**Human hope or mechanical despair?**

From MICHAEL FRIEDJUNG, Paris:

Recent issues have been interesting. The article on China (Solidarity 18) was perceptive. However, the article on the Labour Party in the last issue appeared naive.

The problems of today, as well as the hopes of today, are linked with the collapse of nineteenth-century ideologies. The idea of predictability has taken some hard knocks in the course of the twentieth century, but it has taken a long time for this conclusion to reach left-wing politics. It is for this reason that many debates on marxism are outdated. On the other hand, marxist 'mythology' has become less and less operational over the last few years. This is not the case only in western countries such as France; even the leaderships of the main 'communist' countries can no longer repeat the old propaganda. A vacuum has been created, which often tends to be filled with old nationalist and religious ideas.

The question is, can we fill the vacuum with anything else? Ideas do have a force. People's desire to change or not to change society is not only linked to material needs; it is also linked to their philosophy and what they believe to be the purpose of their lives. People need some understanding also of their social relations with other humans, with nature as well as with their ideals. If people think they are machines in interaction with other machines, the result will certainly not be a free society.

Regards

**Vanguardism**

What if the poor can help themselves?

**God Unmoved**

Why Rushdie has not been struck by lightning