# Ashdown rejects Labour shift on electoral reform

BY PHILIP WEBSTER AND ROBIN OAKLEY

AN EXPECTED pledge by Labour to examine reforms in the Westminster voting system was dismissed by Paddy Ashdown and derided by the Tories last night as the parties prepared for an announcement of a general election on April 9.

With Conservative MPs hoping for a Budget tomorrow that will win votes and be prudent enough to reassure the markets, John Major is expected to tell the Queen on Wednesday of his decision to on Thursday. The prime minister, who spent yesterday in his constituency, is thought to have confirmed arrangements in telephone talks with Chris Patten, the Conservative party chairman.

In a significant shift of stance designed to attract centre-party voters, Neil Kinnock has decided that the Labour election manifesto will promise a government enquiry into electoral reform. Without committing the leadership to change, the move is

## Pilgrims die at sea

INSIDE

More than 80 pilgrims on their way to Buddhist island shrines are feared to have drowned when their ferry was struck by a Thai oil tanker south of Bangkok. Two thirds of the victims were women.

The ferry apparently crossed the path of the bigger vessel on a calm sea and in good visibility just before sunrise..... Page 16

#### Call to FBI

Police have enlisted the FBI's help in their search for the murderers of David Wilson, the accountant who was shot dead in the garage of his home in Lancashire...... Page 5

### Hopes fade

President Bush's hopes for an end to the rebellion led by Patrick Buchanan were disappointed after another attack from the Republican right...... Page 7

#### Mandela plea

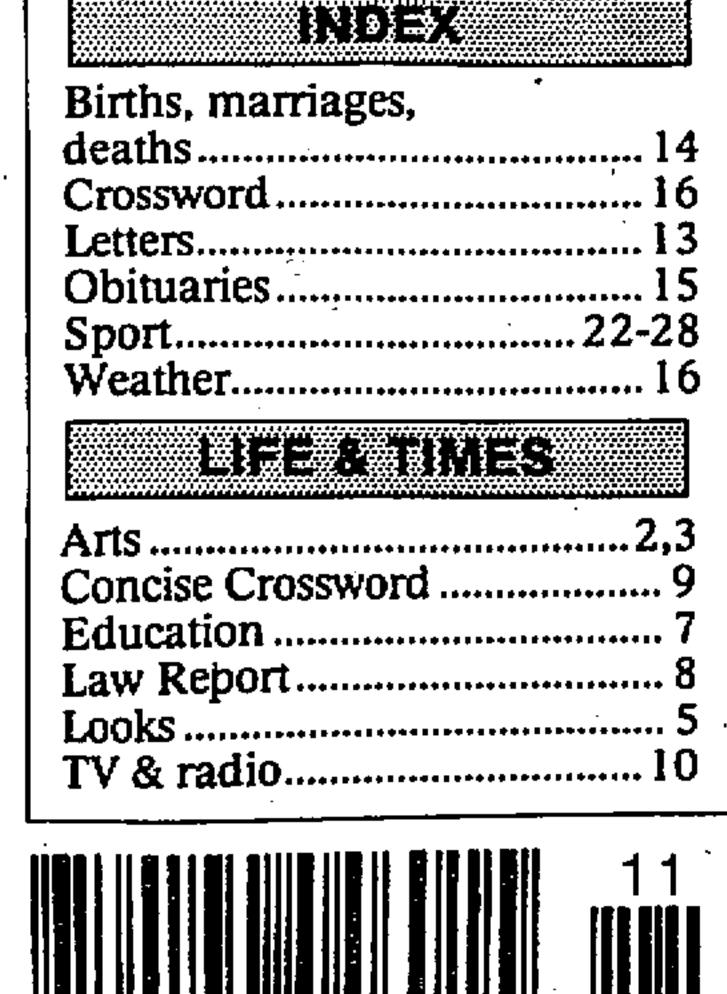
Nelson Mandela appealed to white voters to choose democracy and reject racism in next week's referendum on apartheid reforms. His appeal came a day after P.W. Botha, the former president, called for a "no" vote...... Page 9

#### Liverpool win

Liverpool beat Aston Villa 1-0 in the FA Cup quarterfinal and will play Portsmouth for a final place. The winners of today's tie between Chelsea Sunderland meet Norwich or Southampton... Page 28

#### The Times

The audited circulation of The Times for February was 394,754, an increase of 3,161 on January.





step yet towards Labour one

presentation. Mr Ashdown accused Mr Kinnock of playing the "usual game" of trying to lure voters from the Liberal Democrat camp by making vague promises even as the Conservatives said it smacked of defeatism. He told Mr Kin-

nock to come off the fence. Mr Ashdown, addressing his party's spring conference in Glasgow, made plain that he would not be "fobbed off" wanter is clear miris and parliament. Mr Ashdown continues to emphasise that his price for co-operation would be legislation on elec-

toral reform. Mr Patten said that if Labour really thought it could win it would not even contemplate PR. It was clear that Labour's best hope was Britain's worst nightmare, a hung parliament with all the indecision and instability that it would produce.

The Conservative chairman said Labour had started horse-trading in public. 'Labour would say anything to try to grub up a few more votes. Their readiness to hint constitutional upheaval, without even having the courage to make their own position clear, is yet another sign

Despite the public attacks the importance of Mr. Kinnock's move was not lost on senior politicians. Labour is not expected to promise a Speaker's conference on reform or a royal commission, but to turn its existing enquiry into electoral reform headed by Raymond Plant, a politics professor — into a government enquiry with members of other parties invited to sit on it.

Mr Kinnock, who has been careful to leave open the door on PR, has delighted Labour reform campaigners by his decision, while PR sceptics accept that a promise to hold a full enquiry could give the party a strong card in any negotiations in a hung parliament. Although Mr Kinnock

seen by senior Labour MPs as has declared his opposition to the party's most important pacts, Labour MPs say it would be hard for the Liberal day backing proportional re-Democrats to bring down a Labour government committed to a course of action that

> could lead to PR. Mr Ashdown said after the party conference: "When it comes to fair votes the Tories say no, the Liberal Democrats say yes and Labour cannot get further than maybe." He dismissed reports that he was seeking four places for his party in a coalition cabinet by insisting that "nobody in this party is talking about how mary.hottemwther should include PR and the commitment to a four-year parliamentary programme. The Liberal Democrats would not back a Labour government promoting home rule for Scotland unless it accepted PR for Westminster as well, saying that would be a "flash in the pan" devolution, which could be swiftly reversed by a Tory government.

In his rallying speech to the conference Mr Ashdown concentrated on the theme of reforming the system of government and condemning the two main parties for an election campaign which had been, he said, a disgrace to British politics.

He made clear his party would aim for a position of equidistance from Labour and the Tories. The Tories, he said, had failed and Labour's programme was implausible. Both had debased the currency of politics.

In a speech of powerful rhetoric but little policy, Mr Ashdown scorned the "rake's progress" of election bribes culminating in the national lottery. "When this government was elected, Margaret Thatcher promised us an economic miracle. Now Ken Baker gives us a national lottery. From miracle to lottery. From sound money to loadsamoney. From Adam Smith to William Hill in 13

Ashdown strategy, page 2 Voters wooed on PR, page 2 Leading article, page 13 Lamont caution, page 17

disastrous years."

# Museum charges to go if Tories lose election

By Simon Tait, arts correspondent

ADMISSION charges for national museums would be phased out by a Labour government, the party says in a museums and galleries charter to be launched today.

Mark Fisher, shadow arts

minister, said that admissions had fallen by an average of 40 per cent where charges had been introduced. There would be consultation with the museums on compensating them for loss of income under the measure. The charter would include a national audit of museums and galleries receiving public subsidy to ascertain their capital needs.

A survey by The Times last year showed that the 11 museums funded by the Office of

Arts and Libraries would need almost £1 billion spent on them by the end of the decade to complete refurbishment and development schemes. Money from a national lottery, the subject of a white paper on Friday, would be used by a Labour govern-

cultural buildings. Area museum councils would be enhanced to enable them to take on a development role. Local authorities would be given a statutory responsibility for museums, with expenditure being eligible for rate-support grant.

ment to restore the fabric of

Priority would be given to improving training with the Continued on page 16; col 1



# Tax cuts given low priority by women

By David Lipsey

TAX cuts are a low priority for the Budget among women. Only a quarter of women questioned in an FDS opinion poll believe that Norman Lamont should include tax cuts in tomorrow's Budget, against three quarters who want him to invest more in schools, public transport and health. Half the women questioned would like him to raise state benefits.

Income tax cuts have a particularly low priority among women. If the Chancellor cuts taxes, he ought first to reduce poll tax, nearly half the women say. A third put VAT tax cuts first, but only 17 per cent favour income tax cuts. The survey therefore raises questions as to whether the Budget is likely to restore the Conservatives' standing among women ahead of the general election, as party strategists have hoped.

When asked whether they would like 1p off income tax, women say "yes" by two to one. But the survey shows that they support more strongly tax changes which would benefit women. Of those questioned, 92 per cent would like more tax relief for those looking after elderly dependants; 77 per cent favour tax relief on child care costs and 73 per cent favour an additional tax allowance for working women with children. Most women say the health service should have first claim on extra money. FDS interviewed a representative sample of 1,022

> Matthew Parris, page 12 Letters, page 13 Women's priorities L&T section, page 1

women by telephone between

February 13 and 18.

# Rocket attacks push town to the edge of hell



Anatol Lieven has a hilltop view of a savage but sometimes comic battle between Azerbaijani and Armenian forces in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh

ur position was an artillery spotter's dream. From the top of the hill on which we were crouching, just west of the Azerbaijani village of Shelli and on the border of the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, the battlefield lay before us. To the southwest, raging marked Azerbaijani rockets had landed in the Armenian-held

Between us and the town, a mile and a half away, oil storage tanks, miraculously intact, marked the furthest

town of Askeran.



Armenian position. To the northwest, a cemetery on the edge of the Azerbaijani headquarters of Agdam marked the Azerbaijani line of control. The Karga river meanders in the valley in which the town lies.

From our observation post we suddenly saw a flight of Azerbaijani Grad rockets streaking from their truckmounted multiple launchers in the valley. Exactly seven seconds later, they exploded in Askeran.

As we watched, the Azerbaijanis brought up one of their launchers from another position, fired two

shots, and then opened up with a volley of 19 rockets. Their aim was not good, and many of the rockets landed on the sides of the mountain beyond the town. However, a dozen red

tongues of flame flared briefly all over the centre of the town, and for half a minute or so, Askeran must have felt close to hell. The Azerbaijanis cheered and yelled "Allah" as the rockets burst.

After the killings last week of Azerbaijani civilians from Khodjaly, a few miles away, a fierce spirit of revenge has possessed the Azerbaijanis. "If you get to Askeran don't bother to film Armenian corpses," an Azerbaijani journalist told us. "They are beasts, not men.

A s yet, the Azerbaijani Aorganisation and equipment fall far short of their war aims. Despite our superb observation post, not one of the Azerbaijani soldiers on the hill was equipped with a pair of binoculars. In the valley, apart from the two rocket launchers, there were three 120mm cannon, one without a barrel and all seemingly short of ammunition. Azerbaijanis in an array of civilian vehicles, a police car, a garbage truck, and several buses watched alongside.

When the Armenians returned fire, which landed harmlessly on the opposite Continued on page 16, col 4

Mediation efforts, page 10

# Feminist fervour has its day

INTERNATIONAL Women's Day yesterday was celebrated with feminist fervour in South Korea, China and at the United Nations, but on a low-key, cynical note in the former Soviet Union, where once it was a main holiday in he ideological calendar (Michael Binyon writes). Lynda Chalker, the over-

seas development minister, boasted of Britain's role in helping women in the Third World. In South Korea, a 68year-old former Japanese "sex slave" was named Woman of the Year. In Moscow, traditional ceremonies were cancelled. Demonstrators went to Gorky Park to protest at the downgrading of Women's Day.



DANGER ON THE SHAW



Daniel Massey on Shavian portents of doom for today's world in Heartbreak House Life & Times Page 3

#### UPLIFTING UNDERWEAR



A return to bone corsetry is raising the bosom's profile Life & Times Page 5

**SMOKING OUT** THE TAXMAN



A fuming Peter Barnard doubts any Budget can extinguish his addiction Page 12

# company that employs 50,000 millonaires.

Our workforce mines millions of tons of coal every year, making us one of the biggest mining companies in the world. And in just one week last December, our workforce smashed three European productivity records, not to mention a national productivity record.

Of course, records aren't everything. It is vital that our customers are supplied with coal to meet their individual needs, whatever size their business. By continually improving our business and passing the benefits on to our customers, we're making a profit too. But that's not surprising really, with a workforce as accomplished as ours.



THE ENERGY TO SUCCEED

# CIA paralysed by hunt for imaginary moles



Angleton: his suspicions 'inflicted great damage'

FROM CHARLES BREMNER IN NEW YORK

THE world already knows much about the double-agents and mole-hunting which beset the British secret service in the Cold War. The CIA, it turns out, was every bit as plagued by fear of treason as the British. It secretly paid large sums in compensation to agents falsely accused of being moles, under a so-called "Mole Relief Act".

The careers of dozens of officials at the spy agency were ruined or damaged in the fruitless pursuit of a double-agent called "Sasha", whose real name was supposed to begin with a K. According to a new book by David Wise, an intelligence specialist, the distrust paralysed the CIA. In the past three years, the CIA quietly paid half a million dollars (£300,000) to Peter Karlow as compensation for falsely branding him a traitor and sacking him in 1963. Mr Karlow,

who is now 71, confirmed in The New York Times yesterday that he had been the prime suspect. When he provided alibis for his alleged meetings with Russians in East Germany, his interrogators said only a true spy could devise

such good cover. Similar compensation has been secretly paid to Paul Garbler, the CIA's first station chief in Moscow, and to Richard Kovich, who recruited Soviet agents for the agency. A CIA spokesman confirmed that officers had been compensated but declined to give details.

According to Mr Wise, who researched the matter for ten years, the damage inflicted by the suspicions of James Angleton, the CIA's late counterespionage chief, was far more extensive than previously reported. Up to the mid-1980s, fear of double agents caused the CIA to reject approaches by KGB and other Soviet officials whose information would have been invaluable, Mr Wise

says in Molehunt: the Secret Search for Traitors that Shattered the CIA. The mole panic began in 1961, when Anatoly Golitsyn, a KGB officer who became one of the best-known Soviet

defectors, told the CIA that there was a highly-placed mole in its midst. His code-name was Sasha, he had worked in West Germany and his true name began with K. Mr Karlow was the first suspect because he matched the biography and because he had been involved in a US-British project to produce a tiny surveillance device. Golitsyn reported that the KGB had details of the project. The Russians had, the CIA later learned, been tipped off not by an American but

by George Blake, the British traitor. "Because of pervasive suspicions that prevailed at the time, the CIA was paralysed at the height of the Cold War," Mr Wise says. The CIA never found a mole and all the men it accused were loyal

Lieven, Anatol. "Rocket attacks push town to the edge of hell." Times, 9 Mar. 1992, p. 1+. The Times Digital Archive, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/IF0501933635/TTDA?u=nypl&sid=TTDA&xid=0261a310. Accessed 19 Oct. 2020.