

Blue Books

The Politics Of Thatcherism (Lawrence & Wishart, 1983) Edited by Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques, this is a collection of articles from *Marxism Today*, which pioneered the Left's analysis of Thatcherism and foresaw the longer-term consequences of the break-up of the postwar consensus.

Britain Can Work (Martin Robertson, 1983) Ian Gilmour analyses the rise of monetarism within the Conservative Party. He provides an intellectual 'wet' demolition of neo-liberalism in government.

The Politics Of Consent (Hamish Hamilton, 1984) Francis Pym offers a muted one-nation Tory view. He criticises the style and tone of Thatcherism and offers his alternative concept of a 'politics of consent'.

The Thatcher Government (Basil Blackwell, 1985) Peter Riddell presents a strong, non-partisan analysis of the key themes of Thatcherism, its electoral appeal and its contradictions. He suggests that *Marxism Today* and others have given 'some of the most perceptive insights into Thatcherism', but have over-estimated its coherence and consistency.

A Balance Of Power (Hamish Hamilton, 1986) James Prior gives an insight into the fate of a 'wet' in the cabinet. He attacks Thatcherism, which he sees as a passing phenomenon, on a range of policy areas.

The Thatcher Years. A Decade Of Revolution In British Politics (BBC, 1987) John Cole's perceptive and witty account of Thatcherism's impact on the party system in Britain.

The Iron Ladies. Why Do Women Vote Tory? (Virago, 1987) Beatrix Campbell relates both Thatcherism and Margaret Thatcher herself to the position of women in the Conservative Party as it has developed since the 1880s. An examination of the perceptions and values of Tory women, for too long simply dismissed by the Left.

The Free Economy And The Strong State (Macmillan, 1988) Andrew Gamble argues that a dominant party system is in the making - the 'Thatcher democracy' - but one which is threatened by the contradictory nature of the Conservatives' economic achievement.

The Hard Road To Renewal (Verso, 1988) Stuart Hall's essays collected for the first time and covering his articulation and development of the concept of Thatcherism and his more recent conclusions about the lessons to be learned from Thatcherism.

The Thatcher Years. Britain And Latin America (Latin America Bureau, 1988) A collection of essays covering Britain's relationship with Central and South America in the Thatcher era.

One of Us (Macmillan, 1989) Hugo Young offers a meticulous and critical, though in parts surprisingly mild, survey of Margaret Thatcher's rise to power and the major events of the Thatcher decade.

peared, most notably by Peter Riddell, and by Bob Jessop and his colleagues in their extended examination of Stuart Hall's concept of authoritarian populism. They widen the definition of Thatcherism by focusing upon its political and economic dimensions. This brings out the contradictions and tensions within the concept and leads to the conclusion that it is a much less coherent political project than the analyses of its ideological dimensions imply. Few by this stage, however, denied that the phenomenon of Thatcherism required explanation.

Despite at times appearing to lose momentum and direction, the government recovered to launch a new radical agenda during 1986 and 1987. By now it was hard to continue to reject the importance of strategy to an understanding of Thatcherism. The 1987 stock market crash, the overheating of the British economy during 1988, and the emergence of many new issues suggest that a fourth phase in the development of Thatcherism and its interpretation has now opened.

There is now an extensive literature on all aspects of Thatcherism, which includes mainstream political science - as represented, for example, by Dennis Kavanagh and Tony King. There are also studies by political journalists. Peter Jenkins and Hugo Young present detailed descriptions of the key

events in the rise of Thatcherism. Using their excellent first-hand sources, they give an insight into the personalities behind the scenes. Journalists tend to have a temperamental wariness of theories of Thatcherism but Hugo Young's *One Of Us* (1989) rises above this limitation. While his account may not add anything new to our theoretical concept of Thatcherism, it gives detailed information about particular episodes which have shaped the Thatcher years. Without taking up detailed strategic questions it shows a firm grasp of the stages in the evolution of Thatcherism and makes an important contribution to our understanding of its success.

David Marquand's *The Unprincipled Society* (1988) and Robert Skidelsky's *Thatcherism* (1985) map out a way forward for the political centre, while attempting to explain why social democracy has largely failed to face up to Thatcherism's challenge. There is much speculation at present on whether Thatcherism can continue to shape new agendas, or whether it risks becoming more marginal to British politics in the next decade. The government appears vulnerable on a range of issues form the constitution to the environment, health, education and Europe. On its core issues, however, it shows no signs of retreating or needing to retreat. The era of Thatcherism is not over yet. •

