

sector was, of course, textiles. The consumer society provided not only a role model for East Asians; it also provided a market for their cheap cloth.

It should be noted that almost none of the 'Asian tigers' that followed Japan's example, industrializing themselves through exports of staples like cotton goods, did so with the help of democratic institutions. South Korea was steered through its industrial revolution by Generals Park Chung-hee (1960-79) and Chun Doo-hwan (1980-87), while Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore and Suharto in Indonesia were essentially absolutists (the former an enlightened one), and monopoly parties ruled in Taiwan and Japan. Hong Kong remained a British colony until 1997. However, in each case, economic success was followed after some lag by democratization. East Asia, in short, spun out of the Soviet gravitational field because it became a stakeholder in the American consumer society. It was a very different story in those countries - Iran, Guatemala, Congo, Brazil, the Dominican Republic and Chile - where US interventions were shorter in duration, and even worse in those - Cuba, Vietnam, Angola and Ethiopia - where Soviet intervention or assistance was more effective.

That mass consumerism, with all the standardization it implied, could somehow be reconciled with rampant individualism was one of the smartest tricks ever pulled by Western civilization. But the key to understanding how it was done lies in that very word: Western. The Soviet Union could perhaps be forgiven for its failure to invent and disseminate the colour television or the microwave oven. But not all the defining products of the consumer society were technologically complex. The simplest of all were in fact a kind of workman's trousers invented on the West Coast of the United States. Perhaps the greatest mystery of the entire Cold War is why the Worker's Paradise could not manage to produce a decent pair of jeans.

THE JEANS GENIE

It was once upon a time in the Wild West that the universal garment was born. Jeans started life as the no-nonsense trousers of miners and cowpokes. By the 1970s they were the most popular article of clothing

in the world - and a politically potent symbol of what was wrong with the Soviet economic system. Why? Why could the Soviets not replicate Levi 501s the way they had replicated the atomic bomb?

Jeans as we know them today were invented in 1873, when the Bavarian-born dry-goods merchant Levi Strauss and the Reno tailor Jacob Davis secured the patent for using copper rivets to strengthen the pockets on miners' 'waist overalls'. The fabric they used was denim (originally 'serge de Nîmes', just as 'jeans' probably derives from 'Genoa') manufactured at the Amoskeag Mill in Manchester, New Hampshire, using American-grown cotton dyed with American-grown indigo. The original Levi's factories were in San Francisco and it was there that the familiar leather label was first used in 1886, showing two horses failing to pull a pair of Levi's apart; the red tab was added in 1936. Blue jeans are cheap to make, easy to clean, hard to ruin and comfortable to wear. But then so are workmen's overalls of the sort that used to be worn in Britain (most famously by Churchill during the war), as are dungarees, named after cloth from Dongri in India. Why was it that Californian jeans - which were also issued to convicts in many state penitentiaries - came to dominate the world of fashion? The answer lies in two of the twentieth century's most successful industries: movies and marketing.

It began when the young John Wayne traded in the elaborate fringed leather chaps of the early cowboy films for the plain jeans he wore in *Stagecoach* (1939). Then came Marlon Brando's jeans and leathers in *The Wild One* (1953), followed by James Dean's red (jacket), white (T-shirt) and blue (jeans) outfit in *Rebel without a Cause* (1955) and Elvis Presley's black jeans in *Jailhouse Rock* (1957). The marketing men provided further support for the rugged new look with 'Marlboro Man', the cigarette-smoking, denim-clad cowboy devised by the advertising executive Leo Burnett in 1954. Marilyn Monroe was another early adopter of denim; one of her first modelling shoots featured a less than flattering convict suit. The key from the outset was the association between jeans and youthful misbehaviour. As early as the 1830s the Mormon leader Brigham Young had denounced trousers with button flies as 'fornication pants'. In 1944 *Life* magazine caused a storm by publishing a photograph of two Wellesley College women in jeans.⁸⁸ By the time Levi's competitor Lee

introduced zippers, the reputation of jeans as sexually arousing was established – a curious outcome, considering how very difficult it is to have sex with someone wearing tight-fitting jeans. Jeans were upwardly mobile. They began on the backsides of ranch-hands and convicts; were mandatory for defence workers during the war; moved on to the biker gangs of the post-war years; were adopted by West Coast and then Ivy League students; graduated to 'beat' writers, folk singers and pop groups in the 1960s; and ended up being worn publicly by all presidents after Richard Nixon. Levi's growth was spectacular. In 1948 the company sold 4 million pairs of jeans; by 1959 it was 10 million. Sales of Levi's increased tenfold between 1964 and 1975, passing the \$1 billion mark. By 1979 they had reached \$2 billion. And Levi's was only one of several successful brands, with Lee and Wrangler also in contention.

These all-American clothes were just as attractive to non-Americans, as became clear when Levi's launched an export drive in the 1960s and 1970s. For young people all over the world, jeans symbolized a generational revolt against the stuffy sartorial conventions of the post-war era. The jean genie was out of the bottle, and the bottle was more than probably the distinctively curved glass container of the Coca-Cola soft drink. It seemed only a matter of time before Levi Strauss & Co. would fulfil their stated ambition of 'clothing the world'. 'The World is Blue Jeans Country Now', proclaimed *Life* in 1972.⁸⁹ In expanding overseas, Levi's was taking a leaf out of the Coca-Cola playbook. The brown fizzy liquid, invented in 1886 when John Pemberton carbonated a mixture of cocaine from the coca leaf and caffeine from the kola nut, managed to outdo even Singer as a global brand. Coca-Cola was already calling itself 'the International Beverage' as early as 1929, when it was for sale in seventy-eight different countries, including even Burma – where its distinctive Spencerian script logo could be seen, incongruously, at the entrance to the Schwe Dagon Pagoda in Rangoon.⁹⁰ In the Second World War, Coke managed to run sixty-four different bottling plants in six theatres of war. It even managed to establish a bottling plant in Laos in 1973, at the height of the Vietnam War.

For Levi's and Coca-Cola alike, however, there was no more impenetrable barrier than the Iron Curtain drawn across Europe by the Cold

War. Indeed, Coke boss Robert W. Woodruff refused on principle to be involved with the American National Exhibition in Moscow, personally blaming Vice-President Richard Nixon when Pepsi pulled off the coup of getting the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev to test their rival soft drink after the two leaders' televised debate at the opening of the Exhibition in July 1959.⁹¹

In Cold War rhetoric, it was always clear who the 'West' was and who the 'East' was. The East began where the River Elbe marked the end of the Federal Republic of Germany and the beginning of the German Democratic Republic. It ended at the border between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea. But from the vantage point of the real East – from the Middle East to the Far East – the world seemed simply to have been carved up between two rival Wests, a capitalist one and a communist one. The people in charge looked roughly similar. Indeed, in many ways the Soviet Union longed to imitate the United States, to build the same weapons – and also the same consumer goods. As Khrushchev made abundantly clear in his 'kitchen debate' with Nixon, the Soviets aspired to match the Americans product for product. Sartorially there was little to choose between the two men. Clad in perfect black and white, as if to confound the colour television technology he was supposed to be marketing, Nixon looked like the dour Californian lawyer he was. In his light-coloured suit and hat, Khrushchev looked more like a Dixiecrat Congressman who had consumed one too many Martinis at lunch.

Like young people all over the world, teenagers in the Soviet Union and its satellites in Eastern Europe were crying out for jeans. So it really is bizarre that the United States' principal rival in the post-war world failed to replicate these supremely straightforward items of apparel. It might have been thought that the Western craze for denim had made life easier for the Soviets. After all, the Soviet Union was supposed to be the proletarian paradise and jeans are a lot easier to make than, say, Sta-Prest trousers (another Levi Strauss invention, introduced in 1964). Yet somehow the communist bloc failed to understand the appeal of a garment that could equally well have symbolized the virtues of the hard-working Soviet worker. Instead, blue jeans, and the pop music with which they were soon inextricably

linked, became the quintessential symbols of Western superiority. And, unlike nuclear warheads, jeans were actually launched against the Soviets: there were displays of Levi's in Moscow in 1959 and again in 1967.

If you were a student living behind the Iron Curtain in the Sixties – in East Berlin, for example – you did not want to dress in the sub-Boy Scout uniform of a Young Pioneer. You wanted to dress like all the young dudes in the West. Stefan Wölle was an East German student at the time. As he recalls:

Initially, it wasn't possible [to buy jeans in the GDR]. Jeans were seen as the embodiment of the Anglo-Saxon cultural imperialism. And it was strongly frowned upon to wear them. And you couldn't buy them. [But] many got their relatives from the West to bring them over ... They wore them and that caused teachers, employers and policemen in the street to be angry. It gave rise to a black market in Western goods that seemed to threaten the state.⁹²

Such was the desirability of this article of clothing that Soviet law-enforcement officials coined the phrase 'jeans crimes', which referred to 'law violations prompted by a desire to use any means to obtain articles made of denim'. In 1986 the French leftist philosopher and former comrade in arms of Che Guevara, Régis Debray, remarked: 'There is more power in rock music, videos, blue jeans, fast food, news networks and TV satellites than in the entire Red Army.'⁹³ That much was becoming clear by the mid-1980s. In 1968, however, it was anything but certain.

Nineteen-sixty-eight was a year of revolution in all kinds of ways, from Paris to Prague, from Berlin to Berkeley, and even in Beijing.⁹⁴ But the common factor in all these disruptions to the Cold War duopoly of power was youth. Rarely in modern times have people aged between fifteen and twenty-four accounted for so large a share of the population as in the decade after 1968. Having dropped as low as 11 per cent of the US population in the mid-1950s, the youth share reached a peak of 17 per cent in the mid-1970s. In Latin America and Asia it rose above 20 per cent. At the same time, the expansion of higher education, especially in the United States, meant that a higher

proportion than ever of young men and women went to university. By 1968 university students made up more than 3 per cent of the entire American population, compared with less than 1 per cent in 1928. A more modest expansion had happened in Europe too. These were the post-war baby boomers – young, numerous, educated and prosperous. They had every reason to be grateful to their fathers' generation, which had fought for freedom and bequeathed them opportunity. Instead they revolted.

On 22 March 1968 French students occupied the eighth-floor faculty lounge of the University of Paris X Nanterre – 'mad Nanterre' as the ugly concrete campus became known. By May tens of thousands of students, including those from the elite Sorbonne, were clashing with police on the streets of Paris.⁹⁵ A general strike swept the country as the trade unions seized the opportunity to press a weakened government for higher wages. Similar scenes played out at the University of California, Berkeley, the Free University, Berlin – even at Harvard, where members of the organization Students for a Democratic Society occupied the President's house, and members of the Worker-Student Alliance stormed University Hall (temporarily renamed Che Guevara Hall), evicting the deans working there.

Superficially, this campus revolt was directed against the US war to preserve the independence of South Vietnam, a war which by 1968 had cost the lives of more than 30,000 Americans and had lost majority public approval. The 68ers also lent their support to the African-American Civil Rights movement, a classically liberal challenge to the remaining impediments to racial equality in the American South. Yet much of the language of 1968 was Marxist, representing almost every conflict from Israel to Indo-China as an anti-imperialist struggle. According to the more doctrinaire student leaders like Daniel ('Danny le Rouge') Cohn-Bendit and Rudi Dutschke, the aim was 'insurrection in the centres of capitalism'. 'Humanity won't be happy', the *enragés* declared, 'until the last capitalist is hung with the entrails of the last bureaucrat.' As anarchists, the Situationists wanted the abolition of labour itself, urging their student supporters: *Ne travaillez jamais* – 'Never Work.'⁹⁶ Yet there was one very practical demand that spoke volumes about the revolution's true aims, and that was for unlimited male access to the female dormitories – hence the injunction to 'unbut-

ton your mind as often as your fly'. As one graffiti artist put it: 'The more I want to make love, the more I want to make revolution. The more I want to make revolution, the more I want to make love.'⁹⁷ Female students were encouraged to experiment with hitherto taboo degrees of exposure. From the shapeless pyjamas of Mao's Red Guards to the hippies' denim bell-bottoms, the 1968 revolution was all about clothes. From mini-skirts to bikinis, the sexual revolution was all about the lack of them. 'Women must reject their role as the principal consumers in the capitalist state,' declared the Australian-born feminist Germaine Greer, who loved to party more than she loved the Party.⁹⁸

The irony was that the 68ers, who routinely denounced American imperialism in Vietnam and symbolically smashed the windows of the American Express office in Paris, remained chronically addicted to American popular culture. Blue jeans – now reshaped with low-slung waists and flared legs – remained the uniform of youth rebellion. The record companies continued to supply the soundtrack: the Rolling Stones' 'Street Fightin' Man' (released by Decca in December 1968) and the Beatles' 'Revolution' (released by the band's own Apple label four months before) – both songs notably sceptical about the benefits of revolution. Denim pants and vinyl discs: these were among the most successful products of late twentieth-century capitalism. And, as in the 1920s, a policy of prohibition – this time of narcotics – offered a new field of opportunity to 'Crime Inc.'. The French Situationists might pile opprobrium on the consumer society with its culture of crass materialism and ubiquitous advertising (what Guy Debord sneeringly called 'the society of the spectacle'), but those who rioted against capitalism in Paris were grossly underestimating the benefits they themselves reaped from the system. Give or take the occasional baton charge by redneck and blue-collar policemen, who despised the privileged middle-class 'longhairs', the authorities in the Western world generally allowed the students the freedom to protest. Indeed, most universities caved in to student demands. Another irony was that a youth movement that favoured making 'love not war' ended up being associated with so much violence: race riots in American cities, a surge in the homicide rate and terrorism in Western Europe and the Middle East. A new era began on 23 July 1968, with the hijacking by

the Palestine Liberation Organization of an El Al aircraft bound from Rome to Tel Aviv. It was not long before the Keffiyeh headscarf favoured by the PLO leader Yasser Arafat became as chic as Che Guevara's beret.

Going through the Iron Curtain in 1968 was like going through the looking glass. The visitor from Western Europe found much that was familiar. The urban planners in both halves of Europe had made the same mistake, decanting people from city centres and marooning them in repulsive, shoddy apartment blocks in the brutally functional Bauhaus style that had entranced post-war architects. But some familiar things could have diametrically different meanings. In Prague, long hair and jeans were also favoured by the country's youth over the Communist Party's ideal of short back and sides, polyester suits and red ties. But they were favoured precisely because they were redolent of the capitalist West. The Czechs even called jeans *Texas-skis* – Texan trousers.⁹⁹ With the planners reluctant to manufacture such garments, the only way to get them was through smuggling. The pop singer Petr Janda, whose group Olympic aspired to be the Czech Beatles,^{*} acquired his first pair of Levi 501s that way; they were too short, but his friends were still consumed with envy.¹⁰⁰ As in Paris, so in Prague: universities became flashpoints for a clash of the generations. The beatnik poet Allen Ginsberg visited the Charles University in the spring of 1965; he was expelled in early May for the 'lewd and morally dangerous' nature of his writings. In November 1967 students at the Charles University gathered during a blackout and marched into the centre of Prague holding candles. One of the students involved in the protest was Ivan Touška. As he recalled:

There were so many power cuts at the time – and the candles were a practical symbol during the first protest – we had candles but we wanted electric light. However 'We want light' obviously had a wider general meaning: 'light' against the 'darkness' of the highest political body of that time – the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.¹⁰¹

* Their biggest hit, 'Zelva' (Tortoise), had lyrics evidently inspired by late John Lennon: 'If you don't pay attention to turtles / They can trick you. / It is hard to catch turtles / When they are in the water.'

spearheaded by Václav Havel, the playwright and future President of Czechoslovakia. Never in its history was rock music more political than it was in Prague in the 1970s.*

So why not just let Czechoslovakian students have all the jeans and rock 'n' roll they wanted? The answer is that the consumer society posed a lethal threat to the Soviet system itself. It was market-based. It responded to signals from consumers themselves – their preference for jeans over flannel trousers, or for Mick Jagger over Burt Bacharach. And it devoted an increasing share of resources to satisfying those preferences. This the Soviet system simply could not do. The Party knew what everyone needed – brown polyester suits – and placed its orders with the state-owned factories accordingly. The alternative was inherently subversive. Significantly, the East German authorities blamed the 1953 workers' revolt on Western provocateurs 'with cowboy pants and Texas shirts'.¹⁰³ Khrushchev may have yearned to copy the colour television; he most certainly did not want the Beatles. 'The youth of the Soviet Union do not need this cacophonous rubbish,' he declared. 'It's just a small step from saxophones [sic] to switchblades.'¹⁰⁴ In any case, for the Soviets to keep pace with the much richer Americans in the Cold War arms race, tanks had to take precedence over tank-tops, strategic bombers over Stratocasters. One Soviet critic observed, revealingly, that 'every ounce of energy used on the dance floor was energy which could and should have been invested in building a hydroelectric plant'.¹⁰⁵ It did not stop jeans being smuggled into Russia itself by black-market dealers known as *fartsovshchiki*, who specialized in bartering denim for fur hats and caviar, the only souvenirs that Western visitors to Moscow ever wanted to buy. A pair of black-market jeans could fetch between 150 and 250 roubles, at a time when the average monthly salary was under 200 roubles and an ordinary pair of state-manufactured trousers sold for 10 or 20 roubles.

With the crushing of the Prague Spring, the communist system in Eastern Europe seemed unassailable. In Berlin the division of the city into East and West looked like a permanent fact. But while the communists

* Among the first official guests Havel invited to Prague after his appointment as president on 29 December 1989 were Frank Zappa and Lou Reed.

In April 1968 Alexander Dubček launched his 'Action Programme' of economic and political liberalization. Significantly, his economic policy shifted the emphasis from heavy industry to consumer goods. But the Soviet leadership in Moscow saw the Prague Spring as an unacceptable threat. At 4 a.m. on 21 August 1968, Soviet tanks and troops surrounded the building that housed the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Threatened by an angry crowd, the tanks opened fire, killing one young man. At around 9 a.m. troops stormed the building. Dubček was flown to the Soviet Union, whence he was lucky to return alive. A focal point of resistance was Wenceslas Square, where Czechs gathered daily around the equestrian statue of Wenceslas, the beatified tenth-century Duke of Bohemia. In Paris the students had thrown flaming Molotov cocktails at the riot police. In Prague, on 19 January 1969, a Czech student named Jan Palach doused his clothes in kerosene and set himself alight. He died three days later. In the West students indulged themselves with Marxist rhetoric, but what they were really after was free love. On the other side of the Iron Curtain the stakes were higher. What was at issue was freedom itself.

After 1968 the restored communist regime required all Czech rock musicians to sit a written exam in Marxism-Leninism. An idiosyncratic avant-garde band called the Plastic People of the Universe, formed just a month after the Soviet invasion, hit back with songs like '100 Points' ('They are afraid of freedom. / They are afraid of democracy. / They are afraid of the [United Nations] Human Rights' Charter. / They are afraid of socialism. / So why the hell are we afraid of them?').¹⁰² It soon became clear. In January 1970 their professional musicians' licence was revoked. Two years later they were banned from playing in Prague, forcing them to perform at private parties in the Bohemian countryside. It was after one of these underground events – the Second Music Festival of the Second Culture at Bojanovice in February 1976 – that all of the band's members, including their Canadian lead singer Paul Wilson, were arrested. Two of them, Vratislav Brabeneč and Ivan Jirous, were put on trial charged with 'extreme vulgarity ... anti-socialism ... nihilism ... and decadence' and sentenced to terms of eighteen and eight months in jail. It was their trial that inspired the founding of Charter 77, the dissident group

were good at crushing political opposition, their resistance to the West's consumer society was altogether weaker. The influence of Western fashion proved impossible to keep out, especially once East Germans were able to watch West German television (they had long had access to Western radio). Designers like Ann Katrin Hendel started making their own Western-style clothes, selling them from car boots. Hendel even made her own jeans:

We tried to sew them, from tarpaulin or from bed sheets or from fabric that wasn't jeans fabric. We also tried to dye them but it was also very difficult to get your hands on dye... They were so popular that people snatched them from our hands.¹⁰⁶

The critical point was that the success of Western consumer industries was now matched, mirror-like, by the miserable underperformance of their Soviet counterparts. Not only was growth now vanishingly low after 1973 (below 1 per cent); total factor productivity was declining. Some state enterprises were actually subtracting value from the raw materials they processed. Just as Hayek had warned, in the absence of meaningful prices, resources were misallocated; corrupt officials restricted output to maximize their own illicit gains; workers pretended to work and, in return, managers pretended to pay them. Not only the industrial capital stock but also the human capital stock was not being maintained; nuclear power stations crumbled; alcoholism soared. Far from challenging the United States for economic supremacy, as Khrushchev had threatened, the Soviet Union had achieved per-capita consumption of around 24 per cent of the American level – a challenge to Turkey, at best.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, the shift in superpower relations towards détente and disarmament made the Soviets' ability to mass-produce missiles a good deal less valuable. High oil prices in the 1970s had given the system a stay of execution; as oil fell in the 1980s the Soviet bloc was left with nothing but hard-currency debts – money borrowed from the very system Khrushchev had promised to 'bury'. Mikhail Gorbachev, appointed general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party in March 1985, felt there was now no alternative but to reform both the economic and the political system, including the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe. With *perestroika* and *glasnost* the new watchwords in Moscow, hard-liners

in East Berlin were left high and dry – forced into censoring publications and reports not only from the West but from the Soviet Union as well.

As in 1848, as in 1918, the revolutions of 1989 spread contagiously. In Warsaw in February 1989 the Polish government agreed to talks with the free trade union Solidarity; soon the country was preparing for free elections. In Budapest in May the Hungarian communists decided to open their border with Austria. The Iron Curtain began to rust away. Around 15,000 East Germans set off via Czechoslovakia to 'holiday' in Hungary on what was in reality a one-way trip to the West. In June Solidarity won the Polish elections and set about forming a democratic government. In September the Hungarian communists followed the Polish example by agreeing to free elections. The following month, as Erich Honecker honed his plans to celebrate the GDR's fortieth anniversary, hundreds, then thousands, then tens of thousands, then hundreds of thousands of people poured on to the streets in Leipzig, first chanting 'Wir sind das Volk' (We are the People), later amending that to 'Wir sind ein Volk' (We are One People). This time, unlike in Budapest in 1956 and Prague in 1968 – not forgetting Gdansk in December 1981 and Beijing in June 1989 – the troops remained in their barracks. Within the East German Party, where the extent of the GDR's bankruptcy was becoming clear, Honecker was forced aside by younger 'reformers'. But it was all much too late for reform. Other, nimbler apparatchiks, notably in Romania, were already switching sides, calculating the likely benefits to themselves of market reforms.

On 9 November 1989 a bemused East Berlin press corps were informed that 'the decision [had been] taken to make it possible for all citizens to leave the country through the official border crossing points ... to take effect at once', news that prompted a flood of East Berliners to the border checkpoints. Unprepared, guards opted not to resist. By midnight all the checkpoints had been forced to open and one of the greatest parties of the century was under way, closely followed by one of its biggest shopping sprees. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Cold War was essentially over, though it was not until the failed Moscow coup of August 1991 and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union that the Baltic states, Ukraine and Belarus, along

with the three big Caucasian republics and the five 'stans' of Central Asia, became independent states.

Few had seen it coming.* For some it was 'the end of history', the definitive victory of the liberal capitalist model.¹⁰⁸ For others it was the 'triumph of the West', the political achievement of three charismatic leaders: Ronald Reagan, Pope John Paul II and Margaret Thatcher.¹⁰⁹ A third view gave the credit to nationalism. But the analyst who was closest to the mark was the Italian apparel executive who started marketing a line in skintight 'perestroika jeans'. It was above all as consumer societies that the Soviet Union and its satellites had failed. It was no accident that the popular protests of 2006 against the incorrigibly authoritarian regime in Belarus took the form of wearing jeans – though Minsk still awaits its Denim Revolution.¹¹⁰

PYJAMAS AND SCARVES

In the wake of Mao Zedong's Communist Revolution in 1949 China became the drabest society on earth. Gone were the last vestiges of Qing-era silk. Gone were the Western outfits favoured by the nationalists between the wars. In the pursuit of strict equality everyone was issued with what looked very much like pyjamas. Grey ones. Yet today when you walk down a typical Chinese street what you see is a kaleidoscope of Western styles of clothing. Advertising hoardings in all the major cities extol the virtues of Western brands from Armani to Ermenegildo Zegna. Like every other industrial revolution, China's began with textile production. Until recently, most of the garments manufactured in the coastal Special Economic Zones were intended for export to the West. Now, with demand down in depressed Western economies, the principal challenge facing policy-makers in Beijing is

* The most uncannily accurate prophecy was by the American journalist James P. O'Donnell in an article entitled 'The Ghost Train of Berlin', published in the West German *Reader's Digest* magazine *Das Beste* in January 1979, which foresaw the destruction of the wall ten years later and even the sale of pieces of the wall as souvenirs. Sadly, the rewards for such foresight are paltry – as were the penalties that should have been paid by a generation of clueless academic 'Sovietologists'. The business of political prognostication remains a highly inefficient market.

how to make the Chinese worker save less and consume more; in other words, buy more clothes. It seems as if the triumph of the West's consumer society is close to being complete. Or is it?

Istanbul is a cosmopolitan city, where the outward trappings of Western civilization have long been commonplace in the streets. Stroll down the main shopping thoroughfare of İstiklâl Caddesi and you could be almost anywhere in the Mediterranean world. But go elsewhere in the same city – in the Fatih area near Sultan Ahmet, for example – and things look very different. For devout Muslims, Western norms of female attire are unacceptable because they reveal far more than is prescribed by their religion.* And that is why, in a country that is overwhelmingly Muslim, the headscarf, the veil (*niqāb* or *khimār*) and the loose black body covering (*abaya*) have been making a comeback.

This represents a major change in direction for Turkey. As we saw in Chapter 2, the founder of the Turkish Republic, Kemal Atatürk, set out to Westernize the way Turks dressed, banning the wearing of religious clothing in all state institutions. The secularist military government that came to power in 1982 revived this policy by prohibiting female students from wearing headscarves at university. This ban was not rigorously enforced until after 1997, however, when the Constitutional Court explicitly ruled that the wearing of headscarves on academic premises – including schools as well as universities – violated article 2 of the constitution, which enshrines the secular character of the republic. (The wearing of long beards by male students was also pronounced unconstitutional.) When university and school authorities called in riot police to enforce this ruling, the country was plunged into

* The ideal of covering the female head (the Arabic term is *hiḡāb*) and body (*jilbāb*) derives from the Koran, which commands women to 'subdue their eyes, and maintain their chastity. They shall not reveal any parts of their bodies, except that which is necessary. They shall cover their chests, and shall not relax this code in the presence of other than their husbands, their fathers, the fathers of their husbands, their sons, the sons of their husbands, their brothers, the sons of their brothers, the sons of their sisters, other women, the male servants or employees whose sexual drive has been nullified, or the children who have not reached puberty' (Sura 24 (Al-Nur): 31). The *hadīth*, which recounts the acts of Muhammad, goes further, requiring the covering of the neck, ankles and wrists. Zealous Muslims promote the wearing of the *burqa*, a term usually taken to refer to the *niqāb* and the *abaya*.