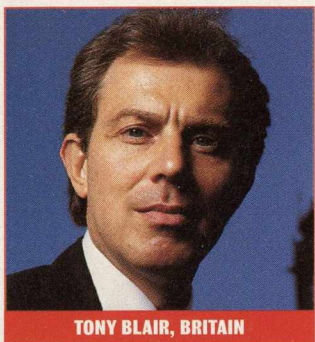


INDIA'S PLAGUE: WILL IT SPREAD?

Newsweek

THE INTERNATIONAL NEWSMAGAZINE

October 10, 1994



TONY BLAIR, BRITAIN

The Socialist Dream
Is Dead Throughout
Europe. Left-Wing
Parties Are Looking for
Some New Ideas.



RUDOLF SCHARPING, GERMANY

WHAT'S LEFT?



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Baltic States \$3.50
Belgium 130.00 BF
Bulgaria 60.00 Leva
Cyprus 1.50 C£
Czech Republic KC 55.00
Denmark 24.00 Kr

Finland 17.00 Mk
France 22.00 F
Germany 5.80 DM
Gibraltar 1.80 £
Greece 600 Drs
Hungary Ft. 220.00
Iceland 220 IKr

Ireland (inc. tax) .. 1.80 £
Israel 8.90 NIS
Italy 4800 L
Luxembourg 130.00 LF
Malta 1.00 M£
Netherlands 5.95 Fl
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Spain 450 Pts
Sweden 24.00 SKr
Switzerland 5.40 SF

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SPECIAL REPORT

WHAT'S LEFT?

The socialist and social-democratic parties of Europe are in a time of disillusionment and drift, and are looking for new ideas. Is "communitarianism" the answer?

By MICHAEL ELLIOTT

ON THE RUE SOLFERINO in Paris, the spacious headquarters of the French Socialist Party are up for sale. In Tunisia, Bettino Craxi, the most successful of the Italian socialist leaders, lives in exile, fearful of returning home to face corruption charges. In Spain, where the socialists led by Felipe González have held power since

1982, internal dissent and yet more accusations of corruption have tainted the party's reputation. In Germany, the Social Democratic Party looks all but certain to lose its fourth election in a row, even though it faces a tired conservative government that has governed since 1982. It's worth asking: is this the end of the line for socialism in Western Europe? What's left of the left?

The 1980s were a chastening time for European socialists. Long before the collapse of the communist economies of East-

ern Europe, most leftists in the continent's western half had recognized the contradictions of central planning. "State direction" of the economy meant bureaucrats playing God in the marketplace—and not doing it very well. The enormous sums consumed by Europe's welfare states were a drag on the economy, as many Germans now concede—and at best had mixed effects on social conditions. Those tower blocks of apartments in so many European towns turned out to be less of a Corbusier heaven

movement called "communitarianism" is starting to interest European socialists. It contains elements drawn from both ends of the political spectrum. Like the left, it advocates redistribution of wealth and income—but without the mechanisms of central planning. Like the right, it celebrates the virtues of family and tradition—and typically has a religious component. But it also rejects the individualism inherent in free-market ideologies. Whether it can take root in European soil is another question.

Europe is still hospitable to the politics of equality. Last month a left-led coalition held on to power in Denmark, and in Sweden the Social Democrats returned to power after three years in opposition. Despite polling just 14.5 percent of the vote in June's elections to the European Parliament, the French Socialist Party has a potentially strong candidate—should he finally decide to run—for next year's presidential elections in Jacques Delors.

Above all, there is Britain. The Labor Party, whose members troop this week to the wind-swept resort of Blackpool for their annual conference, holds a larger lead over the Conservatives in the opinion polls than it has ever had since records were kept. The 41-year-old Blair has reached stunning

Changing the old order: Britain's Blair (left), Germany's Scharping, France's Delors

heights of popularity. "The center-left sees him as a messiah," says Ben Pimlott, a historian of the left at London University. And Blair is not just flavor-of-the-month in Britain alone. Valdo Spini, the Florentine who is charged with the thankless task of rebuilding Craxi's shattered party, speaks of him with open admiration; Spini is even considering, half-seriously, changing the name of his group to "The Labor Party."

In the past year, the British political Zeitgeist has undergone a profound change. From the mid-1970s until very recently, the political right in Britain had all the best tunes—and ideas. After Margaret Thatcher won her first election in 1979, Labor retreated into ultraleft policies and murderous fratricide. "Left" intellectuals seemed incapable of finding a single reason why people should support their party.

That's all changed. Recently Britain has seen a torrent of books and pamphlets from the left. Blair's predecessor John Smith, who died of a heart attack in May, worried that any discussion of left-wing thought would just alienate the voters. By contrast, says Pimlott, Blair "is more interested in ideas than any Labor leader for 30 years." Moreover, while much of the stuff coming out of London's new Labor-oriented think

than a concrete hell. The fall of communism merely finished the process of disillusionment. No longer was it possible to believe in government as the sole vehicle of equality and economic justice. "The socialism of Marx, the idea that what you should do is concentrate everything in the state, is dead," Tony Blair, the leader of Britain's Labor Party, told NEWSWEEK last week. "It's not tired. It's dead."

That doesn't imply a final triumph for unfettered capitalism. Even now, Europeans of traditionally socialist sympathies are looking for new ideas, new ways of advancing the values inherited from Fabianism or populism or even the social gospel of 19th-century Christianity. An American-born

LEFT TO RIGHT: DAVID GORDON—SELECT, PATRICK PIEL—GAMMA-LIAISON, GREGOIRE—REA-SABA

tanks is rooted (as the Marxists say, if any remain) in the objective reality of British conditions, it is close to the concerns of many continental socialists. Look hard, and you just might see a new politics of the European left emerging.

It has made a prickly, uneasy peace with market economics. But there's a deep-seated belief that, left solely to market forces, the economy rewards the rich and punishes the poor. "Segregation by socioeconomic status goes against the grain of the Swedish peo-

ple," says Goran Perrson, Sweden's new socialist finance minister. That explains why, despite the need to get their public finances in order, there is little stomach among Swedish socialists for dismantling their welfare state. Rudolf Scharping, leader of Germany's Social Democratic Party, says that "deregulation doesn't fit our cultural and welfare traditions"—this in a nation where the stores slam shut at 6 p.m.

In France, the guiding role of the state in the economy has been a core component of

national identity since the 16th century and still is, especially in hard times. "There is little desire by French voters at this time for a strong move toward a real market economy," says economist Eli Cohen. "Partly, it's a result of recessionary times. When times are bad, the natural French reaction is to want the state to make them better." Yet even there, the old order of *dirigisme* is changing. Socialists may criticize the privatizations of the government of Edouard Balladur (with some reason, since the pro-

Germany: The Smell of Defeat

NINE MONTHS AGO Helmut Kohl, standing for re-election as German chancellor, looked like an overstuffed George Bush. Rudolf Scharping was an underfed Bill Clinton. Germany was enduring its worst recession in decades. Voters seemed more than ready for change, and Scharping, 46, a self-proclaimed "new Social Democrat," was poised to give it to them. As governor of Rhineland-Palatinate—the same state Kohl governed in the 1970s—Scharping labored to move the Social Democrats (SPD) to the center. He preached fiscal conservatism and promised that there would be no substantive change in German foreign policy if he came to power. For a while the message worked: at the end of 1993, some polls had him and the SPD leading Kohl by as much as 14 percent. Some commentators began to call Scharping "Rudolf Clinton."

It didn't last. The 1994 federal election campaign has been brutal for Scharping, and it's unlikely to get better by voting day, Oct. 16. Voter preference for the SPD has plummeted to around 37 percent, at least five points behind Kohl's resurgent Christian Democratic Union (CDU). Under Germany's complicated election laws, the SPD's only hope for power now seems to be in a "grand coalition" with the CDU, one in which Kohl would almost certainly retain the chancellorship. Within the SPD, the postmortems have already begun: just how did



PATRICK PIEL—GAMMA-LIAISON

Resurgent chancellor: Kohl campaigns as Election Day nears

they manage to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory?

Many point to the candidate himself. Like Clinton, Scharping admired the late U.S. president John Kennedy and his call to civic activism ("Ask not what your country can do for you . . ."). But even by the colorless standards of German politics, Scharping is anything but Kennedyesque—"as boring as can be," grumbles one party colleague. Moreover, many Germans think paying for unification is all the civic activism they need right now. Last May, Scharping—while insisting he was not just another tax-and-spend Social Democrat—said on the stump that he would raise taxes for anyone earning more than 60,000 Deutsche marks. In Germany that's most of the middle class. And Germans already pay 47

percent of their income in taxes—the second highest in Europe—thanks in large part to the costs of unification. The candidate later explained that he meant 60,000 marks in adjusted income, not gross salary—but that only made it seem that he couldn't tell the difference. From that point until only recently, his poll numbers went into free fall.

Scharping has also been a victim of economic cycles. After two long years of steep recession, Germany is finally recovering, and at a rate that has surprised many forecasters. "The bounce Kohl has received from that has been extraordinary," says Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, director of the Allensbach Polling Institute. Even before the recovery took hold, she says, voters were flocking to the CDU,

convinced the worst was over. "It was a flight to stability."

It was also a token of the times. Even with a reasonable recovery, few Germans would dispute the notion that their economy remains overregulated and fiscally profligate. As in the rest of Europe, privatization and deregulation of major industries are inevitable. Yet Scharping earlier this year said in an interview that deregulation "doesn't fit our cultural and welfare traditions," and backed away from the idea of privatizing the national postal service.

Kohl is no radical free marketer himself. But German fiscal pressures require that government be trimmed down, and on that issue the CDU is simply more credible. "It's like the old joke among Democrats in America," said one SPD member last week. "If you have to choose between a conservative and a conservative, the voters will choose the real thing every time."

For Rudolf Scharping, the perception lingers that it could have been different. For all of Kohl's success in managing the diplomacy of unification, he botched the economics—and Germans are still paying for it. Moreover, German industry still faces long-term competitive problems—a problem neither side really addressed during the campaign. "It is easy to say we fell in the polls because of the economy," says one of Scharping's colleagues. "But we will still look back on this election as an opportunity missed, and Scharping will take the blame."

BILL POWELL in Berlin with
THERESA WALDROP in Bonn

ceeds have been used to mask budget deficits and pay off political friends). But hardly anyone in France actually wants to expand the economic role of the state.

People of the left are now groping for some new expression of their belief in the mutual obligations of mankind. Some had hoped that environmentalism would provide a new banner around which the left might rally. But the Europewide economic recession made "green politics" a less attractive standard. Rather, Eurosociologists have returned to a belief in what Blair calls "social solidarity"—the idea that men and women aren't merely individuals, free to prosper (or not) as they choose, but also members of a society that both nurtures them and to which they owe responsibilities. "Socialism," Delors told *Le Monde* recently, "is liberty, solidarity and responsibility." European socialists used to look to state action as the main way in which that principle of solidarity could be given shape. Hence, "the welfare state."

The 'underclass': Europeans now see that their welfare systems are ruinously expensive—Italy is currently wrestling over a tough government plan to cut back its pension system. And they also see that the welfare state is only partially successful at providing social solidarity. It's true (as American conservatives have a hard time admitting) that not one West European nation has anything like an "underclass," of the kind whose pathologies are on view in any large American city. But it's also true that Europe has something much more like an underclass now than it did 10 years ago. In many European cities (London is a notorious example) the incidence of crimes against property is actually higher than in America.

The crisis facing European socialism is this: just at the time that the state has lost its attraction, all other institutions of social cohesion are similarly weakened. The century-long golden age of the traditional family—where the husband worked outside the home, the wife worked within it, and they stayed married until death did them part—is over. Throughout European nations, the divorce rate has doubled (at least) since 1970. In 1990 Britain and France had about the same proportion of out-of-wedlock births as did the United States. Moreover, technology has shattered the massive factories and mines where principles of solidarity could take root. And easy labor mobility has made it infinitely harder to create solidarity through attachment to a particular place

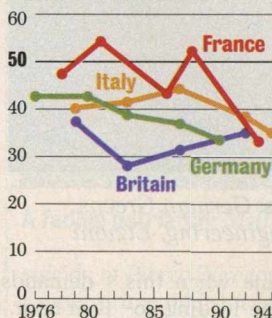


Rightward Ho!

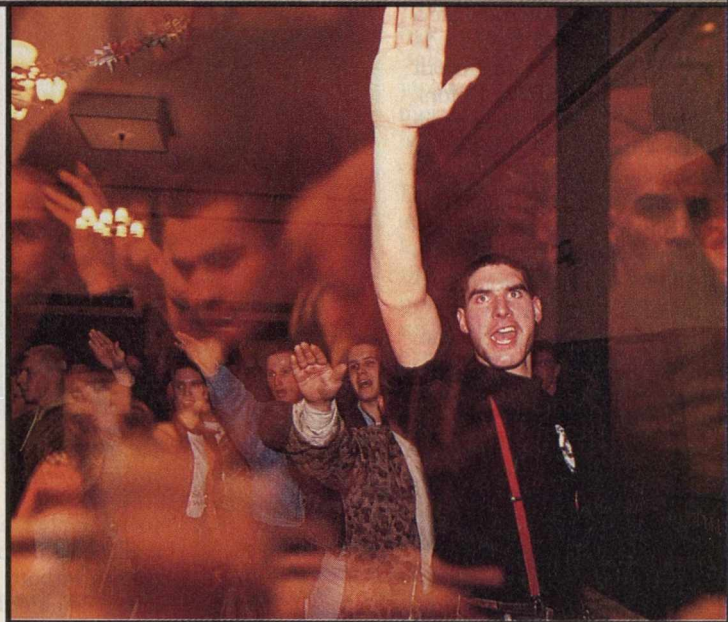
Except in Britain, European parties of the left have been steadily losing ground during the past decade

Left party voting

PERCENT OF POPULAR VOTE



NOTE: "LEFT" MAY INDICATE ANY OF SEVERAL DIFFERENT PARTIES WITH TYPICALLY LEFT-WING PLATFORMS, E.G., COMMUNISTS, SOCIALISTS, SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, ETC. SOURCE: EUROPA, FACTS ON FILE, KESINGS.



BERG ALISTAIR—GAMMA-LIAISON (TOP), MERILLON-SAUSSEIER—GAMMA-LIAISON (ABOVE)

A fresh eye on social ills: Homeless in London, Germany's neo-Nazis

(rural France, for example, is now seeing the kind of great emptying that rural America saw in the 1950s). If state, family, factory and birthplace can't provide people with a sense of social solidarity, what can?

Enter Amitai Etzioni, a cosmopolitan sociologist at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., who argues that the key to the future is a politics of "community." His "communitarian agenda" stresses that individuals have responsibilities as well as rights. If there is a target of Etzioni's work, it is what he calls the "radical individualists" who "confuse the right to be free from government intrusion with a nonexistent right to be free from the moral scrutiny

of one's peers and community." Communitarians, in other words, differ from classical liberals (known confusingly in America as conservatives) by challenging the idea that individual self-interest is a decent basis for a society. But they differ from socialists in championing small social units: the family, neighborhoods, schools, churches and all the other things that make American suburban life (take your pick) either nosily conformist or pleasingly friendly. If any idea is "hot" in the Euroleft today, it is this. Tony Blair can hardly speak for five minutes without talking about the need to rediscover a sense of community.

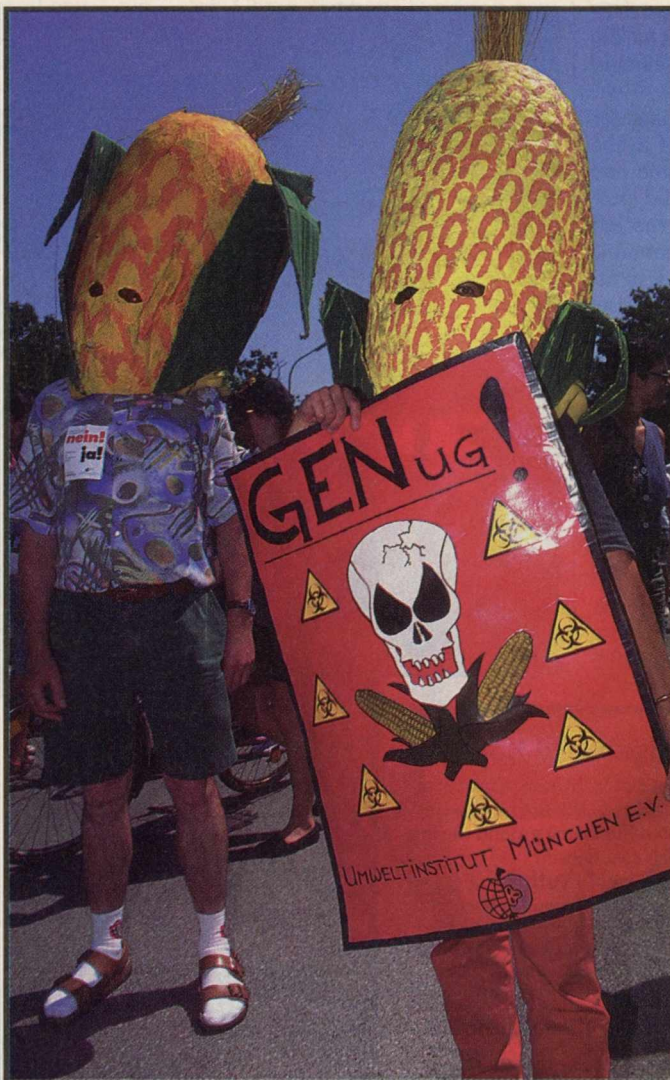
Etzioni, who fairly bubbles with enthusi-

asm about the reception of his ideas in Germany, Britain and Scandinavia, suspects his thoughts take root best in "northern" societies. "The French," he says, "are not yet ready for this. They are much more statist than the north Europeans." In southern Europe, says Etzioni, the only voluntary associations that people recognize are soccer clubs.

It's an old observation. In the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville marveled at the range of American voluntary associations. They were of "a thousand kinds," he said, "religious, moral, serious, futile, general or restrictive, enormous or diminutive . . . Wherever at the head of some new undertaking you see the government in France, in the United States you will be sure to see an association." Yet France may not be so unfertile a ground as Etzioni thinks. As Charles Grant has pointed out in a recent biography of Delors, the French Socialist owes much to the thought of Emmanuel Mounier, a postwar philosopher of "Catholic personalism" who sought a middle way between the state and the individual and whose tenets could easily be called communitarian.

Delors uses communitarian language all the time. "The individual," he told Grant, "cannot live without participating in societies which bind him to people." Delors's attachment to the dreadful word "subsidiarity" in the debates on the proper divisions of authority in the European Union is partly explained by a desire to find a protected freedom of action for local and regional authorities. And Delors explicitly factors communitarian ideas into his policies—one of the reasons he opposed, during the GATT talks, free trade in agricultural goods was its effect on rural communities. Moreover (Dr. Etzioni, please note), Delors is a great soccer fan.

In perhaps the sharpest break with the old politics of the European left, both Delors and Blair talk about the importance of families and of religion. Though Blair is a Protestant and Delors a Roman Catholic, both are devout Christians—and it is hard



BOSTELMANN—ARGUM, JOHN FICARA—NEWSWEEK

Community politics: German Greens protest genetic engineering, Etzioni

to remember a time when this could be said of the leading socialists in both France and Britain. "The older I get, the more the doctrine of the church appears to be good," Delors told Grant. Blair is a little more circumspect. "I don't like politicians who use God as a selling point," he told NEWSWEEK. On the other hand: "I believe very strongly in what I believe." And when asked if his religion was relevant at a time when political parties were looking for values, Blair firmly replied, "It is."

Etzioni agrees, sort of. "It is clear that we need a spiritual revival," he says. "The jury's out on whether it has to be religious. You can't force religion down people's throats." In all likelihood, Delors's Catholicism can only help him. Though the French don't go to church, they cling to a

few symbols of their Christian heritage: a recent survey found that 59 percent want their children to have a church wedding, and the French recently bought 600,000 copies of the Vatican's New Catechism. Georges Montaron, editor of the left-wing magazine *Christian Witness*, thinks Delors may be able to eat into the right's strength among Catholics. "He is not perceived as revolutionary," argues Montaron. "He has a responsible image."

Family values: For Blair, the politics of religion and family values are rather different. Undoubtedly, his image of a churchgoing family man helps him among the middle-class voters in southern England who have deserted Labor. And yet Geoff Mulgan, director of Demos, a London think tank, sounds a warning note. He suspects that for younger Britons—and especially for younger women—communitarianism and family values can appear "moralistic" and "socially conservative." Blair, says Mulgan, can "sound nostalgic for an era which means little to those under 35."

And does all this talk of community really mean anything? Last month Alex Salmond, the leader of the left-leaning Scottish National Party, told his party that Blair was "adrift on a sea of fudge." Labor's left wing agrees and will make noise at the Blackpool conference over demands for a legal minimum wage of £4.05 an hour. (Blair supports a minimum wage, but won't commit himself to a figure this far ahead of the election.) Dianne Abbott, a left-wing member of Parliament, is scathing about Blair's efforts to rid Labor of its image as the party of taxes. "I can't understand," she says, "why Blair wants to kill the idea that Labor is a high-tax party just because Clinton did."

Still, as Hugo Young has said in *The Guardian*, so desperate is Labor for power that "the left doesn't matter." What may matter is whether either Blair can turn his fuzzy talk of community into real policies. Etzioni, with the luxury of an academic, says that communitarian politics should start with "a moral language; that should lead to a change in the personal habits of the heart, and that should then produce policy." Politicians don't have that kind of time. Giles Radice, a Labor member of Parliament, has conducted focus groups among



English voters who thought of voting Labor in 1992 but didn't. Though Radice calls criticism of Blair's blurriness "absolute crap," he concedes that ideas like "community" and "fairness" need to be linked in voters' minds with concrete policies.

What might a communitarian policy look like? Etzioni gives an example. Victims of heart attacks stand the best chance of survival if they get rapid CPR. Socialists might want the state to buy hundreds of new ambulances to rush to every emergency. The city of Seattle, instead, trained thousands of people in CPR, seeding each street with potential lifesavers.

So far, the business of developing poli-

cies based on a sense of community hasn't happened. Perhaps it won't. Perhaps, as Mulgan hints, European society has become so atomized that all talk of "community"—even of politics itself—is a great turn-off. In the last British election, 45 percent of Britons under 25 didn't vote. In France, the so-called *bof* generation of kids (when asked their opinion, they shrug their shoulders, puff out their cheeks and go "bof") look pretty bored with politics. And Germans, says Keith Bullivant of the University of Florida, worry that their youngsters just feel *null bock*—that is, "can't be bothered"—about any political question. Perhaps, throughout Europe, young people are

disaffected from all forms of political participation. Perhaps Europeans will never be able to mimic the American suburbs, where the "politics" that counts is less concerned with elections to the state Assembly than with elections to the school board or selection of the soccer coach. Such an agenda can look trivial for those who once promised (as Labor's constitution still does) to take "the means of production, distribution and exchange" into "common ownership." But it may be the only way that left-wing politics in Western Europe can survive.

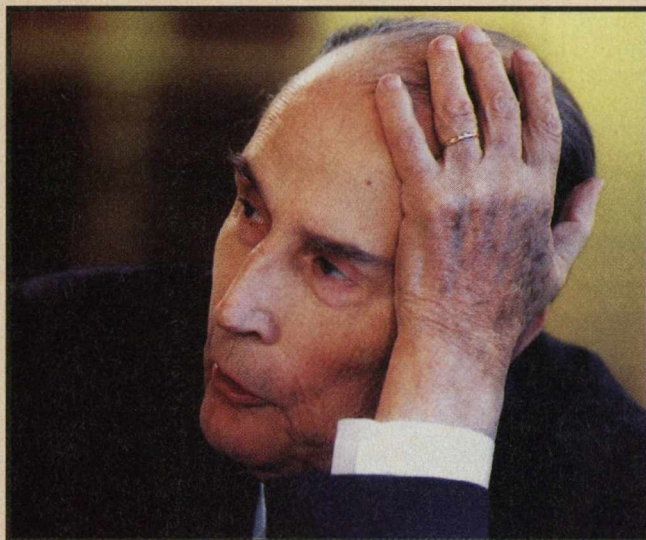
With DANIEL PEDERSEN in London, BILL POWELL in Berlin, THEODORE STANGER in Paris and WILLIAM BURGER in Stockholm

France: A Bankrupt Party

IT'S A SAD DAY WHEN A political party takes comfort from polls showing its opponents with "only" 58 percent support among voters. And that is just one of the problems facing French Socialists. Their patriarch, President François Mitterrand, is fighting cancer. One former Socialist prime minister committed suicide, another faces possible criminal charges and a third has quit the party leadership in anger. Bereft of voters and money, they've even put their offices up for sale.

These days, France seems filled with former socialists and communists. The few remaining faithful gather in near-vacant conference rooms to debate empty ideas and hope for deliverance before next year's presidential elections. "The Socialist Party has seen better days, but it can become France's largest party once more," said its new secretary-general Henri Emmanuelli last week. But if Jacques Delors, the former president of the European Commission, declines to run, the French left may find itself without so much as a credible candidate.

What happened to the left? Recession and double-digit joblessness discredited Socialist economics. Voters rejected the left's liberal immigration policies, another Mitterrand heritage. Then there was scuffling in the Socialist wheelhouse. After the



PHILIPPE WOJAZER—REUTER-BETTMANN

A fading patriarch: Mitterrand's last battle is with cancer

suicide of Pierre Bérégovoy, former prime minister Michel Rocard took over the party leadership. He was forced out when the Socialists won just 14.5 percent of the vote in last June's European Parliament elections (and the Communists only 7 percent). Meanwhile, Mitterrand's favorite, former prime minister Laurent Fabius, may be indicted in the scandal involving government approval of the distribution of HIV-infected blood.

The party also faces literal bankruptcy. Contributions have dropped by about 50 percent. "We have zero franc and zero centime in the coffers," laments finance chief Laurent Azoulai, who wonders how to

meet the party payroll. He predicts a \$7 million deficit for 1994 unless the party can sell its elegant Left Bank headquarters. Asking price: more than \$60 million.

It may all be part of a historical pattern. The French left has rarely enjoyed more than brief—albeit splashy—periods in power. Socialist Party founder Jean Jaurès never made it into government at all. Léon Blum, head of the Popular Front in the 1930s, managed one lasting reform: the paid annual vacation. Socialists polled just 5 percent in the 1969 presidential vote, before Mitterrand brought them to power in 1981.

Through the lean years, the French left could always rely for help on the French right, which it has long labeled the "most stupid right wing in the world." Now they are reduced to hoping that a disabling feud will erupt between conservative Prime Minister Edouard Balladur and Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac, himself a former prime minister. Other leftists urge party rebuilding. Socialist parliamentarian Julien Dray concedes there was "disarray and demobilization" following massive losses in the 1993 legislative elections. But now, he maintains, "there's a new start by those who have experienced only the Mitterrand era and who are discovering what it means to have the right wing in power."

Another long twilight of parliamentary opposition seems to be looming for the French left. Will the moderate Delors, whom some proud leftists disdainfully dub "Saint Jacques," come to the rescue? Polls currently show he could defeat Chirac in a head-to-head vote, but not Balladur. A Delors candidacy is not certain. Without him, the French left may be headed by populist millionaire businessman Bernard Tapie, who almost outpolled the Socialists last June. Worse yet, the two top vote-getters to qualify for France's final presidential vote next spring could be Balladur and Chirac. For a left wing fighting extinction, there could be no worse fate.

THEODORE STANGER in Paris

Is There a 'There' in Blair?

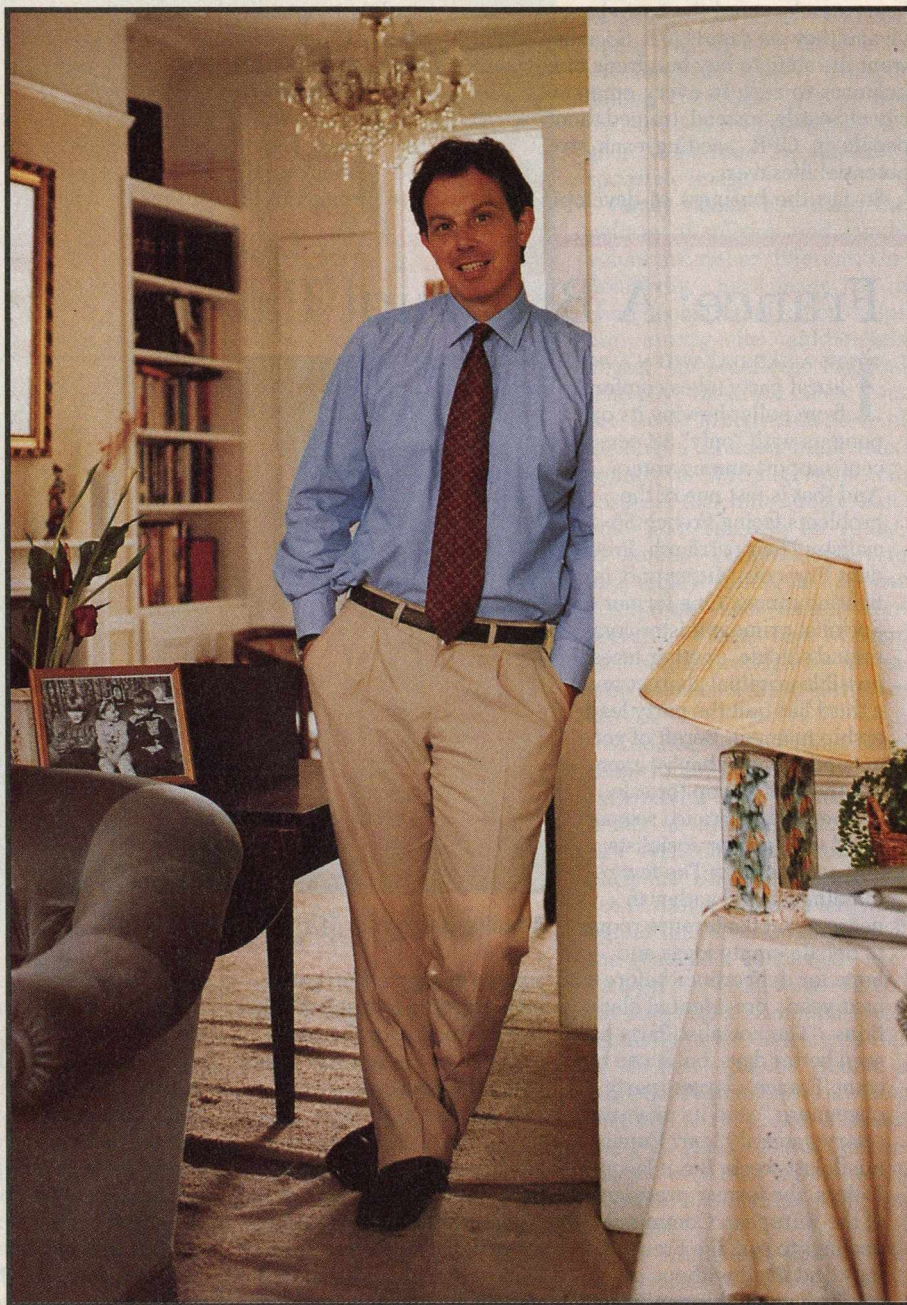
Britain's new Labor Party leader aims to bridge the gap between left and right

BY DANIEL PEDERSEN

ACROSS THE STREET FROM Britain's House of Commons, the yellow leaves at the feet of the statues in the park tell you it is autumn. Inside Tony Blair's office, though, it's springtime for the Labor Party. This week Blair gives his first keynote at Labor's annual convention in Blackpool. On Oct. 18, the day after Parliament opens, he will stand at the dispatch box for the first time as leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. He must show qualities other than loyalty—ideally, very sharp teeth. In Westminster Palace's normally stale air, you can almost smell the change: so much hope. And so much hype.

Watching his fellow centrist Bill Clinton from across the Atlantic, Tony Blair already knows that media honeymoons don't last forever. Neither does the reforming promise of spring in anyone's party—in Europe or the United States. Clinton's moderate reform program has bogged down in Washington. But in London, Blair's new look for Labor remains so new that the reforms haven't even been formulated into policies yet. The next general election probably lies two years off, which leaves Blair plenty of time to spell out his plans. But for now his edge over Prime Minister John Major stands at 29 percentage points (chart). And the papers take a tone no Labor leader has enjoyed in at least a generation. Parliament is full of "flabby bodies and blotched complexions," wrote Daily Mirror columnist Noreen Taylor last week. "But few women would remain unimpressed by the tanned, smiling face, and the slim, hard frame beneath the white shirt and dark trousers."

Sex appeal—in a British Labor leader? How has the 41-year-old Blair come this far so fast, after previous Labor leader John Smith's sudden death last spring? By telegenic charm, by a serious bent of mind, and by a background that blurs the old dividing lines of British politics. Prime Minister Major, who left school at 16 and once spent eight months on the dole, still says he's aiming to forge a classless society in Britain. The irony is that Labor's Blair, whose Tory-voting father gave him an impeccable private-school education, could turn out to be that society's leading citizen. "People have always seen dragons lurking over the shoulder of the Labor leader—trade unions, the loony left, the Welsh windbag," says pollster Robert M. Worcester. "Blair's slain the dragons. He seems like an English



SIMON WALKER—REX

Hope and hype: Blair at home in London shortly after his election as Labor's leader

schoolboy, and that's an asset in a country where 86 percent of voters are English."

In fact, Blair's geographic roots straddle the United Kingdom, much as his sound bites aim to bridge the left-right divide. A childhood in the north of England; a schooling in Scotland; university at Oxford; a bar-rister in London by 1976. He played guitar,

Grateful Dead-style, in a band called Ugly Rumors. But he also became a committed Christian, after wrestling with the compatibility of socialism and the established church. Even now Blair seems an odd blend of holy and hip—a next-generation cross between Jimmy Carter (without the regional accent) and Mick Jagger (without the

drugs). Charlie Falconer, a friend since 1970, was surprised Blair became a barrister. "If you were quite morally conscious, which Tony's always been, it seems a bit parasitical," says Falconer, who is a leading barrister himself. "Perhaps that's why he left."

Battle stripes: Blair first stood for Parliament in 1982, in a strong Tory constituency in the midst of the Falklands War. He lost. The next year, battle stripes earned, he won a safe Labor seat, Sedgefield, near his boyhood home. He was promoted early and often. Former Labor M.P. Bryan Gould, Blair's first boss as a junior shadow minister in 1987, remembers him as an able orator, a genuine social reformer, who fought at some risk to curb trade-union power within Labor and, later, to stake out imaginative new ground on law and order. Gould also found Blair not just boyish, but at times downright naive. His "lack of strong views on economic questions" kept him from making serious enemies, but also made him easier to manipulate. "At the very heart of his politics," says Gould, who once aspired to the leadership himself but recently returned to his native New Zealand, "I sometimes wonder what is really there."

To sordid tabloid appetites, Blair's per-

It's Springtime for the Labor Party

While Tory fortunes have slowly declined under Major, Labor's have soared now that Blair has taken charge



sonal life seems too good to be true. He lives with his wife, Cherie, 40, a successful and apolitical barrister, and three young children. They occupy a Georgian house in the fashionably leftist London borough of Islington (a primary location for the movie "Four Weddings and a Funeral"). But the Blairs rarely are seen at Islington night-spots. Tony reportedly plays tennis, reads Dickens, P. G. Wodehouse and biographies beyond politics, and sticks close to home in his free time. The Blairs go to Anglican (he) or Roman Catholic (she) church each Sunday, in a largely post-Christian land. "In his private life, he's light and funny," says Falconer, who lives nearby. "We do

opening maneuvers. The speeches have been lucid, if sometimes given to artful dodges. From an upstairs suite, overlooking the Thames, Blair has moved the leader's office into smaller digs to be close to his staff of 16. "If he loses the election, the gloss will go very quickly," predicts Bryan Gould. "They'll say he was only a jumped-up public-school boy and he never understood the Labor movement. If he wins, he'll have a different dilemma. The party will want to see what he's going to do. The [old] left will rediscover itself, and then, the relationship will turn tricky." That second outcome may have pitfalls. But everyone inside Labor prefers it to the first.

A Different Set of Values

B RITISH LABOR LEADER Tony Blair is trying to steer a course between traditional conservatism and the old Labor left. Meeting with NEWSWEEK's London bureau chief Daniel Pedersen last week, he laid out some of his differences with both sides. Excerpts:

On the role of the left: The socialism of Marx, of the communist countries, the idea that you should concentrate everything in the state, that is dead . . . The traditions of British socialism are not grounded in that at all. They're like European social democracy. They're grounded in a set of values . . . the belief in society and in a strong social community to back up the efforts of the individual. It's not a belief based on class or owner-

ship or sectional interests.

On possible campaign issues:

There are a lot of issues that the left of center have traditionally left to the right—the family, crime—these are left-of-center issues to my mind. It's absolutely absurd the right wing haven't succeeded on crime. Their answer is to tell people to build a bigger fence and try better burglar alarms. Whereas we need a criminal-justice system that actually deals effectively with those committing crimes. But you also need to tackle some of the underlying causes of crime—the family instability, the drug abuse, the social dereliction. So there are areas where we're breaking through the old divides of right and left. To me that is all to the good.

On religion and the left: People always say about the Labor Party that it owes much more to Methodism than to Marx. That's entirely true. There is a very long tradition of Labor thinkers whose values were Christian. I don't put this up in lights because frankly I don't like politicians who bang on about God the whole time—you know, who use God as a sort of selling point. I mean, I am a Christian. I believe very strongly in what I believe, [but] I'm not interested in forcing it upon people.

On Margaret Thatcher: At the end of the '70s, our country needed change. If we weren't prepared to offer it—and at the time, for various reasons, I don't think we were in a position to—then it was unsurprising that her message had an

appeal. And although this is odd for a politician in my position to say, not everything that was done in that period was wrong. The emphasis on enterprise, I think, was right. The problem is that I don't believe she would ever have agreed with some of the consequences of the philosophy that she brought in. There is a lot of anger in Britain now at the fact that a small group of people get a different deal from society.

On his lead in the polls: I don't pay a great deal of attention to opinion polls. But let me tell you the situation. Very bluntly, Britain feels betrayed by the Conservatives—over taxes, over crime, over the way they run the economy. The people of this country want a change of government. But they will only change to Labor if they trust us, if they know what we're about. And it's my job to make sure that they do.