

LIVING MARXISM

July 1989

No9

£1.50

**Manchester United:
the decline of religion**

**Linda Bellos:
'socialist councils
must make cuts'**

**Armstrong's Moonwalk:
one great leap
for whom?**

**Plus much more
Marxism for your
money**

**The New Woman-an
old wives' tale?**

**Survey:
what teenage
girls want today**

**Adulterating:
sins of the food firms**

**Irish film festival:
As not seen on TV**

**in defence of
REVOLUTION**

why the french had one and why the chinese need one



THE FACE
SWEET SUBVERSION



contents



themes

In defence of revolution

The crisis in China, the turmoil in the Eastern bloc, the bicentenary of the storming of the Bastille; for right-wing pundits, these all provide opportunities to denounce the idea of revolution. For us, these events provide powerful arguments in favour of new revolutions, East and West.

4 Editorial: China: an advert for revolution.

6 Vive la revolution! Frank Richards defends the spirit of 1789 in France against an army of modern critics.

9 Chinese whispers. Pat Roberts disposes of some Western myths about the nature of the regime and system in China.

Women's trouble

18 The New Woman—an old wives' tale? If these are post-feminist times, asks Anne Burton, then why are millions of women still treated as domestic skivvies and second class citizens?

23 A woman's work: never done. Anne Burton on the role of housework in trapping women at the wrong end of society.

24 Survey: desires within young women. We asked teenagers what they want—and what they expect to get—from Thatcher's Britain.

28 Guess who's left holding the baby? Fiona Foster on childcare, nurseries and demographic time-bombs.

30 Tories to back Spuc. The anti-abortionists are on the march again—this time, says Kirsten Cale, with friends in very high places.

31 Equal Pay Act on trial. Andrew Calcutt spoke to two women—one winner, one loser—who have tried to win equal pay through the legal process.

32 Women of the world. Whether they live in a dynamic capitalist power like Japan, a backward capitalist state like Iran, or a colonial set-up like Northern Ireland, women get the worst of it. Daniel Nassim, Mary McCaughey and Mandana Hashemi report.

living

38 As not seen on TV. John Fitzpatrick previews a controversial show which will bring together censored and banned films about Ireland.

39 Married to the Mob. Pat Ford on Jonathan Demme's past horror stories and his new film.

40 'Professional scousers are the worst writers.' Liverpoolian TV writer Frank Cottrell-Boyce told Andrew Calcutt about writing for *Brookside*—and for Merseyside.

41 Lenin—the video. Toby Banks watched it with the sound switched off.

10 A load of Rottweilers. Graham Bishop on the 'devil dog' panic.

11 Maid in Britain. Don Milligan on the strange case of the theft of the Duchess' phone-calls.

12 Official: being Irish is a crime. Stoke police arrested three brothers, evicted their neighbours and vandalised their homes—all because, says Keith Tompson, they had Irish accents.

13 Preparing for Power. Conference organiser Lesley Banham introduces this month's major political event.

14 Thou shalt commit adultery. While the Tories lecture us about personal food hygiene, Helen Simons investigates the sins of the food firms.

16 Then and now: July 1969— Armstrong's Moonwalk. Gemma Forest and Manjit Singh on one giant leap for US imperialism.

35 Linda Bellos—'loony' no longer? The *Sun's* favourite target tells Kenan Malik why socialist councils now have to make spending cuts and implement the poll tax.

46 Letters: Eagleton: adumbrative Marxism or academic twaddle?; For and against Gorby; Smash the USSR?; Homosexual hierarchies.

42 Ghosts in the machine. Mark Thomas on computer hackers and 'electronic terrorism'.

42 McCarthy: Jane Wilde talked to the 'indie' band that makes CDs for the thinking pop fan.

43 Motherhood is powerful. Sara Hardy takes a worried look at the themes of recent feminist novels.

44 Books: Manchester United—the decline of religion; Who framed Colin Wallace—and who cares?; The glasnost school of Soviet short stories.

LIVING MARXISM

Monthly review of the Revolutionary Communist Party ● Telephone: (01) 375 1702
Editor: **Mick Hume** ● Editorial Assistant: **Kirsten Cale** ● International Editor:
Daniel Nassim ● Living section: **John Fitzpatrick** ● Design: **Dave Lamb** ● Production: **Don Bannister, Tony Costello, Joanna Doyle, Sara Hardy, Simon Norfolk, Sean Thomas, Joe Watson** ● Managing Editor: **Phil Murphy** ● Marketing Manager: **Suke Karey** ● Advertising manager: **Fiona Pitt**

Subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £15 ● Europe (airmail) £20 ● Outside Europe (airmail) £27.50 ● Overseas (surface mail) £16 ● (Institutions add £7.50)
Make cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd and send to Junius Publications Ltd, BCM JPLtd, London WC1N 3XX; Fax (01) 377 0346 ● Distributed by Comag Magazine Marketing, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7QE. Phone: West Drayton (0895) 444055; Fax: (0895) 445255; Telex: 8813787 ● Typeset by Junius Publications (TU) ● copyright Revolutionary Communist Party ● Printed by Russell Press (TU), Nottingham ● ISSN 0955-2448 July 1989
Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome, but can only be returned if an SAE is enclosed

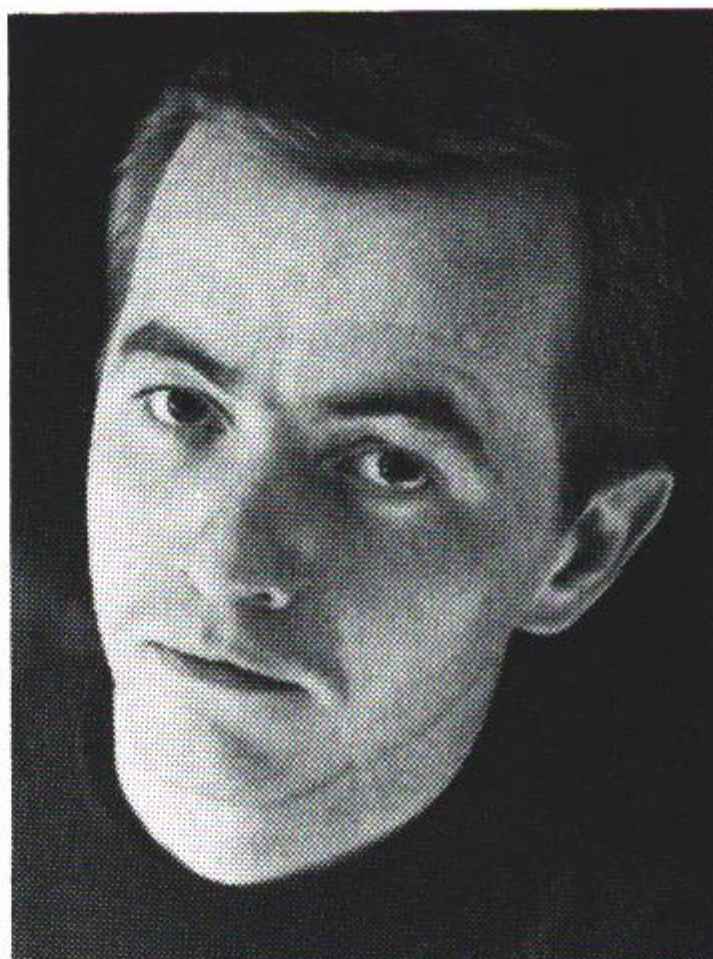
The French Revolution? 'A tragedy'. The Russian Revolution? 'A crime'. The British Revolution? 'An impossibility'. Today there exists an anti-revolution industry, constantly churning out these and all the other clichés of modern conservatism. But its books and articles amount to nothing more than a paper mountain. The events in China are real history in the making.

And the China crisis demonstrates, before the satellite TV of the world, the need for revolution, East and West.

What have the systems that rule the Earth today to offer us? The impoverished peasants driving buffalo through the ancient paddy fields of the Chinese countryside hardly prove that progress is possible under the Stalinist system of bureaucratic centralised control. That's right, say Western capitalists, and the market economy is the efficient alternative; and the rulers of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic now agree.

● But the Chinese regime has been encouraging Western investment and introducing market relations for more than a decade. The result is a Victorian version of capitalism, with all the Dickensian trimmings: sweated child labour, unemployment on a scale that makes Sunderland look like it has a labour shortage, thousand upon thousand of homeless families sleeping rough on city streets, vast fortunes accumulated by a handful of exploiters, widespread graft and abuses.

The Chinese masses who occupied Tiananmen Square were not queuing up to patronise the new Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise there. They were protesting against the chaos and corruption that the capitalist market has brought in its wake. The people of the Soviet Union will enjoy the same benefits if Mikhail



MICK HUME: EDITOR

CHINA: AN ADVERT FOR REVOLUTION

Gorbachev's market-oriented perestroika is implemented.

Whatever it *calls* itself—communist, capitalist, you-name-itist—every existing economic system operates for the benefit of a few at the expense of the many. Neither Stalinism nor capitalism can provide what we need. Each needs replacing with a system run by and accountable to the people themselves. That is easy enough to see and to say; but China also demonstrates that there is no peaceful road to progressive change in any modern society.

East and West, the ruling elites will use terror to protect their privileged status. The Chinese regime's attempt to drown the opposition in blood in Tiananmen Square was a dramatic example of this iron law in operation. But such repression is not peculiar to Stalinists.

The 'freedom-loving' governments of the capitalist

world have always abided by their own version of Mao's creed that 'democracy comes out of the barrel of a gun'. As Edward Heath noted, the British government would not have waited so long before clearing protesters out of Trafalgar Square. And Heath, the Tory prime minister who presided over the massacre by British paratroopers on Bloody Sunday in Derry, knows what he is talking about.

● Western governments have no place posing as outraged bystanders of the terrible events in Beijing. The Deng regime has been their close ally; they armed it, and they are just as capable of taking similar steps if their power is threatened.

Of course, the West felt obliged to make carefully worded diplomatic criticisms of the killings in China, to impose token sanctions, to protect the odd dissident and

to cancel state visits (the Chinese must be most upset that Prince Philip won't be coming over to call them 'slitty eyes' again in the near future). But PR gestures aside, it has been clear all along that the capitalist powers share the Chinese authorities' concern to stabilise the status quo.

The British and American governments are happy to score propaganda points at home by claiming that current international developments are 'rolling back communism'. They will boast about getting a few concessions out of Gorbachev at a summit, or doing a trade deal with Deng. But the last thing they want is to have the Stalinist regimes literally rolled back by mass uprisings.

For Thatcher and Bush, the stability of the international order depends upon concentrating political influence in the hands of a few reliable reactionaries.

Gorbachev and Deng fit the bill; militant students and workers certainly do not. So Western criticisms of the massacre were couched much more in sorrow than in anger.

Veteran American foreign policy expert Henry Kissinger spoke for his class when warning that Washington should not get involved in what was an 'internal' Chinese affair—in other words, it should give

capitalist economies are propped up by mass poverty and fierce state repression.

Thus the authorities in Hongkong (a British Crown colony governed by decree, and the place where the baton round was first used against people) expressed sympathy with the Chinese protesters, while sending out their own riot police to beat up demonstrators. Even the Guomindang government in Taiwan, the historical

overcoming them. The people first gathered in Tiananmen Square simply to ask for a dialogue with the government. Anybody advocating more forceful tactics in those heady early days would probably have been branded an agent provocateur. Yet within weeks, when the army moved against them, those same peaceful protesters were engaged in acts of resistance that they would never

however big, is never enough. So long as our enemies hold power and can wield it against us, we can make all of the noise that we want, to no effect.

To be successful, a movement for change must be certain of its aims and single-minded in its determination to unseat the oppressors. For all of its bravery, the Chinese movement was neither. Who could say exactly what the protesters were demanding? The closest they came to seeking power was to issue vague calls for more democracy, and to name individual bureaucrats they wanted sacked. They never questioned directly the authority of the state, until that authority had been reimposed by gunfire. The disparate, leaderless movement was always in danger of being shattered once the hammer struck.

'The Western powers' biggest concern was not the loss of Chinese lives, but the loss of control by the powers that be'

the Beijing bureaucracy a free hand to regain control. Kissinger has never had any qualms about interfering in the internal affairs of Asian countries when it involves putting down the unruly masses.

As US secretary of state under president Nixon, Kissinger interfered in the internal affairs of Vietnam and Cambodia with B-52 bombers. If the highest estimates of the Tiananmen Square death toll were correct, the Chinese regime would have to commit such a massacre every day for five years to get anywhere near the body-count notched up by the Nixon/Kissinger intervention in Asian politics.

The Western powers' biggest concern was not the loss of Chinese lives, but the loss of control by the powers that be. They have been terrified that the angry demand for democracy and decent living standards in China could spread to neighbouring states—the much-vaunted 'newly industrialising countries' like South Korea, where dynamic

enemies of the Stalinists in Beijing, sent riot gear to help Deng deal with the protests. Gorbachev was on the same wavelength, warning during his Chinese visit that more law and order was required.

Western governments, and their new allies and imitators in the East, all appreciate the need to do whatever is necessary to protect the status quo. They lecture us on the need to use peaceful persuasion, parliamentary lobbying, constitutional tinkering and other tame political methods in pursuit of our aims. But these are no match for their ruthless approach.

They tell us that revolutionary violence is the source of all conflict in the world. But the counter-revolutionary forces of authority have proved themselves to be the true force for violence and suffering. Their opponents must either respond in kind, or endure the fate of the Tiananmen Square crowds.

If China demonstrates the obstacles to change, it also shows the potential for

previously have considered.

People who had come to stand and to sing found themselves attacking troops and armoured cars, often with their bare hands. It was an inspiring display of popular heroics, confirming that, in the circumstances of a struggle for freedom, many who have never thought or acted as militants will rise to the occasion.

A few short months ago many would have said that a popular uprising was as unlikely in China as in Britain. The people seemed cowed and demoralised. Yet, almost without warning, the point was reached where they said 'Enough' and made their stand. This is how such rebellions often start; the revolution does indeed come like a thief in the night. Those who preach doom and gloom about the prospects for a mass political movement emerging in Britain would do well to study the lessons of the Chinese explosion.

Yet events in China have also confirmed, perhaps most clearly of all, that a protest,

●
Revolution is necessary, and it is possible. But it won't just happen. We can rely upon the existing systems to break down and create situations where change is on the agenda. But we need to know what we are after to take advantage of such crises. And we must be ready to fight for it, pitting the organised strength of the masses against the terror of the handful of tyrants.

Two hundred years ago this month, Parisians stormed the Bastille; not just as a protest, but to get the guns stored there. That was a realistic assessment of how power politics work and what revolutions entail. Two centuries on, the stakes are much higher. The alternatives today are stark: we can leave the future in the ever-bloodier hands of the Dengs and the Kissingers, or we can take our destiny into our hands and strike out for real freedom.

With a combination of the spirit of the Bastille and the spirit of the masses in Tiananmen Square, people can change the world. And they cannot do it too soon.

The spirit of 1789

Vive la revolution!

On its bicentenary, Frank Richards defends the legacy of the French Revolution against an army of contemporary critics

Two hundred years since it began, the French Revolution is being condemned more often than celebrated. Hundreds of books and articles have been published in recent months with the explicit purpose of discrediting the legacy of 1789. The dominant strand of the contemporary literature depicts the French upheaval as a terrible tragedy which confirms the futility of the project of revolution.

For conservative writers, the bicentenary celebrations provide the pretext for criminalising the idea of making fundamental change from below. Their main target is revolutionary violence, and they have somehow linked almost every modern tragedy to the French Revolution. Some even portray the civil war which followed the revolution as equivalent to the Nazi Holocaust (see R Secher, *La Genocide Franco-Française: La Vendée-Vengée*, 1986).

These modern writers conclude that the consequences of the revolution were far worse than the situation under the repressive monarchy which preceded it. The examples of France and Russia are said to show that a destructive force like Stalinism is the inevitable logic of revolution. Indeed it appears that most of the literature on France is really concerned with discrediting the idea of revolution everywhere, by treating the post-1789 era in France as an early variant of Stalinist Russia.

According to Bernard Levin's analysis of the French revolutionary leaders, Robespierre demonstrates a definite 'parallel with Stalin' and 'Marat's language is instantly recognisable in Vyshinsky's' (*Sunday Times*, 21 May). Tired old British hacks like Levin are not alone in making such illegitimate comparisons. The most fashionable historian of the French Revolution, François Furet, writes in a similar vein:

'With the men of 1793, the Leninist historian finds himself in familiar surroundings, since the Soviet experience also illustrated the necessity of dictatorship and terror.' (*Marx and the French Revolution*, 1988, p96)

In all the condemnations of the French Revolution the real intent of the authors quickly comes to the surface; their vitriolic polemics are primarily aimed against Marx, Lenin and working class struggle.

In today's reactionary intellectual climate, it is not necessary for right-wing authors to argue with any degree of logic. They need only use emotive words that provoke respectable fears. Thus Douglas Johnson, professor of French history at University College, London, can leap centuries and continents in one bound by using the magic word—'terrorism':

'But the word revolution today conjures up visions of the Soviet gulag or Iranian intolerance. It could be said that only the terrorist will now take moments of the French Revolution as a point of reference. No wonder that lots of its history is depicted as murderous and inspirational.' (*Times*, 28 December 1988).

So Khomeini, Gadaffi and Stalin, the West's favourite caricatures of evil, apparently took inspiration from the infamous French revolutionaries whose hands permanently dripped with blood.

To deal with these distorted arguments, we need first to re-establish what happened in 1789, and what it represented.

It is worth recalling that at the time, most thinking people in Europe were enthusiastic about the French Revolution. The revolution inspired successive generations of progressive thinkers, and created a mood captured by William Wordsworth:

'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven!' (*The Prelude*, 1805, Book X, 693-4)

The French Revolution involved the emerging bourgeoisie struggling against, and eventually overthrowing, the old order. It began in 1789 as a relatively moderate affair. The bourgeoisie wanted the king to lose his absolute powers, but not necessarily his throne. By 1791 France was formally a constitutional monarchy. But the French

aristocracy resisted the changes. This led to further clashes which made it impossible for the moderate bourgeoisie to reach a compromise settlement with the old order. When the king tried to flee to raise foreign support for the counter-revolution, most supporters of the revolution became republicans. After 1791, the revolution became increasingly radical. The institutions of the old order were gradually destroyed in the upheaval that followed.

Why has this revolution, rather than any other bourgeois revolt against an ancien regime, been singled out for such bitter criticism today? The English civil war of the seventeenth century, the American war of independence which began in 1776, and the European revolts of 1848, can all be categorised as bourgeois revolutions. Yet none has received the treatment meted out to the French. The French Revolution stands out because it was far more radical than any other struggle waged by the bourgeoisie. Alone among bourgeois revolts, the French Revolution was backed up by a mass social force.

Bourgeois revolts are characteristically limited in size and scope. Their object is to establish a political framework for the rule of capitalism, by making the minimum change necessary. In most situations the emerging bourgeoisie proved ready to make an alliance with the aristocracy to pre-empt any mass revolt. The classical illustration of this process is England, where no sooner did bourgeois rule prevail than an accommodation was reached with the aristocracy, and Charles II replaced his executed father on the throne.

In the early stage of its revolution, the French bourgeoisie sought to develop a working relationship with the aristocracy. But such an alliance could not be sustained after 1791. The aristocracy refused to make further concessions to the upstart bourgeoisie. Moreover, the aristos were able to mobilise support from allies throughout Europe. Thus the French bourgeoisie was forced to struggle against the entire Continental aristocracy. In these circumstances, moderation and compromise were useless.



While the French fought for liberty, English cartoonists caricatured the revolution as an outpouring of blood lust (inset). They are still at it today

From 1791 onwards, the French bourgeoisie became more and more reliant on mobilising the masses against the aristocracy to retain its grip on power. For their part, the urban masses proved unwilling to play the role of a silent stage army for the bourgeoisie. From 1789 to 1795 the urban masses were permanently mobilised and pushing the bourgeoisie to go beyond its own moderate aims.

The resistance of the aristocracy and the pressure from the masses meant that, unlike in other countries, the French bourgeoisie could not hold back and had to go far beyond its own objectives. The Jacobins led

by Robespierre recognised that they could not do without the support of the urban masses. To retain mass support they were prepared to make concessions to popular aspirations for democracy. But the bourgeoisie tolerated this situation only so long as it had to. By the middle of 1794, the French bourgeoisie felt relatively secure about its position and on 27 July, Robespierre's Jacobin Republic was overthrown. From this point onwards, the French capitalist class undertook the systematic repression of the urban masses.

The capitalists would rather forget the years between 1789 and 1794. In those years, for the first time in

history, ordinary people entered the political stage. The Parisian masses were not prepared to restrict their struggle to the creation of a new political regime under bourgeois control. They demanded the extension of democratic rights and guarantees that resources would be fairly distributed. Their struggles prevented the bourgeoisie from retreating and forced the revolution to go beyond its original aims. The threat posed by the egalitarian radicalism of the mass movement provoked the furious reaction from the rulers of Europe at the time, and still stirs the right-wing critics of the revolution today.

The fact that the vitriolic language usually reserved for the Russian Revolution is now used against the French shows a manifest lack of self-confidence among the modern ideologues of capitalism

Modern conservative historians reduce the French Revolution to the violent period between June 1793 and July 1794, the era of Jacobin Terror. This was the time when the French Revolution was forced to fight a war against European reactionaries abroad, and a civil war against the old order at home. The Jacobin dictatorship engaged in widespread repression against the opponents of the revolution. There were 17 000 official executions in 14 months, as the Jacobins struggled to preserve the gains of the revolution.

Madame Guillotine

The era of the Jacobin dictatorship was no doubt cruel and bloody, but it never descended to the mindless bloodlust portrayed by conservative historians. Repression was the only way that the young French capitalist class could preserve the integrity of the nation. After 14 months the armies of the British Crown and the German princes were repelled, and France was more stable.

The image of Madame Guillotine and mindless massacres of dignified aristocrats still endures as the defining characteristic of the revolution among conservatives:

'At the height of the Terror, it was not unknown for women to follow their husbands to the guillotine because they had been so unpatriotic as to weep. Indeed, women were not among the beneficiaries of the Revolution—apart, that is, from the old hags who sat knitting at the foot of the guillotine.' (P Taylor Martin in the *Sunday Times*, 21 May)

Yet even at the height of the Jacobin dictatorship, the revolution was not simply about terror. The democratic constitution, probably the most egalitarian in bourgeois Europe, was introduced in 1793. The Jacobins decreed the freeing of colonial slaves, and passed laws to protect the living standards of the urban masses and to prevent profiteering. Most important of all, a system of direct democracy prevailed in Paris, where the people took part in political debate.

The ability of the Jacobin regime to defeat its internal and external opponents is testimony to the popular support it enjoyed. The regime survived thanks to the permanent popular mobilisation behind it. It was only overthrown after Robespierre himself had demobilised the radical movement. The conservative emphasis on terror is designed to mystify this central lesson—that the masses on the march are an irresistible force.

As Marxists we have no wish to identify with the bourgeois politics of the French Revolution. Nevertheless it is necessary to defend the tradition of 1789. The critics of 1789 have no

principled objections to terror as such—their hatred is reserved for the violence of mass struggle.

If conservatives were really concerned about terror in the abstract, they would write hundreds of books about the massacres which followed the crushing of the Paris Commune in 1871. These were far more bloody than the Jacobin dictatorship. The violence of the Jacobin dictatorship looks pretty tame compared to the repression of revolts by the European ruling classes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Under the hypocritical double standard applied by the right, only the violence of the masses is labelled as terror. Repression meted out by the rulers is always treated neutrally as a matter of law and order.

Not playing the game

The historical experience of the French Revolution demonstrated the significance of the class struggle in achieving progress. It showed that it is men and women who make history. Nothing in society is natural or permanent. These are the insights which conservative thinkers would like to expunge from the historical memory.

Conservatives view a revolution as a disease that needs to be eradicated. Nothing must be done to interfere with the organic development of society. The institutions of the past must provide the foundations for future development. The French Revolution broke with this perspective. Instead of justifying its aims through appealing to past traditions, it argued for a future based on rules of its own making. By breaking with the past and attempting a new beginning, the French Revolution threatened every aspect of the prevailing order. This remains the reason why conservatives today find revolution so unnatural and alien.

Every new book published as an attack on the French Revolution testifies to the enduring significance of the event. If indeed the idea of a revolution is so ludicrous, why spend so much time and energy attacking it?

French definitions

The French Revolution defined Western politics for more than a century. Almost all significant concepts of modern politics were born in the revolution, or as part of the reaction against it. The terms left and right are one important legacy of this experience. Modern conservative political philosophy developed as a reaction to the French Revolution. The much over-used and mystified term 'terror' entered into the British political vocabulary as an accusation levelled against the French

Revolution. And the Declaration of the Rights of Man of 1789 has provided the essential principles of liberalism ever since.

In one sense it is apt that comparisons are often made between the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution of 1917. The circumstances and objectives of the two revolutions were very different. But they are linked by the influence they exerted on history. Just as the French Revolution defined the terms of political discussion in the nineteenth century, so the Russian Revolution determined those of the twentieth. Since October 1917, the experience of a working class revolution has haunted the capitalist world. A veritable industry purporting to destroy the credibility of October 1917 has been operating for 70 years.

So what is new about today's arguments? During the past 200 years there existed a liberal intellectual tradition, with influence even within the bourgeoisie, which upheld the principles of the French Revolution. Until recently, even bitter critics of the Russian Revolution had a kind word for 1789, and would contrast the liberal tradition of the Jacobins favourably with that of the Bolsheviks. Today, liberalism has suffered a moral collapse. Under attack from reaction, liberals cannot even defend their own tradition because of its association with revolution.

A few go far

The growth of reaction and the collapse of liberalism reveal another important lesson. The fact that the vitriolic language usually reserved for the Russian Revolution is now used against the French shows a manifest lack of self-confidence among the modern ideologues of capitalism. They now feel the need to attack a revolution led by their own class, and to turn back to a rewritten version of history, to justify and defend the status quo of capitalist Europe.

Right-wing thinkers often boast that the fact that revolutions happen so rarely is proof of their irrelevance. It is just as well for them that revolutions are so few and far between, since they already have to work overtime to discredit 1789 and 1917. Yet revolutions do not have to occur too often to realise their significance. The first defined European politics for the nineteenth century, and the second has done so for the twentieth. The third will do the same for the twenty-first. The presentiment of this possibility explains the contemporary obsession with maligning the two most crucial experiences of modern Europe.

Hardliners, moderates and other myths

CHINESE WHISPERS

Pat Roberts disposes of some popular Western myths about the regime and the system in China

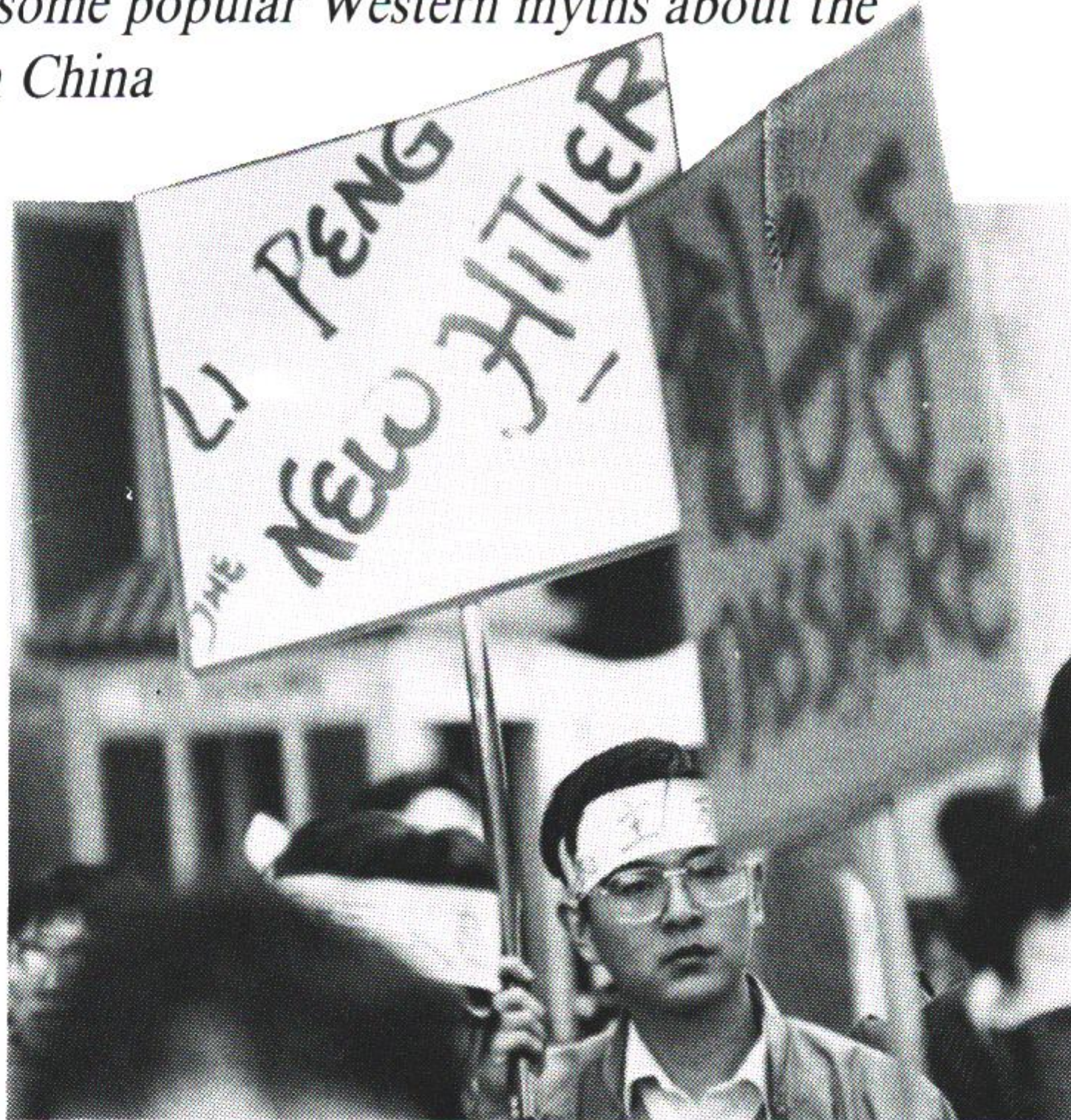
Throughout the unfolding crisis in China, it has been hard to believe anything you hear or read in the British media. One day Deng Xiaoping is reported dead; the next he is shown shaking hands with army generals. Reports of clashes between the 27th Army and other military units are quickly followed by assurances that the forces of order are a solid monolith.

Media analyses of who rules China have been even more puzzling, full of references to moderates, hardliners, Maoists, reformers and old-fashioned communists. Yet nobody has explained what these terms mean. It is worth recalling that somebody like Deng, who today is portrayed as a malevolent hardliner, used to be feted in the West as a progressive reformer. The prize for investigative journalism must go to John Passmore of the London *Evening Standard*, who reported that premier Li Peng 'appeared on TV in the Mao suit he wears every time he wishes to be seen as a hardliner'. If those who wear grey buttoned-up jackets are hardliners, the ones who prefer three-piece Western suits must be the progressive reformers.

It is hardly surprising that nobody has produced a logical analysis of the supposedly deep ideological fissures within the Chinese leadership, since the hardliner/moderate/Maoist/reformer labels are largely a Western invention. Since the mid-seventies it has been difficult to see any serious political differences within the Stalinist bureaucracy that rules China. All sections of the Chinese leadership support the economic reform policies launched by Deng in 1976, and the Open Door programmes initiated in 1978. These policies were designed to inject some life into the stagnant Stalinist system by adopting Western techniques and capitalist economic methods.

Partners in crime

Deng's Chinese version of perestroika has led to the gradual extension of market relations in Chinese society. During the past decade private enterprise has boomed and parts of China, particularly in the south, have experienced high economic growth. These policies have been paralleled in the political sphere



The Chinese masses have to overcome a collapsing system, not a few hardliners

by the growing rapprochement between China and the West. America has grown especially close to China, and Washington considers Beijing an important strategic ally.

The integration of China into the capitalist world market has proved lucrative for the ruling bureaucrats. At all levels of the state apparatus, they have used their status to feather their own nests. Corruption is systematic. The relationship between party bureaucrats and expatriate Chinese capitalists resembles that between the English aristocracy and the emerging entrepreneurial class in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the old guard holds political power, while the capitalists accumulate wealth for both parties. A marriage of convenience has been gradually taking shape.

The Stalinist bureaucracy is an ideal partner for Western and expatriate Chinese capitalists. At least until recently, the Chinese regime seemed able to guarantee a stable environment in which the usual obstacles to exploitation were removed. With workers repressed and living on wages that are a fifth of the south-east Asian average, doing business in China has meant high profits for the capitalists.

However, the attempt to graft market relations on to a Stalinist system has created major problems. Development has been very uneven. The free economic zones and provinces like Guangdong and Fujian have prospered while other areas have stagnated. Most importantly, the growth of the market has fragmented the national economy, undermining the old system of centralised state control. As a consequence, regional differences and rivalries have intensified. Parts of China now have closer links with the world economy than with Beijing. Grasping provincial party bosses jealously guard their own resources and have put up barriers to prevent raw materials and food being moved from their areas.

The growth of the market has led to economic chaos. It has also called into question the bureaucracy's ability to keep political control of the country. In the past the Chinese bureaucracy was a relatively coherent social stratum. This coherence was based on the fact that the bureaucrats shared a common interest in maintaining physical control of economic life. With the ascendancy of the market there is no longer any durable foundation for a Stalinist-type

bureaucracy. This is what has divided the Chinese Communist Party. It is a conflict between equally pragmatic factions competing for resources. Under these circumstances the Chinese bureaucracy has become more like a collection of cliques than a united social stratum.

Losing its grip

The differences in the Chinese leadership are motivated by individual considerations; it is not a question of hawks v doves or any other battle between alternative political forces. No bureaucratic faction wants to return to the days of Mao. All still support economic reforms. The differences are tactical ones about how to manage these reforms with the least disruption. Conflicting individual and regional interests make it even harder to reach a consensus within the bureaucracy.

The current turmoil in China shows the Stalinist bureaucracy experiencing a crisis of political power. It can no longer speak with one voice or hope to implement its decisions. It is paralysed and lacks the capacity to manage society. This explains what happened in Tiananmen Square. The massacre and the wave of repression which followed did not represent the victory of any hardline faction. They were the products of a bureaucratic leadership losing its grip. Party leaders could not decide on a political response at an early stage of the protests. They sensed that any attempt to implement a definite response was fraught with problems. There was no political institution—not even the party—that could be relied on to implement a decision. Without any political options, a military solution became inevitable.

Chaos rules

It is unlikely that Deng or anybody else issued an order to massacre the protesters. Instead, the chaotic state of Chinese politics meant that the military could not carry out any considered plan; it could only lash out blindly. The terrible events in Beijing are testimony, not to the decisiveness of the elusive hardliners, but to the disintegration of a doomed Stalinist system. Behind the chaos is the anarchy of market forces, tearing China apart.

Only the Chinese military can now slow down the collapse of the Stalinist bureaucracy. But no society can be managed indefinitely through force alone. At best, the military can provide the bureaucracy with the breathing space to evolve a political response. However, the contradictions between the old system of bureaucratic power and the market-oriented reforms are so profound that an explosion is difficult to avoid. All that the Chinese bureaucrats can hope for is that the disintegration of their system comes later rather than sooner.

Devil dogs

A LOAD OF ROTTWEILERS

Just when you thought it was safe to go back into the park, the devil dog arrived to menace British civilisation last month. Hardly an hour passed without another victim of a dog bite being descended on by a pack of media hounds.

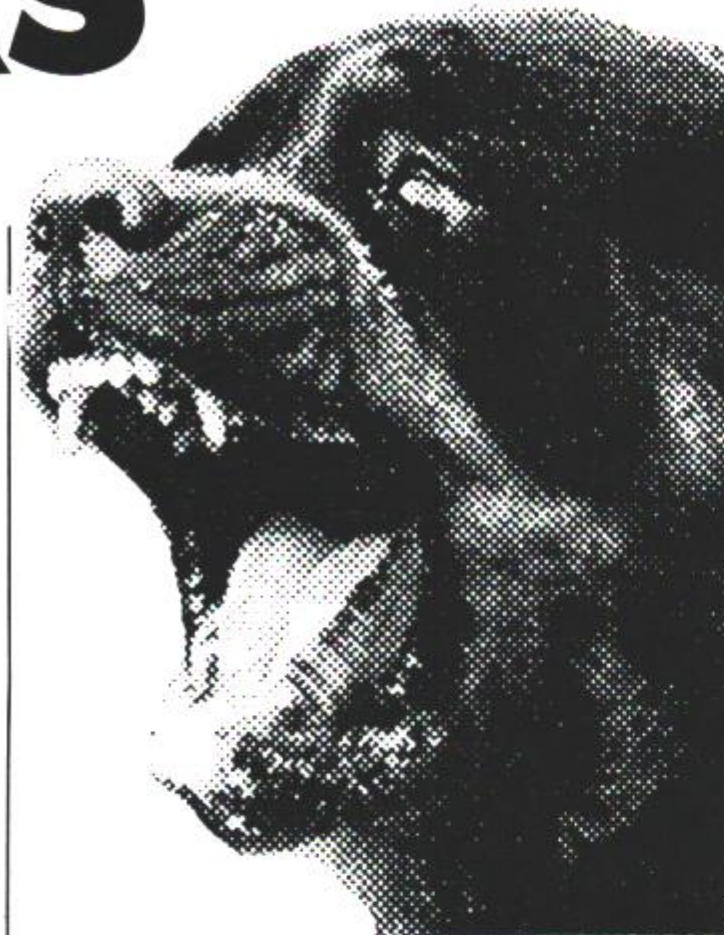
New breeds of devil dog were discovered faster than the Kennel Club could disown them. The *News of the World* found the Bandog, a shark with legs used by drug dealers, and a 'Dr Frankenstein invention' made from a wolf, an Alsatian and a rabid imagination. The *Observer* shed its usual sobriety to headline the 'terrorists on four legs'. Pet psychiatrists became breakfast TV stars, explaining how they taught 'lunatic' dogs to love farmyard turkeys. The American Pit Bull and the Rottweiler fought tooth and claw to be Public Enemy Number One.

'Bring back the dog licence' said

many commentators, although none could explain how a scrap of paper would stop a seven-stone dog that can allegedly devour a small child before you can say 'National Registration Scheme'. Others wanted Rottweilers to be tattooed with their owners' name and address, or to have a computer chip surgically implanted in their necks. (Why don't we make them pay the poll tax while we're at it?) Everybody agreed that the owners were to blame—the 'criminal types', black youth, skinheads and other council-estate dwellers who breed and buy huge packs of genetically deformed macho dogs, without reading Barbara Woodhouse on canine etiquette.

Pedigree panic

Whatever you think of Rottweilers, the reports of a sudden epidemic sound like shaggy dog stories. Dogs



are hardly a new problem. Nor are the Rottweiler owners of Hackney responsible for any dog-bite boom. Most serious attacks are carried out by our old friends the Alsatis—many unleashed by the police and company security guards. 'Some of the worst bites I've seen were inflicted by a Chihuahua', says leading dog expert

Dr Roger Mugford, who also admits that suburban Cocker Spaniels are among the most common offenders. And who will prosecute the Queen for the way that her pure-bred Corgi recently ate a mongrel?

The devil dog stories added up to a silly season press panic (a little early this year). All the standard elements were there. Highlight a few horrific incidents to prey on people's fears, throw in some gruesome-sounding genetic engineering, and you have the perfect recipe for diverting attention from more important issues (who's worried about inflation when they are too scared of Rover next door to walk to the shops?) and blaming the dirty working classes for the problems we face. It worked, too: according to the *Sunday Times*, 'a criminologist reported that, for the first time, our concern over dogs has surpassed fears about any other social issues, including crime, unemployment and racial harassment' (4 June). The media boys can give themselves a pat and a bone.

Panics like this have a long pedigree. One of the biggest ones of recent years concerned crime. Terrified by blown-up media stories about mugging and burglary, many people have no doubt bought dogs for protection. Now they are in the doghouse, the subjects of the scare-mongers' latest scam.

Graham Bishop

SHADOW of the GUILLOTINE

Britain and the French Revolution

Until 10 September 1989

Monday-Saturday 10-4.50

Sundays 2.30-5.50

Last admission 4.30 (5.30 on Sunday)

Admission £2 (concessionary rate £1)
British Museum Society members free

Recorded information tel: 01-580 1788

**BRITISH
MUSEUM**

Great Russell Street, London WC1



What could the Moroccan wife of an Irish plumber do for a Duchess? Serve her whisky and empty her ashtrays of course. That was the relationship between Mrs Brady (née Elaadouli), of Willesden, and Margaret, Duchess of Argyll, of Park Lane. They got along fine. Samira Brady stashed Margaret's case and a half of whisky in the kitchen every week, and liberally doled it out to Her Grace each afternoon and evening.

It was a perfect relationship. Margaret paid the Grosvenor House Hotel £20 000 a year for her flat, and she paid Samira £30 a week for waiting on her hand and foot. However, things got decidedly rocky when the rather high quarterly phone bill arrived; £5697 buys a lot of whisky. The Duchess was appalled. She contacted British Telecom and called in the police. They naturally concluded that the Moroccan maid dunnit, and charged her with dishonestly using electricity. She was found guilty, sentenced to three months' imprisonment (suspended) and recommended for deportation.

Wild, wild women

The judge passed sentence in a state of fury, because Samira dared to accuse Margaret of drinking a lot of whisky, being forgetful and even bad-tempered. The judge believed Margaret, who insisted that she had never drunk too much whisky in her life. The 76-year old Duchess is very traditional. The daughter of a Scottish textile millionaire, she married the eleventh Duke of Argyll, Admiral of the Western Coast and Isles, Keeper of the Great Seal of Scotland and of the Castles of Dunstaffnage, Dunoon, and Carrick and Tarbert. The Duke also owned a fairly hefty slice of several whisky distilleries. Margaret's son-in-law, the Duke of Rutland, owns 18 000 acres of Leicestershire and Derbyshire and lives at Belvoir Castle.

However, Margaret's life is decidedly modest these days; the parties at Invarary Castle, being courted by the Duke of Bedford and the Earl of Warwick, and Cole Porter's mention of her in his song 'You're the tops', are now distant memories. The old Duchess lives quietly without a dining room and only one maid. But she can manage just as long as she can keep the maid on £30 a week and off the phone. She has survived a long life without distinction or useful employment. Consequently, the judge described her not merely as Samira's employer, but as her 'benefactress'; an aristocrat without a stain on her character.

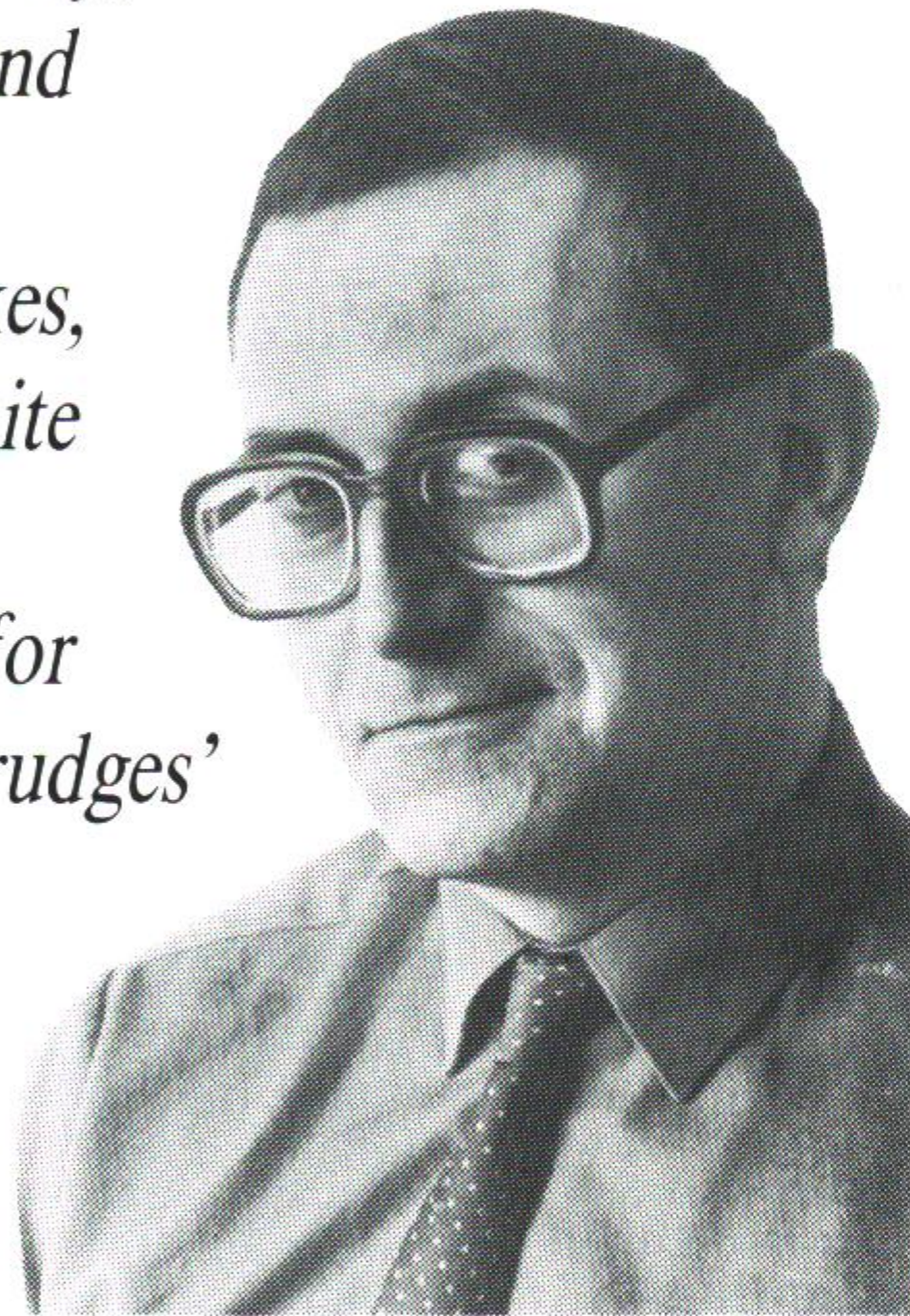
Reviving traditions

I was interested in this little vignette of modern British life because I thought it had died out sometime during the late twenties; a relic of the time when my mother first arrived in London from Tipperary. Like Samira

Don Milligan

MAID IN BRITAIN

'In Thatcher's re-run of Victorian Britain there is not just a boom in vagrancy, malnutrition and sleeping in cardboard boxes, there is a definite upturn in opportunities for menials and drudges'



Brady, she was a very lucky girl. The convent in her home town had fixed her up with a benefactress who allowed her to be a kitchen maid. Over the years my Mum found quite a lot of people who allowed her to prepare their vegetables, serve them their whisky and scrub their floors. I doubt that she ever phoned home, but she did become a dab hand at raiding the pantry.

I also had an uncle who, when young, had a job blacking grates, lighting fires and cleaning the brass. He developed a fascination for the silver-backed brushes that rested on his employer's dressing-table. One day he plucked up courage and brushed his hair. All hell broke loose at the prospect of lice invading m'lady's chamber. He was thoroughly beaten, and sacked.

That was all long ago. I knew there were still nannies in Holland Park, daily cleaners in Clapham and au pairs in St John's Wood. I also know

that chambermaids in swish hotels in the West End can earn £3 per room. If they're fast they might get through seven or even 10 rooms a day. (Most of these lucky girls are from Ireland, Morocco, the Philippines or West Africa.) I know too, that the Princess Royal has servants who read her love letters, but had no idea that such opportunities for emptying ashtrays still existed in the households of minor aristocrats.

Flunkeys in fashion

No, we should be grateful to Margaret, Duchess of Argyll, for bringing it to our attention. The case of Samira Brady, the surfeit of whisky, and the stolen phone-calls have revealed that the desire to give us all gainful employment in noble houses (and flats) is still alive and well. In the sixties when they stopped presenting débutantes like Margaret Whigham at court, and the rich became decidedly chary of flaunting their wealth, one

feared that the openings provided by domestic service were a thing of the past.

Today British industry is about as sprightly as the Duchess of Argyll, and the chances of making a profitable investment in it have shrunk accordingly. So the rich are more prepared than ever to buy into luxuries. As the *Telegraph* observed recently, 'Industrial money has not rained on art in such profusion since the late nineteenth century, nor is there any sign that it will stop'. Paintings, antiques and vintage cars are safe and profitable investments; that the rich should fritter away their spare cash on the chauffeurs and flunkeys to go with them is to be expected.

Worthless as ever

In Thatcher's re-run of Victorian Britain there is not just a boom in vagrancy, malnutrition and sleeping in cardboard boxes, there is a definite upturn in opportunities for menials and drudges. Of course, with the return of servants, we will witness the return of the servant problem. Cleaners who drink the sherry and au pairs who are secretly beastly to the kids are not new worries for the wealthy. But it's alright to share your dinner table with a young middle class woman from France or northern Europe who looks after the children, in return for a room and a few pounds while she is learning English. Letting a North African skivvy use your telephone is an entirely different matter. In such circumstances the ruthless style of the apparently anachronistic Duchess of Argyll remains very much the done thing today.

Samira Brady's crime of using the phone was compounded by her attempt to describe Her Grace as a selfish, drunken sot. Without having met Margaret, it is difficult for me to venture an opinion, but I suspect that Samira's description was probably not too wide of the mark. However, whether the Duchess was a helpful, industrious person or, as did seem more likely, a selfish, pampered layabout, the outcome of the trial removed any doubts I might have had. The fact that a judge handed out a prison sentence and recommended deportation to protect Margaret's reputation reveals that the people who run this country are as brutal and as worthless and as racist as they have always been. And, contrary to the Telecom advertising slogan, it's us who have to answer to them.

More press scares and police persecution

OFFICIAL: BEING IRISH IS A CRIME

Keith Tompson talked to brothers who were arrested in Stoke and had their homes raided by armed police because of their Irish accents

The press had difficulty agreeing on the circumstances in which three Irishmen were arrested in Stoke in May; the *Sun* said two of them had been hauled in after a three-mile car chase, the *Mirror* thought that they were held in an armed raid on a house. But all of the newspapers agreed that the arrests resulted from the police operation against 'the Tern Hill bombers', the IRA team responsible for the February attack on the parachute regiment barracks in Shropshire.

The arrests made banner headlines, but when the three men were released, 60 hours later, having been charged with nothing, it was only thought worthy of a paragraph hidden away on the inside pages—if that. The hysteria is what matters to the British media when reporting events connected with Ireland; for them, the facts are neither here nor there. For us, the facts are here.

On Wednesday 10 May at about 10.15am, brothers Andrew and Lawrence McDonagh were in Stoke city centre in their brown Talbot Sunbeam. A traffic warden accosted them because, he said, their car was the same colour as one wanted by the police. The same man had argued with Lawrence some three weeks earlier. The brothers decided he was just being vindictive, and drove home (presumably this trip was the *Sun*'s 'car chase').

Miami Vice

As the McDonaghs approached their home, an unmarked van blocked the road. Men piled out, speaking into walkie-talkies, and within seconds unmarked cars were arriving from all directions. Police told the McDonaghs their car was wanted in connection with a burglary. Andrew says he knew then that 'they weren't just ordinary police'. The McDonaghs were arrested. Shortly afterwards a third brother, Tom, was also picked up. Meanwhile, the police sealed off main roads for three hours while they searched the Talbot Sunbeam. People living nearby were told to keep to the rear of their homes in case a bomb went off. By 2pm the police had launched full-scale military operations at the brothers' homes in Wilfred Place and Lichfield Street.



Police arrested the McDonaghs (above) after they were 'spotted' being Irish in a brown car

Lawrence and Tom McDonagh lived in Wilfred Place. Their neighbour, Raymond Carr, saw what happened there. 'They had the street blocked off from 2pm until 10pm. I couldn't believe what was going on. It's not something you expect in a quiet road like this—*Miami Vice* is nearer the mark.' Raymond Carr confirmed that the police were all wearing flak jackets and carrying shotguns and handguns. 'It was like a war.'

While all of this was going on, Andrew, Lawrence and (later) Tom McDonagh were being questioned by police. They had been stripped of all their clothing and forced to wear plastic bags. They remained in this state for more than 24 hours. The interrogation was apparently relaxed and fairly general. It seemed to the brothers that police knew they were not members of an IRA cell. Contrary to what most of the media initially implied, they had not been arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, but under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

During the brothers' second night in detention, police cordoned off Wilfred Place again and rigged up lights on the house stairs. Ann Fair and John Tye, who live on the street, say that fingerprint experts were inside dusting, while policemen in

white overalls and boots carried out bags and boxes.

A similar operation was underway in Lichfield Street, where Andrew McDonagh lived. Number 115 is split into three flats. All of the tenants were turfed out of their flats on Wednesday 10 May and told not to return until Sunday. 'They were thrown out on the street and given no choice of where to go or what to do' says Andrew.

The brothers were finally released on Friday night, 12 May. They were not charged with anything, but were placed on police bail and told to report to Shrewsbury police station on 28 June. They did not expect to face any charges. When Lawrence and Tom McDonagh got back to Wilfred Place, they found police had ripped up carpets and torn open sofas. Andrew McDonagh could not get through the police cordon around his Lichfield Street flat until the Sunday. When he did, he found a similar mess, with the addition of a smashed bath.

So what was it all about? On what evidence did the police pull these men from their car, imprison them, make them wear plastic bags, raid their homes, evict their neighbours at gunpoint, and impound and vandalise their belongings, before releasing them without any explanation, let alone an apology?

Detective chief superintendent Malcolm Brevington said later that the men had been spotted by a person 'employed by the police but not a police officer as such', which sounds like a traffic warden. Spotted doing what? It seems that they were simply spotted being Irish in a brown car. That alone marked them down as terror suspects in Brevington's notebook. 'Due to the circumstances surrounding the arrest', he told the press, 'and the nationality of the people involved, it was decided to treat the incident as potentially subversive'.

If the frame fits...

The 'circumstances surrounding the arrest' were that an IRA unit was engaged in a campaign in Britain, which included an attack on nearby Tern Hill barracks three months earlier. The failure to find the IRA members has become a source of acute embarrassment to the British authorities. Under pressure to get a result and put some faces in the frame, the police in places like Stoke have become keener than ever to pick up and interrogate any Irish people in dramatic, military fashion, creating an atmosphere of public hysteria. Andrew McDonagh says that the previous tenants of his flat were also Irish, and left without paying the rent six months earlier. On that occasion police had also raided the house and dusted for fingerprints—hardly normal procedure for collecting rent arrears.

When the McDonaghs were brought before magistrates for consideration of a 36-hour extension to their detention, the police claimed that undercover surveillance teams had been watching them for two weeks. The only possible reason for such an extensive surveillance operation was that the McDonaghs were three Irishmen, one of whom has a blonde girlfriend; as such, they fit the deliberately vague group description of an IRA unit which the police have broadcast throughout Britain. So their ordeal could have happened to any Irish household.

Family worries

The McDonaghs have been forced to leave Stoke because of the media accusation that they are IRA men. Their concern now is to get the truth out, both in Britain and in Ireland. Their families back in Omagh, County Tyrone, are their major worry. 'Our families will become targets unless it gets around that this was a fabricated story put about by the police and the press', says Lawrence McDonagh. 'No innocent person should be treated the way we were', says Andrew, 'all they had on us was that we were Irish'. For the 20 years of Britain's war in Ireland, that has been enough for the authorities to brand people like the McDonaghs as a threat to the British public.

An invitation to our summer school Friday 21 July is the day we start... **PREPARING FOR POWER**



Lesley Banham, conference organiser

'If you want to change the world, or just to understand how it works a bit better, the place to be this month is at the week-long Preparing for Power summer school in London.

Preparing for Power is a unique event, an opportunity to spend a week analysing all of the problems that matter at home and internationally—and discussing some solutions.

Each year people come to Preparing for Power from all over Britain and abroad. Some of them have been involved in politics for years, many more are just getting interested and want to know what Marxism is all about.

Whichever category you fall into, and whatever you're particularly interested in—China, the Greenhouse Effect, Gorbachev or art and culture—you will find no shortage of wide-ranging discussions over the seven days.

The launch weekend of this year's summer school will focus on the big themes of the year, like developments in the East, and their lessons and importance for us in the West. We will be discussing such controversial issues as the meaning of revolutions in the past—France, Russia—and the possibility of revolution today—primarily in Britain. The rest of the week is organised around 16 courses, which are listed opposite, with dozens of workshops and other events in between.

There's also some top-class entertainment included in the week, and plenty of time to take advantage of the bars, swimming pool and other leisure facilities.

If you haven't booked your ticket yet, get in touch today. Anybody who has been before will tell you that Preparing for Power is not to be missed. See you on 21 July.'

**Preparing for Power
Revolutionary Communist
Party summer school**
University of London Union,
Malet Street, London WC1
Friday 21–Friday 28 July
Tickets: £28 waged;
£18 unwaged
Weekend only (21-23 July):
£17 waged; £12 unwaged

• Sixteen week-long specialist courses:

- An introduction to Marxism
- New thinking and Marxism
- Gorbachev and glasnost
- The roots of racism
- Marxism and the environment
- Marxism and art
- The French Revolution and its legacy
- Women's liberation
- An introduction to the Irish War
- Problems of the British revolution
- The Irish War for non-beginners
- The making of Marx's *Capital*
- Social movements and class politics
- Issues in contemporary capitalism
- Imperialism in the nineties
- Germany today

PLUS

- More than 100 workshops and debates
- Guest speakers from Britain and abroad
- Swimming pool and sports facilities
- Creche and accommodation available
- Bands, discos, cabaret and films
- Cheap transport from all over Britain

To get your tickets, or a free brochure giving full details of the week, ring Lesley Banham today on (01) 375 1702. Or fill in the form and send it to Preparing for Power (L9), BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX (if you don't want to cut the magazine, put the same details on a piece of paper).

Please send me _____ tickets for Preparing for Power at £ _____ each (see prices above)

Please send me a free Preparing for Power brochure

I am interested in transport from _____

I require accommodation in London

I require creche facilities for _____ children, aged _____

NAME

ADDRESS

.....

PHONE

.....

Send to Preparing for Power (L9), BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX (Cheques payable to RCP Association)



Sins of the food firms

Thou shalt commit adulteration

Helen Simons explains why she is sick of being told that food hygiene and health is her responsibility

The government cares so much for our diet that it is giving away 10 million booklets on 'personal food hygiene', packed with helpful hints about keeping your dog out of the kitchen and keeping your fridge clean and cold. No doubt this advice will come in handy for those who let their Rottweiler rummage about in the bread bin, or who make a habit of mixing up the fridge and the oven. The rest of us are left to reflect that it doesn't much matter what we do in the kitchen, if the food has already been corrupted before we take it off the supermarket shelves.

Britain has the oldest capitalist food industry in the world. It has been doing brisk business ever since the peasants were driven off the land into the factories and forced to buy food from the market rather than growing it themselves. And British food producers have been adulterating their products to increase profits since the days of Edwina Currie's ancestors.

Food adulteration boomed when the capitalist market achieved ascendancy in eighteenth-century Britain:

'The medieval control over food standards by national and local regulation came to be abandoned...fundamentally because of a change in the conception of the state and the doctrinaire belief in the efficacy of free competition to ensure the best interests of the consumer. These changes coincided with unparalleled inflation and shortages during the French wars, and combined to produce a situation in which it was for the first time easy, safe and profitable to adulterate.' (J Burnett, *Plenty and Want*, 1966)

RIGHT:
You might as well eat the wooden one

In the nineteenth century food adulteration became a true Victorian value. Red lead was used as a substitute for cayenne pepper, copper was used to 'green' pickles. Marx noted that low-paid workers were forced to buy bread from 'undersellers' who sold it 'adulterated with alum, soap, pearl ashes, chalk, Derbyshire stone-dust, and such-like agreeable, nourishing and wholesome ingredients' (*Capital*, Vol 1, p171).

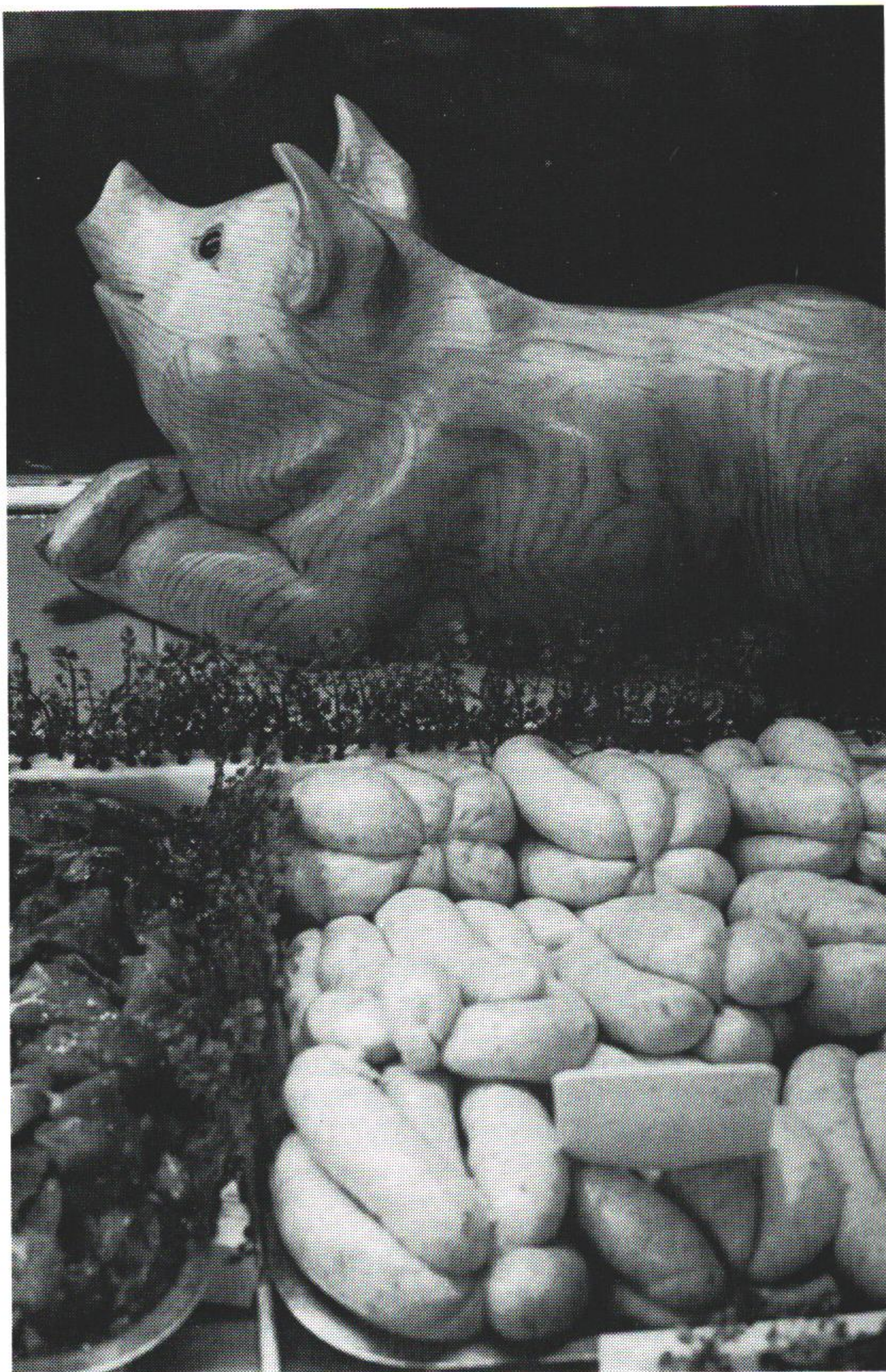


PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

Modern food manufacturers are more sophisticated than their Dickensian predecessors. They use the miracle of science and technology to aid the profit-boosting process; for example, everybody from Bernard 'bootiful' Matthews to McDonald's packs their products with 'mechanically recovered meat' scraped out of parts of the animal's anatomy which most people would consider inedible. Although we are

now more likely to get conned than poisoned, the end result is still bad food.

Adding water to products is a favourite trick. Cooked meats are pumped full of water to add weight; some hams are 25 per cent water. Adding cheap ingredients also helps to hold down costs. A tin of Tyne 'beef and onion' contains more stock and water than either of those ingredients. It also contains chicken.

The government is so sensitive to the interests of the food industry that much data examined by its committees is covered by the Official Secrets Act

Food adulteration is now a major branch of science. Margaret Thatcher was employed in this sector before entering parliament, specialising in 'fat extension'. Her paper on 'The elasticity of ice cream', examining how much air could be pumped into the stuff before it collapsed, was apparently highly respected.

The British food industry is now more concerned than ever to cut corners and keep competitive. Domestic producers are under increasing pressure from foreign competition; food imports have increased by more than 50 per cent in the eighties, and the prospect of a unified European market after 1992 terrifies the British food barons.

What's meat got?

The import problem has hit smaller manufacturers and retailers first and hardest, and the big firms have moved in to tighten their monopoly through a wave of takeovers and mergers. The £55 billion food industry is now dominated by seven conglomerates, while 70 per cent of all food sales go through the tills of just six major supermarket chains. From this position of power, the big companies are taking steps to survive the foreign threat. They have introduced some higher-quality, Continental-style products at the top end of the market. But their main strategy is to cut standards—and thus costs—in the mass production sectors.

Take meat. The recent reports of dirty British abattoirs result from the new policy of increasing the volume of carcasses pushed through the system, without making any investment in proper facilities to cope with the flow. Most abattoirs are old-fashioned establishments designed for a steady input of meat; they cannot cope with the thousands of animals now being herded into the system. One worker has explained the consequences of this cost-cutting scheme: 'Spillage and contamination could happen in the best abattoir when operators try to speed up the process with more meat than the plant was designed to handle.' (*Guardian*, 8 March) Just 74 of the 919 British abattoirs were considered clean enough to be granted an EEC export licence last year.

'Responsible attitude'

The government's attitude to this sort of sharp practice is summed up in the food hygiene leaflet where, after lecturing us about cleaning the kitchen, it assures us that 'the food industry takes a responsible attitude to food safety'. Such cover-ups are about par for the course. British governments have always put the industry's profits before health

standards. The first Food Act (1872) was only introduced after the quality of food eaten by the middle classes started to decline, and the large food companies realised that unbridled adulteration could ruin their reputations and market shares. Even then, the wording of the act was left so vague as to render it useless in most cases (see M Miller, 'Trading on public health', *Food Magazine*, Summer 1989).

Trust the farmers

The Thatcher government has been a particularly good friend to the food industry in difficult times. For example, despite repeated declarations of its determination to slash public spending, the government continues to give generous hand-outs to beef farmers. What Thatcher has cut is the number of public veterinary inspectors who examine British herds, down by almost a quarter over the past decade. Farmers themselves are entrusted with the job of reporting diseased cattle. But when this could cost them £10 000 a herd, the rewards of dishonesty are obvious. The government has also delayed publishing reports on cattle disease for up to two years, for fear that their findings might damage the industry.

Covering up for the food capitalists has become almost a full-time occupation for Tory ministers. After setting up the National Advisory Committee on Nutrition Education (Nacne), the government refused to publish its findings. Even though it was packed with friends of the food industry, the committee's report could not avoid exposing the unnutritious content of much British food. The Tories suppressed the report for two and a half years, before it was finally published—as a 'discussion paper'—in autumn 1983. The government then wheeled out its own chief medical officer to slam the report.

Official Secrets

The following year Nacne was disbanded and replaced by the Joint Advisory Committee on Nutrition Education (Jacne). This body was set up to be kinder still to the industry, but even its report had to be censored before the chief medical officer would allow it to be published. The government is so sensitive to the interests of the food industry that much of the data examined by official committees is covered by the Official Secrets Act!

The food industry has recently come in for fierce public criticism over health standards. The Tory response has been to seek to limit the damage done to company profits. The salmonella/listeria scare was a

good example. As accusations, counter-accusations and panic reports flew back and forth, the government's steadfast concern was to ensure that the big food firms did not suffer too much.

First the authorities did their best to ensure that the most profitable sectors of the industry were protected. So they played down concern about the safety of cook-chill packaged food—which has the highest profit margin in the industry. Next the government acted to ensure that the egg producers were insured against major losses, offering such extensive compensation that much of the money still remains unclaimed in the treasury. Finally the Tories ensured that the panic focused on the dangers of nasty foreign food, like soft French cheeses. The net effect of all this manipulation was that the big British food conglomerates suffered little or no overall loss.

The cynicism with which the food capitalists reacted to the health scares was summed up in February by Harry Solomon, chairman of the food giant Hillsdown Holdings. 'Nobody wanted this problem', said Solomon, 'but now that it has happened, far from damaging our business, we can only see it doing us good'. He had just announced a 37 per cent increase in pre-tax profits. Although trading profits on eggs and poultry were down from £27.5m to £18.3m, Solomon saw no long-term problems. Indeed he was pleased that the egg panic would force more small producers out of business, allowing his company to raise its market-share. In the meantime, profits on red meat had soared from £6m to £21m, more than compensating for any temporary setbacks on the egg front.

A botulism job

The government and the food industry are never going to put our health before profits. Proper safeguards and clean production processes are alien to a system which exists to make money for a few rather than decent food for the public. As the botulism in yogurt outbreak hit the headlines last month, the research institute studying this deadly virus in Bristol was preparing to close down because of government spending cuts. Meanwhile, they treat the truth about bad food as a state secret and tell us to clean out the fridge. Even if we follow all the instructions in Thatcher's leaflets, it will change nothing—except to increase further the amount of time we have to spend grubbing around in the kitchen to prepare food that is often fit for a dog.

July 1969—Armstrong's Moonwalk

ONE GIANT LEAP FOR US IMPERIALISM

Gemma Forest looks at how far America has fallen since the first Moon landing; Manjit Singh examines the military motives which sent the USA into space in the first place



On 20 July 1969, Neil Armstrong backed gingerly down a step-ladder on to the Sea of Tranquility. The *Saturn* rocket that sent Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins to the Moon showed the world that America was Number One.

Eight years earlier, on 25 May 1961, president John F Kennedy's speech on 'Urgent national needs' had caught the public imagination and enthused the nation by calling for a

manned trip to the Moon before the sixties were out. Shortly before his presidency ended last year, Ronald Reagan tried to strike a similarly historic pose by calling for America to send men to Mars. He was greeted with far more cynicism than excitement. The contrasting receptions received by Kennedy and Reagan reflect America's decline over the intervening years.

Back then, \$40 billion seemed a reasonable amount to spend on the

space mission. Now, America has shut down its two Earth-mapping satellites, *Landsats* 4 and 5, because the White House will not find \$7m to keep them running. And the *Challenger* explosion of 28 January 1986 still haunts the US space establishment.

In the sixties the morale of America's National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa) was as high as the Moon itself. Today, a greying Michael Collins calls for a final decision on a trip to Mars

because it could have 'a unifying and perhaps even an electrifying effect' on Nasa and the USA (*Newsday*, 26 May). But the Wall Street Crash of 1987 has destroyed the optimism of US firms hoping to see \$60 billion in revenues from private sector experiments in orbit by the year 2000. Today America's commercial space ventures 'face harsh realities' (*Aviation Week & Space Technology*, 19 December 1988). Japanese investment is now needed to keep US space firms afloat, while in space launches, Europe's *Ariane* rockets have captured half of the world market. Even if the USA's ozone-checking polar orbiting platform gets up on schedule in 1996, it is due to be followed quickly by European and Japanese equivalents.

Afternoon America

In the post-war boom, there was money around to finance the exploration of Kennedy's 'New Frontier'. The Soviet Union's launch of *Sputnik* in 1957 prompted Kennedy to warn of a 'long, slow afternoon' of American decline as early as his presidential election campaign in 1960. The US defence budget was slimmed down at the end of the Korean War, creating 140 000 redundancies in the aerospace sector, then further weakened by the recession of 1957-58. The *Apollo* project, alongside the Vietnam War, helped take up the slack.

The US lunar programme was small beer compared to the economic impact of the Vietnam War: the whole project cost less than a year's hostilities in south-east Asia. Still, space provided McDonnell Douglas, Grumman and North American Aviation with lucrative contracts, brought work to Los Angeles and industry to the American South. Yet by the time the Stars and Stripes was finally unfurled on the Moon's airless surface, even Nasa's part in Keynesian reflation had been curtailed. In 1969, the agency's workforce was half as big as its peak size of 420 000 in 1965. Federal funds made available to Nasa were down by a quarter. The USA's current budget deficit was already in the making, and the authorities were trying, without success, to ease it back.

Heaven and Earth

Today it is an irony that the decrepit Soviet Union is a match for the USA above the stratosphere. In the late sixties, America won the 'space race'. In 1989, the Soviets are at least seven years ahead of America in permanently manned space stations. Moscow has one, but Washington does not. The triumph of *Tranquility* was the ultimate symbol of American supremacy in more terrestrial matters. In the same way, the shambolic state of the US space industry today symbolises the scale of the international problems facing George Bush—problems which will not be resolved by mere promises of a trip to Mars.

'Here men from the Planet Earth first set foot upon the Moon, July 1969 AD. We came in peace for all mankind.'

So reads the plaque which the *Apollo* mission left on the Moon for the benefit of any passing ETs. The fine words belie the militaristic motives behind the US space programme.

The American space industry was an offshoot of the missile business. The USA emerged from the Second World War as the dominant world power, determined to maintain its military supremacy at all costs. The Americans looted occupied Germany, taking equipment, blueprints and, most importantly, Nazi scientists from the V-1 'doodlebug' factories. German military technicians, among them Wernher von Braun who masterminded the V-1 and V-2 rockets, were secretly spirited across the Atlantic. They were instrumental in producing the earliest ballistic missiles—rockets with explosive warheads—and began to investigate the use of rockets to boost other military hardware into orbit. The American space programme was born.

The Cold War, and America's role as the leading capitalist power, put a premium on intelligence gathering—and thus on the development of communications technology to keep tabs on friend and foe alike. By the

The making of the Moon mission

NAZIS, 'STAYPUTNIKS' AND SPIES

early fifties, space technology was sufficiently advanced for camera-carrying satellites to become a viable alternative to hazardous spy-plane missions. But for the launch of the world's first satellite, with its inevitably high public profile, the USA needed a civilian programme. The spy and communications satellites that were of most interest would be launched later, away from the glare of publicity.

The Americans put out a call to all nations for the launch of a civilian satellite to celebrate the International Geophysical Year of 1957—wholly, of course, in the interests of global science. But as the *Vanguard* project neared completion, the Americans were spectacularly gazumped when, on 4 October 1957, the USSR put *Sputnik-1* into orbit. *Sputnik-2* soon followed, on the fortieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution. When the Americans tried to salvage some dignity with their own lift-off, *Vanguard* exploded on the launch

pad. There was a media riot. The American papers heaped derision on the space programme, labelling *Vanguard* the 'Flopnik', 'Kaputnik' and 'Stayputnik'.

Losing the 'space race' really meant losing the missile race. The Soviet space triumphs humiliated president Dwight D Eisenhower's administration at home, and created foreign policy problems for America abroad. America needed its own dynamic, space success story. It embarked on a two-pronged programme. Pentagon-run projects designed to exploit the military potential of space would continue on the sly. Meanwhile, a new civilian programme was created publicly to promote the US launches as 'for the benefit of all mankind'. In 1958, Nasa opened for business, to establish America's credentials as the champion of 'peaceful uses of space' and to beat the Soviets in the space race.

Nasa developed *Mercury* to launch

the first astronaut into space, and *Apollo* as a low-orbit space station. But again, the Soviets pipped America. On 12 April 1961, Yuri Gagarin became the first man to orbit the Earth.

The only comfort that the night sky provided for the USA was the achievement of some of its military objectives. The Pentagon wing of the space programme successfully launched its first spy satellite, *Discoverer*. By the mid-sixties, satellites could penetrate clouds, ground cover, camouflage and darkness, while infra-red scanners could detect the heated water expelled by the reactors of nuclear submarines. But as this progress was secret, it did little to raise America's public prestige.

Kennedy came to power just before Gagarin's flight, on a wave of criticism of America's performance in the space race. If the USA was to salvage any glory from space, it had to be the Moon or bust. In 1961, Kennedy announced that the USA 'should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing man on the Moon and returning him safely to Earth'. In 1969, Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins travelled on a rocket designed by Hitler's scientist, Wernher von Braun, and developed by the same US army which was then devastating south-east Asia, to deliver a plaque 'in peace for all mankind', to the Moon.

Irish Freedom Movement

MARCH

TROOPS OUT NOW

Saturday 5
August 1pm

Assemble Islington
town hall (rear),
Upper Street,
London N1

IRELAND
20 YEARS
RESISTANCE



01-729 0414

August 1989 is the twentieth anniversary of the reappearance of British troops on the streets of Northern Ireland. This year the annual anti-internment march, marking the eighteenth anniversary of Britain's introduction of internment without trial, will broaden its focus to take in this other important anniversary. It will be demanding 'Troops out of Ireland! Prisoners out of jail!'

Join the march.

For leaflets, posters, sponsorship forms, etc, phone (01) 375 1702 or write to the Irish Freedom Movement (L9), BM IFM, London WC1N 3XX.

Post-feminism and family life

The New Woman -an old wives' tale?

This is the age of the New Woman or post-feminist woman (PFW for short). We know she's in town because the press tells us so. We even know how to spot her. She's a power-dresser, but with Janet Reger underwear. She carries a briefcase, reads Jilly Cooper novels and buys ready-cooked meals from Marks & Spencer. When she has the time, she's as adept at making chocolate mousse in her designer kitchen as she is at touching up her lipstick in the executive washroom. The post-feminist woman is sensuous and feminine, but she's no floozy—she got her high-powered, high-paying job on merit. She's made it on her own in a man's world.

Love is a PFW

Newspapers like the *Express* and the *Mail* which have championed the arrival of the New Woman would like us to think she is everywhere—that in every girl on the typing pool there is a budding PFW straining to get out. The media display mock fear at the thought of women breaking into the male bastions of power, but at heart they love the idea of the PFW. They love her because she's done it on her own, proving that there is nothing to stop women from being equal—providing they have the talent and the confidence. The PFW is the antithesis of the Women's Liberation Movement. She shows that women don't need a movement. They are now equal—or if they're not it's their own fault.

Sophie Mirman, secretary turned millionaire owner of the Sock Shop empire, is the model PFW. After being voted Businesswoman of the Year 1988 she declared: 'Too often women succumb to role-playing and

become subordinate to a man. I am often saddened by women's lack of self-esteem. I shrug my shoulders in despair at women who bleat about lack of opportunities....If you persevere and work hard you can do anything.'

But can you? The media may focus on a tiny number of women high flyers, yet the experience of the majority of women is that they are not living in a society where equal rights and opportunities have been won.

All in the mind

It is true that the *idea* that women should have equal opportunities in education and employment has been broadly accepted over the past 20 years. Anti-sexism has entered the mainstream. Children read schoolbooks featuring women firefighters, and advertisers no longer automatically assume that the highest achievement in a woman's life is a spotless floor. Even the prime minister nods in the direction of equal opportunities. She told last year's Conservative Women's Conference (not noted for its feminist credentials) that the Tories 'support the right of women to choose our own lives for ourselves. If women wish to be lawyers, doctors, engineers, scientists, we should have the same opportunity as men. More and more we do'.

The reality for most women, however, is that despite laws making it illegal to discriminate in the workplace, it is as hard as ever to break out of the typing pool. The world of work for women and the world of work for men might just as well be in different solar systems.

The woman manager is still a very

Anne Burton argues that it is hard to live up to the media image of a prosperous, powerful, post-feminist woman when you still have to cook, clean and chase after children

PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

One in five people expects their boss to be a woman by the year 2000; one in six expects it to be a machine

rare species. A recent report from the Equal Opportunities Commission (*Women and Men in Britain*, 1988) revealed that only six per cent of full-time general management staff were women. In a report for *Personnel Today*, Audience Selection asked people whether they thought it more likely that they would have a woman or a robot for a boss by the year 2000. It was a close-run thing: one in five expects their boss to be a woman, one in six a machine.

Most men have little experience of working alongside women, let alone under them. The same EOC report confirms that working women still face a sort of occupational apartheid. Even when they make it to managerial positions it is usually in a 'woman's job'. Women make up just under a quarter of the professional workforce—but they are disproportionately concentrated in areas like health, education and welfare. Clerical jobs provide a major source of full-time work. Three times as many women as men are employed in catering, cleaning, hairdressing and other personal services—but most of these jobs are part time.

Women are still paid less than men. Although employers are now forced by law to pay women 'equal pay for work of equal value', government figures show that working women's wages are 75 per cent of working men's (*Labour Research*, March).

Part-time people

The government likes to stress that 1.5m women joined the workforce between 1971 and 1987. What it doesn't say is that in this same period, the number of full-time jobs for women fell; the overall increase in women workers was made up by increasing part-time employment. Today almost four in every five part timers are women. Part-time work means a part-time wage, and other disadvantages. A recent department of employment survey into the wages and conditions of part timers found that although their hourly rates of pay were usually the same as for full timers, they lost out on company pension schemes, staff discounts and overtime rates as well as unsocial hours payments (*Labour Research*, March). Part timers also have less employment protection and are easier to sack.

More women are joining the workforce because employers are introducing more flexible working practices, and finding women part timers more profitable. Edwina Currie lectured the house of commons on the advantages for cost-conscious firms when the trend for hiring women part timers was first discussed:

'Part-time women are now picking up one third of the earnings. Half the work for a third of the money is a bargain, so it's no wonder that they have got the jobs. The message is clear: lay your hands on as many women as possible and employ them.' (*Hansard*, 11 March 1985)

'Pick up a bargain—exploit a part-time woman worker' is the Tory message to employers.

So why do so many women find themselves working part time in what are labelled as women's jobs? Why are women paid so little and manipulated so easily by employers? Is it just that they lack the motivation and self-esteem to do a Sophie Mirman?

The conventional view is that the problem is one of attitudes and prejudice. Some blame women workers for being unambitious and allowing themselves to be stereotyped. The more radical version is to blame the attitudes of men.

Bunny-shooting girls?

The establishment tends to go along with Sophie Mirman's view that it is all a matter of women's attitudes and confidence. The official response to criticisms about the segregated labour market is to tell school leavers they should cross the sex boundaries. But token displays of bringing female school leavers into male-dominated jobs do little to alter reality.

In 1987, for example, with a fanfare of publicity, the Manpower Services Commission published an Equal Opportunities Code for Youth Training Schemes. In November of that year they introduced 61 reserved place training schemes in areas where women were under-represented—construction, engineering, seafaring and gamekeeping. A year later almost half of the reserved places remained unfilled. Maybe young women lack the confidence to be a gamekeeper—or maybe they have too much sense to fancy their chances of a career on the building site, the grouse moor or the ocean wave. Most young women will take a training course in office skills or personal services, because experience tells them that they are most likely to get a job from it. And they are right. It is a fact, rather than an attitude, that audio-typing is a more marketable skill for a woman than rabbit shooting.

Where the establishment blames women's attitudes, most feminists see the problem as the attitudes of male employers. It is easy to see why.

David Collinson from the department of management studies at Umist carried out a study of the recruitment practices of 45 companies for the Equal

Opportunities Commission (*Barriers to Fair Selection*, 1988). He found that, although they knew it was against the law, many managers consciously avoided hiring women for particular jobs. One gem of a marketing manager explained that he'd always been open-minded about women: 'But I've had problems with them, either getting married, getting pregnant whether they're married or not, or, if they're married, their husbands move and they go with them.... Now obviously it is technically illegal to discriminate, but I am basically saying this time, I want a man, a male.' His assistant shared the same view: 'If the husband doesn't come first, he should do. Therefore the job takes second place. And if they have a family the job takes third place. I'm not saying that's wrong, it's just a statement of fact. The difference with a man is it's his first commitment to provide for all the family.'

These men, probably fairly typical of British employers, are obviously expressing a biased attitude towards women. They assume that men are breadwinners who need to take their jobs seriously, whereas women are homemakers to whom waged work is a second priority. Many of these managers said it didn't much matter whether the woman applicant was responsible for a family or not. They focused on the *potential* for any woman to become responsible for a family at some stage.

Breadwinners wanted

Most employers consider that it is natural for a woman to settle down and have children, so it is understandable (if not desirable) that they regard training a woman as a risky business. By contrast, many managers actively sought male staff who were in the same family situation that made them reject women. A branch manager for a company selling life assurance admitted that he wanted 'family breadwinners'. He wouldn't employ single men because they had 'no big mortgage, no wife, no school fees'. 'It's obvious to us the sort of guy you want', explained a manager in computing, 'he has a hefty mortgage, children and is good at his job. They're the ones who worry more.'

This stereotyped view outrages the post-feminist women. They insist that it is no longer the case that men are automatically breadwinners, while their wives are secondary wage-earners and responsible for the home. Such attitudes must frustrate those women who are independent of the pressures of home life. But the main reason the views expressed by these employers are a problem is because *they reflect reality*.

The reality is that most women cannot compete for jobs on an equal

Family life
often seems
attractive, but
for the
women who
do the
domestic
work there is
a fine line
between a
refuge and a
prison

basis because of their responsibility for the home and family. This is what makes Sophie Mirman's view of women at work so vacuous. Whether you believe in women's equality or not, whether legislation for equal pay and equal opportunities exists or not, the fact is that the responsibilities which society allots to women are not the same as those given to men. Employers' bias against investing in women as trained workers is based on their observation of the real world.

In the real world most women have to organise themselves around priorities determined by family life. If a woman has children it will be disruptive to her employment—not just when they are young, but until they become independent. Any mother knows that if the children are sick it means she has to take time off work to look after them. If they play up in the morning it means she's late for work. Her availability for overtime is restricted if she has to get home to make dinner. It is difficult to type that important letter in your lunch hour if you have to fit the family shopping in. And popping in to sort out a problem at the weekend may well be impossible.

Women workers are caught in a catch-22. Their responsibilities outside the workplace mean that they are seen as unstable and thus second class members of the labour market. At the same time, their unequal position in the labour market reinforces the view that they must take primary responsibility for the family. The managers in Collinson's study complained that women frequently left jobs to follow their husbands' career moves, yet they seldom had the problem of a man leaving to fit in with his wife's career. If a man's job is more stable and higher paid with better prospects, a couple will usually accept that his job comes first. Even if they believe that men should take equal responsibility for childcare, and women should have the right to a career, they may well have to work out a deal where her career comes second. His wages will pay the mortgage—hers probably won't.

Did we volunteer?

The institution of the family and the role that women play in it is at the heart of sexual inequality in capitalist society. Most people see the family as a voluntary association. Two people fall in love, set up home, have children and live together because they want to. But there is more to it. For individuals the family is a voluntary association, and many people—women included—can be very happy in it. But the comfort and joy that the family can provide for its individual members remains incidental. Quite apart from this, the

RIGHT:
There's still little sign
of liberation down the
laundrette



PHOTO: Simon Norfolk



family institution is necessary for the reproduction of capitalist society.

Marx identified the family as a free provider of services which capitalism needs to keep the working class fit for exploitation. Margaret Thatcher celebrated the family for the same reasons at the Tory women's conference last year: 'The family is the building block of society. It is a nursery, a school, a hospital, a leisure centre, a place of refuge and a place of rest...it fashions our beliefs. It is the preparation for the rest of our life. And women run it.' If she had said 'And women run it, for us, for free', she would have been even more accurate.

Social breakdown

The family unit is not just a voluntary association of loving individuals—it is a vital institution of capitalist society. The system needs a wife and mother to be a nanny, a nurse, a teacher, an entertainer, a comforter and a domestic slave. If this service wasn't provided free in the home, largely by women, there would be a breakdown of society as we know it.

The existence of the family as an *economic unit*—a provider of social services necessary for the smooth running of capitalism—underpins women's inequality. It provides a practical barrier to women's participation in life outside the home. Even if full-time jobs were available for women to take up, and the employers were like Sophie Mirman, most women would be hard-pushed to take them. The EOC report cited above found that dependent children were the most important reason why women worked part time. The latest *British Social Attitudes* survey (1988/89) asked women aged 18 to 34 why they did not have a paid job: 81 per cent gave 'raising children' as the main reason. Only eight per cent said they 'preferred' not to work.

Parental problems

Sophie Mirman may argue that you can choose not to have children—but you can't choose not to have parents. Cuts in social services over the past 10 years have severely undermined state care for the sick and elderly. Today almost half of Britain's elderly depend on relatives to look after them. 'Relatives' in most cases means daughters or daughters-in-law. The burden of care for the elderly on untrained people is now so great that a report from the British Geriatrics Society (which represents 1500 doctors specialising in care for the elderly) estimates that half a million elderly people may be at risk of physical or mental abuse by relatives caring for them. The cases of brutality which they cite are not

caused by nutters but by 'very caring people who are at the end of their tether' (*Abuse of Elderly People*).

Even if there is no baby or ageing parent to care for, we have to spend long hours working at home just to stay alive. Who would scrub the nation's toilets, cook its dinners and generally clean up after it if these tasks were not done privately and for free, within the family, as housework? The capitalist class has no interest in paying for these services to be provided socially. And how long could society survive without them being done?

It is these realities of women's lives which shape attitudes. Men who regard women as inferior reflect the fact that women do indeed play an inferior role in life outside the home. Their central responsibility for home and family also shapes women's attitudes to themselves and society. If a woman has been preoccupied all day with the world of a four-year old, and her most stimulating conversation was a brief exchange about egg prices with the check-out girl in Safeway, she is unlikely to feel confident about asserting her views on the situation in Panama over the evening meal. The *cri de coeur* 'we have nothing in common any more' often reflects the reality of the relationship between a husband and wife who spend most of their lives in different worlds.

In the beginning

Almost 20 years ago, the new Women's Liberation Movement declared that family life was restrictive, and that the burdens of childcare and domestic work were central to the oppression of women. In the early seventies the WLM didn't just demand equal pay and opportunities in education and at work, it also took up demands that sought to free women from their domestic responsibilities in the family. The call for free abortion and contraception on demand aimed to give women some choice over whether to become mothers. The demand for free 24-hour nurseries sought to free mothers from the burden of childcare. Those campaigning for women's liberation saw these as the essential preconditions of equality. Liberation meant liberation from home and family—freedom to compete equally on the labour market, to be involved in politics, in trade unions, or even just freedom to go out for a drink. Feminists saw themselves breaking free of the traditional role of wife and mother.

Today the moral and political climate has completely changed. The authorities stress the importance of motherhood and blame social problems on the breakdown of the family. They point to vandalism and

football hooliganism as proof of the need for more parental control. They blame poor school standards on parents' lack of interest in their children's education. They claim that Aids is the responsibility of homosexuals who live 'unnatural' lives in 'pretended family relationships'. They blame cervical cancer on promiscuity. They blame violence in society on the effects which 'unsuitable' TV programmes have on unsupervised children. The examples are endless. Every government minister, press editor and 'expert' is at pains to talk up the importance of the mother's role.

Family fashions

Against the background of this all-pervasive moral offensive, there is much confusion about what attitude we should take towards the family. Many of the women who marched for abortion in the seventies and sported the popular badge asking 'Y B A wife?' now find themselves in monogamous relationships with children of their own. Then the family institution seemed restrictive and possessive, 'old fashioned' and uncool. Today it is increasingly popular among traditional feminists. Sheila Rowbotham was one of the pioneers of British feminism in the seventies. Her contribution to the special edition of *Feminist Review* (Spring 1989) on 20 years of feminism is an article on the dilemmas of mothering. Look at the women's studies section in any radical bookshop and you will find that books on infertility, childbirth and childcare easily outnumber those on contraception, abortion, women at work. A recurring theme in feminist novels is that of celebrating womanhood through childbearing.

The shift is not altogether surprising. Even in the radical seventies the Women's Liberation Movement put many political problems down to the prevailing masculine values; men dominated meetings and imposed structures, men were aggressive, men couldn't express their feelings, men were materialistic, and so on. Once you locate the source of society's problems in masculinity, it is only a short step to seeking the solution in feminine values. And so a celebration of 'womanly' ideals became the fashion. This was expressed most vividly through the women's peace movement of the early eighties, which celebrated women's nurturing role and their closeness to nature through motherhood while shunning men as violent warmongers. The slogan 'take the toys from the boys' summed up this view.

In the eighties both the authorities and the women's movement have begun to put more emphasis on the

value of motherhood and family life. Though they started from different premises they often ended up in agreement. Many feminists now argue that motherhood and caring are more rewarding than waged work, so 'parenting' should be given more status. Thatcher agrees that 'very few jobs can compare in long-term satisfaction and importance with that of housewife and mother', which is 'why we must strengthen the family'.

The danger is that today's feminist arguments can be co-opted by the Tories, and used to reinforce their reactionary case. For example, many feminists and radicals have argued that care in the community is far preferable to the 'institutionalisation of the sick and elderly'. They argue that in the seventies there was too much emphasis on demanding that the state take responsibility for the infirm. Now Thatcher uses this argument to justify welfare cuts, complaining about the 'dependency culture' created by state services and insisting that we should return to the old ways of coping with social problems through the family and neighbours. 'You'll be surprised', she told *Woman* last year, 'at the number of people who used to say: "Look, there's a lady down the road and she's cold. The government ought to do something about it." At home we would have done something about it ourselves'.

The issues surrounding the family are not clear cut. Trotsky identified the family as 'a haven in a heartless world'. The family can and often does bring comfort. Most people get pleasure from an intimate relationship with a long-term partner. Sex can be more satisfying, waking up with a friend can give a better start to the day. Many people get a great deal of joy from children and satisfaction in caring for them. There are even aspects of housework which some find relaxing. And at the end of the day who doesn't like to close the door on a hostile world and retreat into one over which they have at least some control?

Semi-detached

When family life seems attractive, it is usually in relation to the pressures which the struggle to survive in capitalist society exerts on us all. We want to be masters and mistresses of our homes because we have so little control of our lives outside of them. For the women who do the domestic work, however, there is a fine line between a refuge and a prison.

The family is not only important as a provider of free services for capitalist society. It also has an ideological function. Capitalism creates the working class and brings it together as a powerful force with a

common interest in opposing the system. The authorities seek to undermine that collective strength and identity. The family unit is an ideal tool. By emphasising the importance of family life the establishment aims to fragment the working class into millions of unique, atomised units, often competing with each other for survival.

When Margaret Thatcher declared in 1987 'There is no such thing as society—there are individual men and women and there are families', she was saying 'You're on your own and if you don't look after your own, no one else will'. This notion tends to reflect the way that individuals experience life. We exist as members of social classes, but experience life as individuals. Your poll tax bill isn't made out to the working class—it is made out to you, and you have to worry about where the money is coming from to pay it.

Many of us have experienced the sense of power that comes with the solidarity of a picket line or a demonstration. This confidence stems from being part of a common struggle where we can draw on a collective strength. But it is quickly sapped when people get home and become fathers, mothers, husbands and wives once again. The militant who called for all-out strike action in the union meeting is now faced with the problem of how to pay the mortgage. The activist who wants to organise a march against a hospital closure faces the dilemma of who will collect the children from school if she is making placards, and who will do the ironing if she goes to the meeting? Once again the responsibility of the family weighs heavy, this time not just on women, but on the whole of the working class.

Liberation agenda

So long as society depends on the family to play its current role, it will be a millstone around women's necks. For every post-feminist woman with a designer briefcase, many thousands more live pre-feminist lives. Real freedom for them will require more than role models and encouraging words from the few who have made good. We need to get rid of the shackles that hold us down. And the family is the heaviest chain of all.

At a time when the right is going all-out to emphasise women's central role in family life, there is a greater need to assert a claim to independence. The demands which strike at the root of women's oppression are those which will free us from the domestic trap. A campaign for women's liberation in the 1990s must place the fight for abortion rights and childcare

facilities at the top of the agenda.

It is getting harder for a woman to terminate an unwanted pregnancy, in the context of NHS cuts and a political climate in which abortion is seen as less and less acceptable.

Although the law allows for termination up to 28 weeks, some London health authorities will only accept women aged between 16 and 40, with pregnancies of less than 12 weeks, for termination on medical grounds. Last year, Liberal MP David Alton's attempt to impose an early time-limit on abortion fell only because of parliamentary procedure. This year the Tories are promising to bring forward legislation which will further restrict abortion rights.

The right to abortion is essential if women are to play a full role in society. Without the *right* to end an unwanted pregnancy every woman is at the mercy of her biology. We are denied the means to end unwanted pregnancies simply because the establishment decrees that motherhood is our natural state.

The demand for nursery facilities is essential to any campaign for women's liberation. Women who choose to have children should not have to bear the responsibility of care for them, if they are to stand any chance of playing a full part in social, political and economic life. Some women will no doubt find the demand for 24-hour childcare unattractive: 'Who would want to leave a child in a nursery for 24 hours?' This misses the point—mothers should be entitled to decent free childcare whenever they want it, for whatever reason.

The demands for the right to abortion and for round-the-clock childcare may sound idealistic in Thatcher's Britain. But they are no more and no less idealistic than the demand for women's equality. Until we have won these rights, all women will suffer from the expectation that their role at work, in politics or anywhere in the outside world is only a temporary stop-off point before they assume their proper position rocking the cradle.

When the first Women's Liberation Movement conference met in Oxford in 1970 it adopted four demands:

- 1 Equal education and job opportunities
- 2 Equal pay
- 3 Free 24-hour nurseries
- 4 Free contraception and abortion on demand

The first two are now enshrined in law, but as women have found to their cost, until we have the last two they are empty promises. To stop halfway is to lose everything.

Housework

NEVER DONE

Anne Burton on the housework factor in women's oppression

Notwithstanding all laws emancipating woman, she continues to be a *domestic slave*, because petty housework crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and the nursery, and she wastes her labour on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-racking, stultifying and crushing drudgery. The real emancipation of women, real communism, will begin only where and when an all-out struggle begins...against this petty housekeeping, or rather when its wholesale transformation into a large-scale socialist economy begins.' (Lenin, July 1919, in *Collected Works*, Vol 29, p429)

For Marxists, women's liberation must centre on freeing women from their responsibilities in the home. This involves challenging the role of the family in capitalist society.

The capitalist system could not function without the family. Capitalism relies on workers having a home to go to, where they can eat, sleep and replenish their energies ready for the next day at work. Without the time and effort spent by women in the family to ensure the physical survival of the working class, capitalism would have nobody to exploit.

A free lunch

The capitalists rely for their profits on the fact that the money they pay workers is less than the value that workers create in production. If they had to meet the cost of supplying the worker's every need, their ability to produce a profit would be severely impaired. Consequently the employers are very satisfied with the family as a form of social organisation. Within the family, women will cook the meals and wash the clothes that the working class needs, without any involvement or investment from the employers.

Domestic work, or housework, is linked to capitalism—but separate from social production. Capitalism needs it but doesn't pay for it and is not concerned with how it is carried out. This has major implications for the work, and the women who do it.

The domestic work that women do at home is different from any other form of work. For example, an industrial cleaner cleans because he is paid a wage to clean—he is employed for a certain number of hours, and cleans for that long and no longer. If



Who else looks up to a housewife?

he can skimp on the cleaning or skive off for a while without the boss noticing, so much the better. By contrast, a woman at home cleans because her house needs cleaning. She has to stay on the job until it is finished. If she takes time to read or watch TV the work simply waits for her return.

In a workplace, employers take steps to maximise productivity, cut waste and introduce technology. Inefficient capitalists are uncompetitive and will go to the wall. These rules do not apply to housework. At home, rather than operating as part of a productive unit in society, women work alone, in private. There is no economic impulse for the system to rationalise domestic work and make it more efficient. Even if a woman spends long hours washing up and dusting in the same way that her grandmother did, nobody will go bankrupt. Without any drive to raise productivity, the work remains primitive drudgery.

Housework is in a class of its own. Many factory jobs may be as monotonous, repetitive and boring as the round of washing, cooking and

cleaning. But however tedious the production line is the work comes to an end when the worker clocks off. For women in the home there is no clocking off. The work is always there, inseparable from life itself. There is no sick leave and you can't go on strike. A woman's work is truly never done.

Lee Comer, in *Wedlocked Women* (1974) gives a good description of a housewife's evening:

'While she is talking with her husband or watching television she is minutely aware of her responsibilities—the ashtrays which must be emptied, the cups and glasses which must be washed; the husband's and children's clothes which must be sorted out for the morning and she must break off a conversation to put a note out for the milkman and all the time she has to remember what she has to do the next day—the child to the dentist, clothes which need mending, sugar which has run out, ad nauseam. She goes to bed and the evening which her husband enjoyed or merely relaxed in, has for her receded behind the weight of things she has done and things which she has still to do. The

joke that the woman lies there planning the following day's menus while her husband is making love to her is no joke to the woman. Doing housework and being a housewife are indivisible.' (pp85-6)

Most women have to organise their lives around domestic responsibilities. Many aspects of the work are inflexible—children have to be delivered to and collected from school at specific times, meals must be cooked before they can be eaten, clothes have to be laundered before they can be worn. The old joke—'Behind every successful man is a hard-working woman, and behind every successful woman is a pile of unironed laundry' is anything but funny to women who have tried to make a career outside the home. Many women find that domestic responsibilities effectively exclude them from society. They are severely hampered in the labour market, and have little time or money for a life outside the home.

Investment risk

Even women who manage to minimise the intrusion of domestic responsibilities find themselves unequal in the outside world. Society expects women to be handicapped by their primary responsibility for home and family. Whether or not an individual woman has a partner who does an equal share of domestic work doesn't alter this assumption. A woman can be young, educated and ambitious, but when she competes for a job on the labour market a prospective employer does not see her individual qualities. He sees a woman—maternity dress, apron and duster—and asks 'Can I risk investing in training this?'

Women's imprisonment within the home limits their experience of work, of society and of ideas. When a man comes home from even the most tedious job, he has been in the company of other adults with different ideas and backgrounds. The young mother's sole companion has been her baby. While her husband is watching the TV, she's washing the nappies. Whereas once they spent their time together they now live in different worlds. No wonder they sometimes don't know what to say to each other. She finds him detached and unsympathetic, he finds her staid and unstimulating. Capitalism presses people together in the family, and then tears them apart through their experience of it.

Women are treated as inferior because they are put in an inferior position by the structure of capitalist society. Women's liberation must mean liberation from all this, and the creation of a society which has the capacity and the commitment to take responsibility for the tasks which are presently the bane of every woman's life.

Survey: what she wants—and expects—today

Desires within young women

We asked 50 young women, aged between 15 and 19 from England, Scotland and Wales, about their lives, their hopes and their attitudes

'What do you mean, are we less moral than our parents? Do you mean being bad and stuff, getting away with a lot more? My mum doesn't think that but my teachers do. That's what they say to me a lot—that my moral standards need looking at, like wearing short skirts and things, provoking boys, and because I speak openly about sex. They say my head is screwed on the wrong way.'

(16-year old)

'I never realised before the Aids thing that people have sex before marriage, I just didn't realise. I thought it was almost illegal. Aids made me more aware but it hasn't changed my attitudes, just reinforced them.'

(15-year old)

Interviews by Ele Dashwood, Kerry Dean, Debbie Steele, Becky Taylor. Compiled by Kirsten Cale.

Sex, contraception and kids

Q: Do you want to have children? Do you think you will?

Sixty per cent wanted to have children; one in five were sure that they didn't. But just three women were certain they would not have them.

'No, I don't want them, because of the pain! Perhaps yes in my early thirties. It wouldn't be in marriage. If I wanted a child I would have a child and that would be it.'

(19-year old)

'Definitely. I think it's part of womanhood really. When I feel ready with a person I want to marry and all that then yes, I'll have kids.'

(17-year old)

'I haven't always thought I didn't want kids. But because of my mum, she's on social security, she's got three kids and she hasn't got enough money. I just don't want to end up like that. Will I end up having kids? Probably, yes.'

(16-year old)

Half of the women had had sex; only two had done so before they were 16. A small minority were involved in sexual relationships, and almost all of these used the pill. The overwhelming majority had used condoms the first time they had sex.

Q: Why do you think a lot of young women get pregnant?

'I'm not sure, maybe to get attention or something.'

(15-year old)

'Because they're never taught any better. At school I got taught how to have a baby but never how not to have a baby. A lot of women do it as a way out as well. That's all they think there is, get married and have a baby.'

(19-year old)

'Girls get pregnant because there isn't enough morals in today's society. They are being careless when they shouldn't have even done it in the first place.'

(15-year old)

'They are forced into it by men, saying "If you don't do it with me I'm just going to leave you".'

(15-year old)

'They get pregnant to trap the men.'

(17-year old)

Q: Are you worried about newspaper reports that link the pill with cancer?

'These scares about cancer are all to put women down, so we're scared to go on the pill and so we can be work slaves.'

(19-year old)

'I'm not worried about cancer scares because the newspapers are even saying that you can get cancer from apples.'

(15-year old)

'I don't agree with the pill. I think it just fucks your body up.'

(19-year old)

'I can't take the pill anyway, I've got varicose veins. But every day someone says the pill's related to cancer and then every other day someone says it's not so you don't really know what to believe.'

(19-year old)

Q: What would you do if you got pregnant?

Half said they would have the child and the others that they would have an abortion.

'If I found out I was pregnant I'd be scared stiff. I don't think I could handle it. I think I'm much, much too young so I would probably...not have the baby. An abortion? I'm sorry but I would.'

(17-year old)

'At this age, I don't think I'd have the baby. I know it's awful to say but I'd think of myself before I'd think of anyone else really.'

(17-year old)

'I'd panic. but I wouldn't have an abortion. I'd probably get my family's support.'

(17-year old)

'I believe in a baby's rights. I wouldn't have an abortion unless I was raped.'

(16-year old)

Q: Do you think you could get an abortion if you needed one?

'It's very difficult. I always thought it was just private, because you don't hear anything about it. I had a friend who went to the doctor here for an abortion and he let his religion come into it and told her she couldn't have one.'

(17-year old)

'You can get an abortion if you're mad. Or if you can lower yourself to prove you are an unfit mother.'

(19-year old)

'It depends. If people have sex just for the sake of it then they shouldn't be allowed to get one.'

(17-year old)

Q: Do you think abortion is murder?

Half said no, a third said yes, the rest weren't sure.

'No. That's bullshit.'

(17-year old)

'People who say abortion is murder are pathetic. My RE teacher showed us this horrendous video with bits going in black bin-liners. There was a heart-warming bit of a baby in the mother's tummy and our teacher freaks out because I start saying "I wonder if the mum's got any money and a house".'

(16-year old)

'I saw a video and it was really horrible. I don't think abortion should be allowed at all.'

(15-year old)

Q: Has Aids affected your, or your friends', attitude to sex?

Two thirds said it had, the other third weren't worried.

'Not at the moment because I'm not...you know...but as I get older, soon I'll be worrying more.'

(16-year old)

'I don't know anyone who's had sex.'

(15-year old)

'It's a load of crap. It's just a scare against homosexuals to promote prejudice and everything'

(19-year old)

'You get loads of myths like "Don't sit on the toilet seat, you'll get Aids" or "A homosexual person's just been in there, don't go in you'll get Aids".'

(16-year old)

Q: What do you think about homosexuality?

Nearly half of the women felt that homosexuality was up to the individual. About a third positively endorsed lesbian and gay equality, although others were very hostile. Forty per cent said that they had lesbian or gay friends, although all the women we interviewed professed to be heterosexual themselves.

'I tolerate it as long as they keep

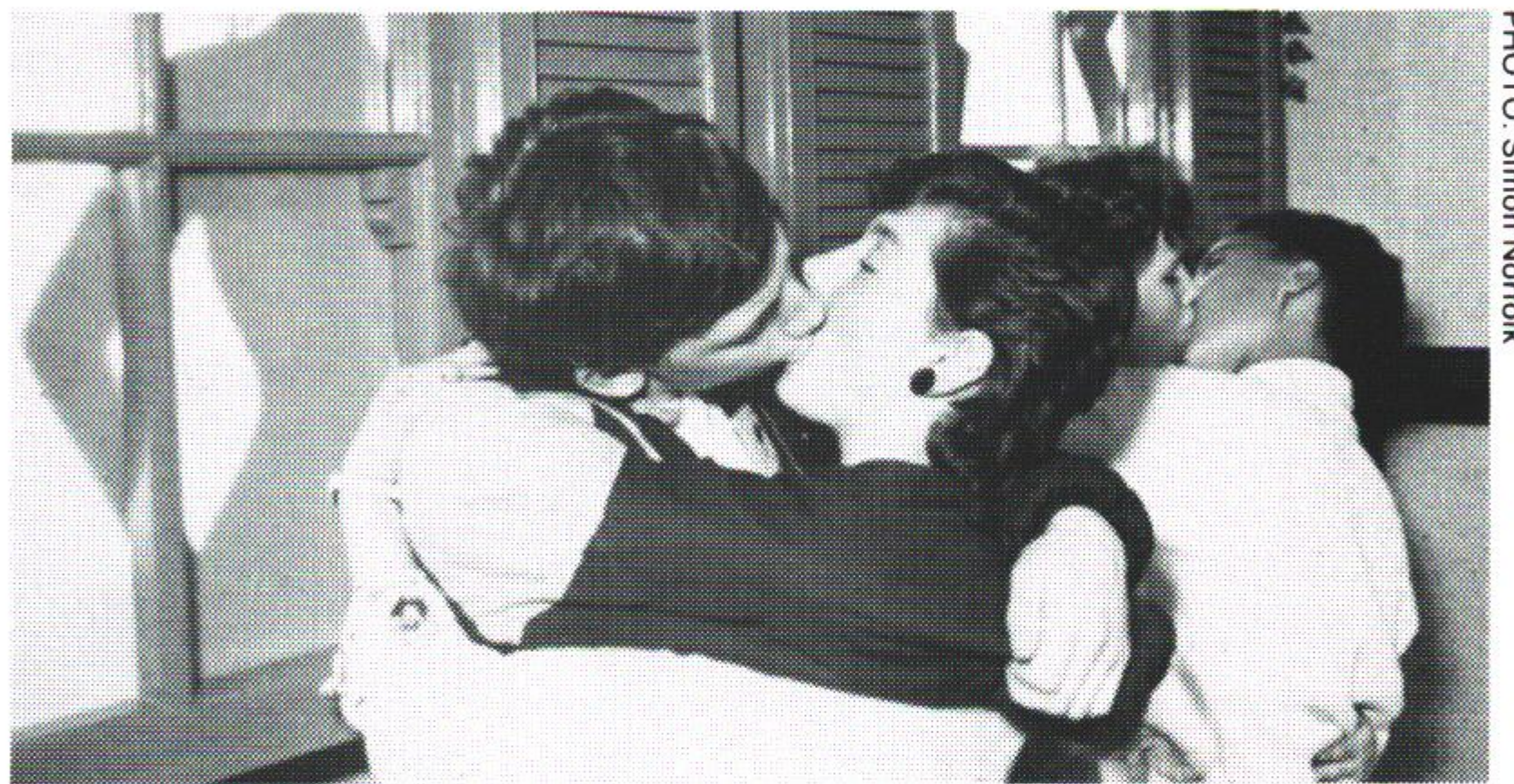


PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

Not-so-great expectations

Q: Where would you like to live when you're 25? And where do you think you will be living?

More than half wanted to live in their home town. But more than three quarters thought they'd be stuck in the same place whether they liked it or not. A third wanted to live abroad when they reached 25, especially if Margaret Thatcher was still in power. But only half of those who wanted to leave the country thought they would make it.

'When I'm 25 I'd like to be working in the foreign office and be posted abroad. I don't want to live here because it's a load of balls. There's nothing here is there?'

(17-year old)

'I'd like to live pretty far away from Leeds. Manchester. I'll probably end up here because of commitments, family and everything.'

(18-year old)

'I'm not bothered where I live in

themselves to themselves. I think it's unnatural. I wouldn't like it being promoted. As for lesbian friends, I hope not.'

(16-year old)

'I think it's sick.'

(19-year old)

'Nobody asks if I prance about on my boyfriend's stomach with stilettos on, so I don't think it's anybody's business what they do in bed or out of it.'

(19-year old)

'A boy I knew was very effeminate and always had the mickey taken out of him. He had a sort of a breakdown. He didn't know if he was gay or not. I went to see him recently. He's living with a boy seven years older and is right happy. At first when they hugged and that I felt a bit uncomfortable. But they're a really nice couple.'

(16-year old)

Glasgow. Just a nice area of town. At 25? Easterhouse probably.'

(17-year old)

'I'd like to live by the sea. I'll probably still be in the city.'

(15-year old)

Q: What job would you like to do when you're 25? What job do you think you will be doing?

The gap between hopes and prospects widens still further. They wanted well-paid, secure jobs. The most ambitious said they would like to be lawyers or doctors. But only one in three thought it possible to get the job they wanted.

'I want to work in a bank. At 25, hopefully, I'll still be working in a bank—my interview's this week.'

(16-year old)

'I want to be an actress or a director. But I'll probably end up working in Woolworth's or something.'

(17-year old)

Problems

Q: What is the biggest problem facing young people today?

Lack of access to proper jobs	60%
Aids	18%
Environmental destruction	11%
Rising crime	4%
Threat of nuclear war	1%
Don't know	6%

'If you can't get a job it often leads to other things like drugs. You're driven by boredom. If you haven't got any money, you're more likely to steal and things. You're against society because society's put you into that situation.'

(19-year old)

'I think the environment is more important than a job because it has implications for the whole world.'

(18-year old)

'Aids is the biggest problem. You hear a lot about it. They're just not

taking precautions, through having sex and injecting.'

(17-year old)

'Getting a job, because it's more immediately soluble than the others. I mean joining CND isn't going to help an awful lot and Aids isn't something you can do much about.'

(19-year old)



PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

Heroes and heroines

Q: Who or what has made the biggest impact on your life?

Parents, friends, families and teachers figured highly as the biggest influence, although not always as they would have liked. Three women named another parental figure, Jesus Christ.

'It was teachers at school. Realising they weren't what they'd been held up to be, realising the people you'd held in high esteem were shallower than it's possible to get.'

(19-year old)

'I suppose my family has had the biggest influence on me because I'll know they're always there. After all, you grow up with them.'

(19-year old)

'My friend's mum. Her husband left her with four kids. She's brilliant, we can all talk to her. She's better off without him.'

(18-year old)

'I don't know, I suppose my parents really. I wouldn't do things if they questioned it. I think, would my dad mind if I do it?'

(17-year old)

Q: Who is your hero or heroine?

Nominations included Morrissey, Paul Weller, David Bowie, Kirk Brandon and Tim Booth; Nastassja Kinski, Sean Connery, Harrison Ford and Emilio Estevez; Nelson Mandela, JD Salinger, Harry Perkins (fictional Labour premier in *A Very British Coup*), Florence Nightingale and Sigmund Freud. Four women nominated less famous figures: their mums.

'I'm not going to say Bros. It's JD Salinger.'

(19-year old)

'My hero's Morrissey...oh, and Freud.'

(17-year old)

Women's rights

Q: Are women equal to men?

'Yes, we're equal, because women are human too! It's just a physical difference. Women've got brains too, most of them.'

(15-year old)

'Men put women down, especially at work. You find there's still a lot of men in high positions. I haven't seen many men cleaners. They're all women.'

(17-year old)

'Women are not equal. It stems from the attitudes of old people. My brother left home at 17. That was fine. But me leaving was not fine. I was stupid and immoral.'

(18-year old)

Q: What do you think feminism is?

'Could you explain what the word means?'

(15-year old)

'It means not wanting to be very feminine. Not wanting to do all the things females do—the normal stuff like dressing up in high heels and wearing skirts. They just want to be themselves.'

(15-year old)

'All I've heard about it, it's like burning your bra and all this. Hating men and all that.'

(17-year old)

'Feminists want to be men.'

(16-year old)

'It's believing you're of no less value than a man. You can do all the things men have been doing for years. You don't need to say: "I need to look after the kids, I need a man, I'm so dependent, I need sex and love." OK we need love, but no more than men do.'

(19-year old)

GET IT FREE FOR 3 MONTHS

Subscribe to **Living Marxism** now and we'll send you 15 issues for £15—the normal price of a 12-month subscription.

Fill in the form and send it to:

Living Marxism Subscriptions Offer (L9), BCM JPLtd, London WC1N 3XX. Make cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd.

I would like to take out a subscription to **Living Marxism**

I enclose £

NAME

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

TEL

join!

The Women's Press Bookclub

Get discounts of up to seventy per cent on sixty new books a year, and on a constantly updated stocklist.

Membership to The Women's Press Bookclub gives you better access to opinion, analysis, fact and fiction.



Here's just three examples of the 130 titles you can choose from in our new July catalogue:

Cat's Eye
Margaret Atwood
Bloomsbury £12.95
Bookclub price £8.95

**The Demon Lover:
On the Sexuality of Terrorism**
Robin Morgan
Methuen £16.99
Bookclub price £8.95

**The Sign of Angellica:
Women, Writing and Fiction**
Janet Todd
Virago £12.99
Bookclub price £8.75

For your free copy of the latest catalogue, write to

The Women's Press Bookclub
Department 1m
34 Great Sutton Street
London EC1V 0DX

Childcare, work and 'demographic time-bombs'

Guess who's left holding the baby?

PHOTO: Simon Norfolk



Fiona Foster examines the mythical boom in workplace nurseries and women's job prospects

'I believe that in 1989 we in this country are standing on the threshold of a new revolution—a revolution in employment opportunities and a revolution that will continue beyond short-term demographic upheavals. And the theme of that revolution should be not so much the Rights of Man, but the Rights of Women.'

The revolutionary fervour comes from employment minister Norman Fowler, speaking at a recent 'Work and the Family' conference staged by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI). We don't often hear Tory ministers preaching revolution, but the discovery of a 'demographic time-bomb' seems to have got them going.

Last summer the National Economic Development Council published a survey claiming that most employers were ignorant of demographic trends which suggest a sharp reduction in the number of school leavers in the nineties. The NEDC warned that alternative sources of labour must be found. Women, the traditional reserve army of labour, have been chosen to fill the gap. Tory employment ministers,

trade union officials, and labour correspondents have all welcomed the 'time-bomb' as a chance to expand and improve women's employment opportunities.

If we are to believe what we read in the press, women considering a return to work after having children will now be lured by companies competing to offer them the best childcare facilities, bonuses, and working arrangements. They could take advantage of a career-break scheme, up to five years' unpaid leave with your job at the same grade guaranteed on your return, perhaps keeping in touch with developments at work via a computer link up or an annual refresher course. 'It means that women can now have their cake and eat it', says the managing director of a retailing giant; 'they can pursue careers while at the same time having interests and commitments outside work'. According to Lesley Garner of the *Telegraph*, demographic change 'has achieved what two decades of feminist agitation failed to alter. It has focused the attention of the government and industry on the need for good childcare'.

Much of the coverage of this issue

has used the 'Your country needs you' images of Britain at war, when the full-scale entry of women into the war economy necessitated state-run nurseries, launderettes and even canteens, while official ideology praised women for going out to work and promoted the social benefits of state childcare. The reality of the Thatcher years, however, is very different. Let's look at the issue more closely.

After the baby boom of the sixties, the birth rate slumped. Between now and 1995 the number of 16 to 19-year olds is expected to fall by 600 000, or nearly a quarter. This could cause difficulties for employers in some areas. For example, if the NHS were to continue its present recruiting pattern it would be recruiting 60 per cent of all female school leavers by the mid-nineties. The problem facing employers is how to replace this low-paid, flexible workforce. The 'women returners' are ideal substitutes. These are women forced to leave full-time jobs to have children and now desperate to get back to work to supplement the family income, or to create it as single parents.

The banking, finance and insurance sectors depend heavily on

ABOVE:
Without freely available childcare, women are living in a box

The thing that
will have to
be most
flexible in
Fowler's
revolution
is a woman's
back

their school-leaver intake, the big four clearing banks employing some 20 000 teenagers between them each year. These firms are trying hardest to play up their women-friendly facilities. Midland Bank has announced plans for 300 workplace nurseries. The other major banks have publicised their career-break schemes and extended certain benefits to part timers. Many other companies now emphasise their equal opportunity policies, and send managers to pack out conferences on childcare, career breaks and so on.

Yet most of these grandiose plans and promises are not worth the paper they are advertised on. Even the Workplace Nurseries Campaign, a pressure group of middle class professional women, admits that media coverage is inaccurate: 'A myth seems to have grown that employers across the country are busy establishing workplace nurseries. Unfortunately that is not true.' In fact *less than 20* big companies nationwide are providing childcare. Midland Bank hasn't even set up the two pilot schemes it announced last year.

On with the old

Where workplace nurseries do exist, priority is often given to women in managerial grades. Even if it wasn't, women working on lower grades could not afford them. Helen works for one of the major banks. She had to return to work quite soon after having her first baby because she split up with her partner and couldn't survive on measly state benefits. 'I was delighted when I read all this "mother-friendly" stuff in the press. Tom stays with my sister at the moment but she's got two little ones of her own. When I asked about the workplace nurseries they told me they'd take ages to set up, cost me about £35 a week and anyway priority would be given to mothers on managerial grades. I suppose it's them they can't afford to lose.'

Unlike during the war years, the government has no intention of easing the domestic burden on women to encourage them into the workforce; in fact the reverse is true. The other side of the demographic coin shows an increase in the elderly population. The number of people in their eighties is expected to double by the year 2000. Six million people, mainly women, already care for dependent relatives. The government's 'community care' proposals can only mean more elderly and handicapped people moved out of institutions and back into the home.

Annette, 38, had just gone back to work after 15 years of being a housewife and mother to three children. 'It was hard work at first

but I got to love it, just being with different people, talking about things other than the kids and the ironing, you know, like politics, careers. I even started thinking maybe it wasn't too late for my own career.' But Annette's career plans came to an abrupt halt when her husband's mother had to come and live with them and Annette had to give up her job. 'I miss work a lot but unless I got a job in the evenings or at the weekend I can't work. With my own parents getting on a bit I can see myself doing this for the next 20 years.'

As for state-funded childcare, there are now less than half the number of places for under-fives in public nurseries as in 1945, and virtually no out of school provision. Margaret Thatcher says that's the way she wants it: 'Women make their own arrangements now and they can carry on doing so....Can they in fact go out at all at that stage of their children's development or should several women get together and arrange that one looks after the children while the rest go part time?' (*She*, January) Home office minister John Patten, who chairs a new government committee on women's issues, says that state childcare provision is 'Stalinist' and that the state should not help the working mother, 'unless her life has collapsed'.

In the speech in which he heralded a revolution, Fowler spelt out what the change really meant:

'It means flexibility in hours of work and in holidays to allow working mothers to take care of children outside school hours....It means a willingness to explore the scope for home-working....It also means that employers need to expand the scope for job-sharing and part-time working.'

The thing that will have to be most flexible in this revolution is a woman's back. She will not be relieved of responsibility for childcare to allow her to go out and earn a decent wage. She will be expected to keep up the nursing and childminding, and make time to fit in evening work, part-time work or homework.

Management priorities reflect Fowler's attitude. Only two per cent of the 2000 employers recently surveyed by Blue Arrow Personnel had set up workplace nurseries, most in the public sector. But a quarter of the employers had introduced flexible working.

Of course so long as childcare is unavailable, many women will be forced to accept any arrangement that enables them to earn some money. A recent survey by the Maternity Alliance shows that for most women returning to work after

having children, flexible working hours, time off to care for sick children and the right to return to the same job were more important than pay and conditions. (One woman returning to work just three months after giving birth was told by her boss 'Right lady, you've had a nice long rest, now it's time to get back to work'.)

Among the new schemes for 'enhancing flexibility' are 'twilight shifts'. Two insurance companies, the Norwich Union and London & Edinburgh have recently introduced shifts from 6pm to 10pm, specifically designed for women returners. Apparently the response to both has been overwhelming. A personnel officer for London & Edinburgh spelled out the advantages for the firm: 'We're delighted with the response to these schemes which mean we can use our technology for an extra four hours a day.'

Part-time work is already the big boom area in women's employment. Between June 1983 and March 1988 740 000 new jobs went to women working part time, and only 550 000 to women full timers. Part-time work is badly paid, has low status with few promotion prospects and little or no employment protection or access to benefits. Women opt for part-time work in the absence of childcare; yet this is widely interpreted as a matter of genuine choice.

Hi-tech sweat

The government made clear its low opinion of part-time women workers when announcing plans to abolish the wages councils, which laid down a minimum wage for certain low-paid trades. A government spokesman said that scrapping this safety-net didn't much matter, since 'most workers in the wages council trades are part timers, many of them contributing a second income to the home'. The British government refuses to ratify the European Commission instruction to extend equal pay and access to benefits to part-time workers.

Homeworking has been infamous for years as under-paid drudgery exploited by the sweatshop owners of the rag trade. Now it is supposed to be a big step forward for working mothers, disguised under the new hi-tech title of 'telecommuting', which basically means using a home computer linked to the office terminal. One telecommuter opted for this work because she couldn't find nursery places for her two young children. 'With the kids around all day I can't concentrate so I don't usually get started till about eight at night. Quite often that means I don't get finished till the early hours, and I certainly don't take the recommended breaks from the computer screen.'

The debate about the demographic time-bomb has created a dangerous myth that presents the restructuring of employment in the interests of employers as a gain for women. The leaders of the opposition and the trade unions have been taken in. Neil Kinnock calls for even more flexible working for women. The TUC welcomes homeworking. It only adds that union protection should be extended to homeworkers. But there's not much value in belonging to a collective trade union if you are isolated in the home and have no contact with other members.

Rather than challenging the increased exploitation of women workers and demanding our right to a decent job and full-time childcare, the unions ask that they be given credit for the measures being introduced. Anne Gibson, national women's officer for the MSF which

represents many women in the banking and finance sector, was angered at our suggestion that she should be sceptical of the changes brought in by the employers and the government: 'We welcome all the developments for women arising out of the demographic trends and would just point out that unlike the employers, we've been campaigning for part timers, flexible working, job-sharing, workplace nurseries, etc, for many years. And we don't intend to let them go when the demographic trends revert. We won't let women be thrown back into the home like they were after the war.'

Anne Gibson doesn't seem to have noticed that most women have barely made it out of the home. Though a small number of professional women may benefit from an expansion in career opportunities and expensive creches, the vast majority of women

can look forward to combining extra responsibilities on the home front with demanding jobs and derisory wages outside.

The schemes being pioneered for women returners provide further opportunities for employers to trap women with no other option into low-paid unprotected work. That should come as no surprise; after all, the school leavers whom these women are meant to replace are the YTS generation. We cannot wait for the third world war to start before we demand the free childcare facilities that can free women from the home.

As for the authorities, they can now rely on women to look after the children, pensioners and handicapped people as well as filling in any temporary labour shortages. Now that's what I call having your cake and eating it.



Abortion rights under attack—again

Tories to back Spuc

Kirsten Cale looks at the latest threat to abortion rights

The Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (Spuc) marches on parliament at the end of June. The anti-abortionists are on the offensive again—only this time, they have the active support of friends in very high places. The government plans to introduce a bill cutting the legal time-limit for abortion from 28 to 24 weeks in the next parliamentary session.

If the Tory government goes ahead and sponsors a legislative attack on abortion rights, it will break the convention that says governments should maintain a hands-off attitude to 'moral' issues. The Tories are confident that they can get away with such an unprecedented assault on women's rights by building on the solid consensus that already exists in favour of more restrictions on abortion. The strength of this consensus is reflected in the current preoccupations of the anti-abortion movement. Spuc believes that it has already won the political and moral argument against abortion; so it organised its demonstration to tie up the technical loose ends, by calling for more parliamentary time for legislation.

Because of the success of the anti-abortion campaigns, the parliamentary debate will not focus on whether women have more or less rights than a fetus. That question has already been decided in favour of the latter. The issue will be the *extent* to which abortion rights can be curtailed. The moral rearmers want a ban on

all abortions, but will settle for an 18, 20 or 22-week compromise. The government, the Labour Party and the medical establishment will most likely promote a 24-week limit. What's left of the old hard left will call for a defence of the status quo—the 28-week limit laid down by the 1967 Abortion Act.

The political success achieved by the anti-abortion lobby means that, regardless of whether the law changes or not, it is already becoming increasingly difficult for women to obtain an abortion under the 1967 Act. The existing legislation does not give women the right to an abortion. It makes abortion *illegal* except in rigidly defined circumstances. Unless a woman can convince two doctors that giving birth will damage her, or her children's, physical or mental health, or that the fetus is handicapped, then she has no legal access to an abortion. The 1967 Act allows doctors, not women, to decide whether to terminate a pregnancy or not.

The 1967 Act sets out stringent guidelines for the approval of an abortion, but is intentionally vague about the provision of abortion facilities. In the current climate, doctors and health authorities are exploiting this combination of factors to put further restrictions on access to abortion. Health authorities have felt free to make NHS cuts in gynaecology departments; many now refuse to perform abortions after 12 weeks. And reactionary members of

the medical profession now feel under even less pressure to grant an abortion. Thanks to the 1967 Act, women who want to terminate a pregnancy are at the mercy of the moralists in the medical profession and cost-cutting health authorities.

If the Tories press on with plans to include a 24-week abortion limit in their new embryology bill, the opposition will not be able to defeat it through parliamentary procedures in the way that was possible when anti-abortion bills were sponsored by individual MPs. And even if that were possible, or if the Tories changed their plans, the anti-abortion consensus means that things would still get worse for women who want to terminate a pregnancy. To make any improvements, it is not enough to defend the status quo. We need to alter the political climate in which the debate takes place, by upholding the unequivocal right to an abortion as early as possible and as late as necessary.

Past campaigns against attacks on abortion rights have been too ready to adapt their demands to fit in with the prevailing political mood. Last year, for example, Liberal MP David Alton sponsored a bill seeking to reduce the legal time-limit on abortion to 18 weeks. In response, left-wing MPs Joan Ruddock and Clare Short argued for support of a 24-week limit as a defence against Alton. Ten years ago, this was the limit the *anti-abortionists* called for. What next? In a few years, will the left be defending an 18-week limit against a 10-week challenge? A campaign for abortion rights will only be able to match the aggressive anti-abortion lobby if we refuse to compromise on the demand for abortion without restriction.



Equal Pay Act on trial

'A LOAF OF BREAD COSTS US THE SAME'

Andrew Calcutt spoke to two women who have tried to use the law to achieve equal pay

Julie Hayward made headlines when she won her claim for wage parity after a 10-year battle. In May 1988, the law lords agreed that her pay and overtime rates as a canteen cook at the Cammell Laird shipyard in Birkenhead should match those of skilled male painters, joiners and insulation engineers, who were paid £25 a week more than her. Her claim was the first test of the 1984 changes to the Equal Pay Act, which stipulate that women in segregated jobs can claim wage parity with men doing equally skilled but different jobs in the same company.

'My fight for equal pay took nearly 10 years but it was worth it. It's a principle. I had to struggle to get my exams, I didn't just walk in after leaving school. But they never saw my job as skilled. They thought it was what you learned off your mum.

'The most encouraging event was when the tribunal in Liverpool sent an independent expert—a university professor from Wales—to follow me around and do the same for my comparators [other workers with whom the claimant compares herself]. He found in my favour, and he was an outsider looking in. That gave me confidence.'

Winner: £134 a week

'I won the initial tribunal in a week. Then after six months Cammell Laird appealed against it and won. Then there was another six months or so before we got to the house of lords. In the lords I felt as if I'd murdered

somebody, as if I was on trial. It was very la-di-da. There is a flunkey and a policeman who bow down to the judges. Everything is carried on in legal terms—rubbish really—it was a bit above my head and my lawyers had to explain everything that was going on to me.

'The judgement made a lot of unions realise the implications, even though it's nearly all men that do the negotiations at national level. The way they reacted, you'd have thought they'd won the FA Cup. But nothing much has changed in our working conditions. There's no windows down here and it gets too hot in summer. Now we're upgraded we get £134 for 39 hours. When I won, I got £5000 off the company. The legal costs came to £66 000—if I work until I'm 60 I won't get that.

'I'm not a feminist and I'm not militant. But what's important is ordinary people like me realising that we can get up and do something back.'

Loser: £5058 a year

Marion Leverton works as an infants' school nurse for Clwyd county council. In December 1988, she lost her claim for parity with 11 higher paid men who the council employed as caretakers, supervisors and clerical workers. The house of lords rejected her claim on the basis that the difference between her pay and that of the male council workers was due only to the fact that she worked shorter hours and had longer holidays.



Nice to see the lads doing the shopping



PHOTOS: Simon Norfolk

Marion Leverton worked 32 hours a week, with 70 days' holiday, and was paid just £5058 a year. The male employees worked 37 to 39 hours, had less holiday and were paid a princely £6081 a year.

'I lost on a lie, and the barrister didn't pursue it as he should have done. The further you go, the more of a farce it becomes. It all happens in an ivory tower unrelated to real events, where everything depends on points of law. "We're dealing with a point of law" they kept telling me.'

'A high-class mafia'

'The idea of equal pay legislation is very good but it's done very little. They have put so many obstacles in your way that really it's a bit of a sham. It's supposed to be for ordinary people to take their cases, but it's impossible for normal people to represent themselves. Right from the start, you need a solicitor or a barrister and immediately it's jargonised. It's a high-class mafia, and very hypocritical. It takes place in a genteel club atmosphere—just right for cover-ups.

'The judge's chamber is a small room with space for only about 20 people. The law lords sit on the other side of the bar, then there's the sergeants-at-arms dressed in black with gold chains. It's very frustrating because you're not allowed to speak or disagree with what's being said. Nor is your solicitor. Only the barristers can speak, and they're more inflexible about their privileges than any trade union.

'They said I didn't deserve a raise

because my hours were different. But the point is that a loaf of bread still costs the same whether you're working full-time or quarter-time.

'At my job in the nursery, you don't get a minute. I do get 30 minutes for lunch because it's mandatory if you've been at work for five hours. But there's never a slack time and you have to be alert all the time. The effort required might easily outweigh a 52-week, nine to five job in an office. I've worked in an office and I know there are busy times and slack times when you can read a magazine. It's not like that when you're working with children. If you like children, they exploit it. The idea is that women like children anyway so they are doing you a favour by letting you work. And you can't go on a go-slow or anything.

'Discrimination is still going on as much as ever. In the house of commons or trade unions, nothing much has been achieved for women's rights. The EOC are setting up a working party to try and simplify the equal pay procedure because it's not working and cases are not coming to fruition. It's all so complicated. Only the lawyers come out on top. And the irony is that I'm paying rates to Clwyd for them to fight their case against me.

'You go through this experience and it shows you that people in top positions are there because they just happen to be part of the old-boy network. And the costs are obscene—the lawyers charge £100, £200 an hour. But people should take their cases forward to highlight the injustice and get the publicity.'

Veils, geisha girls and strip-searches

Women of the world

It isn't exactly the same the whole world over. But whether they live in a dynamic capitalist country like Japan, a backward capitalist state like Iran, or a colonial statelet like Northern Ireland, women get the worst of it



Japan

The Waltons meets Caligula

On the surface Japan looks like an oriental version of *The Waltons*. Almost all women marry in their twenties. Marriage is glorified and divorce rates are among the lowest in the industrialised world. And, if you believe official surveys, high school students don't have sex.

But what would the homely Walton clan make of *Ero-guro manga*, 'erotic and grotesque' comics full of scenes of women being sexually abused and mutilated? One and a quarter billion *manga* are produced each year—10 for every person in Japan. Two fifths of Japan's domestic film output is soft porn. Two million women work in the sex industry.

The family-loving authorities tolerate Japanese-style porn, and only try to censor what they consider foreign filth—like pictures of pubic hair. Teams of women use indelible inks to censor the offending growth from foreign magazines. And foreign films are gone through frame by frame, as with the hi-tech attempt to censor the 1980 porn epic *Caligula*:

'To the tune of several million yen, a special computer was programmed to detect and blank out the black triangles with blobs of light.

Processed by this electronic beaver-sensor, improbable nude crowd scenes resulted in a hilarious galaxy of little dancing stars.' (N Bornoff, 'Censorship in Japan', *Intersect*, April 1988)

The apparent purity of Japanese society is a façade. There are no brothels, but there are plenty of 'soaplands', providing expensive baths for male customers. There are no prostitutes but there are thousands of 'bar hostesses' or geisha girls expected to serve up more than tea. Foreign women are officially fair game. Sex tours of the Far East by Japanese men are big business. 'To embellish and relish the nights of Korea', says a Japan Airlines guidebook, 'you must start, above all else, with a *Kisaeng* (prostitute) party'.

The celebration of women's role as docile home-makers, and the pornographic subculture, are different reflections of the same thing; a particularly intense form of women's oppression. This is a consequence of the way women have been used and abused in the making of Japan's post-war 'economic miracle'.

Japan's famous 'jobs for life'

contracts only apply to a small number of workers, virtually all men. Most workers are in much less stable employment, and women's jobs are the least secure. They are paid half as much as men and the gap is widening. They are expected to resign when they marry or, at the latest, before they have their first child. Middle class women don't escape discrimination; 80 per cent of firms only hire female graduates as 'office ladies'—uniformed clerical staff.

Pill proscribed

Even Japan, the most dynamic capitalist economy on Earth cannot supply the basic services to free women from acting as unpaid skivvies and nurses within the family. Poor welfare facilities, in a country with the highest average age in the world, mean that Japanese women often have to look after elderly people at home. A 1982 survey showed almost half of those aged 65 or over live in three generation families. Another 10 per cent of the elderly live with unmarried children. This additional burden on women is often justified by mystical references to the Japanese tradition of respecting the family elders.

Poor contraception facilities reinforce women's subordinate status. It is illegal to prescribe the pill for contraceptive purposes. It can only be used for 'menstrual disorders'. So it's not surprising that two out of three Japanese women have had abortions by the age of 40. There have been frequent attempts, so far unsuccessful, to tighten up access to abortion.

Tabloid society

The stereotype of the happy Japanese family is the image of personal relations which Japan's rulers present to the world. Pornography and prostitution are the inevitable results of a society that lives by degrading women. The apparent contradictions in Japanese attitudes are only an extreme version of those in the West. After all, the British tabloids thrive on Victorian morality and page three girls. *The Waltons* and *Caligula* really are part of the same script.

Daniel Nassim

ABOVE:
The sex industry is another boom sector in Japan

Another Irish housewife and war veteran



PHOTO: Joe Boatman

Ireland

Next stop the H-Blocks

Two buses stand on the Falls Road in West Belfast. The waiting crowd grab children and carrier bags and rush for the big one with the padded seats. 'You get jolted about all over the place in that other one' says one woman.

The passengers are friends and relatives of Irish republican prisoners in HM Prison the Maze, formerly Long Kesh concentration camp, now better known as the H-Blocks. Most are women going up to visit their sons, husbands and boyfriends behind the bars. They crack jokes, but cannot disguise their apprehension. In an hour's time they will have to go through stringent security checks, possibly even strip-searches. Then there is the dread of what changes they will find in their

friends and family who may have been in solitary confinement or on the wrong end of some other brutality since their last visit.

I end up on the bus with wooden seats. The woman sitting opposite is going to see her son. Her granddaughter sits on her knee, clutching a white envelope with 'Happy birthday Dad' on the front. The woman tells me her son has been sick. 'The doctor has ordered that he eat plenty of fresh fruit. I'm bringing him up these apples and oranges. He needs more than what I've got but they only allow five apples and five oranges a week. Even that might have changed when I get up there now.'

The prison authorities use countless petty rules to harass IRA prisoners and their relatives. The

rules as to what can be brought into the prison change all the time. Any books which the 'screws' consider political are banned from Long Kesh: the definition of political includes anything written in Gaelic. It can also include such subversive material as Andy Capp cartoon books, which one woman on the bus was barred from taking in.

The censorship and the harassment of visitors are part of the British government's strategy for isolating the republican prisoners from the world outside the jail walls. 'The British government are trying to isolate the prisoners from the support of the republican movement and the nationalist community outside', says Eileen as the bus rattles along: 'They want everyone to think that the prisoners are criminals. That might wash with the British public, but you only have to see the busloads of visitors they get every day to know that the nationalist community is right behind them.'

'I've been coming up here for 17 years', says Majella over a cup of tea in the Long Kesh waiting room. She started by visiting her boyfriend, and has continued visiting other friends imprisoned over the years. 'I remember at first noticing a woman who went each week to visit her husband. She was pregnant with twins and had a toddler with her. Her husband, Larry Marley, was shot dead by a Loyalist gang a few years ago. That same woman now goes to Long Kesh to visit her son.'

That morning the British government had announced that republican prisoners serving life sentences would be given release dates. I ask Eileen what she thinks it will mean. 'Not much.' The other women around the table nod, equally cynical about the British government's intentions. They have heard too many empty promises, and carried too many children and carrier bags through prison gates.

Mary McCaughey

Iran

Where being single is blasphemous

In the Islamic republic founded by Ayatollah Khomeini, the law of *Ghesas* (retribution) condemns 'adulterous women' to death by stoning for 'damaging the family honour'. Prostitutes and lesbians can be shot and lashed. A man who kills a woman can only be punished if her

family pays blood-money to his.

Since 1980 government decrees have set strict codes for women's clothing, specifying everything from the colour of headscarves to the permitted brand of handcream. Notorious *Zeinab* squads of fundamentalist women have roamed

the cities looking for transgressors, beating up fully veiled schoolgirls who had drawings of unveiled women.

The West describes women's oppression in Iran as an invention of Khomeini's regime. But the foundations were laid under the dictatorial rule of the West's ally, the Shah, before his overthrow in the popular revolt of 1979. Prostitutes and other women were often stoned and whipped in rural areas under the 'civilised' Shah. The Islamic republic has simply made these practices official state policy. Thus Khomeini abolished the Shah's Family

'It is against our religion to have single women. Marriage is the duty of all Muslims.'
 — Hashemi Rafsanjani

Protection Act, which allowed polygamy only with the first wife's consent; but the economic dependence of Iranian women meant most had to agree to it anyway.

Under matrimonial laws which predate the Islamic republic, a divorced woman 'takes out what she brought into the marriage'—usually the dowry and nothing else. Other degrading laws also predate the Islamic republic. Women can only marry with the consent of their male guardian and married women can only go abroad or get jobs with the permission of their husband.

Abortion is prohibited and severely punishable. Contraceptives are increasingly hard to obtain. As a consequence, Iran has the highest birth-rate in the world. But, after the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives in the war with Iraq, the regime wants women to have even more children—and to care for the war casualties. 'It is the duty of virtuous Muslim women to help our brothers who fought to save Islam', declares Hashemi Rafsanjani, speaker of the Iranian parliament: 'It is against our religion to have single women. Marriage is a divine act which is the duty of all Muslims.' (*Zan-e-Ruz*, November 1986)

Women are pressurised to marry war victims, and given much-needed

benefits if they agree: homes in the new housing estates known as 'martyrs' colonies', weekly allowances, subsidised food and clothing are available to these newly-weds. Women who obey the call are treated as 'heroic Muslim sisters'.

The Islamic republic's attitude to women of different classes has shifted over the years. In the early years the regime conducted a crusade against the liberal urban middle classes employed in the state-controlled service sector. Women were told they could only work part time in the state sector, and nurseries were closed. Women doctors, lecturers, lawyers and administrators were made redundant under *paksazi* ('purification'—in practice, purges).

But the state and private employers needed the labour of working class women in manufacturing industry, especially with the mass wartime mobilisation of manpower for the armed forces. So the regime incorporated the Shah's employment laws, providing maternity leave and pay, workplace nurseries and breaks for breast-feeding. In practice, employers continued to discriminate, setting up separate workshops for women with worse conditions and pay. They justified this by referring to the Islamic code on sexual segregation.

Today the regime has changed policy. It is now desperate to win over the urban middle classes, and to persuade qualified women to return to work in the war-ravaged economy. It also wants to persuade the middle class professionals who have fled the Islamic republic to return. These groups are very sensitive about the clothing code. Thus the regime has relaxed the code a little, and curtailed the operations of the *Zeinab* squads. Urban middle class women look set for a rise in their social status.

Working class women, meanwhile, are being pushed in the opposite direction. The regime bent over backwards to retain their labour during the war years. But as men return home from the front, women's jobs are being given to them.

The position of women in Iran reflects not just the reactionary character of the Islamic republic, but the backwardness of capitalism in the third world. In their campaign against Khomeini, the British authorities hypocritically posed as defenders of women's rights in Iran; yet they give firm support to pro-Western Islamic regimes like that in Saudi Arabia, which does not even consider women fit to drive cars.

Mandana Hashemi

Out this month Confrontation 5

The death agony of Stalinism—a symposium
 Can Europe be one?—a Marxist perspective
 on 1992

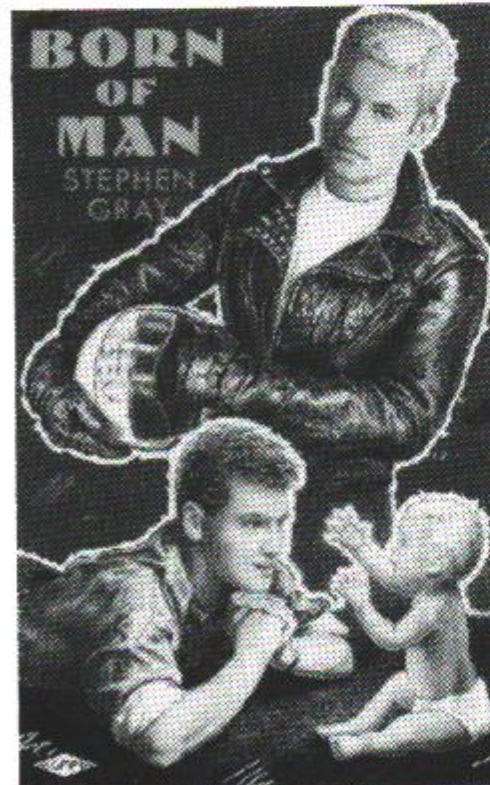
CONFRONTATION is the theoretical journal of the Revolutionary Communist Party. The new issue, out this month, carries the proceedings of a recent conference on Stalinism, covering everything from the relationship between Leninism and Stalinism to the consequences of glasnost for Western Marxists.

CONFRONTATION costs £2.95 plus 50p p&p. A four-issue subscription costs £15 to Britain and Northern Ireland, £18 by airmail to Europe and Southern Ireland, and £16 by surface mail to other countries. (Libraries and institutions add £10.)

To order, write to Junius Publications Ltd (L9), BCM JPLtd, London WC1N 3XX. Make cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd.

CONFRONTATION

THE GAY MEN'S PRESS Spearheading gay publishing



Kevin Vermaak's parental instincts are as strong as any other would-be father. Except Kevin is gay ... and about to become a mother!

Born Of Man is the startling, highly original and richly humorous new novel from Stephen Gray, the acclaimed South African writer and author of *Time Of Our Darkness*. It extends the medical debate on male childbirth to suggest that the urge and the suitability for motherhood may be as great for some men as for society's more traditional bearers ...

£4.95 ISBN 0 85449 107 4



GMP Publishers Ltd. PO Box 247, London, N17 9QR

Linda Bellos: 'loony' no longer?

'You've got to be realistic'

Kenan Malik spoke to Linda Bellos about managing capitalism, making the middle class suffer and mucky hands

Labour Party activist Linda Bellos became one of only three black council leaders in the country when she took control of Lambeth council in May 1986, after Ted Knight had been surcharged and barred from public office over the rate-capping campaign. Her support for equal opportunity policies and her open lesbianism made her a target for the gutter press campaign against the 'loony left'. In May 1988 she resigned as leader after the Labour group split over her cuts policy, and for the next year Lambeth council was run by Labour moderates led by Dick Sorabji. Two months ago the left regained control when Bellos backed Joan Twelves as council leader. Bellos was nominated by black sections and Nupe as Labour candidate for last month's Vauxhall by-election but was rejected by the National Executive Committee.

Kenan Malik: The hard left is back in control of Lambeth council. You and your supporters in the Labour group voted for Joan Twelves. Why?

Linda Bellos: Essentially we had the political dilemma of being in the middle. On one hand we had Joan & Co who wouldn't *themselves* make cuts but appeared to recognise implicitly that they had to be made. And then you had the right, the Labour Coordinating Committee [LCC], who were saying 'We can make cuts but they don't hurt, they're good socialist things'. And there was us in the middle saying cuts have to be made and they hurt, but we can make them and explain the contradictions of capitalism in the process.

In stepping down last year, we had as our agenda the need to realign the left to a position that was realistic, but not the New Realism of the LCC. It's taken us a year to reach agreement on forming an administration with Joan's group.

Kenan Malik: So what's the difference between the new administration and Dick Sorabji's leadership?

Linda Bellos: Dick's lot were saying 'We can make cuts painfully, all we need to do is manage capitalism better and it will be alright'. Joan's lot and my lot said 'That's actually crap'. We do need to manage things better, because none of us believe that the council runs things perfectly, but that isn't the answer. More resources is the answer.

Kenan Malik: How do you gain more resources by making cuts?

Linda Bellos: Where do resources come from? No group of councillors have the ability to magic money from the sky. The people of this borough want better homes, want better quality of services. And the reason one had to make cuts was that there wasn't the money to pay for them.

Kenan Malik: So you're saying that, as councillors, you had to manage the budget you had.

Linda Bellos: Yes, that's right.

Kenan Malik: What's the difference between that and saying you want to manage capitalism better?

Linda Bellos: You might be asking the fundamental question. There's not much difference. When the Labour Party lost the general election, we then had to decide: cuts will have to be made next year—should we resign so that we didn't have to make them? I couldn't do that because I'd be saying that I wasn't going to get my hands dirty, let somebody else do that.

I argued that the cuts are going to have to be made. I am going to make them in the way that is least damaging to working class people. I didn't say they wouldn't be damaging, because I don't believe it's possible to cut 25 per cent of the budget and not hurt people. But at least I was upfront and said that is the consequence of our actions.

I looked at every area of service and said 'Who receives this service?'. Those services which go predominantly to middle class people are in my view of less priority than those services that go to working class people. And we went through

every area to prioritise a package which we could be minimally happy with.

Haringey and even Brent didn't come clean and say we ain't got enough money, the shit has hit the fan, we're going to have to make cuts. They put it off and then the shit hit the fan and there were massive cuts that had an absolutely devastating effect upon the community, in a way that has not happened here. The quantity of cuts in Lambeth was actually greater than in Haringey or Brent, yet the effect has been less damaging.

Kenan Malik: You're saying that even though Lambeth had to impose bigger cuts, because you were more wily, you didn't have the damaging political consequences that the Labour Party has suffered in Haringey and Brent.

Linda Bellos: Yes.

Kenan Malik: So what you're really worried about is the Labour Party. You've been able to push through more anti-working class measures than in Haringey or Brent, but without the same damaging consequences to the Labour Party.

Linda Bellos: No. I totally disagree. Ours have not been anti-working class. They're actually anti-middle class, whereas Brent's have been anti-working class. The political consequences of putting up the rates 56 per cent have a direct impact on everybody, especially working class people. If you've got evidence of anti-working class measures in Lambeth present it.

Kenan Malik: OK, cuts in the town hall workforce. There are more than 1000 vacancies at the moment.

Linda Bellos: That's right. These were not a direct consequence of the strategy we proposed. Those were the direct consequence of the LCC's position which is precisely why we got rid of them.

Kenan Malik: You're not telling me that cuts in the bins or the libraries don't affect working class people?

'I was going to meetings up and down the country to get money. Where was the working class?'

Linda Bellos: Our cuts affected the middle class. And if you don't support that you're not taking a class analysis to service delivery.

I find a terrible contradiction and dilemma. To engage in the political process, one has to be engaged in some site of power—and that might be a journal, like *Living Marxism*, or it might be through a local council, it might be in parliament. But if you're engaged in the political process in local government then it cannot be ignored that we are in an arena where central government is setting the political agenda.

Kenan Malik: Hold on, it's one thing to say you can engage in the struggle through various arenas. It's another to say that when you do so, you pursue anti-working class measures.

Linda Bellos: Don't be silly. Tell me the trade unions aren't pursuing anti-working class measures. Tell me which socialist anywhere, is not party to these things. Don't be naive that somehow there's some little bastion separate from the pressures of capitalism, of Thatcherism. Tell me where it is?

Kenan Malik: It's not me that's being naive, it's those who go into local government and think they can make 'middle class' cuts and not affect the working class. It's those who think they can use the capitalist state to defend the working class. You've created a situation where left-wing solutions have been discredited in the eyes of the working class. Because the left has come into local government saying 'We will fight the Tories', yet people see the same councillors imposing cuts.

Linda Bellos: Wrong! Thousands of working class people come up to me and say: 'We recognise that you did what we are having to do in our homes and in our families. Not that it's right that we can't buy our children new shoes, but we recognise that if this is the amount in our pay packet, this is all we can provide. And we don't like politicians who claim that we can buy new shoes when we haven't got the money. We don't like it because we think politicians are taking the piss out of us.'

Kenan Malik: That's almost word for word what Thatcher would say: good housekeeping.

Linda Bellos: I'm using the analogy as a woman and as a housewife.

Kenan Malik: Which is also what Thatcher says.

Linda Bellos: Which is what all working class people recognise. That

politicians who promise what they can't deliver are no use to the working class. That doesn't mean that you have to live within the remit of what is given. You constantly push forward. But Labour councillors are faced with a situation where you've managed to ward off cuts by doing creative accounting, by vacancy freezing, and all the things that councils have done for years. Ted [Knight] made cuts every single year that he was leader of the council, but he didn't do it upfront, he just did it. Then the shit really hits the fan because you run out of opportunities to do those kind of things, you just run out of options. That was the situation two years ago when I made the cuts.

Kenan Malik: The Labour Party didn't do the one thing that was an alternative to making cuts, and it won't do the one thing that is the alternative to implementing the poll tax. And that's taking the arguments into the working class, campaigning to win support for a policy of opposition to cuts, and giving a voice to the anger within working class communities.

Linda Bellos: What does a policy of opposition mean?

Kenan Malik: It means refusing to make cuts, refusing to implement the poll tax.

Linda Bellos: Never mind being an armchair socialist. When the law says that when there is an obvious gap between your income and your expenditure you will be forced to issue redundancy notices, the Public Works Loan Board won't give you the money to pay the wages, what does it mean then to refuse to make cuts?

Kenan Malik: Either you, as an administrator of a state institution, push through Tory cuts. Or you, as a socialist who has built a campaign within the working class, try to resist the cuts. In Lambeth, in Liverpool, the problem was that there was no campaign within the working class. All your organising was within the council chambers and Labour group.

Linda Bellos: That's absolutely not true. You're not a member of the Labour Party. You don't know what meetings we went to. I was going to meetings up and down the country to get money. Where was the working class? It wasn't a lack of attempt on our part, it was a lack of motivation amongst working class people who thought 'Sod this for a laugh. There's no chance of winning'. But Labour councillors are still paying the surcharge. Are you?

Kenan Malik: No, I'm paying the exorbitant rents and rates that Lambeth has foisted on working class people in the borough.

Linda Bellos: We can go through the list of rebuffs the working class has suffered under capitalism. The support has been there but it hasn't been sufficient.

Kenan Malik: So the problem is that the working class isn't interested?

Linda Bellos: To the extent that one would wish for, that is true. Why is there such appalling support for the government's anti-trade union legislation? Now, that doesn't mean I'm going to wash my hands of working class people. But I'm not going to take a naive view of how we engage in mobilisation, in consciousness-raising. That's where I disagree with you. You're blaming us in the Labour Party, but you've not done it. You have a role to play in reversing anti-trade union legislation. And you've not had a great deal of success, in the same way as we have not.

Kenan Malik: The difference is that the Labour Party has been actively engaged in attacking the working class, and so demoralising militants and discrediting the left. It is because people do not see the Labour Party, Labour politicians, Labour councillors as defending their interests that they're not interested in your campaigns.

Linda Bellos: We can have an abstract discussion that my party sells out working class people, and I will agree with you to an extent. But we have this minor dilemma that insufficient numbers of working class people are supporting the Revolutionary Communist Party either. I'm not going to defend the Labour Party. I'm in the Labour Party for more pragmatic reasons because unfortunately the mass of working class people cannot be persuaded to support another party.

Kenan Malik: It will stay that way until we break with the Labourist tradition and establish a revolutionary alternative.

Linda Bellos: I agree. But I'm in the Labour Party because the reality is that we need to defend working class people from Thatcher's attack and you can't do that from the sidelines.

Kenan Malik: Let's look at one of Thatcher's main attacks on the working class at the moment, the poll tax. The lessons from the Scottish experience are first that you need to break the law to stop the tax. And you need a collective response.

in particular a campaign of non-implementation by council workers. Labour in Scotland has been antagonistic to both. It has refused to countenance illegal measures and Labour councils are implementing the tax and threatening to discipline workers who object. You've argued that it's pointless for councils to break the law. So how are you going to defend the working class?

Linda Bellos: Because we'll limit the damage.

Kenan Malik: Joan Twelves says about poll tax defaulters, 'It is a government tax and we will not spend any more money than the

government has given us'. In other words she'll only spend the £800 000 the government gives her to harass defaulters, not the £2.6m that Sorabji earmarked. That's hardly defending the working class. It's simply a squabble about how much money you're willing to spend in harassing working class people in the borough.

Linda Bellos: It's realistic. Get your own hands dirty. You're on the outside and it's very easy and it's very cheap to be on the outside and not have to deal with reality. The director of finance under the 1988 Local Government Act has got powers to implement the poll tax. We don't like the fact that we're being compelled to implement the poll tax.

PHOTO: Pandora Anderson

Kenan Malik: No one is forcing you to implement anything. You've got a choice.

Linda Bellos: To join your party or to engage in the struggle.

Kenan Malik: For you, then, engaging in the struggle is synonymous with making cuts?

Linda Bellos: Look, we're being realistic. I'd be the last person to defend the Labour Party, believe me. But unlike you we're getting our hands dirty and doing what is necessary.

●

AS NOT SEEN ON TV

This month at the Bloomsbury Theatre in London, the one-day show 'As Not Seen on TV' brings together recent films about Ireland which, thanks to a combination of craven self-censorship by the broadcasting authorities and British government bans, we will never see on our TV screens. There will be a chance to see documentaries like *Death on the Rock* and *Real Lives*, which were broadcast but are unlikely to be shown again, and classic feature films like Carol Reed's *The Odd Man Out* (1947). Most interest, however, will focus on the new work.

Behind the headlines...

Frank Martin's new film *Behind the Mask* contains unique interviews with former IRA leaders who have recently been released from prison. Martin, himself from West Belfast, met them in the course of his research for the independent production company, Activision. He spoke to men like Brendan Hughes, the former Belfast IRA commander who led the first H-Block hunger-strike in 1980. Hughes tells the extraordinary story of his escape from Long Kesh in the early seventies, and the film is worth seeing for that alone, but there is much more besides.

Martin says his film is 'asking the question why did so many ordinary young men and women become involved with the Irish struggle. It looks at the people behind the headlines. Were it not for the extraordinary circumstances in Belfast, none of them would have become involved in politics. They would have lived normal lives. Unless an attempt is made to understand their motivations how can anybody understand the problem and work towards solving it?'

...and behind bars

There is of course no hope of it being televised, given the government ban on broadcasting interviews with Irish republicans. Barely a minute of it would escape the censor. 'Channel 4 were still considering it for the *Dispatches* series when the government imposed the ban', says Martin. Karen Brown, assistant commissioning editor for documentaries, told Martin that they were 'no longer in a position to commission the film'.

Brendan Hughes also features in Art McCaig's *Irish Ways*, 'a few



portraits', says McCaig, 'of people who are normally termed "terrorists". I want to present people who've been in the IRA and in prison as human beings and to show the war through their experiences. I tried to talk to RUC officers and British squaddies,

but we had to improvise. We couldn't spend any time with them. The Northern Ireland office just said "No".'

McCaig hopes the film will give people 'an idea of what life was like under an occupation, and make them think about how they would react'. McCaig, now based in Paris, made *The Patriot Game* 10 years ago. 'This film is less historical and analytical. It

is a series of sketches—of Patricia McDaid, who served time in Armagh jail for handling explosives, of Gerry Docherty who was convicted of blowing up the Guildhall in Derry and then sat in it as a councillor, and of Paddy McIntyre, one of the 38 who broke out of the H-Blocks in 1983 and is still on the run.'

His film was broadcast on Belgian television in April and shown in the Paris Film Festival last month. He thinks the British ban is 'ridiculous, absurd, an infringement of democratic

rights and freedom of expression. I just hope that the film can be seen as widely as possible.

One film at the festival that was shown on Channel 4 a few weeks ago is Dave Fox's *Trouble the Calm*. At least, some of it was shown. 'Channel 4 lawyers insisted on cutting part of an interview with Marie Ferris, whose husband Martin, the captain of the *Marita Ann*, is in prison for smuggling.' What was cut? 'When she mentions the IRA are fighting for a 32-county socialist republic. They are so stupid. The film takes a republican position anyway. I insisted on a card being put up to explain why her words were removed.'

Cut, cut, ban

Fox says the film's thesis is that 'the revolution was cut short by a counter-revolution, and that Ireland has been paying for that failure ever since'. But the film itself 'is an attempt to break with documentary form. It is a piece of fiction, using images and words to present a complex picture the way that a pamphlet cannot do. It wants to be judged as a film, and if this doesn't sound pompous, as a contribution to Irish culture itself, and not just to the debate around it'.

Perhaps the film which got the worst treatment from the broadcasters was *Mother Ireland*, made by Anne Crilly with the Derry Film and Video collective. 'The film explores the image of Ireland as a woman in Irish history, particularly as a nationalist motif', says Crilly. 'We talked to the "daughters" who fought for Mother Ireland. It explores the tensions, and overlapping, between feminists and republicans, today and when suffragettes clashed with women fighting British rule.'

The film was given to Channel 4 just days before Mairead Farrell, Sean Savage and Dan McCann were shot dead in Gibraltar on 6 March 1988. In April Channel 4 asked for five cuts, including Christy Moore singing 'Unfinished revolution' and archive footage shot when a rubber bullet blinded Emma Groves in 1971. Derry Film and Video made the cuts. In October 1988 Rod Stoneman of Channel 4 asked for interviews with Mairead Farrell and with Rita O'Hare (editor of *An Phoblacht/Republican News*) to be removed. That same afternoon Douglas Hurd announced the broadcasting ban. Channel 4 then said that it believed the ban 'applies to material recorded at any time in the past, for example newsreel footage shot before the creation of the Irish republic'. Further discussion was 'academic in the new circumstances'; the film would not be broadcast.

Go Continental

'During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the penal laws encouraged the development of the allegory of Ireland as a woman', says Crilly. 'It is ironic that a programme about an image which arose out of censorship should itself be censored.' Geraldine McColgan, the administrator of Derry Film and Video, says they have had 'lots of individual sales'. 'We're heartened by the fact that other European television networks would be showing it.'

If you want to catch up on what the people of Belgium, Spain, Germany and France are allowed to watch, catch this show.

Married to the Mob

HOLLYWOOD MAFIA

Pat Ford listened to Jonathan Demme on making films, and watched his latest work, *Married to the Mob*

This is how Roger Corman, Jonathan Demme's former boss, used to assess the work-in-progress of the trainee director: 'Great rape, Jonathan, and great murder, but you'll have to cut out the rest.' Demme says Corman had a straightforward formula—a lot of action, humour, nudity, female nudity that is, and a subtle social message'. Demme adds wryly that Corman liked film titles to 'encapsulate the subtlety of the sexual content'. The first film Demme directed for Corman was called *Caged Heat*, a women's prison movie.

Demme remains grateful to Corman, but he has come a long way since then. Films such as *Citizens Band* (1977), *Melvin and Howard* (1980) and *Something Wild* (1986) have brought critical acclaim and commercial success. Perhaps in expiation of his past Demme even tried to make 'a sort of feminist buddy-buddy film', *Swing Shift* (1984). But now he disowns it. Goldie Hawn, in what he calls 'a low grade hysterical reaction' declared of her image in the film 'I'm a whore', and demanded more close-ups of her face. Demme refused, and walked. Warner changed it anyway.

'Cut his nipples'

Demme had many more gruesome tales of movie-making to tell at the National Film Theatre last month, in an appearance jointly organised with the *Guardian*. Roy Scheider once objected to the casting of his co-star because, he told Demme, 'I just don't want anyone to think that I would put my penis into someone as unattractive as Terri Garr'. Producer Freddie Field often tried to mess about with Demme's work by introducing the dubious opinions of his acquaintances. He once told Demme to get rid of a shot because Tony Curtis didn't like the look of Bruce McGill's nipples. But the cut was not possible, because Demme had followed the advice of Bernardo Bertolucci to shoot in long single takes, making it hard for interfering producers to re-cut.

I asked Demme if there was a 'subtle social message' in his new film

Married to the Mob. He laughed. 'Well, this is full tilt, crass commercial entertainment! But as we are at the NFT I can say that the subtle, subtle social message is that if people from different ethnic backgrounds reach out to each other it can work out, and someone can make a fresh start in a different situation.'

I can confirm that there is nothing heavy-handed about this or any other message in *Married to the Mob*. It is a delightful romantic comedy and gangster spoof with a marvellous soundtrack from David Byrne. Just the film for a hot and lazy summer night. As you might expect from the director of *Melvin and Howard* and *Something Wild* it is full of shrewd squints, both affectionate and caustic, at the manners and absurdities of America.

There are some ruthless killings and a good deal of dramatic gangster activity, but the ironic tone is set from the moment the opening credits come spinning on to the screen only to be peppered with bullet holes, while the Mambo Italiano starts up to confer its facetious tone on the proceedings. Even the climax of the violence is a juicy parody of the toll-booth killing in *The Godfather*, this time at a drive-in Burgerworld.

The real drama is thoroughly domestic. Angela (Michelle Pfeiffer), a gangster's wife, struggles to escape with her son from the clutches of the mob, and gets involved in a slow-burning, charming love affair with an unlikely FBI man (Matthew Modine). Angela is marooned in a spectacularly tacky suburban home fending off the attentions of mobsters and their molls, all more ludicrous than lethal. In an ironic comment on yuppie nightmare movies (including his own) Angela flees to a Lower East Side slum, and finds that downward mobility brings more normality and stability than disorientation and fear. This is a film to enjoy, and don't leave before the credits have run.

Married to the Mob opens in London on 23 June



**AS NOT
SEEN
ON TV**

A DAY OF IRISH FILMS

SUNDAY 9 JULY 11AM TO 6PM

Bloomsbury Theatre

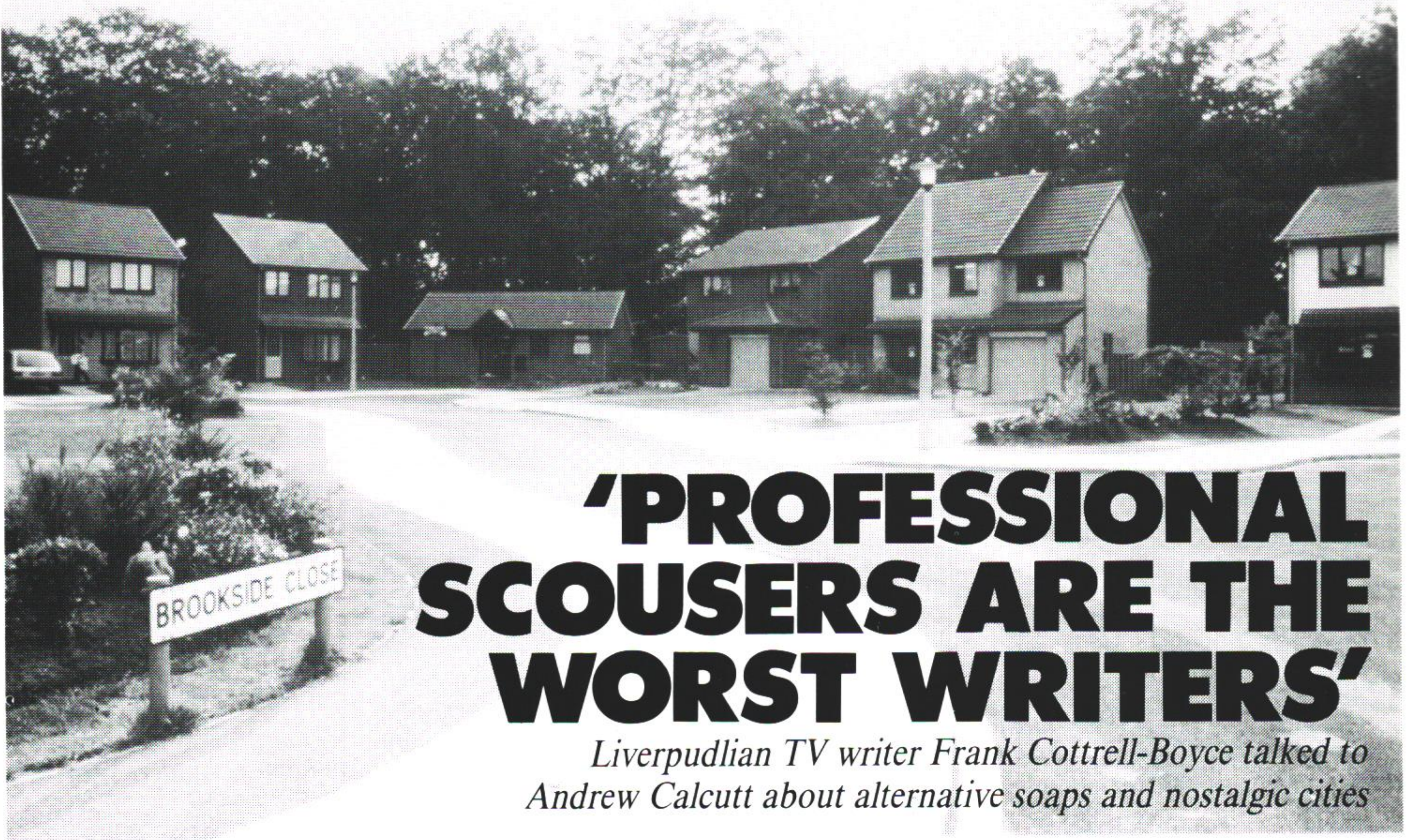
15 Gordon Street, London WC1

(Euston tube)

£8/£5 concessions (half price after 2pm)

Organised by the Irish Freedom Movement

**Full programme and further information
on (01) 375 1702**



'PROFESSIONAL SCOUSERS ARE THE WORST WRITERS'

Liverpudlian TV writer Frank Cottrell-Boyce talked to Andrew Calcutt about alternative soaps and nostalgic cities

I don't think I'd be a writer if I lived anywhere else. Almost everywhere else, being a writer is associated with being middle class, whereas there is a tradition of the working class writer in Liverpool. You get the feeling that it's your job to commemorate the lives of ordinary people, and people ask you to write about things, like Hillsborough. Everyone feels they can turn round to you and say "That was shit" or "That was good".

'The worst Liverpool writers use that approachability in a "professional scouser" manner. Liverpudlians are crippled by nostalgia. We grew up in areas which are completely gone and live among historic monuments like the Cunard building—like living among the pyramids, in the ruins of an empire. But the good side is that Liverpool gives you a different view of being a writer, that you owe people for the stories you take off them.'

Frank Cottrell-Boyce has been taking stories off people to some effect. His four-part drama series *The Real Eddie English* was shown on Channel 4 in April, to wide critical acclaim. That was set in Oxford, but Cottrell-Boyce's writing centres on his home town. He got his first break as a scriptwriter for *Brookside*, the local Merseyside soap.

The creation of radical producer

Phil Redmond (who also started *Grange Hill*), *Brookside* won a reputation as the alternative soap opera. Cottrell-Boyce sees much that is good in the *Brookside* style, but also believes that it is changing for the worse. 'Although it's a soap you can do quite a lot with *Brookside*. *Coronation Street* and *EastEnders* posit this spurious idea of community—everybody works and socialises on *Coronation Street*, the boss drinks with his cleaner. And it's more ridiculous on *EastEnders* with those weird Queen Vic scenes—"Hi Muslims, what are you drinking? The Jews are buying tonight", because everybody's a cockney underneath.'

Bourgeois Brookside?

'But *Brookside* doesn't make those claims for unity—no pub, no shop, no common ground. You can use the fact that it's about difference, whereas the others are about sameness. Well, you certainly could at one point. Also it was the only soap where politics was talked about as though it was something that ordinary people have a right to talk about.

'A big change is the bourgeoisification of the Close, which is a policy decision by Phil Redmond—to take it up-market, partly because advertisers have gone up-market. I think Phil's got a clear ideological position, but it doesn't really impinge on the pro-

gramme. The main restriction is financial. There was a time when *Brookside* got out on to the streets, partly because the site wasn't finished properly. That meant dealing with work as well as home. So instead of writing exclusively about sexual infidelities or problems of child-rearing, you were looking at sexual discrimination in the workplace, strikes, the tedium of work, and its excitements.'

High on the Hill

'But the locations budget has been dwindling, and for the past 18 months huge chunks of it have been taken up with opportunistic foreign locations which have not been moderately entertaining. That was a misguided attempt to pump it up into a big league programme, instead of settling for an alternative with a kind of cult status like *Hill Street Blues*, which kept its production values very high by never pretending to be anything else.'

Cottrell-Boyce sees the financial demands of the deadline as another restriction on experimentation. 'The turnaround on *Brookside* is punishing. It's hard enough to type two episodes in a week, never mind write them. So you fall back on a common store of routine stories, like the jealous wife. Now the programme is going four times a week, so you've less time to think things through. The story of

the Corkhills, that first year when they moved in, was good; a nuclear family torn asunder by a mortgage, at a time when everybody was talking about property-owning democracy. That was good. It hasn't been much good since.'

The old stuff

'*Brookside* is getting more anaemic. I think going four nights a week will be a disaster, and that may be the end of it. There's no talk of doubling the budget. Management want less scenes. To dramatise political situations you need to cross-cut. A cross-cut from the Corkhills to the Collins' can be a political statement. But if there's less cuts, there's less scope for that.'

So *Brookside* looks set to return to what Cottrell-Boyce calls the 'archaic, white, middle class' mould of British TV, which is 'riddled with the most craven self-censorship, because it's run by old men who play very safe. Even in political drama, they hang on to the imagery of consensus. If you look at *Boys From the Black Stuff*, it's incredible how much nostalgia is there. It's set in Liverpool, a city of the past. It's describing the decline of our Labour heritage, and underneath it all is the feeling "The dear old Labour Party, whatever happened to that?''

LENIN: THE VIDEO

Toby Banks looks at an historical talking picture that would be better without the talking



With the constant commercial repackaging of the past, I suppose it was inevitable that somebody would try to make money from Lenin's greatest hits. But how do you make a documentary video about Lenin when there isn't much film of him or his times, and much of what there is dates from after the 1917 Revolution?

The Soviet film industry recreated the history of the revolution by making fact and fiction indistinguishable: much footage of battles and demonstrations has only recently been exposed as skilful re-enactment. The compilers of this Granada documentary have applied a little artistic licence of their own, lifting dramatised film of events like the storming of the Winter Palace from the Moscow studios, and presenting it as contemporary footage. The video even includes the infamous photo of Lenin and Stalin sitting together on a bench in 1922—a Stalinist fake.

Since *Lenin* is a film in Granada's 'Men of our time' series (alongside the equally imaginatively titled *Mussolini*, *Hitler*, *Gandhi*, etc), writer/narrator James Cameron concentrates on Lenin's personality and psychology. Cameron clearly considers political matters as boring details to be rattled through, as when Lenin first meets Plekhanov—'Lenin was to become his bitter enemy...but not yet'—and stays with Gorky in Capri ('more arid intellectual contentions'). Before we know it, it's 1917, and Russia is 'ripe for chaos'. Revolution achieved, we are offered the opportunity to observe the master of chaos at a less breathless pace, through footage of Lenin unveiling statues, addressing congresses, and working in the Kremlin. All the well-known clips are included, starting with the sad procession of funerals that heralded the young workers' state, as Sverdlov, Yelizarov and other Old Bolsheviks are put to earth 'in red boxes, with no

priests or prayers'.

Cameron's attempts to expose the 'real' Lenin, the man behind what he regards as a mask of revolutionary determination, simply distort and belittle the events recorded. Thus a scene of Lenin in the Kremlin stroking his cat is accompanied by mournful music and sombre observation: 'Lenin at home with his wife Krupskaya. The childless pair whose only offspring was an abstraction—a revolution.' Yet, far from depicting a maudlin old couple alone with their memories, the film was shot during an interview Lenin gave in 1920, discussing US-Soviet trade: just one moment in a typically hectic day.

Upon the public Lenin, Cameron projects the Stalinist trait of the cult of the personality. The famous scene of him scribbling intensely at the back of the hall during the third congress of the Communist International is especially endearing for his lack of self-consciousness. Cameron

sees it as a calculated move: 'By crouching inconspicuously to write his notes in an obscure corner, he was assured of the maximum attention.' Otherwise everybody would ignore him, of course.

Silent respect

The films are best watched the way they were made—without sound. Of Lenin's funeral, Cameron observes that 'no emperor, no tsar—perhaps no other human being—was ever so saluted at his death'. The silent film of the vast crowds makes the point more eloquently and sincerely. The only other way to see such footage is in Moscow's Lenin museum, with a Russian narrative consisting largely of 'Aah...Lenin...Lenin'. So, on the strength of its archive film, the video is welcome; a unique picture of a great revolutionary, who, as Cameron says, 'is remembered with veneration or hatred, but never without respect'. *Lenin*, Granada Video, £8.99

THE SOVIET UNION DEMYSTIFIED

Frank Füredi

This materialist analysis of developments from Lenin and the 1917 Revolution to Gorbachev and glasnost answers key questions about the Soviet Union and its relations with the West.

£5.95 plus 85p p&p. Junius Publications Ltd, BCM JPLtd (L9), London WC1N 3XX.



SUAVE SUAUE

A Celebration of Cuban Culture

25 July

One performance only
The Visual Theatre of
Manuel Mendive

26-30 July

Three Legends of Cuban Music
Los Munequitos de Matanzas
El Septeto Nacional
Sintesis

All performances 8.00pm

ICA

ICA Theatre
The Mall, London SW1

Ring Box office for
further details: 01-930 3647



KARL MARX HIS LIFE AND WORK

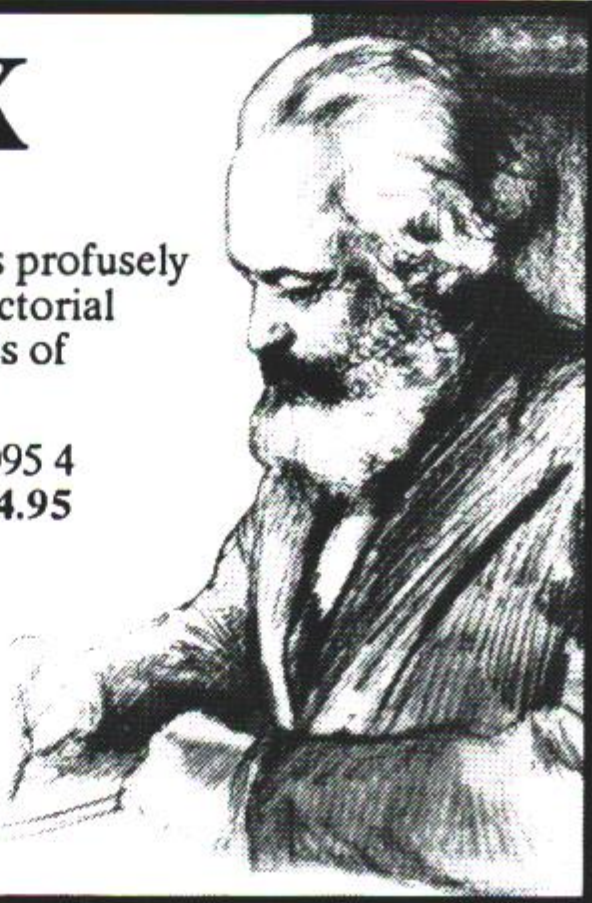
Using materials from Soviet archives, this profusely illustrated life of Marx provides a vivid pictorial account of the turbulent political struggles of nineteenth century Europe.

Published April 1989 ISBN 0569 09095 4
Hbk 29.5 x 23 cm 810 photographs £14.95

Collets

Denington Estate, Wellingborough,
Northants NN8 2QT.
Tel: (0933) 224351

or COLLETS INTERNATIONAL SHOP
129-131 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0EQ.



Computer hacking and viruses

GHOSTS IN THE MACHINE

Mark Thomas on a modern folk-devil—'electronic terrorism'

On the seventh day of the seventh month the seventh in the list of private member's bills waiting to be heard in the commons is the Anti-Hacking Bill. Lack of time rather than a digital jinx will put paid to Tory MP Emma Nicholson's bill. But the Law Commission will report before the end of the year, and is sure to recommend changes in the law relating to computers.

Ever since an American student penetrated a computer network which linked Nasa and the Pentagon (leaving a 'worm' which did not destroy data or programmes but tied up the system), panic has mounted in Britain about computer 'hacking' and 'viruses', 'electronic terrorists' and 'computer criminals'. The timing of the panic is interesting. Last year the law lords held that gaining unauthorised access to a computer was not an offence under the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981. The decision turned demands for a new criminal law to cover hacking into a frenzy. The CBI has called for 'unauthorised access' to be made an indictable offence, and for the criminal offences of theft, fraud, criminal damage, criminal attempt, conspiracy and existing provisions relating to interception of communications and

Hacking—gaining unauthorised access to a computer; either on site or by using telephone links (modems). Passwords can be cracked by ingenious programming or 'brute force searching' (eg, feeding the computer all the words in a dictionary).

A virus—a new programme, or an alteration to a programme, which is covertly entered on to a computer. The new instructions may be activated on a certain date or on the user performing some innocent function. A new programme is sometimes called 'a worm' especially if it operates on a network.

wireless telegraphy to be all brought to bear on computers.

Virus scares have been used to back up the demands for legislation. Disease analogies and metaphors abound. A Chaos Computer Club writing 'virus kits' was located in Hamburg. The most prominent foreign intruder was the '1813' virus from Jerusalem, also called the 'Friday 13th' virus because it could destroy programmes run on that day. Dr Alan Solomon of the IBM PC

Users Group said the '1813' virus was going 'to rampage through every company that doesn't take precautions' on Friday 13 January this year. Yet the day came and went with few casualties. According to *Computer Weekly* only four of the 200 users who called Dr Solomon had genuine problems.

So what is it all about? In truth, the existing law is more than adequate to cover any real harm done to or by computers. The case of Cox v Riley last year decided that to delete or alter a programme could itself be 'criminal damage'. Theft is theft whether by computer or forged cheque.

In any case, the average PC user has little to fear from the hackers or from viruses. So far as simple access is concerned, who wants to know what's on our computers? Apart from the police that is, and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act gives them permission to look anyway, as if they've ever needed permission. As for damage, viruses which flash 'your machine is now stoned' on the screen, or make bouncing balls appear, are hardly 'electronic vandalism'. No doubt some viruses eat space or destroy data or scramble programmes, but detailed examples of real harm done to PC users are suspiciously rare and vague. It seems that many routine

bugs are being blamed on viruses.

The real concern of those demanding anti-hacking laws is not to protect the PC-using public. On a general level, the authorities are keen to use any excuse to extend the grip of the criminal law over another area of life. More specifically, the government and employers want to intimidate employees or others who might put a spanner in *their* computerised works, be it to get back at the boss, embezzle funds, or eavesdrop on the increasingly all-embracing state computer systems run by the home office, the police or the poll tax registration officers.

Keyboard cops

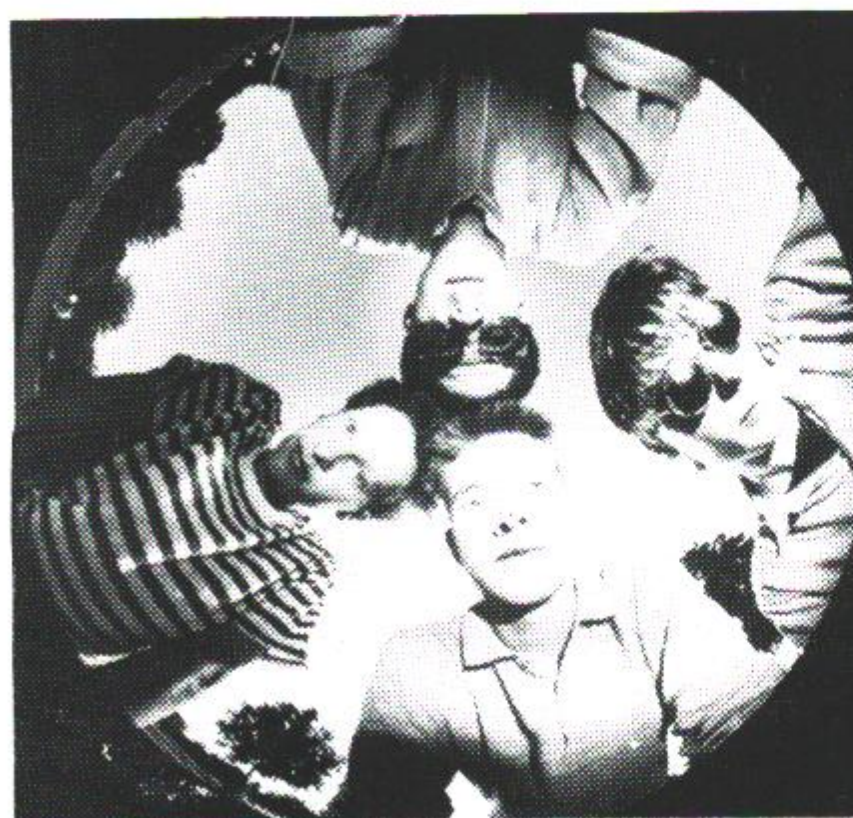
Typically, Dr Barry Cripps of Thomas International told a conference on computer viruses in London to compile 'personality profiles to show employees likeliest to design or spread viruses when bored, frustrated or threatened' (presumably 'threatened with the sack'). British Rail and many City banks have banned their workers from playing computer games at work. The hacking and virus panic is one more way of tightening the screws on the rising numbers of people who work with keyboards.

The criminalisers have tried every trick to justify their proposals. Emma Nicholson has even used the alleged boom in pornographic and racist computer games to justify her bill. They have also exploited the irrational fears and ignorance which many people have about the new technology, suggesting alternatively that computers are a menace which need controlling and victims which need protecting, thus mystifying the machines as independent agents with minds of their own.

Words and music

McCARTHYISM

Jane Wilde talked to Malcolm Eden of the up-and-coming band



McCarthy's new album, 'The Enraged will inherit the Earth', is out on compact disc. There are some on the 'indie' scene, which McCarthy have comfortably inhabited for some time (seven singles, two albums), who disapprove of CD. 'We can't take too much notice of people like that', says Malcolm Eden, McCarthy's singer-songwriter, 'they're anti-technology.

I don't see why we shouldn't ask Stock, Aitken and Waterman to produce us'.

They take their name by way of revenge on a certain American senator who witch-hunted communists; they are a four-piece pop band; and they play some very thoughtful music. 'We are not a musical group to nod your head to, people are meant to think at the same

time. I don't like to write in a very poetic way where there's too much room for interpretation. I would prefer that the listener would get exactly what I wanted to say. Lyrics are an integral but completely undervalued part of the pop song.'

So what does he want to say? 'The songs are usually written to expose the ridiculousness of people's political views.' The new album includes 'New

Left Review No 1', about 'a Labour Party supporter in the 1990s who says you have to be realistic and make your politics inoffensive. At the end he's saying his idea at the moment would be to lower the price of the dog licence'.

Apart from the title, their latest single 'Boy meets girl so what', sounds deceptively innocent until the sweet guitar and smooth violin give way to Eden's voice and a witty indictment of the lazy use of love in pop songs. 'To talk about love incessantly in pop songs seems to me to be ridiculous. The authorities are happy with that.'

Eden wants to stir emotions in a different way, to 'make you feel very sad and then the lyrics come along and hit you over the head. The music's meant to contradict the lyrics'. As for the future, 'I hope we could have progressive lyrics and experimental music, or at least something a bit different. You've got to push it forward on both fronts'. Listen to this band, even if you have to get a CD to do it.

Feminist novels

MOTHERHOOD IS POWERFUL

Sara Hardy casts a worried eye over a recent trend in women's fiction

Read any women's novels lately? Novels written by women for women. You might be surprised. The cover blurb attracted me to Janice Eidus' *Faithful Rebecca*: 'the funny, painful recounting of Rebecca's journey from self-absorbed seductress to a woman desirous and capable of love and independence...Rebecca is an Everywoman for the eighties.' Great, I thought. I read it. It worried me.

The journey at the centre of *Faithful Rebecca* concerns the transformation of Rebecca's feelings about her baby daughter. From this: 'noisy and needy, pooping and wetting and spitting up...Mama, it said in every way, change me, kiss me, touch me, give me. And I couldn't', to this: 'the new Rebecca, Rebecca the perfect mother, had no use for jewellery. Her intentions were no longer to tantalise men. Her only lover was to be her daughter.' This journey the novel heartily endorses.

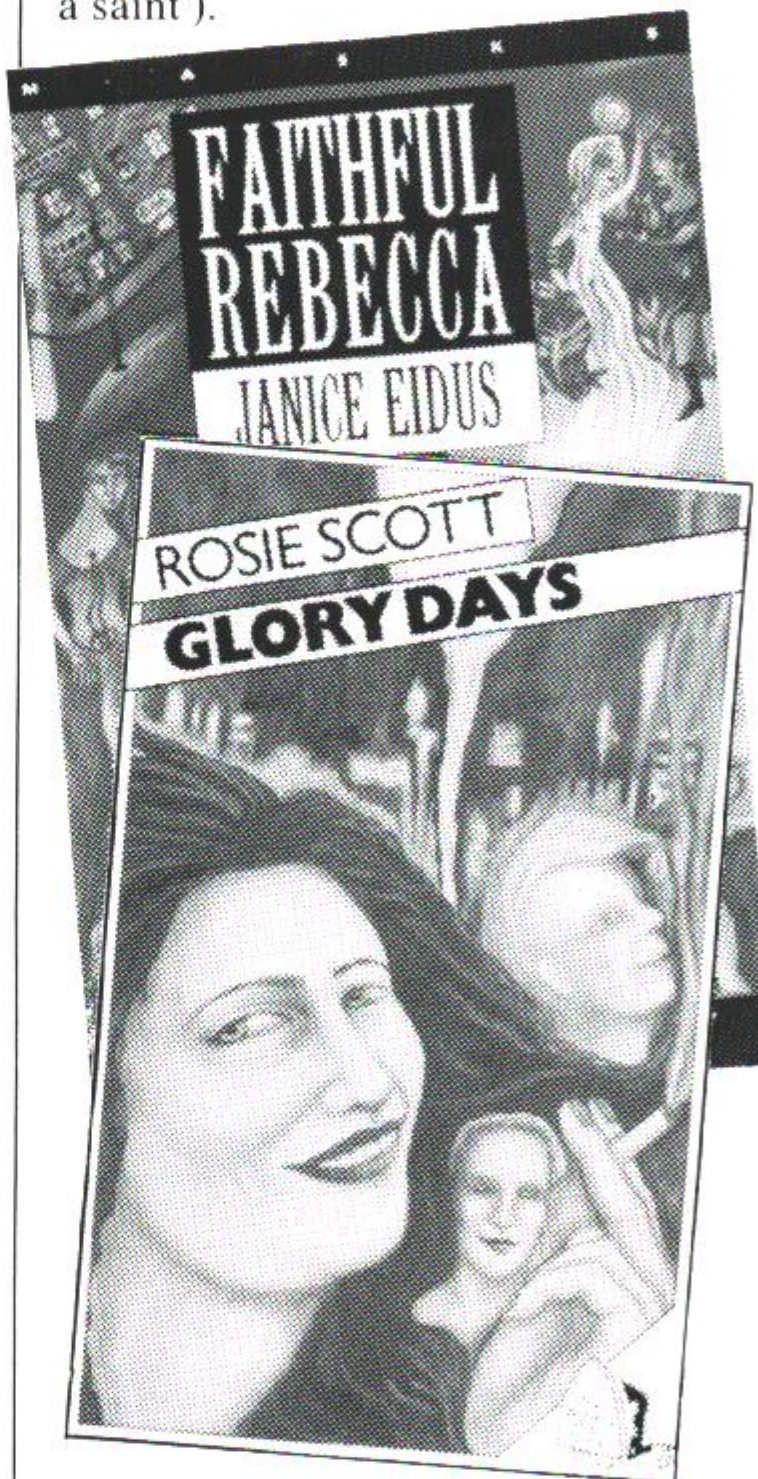
Baby love

I thought that this was the problem we were up against—the idea that women only need to discover our natural nurturing role, have and care for children, and we'll be happy. Undiscouraged, I turned to other recent feminist novels. But the same themes crop up time and again.

Candace Flynt's *Mother Love* centres on the relationships of three daughters to their mother, and to the next generation. One daughter prepares herself for marriage, one is a divorced mother: 'What she feels with her children is a unity that she has not felt...All her life she has wanted to love someone totally.' The third at first rejects childbearing but later abandons her PhD in order to have a child. Joy Magezis' *Vanishing Act* features a heroine who travels to Britain from the USA to find her child's father, strictly for the sake of the child. In Rosie Scott's *Glory Days* characters are judged by their reaction to the mother-heroine's mentally handicapped daughter Rina, who is central to her whole life.

What's going on? Women writers, most of whom would call themselves feminists, seem to be uncritically endorsing women's role as born carers who can find fulfilment only through children, or at least caring. Even in an entertaining and witty work such as The Women's Press' crime anthology *Reader, I Murdered*

Him, several stories carry similarly dubious undertones about motherhood and female instincts. Lesbians plan to kidnap children to fulfil mysterious maternal urges, and a Welsh witch uncovers a murderer through a sort of feminine radar ('that rapid blend of razor-sharp perception and strong intuition which is no more magical than radio waves or a TV signal, but enough to canonise a saint').



It wasn't always like this. In 1979 Zoe Fairbairns' *Benefits* polemicised against motherhood. She portrays a collapsing British state at the end of the century promoting a woman's role as mother through the 'Family' organisation. The state pays a special benefit to keep women at home looking after children: 'valuing' the work women do, but of course preventing them from doing anything else. The sinister emblem of 'Family' is a hand: 'It was a female hand with neat nails and a wedding-ring; in the better reproductions it was full of character. It had wrinkles, tiny muscles, even hints of honest dirt. It was a working hand. It was a hand that could be tender, it could beckon or admonish, make love or smack.' That hand could belong to many heroines of today's generation of feminist novelists.

Today's novels reflect the pressures placed on women in the Thatcher years, and a shift within the women's movement itself. The once passionate attack on the social constructs 'motherhood' and 'womanliness' has been diluted by a growing ambivalence about such matters. As Ann Oakley points out, 'the women's movement articulated an implicitly, if not explicitly, negative evaluation of motherhood for many years before it was able to articulate the positive side' ('Feminism, motherhood and medicine' in *What is Feminism?*, J Mitchell and A Oakley (eds), 1987). Articulating the positive side of motherhood is now becoming a celebration of oppression roles. Rather than reject the roles into which society tries to force women, as the heroine of Lisa Alther's *Kinflicks* (1976) does (she tries and rejects them all, from preppy girlfriend to bolsy dyke, loving wife and mother to stoned-out hippie), today's heroines desperately seek a role they can settle into; and more often than not the role is that of mother.

Turn to crime

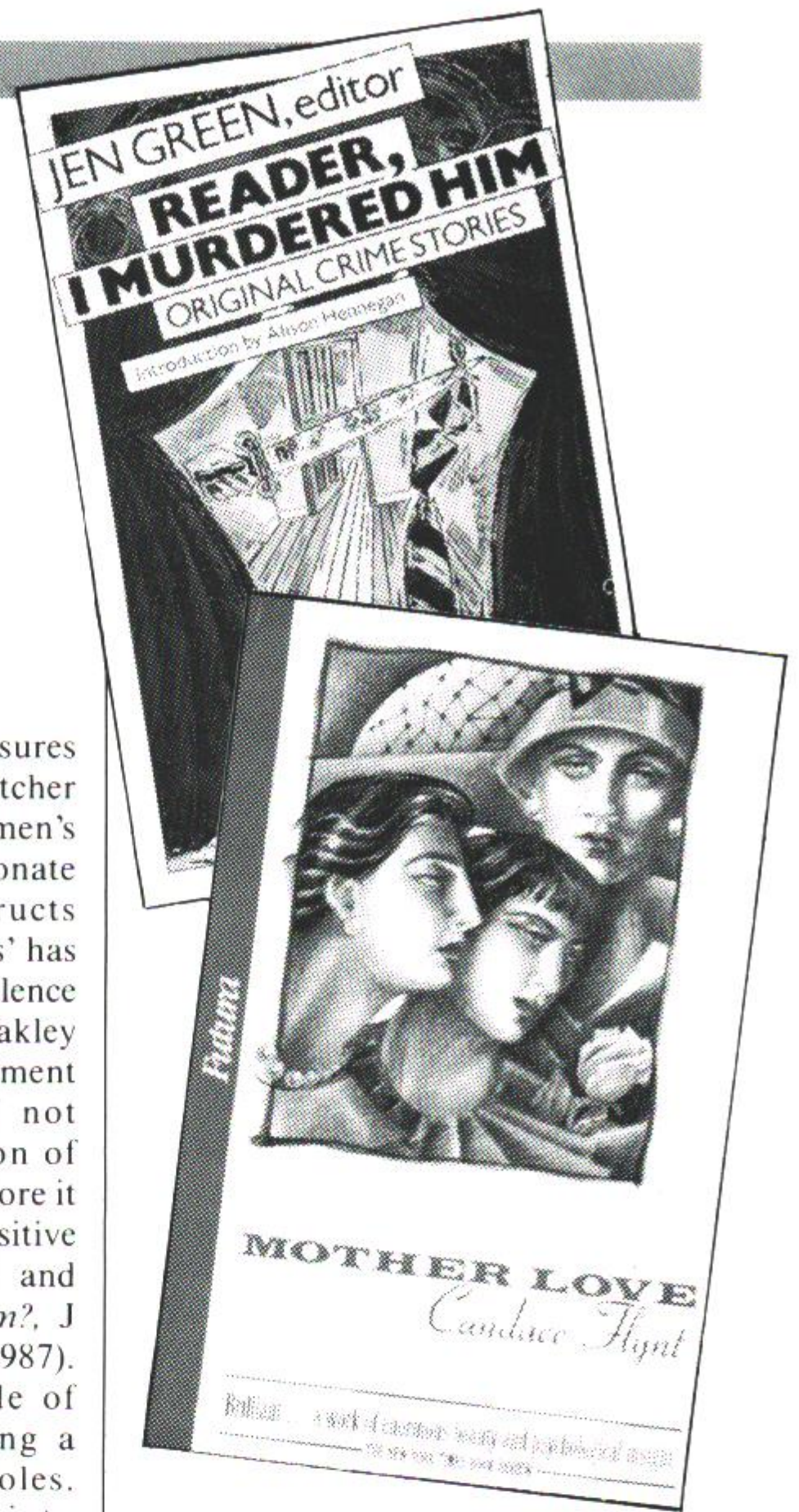
In fact the 'lifestyle' novel is not as popular as many would have us believe. At the top of Virago's best-sellers list are Vera Brittan and Vita Sackville-West. Sisterwrite feminist bookshop in London says that the crime novel is becoming more popular. The mainstream crime writer Ruth Rendell is currently high in both hardback and paperback best-sellers lists, and could well overtake the lesbian anthology at the top of the shop's own list. The Women's Press launched a new crime series in April; Virago is producing its own this summer. Thank goodness crime, in its own way a more experimental form of fiction, has become the women's writing to get into, rather than the more introverted and domestic focus of the motherhood school.

I did however come across a delightfully subversive specimen within the motherhood genre. Margaret Mulvihill's *Low Overheads* wryly takes the rise out of many of the foibles of today's lifestylers. Cora comes to London from an Irish village to have an abortion, and gets a job as nanny to the Lieberman child Orlando. His mother Deborah runs Nativities, a company that specialises in providing any type of birth a woman could wish for (Deborah also

does cats' births and arranges a couvade for men 'whereby fathers participate in the mysteries of the birth process by mimicking pregnancy and sharing in the accouchement period').

Deborah is able to love being a mother because she has Cora to take Orlando off her hands most of the time, she can decide when to be caring and when to wash her hands of it. Instead of having to give up her business and concentrate on her baby's bum, she can immerse herself in the birth rituals of the tribes of Papua New Guinea, while her friends study 'the relationship between women and excrement'. Meanwhile Cora the nanny, who is stuck with studying excremental matters at close hand, decides she doesn't really like babies. It is very funny, and all the while Mulvihill is making the point that for those who have no choice in the matter, and have to make a full-time job out of it, motherhood is no joke.

- Kinflicks*, Lisa Alther, Penguin, 1988 (original 1976), £3.95
- Faithful Rebecca*, Janice Eidus, Serpent's Tail, 1988, £5.95
- Benefits*, Zoe Fairbairns, Virago, 1988 (original 1979), £4.50
- Mother Love*, Candace Flynt, Futura, 1989, £4.50
- Reader, I Murdered Him*, Jen Green (ed), The Women's Press, 1989, £4.50
- Vanishing Act*, Joy Magezis, Pandora, 1988, £4.95
- Low Overheads*, Margaret Mulvihill, Pandora, 1987, £3.95
- Glory Days*, Rosie Scott, The Women's Press, 1989, £4.50



Colin Wallace and Clockwork Orange

HOIST WITH HIS OWN PETARD

Paul Foot, Who Framed Colin Wallace?, Macmillan, £12.95

Colin Wallace was an information officer in the army's black propaganda unit in Lisburn, Northern Ireland. In October 1974 he refused to continue working on a secret project, Clockwork Orange. He was transferred and later dismissed. Since then he has tried to expose Clockwork Orange. In 1980 he was convicted of murdering a friend, Jonathan Lewis, and jailed (he has since been paroled). Paul Foot argues that the security services murdered Lewis themselves to frame Wallace and wreck his credibility.

Clockwork Orange was run by MI5. From 1972 they fed the media with allegations that Tory premier Edward Heath, and then Labour premier Harold Wilson, were Soviet agents. The conclusion Foot draws from Wallace's revelations is that MI5 conspired to bring down elected governments, and are therefore a 'secret state' threatening Britain's 'democratic and civilised society'.

The truth is different. It now seems clear that a section of British intelligence saw itself being marginalised and made a squalid attempt to get back in the limelight. Peter Wright says as much in *Spycatcher*:

'The miners' strike of 1972, and a succession of stoppages in the motor-car industry, had a profound effect on the thinking of the Heath government.

Intelligence on domestic subversion became the overriding priority.... Hanley [MI5 director-general] began to pour resources and men into F Branch and away from K Branch.... I was not alone among the old guard, anti-Soviet, officers in being disturbed by these new developments.'

Wright was in K Branch, the anti-Soviet section of MI5. K Branch set up Clockwork Orange. It was the work of a few reactionaries, which never came near to a coup.

The Tories were certainly in disarray in the early seventies, and many on the right felt that Heath and Wilson were soft on strikers. But the establishment was not worried about their loyalty, nor did it feel the need to resort to Wright's methods. After all, the Labour government was soon restraining the unions and attacking wages through the 'social contract', while the Tory machine moved Heath out and Thatcher in without inventing any Kremlin connection.

The authorities sponsored dirty tricks when necessary; the military and political establishment encouraged the security forces to bring down the power-sharing Sunningdale agreement in Northern Ireland in 1974. By contrast, they never took Wright's little plot very seriously. Margaret Thatcher, the great hope of K Branch, even demanded an inquiry into MI5

activities in 1977.

By blaming the 'unaccountable' MI5 for undermining the 'democratic' government, Foot lets Labour off the hook for its own prosecution of Britain's dirty war in Ireland. The Labour Northern Ireland secretaries were guilty men. Merlyn Rees introduced the criminalisation of IRA prisoners and Roy Mason is still remembered as 'the Butcher' because of his enthusiasm for the SAS and the Castlereagh torture centre. But, for Foot, Rees was 'sabotaged' by MI5, while Mason was 'unfortunate' in his encounter with them.

In his eagerness to throw the blame for Labour's repression in Ireland on to MI5, Foot even seems to take sides in the old rivalry between the 'domestic' MI5 and 'overseas' MI6 wings of British intelligence. He tells us in all seriousness that MI6 chief Sir Maurice Oldfield 'firmly ruled out' assassinations in Ireland. 'MI6 officers ... responded positively to these rules. They were men and women who had served, and expected to serve, in many different countries, and their approach to their business depended upon on a relaxed, well-informed understanding of the political situation.' Foot prefers these suave colleagues of James Bond to the 'cliquish, racist and intrigue-ridden atmosphere' in MI5.

The best part of *Who Framed*

Colin Wallace? exposes the intimate relationship between the army and the British press corps in Ireland. Wallace was the link-man, supplying allsorts of lies and distortions to the tame hacks. His military bosses proposed him for an MBE three times. After Wallace refused to keep mum about Clockwork Orange, however, those same hacks turned on him. Foot provides an excellent demolition of the farrago of misinformation peddled by David McKittrick of the *Independent*. Wallace was hoist with his own petard.

But Foot's main thesis is wrong. The British state is not divided between democratic governments and conspiratorial cliques. The entire machine is one big official secret which will do whatever is necessary to defend the establishment—including going after mavericks like Wallace who try to publicise even minor details of security service operations. The way in which every government from Wilson to Thatcher has ruthlessly prosecuted the Irish War should be proof enough that there is nothing 'democratic and civilised' about the British system.

Foot, however, feels it necessary to recycle the usual prejudices about the Irish. His references to Irish republicans are contemptuous: 'weasels', 'pathetic' and—most frequently—'terrorists'. That would seem a more appropriate label for British agents who bombed and assassinated their way around Ireland in these years, but Foot doesn't go into that. Perhaps he isn't as familiar with Ireland as he should be. On page 45 he says there are 36 counties there.

Andy Clarkson

Soviet short stories

THE GLASNOST GENERATION

Natalya Baranskaya, A Week Like Any Other, Virago, £5.95

Tatyana Tolstaya, On the Golden Porch, Virago, £12.95

These two new collections of short stories illustrate the main strands in post-revolutionary Soviet writing. Realism has been the officially encouraged style, but modernism has produced the masterpieces of this century, many of which have been banned due to their powerful criticisms of Soviet society.

Natalya Baranskaya's *A Week Like Any Other* is in the approved realist mode but is the more revolutionary of the two. The title story created a sensation in the Soviet Union with its vivid description of women's day-to-day problems. The

story outlines an ordinary week for Olga. Wife, mother and worker, she is the complete modern Soviet woman eulogised by press and party. But instead of the heroic supercitizen coolly coping with her many roles, we see a harassed woman struggling along.

Yet Olga is no rebel. She loves her job, husband and children. The fact that she is a model of Soviet womanhood drives home Baranskaya's point. The 'double shift' worked by Soviet women in the home and in the workplace, while coping with a system that can't provide adequate childcare or goods in the shops, is too much for anybody. Worn out, she

breaks down, '...crying out loud and reciting everything that I've done and all the things I should have done and haven't managed to do, and how it's always like that and how my youth is passing, and I haven't sat down for a minute all day'.

The other stories are less direct social criticism, but also depict people coping with Soviet society. The hero of 'The Petunin affair' gets the hard end of perestroika. 'The woman with the umbrella' mourns a husband torn from her, presumably by Stalinism. Told with skilful use of detail, they give a vivid and biting picture of the Soviet Union today.

On the Golden Porch by Tatyana Tolstaya has, by contrast, some of the fantastic elements of the modernists' style. In 'A clean sheet', Ignatiev has his humanity surgically removed to escape the dreariness of reality and failure. The publication of this book probably has little to do with the liberalisation of censorship laws. The problems of Ignatiev's world are presented as a result of unfulfilling personal relationships rather than the inadequacy of the Soviet system.

Most of the stories focus on private loss, disillusionment and fantasy: people wondering why they have never experienced the life and love everyone else seems to enjoy, or falling in love with a 'divine, low, dark, lacy' voice on a record, only to meet a coarse, demanding reality. Tolstaya writes delicately, expressing the lost dreams of the lonely. Although rooted in the Soviet Union her stories are personal reflections on the nature of individuals, divorced from the society which shapes them.

Ragne Miles

Manchester United

THE DECLINE OF RELIGION

Eddie Veale reviews the book that has rocked the football world, Manchester United: The Betrayal of a Legend

Marxism is my belief; but Manchester United is my religion. Admittedly United fans have only been waiting 21 years for the second coming, while the supporters of Holy City have endured two thousand seasons of disappointment. But when it comes to irrational emotions and blind faith, the Red Army can give the God-squad a match any day. On my desk at home, I even have a tacky little icon; a 12-inch figure of the Best footballer ever to wiggle his hips at a first division defence.

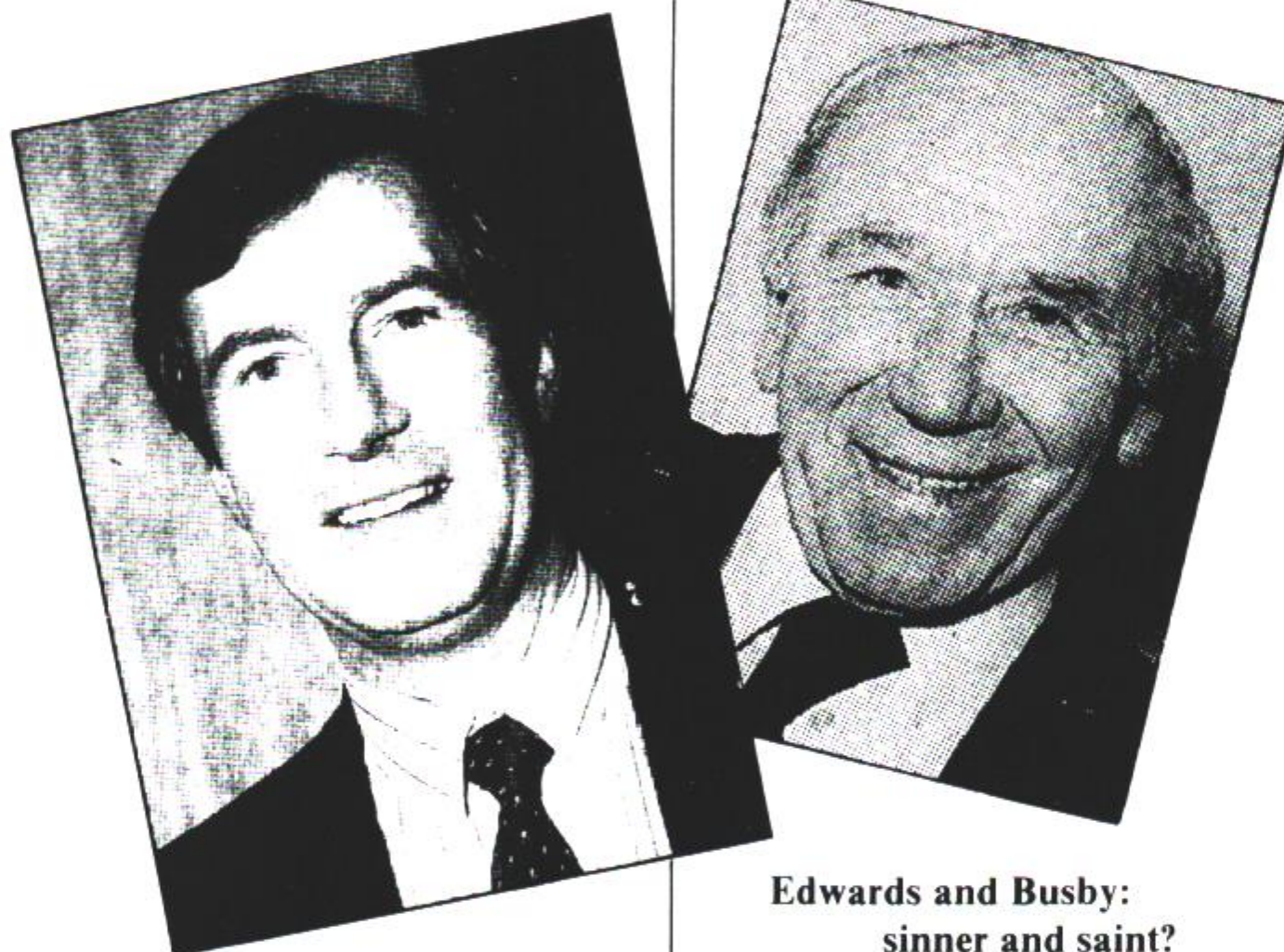
All United fans of my generation are martyrs. When we were young the world was wonderful. What Neil Armstrong did on the Moon, Manchester United did on the football field, becoming the first English club to win the European Cup (1968). We walked tall at school, scribbled MUFCK? on walls and wore our striped scarves to bed. But we have grown up suffering the ignominy of watching United descend into the gloomy depths of a thousand nil-nil draws with the Accrington Stanleys of our times.

In the seventies we suffered the embarrassment of seeing our side drop into the second division, and perhaps the worse embarrassment of having our teenage United fan's uniform (black Harrington jackets turned inside out to show the tartan lining) mistaken for Bay City Rollers' gear. Every season we have suffered the taunts of supporters of more successful teams—Leeds, then Liverpool, Liverpool, Liverpool. This very summer we suffered outraged envy as we watched Arsenal supporters whooping it up around north London because their team had won the league championship. After all, we haven't won it since 1967; Arsenal had it as recently as 1971, the bloody queue-jumpers.

We might cry these nostalgic sentiments into our beer after another ridiculous result (some Mancunians can still be heard singing 'Charlton's better than Pele' on the train back from an afternoon of disappointment at Old Trafford). But you wouldn't want to base a book on them. Yet that is what the authors of *Manchester United: The Betrayal of a Legend* have done. It is a martyr's-eye view of the descent, written by two fans: Channel 4 journalist Michael Crick, and supporters' club chairman David Smith. Smith's club was given the

elbow by United chairman Martin Edwards in 1987, to make way for the new money-spinning membership scheme. So he has an axe to grind, and it shows.

For Crick and Smith, Matt Busby is 'the man who built United', the sinless manager messiah who led the club out of the wilderness. The Edwards clan—the late Louis, 'the man who bought United', and his son Martin, now chairman and chief executive—are the devils who desecrated Busby's shrine.



Edwards and Busby: sinner and saint?

To set the scene for their attack on the Edwards clan (and to pad the thing out) the authors fill the first third of the book with the familiar story of the glory years: how Busby groomed his Babes to be the best, only to have his dreams, his team, and almost his own life wiped out in the Munich air crash on the way back from the 1958 European Cup semi-final. Winning that cup as a memorial to the Munich victims became Busby's self-confessed obsession. When the United of Best, Charlton (himself a Munich survivor), Law, Stiles and Stepney finally achieved it in 1968, beating Benfica of Portugal 4-1 in a game burnt into the memory, Busby declared himself 'cleansed'.

All of this created the legend of Manchester United, sufficient to ensure the biggest crowds in the country for the next 20 years; the average home gate of 57 759 for the 1967-68 season is an English league record that will never be beaten in this age of executive boxes. There have

been moments of magic since, like the late seventies seasons when Tommy Docherty brought back two wingers and the FA Cup, before being sacked for sleeping with the club physio-therapist's wife. But the trend has been downhill for a long time now, and the stalwarts of the Stretford End found it hard to keep the faith last season.

Crick and Smith blame the crisis on the Edwards family and their boardroom scams, full stop. Louis Edwards sold bad meat to the public and gave

good bribes to win school meal contracts. As United chairman, he brought these attitudes into the Old Trafford boardroom. His son Martin is a big chip off the old block. He now takes an £87 825 annual salary out of the club, had manipulated share issues and dividends to make another £233 604 by 1987, has refused to spend money on players United managers wanted, has sought to sell seats on the board to dodgy businessmen and crooked accountants, and generally used the club for his personal advantage. The authors see Edwards' attempt 'to convert the red magic into money' as the root of all evil at Old Trafford. They do not like him one bit, accusing him of being both a jumped-up 'butcher's boy' and a middle class rugby-playing twit.

Now, I do not like Martin Edwards either. But such Thatcherite characters have come to the fore in other top clubs, without the same consequences. The giants of Merseyside and Glasgow make big money from their commer-

cial enterprises, and prosper on the pitch, too. If there is anything to distinguish Edwards, it is that he is not much good at wheeler-dealing. Most of his schemes have flopped, as symbolised by the time he had to spend £11 000 of the club's money on buying up its own lottery tickets. Little wonder that cash for players has been short.

It did not need the awful Edwards to introduce capitalist economics, corruption and personal politicking into football. Their eyes filled with nostalgic tears for the golden years, Crick and Smith quickly pass over such incidents as the 1948 players' strike against Busby's regime, and come close to pining for a return of the maximum wage system. Nor do they see any comparison between Edwards' alleged rip-offs and the fact that Busby paid £5 a year rent to run the United souvenir shop which, by 1986, was grossing an annual profit of more than £100 000.

Edwards must go, by all means, but the malaise goes deeper than that. It is to do with trying to live up to a legend. Manchester United seem to be suffering a modern equivalent of Busby's obsession with the European Cup; now it is with winning the league again. As each year passes, and the pressure from nostalgic fans like Crick, Smith and me grows, the panic becomes more hysterical. There are panic buys of over-priced and under-skilled players, panic hiring and firing of managers. An obsession with the moment is no cure for a wasting disease.

Oh when the Reds...

An appendix at the back of the book shows that, between the seasons 1964-65 and 1970-71, United bought just three players. The rest came up through the club's scouting and youth system. That was the secret of success. It was a secret which Busby himself forgot in the end, when he allowed his obsession with conquering Europe with his already mature team to override long-term considerations. He resigned as manager after the triumph of 1968, leaving behind a team that was going rapidly over the hill, and leaving George Best to carry the burden of keeping the club at the top of the first division. The burden brought down both United and the Belfast boy himself. It will take more than a new chairman to undo the damage of 20 years.

Yet the nature of religion is such that none of this can destroy the faith. We remain the MUFC martyrs, living off past glories and future dreams. Mine eyes have seen the glory of Best's mickey-taking masterpiece of an extra-time goal on that glorious June night at Wembley, 1968. After that, nothing else matters.

Michael Crick and David Smith, *Manchester United: The Betrayal of a Legend*, Pelham Books, £14.95

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.

EAGLETON: ADUMBRATIVE MARXISM OR ACADEMIC TWADDLE?

Terry Eagleton ('Cultural materialism', June) approves of Raymond Williams' move to the left as he grew older, but disapproves of his academic isolation. This is rich. At least Williams had the decency to leave the Labour Party after the first Wilson government and stay out of it; Eagleton joined it after the second Wilson government and is still there. Williams' later involvement with projects like the Socialist Society may not have been very exciting or effective, but what organising outside the academy has Eagleton done in the last 15 years?

That said, Eagleton still shares his mentor's political problems. Both have always been careful to stress that they see the working class as central to political change. This is a token gesture. The ecology, peace and women's movements which they champion represent a systematic rejection of the working class as the agent of change. Instead of showing how capitalism is responsible for war, women's oppression and environmental destruction, Eagleton sets up an artificial debate with 'the more Second International, positivist kind of Marxism'.

Now, I can't recall coming across this rare beast of late, but I have met a lot of people who believe that the interests of women have nothing to do with the working class, and that the Greens can preserve our environment within capitalism. Rather than challenge these views Eagleton prefers to explore with them 'certain kinds of relation with the world which...adumbrate an alternative'. He says this is not 'idle, idealist speculation', but that is a polite phrase for it.

Sue Spencer
Oxford

Terry Eagleton makes me want to spit. His 'Marxism' is academic

gobbledegook that poseurs marvel over and normal people laugh at. Those of us who think Marxism has something to do with revolution have had enough of being associated with this twaddle.

Eagleton says it is not enough for us to seek a 'dominative' relationship with nature, Marxism must also be about having a 'sensuous' relationship with the physical world. So humanity doesn't just need to control nature, it also wants to roll around in the grass sometimes. A brilliant insight.

John Harris
London

FOR AND AGAINST GORBY

Mick Hume's attack on glasnost (editorial, May) rejects both bureaucratic central planning and the market. The fact that many 'socialist' countries are now experimenting with the market does not imply that socialism is dead. It means that these countries can see nothing better to imitate.

It is not enough to say that all existing systems are rotten and how much nicer it would be if the workers were in charge. One needs to explain how supply and demand are to be coordinated in a world without prices and commodity exchange, given the inescapable scarcity of all factors of production. Central planning provides one solution—to date, with disastrous consequences. The market provides another—imperfect, but better than anything else so far. 'Genuine' socialism has so far offered nothing other than critiques of existing systems.

Kevin McFarlane
Milton Keynes

If anyone sounds like an unreconstructed Stalinist, it is surely George Glencross (letters, June). He paints a picture of 'socialist' countries 'looking to the future and providing an inspiration for the peace-loving peoples of the world'. I wonder which particular peace-loving peoples Glencross has in

mind: those of the third world perhaps, whose countries have been ravaged by imperialism and whom Gorbachev seems more anxious to ignore than to help. Or perhaps he was thinking of the Soviet people, whose lack of control over their lives gives a lie to the idea that the Soviet system is socialist.

The Gorbachev charm offensive has exposed the tensions within the Western camp, but this development cannot be explained by mawkish references to Gorbachev's 'decent and likeable' personality. Like all of his predecessors since Stalin, the only future that Gorbachev is interested in looking out for is that of the ruling bureaucracy. Channelling resources away from arms and into the ailing domestic economy is not something Gorbachev aspires to out of altruism. Indeed, his more far-reaching economic proposals would mean rocketing prices and mass unemployment.

Gorbachev presents the Western powers with certain problems, but also provides Thatcher & Co with a stick to beat the left. If it were not for George Glencross, it would be difficult to imagine how anyone but an apologist for capitalism could take inspiration from a man who—in his denunciation of revolution and his praise for the market—discredits communism.

Glencross brands those who attack Gorbachev as 'dogmatic and undemocratic'. If it be dogmatic to prefer Marxism to enthusiasm for the market, then long live dogmatism! If it be undemocratic to put the interests of the Soviet working class before those of the Stalinist bureaucracy, then down with democracy!

Phil Hamilton
Nottingham

SMASH THE USSR?

In an otherwise good analysis of the national question in the Soviet Union, Andy Clarkson proposes an incorrect solution ('The problem of Soviet disunion', June). The demand for 'political, cultural and religious autonomy' can only help the nationalist middle classes, local bourgeoisie and ultimately, imperialism.

As Clarkson points out, market relations are relatively strong in the Baltic states. Increased autonomy here and in the Caucasus can only strengthen the penetration of market forces, thus worsening the position of the working class and creating a foothold for imperialism. This would greatly accelerate the break-up of the USSR, which Clarkson is at pains to avoid. Further, a struggle for autonomy can only blur the distinction between the interests of the working masses and the local

elites and middle classes, allowing the latter to continue to monopolise leadership of the national movements, with dire consequences for the proletarians and peasants.

Clarkson's aversion to breaking up the USSR leads him into an accommodation to the Stalinist bureaucracy. The USSR will ultimately have to be broken up before we can create a new international organisation of communist states. A struggle for independence from Russia under the banner of workers' internationalism is the first step on this road for the comrades in the Soviet republics. Clarkson's 'autonomy' however, implicitly puts off the struggle for revolutions in the republics until the Russian and Western proletariat are ready for theirs. Now where have I heard that before?

John Miller
Coventry

HOMOSEXUAL HIERARCHIES

The lesbian and gay activists interviewed in the Stonewall anniversary feature ('Out for 20 years', June) put forward the doomed strategy of channelling aspirations for liberation into the Labour Party. But at least they perceived the fight for lesbian and gay rights as a political problem. The recent National Union of Students lesbian and gay conference showed that even that is now a minority view among activists.

Most conference delegates put forward individual experience, rather than collective action, as the only basis for achieving liberation. Only lesbians could fight for lesbian rights, only blacks could oppose racism. The issues of racism or class were only raised in the context of trying to ensure that a black or Jewish or working class lesbian was voted on to the committee.

Instead of taking up racism or Ireland to overcome divisions, conference used these issues to divide us further through oppression hierarchies. Just lesbians are considered less oppressed than black or Irish lesbians. The more oppression points you held, the more valid your experience and the better equipped you are to fight for liberation (not that liberation was often mentioned!). Many lesbians applauded the woman who said 'there is no place for a gay man on the lesbian and gay committee'.

We can't fight for our rights by having workshop role-play on how to get money out of a homophobic college authority. Struggling for equality must mean politically challenging the system which criminalises homosexuality.

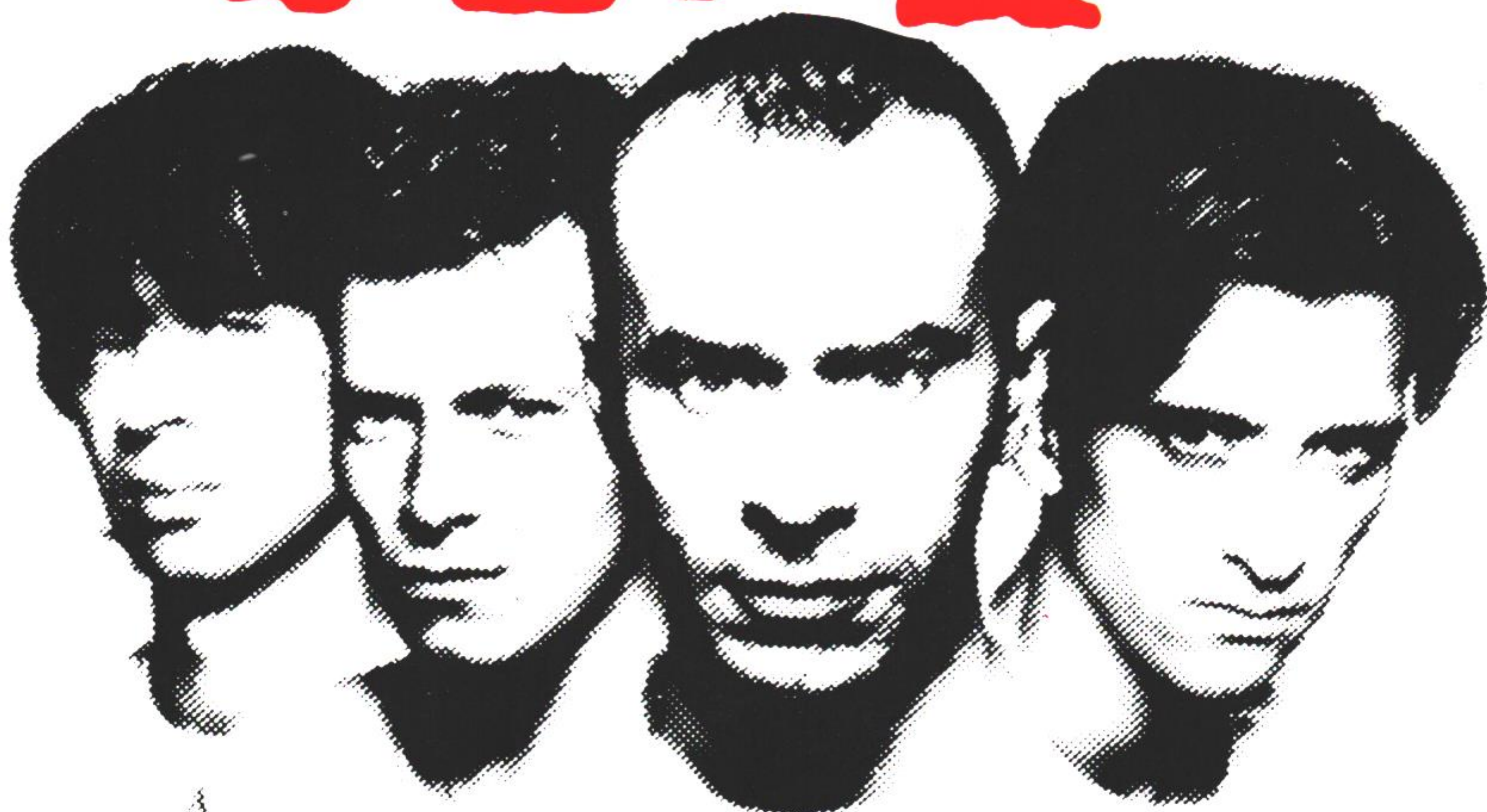
Sandra Denney
Newcastle

MCP, by arrangement with World Service Agency, presents

There
will
be no
support

Time the

**'THE
THE
VS
THE
WORLD'**



BRIXTON ACADEMY

MONDAY

2nd OCTOBER 8.00 pm

Tickets £8.00

Available from B/O Tel: 01-326 1022

KILBURN NATIONAL BALLROOM

TUESDAY

3rd OCTOBER 8.00 pm

Tickets £8.00

Available from B/O Tel: 01-328 3141,
Carey's Estate Agents

TOWN & COUNTRY CLUB

WEDNESDAY

4th OCTOBER 8.00 pm

Tickets £8.00

Available from B/O Tel: 01-284 0303
(Credit Cards 01-284 1221)

HACKNEY EMPIRE THEATRE

THURSDAY

5th OCTOBER 8.00 pm

Tickets £8.00

Available from B/O Tel: 01-985 2424/01-986 9666
(Credit Cards accepted)

Tickets for all four shows are also available from Rough Trade Records Covent Garden and Notting Hill Gate, Rhythm Records Camden, Stargreen, Premier, Keith Prowse, Ticketmaster and LTB (subject to booking fee)

London International Festival of Theatre



Absenteeism amounts to... cultural deprivation - FT

a fascinating mix of spectacle, innovation & exotica - Guardian



INFORMATION 01-240 2428

BOX OFFICE 01-836 1702

3RD-30TH JULY