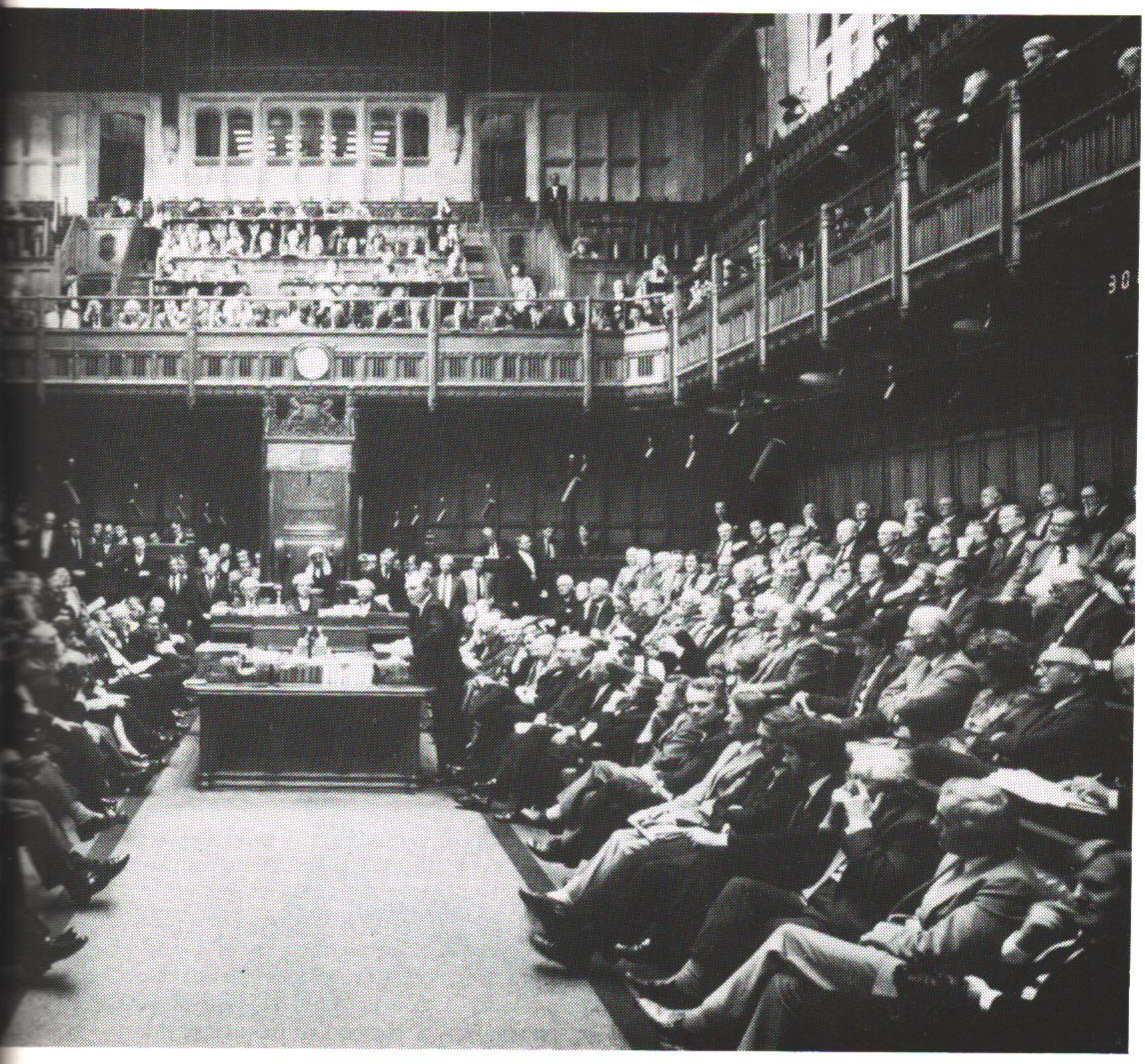
The Conservative Party is like no other political animal. It has been the dominant political force since late Victorian times. The Tory Party's unbroken career as the key player in the political system has given the establishment a powerful instrument with which to cohere its forces. The Conservatives are more than mere sympathisers with the capitalist system; they are the party of the British state. Through the Tory Party, the dictates of the state machine are enforced in the sphere of party politics.

Historians and political scientists traditionally describe Britain's governmental structures as a two-party system, in which equal alternative parties of government interact and take turns to govern. In fact the Conservative Party has no equal in parliamentary politics. Since 1885, when manhood suffrage was introduced, the Tories have been in office (alone or in coalition) for about two thirds of the time. Their old rivals, the Liberals, are now a marginal force in parliament and Labour is set on the same course of decline.

The Tories are not only supreme in Britain; they have no equivalent anywhere in Europe. The leading parties of the Continental right are post-war creations. The various Christian Democratic, Liberal and Gaullist-type parties in Europe lack the tradition and continuity of the British Conservatives.

Unlike other right-wing parties the Tories are extremely flexible. After Labour's landslide victory in 1945, many believed that the Tories were finished. Yet six years later the Tories were back in government. Their success in winning every subsequent election until 1964 showed their durability. The Tories' post-war recovery provides clear evidence of the party's ability to survive in new circumstances. In the fifties and sixties the Tories adopted many Labour policies, for example on the welfare state, to construct a popular base. While other parties of the European right were failing to make the transition necessary to meet the new times, the Tories survived and even won back their leading position in the British system.

While nobody questions the state's authority or nationalist ideology, the Tories remain unassailable



Special relationship

The Tory Party's success is not entirely of its own making. Its pre-eminent position is based on the survival of Britain's constitutional framework. The legitimacy which the British state enjoys in society has ensured that the party most closely associated with it enjoys special advantages. The Tories can always claim to be the most reliable defenders of the patriotic and traditional values which every party claims to uphold. Through their identification with the state, the Tories can assert that they are *the* party of the nation. So long as nobody is asking serious questions about the authority of the state and the ideology of British nationalism, the Tories' long-term position remains unassailable.

The widespread acceptance of the existing constitutional framework means that political conflict is reduced to a debate about which party can best represent 'the British way'. In a struggle over who is best qualified to represent the British nation, the Tories always have the advantage. While Labour pretends to be a party of the nation, the Tories provide the genuine article. They can mobilise the institutions of the state behind their cause and denounce their opponents as hostages to class or other sectional interests.

Under Thatcher, the Conservative Party has perfected its nationalist appeal. The Thatcher regime has drawn strength from its ability to portray every serious manifestation of opposition as a threat, not just to itself or to the wider establishment, but to the nation as a whole. Anybody who stands up and fights becomes another 'enemy within'. Before moving on to examine this aspect of contemporary politics, it is worth noting one other feature of British Conservatism—its ability to win electoral support from a significant number of working class people.

Of all British political parties, the Tories have the greatest cross-class appeal. They have the near-unanimous support of the capitalist class, a solid base among the middle classes, and they manage to win around 30 per cent of the working class vote. This all-class appeal has made the Tories a formidable force.

There has been a long and intricate debate about the phenomenon of the Tory worker. The analysis presented here suggests a more straightforward explanation as to why some workers vote for a party which represents their exploiters. The labour movement's willingness to identify with the British state has endowed patriotism and an acceptance of the rules with the status of common sense. So long as this remains the case, the party that represents the most consistent expression of nationalism can always win votes from sections of the working class. The limited class vision and 'pink patriotism' of Labour is no match for the all-embracing red, white and blue appeal of the Tories. The ability of the party of the establishment to create bridgeheads within the working class has played its part in sustaining political stability.

Thatcher adapts

Critics might accept this analysis of Britain's stable political past, but observe that the contemporary situation seems to conflict with the old patterns. The Thatcher regime does appear to have consigned many traditional features of the British system to the history books. Instead of being flexible, the government looks preoccupied with a single-minded pursuit of power. Thatcher has dumped appeals for moderation in favour of clarion calls for a crusade against socialism. Instead of trying to integrate her opponents into the system, she seeks to humiliate them and to brand them as outlaws.

Yet it would be an overreaction to interpret the Thatcher era as a clean break with the past. There have certainly been many changes, most significantly from the post-war politics of consensus to a climate of diktat and confrontation (see the discussion of post-consensus Britain in the January issue of *Living Marxism*). However, the important thing here is to see Thatcher's methods as the latest attempt by the British establishment to adapt to new conditions; in this case, the conditions of long-term economic recession which began in Britain in the early seventies.

The Thatcher government's central innovation is the shift from incorporating opposition through compromise to dominating society directly. This shift has been forced on the establishment by the perception that the authority of the state has to be strengthened if it is to push through the unpopular measures required to sustain British capitalism in hard times. In contrast to the post-war years, the establishment has little scope today for taking a tolerant attitude to dissent. It has equally little time for educating opponents; they need to be criminalised and crushed as quickly as possible.

The modification of the political rules under Thatcher has not corrupted a democratic tradition. It has rather brought to the surface the inherently anti-democratic features of Britain's secret constitution. After the 1984-85 miners' strike, for example, it should be clear that Britain has always had a national police force whose role is to defend the interests of the establishment. The pretence that the police are public servants accountable to local authorities was exposed by the nationally-coordinated military occupation of the coalfields.

In the same way, the trend towards censoring dissent in the media and using the judiciary against strikers or protesters demonstrates that the law exists to protect money and privilege. The Tories' recent attacks on the right to silence and on the right to demonstrate show how civil liberties, which British people have been told are their birthright, are in reality given and taken away at the convenience of the ruling class. Under the British constitution the state has always retained a monopoly over the distribution of democratic rights. Today it is simply calling them back in.

The national card

Most critics of the government concentrate their fire on its authoritarian tendencies. But we should not lose sight of an equally important development. The Thatcher government has not created a wave of enthusiastic support for its policies; but it could not have carried them out and still won three elections without achieving some measure of popular acceptance.

The three recent Conservative election victories are the legacy of the hard-won political consensus which accepts the authority of the capitalist state as legitimate. Tory governments have always promoted their nationalist credentials. Every Tory prime minister has played the national card. Thatcher has gone a step further, playing the card on every possible occasion.

Thatcher has spent nine years portraying each attack on her government and her class as a challenge to the nation. Every unpopular measure has been pushed through on the grounds that it preserves the national interest. Even a relatively trivial matter like ID cards for football fans has been justified on the grounds that hooligans threaten British prestige abroad. Chauvinist bombast is the bread and butter of Thatcherite politics.

The opposition parties crumble when faced with this nationalist onslaught. Labour and the centre parties are trapped by their commitment to the British state. They cannot match the authority of the Tories as the party of the state. Nor can they offer a genuine alternative without running the risk of compromising their nationalist credentials. Consequently, for the time being, the opposition has stopped acting as one.

The main casualty of the Thatcher era is the Labour Party. Labour cannot oppose the Tories without destroying itself. A party educated by the establishment and fervently loyal to the British state cannot challenge Thatcher's nationalist crusade without questioning its own political foundations. Yet if it fails to come up with an alternative, Labour's further decline is assured. Since Thatcher modified the rules there is no room for an old-fashioned alternative party of government, waiting in the certain knowledge that its turn to govern will come around again. For the time being the establishment is not prepared to share power with anybody except its most reliable representatives.

A high price

Thatcher's triumph has been bought at a high price. The more that she plays the nationalist card, the faster she uses up the reserves accumulated through decades of careful statecraft. Indiscriminate appeals to the national interest threaten eventually to expose the naked class bias behind the flag-waving. The historic achievement of the British ruling class was to win popular acceptance for its institutions through the judicious use of compromise and concession. Without such flexibility, the nationalist appeal can ultimately only appear as what it truly is—the defence of capitalist interest and privilege.

The British state has traditionally adopted the guise of an independent institution standing above political conflict. Thatcher has dropped the pretence and politicised it in

unmistakable fashion. The police and the judiciary now play a directly political role. Even 'soft' state departments like education and health have become the focus of political controversy.

One novel development is the growing fusion of the Tory Party and the state machine. In the past establishment spokesmen boasted that, unlike in the third world, the British state was kept separate from party politics. The idea that civil servants and other functionaries owed allegiance only to the nation, and not to any political faction, provided a useful argument for winning public acceptance of the system. The Tories have now lost traditional inhibitions about making brazen political appointments to supposedly neutral bodies. The appointment of loyal Thatcherites to run the BBC, local health authorities and similar institutions makes a nonsense of the claim of state neutrality. Thatcher is bringing to public attention the hitherto hidden class basis of the British state.

Thatcher's short-term victories may have been bought at the cost of Britain's traditional stability

The adaptability of the British system has served the establishment well down the years. The authorities would doubtless prefer to carry on in the old uncontroversial ways. But they have no choice; the inflexibility of the Thatcher government is the product of the difficult circumstances now facing British capitalism. Whatever the causes of this inflexibility, it threatens to destabilise British politics. Without a framework within which to accommodate new opponents, they may well prove less susceptible to establishment influence than in the past.

The humiliation of Labour and the TUC was a necessary moment in the Thatcherite ascendancy. The establishment had to destroy its traditional opponents to consolidate its authority in circumstances not of its own choosing. Nevertheless, this discrediting of the loyal opposition has been bought at a high price. Labourism habitually provided the first line of defence for British capitalism. As mediators between the employers and the working class, the labour movement leaders played a key role in heading off trouble. Without such mediators, future class conflict threatens to be more direct and less predictable.

It may well turn out that Thatcher's short-term victories have been bought at the cost of the stability long associated with British politics. The Tories have proved beyond doubt that they can deal with their old opponents. But in so doing they could have created the space for the emergence of a new and far more threatening kind of opposition.

The present state of depoliticised limbo in British society will not last. A climate of health scares, disaster stories, and silence on social problems may give the government an easy ride in parliament and encourage personal preoccupations for the time being. But it is no way to consolidate the lasting political support necessary to stabilise the system again.

The Thatcher years have exposed the traditional opposition as impotent, and let slip the secret that British democracy is a cover for capitalist dictatorship. In these circumstances, people's responses to political events inevitably become less predictable. The potential exists to invest popular anger at Tory policies with a new and 'un-British' political attitude; an attitude which neither accepts the old rules of the game, nor suffers from the British sickness of moderation. A movement with no illusions in the constitution or loyalty to the British state, one which owes allegiance only to the cause of creating genuine popular control over society, could mount the sort of challenge which the flexible establishment has avoided for so long. ●

Between Govan and the poll tax

Whither Scotland?

Scotland provides the sharpest focus for debate in Britain today. Alan Harding chaired a discussion of the issues with some prominent players

Alan Harding: We are between the Govan by-election and the implementation of the poll tax next month. Many believe that Labour lost Govan because it failed to fight the poll tax. It has also been put down to a crisis of morale in the Labour Party or to the reassertion of a Scottish identity. What do you think?

John Mulvey: It's a bit of all those things. But from a Labour activist's point of view, I suppose that the attempt of the party leadership in Scotland to downgrade the importance of the poll tax in Govan is itself an indication that it was a substantial issue. The Scottish council of the Labour Party has confirmed its position vis-à-vis the poll tax, but I don't think the issue of what Labour activists do about it is over and done with. Once the bills start hitting the doormats, I think the party will have to review its position. That is going to be very difficult given that Labour dominates Scottish local government and is setting up the machinery, firing off demands for the poll tax, etc.

Alan Harding: Kenny, I think your victory in Govan was a shock even to SNP activists. What do you attribute the success to?

Kenny MacAskill: Well, it wasn't such a shock, myself and others went into the bookies on Monday morning and placed our bets. The poll tax was a major issue in Govan, 14 000 people voted for a candidate with 'Scottish National Party—No Poll Tax' on his ballot paper. But the poll tax is just a manifestation of Scotland's problems. For years the SNP found it hard to articulate what it was on about. People couldn't see the link between constitutional reform and their immediate social and economic needs. The poll tax showed the impotence of Labour and the continued threat of an English Tory government that they didn't vote for. So it wasn't so much the poll tax but everything that the poll tax brought home: that a Labour Party in power in Scotland was unable and unwilling to do anything, because it accepted that the Tories had been elected in England.

John Mulvey is Labour leader of Lothian Regional Council
Kenny MacAskill runs the Scottish National Party's anti-poll tax campaign, and is vice-convenor of the SNP's policy committee
Derek Owen is co-author of *Is There a Scottish Solution?*, convenor of the Scottish Federation of Socialist Teachers, and a contributor to *Living Marxism*
Jim Young is a founder member of the Scottish Socialist Party, and author of *The Rousing of the Scottish Working Class*
George Rosie edits the *Observer Scotland*

George Rosie: What struck me wandering round Govan was the number of folk who were actually going to be better off with the poll tax but were still voting SNP. It wasn't the SNP's anti-poll tax campaign which was winning their vote, it was something else. I think John is right when he describes it as a whole mélange, if you forgive the word, of issues of which the poll tax was just one. I'm not even persuaded that it was the most important.

Alan Harding: Jim, who would you have voted for in Govan?

Jim Young: With reservations I would have voted for Jim Sillars. No one on the left I know would have voted for anyone other than Jim Sillars. That doesn't mean people are starry-eyed about Sillars. He reflects the possibilities and limitations of Scottish culture and traditions. I confess that I was surprised by the majority. I think the poll tax was extremely important but I agree that it was more important as a focus for Scottish resistance. What the politicos don't understand is that there has been a cultural revolution in Scotland, a renaissance expressed in the novels of William McIlvanney and others.

Derek Owen: It's a good point that the discussion on the poll tax represents something more profound in Scottish politics. With the poll tax, for the first time in years, the Scottish TUC lost control of a major campaign. This indicated that something different was happening; Scottish workers are looking for an alternative.

Kenny says he went to the bookies quite confident, but many folk go to the bookies confident every day, that doesn't mean they come out with a winner. Govan surprised people. Yet there were so many ways, including the poll tax, that Labour had proved incapable of defending working class interests that it was on the cards. The working class has in the past shifted votes to the SNP, as when the last Labour government attacked trade unions and living standards. I think a difference this time is that, whether or not they stay with the SNP, many will never go back to Labour. I was struck when talking to young people in Govan by how many were saying Labour was finished for them. I asked one young woman who said she was a socialist how she could square her move to vote for a man in the same party as Ian Lawson. Her response was 'Ian Lawson, Donald Dewar, what's the difference?'.

John Mulvey: The Labour Party's problems in Scotland are as much to do with electoral success as anything else. We've got 49 of 72 parliamentary seats. We control the large cities. People put the Labour Party there because they had the view that it was intent on defending them and was capable of doing it. The problem that has arisen is the way the Labour Party goes about, or fails to go about, defending the people it's supposed to represent throughout the UK. We are locked into parliament and it doesn't really matter that much that it is in London. It's seen as the institution through which you make changes. This is where it seems to me Labour has always been in conflict with itself.

Other than clearly trade union disputes, Labour does not get involved in extra-parliamentary activity. This is the problem we are having to confront vis-à-vis the poll tax, and not just the poll tax. What will happen if Ravenscraig is up for closure? The arguments in Westminster can be as cogent as can be, but when it comes to the vote they will still lose. What do they do

Scottish union leaders and politicians lobby parliament over the closure of the Caterpillar works, 1987

PHOTO: PANDORA ANDERSON

then? This is a major problem in Scotland and anywhere else.

Alan Harding: Kenny, there is the same disquiet with the Labour Party in Yorkshire; there is just no Yorkshire party to vote for as an expression of that disquiet. Surely Jim Sillars won in Govan by presenting traditional left Labour politics, the trade union activist tradition that John is talking about, dressed up in new colours? People were willing to break from the Labour Party but stuck with the Labourist tradition. On the key issues Sillars had the same position as the Labour left.

Kenny MacAskill: The first thing is we don't go along with this myth that the north of England is deepest red. The Tory vote in the north-east of England is higher than the Labour vote in south-east England. In the north-west Labour has a majority of just two seats over the Tories. That's why you get things like Bradford going Conservative. It is inconceivable that the Scottish equivalent of Bradford, a very proud, poor working class town like Motherwell, would go Tory. It might have happened back when the Orange Lodge had some influence, but not now.

The second point is that there is a Scottish national identity, different from England and to an extent different from Wales. Our institutions are still Scottish; both the churches, Protestant and Catholic, are national churches. You can see that the Scottish bishops oppose nuclear weapons. You have English churches that back the Thatcher line. So there's a national identity that doesn't exist down there and because of the palliatives given to Scotland at the time of the Union we've managed to retain our national identity through education, through the church, through law.

Jim Sillars represented not so much his own individual position but the position of the party. It would have been represented by any candidate be it Ian Lawson or whoever. Jim's made it clear that there is a socialist wing in the SNP but there is a consensus that is accepted by whoever is the candidate. We believe, yes, we're representing the old Labour line, because Labour has changed from the party of 1945 that brought in the welfare state. The Labour Party now doesn't represent the Labour tradition or the wants of the Scottish people. We believe that we do with the national dimension. Jim Sillars stood on the SNP platform, he did it with charisma but it was on SNP positions.

MacAskill: 'We're representing the old Labour line'

Jim Young: I sympathise with much that Kenny said but some of it was downright inaccurate. I don't think Ian Lawson would have won Govan. National identity is vital. It's something that the English left have never understood and still don't, despite Govan. There is an emerging national identity. This helped Jim Sillars, equally his socialist rhetoric helped him.

I am astonished that John Mulvey can say that the Labour Party is suffering from its successes. I think it's suffering from Thatcherism like many in England. My daughter recently told me she hadn't paid her Equity membership fee. My dad was a railwayman and a docker and if we hadn't paid our union dues we would have been thrown out of the house. The decline of class identity happened in Govan as well. The young don't have the organisational commitment that my generation took for granted. Young people like my son and daughter have no time for Labour. They see Labour administrations in Glasgow giving £1m contracts to Saatchi & Saatchi. How the hell do you explain that? There is an increasing perception among Scottish working people of the corruption of certain Labour councillors and administrations.

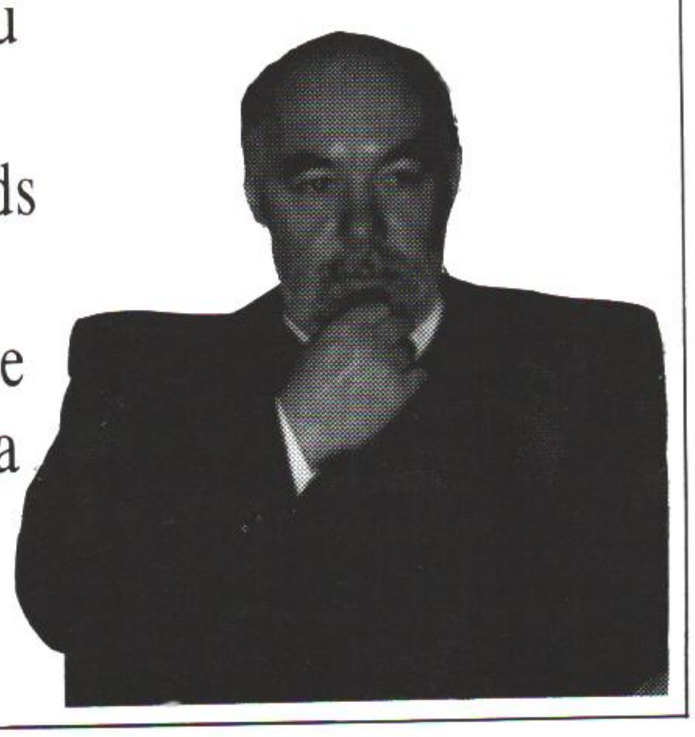
George Rosie: I agree on the growing national identity. Thatcher has made an awful lot of folk in Scotland, and not just socialists, pissed off with the Anglo-British state. But I don't believe that the English left are interested in Scotland, Scottish culture, Scottish history. All they are interested in is a situation coming up that may embarrass Westminster. If you had a left-wing Labour government you guys would be up here saying 'You shouldn't be dabbling about in this stuff, it's revisionist, it's fascist'. I'm a bit cynical about the enthusiasm of the UK left for Scotland and Scottish affairs at the moment.

Alan Harding: I think Kenny is right to say that the SNP has appropriated old Labourist politics and that these are stronger in Scotland than England. But is this Labourism good enough for the working class? Is Scotland red?

Kenny MacAskill: There is a difference in the level of jingoism. In the Falklands campaign there was a

high level of jingoism in the English working class with the bunting out, and for the royal wedding too, none of which was reflected in Scotland. Down there it was perceived as their boys going to give the Argies a good stuffing. In Scotland the overwhelming opinion was that we shouldn't be there and there was a bunch of kids dying, whether it be Argentinian or whatever.

Rosie: 'If you oppose the house of lords in English circles, you're regarded as a wild-eyed Trot'



Derek Owen: Kenny's idea of the myth of the red north of England is a new slant on the old story of the Red Clyde, the idea that when you cross a point of geography people become more red or militant. You have to take one step back. Very militant action was taken on the Clyde around the First World War. But there was similar action in other parts of Britain. The state put tanks in George Square but there were warships in the Mersey as well. It's just as false to draw red lines along the border today.

As for a progressive national identity embodied in Scottish institutions, I would say that at the time of the Union the English, as well as the Scottish, bourgeoisie didn't want to do away with the Scottish legal system, the church, and Scottish education. Law, church and school—these things are very effective in keeping the working class in place, especially if they have some local credibility. Why should they want to disrupt all that? I don't see why it should be considered a victory for the Scottish working class that they managed to retain these institutions that serve no useful function for us.

John Mulvey: Kenny gives as an example of Scottish political culture that we are much less jingoistic than south of the border. But it seems to me that that argument is, at best, not proven, whether you are talking about the Falklands War or the royal wedding. As a regional councillor for Westerhailes, which was previously represented by a left-of-centre member of the SNP, I had great embarrassment avoiding street parties for the royal wedding. We tried to organise a march against the Falklands War; very few turned up. To suggest that there was a high level of opposition to the Falklands War in Scotland is not proven.

Alan Harding: Talking about Scottish attitudes to the British attack on Argentina raises the issue of defending democratic rights against the state. Constitutional reform is now on the agenda with the constitutional convention. But is campaigning for constitutional reform the same thing as organising around the defence of democratic rights in the here and now? For example, what about the question of women's rights, which has proved very divisive in Scottish politics, especially the right to abortion. And the Scottish labour movement has historically tried to ignore the issue of democratic rights in occupied Ireland. We agree that many in Scotland are now looking for a political alternative. So what is it, and where does constitutional reform fit in?

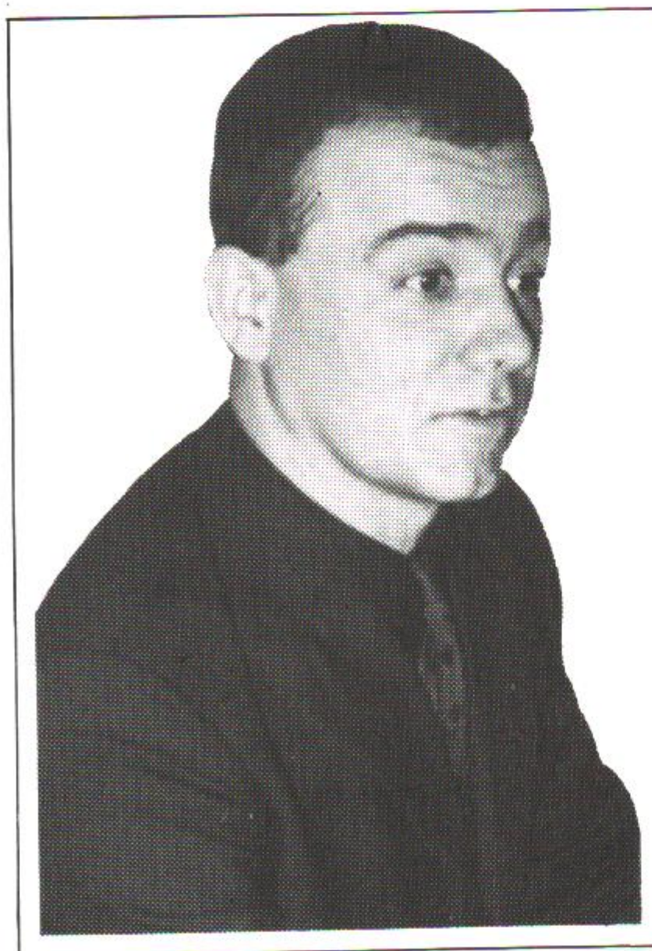
George Rosie: The class system is so heavily institutionalised as part of the UK system of government, until that can be grappled with I think you are pissing against the wind. And I don't see anyone seriously addressing this. Here we are in 1989 with a house of lords! You explain to an American what the house of lords is about they'll look at you as though you're mad. If you suggest in English circles particularly that the lords be done away with they regard you as some wild-eyed Trot.

Jim Young: I read with great fascination the two-page advert in the *Observer* on Charter 88. I was struck by the absence of Scottish names. I'm not saying the Scots have got an answer to the question, I'm just saying we're starting to grapple with it and I don't see it being grappled with in England. I wouldn't sign it although I agree with the bulk of what it is saying in terms of aims and objectives. The whole document revolves around an English debate about 1688. It doesn't have any application to my country, to my nation or to my class.

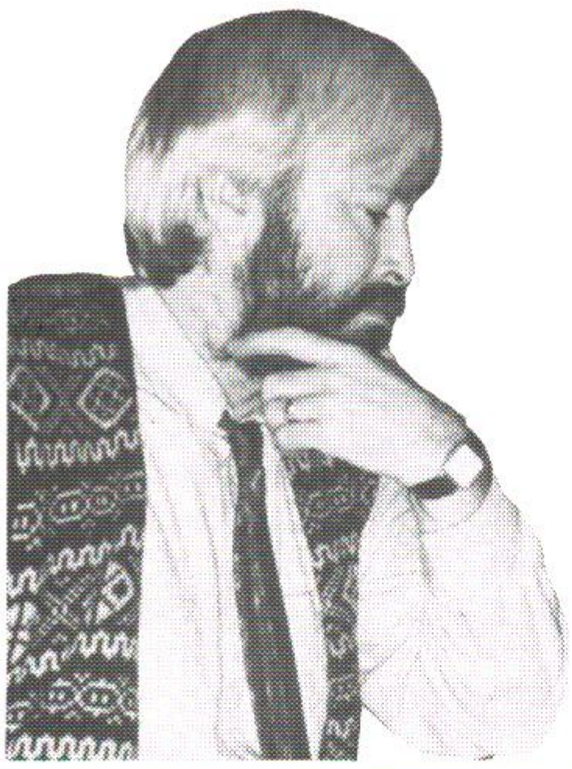
John Mulvey: I do think there are a number of issues which those who regard themselves as socialists should attempt to make common cause on. The Scottish convention isn't necessarily one of them. There is not a political will on the part of any of the different political groups—including the SNP—to make common cause on the important constitutional issues. It will be difficult to get any kind of consensus within that convention. You have got to draw together where you can reach some kind of broad consensus. This is still possible on an issue like the poll tax.

Kenny MacAskill: I take it for granted that common cause will be made. We are opposing the Englishing of our education, any attack on Ravenscraig, the imposition of the poll tax, trying to protect the Scottish people from the ravages of Thatcher. The only way we can see to roll back the frontiers of Thatcherism forever is to pursue independence within Europe. I don't see a Labour government coming and if it did it would pursue Thatcherite policies as Labour governments in Australia and New Zealand have. Labour's agenda has been shifted to reach Thatcher's base vote down in the south of England.

Independence defeats things like the poll tax not once but forever. We could beat the poll tax by non-payment in 1989 only for it to resurface under another Tory government in 1995. With independence we can start getting rid of the house of lords and ensuring a move towards full employment, which we perceive as possible. We



Owen: 'Calling for independence is a diversion from confronting the state offensive, especially when the SNP argues for independence under the Crown'



Mulvey: 'There is not a political will to make common cause in the constitutional convention'

are appalled that the Labour Party has given up the concept of full employment. Our constitutional change isn't tinkering with the system like Charter 88. It's independence, self-government that can allow us to operate as our people want within the parameters that exist.

George Rosie: I don't think the convention will come to much. The bottom line is no one in London is going to take constitutional change seriously until an awful lot of people vote for the SNP, until the SNP look like being a threat to the United Kingdom.

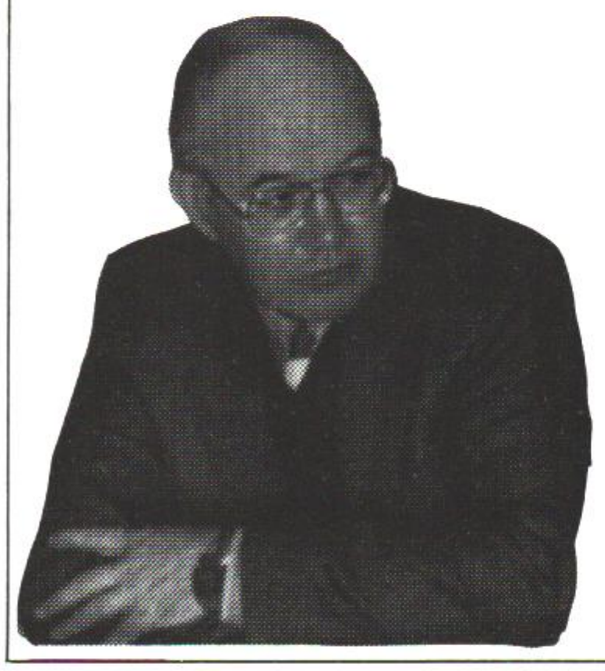
Alan Harding: But what basis is there for the common cause among different classes in Scottish society that several of you are talking about? Tom Nairn has noted that the Scottish professional middle classes are more anti-Thatcher because of the Scottish economy's historical reliance on state intervention. This has dovetailed with the Labour interest inside the councils. There has been common cause between them. The question is, have either of them got anything to say to the vast majority of Scots, any more than Tory entrepreneurs have anything to say to the vast majority of workers in the south of England? I don't see it.

Derek Owen: Constitutional reform does seem to me to be tinkering. Kenny is only arguing for constitutional reform on a different scale—independence. You have to measure that as an answer to the real problems of today. We are in a situation of confrontation where the state goes in hard, not only against Scottish workers, but blacks in all the inner cities, gays throughout Britain, women who are further deprived of any chance of playing an equal role. In Ireland you have shoot-to-kill and the broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein. There are attacks on every organised form of resistance, whether that be the National Union of Seamen, the nurses, or college students; they march in London and it's open season for the police to baton them.

In this context calling for independence is constitutional tinkering. It can only be a diversion from confronting the state offensive. Especially when the SNP argues for independence under the Crown, independence which accepts the state's authority!

Alec Muir was quoted today on the SNP's plans for the Scottish economy. He was talking about full employment in seven years through total rebuilding of the infrastructure. This is the old Labour rhetoric of an economic miracle through state control. It flies in the face of capitalist economic reality. On Wall Street, in the City, nowhere can they reverse the economic crisis; yet Scotland is to be different.

Kenny MacAskill: Not different, like Sweden. Sweden had the same industrial structure. The difference is when the shipyards were closed the government instructed Volvo to train the Gotenburg shipworkers. We got everyone signing on the broo; they got almost no unemployment and two per cent inflation. The real problem in this country is that even Labour accept you can't have both.



Young: 'The Scottish people are suffering the same patronising attitude from the English left as colonial peoples did in the thirties'

Derek Owen: Ravenscraig is a good example of the problem with SNP plans for revitalising a capitalist economy in Scotland. It's in the news for breaking production records; but the way that's done under capitalism is to get fewer workers to do longer hours for less money. This isn't social change.

Jim Young: You can't ignore the international capitalist economy and its crisis. Independence in Europe says nothing about the abolition of the capitalist system. Kenny hasn't mentioned the Treaty of Rome which prevents any attempt to introduce fundamentally socialist policies.

Kenny MacAskill: I don't think the SNP is under any illusion that the Treaty of Rome has inherent weaknesses. Indeed if we don't get independence within Europe Scotland will become a country park. We must specialise. We need a government that will pump money into biotechnology, oil technology, etc. This is what we must do in the short term. If we decide to nationalise the top 200 companies or whatever, we'd face the same problems as González in Spain. We have to work within the parameters set for us.

The only people we can liberate immediately are our own. We can liberate them from Thatcherism. We can express support for the Palestinian *intifada*, and I do, but we can't do anything tangible immediately. An independent Scotland would not be tainted by Thatcher's subservience to US foreign policy in Central America, in the Middle East or the abuse of human rights wherever else. We become guilty by association.

Derek Owen: Kenny missed out the direct tainting of Scots by the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders or the King's Own Scottish Borderers when they were on the go around Derry and Belfast. That is not tainting by association with imperialism thousands of miles away, that is direct Scottish involvement in imperialist aggression. I would liken this to the discussion on jingoism. Certainly a lot of Celtic supporters wore Argentinian strips during the Falklands War. But this reflected an anti-British attitude formed through their Irish connection, not general Scottish progressiveness. There is no way that large areas of Glasgow or Scotland defended the Argentinians or even indicated that they didn't like the idea of the armada going down there.

As for the Englishing of education, I'm a teacher myself, and even our union the EIS has dumped that slogan. Teachers realise it's not Englishing that's going on. It's attacks on trade union rights, on the provision of education. It's nothing to do with the English. English teachers didn't like these measures

when they were attacked by Baker. Scottish teachers are in a similar situation. The supposed Englishing will really mean the removal of Section 88 which defends our jobs, longer hours, and teachers policing the underclass for YTS schemes.

We can't trust the state, be it reformed or reconstitutionalised; we should look to the strength of the working class. We can't look to Labour, which I don't see achieving power anyway, because whoever the leader, it is committed to doing what's necessary to keep the system going. And any idea that the SNP or a Scottish Socialist Party has something to offer the Scottish working class in isolation from the English working class seems to me a dead end.

Jim Young: Derek wrote a book called *Is There a Scottish Solution?*. That exhibits a characteristic of the English left, a genius for asking rhetorical questions, the answers to which are already contained. My response is that if there isn't a Scottish solution there isn't any other solution. The West Indian Marxist CLR James complained in the thirties about the patronising attitude of the English left—his word not mine. They argued then that the colonial peoples should wait for socialism to be achieved here, they would then be granted freedom by Westminster. The Scottish people are suffering from the same attitude today.

Englishing is a poor word but I haven't thought of a better one yet. But Scottish education has suffered from English cultural imperialism since 1707. At the Scottish universities today Scottish students, often from a working class background, are denied entry. Why? Because people who would once have gone to Oxford or Cambridge or other English universities, but can't get in now because of Thatcher's cuts, are heading for Edinburgh as a refuge. That's something which as a Scot, not despite but because of my internationalism, I feel very strongly about.

Alan Harding: One last question to Kenny on the poll tax. Your campaign for non-payment is meant to distinguish you from Labour. But you still seem to have problems inside the SNP; in Grampian where you shared control with the Democrats, which seems intriguing for a left-of-centre party, two of your councillors stuck with the Democrats and will issue warrant sales. The simplest way of having an effective campaign is to prevent the council implementing the poll tax. You haven't done that.

Kenny MacAskill: The two councillors have had the SNP whip withdrawn. Labour in Grampian is not opposing warrant sales either. You cannot have a campaign of non-cooperation. We looked at what the Militants did in Liverpool. They went to the wall and achieved nothing. If we refused to implement the tax there would just be Tory councillors and commissioners to bring it in. We've told our councillors to do the minimum, nothing beyond that. This is what we expect of Labour councillors, we don't expect them to do anything our councillors don't. The problem over the last 10 years hasn't so much been Thatcher's attacks but growing apathy among poorer people in Scotland because of Labour's failure to raise expectations.

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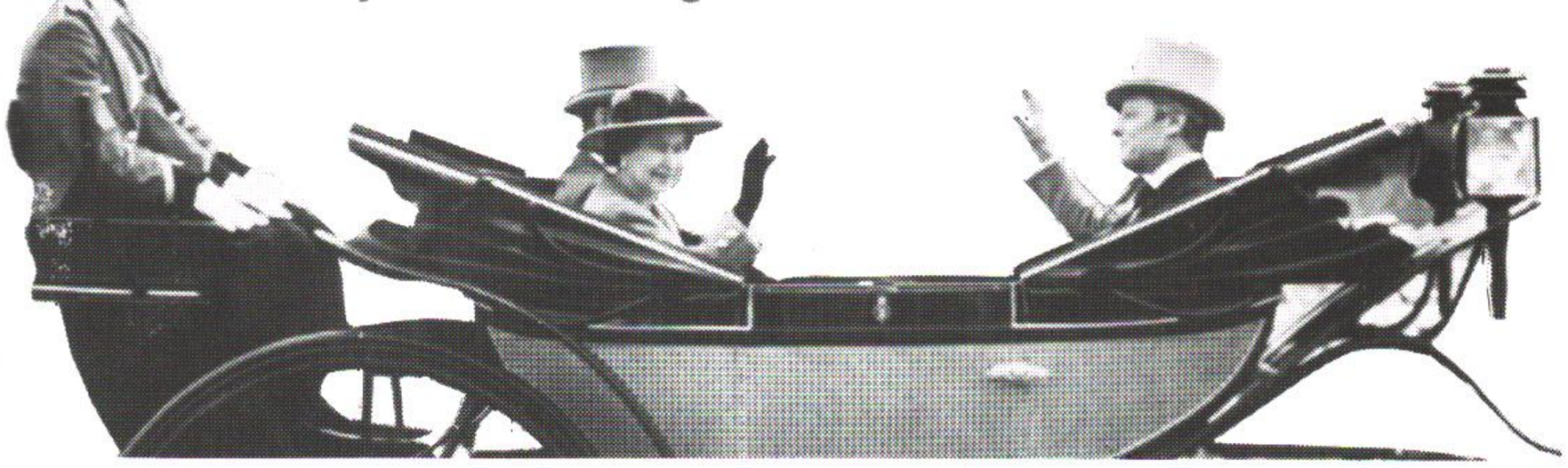
We hope this discussion will be the start of a wide-ranging debate on the future of Scottish politics in the pages of *Living Marxism*. We welcome your views.

The monarchy

LONG TO REIGN OVER US?

Why Alan Harding won't stand for the Queen



Each Christmas the Queen invites herself into homes all over her realm and throughout her Commonwealth of nations. If we mistime our exits from table after the turkey and pudding, we risk joining the millions and playing our own small part in the ritual of the Christmas message. It is a fireside ritual which unites Elizabeth Windsor, 'ordinary' wife and mother, with Elizabeth Regina of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Defender of the Faith, etc, embodiment of the greatness which is our common British inheritance. So we are told.

Why, I wondered from an early age, does this woman with the strange accent dispense platitudes (which she has complete editorial control over) to people around the world in prime television time when they could be showing a Fred Astaire movie? This is no trivial matter, as I discovered when my mother beat me for remaining seated for the Queen after the Dicky Henderson show at the Winter Gardens, Bournemouth, in August 1968.

She was not amused

It wasn't always like this. Despite the idolatry of the yellow press today, the modern monarchy has for much of the time and with most people been a far from popular institution. This doesn't just apply to George III who showed his perspicacity by getting out of his coach in Windsor Great Park and shaking the branch of an oak tree, thinking it was the hand of the King of Prussia. Nor just to his dissolute son, the fourth George, who abandoned his wife for the original dirty weekend in Brighton. Even the mighty Victoria was once booed through the streets of London. More recently Richard Hoggart, recording his working class upbringing between the wars in Leeds (not regarded as the most radical British city) recalls indifference to 'them'. The royals were only loved by snobs, eccentrics, and outsiders.

The monarchy was, and remains, unpopular with many who are excluded from the established order or are victims of the imperial state, be they the radical artisans who detested George III and supported the French Revolution, the British workers who wanted to emulate the toppling of the tsar and the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, or the Irish nationalists who welcomed Elizabeth II to Belfast as 'The Queen of Death' in 1977.

A serious symbol

The recurrence of passionate anti-monarchic feeling gives the lie to the myth that the monarchy survives as a mere sop to the gullible masses. The notion that the royal show is just an elaborate, dazzling charade designed to distract the vulgar was first put about by another Fleet Street hack, *Economist* editor Walter Bagehot, in the mid-nineteenth century. In fact, that was when the ruling class was reinventing and popularising royal tradition for a far more serious purpose.

The Victorian establishment brought royal ritual into the public eye to lend historical legitimacy to the new capitalist order, whose genesis in the industrial revolution had occasioned upheaval in British society. As the Empire expanded, and its booty helped to stabilise the system at home, the Crown became established as figurehead of the nation, popular symbol of the power of the state. To be hostile to the monarchy was to be anti-capitalist, anti-state, and anti-British.

Ever since, the authorities have tried to force the royals into our affections, to establish an identification between the people and the state that can transcend class divisions. During the investiture of the Prince of Wales in 1969, arch-Tory Peregrine Worsthorne summed up the carefully-created image of the monarchy as a symbol of British continuity and stability:

'How strange and rather wonderful it is that it should be the role of monarchy today not to act out fantasy but to be the one institution that seems to be natural and normal.' (Quoted in T Nairn, *The Enchanted Glass,* 1988, p216)

It follows that those who question the position of the monarchy must be unnatural and abnormal Britons.

This has not stopped the Irish or subjugated peoples around the world from hating the monarchy. But within Britain, anti-royalist sentiments (and the anti-capitalist ones they often imply) have been subdued for much of our century by the labour movement's acceptance that it is indeed natural to kneel.

'Ordinary people'

Labour leaders now cheer the birth of royal babies and take prominent seats in Westminster Abbey to mark the Windsors' deaths and marriages. Yet royal toadying is not a new affliction in the upper ranks of the Labour Party. It was there even in the early twenties, at a time when thousands of British workers still sympathised with the revolutionary communists on the Continent. In 1923, left winger George Lansbury gave the Labour executive's response to a motion from Shoreditch Trades Council calling on the leadership to come clean and declare against the monarchy. Lansbury said forget it, the monarchy would disappear under socialism, but meanwhile 'they swore they would uphold the constitution'. And anyway, he had 'sat behind two princes at a football match' and delegates could take his word for it 'they were just ordinary common people like themselves'. (Labour Party, *Report of Annual Conference Proceedings,* 1923 pp250-51)

We should have nothing but contempt for this sycophancy. Nor should we accept the old line that attitudes towards the monarchy do not matter in day-to-day politics. A willingness to curtsy for the Crown is an important sign of a wider respect for the status quo. As Leon Trotsky said of Lansbury and his contemporaries later in the twenties, those who will not deny the Prince of Wales his pocket-money are hardly going to wrest the wealth of society from the hands of the capitalist class.

The monarchy is part of the rubbish of the middle ages. But it is also the ultimate constitutional guarantor of class rule:

'In a moment of absolute crisis, the "Patriot King—or Queen" — could be the nation's ultimate safeguard against tyranny masquerading as "the will of the people". It is never likely to come to pass, for, if it did, the nation's genius for compromise would have collapsed and the British would not be the British anymore.' (P Grosvenor and J McMillan, *The British Genius,* 1973)

If the capitalist order were threatened, the Queen could make her Christmas message to the nation an announcement of martial law. This time she would have a scriptwriter—the entire ruling class—but it would all be in accordance with the constitution. As the dictatorial Thatcher makes clear that 'the nation's genius for compromise' no longer meets the system's needs, we should listen more closely to what the Queen says after dinner.

The royal mace which Ron Brown got into hot water for dropping last year is no idle ornament. The bauble was once an instrument of war, and is still backed by the full weight of the capitalist state. That's why every socialist has to be a republican. I'm with Oliver Cromwell in being prepared to do a royal down, even the sensitive Charles. Otherwise they may well put him up front in order to knock us down. I know which I would rather see go, and that would be worth getting out of your seat for.

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PHOTO JOE BOATMAN

The opposition's response

Bill of rights, PR, or pact?

Mike Freeman looks at the limitations of the latest proposals from Thatcher's opponents

'The determining fact of current politics is the fact that the Conservatives believe they will be in power until 1995 and probably until 2000', proclaimed Hugo Young, the *Guardian's* chief political pundit, last November. In December St Helens MP John Evans, a prominent moderate on Labour's national executive, quoted this passage and suggested that 'Young's article should be compulsory reading for every member of every rank of the anti-Conservative political parties in Britain today'. Bemoaning the mounting arrogance and evident invincibility of the Thatcher regime, Evans added his voice to the swelling chorus of calls for either constitutional reform or for an electoral alliance among the opposition parties, or both, as the only way to drive the Tories out of office.

PHOTO: DON REED

Personal diktat

Opposition politicians and other critics of the government often quote the warnings expressed in 1979 by Lord Hailsham, former lord chancellor, about the danger of trends towards 'elective dictatorship' in Britain. Indeed the authoritarian tendencies of the current Conservative government are all too apparent. Successive Thatcher administrations have built up the police and the armed forces and extended the state's repressive powers, and have systematically undermined all sources of potential resistance to the will of Downing Street.

In parliament the government has used its majority to curtail discussion and to railroad through controversial legislation. The ministerial statement, the unattributable briefing and the leak have replaced open debate. Trouble in the lords has been crushed by the mass mobilisation of hereditary peers. Local government opposition has been destroyed through the abolition of the GLC, the metropolitan councils and Ilea, and the ruthless imposition of financial control on other councils. Thatcher has appointed personal favourites to replace critics in the European Commission, in the BBC, at the National Economic Development Council and in many other quangos; the same approach prevails down to the level of district health authorities, where Tory placemen now loyally serve their patron. Broadcasters and newspaper reporters have been censored, bullied and bought off. Yet another round of anti-union legislation aims to extinguish completely the threat of resistance from the official labour movement. Furthermore, the opposition parties are in such disarray that there seems little prospect of any party beating the Tories at the polls in the foreseeable future.

From a Marxist perspective, the subordination of all British political institutions to the personal diktat of Margaret Thatcher undermines the myths of parliamentary democracy and exposes the predicament of British capitalism. The Thatcher cabinet's control over the state machine shows that behind the façade of elected government stand the civil service, the judiciary, the police and the military, powerful forces accountable only to the prime minister. Thatcher personifies the ruthless approach necessary to safeguard British capitalism in a period of increasing global economic and political insecurity. The Thatcher regime reveals that the government of Britain is indeed a dictatorship, one which enforces the

interests of the capitalist class. The decline of traditional sources of opposition at a time of growing state authoritarianism confirms the urgency of mobilising an anti-state, anti-capitalist movement that can rally the majority of society—the working class—against the Thatcher dictatorship.

Showbiz people

The mainstream opposition parties and their advisers do not, however, take a Marxist perspective on the Thatcher government. Their response to the prospect of a fourth and fifth Conservative term and even more state repression is to appeal for changes in the political system that they hope might deter the advance of Thatcherite autocracy. In November the *New Statesman and Society* launched Charter 88, a call for a bill of rights, for legal controls over the executive, for freedom of information, proportional representation, reform of the house of lords, an independent judiciary and a written constitution. Charter 88 is backed by prominent figures from the academic left and centre and by showbiz personalities like John Cleese, Julie Christie and Billy Bragg. Full-page appeals in the quality press attracted several thousand signatories.

The new journal *Samizdat*, backed by intellectuals and journalists from the ranks of Labour, the Democrats and the Communist Party, offers to forge a new 'popular front of the mind' by rallying the anti-Thatcher forces. Its first issue attracted 3000 subscribers. The centre-left Labour Coordinating Committee has joined MPs like Jeff Rooker, Austin Mitchell and John Reid, and shadow cabinet member Robin Cook, in supporting electoral reform. The call for some form of anti-Tory electoral pact has been openly endorsed by Dr David Owen's SDP rump and by the Communist Party. As Labour continues to languish in the opinion polls in 1989, and by-elections confirm Neil Kinnock's inability to revive its fortunes, John Evans' pact initiative is likely to gain support inside the Labour Party. But can constitutional reform and electoral pacts provide effective resistance to Thatcher's onward march?

Thatcher has shown that state power counts for far more than parliamentary procedure

Losers' policy

The most obvious objection to the campaign for constitutional reform is its sheer impracticability as a device for speeding the removal of the Thatcher regime. Reforms of the sort proposed by Charter 88—characterised by its sponsors as 'dramatic—no, revolutionary'—could only be introduced *after* the electoral defeat of the Conservative Party. Hence they have little to offer those concerned about how to stop the Tories *now*. This is clearest in the case of proportional representation. The Conservatives have no interest in introducing an electoral system which would enhance their prospects of defeat. (It is of course also clear that if Labour ever did win an election under the present system it would never introduce PR, a system which could only weaken its position: while undoubtedly more democratic, PR is the policy of the losers of British politics.) There are, however, a number of more substantial issues raised by the Charter 88 approach.

The first concerns the scale of social conflict involved in writing or rewriting a nation's constitution. Novelist and Charter 88 signatory Salman Rushdie has issued a spirited defence of the charter against critics in the media and the Labour leadership: 'Yes, Charter 88 proposes something very like a constitutional revolution, but constitutional revolutions have happened before.' (*Samizdat*, January/February 1989) This is true, but, we might remind Rushdie, they usually happen after revolutions: that is, real revolutions—wars, civil wars, coups, revolts and rebellions, blood, guts and destruction—not rhetorical revolutions of the sort proclaimed in the offices of the *New Statesman and Society*.

Madame Guillotine

The American Declaration of Independence of 1776 was enforced through the War of Independence, and all of the battles, blockades and burnt cities that it entailed. The Declaration of the Rights of Man in France was part of the 1789 Revolution, alongside the storming of the Bastille and the rise of Madame Guillotine. New constitutions emerged from the turmoil of 1848 in Europe and 1917 in Russia. History has examples of constitutions being imposed by dictators from above and of constitutions being forced on autocratic regimes by popular revolt from below. It is difficult to think of an example of a constitutional revolution resulting from an advert in the *Guardian*.

'Yes, it would require, for example, parliament voting for its own momentary abolition, so that—perhaps at a constitutional convention—the law could finally be placed over our rulers' heads', continues Rushdie in his case for Charter 88. But why should parliament vote, even momentarily, for its own abolition? It would only take such a step under the most extreme duress, such as the threat of coup or insurrection, neither of which appear in the Charter 88 platform. The most familiar example of a constitutional convention placing 'the law over our rulers' heads'—the recently commemorated Glorious Revolution of 1688—followed four decades of riot and mutiny, conspiracy and terror, invasion and civil war, including the literal removal of the ruler's head (see A Harding, 'A very British coup', *Living Marxism*, November 1988). Three hundred years later the supporters of Charter 88 think it possible to rewrite the British constitution through the power of prose, without even daring to suggest the abolition of the monarchy or the house of lords.

Parliamentary democracy is another issue raised by Charter 88 and more generally by the campaign for proportional representation. The demand for electoral reform assumes that the defect of parliamentary democracy lies in the method of voting. This is how Haydn Thomas of the Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform sums up the case against the 'democratic inequality' of the present system:

'In the West Country half a million people voted Labour and returned one MP. In East Anglia the Tories control 19 out of 20 parliamentary divisions on little more than 50 per cent of the vote. At the last election 33 million people voted but only nine million votes elected the entire house of commons.' (*Guardian*, 23 December 1988)

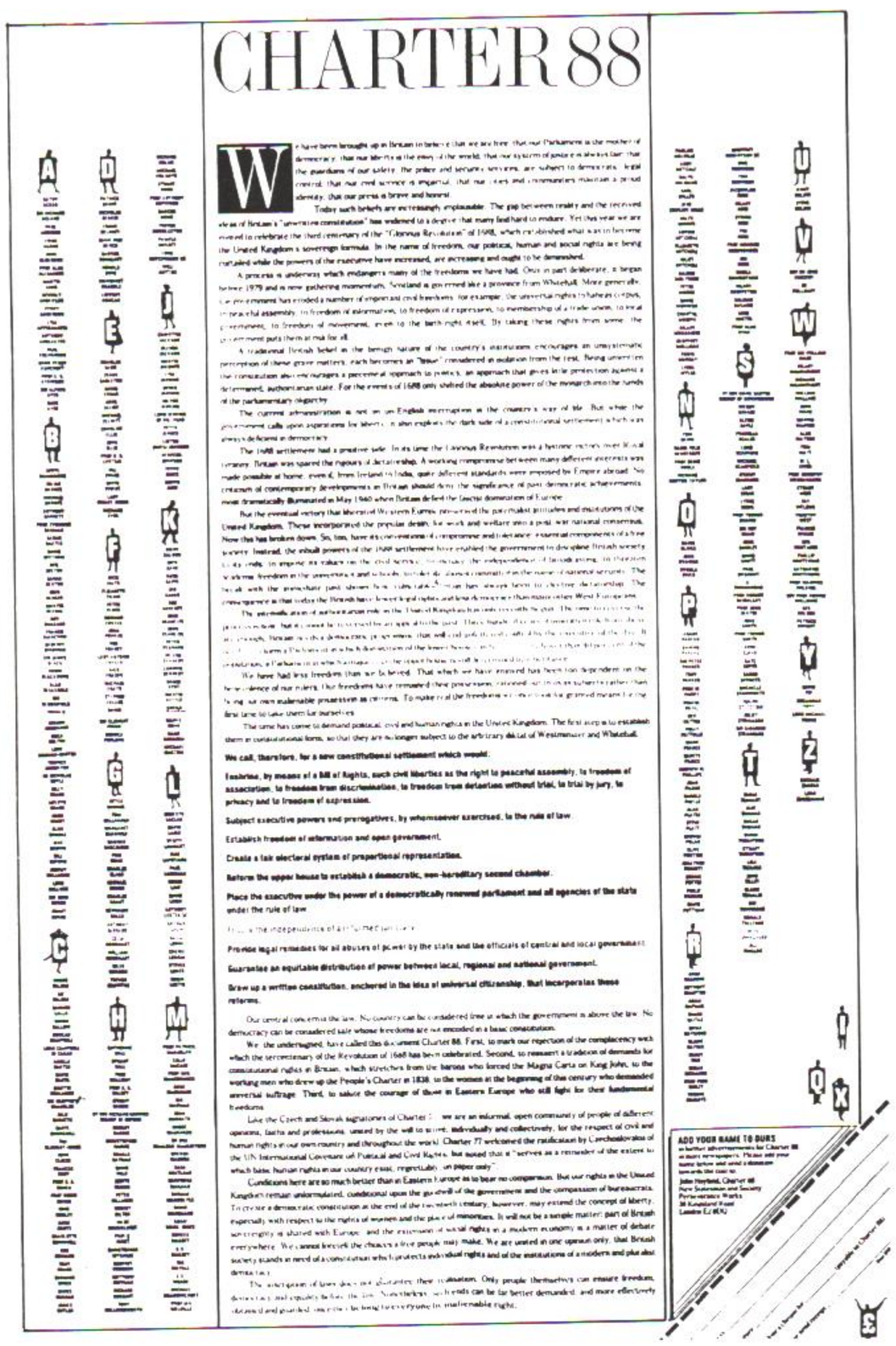
In the same vein, Labour supporters in Scotland and the north often claim that they have been 'disenfranchised' by the system because, despite their overwhelming vote for Labour, they are landed with a Tory government. But the problems of British democracy run much deeper.

Parliamentary democracy offers voters every four or five years the choice of a local representative to send to Westminster. In between elections an elector has no control over his or her MP and, as we have seen, the ordinary MP, indeed the whole house of commons, has little control over government legislation or the conduct of the state. The fact that constituency candidates are organised according to political parties makes little difference in practice because there is so little to separate the policies of the major parties today—all uphold the profit system, favour restrictions on the trade unions, support Britain's military alliance with the USA and other Western powers, its occupation of Ireland, its racist immigration laws, etc.

What difference would it make if there were a few more Labour or centre-party MPs from the West Country or East Anglia? People in the inner cities, Scotland and the north have a disproportionately high number of Labour MPs; this does

not seem to have given them a superior experience of democratic participation. Would the people of Scotland and the north be better off under a coalition government in which Labour and the centre parties had more influence? The record of past Labour governments and the policies of today's opposition parties suggest that little would change.

The Mori polling organisation has calculated that if the last general


CHARTER 88

We have been brought up in Britain to believe that we are free; that our Parliament is the mother of democracy; that our liberties are the envy of the world; that our system of police is always our friend; that the guardians of our safety, the police and security services, are subject to democratic legal control; that our civil service is impartial; that our courts and commentators maintain a proud identity; that our press is brave and honest.

Today such beliefs are increasingly implausible. The gap between reality and the received views of Britain's "unwritten constitution" has widened to a degree that many find hard to endure. Yet this year we are moved to celebrate the third centenary of the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688, which established what was to become the United Kingdom's sovereign formula. In the name of freedom, our political, human and social rights are being curtailed while the powers of the executive have increased, are increasing and ought to be diminished.

A process is underway which endangers many of the freedoms we have had. Once in part deliberate, it began before 1979 and is now gathering momentum. Scotland as governed like a province from Whitehall. More generally, government has eroded a number of important civil freedoms. For example: the universal right to habeas corpus, to peaceful assembly, to freedom of information, to freedom of expression, to membership of a trade union, to local government, to freedom of movement, even to the birth right itself. By taking these rights from some, the government puts them at risk for all.

A traditional British belief in the benign nature of the country's institutions encourages an unsystematic perception of these grave matters, each becomes an "issue" considered in isolation from the rest. Being unwritten the constitution also encourages a piecemeal approach to politics, an approach that gives little protection against a determined, authoritarian state. For the events of 1688 only shifted the absolute power of the monarch into the hands of the parliamentary oligarchy.

The current administration is not an un-English interruption in the country's way of life. But while the government calls upon aspirations for liberty, it also exploits the dark side of a constitutional settlement which was always deficient in democracy.

The 1688 settlement had a positive side. In its time the Glorious Revolution won a historic victory over brutal tyranny. Britain was spared the rigours of dictatorship. A working compromise between many different interests was made possible at home; even if, from Ireland to India, quite different standards were imposed by Empire abroad. No criticism of contemporary developments in Britain should deny the significance of past democratic achievements most dramatically illuminated in May 1940 when Britain defied the fascist domination of Europe.

But the eventual victory that liberated Western Europe preserved the patchwork principles and institutions of the United Kingdom. These incorporated the popular desire for work and welfare into a post-war national consensus. Now this has broken down. Six, less, have its convenient mix of compromise and reluctance: essential components of a free society. Instead, the inbuilt powers of the 1688 settlement have enabled the government to discipline British society by its ends. To impose its values on the civil service, to undermine the independence of the British press, to threaten seriously freedom in the universities and schools, to limit the democratic rights of the citizen, in the name of national security. The record with the immediate past shows how rights take. Once a man has always been to destroy the relationship. The consequence is that today the British have fewer legal rights and less democracy than citizens of most other West European states.

The potentially absurd authoritarian role in the United Kingdom has only recently come to light. The new legislation on the prevention of terror, but it cannot be restricted to an application to the past. Once British citizens have been denied the right to silence, to habeas corpus, to trial by jury, to travel freely, to publish, to demonstrate, to strike, to associate freely with others, to join a trade union, to protect their privacy, to be free from arbitrary detention, to be free from discrimination, to be free from the fear of the knock on the door, then Britain will be a democracy in name only. The Government will be free to govern by decree.

We have had less freedom than we believed. That which we have enjoyed has been too dependent on the benevolence of our rulers. Our freedoms have remained their possessions, exercised not as citizens but as subjects rather than being our own inalienable privileges as citizens. To make real the freedoms we think we have has granted means facing for the first time the task to take them for ourselves.

The time has come to demand political, civil and human rights in the United Kingdom. The first step is to establish them as constitutional forms, so that they are no longer subject to the arbitrary diktat of Westminster and Whitehall.

We call, therefore, for a new constitutional settlement which would:

Enshrine, by means of a Bill of Rights, such civil liberties as the right to peaceful assembly, to freedom of association, to freedom from discrimination, to freedom from detention without trial, to trial by jury, to privacy and to freedom of expression.

Subject executive powers and prerogatives, by whomsoever exercised, to the rule of law.

Establish freedom of information and open government.

Create a fair electoral system of proportional representation.

Reform the upper house to establish a democratic, non-hereditary second chamber.

Place the executive under the power of a democratically renewed parliament and all agencies of the state under the rule of law.

Ensure the independence of the [illegible].

Provide legal remedies for all abuses of power by the state and the officials of central and local government.

Guarantee an equitable distribution of power between local, regional and national government.

Draw up a written constitution, anchored in the idea of universal citizenship, that incorporates these reforms.

Our central concern is the law. No country can be considered free in which the government is above the law. No democracy can be considered safe whose freedoms are not encoded in a basic constitution.

We, the undersigned, have called this document Charter 88. First, to mark our rejection of the complacency with which the tercentenary of the Revolution of 1688 has been celebrated. Second, to reassert a tradition of demands for constitutional rights in Britain, which stretches from the barons who forced the Magna Carta on King John, to the working men who drew up the People's Charter in 1838, to the women at the beginning of this century who demanded universal suffrage. Third, to salute the courage of those in Eastern Europe who still fight for their fundamental freedoms.

Like the Czech and Slovak signatories of Charter 77 we are an informal, open community of people of different opinions, faiths and professions, united by the will to assert, individually and collectively, for the respect of civil and human rights in our own country and throughout the world. Charter 77 welcomed the ratification by Czechoslovakia of the UN International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights, but noted that it "serves as a reminder of the extent to which basic human rights in our country exist, regrettably, on paper only."

Conditions here are so much better than in Eastern Europe as to bear no comparison. But our rights in the United Kingdom remain unformulated, conditional upon the good will of the government and the compassion of bureaucrats. To create a democratic constitution at the end of the twentieth century, however, may extend the concept of liberty, especially with respect to the rights of women and the place of minorities. It will not be a simple matter: part of British sovereignty is shared with Europe, and the extension of social rights in a modern economy is a matter of debate everywhere. We cannot foretell the choices a free people may make. We are united in one opinion only, that British society stands in need of a constitution which protects individual rights and of the institutions of a modern and pluralist democracy.

The entrenchment of laws does not guarantee their realisation. Only people themselves can ensure freedom, democracy and equality in their own lives. Nonetheless, such ends can be far better demanded, and more effectively defended and pursued, once they belong to everyone in inalienable rights.

ADD YOUR NAME TO OURS

[illegible]

John Hayland, Charter 88
New Statesman and Society
Perbenconsure Works
38 Kingsland Road
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election had been conducted according to PR the outcome would have given the Conservatives 279 seats instead of 375, Labour 209 instead of 229, and the Alliance 149 instead of 22. This result would mean some form of coalition government backed by a solid core of centre MPs, ensuring the continuation of pro-capitalist policies little different from those of the current Conservative regime. It is not just the 'first past the post' system which disenfranchises the British people. The whole charade of parliamentary democracy merely provides a rubber stamp of legitimacy for the measures required by the capitalist class. The disenfranchisement of the majority is compounded by the fact that all the major parties are preoccupied with the quest for middle class votes, leaving the working class with no voice in the political mainstream. Haydn Thomas seeks to 'empower people and create a more participatory democracy', but this project truly demands revolutionary changes in society, not just PR.

A third defect of the campaign for constitutional reform is that it assumes that legal conventions can be effective safeguards of civil liberties in our society. Many radical campaigners are now calling for the incorporation of the United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights into British law. Again, the *New Statesman and Society* reminds us 'just how revolutionary a development' this declaration was. It was certainly the result of cataclysmic events—world war, holocaust and genocide—and the various charters of the United Nations ratified the new world order under US supremacy. But has the UN charter proved effective in defending human rights?

Humbug charter

A cursory survey of the world after 40 years of the UN charter confirms that human rights are, if anything, even more widely violated today. The USA has consistently used human rights as a propaganda weapon against the Soviet Union, while equally consistently blocking the application of the same standards to its allies and puppet regimes in Latin America and Asia, where death squads still operate with impunity. The Western powers have focused concern on civil liberties in Afghanistan, Poland, Czechoslovakia and elsewhere in the Eastern bloc, while continuing to support the apartheid regime in South Africa, Pinochet's Chile and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. The British media was outraged by the use of children as soldiers in the Gulf War, yet, because Britain sent young naval cadets to the Falklands, its representatives are blocking stricter UN rules on young people's rights. On closer inspection the UN charter of human rights seems to have served more as a platform for humbug and hypocrisy than as a framework for advancing freedom.

Supporters of Charter 88 cite the safeguards of civil liberties included in the US constitution and recommend a similar framework for British law. Yet the rampant racism and injustice of American society would suggest that this document has proved of little use in protecting the rights of the individual in the richest of capitalist nations. For 200 years capitalist constitutions have proclaimed liberty and equality, while capitalist societies have proved incapable of delivering basic human rights to the majority of their citizens. The problem lies, not in the constitution, but in capitalist society itself and the relations of exploitation and oppression on which it rests. The solution cannot be found in trying to rewrite the constitution, but through overthrowing capitalist society itself. In the absence of any perspective of fundamental—yes, revolutionary—change, the call for constitutional reform amounts to a combination of wishful thinking about the future and despair about the possibility of fighting back in the present.

Schemes for an anti-Tory electoral pact begin from the recognition that there were many constituencies where the combined opposition vote easily exceeded the winning Tory vote at the last election. John Evans proposes that Labour and the SLD identify 60 seats in which their combined vote exceeded 50 per cent of the electorate. In 30 where Labour came second the SLD would agree not to contest the next election, and vice versa in the remaining seats in which the Alliance candidate was runner-up in 1987. Evans reckons that if the parties had made such a deal before the last election, Labour would now have 270 seats and the SLD 50. The Tories would still be the largest party, but Evans argues that they would have had trouble passing unpopular legislation such as the poll tax, privatisation and the housing bill, and that Thatcher might even have fallen. Scottish Labour MP John Reid calculates that an electoral deal in 100 seats could produce a majority for an anti-Tory coalition.

There are objections to the electoral pact proposals on both tactical and on wider political grounds. Not surprisingly, the tactical objections are uppermost in the minds of the leaders of the Labour Party; it is fairly clear that Labour stands to lose the most and gain the least in any such dealing.

The major weakness of the pact proposals is the assumption that Labour and centre-party voters will obediently switch their votes according to the terms of the deal negotiated by party leaders. All the evidence suggests that while Labour voters' second preference is overwhelmingly for the centre parties, supporters of the Democrats and SDP split fairly evenly between the Tories and Labour when asked about their second preference. The same pattern is evident throughout Europe: working class voters vote for the centre in preference to the right when the left drops out, middle class voters are as likely to opt for the right as they are for the left when their centre party is out of the running. The advantage to the centre parties is clear.

Furthermore, deals at national level may well meet fierce local resistance, where opposition parties with roots in the community would be reluctant to sacrifice years of campaigning at council and

constituency level to give a clear run to old adversaries. This is particularly true of Labour constituency parties in the south, where most SLD target seats would be. Such local parties tend to be left-wing and intensely hostile to centre-party politicians who are often well-known figures in local government. The Labour leadership has enough trouble ensuring that local parties select individuals whom it regards as suitable parliamentary candidates. Forcing them to accept SLD candidates could be expected to provoke major ructions.

Nor would negotiating a pact be without problems for the Democrats. The leader of the Democrats on the council in Bath, one of the seats mentioned by Evans as suitable for a Labour withdrawal in favour of the SLD, is against a pact. He fears that many Labour supporters would abstain and that many of the Democrats' former supporters might be so disgusted with the leadership's deal with Labour that they would vote Tory—or defect en masse to a fourth party such as the Greens. The horse trading and manoeuvring around any pact arrangements runs the risk of increasing the already high level of public cynicism about party politics, and compounding the disarray of the opposition parties, rather than aggregating their voters. The Tories would have little difficulty in seizing the high moral ground and projecting a clear and distinct party profile against a fudged opposition pact in any future election.

The political objection to the pursuit of electoral pacts is that it can only shift the focus of opposition campaigning towards an appeal to the middle classes and the centre and away from any concern with the working class and the left. Annie Marjoram, president of Bath Labour Party, accurately sums up the political consequences of an electoral pact: 'The basis of a pact would be a set of policies which included abandonment of nuclear disarmament, no repeal of trade union laws, and the more effective management of capitalism. That is not why I am in the Labour Party.' (*Guardian,* 20 December) The condition of such a pact would be Labour's repudiation of any pretence of opposing militarism, defending the unions, or standing up for the working class. While David Owen and other centre-party figures have always been explicit about these terms, Labour supporters of a pact demand no policy commitments from the centre parties. Indeed they welcome any such realignment as a convenient way of destroying the residual influence of the left and Labour's traditional identification with the working class.

The move towards electoral pacts gives all the options to the middle classes and no choice at all to the working class. Once Labour is more closely allied to the SLD, middle class voters can choose between the Tories' aggressively pro-capitalist and anti-working class platform and the Labour/Democrat pact's attempt to present a similar set of policies in a more liberal package. Such a choice, which is indeed only a more extreme form of the alternatives on offer in June 1987, offers nothing at all to most voters. Things are already bad enough for working class people who identify with their own class; they are generally presented with no alternative but to vote for Labour, a party that repudiates any concern for their interests. A pact would further encourage the politics of the lowest common denominator, the selection of policies acceptable to middle-of-the-road public opinion. It rules out any attempt to put forward the sort of creative alternative policies which are essential to protect and advance the interests of the working class into the nineties.

The most striking feature of opposition politics in Britain today is the decomposition of party alignments and the new volatility of affiliations. Charter 88, *Samizdat,* and various conferences and journals of the left all bring together intellectuals and activists from across the anti-Thatcher spectrum, from the Greens through the Democrats and the SDP to the Labour and Communist parties. Why are all these high-powered individuals and once powerful organisations in such a state of confusion and crisis? Why all this concern to discover some new idea that can revitalise the

A constitutional revolution followed the bloodshed of the English civil war; it is hard to imagine Charter 88 adverts in the *Guardian* having the same effect (left)

The key question is not what to include in a grandiose paper manifesto, but how to mobilise the maximum working class resistance against the state

opposition or to patch together some kind of artificial majority out of the disparate anti-Tory forces? The answer is that the existing opposition forces have failed to grasp the nature of the problem they are up against. Hence their solutions lack coherence or conviction.

Important shifts in political life do not emerge from discussion circles and think-tanks or from reshuffling relations among different groupings in smoke-filled rooms, but reflect the changing balance of class forces in society. When the capitalist class is in the ascendant, the rest of society moves towards the right; when the working class is making the running, the balance shifts towards the left. Lacking a clearly defined role in capitalist production, the middle classes shift according to the relative strengths of the major antagonistic classes, thus defining the position of the political centre. All progress in matters affecting the living standards or civil liberties of the majority of society is the result of the pressure the working class exerts on the system. Hence the key question is not what to include in some grandiose paper charter or manifesto, but how to mobilise the maximum working class resistance against the capitalist state under the Thatcher regime.

The problem goes beyond the level of ideas or of electoral tactics. The problem is that the social basis for an anti-Thatcher alliance of the sort currently under discussion does not exist. Here the opposition could learn something from the prime minister. Thatcher's success has been achieved through the political mobilisation of key sections of the middle classes, supported by a smaller layer of upwardly mobile working class voters, around a well-articulated programme of chauvinism, reaction and old-fashioned petit-bourgeois prejudice. The only way that Thatcher can be effectively opposed is through the mobilisation of an alternative base among that section of society which is most alienated from the Conservative government—the working class. The British middle classes are so fragmented in their outlook and so spineless in their political convictions that they could not sustain the Alliance between the Liberals and the SDP, never mind one between Labour and the SLD.

Bearing the brunt

The working class, on the other hand, has an objective interest in uniting against the Tory government. There are important divisions and conflicts among workers, between men and women, black and white, gay and straight, employed and unemployed, and these need to be challenged and overcome. It is true, too, that many have absorbed the prejudices and confusions that now dominate British politics, and these too must be tackled. But everybody who relies on wages or benefits in Thatcher's Britain starts with a common interest in resisting the government's austerity measures. Working class people are already bearing the brunt of the state's repressive policies, whenever they try to go on strike, go to a demonstration, or merely go to a football match.

The opposition in Britain is in a mess because it has constantly-evaded, postponed and delayed the task of rallying the only force that can end the tyranny of Thatcher's Britain. Mobilising the working class against the Tories requires not a pact among the parties of the past, but a struggle to build a movement that can start the fight to create the society of the future, by resisting the decadent society of the present. This struggle, not any constitutional or electoral reform, is the only guarantee of the rights and liberties of the majority.

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March 1939

THE SPANISH TRAGEDY

Rob Knight on the end of a revolutionary era

The Spanish Civil War ended 50 years ago this month. After bitter fighting and even more bitter betrayals, the victory of General Franco's Nationalists over the Republican government extinguished the last sparks of the revolutionary movement which had set Europe ablaze for 20 years.

When the war in Spain began three years earlier, many of the best militants from across the Continent went there to join the International Brigades, to make what they saw as a last stand against the forward march of fascism. Typical of these was Hans Beimler, who arrived in Spain in 1936 to become political commissar and the driving force behind the German section of the International Brigades. Beimler had been a member of the Spartacist Group during the First World War, and took part in the 1918 revolution in Germany as a member of the Sailors' Council in Cuxhaven. He served in the Red Guard of the Revolutionary Sailors during the 1919 Bavarian uprising, and was imprisoned for his part in the attempted revolution of 1921. In 1930 he became a Communist MP. After Hitler's rise to power Beimler was arrested and sent to the new concentration camp at Dachau. Within weeks he escaped, killing a camp guard and walking out in his clothes.

The last line

Beimler and thousands like him saw the civil war in Spain as the last line of defence against fascism. The 40 000 who joined the International Brigades were drawn from the most political section of the European working class. Most were communists or left-wing socialists, many were exiles from Italy and Germany. It seemed to them that a victory for Franco's Nationalist rebellion against the Republican government in Spain would create a key link in a fascist chain stretching across Europe.

The civil war devastated Spain. Half a million died and much of the country was reduced to rubble. Most losses were on the Republican side. From 1936-38 the International Brigades fought alongside the Spanish Republican Army and suffered terrible casualties. Of the 5000 Germans, 2000 were killed. Three quarters of the 2000 British volunteers were either killed or wounded. Yet despite these sacrifices the Spanish Republic collapsed on March 31 1939, and Franco began his 36-year reign.

Spain's tragedy was to be used as a pawn in the vast and dirty diplomatic games of the thirties. Many of the left-wing fighters who put their lives on the line there looked to the Soviet Union for leadership and support. Yet the Soviet Union was now run by Stalin's bureaucracy. Having usurped power from the working class which made the 1917 Revolution, the Stalinists' sole concern was preserving their privileged status. To do that they were prepared to sacrifice the working class both in the Soviet Union and internationally. After Hitler took power in 1933 and crushed the German Communist Party, the main aim of Soviet diplomacy became to make an alliance with Britain and France against Germany.

When the Spanish Civil War broke out, Soviet rulers saw a golden opportunity to win favour with the Western powers. Even as workers seized control in parts of Spain, Moscow refused to acknowledge the opportunity of turning the war into a revolutionary struggle. Instead, Stalinist propagandists proclaimed that Spain was only about the survival of liberal democracy. The Soviet leadership hoped that, by putting the Communist International at the service of Western democracy, it could establish closer links with the non-fascist powers.

This strategy met with sympathy among European Communist Party leaders. They too had given up any hope of leading revolutions, and were trying to make alliances with various pro-capitalist forces around moderate platforms. The International Brigades thus became both an abused instrument of Soviet diplomacy, and a safety valve through which the best European militants could fight while the Communist parties at home were turning their backs on struggle.

The Stalinists' attempt to court non-communist (and even anti-communist) allies had a disastrous effect on the course of working class struggles. In France in 1936 it led the Communist Party to do all it could to end the most militant strikes that French workers had ever engaged in, on the grounds that class struggle undermined the prospect of alliances with establishment forces. In Spain the effects were even more catastrophic.

While they faced Franco, Stalin attacked their rear

PHOTO: HULTON PICTURE LIBRARY

The Republican government could find no international backers except the Soviet Union. In exchange for Soviet support the Republic had to give the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) considerable influence over the conduct of the war. The PCE did its best to prevent the Republican struggle taking an anti-capitalist direction. It discouraged the seizure of land by peasants and the occupation of factories by workers. It was instrumental in crushing the Barcelona uprising of 1937, when workers rose up against the moderate policies of the Republican government. At the height of the war it organised showtrials of Spanish leftists, and cooperated with Stalin in purging oppositional elements from the International Brigades. In the final retreat from Franco in 1939, the PCE still found time to identify and hang leftists near the French border.

The policy of moderation prevented the working class from influencing events. In Spain the Republican government rapidly lost the active support of the masses, thus sealing its fate. Internationally, the widespread sympathy for the Spanish Republic could not be mobilised beyond the provision of charity. British collections alone raised over £70m of aid at today's values. But when the South Wales miners voted to strike in 1938 in support of the Republic, the Communist Party blocked the action.

The Munich agreement between Britain, France and Germany in September 1938 seemed to shatter the possibility of an alliance between the West and the Soviet Union. Stalin's response was to pursue a pact with Hitler, Franco's principal backer. To pave the way for this, Stalin withdrew support for the Spanish Republic, squeezing financial and military aid before withdrawing the International Brigades in October 1938.

Enemies within

Fifty years ago this month the defeated remnants of the Republican army were marched into Franco's prison camps or retreated into the mountains or over the border into French detention camps. They took with them the last hopes of a revolutionary movement born out of the struggles around the First World War, led by people of the calibre of Hans Beimler, who was killed in suspicious circumstances while under investigation by the Stalinist secret police. Spain marked the end of a crucial phase in international working class politics. The left has yet to recover from the loss—or to settle accounts with the enemies within the movement who ensured that the sacrifices were in vain.

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Earth's atmosphere

An ozone-free zone?

John Gibson cuts through some clouds of confusion

A recent survey of 2000 Britons and Americans found that 90 per cent of each knew there was a link between too much sunlight and skin cancer. This contrasted with just over 30 per cent who knew that the Earth orbits the sun once a year. Public awareness, and fear, of the threat to human life posed by the sun's rays has been raised by reports of the destructive action of chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) gases on the ozone layer which protects the planet.

Governments and businesses have taken steps to meet the mood of concern. Tesco recently announced that they would remove their brand name from all aerosols containing CFCs. McDonald's have already removed the guilty party from their hamburger cartons in favour of more 'ozone-friendly' chemicals. Margaret Thatcher is to co-host a major international conference in London this month with the United Nations Environment Programme, seeking an 85 per cent reduction in CFC production. This is a remarkable turnaround by the British government, which until late in 1987 was one of the most vigorous opponents of controls on CFC output.

What is ozone? Is it really under threat, and from what? And what are we to make of the Tory government's rapid about-turn?

Ozone is a pale-blue gas made up of three oxygen atoms, rather than the two atoms essential for breathing. Tiny amounts of ozone are created at ground level through the action of sunlight on air pollution. In the upper atmosphere or stratosphere, four or five billion tonnes of it form the distinct ozone layer.

Ozone is continually created and destroyed by the action of ultra-violet radiation in the stratosphere. This process turns most ultra-violet radiation into heat, thus preventing it from reaching Earth, where too much would wipe out all human life.

Box 1 explains the dynamic equilibrium between the creation and destruction of ozone in the stratosphere. Three main substances speed up the destruction of ozone: oxides of nitrogen and hydrogen, and free chlorine atoms. By producing these substances in industry, humanity is only adding to a natural stock which itself varies from time to time, causing fluctuations in the ozone layer.

For example, volcanos spew molecules containing chlorine into the atmosphere. A violent eruption might lead to some of this reaching the stratosphere where the molecules would be broken up to yield free chlorine. Seaweed is another natural source of chlorine. As for oxides of nitrogen and hydrogen, they are formed in the stratosphere and above by the action of electrically charged particles from the sun. Thus a depletion of the ozone layer would follow a powerful solar flare, especially at the poles, due to the funnelling effect of the Earth's magnetic field: a large flare caused a reduction of 16 per cent in the ozone over the Arctic in 1972 (L Dotto and H Schiff, *The Ozone War,* 1978, p230).

The destroyers

These fluctuations are not a problem; the ozone layer soon recovers its equilibrium. The worry is that, as a result of human society's productive activity, a permanently higher concentration of those chemicals which increase the destruction of ozone might be established in the stratosphere.

CFCs have been identified as just such an ozone destroyer. Their basic molecules consist of chlorine, fluorine and carbon atoms in various arrangements, depending on the need, and are well-suited to a wide range of industrial and domestic uses. They are cheap to make, and boil at between -40 and zero degrees centigrade, which makes them ideal for refrigerators. They are odourless, non-flammable, non-toxic, easy to store, and do not react with other chemicals, including human skin, which makes them ideal for use as

PHOTO: SIMON NORFOLK

Box 1: How ozone is created and destroyed

All molecules can be broken apart by ultra-violet radiation, and each has a range of wavelengths at which it most easily breaks. Most of the radiation from the sun is in the visible spectrum, that is, radiation with wavelengths between 760 nanometres (nm) (red), and 400nm (violet). A small proportion falls either side of this, in the infra-red (wavelength longer than red) and ultra-violet (shorter than violet). The shorter the wavelength of the radiation, the greater its energy. If radiation with wavelengths below 290nm reached Earth in significant amounts it would kill outright. In the region 290-320nm it is cancer-inducing. Thankfully the Earth's atmosphere cuts out most radiation below 320nm. The equilibrium between the creation and destruction of ozone plays the crucial role.

Oxygen molecules (O_2) are broken up by ultra-violet below 190nm. In the process the energy of the radiation is converted into heat. This process leads to two free oxygen atoms (2xO). In the presence of nitrogen, one of these atoms can combine with an oxygen molecule to form ozone (O_3). That is:

$O_2 \rightarrow O+O$ **(when hit by ultra-violet radiation)**

$O+O_2+X \rightarrow O_3+X$ **(X=some other molecule, usually nitrogen)**

Ozone itself is then broken down by ultra-violet radiation, of lesser energy since O_3 is more unstable than O_2. Radiation between 230-290nm is thus converted into harmless heat, along with much of the radiation between 290-320nm. The result is oxygen. That is:

$O_3 \rightarrow O+O_2$ **(when hit by ultra-violet radiation)**

$O+O_3 \rightarrow O_2+O_2$

The result of these two reactions is that two ozone molecules are turned into three oxygen molecules.

The presence of catalysts also speeds up the destruction of ozone. A catalyst is a substance which speeds up a chemical reaction without itself changing the nature of that reaction. Chlorine is particulary good at this: one free chlorine atom is able to destroy up to 100 000 ozone molecules before being rendered harmless by some other chemical reaction.

A dynamic equilibrium is established between the creation and destruction of ozone. This equilibrium is affected when our activity on Earth increases the amounts of the catalysts. Because one molecule of the catalyst can destroy so many ozone molecules, a small addition to the stratosphere can make a significant difference. It has been estimated that by the early seventies humanity had already doubled the amount of free chlorine in the stratosphere (*The Ozone War,* p221). It is further estimated that even if the emission of CFCs is limited in line with the Montreal protocol, there will be a three-fold increase in the concentration of free chlorine compared with present levels, and 10 times the amount present before the widespread use of CFCs by the year 2020 (*The Hole in the Sky,* p148).

The temperature of the stratosphere also enhances the damage humanity can do. As a result of the processes we have described, the temperature of the stratosphere is increased; in fact, unlike in the lower atmosphere, temperature increases with height. This traps the gases in the stratosphere (since warm air rises), and they are not washed out by rain, adding to the destructive power of the chemicals put up there by society. A US National Academy of Sciences study likened the stratosphere to 'a city whose garbage is collected every few years instead of daily'.

On the basis of catalytic destruction by one chemical, projections show that the result is not to wipe out all the ozone (since it is continually created by the destruction of oxygen molecules), but to establish a new dynamic equilibrium with the concentration of ozone less than before.

propellants in aerosols. They are also excellent solvents, used in the electronics industry as they do not attack plastic circuit boards. CFCs are widely used to expand various foams, from hamburger cartons to major industrial products.

But the very property of being chemically inert, which made CFCs so attractive to industry, also makes them dangerous for the ozone layer. Because nothing can break them down in the lower atmosphere they have nowhere to go but up. In the stratosphere they are broken down by ultra-violet radiation. This releases chlorine which can attack the ozone layer. Ironically it is the presence of the ozone layer which stops ultra-violet radiation breaking them down lower in the atmosphere.

CFC dumping

Since 1971, the concentration of CFCs in the lower atmosphere is estimated to have increased by 500 per cent (J Lovelock, *New Scientist,* 21 April 1988). The bulk of this increase is in CFC-11 and CFC-12, which together have been dumped into the atmosphere at rates of up to 800 000 tonnes a year since the mid-seventies (J Gribbin, *The Hole in the Sky,* 1988, p45). This has caused a trebling of CFCs in the stratosphere since 1960 (R Keir, *Science,* 12 August 1988). So there is a growing concentration of CFCs in the lower atmosphere, slowly seeping upwards. It follows that even if all production stopped immediately, the problem would remain for decades. The call for an 85 per cent cut follows from the calculation that this is required just to stop the concentration of chlorine in the stratosphere increasing.

Polar hole

The study of the effect of CFCs on the ozone layer was given added urgency by the discovery of a 'hole' in the ozone layer over Antarctica. This first appeared in 1979 and reached its greatest extent in 1987. It is not a permanent phenomenon, appearing with the return of the sun after the Antarctic winter and caused by the severe winter temperatures and atmospheric conditions (for a good explanation see *The Hole in the Sky*). Nevertheless, it provided definite proof that CFC gases could significantly affect the ozone layer; the amount of ozone over Antarctica fell by about 60 per cent in October 1987. An international team set off in January this year to study a similar, but smaller, hole over the North Pole.

Restrictions on CFCs are now certain to be applied. The most lax controls likely are those agreed under the Montreal protocol in September 1987, which has been signed by all the industrialised countries. It calls for a 50 per cent reduction in the emission of CFCs by the end of the century. This may well be changed in the near future to a rapid 85 per cent cut. Will this solve the problem, or are we all in imminent danger?

There is little controversy over the effects of an increase of ultra-violet radiation reaching the Earth: more cases of skin cancer. The figures, however, show that something of a scare, out of proportion to the foreseeable threat, has been whipped up. Unless there was a severe drop in the level of ozone, allowing through radiation which can destroy nucleic acids RNA and DNA (which nobody is predicting), the US environment protection agency has predicted that each one per cent decrease in ozone would lead to an annual increase of about 100 cases of terminal cancer in the USA. Not very nice, but hardly the biggest threat facing 230m Americans.

Scary science

Scaremongering characterises the approach of environmentalists and their supporters in the world of science. It does nothing to aid a proper investigation into the real problem. For example, John Gribbin's book on the Antarctic ozone hole clearly explains that the

conditions which create it are peculiar to the polar regions. Yet on the back of the book we read: 'Unless we act now, the hole could widen to cover the rest of the world, causing irreparable damage to our environment and ourselves.'

Crossed chains

A similar approach is taken to global measurements. At present there is no accurate means to measure global changes in the amount of stratospheric ozone, or of ultra-violet radiation reaching the Earth. What ground-based data there are indicate no change in ozone levels up to 1984. Both Friends of the Earth and Gribbin use results from Nasa's satellite, Nimbus 7, to indicate a recent sharp decrease. Both play down the fact that these data are widely rejected, since there is no way to check the callibration on the satellite which has been in service for 10 years and is due to be replaced. Nimbus 7 recorded a global ozone depletion of about five per cent from 1978-86, which clashes with ground-based measurements (*New Scientist*, 4 February 1988).

Very little government money is going into the basic task of measuring ozone depletion, accurately, over the globe. In this situation we are left with computer models of what might happen as the only indication of future trends.

The basic catalytic chains for ozone destruction are fairly well understood and allow accurate predictions. The problem is that these chains are mixed up with another 150 or so chains of chemical reactions. It seems that some of the catalysts which destroy ozone neutralise each other; for example chlorine and nitrous oxide do. In addition, the growing concentrations of carbon dioxide and methane in the atmosphere slow down the rate of ozone depletion. Taking as many as possible of these factors into account, and assuming that the Montreal protocol for restricting CFCs will be adhered to, Guy Brasseur of the Belgian Institute for Space Aeronomy and Matthew Hitchman of the US National Centre for Atmospheric Research indicate that by the middle of the next century the global ozone depletion will be less than one per cent (*Science*, 29 April 1988).

By merely extrapolating one trend—the catalytic destruction of ozone by chlorine—many environmentalists exaggerate the threat of ozone depletion. Brasseur and Hitchman also point to the contribution of changes in the ozone layer to the wider problem of 'greenhouse warming'. This is a much greater problem than the thinning of the ozone layer in and of itself—and one which governments and corporations are far less able to cope with. We will examine the greenhouse issue in next month's *Living Marxism*. For now, let's look at the authorities' response to the debate about the depletion of the ozone layer.

'Banging on'

The Tory government's attitude has been marked by good opportunism, and poor environmentalism. *Private Eye* asked the pertinent question: 'Why is the government banging on about the purity of the ozone layer while Britain continues to fill the lower atmosphere with acid rain, the water table with nitrates and the oceans with sewage, heavy metals and radioactive isotopes? Is it just a lot of old humbug, or does Mrs T's conversion have something to do with the conversion of one of the UK's biggest companies, ICI?' (9 December 1988) Thatcher's new hostility to CFCs does indeed reflect the advanced ability of ICI to produce—and export—alternatives.

All advanced capitalist countries now have substitutes for most CFCs on the market (see Box 2). ICI's new plant at Runcorn will come into operation in 1991, producing FC-134a. This is 'ozone-friendly' because it contains no chlorine. Other compounds are rendered harmless by adding a hydrogen atom, which allows chemical reactions in the lower atmosphere to break them up.

Profits first

The Tory government vigorously opposed restrictions on the production of CFCs until it could be sure that the British chemical industry wouldn't get entirely squeezed out of the market for alternatives by the giant US firm Du Pont. This led White House environment spokesman Richard Bendick to accuse Britain of being 'more interested in short-term profits than in the protection of the environment for future generations' (*New Scientist*, 5 March 1987). The American government, however, was no better. Despite overwhelming evidence of a problem, Washington resisted curbs on the use of CFCs in aerosols until the end of 1978.
Du Pont proposed that CFCs should be 'innocent until proven guilty'—that is, don't ban them until we have

Box 2: CFCs and the alternatives

The Montreal protocol calls for restrictions on five key chlorofluorocarbons: CFC-11, CFC-12, CFC-113, CFC-114 and CFC-115. This was the global output before any of the recent measures were taken to reduce production.

Global production (approx) of more important CFCs in 1985 (millions of kilogrammes per year)

CFC-11	**340**	**CFC-114**	**very low**
CFC-12	**440**	**CFC-115**	**very low**
CFC-113	**160**		

(Source: *Into the Void: A Report on CFCs and the Ozone Layer*, Friends of the Earth, 1987)

In all cases alternatives are available. With aerosols, substances other than CFCs will do the job. For other purposes more 'ozone-friendly' CFCs are available. The difference in the threat to the ozone layer is striking.

A Uses of restricted CFCs; B Alternatives(s); C Comparative threat to ozone layer (% of threat posed by A)

A	B	C(%)
Aerosol (CFC-11)	**butane or ethane**	**0**
Home appliances (refrigerators/freezers) (CFC-12)	**FC-134a**	**7**
Various foams (CFC-11/CFC-12)	**CFC-124/CFC-123**	**1**
Solvent (CFC-113)	**CFC-123/CFC-132b***	**5**

(Source: *Into the Void*)

*In the case of solvents there is also a chemical EC-7, developed in the USA from citrus fruits, which poses no threat to the ozone layer. In electronics it will be essential to use this as alternative CFCs attack the plastic circuit boards.

Not all of these alternatives are on the market yet. But by 1991, when ICI's new plant at Runcorn begins production, the need for CFC-11 and CFC-12 will be eliminated. They constitute 70 per cent of total CFC output, and are the most damaging to the ozone layer. This, plus better recycling, should make the declared aim of an 85 per cent reduction fairly straightforward.

a profitable alternative. Only once they had that profitable alternative did the US authorities become ardent defenders of the ozone layer. Thatcher has now followed suit.

Blaming Asians

Behind their high-minded expressions of environmental concern, the Western powers have manipulated the CFCs issue to maximise their profits. Thus, under the 1987 Montreal protocol, they agreed to cut their consumption of CFCs by half; *production* of CFCs, meanwhile, was only due to be cut by about a third. As with all of its outdated and dangerous technology, the West has sought to dump the surplus on third world countries. Now that the major capitalist nations have developed alternatives to CFCs, they also want to maximise their share of the world market by putting the third world producers who are stuck with the old technology out of business. So Britain is set to ban the import of CFCs by 1991. Countries like Taiwan, South Korea, India and China are understandably suspicious of these arrangements and have refused to sign the protocol.

This has led to a racist backlash in the West, blaming the third world for endangering the planet. The *Independent* suggested that the Asians were not worried about damage to the ozone layer because of their darker skins (30 November 1988). Yet it is common knowledge that an increase in ultra-violet radiation will cause the same percentage increase in skin cancer the world over. The prize for the most ignorant outburst of bigotry must go to Virginia Bottomley, Tory environment minister. Apparently oblivious to the fact that the per capita consumption of CFCs in the USA and Britain is *five times* the world average, Bottomley depicted Britain as the victim of irresponsible Asians: 'If for example the two billion people of India and China were to use refrigeration and air conditioning in the way they do in New York, the beneficial effect of action in other countries would seriously be put at risk.' (*Independent*, 29 November 1988). The idea that the impoverished Asian masses could invest in Manhattan-style air conditioning for their villages and shanty towns is about as credible as the notion that the Tories would put protecting the ozone layer before defending ICI's profits.

Ozone players

In sum, Western governments have only moved into action when their chemical factories have developed an alternative to CFCs. Quick to spot an opportunity, they are now seeking to blame the third world for any problems and to monopolise the market. In the past, the Tories played down the threat from the possible depletion of the ozone layer. While cutting back on the funds needed to do the basic research, the government is now playing up the threat so that it is seen as tackling a major environmental crisis. This serves as a distraction from other environmental problems they are not doing, or can't do, much about—for example, global warming. And a good panic about rays from space is useful to divert attention from social problems on Earth.

Right price

While there is doubt about the effects of CFC gases, we should call for their rapid replacement—without the cost being passed on to the consumer or to third world countries. Throughout all the hype surrounding this month's conference, let's remember that although the capitalist system can solve the depletion of the ozone layer by CFC gases, it will only do so when the price is right; and it cannot solve the wider problems of environmental decay that its drive to maximise profits is creating.

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Transport in London

JAM TODAY

John Fitzpatrick and Manjit Singh try to get across the capital

The average speed of traffic in central London thoughout the day is now 11 miles per hour. Unless you get towed away. And don't get towed away in Hammersmith because, insult to injury, your anxious phone call to the car pound will be stacked in a queue and you'll have to listen to Richard Clayderman while you wait. Or you could go by tube. Try the Northern Line—infrequent, slow, shabby and packed. If you manage to squeeze between the begrudging masses wedged in the doorway, you stand eyeball-to-nostril with a stranger, savouring his aftershave (if you're lucky). If it is a hot day the train will stop in the tunnel so that you really get your money's worth.

Travelling in London is beyond a joke. Quite apart from the King's Cross fire and the Clapham Junction crash, both startling symptoms of an overburdened, underfunded transport system, every day is marked by frustration, dreariness, inconvenience and delay. There are more people around and the government, inclined to the private motorist (or at least to the road-builders), won't undertake the strategic planning and investment in public transport needed to relieve the situation.

London's population stopped falling in 1983, and it is now projected to rise to 6.9m by the year 2001, 2.5m of whom will be in inner London. But the biggest rise is in commuting, largely caused by the boom in office development around the financial sector. Since 1982 there has been an 11 per cent increase in the numbers entering central London between 7.00am and 10.00am, and the total is now running, or crawling, at 1 125 000 a day.

The heaviest pressure is on the rail and tube services (commuter use up by 15 and 45 per cent respectively). Between them they now bring in 850 000 passengers daily—and that's just the commuters. The logjam has been made worse by the decline in commuting by car and bus (down 18 and 20 per cent). Ironically roads are more congested, as car ownership in London rises and the roads undergo constant makeshift repairs. And the proposed Channel Tunnel termini at King's Cross and Waterloo are expected to deliver 13m people into London in their first year, some time after 1993.

In the face of the mounting, often conflicting, pressures, the government has been trying to keep its head down. Transport ministers Paul Channon and Peter Bottomley reel from one crisis to the next—Zeebrugge, King's Cross, Lockerbie, Clapham and the British Midland 737—and from one row to the next—the road through Naseby battlefield, the high-speed Chunnel link through Kent and the expansion of Stansted and Heathrow airports. While reports and proposals on London's problems pile up, the government proves incapable of coordinating a response.

Assessment studies commissioned by the department of transport from different firms of consultants came up with numerous options for four key transport 'corridors' in west, east and south London and the south circular. The short-listed favourites should be out in the summer, and are expected to favour driving new and expanded roads through these areas. Another commissioned report, the Central London Rail Study, (which a typically myopic transport official told us had 'no connection' with the assessment studies), recently landed on Channon's desk. It recommends new tube links between Euston/King's Cross and Victoria (north-south) and between Paddington/Marylebone and Liverpool Street (west-east). An alternative is to substitute the north-south link with a new tube line from Chelsea to Hackney.

Independent of all this, several major transport developments are already proposed or under way, for example, the upgrading of the Central and Northern tube lines, the development of the railway lands round King's Cross (in addition to the new terminus) and the building of a new Western Environmental Improvement Route (that is, road) from Holland Park to the Thames, which is introduced rather defensively in the department brochure: 'WEIR is not a motorway. It is not elevated over the railway. It is not a new Westway. It is nothing like the old plans for a west cross route. It will not replace the railway.'

Close encounters of a lurid kind on the underground

PHOTO: SIMON NORFOLK

Big business

Nick Lester, planning and transport officer of the Association of London Authorities, sees no government strategy. 'They don't accept that they need to plan for transport in London. They are approaching it on a totally ad hoc basis. Unless the government changes its policy, congestion will get worse. That will put more pressure on the underground and British Rail, with more overcrowding and more risk of major accidents. It will be more difficult for industry and commerce to operate, and people will find it more difficult just getting around.'

It is generally accepted now that building more roads simply leads to more cars using them, and to more congestion; witness the recent experience of the M25. Yet, as Lester says, 'the road lobby is one of the most powerful, if not the most powerful, of the lobbying forces in Britain today. Vehicle manufacturers like Ford, engineering and construction companies like Wimpey and Tarmac, road hauliers and lorry operators, motoring associations like the AA, these are wealthy and influential groups. Taylor Woodrow alone is one of the largest contributors to Tory Party funds'. It is hardly surprising that Channon has failed to get treasury backing for the cost of the rail study package which is estimated to be £3.5 billion. So it looks like more roads, but this won't solve the problem, says Lester, because 'these schemes won't have any serious effect for seven or eight years, and frankly London can't wait that long'.

Protest votes

Opposing roads is currently one of the biggest protest businesses around, especially among those who express concern for their environment—and the value of their property. There are groups everywhere—the veteran Archway Alert, the West London Road Watch, ELAS-ALARM (against the East London Assessment Study), the Friends of Parkland Walk, Londoners against Motorway Madness and the Hackney Transport Campaign. These local groups are

a growing phenomenon, and the commuters, the brolly brigade of Network South East, are a considerably bigger constituency. They don't want another Clapham Junction, and they are losing patience with their 'cattle trucks'. There are plenty of Tory voters among the disaffected residents and commuters.

Toll tax

If the Tories hadn't abolished the GLC they might lose another GLC election on the transport issue, as they did in 1973 and 1981. As it is, the post-GLC London Planning Advisory Committee published a report last autumn, with unanimous cross-party support, calling for a coordinated strategic land-use and transport policy. In the meantime they want an expansion of public transport, a halt to new road schemes and the introduction of extensive car restraint measures. A free-enterprise government, however, is not going to start coordinating land-use and transportation policies, for example, by controlling office development. Neither will the Tories inject the massive capital expenditure which public transport will require. Every mile of underground railway costs an estimated £100m to build today.

That leaves traffic restraint, discouraging cars from coming on to London's roads. Together with safe, convenient and affordable public transport this may seem a way to deal with the long-term problem. Indeed without it public transport can't work effectively; the buses have lost so much custom because they are always stuck in jams. Other countries have achieved restraint through parking restrictions, checkpoints, charges, fines, no tax concessions for company cars and so on. Some of these are less inequitable and some less of a threat to civil liberties than others. But which car traveller is going to support them while the alternative remains an increasingly rundown and expensive public transport system? This year alone, fares are up by 12.5 per cent on the tube and 9 per cent on BR.

The Tories have borrowed some ideas from those proposing traffic restraint, such as toll roads and higher road taxes. Yet they will use the extra revenue not as part of a conscious transport plan, but as a way of making us pay for botched repairs to the crumbling and overcrowded highways. As the government refuses to invest in decent public transport and encourages the profiteers to wreak further havoc with the road system, everybody (and remember 42 per cent of London households are carless) will have to put up with the current method of restraint; congestion.

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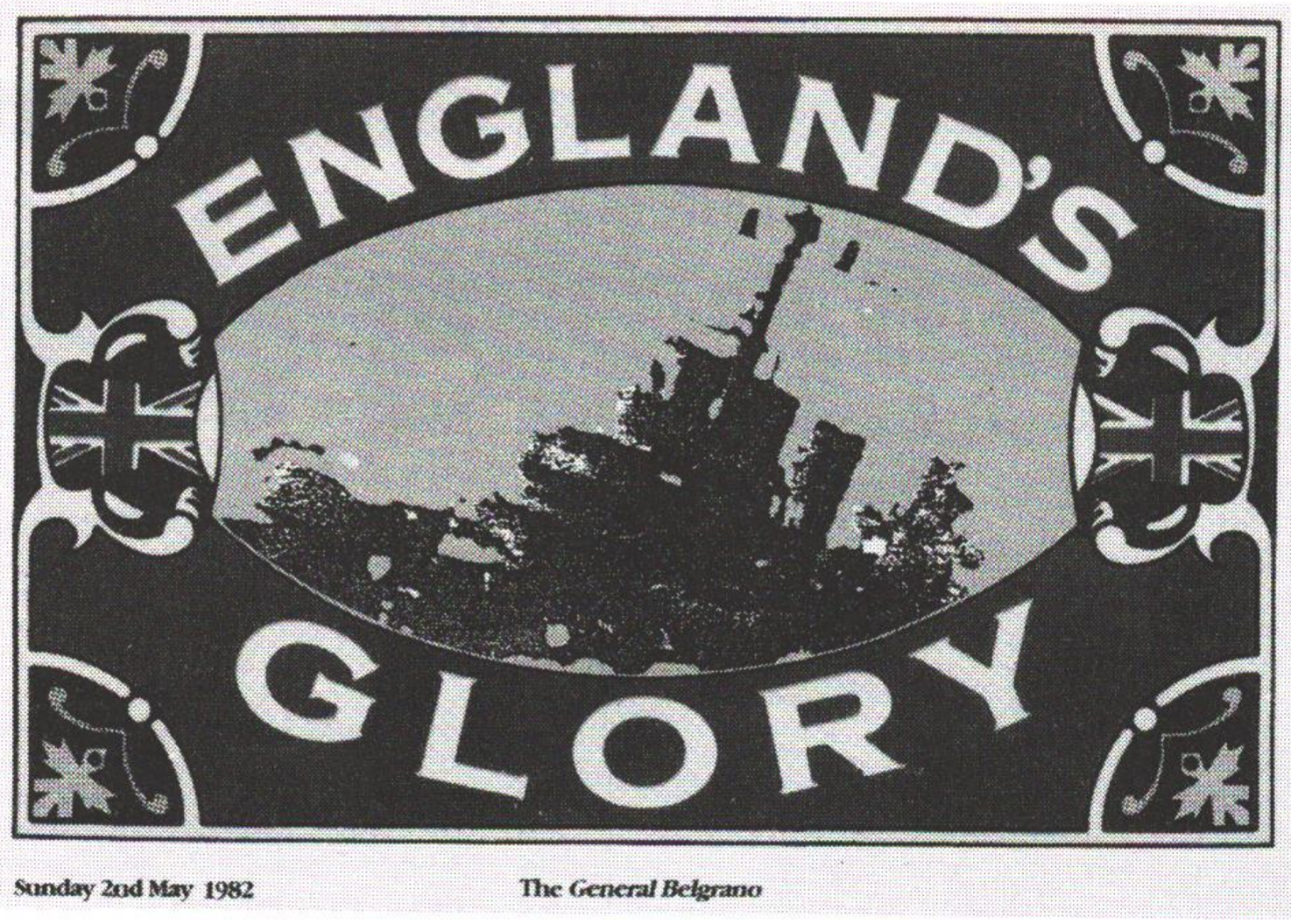

Exhibition on Britain at war

THE FALKLANDS FACTOR

Toby Banks looks at some South Atlantic souvenirs

This exhibition about the Falklands campaign of 1982 offers some perceptive reflections on a key moment in the shaping of Thatcher's Britain—and Thatcher's media. Its theme is the 'Falklands Factor', which we may understand as the use of war and nationalism to create a climate in which any critic of the government can be branded as the 'enemy within'. Anything which questioned the South Atlantic War, however meekly, was kept off our screens until last year's BBC film *Tumbledown* provoked 'a storm'. Predictably, this exhibition too has been denounced by Tory politicians and the popular press.

Secret war

Exhibition organiser Tim Wilcox had the idea after doing one about Vietnam. The contrast between public perceptions of the two wars is striking. Vietnam was the first 'TV war', with the bloodshed broadcast straight into living rooms. The Falklands were veiled in secrecy, a war fought by a few professional soldiers, covered by just 20 loyal self-censoring hacks and two photographers, while official censorship ensured that TV showed none of the fighting. As a result we experienced the conflict at a great distance, through sanitised press reports and government statements, much as the Victorians must have followed the Zulu or Boer wars. The exhibits reflect this indirect experience; most are taken from contemporary newspapers and magazines, the rest are heavily influenced by press treatment of the war.

The show reveals how judicious selection and cropping of photographs in editorial offices subtly changed their meaning. The press pictures of troops show grim determination and sense of purpose, or a nonchalance in the 'thumbs up from Tommy Atkins' style of old war films. Tom Smith's picture of islanders offering a blackened squaddie tea was obviously intended to conjure up the Blitz spirit. Cartoons unearthed old images of Empire and lions and Britannia. The private photos of serving soldiers are in stark contrast to this stuff: prosaic snapshots of bored people killing time, and horrific scenes of headless corpses.

No neutrals

The work on display was chosen less for artistic merit than for propaganda value. The best of it—such as David Evans' parody of an England's Glory matchbox depicting the *General Belgrano* sinking—is striking and witty. Too often, though, the irony is laboured and didactic. Rosalind Furniss' *It's a Full Life in the Army* is the worst culprit, coupling a picture of troops in Union Jack shorts pounding the decks with an advert for toy guns. Too many artists are trying to make a moralistic appeal to independent observers. But as the *Sun* bluntly put it during the war, 'There are no neutral referees above the sound of gunfire'. The paper even put its money where its mouth was, sponsoring a missile.

After the photo of HMS *Antelope* exploding and the bottles of *Sunday Mirror* Special Forces Ale (Newcastle Brown with a new label—the troops wouldn't touch it, demanding lager instead), comes a final set of collages by shell-shocked patients at the navy's psychiatric hospital. There is no need to search for hidden meanings here: drink, broken marriages, brick walls, lists of dead, and titles like *'Was it Worth it?'* tell their own story. It is hard not to regard the incongruous placing of these collages at the end of the exhibition—thus giving the soldiers themselves the last word—as an attempt by the organisers to pre-empt accusations of anti-British bias. If this was the aim, their lack of success in averting flak only underlines the continued strength of the Falklands Factor today.

The Falklands Factor: Representations of a Conflict
Manchester Polytechnic Righton Gallery until 17 March
Wolverhampton Art Gallery, 31 March-20 May
Catalogue £3.95 from galleries

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State of the Hollywood art

BLOCKBUSTING

Francis Walsh on the making of *Die Hard*

Looking at the way a first-class formula blockbuster like *Die Hard* is put together can tell us a lot about the attitudes the American film industry is busy cultivating in its audience. Luckily the film is about as easy to deconstruct as a disintegrating skyscraper after Bruce Willis has been let loose on it. We don't even have to identify the role models of the hero, as the villain expressly accuses him of pretending to be various US film and TV legends, such as Rambo. 'I prefer to see myself as Roy Rogers' retorts the lawman.

This nudge is typical of the economical but insistent way in which a host of hoary old themes are recycled around the core of an exciting action thriller. Each element, like this reference to the wholesome Western tradition, is as unashamedly brought to our attention as the shafts, gantries and workings which are normally hidden behind the glossy façades of your average skyscraper. It is down these mean ducts that New York cop John McClane (Bruce Willis) stalks the gang which has taken over the building just when he was going to a Christmas party there.

Director John McTiernan has skilfully thrown in the crowd-pulling themes of his times, and he doesn't care who knows it. The base of course remains the action. It is about unequivocal goodies and baddies (here, alien terrorists) so that the audience can cheer quite gruesome violence. It doesn't go nearly as far in this direction as Brian De Palma's *The Untouchables*, but it wields its moral simplicity for the same purpose.

From George P Cosmatos' *Rambo*, McTiernan takes much more than the tattoos, bulging muscles and white vest (although Willis does them proud). He takes the populism of the small guy standing up, not only to the enemy, but also to a deeply distrusted authority. In Rambo it was the politicians and the desk soldiers. Here the police chief, the FBI and the media are roundly lampooned as preening, ineffectual self-seekers. The rank and file cops are the real heroes; which brings us to the buddy-buddies. McClane, isolated in the building, makes radio contact with a fellow salt-of-the-earth, a police sergeant, and the bonding that goes on nearly makes the radio superfluous. It certainly eclipses anything that goes on between McClane and his wife, Holly (Bonnie Bedelia), held prisoner by the gang. As Dennis Hopper's *Colors* reminded us recently, where cops are involved even films about street gangs can become buddy films, reaffirming the culture of the male.

There is in fact thrown in at the beginning a most promising battle of the sexes—eighties-style of course, involving a career woman. Holly has joined an up-and-coming Japanese corporation on the West Coast, and wants a resentful John to see their ailing marriage differently. This issue, the subject of recent films such as the admirable *Broadcast News* from James Brooks or the appalling *Fatal Attraction* from Adrian Lyne, never develops. The conflict is spuriously resolved when Holly is swept off her feet by John's macho derring-do.

There is much else besides. There is considerable play, of the sort done so well in Paul Verhoeven's *Robocop*, upon the fascination and also the failure of machines, in particular the big hi-tech building itself. In the end our barefoot, barechested hero goes swinging through the urban jungle, driving all before him, a more sophisticated version of the self-sufficient Rambo or Mick Dundee from John Cornell's Crocodile films. There is a moralistic anti-corporate undercurrent, directed not only against those who see the building as more valuable than the people, but also against the mercenary strivers within the belly of the beast. One of the least successful characters is a coke-sniffing degenerate yuppie, who gets his come-uppance with as little pity as Gordon Gekko at the end of Oliver Stone's *Wall Street*.

Great care is taken to establish that the gang, originally set up as terrorists, are in fact thieves. This is not a disaster movie which dwells drearily on the victims, and the gang comes over as an attractive and stylish bunch. It was no doubt felt that they were far too attractive to be anti-American politicals, so their leader reveals that his knowledge of those they claim to be fighting for is culled from *Time* magazine.

As cops and robbers nonsense *Die Hard* is enjoyable in its own right. But there is much more to it than that. It is a melting-pot of the images and themes that sell seats in America today and, as such, a sure-fire formula for making millions. ●

That Petrol Emotion

IRISH OVERTONES

Réamann Ó'Gormáin talked to Pat Ford about petrol, emotion and the band from Derry

That Petrol Emotion guitarist Réamann Ó'Gormáin grew up in Derry. 'My father took me on the first civil rights march in 1968. We were on the bridge and got water-hosed by the police. I was eight years old. My father was also on the march on Bloody Sunday. We heard the news on the radio that there was shooting. Of course someone from every house had gone on the march, and nobody knew who had been killed, and of course everybody automatically thought the worst. There was pandemonium, so there was. It makes an impression on you, I don't care what anybody says, and I'll never turn my back on it.'

PHOTO: PETER ANDERSON

Plus ça change...

Returning to Derry in 1984 from three years at the New University of Ulster at Coleraine and one year in France, he brought back not only a French degree, but a more conscious political outlook. 'Nothing had changed' he says, and so when he got a new band together with ex-Undertone Seán Ó'Néill, they agreed from the outset: 'We made a conscious decision to talk about Northern Ireland. The Undertones hadn't done that. Towards the end that really frustrated Seán a lot because it was the time of the hunger-strikes.' The band's name, surely one of the best ever, came from a song title from Réamann's earlier band Bam Bam and the Calling. 'Me and Seán thought it was a classic name for a group. It seemed to sum up for us the anger and frustration of growing up in Northern Ireland.'

The two guitarists recruited Ciaran McLaughlin on drums, Damian Ó'Néill (like his brother Seán, an ex-Undertone) on bass and, deciding that four Derrymen was enough, enlisted Canadian vocalist Steve Mack in London where they had moved in 1985. Four years later they have established themselves as one of the best live bands in these islands, and consolidated their reputation with three solid LPs, *Manic Pop Thrill* (number one in the independent charts), *Babble* and *End of the Millennium Psychosis Blues* (both of which featured briefly in the mainstream charts). They use the Gaelic form of their names 'to show people that we have a culture of our own'.

I first saw them in 1985 at the George Robey in Finsbury Park, tearing through their own songs and the odd rock classic, including a notably fine cover of Captain Beefheart's *Zig Zag Wanderer* from the *Safe as Milk* album. 'We like to acknowledge our sources' says Ó'Gormáin 'and that is probably the greatest record ever made'. They play a raw, driving, guitar-led rock, although they can modulate easily into a moodier key or fill out the recorded sound with a brass section (to particularly good effect on some of the *Millenium* tracks). 'It's rock and roll, or pop. We've never had any qualms about saying it's pop. You want people to listen to your music not keep it for a certain segment of the population.'

'I've always loved the things that are accessible to people but with their own wee individuality stamped on them, instead of being bland like the charts now. I don't like people being quirky for its own sake, but I think we've almost too much reverence for the music that we love. But we're letting ourselves go now.' I was talking to Ó'Gormáin before he left for their second tour of the States where the *Millenium* album was top of their independent chart. In Britain they have just released a single, *Groove Check* ('our homage to hip hop, it's about fighting until we're equal'), and a video recorded live at a sold-out Town and Country Club (*Seen and Unseen*). Seán Ó'Néill has left the band for the moment ('sort of paternity leave, he's welcome back any time') and John Marchini from Coleraine is playing bass while Damian steps into his brother's shoes.

The years in what he describes as 'a fucking cynical business' seem to have left Ó'Gormáin's openness and good nature remarkably intact, and he is still irrepressible on two subjects—music and Northern Ireland. He remains an avid music fan, not just of the formative influences—'the Buzzcocks, Television, punk generally, Afrika Bambaata, Beefheart, the Beatles, the Stones' but also of music less directly in his own tradition. 'I really admire The Pogues, and I'm glad they did the Birmingham Six song. They write good songs and have a good time. Fair play to them. Van Morrison? He's a genius. REM's LP *Green* is just brilliant.'

U2 can be a tube

At the moment he is looking abroad for inspiration, to the Young Gods from Switzerland, and particularly to American guitar bands like The Pixies, Dinosaur Junior and Sonic Youth. 'Sonic

Youth have revolutionised the guitar, using six or seven different tunings. It's still basic rock and roll but it's a strange sound. It gives you a different way of expressing things and I've used it on several songs.' He has been exploring jazz too: 'I've really got into Charlie Mingus, buying records like I was 13 again, grabbing every Mingus record I come across.'

These wide-ranging accolades should not suggest that Ó'Gormáin suffers from the 'everybody is wonderful' outlook of the Great British Showbiz Club—especially where those at the top of the industry are concerned. He loved Joy Division, for instance, but feels otherwise about the Factory boss behind them and New Order, who now presents ITV's *Other Side of Midnight*: 'I think Tony Wilson is a tube, he gives me the creeps.' We were talking about the New Order video which includes references to Joy Division singer Ian Curtis who killed himself. 'He was just using the guy to make more money, just taking the piss. He should give the guy a bit of respect.' Where many critics claim U2 are the greatest band in the world and the embodiment of what's best about Ireland, Ó'Gormáin thinks they are 'shit', and, what is a bigger sin, 'pompous'. 'When I heard Bono say that his two heroes were Martin Luther King and John Hume I nearly laughed until I threw up. U2 don't care about Ireland, they're all from public schools in Dublin.'

On their sleeves

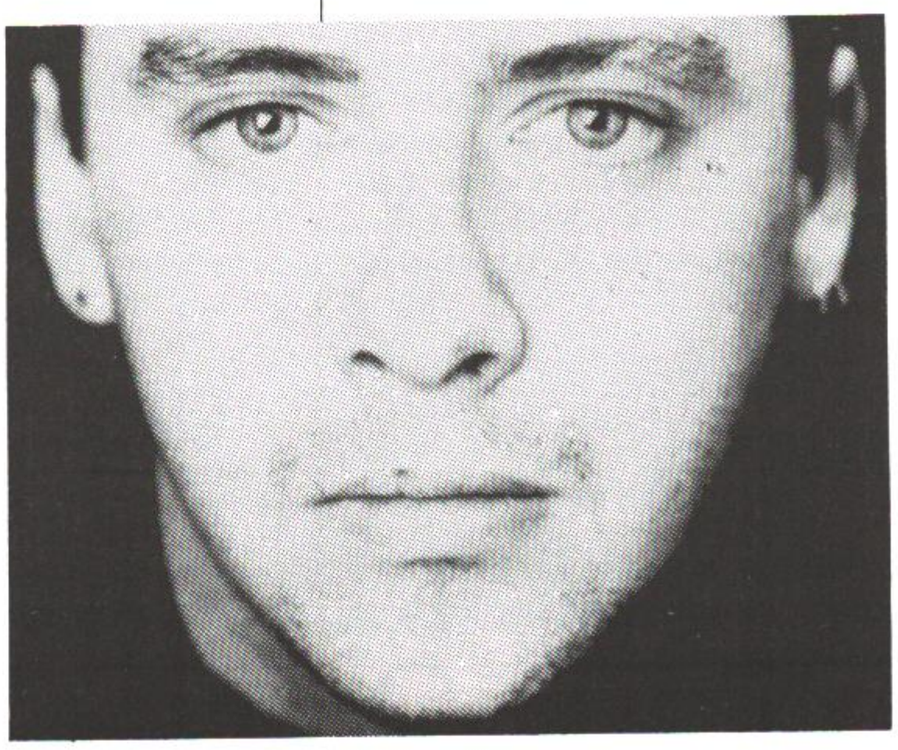
O'Gormáin cares about Ireland, and he has remained true to his promise not to turn his back on the troubles there. That is why That Petrol Emotion joined the list of the banned along with Sinn Fein, The Pogues and Christy Moore at the end of last year. 'After *Relax* the BBC won't say that they're banning a record. They just won't play it. We heard that someone at Virgin took *Cellophane* into Radio 1 and they just looked at the cover and said "We want nothing to do with this band".' That Petrol Emotion certainly wear their politics on their sleeves. The cover of *Millenium* has a lengthy statement (written by Ó'Gormáin and McLaughlin) about the emergence of the IRA from the civil rights protests of the late sixties. 'The whole thing was to explain the raison d'être of the IRA. Why they exist. Guys I knew at school are now dead or in jail. You have to explain that. I'm involved in an information war.'

An H-Block hit

The BBC are not the only ones who tell Ó'Gormáin to keep his mouth shut. The *Sun* listed the Petrols at number 6 in its list of the 10 looniest bands, and he got beaten up recently on Tottenham Court Road by two off-duty paratroopers. 'We'd been to see The Triffids and we'd had a few drinks so we were on good form. They heard the accents and decided it was anti-Paddy week again.' There is opposition from friends too. 'A lot of people, especially at home, say "Cut out the politics and you'll be successful. What are you talking about Northern Ireland for?". But who else is saying it? We've had feedback from people in Long Kesh telling us to go ahead and keep it up. We don't sledgehammer people, in fact sometimes I think we're too subtle. We should have called *Cellophane* the *Murder Machine*. We don't expect people who come to the concerts to automatically sympathise with the politics.'

Looking ahead to the new album, the second with Virgin, Ó'Gormáin is characteristically enthusiastic. 'I'm an employee of a multinational corporation. I know the contradictions, but when we signed with Polydor and then Virgin we told them what we wanted to write on the sleeves. We just get on with it. We've written about two thirds of the next album. It's really brilliant. We're starting out again, getting back to the raw energy of the early days, after the more crafted style of the last LP. I think we'll record the next one live. I've never been as happy as I am now.'

PHOTO: ANDY CATLIN



Ó'Gormáin: 'I'm involved in an information war'

Boys for rent

VILLAINS OR VICTIMS?

Don Milligan tackles the myths and hypocrisy that surround the boys who go on the game

Rent boys threaten many reputations with a trail through the mud. Synonymous with 'blackmailer', 'thief', 'liar' and 'cheat', the rent boy lurks in the tabloid imagination awaiting his chance to bring down some much-loved public figure. Since celebrities like Elton John and René from *'Allo 'Allo* got caught up in rent boy scandals, scores of other pop stars, family entertainers and politicians must live in fear that some lying ungrateful youth will claim to have charged them for sexual services. Worse still is the prospect that the boys might tell the truth.

Barnardo boys

The image of rent boy as malign and untrustworthy parasite vies with that of rent boy as innocence corrupted. In the view from the moralists' pulpit, the waif, a barefoot candidate for Dr Barnardo, falls into evil company and is lured into prostituting himself to fish-eyed old men. His corruption is caused by rich 'queers'—if it wasn't for them he would be usefully employed on a Youth Training Scheme! Such myths weave in and out of reality; truthful enough to seem plausible, they are embellished by a deep-rooted horror of 'bum-boys'.

The practice of young men renting out their bodies for sexual purposes by the minute or the hour is considered by many to be more revolting than heterosexual prostitution. The authorities endorse this view. After all, women selling themselves to men is 'natural', the 'oldest profession', etc. But boys selling themselves to men, that's vice.

Various official reports nave emphasised the need to give teenage boys special protection, arguing that young men at 16 and even at 18 are 'particularly vulnerable' to offers of gifts, money and hospitality from older men in return for indulging in homosexual behaviour. Girls can consent to sex with men at 16, boys have to wait until they are 21. Whether they are on the game or just having free sex gay teenagers are criminals; for their older partners they are 'jail-bait' whether or not they charge money for their favours. In the eyes of the law and the law-makers, no youth in his right mind could possibly consent to committing 'gross indecency' with a man; so any who do so must have been corrupted by greed and dishonesty.

Rent boys are indeed lying cheats. They pretend to like their prospective clients. Yet they give as little sex for as much money as they can negotiate. They will attempt to drive an hour down to 50 minutes, and to make the punter ejaculate in five. This tension undermines the illusion of affection and eroticism that the customer has paid for. It lies at the heart of the whore/punter relationship, making all prostitutes appear peculiarly dishonest and ungrateful. Of course, this problem is not restricted to male prostitution; but the circumstances in which men often make casual sexual contact with each other introduces a note of confusion and ambiguity that is generally absent from heterosexual life.

Fine line

Because homosexual men frequently pick up complete strangers in parks, streets and public toilets, the dividing line between prostitution and free sex can become blurred. There are many opportunities for confusion, wounded pride and allegations that the older man is cheating the younger by refusing to pay. The straight boy down on his luck can find himself embroiled in gay sex when all he wanted was a drumstick and chips and a bed for the night. More commonly, a destitute straight lad will use offers of sex, threats of police involvement and violence to get cash out of a gay man alone in his flat.

The ambiguity between prostitution and free gay sex is not simply a product of circumstantial confusion; it is a product of the

legal status of homosexual men. The dark and casual circumstances in which gay men cruise each other are themselves a product of legal repression. When considering the behaviour of homosexual men looking for partners the state makes no distinction between prostitution and free relationships. The exchange of money is rarely at issue. Any attempt by gays of any age to meet each other in public places is in law a species of prostitution, punishable by fines and imprisonment.

The most vulnerable rent boys, working in central London streets, pubs and clubs, can make a living out of £10, £15 or £20 sessions. However, at two or three in the morning, when all the clubs are closing, the homeless boy often has his price driven down or wiped out altogether in return for a bed for the night. It is an insecure, often boring and at times dangerous occupation that can pay as little as £100 per week.

The more prosperous and better organised can get clients by registering with escort agencies. In return for 15 per cent of the prostitute's fee, the agent will put clients in touch; £40-50 for 30 or 60 minute sessions are common, with home or hotel visits at a premium. The market for home visits by masseurs is even more lucrative. These forms of prostitution afford the best prospects of a decent income for the rent boy, and maximum protection for him and his client. Many youths involved in them doubtless plan to quit after a couple of years, having accumulated enough to finance some cherished scheme. But, for all but the few, this remains an unfulfilled aspiration.

Friends and rivals

The life of the houseboy, or the gay gigolo that wines and dines and crews one's yacht, has its advantages. But the restricted circumstances and vulnerability of even very rich gay men renders this type of rent boy very rare. So the escort and the masseur remain the principal forms of stable and organised prostitution among men. Pimping is generally restricted to agency fees and does not involve intimidation. However, where the gay scene is small and rent boys cannot merge into a wider homosexual milieu, physical threats and violence are used to control the boys in the market and to take a slice of their fees.

Violence from pimps, poncing by boyfriends or repression by the police are not the main problems for the rent boy working from bars or trading on the street. The more mundane problems are boredom and loneliness. The boys crowd around the space invaders building up a hearty togetherness. The middle-aged men crowd the bar, talking loudly about theatre and business, nonchalantly pulling £50 notes from thick wallets. Like people at an auction they indicate, with nods and glances, which boy the barman is to fetch a drink for. The two camps eye each other. Despite the desire for friendship between the boys they are thrown into competition with each other. To survive they must do each other down. The clients offer no respite from the lies and deceit and the competition; indeed they are its cause.

The rentboy is compelled to counterfeit sexual interest and affection day in and day out. For the most part his companions are also his commercial rivals; he lives without mates. He has forfeited the separation that most of us strive to maintain between our private life and the rigours of competition for money and status. He must develop a precocious cynicism, and present it as the wisdom of one who has seen it all.

Boys do disappear without trace, clients are blackmailed and murdered. But these are startling and shocking exceptions. As a rule male prostitution is not played as the lurid or sordid melodrama portrayed in the Sunday papers. In many ways it is just another commercial outlet in the you-gets-what-you-pays-for society. The clients can browse through the photo catalogues of escort agencies. The tired businessman can ring the masseur. The boys working the bars can team up for a coach trip to Alton Towers, and their clients can be kind and helpful. The lads can treat a respected elderly client with great charm. Reality is much more complicated than popular indignation would ever allow. There are no whores with 'hearts of gold', but there are a lot of rent boys trying to make out.

Male prostitution is one of the more dismal consequences of the struggle for survival. The repression meted out by the state against homosexual men compounds problems which are in turn exacerbated by the ghoulish interest of the popular press. The motive for the sale of sexual services can range from destitution to the battle for a more leisured existence. Many young men become prostitutes simply because they are poor or unskilled; others do so to save up a lump-sum or to avoid the horrors of working for wages. For most, it proves to be a mistake. While failing to produce any appreciable capital, prostitution frustrates the creation of a protective network of friends and acquaintances. By opting to live on his wits the rent boy, like the petty crook, does indeed become both victim and rogue.

Eros, Piccadilly Circus: a place of business

PHOTO: PANDORA ANDERSON

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.

WE NEED NUCLEAR FUSION

After reading John Gibson's well-balanced article ('Nuclear power—no thanks?', *Living Marxism*, February) I found the conclusion surprising. The question is not will nuclear power be safe under socialism, but rather how will we make it safe.

In a society that produces for short-term profit and not safety, 'accidents' and 'disasters' are inevitable. Just as tragedies such as King's Cross and Clapham Junction were not 'natural' disasters but were caused by cost-cutting, so nuclear accidents are of similar origin. From its inception nuclear power was implemented as cheaply as possible. The reason the technology required to make nuclear power safe has not been developed is that it is simply not profitable to do so.

There are no limits to human invention or technological development, other than those imposed by the society we live in. Only by removing these limits can the safe utilisation of nuclear power become a reality. Indeed since the traditional sources of energy, fossil fuels, are of finite supply, it is likely that under socialism society will be forced to solve the problems associated with nuclear power.

The development of nuclear fusion may be one way. Nuclear fusion is generally recognised as not only safer than fission, but capable of generating energy on a par with the sun (and is hence many times more productive than fission). Nuclear fusion works on the principle of fusing two 'light' elements to give helium (a gas found naturally in the air) and energy. Fusion has many advantages over fission. The elements required to start the fusion process are found in water, and are therefore in 'limitless' supply; unlike fission, fusion produces little radioactive waste; the fusion process consumes itself during reaction, and hence it is easier to control the extent of reaction.

Nuclear fusion, however, remains a scientific dream. The ideas and theory exist, the technology to implement it does not. The main problem is in generating sufficient temperatures to catalyse the reaction. Capitalism has found one way of producing fusion—though typically destructive—in the H-bomb. A nuclear fission reaction is used to generate sufficient heat to start the fusion reaction. The H-bomb has the ability to cause destruction on a scale far beyond that of Nagasaki or Hiroshima. The progress required to harness nuclear fusion safely is massive.

The solution to the problem of nuclear power and safety is technological. The solution to the problem of inadequate technology is social. That's where we come in.

Karen Redding
London

THE ENVIRONMENT CAN'T WAIT

Frank Richards seems to imply that the problems of the environment can only be solved by changing the total character of society ('Can capitalism go Green?', *Living Marxism*, February). I can see sense in much of what he writes. The hypocrisy of industrial multinationals 'going Green' in their adverts whilst producing added pollution in their factories has always infuriated me.

But what are we to conclude from this line of argument? That saving the planet must wait until after socialism? Surely this qualifies Frank Richards for the (presumably perjorative) name of 'Utopian', which he attaches to environmentalists?

I think it is irresponsible and complacent to imagine that there is a moment to lose in taking steps to secure the environment. After all, if we allow things to continue, we will be facing the imminent destruction of natural life—and then what will the 'class issues' which so concern Frank Richards matter? The greenhouse effect, the destruction of the rain forests, the multiplying chances of a nuclear apocalypse, and the varied other strands of the environmental crisis are of primary importance because they are, without being melodramatic, matters of life and death for each of us and for the next generation.

However low an opinion Frank Richards might have of those he puts together as 'the Green movement', there are many people working very hard to stop the rot, which must be more constructive than issuing armchair dismissals, from however logical and well-argued a standpoint.

Julie Banks
Surrey

'POST-FORDIST' PESSIMISM

Dan Rubinstein (letters, January) argues that, as 'the revolutionary class' in the Russian Revolution was less than seven per cent of the working population, there is no reason why 'Fordism' too should not have been 'the dominant mode of production' by involving a similar percentage of American workers. But in the Russian case what is referred to is the whole of the working class within the mode of production of capitalism. In the case of Fordism it is seven per cent *of the working class*. If the comparison highlights anything it is the pessimism of 'New Times'; it is hard to imagine Lenin deciding to champion 'social citizenship' because seven per cent of his 'less than seven per cent' were declining relative to the rest.

Rubinstein believes we should be more concerned at the decline of Fordism because the organised labour movement has declined with it. It does not seem to occur to him that one reason for this is the way in which the labour movement has seen its job as primarily to organise precisely that section of the working class, rather than to provide a distinct political outlook for the working class as a whole, denying primacy to any one section.

To demonstrate the 'insurmountable' problems that changes in the labour process have caused for the left, Rubinstein points out that 'bank clerks unlike miners do not take their life in their hands every time they go to work'. Strange, but I could have sworn the miners came out on strike to insist they be allowed to *keep* those jobs in which they risk their lives. It will take greater ingenuity than this to find a strike where the demands of the workers do not relate to the needs of the working class as a whole. When the left bases its political analysis on such differences in preference to the position we hold in common is it really so hard to see why Marxists might have 'an axe to grind'?

Paul Johnson
Bristol

LESBIANS LEFT OUT

In his desire to defend the gay scene against attacks from right and left ('Out for sex and laughs', *Living Marxism*, February), Don Milligan took a dismissive attitude to lesbians. To write about lesbians as 'a threatening presence' which 'sullies' the scene and risks 'thwarting' men's fun is bad enough. To caricature lesbians as 'poor relations', and compare their concern with motherhood or with challenging oppression unfavourably with the 'glitz' of the gay scene is worse.

The term 'lesbian and gay' before groups' names is not a matter of semantics. I see it as giving deliberate emphasis to lesbianism, ending the days when lesbians were pushed into the background by left groups and gay men alike. Some people still suffer from the hangover of the past. Milligan says that the left's homophobic attitude to gay men is to blame for the anti-political atmosphere on their scene. He may well be right about that. But his own attitude can only reassure lesbians that the left has nothing to say to them either.

Su Tracer
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SEEN AND UNSEEN – CAT NO VVD 463

GROOVE CHECK E.P. (VSA 1159) is also on album "End of the Millennium Psychosis Blues"

THE LIVING MARXISM WEEKEND

Setting the agenda for the 1990s

Saturday 18/Sunday 19 March
Caxton House
St John's Way
London N19
(Archway tube)

*The **Living Marxism Weekend** will be two days of discussion on the relevance of Marxism in analysing new issues and problems, from the emergence of glasnost in the East to the Greening of politics in the West.*

*The weekend will be an opportunity to discuss the arguments with the authors. All readers of **Living Marxism,** and anybody looking for a fresh perspective on the world we live in, are welcome. The weekend's discussions will be organised around introductions by contributors to **Living Marxism.***

OPENING SESSION
Red, Green and Pink: the changing face of British politics—Frank Richards

WORKSHOPS
Marxism and the environment—John Gibson
Why the state is one big official secret—Mike Freeman
Death-squad economics in the third world—Stefanie Boston
The 'post-Fordism' debate—Tony Kennedy
Where are the German Greens going?—Christina Braun
Updating glasnost—Rob Knight
A reply to communism's modern critics—Helen Simons
The missing link in the Thatcherism debate—Joan Phillips
Who can change society?—Anne Burton

FINAL SESSION
Breathing life back into Marxism—Mick Hume

Registration starts at 10am on Saturday 18 March, sessions start at 11am on both days.

Tickets cost £10 waged/£7.50 unwaged. Creche facilities and accommodation can be arranged on request.

To guarantee your seat, get your ticket in advance. Ring Anne Burton on (01) 729 0414, or make cheques payable to RCP Association and send to Living Marxism Weekend, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX.

LIVING MARXISM

PREPARING FOR POWER

Each year, the Preparing for Power summer school organised by the Revolutionary Communist Party brings together people from around Britain and abroad to discuss the Marxist view of current events. In 1988, well over 1000 turned up to join in; this year we expect our biggest and best conference yet.

Preparing for Power is organised around 16 week-long courses, covering the big issues from the environment and *glasnost* to the Irish War and the French Revolution. This year's courses will be:

- ★ An introduction to Marxism
- ★ Social movements and class politics
- ★ Marxism and the environment
- ★ Imperialism in the nineties
- ★ New Left thinking—old ideas
- ★ The French Revolution
- ★ The making of Marx's *Capital*
- ★ The Irish War—introduction and advanced course
- ★ Women's liberation
- ★ Race and racism
- ★ Marxism and culture
- ★ Issues in contemporary capitalism
- ★ Gorbachev and *glasnost*
- ★ Problems of the British revolution
- ★ The German question

On top of this, there are more than 100 workshops covering political and social issues around the world. Whether you're interested in anti-racism, Armenian nationalism or Acid House, you'll find plenty of interest at Preparing for Power. And there's top class entertainment, bars, sauna and sporting facilities to keep you busy in between times.

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Preparing for Power will be the major Marxist event of 1989. **The sooner you book your tickets, the less you have to pay.** Our special discounts mean that, until 1 April, a ticket for the whole week will cost you just £20 waged/£14 unwaged.

Tickets, and brochures with full details of the week, are available from Preparing for Power, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX. Make cheques payable to RCP Association. Or ring us on (01) 729 0414.

Friday 21-Friday 28 July 1989 University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1