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WHY BRITISH TROOPS SHOULD GET OUT OF IRELAND
see pages 3,5,8 and 9

Revolutionary Communist Party Weekly 4 March 1988 40p

Health workers need... UNITED ALL-OUT ACTION



Pandora Anderson

National industrial action involving one million health workers could quickly make the Tories back down in the NHS dispute. The way to organise such united strike action is to give all health workers an equal stake in beating the government. And we can only do that by prioritising the issues of pay and working conditions, which everybody from skilled nurses to cleaners shares an interest in improving dramatically.

(Continued on back page)

SCOTTISH HEALTH WORKERS SHOW THEIR STRENGTH

Some 60 000 Scottish workers took to the streets last Wednesday to protest about Tory cuts in the health service. Council workers and postmen, firemen and miners, engineers and the unemployed all joined health workers to bring the centres of Glasgow and Edinburgh to a standstill. The streets rang to the sound of buses and cars honking their horns in solidarity.

The protests showed we have the power to defeat the Tories. Yet the next day you could be forgiven for thinking they had never happened. Except for a few unswept leaflets the streets were back to normal, and, apart from the handful of workers taking selective action in Glasgow, so were the hospitals. The domestics, porters, technicians and nurses who had vented their anger on Wednesday were back at their posts on Thursday, wondering whether the day of action was just a waste of time.

While workers took to the streets and showed their determination to stop the Tory attacks, union leaders debated how best to cooperate with management's drive to make cuts.

At the Scottish Health Service Campaign conference the day before the demonstration, Bill Spiers, deputy general secretary of the Scottish TUC, declared that the health workers' campaign was not about higher wages. Rodney Bickerstaffe, general secretary of Nupe, insisted that the union had done everything possible to make the NHS efficient.

Management have taken full advantage of the union's supine attitude. In a letter to health workers which begins 'Dear Colleagues', Laurence Peterkin, general manager of the Greater Glasgow Health Board, explained how union cooperation 'to improve our efficiency' has 'saved £5m per annum' over the past two years. 'But,' he added, 'we need to achieve a lot more....'

Greater 'efficiency' can only mean fewer health workers working harder for less pay in worse conditions. The union leaders' determination to balance the books for management destroys any possibility of defending health workers' jobs or fighting for better wages and conditions. Instead of building for all-out united action, which is the only way to win our demands, the bureaucrats have restricted the fightback to token activities, which will not upset management.

Many workers have already shown their contempt for the union officials' restrictions. On Wednesday morning 200 health workers picketed the Western Infirmary in Glasgow. Women ancillaries spontaneously turned a formal protest into an effective picket by blockading the road and refusing to move until delivery vans turned away.

We need to build on this spontaneous anger and militancy.

Many activists are worried that the momentum of action is being lost. It is vital that we involve as many workers as possible from every sector of the workforce and from every hospital to coordinate the action that will disrupt management most effectively in the shortest possible time.

Alan Harding



SCOTTISH HEALTH WORKERS HAVE THE POWER TO BEAT THE TORIES

No sympathy for killer cops

GUN-TOTING killer cops are not getting the public sympathy they deserve, according to a new home office report.

Post-shooting Experiences **is a survey of 25 police firearms officers who have 'killed or wounded while on duty'. The officers describe their feelings as they pulled the trigger. Most said that 'time seemed to slow down'. One experienced 'tunnel vision' as he fired. Four crackshots reported 'feelings of intense fear rapidly replaced by overwhelming anger'. All said that they were prone to stress disorders ranging from cold sweats and nightmares to prolonged depression and, in one case, migraine so severe as to cause partial, temporary paralysis. One sniper said that his hair turned grey overnight.**

STRAIN

The home office report presents firearms officers as victims. It calls for confidential counselling and professional support for marksmen suffering from 'post-trauma stress disorder'. The authors conclude that those under the strain of carrying a gun on behalf of the British state deserve greater public sympathy. The publication of *Post-shooting Experiences* follows a series of shooting incidents involving the police which have served to deepen public unease about the force's free and easy use of firearms. The aim of the report as well as recent media coverage is to focus public concern on the officers who are 'only doing their job', rather than on the victims of police violence.

When a West Midlands policeman shot and killed five-year old John Shorthouse in 1985, police spokesmen and media pundits tried to evoke sympathy for the unfortunate officer who 'acted in the heat of the moment'. In 1987 Inspector Douglas Lovelock stood trial for the shooting of Cherry Groce during a police raid on her Brixton home. The judge portrayed Lovelock as a dedicated public servant who made the 'mistake' of putting a bullet in a black woman's spine and crippling her for life. Lovelock was free to walk from the courtroom; his victim could only sit and watch from her wheelchair. The press played up the mental scars which Lovelock said would be with him forever, but barely mentioned the paralysis which Cherry Groce has to live with.

ENEMIES

The authorities are keen to win acceptance for the increasing paramilitary capability of the police. Last year's spate of 'psychopath' scares had the effect of encouraging people to accept the necessity for arming the police against the menace posed to society by maniacs like 'Rambo Ryan'. *Post-shooting Experiences* is another piece in the composite picture of the police as overworked Jack Regans committed to public safety. But the authors give the game away by recommending that firearms training should include 'psychological preparation for the reality of killing'. Britain's rulers recognise that in future the police will be required to engage in more and more lethal operations. We should recognise that the target of those operations will not be 'maniacs', but political enemies of the ruling class.

Andrew Calcutt

POLICE INFILTRATORS USE YARDIES PANIC

Last week Scotland Yard set up a new squad to tackle the Yardies, the 'black mafia' which supposedly controls crime in the inner cities. The campaign shows how the police are using scares about black crime to infiltrate the black community.

The police and the media have built up a picture of the Yardies in Britain as a vicious gang of international mobsters. The Yardies were originally Jamaican gangs involved in small-time drugs and extortion rackets. During the seventies they were drawn into the power struggle between supporters of former prime minister Michael Manley and his rival, the CIA-backed right-wing stooge Edward Seaga. Seaga's fight to oust Manley was marked by brutality and murder. The Brixton-based reggae poet Michael Smith, a Manley supporter, was stoned to death by Seaga's gangs on a visit to Jamaica in 1984.

Many Yardies moved to America where, according to the authorities, they became an organised crime syndicate, rivalling the mafia in the scale of their operation. Two years ago Scotland Yard claimed the Yardies were moving to Britain because of a clampdown by US authorities. Ever since, periodic stories in the press have embroidered the Yardie legend.

Most British Yardies are small-time crooks who use the notoriety of the name to boost their reputation. Even a recent police report dismissed much of the publicity about the Yardies as 'media hyperbole'. However, the authorities have seized on the issue as a way of infiltrating the black community and cracking down on all black youth.

At midnight last Thursday, 60 armed policemen smashed their way into Hackney's New Four Aces Club and arrested seven people for drugs offences, claiming that they were members of a Yardie gang. Three now face deportation. According to local police chief Frank Wilkinson, the officers swooped after suspicious 'strangers' were seen in the area. 'The key clue', claimed Wilkinson, 'was that they simply did not know the area. They stood out from the local black community who certainly haven't welcomed them.'

Black people in Hackney have little time for the anti-social behaviour of crooks. But the police are trying to exploit fears about 'mafia-style' gangs to encourage black people to cooperate with a police clampdown. By gaining black support for their anti-Yardie operations, the police hope to neutralise resistance to their everyday harassment of black youth. Recent high-profile police campaigns against knife gangs on the underground, 'steaming' gangs at the Notting Hill carnival and Sikh gang warfare in Southall have all used black community leaders to front the operations.

BEGINNERS

Cooperating with the police is no way to deal with anti-social elements. The police are the biggest gangsters of all, with a history of terror and violence against black people that would make even the toughest Yardie gang look like beginners.

The police who raided the Four Aces Club came from Dalston police station, where Tunay Hassan, a local Turkish youth, died last year a few hours after being arrested on suspicion of burglary. Colin Roach, Michael Ferreira and Aseta Simms were all killed in Stoke Newington police station, just half a mile from Dalston. Fifteen months ago Trevor Monerville almost joined the list, after Stoke Newington police beat him to within an inch of his life. There is nothing that the Yardies could teach the gangsters in blue about terrorising the black community. We should reject every attempt by the police to use concern about crime to invade the black community.

Kenan Malik


POLICE RAIDED A HACKNEY CLUB ON THE PRETEXT OF CATCHING YARDIES

the next step

Revolutionary Communist Party weekly No 9 Editor: Mick Hume

TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND NOW

THE body of Aidan McAnespie, shot dead by a British soldier at Aughnacloy, is exhumed for a second post-mortem. Private Ian Thain, the only British soldier convicted of on-duty murder in Northern Ireland, is out of jail and back on duty. Two IRA volunteers are blown up by a premature explosion outside Crossmaglen. And three Irish people are hauled before a London court, under armed guard, charged with conspiring to kill Tory Northern Ireland secretary Tom King. It's the start of another week in the Irish War.

At a recent press conference, Margaret Thatcher was asked what she would do to alleviate the concern among Irish people about the shoot-to-kill campaign and the cover-up at the centre of the Stalker affair. 'Do you know,' she replied, 'I asked today how long the Irish problem had been going on. I always thought 400 years. I was told 700 years. So you know, you have to take the long perspective.' All the ignorance and arrogance of Empire are in that statement. When Thatcher says she will 'take the long perspective', it is a declaration of the British government's determination to continue its colonial occupation of six Irish counties. And that is the guarantee that many more weeks will begin with deaths, post-mortems, trials and scandals.

●

The British authorities have gone to great lengths to blame the Irish for the recent upsurge of violence and controversy. *Panorama*, the programme tamed by the Tories, did its bit for the British war effort on Monday, by broadcasting another timely piece of nonsense about the IRA, Libya and 'international terrorism'. But the cause of the conflict in Ireland is not the Libyan connection; it is the London connection. The war continues because Northern Ireland is not British. And the Irish nationalists caught within its phoney Borders are not prepared to accept the authority of the British Crown.

Who can claim that the British have the right to rule the parts of Ireland on which current events focus? Aidan McAnespie was shot dead in County Tyrone, an area whose people elected IRA volunteer Bobby Sands as their MP in 1981. Private Thain shot his victim, Thomas Reilly, in 1983 in West Belfast — just two months after nationalists there elected Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams as their MP, a seat he still holds. The two IRA members blown up on Monday died in South Armagh, where the British Army has to travel everywhere by helicopter to avoid the hostility of the Irish population. These places have not been turned into militarised zones because the British authorities fear some handful of 'terrorists' propped up by Colonel Gadaffi. They are the centres of popular resistance to Westminster rule, where people have learnt from bitter experience of British governments, judges and guns that they will have to fight for freedom (see centre pages).

Since 1921, when they partitioned Ireland, British statesmen have claimed that republicans in the North have no legitimate case. Ireland already has its independence, they say, in the Southern state. Now it is becoming obvious that the Republic of Ireland has little more independence from Britain than does the Isle of Wight. It remains a satellite state, where politicians condemn British imperialism in public while bowing to British orders in private.

●

The Anglo-Irish agreement was supposed to give Dublin a role in protecting the interests of nationalists in the North. Instead, all it has done is to extend British influence in the South. Despite all the insults which Britain has flung at Dublin of late, the Southern government limply insists that its forces will continue to operate as an arm of the British military machine against those struggling to unite Ireland. Indeed, during all the public arguments this year over Stalker, the Birmingham Six, McAnespie and Thain, the Irish police have unearthed and stolen even more IRA ammunition than the British. Dublin might make the gesture of holding a second post-mortem on McAnespie. But its security forces still work hand-in-glove with the British Border guards who murdered him.

North and South, British imperialism denies Irish people their right to self-determination. So long as Ireland is divided and dominated by force of British arms, the liberation war will continue. The only way to end it is to campaign for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Irish soil.

Britain has no political solution to the Irish War. No Anglo-Irish agreement or new sham assembly in the North can paper over the basic contradiction between the British state and the aspirations of the oppressed. Neither can the British government find a military solution, short of genocide. Acts of state violence like the shooting of Aidan McAnespie only serve to harden Irish hearts against the occupying power. 'This', says his sister Eilish, 'is what makes young people round here republicans.'

All that the British authorities can offer the Irish is 'the long perspective' of continuing oppression and resistance. We will see another round of shootings, followed by more inquiries and talks and mock trials. Then there will be other false promises of peace, until the sound of British gunfire and the reply from the IRA drowns out the lies and the hypocrisy once more.

●

All of the arguments which our rulers have used to convince people in Britain that their rule in the North of Ireland is just have been shot full of holes over the past month. British law and order has been revealed once more as a legal charter for state murder. The 'sovereign' Southern state has been shown up as a British dominion disguised as an Irish republic. It has rarely been more obvious that the government is fighting a dirty war in Ireland in our name. Yet the official British opposition continues to collaborate in the carnage.

Last week, while Thatcher waved the Union Jack in Irish faces, the Labour Party leadership could only complain that the continued presence of the red, white and blue on the South African flag was an 'insult to Britain'. In truth it is entirely fitting that the flag of the British ruling class, which is called 'the Butcher's apron' in Ireland, should be associated with oppression around the world.

We have been led for too long by politicians who take 'the long perspective' on the Irish War. Another week of it will be too long. Our aim is to build a movement in Britain that can support the Irish in their fight to remove the root cause of the conflict, by forcing the troops out now.

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AT THE SHARP END OF BOTHA'S REPRESSION

NOW ALL RESISTANCE TO APARTHEID IS...

BANNED

The South African government effectively closed down the United Democratic Front and 16 other black anti-apartheid groups last week. President PW Botha also banned political activity by the trade union federation, Cosatu. The listed organisations still exist in name — but they cannot post a letter without government permission.

Law and order minister, Adriaan Vlok, claimed the bans were to suppress a 'revolutionary climate' in the country. But South African security forces have already largely suppressed the opposition groups. Since the government declared the latest state of emergency in June 1986 it has detained over 30 000 people. Many more have been intimidated, beaten and murdered by the security forces or government-backed vigilante squads. The new crackdown is not needed to deal with anti-apartheid organisations.

Instead, it is designed to persuade the white electorate that Botha's National Party remains committed to upholding the apartheid order.

After state repression dealt a body blow to the United Democratic Front, the mass union federation, Cosatu, became the main channel for political activity. Cosatu adopted the UDF's programme, and increasingly took on broader political issues. But last week's decree restricting Cosatu to trade union work was largely symbolic — government action, both open and covert, had already strangled most of Cosatu's political activities. Bombs have wrecked its public offices and union officials face harassment and detention. The defeat of the bitterly fought miners' strike last September seriously damaged the National Union of Mineworkers, the largest union within Cosatu.

BACKTRACKING

Last week's measures, the most wide-ranging since 19 groups were banned in 1977 after the Soweto uprising, were widely expected. The real question was when Botha would make his move. This week's by-elections in the conservative Transvaal, for seats in the all-white parliament, persuaded Botha that now was the time. He announced the new powers barely 24 hours before he was due to speak at an election rally in the Northern Transvaal town of Standerton. The by-elections are in former government strongholds which the far-right Conservative Party now controls. The ruling National Party has had trouble maintaining its traditional Afrikaner base in face of Conservative Party charges that it is backtracking on its commitment to apartheid.

The Conservatives won 22 Transvaal seats in last May's all-white elections and almost half of the total Afrikaner vote in the country. Botha is concerned that the rightward drift among whites is the result of his party's so-called reform strategy, which aims to buy off a section of the black population and modernise and stabilise the apartheid system.

SHAM

Alongside the detentions and bans of the last two years, Botha has put money into the black ghettos at the centre of the resistance movement. He is spending millions rebuilding the political credibility of sham black councils, and co-opting a new layer of collaborators. Black stooge councillors who took refuge in stockades behind armed guards just 18 months ago are now back at their posts. The UDF-affiliated residents' associations, which drove these collaborators out in the first place, are banned under the new decree.

Botha's reform-and-repression strategy may have helped to stabilise the townships but it has upset the government's traditional white electorate, already angry over the impact of drought and economic recession. By demonstrating his willingness to hammer the resistance movement Botha hopes to restore his electoral base while still pursuing the twin-track strategy.

Even the draconian nature of last week's measures is unlikely to placate the right-wing Afrikaners of the Transvaal.

As we go to press the Conservatives look set to win the by-elections with increased majorities. But the real worry for the apartheid regime is that, in destroying the last remains of legal black opposition, it may unleash a far more ruthless resistance.

Russell Osborne

ABORTION TIME-LIMIT DEBATE

LORDS LEAVE IT TO THE DOCTORS



Pandora Anderson

THE ANTI-ABORTIONISTS ARE DOMINATING THE DEBATE — WE NEED TO MAKE OUR ARGUMENTS HEARD

A house of lords select committee has recommended the rejection of legal time-limits on abortion. But, explains Fiona Foster, this only shows how confident they are that the DHSS and the doctors will police women's rights

Journalists heralded the select committee report as a setback for Liberal MP David Alton's attempts to reduce the abortion time-limit from 28 to 18 weeks. But can it be true that the noble lords are really the latest recruits in the fight for women's rights? And will their recommendation thwart Alton's efforts to limit women's access to abortion? A closer look at the report reveals that the answer to both questions is a resounding *no!*

The select committee had been discussing the Infant Life (Preservation) Bill, introduced in 1986 by the Bishop of Birmingham and now being sponsored by Lord Houghton of Sowerby. The bill aimed to bring the law into line with the medical profession's view that a fetus is now viable from 24 weeks, by amending the 1929 Infant Life (Preservation) Act to outlaw terminations after 24 weeks.

The peers felt that the proposed restrictions were an insult to the state and medical authorities which they consider to have an exemplary record on policing women's access to abortion. The 18-page report highlights government controls on abortion clinics and the medical profession's tough criteria for terminations as evidence that no legal restrictions on late abortions are necessary: 'Having regard to the restrictions already imposed administratively by the combined force of the health departments and the medical profession on abortions after 24 weeks of pregnancy, the committee see no purpose in retaining the 28-week restriction at all.'

Convinced that the state and the medics, with a little help from anti-abortion agitators, have created a climate in which women already find it so difficult to get abortions, the peers concluded that further legal controls serve no purpose.

The select committee noted that successive Tory health ministers have made extensive use of their powers to impose restrictions on non-NHS premises which carry out abortions. Only 65 private nursing homes are authorised by the DHSS to carry out abortions, and then only up to 20 weeks. Only seven can do abortions up to 24 weeks, leaving the small number done after 24 weeks in the hands of the NHS. All private sector nursing homes are subject to periodic, unannounced inspections by the DHSS and their right to continue operations is reviewed every two years. The lords produced striking statistics to vindicate their faith in medical practitioners. In 1986 only 29 abortions were carried out after 24 weeks, and only seven were on 'social grounds'.

Endorsing what is already general practice, the committee recommended that the 'social clause' of the 1967 Abortion Act be amended to ensure that two doctors agree that an abortion would be 'essential' to the mother's physical and mental health. By adding the word 'essential', the lords want to further undermine the already tenuous basis on which the vast majority of women gain permission to terminate an unwanted pregnancy. Because the latest figures show that no abortions were carried out after 24 weeks on the grounds of injury to existing children, the lords propose a legal limit of 24 weeks on these grounds only.

CONTROL

The committee's rejection of a sweeping 24-week limit on abortions may well mean a rocky ride for Alton's bill should it reach the house of lords. But it will do nothing to undermine attempts by Alton and his supporters to shift the climate of opinion in favour of stricter controls over abortion. Indeed, so successful has the anti-abortion lobby been that the lords now feel confident enough to reject time-limits in the knowledge that the state and the medical profession will continue clamping down on women's rights.

The select committee report confirms that women are as far from having the right to abortion as we have ever been.

The 1967 Abortion Act was carefully framed to ensure that there would never be any possibility of abortion on demand. It is now so widely accepted that the state and the medical profession have the sole authority to decide who can and cannot have an abortion that there is hardly any need for this principle to be enshrined in legislation. The only purpose of retaining the law seems to be to allow the anti-abortion lobby to attack it as a means of promoting prejudice against women.

EOC REPORT

WOMEN ARE WORSE OFF -OFFICIAL



Andrew Calcutt

PART-TIME CLEANING IS ALL SHE COULD GET

The Equal Opportunities Commission's new report, *Barriers to Fair Selection*, details the range of practices which ensure that women are kept in the worst-paid jobs and the lowest grades. The document was compiled from a survey of workplaces in the private sector. The responses were a great disappointment to the EOC, but will come as no surprise to most women.

The report revealed the predominance of women in the part-time sector and in temporary jobs. In one firm more than 99 per cent of part-timers were women. The employers gave various reasons for employing so many part-time staff, ranging from the concerned — 'it gets them out of the house after they've sorted the family's tea out' — to the blunt — 'some start asking when they're to be laid off.' In this case 346 women were laid off with one day's notice to suit the interests of the company.

LOW

Many of the women interviewed held a low opinion of existing equal opportunities legislation. Only 29 per cent believed they were being given an equal chance to men, and 68 per cent felt they were discouraged from promotion. Most commented on the complete absence of any opportunities whatsoever.

The report uncovers numerous procedures which breach existing legislation but which are virtually impossible to stop. A large number of employers use the 'word of mouth' network to keep women out of senior positions. An insurance worker explained how his firm used to recruit new staff: 'They didn't like to advertise in case they got the wrong sort. No Jews, Catholics, or negroes and particularly no women.'

HOSTILE

If any women managed to get to the interview stage, they would then face a barrage of hostile questions relating to their family circumstances. After being asked about how she would deal with a personal assault in somebody's house and about her plans to marry, one woman soon got the impression that 'it wasn't really a female they were looking for.' Employers put an emphasis on 'geographical mobility' and the willingness of women to move if the job required it. Few women are able to uproot themselves due to responsibilities at home and their lack of economic independence. As a result, this requisite disadvantages women immediately, and in many cases is only announced at the interview to discourage women applicants.

The report's conclusions offer little hope to women in badly paid, insecure employment, or to women who are denied work in the first place. It recommends that firms '*monitor* their practices...to identify the extent and location of any barriers to equal opportunities'. It is clear in the report that the 'extent and location' of these barriers are very great. It is not so clear what can be achieved simply by monitoring the situation. There are also proposals to formalise equal opportunities in the selection process, and the report gives personnel managers responsibility for operating these plans. This seems at odds with the evidence in the survey which shows personnel officers to have taken a leading role in discriminating against women.

For nearly 20 years equal opportunities legislation has failed to improve the position of women at work. Indeed the EOC's report seems to show that the situation has worsened. Women have even less chance of securing stable full-time employment today than was the case in the seventies. Yet the EOC calls complacently for wider changes to the law. This includes tackling issues such as paternity leave, career breaks and 'childcare facilities'.

The question of childcare facilities is of major importance to women, although you would not think so given its low priority in the EOC report. For women with children, lack of nursery provision is the greatest barrier to decent employment. If women are to gain full equality at work, the issue of women's role as domestic drudges and child-bearers must be confronted. To release women from these burdens, we need to fight for free abortion on demand and free all-day nurseries. The Equal Opportunities Commission, which has spent all of two decades discovering that discrimination exists, is not the body to lead this struggle.

Joanna Doyle

AFTER AIDAN McANESPIE, WHO'S NEXT?

'THEY'LL STITCH ME UP, OR SHOOT ME'

Joe Boatman spoke to Jim Collins from Derry, who has been harassed by British occupation forces for years — just as Aidan McAnespie was threatened before a soldier shot him dead in Aughnacloy last week


Joe Boatman

JIM COLLINS

Jim Collins is a photographer from the Bogside, whose experience of harassment by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the British Army has much in common with that of Aidan McAnespie.

'The first time I was ever arrested they put me in jail in Crumlin Road. They gave me a going-over, I was bashed around through the time I was interrogated.' That was in June 1985. Jim was held for seven and a half months. Then the RUC dropped the charges and released him. 'Remand in Ireland', explains Jim, 'is just another form of internment. Somebody can just snatch you off the street and put you in jail for up to two years. The charges may be thrown out in court but at the end of the day you've spent two years in jail on the word of an RUC man or a supergrass.'

As soon as Jim steps outside his door the security forces are on his back.

He has been arrested eight times in the last 18 months, and hauled off to Castlereagh interrogation centre. 'Sometimes you're lifted straight off the street. You could be going to the shop and they just pull you up. One minute you're walking in the fresh air, the next minute you're locked up in a cell.'

TORTURE

Last week they came for him again. 'Tuesday morning, half seven, the RUC came and raided the home and took me to Strand Road barracks and later to Castlereagh. I was arrested under Section 12. That allows them to hold you for seven days without charge. They took me into the back of the jeep and told me to sit on the ground which I refused. One RUC man kept his boot on my back and the other held me down with his elbow on my shoulder.'

Castlereagh is the main torture centre in the Six Counties. 'They've become very sophisticated in how they ill-treat people. They can slap you on the head for maybe four hours and you still wouldn't have a mark on you. But it has the same effect as kicking you. There are times when they'll leave you standing for hours and if you sit down they throw you back up again. Or else they bend your fingers or your wrist back, various blows to the stomach or testicles. But they don't leave any marks.'

Before he left Castlereagh last week Jim was put on an identity parade. 'A girl came on heavily disguised with a blonde wig and dark glasses. The RUC man in charge walked in my direction and said "Are you sure you can't identify anybody?" He didn't tell her to pick me out but he brought her right over. She still didn't identify me.' That was the second time in as many months that he had been put on an identity parade by his captors.

'They recognise me as a republican so they do their utmost to get me off the streets. Eventually they'll stitch me up or shoot me.' He is also well-known as a photographer, whose pictures aim to show the reality of war for Irish nationalists. 'That's very little in terms of the war going on, but something so small is enough to get me hounded by the RUC and the British Army.'

Everybody in the Bogside has a friend who has been whisked off the street or a relative who has been tortured in Castlereagh.

'If you live in the Bogside or Creggan, recognised nationalist areas, the RUC are going to harass you no matter what. They don't have to know you or know you're a republican. If you live in the Bog there's every chance you're going to be a Catholic so they're not going to give you a minute of your life.'

The murder of Aidan McAnespie was no surprise to Jim. 'The RUC and the British Army have always had a shoot-to-kill policy in Ireland. They didn't suddenly come to the conclusion "Right, let's go and start shooting some people." They've always done it.'


Jim Collins

A JIM COLLINS PHOTO CAPTURING AN RUC ATTACK AT A DERRY FUNERAL

PRIVATE IAN THAIN AND YOUNG IRISH POWs

TWO FACES OF BRITISH JUSTICE

'We consider the incident to have been a tragic error of judgement made by a young man in very difficult circumstances.' This was how a British Army spokesman justified the decision to release and re-enlist Private Ian Thain. Thain, the only British soldier ever convicted of murdering an Irish nationalist while on duty, was sentenced to life for the cold-blooded shooting of 22-year old Thomas Reilly in Belfast in August 1983. Now it has been confirmed that Thain was released in February 1987, after serving only two years and one month of his sentence.

The British authorities justified their decision on the grounds that Thain was a young man who made a mistake when he was under pressure. He had been in the Army less than a year and was 18 when he killed Reilly, three months into his first tour of duty in Northern Ireland. At his trial the judge said he had taken account of Thain's youth, inexperience and lack of sleep. Last week the press made much of the fact that Thain had been suffering from 'emotional shock' at the time of the shooting, after the death of a fellow soldier killed by a bomb two months earlier.

British government spokesmen, who showed sympathy for Thain's plight, do not grant the same clemency to Irish republicans of the same age and younger who are detained at the 'Secretary of State's Pleasure'. Most Irish nationalists who are imprisoned for alleged offences against the British occupation of their country are sentenced with release dates. But those convicted of 'crimes' allegedly committed when they were under 18 are detained indefinitely at the 'Secretary of State's Pleasure'. There are more than 50 Irish prisoners of war serving 'SOSP' sentences in British jails in Northern Ireland.

Terry Boyle from Strabane was 21 when he was arrested. But the attacks he was charged with dated back to 1973 when he was 16. Because he was convicted of a murder committed before he was 18, he was sentenced to be detained at the whim of the Northern Ireland secretary. He will have served 10 years in April, yet he still doesn't know when he will get out. In 1972 Joe Lynch and Brendan Malley were jailed after being convicted of participating in an IRA operation. Lynch got life and Malley, then 17, got 'SOSP'. Lynch was released after serving 13 years, but Malley is still inside and likely to remain there for at least another two years. By then he will have spent half his life behind bars.

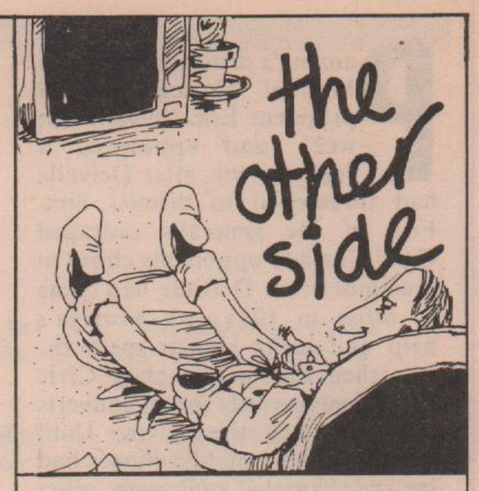
UNPRECEDENTED

The way in which the authorities arrive at their decisions on release dates is instructive. Thain's case was considered at top level *before* the parole board made its decision to release him. The British Army concluded that Thain should not be dismissed from the force — unprecedented for a convicted murderer — and the parole board agreed to release him back into his regiment. The final decision was taken by home secretary Douglas Hurd, who gave his approval for Thain to rejoin the Army.

Contrast this to the way Irish 'SOSP' prisoners are dealt with. They are supposed to attend review hearings with the assistant governor who is a professional Loyalist. After the formalities of inquiring about the prisoner's family and education, questions about his attitude, remorse, guilt and political beliefs take over. The implication is that only if the prisoner renounces his political convictions and promises to have no involvement in the republican movement will he stand a chance of getting out.

If you are a young British soldier who shoots an Irish nationalist in cold blood and gets sentenced to life imprisonment you can expect to be released back into the force which is waging war against the Irish people. If you are a 16-year old Irish nationalist who gets sentenced to 'SOSP' for resisting the British occupation of your country you will never be allowed out to rejoin the fight for Irish freedom.

Joan Phillips



THE FEAR

'WHAT do you want?' ask the shady Men-in-Suits whose illicit operations are threatened by Carl, the razor-faced boy gangster in *The Fear* (ITV, Wednesday). 'A profit' spits Carl the Islington upstart. Then he pops out in his Porsche to kill some more people and increase the return on his investment.

Everybody says that *The Fear* is a 'controversial' moral allegory about Thatcher's Britain, because Carl has a yuppie lifestyle and the same thrusting qualities found among the young City slickers who have made fortunes in the markets. The difference is that Carl breaks laws other than those concerning insider dealing, and uses 'designer violence' rather than computer fraud to make his money. So what's controversial about all that?

The basic story in *The Fear* — young hood challenges old gang-land bosses — is the staple stuff of crime thrillers. Carl is only an updated, better-dressed and better-armed version of Pinkie, the lean teenager with a razor under his thumbnail in Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock*. Carl even has a boyhood mate, Marty, who wants him to give up crime — the temporal answer to Jimmy Cagney's pal-turned-priest (Pat O'Brien), in *Angels with Dirty Faces*.

Neither is the idea of presenting organised crime as just another business exactly new. From the old prohibition gangster films to *The Godfather,* the line separating the violent crooks from the capitalists and the politicians has always been a fine one. After all, didn't Cagney lose his booze-smuggling fortune in the Wall Street crash in *The Roaring Twenties*?

Presumably what makes *The Fear* 'controversial' is the fact that it's about Britain, now, rather than the USA years ago. Dignified members of the establishment have always prided themselves on belonging to the Confederation of British Industry rather than the Cosa Nostra. But the spate of City crime scandals, and the revelations like those in the Stalker affair (of police chiefs, Tory dignitaries and businessmen mixing with crooks at swish soirées), have allowed the mask to slip a little. The powers that be don't need any more embarrassing reminders that there is little difference between the methods used by Carl's crew to extract extortion from a pool hall ('Be 'ard, Jo-Jo' says one, as Jo-Jo kicks in the door), and those used by budding British businessmen making a dawn raid on a rival company's shares.

If Carl symbolises anything, it is that little apart from the packaging has changed either in crime movies or capitalist standards. He even exhibits the same vicious chauvinism as the Cagney gangster who pushed a grapefruit in a woman's face in *White Heat*. But then, the dodgy Hoorays in the City wine bars probably aren't averse to throwing up fruit juice over a gel, either.

Eddie Veale

CRISIS IN PANAMA

UP THE CANAL WITHOUT A PADDLE

Panama's strongman General Manuel Noriega ousted president Eric Delvalle last week and appointed a replacement, after Delvalle had threatened to dismiss him. Few of the general's outraged Civic Crusade opponents chose to remember that Delvalle had come to office in 1985 with Noriega's help and using similar methods. But then the middle class Civic Crusaders are only recent converts to democracy themselves. Until 1987 Panama's middle classes had backed Noriega and every other dictator who has wielded power throughout their country's brief history.

CARVED

The history of this small Central American state reveals that Panama has never achieved independence from its US sponsors or managed to establish a stable democracy. And the tumultuous events of the past few months show that the USA is finding it increasingly difficult to keep control over its own 'backyard'.

If any country can claim the title 'the 51st State of America', it is Panama (short for Pan America).

The country was carved out of Colombia in 1903, when a number of Colombian shareholders in the Panama Canal Construction Company signed an accord with US president Theodore Roosevelt. This granted the USA sovereign rights over a 10-mile wide strip of the isthmus 'in perpetuity'. Following his 'walk softly and carry a big stick' policy, Roosevelt overruled Colombian objections to the separation and despatched several US navy cruisers to the Panamanian coast.

SOVEREIGNTY

The canal was built between 1904 and 1914, and the USA began to install its 10 000-strong Southern Command there. The force was sent ostensibly to protect the canal and its American operators, but its true mission over the decades that followed was to police the entire region. In 1977 US president Jimmy Carter consented to hand over sovereignty of the canal zone by the year 2000. But Panama was compelled to guarantee the international neutrality of the canal and to grant the USA the 'perpetual right' to defend this neutrality.

Panama's General Omar Torrijos began his sovereignty negotiations with America in the sixties, with support from the Panamanian middle classes who were eager to reap the benefits of running the canal themselves. They had precious few interests of their own to develop, since every section of Panama's economy is directly tied to the fortunes of the international economy.

But the damaging impact of the decline in world trade from the early eighties has encouraged the Panamanian middle classes to think twice about cutting ties with the USA.

The world recession hit the Panamanian economy on several fronts. The fall-off in world trade devastated Panama's 'flag of convenience' shipping fleet, which faces stiff competition from newcomers like Cyprus and even land-locked Luxemburg. The economic crisis cut canal traffic, and the opening of the Trans-isthmian oil pipeline in 1985 led to a sharp decline in revenue. Panama's international banking operations took off in the seventies. But they are now struggling to compete with Miami's still newer financial facilities, even though Panama's currency is the US dollar. Falling prices have decimated Panama's main agricultural cash crops of bananas and sugar.

All this has led the middle classes to abandon thoughts of ditching their special relationship with the USA. They have thus become increasingly unhappy with the anti-US gestures which Noriega uses to keep control over the masses.

General Noriega assumed command over Panama's 15 000-strong defence forces in 1983 as the effects of the recession began to bite. He got the job with the help of a good reference from his CIA employers. From 1980 Noriega allowed the CIA to train Contras in Panama for use against the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. The US undercover subversion and assassination agency laundered drug money via Panama's secrecy-conscious banks to arm the Contras, and established a listening post to monitor 'subversives' throughout the continent. Noriega turned a blind eye to US dirty tricks and infringements of international law. But growing working class unrest at home has since forced him to cold-shoulder his CIA sponsors.

In March 1986 Panama accepted an IMF programme of harsh austerity measures in return for a $60m commercial bank loan to help relieve its economic problems. Panama's trade union confederation, Consato, protested by calling an indefinite national strike. The nine-day strike was marked by clashes with the defence forces, but was called off after Noriega's stooge Delvalle made substantial concessions to the unions. This quick victory unleashed a strike wave that lasted the rest of the year. Relations between the conciliatory Noriega and the desperate Panamanian middle classes deteriorated throughout 1986. They reached an all-time low in March last year when Noriega sacked his second-in-command Colonel Roberto Herrara, who had accused him of drug trafficking and conspiring with the CIA to kill Torrijos in 1981.

Noriega's middle class opponents moved into the streets and formed the Civic Crusade to press for his resignation. Lacking any democratic tradition, they were obliged to import the 'People's Power' model of Filipino president Corazon Aquino. Remarkable scenes of well-dressed lawyers and doctors confronting soldiers in riot gear hit the world's TV screens. The new crusaders for democracy issued unsuccessful appeals for a general strike, but failed to put Noriega under pressure.

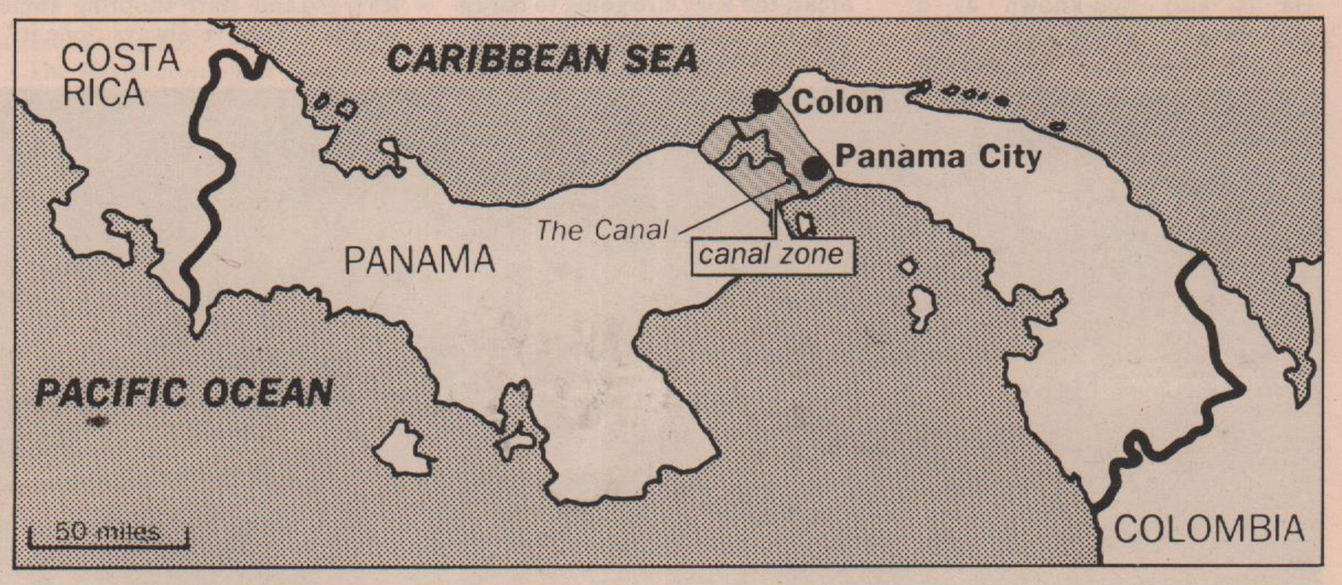
Their only hope of ousting Noriega lies in persuading Washington to take their side, and beyond a few gestures this is unlikely to happen.

When the American embassy in Panama City was bricked by a mob last July, Noriega's soldiers stood by and watched. Like Argentina's General Galtieri in 1982, who directed popular revolt against Britain's usurpation of the Malvinas, Noriega has been obliged to channel domestic opposition against US imperialism. But at the same time he has undermined the protest movement by making his own personal battle, rather than the issue of US interference in general, the focus of popular dissension.

CONFLAGRATION

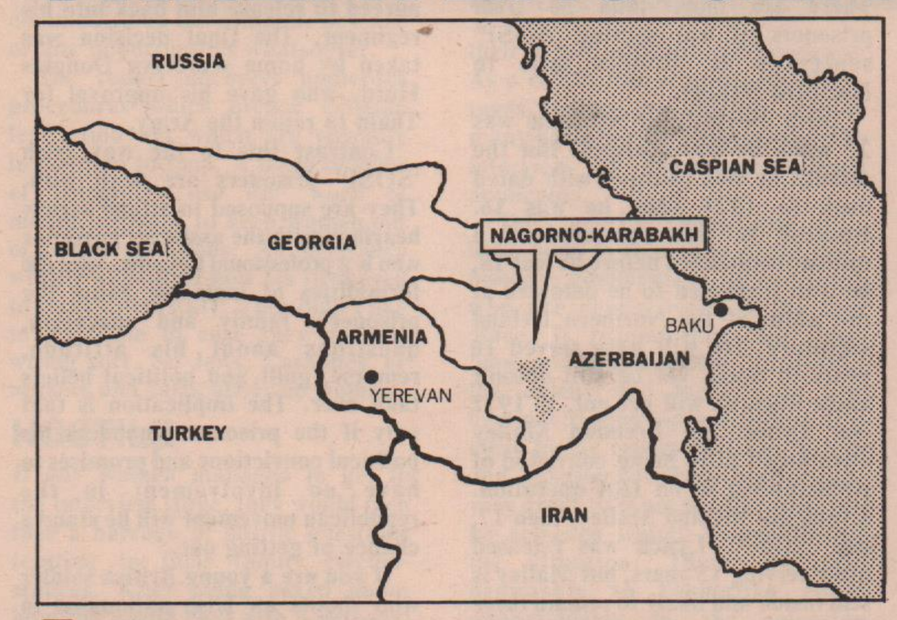
American courts can issue as many drug indictments as they like, but US leaders are not seriously considering unseating Noriega. These days Washington is grateful to find a third world leader who can pledge that 'all American interests in the Republic of Panama shall remain intact, undisturbed and unharmed,' and still manage to keep a grip on the rebellious masses. Washington is reluctant to endanger its vital strategic interests in Panama by precipitate action, and a direct military intervention would risk conflagration across Central America. For the moment it seems that Noriega's position is assured, but the continuing upheaval means that his future is far from guaranteed.

Andy Clarkson



GORBACHEV'S NIGHTMARE

ARMENIAN UPHEAVAL THREATENS GLASNOST



A million Armenians demonstrating on the streets of their capital city Yerevan caught the Soviet leadership by surprise. Since the anti-Russian riots in Kazakhstan in 1986, the national question has emerged as one of the most important political issues facing Gorbachev. More than 100 nationalities live inside the borders of the Soviet Union — and the ethnic tensions that have smouldered for decades are now threatening to explode.

The protests in Yerevan have been sparked off by the demand for the predominantly Armenian autonomous region of Nagorno-Karabakh to be removed from the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan and transferred to Armenia. The disputed area of Nagorno-Karabakh has been part of the Azerbaijan regime since 1923. Ethnic tension between the largely Christian Armenians and the Muslim Azerbaijanis goes back to the pre-1917 period. It now threatens to engulf the region in ethnic violence.

The past week's demonstrations over Nagorno-Karabakh are symptomatic of a more general desire for change.

Over the past 12 months Armenians have protested against nuclear power plants and industrial pollution in Yerevan. It appears that the local leadership of the Communist Party has played a significant role in the demonstrations. The Armenian party leadership is well-known for its corruption, and was under investigation by Moscow before the protests began. The local bureaucrats have used the national aspirations of the Armenian people to strengthen their hand in negotiations with Moscow.

The explosion in Yerevan is an unresolvable problem for the Kremlin. If Moscow makes any concessions to the Armenians it will provoke a backlash among the Azerbaijanis. But if the Soviet leadership ignores the demands of the demonstrators then it risks fuelling further unrest. Gorbachev is playing for time. All he can offer in negotiations are cosmetic concessions. Gorbachev wants to avoid a repressive military response since that could finish off his policy of *glasnost*. However Moscow has little room to manoeuvre. The ruling bureaucracy cannot allow nationalist protest to succeed lest it set an example to other ethnic groups. Sooner or later Gorbachev will threaten to use force, and if that doesn't work he will have to send in the troops.

INDICTMENT

The growing importance of the national question is a grave indictment of the Stalinist system in the Soviet Union.

From the mid-twenties the Soviet bureaucracy usurped all power from the working class and systematically liquidated revolutionary politics. The communist tradition, which had considerable influence in Armenia and neighbouring Azerbaijan during the years following the 1917 revolution, perished in the Stalinist era. With the destruction of working class politics, nationalism has become the dominant form of political expression in Armenia and the other republics. The responsibility for this tragedy lies with the Soviet bureaucracy.

Only a new proletarian revolution can create the conditions for overcoming the ethnic divisions which now plague the Soviet Union.

letters page



Pandora Anderson

NURSES ARE NOT 'ANGELS'

THE establishment knows that control and manipulation of nurses as a workforce depends on the maintenance of the image of nurses as 'ministering angels' with infinite patience. John Moore, the social services minister, has already drawn the distinction between 'decent' nurses who don't take industrial action and the rest of us, portrayed as lacking in compassion and humanity.

Most nurses feel a deep commitment to those they care for, and the authorities know they can control us by insinuating that we are personally responsible for patients' well-being.

Now is the time to make clear to the government and managers that, under the present structure, if we decide to strike it is *they* — not us — who are responsible for providing services, including emergency cover. They perpetuate the appalling pay and conditions that we have to work under, not us. We need to encourage our colleagues to realise that the continuous emphasis on the image of dedicated Florence Nightingales is kept up for the purpose of covering up the reality, ie, that we are a group of low-paid, totally exploited, mostly women workers.

Sarah
North London

AIDS IN AFRICA

TO say that the bubonic plague bacillus originated in the Himalayas does not imply any prejudice against the people of Central Asia. Nor is there anything racist about admitting that there are a large number of people with Aids in Africa, or about conceding that it seems likely that the virus originated in Africa. These are simply facts.

The letter from Tunde in last week's *tns* reveals a widespread radical inability to face up to reality and a tendency to evade political problems. The evident fact that there is a serious Aids epidemic in central Africa has been seized upon by the Western establishment to reinforce racial prejudice. When anti-racists respond by trying to deny truths that are evident to everybody they simply confirm public suspicions that left wingers are head-bangers and leave the influence of reaction unchallenged.

Our response to the use of Aids to stir up racial bigotry — for example, by imposing new regulations on immigrants or visitors — should be to step up opposition to all forms of immigration controls. This fits naturally into the work of a campaign such as Workers Against Racism which has played a leading role on this front for several years.
Don Milligan
London

STRIKE FOR JOBCENTRE JOBS

I WORK at Tottenham Jobcentre and have been on strike since 1 February against staff cuts. Two weeks before we came out, I was assaulted in the office by a client who had been waiting to be seen for over half an hour. That day there were 30 people waiting and three staff on duty. A few days later, the area manager promised us two extra staff. They were recruited during the following week. Then we received a memorandum from senior management saying that the new staff would have to go.

By this time, we'd heard about the Camden strike, and we knew that their dispute and ours were both about the same thing: staffing cuts as a result of last year's merger of Jobcentres and unemployment benefit offices. We voted overwhelmingly to join the Camden strike. At least 25 offices are now involved, and it looks as if it could escalate into a London-wide indefinite strike, including DHSS offices as well.

The pay in the civil service is an insult. Staff morale is at its lowest for 15 years, while turnover is reaching new heights. I often think that the best thing is to leave, because there seems very little chance of changing anything that the government does. I've been involved in industrial action three times in the past year, and it's clear to me that the government is carrying out a wholesale assault. The only possible way of making a proper stand is for all public sector workers to unite against it.

CPSA striker
Tottenham

AFGHAN PUZZLE

GORBACHEV'S declaration of withdrawal from Afghanistan has certainly pulled the rug from under US propagandists. It has also caused great consternation among speech writers in Whitehall. Yet while the analysis in James Malone's article (*tns*, 26 February) is excellent, the conclusion is somewhat vague.

It's all very well to say that 'only the independent struggles of workers and peasants can liberate the Afghan people'. But *what* workers and peasants? With next to no industry there cannot be a working class in Afghanistan; and, as the article states, the reforms introduced by Muhammad Taraki's government — the radical administration which took power in 1978 — were resented by the Muslim peasants. Since then, the fundamentalists have consolidated their influence in the rebel movement. Any 'independent' struggles will only be independent of the Kabul government, not independent of the reactionary mullahs.

Najibullah's regime would not survive a Soviet withdrawal, and if it falls the ensuing fundamentalist administration would make Khomeini's look liberal. There is nothing progressive about any wing of the Afghan rebel movement.

It was correct to condemn the Soviet invasion in 1979 on the grounds that it would only reinforce reaction in Afghanistan. Yet if the Soviet forces withdraw, the fundamentalists will carry out a monstrous pogrom. If the Soviet forces remain, the civil war will continue and the mullahs will gain even more support. It's not just the US state department and the British foreign office who have no answer for Afghanistan.
Paul Flewers
South London

CUTS AND BRIBES FROM BR

BRITISH Rail management in Scotland are forcing through job cuts and changes in work practices among clerical grades. Union officials have accommodated with management all the way. A recent example of their approach occurred when delegates from all over Scotland met management in Glasgow.

The first half of the meeting was between local staff reps and a group of full-time union negotiators. This lasted for nearly eight hours. During that time, any dissent from the floor was automatically attacked by the top table. Then at 6pm management arrived to work out the finer details of how they intend to implement the cuts and changes in work practices. As they negotiated through the night with the full-timers, local staff reps watched from the sidelines, unable to take part.

Write to *tns* BCM JPLTD, WC1N 3XX



When the meeting came to an end at 3.45am, staff reps were put into taxis and given a day off with pay. Management even offered rooms at the Hospitality Inn at British Rail's expense. I declined their bribe. The next day I went to work to tell union members about the farcical negotiations I had witnessed.

The only way to stop job cuts is for militants to go to weaker areas and argue for action. Railworkers must also unite across sectional lines. My colleagues in the train drivers' union tell me that their officials have ordered a news blackout on the current negotiations over the introduction of the 'traincrew concept' — management's fancy name for further flexibility and job cuts. We cannot allow our fightback to be sabotaged by demarcation between drivers, clerks and guards.

NUR member
Glasgow

HOW TO STOP THE CLAUSE

THE Stop the Clause demonstration in Manchester was one of the biggest-ever lesbian and gay marches. The carnival mood was in the tradition of Lesbian and Gay Pride. But the rally at the end didn't do anything to raise our spirits.

The speeches were mainly rhetorical — all about how nasty and horrible Clause 28 is. No one put forward any strategy of how we might build a fighting campaign. This was in stark contrast to the militant and angry march in London earlier this year, where the speakers and marchers were in fighting form. In London, Linda Bellos spoke of how she would be prepared to break the law by operating a policy of non-compliance. However, when I spoke with her before the Manchester rally, she made it clear that although she would still adopt this approach, her Labour group did not support her. Her speech was as rhetorical as the rest.



Pandora Anderson

As we get near to the time when the shit hits the fan, the excuses are coming out. It is abundantly clear that we cannot rely on Labour councils to fight on for us. When the crunch comes, they will capitulate to pressure in the Tory courts.

We have to respond to this situation by putting forward an effective strategy to win council workers and the rest of the working class to fight for lesbian and gay rights. The Fighting Charter for Lesbian and Gay Rights (*tns*, 26 February) is a clear platform from which to present the arguments for the complete decriminalisation of homosexuality. It is imperative, now more than ever, to begin to build a campaign for lesbian and gay rights and for equal rights for all.

Andrew
Liverpool

the propaganda war



VERY FILTHY LUCRE

ACCORDING to the latest issue of *Money* magazine, Al Capone had the highest-ever annual income made by any individual; the £2.5m he took in 1927 is equivalent to £390m today. None of the wealthy listed in *Money's* survey of 'Britain's richest 200' get close to the gangster's income, but many make the same contribution to British society as he did to Chicago.

***Money* points out that the old British aristocracy has been in decline for years, so that today 'Only five aristocratic families make it into the top 20, and there are just 30 members of the landed gentry among our list of 200.' And, it adds, 'Self-made men outnumber those who inherited their wealth by more than two to one.' This might suggest that the entrepreneurial spirit which built the workshop of the world is still alive. But a closer look at the survey reveals the modern British rich as dead wood.**

Most of the modern British rich have assumed the parasitic style of the aristocracy. They make their money not from industry, technology and enterprise, but by creaming off rent, interest and dividends from land ownership and share speculation. The prophets of Thatcherism like the mythical image of an economy sustained by industrious individual capitalists rolling up their sleeves at the family factory. But today's economy is dominated by massive corporations with their fingers in a thousand pies, swapping paper shares across the globe. These outfits, as *Money* discovered, are run by managers whose 'share stakes were much lower than their profiles and their salaries'. The men with the real money (and more than 90 per cent of those on *Money's* list are men) simply sit back and accumulate fortunes on the strength of owning things. They are living adverts for the argument that capitalism is a corrupt and bankrupt way of running the world.

BILLIONAIRES

Take a look at who owns what in Thatcher's Britain.

***Money* reckons that there are seven billionaires in Britain today. The Queen comes top of the pile with an estimated £3340m. She gets a £4.3m annual handout from the state, and owns castles, thousands of acres of prime land, a vast personal portfolio of stocks and shares, jewels and racehorses — 'Although,' *Money* notes sadly, 'the triumph of a Derby winner still eludes her.' Our hearts go out to the poor woman.**

Then there is Sir John Moores, 'Britain's richest man', worth about £1700m. *Money* tries to make something of the fact that Moores left school in Eccles at the age of 14 and worked his way up. But that was at the turn of the century. Today the 92-year old Moores rakes it in from owning Littlewoods football pools — hardly an enterprise which can compensate for the collapse of Britain's manufacturing industry.

Other billionaires include the Duke of Westminster, just 36 and sitting on £1400m. *Money* suggests that his wealth is due to 'being in the right place at the right time'. In fact he was only in the right womb at the right time. The family's real lucky break came centuries back, when Buck House was built on marshy land they owned in Belgravia, which quickly became a lucrative piece of real estate. Sir James Goldsmith is worth £1000m. *Money* politely describes him as 'a corporate raider'. In other words he is a City shark who dives through the markets biting chunks out of anything tasty and spitting out the remains. The Vestey family are on the same billion mark. They are best known as the most infamous tax-dodgers in Britain, whose exploits make Lester Piggott look like an honest citizen. And just behind the billionaires, with £700m, comes the repulsive Robert Maxwell. He is another worthless speculator, who owes his image as a hard-working captain of industry to the publicity efforts of his own *Mirror* (which mentioned his name a mere 94 times last Wednesday).

SPIVS

Successful hi-tech businessmen like Alan Sugar of Amstrad consumer electronics are few and far between in *Money's* survey. Sugar started out selling car aerials from the back of his car and is now worth £280m. But even he made most of that from the boom in share prices, which multiplied the value of his holding in Amstrad, rather than from flogging computers. The fragility of Sugar's fortune was revealed in last October's crash, when he lost £100m overnight. The myth of the dynamic entrepreneur is finally exposed by the survey's revelation that a full third of those with between £10m and £50m are fading entertainers like Mick Jagger and Elton John, pulp novelists like Jeffrey Archer and Barbara Cartland, ham actors like Roger Moore and Joan Collins, and human 'saucy' postcard Benny Hill.

***Money* admits that its survey is flawed and incomplete. DHSS claimants might have to account for their every penny, but the accountancy profession exists to keep the ill-gotten gains of the rich away from the public — and the Inland Revenue's — gaze. It is also true that being very rich is no guarantee of direct power. The people who make the final decisions concerning the future of British capitalism do not appear on this list; Denis Thatcher's few million in the bank leaves him and Margaret down in the third division of the filthy rich league.**

Despite this, and its sycophantic tone, *Money's* survey is a useful antidote to all the hype about British entrepreneurship being reborn. In the week when Britain recorded its worst-ever monthly trade deficit, the catalogue confirms that the rich Brits ripping off the world's wealth are a jaded collection of spivs and coupon-clippers. So far as the horse race of the historic struggle for social progress is concerned, they could not saddle a Derby winner between them.

JUDGES AND GUN

MUR

'reasonable in th

Another Irishman was shot dead by a Br that the only British squaddie convicte of jail and back in the Army. The way **Mick Hume**, is a sure sign that ther

The Irish War is shrouded so heavily in British lies, myths and cover-ups that nobody seems certain exactly how many Irish people the British forces have shot dead since the fighting began again in 1969. Various organisations and individuals have tried to cut through the smog of false propaganda to arrive at a reliable figure. We'll go with the Irish Information Partnership, which recently produced statistics showing that the total stood at 304. The killing of Aidan McAnespie by a British soldier at Aughnacloy last Sunday makes 305. More than 55 per cent of them were civilians with no involvement in the republican armed struggle. McAnespie's killer has now been charged with 'unlawful killing'. But judging by the record, he has little to worry about.

Only 20 members of the British Army, Ulster Defence Regiment and Royal Ulster Constabulary have ever been prosecuted for committing murder or manslaughter while on duty in Northern Ireland. And just two of those cases have ended with convictions in the no-jury Diplock courts. That is an acquittal rate of 90 per cent. It contrasts dramatically with the 34 per cent acquittal rate for all cases, mostly involving republicans, which have been heard by single judges in the courts of Northern Ireland. Even the two British soldiers who were convicted did not exactly suffer for their crimes.

***McAtamney:* 'Once you have decided to open fire, you shoot to take out your enemy.'**
***Judge:* 'Do you mean permanently out of action?'**
***McAtamney:* 'Yes'**
Exchange between deputy chief constable McAtamney of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Lord Justice Gibson, during the 1984 trial in which three of McAtamney's shoot-to-kill squad were acquitted of murder

The first was Private Robert Reid Davidson, who shot and killed Theresa Donaghey as the car in which she was a passenger passed through an Army checkpoint at Strabane in April 1980. The Army said it was an accident (a claim they repeated while Aidan McAnespie lay dead on the Derry-Dublin Road last Sunday). Davidson was convicted of manslaughter. He was sentenced to all of 12 months in a Young Offenders' Centre — and his sentence was suspended for two years.

The second and last soldier convicted was Private Ian Thain. He shot Thomas 'Kidso' Reilly through the heart as the Belfast nationalist ran away from a bullying Army patrol in August 1983. Thain was convicted of murder and handed a life sentence. He was shipped home to serve his sentence in Britain — a privilege repeatedly denied to the Irish republican prisoners in British jails. Then, last week, it was announced that Thain had been released after serving just two years and one month of his sentence, and had even rejoined the Army to serve out his six-year contract. The authorities said they had treated Thain leniently because 'he was only a young man at the time of the incident.' They have never allowed this consideration to alter their attitude to Irish republicans convicted at the



'Sinn Fein has had all sport up to the present an are going to have the s now. The more you shoo better I will like it, a assure you no policeman get into trouble for shoo any man.'
Lieutenant Colonel Smyth, Irish Constabulary comman Munster, 1920, telling his m shoot any Irishman seen a suspiciously — eg, walking hands in pockets

-LAW IN IRELAND

RDER
e circumstances'

tish soldier last week. And news broke of murder in Northern Ireland was out the law treats British killers, argues is an undeclared war on in Ireland

ripe old age of 16, and locked up for indefinite sentences at the 'Secretary of State's Pleasure' (see page 5).

The courts' treatment of soldiers and policemen who kill Irish nationalists is the clearest indication that the law in Northern Ireland is a weapon in Britain's war to keep control over its oldest colony.

'The law should be used as just another weapon in the government's arsenal, and in this case it becomes little more than a propaganda cover for the disposal of unwanted members of the public. For this to happen efficiently, the activities of the legal system have to be tied into the war effort in as discreet a way as possible.'
General Frank Kitson, infantry brigade commander in Northern Ireland, 1970-72

Over the 18 years of the current conflict, the courts have handed down many judgements which give the British forces a free hand to kill any Irish person. They have acted along the lines laid down by General Frank Kitson, the author of much of Britain's counter-insurgency policy. 'The law should be used as just another weapon in the government's arsenal,' wrote Kitson in 1971, 'and in this case it becomes little more than *a propaganda cover for the disposal of unwanted members of the public.*' The one piece of Kitson's advice which the judges have failed to follow is that they should be 'discreet' in legalising murder by the armed forces.

The key case was in the mid-seventies. In August 1974 British soldiers raided the McElhone family farm in County Tyrone. None of the family had any republican connections. The troops ordered young Patrick McElhone outside and beat him up. Then a Private Jones took the farmer into a meadow and shot him dead. Jones was charged with murder. In his defence, Jones claimed that he thought McElhone might be an IRA member seeking to escape. Justice MacDermott ruled that this (entirely groundless) belief made the use of deadly force 'reasonable in the circumstances'. The most important circumstance, said the judge, was 'the "general wartime situation" in Northern Ireland'. MacDermott thus admitted that Britain was at war with the nationalist community, and that it was reasonable to assume that any nationalist was an IRA member deserving of a summary death sentence.

The case then went to the Northern Ireland court of appeal which, under the authority of Lord Chief Justice Lane, head of the Six Counties judiciary, endorsed the idea that the killing was 'reasonable'. But it was left to the house of lords, where the McElhone case ended up, to put the highest seal of approval on the practice of murdering Irish nationalists.

Lord Diplock gave the judgement at Westminster. He noted that 'the legal rights and duties of a soldier' were normally 'no more than those of an ordinary citizen in uniform'. But, Diplock went on, 'Such a view is in my view misleading in the circumstances in which the Army is currently employed in aid of the civil power in Northern Ireland...[where] there has existed for some years now a state of armed and clandestinely organised insurrection against the lawful government of Her Majesty.'

In other words, there is a war on, and the technicalities of the law cannot be allowed to stand in the way of defending 'the lawful government of Her Majesty' against the Irish.

And nor, Diplock concluded, can soldiers be blamed for treating all Irish nationalists as mortal enemies of the Crown. Alright, he admitted, McElhone was not in the IRA and had no gun on him. But it was still reasonable for Private Jones to shoot him on the assumption that 'if he got away, [McElhone] was likely *sooner or later* to participate in acts of violence.' In the noble opinion of the house of lords, Diplock had ruled, the only innocent Irishman is a dead one.

The McElhone case set the legal precedent for the British forces to pursue a shoot-to-kill policy in Northern Ireland. Other judges have since endorsed Diplock's view of the law as a weapon in wartime. In 1977, for example, an Army sniper squad shot dead in cold blood three men attempting a bank robbery. The soldiers said they thought the dead men were IRA bombers, and the authorities said that was alright then. However, the widow of one of the dead, James McLaughlin, brought a civil case against the ministry of defence. Lord Justice Gibson heard it, and threw it out on the grounds that old-fashioned gun-law was operable in Northern Ireland. 'If you watch Wild West films,' Gibson told the bereaved woman, 'the posse go ready to shoot their men if need be... shooting may be justified as a method of arrest.'

That was not, of course, Lord Justice Gibson's best-known judgement on murder by the British forces. In 1984 he heard the murder case against three RUC officers charged with one of the shoot-to-kill incidents which are at the centre of the Stalker affair. In an infamous judgement which is still the most honest statement of what British law and order means for the Irish, Gibson freed the police killers and congratulated them for bringing the three unarmed republicans they had murdered to 'the final court of justice'.

Prosecutions of British soldiers and Loyalist police are a charade, a formal exercise in keeping up the illusion of law and order.

The evidence is irrelevant. The accused are judged according to which side they are on in the Irish War. In the 1984 case, Gibson did not even bother to hear the defence case before freeing and praising the RUC gunmen. In 1986, the courts went through the motions of trying RUC man Neil Hegarty for the manslaughter of John Downes, shot dead with a plastic bullet before millions of TV viewers at a Belfast march. The state offered a pathetic prosecution case. Hegarty's defence lawyers did not bother calling any witnesses. He walked free, and nobody in Northern Ireland was surprised.

The courts often accept that the killing of Irish people by soldiers and policemen is 'an accident'. Aidan McAnespie's murder is the latest to be excused in this way by the Army. But it's not an accident that there are British troops operating heavy machine guns on the Border post at Aughnacloy where he was shot. They are there to defend by force of arms the divide which Britain imposed on Ireland more than 66 years ago. They are not given guns by chance, but by the British authorities, to kill Irish people who want their nation to be free and united. All the talk of law and order is designed to disguise the fact of continuing British oppression.

Britain's colonial law legalises murder by the state. Yet British statesmen still throw their hands up in horror when Irish republicans take the exercise of justice into their own hands. Last year the IRA blew up Lord Justice Gibson in revenge for his acts of courtroom violence against Irish people. The republicans issued a statement which affirmed that 'there are other judges in Ireland besides those imposed by the British.' It is little wonder that thousands of Irish nationalists look to those 'other judges' to defend them against Britain's gun-law.

Eighteen years' experience of open shootings in the street, undercover SAS assassinations, cover-ups in the courts and lies in parliament have destroyed any illusions many Irish nationalists might have had in the process of British justice. Yet the authorities keep up the facade of legality, largely for the benefit of the British public.

We should seize upon cases, like those of McAnespie and Thain, to expose the truth to people in Britain.

Behind the wigs and the judicial jargon, the law is just a rag used to clean up the dirty war in Ireland for public inspection. Our job is to get beneath the legal sheen and convince people here that British rule is the cause of all the bloodshed in Ireland. Governments and judges who make murder respectable can never grant justice to ordinary people on either side of the Irish Sea.

Mitchell: 'What I'd like to do is to have a machine gun built into every television camera and then say to the IRA, come out and let's talk...and then shoot the lot of them.'
Coleman: 'After a trial?'
Mitchell: 'That would be a complete waste of time. I know because I've met similar people.'
Lieutenant Colonel 'Mad Mitch' Mitchell of the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders, interviewed by Terry Coleman in the *Guardian*, January 1972



BUILDING THE PARTY IN THATCHER'S THIRD TERM

THE PROBLEMS OF DEFENSIVENESS

Last weekend Revolutionary Communist Party supporters met in London to discuss perspectives for the coming period — this is an edited version of Mike Freeman's introductory speech to the conference

The performance of Eddie 'the Eagle' Edwards in the Winter Olympics at Calgary provides a striking image of the plight of British capitalism. In a heroic display of the indomitable spirit of British enterprise Eddie managed to complete the ski jump and set a new British record. In the national celebrations, the commentators nearly forgot to report that Eddie came last in the competition against the rest of the world.

Despite the fragility of the much-vaunted British economic miracle, the establishment is in remarkably confident form. Although a major US recession looms ahead, the British economy remains buoyant, especially compared with its European competitors. Hence, while Thatcher may be riding for a fall in the not too distant future, for now she is riding high. She has just won her third general election in a row and has since consolidated the Tories' advantage over the opposition. Since the election the Alliance has disintegrated and Kinnock's Labour Party remains ineffectual and lacking in direction.

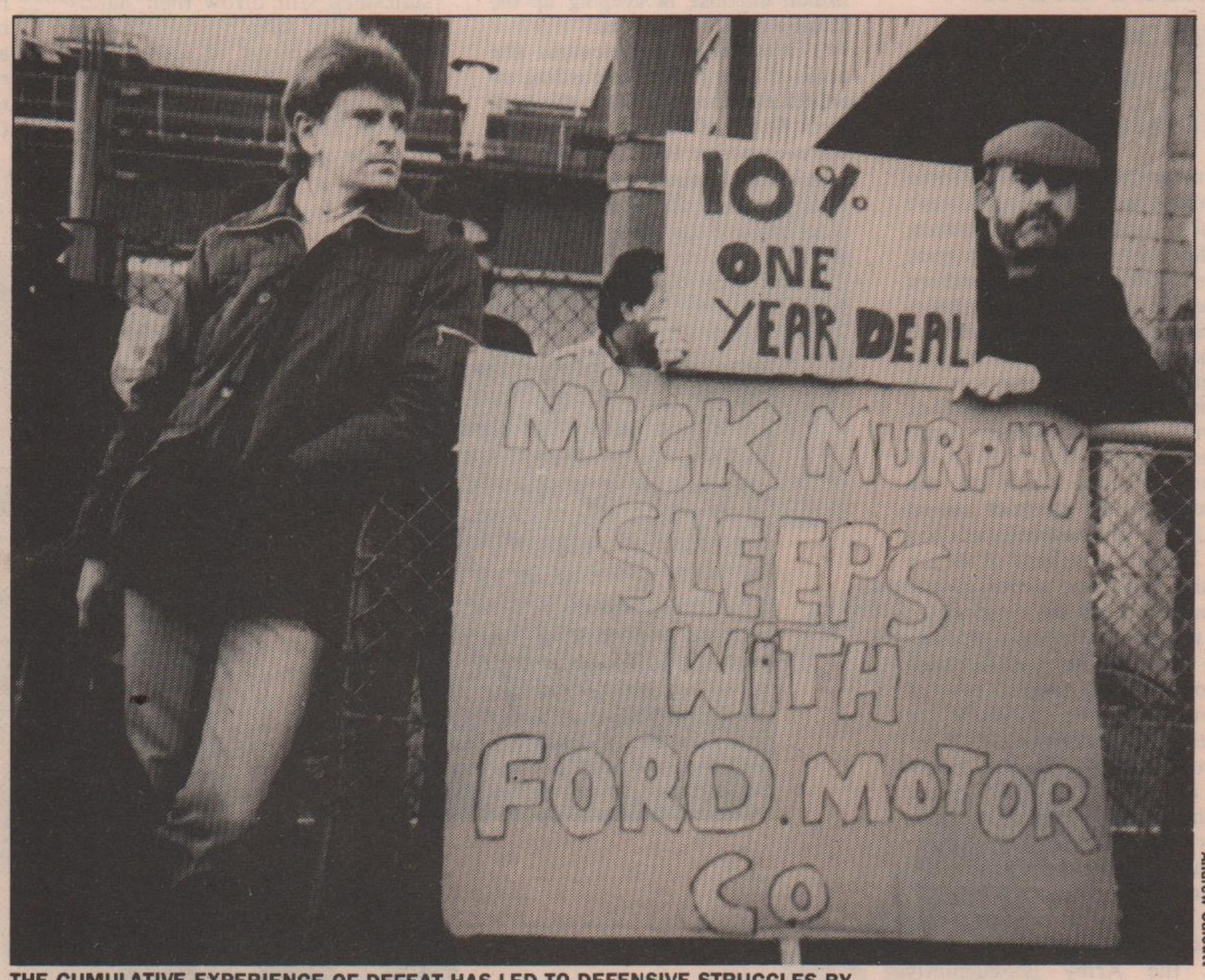
The Tories are making the most of what is likely to be a short interim period before another slide into global capitalist slump.

Since June the government has launched a wide-ranging offensive against the working class, pushing ahead ruthlessly regardless of outcries of protest and indignation. The Tories are carrying on their programme of privatisation, their shake-out of the civil service, the squeeze on local government, Baker's education reform, and cuts in the health service and welfare benefits. The spate of anti-Irish judicial and legislative decisions shows that no old-fashioned notions like justice or fair play are going to be allowed to stand in the way of British imperialist rule in Ireland. News and current affairs programmes have been given over to sycophantic interviews with an increasingly arrogant and authoritarian prime minister, and self-censorship of anti-establishment opinion is now routine.

Whereas in the first two Thatcher governments the Tories carefully picked off the unions one by one, since June 1987 the employers have gone for the kill on several fronts at the same time. Unions like the seafarers and the pit deputies are now threatened with extinction. While it took Rupert Murdoch 12 months to crush the unions at Wapping, trade union organisation at TV-am has been destroyed in a couple of months. In local government, the civil service and the health service, unions are coming under intense pressure as a result of privatisation and spending cuts.

RESISTANCE

The class struggle in Thatcher's third term has two key features. The aggressive character of the establishment offensive has provoked resistance on a wide range of fronts — over Clause 28 and lesbian and gay rights, over the Alton Bill and abortion, and in the unions. The scale and militancy of the popular revolt has come as a shock to a government that has become used to getting things its own way. It is significant that resistance has often come from many people — such as those on Clause 28 or Alton Bill demonstrations — who have not previously been much involved in labour movement campaigns. It has also come from workers — such as those at Land Rover in Solihull or the Vauxhall plant in Luton — who have generally been regarded as moderates rather than militants. The high level of votes for industrial action in the motor industry and the preparedness of workers to follow their votes with action has led to media speculation about a return to the union militancy of the 1978-79 winter of discontent or the strike wave of 1969-74.



Andrew Calcutt

THE CUMULATIVE EXPERIENCE OF DEFEAT HAS LED TO DEFENSIVE STRUGGLES BY WORKERS SUCH AS THOSE AT FORD

The second feature of political action today highlights the differences between what is happening now and the events of the seventies. Resistance today takes place after nearly a decade in which virtually every major industrial confrontation has ended in defeat for the workers. The cumulative experience of setbacks in a climate of growing reaction across the board has strengthened conservative and pessimistic sentiments. The result is that resistance has an overwhelmingly defensive character: *defend* is the keynote slogan — 'Defend the NHS', 'Defend the 1967 Abortion Act', 'Defend Ilea', etc. The perception that it is not really possible to fight and win has encouraged workers to put forward limited demands and to have low expectations about what can be achieved. Thus workers at Vauxhall voted to take industrial action over pension rights, while workers voted to return to work at Ford for a two-year rather than a three-year pay deal.

FATALISM

Whereas the spirit of resistance is strongest among people more remote from the traditional labour machine, the closer you get to the unions, the Labour Party or the left, the stronger is the mood of fatalism and resignation.

The Revolutionary Communist Party directs its energies towards the more active, positive sections of the working class. Our aim is to promote resistance, to direct it and take it forward. The traditional labour movement relates to the more passive, negative side of the working class. The old left reflects and reinforces pessimistic sentiments, curbs and contains revolt and generally acts as a wet blanket.

UNITY

Since our intervention in last year's general election under the banner of the Red Front, we have shown that it is possible to give a lead in fighting back against the Tories. We are widely acknowledged as a leading force in Irish solidarity, anti-racist action, and in campaigning for women's liberation and lesbian and gay rights. But whereas the British left has long neglected issues of oppression, it has always regarded the unions as its exclusive power-base. This is why our most significant success has been in the dispute in the health service in which our members and supporters in London, West Yorkshire, Scotland and elsewhere have shown the scope for mobilising working class unity in action in fighting for better wages and conditions. Let's look more closely at the different responses to the current situation of the RCP and the established left.

For the RCP the present minor upsurge in the class struggle provides the potential to politicise a new layer of activists. The wave of strikes and anti-government campaigns reveals a substantial body of people who are angry and want to fight, but who currently have limited targets and objectives. Our aim is to engage these people through our activities and campaign work and through selling *tns,* and to show them that the problem is not just the Tories, the council, Ford Motor Company, but the capitalist system itself, which is the real barrier to the emancipation of the working class from all forms of tyranny.

POLARISE

We want to convince people that the way forward lies through mobilising the working class in a party which aims at the overthrow of the capitalist system. To do this it is necessary to push working class interests to the fore, to emphasise demands which promote working class unity and polarise workers from the capitalist class. In our campaign and trade union work it is essential that we never lose sight of our fundamental objective of building the party and that we make that priority explicit to those we engage in our activities.

While for the RCP the upturn in resistance presents great opportunities, for the official labour movement it offers only the potential for further setbacks and further damage to its own standing in society. Hence it responds to militancy by trying to restrict the scale of confrontation, and minimising the offensiveness of its demands. Rather than mobilise action to win, it pleads for mercy. It is remarkable how the left has followed the labour bureaucracy in lowering its horizons. Twenty years ago, the left was out to change the world. By the close of the seventies it settled for trying to change the government. Now it has, understandably, given up any hope of replacing the Tories with the Labour Party. Today the greatest ambition of the left is to keep things the same. Pursuing the politics of the lesser evil to the bitter end, the left has ended up defending the capitalist status quo — after all, things could get a lot worse.

The retreat of the official labour movement opens up a growing conflict between the bureaucracy and the working class.

Defending the status quo may suit the officials of the unions and the organisations of the left, because they have a substantial stake in the existing order. But the existing order offers less and less to the working class: the status quo means mass unemployment, poverty and oppression for millions of workers — and the promise of worse to come.

The labour bureaucracy's response to any change in the organisation of society is to defend what already exists. Thus the union leaders defend every aspect of the trade union machine from workplace level to their seats on high-level quangos like Acas, the Manpower Services Commission and the National Economic Development Council. Labour politicians defend everything from the Central Electricity Generating Board to the Inner London Education Authority, claiming that these are the 'historic gains' of the working class movement, though it is difficult to recall the mass struggles that established these state agencies.

COMPLICATED

For the working class matters are more complicated. Yes, we should defend jobs, wages and workplace organisation. But why should we defend the TUC, the dead wood at the head of the labour movement, or union leaders like Jimmy Airlie and Mick Murphy, who acted as management stooges in policing the recent strike at Ford? We are all in favour of defending workplace union organisation in the health service, but what use is the machinery of Cohse, Nupe and all the rest of them in the current dispute? We are against the Alton Bill, but what are we supposed to defend about the 1967 Act? The humiliation of getting permission from two doctors, the bureaucratic delays, the restrictions imposed by cuts and Catholic consultants? We are against Clause 28, but we are also against the panoply of oppressive legislation that currently criminalises homosexuality.



Pandora Anderson

THE TORY OFFENSIVE HAS BROUGHT NEW PROTESTERS ON TO THE STREETS

For the RCP, the issue is not to defend mythologised 'past gains', but to defend working class interests today.

Insofar as any institution assists the defence of working class interests, we should defend it. But where such an institution becomes an obstacle to advancing the interests of the working class, we should not hesitate to challenge it. Making this distinction is not always straightforward, particularly in the sphere of trade unionism, which, because of its role in mediating between capital and labour, has an inherently ambivalent character. The current NHS dispute illustrates some of the tactical difficulties that arise in the defensive climate that prevails over the labour movement at present.

SHABBY

From the point of view of the working class there is nothing progressive about the NHS. It is a system that was established after the Second World War to provide a modern capitalist society with a fairly cheap and efficient system of healthcare. It is now breaking down under the strains of chronic underfunding and the growing demands of an ageing population. It has always provided the working class with a slow and shoddy service in crumbling workhouse hospitals and shabby GP surgeries. It has long relied on atrociously paid men, women and immigrant workers who work in poor conditions. Ever since the last Labour government started cutting spending on health and closing hospitals, wages and conditions have got worse, waiting lists have lengthened and the general quality of care has deteriorated. The fact that the NHS is 'popular' is itself indicative of the low expectations that have been encouraged by nine years of Thatcher and, more particularly, by five years of Kinnock.

MAXIMUM

While the NHS as an institution is not worth defending, the jobs and services it provides are important to the working class. Our strategy should be to mobilise the maximum unity in action to fight for better wages and conditions for all workers in the health service. This is the only way to ensure a decent living for health workers, which is also the first condition for a decent health-care system.

Calling for action in defence of the living standards and working conditions of health workers is not the same as appealing to people to 'Defend the NHS'.

The strategy of defending the NHS begins from the view that it is impossible to rally health workers to take action against the government. From this pessimistic assessment the left concludes that the only way to improve wages and conditions in the health service is by launching a crusade to mobilise public opinion to press the government to provide more resources.

This strategy means restricting militancy — 'angels' pleading for public sympathy cannot be seen on picket lines. It also reinforces sectional divisions between 'caring' nurses and other hospital workers who are more remote from patient care. The left's policy of replacing industrial action with public relations stunts means handing the initiative to the union leaders who have 'organised' a series of token days of action stretching into the indefinite future. Instead of the short, sharp, all-out action that is necessary to win, we have a chaotic and ineffectual campaign that can only dissipate militancy and take the heat off the government.

GURU

'It seems unlikely that a broad-based, anti-Thatcherite popular politics can be built without politicising the charitable impulse' wrote Professor Stuart Hall, the guru of the soft left, in an article about Bob Geldof's Ethiopian famine relief campaign in July 1986. At the time the idea that the way forward for the left lay through promoting old-fashioned Victorian middle class philanthropy was widely dismissed as an academic eccentricity. Yet less than two years later in response to the NHS dispute the whole of the official labour movement and the left from Neil Kinnock to David Widgery of the Socialist Workers Party has adopted Hall's strategy of 'politicising the charitable impulse'.

'Politicising the charitable impulse' is the antithesis of the RCP approach to the NHS.

Whereas we have set out to clarify a working class strategy, the old left accepts that this is impossible and argues instead for the working class to put its faith in appealing for middle class sympathy. Where we seek to politicise with class politics, the left seeks to politicise with the politics of class collaboration. There is no doubt that there is some resonance for the left's moralistic petit-bourgeois approach. This strategy can find an echo with workers who have lost faith in the possibility of collective resistance. It can also find favour with healthcare workers, particularly nurses, who are strongly influenced by professional attitudes and values and have little sense of themselves as members of the working class. Because the attempt to politicise the charitable impulse can only have a divisive and demoralising effect it is essential to challenge this strategy to take the NHS dispute forward.

Challenging the left over the NHS dispute requires tactical care. Because we refuse to join the all-class crusade, we can be caricatured by left wingers with limited intellectual capacities as being in favour of the destruction of the health service. The point is that no amount of public sympathy for the NHS will force the Tories to pay hospital workers decent wages. Only all-out action by health workers can do that. To win all-out action we have to mobilise around demands that unite all NHS workers and reject demands that restrict and divide the struggle.

DECISIVE

Many activists in the health service and in other campaigns instinctively recognise the superiority of our tactics. Yet to grasp the relationship between these tactics and our wider strategy of building the party requires a process of political development. This process involves challenging the prevailing attitudes of the labour movement and arguing for the wider perspectives of the party around our activities and discussions of *tns*. Such a dialogue is always crucial in building a working class party, but it is particularly important today when the fatalistic view that it is impossible to do anything exerts such a widespread influence.

Over the past eight months we have shown that the Revolutionary Communist Party can give a lead in the class struggle. We must make the most of the current upsurge to rally a solid group of activists around the party that can put us in a position to play a more decisive role when Thatcher's economic bubble bursts.



A DOCTOR WRITES

AN OCCASIONAL COLUMN

Aids: the real lesson from America

PROMOTERS of the Aids panic from across the political spectrum in Britain now share two convictions about the spread of the disease. Authorities like Aids Professor Michael Adler, Minister for Aids Propaganda Norman Fowler and *New Statesman* Aids expert Duncan Campbell all agree on the urgent need to alert the public about the dangers of a heterosexual epidemic. There is also a growing conviction that the adoption of safe sex practices among gay men — and the likely decimation of the established gay scene by Aids — means that the disease is likely to become less of a threat to homosexuals. The latest studies from the US Centers for Disease Control, based on an epidemic roughly 50 times as big as Britain's, challenge both the major themes of the British Aids establishment.

'We do not expect any explosion into the heterosexual population' declared Dr Otis R Bowen, US secretary of health and human services, in January. Yet only 12 months previously Bowen had warned that the disease was 'rapidly spreading' to the wider population and that it would make the Black Death seem pale by comparison. What changed Bowen's mind were the results of a series of surveys and investigations authorised by the federal government's public health body based in Atlanta, Georgia (see *The New York Times*, 14 February). These included 50 studies of gay and bisexual men, 88 studies of intravenous drug users, 33 studies of haemophiliacs, 21 studies of the heterosexual partners of infected individuals, 27 studies of women and scattered studies of prostitutes and prisoners.

As far as heterosexual spread is concerned, the US studies showed that the spread of HIV infection was largely confined to the sex partners of people who got the disease in some other way — especially through using contaminated needles. There was little evidence that the virus had been spread among non-drug using heterosexuals through sexual intercourse. The results of screening blood donors and applicants for military service have been reported as 'reassuring' — a fraction of one per cent. Surveys among heterosexual attenders at big city VD clinics — where HIV infection might be expected — have shown rates between zero and 2.6 per cent.

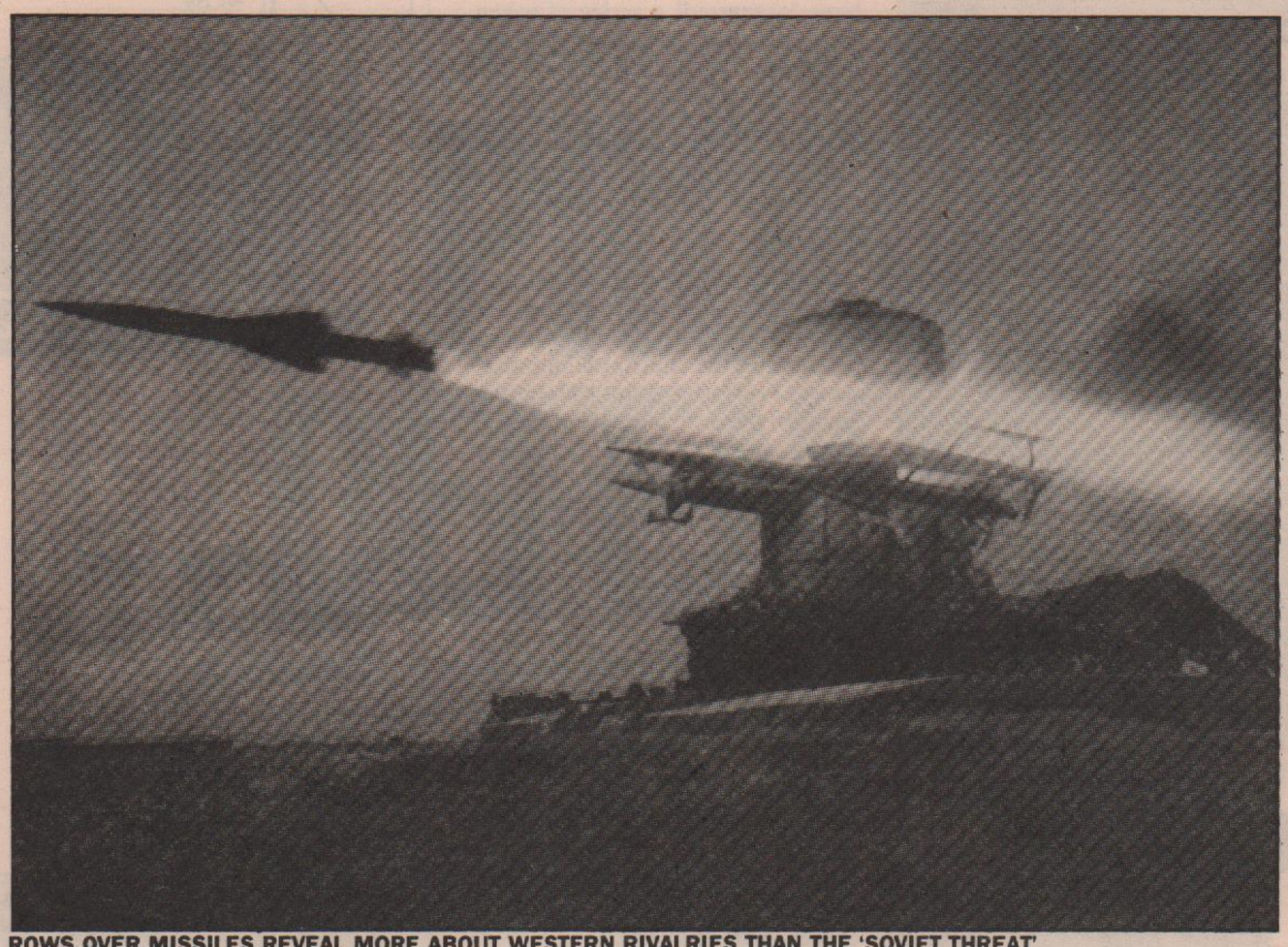
The Centers for Disease Control concluded that the prevalence of HIV among heterosexually active people with no recognised risk factor for Aids was 'very low on a national basis': 0.021 per cent, to be exact. In Britain, where there is a much smaller total number of cases, far fewer drug abusers and less extreme conditions of inner-city deprivation, Aids is likely to remain a rare disease among heterosexuals.

Aids has undoubtedly had a devastating effect on gay men in America: they make up around three quarters of the total of 52 000 cases. In San Francisco it is estimated that half the gay men are infected with the HIV virus and the fact that many will die will inevitably have a major economic and demographic impact on the city. However, there are now signs that the spread of HIV infection among gay men is slowing down. According to San Francisco epidemiologist Dr Andrew Moss, 'Aids may kill half of the homosexual men in American cities, but the epidemic in gay men is basically over in San Francisco.'

The Centers for Disease Control estimates that some 500 000-625 000 gay men are HIV positive, and an additional 125 000-375 000 bisexuals have also been infected with the virus. But these figures are based on estimates that the total number of homosexual men in the USA is 2.5m with an additional 2.5m-7.5m bisexual men — out of an adult population of more than 150m. Yet 40 years ago the Kinsey reports found that 10 per cent of white American males were more or less exclusively homosexual for at least three years of their lives and that four per cent were exclusively homosexual. The American public health authorities appear to rely on figures based on men who openly admit to their homosexuality — those who are at least to some extent 'out' — when it is evident that in response to the oppression of homosexuals in modern society the majority of gay men conceal and disguise their sexual orientation.

The relationship between the 'out' and the 'closeted' world of male homosexuality is of the greatest importance in assessing the dangers of the spread of Aids and how best to prevent it. Aids has swept through the 'out' gay scene of the Western world over the past five years. The impact has undoubtedly led to a change in sexual behaviour to reduce risks, and the death of a high proportion of members of the established gay community over the next decade may limit the pool of infection. But what about the world of male homosexuality that remains underground, where sexual relationships are carried out in conditions of shame and secrecy, which are not conducive to safe sex propaganda and practices?

For as long as homosexuals continue to suffer discrimination and harassment in society the conditions for the dissemination of the Aids virus among the submerged majority of gay men will continue to exist and Aids will continue to take its toll. The real lesson of the experience of Aids in the USA is to stop trying to scare heterosexuals and start fighting for homosexual rights.



ROWS OVER MISSILES REVEAL MORE ABOUT WESTERN RIVALRIES THAN THE 'SOVIET THREAT'

THE WESTERN ALLIANCE IN CRISIS

RETURN TO GREAT POWER POLITICS

This week's 16-nation Nato summit meeting in Brussels is an ostentatious display of Western unity. But underneath the current camaraderie, explains Gemma Forest, conflicts are mounting

At talks in Washington last month West Germany's chancellor Helmut Kohl urged the US senate to ratify the intermediate nuclear forces (INF) treaty agreed in December by Reagan and Gorbachev. Before the treaty was concluded the idea of removing ground-launched Cruise and Pershing missiles had revived fears in Bonn that the USA might one day 'decouple' all its nuclear weapons from the defence of Europe. But on Capitol Hill Kohl praised the INF accord, urging the USA to add new arms control treaties to it.

Although Reagan reassured Germany that for him a Soviet nuclear attack on Munich would be the same as taking out Chicago, he despatched secretary of state George Shultz to Moscow with an agenda downplaying arms control. In talks with Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze last week, Shultz highlighted Moscow's treatment of dissidents and of Afghanistan. But he was optimistic that 50 per cent cuts in intercontinental missile warheads were a possibility when Reagan and Gorbachev meet in May. Reagan has since dismissed the possibility of doing a deal on nukes in May, and has reaffirmed that Star Wars is 'not a bargaining chip' in arms control negotiations. While Kohl has switched from anxiety over US nuclear withdrawals to a desire to speed up 'denuclearisation' in Europe, Reagan has revived anti-Soviet rhetoric less than three months after the reputedly epoch-making INF agreement.

CLOUT

What is going on? West Germany is glad to be consulted by the USA in Brussels over the stance Reagan will take in Moscow this spring. Bonn hates to be left out from the process of multiplying bilateral US-Soviet relations. (American defence secretary Frank Carlucci has overturned the policy of his predecessor, Caspar Weinberger, and agreed to meet his Soviet counterpart, Dmitri Yazov, later this month.) We should not take the renewed stridency of US anti-Sovietism at face value. While the about-turns in Bonn and Washington indicate the growing instability of world politics, Reagan's Cold Warrior act is primarily a means of putting pressure on West Germany.

By magnifying the issue of Soviet military power, the USA reminds Bonn that German economic prosperity is no substitute for American nuclear clout.

The fact that Reagan has made Star Wars the main obstacle to strategic arms reductions, when the project is widely felt to be technically unworkable, reveals that the alleged Soviet threat has little to do with belligerent moods in America. Star Wars is just another way of telling Kohl that Uncle Sam still calls the shots. Since its launch by Reagan in 1983, its main effect has been to reinforce German anxieties about the seriousness with which the USA regards its nuclear responsibilities in Europe.

DEFICIT

America needs to militarise relations with its allies because it is heading for deep economic trouble. 'We face formidable challenges over 1988 and beyond' declared the Federal Reserve Board. Government officials deny that a full-scale recession will break this year, but forecast a cut in annual growth from nearly four per cent to barely two per cent. The 'formidable challenges' stem principally from Japan and West Germany, the two countries whose reluctance to continue funding US indebtedness occasioned the crash of 1987.

Economic decline in America has immediate military repercussions. The US budget deficit is so great that even a committed militarist like Reagan has had to stomach cuts in state expenditure which have reached into the Pentagon. As a result there has been a spate of resignations by US militarists, as well as a spate of calls for Europe to do more 'burden-sharing' in Nato. Top American politicians threaten troop withdrawals from Europe and demand that it spend more on conventional defence. Carlucci insists that increased US naval commitments in the Gulf compel Europe to pay its way on arms.

America fears that the Deutschmark is now strong enough to allow Bonn to grow more independent of the White House. But its commercial nightmares are always couched in the macho language of Nato-speak. The tone is well-captured by *Discriminate Deterrence*, a Pentagon report issued in January by Henry Kissinger and others. The main arguments are as follows:

- Europe should rely less on US strategic nuclear deterrence, and be ready instead to fight a conventional or theatre nuclear war on its own soil;
- The German border with the Warsaw Pact isn't everything: Nato territories as far-flung as Norway and Turkey count as much;
- Spain and Greece should not have chased US forces off their turf even to the limited extent they have; France also erred in refusing US F1-11 warplanes flying rights when they were on their way to bomb Tripoli in 1986;
- Europe should offer direct military aid to America in out-of-Nato-area conflicts, and especially in the Gulf.

For the USA alliance unity means that Europe must do America's will on an increasingly global basis.

In contrast to the Gaullist era of the sixties, today it is Bonn not Paris which leads the rest in pro-EEC fervour. Given it is constitutionally barred from possessing nukes or sending gunboats to the Gulf, Germany's sole counterweight to US military pressure is to try to project its relative industrial dynamism on an all-European basis. This is why Kohl insisted at the recent Common Market summit that France and Britain subsidise Bavarian farming, and why Bonn has taken the lead in calling for a common European currency which would of necessity be based on the Deutschmark.

Far from being a demonstration of alliance unity, the Brussels summit signals the return of the Great Power politics of the inter-war decades.

The chief feature of this era was the fast-changing system of temporary, bilateral alliances in defence and mounting multilateral antagonism in economics. While non-aggression pacts and treaties went through bewildering permutations almost every year, conflicts over overseas trade and spheres of investment grew in linear fashion.

RIVALRIES

This pattern has now returned to the world. *East-West* relations operate mainly as a sounding-board for *inter-imperialist* rivalries. The issue of moving towards the elimination of battlefield nuclear weapons (BNW) based on West German soil, which is being deliberately avoided at Brussels, highlights the relative insignificance of East-West hostilities. If ground-launched Cruise and Pershing were removed, a nuclear 'double zero' would be the result. Ground-launched missiles in the ranges of 500-1000km and 1000-5000km would no longer grace European territory. In a well-judged attempt at 'wedge-driving' between Nato members, the Kremlin has therefore called for a 'triple zero' which means removing 0-500km BNW. This would affect 1400 Soviet Scud missiles in silos in East Germany, and 88 US Lance missiles situated on West German soil.

After the dismantling of INF is complete, only West Germany will have the ground-launched nukes to invite a pre-emptive Soviet strike. No other European member of Nato will face this predicament, which is why Kohl initially jumped at the Kremlin's offer of ending battlefield nukes. Kohl has since remembered that total removal of BNW would be tantamount to yet another major decoupling of America from West Germany. But he has still said that a broad range of East-West arms control agreements, including cuts in BNW and the elimination of chemical weapons, must precede any Nato drive to 'modernise' the 88 Lance.

Kohl's worries about Soviet BNW or gas attacks, however, are nothing compared to his desire to build a network of profitable economic links with Eastern Europe and especially East Germany. The USA can best prevent this by demanding that Kohl stick by a Nato decision taken way back in 1983, that Lance be modernised to give it a range of 450km rather than 100km. America is again trying to compensate for economic weakness — its inability to match Bonn in opening up Eastern bloc markets — by military bluster.

FLUID

Nato leaders are tearing their hair out in the present about developments that are still relatively distant. Everybody now debates US troop withdrawals from Europe, although the destabilising effects promise to be so great that neither America nor Europe can entertain this for some years yet. Everybody debates the impetus to a united Europe that will follow the ending of EEC internal market barriers, although the completion of that process is only a *probability* by the end of 1992.

Western friendships and enmities over defence become more fluid as economics becomes more of a military question.

Kohl would prefer to solve his Lance problem by Britain building an air-launched, British-sited missile for its Tornado fighters. In the meantime he has established a 3500-strong joint infantry force with France. Britain has sought help from France, or may go to the USA, to upgrade its Tornado missiles. Thatcher nevertheless called the French 'crazy' at the EEC summit and condemns Kohl's collaboration with the French as 'playing to the gallery'.

POSTURES

Thatcher is cold about the burgeoning plans for European defence collaboration. She wants a stronger European pillar to Nato, not a European Third Force. At every stage she upholds the 'special relationship' with the USA, when the only basis for this US-takes-all arrangement is that Downing Street's economic plight is nearly as global and just as advanced as that of the White House. Sales of British arms to America, always derisory, have been hit by Reagan's spending cuts. Yet Thatcher wanted the Nato summit to reiterate the Carlucci line on Lance against Kohl.

The hopelessness of Britain's diplomatic postures comes out when contrasted with those of France. Mitterrand has gone some way to checking Bonn's Eastern designs by involving it in Franco-German defence. He has the basic missile technology that Britain's Tornadoes require. He benefits from Nato but remains outside it. His links with Moscow persist. But while France is courted by all, Britain lacks any firm alliances. It is in on the Airbus, formally out of the European Monetary System but in practice tied to it, and unable to find the cash for European space cooperation. The City looks forward to the deals it will be able to strike in the EEC of late 1992, but British manufacturing dreads a flood of imports trucked in through the Chunnel.

It is impossible to predict the outcome of the growing conflicts in Nato, but the return of Great Power politics is an omen of international conflagration.



CONFRONTATION ON THE STREETS OF OCCUPIED PALESTINE: ISRAELI REPRESSION PROVOKES A BACKLASH FROM LOCAL WOMEN

THE PALESTINIAN REVOLT

THE MYTHS THAT MASK OPPRESSION

Daniel Nassim looks at some of the misconceptions that have arisen over the struggle between Israel and the Palestinians

The TV image of four Israeli soldiers standing over two young Palestinians and hurling rocks at their arms shocked Western viewers last week. The four Israelis who were shown beating and breaking the arms of the two Palestinians in Nablus are now facing court martial. After 12 weeks of watching similar scenes of torture and violence in the West Bank and Gaza, few can now doubt the ferocity of the Zionist response to the Palestinian uprising. But there is still confusion about Israeli intentions and about how to end the conflict. Let's look at some of the assumptions that have informed the popular response.

Myth 1: 'Israeli troops are out of control'

The argument that Israeli soldiers are out of control was voiced most frequently at the start of the uprising. According to this view Palestinian casualties are caused by ill-disciplined soldiers who panic and fire at demonstrators.

It is true that Palestinian resistance has terrified Israeli troops. One member of a frontline infantry unit told the *Jerusalem Post* that 'it's no joke when they catch you in one of those alleys and throw building blocks down on you from the roofs' (27 February). Faced with opposition of this sort many soldiers have simply opened up indiscriminately.

After three months of fighting it is clear, however, that Israel's attacks on Palestinians are systematic and deliberate. In January Israeli defence minister Yitzhak Rabin declared that the use of 'force, might and beatings' to quell Palestinian demonstrations was now state policy. Israeli troops are well-stocked with rubber bullets, tear gas and wooden clubs, as well as standard issue assault rifles. Palestinians suffer beatings, curfews, arrests, detention without trial and deportations.

The Zionist state survives only by using violence against the Palestinians. Israeli society is totally militarised to counter the threat from the freedom struggle. Almost every able-bodied adult male spends time in the army each year. As long as the Israeli state continues to deny Palestinians their right to self-determination, the cycle of violence will continue.

Myth 2: 'Opposition inside Israel can stop the violence'

Many Palestinian sympathisers often look to radical Israelis to take the heat off the resistance movement. They cite the call for an international peace conference by foreign minister Shimon Peres and several recent demonstrations by Peace Now as evidence of growing sympathy for the Palestinian plight.

The problem with this argument is that it overestimates the number of Israelis who oppose the pogroms and underestimates the political limitations of the peace movement.

Opinion polls show the vast majority of Israelis to favour the official handling of Palestinian demonstrations or to support even harsher measures. A *Newsweek* poll last week revealed that only seven per cent of Israelis believe the army is 'too harsh'. Israeli society is founded on the privileged status of the Zionist population and the inequality of the Palestinians. Most Israelis appreciate that if the authorities lost control over the West Bank and Gaza the whole system would be threatened.

Official Israeli peace pronouncements should be treated with scepticism. Peres might make sanctimonious statements about peace, but he has no intention of making concessions to the Palestinians. He told Israeli television that if Israel withdrew from the West Bank 'the security border would be the [River] Jordan, with a united Jerusalem'. In other words, Israel would withdraw its troops from Palestinian population centres while keeping control of the area. His aim is to seal off this South African-style bantustan from the rest of Israeli society.

The vast majority of the Israeli peace movement share Peres' approach. They are worried about the corrupting effects of the occupation on the 'Jewish character' of the Israeli state, and fearful of the instability generated by Palestinian resistance. A recent demonstration in Tel Aviv featured a poem by an army officer complaining about the effect of the occupation on his troops in Gaza. Nobody had anything to say about the devastating effect of Israeli repression on the Palestinians.

Myth 3: 'Islamic fundamentalists are behind the uprising'

Israeli apologists attribute the outbreak of unrest to the growth of Muslim fundamentalism. In January a spokesman for the Israeli foreign ministry declared that the state could not 'leave the streets of Gaza to the rule of frenzied, radicalised youth incited by the fundamentalist Al-Jihad-Al-Islami'.

This view overstates the influence of radical Islam and obscures the nature of the uprising. Palestinians who endure conditions of extreme deprivation and repression do not need Islamic fundamentalists to tell them to revolt against oppression.

Radical Islamic groups are fairly strong in Gaza and have some sway in the West Bank. But given the impasse of the nationalist movement, the influence of radical Islam is less than might be expected. Even when resistance appears to be inspired by Islamic sentiment, the conflict is between the Israeli oppressors and the Palestinian freedom struggle. All Palestinians feel revulsion at Israeli army attacks on the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, the third most holy site of Islam. Many thousands, including atheists and communists, have protested against Israel's desecration of the site. Their concern is to stop yet another Zionist incursion on to Palestinian territory.

Myth 4: 'Western diplomacy can bring peace'

The possibility of a Western diplomatic solution to the Palestinian conflict is the most resilient myth to emerge over the past three months.

International peace initiatives amount to little more than a strategy of containment. The Israeli army uses armed might to try to crush demonstrators, while Western diplomats encourage Palestinians to pin their hopes on endless rounds of 'talks about talks' in various world capitals. Western politicians talk vaguely about safeguarding Palestinian rights, while affirming their commitment to Israeli security. Thus when US secretary of state George Shultz arrived in Palestine last week he made a typically rhetorical statement about the 'peace process'. Shultz was more specific when it came to guaranteeing Israel's right to exist, asserting that 'the friendship and ties between Israel and the United States have never been stronger.'

The most damning indictment of the diplomatic process is its endorsement by Israeli defence minister Rabin. The architect of the policy of 'might, power and beatings' is happy for Western leaders to promote diplomacy as a device to divert Palestinian resistance. He told Israeli television that he took 'a very positive view of initiatives to reach political talks'.

While Western politicians try to obscure the issues, we should be unequivocal about the nature of the conflict in Palestine. Israel is an oppressor state which survives by denying the democratic rights of the Palestinians through force of arms. We give unconditional support to the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. There can be no peace in the Middle East until this conflict is resolved in favour of the oppressed.

THE UPRISING

DECEMBER
8 Four Palestinians killed when Israeli army lorry drives into their truck
9 Israeli troops shoot dead the first Palestinian of the uprising at the Jubalya camp
10 Another Palestinian killed in the Gaza Strip
11 Three Palestinians shot dead during demonstrations in the West Bank
19 First demonstrations in Palestinian East Jerusalem
21 Palestinian general strike inside the pre-1967 Green Line

JANUARY
1 First Palestinian murdered in the 'Greater Jerusalem' area
4 Tory minister David Mellor visits Jubalya and the first national Palestinian leaflets appear
13 Four Palestinians from the West Bank deported
15 Israeli police and troops storm the Dome of the Rock, firing tear gas inside the mosque
19 Israeli defence minister Yitzhak Rabin announces policy of beating Palestinian demonstrators
23 Palestinian demonstration in Nazareth, inside the Green Line
24-25 Arab foreign ministers summit in Tunis
28 Egyptian president Mubarak arrives in Washington, on a tour taking in the Gulf, Paris and London

FEBRUARY
5 Israeli troops use bulldozer to bury four Palestinians alive
8 Jordan's King Hussein meets the 12 EEC foreign ministers
14-21 Labour leader Neil Kinnock visits Egypt, Jordan and Palestine
15 Zionist agents bomb Palestinian ship on its way to take refugees to protest in Israel
19 Massive Israeli security operation in preparation for visit by US secretary of state George Shultz
24 First execution of collaborator by Palestinians
25 Shultz arrives in Palestine

BAD SPORTS



SUMO

IF you aren't wondering whether the 38-stone Hawaiian Konisuiki ('the Dump Truck') is going to win the Aki Basho, whether the supreme champion Chiyonofuji ('the Wolf') will triumph again, or whether the disgraced newest Yokozuna, Hokutoumi, ('the Puppy'), is finally going to have a good tournament, then you haven't been watching *Sumo* on Channel 4. Sumo wrestling from Japan may appear to consist only of two extremely fat men in uncomfortable jock-straps, slapping and shoving each other for a few seconds until one lurches out of a small circle. Little did you know.

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Some will watch *Sumo* with all the usual prejudices about funny foreigners. Seeing it as another novelty turn from abroad, they'll be waiting for Clive James to pop up and sneer about how hilarious and inscrutable these Japanese are. They don't go on strike, they love brutal game shows, and now this! In fact, James is equipped to go a round with these blokes. But can he do the splits or use his toes to grip like fingers? They can.

Sumo wrestling is the oldest martial art. The real interest lies not so much in the short bouts as in all the ceremony and background detail which is so *stylishly* weaved into the programmes. The emphasis on style has rubbed off from the sport itself. It is intensively competitive and physical, but conducted with astonishing attention to dignity and detail, every oiled hair in place, every step of the ritual religiously observed.

The British like to think of themselves as a great sporting nation. But Britain has been ripe for Sumo for some time. Those who can watch the juggernauts of darts park their lagers and waddle into position again and again, and listen to the interminable cries of 'One hundred and eighty!' should be ready for some real heavyweight poetry. Those who can savour crown green bowls from Harrogate will surely appreciate the etiquette and restraint of the refined Sumo masters.

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Comparisons are invidious, and it would be wrong even to consider Big Daddy, Giant Haystacks and the tawdry theatre of British wrestling in the same breath as Sumo. But take boxing. Compared to Mike Tyson's much-awaited massacre of Frank Bruno, Sumo has the edge in beauty and spectacle, drama and suspense. And nobody gets brain-damaged either. It may not always be easy to see exactly which arcane technique the Dump Truck has, according to the commentator, just employed to remove an opponent from the circle. They do all look pretty basic to the uninitiated. But then just think what foreigners must make of cricket; think of what you make of cricket. And one thing is for sure, you would *never* hear the Giant Panda say a cross word to the umpire.

Pat Ford

BERTOLUCCI'S CHINA EPIC

KIDNAPPED BY HISTORY

The Last Emperor, **Bernardo Bertolucci (Director)**

It is an impressive riches to rags story. When Pu Yi became emperor in 1908 he was treated as a demigod by a vast entourage of eunuchs, guards and servants. The Qing dynasty which had ruled China since 1644 may have been tottering towards collapse but the boy emperor remained cocooned within the sumptuous splendour and elaborate ritual of life in the Forbidden City, a complex of palaces, temples and grounds which was the imperial headquarters in Beijing.

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It was downhill from there. At first, after the establishment of a republic in 1912, he was simply confined within the City, although kept in the manner to which the 'Lord of Ten Thousand Years' was accustomed. In 1924 he was banished to the Japanese concession of Tianjin, where he degenerated into a Western playboy. He tried to make a comeback, but picked the wrong horse in 1934 when he let the Japanese install him as emperor in occupied Manchuria. When Mao Zedong declared the People's Republic in 1949, Pu Yi was beginning a 10-year prison sentence, which, under the new regime, was also a process of compulsory re-education. He was released to take his place in the new China as a humble gardener, in good time to be further frightened and bewildered by the Cultural Revolution of the sixties.

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Bertolucci's 162-minute epic begins in 1950 with Pu Yi as a suicidal prisoner and ends in 1967, the year of his death, with a man apparently reconciled to his lot. The bulk of the film deals, by way of fluent flashbacks, with his early life. The structure focuses the story around the most interesting questions. Did the emperor, having fallen from the pinnacle of glory to the pit of despair, come at last to accept the role of ordinary citizen, and if so, how? Unfortunately the film fails to answer them.

The problem is not that Bertolucci dwells so long on his subject's formative years. The experience of being born into a world where the courtiers study the stools in your chamber pot or drink green ink at your childish whim, where you are imprisoned in isolation from other children, where no sooner do you appreciate your role at the centre of society than it slips maddeningly away; this is the experience which has to loom over the film in the way that it loomed over Pu Yi's life. And so it does. Bertolucci takes every advantage of the permission he got to film within the Forbidden City, to create the magnificent spectacle of an ancient culture in all its bewitching detail.

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He is not concerned with the warlords, nationalists, communists and red guards struggling to make history, but with a man who, in Bertolucci's own phrase, was 'kidnapped by history'. Pu Yi's communist captors exhort him to write, by way of confession, 'a frank and sincere' account of his life. The memories of his youth need no encouragement to come crowding back into the austerity of his prison world. The contrast with the Forbidden City could not be more effective. The greyness of walls and uniform is relieved only by the occasional red star.

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The problem is that no sooner is the excellent portrayal of his interrogation and rehabilitation getting interesting, than it is over. He has been taught to tie his own shoelaces and pee against the side of his slop-bucket so as not to disturb his cell-mates, but he is displaying considerable recalcitrance, telling his guards what they want to hear. We are then abruptly brought forward to his release, and shuffled through the rest of his life, past a demonstration of fanatical young red guards, to a coyly ambivalent conclusion in which he revisits the Forbidden City as a tourist. It is hinted that while he can really smile at last, he still harbours delusions of grandeur.

This is frustrating, because the film wastes much time in Tianjin and Manchuria, and all we are left with is a portrait of a weak and not very attractive man who made the best he could of cruel circumstances. Nevertheless it is a visual treat, with fine performances from Ying Ruocheng (the prison governor), Peter O'Toole (the royal tutor) and most of all from John Lone and the three child actors who play the emperor. Lone could easily have carried a more searching examination of Pu Yi's confrontation with both the new order and himself.

Pat Ford



BOY EMPEROR PU YI BEFORE HIS BANISHMENT

FROM CHOLERA TO AIDS

THE STATE AND MORALITY

Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualties: Medico-moral Politics in England since 1830,* Routledge & Kegan Paul, £7.95

***Dangerous Sexualities* is about the development of social medicine and moral politics. Frank Mort's framework is historical, but he deals with issues of immediate relevance: the rise of official morality, the role of the state and the medical profession, the standpoint of the women's movement and the left. The result is a stimulating, well-researched and entertaining book.**

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Mort traces the ideas around which the Victorian ruling class constructed a moral consensus, taking in sexual debauchery and cholera epidemics in the 1830s, prostitution and venereal disease in the 1860s, homosexuality and national degeneration in the 1880s and 1890s.

The passing of the Contagious Diseases Acts in the 1860s, which imposed harsh restrictions on prostitution, signalled an important shift towards state intervention in the moral sphere. But this was an exceptional response to the problem of venereal disease in the armed forces. Only from the 1880s did the state move in to police morality on a wider front.

The Contagious Diseases Acts provoked widespread opposition, and an alliance of feminists, Liberals, clerics and radicals succeeded in repealing the legislation in 1886. They had objected not to state intervention itself, but to the idea that women were the source of immorality. For them male vice was the problem. Many of them came together again in the social purity movement, to campaign for an even more extensive imposition of repressive laws. The social purists mobilised a formidable movement for moral reform in the cause of national regeneration, demanding laws to deal with prostitution, homosexuality, indecency and obscenity. In the late nineteenth century the state massively extended its system of surveillance and regulation.

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Mort's analysis fails to explain the impetus for legal intervention. He overestimates the influence of the lobbyists and underestimates the role of the state itself. He puts the success of the social purists down to their ability to hegemonise the public debate. But their success was not due to the proficiency of their campaigning tactics, but to the fact that they articulated the interests of the state. In the late Victorian years the British establishment was desperate to strengthen the authority of the state over society. It was under pressure from movements for colonial freedom and labour movement unrest. The creation of a moral consensus based on the elevation of the family and the nation was a godsend. The social purity movement played an important role in fostering a climate of conformity. But it grew on the fertile ground of nationalism cultivated by the British ruling class.

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Mort disparages the tendency of Marxists to tie their analysis of morality to the needs of capital. But in dismissing the central role of the state in shaping morality, his own analysis tends towards incoherence. This becomes clearer the closer he gets to today. He argues rightly that the hysteria over Aids must be placed in the context of economic decline and social unrest. But he argues wrongly that the media and the right have made all the running in fuelling the Aids panic.

For Mort, the problem is one of right-wing bigots dictating the terms of the debate, and his preoccupation is how to 'combat such dominant discourses'. In responding to the Aids panic the issue is 'what languages to mobilise?' Having failed to locate the source of the Aids panic within the wider drive by the state to re-assert conventional morality, Mort is incapable of offering a coherent critique of Tory moralism or a strategy for combating the persecution of homosexuals which has been its consequence.

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Mort's analysis betrays a weakness which has dogged the left since the latter days of the social purity movement — an underestimation of the state and the necessity of challenging its divisive ideology. For all its flaws, however, *Dangerous Sexualities* is recommended reading for those seeking a fuller grasp of the development of official morality.

Joan Phillips

TWO TASKS FOR SUPPORTERS

LAST WEEKEND RCP supporters from around the country met in North London to discuss their political work. The event gave leading RCP organisers a chance to explain our analysis, tactics and strategy. It gave supporters an opportunity to offer their suggestions for future work, voice their frustrations and difficulties, and compare notes with those from other branches. It was a working atmosphere, with some laughs thrown in.

The beauty of attending a conference of RCP supporters is that everyone knows everyone else is on the same side. That doesn't mean it's a gathering of hacks and 'yes men' where everyone always agrees and praises each other. In fact usually it's quite the opposite — because we know we're all working towards the same goal we can discuss issues much more critically. This conference was no exception. At times debates were lively and arguments were heated. The discussions of our work in the Clause 28 and the Fight Alton's Bill campaigns and in the NHS dispute dealt with genuine problems faced by supporters in different branches.

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Two main points came out of the conference: the need to sell our newspaper to a much wider audience, and the need to build our summer school **Preparing for Power** into our biggest event ever.

Selling the paper is the most important work an RCP supporter can do. Through the various disputes and campaigns we're involved with we are meeting hundreds of people who may not yet be active in politics, but are interested in what we have to say. At the moment we are sometimes too slow to get these people to buy, read, and discuss *tns*. RCP activists must always have a supply of papers and should be waiting for opportunities to interest people in particular articles.

Whenever possible we should try to involve our new readers in weekly 'readers' groups' where they can discuss articles and demand explanations of points they do not understand. It was clear from the conference that our most vibrant supporters' groups are in branches where our supporters sell a large number of papers. This is not just because more people read the paper and want to join the supporters' group meetings. Selling *tns* forces our existing supporters to work out answers to new questions and to think about how to deal with new situations. It's no coincidence that Kerry Dean, who ran a workshop on selling and using *tns*, found that the supporters with the most to say were often the ones who sold the most papers.

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This year's **Preparing for Power** summer school is probably our most important yet. The vast amount of campaigning work we've recently undertaken means that thousands of people have now heard of the RCP and even read our newspaper, but they know very little about us. **Preparing for Power** is an opportunity to show the world what we're made of. It's a week-long public summer school designed to give supporters and working class activists a chance to discuss how the world works and how to change it.

The summer school starts on Friday 22 July and runs for a week. The opening weekend will centre on a wide-ranging discussion of the issues at the top of the political agenda in 1988. The rest of the week will concentrate on 15 specialist courses ranging from 'War and Revolution in the Middle East' to 'The Roots of Racism'. There'll be lots of one-off sessions too. Last year we included workshops on artificial intelligence, animal rights, Freud, Einstein and a host of other issues.

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We've worked out a generous discount rate for anyone who registers before 1 April. All supporters and regular *tns* readers should take advantage of this deal. But don't plan to come on your own. Every supporter should try to get their friends, relatives, neighbours, workmates, whoever, to come and join in. If we meet the aim of last weekend's supporters' conference — double our paper sales, and mobilise people now for our summer school — we should be able to have a supporters' conference in the autumn that's twice as big.

Anne Burton

Irish Freedom Movement

● *LONDON IRISH FORUM*

Wednesday 16 March, 7.30pm
'Loyalism — myth and reality'
Room S53, St Clements Building
London School of Economics, Houghton St WC2
(Holborn tube)

● *BRISTOL DEBATE*

'Which way forward for Irish solidarity?'
Speakers: IFM, Labour Committee on Ireland, Labour and Trade Union Group
Thursday 10 March, 7.30pm
Mail Coach pub (near Littlewoods)
Broadmead
Bristol

● *VIDEO SHOWING*

'The funeral of Larry Marley'
Friday 4 March, 7.30pm
Shepherds' Hall (Old Market)
Bristol

● *VIDEO SHOWING*

'The Longest War'
Tuesday 8 March,7.30pm
BI Centre
Rutland Street (near Odeon Cinema)
Leicester

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PUBLIC MEETING

How to beat Alton

Tuesday 8 March 7.30pm
Rose and Crown
Stoke Newington Church Street
London N16

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S WEEK

FIGHT BACK!

Half-day conference
Saturday 12 March 1.30-6pm
Quaker Meeting House
Woodhouse Lane
(Opposite University)
Leeds
Workshops include:
Women freedom fighters • Making the unions fight for women • Clause 28, Alton's Bill and moral reaction • Building a new opposition
Tickets £2/£1 UB40
Evening social. Creche and refreshments available.

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Pandora Anderson

●

On the Stop the Clause demonstration in Manchester two weeks ago, RCP supporters sold 700 copies of *tns*. Our arguments about the need to fight for the complete decriminalisation of homosexuality in response to the Tory clampdown on lesbian and gay rights won wide agreeement

the next step

UNITED ALL-OUT ACTION

(continued from front page)

Everybody involved in the health dispute says that they favour a united campaign. The question is, who do we most need to unite with, and in what sort of campaign, to win against this cost-cutting government?

The leaders of the health unions Nupe and Cohse, the Royal College of Nursing and the Labour Party all want to unite with the respectable pillars of British society. They want to line up with the medical establishment in the royal colleges, the media and the Tory wets to lobby the government for extra resources. To keep on the right side of these responsible bodies, the union and Labour leaders have played down the demand for decent pay and working conditions in the NHS. They fear that raising such issues might scare off the consultants, the Conservative backbenchers and their other middle class allies. Instead, the unions have appealed to public sympathy for the NHS, and depicted the nurses as ministering 'angels' who deserve a little more charity.

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The unions' search for respectable support also means that they cannot sanction militant industrial action. They have tried to stamp out strike initiatives taken by health workers. Instead, the officials have organised a series of one-day (or even two-hour) gestures, and assured everybody that the health workers involved are standing on 'protest lines', not picket lines. The TUC rally in London on Saturday is the biggest event that the union chiefs have worked up the courage to call.

This sort of low-key campaign might win polite applause from some top doctors, opposition politicians and sections of the press. But it won't worry the Thatcher government. Tory ministers have been prepared to ride roughshod over the official opposition and dissidents in their own ranks for nine years. They are hardly likely to turn tail and retreat now at the prospect of a windy speech from Norman Willis of the TUC on a Saturday afternoon. The union leaders' pathetic idea of 'action' is incapable of shifting the Tories. Worse still, the arguments they are using to attract middle class sympathy play into the government's hands.

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The official labour movement leaders are echoing the royal colleges in asking the Tories to invest in making the NHS more 'efficient' and 'caring', especially in specialist areas like children's surgery. These might sound like admirable aims. But in a health service which is run according to the dictates of capitalist accountancy, increasing efficiency has always meant making health workers work harder for desperately low pay. And appealing for special treatment for those who care the most endorses the division between skilled nurses and other health workers, especially the ancillary staff. This is exactly what the Tories want.

The government's major concern over the nurses' pay review is to ensure that it introduces new variations between the pay of different groups of health workers. The Tories want to open up divisions within the NHS workforce by rewarding a few and leaving the rest on or below the breadline. Then they can drive bigger spending cuts through the gaps in our ranks. The union leaders' approach can only aid the government, by separating the specialist 'angels' on the children's wards or in intensive care from the hundreds of thousands of other health workers who will suffer at the sharp end of any 'efficiency' drive.

Health workers need a lot more than token protests to beat the Tories. All-out industrial action to make the government's schemes inoperable would create the one sort of pressure which Thatcher cannot ignore. We need a militant campaign for national action, and we cannot worry about whether or not it upsets the public opinion makers. The people we need to worry about uniting first and foremost are the health workers themselves.

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The question our leaders ask is, 'what sort of campaign can we organise to plead for mercy in unity with public figures?' But the question health workers must address is, 'what sort of campaign will bring our own forces together in a fight to win what we need?' Seen in this light, the answer should be clear. We need a campaign which centres on the concerns of every worker in every hospital. It is especially important to involve those who have so far been pushed into the background, like the nursing auxiliaries and ancillary workers. They have no interest in calling for investment in efficiency drives which operate at their expense. Nor is there anything for them in a campaign about the angelic efforts of the top nursing staff.

What every health worker desperately needs is a significant wage rise and a big improvement in working conditions. These demands are the obvious focus for building a united campaign. By burying these vital concerns beneath their timid appeals to defend the NHS, the trade union and Labour Party leaders are throwing away our one chance to pull health workers together in a struggle that could succeed.

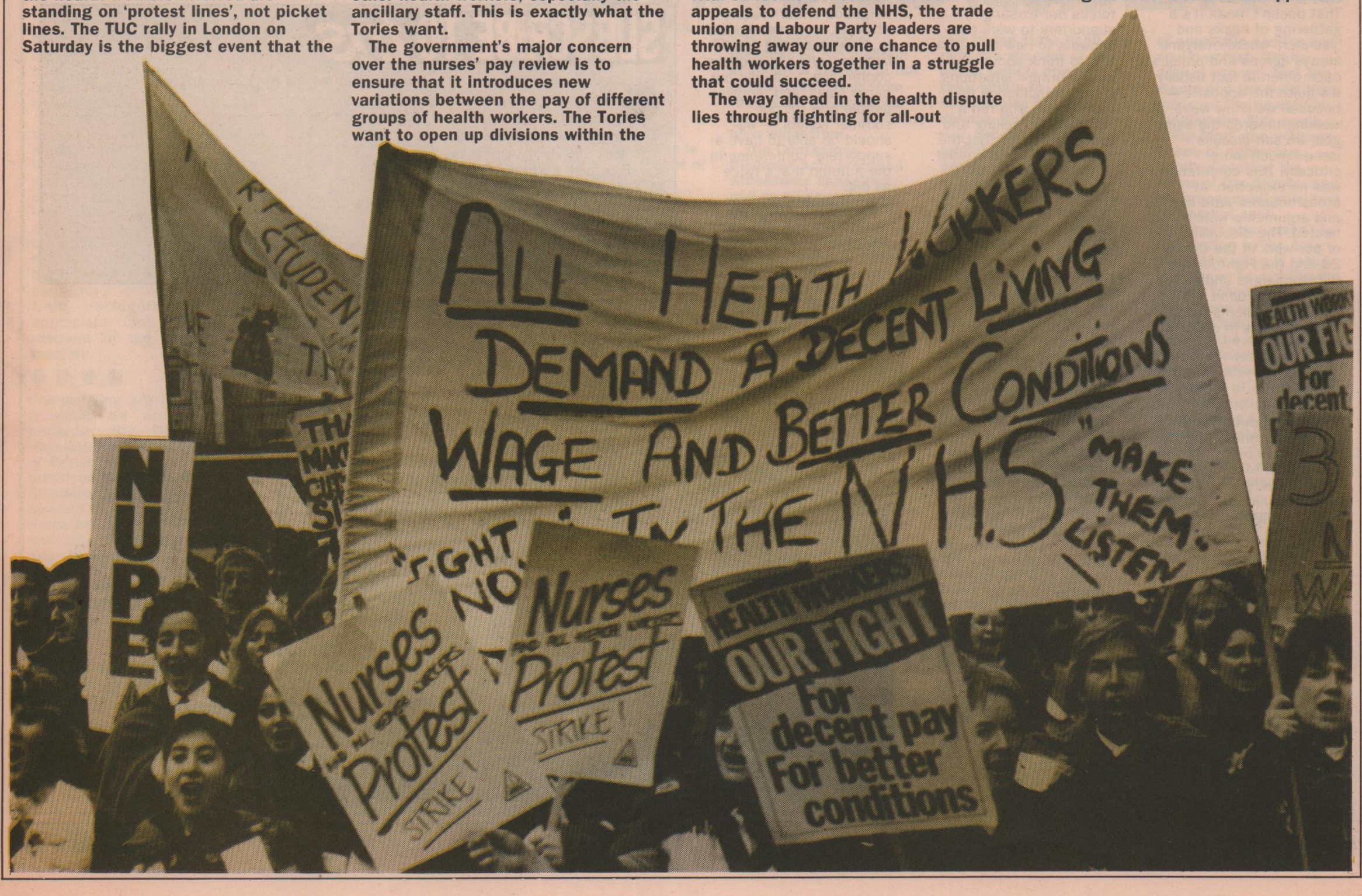
The way ahead in the health dispute lies through fighting for all-out industrial action — with emergency cover under health workers' control — behind health workers' own demands on pay and conditions. We would be fooling ourselves if we imagined that the union officials currently heading the campaign could ever be willing or able to organise such an initiative. So, if health workers are to make progress along these lines, they will need to seize control of the struggle themselves.

Instead of looking to the TUC general council or any other dead labour movement body, health workers should set about forming action committees at rank and file level. These would provide an ideal forum in which to overcome longstanding divisions among different groups of hospital staff. They would also bring together all of the expertise required to work out what sort of emergency cover to provide. Action committees in the hospitals would be building blocks from which a national campaign of industrial action could be created.

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All-out united action over wages and conditions is not an idea that can appeal to the middle class bodies our leaders are courting. It will be condemned by the medical establishment and pilloried in the press. But that is not important. What matters is that it would shake the Tory government. And it would provide the basis for appealing for active solidarity, rather than passive sympathy, from other sections of the working class. Workers around the country have already shown willing to take action alongside health workers. This is the sort of unity we must build on. It will be a lot more effective than getting a kind word for the 'angels' out of a Tory wet.

Florence Nightingale is no match for Margaret Thatcher. But nurses fighting for what they need, backed by the rest of the NHS workforce and others in industry and services, are an altogether more formidable opponent.



Pandora Anderson