SCOTLAND: HOW TO SMASH THE POLL TAX—see page 7

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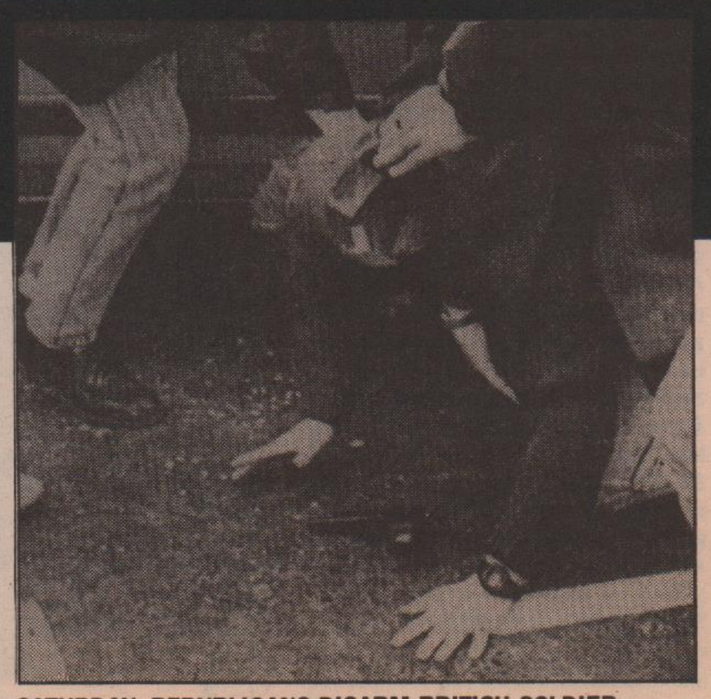
INSIDE ON IRELAND:

- EYEWITNESS REPORT FROM FUNERALS
- A WEEK IN THE IRISH WAR
- LOYALISM AND THE BRITISH CONNECTION
- WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?

Revolutionary Communist Party Weekly 25 March 1988 40p

Funeral violence in Ireland

THE FURY WHICH GROWS FROM GRIEF



SATURDAY: REPUBLICANS DISARM BRITISH SOLDIER

NEARLY 19 YEARS of pent-up anger among Irish nationalists exploded in Belfast on Saturday. Two plain clothes British soldiers who drove into a republican funeral cortege were attacked by mourners and then shot dead by the IRA.

Many in Britain were shocked at how bitterly the mourners reacted against the Army intruders. But the level of nationalist anger reflects the scale of suffering inflicted on their community since the Irish War began in 1969 — and especially this month.

On Wednesday thousands of nationalists went to Belfast's Milltown cemetery to bury three IRA members shot dead in cold blood by the SAS in Gibraltar. Those three joined the roll of more than 300 Irish people shot dead by the British forces.

The mourners were attacked at the graveside by a Loyalist murderer with guns and grenades, who killed three of his pursuers and maimed scores of other mourners. These victims were the latest of 600 nationalists killed by Loyalist paramilitaries.

On Saturday the nationalists of West Belfast turned out again for the funeral of Kevin Brady, a republican victim of the Milltown massacre. When the soldiers careered into the procession, they sparked off the fury which nationalists feel at what is being done to their people. When they fired at the mourners who surrounded their car, nobody should have been surprised by what followed.

The bloodshed of recent days has nothing to do with the 'mindless violence' which the media talk about. It is all a consequence of the political conflict between the British state and Irish nationalists who want their freedom. The only solution is to remove the cause of that conflict: Britain's military occupation of the North of Ireland.

TROOPS OUT NOW!

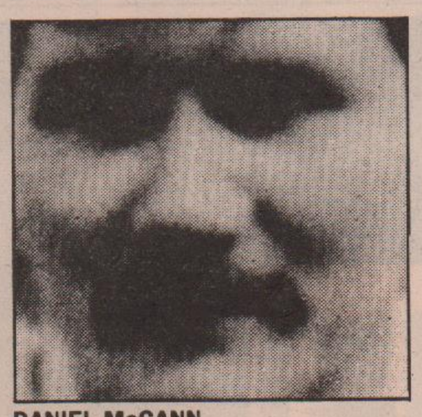
There have been almost 1000 weeks in the Irish War...this was one of them

MONDAY 14 MARCH

The BAC-111 jet returning the bodies of Mairead Farrell, Sean Savage and Daniel McCann, the three IRA volunteers shot dead by the SAS in Gibraltar, touched down at Dublin airport at 4.40pm. At 7.42pm, while the funeral cortege was making its way North, the British Army shot dead IRA volunteer Kevin McCracken in Turf Lodge, Belfast, a short distance from his home and that of Sean Savage. Shortly after 9pm, the Gibraltar cortege reached Dundalk on the Border, where more than 6000 local people had waited four hours in driving rain to pay their respects.



MAIREAD FARRELL



DANIEL McCANN



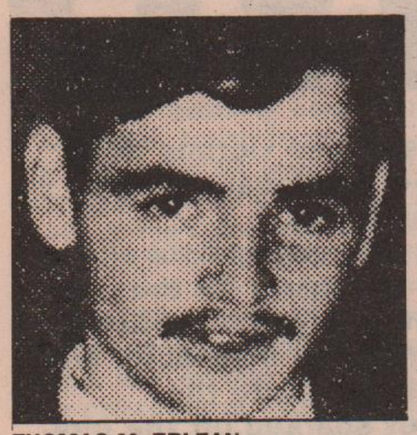
SEAN SAVAGE

TUESDAY 15 MARCH

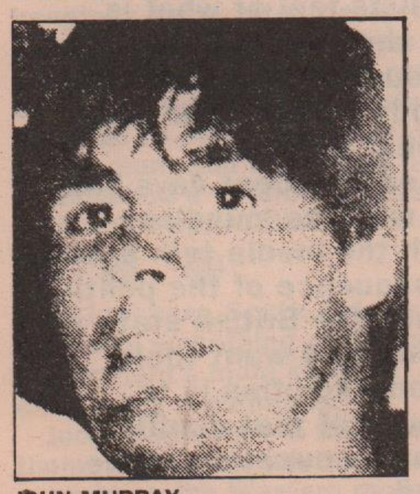
A masked Loyalist gunman shot dead 25-year old Charlie McGrillen as he was working at Dunnes Store at the Annadale Embankment in South Belfast. The Ulster Freedom Fighters claimed responsibility for the sectarian murder. Charlie McGrillen had no involvement in the republican movement: he was gunned down because he was a Catholic.

WEDNESDAY 16 MARCH

At the funeral of the three IRA volunteers shot dead in Gibraltar, Loyalist Michael Stone launched a gun and grenade attack in Milltown cemetery, killing three mourners and maiming many more. That night 22-year old Kevin Mulligan, a Belfast Catholic shot by the Loyalist paramilitary Ulster Defence Association in August last year, died in hospital after suffering a relapse.



THOMAS McERLEAN



JOHN MURRAY



KEVIN BRADY

THURSDAY 17 MARCH

Thousands of nationalists attended the funeral of Kevin McCracken, the IRA volunteer shot dead by the British Army on Monday night. Following a tense burial ceremony in Milltown cemetery, mourners joined the traditional St Patrick's Day parade as it made its way up the Andersonstown Road to a rally in Casement Park. At the head of the procession marchers carried banners strung out across the street, demanding freedom for the Birmingham 6, framed for the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings, and for political hostages in British jails.

FRIDAY 18 MARCH

Charlie McGrillen, the Catholic killed by the sectarian Ulster Freedom Fighters at a Belfast supermarket on Monday, was buried. So too was brave young nationalist Thomas McErlean, only yards from where he was shot dead giving chase to Loyalist gunman Michael Stone in Milltown cemetery on Wednesday. The IRA shot dead 21-year old Jillian Johnston and wounded her fiancé Stanley Leggett at Tonaghgorm, county Fermanagh thinking Leggett was Johnston's brother who served as a part-time soldier with the Ulster Defence Regiment.

SATURDAY 19 MARCH

Two British soldiers were executed by the IRA after they threatened the funeral cortege of Kevin Brady, the IRA volunteer killed in Milltown cemetery on Wednesday. Saturday's shootings brought the death toll for the week to nine: six Irish nationalists, one Protestant and two British soldiers.



CORPORAL DEREK WOOD GETS OUT OF HIS CAR GUN IN HAND

AFTER WEDNESDAY, WHAT DID THEY EXPECT?

There has been much speculation about what two British soldiers in civilian clothing were doing driving into the funeral of an IRA member on Saturday.

Early news reports at Saturday lunchtime said that the Army had admitted the dead men were an SAS undercover team. By Saturday evening the Army was instead insisting that they were simply members of the Royal Corps of Signals, travelling incognito from one post to another. On Monday Tory Northern Ireland secretary Tom King repeated this explanation, and added that the two corporals were probably taking a 'short cut'. This last is an unlikely story given that they had to avoid the motorway to drive down the Andersonstown Road to the funeral. More credibly, observers have suggested that the soldiers were there to snoop around the funeral, either officially or as freelancers.

THE FACTS

Whatever their motives might have been, the known facts are these. The corporals' car was stopped in front of the funeral procession by republican stewards. Instead of turning back, they swerved around a line of black taxis and sped towards the cortege, along the pavement, at an estimated 40mph, badly injuring several mourners. The soldiers tried to drive down what turned out to be a cul-de-sac, and then reversed their car back into the path of the funeral procession. They were surrounded by angry mourners, pulled a gun and fired a shot. The rest is well-known.

These events can only be understood in the context of what preceded them. The nationalists in that procession were the same people who had been attacked by a Loyalist with guns and grenades at another funeral three days before (see opposite). They had come out to bury one of their number who died in that assault. When an unknown car came at them, they had no reason to doubt that it was an attempted repeat performance. If they had known these men were soldiers rather than Loyalist paramilitaries, it would not have altered their suspicions; republican mourners have suffered enough attacks from official British forces in the past (see page 4).

When the soldiers pulled guns, they sealed their own fate. The unarmed mourners reacted just as they had to the Loyalist assailant on Wednesday. They went after those who were threatening their funeral with firearms, and overpowered them. The IRA then shot the soldiers, reportedly with the same guns which the troops had drawn against the civilians.

The reason for the ferocious violence was not, as many now claim, the lack of a police or Army presence at the funeral. It happened because there were two too many military personnel there, threatening a procession made up of Irish nationalists who had buried enough of their people that week to last a lifetime.

A TALE OF TWO FUNERALS

'I AM not a violent man. But when I saw a group of Sinn Fein sympathisers chasing the man responsible for this attack, I hoped they would catch him. I am not proud of those feelings.' Peter Bond has been covering events in Northern Ireland for the *Sun* for 15 years. Like most of his fellow pressmen he has concocted most of his stories in snug hotel bars, away from the war-torn streets of Andersonstown and Turf Lodge, Bogside and Creggan.

At the graveside last week we heard their plummy voices telling stories about how they managed to grab the claret from the dinner table before they were evacuated from their hotel after a bomb scare. Last Wednesday's massacre at Milltown cemetery was the nearest they have come to losing their lives. And many more than Peter Bond had cause to swallow their pride and salute the courage of the republicans who ran after Michael Stone.

When two armed plain clothes soldiers drove their car at the funeral on Saturday of one of the republicans killed chasing after Stone it was back to bigotry as usual for the British press corps. The republican heroes of Wednesday became the 'murdering mob' of Saturday. There is nothing like a grenade attack in a graveyard to clear the mind, and nothing like another bottle of claret to put the Irish War back into British focus.

Joan Phillips

Irish Freedom Movement Dayschool

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Phil Murphy

DERRY SINN FEIN LEADER MARTIN McGUINESS DISPLAYS A SPENT CARTRIDGE AND SHRAPNEL FROM A FRAGMENTATION GRENADE

Joan Phillips and Phil Murphy were in Milltown cemetery on the Wednesday when Loyalist Michael Stone made his murderous attack on mourners at the funeral of the three IRA volunteers shot dead by the SAS in Gibraltar

EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNT OF MURDER AT MILLTOWN

DEATH AND DEFIANCE



Phil Murphy

MOURNERS RUN FOR COVER AS ANOTHER GRENADE GOES OFF

It was twenty past one and many mourners had already left the cemetery. The only hitch in a day when everything had gone better than anybody might have expected was a delay because the single grave was not deep enough to hold the three coffins. IRA volunteer Dan McCann was about to be laid to rest when the silence was shattered. You could almost hear the hearts stop beating as the first grenade exploded, sending a pall of black smoke into the cold air above the cemetery. The throngs of mourners froze for a moment, as the screams began to echo around the gravestones.

In that first split second before their minds got control of their senses, many people standing away from the carnage mistook the explosion for an IRA salute to the fallen volunteers. Most had not even heard the two gunshots which rang out seconds earlier. But when the second grenade went off, and then a third, and a fourth, everybody knew, no matter where they were standing, that somebody was out to kill them. After the second grenade landed, everybody dived for cover.

SCREAMS

From where we stood and scanned the cemetery you could not see what was causing the explosions. It could have been a mortar attack from the expanse of waste land adjacent to the graveyard, or the cemetery could have been mined. There were desperate shouts of 'get down, stay down' from Sinn Fein stewards, clashing with cries for help from the injured, and terrified screams from all around us.

At this stage we did not know how many people had been injured, or whether any had been killed. But the horror of what happened was etched on the faces of the men, women and children who came stumbling past with tears streaming down their faces. Long after the initial blasts little children were still crouching, their faces pinched and hands clenched with fear, behind the gravestones.

By now all eyes were fastened on the figure of a man running towards the perimeter of the cemetery clutching a gun, with hundreds of young men closing in on him from all directions. You could feel the mood of the mourners change within minutes from one of shock and bewilderment to outrage and anger. From across the cemetery cries of 'get the bastard' swelled into a chorus of 'kill him, kill him'. Nobody standing amid the devastation the gunman had wreaked, not even pressmen, could have disagreed with this sentiment.

CASUAL

Moving down the sloping cemetery towards the motorway, a good way behind the young men leading the chase, it was like watching a slow motion video. The anonymous intruder was making halting progress towards the path leading out of the cemetery, with an almost casual disregard for his pursuers. As he walked and ran he turned and lobbed more grenades, reloaded his gun and opened fire indiscriminately, occasionally taunting the youth behind him.

Later, people from the media said they found it hard to comprehend the courage of those young men who risked their lives on that half-mile chase though the cemetery. They forget that those same people have spent every day and every year of their lives defying the armed might of the British state in the struggle for Irish freedom. They were not going to be cowed by a lone Loyalist gunman who came to defile their dead and send more of the living to the grave.

The pockets of his blue anorak were stuffed with grenades, guns and ammunition. He had more grenades stashed at the corner of the fence, at the entrance to the path leading to the motorway. He had been told that there would be no Army or police presence at the funeral. He knew that he was armed to the teeth against unarmed and defenceless mourners. He reckoned that nobody would have the nerve to give chase. That was his mistake.

QUARRY

Bullets and grenades were never going to be enough to save him. Three young men were killed trying to stop him, and others were injured running into exploding grenades as they closed in on their quarry. But none of this deterred the rest. Young boys blockaded the motorway to prevent him hijacking a vehicle, while the rest pursued him along the M1. His flight ended when his gun jammed and people jumped him. A huge cheer went up, and in the cemetery crowds of youth began chanting 'I-I-IRA'. After being given a going-over, the man was bundled into a car and driven off, before being taken into custody when the drivers were challenged at a police road-block.

The hundreds of youths who had joined the chase were coming back. Some were saying 'We stiffed him,' others said 'We danced on his head.' The faces of some of the younger boys were streaked with tears, sweat and dirt. They had caught their man, but they had seen their friends cut down in front of their eyes. Suddenly panic surged through the crowd, as everybody started running back up the cemetery, weaving their way through the gravestones. It was a false alarm, the police were nowhere to be seen.

Back near the republican plot, 20 yards from where the first grenade landed, people were still dazed. Many of the injured had already been taken to hospital in funeral cars, taxis and private cars. Ambulances were just arriving. This part of the cemetery resembled a battlefield; the ground between the graves had turned to mud; there were shallow blackened craters where the grenades had landed; young boys bleeding from shrapnel wounds in the legs, stomach and back waited patiently to be attended to; some were in a state of hysteria, shaking uncontrollably, not knowing where they were or what had happened.

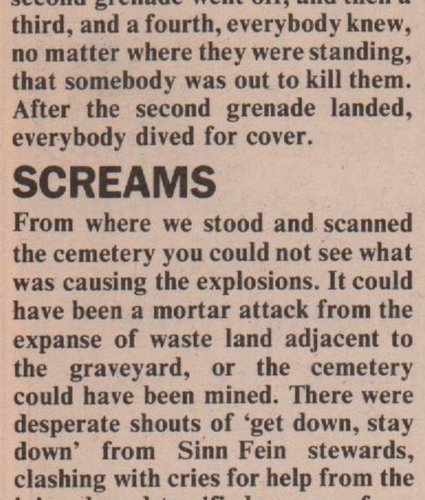
One thing was clear to everybody — whoever the attacker was, he had acted on a tip-off. It was the first republican funeral in five years which had not been hemmed in and harassed by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the British Army. Nobody would have believed it if you had told them the night before, when soldiers and police were swarming outside the houses of the three dead volunteers, that there would be no presence at the funerals the following day. The last thing we expected as we drove into Belfast from Derry that morning, past Army roadblocks and RUC check-points, was that we would not see one single military uniform throughout the four-hour journey to Milltown cemetery. The two British Army helicopters overhead were all they sent. It had been a set-up, people said, it was as simple as that.

If the press thought that Wednesday's massacre would frighten people away from Thursday's funeral of Kevin McCracken, shot dead by the British Army on Monday, they were wrong. The spirit of defiance which has sustained the nationalist community through nearly 19 years of British bloodshed and violence was on display the next day. Mourners turned out in their thousands to pay tribute to the fallen IRA volunteer. The mood was sombre but determined as the funeral cortege snaked its way from the McCracken home in Norglen Parade, Turf Lodge, down the winding route to Milltown cemetery.

TENSION

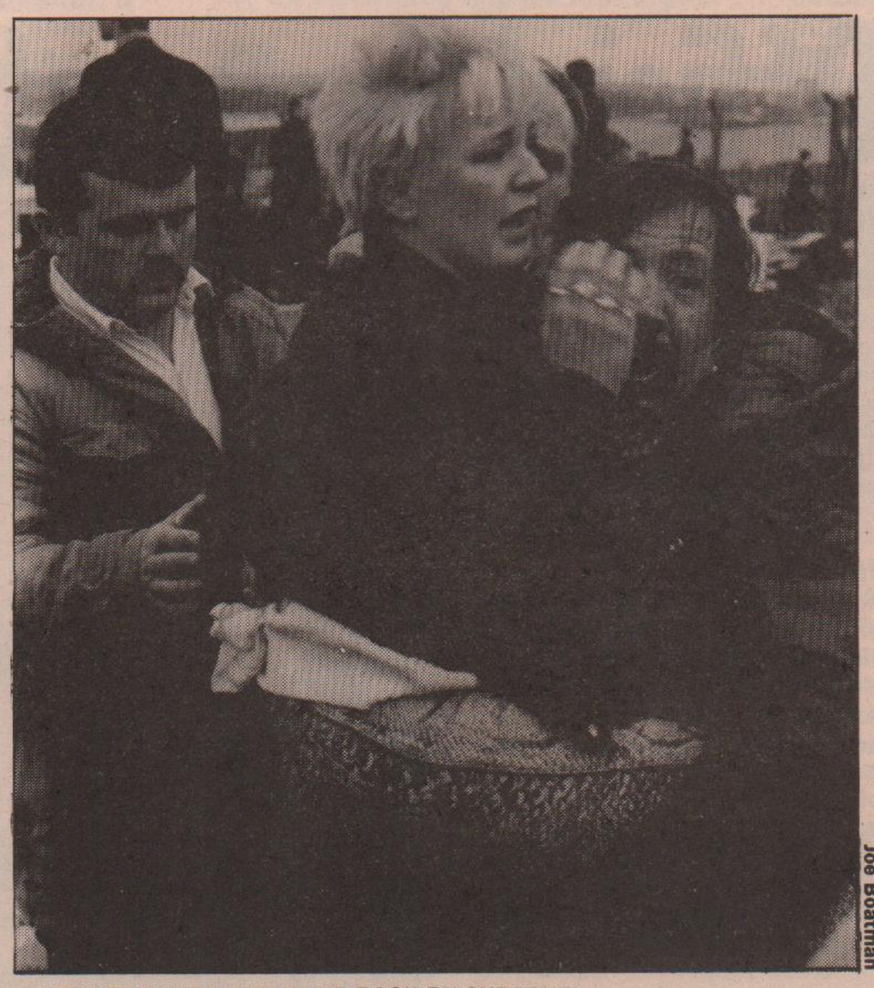
Sinn Fein stewards were everywhere, searching pressmen and scouring the streets. They took up positions all around the cemetery, and told people to be vigilant. Nobody needed telling. As the ceremony started the crowds of mourners fidgeted, looking over their shoulders towards the motorway. The atmosphere was tense. Everybody stayed to the end this time, but everybody was glad to leave the cemetery gates behind them. But they'd be back — they had another republican funeral to go to on Saturday — and they wouldn't ever forget what happened on Wednesday.

That morning as we drove into Turf Lodge eight-year old Deirdre had asked 'When will they take the black flags down daddy?' 'Good question,' came the reply. 'The way things are going they'll be up permanently.' They'll come down for good when the red, white and blue flag is permanently removed from Irish soil.



Phil Murphy

SHOCKED AND BLEEDING



Joe Boatman

A YOUNG WOMAN HIT IN THE BACK BY SHRAPNEL

The murder of three republican mourners last week was the latest act in a long-running campaign of sectarian violence by Loyalist supporters of British rule.

LOYALIST MURDERS IN BELFAST

MADE IN BRITAIN

THE BRITISH MEDIA were at pains to emphasise that Michael Stone, the Loyalist gunman who murdered three mourners and injured many more at a Belfast funeral last Wednesday, was a crazed loner. They pointed out that Stone had an unhappy childhood, developed psychopathic tendencies, and became such a maniac that he was even turned away by the Ulster Defence Association.

Crazy or not, Stone was far from alone. His attack fits into the long-established pattern of Loyalist paramilitary violence against the Catholic nationalist community in Northern Ireland. The first killing in 'the troubles' came three years before the conflict proper erupted. It was carried out by the Ulster Volunteer Force, which gunned down four young Catholics in Belfast. Eighteen-year old Peter Ward was shot dead. Around 600 Catholics, the vast majority of them ordinary civilians, have since been killed by the Loyalists.

Members of the British forces in Ireland have often been complicit in Loyalist assassinations.

Usually this cooperation is informal. Individual Loyalists who serve as members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary or Ulster Defence Regiment may double as gunmen or gun-runners for paramilitary organisations like the UVF or UDA when off duty. Last February, an Ulster Defence Association gang raided an Ulster Defence Regiment barracks at Coleraine and escaped with 170 guns. Two serving UDR officers were charged with complicity in the raid; both admitted to being members of the UDA. Off-duty members of the British forces are not above launching Stone-style attacks of their own. Last May, an RUC man raked a chip shop with gunfire in the nationalist town of Castlewellan, County Down.

COLLUSION

On other occasions the British forces are more formally involved with the Loyalist groups. In 1984, for example, former British military intelligence officer Fred Holroyd revealed how MI5 agents worked alongside Loyalists in organising attacks on Catholic targets. These included the car-bombing of Dublin in 1974, which killed 25 civilians (the largest number of casualties from any incident in the war), and the machine-gunning of the Miami Showband in County Armagh in 1975.

Michael Stone's assault on the republican funeral last week also raised questions about collusion. On Wednesday morning, people in West Belfast still did not know whether or not the Army and RUC would come out in force to surround the funeral of the three IRA members killed in Gibraltar. Stone, however, was evidently confident that he would be able to gain easy access to the graveside and throw grenades around, which suggests he knew something about police plans that the mourners didn't. One of the guns he used, which was recovered by republicans, was a Ruger pistol, issued as standard to the RUC.

SECTARIANISM

The killings committed by Stone were later claimed by the Protestant Action Force, which said that it had supplied his arsenal. The PAF was prominent in Armagh in the early eighties. It was responsible, among other atrocities, for the murder of Catholic civilian Adrian Carroll in Armagh City in 1983. Carroll was deaf; he could not hear the gunman who sneaked up and shot him in the back of the head at point-blank range. The Protestant Action Force killer turned out to be a member of the Ulster Defence Regiment, who had been spirited away from the murder scene by other members of his UDR patrol.

Whether or not any particular Loyalist attack involves the British forces of occupation, the entire sectarian campaign is a consequence of British rule in Northern Ireland.

Britain divided Ireland and created the 'province of Ulster' in 1921, manufacturing an inbuilt Protestant 'majority'. Protestants in Northern Ireland have been guaranteed privileged access to jobs, housing and power. In return, they have acted as loyal defenders of British rule over the Catholic nationalist community. During the last 15 years or so, the British authorities have made some cosmetic attempts to cover up the continuing system of anti-Catholic discrimination in Northern Ireland. But they cannot disguise the fact that Catholics are still about three times as likely to be unemployed as Protestants. These privileges, though often marginal in material terms, have created a social division between first class Protestant citizens and second class Catholics. This ensures Loyalist support for Crown rule and hostility to the oppressed nationalists.

INDISCRIMINATE

The Loyalist paramilitaries are simply the most militant defenders of Protestant privilege. Loyalists rely on the British state for their status, and view all Catholics as the enemies of the state. Their sectarian attacks are directed indiscriminately at members of the nationalist community, regardless of whether or not their victims have republican connections. Last week, a group which is trying to assume leadership of the Ulster Defence Association announced that it wanted to be more selective, and to target known republicans. This idea was immediately rejected by a spokesman for the Ulster Freedom Fighters, the name under which the UDA commits its worst murders. The UFF confirmed that they would continue killing Catholic civilians, and expressed sympathy with Stone's actions. They then admitted killing a Catholic in Belfast last Monday.

The British authorities make half-hearted condemnations of Loyalist sectarianism. But in reality they accept it as a necessary part of the British set-up in Northern Ireland. Indeed, Loyalist violence serves a useful purpose for the British government. It terrorises the nationalists. It also distracts attention from the real cause of the conflict, and allows the British authorities to claim that the Irish War is just an irrational, religious conflict between fanatics whom the Crown forces are trying to keep apart.

In typical fashion, the British media responded to Stone's attack with dire warnings about 'Catholic retaliation' and 'another round of tit-for-tat killings'. This is designed to disguise the big difference between the use of force by Loyalists and by republicans in Northern Ireland. The Loyalists carry out sectarian attacks on civilians because they hate all Catholics.

The IRA, on the other hand, concentrates its attacks on the British forces of occupation because it identifies its enemy as the British state.

The republican movement has always distanced itself from suggestions of religious sectarianism against Protestants. Most people killed by the IRA *are* Protestants — but that is because more than 90 per cent of Ulster Defence Regiment and Royal Ulster Constabulary members come from the Loyalist community. These soldiers and policemen are shot as agents of the British state, not as followers of the Protestant religion. Instances of Catholic sectarianism against ordinary Protestant people are extremely rare, and almost always retaliatory.

British rule in Ireland was behind Michael Stone's murderous foray into Milltown cemetery, just as surely as it was behind the SAS assassination of three IRA members in Gibraltar. 'I am a Loyalist' Margaret Thatcher assured everybody after she signed the Anglo-Irish agreement in November 1985. It was an admission that the British government is on the same side as a murderer like Stone in the Irish War.



'I am a Loyalist' — Margaret Thatcher, November 1985

'Some people are just more Loyal than others' — Michael Stone's neighbour last week

Official terror at Irish funerals

It was no surprise that the arrival of two British soldiers in the middle of a republican funeral on Saturday should cause such bitterness. The British forces in Ireland have attacked mourners on many similar occasions in recent years. Their campaign of harassing funerals gave Loyalist gunman Michael Stone a licence to commit slaughter in Milltown cemetery last Wednesday.

The policy of heavy policing at republican funerals was initiated at the end of 1983. On 4 December IRA volunteers Brian Campbell and Colm McGirr were shot dead in an SAS ambush. Television pictures of the funeral showed their coffins being carried by masked and uniformed IRA men, followed by a large crowd of mourners, just yards from the Royal Ulster Constabulary fortress in Coalisland, County Tyrone. This embarrassing display of republican support and police impotence seemed to decide the authorities in favour of a hardline approach.

Since then, the RUC and the Army have attacked around 30 Irish funerals. They have opened fire on mourners with plastic bullets, as at the funeral of IRA volunteers Eddie McSheffrey and Paddy Deery in Derry last year. They have trained guns on mourners at private funerals, like that of 61-year old republican veteran James 'Spotter' Murphy in 1986. They have baton-charged crowds at many other republican funerals, charged mourners with armoured cars, threatened to hijack hearses, tried to hijack coffins. Last April the family and supporters of IRA volunteer Larry Marley fought street-battles with the RUC for three days before they were able to get his coffin through the police ranks and bury him. Finally, earlier this month, the Army used massive Chinook military helicopters to ferry in forces to attack the funeral of IRA volunteer Brendan Burns in Crossmaglen, South Armagh.

When the British forces decided to withdraw from last Wednesday's funerals of IRA volunteers Mairead Farrell, Daniel McCann and Sean Savage, Michael Stone took his guns and grenades and moved in to replace them. He took his lead from the systematic violence which the Army and the RUC have inflicted on Irish mourners in recent years.

On Monday, Northern Ireland secretary Tom King told the Commons that the policing of republican funerals was 'under review' after the killing of two soldiers on Saturday. This may well mean a return to large-scale confrontations between the RUC and republicans around coffins. For nationalists, it is hardly a welcome alternative to Michael Stone.



Jim Collins

BRITISH FORCES OPEN FIRE AT A DERRY FUNERAL

the next step

Revolutionary Communist Party weekly No 12 Editor: Mick Hume

THE FURY OF THE OPPRESSED

CONTRARY to recent reports in the British press, the Irish do not suffer from blood-lust. The people of West Belfast are not psychopaths. They do not *want* to smash car windows with their bare hands, dodge a bullet fired by the occupants, pull them from their vehicle, beat them and shoot them. But they will do it, because of all that has been inflicted on them by the British forces of occupation, of which those two soldiers killed on Saturday were a part. If the media want to report a truly grisly glorification of death, they need look no further than the leaflets currently being handed out to Irish nationalists by British Marines in Newry, which depict two dead local republicans as meat hooked up in a butcher's shop run by the SAS.

Tory MPs and British reporters have branded the nationalists involved in Saturday's funeral confrontation as 'the scum of the Earth' among other things, and compared them unfavourably with hate figures from Adolf Hitler to Idi Amin. This fever-pitch exercise in playing on British people's emotions is designed to disguise the reasons why the Belfast mourners reacted as they did.

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It was an outpouring of the fury of the oppressed. It was a moment when people who live under military rule and are denied democratic rights lashed out against the representatives of those responsible for their plight. It was an explosion of the same anger which leads black youth in South Africa's townships to 'necklace' collaborators with blazing tyres, or provokes Palestinians to take similar measures in the Occupied Territories. These oppressed peoples around the world seem to suffer from the same 'blood-lust' and 'lynch-mob mentality' which British commentators claimed was on display in Belfast on Saturday. In reality it is an expression of their burning antagonism towards their oppressors, which drives them to face up to military might armed with little more than their anger, as the young republicans did who chased the Loyalist gun-and-grenade attacker out of Milltown cemetery last Wednesday.

The hysteria which has been whipped up around Saturday's killings reflects the fear which the British authorities feel when confronted by the fury of the oppressed, and particularly the fury of Irish nationalists. Such an attack on the British armed forces is an affront to the state institutions on which the authority of the ruling class rests throughout the 'United Kingdom'.

The state machine is the most precious and powerful instrument which the British establishment possesses. Popular acceptance of the sovereignty of the state is the precondition for the smooth running of capitalist society. The British establishment has had considerable success in selling people the idea that the state exists to serve us all, and in persuading them to submit to its law. Except, that is, within Ireland.

●

Thousands of nationalist people trapped within the colonial hell-hole of Northern Ireland do not recognise the sovereignty of the British state, nor do they respect its laws. They want their nation to be united and free from British diktat. They refuse to be bullied or bought by the foreign authorities. Last week, for example, the Royal Ulster Constabulary promised not to harass the funerals of the three IRA members shot dead in Gibraltar, if their families would make public statements swearing that there would be no 'paramilitary displays'. The families would not make such a declaration. They knew that the IRA would not attempt any show of armed strength at their funerals, having already fired its traditional salute to its fallen volunteers. Yet the bereaved refused, on principle, to make any public gesture of submission to the will of the British government and its police force.

This attitude among Irish nationalists terrifies the British authorities. It undermines the legitimacy of their parliament, their police, their laws. It leaves them with the dangerous resort to armed force as the only way to remain in control. This is the path every British government has pursued in Northern Ireland since 1969, when Labour sent in the troops. They have sought to conceal the extent of the threat they face there, by telling people in Britain that the Irish conflict is caused by a handful of hardened 'terrorists'. But a televised clash such as happened on Saturday forces the authorities to face the truth; that the power of their oppressive state in Northern Ireland is being challenged by a popular revolt.

On Monday, the *Guardian* caught the mood of horror which this reminder of Irish realities has created in Britain's ruling circles: 'That most people who joined the pursuit must have been ordinary Belfast people, not the trained paramilitary killers of earlier atrocities, makes these events especially chilling.' A chill runs down the British establishment's spine at the thought of 'ordinary Belfast people', or ordinary people from anywhere else in the 'UK', beating its soldiers in the street and trying to secede from the jurisdiction of its state.

This is why there has been such a panic this week about the idea of 'no-go' areas for the British forces in Northern Ireland, about the fact that the soldiers' bodies lay out of reach in 'republican West Belfast' for some time, about the way in which Sinn Fein stewards have taken control of the streets during recent funerals. The state must rule, and be seen to rule, throughout its jurisdiction, or risk suffering irreparable damage to all of its structures and its reputation.

●

The fear which Saturday's killings struck into the heart of the British establishment is behind the rash of demands for a new crackdown on Irish republicans. No doubt the Tories will bring out the SAS again before long to try to reassert their authority. But they are unlikely to bow to the demands for a ban on Sinn Fein. Such a move would achieve nothing, and would only serve further to expose the myth of British law and order in the North of Ireland. You cannot ban the fury of the oppressed with paper acts of parliament.

No doubt many people in Britain will have gone along with the official condemnations of the killing of the soldiers. Pictures of blood-stained bodies are always a powerful pull on people's emotions. But we should take a step back from the immediacy of events, and place Saturday in the wider context of a war which has been raging in Ireland for almost 19 years — a war in which the British forces are the aggressors rather than the victims. Anybody who seriously wants to end it should work to remove the cause of Irish fury — their oppression by the British state — so that they can exercise their right to national self-determination.

We should also, however, place the debate about Ireland in the wider context of British politics. The fact that the Tories and other champions of reaction over here are so scathing about Irish nationalists should raise suspicions about where the true interests of ordinary British people lie in the Irish War. Why should we find ourselves on the same side over Ireland as the very forces which we have to fight against to defend our own rights and living standards every day? How can Thatcher be a ruthless executor of capitalist interests on this side of the Irish Sea, yet become a peace-loving democrat on the other?

●

The British working class has far more in common with the 'ordinary Belfast people' of Andersonstown that it could ever have with their enemies in the British establishment. The state whose authority is on the line in the Irish War is the same body which leads the Tory offensive against our class in Britain. Our interests in the Irish War lie with those struggling against the capitalist state which dominates us all. We should not allow the graphic pictures or 'mob murder' headlines to blind us to that fact.

It is one of the great tragedies of British working class politics that a force which could be among our best allies, the Irish liberation movement, is widely seen as our worst enemy. While this remains the case, the fury of the oppressed will be a big, but containable, problem for the British ruling class. Our job is to change this state of affairs, by making state violence against Irish nationalists a cause of fury among the ordinary people of British cities. Take sides in the Irish War; there will never be a more important time to do it.

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Pandora Anderson

IT WILL BE STEVE FOREY'S LAST STOP IF MANAGEMENT HAS ITS WAY

KING'S CROSS ACTIVIST SACKED

VICTIMISED

Aslef activist Steve Forey spoke to Andrew Calcutt about getting the sack and his campaign for reinstatement

'The charge was that I was seen distributing copies of *On the Line,* the Aslef King's Cross branch newsletter. The disciplinary hearing was a farce, and I said so. We were in there for three hours, but from the outset it was clear that the area manager was under instructions to sack me. At 7.30 on Wednesday evening, that's exactly what he did.'

Forey was alleged to have distributed literature calling on train drivers to take solidarity action with striking health workers. This would have been 'beyond the sphere of legitimate union activity', under the terms of Tory anti-union legislation. But the planned one-day strike never happened. Management applied for a court injunction against six Aslef branch committee members, including Forey, and forced them to withdraw the strike call. They picked on Forey, as the activist with the most militant record. His sacking was a warning to every activist on the railways.

All six branch committee members are still under threat from the courts. A letter from management to every King's Cross worker stated that 'anyone foolish enough to go on strike' with the health workers would face the sack. Managers removed copies of *On the Line* from drivers' pigeonholes, and told platform staff they would be sacked if caught reading it. Someone broke into the King's Cross union office and stole computerised records including lists of activists.

On the day of Forey's hearing, scores of police swamped the station.

'They rarely come on to British Rail property. The railway police usually handle everything. But the Met were there in force that day. They were lining the staircase to the manager's office, and I had to wade my way through them after hearing the verdict. And since we began a campaign to reverse the decision, we have clear evidence of phone-tapping.'

This intimidation campaign is scaring the pants off the Aslef leadership. 'To apply for an industrial tribunal, I must submit a letter signed by a "responsible" officer of my union stating that I was sacked for carrying out trade union activity, and I must have it within seven days of dismissal. So far, the executive officers of Aslef are refusing even to sign that letter.

'Our branch feels under siege. At the emergency meeting immediately after my hearing, a number of people wanted to walk out there and then. But six officers were already under court injunctions, and we didn't want to set ourselves up. Tactically the best option is to build a campaign in the depot and explain the issues to people — explain that if management get away with this they'll be able to walk all over everyone when the new rule book comes into effect in June. And protect those threatened by the law by having a ballot for a legal strike. That is what we are doing now, with open meetings for all railworkers, and pre-ballot meetings to let people know what it's about.'

As we go to press, the ballot result has yet to be announced. But offers of solidarity action have already arrived.

'The response has been tremendous, from National Union of Railwaymen branches as well as Aslef. Some branches have said, "We'll be out with you when you get your result." Others have said, "Put half a picket line on our place, and we'll join you." There are plenty of people who recognise the seriousness of the issue.'

Forey sees British Rail's intimidation tactics, and railworkers' defiant response, as evidence that the gloves are off in workplaces today. 'People are thinking that there must be a possibility of fighting back, and management are setting out to challenge that. In most industries, there is a real to and fro going on. This is one tussle that I think we can win.'

HEALTH WORKERS NEED...

UNITED ALL-OUT ACTION

A united campaign of all-out action by one million health workers, focused on the issues of pay and working conditions which every hospital worker has a stake in improving, could force the Tories to give way. This week's conference of health union delegates must work out how to build such a campaign before it is too late.

We have had a series of desultory days of action, a parade of public relations exercises and a succession of national rallies. All of these protests have been organised under the control of the trade union leaders, not to put pressure on the government, but to appeal to middle class sympathy. The trade union chiefs have studiously avoided making the issues of pay and conditions the focus of their campaign, preferring to emphasise requests for funds to make the NHS more 'efficient'. They have sought to restrain any outbreaks of militancy by angry health workers, so as not to alienate middle class public opinion.

By elevating the issue of underfunding and tailoring their campaign to suit the prejudices of the middle classes, the union leaders might have held on to mainstream support. But they have made no impact on the government. The only people they have hurt are their own members, who have become increasingly divided and demoralised as the ineffectual protests drag on. The image of nurses huddling under umbrellas outside the house of commons, straining to hear the budget debate on their transistor radio, sums up the way in which health workers have been excluded from playing a direct role in the action. After the budget it should be clear that there is no point pleading with the Tories to have a heart. This week Thatcher will receive the recommendations of the pay review body, which are guaranteed to exacerbate divisions among workers across the health service.

PRIORITIES

We urgently need a campaign that prioritises the concerns of every worker in every hospital, so that we can involve those who have so far been left out on a limb — especially ancillary workers and nursing auxiliaries. These people have no interest in supporting calls for government investment in 'efficiency drives' which mean harder work for them. Nor is there anything for them in a campaign that emphasises only the angelic efforts of top nursing staff. What every health worker needs is a wage rise and an improvement in working conditions. These demands are the obvious focus for building a united campaign. The way ahead in the health service dispute lies through fighting for all-out action — with emergency cover under health workers' control — in support of health workers' own demands on pay and conditions.

This means taking control of the struggle out of the hands of the union leaders who have done so much thus far to undermine it. Instead of looking to the TUC, health workers should set about forming their own action committees at rank and file level. These would provide a forum for overcoming longstanding divisions among different groups of hospital staff and for organising unified effective action. Local committees would be the nucleus for building a national campaign of hard-hitting action to make the Tories deliver on our demands.



Pandora Anderson

LABOUR COUNCIL AGAINST HOMOSEXUALS

Gay teacher faces sack

Gay teacher Austin Allen may lose his job in Bradford because he refuses to deny that he is gay. His suspension shows that Labour councils are implementing the terms of the anti-homosexual Clause in the Tory Local Government Bill, before it has even reached the statute books.

Two weeks ago the Bradford *Telegraph & Argus* printed an interview with Allen, in which he said he would not lie to kids about homosexuality. Bradford education authority suspended him, and told him that his contract as a supply teacher at Grange upper school would not be renewed at the end of term. Allen was compulsorily transferred to Grange school in December, after telling students at Eccleshill upper school that he was gay. Last time he got off with a warning. Now he faces the sack.

The education authority hounding Allen is run by a Labour council.

Labour's equal opportunities chair John Ryan insists that Allen was not removed because he is gay. But assistant education director Nils Purser was speaking with the full authority of the Labour council when he said that 'Allen's statements that he has responded to students' questions about homosexuality must affect public confidence in his professional capacity.' Labour's policy is that it is okay to be gay, as long as you stay in the closet.

Bradford council has sacked gay teachers before. What's new about the Allen victimisation is the brazen way in which it was carried out. Only last December, Allen's compulsory transfer from Eccleshill was hushed up. But this time the council was keen to advertise its victimisation policy. The *Yorkshire Evening Post* endorsed Bradford's action, and called on Leeds city council to sack a Leeds headmaster who was suspended and then reinstated after appearing in court on charges of importuning. There is no doubt that the advent of the Clause has bolstered the bigots' confidence and given more scope for their witch-hunts.

There are obstacles in the bigots' path. At a meeting of Bradford District Labour Party last week, delegates voted unanimously against Allen's sacking. Bradford teachers have voted to strike for half a day to lobby the education authority's next meeting. As we go to press, it seems likely that Allen may be disciplined but not sacked. Labour delegates and local NUT leaders have pointed to the growing atmosphere of vindictiveness against lesbians and gay men. But they are basing their opposition to Allen's sacking on the fact that the education authority did not follow correct disciplinary procedures. Bradford NUT secretary Ian Murch protested that 'there is no evidence that Allen has sought to promote homosexuality.'

Murch's apologetic approach cannot defend lesbian and gay teachers against the charge of 'corrupting the youth'.

The only effective way to take on the bigots is to fight for the right to tell kids it's okay to be gay. Some teachers in West Yorkshire have been doing just that. At branch meetings in Leeds, we have raised motions calling for non-cooperation with the Clause, and got them passed. Now we must go into schools and involve a new layer of teachers in the fight for lesbian and gay rights. If we don't, the next time teachers are seen on a demo against the Clause, we might get more than whispers in the staff room and shouts of 'lezzie' as we walk down the school corridors.

Leeds teacher

IN SCOTLAND

THE POLL TAX IS COMING

Next week squads of snoopers will be knocking on your door if you live in Scotland, to enforce registration for the poll tax. Carol Taggart explains below what we are up against and how we can organise resistance

Are you a 'responsible person'? Under poll tax legislation each household must appoint a 'responsible person' who is legally bound to provide information on all members of the house in which he or she resides. The law defines a 'responsible person' as the occupier, whether the premises are occupied by an owner or a tenant. If he or she fails to provide the information by the specified date or if he or she gives false information, the authorities will impose a civil penalty of £50. If these offences are repeated the penalty will be £200.

BOUNTY-HUNTERS

Teams of canvassers will make doorstep deliveries of the forms, followed by a collection visit or interview. A letter from the Community Charges (Poll Tax) Registration Office of Strathclyde regional council is inviting applications from council employees to take part in the canvassing operation. The letter informs prospective canvassers that 'no set hours of work are allocated', but that work must be completed within a set timetable. It advises that the best results will be obtained from 5pm to 9pm and at weekends, and payment will be 40p for each completed call. Local newspapers have carried adverts for canvassers and anybody can walk into the Assessors Office in Cochrane Street, Glasgow, to fill in an application form.

The Scottish Labour Party conference at Perth a fortnight ago pledged to repeal the poll tax when Labour returns to government. But where Labour is already in power in places like Strathclyde, it is setting up the machinery to implement the poll tax. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities noted in a press release in February that 'local government officers in Scotland are actively engaged in implementing the processes and procedures required as a result of this legislation.'

By recruiting bounty-hunters to collect completed registration forms at 40p a time, Labour has surrendered any opposition to the poll tax.

The Labour Party says it is keeping open the option of non-payment. But Labour officials in local government have already closed it. John Maxton MP has pledged to resign as local authority spokesman if Labour votes for non-payment. Lothian regional councillor Eric Milligan has pointed out that 'a successful non-payment campaign will necessitate action by the local council to compel payment.' If individuals refuse to pay, Labour councils will fine them. If the fines are unpaid, the sheriff's office will take further action against the refusenik, including warrant sales and deductions from income.

The majority of Scottish people oppose the poll tax, and up to a million presently favour non-payment. The Labour Party fears that their anger could well be channelled against local councils with responsibility for collecting the poll tax. Scottish MP Brian Wilson explained that Labour set up the Stop It campaign to prevent this happening:

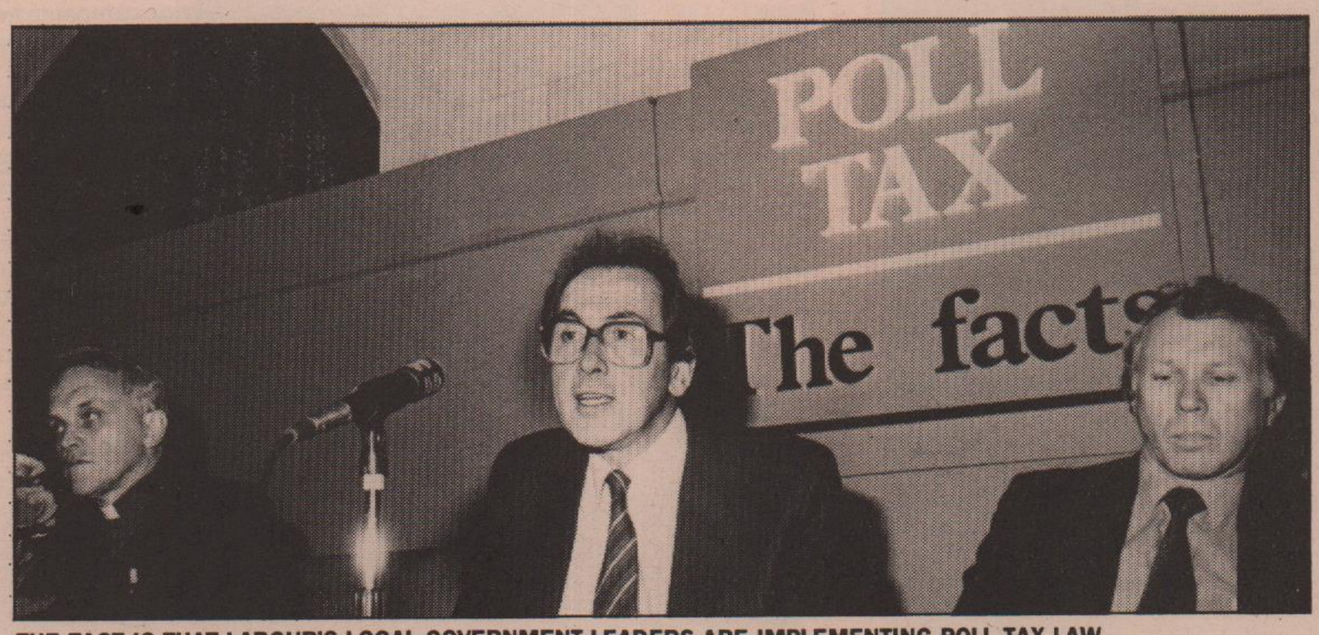
'There is a very narrow difference in public perception between the government which introduces the legislation and the local authority which implements it. And it seemed to me to be a matter of greatest urgency to our party that we should be distancing ourselves a great deal more from the legislation...because otherwise, and by the time of the district elections, the poll tax will be rebounding not against the Tories but against the Labour local authorities.'

The Stop It campaign is a cynical exercise to cover up for Labour's complicity in implementing the Tory tax. It is designed to put up a show of resistance, without breaking the law. Hence the campaign advises people to write to the authorities questioning whether they should be the 'responsible person', and requesting further clarification. It stipulates that people should *not* refuse to fill in the form because this could result in a penalty of £250. It is ironic that Labour is advising people to obstruct the registration process, at the same time as it prepares to impose penalties for poll tax evasion.

When poll tax snoopers start knocking on doors next week they will get a hard time from local people who have already had enough and who are not prepared to take any more.

Bin lids will be banged and whistles blown to warn of their arrival. Some people will refuse to open their doors to the bounty-hunters, others will chase them out of the area. They will not be made to feel welcome.

A party which claims a mandate to rule in Scotland, but which cannot direct the anger of ordinary people into a collective campaign of resistance to the poll tax, has no right to lead the working class. It's up to us to smash the poll tax by getting together to work out a plan of action that can unite council workers and community activists against the bounty-hunters and their Labour bosses.



THE FACT IS THAT LABOUR'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERS ARE IMPLEMENTING POLL TAX LAW

HOW TO BEAT IT

UNITED ACTION by council workers who are being told to implement the community charge and working class people who are expected to pay it is the only way to beat the poll tax.

• ACTION STARTS NOW

Building a campaign of non-implementation does not mean waiting until the tax is about to be levied before we do anything. We must use the registration process to start building opposition to implementation now.

• COLLECTIVE RESISTANCE

Many people will express their anger by burning their registration form, or by filling it in incorrectly. But it would be far more effective if people who want to fight the poll tax got together in their own areas to agree on a collective response to registration and to discuss how to build a non-implementation campaign. If we act together we can maximise our impact.

• BREAK THE TORY LAW

A commitment to defy Tory legislation and defend those victimised for non-implementation or non-payment must be the starting point of opposition to the poll tax.

• A UNITED CAMPAIGN

The campaign must be built around united action by council workers, community groups, women working in the home and the unemployed.

• NON-COOPERATION

Council workers drafted in to process poll tax registration should refuse to cooperate. We should demand their redeployment into departments which are understaffed and overworked. All victimisations should be vigorously fought.

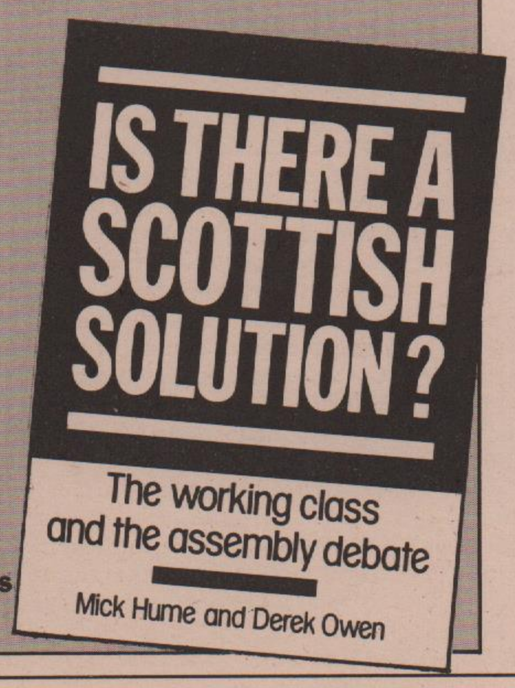
• DEALING WITH SNOOPERS

Council workers should release information about when snoopers are going to hit certain areas so that local anti-poll tax groups can organise against them. There are many ways in which we can keep them from coming back. We should be clear that people who accept the blood-money of 40p for every filled-in registration form are making a conscious decision to scab on the working class. They should be treated accordingly.

All those who want to build an effective campaign against the poll tax should get in touch with the Smash the Poll Tax Campaign, which is organising along the lines suggested here. We are holding regular meetings involving council workers and local people, and organising door-to-door work on the streets and housing schemes. Get in touch by writing to the Smash the Poll Tax Campaign, PH8, 340 West Princes Street, Glasgow.

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FORD'S DUNDEE

NEW LOW FOR NEW REALISM


AEU CHIEF GAVIN LAIRD

THE inter-union squabbling over Ford's decision to abandon plans for a new site in Dundee reveals the bankruptcy of the New Realism which has overtaken the official labour movement.

Ford established a single-union deal with the Amalgamated Engineering Union last October. Before the Dundee plant had been built, union leaders Gavin Laird and Jimmy Airlie had signed away the right to strike and agreed rates of pay 50 per cent below those in other UK plants, in return for the union dues of a few hundred new members that would come with recognition.

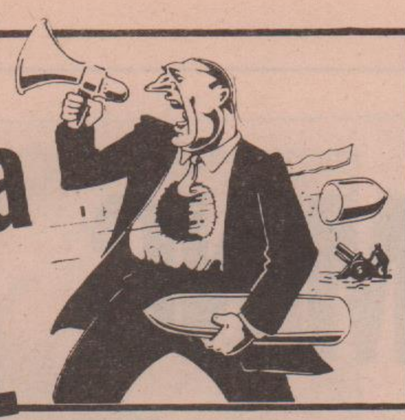
When the deal was made public other Ford unions were up in arms. Their gripe was not against the principle of sweetheart deals, but against the fact that recognition went to the AEU rather than to them. 'Why the engineers,' complained transport union official Bill Morris, 'when we are the union with the largest number of members in Ford UK plants?' The TGWU does not object to the AEU surrendering its members' rights for the sake of a few quid in the union coffers and a few seats around a negotiating table. On the contrary, it wishes that it could be so lucky.

Now that Ford has used the row over recognition as a pretext to ditch its Dundee plans, the TUC has intervened to act as a broker between the employers and the unions. At a meeting on Monday motor union chiefs met with leaders of the TUC and the Scottish congress. The TUC voted to accept the AEU deal in a shabby attempt to entice the company back to Dundee. It is prepared to ditch longstanding agreements at the employers' whim.

The Ford fiasco reveals the new low to which New Realism has brought the official labour movement. The union leaders have gone further than ever before in prostituting the labour movement before an employer. It is ironic that their subservience and petty squabbling has allowed the same corporation to brand them as trouble-makers who have thrown away the promise of jobs for their members.

Joe Hall

the propaganda war 1



LITTLE BOY LABOUR

NORMAN TEBBIT has accused Neil Kinnock of being 'a boy trying to do a man's job'. Some might say that this is rich coming from Tebbit, who is surely the prime example of a lower life-form trying to act like a more advanced species. Nevertheless, the former Tory Party chairman does have half a point. Neil Kinnock is behaving like a little boy; not a boy who pretends to be a man, but one who is looking for a mother or a father whose legs he can hide behind when bullies like Tebbit start pushing him around. Some recent political debates illustrate the point.

Before Christmas, the Tories introduced Clause 27 (subsequently to become Clause 28 and then Clause 29) of the Local Government Bill, which seeks to ban the 'promotion of homosexuality' by local authorities. Confronted with this, without notice, in parliament, the Labour leadership panicked. It had no idea how the big boys in British society — the bishops, the press barons and so on — would react to the Clause. So Kinnock's team accepted it. It was only later, when churchmen and actors and other public figures criticised the Clause, that Labour felt it safe to do the same. Even so, Kinnock was scared of getting out of step with the senior class. He has stuck to accusing the Tories of 'bishop-bashing' in their conflict with certain C of E notables over morality and the Clause. It was left to fading Liberal leader David Steel to point out that the people who were in fact being bashed were homosexuals.

PARANOIA

From January parliamentary conflict centred on the argument over the NHS, supposedly the strongest string to Labour's bow. Even here, however, Kinnock has proved petrified of going it alone. Labour's paranoia about keeping in with public opinion on the health service reached its high-point recently, when it was revealed that the Queen Mother was unhappy about a hospital ward being closed shortly after she had dragged her hat down there to open it. The insecure Labour leadership leapt at the chance to hide behind the apron of 'Britain's favourite granny'. 'The government has ignored us,' bleated Kinnock's aide and health spokesman Robin Cook, 'but perhaps it will listen to the Queen Mother.' This belief that anybody with a big house must be more attractive than you is certainly better suited to a teenager on a first date than to a political party which is supposed to represent the organised working class.

Then came the SAS shootings in Gibraltar. The Tories were all cheering the deaths of three Irish republicans in parliament and, like many a youngster, the Labour leadership was scared of not being invited to the party. So Kinnock encouraged his people to join in the celebrations. No doubt, through the mists of his hangover, he realised he might have gone too far the morning after, when Max 'Hitler' Hastings, editor of the Tory *Daily Telegraph*, attacked the Labour Party for being too right-wing in its response to Gibraltar. When David Owen stepped forward to call for an inquiry into the killings, Kinnock gratefully accepted the lift and echoed the Doctor's request.

Now it's the economy and, specifically, the Lawson v Thatcher debate over the exchange rate of the pound. This is always a tough subject for the adolescent Labour leaders, who have not got an O-level grasp of the issues between them. So Kinnock seized upon the apparent disagreement between the two top Tories. He sided with Lawson, rather as a puny schoolboy might hold his class toughie's coat during a playground scrap, in the hope that some glory might reflect his way if the fight is won. Perhaps this new affinity for Lawson explains why Kinnock was so anxious to distance himself from those Labour MPs who dared to heckle the chancellor during his budget speech.

CHILDLIKE

The bishops, the Queen Mother, David Owen and Nigel Lawson; all of them have been adopted by Labour as its foster parent for the duration of a debate. Each of them, however, has responded to Kinnock's childlike affection by letting it be known that they want him out from under their feet. The Labour leader has been left to brood alone in his bedroom.

Neil Kinnock does not really believe that the elder statesmen whose shadow he walks in are on his side. He is simply terrified of stepping out from behind them, and believes that being seen with such notables is his safest passage to political success. In fact it is the guarantee that he will remain a failure. He is like the boy who thinks that smoking with the older kids is the best way to be big, and only discovers too late that it has stunted his growth.

Politics is not like *Bob Says Opportunity Knocks*; you do not get the biggest score on the clapometer just because you are cute, 15 years old and your school cap is askew. It is a war, against cut-throats like Tebbit. If Kinnock thinks that the Queen Mother's pinny provides sufficient protection, that's his problem. The rest of us are surely grown-up enough not to hide behind him while he is hiding behind the has-beens of the British establishment.

Eddie Veale



TRYING HARD TO BE A PERSONALITY: NEIL KINNOCK

Pandora Anderson

Frank Richards looks at the lessons of the French experience for British workers and argues that conditions for building a new anti-capitalist movement here have never been better

The traditional conflict between left and right in Britain has been superseded by the politics of the middle ground. This is the meaning of the New Realism which has come to dominate the outlook of the official labour movement. The New Realism shuns class politics and celebrates commonsense pragmatism. A less charitable interpretation of events would suggest that the left has even vacated the middle ground, and moved on to the terrain of the right.

Experience has shown that the inescapable consequence of New Realism is the collapse of any effective political opposition to the Tory government or to the capitalist class. Over the past nine months the Tories have become more daring in their attacks on the working class. They have launched a series of campaigns on several fronts, from social security cuts to a shake-out in the civil service. Lawson's 'you are what you earn' budget is just the most recent example of the new ruthlessness of the Thatcher regime (see page 13).

At present the Tories have little to fear.

For some time now they have faced no political opposition. It is a sign of the times that the only source of parliamentary pressure on Thatcher comes from her backbenchers. Labour has failed to put up a credible fight against the new budget. After the budget, the editor of the *Financial Times* commented that Labour's loss of impetus appeared to be permanent: 'Nothing in the response to date suggests, however, that the focus of opposition in Britain is about to shift rapidly from the Tory backbenches to the Labour frontbench.'

SIMILARITIES

The absence of a coherent focus of opposition to the Tories is the most significant feature of contemporary British politics. Without such a focus every movement of resistance is doomed to isolation. More importantly it means that our class has no means of articulating its own interests. The presidential election campaign now going on in France suggests that this is a problem that afflicts workers across the Channel too. It is worth examining the French experience to consider the lessons for workers in Britain.

The French presidential election campaign has striking similarities to events in Britain last June. In the same way that the June 1987 general election here ignored the key issues, so too in France none of the real problems facing the working class figure in the campaign. The French ruling class has succeeded in setting the agenda of political debate. There is no discussion about unemployment, falling living standards and deteriorating social services. Instead the only notable debates in the campaign centre on race and law and order.

In Britain last year, Labour's new-style election campaign meant that in the end the choice was one of personalities. In France the situation is much the same, although arguably it is even worse. There are three main presidential contenders. The two well-known right-wing candidates in the running are Jacques Chirac, prime minister and leader of the Gaullist RPR, and Raymond Barre, leader of the UDF. The third candidate is Francois Mitterrand, the current president and leader of the socialist PSF.

PERSONALITIES

Mitterrand has not yet announced his candidacy, and is striving to project an image of somebody who is above the rough-and-tumble of electoral politics. In his desire to appear as the father of the nation, Mitterrand has steered clear of all controversy. He has even distanced himself from his own party and has assumed the pose of a statesman.

The choice in France is not between candidates of the right and left, but between different personalities.

Mitterrand is under no pressure to adopt a left-wing stance. The French Communist Party, the traditional party of the working class, is facing disintegration. In the early eighties the PCF collaborated closely with the Mitterrand government and was fully complicit in its attacks on the working class. These betrayals had a profoundly demoralising effect on working class voters.

The PCF was the main casualty of this experience. Since the early eighties its electoral base has been steadily eroded. At one time it had the support of more than 20 per cent of the electorate. Today opinion polls suggest that it is down to around five per cent. The PCF's presidential candidate, André Lajoinie, has more or less conceded defeat. He has tried to distinguish himself through repeated denunciations of the far-right Front National.

As things stand it appears that Mitterrand will win the election. But what will this victory mean for the working class?

Mitterrand has made a major contribution to depoliticising the election campaign. To those inclined towards the philosophy of New Realism this is seen as a master-stroke of a political genius. Neil Kinnock must be green with envy. Mitterrand has succeeded where Labour has failed. He has avoided political debate and cut



OUR CLASS NEEDS A VOICE

FRENCH LESSONS FOR BRITAIN

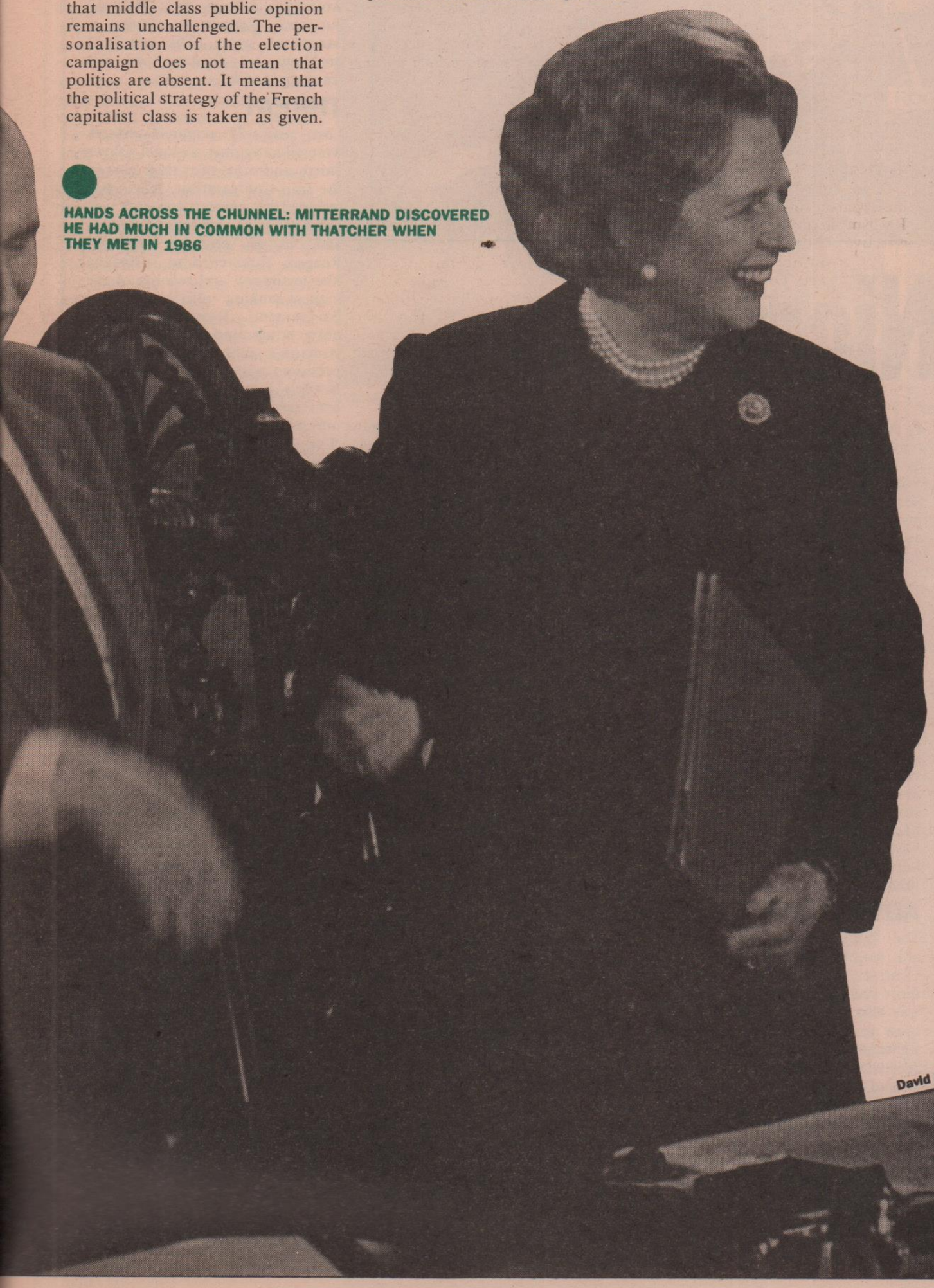
his ties with the working class.

But while Mitterrand is a role model for the Labour Party, he is a danger to the French working class.

By depoliticising the election campaign, Mitterrand has ensured that middle class public opinion remains unchallenged. The personalisation of the election campaign does not mean that politics are absent. It means that the political strategy of the French capitalist class is taken as given.

Since nobody is questioning the bourgeois character of French politics, the election contest amounts to little more than a clash of personalities. Behind this personal confrontation, political consensus prevails. Mitterrand has done as much as Chirac and Barre to uphold this consensus.

The French political consensus excludes any questioning of capitalism. It narrows the terms of political debate to what is acceptable from the point of view of the establishment. The result is the marginalisation of working class interests, and their subordination to the capitalist consensus. There is nothing on offer for workers in this election. All that the parliamentary left can offer is the perpetuation of the status quo, through the re-election of Mitterrand.



HANDS ACROSS THE CHUNNEL: MITTERRAND DISCOVERED HE HAD MUCH IN COMMON WITH THATCHER WHEN THEY MET IN 1986

ILLUSIONS

In one sense the French situation today is worse than that in Britain during the 1987 general election. At least it was possible for many on the left to argue that the election of a Labour government would be a step forward. Of course Kinnock would simply have continued where Thatcher left off. But for many workers, at least Labour held out the illusion of change. French workers are under no such illusion. They know that Mitterrand offers only more of the same.

The absence of an effective working class alternative has boosted the confidence of the French ruling class. The Mitterrand-Chirac regime may not feel as omnipotent as Thatcher, but it feels it can get away with almost anything in the present political climate. The minister of the interior, Charles Pasqua, is presiding over a vicious law and order campaign, involving systematic police harassment of immigrants and youth. The law and order campaign is designed to outflank the Front National. French voters can choose whether to accept Chirac's police repression or Jean-Marie Le Pen's more extreme alternative.

This mirrors developments in Britain, where the focus of opposition to Thatcher is to be found among her own backbenchers, and political debate is reduced to differences of opinion about which right-wing policy option to pursue.

The French situation puts a new perspective on the problems facing workers in Britain. It would be simplistic to suggest that the problems are identical on both sides of the Channel. But it is certainly the case that in Britain, as in France, the left no longer even pretends to offer an alternative to the right. In both countries the working class lacks a movement which can voice its aspirations and interests. In France and Britain the working class does not count as a political entity.

NOVEL

Many people have drawn pessimistic conclusions from their analysis of contemporary conditions. But it would be wrong to portray the situation as merely one of doom and gloom. The collapse of the traditional left exposes a reality which is far from new: the lack of a working class alternative to the capitalist class. The novel development which has come to light in recent months is the traditional left's abandonment of any pretence that it is committed to the independent interests of the working class. Today it is possible to see the old left for what it is — an outdated movement which is entirely subservient to the capitalist class.

In the short term the collapse of the left can only demoralise the working class. Many workers will interpret the demise of the left as a defeat for their class. But in the longer term the absence of a coherent left-wing alternative opens up the possibility of building a new movement. We should recognise that what has been defeated is an alternative that never had anything positive to offer the working class in the first place.

For revolutionaries it is important to distinguish between the exhaustion of the traditional left and the potential of the working class to change the world. Until now, that potential was actively suppressed by the left. Although it would be foolish to think that the left will no longer play this stifling role, it is clear that its capacity to do so has been weakened in recent years. This provides an opening which revolutionaries must learn to exploit. This is the main lesson that we should draw from the French experience.



JEAN-MARIE LE PEN

The new opening offered by history does not provide automatic answers for those who want to destroy the capitalist system. It only provides the conditions for challenging false solutions and projecting a fighting alternative. It demands that revolutionaries develop a perspective which gives those who are ready to fight for our class a political focus.

The problem of demoralisation cannot be solved through argument alone. It can only be tackled by organising those who are prepared to fight.

At present the isolation of working class activists undermines their ability to influence their fellow workers. This is where a revolutionary party makes all the difference. Through organising class fighters the party can guide each individual with the arguments and policies they need to influence others. The party maximises the impact of anti-capitalist forces and through its organisation offers an antidote to demoralisation.

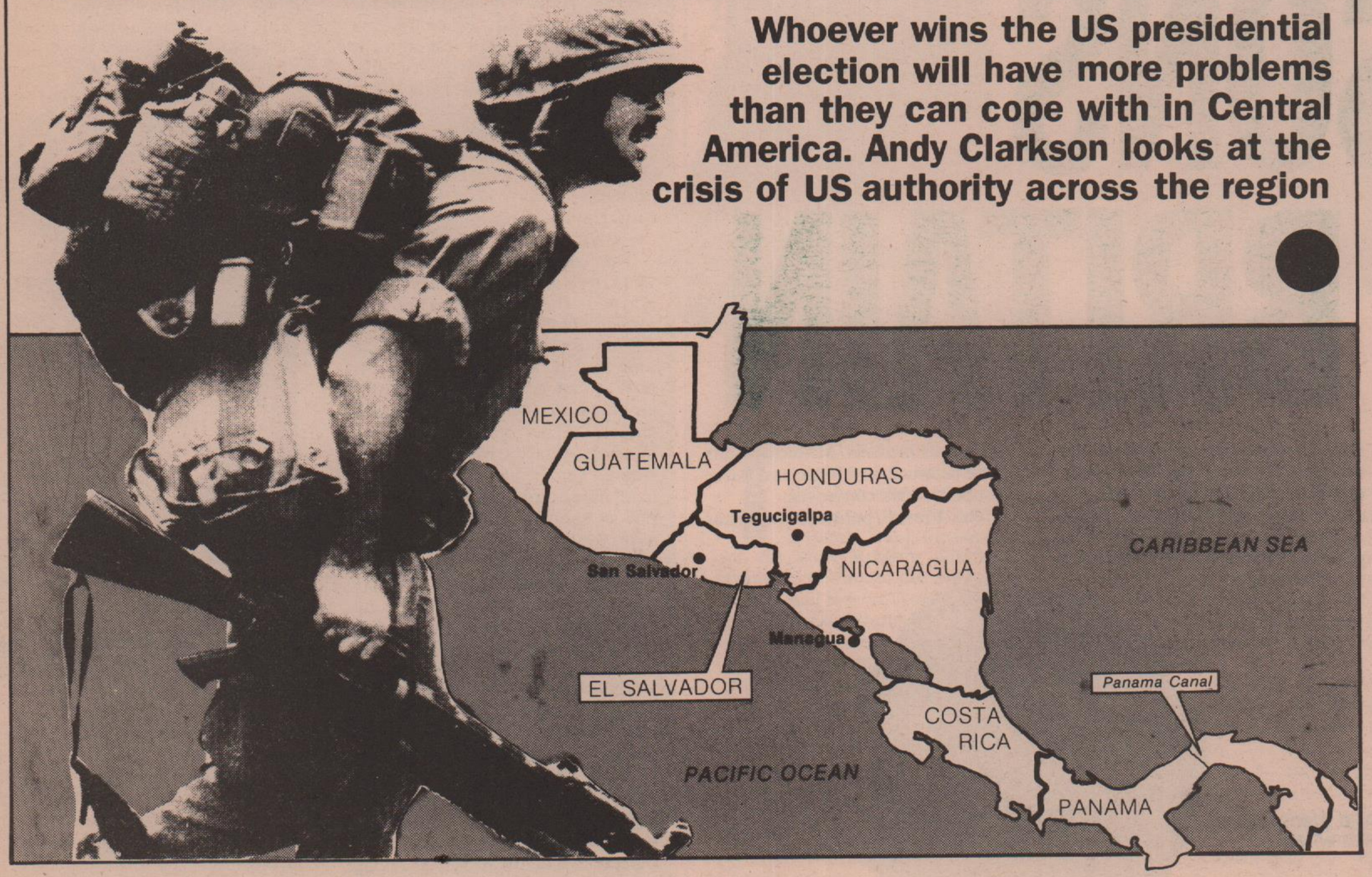
The Revolutionary Communist Party does not pretend to cater for everybody. It single-mindedly directs its work and arguments towards those who are not prepared to submit and who want to fight for their class. We believe that building such an organisation is the most important task facing our class. The working class does not need false promises or fancy policies, but an organisation that can serve as an effective instrument of the class struggle.

David Rourke

CRISIS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

REAGAN'S 'BACKYARD' BECOMES THE FRONTLINE

Whoever wins the US presidential election will have more problems than they can cope with in Central America. Andy Clarkson looks at the crisis of US authority across the region



No peace for Nicaragua

Last week Ronald Reagan sent 3126 troops of 82 Airborne Division to Honduras. He claimed that their mission was to defend the Central American republic from the threat of invasion by the radical Sandinista regime in neighbouring Nicaragua. In fact the US troops were sent for reasons which had little to do with local border incidents. Their mission was to reimpose US authority in its unstable 'backyard', and to shore up the status of Reagan's ailing regime at home. Washington's crisis focuses on the fate of the Contra guerrillas based in Honduras.

In early February the Democrat-dominated congress voted to end military aid to the right-wing Nicaraguan Contras — Reagan's favourite stooges in Central America. The vote put the Contras in a very shaky position in their campaign to undermine the Sandinista regime. It exposed the post-Vietnam fear which an important section of the US establishment still feels about becoming embroiled in third world trouble-spots.

Congress was worried that a vote for the murderous Contras would further alienate Washington's other Central American allies, and give the Sandinistas the perfect excuse to drop the measures they have been obliged to concede under the Arias 'peace' plan.

President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica won last year's Nobel peace prize for his Central American plan. It calls for ceasefires in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua; political dialogue with unarmed political opponents; an amnesty for prisoners; freedom of the press, television and political assembly; and an end to all aid to the Contras, including 'humanitarian' aid. Last August the presidents of Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Costa Rica signed the accord. In so doing, they overrode Reagan's orders to throw out the plan and expressed a new independent attitude to Washington. Reagan has worked to undermine the plan and to keep the Contras in business.

CONCESSIONS

Under pressure from the Soviet Union and Mexico, Nicaragua accepted the Arias plan, ended its state of emergency, and entered talks with the Contras. In February, business conditions were improved in Nicaragua when the Sandinistas introduced an austerity programme involving the elimination of government subsidies on 33 basic products from rice and beans to cooking gas and electricity. The concessions the Sandinistas were forced to make under the Arias plan seemed to fulfil many of Reagan's demands. Yet his attitude has only hardened against the Nicaraguans. Reagan has upped the stakes at every stage before finally sending the troops to Honduras last week.

Reagan wants to destroy the Arias plan because it leaves the Sandinistas in power. He cannot stomach the Sandinistas' objection to playing the old docile 'banana republic' role. They came to power in Nicaragua in 1979, after the overthrow of the brutal pro-US Somoza dictatorship. Their victory inspired a revolt in El Salvador, and unsettled all of Central America.

Even before he was elected in 1980, Reagan swore to make Central America the test of the USA's world leadership, the place where he would 'draw the line' against upstarts like the Sandinistas. He has staked Washington's credibility as a global power on its ability to dominate Central America. The Arias plan, however, ratifies the Sandinista regime and shows the spread of sullen revolt among Reagan's Central American stooges. Under the plan, Honduras had begun closing down Contra bases, forcing them to remain on hostile Nicaraguan soil in large numbers.

ADVANTAGE

The US congress vote against aid to the Contras encouraged Central American states to be more surly towards Washington. It was also widely regarded as a big blow to Reagan's loyal 'freedom fighters'. The Contras would still receive £26m in 'humanitarian' aid — and could get extra via the drug profits that the CIA channels to them. But the appearance that the Contras' major ally might be on the point of deserting them gave a major boost to the Sandinistas in their ceasefire negotiations with the right-wing rebels. Last week's Nicaraguan operations against the Contras on the Honduran border were designed to strengthen the Sandinistas' hand, and to turn the talks to their own advantage.

Despite Reagan's bluster about a Nicaraguan invasion of Honduras, the US troop movements are an exercise in sabre-rattling.

They are designed to limit the damage done by the anti-Contra vote and the Arias plan, and to show Central America and congress that the White House is still the seat of regional power. The fact that Reagan even had an initial problem persuading Honduras to cooperate indicates how much ground he has lost.

Honduras used to be better known as the Pentagon Republic. Last year, a defence department spokesman told a senate hearing that the US military presence in Honduras was 'temporary but indefinite', with the length of stay dependent on 'our own public will to stay the course in Central America'. Honduras has been the armed camp of the US military ever since the Sandinista insurrection in July 1979 knocked out Washington's main client in the area — Nicaragua.

TUB-THUMPING

Since Operation Falcon's Eye in October 1981, the Pentagon has been running a continuous programme of 'exercises' with the Honduran army. Dwarfing the present effort, the Big Pine series that lasted throughout 1983 involved 7000 US combat troops, 10 000 Honduran troops, tactical air groups and two aircraft carriers complete with battleship escorts. Two years ago, US-piloted Chinook helicopters ferried Honduran troops to its border with Nicaragua in another fake invasion scare.

Last week, however, Washington had to twist the Honduran government's arm to get it to 'request' the US military intervention. The *Financial Times* report revealed that the Honduran government initially accepted Managua's claim that no invasion had taken place, 'although in a harder response later, it demanded that Nicaraguan troops cease *threatening* its border.' Even the stooge Tegucigalpa regime had difficulty swallowing Reagan's invasion story at first. US arm-twisting had, however, obtained an Honduran air-strike on Sandinista positions within 24 hours, followed by belligerent counter-invasion threats. The US offensive boosted the Contras, undermined this week's ceasefire talks, and brought the Arias plan close to collapse.

Reagan's sabre-rattling over the Sandinistas and troop deployment in Honduras was also designed for domestic consumption. He hoped that a show of strength against 'communist subversion' in Central America could silence his many critics, and give his Republican Party a boost in the presidential election. Despite much congressional cynicism at first, the administration's militaristic tub-thumping did manage to put the Democrats on the defensive. But in trying to manipulate Central American affairs for political purposes, Reagan is playing a dangerous game. The potential problems are illustrated by the Irangate scandal.

THREAT

Last week 23 criminal charges were filed against Colonel Oliver North and others for their part in the Iran-Contra affair. North has resigned his commission as it was 'inhibiting a vigorous defence', and, in an obvious swipe at Reagan, threatened to subpoena 'the testimony and records of the highest-ranking officials in our government'. Reagan's response only compounded the administration's embarrassment. The president pointed out that one of North's confederates who has confessed to breaking the law, was only guilty of misleading congress and 'I've done the same myself.' The Iran-Contra revelations remain a threat to the Republican election campaign.

All these problems are symptoms of the decline of US power in its own 'backyard', and the loss of the complete control it once enjoyed over Central American states. In 1986 Colonel North arranged for a shipment of Eastern European arms to be captured in El Salvador so they could be produced as proof that Nicaragua was still exporting arms and revolution to the FMLN guerrillas fighting there. His collaborator in this conspiracy to frame Nicaragua was none other than Panamanian dictator General Manuel Noriega. Noriega was then a CIA stooge and North's partner-in-crime. Today he is a thorn in Reagan's already-aching side. If he can turn 'rogue', ask worried Washington officials, what is to stop the USA's other allies going astray?

The deployment of US troops in Honduras is meant as a warning to those who might consider following the Noriega line.

Reagan has no wish to involve his forces in a Central American war. But once they are on the ground in Central America, accidents can happen. So long as the instability continues, a small incident could draw the GIs in further and become the spark that turns the 'backyard' into a frontline that stretches all the way up to the Alamo.

Death squads rule El Salvador

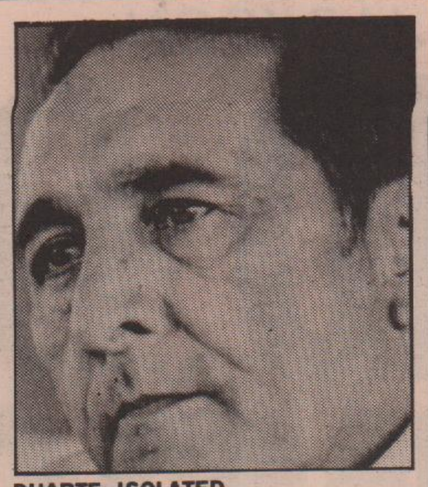
THE SITUATION in El Salvador shows how the USA is having to drop the pretence of supporting democracy in Central America, and throw its weight behind the rule of the death squads.

Sunday's election in El Salvador was won by the right-wing Arena Party, which fronts for the army's covert death squads. This has isolated Christian Democrat president Jose Napoleon Duarte. The national assembly elections were boycotted by the political wing of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front guerrillas, who have been fighting the US-backed regime since 1981.

Back in 1984, Washington supported Duarte's presidential campaign against the challenge of Arena Party leader Roberto D'Aubuisson. But Arena has been making strenuous efforts to clean up its image under Washington's direction. Since Duarte signed the Arias plan last August Reagan has wanted him out.

The bitterness between Reagan and Duarte came to a head over what is known as the 'Pink Zone Massacre'. In 1985 three FMLN anti-government insurgents were jailed for allegedly killing 13 people — including four US marines — in San Salvador's fashionable *Zona Rosa.* Under the Arias plan, however, all political prisoners must be released. Duarte has been releasing both death squad members and left-wing insurgents.

When a Salvadorean court decided in January that the Pink Zone Three were political prisoners, the US state department threatened to cut off all aid to El Salvador if they were released. Rumours of the corrupt use of US aid by Duarte's party were spread before Sunday's polls. With Arena and its death squads now making the running in El Salvador, there will be less talk from Duarte about releasing left-wing prisoners, talking to insurgents and implementing the Arias plan.



DUARTE: ISOLATED

After Noriega, what next?

As we go to press the fate of Panamanian strongman General Noriega remains uncertain. But whatever happens, his conflict with Washington has done further damage to US policy in Central America.

When Noriega ousted Panama's president Delvalle last month, it gave Reagan the excuse to move against the 'undemocratic' general. Yet Washington has no objection to such coups in principle; Delvalle himself was put in office by Noriega in similar fashion. What has upset Reagan this time is the anti-US gestures which Noriega, his erstwhile ally, has been making to win popular support. At a time when US authority is being challenged across the region, even token resistance from Noriega is an unacceptable affront to US imperialism. Reagan cannot afford to have any more of his surrogates following the Panamanian's example.



NORIEGA HAS TURNED ON THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE

HAVOC

A military intervention against Noriega would expose the USA to many risks. It could endanger US interests in the Panama Canal, and provoke a backlash elsewhere in Central America. The USA has thus sought to use economic strangulation to isolate Noriega. Since Panama's economy is tied so tightly to international, and particularly US, capital flows, Washington was soon able to destabilise Noriega's regime. Reagan's people have since alternated between encouraging coup attempts and trying to buy Noriega off. They would rather he went quietly. In the past, the CIA supplied Noriega with dossiers on every US politician of note, complete with copious details of their political and private problems. If he decides to hang out this dirty washing, Noriega could wreak havoc on the US presidential election.

Despite its desire to sort out Noriega with the minimum of fuss, Washington's economic sanctions against Panama have stirred up a dangerous level of instability.

FURIOUS

The squeeze on Noriega successful — some would say too successful. It has plunged Panama into economic chaos and brought the masses out of their homes last week. Their furious protests against Noriega forced him to drop his phoney anti-US pose, and to turn on the Panamanian people. When dockers, power workers, health workers and teachers struck in protest at not being paid, Noriega's Doberman police force tried to baton them off the streets and the army locked them out of their jobs. To retain his grip, Noriega has been obliged to declare a 'state of urgency', suspending civil rights.

For over a year now the middle class Civic Crusade has been campaigning to get rid of Noriega. But it was only after the USA imposed its sanctions that things began to go the way of the 'BMW revolutionaries', as Noriega scornfully calls them. The Civic Crusaders had previously been marginalised by popular working class support for the general's anti-US gestures.

The Civic Crusaders have welcomed the public sector strikers to the ranks of their campaign against the general. Yet the middle class movement against Noriega began when they accused him of being too soft on these same workers after a highly effective nine-day general strike against austerity measures two years ago. Today the Civic Crusaders are prepared to back a general strike against Noriega, but only to help them win the power to smash the public sector workforce themselves. That is why they chant *'¡Que vengan los Gringos!'* — 'Let the Yanks come!' They want Reagan to do a 'Grenada' on Noriega, because they understand that a civilian regime in Panama will not be able to tackle the working class by itself once Noriega has gone.

DANGER

Last week's working class riots against Noriega's cops had nothing in common with the Civic Crusade campaign. *Independent* reporter John Carlin has commented disparagingly on the Civic Crusade demonstrators' 'tendency to flee at the first sign of the riot police', while the working class fighters 'motivated by empty stomachs' repeatedly threw back the Dobermans: 'The hospital protesters, some of whom said they had never heard of the Civic Crusade, grew more combative with every salvo of tear gas or pellets....Every time the police retreated a step, the phalanx moved forward so as not to lose range.'

Now that Noriega has turned against his working class base, he is in more danger than he could ever have faced from the middle classes. He is isolated and vulnerable to more coup attempts. Noriega is without doubt anti-working class. Even so, it is impossible to remain neutral about who overthrows him.

Reagan wants to settle the Panamanian crisis as quickly and quietly as possible. However, he may be forced to intervene against Noriega. If Reagan ousts him in a coup, or even succeeds in buying him off, this will strengthen the USA's grip over the region. There might then be a brief breathing space while Delvalle pays out the wages that are owed, and economic activity recommences. But this will only be a temporary prelude before US imperialism and its new Panamanian stooges turn the screws on the masses. A regime installed by Reagan could only make things worse for the working class. That is why drug trafficker and former CIA-employee Noriega is worth defending against Washington.

Panama's working class has shown itself more than ready to fight in defence of its interests. This is the only force that can overthrow Noriega in the name of progress.

the propaganda war 2



A COMMON PURPOSE

MANY British politicians and newspapers have protested against the South African authorities' treatment of the Sharpeville Six, sentenced to death for the murder of the deputy mayor of Sharpeville in 1984. The court accepted that the six had not committed the murder, but insisted they were guilty because they shared a 'common purpose' with those who did.

This extension of the 'common purpose' rule outraged Western opinion. Even Margaret Thatcher was moved to appeal for clemency. *The Times* called the decision 'a disgraceful piece of chicanery'. The South African judicial system, it argued, 'hardly deserves the name. It is little more than a charade designed to deter and intimidate — terror tailored to the purposes of the state.'

The *Independent* was sure that the common purpose rule 'could not be applied in similar circumstances in this country'. Its legal affairs correspondent Robert Rice quoted from *Craig and Bentley*, a celebrated case from the fifties, to prove his point. Craig, who shot and killed a policeman, was convicted of murder but escaped the death penalty because he was a minor. Bentley, who egged Craig on and told him to 'let him have it', was convicted of murder for encouraging him, and hanged.

This, wrote Rice, was the closest English law could get to 'common purpose'. Even if 'the slightest act of encouragement is enough' to condemn someone, nevertheless 'under English law there must be some action by an accessory before he becomes criminally liable.' He added that 'If a defendant just happens to be present at the scene of the crime, it is clear, under English law at least, that he cannot be convicted of being an accessory.'

◆

I am sure that Mr Rice is a very learned man who has read all his law books. I doubt if Dominic McGlinchey or Winston Silcott have heard of Craig or Bentley, never mind read their case notes. Yet I have little doubt that both would beg to disagree with our legal correspondent's informed opinion.

Dominic McGlinchey, a leading member of the Irish National Liberation Army, became the first republican to be extradited from the Republic of Ireland to face trial in the North. The main evidence against him at his trial in 1985 were some affadavits he signed in the South some years earlier, admitting to membership of the South Derry brigade of the IRA. The Northern judge decided that this was proof of McGlinchey's involvement in a killing in County Antrim. The South African police showed that the Sharpeville Six were in the crowd when the killings occurred. The British authorities could not even prove that McGlinchey had ever been to County Antrim — which is nowhere near South Derry — never mind that he was there when the killing occurred. But, not to worry, McGlinchey was a self-confessed republican who desired Irish freedom and so shared a 'common purpose' with whoever pulled the trigger. So he was found guilty.

Winston Silcott was sentenced to life imprisonment last March for the murder of PC Blakelock in the Broadwater Farm unrest of October 1985. No witnesses testified against him. The prosecution produced no photographic or forensic evidence. He confessed to nothing. Once again, the police could not even prove that Silcott was in Tottenham on the evening of the riot. Again the court was not swayed by such minor details. Silcott was black, he came from Broadwater Farm and, like everybody else on the estate, he hated the police. *Quod erat demonstrandum;* he shared a common purpose with the killers and was found guilty.

◆

The cases of McGlinchey and Silcott do not prove that Robert Rice has failed to read his textbooks properly or is ignorant of the British law. They show that the British legal system distinguishes between individuals who break the criminal law and those who belong to any section of society which presents a political problem for the British state.

Individual criminals have no common purpose beyond successfully carrying out their crime. Even if they are members of an organised gang the law accepts that their rights as individuals must be protected. If Bentley had kept his mouth shut he would have lived.

Dominic McGlinchey and Winston Silcott, on the other hand, are not simply individuals who happen to be of a particular nationality or colour. The Irish people's struggle for freedom and the resistance of black youth to the police pose a political threat to the British state. This marks every Irish person or young black as a target for the authorities.

The treatment of Dominic McGlinchey demonstrated the basic rule of British law in Ireland: 'If you are a republican and there is a killing in the Six Counties, then you must be responsible.' The conviction of Winston Silcott confirmed the view of Basil Griffiths, former deputy chair of the Police Federation that 'the only way the police can protect society is quite simply by harassing these people and frightening them.'

If you are a member of any section of society with which the state is in political conflict — be it Irish nationalists, black youth or Yorkshire miners — you have a 'common purpose' in challenging the state and will be treated as a criminal. Like the man from *The Times* says, such a legal system is 'little more than a charade designed to deter and intimidate — terror tailored to the purposes of the state.'

Kenan Malik

JESSE JACKSON

THE END OF THE RAINBOW

James Malone examines how the black presidential candidate has adapted to traditional American politics

Jesse Jackson has changed since he last stood for president four years ago. In 1984 he put himself forward as the representative of American blacks, who could build a 'rainbow coalition' among the oppressed sections of US society. Today he is pushing hard to win white support.

So far in the Democratic Party primaries, Jackson has won 90 per cent of black votes cast and 10 per cent of white votes. He even managed to pick up 20 per cent of the total vote in Minnesota, where only 1.3 per cent of the population is black.

But his white support is still far too small to pose a serious challenge for the top spot.

All opinion polls show Jackson's white support coming from the traditional liberal wing of the Democratic Party. Eight years of aggressive Reaganism have led to a collapse of American liberalism. This year there is no white candidate in the old liberal mould, so Jackson has become a surrogate champion for those few middle class white voters who still await the second coming of John F Kennedy.

GOSPEL

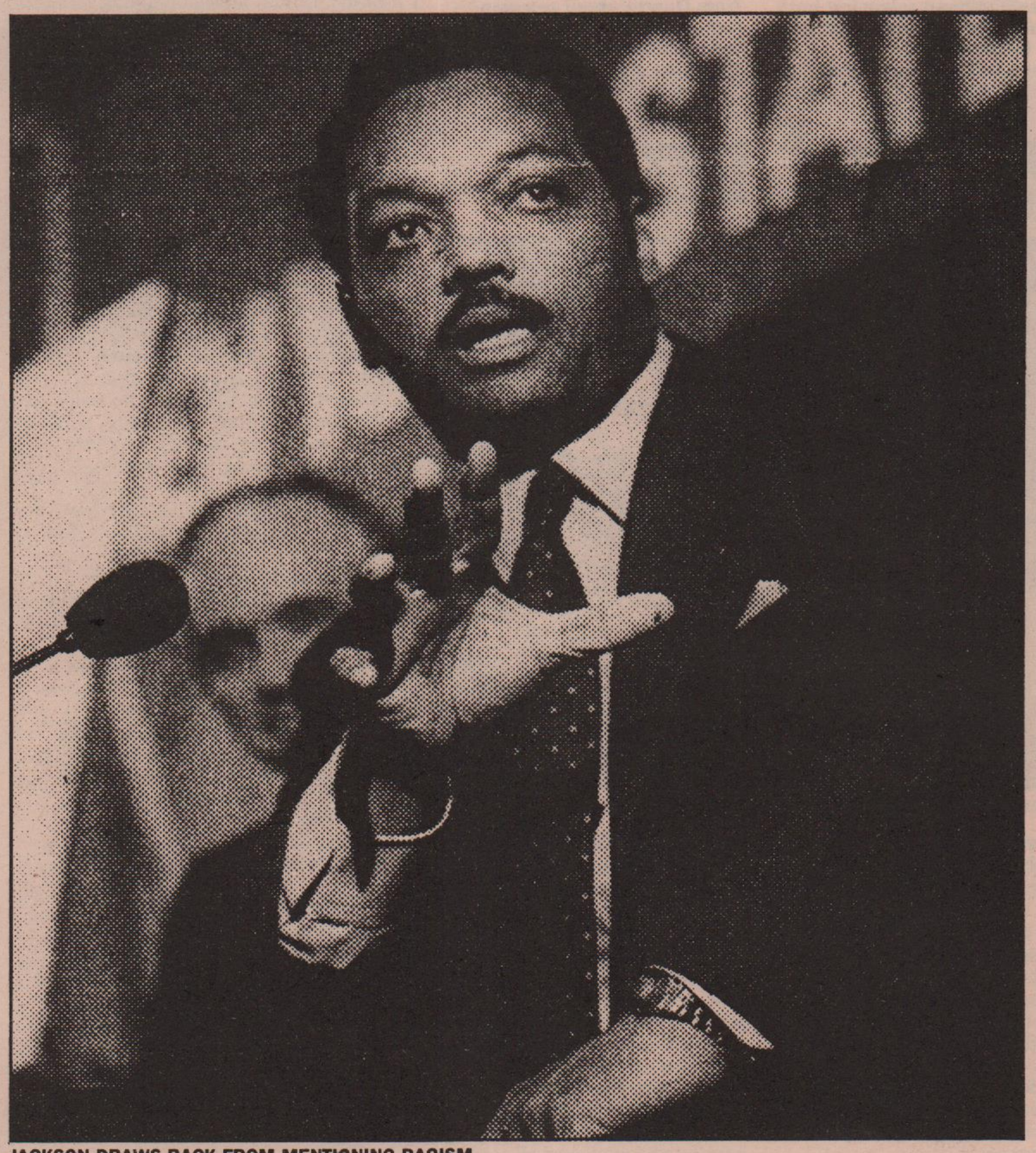
The main difference about Jackson today is not the fact that he has won a few white votes, but the political accommodation he has made to try to attract more. This year he has become a more aggressive advocate of American populism, focusing on traditional small-town values about the family, the flag, and the local church and community.

Jackson preaches a gospel of unity which stretches beyond black and white workers to farmers and small businessmen. He stresses the need to defend 'the small man' against crime, large corporations and foreign threats to American interests. The black preacher picks on themes which present him as the patriotic defender of ordinary Americans.

Jackson's favourite theme is drugs. 'Stop drugs coming in, stop jobs going out' is his slogan. Asked why he dwells on the subject of drugs, Jackson said, 'It is the one threat to every American household with children that crosses all lines.'

By trying to find an entirely classless issue with which to win support, Jackson has ended up tail-ending the anti-drug crusaders of the white American right.

Drug abuse is undoubtedly rife in America's no-hope ghettos. But the hysterical drugs panic in Reagan's America is not aimed at solving the problem. The authorities have exploited popular revulsion over drug abuse to promote all manner of reactionary ideas. In particular, the phoney war on the 'drug thugs' has served as the excuse for a racist police crackdown in US inner cities, and for pressurising Latin American states to submit to Washington. Jackson's campaign goes along with all this — indeed, he wants it to go further.



JACKSON DRAWS BACK FROM MENTIONING RACISM

The Reagan administration has condemned Panama's strongman General Noriega as a drug trafficker, as a cover for its campaign to oust him. Jackson wants Reagan to put his minesweepers where his mouth is and teach the Latin Americans a lesson: 'We put minesweepers in the Persian Gulf. I will put drug-sweepers in the Gulf of Mexico.' Jackson has also demanded sanctions against other third world states.

Jackson's drugs propaganda points the finger at Latin America as the source of social ills. This can only encourage the backlash against the millions of Hispanics living in the USA. Jackson's talk about building a 'rainbow alliance' is forgotten, as he chases after conservative opinion with a campaign which reinforces the crippling racial and ethnic divisions within the US working class.

Jackson's economic populism is equally divisive.

He is always attacking the 'big barracudas' of Wall Street, 'merger mania' and 'corporate raiders'. This goes down well among many Americans who have reacted against Wall Street crime and the whole yuppie culture. But his alternative economic policy is a backward-looking appeal to the traditionally insular outlook of Middle America. Jackson appeals for 'decent' American employers and workers to unite against Wall Street and the multinational corporations, which are 'merging, purging workers and submerging the American economy'. His vision of a return to a self-sufficient US economy with a strong manufacturing base may be a dream; but it has produced a dangerous programme of economic nationalism, designed to protect declining US capitalists from foreign competition.

Jackson wants stiffer import controls, restrictions on foreign government export subsidies and curbs on American investment abroad. His protectionist ideas turn the anger of America's dispossessed away from those who exploit and oppress them at home, towards foreigners. In particular, with the USA running a substantial trade deficit with Japan and Asia's newly industrialising countries, Jackson's campaign can only further increase popular hostility to Asian-Americans.

Despite his reputation as a moderate in foreign affairs the black candidate's patriotic politics extend overseas. His more radical supporters are quick to announce that he wants to cut defence spending. But Jackson is equally quick to counter accusations that he is 'soft' on communism. On a nationally televised debate, he asserted that there could be 'no foreign military advisers, no Soviet base' in Nicaragua; 'And if the Sandinistas, in their self-determination, choose to relate to the Soviets in that way, they must know the alternative. If they are with us, there are tremendous benefits. If they are not with us, there are tremendous consequences.' Jackson understands that Cold Warrior credentials are still a necessary qualification for entry into the American political mainstream.

Jackson is a fervent supporter of the reactionary moralism which the Reaganites have monopolised over recent years.

'DIVISIVE'

His liberalism always comes a poor second to his religious endorsement of traditional prejudices about women and the family. On abortion, he says that 'women should have freedom of choice but should make the moral choice.' In his collection of speeches, *Straight from the Heart*, Jackson quotes disapprovingly the lyrics of Mick Jagger's *Some Girls*. 'We must call pornographic music what it is,' says Jackson, 'child abuse.'

In his attempt to make a populist appeal to white America, Jackson has all but abandoned anti-racist gestures. Despite the phoney 'positive action' programmes of the sixties and seventies, the position of black Americans is worsening; black male unemployment is twice the level for whites. Yet Jackson now avoids the race issue as 'divisive', and tells blacks that they must become good American entrepreneurs — 'the marketplace is the arena for our development' — through self-help and positive thinking. While racist attacks are on the rise, Jackson distances himself from protests. He is steering clear of anti-racist demonstrations, like that which followed the lynch-mob murder of a black youth in Howard Beach, because they are too confrontational for his clean-cut image.

LOYALTY

Jackson's political accommodation sums up where the constitutional road has led black politics in the USA. Since the state crushed militant black movements in the sixties, the focus has switched to electoral politics. Middle class 'community leaders' have sought to channel black unrest off the streets and into the parliamentary chambers. Today there are some 7000 elected black officials, and many major cities in the USA have a black mayor. These were never more than token figureheads, whose elevation made little difference to the vast majority of impoverished blacks. But the Reagan years have created a more hostile and racist climate, and black politicians have come under pressure to toe the establishment line. Jackson's election campaign, as the black candidate who won't dare to mention racism, is the result.

Jackson has no chance of winning the nomination.

The strength of racist feeling in the USA — which he ironically refuses to challenge — is the guarantee of that. His relative success so far is largely a reflection of the unattractive character of the other Democratic Party hopefuls. Whatever he might hope to achieve among the white population, Jackson's true role for the party is to ensure the continuing loyalty of the all-important black vote. Around 90 per cent of blacks who voted supported the Democrats in the last three elections, compared to just 39 per cent of whites. Jackson's job for the party leaders is to keep the black vote safe while they veer to the right and try to win back conservative white support.

The dream of a 'rainbow alliance' built around pro-capitalist politics has ended up in a campaign which can only deepen divisions among ordinary Americans, and aid the authorities which oppress them.

AFTER THE BUDGET

GET READY FOR THE TORY OFFENSIVE

Tony Kennedy reveals the hidden meaning of the Tory budget

Many people have objected to the inegalitarian character of Nigel Lawson's budget, which gives tax cuts to the rich and more immiseration to the poor. The most important thing about this budget, however, is not the specific measures it includes but the message it imparts. The budget's tone helps to create a climate in which no-nonsense capitalist economics are the order of the day. It signals the start of a new Tory offensive. The central focus of this offensive will not be on taxes, but on attacking wages and working conditions in the public and private sectors. This is the Tories' response to the critical weakness of British capitalism — a weakness confirmed by the budget itself.

The treasury's *Financial Statement and Budget Report* reveals the dilemmas of Tory strategy. The Tories claim that rising pay settlements threaten inflation and endanger the competitiveness of the British economy. But the report states that 'recent private sector pay settlements' have been 'markedly lower than the recent growth in earnings which reflects record overtime working and bonus payments'. In fact pay settlements in manufacturing last year 'show a fall of about one percentage point' compared to the previous year.

In other words, pay settlements have fallen and longer hours and rising productivity account for wage increases.

Trends in unit labour costs — the labour cost element in the overall production costs of each unit of output — confirm that talk about inflation is hype. According to the treasury, unit labour costs in manufacturing were 'broadly unchanged', while in the service sector they rose marginally. The service sector rise has nothing to do with the level of pay settlements, which have been lower than in manufacturing. Greater structural difficulties in raising labour productivity in services explain the rise in unit costs.

ADVANTAGE

Labour costs cannot explain a UK inflation rate of just over four per cent in 1987, nor can trends in the prices of imported raw materials and capital goods. A strong pound and a rapidly depreciating dollar have cheapened the cost of imported goods. Inflation is the result of capitalists taking advantage of growing consumer demand to hike up sales prices and improve profit margins.

The level of wage settlements alone cannot explain Tory fears about pay. The government is aware that the recent rapid growth of labour productivity, which has allowed profits to rise despite higher wages, is set to slow down. Gains in productivity have come through intensifying the labour process, rather than through investment in modern technology. With little prospect of increasing the level of capital investment, the capitalist class has to mount an offensive against pay.



The vulnerability of the British economy to adverse trends in the world market is another reason why the Tories are compelled to go in hard against the working class.

While British capitalism relies to a greater extent than ever on the world economy as a source of profits, it lacks the economic clout to manipulate international trends in its favour. The treasury report shows that world trends are moving against Britain.

The UK stock of net overseas assets fell by a massive £20 billion as a result of the world stock market crash and the dollar's decline. Flows of interest, profits and dividends from overseas are expected to fall. World trade growth is expected to slow in the second half of the year, while UK imports will continue to rise faster than exports. Britain's surplus on oil trade will fall by more than a third. The celebrated surge in productivity has done little to improve British industry's competitive position. While unit labour costs in UK manufacturing are expected to grow marginally this year, no unit labour cost growth is forecast in other major industrialised countries.

DRAW

The restricted options available for countering these adverse trends in the international arena dictate a renewed offensive on the home front. The row between Lawson and Thatcher over Britain's exchange rate policy is instructive in this respect. The chancellor wants to mount a holding operation while the attacks bear fruit. By holding down sterling he hopes to preserve British trade competitiveness. The prime minister is worried that such a policy, by reducing interest rates and throwing more pounds on to the money markets to take the heat off sterling, will undermine the capitalist offensive. With more pounds about, Thatcher fears that British business might opt for inflation rather than class confrontation to boost profits. The outcome of the duel was a draw. Lawson got his reduction in interest rates, but sterling remains higher than its previous three-deutschmark limit. The problems involved in balancing these conflicting considerations mean that the debate is likely to resurface.

Lawson's package, involving a £4 billion tax give-away favouring Britain's wealthy, has been dubbed a rich man's budget.

But while Lawson boasted about the radical nature of his tax reform measures, more modestly he admitted that it was not a tax-cutting budget. The budget does not reduce the tax burden as a percentage of gross domestic product for the fiscal year 1988-89 — it remains at about 37 per cent of GDP. Lawson was able to give away £4 billion because existing tax rules mean that taxes on private incomes rise faster than incomes themselves. As a consequence the tax burden has risen from 35 per cent of GDP in 1985. Lawson has simply removed this 'fiscal drag' from the tax system in an effort to moderate the rate at which revenues rise automatically in line with economic growth.

The Tories' achievements on the tax front have been modest. Since all taxation is a reduction from the profits of the capitalist class, state revenues are a barrier to capital accumulation. The government needs more ambitious tax cuts to deliver on its promise to get the state off the back of British business. Tax cuts, however, require spending cuts. The Tories have recently announced swingeing cuts in public spending — particularly on welfare, social security and state employment — having failed to implement earlier plans for reducing state spending.

In 1980 Thatcher promised to slash financial outlays on public services. Since the cost of providing even a static level of services rises due to inflation, this meant decimating public service jobs and welfare provision. Instead, state spending spiralled out of control as the Tories tried to hold together an economy ravaged by world recession. By 1983 state spending accounted for 46.7 per cent of GDP, compared to 43 per cent under Labour between 1978 and 1979. After the 1983 election victory, Tory ministers pledged to keep service provision constant, rather than to slash public spending. Lawson announced a further concession in time for last year's election, promising real increases in spending on services in line with economic growth.

MARGINAL

While the Tories have delayed an all-out crackdown on state spending, workers in nationalised industries such as mining, steel and shipbuilding have suffered nevertheless. The government has kept the health service going, not by giving it more money, but by making health workers sweat. The government has held down public sector pay settlements well below those in private industry. Despite these successes public spending still accounts for 42.5 per cent of GDP, only 0.5 per cent lower than when the Tories came to power.

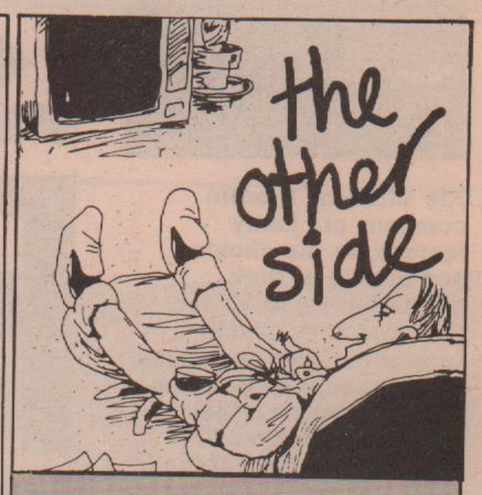
The Tories' achievements in freeing British capital from the constraints of central government have been marginal.

Another of Lawson's supposed success stories — balancing the accounts and ending government borrowing — has nothing to do with his policies. A year ago the treasury predicted a £4 billion borrowing requirement, last November this was revised to £1 billion, and in the budget zero borrowing was declared. While the final figure might look good, the government's prior ignorance about how much revenue it was taking in hardly inspires confidence in its ability to manage the economy.

IMPENDING

It would be more accurate to say that the capitalist economy has been managing Lawson. The Tories have been blessed with a period of growth based upon the earlier shake-out of British industry, a revival in world trade and the enormous expansion of international capital flows. All these fortuitous trends over which the government has no control, have allowed Lawson to become a celebrity in capitalist circles, but have done nothing to confront the fundamental problems of British capitalism.

The impending social security cuts, plans for further restrictions on trade union rights, the introduction of the poll tax and the imminent restructuring of the civil service are proof that all is not right with British capitalism. A realistic assessment of the state of the economy is the precondition for the only realistic response — building a movement that can rid us of this decaying and degrading system.



CROSSFIRE

THESE IRA men will stop at nothing. I saw them on the BBC news last week. They showed this IRA Army Council meeting. Most of the men at it had English accents (they're cunning, these Provos). They said they wanted to take the war 'to the very doorsteps' of the British people. So they organised a secret bombing campaign. They made these exploding milk bottles, hijacked a milk-float, planted them on doorsteps in Finchley, and blew up innocent housewives.

The bombing campaign was carried out by these undercover IRA men who had been living in London for years and years, one working as an amusement arcade attendant and another as a ticket collector on the underground. Apparently, this bloke came over from Belfast, flashed a 'Yeats Country' postcard at them as a signal, then off they went on their murderous milk-round. Except that most of them got caught because this brilliant bloke called Freddie from Special Branch intelligence had this computer with a trillion Irish people's movements on it. He brilliantly noticed that one Irishman in London had returned to his house at 20 past six every day for about 700 years, but then one day he didn't go home until 20 to 11. So he had to be the bomber, and they nicked him after an exciting milk-float chase. Brilliant.

What do you mean, that wasn't the news? *Crossfire*? A new, appallingly ignorant BBC drama series about Northern Ireland? No, no, I know it was the BBC news. They have brilliant news stories like that all the time.

The other week they had that brilliant news story about the IRA gang in Gibraltar, who planted that 500lb bomb and then made it disappear into thin air. They were so cunning and evil that even after the SAS shot them, they still made threatening movements so that the SAS had to shoot them some more in self-defence.

Then on Saturday the BBC had that news story about how the IRA ambushed those British soldiers who were innocently going off on their holidays, driving backwards down the Andersonstown Road in West Belfast.

So don't tell me that wasn't the news. Don't give me all that garbage about *Crossfire*. I don't need to watch BBC dramas about Northern Ireland. I know all about the real thing from what that Moira Stewart says. She's almost as brilliant as Freddie.

Eddie Veale

Frankenstein, **Jonathan Pope (director)**, Citizens' Theatre, Glasgow, until 2 April
Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Penguin, £3.50

THEATRE IN GLASGOW

FRANKENSTEIN AND THE FUTURE

The Citizens' Theatre company are justly famous for the choice and quality of their productions and for the fact that they usually try to stretch their audiences rather than indulge them. I don't know how their forthcoming piece, *The History of Celtic Football Club*, will work out, but I can assure you their *Frankenstein* is well up to scratch.

In 1816, 19-year old Mary Wollstonecraft spent the summer beside Lake Geneva with her lover (later her husband), the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. She was nursing their second baby. The first, a daughter, had died within days of birth. It was the coldest summer on record in the northern hemisphere. Their companion, Lord Byron, suggested that they employ themselves by each writing a ghost story. The two poets soon tired of constructing plots, but Mary persisted. Shelley's passion for scientific enquiry and their collective discussion of Luigi Galvini's experiments with electricity and the possibility of imbuing inanimate matter with life provided the spark for her imagination. She came up with *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus.*

MARVELLOUS

Before the story was completed the following May, Mary's half-sister had committed suicide and Shelley's first wife, Harriet, had drowned. Little wonder that Mary described the writing of her marvellous story as a 'creation out of chaos', an attempt to 'give form to dark, shapeless substances'. But far from indulging her own suffering, she grappled with her experiences.

The result was an act of creative imagination which used the idea of creation itself — the creation by science of new life. In so doing she was able to explore many important themes; the nature of self-knowledge, the struggle for control over our environment and the legitimacy of scientific enquiry, all central concerns for humanity at the threshold of modern capitalist society. Indeed it was only the development of the productive forces of society which made such a discussion possible; and it was only the separation of people from the fruits of their labour, of the creator from the created, which made it necessary.

COMPLEX

Mary Shelley allows each of the three main characters — the scientist, Victor Frankenstein, the being which he has created, and an explorer, Captain Walton — to relate their own experiences. Walton, journeying towards the North Pole, has come upon the scientist in frantic and fruitless pursuit of his creation, which having been rejected as a monster has turned on its creator.

The complex structure complements the complexity of the different perspectives as each character tries to come to terms with their lot. It is fitting that Frankenstein should reveal the extremes of his own experiences when he is at the limits of the physical world, surrounded by the grandeur of the mountains and by endless light. In this suitably awesome setting the two men share the 'madness' of pursuit and enquiry. For Walton too 'there is something at work in my soul which I do not understand.'

MYTH

This Romantic habit of associating feeling directly with nature may strike the contemporary reader as rather odd and precious, but the sense of dread which pervades the work (and owes much to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner') will be more familiar. The guiding spirit, however, hails not from Romanticism but from the *Paradise Lost* of John Milton, and the theme derives from the myth of Prometheus. The Miltonic struggle between good and evil is clarified here as a struggle between the lost Eden of nature and ignorance, and the pain of knowledge and consciousness. Prometheus stole fire from the gods for the benefit of humanity, which made him for Karl Marx 'the foremost saint and martyr in the philosopher's calendar'. But the light he held up revealed not bliss but the struggle and the pain of human existence. Frankenstein took a step forward too, but he found that his monster embodied (or had projected on to it) all the ugliness, rejection and alienation which he was trying to transcend.

VALIANT

Clearly Shelley's *Frankenstein* is a long way from the Hammer House of Horrors with which we are all too familiar. Congratulations then to the Citizens' Theatre for making a valiant effort to reclaim the tradition. In a packed house at the free preview some 40 Peter Cushing fans left before the end of the performance but the vast majority of us stayed to applaud. There are, it is true, still some rough edges to be smoothed out. The Henry Clerval character is too much a stilted prig to inspire the devoted friendship of Victor Frankenstein. It is unfortunate too that the saint-like Elizabeth Lavenza should sound like a cross between an Oxford English graduate and a Barbie doll.

FEARS

But these are minor problems. The production succeeds because it grasps the story as the elucidation of Mary Shelley's own fears and aspirations. In dramatic terms this is brilliantly achieved by making the only narrator who stands outside the action of the play a woman mourning for her dead infant — Mary herself.

TORCH

There is no doubt that there is an ambivalence to the pursuit of knowledge at the heart of *Frankenstein*. It was one that Mary Shelley felt we should all know before going forward. She wrote in her journal some five months before her husband was lost at sea in 1822, that she would 'fearlessly descend into the remotest caverns of my own mind, carry the torch of self-knowledge into its dimmest recesses; but too happy if I dislodge any evil spirit or enshrine a new deity in some uninhabited nook'. She knew there was no going back, and that the only light she would have would be that cast by her own struggles and experiences. The Citizens' Theatre has given her a new audience. For those of you unfortunate enough not to live in Glasgow, read the book.
Alan Harding

MUSIC OUT OF AFRICA

PUT A WIGGLE IN YOUR STRIDE

Talking Heads, *Naked*, EMI
Ali Farka Toure, *Ali Farka Toure*, World Circuit
Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens, *Thokozile*, Earthworks

'Put a wiggle in your stride, Mr Jones, loosen up,' sings David Byrne. After two disappointing years Byrne and Talking Heads return with a stunning new album, *Naked*, possibly their best work, certainly their most inventive. The album was recorded in Paris, which is fast becoming the new international centre for music. For a long time the jazz capital of Europe, it has become over the past decade the home for African musicians of a variety of styles, from highlife to rai. Many of the African records now finding their way to Britain were recorded there, and more recently it has attracted Caribbean styles such as zouk.

'All this can be found in New York City as well,' says Byrne, 'but there's a different attitude from the audience in Paris. There, it's accepted that these various styles of music can be for everyone.' London and New York may only just be discovering these styles; Parisians have been jiving to them for a decade.

HYBRID

It was perhaps inevitable, therefore, that the Heads would be drawn to Paris. Byrne's greatest strength has always been his ability to absorb new styles and influences and to anticipate trends — *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, his collaboration with Brian Eno, experimented with sampling seven years before it became a chart commonplace. Byrne's creativity sets *Naked* apart. *Naked* is not an album of 'African' music as, for example, Paul Simon's *Graceland* attempted to be. Simon simply appropriated particular styles as a backdrop to his songs. Byrne seamlessly fuses the Heads' jagged, paranoid white funk with various styles to produce a scintillating hybrid.



BYRNE: 'SCINTILLATING HYBRID'

Rather than write carefully structured songs, the band laid down improvised rhythm tracks in New York. Twenty five of these tracks were taken to Paris and formed the basis for what were effectively extended jamming sessions. The vocals were finally added in New York. It sounds hopelessly anarchic — but the result is a set of tight, coherent and immensely attractive songs.

The album features such familiar names as former Smiths' guitarist Johnny Marr, the Pogues' accordionist James Fearnley and Kirsty McColl. But it is the catalogue of Caribbean and especially West African artists — guitarist Yves N'Djock, trumpeter Angel Fernandez, Mory Kante on kora, Abdou M'Boup on talking drums — that infuses the music with such spirit. From the opening funky brass, through Fernandez' arrangement of the horns on 'Mr Jones', to Moussa Cissokao's hypnotic oil drums on 'Ruby Dear', and Yves N'Djock's high-life guitar on '(Nothing But) Flowers' you are hooked.

MESMERIC

Ali Farka Toure provides another reminder that the assimilation of musical styles is by no means a one-way process. Ali is a mesmeric acoustic guitarist from Mali, now based in Paris. Like fellow countryman Salif Keita, whose album *Soro* was one of the highlights of last year, Ali is equally steeped in the musical traditions of his homeland and in the work of such blues giants as John Lee Hooker and Robert Johnson. Ali's piercing voice and the soul-drenched feeling his sparse, hypnotic guitar style creates make you think that the blues came down from Mali.

Thokozile is the best mbaqanga album released in this country. Mbaqanga — 'the indestructible beat' — is the infectious South African township-jive music. The album brings together three of its best exponents. The stirring vocal harmonies of the Mahotella Queens have long established them as the top female vocal group. Mahlathini is mbaqanga's most distinctive male groaner. The Makgona Tshole Band — 'The band that knows everything' — is mbaqanga's hardest backing band. The mix of Mahlathini's rasping street-growl, the Queens' sweet harmonies and the Band's compulsive rhythms is irresistible. It is not the first time they have recorded together — their debut single *Orlando Train* came out in 1965 and they are featured prominently on Earthworks' previous mbaqanga compilations — *The Indestructible Beat of Soweto* and *Thunder Before Dawn*.

What sets *Thokozile* apart however is the brilliant production which really does capture the effervescent rhythms. Put a wiggle in your stride? You bet.
Kenan Malik

party page

POLICING THE FAMILY

JOAN PHILLIPS' new book *Policing the Family* could not be more timely. 'Traditional family values' are a constant propaganda theme accompanying the offensive on democratic rights. The Tories claimed they were 'protecting our children' by introducing the anti-homosexual Clause into the Local Government Bill. The belief that women's primary role is as child-bearers and rearers lies behind Liberal MP David Alton's anti-abortion bill. The ban on promoting homosexuality, and further restrictions on women's right to get an abortion, are both likely to be on the statute book before long.

PANICS

Policing the Family indicates that this is only the start. The book shows how the different, seemingly unconnected panics about the family fit together to play a vital role for the Tories. It explains how the recent discussions on censorship, child abuse, abortion and drug abuse are all used to create a political climate that is favourable to the Tories and anti-working class.

The book doesn't just explain what the establishment moralists are up to. It also clears up a lot of confusions that have arisen on the left. The right has been able to consolidate its authority around the moral issues, and is pushing bigoted laws through parliament. Yet the left has come to accept some of the premises on which the right bases its policies.

Many of our supporters around the country have noted how left-wing activists have abandoned the fight for the rights of homosexuals or women when put under pressure by the right. Many of the groups set up to oppose the Clause have effectively demobilised themselves in a bid to be uncontroversial. When our supporters have argued the need to campaign for the decriminalisation of homosexuality, they have met opposition from people who argued that this was unreasonable.

RESPECTABLE

For example, at one college our Charter for Lesbian and Gay Rights was opposed by those who said they were against the Clause, but were also against fighting for the decriminalisation of homosexuals because it implied that we would tolerate the sexual abuse of children! These radicals have effectively accepted the assumption that homosexuality equals child abuse.

In the Fight Alton's Bill groups there has been a similar tendency to try to find a respectable middle ground. One of the most popular current arguments is that if Alton wants to prevent late abortions he should accept an amendment to his bill to compel health authorities to carry out abortions up to 12 weeks. This would mean that women 'genuinely' wanting early abortions could get them, while those trying to get late abortions would be screened even more closely. The left's approach adapts to the right-wing prejudice that women should only be allowed late abortions if they are particularly 'deserving cases'.

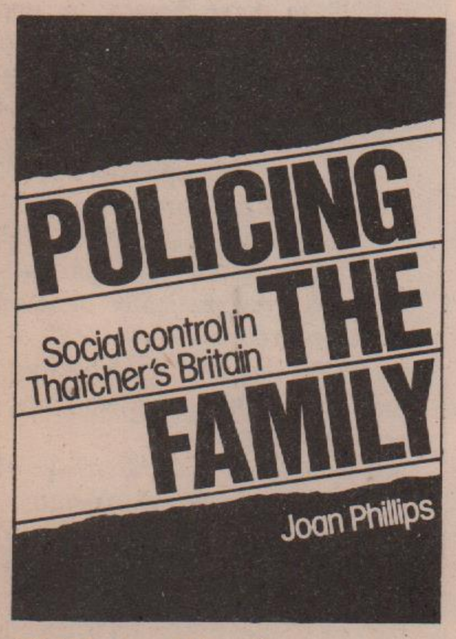
DOOMED

Joan Phillips shows that these attempts to appear moderate and appeal to the middle ground are doomed to failure. The middle ground, which could accommodate a few liberal concessions to 'deserving cases' in the seventies, no longer exists. Now the establishment is going all-out to destroy democratic rights. In these circumstances, we cannot sweet talk the government into making concessions. We will have to terrorise it into giving us what we need. These arguments have been borne out by our recent experiences.

One FAB steering committee meeting was marked by a heated debate about whether picketing MPs might alienate them. An activist from East London told how an MP had explained to local students that his conscience would not let him vote against Alton. The students explained that if this was the case their consciences would force them to mount an all-night protest at his house. They gave him 45 minutes to make his mind up — his conscience lost its grip in 45 seconds. This is the kind of attitude we need to win in 1988.

Policing the Family shows we are up against not only individual bigots, but a moral offensive from the whole capitalist class. We need to understand their strategy if we are to develop the strategy and the tactics to win. It's vital to discuss the issues with all left-wing activists. If you haven't read Joan Phillips' book — make sure you order it now.

Anne Burton



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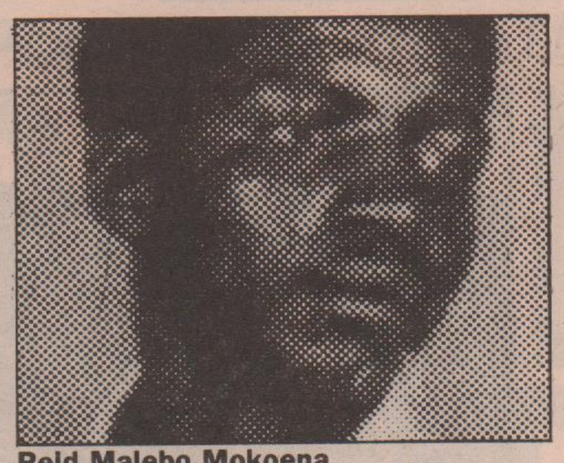
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SHARPEVILLE SIX STILL ON DEATH ROW

THE HANGING JUDGES OF APARTHEID

The Sharpeville Six have been granted a temporary stay of execution. Russell Osborne examines their case as part of a legal strategy of victimising political activists

THE SHARPEVILLE SIX were granted a stay of execution until 18 April by the South African supreme court. Last-minute evidence suggested that a black state witness had made up evidence against them after being beaten by police. They were originally convicted two years ago of the murder of a black township councillor in Sharpeville, Jacob Diamini.

None of the six was proved to have caused Diamini's death. But under South Africa's draconian laws, their presence in the area was sufficient for the judge to send them to the gallows. All were held to have shared the 'common purpose' of about 100 people who stoned and burnt Diamini as a collaborator with apartheid.

The judges' postponement of the hangings came after president PW Botha turned down pleas for clemency. But this should not suggest that the South African courts are opposed to apartheid terror. The government and the courts have established a division of labour to deal with black opposition to the state.

● ● ●

Until last year, South Africa's courts were still something of a barrier to the government's more extreme emergency regulations.

Judges who like to think of themselves as sophisticated legal experts on the Western model, rather than third world-style state stooges, were unhappy about rubber-stamping government orders. What the government decreed under the emergency was often dismissed or overturned in the courts on technical grounds. This only meant, however, that the judges were acting as friendly legal advisers to the regime, and pointing out legal loopholes in its repressive regulations. Once the government accepted their advice and closed the loopholes, the courts were happy to carry out the bidding of the white supremacist state.

The government rapidly reimposed draconian restrictions through reworded regulations or after appeal court judgements. The state can now do more or less what it likes under emergency provisions. The 'common purpose' stipulation under which the Sharpeville Six face execution is just one repressive measure among many.

Appeal judges have ruled that, given the state of emergency, extraordinary powers are demanded. Botha can issue any orders to allow for the smashing of resistance, even orders which might normally be declared void on the grounds of unreasonableness. In the wake of the appeal judges' decision, even the right of a detainee to be heard in court has been removed and lawyers are no longer allowed to visit their clients in prison.

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Civil rights lawyers have remarked on the similarity between these repressive judgements and similar controversial measures in the fifties and sixties — the last time apartheid's rulers faced mass resistance. South Africa's law-makers won particular notoriety during the Defiance Campaign organised by the African National Congress in the fifties. They introduced mandatory flogging for all participants arrested during the passive resistance demonstrations.

The state is taking an equally hard line today.

● Until recently the charge of high treason — for which the death penalty may be imposed — was reserved for cases where the state attempted to cook up grand conspiracy theories. Now day-to-day political activity is sufficient for a treason charge.

The current trial of trade union leader Moses Mayekiso and others for involvement in people's courts and township committees could set a precedent for many anti-government activities to be declared treasonable if Mayekiso is convicted. In a parallel trial, eight young activists are charged with treason for their involvement in people's courts. If they are convicted, the thousands of township residents who participated in people's courts and township committees throughout the country could face charges of treason and the death penalty.

● In an atmosphere of intense censorship and with the ban on all political meetings, the witness-box had become one of the few avenues left for the expression of opposition politics. But new emergency regulations closed off even this avenue. Court records of such trials can now be published only when there is a final judgement and many cases take months or years to complete.

● The state now transfers trials of those accused of terrorism to near the site of the alleged deed. Special court sittings are held in remote rural areas where land-mines have exploded. The chance of a fair trial in a courtroom with a public gallery packed with the white relatives of land-mine victims is remote.

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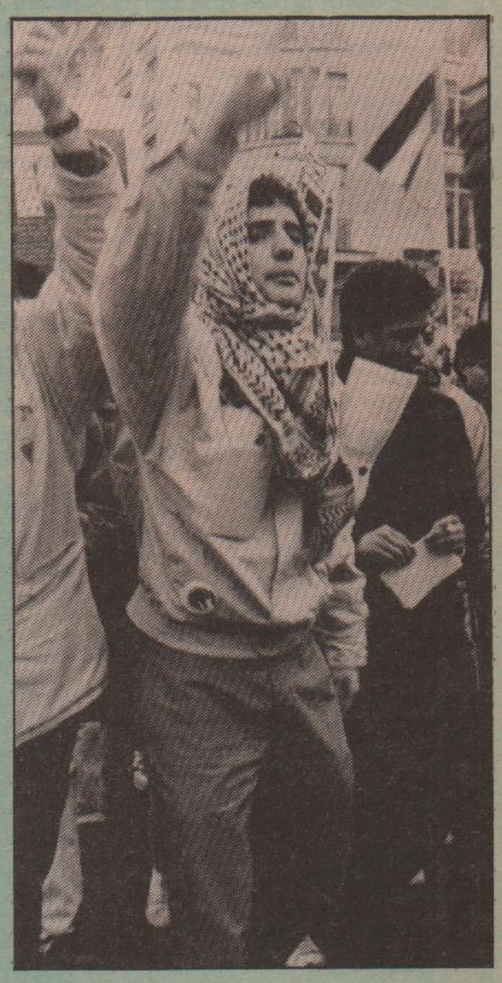
The Botha regime is ruthless in the measures it imposes to put down resistance. The courts are its willing accomplices.

The death sentence imposed on the Sharpeville Six is just one of many judicial horror stories in South Africa today. Anybody who still has illusions in the independence of South African courts need look no further than the recent case of Benjamin de Bruin of Stellenbosch in the Cape Province. De Bruin was sent to jail for six years, three years suspended, for furthering the aims of the ANC. The evidence against him was a tattoo on his body.

Victory to the Palestinians!

When the Palestinian uprising started 15 weeks ago Israeli politicians said it would be over in a few days. Since then well over a hundred Palestinians have been shot dead and thousands wounded in battles with Israeli troops. Unable to crush the revolt, Israel is now seeking to contain it.

The new Israeli strategy was outlined by chief of staff Dan Shomron last week in an interview in the labour federation daily *Davar*. He explained plans to use a combination of repression and economic pressure to sap the determination of the Palestinian population. Recent measures include banning fuel oil supplies, cutting international telephone links to the West Bank and Gaza, severe restrictions on foreign travel and a night-time curfew on the whole of the Gaza strip.



Pandora Anderson

Israel's tactics are partly a response to a more coordinated Palestinian campaign than in the early stages of the uprising. Palestinian policemen and tax collectors in the West Bank and Gaza have bowed to popular pressure and resigned. General strikes by Palestinian workers are biting into the Israeli economy. At the weekend the first Israeli soldier was shot.

While Israel emphasises economic pressure, army brutality continues unabated, taking a daily toll in Palestinian deaths or injuries. Now Israel is systematically banning the media from trouble-spots. Palestinians are being shot and beaten away from the television cameras and press photographers.

The length and intensity of the uprising confirms the strength of the yearning for freedom among Palestinians. Israel can only survive by denying Palestinians everything from the most basic democratic rights to fuel oil. There can be no peace in the Middle East until the Palestinians win their freedom.

Daniel Nassim