# The Next Step

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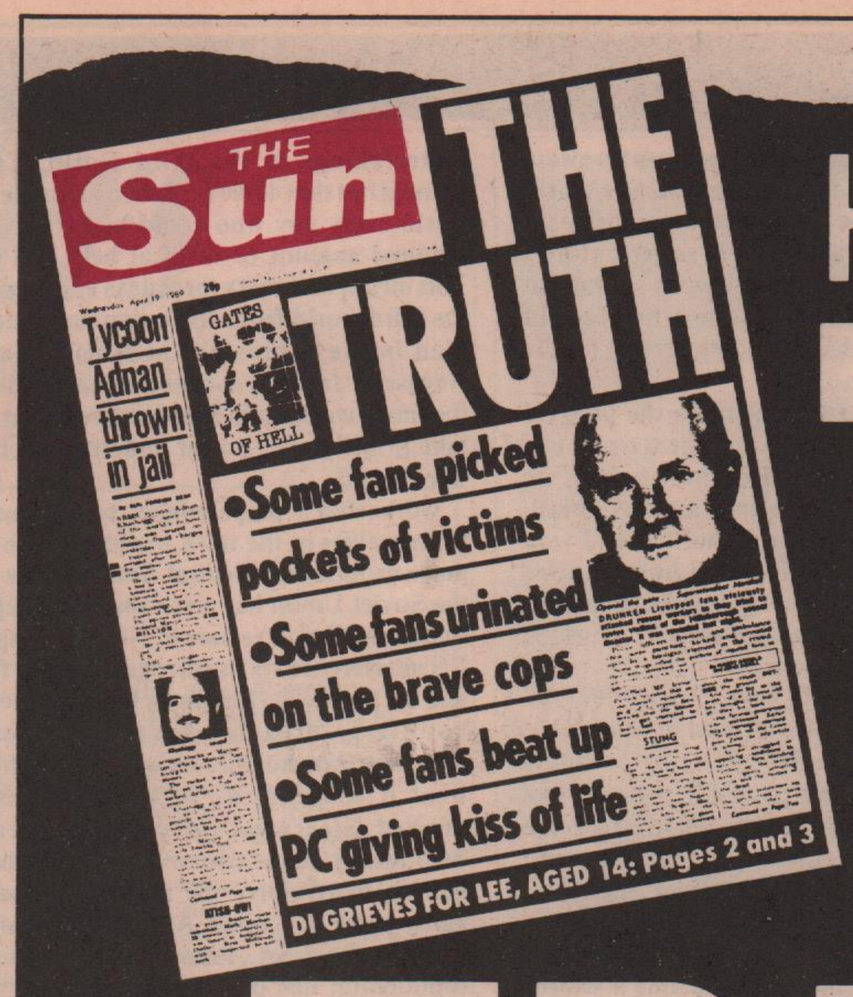


# HILLSBOROUGH THE TRUTH

## • Thatcher led the law and order drive which caged fans

## • Police treated dying fans as a public order problem

## • Press liars abused the dead to cover up the truth

Within days of the tragedy everybody in authority was blaming drunken yobs for what happened at Hillsborough. In a sickening front page emblazoned with the headline 'THE TRUTH', the *Sun* defiled the dead by printing police lies about drunken fans looting, punching, kicking, spitting, urinating and jeering. These contemptible smears were designed to shift the blame away from those who are really responsible for the carnage. Let us be clear about who they are: we blame the government, the police and the press who set up fans as hooligans and caged them in a suffocating pen.

*See pages 2, 4 and 5.*

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# Editorial

*28 April • No 13*

*Editor: Joan Phillips*

# HILLSBOROUGH

FROM COURAGEOUS and dignified heroes who risked their own lives to save others, the Liverpool fans at Hillsborough have become baying, drunken brutes who defiled the dead. The speed with which coverage of a working class tragedy was transformed into an anti-working class tirade shows how the establishment will pervert the truth to serve its own squalid political ends.

Our people have had to suffer countless insults from the political representatives of the capitalist class over the past 10 years. But the smears which police, press and politicians have levelled against those who emerged alive from the carnage of Hillsborough come from the sewer.

The vicious anti-working class prejudice of much of the media comment on the tragedy has angered tens of thousands of people. But unless that anger is given a political focus those in authority who are really to blame for the tragedy will get away with passing the guilt and retribution on to the victims of Hillsborough.

It was not easy for the government, the police and the media to turn the debate around. The weight of evidence exculpating the fans and incriminating the police, as well as the breadth of anger against the authorities which the tragedy evoked, made it difficult to scapegoat fans as hooligans.

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Gradually the tone of the media comment began to change. On Monday London *Evening Standard* columnist Peter McKay asked: 'How long will it take for it publicly to be acknowledged that fans themselves share the blame?' If his article was to be the barometer of how quickly the truth would be revised, the answer was no time at all. McKay set the tone for the ensuing debate, blaming the 95 deaths on 'tribal passions'.

Yet even after the gutter press led by the *Sun* reprinted police slanders about drunken fans brawling, jeering, spitting and pillaging, the torrent of anger which this brought forth forced the authorities to feign neutrality. The Merseyside Police Federation rebuked their South Yorkshire colleagues for making allegations which might prejudice the official inquiry. And in an unprecedented move the home secretary Douglas Hurd intervened to call for an end to the recriminations.

Hurd's intervention shows the conflicting pressures on the establishment. On the one hand, the government needs to encourage the prejudices articulated by the *Sun* to consolidate its political base. Hence, while the government made a pretence of impartiality, its lackeys in the press continued to issue slurs against the fans.

On the other hand, the government is aware that if it goes too far there is a danger that it could bring to the surface anti-establishment sentiments which are latent in society. Hurd's contribution to the debate was an attempt to defuse a dangerous dispute which could conceivably have led to a political crisis for the government.

As long as it can monopolise the political debate, the government is confident that it can turn the outcry over Hillsborough to its advantage in the weeks and months ahead. Indeed, it is because the authorities had won the argument about football hooliganism *before* Hillsborough, that the media felt able to issue their vile slurs *after* a tragedy in which hooliganism played no part.

For years the Tories have branded football supporters as animals who need to be caged in order to justify tougher policing methods against working class people in general. The idea that society is under threat from the scourge of hooliganism has been taken on board by people across the political spectrum. It is on the basis of having won the propaganda war about hooliganism that the government's supporters in the media now blame a violent minority of yobs for what happened at Hillsborough.

Writing in the rabidly reactionary *Sunday Telegraph,* Frank Johnson summed up the distinction between the respectable working class and the degenerate mob which has characterised the discussion: 'Going to football is now the recreation of what Marx called the lumpen proletariat, what sociologists call the underclass, and what the rest of us are content to call the yobs.' (23 April) These prejudices have been repeated, albeit in less strident language, in all the quality papers from the *Independent* to the *Observer.*

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It is important to understand that unless we reject the hooligan panic altogether the government will get away with branding fans as the guilty party at Hillsborough. It is notable that while many people reject out of hand the accusation of hooliganism at Hillsborough, they accept that nevertheless there is a general problem of hooliganism. But if we make any concessions to the idea that hooliganism is a problem, it means that we are entering the discussion on their terms. The logic of accepting that there is a public order problem at football matches is that we accept more repressive policing and more security measures as the solution.

Yet more law and order is not the solution but the problem. It was the problem at Hillsborough where 95 people died because the government's hysterical campaign against hooliganism led to fans being caged like beasts and treated as a public order problem by police. Our role should be to provide a political focus for the outrage over Hillsborough. That means refusing to accept that hooliganism is a problem and exposing the official panic whipped up around the issue as a cynical ploy by the government to win support for its law and order campaign. If we do not challenge their scaremongering about hooliganism, the 95 who died at Hillsborough will not be the last victims of the law and order panic.

# GORBACHEV

IT IS becoming clearer that the convergence between East and West which is the fruit of Mikhail Gorbachev's diplomacy is taking place at the expense of the third world. Gorbachev's willingness to make major concessions to the West in strategic areas of the world in return for progress in arms reductions and economic aid for the Soviet Union involves sacrificing the interests of the third world masses. The peoples of Central and Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and other regions of the third world will be the losers in Gorbachev's wheeler-dealing with the West.

Gorbachev's cool reception from Fidel Castro during his recent visit to Cuba was instructive in this respect. An article by Hugh O'Shaughnessy in the *Observer* related how Castro questioned Gorbachev on what his diplomacy implied for the Soviet Union's undertakings in the third world. Castro pointed out that 40 000 children die in the third world every day who could be saved with a minimal amount of medical help and food. This means that every three days as many die in the third world from starvation and illness as died in the explosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In reply Gorbachev made it clear that improvements in East-West relations must take priority over Soviet undertakings in the third world.

Gorbachev's preparedness to sell out his former allies in the third world has also been made explicit over Central America. For years the Soviet Union has given rhetorical support to the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua against US interference via its surrogate Contra forces and the regime in Honduras. In recent months, however, Gorbachev has moved closer to accepting Washington's right to interfere in what it considers its backyard. Gorbachev praised Nicaragua's decision to increase democracy and reduce its armed forces, helping to reinforce the impression that the guilty party in Central America is Nicaragua and not the USA. Predictably, Gorbachev's capitulation has only encouraged the White House to demand further concessions by Moscow to the US line on Central America.

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The new convergence between Moscow and Washington has already exacted a heavy toll from the peoples of southern Africa. Gorbachev has been complicit in the destruction of the independence struggle in Namibia. His desire to improve his ratings with the Western powers explains why the Soviets put pressure on the Angolans and Cubans to comply with the sham United Nations peace plan in Namiba. This imperialist scheme effectively surrenders the Namibian people to continued South African domination and opens up Angola to US interference. Moscow's overtures to Washington have also led to cuts in Soviet aid to the black liberation movements and to the frontline states.

In the Middle East too it is possible to detect the conciliatory stance of Gorbachev in Moscow's recognition of Israel. In taking this step towards acknowledging the legitimacy of the artifical Zionist state, Gorbachev has given notice to the West of his willingness to sacrifice the rights of the Palestinians to self-determination. Offering concessions to the West is now the pattern of the Soviet Union's international manoeuvres everywhere from Kabul to Kampuchea. The growing convergence between East and West means that the third world will no longer be able to benefit from playing off the superpowers as it did to a limited degree in the past. The warming of relations between the imperialist and Stalinist camps leaves the third world out in the cold.

# GOING UNDERGROUND

THE EMERGENCE of unofficial rank and file organisation by London's tube drivers is a step forward. The fact that a significant section of workers has seen the necessity to organise independently of the union bureaucracy is a positive development. It is especially welcome coming as it does at a time when the general trend is in the other direction, away from independent organisation and action.

Other groups of workers such as the dockers could learn some useful lessons from the tube drivers about how to maximise their impact. The first lesson to be learned is that it is possible to fight. The most refreshing thing about the action on the underground was the way in which thousands of workers disregarded the prejudice that it is futile even to contemplate fighting in today's conditions. The tube strike was a powerful antidote to the mood of despondency which has come to prevail.

A second lesson which could be usefully assimilated is the need for independent organisation. The paralysis of the union leaders in the dock dispute proves beyond doubt that the trade union bureaucracy is an obstacle in the way of workers who want to defend their jobs and living standards. The tube strike went ahead in defiance of the union leaders, and was all the more effective for doing so. The precondition for workers making any progress today is rank and file initiative and control.

The third lesson to be learned from the tube drivers is that it is possible to win if the working class takes matters into its own hands and organises to hit the employers where it hurts. The strike was devastating in its impact on the City of London. After only two days of action on the underground it is clear that these workers have the power to bring the business of the City to the verge of collapse. The panic which their threats of further strike action has induced in the employers is palpable. That is the way to win.

# THE 39% PARTY

EVERY TIME the Labour Party moves a few percentage points up the polls there is a resurgence of hope that maybe it will make the breakthrough required to dislodge the Tories. This was the case just over a month ago after a spate of opinion polls and by-elections seemed to show the Labour Party doing well and the Tories suffering a slump in support. At the time we argued that it would be wrong to read too much into these indicators and conclude that the official opposition was about to take off. The most recent polls bear out this assessment, and prove that these premature celebrations of a Labour Party revival were simply wishful thinking.

If the opinion polls prove anything it is that Neil Kinnock's party is unelectable. Labour is now back at 39 per cent in the polls, where it seems to have been wallowing for the past 10 years. After a decade of Tory rule the Labour Party cannot even manage to regain the 10-point lead in the polls which it sometimes achieved at comparable periods of Tory unpopularity in the past. The Thatcher regime's ascendancy cannot be explained by the popularity of Tory policies. It is clear that the government has not yet managed to establish a firm consensus around its political programme. Thatcher's monopoly of political power is entirely the result of her success in discrediting the opposition. The Labour Party is unelectable because it has been destroyed as a political force and cannot lay convincing claim to be an alternative party of government.

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# letters

*Write to the next step, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX*

## BLAME THATCHER

**AS A workmate of one of those who died at Hillsborough, I'm writing to make a point about the real culprit behind the disaster: this government.**

**Nick, a lad in his 20s, played for the factory football team and only married a few weeks ago. The son of a guy who works in the next department was also killed. In fact Nick didn't have a ticket until the last minute, when one of the people at work couldn't use it and gave it to him.**

**Initial anger surfaced because the first reaction of the police when people tried to climb over the fence was to push them back. One opened the small gate, allowed three people out, and then, seeing how many more wanted to get out, he closed it again. That policeman sealed the fate of some people.**

**Outside the ground, a number of photographers, who had been taking close-up pictures of those being crushed instead of helping them, were attacked. One had his camera smashed, as did another later on at a service station while he and a journalist were hassling supporters still in shock.**

**The fans were being blamed for the crush outside. The truth is that it was inadequate organisation and policing that was to blame. In many cases, it was left to friends, relations and complete strangers to try to resuscitate those who were unconscious or whose hearts had stopped. Many police formed a line across the pitch–police who were trained in first aid and could have offered help in those vital minutes when everything happened. Everything about the police behaviour summed up their attitude to the fans: hooligans to be controlled.**

**Monday morning in work was an eerie experience. No one switched on their machines. The management stayed in their offices. No one could believe the Yorkshire chief constable's comment that he could see no connection between his men opening the gates and what happened afterwards. Later, his minion delegated to do the press conference almost ran off when questioned about police behaviour.**

**One sad aspect of the comments made at work was the acceptance that the police inquiry would inevitably be a whitewash; another indication of how far-reaching is the depoliticisation in society today. There is an all-pervasive attitude that football fans are hooligans, but where does this idea come from? The answer is: this government. This is a point we must press as forcefully as possible while Thatcher and Hurd scurry about trying to appear concerned, creating the impression that they are doing something about a tragedy that is of their making. They still want to press ahead with the ID card scheme for their own narrow political aims of working towards the day when it will be compulsory for all of us to carry ID cards.**

**Wednesday morning in work saw the expression of anger the like of which I've not seen in all the years I've worked there. Copies of the *Sun* and the *Star* were either thrown in the bin or ripped up. Over the years I've managed to persuade a few people to stop reading the *Sun*. In a single day, the whole factory became *Sun, Star* and *Mirror*-free (*Mirror* because of the gruesome photographs it displayed on Monday). Some of us also thought the *Sun* story, 'The Truth', was an attempt to bail out Thatcher because of the problems facing her ID card bill.**

**The connection between the government's actions and a series of tragedies is being made. The blood of our workmates is on Thatcher's hands. Some of us will not forget.**

***Danny Watson***
***Liverpool***

## SCORING POLITICAL POINTS?

**IT'S** been sickening to watch politicians and journalists poring over every last detail of the Hillsborough tragedy and then trying to reconstruct it to fit their point of view or further their selfish aims. I was sorry to see *the next step* turn the issue into a sort of Hillsborough special. I know your intentions are different from those of the gutter press, but I do not think you should have followed the pack and made so much of such a tragic event. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that you too want to make political capital out of the tragedy.

**Sue Hill**
**Birmingham**

**Our view is that there has to be a political response to Hillsborough. The government and its supporters in the media have been making political capital out of the anti-hooligan panic for years. This is something which we have warned against in *the next step* for the past five years. It is precisely because the authorities have run this political campaign that so many people died at Hillsborough. It is, therefore, vital that we emphasise the political roots of the tragedy and pin the blame on the guilty parties. If we don't they will certainly turn the debate around, as they have already started to do, and shift the focus of blame on to football fans.**

PRESS ASSOCIATION

## FILTH FROM THE GUTTER

**LIKE** a lot of people I've been angered by the cynicism of the press response to Hillsborough. Normally tabloid editors have enough sus to know what the popular mood is and adapt to it. But the *Mirror* outraged everybody with its colour close-ups of corpses turning blue. By the middle of the week the crocodile tears and lofty sermons were abandoned, and the most blatant political manipulation of the tragedy began.

At the time of the disaster, police tried to cover up their role by blaming the crush on hooliganism outside the ground. This was immediately exposed as a lie by the many eyewitnesses who saw nothing of the sort. But a week later, this story has crept back into frame. South Yorkshire police officers claimed Liverpool 'yobs' were trying to provoke Forest fans and 'looting' the corpses. The claim was certainly a fabrication, but the story served the purpose and put 'yobs' back on the front page.

The *Mirror* took what seemed like a principled stand, slamming the anonymous police cowards for trying to get themselves off the hook. But its stand looks less impressive when you remember the knock its sales took after the sensationalised coverage on Monday. And it looks positively cynical when you bear in mind that its arch-rival the *Sun* was leading the campaign against the 'yobs'.

The establishment is going to find it hard to square Hillsborough with the line it wants to push on policing and hooliganism. But they will try, and if we don't reject the premises on which their law and order panics are based, they will use the next convenient opportunity to resurrect them.

**Ray Haviland**
**Lewisham**

# The working class

SIMON NORFOLK

Tube workers have the power to stop London: they should use it

TUBE STRIKE

# HIT THE CITY

### A London Transport worker explains why feelings are running high underground

The unofficial strike by London's tube drivers last Thursday brought chaos to the roads and the City to a halt. The drivers' second day of action in the past fortnight halted three out of four trains on the underground and rattled management. Thursday showed that support for the action is spreading. It also showed that tube drivers have the power to disrupt London, and, in particular, to bring business to a halt.

The immediate cause of the strike is the introduction by London Transport of one-person-operated (OPO) trains, in which there are no guards and the drivers do all the work. Out of 2500 tube drivers, 1650 now operate driver-only trains. The drivers are demanding an extra £64 a week to compensate for the increased workload. Management have refused to consider the demand.

## Continental working

But the strike is not simply about pay. Privatisation, redundancies and flexible working are all part of 'tomorrow's underground'. Management wants to introduce continental working, under which drivers would get paid the same for weekends as for the rest of the week. It plans to scrap the 'banked rest day' which provides cover for annual leave. And it wants to get rid of the 'assistant prepare staff', who help drivers prepare trains before they go into service. All this would lead to major job losses—and reduce wages for those that remain.

Tube bosses are also putting into place what they call the 'business plan', creating the conditions for the easy transfer of lines, stations and depots into private hands. Engineers who used to run the depots have been replaced by managers who are smashing up the old grading system. A semi-skilled worker yesterday is a janitor today. In many stations white-collar workers have been forced to help out on the platforms.

LT builders have been privatised with huge job losses. The cleaning services and depot maintenance staff have gone. Train maintenance and the lines themselves are about all that's left. We know that the lines are going to be sold off, either in one piece or in sections. Already certain stations have been designated 'Action Stations' and given control of the line or part of the line. The station manager has full responsibility for hiring and firing and for line profitability. Throughout the system, new ticket machines and automatic barriers are in place and all stations and depots are getting a quick lick of paint.

## Backs to the wall

Everyone is aware that our backs are to the wall. We also recognise that our unions will not be of any help to us. In a strike ballot, nine out of 10 NUR members and two thirds of the white collar workers in the TSSA voted for action against the introduction of 'Action Stations'.

**The extent of rank and file anger has finally pushed the unions into calling a strike, but they are doing their best to ensure it doesn't take place.**

The NUR is putting its energy into getting tube bosses to reconstitute the negotiating machinery which management has dumped. Given the sterling service the unions have provided over the years, keeping a lid on rank and file anger, management's refusal to talk might seem surprising. But LT reckons that in the new climate of rationalisation the union bureaucracy is a luxury it can dispense with. In any case it will be easier to privatise the company without such cumbersome machinery.

While management has shown its contempt for the unions, the new wave of rank and file activity has got it running scared. The two days of action have shown that tube drivers can hit the bosses where it hurts by bringing the City to its knees. While the authorities have not hesitated to raise the stakes against miners, printers, seafarers and dockers, they have so far taken a conciliatory attitude towards tube drivers.

London Underground managing director Denis Tunnicliff assured workers that management has 'no plans' to take legal action against strike organisers. Officials in the department of employment told the *Observer* that the strikes were 'lawful' even though there had been no ballot because they were 'legitimate trades disputes' organised by individuals, not trade unions. When government officials are forced to say that an obviously illegal strike is legal, you know you've got them on the run.

## Shepherd's Pie?

What worries management is the spontaneous nature of the strikes and the widespread support for them despite the lack of picketing. The strikes have been organised outside formal union structures and in almost total secrecy. Ever since the first strike was announced newspapers have launched a hunt for the 'secret group of 20 tube activists' who are supposed to be running the strike. The London *Evening Standard* showed just how clueless the authorities are when it claimed in all seriousness that the strike leaders operated under the codename 'The Shepherd's Pie Group'.

**While the drivers have shown the right approach by taking control of the dispute, there are a few problems we need to sort out if we are to be really effective.**

Because of the secret way the strikes have been organised many drivers are in the dark about what's going on and confused about what our strategy should be. Some drivers feel they haven't been consulted or even told about the strikes. There is a widespread feeling too that one-day strikes will not put sufficient pressure on management.

There is also the question of unity. While the two strikes so far have been solid among OPO drivers, we need to involve other drivers and underground staff. Everyone recognises that management's plans will affect all underground workers. Despite worries that open meetings will bring management reprisals, we need mass meetings to bring together workers from all stations and depots to work out how to win decisively. As a mate of mine said the other day, 'Good luck to the drivers, but none of us will be safe until we turn over the whole goddam business plan'. Having already got management on the run there is no reason why we shouldn't do just that.

**D Ryan**

# Feature

AFTER HILLSBOROUGH

# THE TRUTH ABOUT HOOLIGAN PANIC

***In edited extracts from a speech delivered in London this situates the Hillsborough tragedy in the context of Thatche***

The deaths of 95 people at Hillsborough have moved millions and stirred many different emotions. Now it is time to put the terrible events in some perspective.

A lot of people have blamed police incompetence for the Hillsborough deaths. But most of what the police did resulted from a *deliberate* policy and style of controlling football matches today. Hillsborough didn't just happen because of mistakes made on the day. It was the end result of a campaign of political victimisation orchestrated by the Thatcher government. The government has branded young football fans as hooligans, an enemy within that must be contained and cut out like a cancer. So when the police herded the Liverpool fans into that suffocating pen, they were carrying out Tory orders.

## Civilisation

The chain of events at Hillsborough flowed from the policing policy which defines all football fans as a public order problem. When Liverpool supporters turn up for a big match, you cage them like dangerous animals, regardless of the crush. And when they try to escape from the killing cage, you treat it as a riot instead of a rescue operation. Push the first ones who climb out back over the barriers. When crushed fans lie gasping for breath on the grass, get a few hundred police officers to stand in a battleline across the pitch—to prevent the dying making a charge at the Nottingham Forest fans.

When the fans themselves rip up advertising hoardings to use as stretchers, bring out the police dogs to keep them in order. And get your priorities right when it comes to equipment: empty oxygen tanks and non-existent defibrilators are OK, but make sure your surveillance cameras, hoolivans and several tons of other riot gear around the ground are in good working order.

**The fear of 'the mob' has been a feature of British middle class opinion for 150 years**

This is what happened at Hillsborough. It was the culmination of a long-running political campaign to criminalise football spectators. For years British governments and newspapers have run high-profile campaigns about the problem of football hooliganism. The Thatcher government has raised this to hysteria level. It has seized on one or two incidents of trouble to brand all young fans as violent criminals.

**Tory ministers like Colin Moynihan are on our TV screens every week, warning that football hooliganism is threatening British civilisation.**

Last year Moynihan described the trouble caused by England fans at the European championships as if it was a war to end all wars; the local police said it was no worse than a normal weekend during the West German league season. Just last month Tory Lord Onslow boasted that the government was out to deal with the 'members of the yob class' who attend football matches. And Lord Hill-Naughton, admiral of the fleet, recently argued that football should lose its title as the national game, since it is 'a slum game played by louts in front of hooligans'.

## Irony

When the Uefa chief Jacques Georges called British football fans 'beasts' after Hillsborough, the authorities here turned on him in an attempt to divert the flak they were getting on to a handy foreigner. But Georges was only repeating a message which, until six minutes past three on that fateful Saturday, had been broadcast by every spokesman for the British establishment. He got caught out like the one idiot at every football match who tries to carry on with a chant after the rest of the crowd has temporarily finished with it. And it wasn't long before the British media were taking up the 'animals' chant again.

The point of all this Tory propaganda about hooliganism has been to build up an image of football fans as the barbarian hordes of our time, to terrify the public into accepting that more police and tougher legal powers are required to deal with them. It has been a smokescreen to cover a big increase in the repressive capacity of the state.

The most bitter irony is that the Tories have claimed more police were needed to keep society safe. But as Hillsborough showed, public safety is the last thing the strengthened police force is concerned about. They have used the panic about hooliganism as an excuse for practising heavy-handed tactics.

If you don't go to football, it is hard to comprehend what the people on the terraces have to put up with. The football bosses see them as turnstile fodder, to be charged top prices to 'enjoy' facilities that would shame a slum landlord. The police treat all spectators as potential hooligans, but save their worst for the away team's fans, viewed as an invading army. This was the treatment Liverpool supporters would have got in Sheffield.

## Cover-up

The away fans are usually marched from the rail and coach stations under heavy police escort, pushed around and shat on—sometimes literally—by mounted police outside the ground, searched and smelt for traces of alcohol at the turnstile. Inside the ground they are packed into pens and told where they can stand.

**The police decide when the crush in one wire pen is stifling enough to open the next one; if they say there is still room for you, then in you go, regardless of whether there is space to stand, let alone to see the match.**

The experience of being hemmed in by cages and hurled around by the crowd on a visitors' terrace at a big game is like being on a packed rush-hour train that crashes every 30 seconds or so. I have seen several people faint and more than one crack a rib against the aptly-named crush barriers. The policing methods and prison camp conditions at all big matches meant that Hillsborough could have happened any week.

When it did happen, it didn't take the politicians, the police and the press long to launch a cover-up operation. They sensed instinctively that Hillsborough is not just another disaster; the authorities are more directly implicated in the carnage this time, and have to work harder to shift the blame elsewhere.

It is now standard practice after a disaster like a rail crash for management and the media to name and blame the drivers involved. But the 'staff' on the scene at Hillsborough were policemen. The Tories and the tabloid editors cannot brand *them* as idle or irresponsible. So it had to be the fans' fault. The *Sun* led the charge of the liars brigade.

## Normal

Under the banner headline 'The Truth', the *Sun* reprinted the scandalous allegations made by South Yorkshire police: that Liverpool fans were drunk, that they urinated on rescue workers, that they robbed the dead, etc, etc. These slurs do not really deserve a reply, and nobody should be defensive about them. Suppose for a moment that they had all been true; are we meant to conclude that this would make the massacre OK? Is the penalty for being drunk and disorderly now death by asphyxiation? And suppose the Liverpool supporters had not been so remarkably restrained, and had rioted against the police who caged them and left their friends to die: who could have blamed the rioters?

The fans have no need to defend themselves against such low-life journalism. But it is worth looking into these lies to reveal the depths to which the authorities and their press friends will sink in the attempt to discredit their victims.

Perhaps a *Sun* reporter would treat an FA Cup semi-final as just another chance to get legless on expenses. But for Liverpool fans it is a major occasion. There are plenty of pubs on Merseyside; people don't need to travel to Sheffield and spend £14 on a ticket (or a lot more from a tout) to get tanked up. They went there to see the match.

Of course many of them had a drink beforehand. For anybody except football fans, that is considered a normal part of a Saturday out. If you really want to see drinking at a sporting event, go to the rugby at Twickenham, the rowing at Henley or the racing at Royal Ascot. The 'respectable' class of spectators at these events is allowed to drink as much as they like where they like, and to display what's called 'healthy high spirits' afterwards (rugger chaps invade the pitch as a matter of course, Hooray Henrys vandalise anything going at Henley).

**But these same people treat working class football fans the way that the Victorians viewed Irish immigrants and American settlers viewed the Indians: as sub-humans who were meant to become murderous savages as soon as they got a taste of alcohol.**

As for the fans urinating on people, I'll leave it to one who was there and who wrote to the *Independent* last week to answer that: 'In the worst moments of the crush I was both urinated and vomited on—this was not malevolence, but death throes.' And it looked to me and everybody else watching on TV as if the fans were trying to pull the injured clear and give them the kiss of life, not picking their pockets. But then, I suppose we don't have a trained eye for spotting these things unlike the police who stood around and watched people die.

The fury which these accusations caused in Liverpool, where copies of the *Sun* were burnt, is testimony enough to the insult involved. Even the Merseyside police felt obliged to criticise what the South Yorkshire force had said—because they realised that, if there was a major anti-police backlash in Liverpool, it would be them in the firing line.

And when the poison-pen writers had had their say in the press, the authorities announced that there should be no further discussion or speculation about what happened at Hillsborough. We should all wait to see what comes out of the official inquiries. Experience should tell us already what those reports will recommend—even stricter controls on football spectators.

The police inquiry, for example, is being run by Geoffrey Dear, West Midlands chief constable. Dear knows a lot about the subject of policing football. Soon after his appointment to his post in 1985, he personally led a cavalry charge on spectators at a Birmingham City match. As for Lord Justice Taylor's report, we can expect it to be full of the anti-working class prejudice already evident in the reforms proposed by the government.

Take the calls to make all-seater

**Whatever the official inquiries say, let us be clear that the 95 who died at Hillsborough were the victims of the anti-hooligan hysteria and the law and order drive which has been orchestrated by the Tory government, implemented by the police, and accepted by the football bosses and the opposition parties.**

Every reactionary and hypocrite from Margaret Thatcher downwards has made a display of false sympathy. But scratch the surface, and you will find Hillsborough has split British society. On one side stand those who accept the explanation that hooliganism was to blame. Many of these people express the traditional middle class fear and loathing of 'the mob', a hatred for working class people whom they see as vulgar and violent. This is the view now being expressed and encouraged in an endless stream of post-Hillsborough press articles. On the other side stand the mass of people who have instinctively sided with the fans, blamed the police, and displayed all that is best about the working class.

## Right-on

The fear of 'the mob' has been a feature of British middle class opinion for a hundred and fifty years. It has inspired all manner of moral campaigns to Christianise or otherwise clean up the masses, to make the working class more 'respectable'. It has also ensured a body of support for government or police action designed to tame the unruly street urchins.

This prejudice is not the exclusive preserve of right-wing journalists. It even influences many middle class individuals who consider themselves social progressives. Just three days before the Hillsborough disaster, I was in a pub where one of the best-known women comics on the alternative cabaret circuit, considered to be very radical and right-on, was performing. She centred her routine on a 'joke' about how she didn't want English football clubs to get back into European competition; she wanted all of the fans 'to stay in Britain and kill each other'. No doubt, in the light of subsequent events, she has dropped that gag. But the general hatred of working class 'yobbery' she expressed remains strong among many middle class people across the political spectrum.

The working class response to Hillsborough provides the best counter to this prejudice. The people whom the pundits consider to be an anarchistic mob have shown their humanity, their strength and their capacity for organisation. You only have to look at the way the fans organised their own stretcher teams and first aid in the middle of the terror and confusion on the pitch to see how the 'mob' and 'yob' stories are an invention of twisted minds.

**People have shown tremendous solidarity with the fans who suffered and died at Hillsborough; more than a million have filed through Liverpool's Anfield stadium to pay their respects.**

This provides a powerful counter to the Tory argument that people today live as individual citizens with no sense of community or class. Despite 10 years of Thatcherism, a collective spirit still survives among working class people. And even in face of a full-scale gutter press campaign, many will refuse to be swayed by the official lies.

## Respect

The sense of solidarity even seems to have made some headway in crossing modern political divides within the working class. The north-south divide is usually expressed in the abuse exchanged between rival groups of football fans; London supporters are notorious for singing 'Sign on, sign on, and you'll never get a job' to the tune of the Liverpool anthem 'You'll never walk alone'. Yet these same fans stood in total silence at 3.06pm on Saturday—an unheard-of show of respect from people normally guaranteed to chant their way through any official minute of silence. Of course, the media focused on a handful of Millwall supporters who *did* try to keep up the noise. But even they were shouted done by the angry majority.

We have also come across many black people who sided with the fans from the first. Given their experience of getting racial abuse from the worst sections of football crowds, that may seem surprising. But the far more serious racist harassment they get from the police has proved enough to make many black people line up with the fans against the Force.

Or look at what happened during the televised European Cup semi-final between AC Milan and Real Madrid in mid-week. The noise which continued during the minute's silence was not disrespectful chanting, but thousands of Italians singing 'You'll never walk alone'. In an era when the British authorities and chauvinist English football supporters have subjected foreigners to much abuse, and when 39 Italians have died after a charge by Liverpool fans in Heysel stadium, this was a moving reminder of the basic working class instincts which can still transcend national divisions and disputes.

## Silence

None of this is unambiguously positive. The emotions generated by Hillsborough in Britain have not been channelled into a coherent political statement that the authorities are responsible for the deaths. In these circumstances, the expressions of solidarity can take on an excessively maudlin character. The churches and other establishment do-gooders can then prey on people's positive feelings and turn them into a funereal mood of 'forgive and forget'. The response which began as an outburst of working class anger is thus damped down into a mood of passive grief.

This is why Hillsborough demands a political response that can hammer home the lessons: about the consequences of the Tory law and order drive, about the myth that the militarised police force is there to protect the public, about the contempt in which the authorities hold working class people. Some might accuse us of exploiting the tragedy. But the Tories and their supporters have been scoring political points off this for years, are now even trying to twist Hillsborough to their advantage in the debate about ID cards. Minutes of silence are not enough in reply. Our silence can only help them to monopolise the post-Hillsborough debate. The root of the problem is political. It demands a political response that can lay the blame for the black hole of Hillsborough at the right doors, starting with No 10 Downing Street.

# THE

## eek, Mick Hume r's Britain

stadiums compulsory. Whatever the technical safety merits of such an idea may be, this is not why the Tories are keen on it. Focusing discussion on the dangers of packed terraces helps them to spread the idea that the crowd, rather than the policing and security system, was the problem at Hillsborough. There has also been a lot of talk about making British football grounds more like American football stadiums—that is, full of middle class people, corporate executives and their clients, occupying expensive seats. The authorities would like to price young people out of the grounds, and introduce the bored calm of the executive box where now there is the passion of the terraces. Then we should really see some heavy drinking at football matches.

NEW READERS START HERE

# What we fight for

*THE WORKING CLASS in Britain and throughout the West has suffered a series of setbacks in recent years. These setbacks have strengthened those who argue for moderation, 'realism' and a strategy of defensiveness. The Revolutionary Communist Party takes a different view.*

*We believe that these setbacks are the responsibility of the old parties and union machines of the official labour movement. In Britain the Labourist tradition has exhausted itself and can no longer relate to even the most modest aspiration of the working class. The exhaustion of Labourism in no way undermines the potential of the working class to change the world.*

●

*The RCP is committed to the construction of an independent working class movement. Only a movement which recognises that the interests of the workers are irreconcilably opposed to those of the employers can fight effectively in the struggles ahead.*

*For the RCP, working class politics cannot be reduced to trade unionism or the affairs of the workplace. Workers must take a stand on every issue and express an independent point of view if we are to liberate ourselves. The fatal flaw of British Labourism is that it restricts workers' horizons to economic matters, while it allows the employer class to monopolise political debate. Workers must define every problem from our point of view and fight for the rights of every section of society if we are to constitute a politically independent class.*

*While the RCP supports the fight for real reform or improvements in the lives of the working class, we believe that no durable gains can be won within capitalism. The RCP argues that the overthrow of capitalism provides the necessary precondition for the liberation of the working class and of society as a whole.*

●

*The British state exists to protect the wealth and privilege of the capitalist class. The RCP aims to destroy the state, which maintains the conditions for exploitation. We believe that the state cannot be used for progressive ends. Any attempt to use the 'soft' side of the state, such as local government, inner-city partnership, or police authorities, lends legitimacy to the entire state apparatus. It can only strengthen the authority of the capitalists' coercive machine.*

*The RCP believes that workers have no nation. British workers share the same interests as the exploited in other countries. British workers have nothing in common with the employers and must resist the appeals of patriotism and chauvinism. As internationalists we recognise that the enemy is at home. Since Britain remains an imperialist power around the world, the only international role it can play is that of the oppressor.*

*The class struggle is inextricably linked to the struggle against imperialism. The RCP supports all anti-imperialist struggles. Workers who live in the imperialist heartland have a special duty to back those fighting against the British oppressor. Thus we fight for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and for Irish self-determination. We opposed Britain's colonial war in the South Atlantic, and support the return of the Malvínas islands to Argentina. We oppose British and Western interference in the Middle East. We support the destruction of the Zionist state in Palestine and of the apartheid regime in South Africa. We uphold the same principles in every struggle against imperialism. The RCP is a fervent opponent of all forms of British militarism, nuclear, and 'non-nuclear' alike.*

*The RCP believes that the fight against oppression is central to the construction of an independent working class movement. Workers must defend the oppressed if we are to fight for our own liberation. This is why the RCP is wholeheartedly committed to the fight against racism. The struggle for the emancipation of women is another fundamental issue for the working class. We unreservedly oppose any form of discrimination against lesbians and gays and call for the decriminalisation of homosexuality. Workers must take a stand on these issues, not out of altruism, but because it is in our class interest to fight for the fullest extension of democratic rights.*

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*Workers need combat organisations capable of defending our interests. The existing organisations of the labour movement are singularly unsuited for this task. The RCP believes that the Labour Party is a bosses' organisation that should be fought and exposed. Despite its working class constituency the Labour Party has always followed the dictates of the capitalists. Whenever Labour has been in office, it has always betrayed the hopes of workers. The RCP is against giving any electoral support to Labour. Workers need a party that is 100 per cent our own and only responsive to proletarian interests.*

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*The existing trade unions are heavily bureaucratised and incapable of representing the aspirations of their members. The RCP argues that rank and file trade unionists should fight to take control of the movement. Trade unionists should organise across the workplace and industry and demand that we run our own affairs. Rank and file committees organised on an industry-wide basis could ensure that the unions truly belong to their members.*

*The RCP's aim is social revolution in Britain and internationally. We believe that this perspective is no less essential in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union than in the West. Only the working class has the capacity to liberate humanity. Our job is to contribute practically to the realisation of this objective.*

*If you would like to discuss these issues further, please write to: RCP, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX, or phone (01) 375 1702.*

# State of the nation

REPORT FROM THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE

# CLASS POLITICS IN THE AGE OF THATCHER

*From the political committee: a special report for our supporters on the party's perspectives*

Ten years of Thatcherism have certainly taken their toll. The defensive posture of the trade union leaders in the face of the government's proposal to scrap the national dock labour scheme is symptomatic of the present trend. The desultory lobby by dockers of their union leaders appeared like a grotesque caricature of similar events in the seventies.

Gradually over the past decade the experience of defeat has turned into a tradition. The transformation of the British political landscape is strikingly confirmed by the paralysis of the Labour Party. Labour cannot even match the position it attained in the opinion polls at comparable periods in the aftermath of the 1979 and 1983 general elections.

The trend towards the depoliticisation of the working class has been strengthened over the past year. The collapse of the institutions of the labour movement has deprived the working class of a political focus. The Tory ascendancy has been paralleled by the decline of protest, dissent and political debate.

## A depoliticised class

It would be easy to draw entirely negative conclusions from an appraisal of this situation. Yet matters are contradictory. It is true that the era of the post-war consensus has been succeeded by a period of reaction. But post-consensus Britain is still without an adequate political tradition. Thatcher has failed to forge a new consensus around her political programme.

**The dominant position of the Tories is not the result of a positive acceptance by most people of a right-wing political outlook.**

The government's lack of direction and its hand-to-mouth invention of policies are evidence of its vulnerability. The strength of the Tories is entirely the consequence of the collapse of the Labour Party. By discrediting the opposition and destroying its pretension to be a party of government, the Tories have established an almost invincible electoral position. But it is not one which rests on solid popular support.

The problem for us is not the government's electoral position, but its success in discrediting the tradition of struggle. The pervasive notion that it is futile to fight has contributed to the depoliticisation of the working class. In such a climate political work is difficult and revolutionaries are forced to go against prevailing attitudes and conventions. The problem is not simply one of having to struggle against established views, but of having something with which it is possible to interact.

**At a time when irrationalism is becoming a state philosophy, our analysis can play a major role in forging a coherent intellectual alternative**

On the surface of society there are no obvious political trends and responses which could provide us with a focus for intervention and interaction. Even the left is no longer able to articulate a coherent set of ideas. All that we have to work on are models, implicit assumptions and apparently disembodied political responses. Even instances of activism are characterised by a desire to play down politics.

Many people on the left regard the present period of stability as a temporary hiatus in the class struggle which will be followed by a return to old-fashioned class politics. Alternatively, there is a belief shared by many on the left that instituting a policy review or devising a clever political formula will be sufficient to put things right.

**In contrast, we have no illusions about the possibility of a return to the past patterns of class relations.**

There is no prospect of a repeat performance of the militant struggles of the seventies. Thatcher has established a new form of direct class domination, which has effectively destroyed the old traditions of struggle. It is a certainty that new forms of struggle will emerge in the coming period. But the struggles of the future are impossible to anticipate because they will represent a future reaction to the contemporary period.

In such circumstances there is little point in waiting for upturns in the class struggle or in working out elaborate tactics for the future. Our most important role is to uphold and develop working class internationalism in relation to every struggle. While we cannot predict the future we must not allow ourselves to remain imprisoned in the past. Mastering current trends and developing a political perspective that gives meaning to the stage we are passing through will ensure the party's relevance to the struggles of the future.

The relevance of this perspective today is more problematic, given the gap between what we are proposing as a solution and what is perceived to be possible in the current climate. A party that presents the class struggle as the solution to the problems facing humanity will necessarily be seen as out of step with contemporary developments.

The party's perspectives are designed to address the problems that arise in the current depoliticised climate. Our aim is to establish a dynamic centre of revolutionary propaganda, which can provide a political focus for those who want to fight. Our ability to develop a revolutionary analysis adequate to today's conditions will ensure that on the intellectual level at least an alternative does exist.

At a time when irrationalism is becoming a state philosophy and petty prejudice is promoted as a respectable worldview, our analysis can play a major role in forging a coherent intellectual alternative. Our monthly review *Living Marxism* can make a positive contribution to the development of a new intellectual tradition.

**It is important to recognise that without coherent theory and compelling arguments we will get nowhere.**

As a party we recognise that we have to win people not just to specific ideas but to a commitment to build a revolutionary movement. It is not an easy task to win that kind of commitment, because the objective pressure which could force people towards political involvement is absent. In a period when the class struggle is at a relatively low ebb it is difficult even to convince people to get involved in activity.

There are many people whose instincts are to have a go and fight. What they are missing is theoretical clarity and political direction. Our aim is to place before a working class audience a distinct revolutionary point of view. Through *Living Marxism* we can establish a positive focus for Marxist politics, and set a working class agenda on every subject.

Seafarers remain defiant, but they have been left high and dry by leaders who accept the Tory argument that it is useless to fight

PANDORA ANDERSON

BRITISH ECONOMY

# FACING A POUNDING

**The return of Alan Walters for a second stint as Margaret Thatcher's economic adviser is symbolic. Walters was the man who coached Thatcher through the recession of the early eighties, firming up her view that the route to a brave new capitalist world lay in restricting the supply of money. After a six-year absence, and with inflation rising and a collapse of the pound in the offing, 1983 will seem like yesterday to Walters.**

**Thatcher's economic strategy is in tatters. This year's current account deficit is on course to reach £20 billion, far above the £14.5 billion estimate in the budget. It is seven months since chancellor Nigel Lawson dismissed rising inflation as a temporary 'blip'. It has kept blipping upwards and is now set to assign the latest estimates of an eight per cent high-point to the treasury's already overflowing waste-paper bins.**

**A crisis of economic management is pending because the Tories can no longer contain conflicting pressures. Over the past year the government has edged towards a policy which gives renewed priority to tackling inflation. High interest rates have been used to undercut inflationary pressures by promoting a financial environment less conducive to credit expansion.**

**At the same time, the government has sought to avoid a sharp reversal of economic growth. Tory ministers have talked about a policy mix designed to achieve a 'soft landing'. Their aim is to reduce the rate of growth to a level compatible with low and stable inflation. Lawson has emphasised his determination to keep the interest rate at 13 per cent. He is adamant that this is the 'right rate': one conducive to tackling inflation and sustaining economic growth. In other words he is arguing that any deviation from this means abandoning one aspect of the soft-landing equation. A lower rate means giving up the fight against inflation, a higher rate may send the economy into recession.**

**This economic balancing act is highly sensitive to international pressures. To financial investors the increasing dimensions of Britain's external deficit show a nation unable to pay its way. It makes sterling-based assets less popular with investors, encouraging a fall in the pound.**

**The Tories have two choices in the face of this downward pressure on the pound. They could let credit-based growth continue and allow the fall in the pound to run its course. However, this implies rising inflation in the form of higher import prices. In practice this is neither a feasible nor a politically viable option for the government. Such an approach has failed in the past. And the Tories have spent a decade blaming this permissive approach for the decline of British capitalism.**

**The government's preferred option is to try to stifle the inflationary implications of the external deficit through policies which tighten the availability of money. The rationale for tighter money is that it forces business to become more efficient. In Tory-speak it stimulates supply-side improvements which enhance the long-term strength of the economy.**

**The possibility of a collapse of the pound shows that international investors are unimpressed by Tory boasts about reinvigorating the British economy. Although they benefit from interest rates far above those of its competitors, the money men are getting out of Britain. Strong downward pressure on the pound means that inflation will be much harder to contain than the government admits. Getting inflation down will require more interest rate rises with damaging consequences for the soft-landing strategy. Even if they try to hold the line it can only be for a short time. The markets are in no mood for signs of the Tories going soft. Enter Alan Walters.**

***Tony Kennedy***

# The week in politics

WHY THE RIGHT TO REPLY MEANS...

# THE RIGHT TO CENSOR

*As press standards sink into the sewer, **Kenan Malik** asks whether a statutory right of reply would do any good*

'Editors and publishers of the national press are on probation', home office minister Timothy Renton told parliament as he announced a new inquiry into press standards. 'They have a year or two to clean up their act.' Renton's broadside came after Tony Worthington's private member's bill to enforce a right of reply in newspapers had been talked out of time. His bill would have set up a press commission appointed by the home secretary with power to compel newspapers to publish corrections of factual inaccuracies in the next possible edition.

There is widespread concern about press standards, which even opponents of the bill were forced to acknowledge. Those Tories who argued against the bill also agreed that something needed to be done to make the press clean up its act. 'There is a cancer growing away at the heart of the British press', declared Tory MP Jonathan Aitken, warning that the profession has been 'infiltrated by a seedy stream of rent boys, pimps, bimbos, spurned lovers, smear artists with grudges, prostitutes and perjurers'.

The concern at Westminster reflects anger in the country over the way the press, and the tabloids in particular, regularly invade people's privacy and distort the truth. Led by Rupert Murdoch's *Sun*, the gutter press has sunk ever deeper into a cesspit of innuendo, scandal-mongering and downright lies. Smear campaigns, such as the *Sun*'s vilification of Elton John, have become commonplace. Unashamed Tory propaganda now passes for unbiased political comment. Salacious gossip and bizarre trivia have been elevated to headline news. The tabloid coverage of the Hillsborough tragedy has brought this anger to a head. The *Mirror's* publication of distressing photographs and the *Sun's* abuse of Liverpool fans (see pages 1, 4 and 5) outraged thousands of people.

It is clear that press standards have sunk to an all-time low. But would government regulation of press standards or a statutory right of reply help? Unfortunately, they would not. In fact, they would provide the authorities with another means of extending their vetting and censorship procedures.

**It is ironic that government ministers who have elevated state censorship into a Conservative credo should have argued against a statutory right to reply because of a professed concern to defend press freedom.**

We should not be taken in by these mock stands of principle. It is already apparent that the government is intent on exploiting public concern about press standards to impose new constraints on the press. The only outcome of the inquiry into the press which Renton has announced will be a gamut of new restrictions.

The Revolutionary Communist Party has consistently opposed any form of state censorship or interference. Any power the state possesses to restrict what we can say, write or do will inevitably be used to limit the democratic rights of working class people and the oppressed. We need to be particularly vigilant against state incursions on our rights today when the Tories are trying to outlaw any challenge to their rule. The attempt to suppress *Spycatcher*, the use of Section 28 to ban the promotion of homosexuality and the broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein all show that the Tories will brook no opposition.

**It is in this context of increasing state repression that we have to consider the debate about press standards and the right of reply.**

At first sight a statutory right of reply seems to be the very opposite of state censorship. After all, the media are unswervingly anti-working class. Would it not be a step forward if we could reply to their daily diet of lies and fiction? The Liverpool fans who were attacked in the *Sun* could reply in kind. The dockers would be able to refute the prejudices which have been levelled against them. We could use their press for our propaganda.

## Hurd's blue pencil

Unfortunately things are not so simple. The right of reply is not an absolute right. You will first have to prove that a newspaper report is 'factually inaccurate'. Who will decide that? A commission appointed by the government. In other words any right of reply will be vetted by the state.

In the wake of the Hillsborough tragedy, the abuse of football fans has incensed many people. But the government has been orchestrating a hooligan panic for many years. Do we really believe that during the hysteria about football violence at last year's European championships the people the press was denouncing as mindless thugs would have been allowed a right to reply? Or that the government would have allowed the IRA any space in the *Sunday Times* to present its case about the Gibraltar killings?

A statutory right of reply would not be worth the paper it is written on. Even worse, it would allow the authorities to interfere in our affairs. As far as the establishment is concerned, the most offensive publications are not the *Sun* or the *Mirror* but working class papers like *the next step*. Imagine the government's response to our articles calling for an Argentinian victory during the Falklands War had it had a legal right to reply. A statutory right to reply would effectively give Douglas Hurd the right to sit on *the next step's* editorial board.

**The main effect of a statutory right of reply would be to hand the state another weapon to use against the working class.**

We should be wary too of the government's argument that press standards have sunk and need to be regulated. We can feel nothing but contempt for the way press barons like Murdoch and Maxwell have dragged their papers from the gutter to the sewer. But their standards mirror the government's own morality and disregard for truth. The *Sun*'s persecution of Elton John, for example, reflected the climate of homophobia created by the Tories. The government's Section 28 has provided a licence for everyone from Rupert Murdoch to street thugs to go 'queer-bashing'.

## Tory pimps

Newspaper editors' disregard for facts similarly reflects Tory attitudes. For the Tories the truth is anything which fits their argument. Over the past decade the Tories have turned into an art form the massaging of statistics and the fixing of facts. Unemployment's too high? You make 28 different changes in the way the figures are compiled to reduce the figure. Problems with trade deficits? You give Nigel Lawson the responsibility for making up the figures.

**A Tory crusade to improve press standards is about as credible as a pimp campaigning against prostitution.**

We cannot expect the authorities to provide the working class with a right of reply. Our only reply to the ruling class is our ability to organise to overthrow a system in which the *Sun* passes for a newspaper and where even in death the working class can find no peace. *the next step* is the place where the working class will find a real reply to Murdoch's filthy lies. And the distraught relative who smacked FA secretary Graham Kelly in the gob—she gave the only reply that Thatcher, Renton, Hurd and the rest really understand.

The Tories have as little regard for Hillsborough victims as the press vultures

GUARDIAN

FIGHTING AGAINST IMMIGRATION CONTROLS

# JULIUS ALEXANDER MUST STAY!

**Julius Alexander was one of the first people to be threatened with deportation after the government introduced new immigration appeal regulations in August 1988. His case has become something of a test case for the authorities, to establish that immigration officers have the right to issue deportation orders. The way in which the courts have unilaterally extended the authority of immigration police marks an advance in the repressive powers available to the state. This only goes to show that the law exists to uphold the interests of the state, and can be twisted to mean anything which serves its political purposes.**

**It also confirms that we cannot expect to challenge the immigration laws by looking for redress through the legal system itself. Indeed, it underlines the urgency of building a movement which can challenge the state and the edifice of racist laws which it has built to criminalise black people. Our opposition to all immigration controls is based on the recognition that it is in the interests of the working class to fight for the rights of black people deprived of equal status by the state. Julius Alexander is the victim of a corrupt system whose racist laws degrade and divide the working class.**

**Workers Against Racism is campaigning to prevent his expulsion from the country and his separation from his fiancée and children. The only way to stop his deportation is to mobilise large numbers of people in his defence, by convincing them that it is necessary to join the struggle to overthrow all immigration controls. The legal process can provide no guarantees against deportation: political campaigning and strength of organisation offer the only possibility of success. Join our picket of the immigration appeals tribunal, and join the fight for a new anti-racist movement.**

**● Julius must stay! Smash all immigration controls! Picket Thanet House, The Strand, London WC2, 10.30am, Thursday 18 May. If you would like to help the campaign, ring us on (01) 375 1702.**


Revolutionary Communist Party
Regional Dayschools

COMMUNISM AFTER GLASNOST

The Western media are gloating over recent developments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The message behind *glasnost* seems to be 'bring back the market—communism does not work'.

We are organising discussions around the country to counter this celebration of capitalism. The aim is to provide a forum for a critical assessment of developments in the East, and their consequences for us in the West.

Discussions on:
Marx and communism
Soviet Union ● Eastern Europe
Third world ● Is a revolution possible today?

Birmingham Region
Saturday 29 April, 11am
New Imperial Hotel, Temple Street (off New Street)

London Region
Sunday 7 May, 10am
University of London Union, Malet Street, WC1

Nottingham Region
Saturday 13 May, 10.30am
International Community Centre, Mansfield Road

South West Region
Sunday 14 May, 10.30am
Shepherds Hall, Old Market Street, Bristol

Newcastle Region
Saturday 20 May, 1pm
Tyneside Cinema, 10 Pilgrim Street

Northern Region
Saturday 27 May, 11am
Manchester Polytechnic, Mandela Building, Oxford Road, Manchester

For further details ring
(01) 375 1702

# the next step

*Revolutionary Communist Party Weekly 28 April 1989 No 13 40p*

## NATO SQUABBLES

# THIEVES FALL OUT

ALL THE celebratory talk has been of unity in the discussions about European union in 1992 and Nato's fortieth anniversary summit in May. But the nuclear slanging match between Bonn and its European supporters and Washington and its junior British partner exposes the reality of growing tensions in the Western Alliance.

It was a major feat for the USA to win agreement to stage a Nato summit at all next month. Now the stage is set for confrontation after West Germany urged Nato to hold direct talks with Moscow on the abolition of short-range nuclear forces in Europe. Since Bonn announced its new defence policy Washington and London have been engaged in frantic efforts to force the West Germans to toe the line.

Other Nato members, including the Belgians, Danes, Norwegians and possibly the Dutch and Italians, have indicated that they will not yield to US pressure on this issue. In this situation it will be extremely difficult for all parties to affect a display of unity by issuing the usual meaningless statement papering over the cracks at the May summit.

West Germany is growing impatient with life under Washington's thumb. West German capitalists are even more resentful at being pushed around by a third rate power like Britain, which thinks it can still call the shots on Washington's behalf. This is the backdrop to West Germany's reluctance to see the Nato nuclear arsenal modernised on its soil.

In Bonn, leading politicians are questioning the assumptions behind Washington's militaristic policies, recognising that an escalation of US militarism will focus international tension within Germany. West German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher has declared his belief that both the changes brought about by Gorbachev and developments within Europe itself require a redefinition of international relations. It is clear that what he is talking about is a redefinition of the post-war settlement under which West Germany was subordinated to US tutelage.

These statements indicate that the West German authorities are not prepared to put up with a 40-year old set of American rules indefinitely. In this sense the dispute in Nato over the modernisation of nuclear arms is symptomatic of a broader fragmentation of the Western Alliance. The growing conflicts in the Nato club are a sign that the old order in which the USA reigned supreme is changing irrevocably.

The cohesion of Nato depends on the USA continuing to lead the world economically and militarily, and West Germany and Japan continuing to accept the lowly status assigned to them after their defeat in the Second World War. As the balance of world power has tilted away from the USA and towards West Germany and Japan over the past decade conflicts in the imperialist club have risen.

We can expect a more assertive West Germany over the months and years ahead, one that will no longer tolerate being bossed about by has-beens like Britain. The disintegration of the post-war international order has thus unleashed tensions that may soon prove uncontainable within the old Western Alliance. As Nato starts to fall apart, trends towards nationalism and militarism will gather pace. This is something that must be combated resolutely if we are to be in a position to stop them dragging us all into a third world war.

## POLICE FRAME-UP EXPOSED

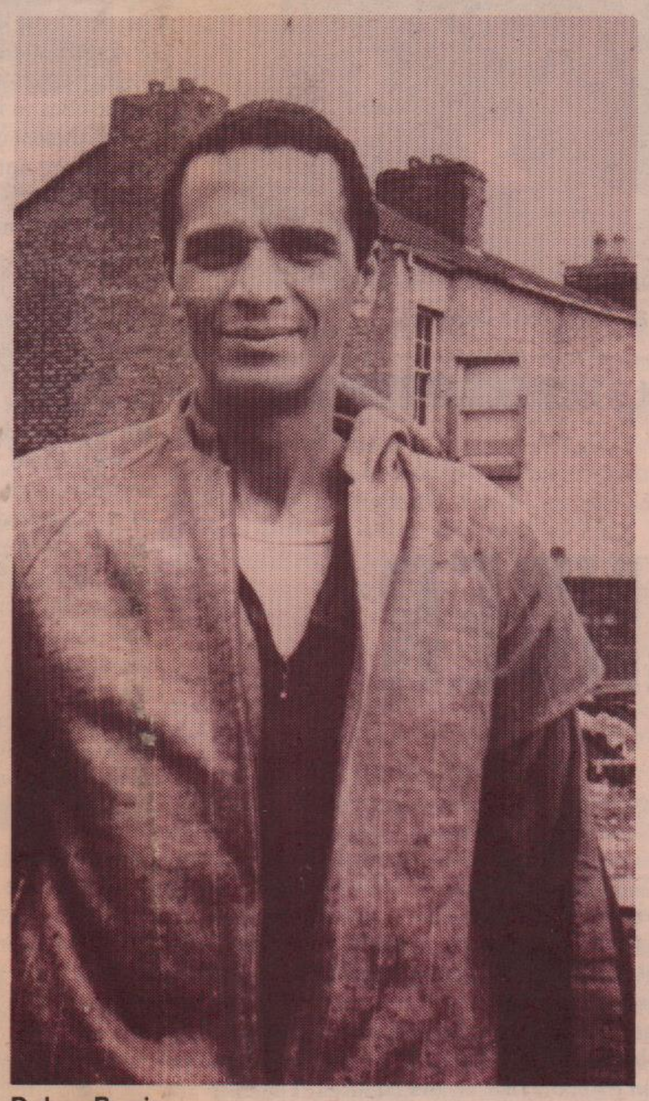
# DELROY BURRIS IS INNOCENT

**COMMUNITY ACTIVIST Delroy Burris walked free from Liverpool crown court on Tuesday after the all-white jury threw out a trumped-up charge of 'violent disorder' under the 1986 Public Order Act. Burris could have been sent down for three years if convicted.**

**The police had accused Burris of leading an attack on an unmarked police car in June last year. But the attack never took place. Burris had gone to Admiral Street police station to complain about high-speed police chases through Granby in the heart of Liverpool 8. The following morning, police burst into his house to arrest him for 'violent disorder'.**

**The jury's not guilty verdict was all the more remarkable given that Liverpool's kangaroo court did all it could to fit Burris up and have him sent down. The police carefully concocted their statements. A succession of officers took the stand and claimed that Burris was a lawless ringleader who 'made us fear for our safety'. Officers in charge of the case sat in court listening to defence cross-examination and reporting it back to prosecution witnesses. Other officers kept a watchful eye on Burris' supporters in the gallery. Their message was clear: this court is police territory.**

**Police and prosecution tried to withhold vital evidence—including the tape of radio conversations between police headquarters and the car Burris was alleged to have attacked. At first the police insisted that no such tape existed. Defence barrister Peter Hall's persistence finally forced them to hand it over. It contained no mention of any attack. The only mention of Burris—'could you put in Burris holding two half bricks'—bore all the hallmarks of a plant.**



Delroy Burris

ANDREW CALCUTT

**Judge Wickham conducted the case as if Burris had already been convicted: no bail at lunchtime; no sandwiches to the prisoner at lunch; Burris to be held in custody for 30 minutes after the jury has left the court. Wickham dismissed Hall's application for black people to be included in the jury. He banned Hall from informing the jury that one of the chief police witnesses had been discredited in similar Public Order Act trials—but allowed the prosecution to bring in all sorts of scurrilous accusations against Burris. He denied defence counsel access to statements made to the police by defence witnesses.**

**In his summing up, Wickham painted a Jekyll and Hyde picture of Burris as a community leader given to bouts of 'excitability'—and implied that violent outbursts were part of his character. He reminded the jury that the 'use or threat of violence' applied to property as well as people. If there's a thumbnail scratch on a police car, Wickham was saying, then Burris was guilty. And he emphasised that if the jury found Burris not guilty it would be accusing the police of lying. The jury's verdict showed that not everybody is willing to accept such gross manipulation.**

**Wickham gave an unwittingly accurate picture of British justice when he told Hall: 'You are only entitled to do what I allow in this court....I am right on this, and even if I am wrong, it makes no difference.' The history of police frame-ups in Liverpool 8 is testimony to this. In the same week as Burris walked free, Merseyside police announced that they would be sending out 3700 'reminders' to residents of Liverpool 8 that membership of a street gang is punishable by up to three years' imprisonment. In Thatcher's Britain simply being young and black is a crime.**

***Andrew Calcutt***