

socialist **f** **uture**

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LEADING ARTICLE

Paul Feldman
explains the source
of Blair's reactionary
"communitarian"
philosophy, which
abandons
Labour's history

Paul Feldman *analyses the historic changes in the Labour Party culminating in the election of Tony Blair, and the plans to scrap Clause 4*

Behind Blair's "New Labour"

The decision of the Tony Blair-Gordon Brown leadership to abandon Clause 4, alongside the sidelining of the trade unions, marks a turning point for the Labour Party. Labour's new leaders are abandoning their party's history and outlook. They plan to convert Labour into an openly bourgeois party of a reactionary type.

What is planned is a corporatist partnership with big business, where workers and employers are united in a "common interest" to improve economic performance. It is a perspective the ultra-right could endorse.

• *Power at all costs* •

The forces driving these dramatic changes include 15 years of an extreme right-wing Tory regime, four successive election defeats and a crisis-ridden world economy dominated by multi-nationals and finance dealers. "New Labour", as Blair and Brown now prefer to call it, is a naked bid to win political power at all costs. Opposition to these plans inside the trade unions in particular could easily lead to a split in the party. The unions are gradually realising that Blair will not represent their interests in parliament - the very reason they founded the Labour Party in the first place. That is why Unison and the Transport & General Workers Union in particular - who represent the bulk of the low paid - voted to keep Clause 4 at the Labour Party conference.

The trade unions and the working class are facing revolutionary questions: if Labour reformism is being buried, then the choice comes down to capitulation to capitalism or organising for its overthrow. This long-postponed debate gives Marxists an opportunity to examine Labour's crisis from an historic standpoint, and win support for a revolutionary alternative to parliamentary politics.

Labour's founding in 1900, following a narrow

vote by the Trades Union Congress to set up a parliamentary representation committee, was an historic step forward for the British working class. The decision to break with Liberal politics and form an independent party to represent labour in parliament expressed the emergence of collective class consciousness amongst workers.

An offensive by the employers and the courts, together with the inability of the Liberals to deliver any reforms, had forced the change. The TUC of 1899, after years of rejecting similar moves, accepted a motion by the railway union to form an independent party. By repudiating and rejecting this history, as Blair and Brown do, they set out to transform Labour into its own opposite - an openly capitalist party. That is why the Tory press loves Blair so much.

Labour's ambition has always been that of winning a parliamentary majority and introducing some small improvements for working people. These would be achieved through state regulation and taxation. Occasionally, bankrupt industries would be brought into public ownership at vast expense.

It is this modest reformist strategy that the Blair leadership is finally abandoning. Blair asserts that this was "old style socialism". It was nothing of the kind, of course. Nevertheless, Clause 4's reference to common ownership must go, in order to cleanse the party and make it safe for anti-socialists to join.

Blair's unilateral decision to rewrite the constitution comes alongside the pledge to be the party and partners of a "a truly dynamic market economy" where individuals can prosper. No wonder that companies like Sainsbury, Marks & Spencer and Littlewoods are coming in behind Blair.

The plan to convert "New Labour" into a cross-class, "party for the whole nation" is well under way. As right-winger Frank Field enthuses: "We are leap-frogging over the old social democracy."

Labour is already "safe" enough for leading Tories like Joyce Sampson to declare that her "personal ambition" would be better satisfied with Labour, and for media mogul Rupert Murdoch to consider backing Blair. Former members of the right-wing Social Democratic Party – founded to keep Labour out of office – like Lord Chandos, are returning to membership, welcomed with open arms by Blair. Shirley Williams and David Owen will not be far behind.

Defence chiefs have broken with a tradition pre-dating World War I that they do not brief opposition politicians. As Dr David Clark, shadow defence secretary, said: "People realise that we are now serious about the issue of defence and have thrown out the zany policies of the past."

It would be a mistake, however, to see the Blair phenomenon as some sudden hi-jacking of a party. What his leadership represents is the outcome of a process that began in the dying years of the last Labour government, of 1974-79. Led by James Callaghan, it became a willing tool of the International Monetary Fund and was only kept in office through a pact with the Liberals.

Swept into parliament by the miners' strike of 1974, Labour spent the next five years in the grip of the world-wide economic crisis. Instead of reforms, workers got pay policies and spending cuts. Callaghan used troops against the firefighters' strike and during the following "winter of discontent" low-paid council workers fought the government. These betrayals disillusioned millions and Thatcher swept to power as a result.

In the early 1980s the collapse of industry, massive spending cuts and large-scale unemployment produced a new type of Tory regime under Thatcher. Rule by decree through the political manipulation of the state replaced parliamentary democracy. Post-war consensus was replaced by no compromise and confrontation.

Michael Foot's support for Thatcher's war against Argentina was followed, after another election defeat, by Kinnock's refusal to support the miners' 1984-85 strike for jobs or Labour councils fighting rate-capping.

Kinnock followed the distancing of the party from the unions with the witch-hunt against the left in the party. Following another election defeat John Smith's leadership took on the unions' block vote and the power of the constituency parties.

One-member-one-vote, introduced last year, is Labour's ideological mirroring of the rampant individualism whipped up by Tories whose own world has crumbled about them. Tory thinking is expressed through any number of its policies - home

ownership, the "right to buy" council homes, self-employment, privatisation and above all in the anti-union laws. Compulsory pre-strike ballots are, of course, not connected with democratic principles, but with the need to dilute the class strength and anger of workers felt strongest when they are together at a workplace. A ballot delivered to a trade unionist's home puts him or her under tremendous pressure as an individual often confronting both the employer and the government alone. Blair made a specific commitment to keep this anti-union law.

Thus the so-called constitutional reforms in the Labour Party have served to break down the impact of the interests of the working class, replacing them with Tory notions of individual liberties. Instead of being based and founded on the trade unions, Labour is hostile to them and everything they stand for. That is why Blair and company hate the block vote, are reducing its impact at conference and plan to reduce the number of seats reserved for the trade unions on the national executive. It is also why they want to repudiate Clause 4 of the constitution.

Clause 4 was adopted under the impact of the Russian Revolution of October 1917 and the near-insurrectionary struggles by workers in Britain. The small Russian working class had given an example to workers internationally, when it took state power under the leadership of a revolutionary party.

• *Troops and tanks* •

There was tremendous support for the revolution in Britain and hostility to any Allied intervention to overthrow the Bolsheviks. In the period following the end of the first imperialist war, British workers staged a wave of powerful struggles which terrified the ruling class. A general strike on Clydeside in 1919 led to street fighting and the Liberal-Tory coalition sent troops and tanks to Glasgow. As the prospect of civil war was raised by union leaders, even right-wing Labour leaders spoke in revolutionary language to try and keep the mass movement under their control.

Herbert Morrison is reported as telling the 1919 Labour conference they had got to realise that "the present war against Russia on the part of this country, France and the other imperialist powers, was not a war against Bolshevism or against Lenin, but against the international organisation of socialism". It was, he said, a war against the organisation of the trade union movement itself, and as such should be resisted with the full political and industrial power of the whole trade union movement.

It was only at its January 1918 conference that the Labour Party for the first time assumed the aspect of

a definite party, opening its ranks to individual membership. The new constitution set up constituency parties and a national executive dominated by affiliated organisations. And in the context of the post-war ferment, conference adopted objectives, Clause 4 of which said: "To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best possible system of popular administration and control of each industry or service."

No Labour leader has, of course, ever tried or intended to implement this objective. But its mere presence on the back of membership cards is too much for Blair. It is a reminder that society is, whether Blair likes it or not, divided into classes based on property; and that workers are organised in class-based trade unions which founded the Labour Party in the first place. Lastly, of course, the clause defines what socialism is actually about: the replacing of the capitalist system of private ownership for profit by one based on social ownership.

It is all this history that Blair and his co-thinkers must bury to succeed in transforming Labour into a bourgeois party of the second order. Blair openly dismisses the traditional reformism of Labour, which consisted of using the capitalist state to legislate reforms and, through taxation, effect some small redistribution of wealth.

Even bourgeois commentators are astonished at the Blair camp's elimination of history. Anthony Bevens, writing in *The Observer* on October 2 began: "Mainstream British socialism died last week. The speeches made by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown... were as seismic for the Labour Party as the changes wrought to the Conservative Party by Margaret Thatcher in the late 1970s." Bevens said Blair had "wiped the slate clean", declaring that the "essential principle" was that "society must work together for the individual to succeed".

Blair's repudiation of the "out of date conceptions of the old left" was amplified by Brown who told a gathering of big business and media figures: "Past Labour tried to counter the injustice and failings of free market forces by substituting government for market, and often saw tax, spend and borrow policies as the isolationist quick fix for national decline...New Labour sees modern economic intervention not as a controlling or directing force, either second-guessing, or subsidising, or creating a *dirigiste* or corporatist economy, but working in partnership with people to make the market

economy truly dynamic."

Brown's thinking is at once chauvinist and shallow, as he revealed when he maintained that everyone to date had failed to "start with a clear analysis of national economic decline". Those waiting for anything profound were left pondering the Brown "analysis", which announced: "They [all governments, including "past Labour"] have never properly understood the relationship between public interest and the economy. It is this failure that is the true source of British economic problems."

All so simple, really!

There were no references, of course, to the historic decline of British capitalism, dating from the last decade of the 19th century – a decline accelerated by the slump and which has undermined one institution after another, from the Treasury to the monarchy.

Brown, in fact, arrogantly dismissed all thinking and analysis done by his own party as a waste of time, declaring: "For one hundred years, the relationship between government and industry in Britain has been subject to continuous and acrimonious and debilitating ideological dispute."

• *Big business support* •

This is the clearest signal that should Labour come to office it would form a corporate, right-wing relationship with business. There would be no "ideological disputes" – in plain language, no restraints on capitalism.

The Observer reminded readers of a statement by Thatcher in 1983, when she said that unlike the United States, where both parties were based on "free enterprise, freedom and justice", Britain's two main parties had "fundamentally different" philosophies. Bevens concluded: "Not any more. Perhaps Mr Blair should clinch the change by renaming Labour the Democrats."

The American connection is there alright, dominating the staff of the New Labour leadership's Westminster headquarters. David Milliband, 29, head of policy, completed his studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and was heavily influenced by US academics. Brown's speech writer and chief economist is 27-year-old Ed Balls. His Harvard tutors included Larry Summers who, when working for the World Bank, championed the Structural Adjustment Programmes, which slashed health and education spending in the developing countries. Summers is now one of the Clinton treasury team.

Balls is part of a leadership team which claims to be "without ideology", which, if taken seriously, must mean they have no outlook whatsoever and are

androids from another planet. In fact, the "without ideology" crew are the product of the bourgeois post-modernist school of philosophy. This emerged in the Thatcher-Reagan years and justified the rampant individualism of that period. It is an outlook based on absolute subjectivism and a rejection of historical processes. A leading post-modernist exponent was responsible for declaring that "history has ended".

One centre-left Labour MP was reported as saying of Blair's team: "Most of the advisers are either well to the right of the party or entirely without any politics." These sharp suited, young, American-trained academics, who have no loyalties to the labour movement, are dubbed the "Arkansas-style yuppie careerists".

Seamus Milne, writing in *The Guardian* (on 3 October) noted that they epitomised "the political rupture Labour's new leadership team has made even with the late Kinnock years, let alone with the John Smith interregnum".

Blair has set out his "thinking" in a series of statements, pamphlets and speeches. In doing so, he has laid down a challenge, not least to the left centrists in his own party. Their own difficulties stem largely from the absence of theoretical analysis, both of their own party and the world at large. Many on the Labour left leant heavily on the Soviet Union, refusing to recognise its Stalinist nature. When it collapsed, many of them were left floundering.

A little study shows that Blair is not the original thinker the Tory press are dressing him up to be. It is just in a labour movement where theory is a dirty word, just by thinking at all Blair stands out. He is trying to impose a crude, philanthropic bourgeois Christian morality based on a set of abstract ethics usually spouted by High Church Tories. The family, law and order, self-interest, individual freedoms, fairness: that is Blair's appeal. Not socialism but social-ism.

To the outlook of Victorian England, Blair has added the concept of "communitarianism" taken from American academic Amitai Etzioni. This is another empty abstraction which blurs and obscures the real relations of power and oppression in society. The "community" is thus all things to all people. It implies the forcible merger of different interests and classes while leaving the status quo intact. It would require an extreme, totalitarian regime to enforce.

In his latest book, *The Spirit of Community*, Etzioni, sets out his social agenda. It calls for greater responsibility in family life and child-rearing. Divorce should be discouraged. On welfare, it says people should help themselves and then be helped by those closest to them. It advocates community

service, moral education in schools and public humiliation of offenders.

Desperate to break from Labour's past and cash in on the widespread reaction against Tory individualism, Blair and Brown have seized on Etzioni's "community" concept. In his speech at Labour's conference, Blair said: "Community is not some piece of nostalgia. It means what we share ...working together ...and about how we treat each other... So we teach our children to take pride in their schools, their town, their country. We teach them self-respect and we teach them respect for others too. We must work for it together. Solidarity. Co-operation. Partnership. These are our words. This is my socialism. And we should stop apologising for using the word. It is not the socialism of Marx or state control. We are the party of the individual because we are the party of community. It is rooted in a straightforward view of society."

Politics, Blair added, was "moving to our ground". "Across the nation, across class, across political boundaries, the Labour Party is once again able to represent all the British people."

• *Anti-community* •

It is no surprise then that in his first public interview as Labour leader, Blair attacked single mothers, who by their nature are obviously selfish and undermine the community. Nor should it come as a shock that Blair has refused to oppose the Criminal Justice Bill, which turns a series of civil offences into criminal acts. Squatters, ravers, protesters, anti-hunt saboteurs - they all act in an anti-community way, Blair's advisers told him.

In a perceptive article in *The Independent* on August 8, Kenan Malik pointed out that Western government's policies had created social fragmentation and disenchantment with popular institutions. "In such a context, community is an attractive way of imposing a commonality of values and interests across a divided society," he wrote. "But since no such commonality exists, the question that needs to be asked is 'whose interests?' and 'whose values?' - and indeed, 'whose community?'"

Malik does not answer these questions. We can say with certainty, however, that these "values" are taken from existing capitalist society. These values are handed down by a decadent and corrupt ruling class and imposed on society by church, state, universities - and the Labour Party.

"At the heart of the philosophy of community is the elevation of duties to society above individual rights obtained from society. What communitarians create is not an alternative to the Thatcherite vision

of the free market, but a potentially more coercive and divisive version of it," Malik concluded correctly.

In his Fabian pamphlet published to coincide with his leadership victory, Blair claims that the collapse of the Soviet Union means that the "socialism of Marx, of centralised state control of industry and production" is dead. To lump together the monstrosity of Stalinism with Marx's theories is only one example of Blair's subjective method of thinking. The bureaucratic degeneration of the USSR, although done in the name of Marxism, had nothing in common with revolutionary socialism. After all, no one would accuse Wilson, Attlee, MacDonald or any other leader of socialism just because that is what they called it!

What Blair succeeds in doing here, however, is challenging all those in his party whose "socialism" has in fact consisted of state ownership and control under capitalism. Blair's alternative to Marxism is "ethical" socialism, the values which will determine who does what in Labour's "community". He acknowledges that it is a "subjective judgement that individuals owe a duty to one another and to a broader society".

• *Map of destiny* •

It takes an "enlightened view of self-interest" and regards it "as inextricably linked to the interests of society". Blair rejects "narrow time-bound or sectional interests", adding: "Once the destination – a strong, united society which gives each citizen the chance to develop their potential to the full – is properly mapped... We can then go out as a party to build a new coalition of support, based on a broad national appeal that transcends traditional electoral divisions."

No wonder John Major could say at the Tory Party conference that Labour was now speaking the language of the last 15 years of Conservative government, the language of the most reactionary period in post-war Britain. "Buying Tory policies from Labour is like buying a Rolex on the street corner – they may bear the name, but they are not the real thing," he told the Tory conference in Bournemouth. It was good, he added, that Labour now accepted that the Tories continued to set the political agenda. And he is right.

This Christian, ethical "socialism" of Blair's has an echo in the past, in the thoughts of the first leader of the Labour Party, Ramsay MacDonald, who led the minority governments of 1924 and 1929. He is, of course, infamous for joining a national government in 1931.

In his pamphlet *Where Is Britain Going?*, Leon Trotsky dwelt on the "peculiarities" of British Labour leaders like MacDonald, who began political life as a Liberal. He noted: "The MacDonalds inherited from Puritanism not its revolutionary strength, but its religious prejudices. From the Owenites, they received not their communistic fervour, but their utopian hostility to the class struggle... From the past political history of Britain, the Fabians borrowed only the mental dependence of the proletariat on the bourgeoisie. History turned its nether parts to these gentlemen; and the writings that they there read became their programmes."

Trotsky said he had forced himself to read an article by MacDonald in which the Labour leader wrote: "In the realm of feeling and conscience, in the realm of spirit, socialism forms the religion of service to the people." Blair would not disagree. According to MacDonald, socialism was founded on the gospels and denoted "a well-thought out and determined attempt to Christianise government and society." Like Blair, MacDonald talked of an "an old [Marx] and a new school of socialism", adding: "We have no class consciousness. Our opponents are the people with class-consciousness... But in the place of a class-consciousness we desire to evoke the consciousness of social solidarity." For "social solidarity" read Blair's "community".

Trotsky commented: "The social solidarity which MacDonald preaches is the solidarity of the exploited with the exploiters, in other words the maintenance of exploitation. In addition to this, MacDonald boasts that his idea is distinct from the idea of our grandfathers, having in mind Karl Marx. In actuality, MacDonald is distinguished from his 'grandfathers' in this sense, that he has returned to his great-grandfathers. The ideological skilly which MacDonald puts out for a new school signifies – on an absolutely new historical base – a return to the petty bourgeois sentimental socialism subjected by Marx to a devastating criticism even in 1847 and earlier. To the class struggle MacDonald opposes the idea of the solidarity of all those virtuous elements who endeavour to reconstruct society by means of democratic reforms. In this presentation the struggle of the class is replaced by the 'constructive' activity of a political party, which is formed not on a class basis but on the basis of social solidarity."

This philosophy led MacDonald to betray his own party in 1931. His desertion enabled the Tories to impose the full brunt of the slump on the working class. Several Labour governments later, Blair says the party as a whole must go down this road: the national interest must come first. Class interests are "out of date" and must be jettisoned.

The Socialist Future Group will support all those in the Labour Party and the unions who defend Clause 4. Blair and his allies have no right to overturn the history of the party. Despite what he says, the Labour Party would not exist today without the working class and the trade unions. Only they have the right to decide the party's fate.

Blair is signalling that parliamentary reformist politics is at an end in Britain. In doing so, he is expressing powerful historical processes which have brought Britain to the edge of open dictatorship. The Tories are in tremendous crisis, riddled with corruption and split on every question. The major

institutions of state are crumbling. Under these conditions, Blair is the cavalry on the horizon. He will save capitalism.

The working class movement has to face under entirely new conditions the challenge it first considered under Chartism, and which eventually led to the creation of the Labour Party: how to win political power. In 1900, a parliamentary reformist road to socialism was adopted. In practice it proved a cul-de-sac. In his own way, Blair is confirming that. For socialists who want to make Clause 4 a reality, the discussion must begin on elaborating a revolutionary socialist alternative.

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Bill Bowring is a barrister and lecturer in law, and chair of the Haldane society of socialist lawyers. He has made many visits to the Occupied Territories to highlight human rights abuses by the Israeli forces. Here he reports on a visit by a delegation after the PLO/Israel autonomy accord.

The challenge of Palestinian autonomy

It is just over a year since the rhythm of events in the Middle East suddenly accelerated. On 13 September 1993 the Israeli Government and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (still an illegal organisation under Israeli law) signed the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (the DOP), which set the stage for the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area signed on 4 May 1994 in Cairo (the Cairo Agreement). I travelled on a lawyers' mission of inquiry to Israel, the Occupied Territories, and the Gaza Strip and Jericho in July 1994, and returned in September 1994 for a Conference on International Human Rights Enforcement in East Jerusalem (I had previously visited the Occupied Territories in 1988, shortly after the beginning of the Intifada, and then in 1990, shortly after the Al-Aqsa massacre). What follows is an attempt to analyse, from a legal and human rights standpoint, some of the recent developments. I cannot pretend to the expertise and knowledge which Palestinians "on the ground" possess, and recommend particularly the writings of Av. Raja Shehadeh, in *Middle East International* and other publications.

• Statehood at last? •

At first sight, it might appear that the Palestinian people have at last won the self-determination to which they have an undoubted right (confirmed so many times by the international community), and even statehood – after all, some 120 states have already recognised Palestine as a state since the Declaration of 1988. Pursuant to the agreements, Israeli troops have already withdrawn from the Gaza Strip (save for Israeli settlements) and from Jericho, and some 8,000 Palestinian police and security forces have moved in. This strong police force,

armed with Kalashnikov rifles, is highly visible. All Palestinian areas are now festooned with Palestinian flags, and with large portraits of Chairman Arafat – "Abu Amar". Gaza is already transformed; people are once more swimming in the Mediterranean, after so many years of shootings, curfews, house demolitions, and many other grave breaches of human rights standards by the Israeli military authorities, and much construction activity is in evidence.

It is not just a question of the Gaza Strip and Jericho. Under arrangements for "early empowerment", the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has taken over health, education, social services, tourism, and the collection of taxes from the Israeli Civilian Administration in the West Bank. Elections to a new Palestinian National Authority, which should have taken place in July 1994, will surely be held by the end of the year, giving the PNA much needed legitimacy. A Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights has been set up, under the redoubtable Hanan Ashrawi.

So why is there not general jubilation? There are two main reasons. The first relates to the many deficiencies of the DOP and the Cairo Agreement. It must never be forgotten that the PLO was forced to negotiate from a position of the very greatest weakness. The debacle of the Gulf War, when the PLO's backing for Saddam Hussein alienated many powerful backers in the region, and revenue ceased to flow from Palestinian workers in the Gulf, left the organisation in a state of near-impotence. At the same time, there were divisions not only within the Palestinian community in the Occupied Territories, between Fatah and Hamas in particular, but also between Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and those in exile, in Lebanon or Tunis. King Hussain of Jordan has shown an ever-greater willingness to

accommodate with Israel: witness his recent restoration of relations with Israel, and his claim to maintain protection of the holy places of Jerusalem, which so affronts Chairman Arafat.

As a consequence, the Palestinians are, legally, in a very weak position. Raja Shehadeh has provided the following eight-point overview of the DOP and Cairo Agreement.

(1) This is, it must be stressed, only an interim regime. It is entirely provisional.

(2) It calls for the first time for the establishment of a Palestinian national authority.

(3) It calls for the first time for national elections.

(4) It brings about a certain kind of withdrawal by Israel.

(5) It recognises the dual system, as between Israelis and Palestinians, which has existed since 1978.

(6) It confirms the changes in the law made by Israel, and their implementation by a legitimate Palestinian authority.

(7) It confirms Israeli gains in control over natural resources. It is notable that there has been no legal challenge to this.

(8) It affects the way in which it is possible for Palestinians to challenge human rights violations.

This last is a point to which I will return.

An especially graphic demonstration of the plight of the Palestinian people was presented at the September Conference by the Jerusalem-based Land and Water Institute for Studies and Legal Services. It compares the Bantustans in the former apartheid South Africa with the Palestinian Autonomy Areas. (See table opposite)

• Advent of autonomy •

The second problem relates to the nature of the PNA, and the way in which it is operating. Already there are some Palestinians who assert that the new Palestinian authorities are simply acting as the long arm of Israel. An article by Khaled Abu Toameh in the Israeli political weekly *The Jerusalem Report* (22 September, 1994) is entitled "Early Disempowerment?". It states that: "In the towns and cities of the West Bank, many Palestinians await the advent of autonomy – and Yasser Arafat's regime – with something approaching dread." It quotes Dr Mahmud Sa'adeh, lecturer at the Islamic University in Hebron, as saying: "Gaza and Jericho have been turned into a new police state. The new authority is behaving like a revolutionary military junta controlled by factional dictators. Anyone who dares question their actions is at once branded as a traitor or reactionary."

1. Negotiations were carried out with the Bantu people who are part of the South African People

1. Negotiations were carried out with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, which represents the Palestinian people.

2. As a result of the special law of 1959, certain zones were declared to be areas of black autonomy. These were called Bantustans.

2. As a result of the negotiations and the Cairo Agreement, it was agreed that the PNA would take over areas densely populated by Palestinians. These were called Autonomous Territories.

3. Authority in these areas was given to the local citizens.

3. Authority in these areas was given to the local citizens.

4. The law provided for elections to be held, but not for a constitutive legislative assembly.

4. The Agreement provided for elections to be held, but not for a constitutive legislative assembly.

5. The law provided for the election of a parliament and a figurehead government.

5. The Agreement provided for elections for an authority council for the transitional period.

6. Security, external affairs, natural resources and curricula were all left in the hands of the whites.

6. Security, external affairs, natural resources and curricula were all left in the hands of the occupation authorities and the Israeli legislature.

7. The Bantustans were politically segregated from South Africa and the authorities supervised the transfer of black citizens to the areas.

7. The Autonomous Territories were segregated from Jerusalem.

This is not just the view of an Islamic militant. Palestinian non-governmental organisations which have for many years exposed Israeli human rights violations have raised the alarm. On 31 July, 1994 the authoritative Palestinian Human Rights Information Centre sent an open letter to Yasser Arafat, expressing deep concern over the confiscation of copies of *an-Nahar* newspaper on Thursday, 27 July, by members of the Palestinian preventive security force, and the subsequent ban on distribution in the Palestinian authority areas. As they pointed out, this action was clearly contrary to Article 66 of the Draft of the Palestinian Basic Law, guaranteeing freedom of the press, as well as article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The paper, closed for a while, has now re-commenced publication, but with fulsome declarations of loyalty.

Evidence of further violations, of a disturbing nature, has continued to accumulate. Specific instances include, first, the case of Farid Abu Jarbuh, 28 years old, arrested for espionage and tortured to death in a Gaza police cell; the Palestinian authorities initially claimed he had died of a heart attack, but the new Palestinian General Prosecutor has disclosed, under pressure, that four policemen will be tried for his murder. Second, it was alleged that 10 Palestinians were condemned without trial and secretly executed in Jericho. Third, it was said that more than 120 Palestinians are being held in Palestinian jails, including an 85-year-old man accused of illegal construction on state land.

In mid-August Maha Nasser, chairwoman of the Palestinian Womens' General Union and a PFLP activist, stated her opposition to the participation in the Union's annual conference of Intisar al-Wazim (minister for welfare in the PNA and widow of Abu Jihad). Maha Nasser received death threats, and suffered an attack on her Ramallah home, after which a blood-soaked cloth was left on her doorstep, together with a written warning that if she did not change her mind, her life and those of her children would be in danger. The conference was cancelled.

• *Obstacles to human rights* •

The Independent Human Rights Commission is striving to rectify human rights abuses. But there are at least three significant obstacles to the protection of Palestinian human rights during the transition. First, the PNA is still desperately short of money. The PLO is forced to beg donor states for salaries for the police, who lack housing and even the most basic equipment, as I was told by their commanders in the

Gaza Strip. For example, there are 7,200 Palestinian police in Gaza as well as 500 intelligence officers, one for every 100 Gazans (there are currently 6,700 teachers). The cost of their salaries is \$7m a month, while PNA tax revenue is about \$3m. There has been a cash shortfall in the police budget of \$12m, so that most officers have received only partial pay. Only now is agreement being reached for distribution of foreign aid. It seems likely that money collected from taxes will be entirely inadequate for the running of civil affairs in the West Bank.

Second, the Palestinian legal system is in disarray. Nearly 50% of West Bank advocates, members of the Jordanian Bar, have been on strike for 25 years, practising only in the religious Shari'a courts. Most criminal offences have been tried before Israeli military tribunals, under the British Emergency Defence Regulations of 1945, and a multitude of Israeli military orders.

West Bank law is made up of Ottoman law, pre-1967 Jordanian law, and Israeli military orders. The law of the Gaza Strip, on the other hand, is British Mandate (pre-1948) law, Egyptian law enacted between 1948 and 1967, including a Constitution, and Israeli military orders. The new Palestinian judge in Jericho told me that he has no understanding of Gaza law; nevertheless, appeals from his court go to an Appeal Court in Gaza. There has already been one instance of deadlock. How, then, are Palestinians to obtain effective remedies against the abuse of power by Palestinian officials? Furthermore, the PNA cannot yet legislate; even when it can, legislation will be subject to veto.

Third, there is the vexed question of whether Israel is still, legally, in "belligerent" (military) occupation of the Occupied Territories, including the Gaza Strip and Jericho. Following the creation of the self-rule areas, does Israel retain responsibility for the human rights of their inhabitants? If Israel is no longer responsible, then what is the status of the new Palestinian Authority? What are its obligations in international law? These are questions of the greatest importance to each Palestinian.

The dispute over the question of belligerent occupation is not new. The Israeli government has always maintained that its rule over Gaza and the West Bank is not one of belligerent occupation. It has, nevertheless undertaken to abide by the humanitarian provisions of the 1949 IV Geneva Convention, protecting civilians in occupied territories, *de facto* if not *de jure* (as a matter of law). The United Nations, both at General Assembly and Security Council levels, has for a long period consistently maintained that the Convention applies *de jure*. The Israeli Supreme Court has taken a quite

different position from the government; it has frequently referred to and discussed the IV Geneva Convention, to the extent that matters concerning the Convention are effectively within the court's jurisdiction. It granted all Palestinians access to Israeli courts, in particular the High Court of Justice, providing them with immediate and affordable access to judicial review of almost all actions of the military government. There were even a few successes for Palestinian complainants.

A number of experts, including judges of the Supreme Court, consider that Israeli rule over the West Bank and Gaza has not ended. According to the DOP, Israel will remain responsible for most of the region's overall security even after IDF withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho (Article VII), and the 945 Defence Emergency Regulations - Article 119 of which permits house demolitions - will remain in force (Article IX). Furthermore, a final agreement is to be reached by the parties within five years; therefore, the declaration is an interim agreement that does not purport to end the occupation. During this period, Israel will continue to exercise some legislative, executive and judicial functions in the Occupied Territories: complete jurisdiction over East Jerusalem, settlements, border areas, and substantial land and water resources.

According to Article 6 of the 1949 IV Geneva Convention, to the extent that Israel exercises the functions of government, it continues to be bound by the main provisions of the Convention until the end of occupation. For its part, on 14 June, 1989 the Ambassador of the State of Palestine filed instruments of accession to the Geneva Conventions and Protocols. The Swiss government refused to decide whether the communication should be considered an instrument of accession, due to the uncertainty as to the existence or non-existence of a State of Palestine, but noted that the "unilateral declaration of application" made by the PLO on 7 June, 1982 remained valid. But the only adequate protection of human rights within the new self-rule areas will be incorporation of the main provisions of international human rights instruments into Palestinian legislation. Where the Palestinian authorities cannot implement new legislation, Israel will remain internationally responsible for human rights violations.

All those I spoke to were therefore rightly concerned to grasp the significance of the Israeli veto. At the time of writing, no-one knows how the provisions of Article VII (Legislative Powers of the Palestinian Authority) of the Cairo Agreement will operate in practice. While it is true that the Authority has power within its jurisdiction to promulgate

legislation, such legislation is subject to several levels of control by Israel. The grant of self rule to the Palestinians in certain areas, and of early empowerment in others, is therefore highly conditional on Israeli approval. There is no doubt that, in reality, Israel could re-assert complete control on the ground. For example, Professor David Kretzmer, of the Hebrew University asked me to imagine the hypothetical case in which the Israeli authorities had reliable information of gross and persistent human rights violations, for example torture, in Palestinian jails. Would Israel have the right and duty to intervene to protect the individuals concerned, and to call the perpetrators to account? If, as he believed, Israel remains in belligerent occupation of the whole of the West Bank and Gaza, then victims of human rights violations would be entitled, by virtue of the provisions of the IV Geneva Convention of 1949, and by virtue of the provisions of general international law which continue to apply under conditions of occupation, to call upon Israel to respond.

• *Occupying power* •

A dissenting voice is provided by Dr Eyal Benvenisti, a leading Israeli expert. He argued as follows in 1993, shortly after the signing of the DOP: Being an occupying power, Israel draws its powers in the West Bank and Gaza from the effective control it has there. In his view, effective control is a necessary element in defining a situation as occupation. He relies on article 42 of the Hague Regulations on Laws and Customs of War of 18 October 1907; it is generally accepted that these have the status of customary international law, binding on all states whether or not they have ratified any treaties or other instruments. Article 42 provides:

"Territory is considered occupied when it is actually placed under the authority of the hostile army. The occupation extends only to the territory where such authority has been established and can be exercised."

Benvenisti argued that after relinquishing its control, as envisioned in the DOP, in Gaza and Jericho, Israel will have no effective control, and therefore will have no right to re-occupy those areas. The Palestinian entity in these areas "has a life of its own, and does not draw its authority from the Israeli occupation or from the Declaration, but from the Palestinian people's right to self-determination". The DOP therefore constitutes an "irreversible step" towards settlement of the conflict.

When I met Dr Benvenisti, he was a good deal less

sanguine about the irreversibility of the peace process. He told me that the legal adviser to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Joel Singer, believes that the whole of the West Bank and Gaza is still under occupation. Singer points to Article XXIII paragraph 7 of the Cairo Agreement, which states that:

“The Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area shall continue to be an integral part of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and their status shall not be changed for the period of this Agreement. Nothing in this Agreement shall be considered to change this status.”

While Benvenisti concedes that Singer is probably correct as to the position in law, he thinks it is necessary to look at the facts; it is then clear that the Palestinians in the Gaza strip and the Jericho area are not under occupation. In his present view, Article 42 provides a very simple objective test as to who has objective control: the ability to govern and to regulate civilian life in the self-rule areas. If the test is effective control, then one has to see first, whether the Cairo Agreement gives Israel powers over the civilian population; and second, whether Israel in fact exercises such powers. The answer, according to Benvenisti, is that Israel has no such powers. The Israeli right to intervene is very limited – to hot pursuit. Furthermore, if you look at the practice, Israel is not interested in what goes on in Gaza and Jericho, and is leaving the PNA/PLO to regulate its own affairs. Benvenisti recognises that the problem is how to reconcile the objective test with the meaning of the Cairo Agreement. His proposition is that both parties to the Agreement felt comfortable with regarding Gaza and Jericho as still being under occupation, since, if there is no occupation, it is necessary to decide who has sovereignty.

In his view, it is preferable for the Palestinians, too, to view Jericho and Gaza as still under occupation. But the fact that Israel and the PLO have agreed to regard the whole area as still under occupation does not mean that it is in fact occupied. If someone held in Gaza prison wants to complain to the Red Cross, will the Israeli Army and Foreign Ministry say they are not responsible?

The real debate is whether the new entity constitutes a state, an autonomy, or what? The Palestinians have had to accept the Cairo Agreement because they are weak; but Benvenisti considers that this was a wrong move. He had hoped that the Israeli government would have been able to compensate by giving the Palestinians more powers, and more funding and help with fund-raising. He is afraid that there may now be a vicious circle, where the Palestinians complain that they are being forced into

the position of agents for the Israeli authority. Meanwhile, the PLO remains, in Israeli law, an illegal organisation.

Finally, what is the view of the International Committee of the Red Cross, which is responsible for the vindication of the Geneva Conventions? They believe that the position of the ICRC vis-a-vis the question of belligerent occupancy is that they will wait to see to what extent the Israeli government will exercise its veto. If Israel does exercise the veto, that will suggest that there is sufficient control to amount to occupation. However, the ICRC's view of occupation is multi-faceted: they do not strictly apply Eyal Benvenisti's "effective control" test.

The crucial question is the protection of the human rights of individual Palestinians in the whole of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Even if the PLO and PNA continue to declare their acceptance of international human rights norms, human rights will only be protected effectively by means of domestic legislation, and an adequate system of legal enforcement, with qualified and honest judges, and competent lawyers. How, to give just one example, will administrative decisions be challenged once "early empowerment" takes effect? And to what mechanism will the ordinary Palestinian turn, in order to seek a remedy for human rights violations?

• *Violations of human rights* •

Meanwhile, Israeli human rights violations have continued. Palestinians are still shot dead by Israeli forces – another 4 from 12 to 20 August 1994. In May 1994, although the re-deployment of the occupying forces began to confine them largely to the 40% of the land area of the Gaza Strip assigned to Israeli settlers, three killings, including that of a 14-year-old boy, were reported and 107 injuries, comprising 79 by live bullets and 28 by tear gas. On 17 July, 1994 two Palestinians were shot dead and 90 injured by gunfire at Erez checkpoint at the entrance to the Gaza Strip. A protest was being mounted by Palestinian workers attempting to enter Israel to work.

Palestinian land is still confiscated, if at a somewhat lower rate: 521,048 dunums (one dunum = 1,000m²) from the Madrid Agreement (December 1991) to the Oslo Agreement (September 1993), that is, 24,811 dunums a month; 93,910 dunums from Oslo to the Cairo Agreement (April 1994), that is, 13,415 dunums a month; and 35,245 dunums from Cairo to July 1994, that is, 11,748 dunums a month. During the first two of those three periods, trees were uprooted at the rates of 927 and 543 trees a month – these are olive trees, an essential resource

for most Palestinian villages. Palestinian East Jerusalem is still in the process of being carved up by a host of new Israeli settlements, while Palestinians cannot obtain building permits.

The presence of Israeli settlers will continue to pose the gravest danger to peace and the protection of human rights. By 1990, approximately 70,000 Jewish settlers lived in the West Bank and a further 70,000 lived in the new suburbs developed around Jerusalem. A 1993 "Peace Now" report showed that there were 120,000 settlers around Jerusalem; all settlers may carry weapons. The Hebron massacre of 24 February, 1994 indicated the possibility that settlers, individually or collectively, may seek to provoke conditions in which Palestinian autonomy is reversed. The Israeli government has been obliged to act: ten settlers from the Kiryat Arba settlement near Hebron, including two rabbis, two serving Israeli Defence Force officers, and an Arab convert to Judaism have very recently been arrested, suspected of conspiracy to kill Palestinians.

Some Palestinian experts now consider, bleakly, that Palestinian statehood is highly unlikely; that what the Israeli government intends is that the West Bank should become either a part of, or affiliated to, Jordan. It would in effect act as an economic bridge between Israel and her Arab neighbours, supplying cheap labour to Israeli industry. In such a scenario, Gaza would have to fend for itself. I saw how Ramallah is rapidly becoming the commercial centre for Palestinians, with new shops, restaurants and

homes springing up everywhere. I was told that banks and accountants, particularly from Jordan, are establishing themselves in increasing numbers.

But the Intifada was not conducted, with so much heroism and sacrifice, in order to achieve union with Jordan. Not only do the Palestinian people have a right to self-determination; each Palestinian is scarred with the struggle to make that right a reality. At the same time, the intifada was a time of unprecedented social solidarity, when all classes in society fought and suffered together. What is plainly happening now is that the commercial and industrial élite are once more emerging. Wealthy American-Palestinians are buying and building property around Ramallah, so that their children can attend Palestinian schools. But at the same time thousands of poor Palestinians are obliged to seek menial work in Israel, subject always to the whim of the Israeli authorities, who can and do withdraw permits or close the border.

Nonetheless, it is a change which even ten years ago was almost unimaginable, that Palestinian forces control even parts of Palestine. With every day that passes, Palestinian authority becomes more of a reality. Once Israeli troops are withdrawn it will be hard to send them back. It is to be hoped that the factions which presently divide the PLO and control the PNA will find the ability to provide the resolute but accountable leadership to create, from unpromising beginnings, the first Palestinian state.

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Corinna Lotz examines the controversy surrounding a major exhibition of German art.

Contradictions of "Deutsche Romantik"

Four years after German unification, three international art centres have joined together to provide Londoners with a sweeping selection of German art from the late 18th century to the present.

London's South Bank Centre has co-operated with the Scottish National Gallery and the Nationalgalerie in Berlin to organise *Deutsche Romantik*, one of the most significant displays of German painting over the past two centuries seen in London. The exhibition, which has aroused fierce political controversy, is presented simultaneously with an excellent programme of music, lectures and broadcasts.

At the Hayward Gallery the tour through German Romanticism begins upstairs with a group of figure studies, landscapes and paper cut-outs of plant silhouettes. Caspar David Friedrich's "Woman at a Window", painted in 1822, stands with her back to the viewer. Her face is turned to the sun outdoors. There is a calmness of spirit, a composure mingled with a longing for the bright light beyond the shutters.

The theme of a person sitting or standing near a window recurs in many paintings of this period. Friedrich's contemporary, Georg Kersting, was also fond of it. He depicted his fellow artist Friedrich standing by a window in his studio, gazing at his easel, and "Before the Mirror" and "The Embroidress" show women before windows.

Human beings facing nature – this relation preoccupied not only German Romantic painters but also English poets of the same period. Indeed, some of the poetry of both Keats and Wordsworth could have been written to describe paintings by Friedrich, Runge, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Carl Blechen, Carl Carus and Johan Dahl, to name only a few.

John Keat's poem "As I Stood Tip-Toe" published in 1817, has the same, direct, uncluttered delight in nature which appears in the landscape paintings and studies by these and other German artists. A similar

approach can be seen in Constable's landscape drawings and sketches.

This is not to suggest that these artists are identical, but simply to illustrate – if proof is needed – that Romanticism was a European movement, not a peculiarly German phenomenon. The heightened feelings which nature arouses in the human soul are experienced as the impetus for artistic creation, for Keats just as for Friedrich.

Friedrich's use of symmetry, the fall of light, delicate nuances of colour are drawn with a close observation and powerful emotion, just as in Keats. Friedrich was admired by his contemporaries for his craftsmanship, his fidelity to nature. His paintings have a powerful contemplative, longing quality to them – "Sehnsucht". There is no empty rhetoric, no grandiose gesturing. The human beings are neither overawed by nature nor do they try to dominate it.

Philipp Otto Runge's self-portrait of 1802 has a directness combined with heightened sensitivity, a lack of self-dramatisation or idealisation. The artist's face is composed, but the fall of light on his face and throat, the flowing folds of his open-necked shirt, his soft full lips, all suggest a hyper-sensitive character.

The innocence of childhood and a fresh uncorrupted vision is a common feature in early Romantic paintings. The search for the child-like, the naïve, the uncorrupted in nature reflected an outlook which had been advanced earlier by the French Enlightenment philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau. In this respect, the German Romantics did not jettison all of the ideas of the Enlightenment, as is often suggested.

Runge saw his time, the early 19th century, as a decisive moment in history. He felt art had to be renewed by the returning to the "initial inwardness of feeling – or until we have become children again". Runge and others depicted childhood as the age of innocence, and wanted to discover in nature a world of perfect symmetry which was far away from the political stagnation they found around them. As

many of the essays in the exhibition catalogue stress, one of the main features of German Romanticism was the "movement into self", the inward turning quest for enlightenment and fulfilment.

Some poets and artists, such as Goethe, initially found inspiration in the "Gothic", in the architecture of the middle ages. Others looked back to bygone ages in a variety of ways. This turn to aspects of the past also characterised the Brothers Grimm, who carefully assembled oral peasant traditions of story telling to create a popular heritage.

The Grimms, who worked closely with the painter Runge, were in opposition first to Napoleonic rule but also to the feudal despots who held power in Germany after the fall of Napoleon. The brothers had to flee for their lives from the authorities in Göttingen to Berlin and were closely involved in the 1848 revolution.

• Romantic school •

The visual images of early German Romanticism have a delicate innocence and freshness – and a number of later artists continued this tradition right through the 19th century. It was revived under new circumstances in the 20th century by artists such as Franz Marc.

There is a distinction between the Romantic School and Romanticism as a general tendency. The first flowering of the Romantic School was around 1800, when a close collaboration was established in Jena between the literary critics Friedrich and August Schlegel, Karoline Schlegel and the poets Tieck and Novalis, the philosophers Schelling and Schleiermacher.

It was a reaction to the rationalism of the Enlightenment, which had become identified with Napoleonic repression. Romanticism as a more general European movement in the arts superseded the Classical period, concentrating increasingly on the human being's moods and feelings.

The German and English curators and essayists are right to draw a connection between the Romantics of the 19th century and the Expressionist and Utopian painters of the 20th. In various ways they were looking for an escape from the social reality that confronted them. But even while doing so, their painting became filled with the social being of the times in which they lived.

Thus the ultra-subjective Expressionist painters of the Brücke group, the mystical colourists of the Blaue Reiter group and other "neo-Romantics" working before World War I, gave a foretaste of the powerful upheavals that were to transform the world. Again, although revealed most powerfully by

German artists, this was not a purely German thing.

The carefully selected exhibition at the Barbican Art Gallery called *A Bitter Truth* gives a heart-wrenching view of the human horror of the Great War. The Barbican show should be seen as an antidote to the thinly-disguised chauvinism displayed by various critics of *Deutsche Romantik*. Many of the same artists who appear at the Hayward can be seen at the Barbican, but this time in an international context.

In his accompanying book, curator Richard Cork, focuses on Ludwig Meidner's "Apocalyptic Landscape", painted in 1913, which is the most uncanny warning of the imminent outbreak of World War. The intimation that a huge conflagration was about to happen appeared not only in Meidner's work, but also in Franz Marc, Wassily Kandinsky and the Italian and Russian Futurists.

The German artists included by Cork disprove the thesis that they opened the door to Nazism. On the contrary, Otto Dix, Ernst Barlach, Max Beckman, George Grosz, Franz Marc, Paul Klee, Erich Heckel to name only some, appear far less nationalist than many of their counterparts in Britain, France and Italy.

Even before the Hayward Gallery opened the doors of "The Romantic Spirit in German Art 1790-1990" on September 29, the art critic of *The Independent*, Andrew Graham-Dixon, denounced the festival as being "thoroughly misconceived", claiming: "It is actively constructed around a vast absence, an enormous hole of forgetting and historical distortion. Of course, as the organisers may care to argue in their defence, German Romanticism produced many, many things that were not Nazism – but Nazism was the biggest and most dreadful thing that it did produce. Any history which pretends otherwise is a lie."

Graham-Dixon went on to claim that "Hitler was not some peripheral distorter of German Romantic ideas. He was, in many respects, their most extreme interpreter..."

• Philosophical background •

This outburst from a newspaper which is generally pro-European and prides itself on its visual arts coverage, surprised many in the art world – and beyond. It was written before the exhibition opened, and without the benefit of actually seeing the art works which the critic insists led in a direct line to Fascism. By way of contrast, *The Times* produced a 16-page colour supplement about the festival which set out the political and philosophical background to the German Romantic movement and included an



Man on a plain, Erich Heckel, 1917
"A Bitter Truth" at the Barbican Art Gallery.



Mystical images of War, Natalia Goncharova, 1914
"A Bitter Truth" at the Barbican Art Gallery.



Apocalyptic Landscape, Ludwig Meidner, 1913
"A Bitter Truth" at the Barbican Art Gallery.

Self Portrait, Philipp Otto Runge, 1801
"The Romantic Spirit in
German Art", Hayward Gallery



Detail of Iphigenie, Anselm Feuerbach, 1871
"The Romantic Spirit in
German Art", Hayward Gallery

appreciation of the early Romantic painters, Philipp Otto Runge and Caspar David Friedrich.

Director of South Bank exhibitions, Henry Meyric Hughes, revealed to *The Times* that when he first began to approach galleries in Germany in the late 1980s, "no German institution could dare take it on. They were willing to help as long as it remained a British initiative".

On the day the exhibition opened, Brian Appleyard, also writing in *The Independent*, felt moved to reply to Graham-Dixon's attack. Appleyard suggested that if Graham-Dixon's criteria were applied to a painting by Francis Bacon, the consequences might be even more alarming than Fascism!

Graham-Dixon's simplistic historical approach was parodied thus: "Effectively," Appleyard says, "this means that we should look at a painting of the early 19th century by Caspar David Friedrich with eyes that have seen the Holocaust. That we should hear Wagner with ears that have heard the goosestep."

• *Subtle & devious* •

Appleyard suggested that Graham-Dixon's anxiety is because "the post-Enlightenment abyss at which the Romantic stared and into which the Nazis plunged has not gone away".

More subtle and devious than his opponent, Appleyard is actually a thoroughgoing sceptic who believes what he calls the "great Western rationalisation" (read the Enlightenment) has led the world to disaster, a concept which has affinities with post-modernist theories about the supposed end of history.

One super-radical at the Press launch said the inclusion of three paintings by Nazi sympathisers in the Hayward Gallery show would poison the minds of the young. Other critics claimed that the Nazi epoch had been evaded. But she, like the other fiery critics, and like Galileo Galilei's ecclesiastic persecutors in 16th century Italy, had not actually looked at the objects of contention.

Lord Weidenfeld, one of the leading lights behind the festival, wrote in its defence in the September 29 *Independent*, under the headline "The Romantic earthquake". He pointed out that "German nationalism was not always a sinister or illiberal force", and that "the greatest danger to any compassionate understanding of other nations and cultures is a Manichean approach that underrates pluralism".

In early 19th century Germany, Weidenfeld wrote, there was a "Left Wing, anti-Establishment faction" and that far from being anti-Semitic, the leading

lights of the Romantic movement "moved in the literary salons of the newly emancipated German Jewish intellectual bourgeoisie". He also explained that a facile identification of the composer Wagner with Nazi ideology had little to do with Wagner himself.

But some leading critics continued their offensive. Brian Sewell of the *Evening Standard*, in a gushing torrent of words which barely referred to the paintings in question, concluded: "It is madness for 40 art historians to conspire to confuse us with an exhibition that extends that concept of Romanticism to the present day... All definitions in art are arbitrary, but like pigeonholes they have their uses. This pigeonhole, however, is worse than the Black Hole of Calcutta." (*Evening Standard*, September 29, 1994)

Tim Hilton, art correspondent of the *Independent on Sunday*, distinguished himself from other critics because he actually looked at the exhibition. But sadly, like Graham-Dixon, Hilton also fell prey to a mechanical teleology. He admonished the curators for not emphasising that "this romanticism, by its very nature is open to such corruption [the Third Reich]. Fascist art proves this to be so".

What is "this romanticism"? It can only refer to the German strain. Simply because the German movement had features peculiar to itself, it is said once again that it was tainted from birth, guilty of original sin. The "logic" of our "anti-Nazi" critics is the lumping together of two completely different historical periods. They arbitrarily impose the events of the present on to the past.

By arguing that the seeds of Fascism were sown by the Romantic movement in Germany, they adopt the argument which, because there are similar features in different historical periods, lumps together the form with the content, giving them all muddled labels. Historical change and contradictions of all kinds are papered over with truisms about innate national characteristics.

• *Historical fatalism* •

If all the basic elements which led to Fascism were already present 140 years before Hitler came to power, then the German people themselves must be to blame for everything that took place in German history, which is seen as a long chain of pre-determined events. This is not only historical fatalism, but a crude evocation of the Hegelian world spirit to which all of history must conform.

Like their predecessors during the 1848 revolution, many of the most outstanding German artists of the early 20th century joined the social

revolutionary side of politics, not the side of feudal or capitalist reaction. Günter Metken, in his essay in the exhibition catalogue, records the speech of socialist writer Kurt Eisner who in November 1918 chaired the Workers' Soldiers' and Peasants' council which established the Peoples Free State of Bavaria. Many other artists and writers, including Paul Klee, Ernst Toller, Campendonck and Dadaist Hans Richter, were inspired by these events to join the Action Committee of Revolutionary Artists.

• *Forward-looking Bauhaus* •

The revolutionary political events drew together artists who worked in completely different styles. After the defeat of the Bavarian Soviet by the Freikorps, the Bauhaus at Weimar became a centre of attraction for many outstanding artists and architects. While the Bauhaus was a forward-looking enterprise, which established a highly contemporary style, it also developed further a number of ideas and theories which originated from the early Romantics.

The weakness of the German bourgeoisie had been revealed during World War I. The Weimar Republic of 1919, which succeeded the German Reich of Kaiser Wilhem, was inherently unstable. The social democrats of Weimar took power after murdering Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, the leaders of the German revolutions of 1919 and 1923. The Wall Street crash, hyper-inflation and mass unemployment gave rise to two alternatives in Germany: the iron fist of fascism or a socialist workers' republic. It was the betrayal of the German workers first by the Social Democratic leaders and later by Stalinism which enabled Hitler to seize power in 1933.

The imposition of Nazi pseudo-culture in the form of the mass Nuremberg rallies, Nazi architecture and painting was a form of ideological control which became possible only after big business swung its weight behind Hitler. It was not an "innate desire" of the German nation, but brutally imposed upon it by dictatorship.

Yes, National Socialism exploited various aspects of idealism and romantic outlooks to cover up the brutal realities of its rule. But to blame the Romantic artists of the 19th century for this is the same as holding the ancient Greeks responsible for the colonels' dictatorship of 1967. The Greek dictators of modern times used the symbols and forms created in 500BC to rationalise and embellish their brutal rule, but only the most primitive thinker would suggest that Plato, Pericles, Phidias or Praxiteles had planted the seeds for fascists of 20th century Greece, such as Papadopoulos and Ioannides.

Like all dictators, the Nazis exploited everything they could – whether ancient myth or modern technology – to justify their rule and provide it with a gloss. As the exhibition shows, the German art and culture that sprang up during the Weimar Republic was the opposite of all the Nazi ideals, and had to be brutally banished.

Romanticism was a multi-faceted movement. It was a flower which bloomed repeatedly in Germany partly because of that country's stunted political development in the early 19th century. Politically it was highly contradictory. One aspect of the turn to the past (which is contained within the word romance itself) was a conservative, medievalising reaction to the advance of capitalism. This combination of backward-looking anti-capitalist tendencies can also be seen in British writers such as Thomas Carlyle.

Another feature of the Romantic movement was the protest and rebellion against reactionary politics. This can be seen in the Brothers Grimm, and figures such as Shelley, Byron, Victor Hugo, Chopin and many others. This unity of opposing tendencies not only characterised the early Romantics but in a later age was equally true of movements such as Futurism, which in Russia later allied itself with Bolshevism and in Italy with Fascism. Art reflects existing social movements but also those which are aspired to, or which do not exist.

This is especially true of German 19th and 20th century art, which as the exhibitions at the Hayward and the Barbican show so poignantly, often reveals a longing for a lost paradise, a desired utopian world.

• *Germany oppressed* •

Art historian Frank Whitford went some way to placing the German Romantic movement into its historical perspective in his Radio 3 talk about "Romantic Delusions" (October 7). The first stirring of Romanticism was connected with the striving against the French forces who oppressed Germany until Napoleon's defeat in 1815, he said.

The Congress of Vienna in 1815 then brought into being the German Confederation. This consisted of 34 independent states. The kings of three foreign countries – England, Denmark and Holland – were recognised as sovereigns over Hanover, Holstein and Luxembourg.

Whilst this new Germany was the biggest state formation in Western Europe, there was no organic connection between its independent states. It was politically fragmented and dominated by feudal and semi-feudal monarchic regimes.

Since Germany was denied its nationhood in

political practice – in reality — the idea of a “cultural nation” arose in peoples’ minds. While other nations, especially the French and the British, accomplished revolutions in social and political practice, the Germans could only re-create them in their philosophy and imagination.

The stagnating political reality was the opposite of the dynamic spiritual contribution of German philosophers, musicians and artists in the late 18th and 19th centuries.

As William Vaughan, Roger Cardinal, Konrad Feilchenfeldt, Hilmar Frank and Iain Boyd Whyte all show in their essays, there were close connections between the ideas of leading German philosophers especially Kant, Schlegel and Schelling, with the practising artists of Romanticism.

These philosophers stressed the rights and importance of the individual, giving an impetus to the struggle against feudal reaction. Artists and writers took an active part in this movement. During the 1830s a secret republican society was formed in Hessen and Darmstadt, headed by a pastor and a literary critic, called the Human Rights Society. Its programme demanded “Peace to the Cottages, War on the Palaces”.

• *Opposition to feudalism* •

A literary current headed by Ludwig Borne and Heinrich Heine formed part of the opposition to feudal autocracy. Ludwig Feuerbach joined the Young Hegelians and wrote the first materialist criticism of religion in 1841. In Berlin university, Karl Marx mixed with a group of Young Hegelians who drew radical conclusions from Hegel’s philosophy and he was strongly influenced by Feuerbach’s work. The 1830s and 1840s saw the rise of the German workers movement. Secret societies were formed by political exiles. Karl Marx began to edit the *Rheinische Zeitung* giving it a revolutionary democratic orientation.

The would-be German nation was torn between the Hohenzollerns of Prussia and the Hapsbourgs of Austria. The struggle to sweep away the crippling relics of feudalism was hampered by the German bourgeoisie’s fear of the 1848 revolutionary movement. The storming of the armoury by the Berlin workers in June 1848, followed by the insurrection in Paris filled them with fear. The German bourgeoisie preferred alliance with the old nobility to alliance with the republican masses.

German unification finally came very late, under Prussia’s Bismarck, and when it came, it was not as the Romantics had hoped. By contrast Britain achieved national unification and its bourgeois

revolution centuries earlier. In Germany the constitutional issues were only resolved by Bismarck in a revolution from above in 1871.

A century later Germany has been re-unified in an epoch of shattered dogmas and the break-up and re-formation of nations. German unification followed the end of Stalinism with breathtaking speed. The consequences continue to reverberate, not least in Britain. Passions are constantly aroused by the new Germany, reflecting different political interests, and above all the deep divisions within the British ruling class. For some British nationalists, especially the petty-bourgeois, the Little Englanders and isolationists, the thought of a massive industrial and cultural rival just across the channel is terrifying. The theme of “Deutsche Romantik” plunges us deep into an unaccustomed sea of ideas and notions.

A battle of arguments and concepts is healthy and important, especially at a time when dissent and difference is being suppressed by government legislation and a swamp of low-grade pap from television. “Deutsche Romantik” offers a great deal to enjoy and think about. In association with the discussions presented by Radio 3, a broad sweep of history and culture is being presented. It makes possible a fresh and unprejudiced assessment of German cultural development.

The prevailing movement amongst the German artists, poets, writers and musicians was not towards a Fascist, racist view of the world. “Deutsche Romantik” shows how the trends in German culture were deeply inter-twined with pan-European artistic ideas. Indeed, a great deal of inspiration was originally derived from English, Scottish and French philosophers and writers.

Cross-references between the Hayward and Barbican exhibitions provide an in-depth understanding of artists not only of the early Romantic period but significant 20th century painters such as Paul Klee and Franz Marc.

• *One-sided view* •

German culture and history must be viewed without the assumption of collective guilt and the notion that there was no resistance to Nazism. The truth is that the Allies, including the Soviet Union, point-blank refused to recognise or collaborate with the German resistance to Hitler.

History – whether cultural or political – cannot be confined to the constraints of one-sided viewpoints which seek to cleanse it of contradictions. Those who start in this way deal in impressions of historical processes. It is an approach full of danger when brought to bear on political action.

There is the example of the German Communist Party of 1933, who under the domination of Stalinist ultra-leftism belittled the Hitler threat. "After Hitler our turn" was the slogan that led to the defeat of the German working class. Today, the impressionists claim that fascism is about to sweep Europe, and one

anti-racism campaign after another is launched amidst some hysteria in middle-class left circles. Racist attacks are thereby divorced from capitalism in crisis. This superficial, bourgeois liberal standpoint leaves the essence of the system unchallenged.

DETAILS OF EVENTS:

Films at the National Film Theatre, Goethe Institut London and the South Bank Centre until November 24.

Paintings The Romantic Spirit in German Art 1790-1990 at the Hayward Gallery until January 8 (Tel 0171 928 3144/0171 261 0127).

Music and Performance on the South Bank until November 24 (0171 928 8800), and on Radio 3 – see newspapers for details.

Exhibitions Romantic Germany in English Eyes at the Goethe Institut (Tel 0171 411 3400) BBC Radio Drama and Documentary broadcasts, lectures and discussions at the Goethe Institut, the German Historical Institute and the Institute of Germanic Studies.

A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War. A separate exhibition and education programme at the Barbican Art Gallery until December 11. Tel: 0171 638 8891. Accompanying book by Richard Cork, Yale University Press 1994, £25.

REBECCA BOGUSLAVSKAYA

The Socialist Future Group was sad to learn on a recent visit to Moscow of the death early this year of Rebecca Boguslavskaya, the daughter of Left Oppositionist Boguslavsky. Rebecca is survived by her husband Ivan Yakovlevitch Vrachev, the last living signatory to the treaty which created the Soviet Union in 1922. She remained a communist throughout the repressions of the Stalin period and lived to see the end of Stalinism. Aged over 70, she travelled to Britain to participate in Symposium 1990, to contribute to revealing the history of the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s.

This essay by Neil Charlton is published to open a discussion on economic perspectives. It is a serious contribution to understanding capitalism and elaborating a socialist solution. The author leaves open the central political question – by what process will the basis for socialism be established. In Socialist Future’s view, the socialisation of production requires the overthrow of the capitalist state through revolutionary struggle. The author uses the terms “state communism” and “state socialism” to describe the former Soviet Union. In our view, the Soviet Union degenerated into a bureaucratically deformed workers’ state, which was, in fact a brake on the development of socialism.

Towards a model of 21st century socialism

The structural problems of the UK economy, whilst exacerbated by 15 years of market liberal policy, cannot easily be dismissed by the left as simply a product of Thatcherite and Majorite mismanagement. What is clear is that the partial modernisation implicit in the assumption of such a policy has come to an end.

A decade of privatisation has, ironically, seen the decline of the private shareholder and the rapid growth of international finance. The continuing relative decline of the UK manufacturing base has proceeded apace. In both public finance and the balance of trade, the UK government and “UK plc” respectively are in danger of insolvency. Even in the sphere of taxation, whilst the reduction in the highest tax bands has provided the super rich with massive savings, those on average and below average incomes now suffer from a higher burden of taxation than in 1979.

In its current “Majorite” guise, the application of Thatcherite principles to the welfare state is unlikely to spread with the evangelical zeal of the 1980s crusade for privatisation. The creation of internal markets in health and education – a necessary precursor to any subsequent privatisation – has reopened the question of the suitability of market criteria for public service provision. Throughout the welfare state, the effects of quasi-markets seem apparent to all: the subversion of quality to quantity, of standards of care to cost considerations and of professionalism to managerial authority. In a drive

for “efficiency”, moreover reform has spawned ironically, a huge growth in bureaucracy as each trust attempts to replicate the entire range of managerial services existent in local authority departments.

Perhaps more insidiously, the apparent “empowerment” of managerial élites within trust corporations belies the degree to which the effective centralisation of decision-making at Whitehall has taken place. Whilst trusts control their own falling expenditure, government quangos lay down increasingly prescriptive rules requiring more to be done with less. Not so much “opting-out” of local authority support as “opting in” to central government diktat. The not-so-hidden agenda of service cuts through merger, “restructuring” and rationalisation becomes all too apparent in such circumstances.

• *Manoeuvre or sell-out* •

Yet where is the counter strategy? For all the vitriol of the Labour Party, it seems that the general structure of reform set up by the Tories will be continued under Blair with simply the personnel being changed to make it more accountable. Is this a legitimate tactical manoeuvre or a sell out? Do past experiences of past or existing models of “socialism” give us inspiration for the future?

The demise of state communism in Eastern Europe has, until recently, been one such model. Even before its collapse, however, it was obvious to most

that the total centralisation of economic decision-making in the hands of planners and the supersession of individual liberties by party rule could only work as a form of "war communism". The dual problems of late development and an inherited bureaucratic political structure meant that the revolution was compromised from the start. Full employment could only be provided at the price of low living standards and limited individual freedoms. The removal of pre-revolutionary economic élites was only accomplished at the expense of creating new political élites themselves enjoying manifest economic privileges.

In the workplace, ironically, the need to restructure production methods became increasingly beset with problems. With firms facing only "soft" budget constraints, full employment and widespread trade union organisation made it more expedient for firms to defer change and continue receiving subsidies rather than independently modernise plant, machinery and working practises. Even in a "workers' state", however, workers are also necessarily consumers. Indeed these workers, as consumers, wished to enjoy higher standards of living more comparable to Western Europe. Yet consumer goods were often seen by planners as an afterthought to the priority areas of capital and defence goods. Finding it difficult to offer economic progress in either production or consumption, the liberalisation of the political apparatus under Gorbachev opened up a Pandora's box of often contradictory popular demands. An increasingly sophisticated populace and highly trained workforce could no longer give its passive consent to such an iniquitous and inefficient system.

• *Market liberal economics* •

Meanwhile in Western Europe, the post-war consensus had begun to fracture during the 1970s. Less a model of socialism, more a pragmatic mixture of social democracy in its joint adoption of a mixed economy plus a welfare state, even this model was to be undermined by the shift towards market liberal economics. Keynesian demand management had, apparently, provided a solution to mass unemployment through counter-cyclical regulation of demand across the trade cycle. By the mid-1970s, however, the joint existence of a stagnant economy with rising unemployment and high inflation – stagflation – began to undermine the now shallow foundations of the political consensus. Similarly a new phenomenon – the internationalisation of production and the firm – proceeded apace throughout this period. With budgets often larger

than those of nation states and an ability to switch investment and production according to prevailing economic and political conditions, the growth of multinational enterprise undermined the efficacy of strictly *national* economic regulation. The latter are not abstract economic processes mentioned only in the dusty pages of economic theory but a real process re-shaping the international division of labour to the benefit of capital and to the detriment of labour. Facilitated through the *laissez-faire* theology of GATT, the current European business response to the social regulation afforded by the Social Chapter is one of increasing doubt. Global capitalist rationale dictates that firms – European included – should migrate to those areas combining low wages, good social and technological infrastructure, skilled labour and no trade unions.

• *One third unemployed* •

The Pacific Rim is obviously a good candidate. The enormous transfer of capital to the "little Dragons" is now well-documented and few consumer electronics goods in Europe are not designed, manufactured or at least part-assembled in this region. If firms do relocate they can massively reduce costs and increase profits. If firms do not follow such imperatives, they know their competitors will. To remain "Eurocentric" in production will invite a loss of competitiveness in the medium term. Yet to follow blindly such dictates in the short-term will fatally weaken the structure of the European economy. It will also generate high levels of unemployment and, equally important, underemployment and, similarly, unbalance the balance of trade in a structural manner. Imports of consumer goods to Europe will only in part be counterbalanced by remitted profits and share premiums to the *rentiér* sector of the European economy. In the UK this process is only too obvious. With some 3.5 million actually unemployed and some 6 million people working part time, the unemployed and underemployed constitute anything up to one third of the working population. A persistent structural deficit on balance of trade has been a reality for some time, although this is not all due to trade with the "Newly Industrialised Countries" or NICs, but to our relative disadvantage with our other European trading partners.

The recent fiasco over the structure and role of the ERM is yet another illustration that the imposition of controls on global markets is no easy task. Of all the markets, that in finance is the most global and critical for the conduct of economic policy. The financial deregulation of the 1980s made it so. At the

speed of a microchip, the \$1000 billion of speculative balances in the forex markets can change hands. Yet as individual nation states deregulated with one hand – in order to attract as great a share of this business as possible with as few regulations as possible – they attempted to simultaneously calm the turbulent financial waters at a pan-European level through the ERM. Will Hutton, writing in *The Guardian* anticipated and predicted the problems of an over-valued pound sterling in the semi-fixed exchange rate mechanism. Like the Gold Standard before it, UK entry into the ERM was compromised by the sectional interests of UK finance in demanding a high external par value. In any battle this century between finance demanding a high pound and manufacturing needing a low pound, the City has always won. Any devaluations that have occurred have been panic measures in the face of disastrous trade figures or humiliation through forcible expulsion from the ERM. [It should be remembered that the Labour Party was an early convert to ERM membership].

• *Market rule* •

More seriously, the subsequent destruction of the mechanism at a pan-European level has graphically illustrated that piecemeal Central Bank intervention is no match for the economic firepower of the currency speculators. The destructive power of the market would not surprise Polanyi, though it might have made him revise his judgement about its supersession. Financial deregulation and managed currency stability have proved to be quite incompatible bedfellows. In such circumstances the market liberal solution to all this is quite clear. Let the market rule in all matters. Where markets exist the solution by definition must be optimum as markets are perfect means of allocating resources. Where markets do not exist they must be created. Elsewhere scrap any social protection afforded by the Charter, neutralise trade unions, privatise the welfare state and tell the workers to get on their rickshaws.

In such circumstances, then, it is hardly surprising that political economy has converged, from Moscow to Madrid, and Stockholm to Canberra, towards the acceptance of market-liberal policy. From this vantage point, the pragmatic timidity of opposition parties the world over is not difficult to understand but it offers only pyrrhic victories on the road to electability.

What alternative prospectuses are available? Policies in three domains – the economic, political and civil society need to be considered. In the first

domain the overriding principle of socialism through the ages has been towards that of creating greater equality. Critics argue that greater equality is inimical to the needs of wealth creation. “Trickle-down” economics alone by this view, can deliver rapid growth. For a long time, the high growth, high tax, high benefit Scandinavian economies seemed to offer a workable alternative. Yet even this consensus of successful social democracy is now under threat. Perhaps this illustrates how defensive Western European socialism has become.

Whilst some would like to renounce the importance of public ownership as an irrelevance in the modern age, this illustrates how little they understand their own philosophy. It also shows how *conservative* their interpretation of the term “public ownership” has become. In both communist and capitalist countries alike, public ownership has effectively been state ownership on *behalf* of the people by a “benign” state that will act as a neutral arbiter between divergent social interests. Workers have not themselves owned any stake in the enterprise or exercised anything like the rights given to private shareholders in private industry. At no level, except the expedient, have workers ever been involved in anything resembling decision-making.

In the case of the UK, sectors which declined under private enterprise in the inter-war period were taken over at high cost and mistakenly labelled as models of socialist practice along Morissonian lines. Nationalisation and not the democratisation of ownership took place. Nationalisation was used, in short, to manage decline and it was discredited within a decade by its own innate conservatism and expediency. Even in nominally “socialist” countries where state control was established in its entirety, the experience was lamentable. With so little direct involvement of the workforce at enterprise level and no stake in ownership, it is small wonder that the consensus was so fragile. No surprise either that under a different prevailing wind of ideology that the real controllers of public enterprises – the higher management and apparatchiks [or the nationalised industry directors and Whitehall civil servants in the UK case] – were some of the earliest converts to deregulation and privatisation. “On behalf of the people” soon became “on behalf of themselves”.

• *Rights of ownership* •

Hence the whole concept of social ownership needs clarification. For an entity as abstract as the state to possess an industry on behalf of those employed in it is hardly a sufficient definition for socialist practice. Socialism must involve the public,

as workers at source in their own enterprise. Their full participation in the rights of ownership and access to profit needs to be addressed. As Marx recognised, the basis of the capitalist profit lay in the exploitation of surplus labour. Profit is not simply mercantile gain from "buying cheap and selling dear" but through exploiting the capacity of human labour to produce more value – surplus value or profit – than it has been paid. To simplify, if each worker produces £25,000 of value for his or her firm after costs of production have been considered, but receives only £18,000 in wages, that worker will be producing £7,000 of profit. At the level of the economy as a whole this aggregate profit represents surplus value. The whole process of capitalism then rests on how to raise the productivity of the worker through raising the length of the working week or installing machinery to increase production. The longer and faster the worker works allows the firm to cover the wage costs in the shortest possible time and create even more surplus value or profit. By the system of capitalist property rights this surplus value is then distributed by the management of the company as dividends to the shareholders – the ultimate owners of the firm and the profit made by the firm's operations. Yet here's the rub: even with a necessarily exploitative system, few people question the basic legitimacy of the ruling order. Not only is exploitation difficult to observe at the level of market relations – one can only conceptually separate value and surplus value a priori – but attempts at socialist enterprise have either been inconclusive or have failed. Most capitalist societies can promise, moreover, a general rise in the standard of living for the working class and the promise of future growth. More often than not, attempts at public enterprise have been non-exploitative but also laggard in terms of growth rates and slow to innovate. Whilst exploitative in character (they must be so) capitalist firms have been dynamic innovators in product design and purveyors of dramatic improvements in productivity. The search for profit makes the firms necessarily dynamic in both these spheres.

Indeed one of the most recent ironies has been that capitalism has been able to generate great dynamism even with – indeed because of – high unemployment. Marxists know that the creation of a pool of unemployed – the reserve army of labour – allows capitalism to restructure work place relations through the whip-hand of the fear of unemployment. The complementary role of new technology and the new international division of labour at this current conjuncture raises the spectre of jobless growth in the future. Yet this remains a paradox for socialism

in that the very commitment to maintain full employment – even if achievable – arguably undermines its capacity to transform the economy as rapidly as a capitalist system. Even accepting that there is some truth in this assertion, a commitment to lifetime employment is one which cannot be renounced if socialism is to mean anything. Its achievement will undoubtedly require structural change in the working week, with job sharing and four-day working. This will not easily be conceded by private firms: the continuing deregulation in the labour market has helped introduce Sunday working for some and enforced "flexibility" for others. This is surely the wrong direction to move in.

Nevertheless social ownership must combine the dynamism of the profit motive and the equity of profit sharing. Employee profit sharing and asset ownership needs to involve people more directly in corporate governance but this will not be easy to achieve. It is far easier, as we have implied earlier, to sell off cheaply public property to private owners than confiscate private property on behalf of the employees. The first, in our society, is seen as indicative of modernity: the latter would – without compensation – be seen as a crime. Before this could ever hope to proceed the firm must be democratised. Democracy is too precious a concept to be associated with the four-yearly election of the latest model of white, middle-aged, middle class mafia. Democratisation must be imported into the economic sphere as a matter of course. Each level of organisation of corporations needs to be democratised according to "bottom-up" rather than "top-down" principles of management.

• *Democratic control* •

Left to themselves, the effective "co-operativisation" and "democratisation" of industry will inevitably generate contradictions but they will be resolved democratically both within the firm and at the level of the economy as a whole. In key sectors, where closures have strategic implications for the national economy and where there are large social costs involved in rationalisation, the state – whether national or European – needs to play a role. Indeed given that the economic activities of each firm will have a spatial impact on the economies in which they function, the state itself needs a minority shareholding in each enterprise. Indeed both the local/regional state and the nation/European state need an input into this process. Implicit in this is a strong commitment to regional government for many economic activities. The organisation of the financial system itself will need careful scrutiny in

order to distribute funds for social need rather than simple private profit. There would need to be a commitment to longer term industrial growth rather than simple short-term commercial return as a principle of investment. The genuine social ownership of industry cannot, indeed should not, try to deny the need for change but should direct change to help the whole community.

• *Structural decline* •

In summary, it is argued that previous forms of public ownership in Western Europe were essentially reactions to structural decline in the older smoke-stack industries and were led by a wish to help manage the decline rather than democratise or socialise production. In the East the total centralisation of economic decision making within the ministries created a heavily bureaucratic command economy. With no direct popular ownership of their companies, and with managerial structures remaining as hierarchical as ever, state socialism isolated itself both from the workers and the consumers – essentially the different needs of the same people. Socialism was operated on behalf of the working class by party cadres and planners. Lectures and directives were issued from above but no attempt at involvement and ownership from below was ever attempted. Lacking positive involvement, and beset by problems of limited investment, workers in the state-run enterprises fell back on negative attitudes. Rather than modernise working practices, they preferred to maintain the status quo in order to protect short-term employment and conditions of service. Change was seen as the enemy both from above and below. Soon the structures and practice of these firms became ossified and socialism became identified with stagnation.

Indeed it can be seen in retrospect that the lack of progressive policies in ownership rights and the like have created major difficulties for Western European socialist parties. Given that capitalism always, if left to its own devices, produces a highly regressive income structure, the reluctance of such parties to socialise property rights has led them to try to ameliorate this situation in the sphere of taxation. Traditionally, the left since Keynes, has been associated with a high tax-high benefit policy. Such an approach has allowed parties of the left to ameliorate the worst effects of capitalism, to soften the blow of unemployment to individual and society alike and to provide basic necessities and services free at the point of access out of general taxation.

On the spending side of the equation, however, it

became clear in the 1970s that the state would have to assume a major role to put right the dysfunctional effects of capitalism in employment relations alone. The bill for unemployment benefit through recessions is extremely high. Neo-Keynesian measures to create employment through the last two recessions have proved less useful. The crisis in employment in the UK is as much a structural problem as a cyclical phenomenon. A fall of some 250,000 in the numbers unemployed during 1994 was actually accompanied by a net fall in employment over the same period of 58,000! The immediate future hardly seems more optimistic. Changes in technology make it difficult, with the existing working week, to generate a significant number of permanent jobs especially in manufacturing. Under current circumstances in the UK, a reflation would inevitably set in motion an inflationary cycle with a worsening balance of trade deficit.

• *No support for high taxes* •

So, too, on the tax side of the equation the prevailing orthodoxy of the post-war period has changed. For whatever reason, citizens as tax-payers seem to prefer to retain a greater proportion of their income for private provision rather than social planning. Arguably both central and local government have been slow to publicise the uses to which tax revenues have been put. Nevertheless elections have seemingly been lost over higher taxes. Citizens are desirous of better public services but voters seem to reject higher taxes to pay for them! It seems unlikely that the shift back to higher general rates of taxation, for whatever purpose, will win massive support. Indeed the UK Labour Party seems to have surrendered the agenda on this, hoping to win converts by vague promises of more efficient management and allocation of tax.

Hence the intellectual bankruptcy of the labour movement is manifest and the transformation of a socialist into a social democratic party completed. If the Labour Party drags its feet on the issue of a minimum wage (probably itself set at a low level) it is hardly likely to instigate interest in a maximum wage. The unruly scramble to adopt hypothecate as a means of legitimating taxes is surely sound and fury signifying nothing. In the sphere of welfare payments, any move from universal to means tested benefits may backfire: reducing benefit provision to the middle class may simply remove their commitment to contribute to paying taxes for the welfare state in total. There are no easy answers in any of these areas.

The root causes of UK economic decline have remained untouched. As a partial labour aristocracy, some sections of the craftist labour movement enjoyed a relative security under imperialism in the 19th century. Only with the growth of "new unionism" at the turn of the 20th century did labour in the UK outgrow its craftist (and liberal) roots. Facing bloody-minded onslaughts throughout the Victorian period, a similar class conscious and combative working class culture arose and developed during the 20th century. UK labour relations, as documented by Kendall, lacked any statutory basis and functioned on principles of voluntarism and self-help. At times of high unemployment, employers could exploit their advantage: during times of full employment, unions would respond in kind, putting wage demands and sectoral sectarianism before national well being. British industrial relations were a continuing trench warfare of epic proportions. Reforms of the 1980s have not improved matters, but simply weakened one side temporarily to the benefit of the other. A country of two nations has bred an industrial relations culture of mutual misunderstanding and disrespect. Only with the real involvement of workers in the decision-making of their firms and the democratisation of the firm will "two sides" of industry become the "classless society". Yet in the context of the present day UK economy, even a meritocratic capitalism would be progress! So, too, the UK economy has suffered from the unique relationship of finance and manufacturing. British industrial success was itself premised upon mercantile venture. The "unbound Prometheus" itself depended on an empire of vast proportions. "Free trade" in Europe co-existed happily with slavery in the empire. With its captive markets and imperial preference, the UK failed to innovate to the same degree as its major competitors, the latter themselves financed partially by the cosmopolitan City of London financial institutions. The City, as the most important international financial centre in the 19th century, needed free trade to promote its interests. As aforementioned, a high pound was needed to ensure that the City could ensure its own overseas role was maintained.

• *Crisis management* •

By the 1980s the short-termism of the City was infamous: even the embryonic UK biotechnology industry was seeking financial assistance from overseas lending institutions... from Japan. Paying high dividends to institutional shareholders, and investing in the safe havens of property and the stock

markets, long-term risk capital to manufacturing declined. Pension fund trustees judged on quarterly time horizons of payback on investment accelerated the trend. The UK had lost an empire but had retained the institution which first financed the empire and then its competitors. The first act of the Thatcher administration in the arena of trade was to remove exchange controls; the haemorrhage of funds has continued apace ever since and the creation of a small but powerful "rentier" class is now an acknowledged fact. Big Bang confirmed this internationalisation of finance. The City requires the politics of free trade for its own narrow interests and will destabilise any elected government that tries to threaten the dominance of cosmopolitan finance.

In terms of industrial policy it is clear that both the quality and quantity of government initiatives were lacking in the post-war period. In no sense could the N.E.B in the UK be compared to M.I.T.I. in Japan. The eventual decision to nationalise was often undertaken as an exercise in crisis management: the railways in 1945, British Leyland and Rolls Royce in the 1970s. In most sectors the scale of operations experienced by UK firms was small (the car industry was such a case), yet another result of firms' reliance on equity rather than loan capital. With such an inheritance, state-led restructuring was doomed from the start. But even the keenest proponent of nationalisation can hardly be proud of the experience of companies such as British Leyland.

• *Reversing decline* •

All these factors – poor industrial relations short termist and anti-industrial financial institutions and inadequate and belated state intervention – led to the decline in the UK economy. Reversing the decline in the deregulated, privatised and internationalised environment of the 1990s will be all the more difficult. A lack of vision will not help matters.

Hence the largest public limited firms must undergo the gradual socialisation and democratisation of property. Controlling the top 100 firms would be a good aim. Socialism will need to explain to large segments of the workforce – the self-employed, research engineers and scientists and production management – that their roles will be of equal worth in a new society. Both the property and profit of these companies needs to be owned by the producers, in conjunction with a powerful new tier of regional and European states. The nation state has been *over-determined*. The role of Whitehall must give way to the above. Full powers of taxation and expenditure – in conjunction with the Europeanisation of multi-national enterprise – is

needed. Other powers, such as environmental legislation, defence and the like, can be safely vested in a *democratised Brussels*.

Capitalism is historically progressive in its role as a global force in that it is laying the basis for its own transcendence: global private ownership can as easily become global public ownership. The present form of capital as fictitious capital – in that it is totally separate from the process of actual capital accumulation and only present as a totally footloose *rentiér* form of finance capital – in effect opens up the agenda for socialism. The partial Europeanisation of ownership must be seen as a key step on the road to a viable socialism.

• *Profit motive* •

In the area of the welfare state, the establishment of market-led criteria – such as profit maximisation – have been proven inappropriate to the needs of public services. Profit cannot and should not be seen in these sectors as an acceptable dynamic. In the general economy though, there is no reason why profit should not be seen as an acceptable aim of business policy as long as this surplus is appropriated collectively. Whilst the left's ascetic inheritance tends to lead them to reject both "materialism" and the profit motive, there is little doubt that it has proved to be the prime motive force in the generation of both new product and process technology. The left is right to reject crass materialism but there is little nobility in being poor. It is acceptable that people have come to expect a better standard of living than their parents and by no means inimical to socialist objectives. The key is to direct that force towards social appropriation.

In the political sphere too, democratisation should be the key word for the next millenium. Yet democracy, like justice, should not only be done but be seen to be done. Extending democracy and modernising the UK state is fundamental to progress. The "archaic" state in the UK of the appointed House of Lords, the feudal anachronism of the monarchy and the bureaucratic incompetence of the civil service all need reform. The class élitism of the civil service and judiciary needs to be removed, not replaced by a different set of functionaries with more liberal pretensions.

Parliament itself needs to be reformed. Professional politicians are, in the main, a self-serving clique. A veritable white, male, middle aged mafia who serve themselves and their perceived

sectoral interests under the guise of "representative" democracy. The mandatory rotation of office – perhaps one term in office, one in opposition as a maximum – could be a guiding principle at the top, as politics moves from being a self-elected élite towards one based more on community service.

As aforementioned, powers for local spending and taxation can be vested, in many instances, in a new tier of regional government. Transport as well as education could be controlled through a decentralised structure of federal regional states within a united Europe. Activities such as environmental policy which require a global remit can be situated within a European parliament. Elections should be fixed term to prevent parties using the flexibility of the present electoral system for their own advantage.

Representatives should be representative, according to class, age and ethnicity as far as possible. The case for some form of proportional representation is undeniable. All aspects of government policy should become "transparent" to the public: all cabinet committees and select working parties should be televised. Real democracy requires the democratisation of economic decision-making within the firm.

The aim of the democratisation of political institutions and the socialisation of property must be to allow everyone to play a full role in civil society. The philosophy behind such a policy is aimed at enhancing the quality of life and not simply maximising a mythical average consumption basket of goods for consumers. New technology renders it possible for this to occur. The reduction of the working week will help facilitate improved access of parents to children – especially fathers. In the words of yesteryear, we need to reduce the "sphere of necessity" – work – in order to improve the "sphere of freedom".

Socialism should be able to offer an improvement in the conditions of life. Socialism can never be, however, a philosophy for maximising personal commodity acquisition. The freedom of television advertising companies to pollute the minds of the young from the cradle to the grave with such values is a form of spiritual atrophy that this society can no longer afford. Our "consumption-mindedness" not only destroys our own human values but threatens to destroy the very planet we live on. There is no necessary contradiction between socialism and green politics, and an accommodation must be made. All it needs is political will.

JOHN EDEN reviews *The Rape of Greece: The King, the Colonels and the Resistance* by Peter Murtagh, published by Simon and Schuster, price £17.50

Resisting the rule of the Colonels

Peter Murtagh is presently the home editor of *The Guardian*, a best-selling author and award-winning investigative journalist. He spent five years researching this book which, like the curate's egg, is good in parts. Its chief fault, and the most crucial to understanding historical or present world events, is his view that the struggles in Greece from 1941-1974 were a conflict between the forces of democracy and totalitarianism.

Marxists define history as the history of class struggle, and it is Murtagh's non-class position which leads him to over-emphasise the role of Democratic Defence, a bourgeois and petit-bourgeois resistance movement that sprang up against the CIA-backed Colonel's coup of 1967. He virtually ignores other resistance movements, and certainly the resistance of the working class political organisations and the trade unions.

The author admits that Democratic Defence could not, and did not, bring down the Junta in 1974 (p239). It was brought down by the action of students at the Athens Polytechnic, with behind them the undefeated working class and peasants.

On the positive side the book gives a very general, and therefore formal, view of events from 1941.

Murtagh explains:

- The use by Churchill of Greek fascists, Nazi collaborators, alongside British soldiers to fight the 1945 popular uprising of the working class and peasants, mainly dominated by the Communist Party.
- The CIA training given to these former Nazi collaborators, as the officer corps of the Greek army, future leaders of the fascist junta of 1967-74
- The fact that the Greek monarchy were puppets of the CIA and MI6, and their role in bringing down the government of George Papandreou in the mid-1960s. Papandreou had to go because he insisted on conducting a full investigation of vote-rigging, carried out by the pro-monarchists and the CIA in the election of 1961. Papandreou's party would certainly have won if it had not taken place. Papanderou, a Greek nationalist,

was seen by the CIA and the Greek right as a liberal who might open the door to communism.

The book gives a good insight into America's desire to divide Cyprus in the mid-1960s between the Greek majority and the Turkish minority. A weakened and divided Cyprus would accept to be an American base for operations against the Soviet Union and the Arab revolution.

Papandreou opposed the division of Cyprus proposed by the US; he wanted to see all of Cyprus incorporated into the Greek state. The Colonels' junta which had American support, also sought to include Cyprus in a Greater Greece; some even wanted the return of former Greek lands lost to Turkey in 1922.

Murtagh shows how the student uprising of November 1973 and the debacle of the attempted invasion of Cyprus, finally brought the junta down. It was already weakened by mass unrest, and hoped a nationalist victory in Cyprus would bolster its authority. But they were militarily defeated by the Turkish army, and their adventure had no support from Greek workers.

Peter Murtagh says: "This book is a work of journalism, not of academic scholarship". There is some merit in that, to write down things as they appear when they happened. But it is not enough. Democratic Defence was a pro-capitalist, liberal organisation, which wanted a Greece free from American domination and American puppet governments – an independent, sovereign, bourgeois Greece.

But Greece, like all the Balkan states, can only be truly independent under the control of its own workers, under socialism. It is the recognition of this by a section of the Greek bourgeois that gave rise to PASOK (the Greek socialist party which is now in power in the country) to confuse the working class and peasantry by combining nationalism with socialist rhetoric. For revolutionaries it is not the combining of the two, but the struggle for socialism that is the only guarantee of national independence.

Beyond Postmodern Politics – Lyotard, Rorty, Foucault,
 by Honi Fern Haber. Published by Routledge, paperback £12.99.
 Fifty Key Contemporary Thinkers by John Lechte.
 Published by Routledge, paperback £7.99

Wild west world of post-modernism

Honi Fern Haber starts her book with the assertion that “There is no view from nowhere”. She is admirably forthright about her aims, jettisoning from the start the idea that there is such a thing as “a wholly disinterested standpoint”.

Her determination to get stuck into the proponents of post-modern philosophy makes her resemble a lively terrier, which has got its teeth into something and refuses to let go.

For those perhaps unfamiliar with the ideas she is discussing, the 160 pages of her neat little volume are a useful introduction to the wild west world of post-structuralist and post-modernist philosophy.

Jean Francois Lyotard, whom Haber attacks with gusto, is the author of *The Postmodern Condition*, written as a report on knowledge for the Quebec government and first published in 1979.

As John Lechte explains in his book *Fifty Key Contemporary Thinkers*: “Although a political activist of Marxist persuasion in the 1950s and 1960s, Lyotard became the non-Marxist philosopher of post-modernity in the 1980s.”

Haber, who teaches philosophy at the University of Denver in Colorado, USA, says she holds with “the post-structuralist insight that the notion of the individual is correlative with the notion of the subject, and that since subjects are inscribed in language they are always cultural, historical and social entities. This notion of the subject gives a privilege to community, for our interests are always the interests of some community or other.”

In her book she concludes that “post-structuralism and post-modernism, which relies on the metaphysical and ontological commitments of post-structuralism, can be used but not adopted wholesale for the purposes of oppositional politics”.

In other words, she is prepared to start from some of the basic ideas put forward by post-structuralist and post-modernist thinkers, but believes she can throw away those “parts” that she doesn’t like, or which do not fit in with her own “communitarian”

outlook. This is a form of pragmatic eclecticism rather than a fundamental or revolutionary critique of current bourgeois philosophies. It also gives an insight into the strengths and weaknesses of her book.

Haber is one of a number of philosophers who are re-evaluating and criticising post-modernist trends. She wants to provide a theoretical framework for opposition to the ideology of right-wing bourgeois regimes during the 1980s and early 1990s, in particular the Reagan and Thatcher governments.

Post-modern politics, in its anxiety to cast out the demon of anything that smacked of socialist ideas (termed by Lyotard as “grand narratives”) insisted that there were no essences beyond the context of a particular language game.

Haber has no objections to the post-structuralist idea that “the self is formed within the confines of language”. She simply points out that “there are no private languages” and that “we always find ourselves a member of some community”.

She does not endorse the out-and-out relativism of Lyotard, Rorty or Foucault. Instead she replaces it with her own concept of the self as a “subject in community”.

Her subjective pragmatism is starkly revealed when she says: “A political theory will be judged useful or true or convincing to the extent that it matches one’s background beliefs regarding the quiddity [essential nature] and parameter of the self and society.”

There is thus, in her view, no objective measure of political theory. It is entirely dependent on the views of an individual. Thus, while rejecting some of the relativism of post-modernist theorists, she replaces it with her own homespun American variety.

She has no fundamental differences with the central theories of post-modern thought, including structuralism and semiotics. Nor does she have a problem with Lyotard’s view of the self “as a territory of language”, as indeed is every meaningful

object. This position, she shows, leads Lyotard to take refuge in the politics of "paganism". But she finds his "equation of consensus, commensurability, unity, homology and efficiency with terror" is something she cannot go along with.

By "terror", Haber explains, "Lyotard means to denote anything that would contain or delimit the unbounded nature of the self".

His "pagan politics" is an anti-authoritarian search for instabilities. But as Haber shows, it is not possible to have a politics that does not allow for structure. She demonstrates that Lyotard still has a need for a universalising principle, despite all his rejection of "meta-narratives".

He, in common with many others, offers the "Kantian ideal" - he "allows idolatry (and Kant) in the back door, and in so doing gives up on his political commitment to difference". He is attracted to Kant, "because he sees Kant as providing the argument that we can judge without criteria".

The adoption of a Kantian "categorical imperative" shows the contradictions within Lyotard's philosophy and how it fails to challenge bourgeois capitalist society.

Haber proves this clearly. But when she puts forward her alternative view, the asses ears of formal logic start to poke out. The relation of the individual to the community is defined as "subjects in community". Her description of the connection between a subject and the community is a purely formal and mechanical one.

Language and the things, objects, processes, or individuals which it describes, are seen as merely subjective designations of individual concrete things.

The structuralism to which Haber still subscribes was raised from a valid scientific research method to a philosophy fundamentally opposed to dialectical analysis. It rejects, as she does, any concept of dialectical development, or dialectical negation. Haber's formulation of the relationship between the universal and the individual is narrowed down to abstract communities and abstract individuals.

She cannot even begin to think that the way to overcome the absolute difference (or *Differend*, as he terms it) she rightly criticises in Lyotard is the understanding that every difference has its source in

identity and contains identity within itself.

She can only conceive of an abstract idea of community, not a real community which must exist in an objective world dominated by capitalist class society. For her, no more than the men she criticises, there is no essence, no material self-moving universe outside her subjective constructs.

Haber sees the relation between the individual and the community as simply a set of "common features".

The political implications of her position are explicitly stated: "Sometimes we recognise parts of ourselves in the stories of others. When we do, and when enough of us do, then we feel solidarity and begin to be able to formulate a vocabulary for our oppression, and hence have the tools ready for structuring our liberation."

If only it were so easy! Unfortunately the "self-determination of marginalised groups" fails to address the underlying power structures which determine that the vast majority of society is "marginalised".

Liberation of oppressed sections of society is not possible without the liberation of the productive forces which make human society possible in the first place. This reality is never addressed by Haber, starting as she does from post-modern, anti-dialectical assumptions.

Her concept of the relation of the individual and the universal is essentially nothing but the scholastic concept of the relation between the abstract and the concrete which was so well explained by E. Ilyenkov in his book *The Dialectics of the Abstract and the Concrete in Marx's Capital* (Progress 1982).

* John Lechte's book *Fifty Key Contemporary Thinkers - from structuralism to post-modernity* gives very useful sketches of the lives and ideas of many key bourgeois philosophers who have become prominent over the last 50 years. He divides them up into the following schools of thought: structuralism and post-structuralism, semiotics, second generation feminism, post-Marxism, modernity, and post-modernity. *Socialist Future* will give its readers a closer look at this handbook in its next issue.

C.L.

Editor's comment

This Winter 1994 edition of Socialist Future marks a change in the nature of our magazine. We have doubled the number of pages and broadened the scope of contents and contributors. In doing so, the Socialist Future Group is initiating a wider discussion on the important issues facing the working class movement in 1994-1995. The Blair leadership of the Labour Party has thrown down a challenge to all socialists which is analysed in our lead article. We present new contributor Neil Charlton's "Towards a Model of 21st Socialism" and other features to encourage controversy, debate and Marxist analysis on the main problems facing not only the working class in Britain also but internationally. The passing of the Criminal Justice Bill, the crisis of the Monarchy and state institutions, and other moves towards dictatorship make the development of revolutionary working class leadership decisive. Readers' comments, letters and articles are welcomed. Please send them to Socialist Future, P.O.Box 942, London SW1V 2AR.

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