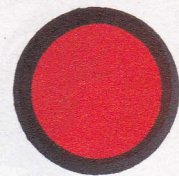


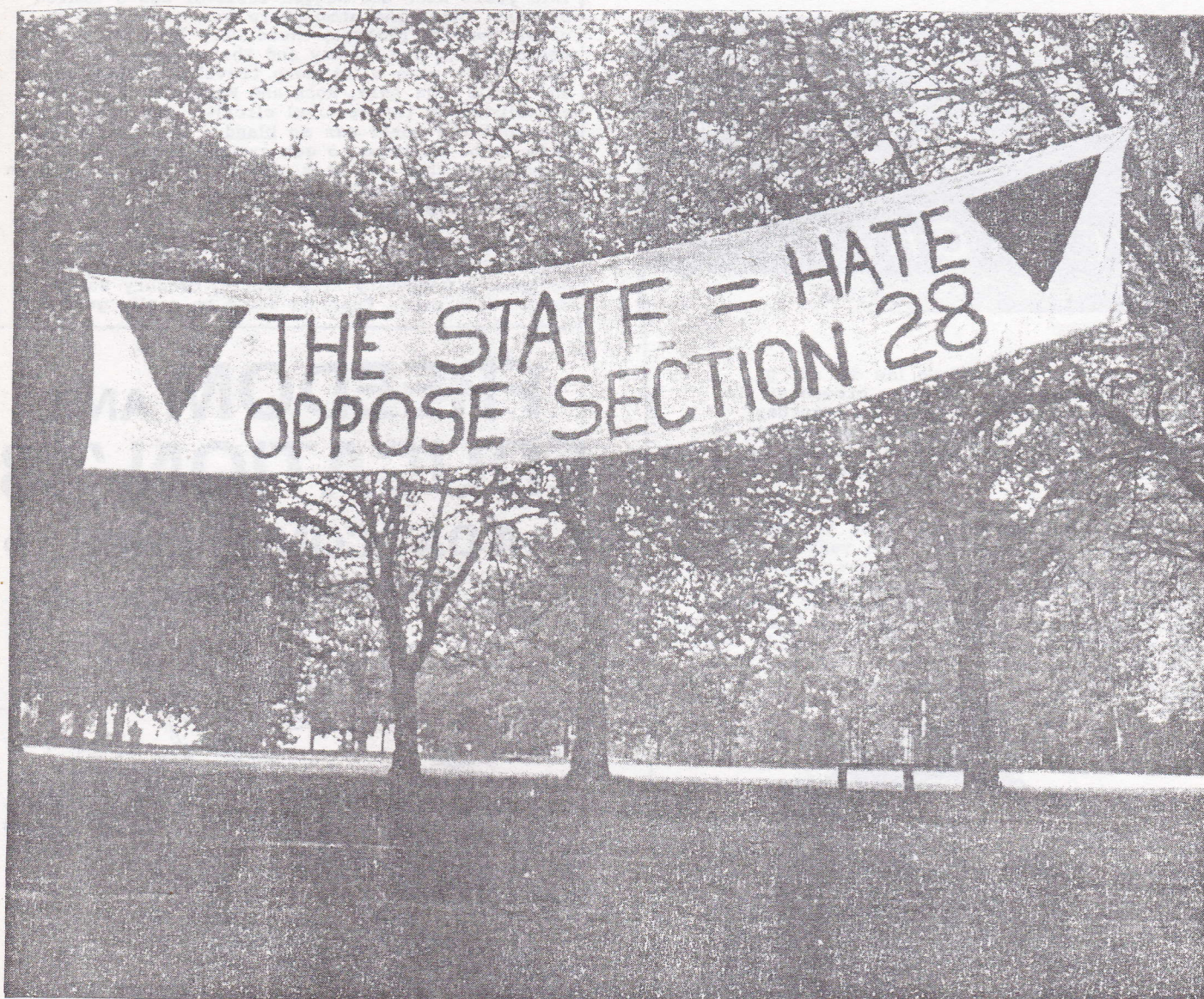
Nottingham Anarchist

★ **News** ★

No: 19
AUTUMN '88



INTERNATIONAL
ISSUE



INSIDE: MAYDAY IN CHILE, LESBIANS IN
CUBA, POLL TAX, PSYCHIATRY & MORE



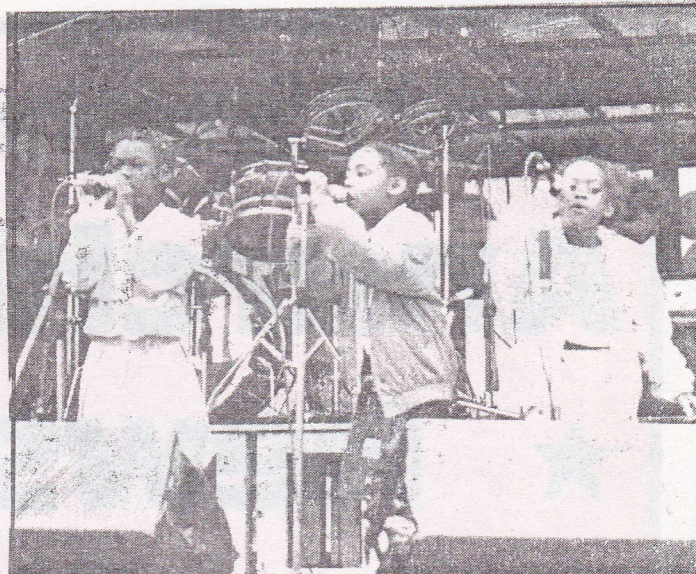
BLACK RAVEN BOOKSTALL

Black Raven stocks Anarchist papers, pamphlets, books and periodicals. We can also order books on request.

The stall is usually at St. Peter's Gate on Saturdays.

For information contact:

Black Raven Bookstall,
c/o Box 1, Hiziki,
Goosegate,
Hockley,
Nottm.



ROCK AND REGGAE

This years Rock and Reggae festival was a limited success. True the atmosphere was as relaxed as usual, more so perhaps, there were lots of people, especially on the Sunday and the weather wasn't too bad. There were a lot more traveller's vehicles and stalls this year; Rock and Reggae is becoming established in the festival circuit. The problem was that the music was so bland - there just didn't seem to be anything to get excited about. Is it a coincidence that the best act of the weekend was an unofficial, unrehearsed spot by some of the youngest people on the site?

If you would like to help with next years Rock and Reggae, the organisers can be contacted through Nottingham Community Arts Centre, Gregory Boulevard. Next years Festival could be really good.



CLAUSE 28

The passing of the clause into law did not go unmarked in Nottingham. The large crowds at the Park and Ride site on the Forest on Saturday morning following the implementation of section 28 were greeted with painted slogans. During the night banners were hung in the surrounding trees (see cover).

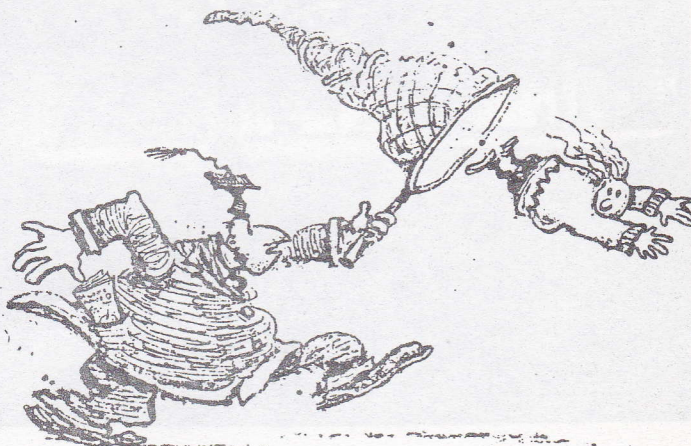
Following the arguments and protests at the further legal protection of homophobia, this years Gay and Lesbian Pride march in London was the biggest and best yet. Some people were disappointed at the complete lack of coverage in the national media, but nevertheless noone could come away from the day without a feeling of hope and joy that people could come together and feel so strong in the face of adversity. Together we can beat them.



FREEDOM AND EDUCATION '88

• A DAY CONFERENCE •

Saturday, 1st October



From 10 - 6
plus EVENING ENTERTAINMENT

VAUGHAN COLLEGE
ST NICHOLAS CIRCLE
LEICESTER

For further details: Lib ED magazine, The Cottage, The Green, Leire, Leicester, LE17 5HL

HELLO

Welcome to the nineteenth issue of Nottingham Anarchist News. This one ought to have been styled a magazine, but (once again) there's still covers with "news" on, so "news" it is. The international slant to this issue comes from contributors who have travelled to central and south America in the past few months, and, nearer to home, a report of the annual Troops Out delegation to Northern Ireland. Although we're more than willing to print longer articles like these ones, we also would like more shorter, snappy news articles. There's so much been happening in the past few months that just doesn't get a mention, either here or anywhere else. You don't have to be an expert to write - first hand experience is much more valuable than literary flair. So come on, let's have 50 or 1000

words on something you've been involved in. Share the experience, change the world.

You may pay more for this issue than previous ones - there's more pages and printing doesn't get any cheaper. Please recycle. Either use it as bog paper, light a fire with it or give it to someone else to read.

Thanks everyone who's helped with this issue. Please send all contributions into the address below before the end of November and with a bit of luck we'll have another issue out before the end of the year. And there's no space to tell you about the Rolls Royce rolling over Kevs foot.

NOTTINGHAM ANARCHIST NEWS
BOX A
RAINBOW CENTRE
180 MANSFIELD ROAD
NOTTINGHAM

POSTAL WORKERS STRIKE

As we go to press, postal workers all over the country are on strike. More than two thirds of sorting offices have been closed by unofficial 'wildcat' strikes by members of the Union of Communication Workers.

The UCW called a national one-day strike on Wednesday August 31st because Post Office management instituted the payment of bonuses, usually paid only to workers with over one year's experience, to new workers in the South East, where low wages have caused problems for management in recruiting and keeping staff.

The next day, management at many sorting offices tried to bring in casual staff to clear the alleged backlog of undelivered mail caused by the one day strike. UCW members walked out again in protest, and over the next few days the wildcat strikes spread as management tried to get other sorting offices to handle mail 'blacked' by striking offices.

Now, a week later, national mail services are at a standstill. The strike is solid but isolated, and support will not be generated by actions such as the shortsighted attempts of UCW pickets in some areas to stop private delivery of DHSS giro to the unemployed.

At its own expense, the Nottingham branch of the UCW is delivering urgent hospital mail and giro for the disabled, a positive step which unfortunately validates the doubly devaluing distinction between the *deserving poor* - the disabled, whose supposed inadequacy is thereby both romanticised and affirmed - and the *undeserving* unemployed.

Yet it is encouraging that UCW members are taking local strike action. The effectiveness of the strike demonstrates the obsolescence of the union's hierarchical superstructure, and the collective withdrawal of labour without union assistance highlights the potential for its re-introduction under radically different conditions without management interference.

But grounds for optimism are limited to these tactical advances: strategically, the UCW is being outmaneuvered by management and state together in a fashion reminiscent of the miner's strike.

On the day after the national strike, when management attempted to bring in casual labour to clear the backlog of mail, UCW leader Alan Tuffin told the national media that disputes over this issue would have to be settled locally. He failed to raise the question: what backlog?

The one day strike was well publicised in advance, and the businesses large and small which send the bulk of the country's mail made allowance for it. Most that didn't were unable to post letters anyway, because almost all of the country's mailboxes were sealed up.

On Merseyside, where every mailbox was blocked, television news on the day after the official strike showed letters piled high

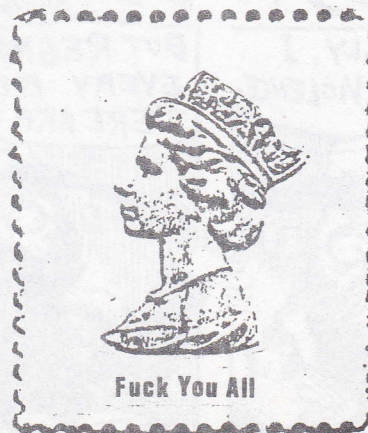
inside Liverpool sorting office. The voice-over didn't actually say that this was the backlog - but neither did it explain that it was contract mail that doesn't have to be delivered until October 24th.

The management decision to send mail from striking offices to those still working was calculated to spread the strike still further, and by the weekend create a situation where a 'government spokesman' was able to say that the strike showed clearly that the Post Office can no longer be entrusted with its monopoly of the nation's mail services.

The Post Office, one of the country's biggest employers, has already been made into three separate companies by the government. Its privatisation will be a direct attack on workers, leading to redundancies, lower real wages, harsher working conditions and less job security.

The strike was provoked in order to demoralise and weaken the UCW, generate public support for privatisation and divert attention from the latest increase in postal charges, introduced despite record profits and designed to make shares in British Mail PLC even more attractive.

Capitalism in 1988 is very sophisticated, and weapons that were useful only ten years ago are now manipulated by management. In this strike, the false separations invented by the state have been reproduced by some workers placing themselves apart from their natural allies. Such actions prevent community support for the strike from growing, and affirm the belief that insurrection is a specialised activity, somehow divorced from everyday life. This strike highlights the urgent need for the growth of a more sophisticated opposition to the misery of capitalism.



FESTIVAL

THE STORY OF THE 1988 NOTTINGHAM PEACE FESTIVAL..

Things were already well under way by Saturday night, as travellers' vans arrived from all over, and groups began erecting a motley assortment of tents and structures. Those not busy sat around watching the bands setting up their gear and getting together for informal jamming sessions that went on till around 2.00am. Some of us who were still conscious around dawn witnessed a magical sunrise dispell the ephemeral mists haunting the Trent, harbinger of a glorious day...

The site gradually came alive to the sounds of yawning, scratching and farting, as those in desperate need of caffeine fumbled with their camping gaz. Activity steadily increased throughout the sunny morning, the air ringing with the sound of hammer on tent peg, and the shouts of old friends greeting each other. The sun-drenched field gradually filled with colourful banners and awnings. At last, everything was set, and we awaited the exciting moment when Joan Ruddock would arrive to open the proceedings. Introduced by the "Durruti of Radical Bookselling", Ross Bradshaw, Joan grabbed the microphone, and delivered an outrageous personal attack on Lady Natasha Dog-breath, Chairperson of BWFNIRWF (British Women and Families for the Nuclear Incineration of Russian Women and Families). Then the music began with Eric Deranged and the Understains, who soon had most of NCND executive committee banging their heads against the nearest tray of flapjack.

The sun shone down as the crowds increased and I took a stroll to look at the stalls- by now numerous, exciting and exceedingly festive. I won a bottle of Harpic at the "Anarchist Vengeance" tombola. There was something for everyone! Someone had made a model of a missile site out of old Harpic bottles, and there was a big queue at Beeston Peace Action's "Knock-down-the-pile-of-empty-Harpic-bottles-and-win-a-full-one". Forest Fields Peace Group must be congratulated for making a major conceptual leap by painting peace signs on the Harpic bottles in their Lucky Dip. Delicious smells wafted from stalls selling all kinds of exotic food: pitta bread filled with spicy beans, pitta bread filled with spicy vegetables, pitta bread filled with spicy beans and spicy vegetables... Meanwhile, old comrades who hadn't seen each other for months, some from peace groups as far away as Mapperley, sat on the warm grass talking about what they'd been doing since the last Festival, selling each other raffle tickets and planning activities for the coming months.

It's always easier to organize really meaningful, creative peace actions conveniently close to the beer tent, and it was there that I found Christy Moore hanging around with his old guitar slung across his back. Lisdoonvarna and Nottingham Peace Festival are two summer events he never misses. "It's great crack" he assured me, "look, I've won a bottle of Harpic."

The glorious afternoon wore on, and just before the main musical items, Christy, Joan Baez and the Wolfe Tones, there were some memorable speeches, which deepened the commitment of all present. Bert Gorm of "Rock Against Sizism" praised the large number of XL tee-shirts on sale, then Mrs Fussle of "Class-War SLD", said that something should be done about the ridiculous price of houses in Mapperley. Doreen, of "Wombat Alliance", gave a moving but inaudible speech, presumably about wombats, and most exciting of all, Daniel Ortega arrived by helicopter gunship to announce the lucky raffle winners (first prize - a big case of Harpic). Daniel gave a long, passionate oration in Spanish, which was received with thunderous applause, if not actually understood. Then I was sent to flush Christy out of the beer tent where he was chatting to Tina Turner, with whom he did an unforgettable double act later on. Even at 42, Moore struts the stage like a young panther, belting out his old standards like "River Deep, Mountain High".

The sun began to set on another great Peace Festival, with the enthusiastic crowds refusing to let the Wolfe Tones off the stage. Finally, people started drifting away when Paul Johns lead everyone in singing "We Shall Overcome", and stalls were packed up. It had been a fitting celebration of another year of vigorous and imaginative campaigning for peace, so that we all look forward to the next 12 months with renewed energy and a deep sense of Harpic.

Rory O'Connor

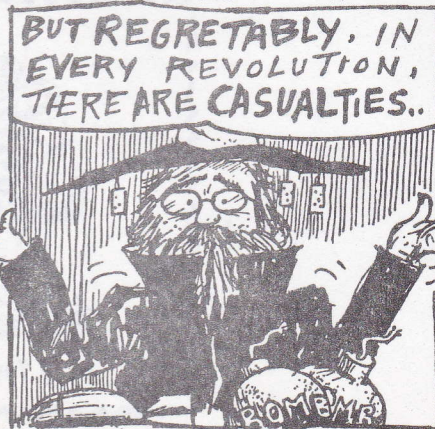
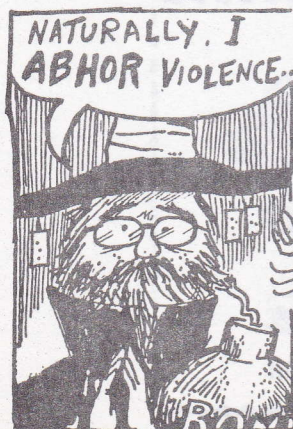
EDITORIAL APOLOGY: I'm afraid Rory has committed the classic reporter's 'faux pas' of writing about something he didn't actually attend. On the Saturday night, I caught him heading in the direction of Chilwell Depot with two cans of petrol in carrier bags. There was... an unfortunate scene, he stomped off to his room with the rest of my duty-free, and was in fact unconscious most of Peace Festival Sunday.

Regretably, it was a long time before we could find anyone who would admit to having gone to it, so we didn't discover that Rory's description of the Peace Festival was almost - but not quite - complete balls, until we went to press. We would therefore like to apologize to the organizers of the Peace Festival, who have our deepest sympathy.

Olga da Polga

LIFESTYLE

TONGUE-TIED WHEN YOU MEET FAMOUS PERSONALITIES LIKE KEN LIVINGSTONE? DONT WORRY. JUST BE YOURSELF. TRY SAYING: "OH, I SEEM TO HAVE RUN OUT OF DOMESTOS.."



© TITANIC SECRET POLICE '88

* SORRY, NO 'BOOM' IN THIS STRIP

CHAPTER 24
TEBBIT
THACHER
TEBBIT
TEBBIT
FOSTER
TEBBIT
KINNOCK
DUBBINS

POLL TAX

The screws of oppression are given a further twist for those of us claiming benefit. Like the rates now, unemployed people will have to pay a fifth of the Poll Tax, but rebates will be based on a national average. This means that unemployed people living in areas controlled by high spending councils (the large cities and towns with Labour authorities, and remote rural areas where costs of service provision are higher) won't get a full rebate, and will have to pay more than a fifth of the tax.

INEFFICIENT

So the Poll Tax is unjust, but because its payable per person its inefficient, too. The domestic rates system was based on buildings, which don't move around much, and its fairly obvious how many there are in each area. The Poll Tax will be more difficult and costlier to administer. The government Green Paper on the tax quoted a figure for Nottingham of £207 per person, but this doesn't take into account the extra cost of collection compared to the rates. In Glasgow the city's Director of Finance has estimated this at £79 per person.

To make the Poll Tax work, state surveillance and information gathering will have to be further centralised and extended. The tax might eventually provide the excuse to introduce compulsory national identity cards, which would have to be used for everything from taking out a library book to getting a job or renting a flat.

HOW IT WORKS

Poll Tax Registers, lists of people eligible to pay the tax, will be compiled. A registration form will be sent to your home. If you decide to light a fire with yours, or if you are economical with the truth when you complete it, this is a criminal offence with a fine of £50 first time around and £200 for each.

The Poll Tax, or Community Charge, will replace the domestic rates as the system to make people pay for services provided by local government. People living in Scotland start paying the Poll Tax on April 1st next year, but it will be 1990 before we have to pay it in England and Wales.

The Poll Tax is completely different to the rates because it is a tax on people, not property. Instead of paying because we have somewhere to live, in the future we will pay simply for being alive.

The Poll Tax isn't linked to voting rights, although it might encourage some people to leave the electoral register in their attempts to avoid payment. We would never fight for the chance to choose the style of our exploitation, but this isn't essentially a tax on the right to join in the sham democracy of government. The Poll Tax is a tax per head (per 'poll', in old english). In each council area, all adults over 18 will pay the same flat rate of tax. The amount each person pays will be worked out so that the council can collect the same amount of money as they do using the existing domestic rates.

UNJUST

The Poll Tax is unjust because it isn't even superficially linked to the ability to pay. People on lower incomes are more likely to live in shared housing, and will almost certainly pay more Poll Tax than they currently pay rates. Here are some examples based on current figures: Mr & Mrs Bastard Thatcher, who own six properties in the South East and pay over £10 000 in rates, need only pay £262 Poll Tax between them. But five adults (mum, dad, a grandparent and two teenagers, say) sharing a small flat in Kentish Town will be faced with a Poll Tax bill of £4 682. Because its a second home, the Queen would pay only £350 for her 17 000 acre estate and castle at Balmoral (although she actually pays no taxes at all): her postman will be due to pay £519.

In Nottingham, the family of council leader Bill Bradbury will save £600 a year when the tax is introduced. Research in Scotland by Edinburgh University's Economics Department shows that on average the only people better off will be those earning more than £419 per week. Those earning between £66 and £96 a week will be worst hit, paying an extra £2.48 weekly. People living in one of the wealthiest areas of Glasgow will have their rates bill reduced by an average of 29%, but those in one of the poorest areas will pay 48% more.

Asians in Britain are victimised by the Poll Tax, as many Asian homes maintain the tradition of the extended family and have two or more generations of adults living at the same address. And if you've been living with somebody of the opposite sex for more than a year, one of you will be made responsible for payment of both of your Poll Tax bills - but this won't happen if you're both the same sex.

POLL TAX

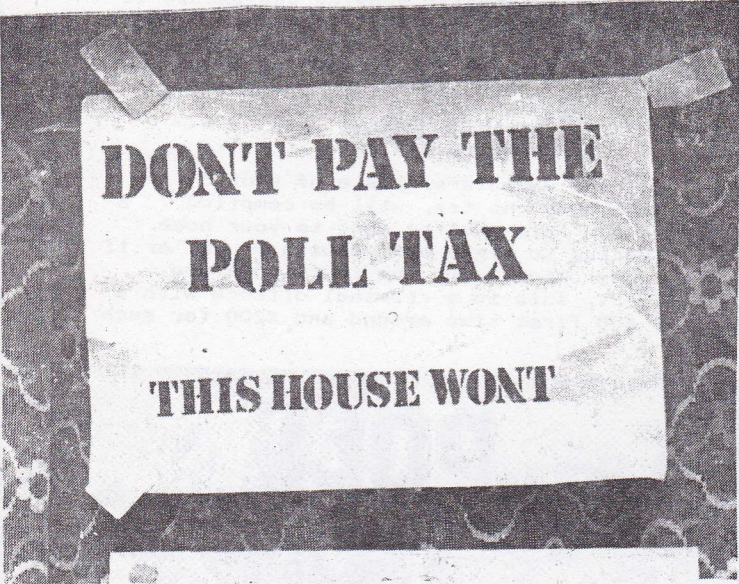
STRATEGIES FOR RESISTANCE

SMASH MEETING
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY CENTRE
WEDNESDAY 14th SEPTEMBER 8:00pm
EVERYBODY WELCOME

further attempt. Information will be gathered from other sources, too: the DH/SS, Inland Revenue, the police, the post office, banks and building societies, medical records, employers, libraries, RCP supporters lists.. anywhere you might foolishly leave your name and address.

The registration form being used in Scotland is long and complex. It requires each household to nominate a responsible person, who must then grass on everybody else living there. The details asked for include names and dates of birth.

A registration officer will call at your home to collect the form. Some officers in Scotland have been very keen, as they get a 40p bonus for each completed form they collect. To date, at least 5 have been rewarded for their enthusiasm with a beating, and some communities have declared themselves Poll Tax No-Go Areas. But with the mass of files available, and the extensive powers of the registration officers, they're likely to catch you sooner or later. The only people likely to be able to avoid registration for long are those who don't need to claim benefit, don't pay rent, don't need to use public services and don't work (like some of the more obscure members of the Royal Family)



**DONT PAY THE
POLL TAX
THIS HOUSE WONT**

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

The spontaneous street surgery which has already greeted some registration officers in Scotland is only part of the widespread resistance to the Poll Tax. There are 23 local anti-Poll Tax groups in Edinburgh, and 31 in Glasgow. City-wide federations link the neighbourhood groups. At two large demonstrations, poll tax forms have been burnt, residents have sealed their letter-boxes to stop forms from being delivered, and alternative Neighbourhood Watch schemes have followed poll tax snoopers and used megaphones to warn local residents of their presence. Already, the debate in Scotland isn't for or against the Poll Tax, its about the best way to stop it. These are the options being discussed:

PARLIAMENTARY CAMPAIGNING

Neil Kinnock's strategy, to continue with routine political criticism and campaigning in an attempt to influence the legislation for England and Wales that's already in Parliament. If this was successful, the Scottish legislation would be amended too. Now that the Poll Tax bill has passed through the Lords without amendment, the limited possibilities offered by this approach have already been exhausted.

NON-COLLECTION

The most effective way to fight the tax: persuade local government workers not to cooperate with its administration and collection. Potentially the most difficult, too, since it

could cause a crisis in local government funding that put workers jobs at risk. Many workers would gamble their boring, unfulfilling jobs to inflict such a serious defeat on the government, but the unions will no doubt 'put their members interests first' and try to prevent any large-scale action of this type.

NON-REGISTRATION

Funtime. Forms can be left on the bus, or covered in baby sick. They can be returned with a query about question 1, then question 2, then question 3.. We can say that our 'responsible persons' are dead persons, or non-existent persons, or real people we don't like very much. But we mustn't forget that the registration forms aren't their only source of information..

NON-PAYMENT

Non-payment is not a criminal offence, but a civil one, a debt, like not paying our gas or electricity bills. The council must initiate action through the courts, a lengthy process which is even slower if many of us are involved. The likely penalty is the payment of the debt plus costs, in instalments according to income. If we then refuse to pay the instalments, further legal harassment will follow. At the very least, non-payment is a handy way of spreading poll tax payments over the year, for only a modest charge.

FIGHTING BACK

The inefficiency built into the Poll Tax creates the space for a campaign of massive resistance. Registration would be difficult and complex even if people co-operated willingly, and imaginative resistance will make it even harder. But non-registration is a criminal offence so a mass campaign would be costly, and unsuccessful because they'll be able to find most of us without the forms. We should obstruct registration as much as we can, but without getting nicked because it isn't worth it.

The major focus of our campaign should be the refusal to pay. We should also speak to local authority workers, although the unions are likely to prevent mass non-implementation, because some workers might be angry enough to organise themselves against the tax. Besides, bundles of registration forms can be mislaid or drenched in vending-machine coffee, computers can break down or accidentally erase data, flu epidemics can immobilise offices..

It is vital that resistance to the Poll Tax is organised within our communities, and spreads outside the narrow confines of the rainbow alliance. It will be a long slog, but we must start now; door-to-door leafletting, posters, meetings to establish local anti-Poll Tax groups and networks, benefits to raise money for equipment to stop snoopers: bricks are cheap, but megaphones and CB radio sets are more effective.

The hardship caused by the Poll Tax will create a lot of anger. A mass campaign of non-payment can defeat the tax, and give people a taste of the power they have to collectively transform the obscene society we live in.

David Basket-Weaver

Anti-crime signs stolen

A VILLAGE'S anti-crime campaign started badly when two neighbourhood watch signs were stolen from roadside posts.

The organiser of the scheme in Chilham, Kent, Mr Frank Davis, said yesterday: "I am so angry. I have offered a £100 reward for the prosecution of the culprit."

COMMUNITY CARE?

We are supposed to be in the middle of a revolution in mental health care! The asylums are being decanted; the bins are being emptied! They call it "Community Care". If you want a real picture of what this revolution will produce, then read Ian McEwan's novel "A Child In Time". It contains state-licensed beggars, complete with standard-issue begging bowls, baying for spare cash from passing cool yuppies on the streets of English cities. The bowls will fill up if the community cares. If not, well....

"COMMUNITY CARE" - its such a kind and concerned and compassionate phrase. Saatchi & Saatchi would be proud of it (perhaps they invented it!), coming caressingly off the tongue: the compassionate heart of modern psychiatric care, packaged as the enlightened new alternative to those dark, satanic institutions, the lunatic asylums.



"Community Care" is progressive. That is the message. Of course, the very same asylums now condemned by those marketing "community care" were also once progressive. Psychiatry is always progressing. Ever since the medicalisation of madness and the great wave of asylum building in the nineteenth century, psychiatry has contested that each new development represents enlightenment. Psychiatrists have perfected the art of lies and distortion. In many ways psychiatry has been the tool of the modern, repressive, capitalist state; but it has taught that state the art of lying. The big lie. Cruel and brutal incarceration in dehumanising asylums; padded cells and strait-jackets; insulin shock treatment and electric shock treatment; psychosurgery (cutting or burning out bits of the brain); massive brain-damaging chemical assault (drug therapy). That has been the horrific reality. And psychiatry has continued the great march forward, progressing always; the broken army of the leucotomised and institutionalised and suicided and brain-damaged, discarded, forgotten.

And now this horror show brings us "community care". The show is still on the road despite the brutal history. And despite the fact that medical psychiatry has failed utterly and abysmally to even address the real causes of mental health problems, let alone solve them. IT HAS FAILED TO EVEN GRASP THAT AN AUTHORITARIAN, VIOLENT, DIVIDED, EXPLOITATIVE, PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY CAN ONLY PRODUCE MISERY, EMOTIONALLY AS WELL AS MATERIALY.

This is not by accident, but because the primary function and role of state psychiatry has never been to offer loving interventions in the lives of those disturbed, depressed or deranged by the struggle to live in a society built upon greed, violence and exploitation. It has claimed such aims, but the claims are lies, the false front that has now produced the distorting myth of "Community Care". Psychiatry's real function, its state function, has been to enforce normalisation, to ensure that the majority tamely conform (out of fear) to the dehumanising demands of the capitalist state. In pursuing this aim it has isolated and punished deviance in all its manifestations, using the pretence of medical neutrality to disguise this function, just as the modern British state uses the pretence of the "independence" of the judiciary to disguise the reality of its attacks on the most vulnerable sections of our society.

Medical psychiatry has always made spurious claims. Indeed, it assumed control and power before it had even spurious claims to offer "cures" for "madness". Mental health history in Britain in the 20th century has reflected the medical professions determined effort not to ease human misery, but to ensure and extend its own power and hegemony. Successive pieces of legislation have under-pinned this power, because the state recognised how convenient it was to lodge such power with medical psychiatry. For to medicalise human pain and despair is to deny its political cause, and to forestall the recognition that political solutions are needed and not the "treating" of the individual by incarceration, shocks, crude behaviourist therapies, mind-numbing drugs, etc. So, for example, psychiatry has been used throughout this century to deny the oppression of women in this violently patriarchal society. Women hurt and shattered by sexual violence, economic exploitation and the omnipresent realities of second-class status have been told again and again that their suffering is their own fault or the consequence of disease processes occurring "inside" them.

It is hardly surprising, then, that the modern state has encouraged the development of medical psychiatry and used it to deny the true political reality of social structures founded on the values of the patriarchal state - state violence, sexual violence, exploitation, gross inequalities, poverty, unemployment, racism, authoritarianism, militarism. Psychiatry's purpose has been to punish those who will not or cannot fit into such horrific and brutalising social "norms", and to force the rest of us to accept those dehumanising



COMMUNITY CARE?

→ fears, not willingly, but out of fear of the alternative - of breaking down, cracking up, going mad and so on. And that is why, despite the progressive images, state psychiatry has also cultivated fear of "madness" and of breakdown. That duality is not accidental, but quite deliberate.

And that is what "community care" is in reality about. No more or less than the terrifying, Kafkaesque asylums of the 19th century. "Community Care" is, like those asylums, adjudged to be the most efficient and cost-effective means of maintaining and controlling deviance, a typical Thatcherite "solution". The asylums proliferated because they provided a brutal, efficient method of isolating and incarcerating the elements of society that were unable to act as fodder for the industrial revolution and the imperialist militarism that was fuelling it. As Michel Foucault illustrated so powerfully, these institutions were like isolation units, leper colonies, acting as much to frighten the "sane" population as to incarcerate the victims of the crude evolving industrial state. Ultimately they produce a kind of mental health apartheid. To be certified as mad was to be cut off from human society, literally and metaphorically, with a sentence of indeterminate length (quite often meaning "life") in an inhuman prison.

Such was this apartheid, and the horror of it, that we can still feel the impact - loonies, nutters and weirdos, them with the lurgy. Who is not familiar with that fear, even now? The illusion of medical care was always precisely that - an illusion. The dehumanising state, as Orwell realised, can never face, or admit, or recognise its own true image.

And this remains true as psychiatry carries the great march forward on into the era of "Community Care" when, we are told, the gradual shutting down of the alienating asylums heralds an era of understanding, with policies designed to foster "community" understanding and acceptance of the "mentally ill". In fact, and as radical critics like David Cooper have long realised, the asylum has been moving out into the community for years; ever since the development and adoption of modern psychopharmaceutical drugs in the 1950s. Now the tranquilliser industry is a huge profit-making one and the medical psycho-manipulators have a vast chemical arsenal with which to control, subdue, sedate and bully those that they label "mentally ill". Why continue with the expense of the big institutions when chemical straitjackets can do the job just as well, far more cheaply and with the minimum of human intervention?

Of course, despite the drugs, a "community care" policy would still be risky if the community really did care - after all, people may begin to realise that they are as likely to become victims of the nuclear state as the so-called mentally ill: that the fears, tensions, fantasies and despairs of these people are our fears, tensions, fantasies and despairs: they might discover solidarity and begin to understand that the only true "solution" to despair, depression and emotional disintegration involves the creation of a society at peace, cultivating freedom, cooperation and love. That would truly subvert the nuclear state and undermine the vast drug industry that thrives on the maintenance of the "mentally ill" and the widespread belief that only "experts" can help or "cure".

That's why the widespread adoption of "Community Care" is occurring NOW, in Thatcherite Britain. For just as medical psychiatry has through this century succeeded in depoliticising mental health issues, leaving the state's victims haplessly disconnected from society, so Thatcher's state has worked tirelessly to obliterate the last vestiges of real community, nowhere more so than in the desolate and desolating inner cities which is where, of course inevitably, the great majority of the recipients of "community care" will be dumped. For community is, and always will be, anathema to the nuclear state. Community implies cooperation and true concern for the well-being of others, out of choice, out of freedom.

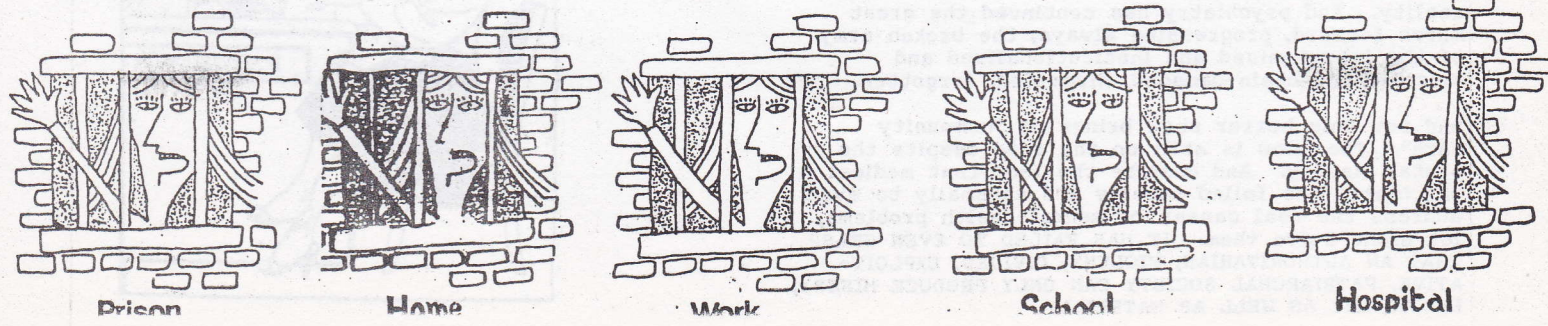
Consequently, Thatcher's most concerted and violent assault has been on community - through the rapid extension of the police state, the creation of mass unemployment, the use of the courts to destroy institutions fostering cooperation and solidarity, punishing those who dare to dissent from the insane politics of the nuclear state, and the Goebbels-like use of the capitalist press to condition the populace to embrace what is choking and poisoning them. Thatcher's policies, then, have been deliberately designed to destroy community and to ridicule and punish the notion of care, of human beings caring each for the other.

George Orwell knew that the totalitarian state has, above all, deny its own hideous creations and that the desecration of language is intrinsic to this task. And so, Thatcher's nuclear state embraces "COMMUNITY CARE".

"Community Care" is a cheap, dishonest fraud. How can it be otherwise when those most vulnerable and most sensitive are projected out into a blasted community where to care is to be weak, and where the "values" of the market place insist on the obliteration of the weak. You can see "community care" shuffling along our inner cities any day of the week: in the gutters, in the bus shelters, in the stinking public toilets, in the filthy hostels and night shelters, in the proliferation of private "homes" and bedsits with maximum rents, tyrannical rules and minimum facilities. You can see "community care" in the faces of the homeless, in the stiff, zombied faces of the psychodrugged, and hear "community care" in the ravings and mutterings and desolations. "Community care" means reductions in costs and reductions in services. It means an increased reliance on the arsenal of drugs and tranquillisers, intended not to open our experience and enhance freedom, but to contain and control people in nightmarish, never-loosened chemical straitjackets. It means exploitation of the most vulnerable in houses and hostels run for profit. It means the depositing of alienation and despair and loneliness on the streets of cities where those thriving in the nuclear state have been conditioned to ignore those who are falling apart, as the thriving middle-class were conditioned in Nazi Germany to ignore the growing persecution of the Jews. It means the crude bribing of charities and voluntary organisations with small grants to provide inadequate services and provide first aid to the worst victims of "community care".

The asylums are emptying and the police cells and prisons are filling up. That is the reality of "community care". It is the crude abandonment of those most victimised by the state. And it is a predictable marginalisation. For, like women, like minority communities, like gays and lesbians, like those groups struggling for peace and social justice, the so-called "mentally ill" can only be kicked in the face if the state is to survive.

LES.



IRELAND: TROOPS OUT NOW!

Dear NOTTINGHAM ANARCHIST NEWS

Here's a first hand account of the Troops Out delegation to Northern Ireland, August 1988. I've sent it to a few other anarchist publications, but have to admit that I'm dubious as to whether or not anybody will print it. The Irish situation seems on the whole to be either completely ignored or given the right wing treatment - even by the left wing press.

I Didn't know what to expect. I'd read previous accounts of the Troops Out Delegation: of the body searches; the guns trained on children; the feelings of grassroots solidarity amongst a tight knit community brought together by the threat posed by an army of occupation. The week before we set off, a section of an army barracks in London was reduced to rubble; a British soldier (who'd done six operational tours of N.Ireland) was shot dead in Ostend. Would the army be out to get revenge on the Anti-internment March? How would the Irish people react to us considering the British populations overall prejudicial ignorance towards their struggle?

Waiting at Larne for the coach that would take us to Belfast, ten yards away on the right there's an armoured car, through the smoked windows you can see the outlines of the RUC men, their guns pointed towards us. A couple of them stand beside it, bullet-proof vests and guns making them appear invulnerable. I try not to look at them, as if pretending that they aren't there will somehow keep me safe. I think its known as burying your head in the sand.



THE NAZIS HAD HITLER - THE BRITISH HAVE THATCHER
THE NAZIS HAD AUSCHWITZ - THE BRITISH: LONG KESH
THE NAZIS HAD THE SS -- THE BRITISH HAVE THE RUC
WELCOME TO NAZI OCCUPIED IRELAND

As the coach moves into Belfast, I couldn't help but be struck by the contrast between the surrounding hills and the city itself. Rolling green boxes in a decaying city. Some factory must be doing a roaring trade in barbed wire - it's everywhere. (In all probability it's an English factory, since jobs in Belfast are few and far between. The Divis Flats - now half demolished - stand at the bottom of the Falls Road. It's difficult to tell where the demolition site ends and the inhabited section begins. At the top of the tallest block there's an army post; through the corrugated iron you know that they're watching you watching them. It's a nerve-racking feeling, but one that the Belfast people have long since incorporated into daily life.

We're taken on a guided tour around what's left of the Divis. Flats designed to split a community - it's the same story even on the new housing estates. Whole areas built without a single shop, without a community centre or creche or play facilities: the idea being that if the community have nowhere to meet, then they'll lose their solidarity with each other through enforced isolation. In the Divis, the opposite happened: the community formed action groups to combat the lack of facilities. They squatted empty flats and turned them into an advice centre; a playgroup; a skill centre; an education centre; a woman's group - all this without any official funding since the authorities refuse funding to any groups that are connected to Sein Fein. Being in West Belfast you can't help but be aware that Sein Fein are the only political group that are working in the community. They work in the community because they live in it - unlike the ambitious politicians that we've come to know and loath in British politics, they aren't separated from the people, they are the people.

WE MUST GROW TOUGH
BUT WITHOUT EVER LOSING OUR TENDERNESS

We meet with women representing the Sein Fein Women's Department. They make it clear that to them the war comes first. In the past they've been criticised by English middle class feminists who've said that they should be doing this-and-that to achieve "personal liberation"; they see it as rhetoric that doesn't apply to their lives - I can understand why. Whilst their country remains occupied by a hostile force there is no such thing as "personal freedom". Getting the British army off their streets has to be their first priority. There's no such thing as friendly colonialism; while the army remains, so does the war.

Again, they work in the community. Recently they went door to door on the council estates explaining the importance of smear testing and making sure that every woman got access to one. The abortion issue was raised. It's an uncomfortable topic for the Sein Fein Women because whilst fighting for a "woman's right to choose" within the organisation, they are reluctant to slag off Sein Feins stand on it, preferring to skirt around the issue by describing their policy towards it as "progressive". "Progressive" isn't the word that I'd use to describe a policy that more or less denies a woman's right to choice, but in a community that was raised on Catholicism, it's an understandably touchy subject.

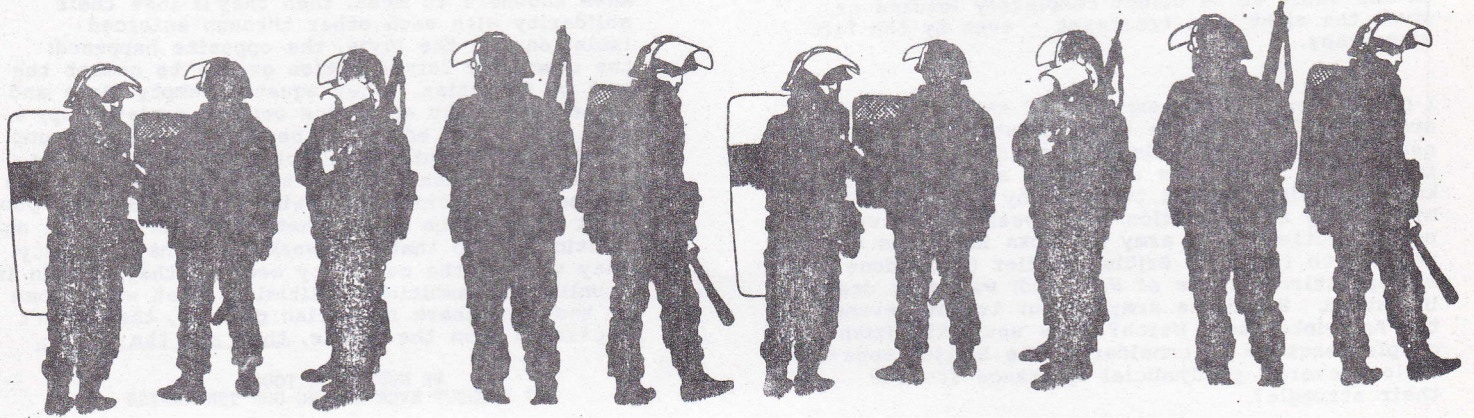
Nobody tries to gloss over the fact that Sein Fein is still most definitely a male dominated organisation. There's a policy of positive discrimination towards women to try and change that - but they know they have a long way to go. None of the women that we met could in any way be described as token. Twenty years of struggling, not just for their own rights but the rights of their people, has produced women of incredible strength and determination.

WHEN YOU CAME TO THIS LAND
YOU SAID YOU CAME TO UNDERSTAND
SOLDIER, WE'RE TIRED OF YOUR UNDERSTANDING
TIRED OF BRITISH TROOPS ON OUR SOIL
TIRED OF THE KNOCK UPON THE DOOR
TIRED OF THE RIFLE-BUTT ON THE HEAD
TIRED OF THE JAILS AND THE BEATINGS
TIRED OF THE DEATHS OF OLD FRIENDS
TIRED OF THE TEARS AND FUNERALS
THOSE ENDLESS ENDLESS FUNERALS
IS THIS YOUR UNDERSTANDING?



IRELAND: TROOPS OUT NOW!

Sunday morning was spent being given a guided tour around Milltown Cemetery. It was a bizarre sight: over a hundred of us chasing a man with a loud hailer, desperately leaping around trying to avoid standing on graves as we went from plot to plot listening to the lives and deaths of those buried there. Children killed by plastic bullets; men and women who died from psychological as well as physical torture at the hands of the British state; Hunger strikers who died battling for the right to



be recognised as prisoners of war; Freedom fighters who knew that "you can kill the revolutionaries, but not the revolution". Graves and headstones are often defiled by the British soldiers on the last night of their tour of duty; an exercise of rubbing salt into already deep wounds. The soldiers vandalism isn't confined to the graveyard. Take a walk anywhere in West Belfast and every hundred yards or so you'll come across a wall mural. Colourful and well-considered testaments to a peoples resistance, they range from messages of solidarity with the ANC to extracts from Bobby Sands writings. A favourite trick of the "Brits" is to chuck paint over them and often.

I'd heard about the famous hospitality of the Irish, but it has to be experienced to be believed. (There's 85% unemployment amongst the catholics in West Belfast. The jobs that are going are so sought after that the bosses get away with wages that amount to slave labour. One pound forty an hour is seen as an acceptable wage - and food prices aren't any lower than in England.) Money's tight and it's very difficult for families to manage, yet our hosts more or less refused to let us pay for anything. We were taken to Republican clubs and offered liberal quantities of both Guinness and friendship everywhere we went. The only payment that they would accept in return is that we go back "and tell them what's happening to the Irish people".

Everyone you meet has suffered in some way in the war. Brothers and sisters killed; homes burnt out; houses torn apart by British troops because they suspect a fourteen year old boy of rioting; fathers and brothers in the notorious H-blocks; women who have been systematically humiliated by strip searching whilst serving sentences inflicted without a judge or jury; numerous instances of beatings by the troops and RUC. It gets to the point where you stop being able to comprehend what people are saying to you... but you carry on listening and you wonder why these people trust you enough to share their experiences when the last contact with a Brit they had was a soldier screaming "Fenian Whore" or "Bastard Taig" at them.

The soldiers kept a low profile the weekend of the delegation. Low profile or not they were still there, slinking along the streets, guns pressed against shoulders that were young enough to still suffer from acne. Both the RUC and the army lined the route of the anti-internment march. Guns and bullet-proof vests reminding you that they were both protected and armed; it made you feel vulnerable. Knowing that you'd like to be allowed to live a little longer is no protection against a bullet. The feelings of vulnerability were replaced by emotional solidarity as supporters lining the streets clap as you pass.

At the rally we were blocked in by the crowds. The RUC tried to intimidate us by revving the engines of the armoured cars only inches away. In my case it worked... I would have shit myself if I'd have had a spare pair of trousers to change into. We were right next to the spot where the RUC murdered John Downes at pointblank range four years ago... so you know it's not just a game.

FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE, NO EXPLANATION IS NECESSARY
FOR THOSE WHO DON'T, NO EXPLANATION IS POSSIBLE

But to us it's just four days. But even in four days you see and hear enough to know that the conflict in Ireland isn't a case of religious feuding got out of hand. The British troops aren't there to keep the peace between two sectarian groups. Ireland has been a victim of Britains military oppression for over eight hundred years. True, there wouldn't be instant peace if the troops were all shipped back to our shores tomorrow; but there will certainly never be a solution to the Irish conflict whilst Britain tries to protect its own colonial with an armed presence.

As an Anarchist I have an inbuilt mistrust of all parties and groups claiming to represent the people. Nonetheless, I came away from Ireland both supporting Sein Fein policies within the community and seeing the necessity of having a political wing along with an armed one. The people who make up Sein Fein have not been drawn into politics as a career move. They are men and women who have spent years of their lives in jails set up by the British state. They are the people who's houses have been torn apart for the sin of being born into a catholic family. They are involving themselves in the political arena because if they don't fight for their own communities nobody else will.

All those people who believe that the IRA is an isolated terroist group should spend a few days in West Belfast. The IRA are not terrorists. They are ordinary people who resorted to arms. They are people who have been faced with the impossible choice of standing up and fighting as Britains military might tries to crush their communities, or passively accepting the rule of a hostile state which makes laws that openly discriminate against them; which tortures; which kills children and tries to keep the Republican community firmly under the jackboot by using poverty as well as military force as a weapon.

AND YOU DARE TO CALL ME A TERRORIST, WHILE YOU LOOK DOWN
YOUR GUN...
WHEN I THINK OF ALL THE DEEDS THAT YOU HAVE DONE
YOU HAVE PLUNDERED MANY NATIONS, DIVIDED MANY LANDS
YOU HAVE TERRORISED THEIR PEOPLE, RULED WITH AN IRON HAND
AND YOU BROUGHT THIS REIGN OF TERROR TO MY LAND

GRAFFITI

Graffiti has been receiving a lot of attention lately. It is estimated that it is costing a million pounds of damage a year in Nottingham and has an adverse effect on tourism(!). The Evening Post has led a campaign against the (thousands of years old) practice and Tory MPs have even called for the possession of aerosol paint cans by minors to be made illegal. The practice of writing on flat surfaces has become an obsession: The council employs a permanent team to erase and clean graffiti and flyposters; Video cameras are even being installed on buses to criminalise bored and ineffectual youth. (A useful tip is to write your bit on a sticky freezer label at your leisure and stick it wherever you want later. This cuts down the chances of being caught in the act and they're extremely difficult to remove.)

But it's not the political activist with a message to push or grievance to air that is the target. In fact the culprits have no message to push except one of self-publicity. The aim of the new wave of graffiti-ist is to leave their mark (or 'tag') on as many (preferably inaccessible) places as possible, to outdo the opposition. In this game whoever shouts (or sprays) the loudest and most often is the winner. But also often the loser - signing your name everywhere is a pretty sure-fire way of getting caught. More often than not the participants in this game are young, working class lads to whom the excitement of tagging relieves an otherwise boring existence. But there is a more worrying side to this practice; an acceptance of the Thatcherite ideology which has so much of the country in its grip; a competitive world where self-agrandisement is the aim and society doesn't exist, only the individual. Within the subculture of sprayers is a more sophisticated sect, the 'aerosol artists' who develop their tags into large, colourful, stylised 'pieces', but whose message is always the same.

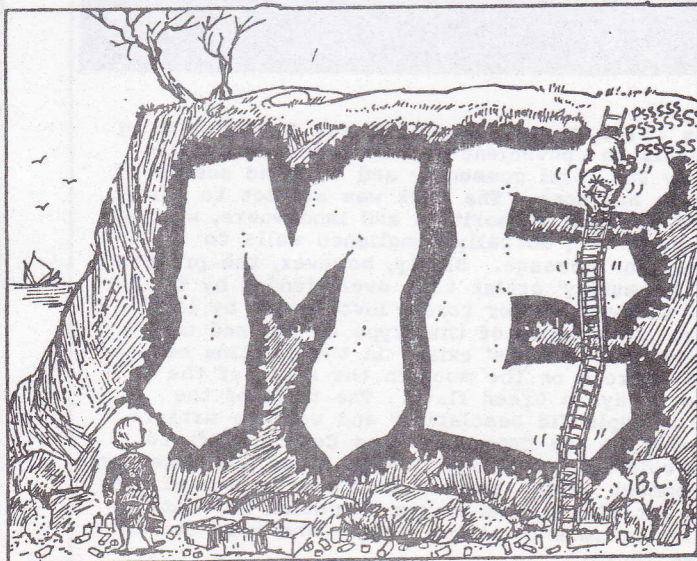
Not for these people the co-operative effort of scrawling a message or slogan, of enhancing community. Not for them the "Smack is Bad, God is Worse", the "Socialism will come riding on a bicycle", or even "George Davis is Innocent". Not for them the incisive surgery to advertising hoardings; "You Know Who Makes The Best Bacon" with the sprayed addition "P.C. Blakelock"; or the FIAT

advert "If It Were A Lady It Would Get It's Bottom Pinched" with the addition "If This Lady Was A Car She'd Run You Down". No, the aerosol artist has only one message: "ME!!". The leaders in this field want to design adverts rather than subvert them.



A "piece" of aerosole art at the Clifton flyover. Its pretty, O.K. The "criminal damage" is only to those who hold property as the most sacred of gods. And it may be art. But so what?

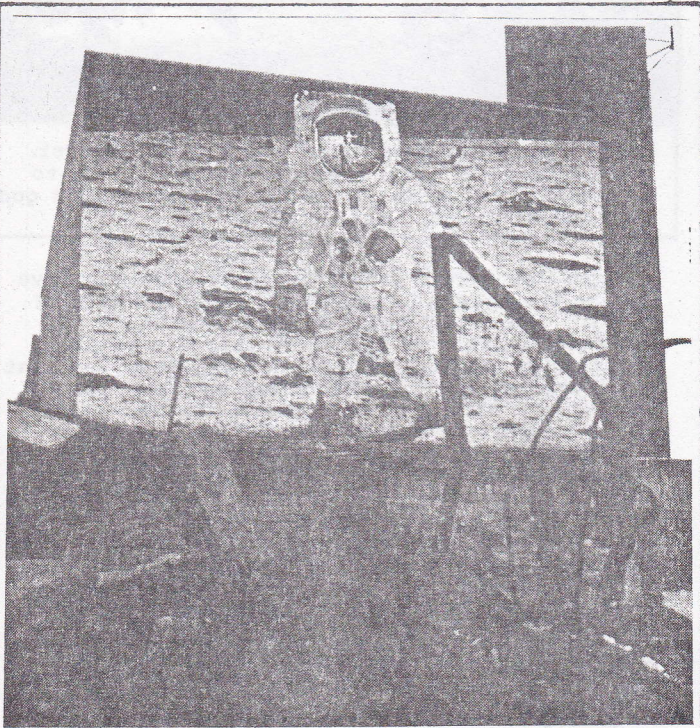
Although the gutter press and gutter MPs may rave against the criminal damage and visual pollution of graffiti, many statistis have recognised the beneficial aspects of the craze they are out to recuperate and control. In just the same way that Rock'n'Roll became respectable and punk was tamed, the aerosol 'artist' is encouraged. In the future you can expect to see more graffiti-style pieces legitimately adorning walls and billboards in your neighbourhood. Locally, the Community Arts Centre has had an exhibition and subsidised a couple of issues of the normally excellent 'Lobster Telephone' with special features on graffiti. In other places, the police are already running workshops in the techniques (Daily Telegraph 19th Aug). And why shouldn't they, because the egotistical art form



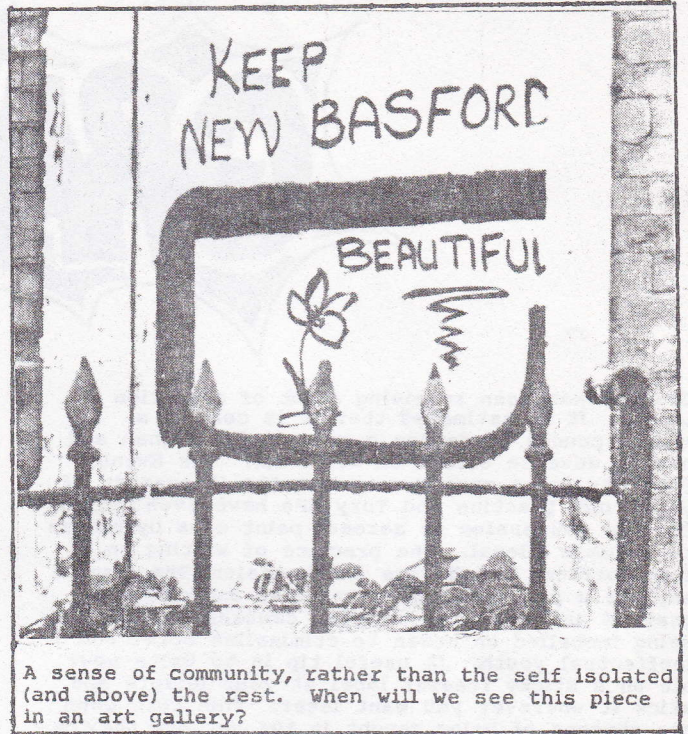
poses absolutely no threat to the established order. In fact, it fits in very well with authoritarian statist ideology. The attitude of the aerosol artists is summed up by one of them, the Artful Dodger: "You can erase the name, but you can't erase the FAME". The point is to make your mark, better and brighter than anyone else, to further your career, a big ego trip. The Artful Dodger has moved on from tagging the council house lions and has been rewarded with contracts to design adverts, commissions and funding for exhibitions.

But perhaps I'm being too critical, too cynical. It's ART, after all. If people want to spend their time spraying subway walls or bus shelters, good luck to them. "Fight crime not art" is the cry of the reformers. And there's the rub: art is all it is. The elitists, the professionals, the aerosol artists and their dotting liberals see their art as superior to the scribbles of the property defacers, as worthy of establishment patronage and recognition. But it all carries the same message and should be resisted (or at least ignored) rather than encouraged as the best thing since sliced bread. There is art all around us; it would suit us all better if Community Arts organisations nurtured those forms which were beneficial to the whole of the community and not those which merely provide a cheap training ground for those seeking new forms to sell their Weetabix or provide distractions for disaffected youth.

"RESIST! ART MUST APPLY. IT MUST BE INTEGRAL AND NO LONGER THE INCIDENTAL MEANDERINGS OF KIDDIES IN A PLAYPEN. YOU HAVE A VOICE. WHY SPEAK TO YOURSELF?"



In the 1970s, there was an upsurge in the painting of murals on convenient walls. These were often done by the local community and depicted scenes of struggle and hope. The work was subject to being erased by local authorities and landowners, who, in some instances, actually demolished walls to destroy the message. Slowly, however, the professional 'community' artist took over, funded by the state and with no (or token) involvement by local people. An example of this type of art and the arrogance of 'artists' exists in the painting of Neil Armstrong on the moon in the midst of the rubble of Hyson Green flats. The title of the piece is "Splendid Desolation" and was the artists (a worker at the Community Arts Centre) "gift to the people of Hyson Green". The mural now makes an apt comment on the long-awaited destruction of the flats, but at the time of its execution was just a slap in the face for those people who were forced to live there.



A sense of community, rather than the self isolated (and above) the rest. When will we see this piece in an art gallery?

Interviews with aerosol "kings" and lots of examples can be found in "LOBSTER TELEPHONE" numbers 23 and 24, available at Selectadisc, the Rainbow Centre and other places, price 10p.

"SUBWAY ART" by Cooper and Chalfont claims to be "the definitive record of a unique cultural phenomenon that is equally fascinating in its social significance and in its artistic importance." (The American scene predates the British one by several years). Price £7.95.

COLIN

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MAYDAY... MAYDAY... MAYDAY...

May Day is a day of international working class solidarity. Every year it is marked by strikes, marches, rallies and demonstrations throughout the world. Here we print reports from two of these events. The first was sent to us by John Waller, who is currently travelling in South America, and who was in Santiago on May Day. In contrast, we also reprint the report to Nottingham and District Trades Council by its secretary, Ian Juniper, of this years events in Nottingham. This is followed by some comments from someone who has been on more May day marches in Nottingham than Ian has good words to say about anyone.

IN CHILE...

Sunday May 1st, 10am and the streets of central Santiago are cold and empty - cold because winter is on its way and because in the canyons between the rows of offices that are the city centre the sun has not yet risen high enough to penetrate. By 11 it will be hot. Empty - because it is Sunday - but also empty of something else, empty of expressions of politics; there is not a single political poster or wall slogan in the city centre: it's too dangerous to put them up in this land of fascism wrapped up in modern western clothes.

I'm on my way to the MayDay rally called by the Chilean equivalent of the TUC. Finding where it was going to be was not easy because even the couple of permitted leftist publications talk of something happening but dare not say when and where. One relies on word of mouth, or leaflets handed out in the outlying estates.

11am - I arrive at the final gathering point, an area of waste land and old railway tracks. Some people are erecting a platform, 20 or so teenagers

with masks are rapidly spray-painting a mural on a long wall, others are individually covering every wall in site with slogans. Bit by bit more arrive, as individuals, in contingents of unions/workplaces/parties, and then 4 marches each coming from a different point. By 12 everybody is there - how many? So hard to estimate but maybe 50,000 (afterwards the organisers claimed 100,000, the police 10,000!).

The rally starts. In many ways the usual stuff - boring speeches from middle-aged trade union leaders, the only woman on the platform being a folk singer, left groups in the crowd selling their publications - but far fewer publications than their English counterparts because the Chilean left does not have access to money or printing presses. Yet the mood is positive - the sun is shining, the Spanish language makes for a livelier presentation, but above all people know that slowly the grip of the dictatorship is weakening - today's event could not have occurred 2 or 3 years ago.

1 o'clock - the official speeches are coming to a close. At the back on a small road 50-100 teenagers, mostly masked, start burning a few tyres and making an impromptu road block (there is no traffic, anyway). Some of them belong to the MIR or the Communist Party - the two left parties that see a role for armed struggle. They pose for the ranks of photographers, me included - they want publicity. This is not spontaneous, but the reaction of the people around, of support and encouragement, is spontaneous.

And we all wait for the reaction. The reaction has been waiting, too, waiting for its invitation - it soon arrives, water cannon and gas grenades fired indiscriminantly. I have this photo of a water cannon being directed against a row of boarded-up (for the day) shops - the following day the press will scream about the damage done by the protestors. For some minutes there is an almost ritualistic phase of charge and countercharge - sticks and stones versus water and gas - but not tear gas, rather something nastier which here they call 'vomit' gas because that's what it makes you do (as I soon discovered) as well as giving the sensation that your skin is burning. Behind the 'front lines' people hand out salt and lemon to rub on the skin to stop the chemical burning sensation.

Then a couple of armoured water cannon burst through the lines and we scatter in all directions, both to avoid the water cannon but also for fear of being surrounded by the military. For me, still retching, and for most others, I think, the demo is over.

The next day the press is full of the outrageous actions of the demonstrators and the trade union leaders (some at least) cringeingly say that it wasn't their fault and condemn the action of the youngsters. So once again the military showed who has the power. Perhaps it was futile, but perhaps, in a military dictatorship on MayDay, celebration is not enough, one has to resist whatever the odds.

IK WERK VOOR
CHILI



1 MEI AKTIE
EVERT VERMEER STICHTING
PVDA-APDELINGEN
CHILI-KOMMITEE
WERELDWINKELS - SJALOOM
WERKTEATER - NIVON

AND NOTTINGHAM

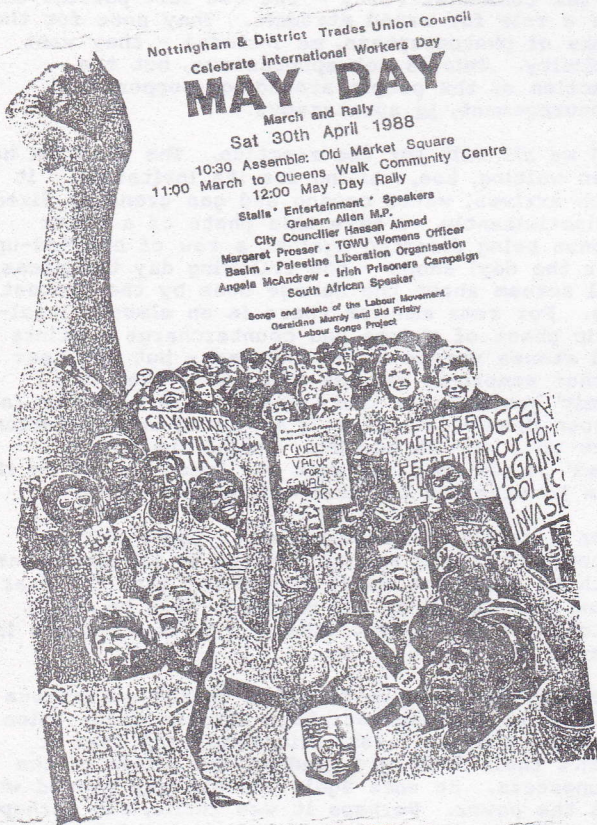
The Trades Council May Day March & Rally can be put into perspective by the fact that there were more Wimbledon supporters at the City ground in the afternoon; and that the 103 on the March as revealed by an accurate head count numbered less than 2/3 of the Trades Council's own mailing list. Furthermore, it had very little of the "here we go gathering nuts in May" feel about it either - one of the marchers said it felt like a dole queue wandering off in search of the Promised Giro.

The Rally was described thus in "Nottingham Anarchist News" :- "Speakers listened to in sullen silence. No heated discussion, no life." Three of the scheduled speakers didn't turn up:- an NUS rep for obvious reasons, Margaret Prosser, who wrote soon afterwards to apologise and explain that she

had been ill at the last minute, and a PLO speaker. No-one even bothered to listen to Mary Donnelly from Nottingham FAB who spoke on the Market Square before the March set off, and who was easily the best speaker of the day, in my opinion.

The ironic thing is that the turn out at some May Days has been much better when all the organisation - leaflets, &c., &c. - has been done at the last minute. This year the basic decisions were taken at the June and August Council meetings; there were successive meetings with MayDay 88; over 100 letters were sent out to over 100 local organisations inviting their participation in planning the day; the venue was switched to QWCC to achieve as much good will with other local organisations interested in the event; much of this work, incidentally, being done over the Xmas holiday period. The publicity - leaflets, posters - was equally done in good time - late February/early March. The end result was the poorest turnout I have known in 10 years' experience of May Days in Nottingham.

(Incidentally, the Thursday before May Day just 1 person turned up to the joint Trades Council/Nottingham Video Project 'Videoscope' event as part of the Artworks Festival.



In contrast, at a time when the Palestinians are being systematically brutalised before the world's media, when the South African masses are being brutalised out of sight of the world's media, when the very existence of the NUS was at stake, when British injustice to the Irish was even more exposed for all to see - in short, when all the genuine meaning of May Day was urgently crying out for powerful expressions of international solidarity -

Nottingham's counter-culture vultures were flocking to the May Day Eve to wonder at Fanny the Wonderdog, greeting the May Day Dawn with ring-a-ring-a-rosies, and picnicking in the Arboretum - the lifeless statue of Feargus O'Connor no doubt being the most evident sign of political life. The booklet that was produced 'Why Celebrate May Day?', furthermore, gives the impression that no May Day events of any note have been held in Nottingham for years - leaving one to wonder whether the authors have actually taken part in any of them, most notable in 1983 with Nottingham CND and in 1984 with the striking miners, when the May Day march itself was preceded by a March of striking miners from Cotgrave.

The conclusion I reach is that our collaboration with May Day 88 and our efforts to get something

out of Artworks have not yielded any dividends in terms of helping to achieve heightened participation in a political celebration of May Day, and what it really stands for - and I was very much in favour of giving it a go. Nottingham 'lefties' would seem to have acquired the label for reasons other than commitment to socialist ideology - I'm tempted to speculate but I would probably be denounced for autophobia.

The main achievement of May Day 88 (apart from a financial loss) seems to be that "everybody had a good time" (well, isn't that nice); whereas at least on the March and Rally, it paid for itself, £100 was collected for the seafarers, there was also radio publicity as a result for the East Midlands NUS Support Committee both on Sunday and Monday, and the Rally was well-supported in terms of stalls; and I also thought the music was very good.

Recommendations:-

- that the March & Rally be held next year on Monday 1st May, highlighting issues in the County Council Election; venue, speakers and fundraising events to be decided.

- that we aim to hold one in 1990, Trades Council Centenary Year, and to review holding future ones in the light of interest and participation in these 2 years.

- that a Palestinian speaker, and Roger Suckling of Nottm Video Project be invited to future Council meetings, Roger to do a potted video presentation of the one he prepared for the joint event for the Trades Council.

I.B.J.

AGAIN

The Trades Council MayDay rallies have been going downhill for a long time; it is no coincidence that the highlights cited by Ian from previous years have been those organised with other groups. Last year, the presence of Trader strikers and supporters boosted the numbers and liveliness - there were complaints that these people had 'taken over' the Trades Council march. This year, with no outside input the event was the worst ever, with the possible exception of a year in the mid-seventies, when there were two marches/rallies. In that year, May 1st fell on a Sunday - the "traditionalists" in the Trades Council insisted on a Saturday march from Slab Square to the Forest; the Labour Party with the prospect of a name speaker (Dennis Healey, no less!!!) marched the next day on the reverse route, thus effectively halving the size of each demonstration. (To my shame, I went on both marches). Those two, and the many others I have been involved in, were marked by an atmosphere of sombre duty rather than a feeling of celebration and strength.

Over the last few years, I and others have tried to work with the Trades Council in the organisation of 'their' events, and also done things for May Day - May 1st - itself. These have involved picnics, ceilidhs, parties, leafletting and street meetings in an attempt to bring some joy, some life, some meaning into the festival of international solidarity. Attempts at working with the Trades Council have been continuously frustrated by those stalinist and other hacks who want to control the decision making/policy forming functions, but who do not want to do any of the work themselves. The Trades Council MayDay is actually organised by an open, but very small, committee whose every decision is to be ratified or rejected by the full Council made up of delegates who enjoy the prestige but not the work, and who are, at heart, very conservative.

This year the MayDay 88 group made a determined attempt to make something of May Day. Of course there were mistakes: it was the first time for most of them in organising anything like this. But Ian's criticisms just do not hold water. The

→ MAYDAY...

Booklet "Why Celebrate May Day?" included in its introduction the words "It hasn't been easy, given our resources, to cover everything, and in particular there is very little material on Nottingham's labour May Day. Perhaps next year...". Everyone at MayDay 88 would welcome contributions from Ian (or anyone else) on this part of May Day, but it seems he and other hacks are more interested in 'dividends' and what they can control than helping produce an authoritative, accurate account of May Days past. They were asked.

Ian also conveniently forgets to mention the Free University held at the ICC on Saturday afternoon with speakers and workshops on a wide range of subjects. No, it wasn't a roaring success - but it was an attempt to bring out the political aspects of the day and some of the blame can be laid at the feet of those politicians who were just looking at what they could gain from MayDay 88, not what they could contribute. The sum total of the contribution of political ideas/information by the sussed stalwarts of the Trades Council to the Free University was precisely nil - is this the 'collaboration' that Ian writes of?

The MayDay 88 events were a good chance for all those Trades Council delegates committed to a "political celebration" to have their say, to get their message across, to present their ideas. They

failed miserably, preferring to preach to the converted rather than reach out and do some education. They wanted their way, not their say. Some of us believe that to create socialism, you must first have socialists: the Trades Council seems to be filled with people who think that you're either a committed, fully sussed politico or you're not worth bothering with. Until the revolution, of course, when socialism will be imposed on you by the central committee.

Ian's report is particularly sad because it recommends a retreat into the laager of local labour myopia and away from internationalism. They have been trying this for years **AND IT DOESN'T WORK**. MayDay 88 have proved they can draw the crowds. They should be given every encouragement in providing an international forum for debate, discussion, the investigation of new ideas, the propaganda of organising something big in a co-operative way. The Trades Council could have a very valuable role to play in making MayDay in Nottingham as big, as important, as relevant, as fun as it is in other parts of the country and the world. There wasn't as much overt politics in this years MayDay 88 events as there could have been; it is up to all of us, Trades Council included, to remedy that. The ideas were sound but unfortunately inexperience, lack of numbers in organising, suspicion and distrust by politicians combined to diminish the impact of the message. Let's change that next year. Together.

colin

UPPER HEYFORD OCTOBER 15TH

The members of Nottingham CND's executive committee have - with some honourable exceptions - never been keen on doing nonviolent direct action (or in fact much of anything lately). But they have at last been woken up by an edict from National CND exhorting its members to carry out NVDA at Faslane, Upper Heyford and Portsmouth on SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15TH. It is doubly ironic that NVDA has become National CND policy when organized NVDA in Nottingham has been zero for many months.

However, many feel that action is long overdue, particularly against the deployment of NATO's "modernized" nuclear weapons; so a disreputable collection of gnarled and grizzled old NVDA'ers have emerged from the shadows to plan October 15th.

The euphemism "modernization" means that NATO has found lots of ways to bend the INF treaty without actually breaking it. It is loudly proclaimed that, in addition to the weapons negotiated away by INF, NATO's present nuclear stockpile will be reduced from 4600* to 3490 warheads. The likely composition of the delivery systems on which those 3490 warheads are mounted, is:

EXISTING WEAPONS:	
8 inch artillery shells	200
Bombs	800
B-57 depth bombs	190
	1190
NEW WEAPONS:	
Air launched cruise missiles (ALCM)	300
Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS)	600
155mm artillery shells	400
	2300
TOTAL	3490

In addition, there will be 380 sea launched cruise missiles (SLCM), some or all of which could be at the disposal of the land forces commander.

The 2300 new weapons listed above are 2-3 times the number of weapons covered by the INF treaty. The 1110 weapons withdrawn were obsolete, and ground launched cruise missiles (GLCM) had to be abandoned because they were made unworkable by the unceasing actions of the Greenham Women. The SLCM alone almost make up for the 464 GLCM removed by the INF treaty, but as usual, the withdrawal of any weapons the military have no use for, is accompanied by a loud media fanfair, and the addition of new ones is almost ignored.

For NATO, nuclear war hasn't been unthinkable for a long time; its current strategy now requires low yield, accurate weapons that are "politically usable" soon after war breaks out. "Modernization" means a whole new range of weapons that will fill this role more efficiently than the old ones. It is a defence policy that would turn Europe into a radioactive desert; to do this would only require about 10% of the weapons now stationed in Europe to be exploded. Weapons of mass destruction are not for defending people, they are for destroying them, and their deployment is only credible given that



TERRIBLE BEAUTY

A LIFE OF CONSTANCE MARKIEVICZ

By Diana Norman
Hodder & Stoughton 14.95
ISBN 0-340-39525-7

Although Constance Markievicz was one of the most amazing people to have lived this century, comparatively few know much about her. She has been hidden from history twice over - as a fighter for Irish freedom, and as a woman. Biographies about her have appeared before, but male biographers have been unable to cope with her strength and have ended up writing patronising drivel (e.g. Sean O'Faolain's book), which hasn't helped much. At last in Diana Norman's book we have something worth reading.

So what was so amazing about Constance? It's hard to know where to start. She was English born, of the Protestant ascendancy, with a rosy upper class future ahead of her - yet she rejected all this, at first in favour of art and the bohemian life and then, at the age of forty when most people would assume that the pattern of their life was fixed, in favour of Irish revolutionary socialist politics.



the real purpose of militarism is to enforce the dominance of one power structure over another. We all get blown up in the process? Hard shit.

So the INF circus changes nothing; the struggle to relieve governments of their nuclear weapons is a step towards relieving them of their power over us completely, and must go on. This cannot be an arm-chair struggle, with polite letters of concern to plausible MP's. Nuclear weapons must be confronted at the bases of American imperialism themselves. On October 15th, we propose to carry out direct action against USAF Upper Heyford. We are prepared to be arrested, but there will be other protests going on for which the chance of arrest is much less (except of course under the Nah-then-Ivan-I-don't-like-your-face Act of 1984). The NVDA'ers will need a lot of supporters and helpers too, so there is absolutely no excuse for YOU not being there in some capacity!

There will be a meeting for everyone who wants to be involved in any way on SEPTEMBER 8th at the WEA, Shakespeare Street, 7.30pm. At this meeting, those wanting to do NVDA will form affinity groups; these will be new groups, not based on the old NCND neighbourhood groups, which are in a woeful state. These groups will decide what action to take on the day, and hopefully, will stay together after October 15th to carry out new operations. Some expressed concern that we were taking orders from CND. That is not the case; the only large, local surviving network with some peace activists in it is NCND, and this action provides a focus to rally old comrades and attract new ones to action.

Upper Heyford is one of 133 US bases in Britain. From here, Reagan sent planes to bomb Libya in 1986, forgetting to tell his best buddy, Margaret, till afterwards. The F1-11's already there, would be reinforced with F1-11's armed with new ALCM. B-52's carrying longer range ALCM will probably also be deployed there. We blockaded Upper Heyford for 24 hours as part of a week long protest in 1983. Now we're going back because our business is unfinished... Come with us.

Rory O'Connor

Remember: There will be a meeting for everyone who wants to be involved in any way on SEPTEMBER 8th at the WEA, Shakespeare Street, 7.30pm. If you miss this meeting contact via NCND or NAN

At a time when it was unusual for women to participate in public life, Constance not only threw herself into the struggle for Irish freedom, she also took up arms (she was a crack shot!) and fought in the Irish Citizens Army. She was sentenced to death for her part in the Easter Rising although later reprieved on account of her sex (much to her disappointment at the time).

She was the first woman elected to the British parliament, although her principles meant that she didn't take her seat, and received her official call to represent her constituency whilst she was actually serving one of her many prison sentences. She founded the Irish Nationalist youth organisation - the Fianna - in response to Baden-Powell's scouts, and trained them so that they were able to play a prominent part in the fight against the Brits.

Her politics were not only something she displayed on platforms or behind barricades - though she did plenty of both - but were a deep part of her everyday life. She fought for the freedom of Ireland, the freedom of its workers and the freedom of women - causes which Constance recognised as being totally interconnected - wherever she was. So she gave away her personal wealth bit by bit to people who needed it to survive. So she planted gardens in the slums of Dublin. So she carried coal on her back up steps to freezing tenements. And she also worked hard on an organisational level against sectarianism, to try to get the many different movements (republican, socialist, feminist) with which she was involved to see that they had a common cause and a common enemy.



There was so much more to Constance, it is impossible to summarise her life briefly. Instead: steal, borrow or somehow get hold of this fascinating book which is unfortunately not out in paperback yet. You'll want to be like Constance when you grow up too! Diana Norman has obviously done a lot of painstaking research and is able to dispell some myths and fallacies such as the cruel and untrue picture of Constance as bizarre and bloodthirsty. She may not be too knowledgeable of the military tactics of 1916 but this is a small criticism. There are many mistakes which any biographer of a personality as large as Constance could easily have made: writing a dull book which concentrates on minutiae of political infighting, or writing a "personal" book which undermines her political thought and activity. Happily Diana Norman has made neither mistake, but has instead produced a well-researched, well-balanced and extremely readable book about someone who became "an inspiration to an oppressed people and a legend while she lived". If I could think of any other way of recommending this book to you more, I would do so.

Olga da Polga

Also of interest:
PRISON LETTERS OF COUNTESS MARKIEVICZ,
Virago, 4.95.
DAUGHTERS OF ERIN,
Elizabeth Coxhead, Colin Smythe Ltd, 3.95.
UNMANAGEABLE REVOLUTIONARIES,
Margaret Ward, Pluto, 5.95.
CONSTANCE MARKIEVICZ,
Sean O'Faolain, Cresset Library, Hutchinson, 5.95.

LESBIANS IN CUBA

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

I was in Cuba for 3+ months, the first month with the Jose Marti Brigade where we carried out constructional and agricultural work and received talks from various government officials. We visited educational and welfare establishments, revolutionary organisations, unions, etc. This was followed by a 10 week stay with a family in Havana. During this time I established friendships with many people, including lesbians and gay men, and have collected my material from both informal and formal interviews, my own observations and a review of some of the articles published on this subject.

The experience of Lesbians in Cuba cannot be examined in isolation, but only in the context of the cultural, social and structural framework of that society. To consider any of the material in this article out of context would be destructive and misleading, and fails to serve any purpose. The following information hopefully provides some context in which to begin to examine the identity and position of lesbians in Cuba.

CUBA BACKGROUND

Prior to the Cuban revolution (1959) there was mass corruption, enormous poverty, appalling housing, no sanitation, the vast majority of the population was illiterate and there was no health care or welfare system. The Batista regime was overthrown by a group led by Fidel Castro and in 1964 the Communist Party was formed, with Castro as Comandante.

When looking at any single aspect of present Cuban society, it is important to recognise certain key factors. Cuba is a "3rd World" country; it is the first country to defeat US imperialism, it is a socialist state; Cuba was one of the main centres for African trade - importing slaves to work the vast sugar plantations. African culture is now very strong and Cuba identifies as Afro-Cuban in culture; has stronger ties politically with many African countries than Latin American ones; and finally, but still significantly has a trade embargo with the US and lives in continual threat of invasion.

STRUCTURES AND CULTURAL INFORMATION

The Committee for Defense of the Revolution (CDR) is the most visible structure of the revolution within the local community, and plays a prominent role, at street level, in people's everyday life. Originally set up as a community-based vigilante against counter-revolutionaries, it now has a branch on every street, mainly aiming to encourage local residents to play an active part in the revolution. It organises night guard-duty, voluntary neighbourhood cleaning, and has a role in local political education and community health. Although CDRs fulfill some obviously necessary roles, many Cubans describe how surveillance of their everyday lives in the street/home is invasive of their privacy. The CDRs issue certificates of "good character" to all individuals over 17 who study or work, and without this reference there are very few forms of employment available.

The Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) is the national organisation for women; it has similar functions and aims to the CDR and works alongside it, though specifically with women. It operates very much as an organ of the state, to debate and finally implement state policy. It does not operate independently of, or outside of the state system. This is very different from the women's movement as we experience it in the West.

About 25% of all young people (16-26) belong to The Young Communists which has organisations at educational institutions, work places etc. For young children, The Young Pioneers provides an after-school and summer camp community with activities to encourage good cooperative and collective behaviour. It also provides an arena for socialisation.

The Family is considered the most fundamental unit of socialist society in Cuba and has an almost sacred value. The chronic housing shortage contributes to the fact that it is very common for three generations to live together in one house. Young people very rarely leave home and, on marrying, will often remain in the parents' home with their spouse. Marriage/cohabitation is the only acceptable form of lifestyle; for individuals to live alone or with a friend is very rare. These factors cause obvious problems for lesbians and gay men.

Finally, the latin-based machismo is still a prominent part of society and the resultant way in which heterosexuality is viewed and practised cannot be separated from overall male power.

PRE-REVOLUTIONARY LESBIANS AND GAY MEN

Havana was a city renowned for mass prostitution, drug dealing, gambling, etc. and was heavily supported by US clientele. It had a very flamboyant and decadent male homosexual scene wherein male prostitutes were mainly used by US military personnel. Most lesbians and gay men migrated to Havana for work and in search of a more liberal lifestyle. Furthermore, Cuba's Afro-Hispanic patriarchal culture, with its emphasis on compulsory heterosexuality, was strongest in rural areas. Employment for women was scarce (domestic work, prostitution or factory work was available). Lesbians, or TORTILLERAS (a negative word for lesbians still in use), were considerably less visible than gay men due to a wider overall repression of female sexuality and were either ignored or made an object of ridicule. Within the lesbian population the expectation of carrying out sexual favours with men was seen as the norm. For the vast majority of lesbians life was a shameful, guilt-ridden experience.

THE PRESENT OFFICIAL STANCE ON LESBIANS

Although in the last 10 years there has been some increase in tolerance towards lesbians and gay men, a great deal of silencing, control and disapproval still exists. I will examine some of the attitudes of officials in state organisations which I came across during my visit. Although incomplete, this survey will indicate the severe degree and nature of the oppression that exists at this level.

WOMEN'S PRISON - This places emphasis on re-education and re-habilitation. A committee of prisoners are elected and are responsible for areas of cultural re-education, health and discipline. A methodological counsel decides on an appropriate programme for each woman, asking relatives for support in its implementation. The prison director (a woman) states that women aren't imprisoned for being lesbian, but because they have committed a crime. If someone's behaviour poses a "threat to the moral integrity of the society" this can lead to arrest; similarly someone can be arrested for "causing a public scandal". "Lesbian activity" on the street can be classified under this heading, and for this reason (amongst others) lesbians are

very careful about behaviour and dress code in public places. The director describes the prison as an "upholder of the state's policy", and therefore doesn't allow any lesbian activity or expression in prison, as "lesbianism is against the socialist dogma of the state". As a lesbian I felt a great sense of unease about the combination of the state's attitude to lesbians and the emphasis in prison on cultural and political re-habilitation of prisoners.

FEDERATION OF CUBAN WOMEN - (FMC) - This organisation does not have any reference to lesbians in its constitution, nor does it propose or support any changes in The Party's attitude. It does not recognise the need to have lesbian organisations within the FMC as it says that there is no discrimination against them, whilst actively promoting the family and heterosexuality for women as the only valid and recognisable lifestyle.

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - In the large hospital "Massora" on the edge of Havana, an information pamphlet showed the numbers of people admitted in 1985 under each category in the classification of psychiatric disorder. They included Schizophrenia 26.8%, sexual deviation 0.5% (46 people) and Organic psychosis 2% (168 people). A doctor explained that sexual deviation means "people who change their sex; men who are attracted to men; women who are attracted to women". He confirmed that this meant lesbians and gays. He said that no re-education programme exists for them and that they are here because they are mentally unwell. In which case, why aren't they classified by their presenting illness? The doctor claimed it was just a way of classifying the intake, but if sexual deviation was not seen as a disorder surely it wouldn't require a distinct category.

RECTIFICATION PROCESS (RP) - A government official speaking about the RP (a structure set up to implement necessary changes in economic and cultural spheres) said this about the possibility of a programme to reduce hostility towards lesbians: "We have norms in our society. We don't repress homosexuality in Cuba, but we don't promote it either. Anyone can be homosexual, as long as they don't cause a scandal, or immoral behaviour in the street. We don't need a RP about lesbians here - there is nothing to rectify."

YOUNG COMMUNISTS - Lesbians and gays are not allowed to join the YC. However, there are many of them in this party. But they keep totally silent about their sexuality: although lesbian members can identify other lesbians in their party branch, they will often consciously avoid communication for fear of being identified.

INTERVIEWS & OBSERVATIONS

This final section provides some insight into the life, politics and attitudes of some lesbians through interviews with friends and informal observations. It in no way purports to be a definitive study of lesbianism in Cuba. In Cuban society, the phrase "anti-social" has a wide range of reference, mainly to refer to those people who don't work for the social benefit of society in some way. In 1980, Port Muriel opened and thousands of people left Cuba for the US. They were all labelled "anti-socials" by the Government, and included criminals, the mentally ill, counter-revolutionaries, lesbians and gay men, etc. Figures for the number of lesbians and gays that left vary, but probably include 50% of the Murielians (and are stated as between 4 and 12,000): Some of them had previously held a wide range of economic positions in society, others were not employed, but since this time the labels "anti-socials" and "homosexuals" have been seen as synonymous. This reinforces the earlier social and political prejudice against homosexuality. It is a widely held belief that to be a revolutionary and a lesbian are incompatible; that lesbianism signifies a moral weakness, a lack of personal integrity and a dishonest character.

The frequency with which imprisonment of lesbians occurs today is unclear. A lesbian friend, 'A', describes a tea-house in Old Havana as a known meeting place for a particular "type" of lesbian, i.e. those not involved in legal work or study ("anti-socials"). In the past police vans have made swoop arrests which can result in four years imprisonment. "These people don't see themselves as part of society; they don't contribute to it; and will probably be charged under some pretext, e.g. ID card not on person, ID card out of order etc. I would never go to drink at the tea-house. These people are all "fuerte" (literal translation: strong. A word used for lesbian/gays who are very visible by their dress-style, mannerisms, behaviour, etc.). Maybe they don't have anything to lose by being so open; they have no career/job/role in society, so they can afford to be blatant about their sexuality." I suggest that these women may not wish to contribute to a society with such an intolerance of lesbians, but 'A' has no sympathy with this idea.

Economic and class position clearly influence the degree of openness one can adopt about one's sexuality. 'Y' says "I think it is easiest for lesbians like myself who live in artistic/intellectual circles; there's more tolerance here. All the houses where I live are quite large and separate; neighbours don't overlook you much, so they don't know what's going on, or watch the movements to and from your house. But for lesbians in working-class areas the housing is very dense, there's a lot of observation by neighbours of visitors to the house, and people have much more knowledge of your social life. I experienced problems at work in a very high status post, so I can't imagine what it's like to be a lesbian and work in a factory!" Generally there is a certain level of tolerance and acceptance of lesbians in cultural/performance circles, and many female artists are known lesbians.

In contrast, my friends 'F' and 'E' (two working-class lesbians) describe their lifestyle demonstrating a strong concern about discovery by others of their sexuality. They live together in a block of flats in Havana under the guise of sisters. 'E' was left the flat by her aunt and tells everyone that 'F' was raised by 'E's mother as she had been abandoned by her own. Four years ago, 'F' married a gay man to present an image of "acceptable heterosexuality" to her workplace, her family in the country, and the CDR, FMC etc. They have no other lesbian friends, partly in case too many female visitors to the flat arouse suspicion. All their friends are gay men, who accompany them out to theatres, bars, restaurants etc. as cover and protection in the strongly heterosexual street life. "We would never go out just the two of us for fear of people registering that we're always together and not with men". Although in the home 'E' and 'F' dress in a very casual and relaxed manner, on the street they wear "what Cuban men expect women to wear", i.e. make-up, smart dresses, high shoes, painted fingernails etc. They feel they're very fortunate to be able to live together and to be able to have an active sexual life, as most lesbians of their particular economic status are living at home with parents and have a very submerged sexual identity. Any single, unmarried woman living alone would be noticeable within Cuban society, as women only leave home to marry, and would automatically be labelled as lesbians by the community.

Personal identity issues, prevalent in some lesbians communities in Western capitalist societies, are not seen as significant topics amongst lesbians in Cuba, and the concept of "coming out" does not exist. On the subject of identity, 'A' says "lesbianism is not the centre of my life. The centre of my life will be my profession. I'd prefer a job in the Arts or Cultural field because intellectuals are more open to us than the rest of society. But the aim - purpose of my life isn't my sexuality. I don't care if people know or don't know if I'm lesbian. It's not important to me, although if they don't know it's better. My main

aim is to be good at my work and contribute to building a new society. I have a very low expectations about being able to express my sexuality. I live in rather unique circumstances: I have my own bedsit attached to my family home, my parents are both academics, they know I'm lesbian; and I can invite lovers to my room etc. I can go to a bar, restaurant or cinema with a woman. Some people may know we're lovers, but I'm not interested." (The contrast between this attitude and that of 'E' and 'F' is due to class differences. 'A' is beginning a prestigious career, mixes in intellectual circles and is therefore buffered from the reality of other lesbians.)

The Women's movement, as it exists in the US and Western Europe, is not present in Cuba. Hence, there is no section of the lesbian population that has any particular identity with western feminist ideas. 'A' does not believe that lesbians and gays can act as a challenge to gender-typing and male-dominated value systems in any way in Cuba. On the contrary, she believes that if any impetus for change were to be associated with lesbians it would be counter-productive as attitudes would become even more traditional and conventional as a backlash reaction. "I don't believe there's a necessity in Cuba to organise politically as a group of lesbians. For a start, nobody organises outside of the state structure anyway. Just to demand the freedom to be able to say on the streets: I'm a lesbian - isn't important to me. It seems crazy to organise separately solely for the issue of lesbians and gays."

'Y' used to work as an official researcher for a government department. She describes the application of an ambiguous law which states that, in order to maintain this particular post, one has to have appropriate prestige in the community: "A lesbian and a gay man in my department were asked to leave because of their sexuality. Research carried out for the Director by the CDR revealed that they were known as homosexuals in their neighbourhoods and therefore did not have appropriate prestige to be employed in this type of work. They were both intelligent people, very good and responsible workers, and neither of them could be described as "fuerte" or indiscreet at work." In investigations of this nature, the CDR can interview your family/friends/neighbours, write to your university or past workplace to collect information. 'Y' has now changed careers, working

from a workshop at home, and is thus able to avoid the potential work problems encountered by lesbians.

Five years ago, students were being thrown out of the university if they were known to be homosexual. Now that doesn't happen. Bit by bit, the CP is beginning to recognise that how one functions as a social being is not dependant on one's sexual identity. However this is a very slow process.

CONCLUSION

Revolution is a process in itself, not simply a means to an end. The values which one wishes to see operating in the new society should be incorporated into the revolutionary process from the very onset of the struggle. The overthrow of the oppressive regime only marks the beginning of a long period of development and change.

The strength of many of the lesbians I met, and their sense of responsibility to work towards the construction of a new society (in all its dimensions) has made a lasting impression on me. In Britain, the focus on identity and lifestyle amongst lesbian-feminists was needed as a strengthening time, but now we need to move outwards, as some lesbians are already doing, to participate in the wider struggle (as lesbians) towards constructing a more just and caring society.

The unity and solidarity of the lesbian and gay population in Cuba would seem an appropriate model to adopt here, in certain aspects of our lives. Given that "the current moral crusade does not distinguish the two, lesbians need to unite with gay men to resist it. The backlash against gay liberation is now so strong that the battle between liberal and radical feminists, which dominated the 70s and early 80s seems like a luxury" (M. McIntosh).

Finally, in examining the ways in which the sexual politics are not articulated in social practise in other countries, we are also looking at ways in which it must be articulated in the practise of all groups working towards any real structural and ideological change in this society.

GILL BOWRY

INDIANS IN ECUADOR

Many thousands of years ago, so the Anthropologists tell us, Indian people crossed over the Bering Straits from Russia into Alaska and slowly made their way down the continent. In 1492, the history books tell us that Christopher Columbus "discovered" America. And so began a colonial history of 350 years of conquest, plunder, exploitation, genocide, etc, etc, of the indigenous Indian peoples, that Ronald Reagan would be proud of. Carried out largely by Spain and Portugal, but lets not forget that plenty of Inca gold found its way into the coffers of other European nations, pirated on the high seas - remember Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh?

150 odd years ago, inspired by the example of the American revolution amongst others, the people of Latin America (by now a mixture of Indian and European) kicked out their colonial masters. [As an aside, its funny how the US is now so afraid of Cuba and Nicaragua's revolutions - the threat of a good example?]. But soon, for the Indians, it

became clear that little had changed - just different masters.

Almost 500 years since the 'discovery', 500 years of resistance as the Indians would see it, perhaps the most fundamental achievement has been one of SURVIVAL - of individual families, of economic and social communities, of culture and languages. Shat upon, in places weakened and divided, it is true - but still present as sizeable social groupings (half the population in some of the Andean countries) whose way of life retains a fair degree of independence/isolation from the 'Latin' nation state.

In looking a bit more closely at what is happening in Ecuador the starting point has to be this struggle to survive, and from there to its extension, the struggle to manage their own affairs.

Most indigenous Indians in Ecuador live in the mountains, traditionally involved in agriculture

and more recently often migrating full or part time to the cities to find work of sorts in construction or street selling. They are largely united by a common culture and language - Quechua - the gift, ironically, of their previous imperial rulers the Incas. Historically most of their struggles - bitterly fought and brutally suppressed - have been about land, trying to reclaim it from the colonial landowners. The rules of the conflict are perhaps now less brutal but the process continues - with its victories as the weaker landowners get driven out by land invasion, and its more subtle setbacks as intensive cultivation of poor soils on steep slopes leads to soil erosion and loss of land.

For land alone is not enough - small farmers need many other things - seeds, fertilisers, equipment, access direct to markets - at its heart MONEY to invest to increase their production. Consequently there has arisen many 'development' agencies, both government and independent, to 'assist' them. The best of these have striven to economically strengthen the communities within their own terms - respecting a tradition that whilst based on 'extended' family land ownership includes a high degree of communal working of the land and of seeing themselves primarily as part of a community rather than individuals. But many agencies of course have other ideas - perhaps paternalistic ones that have served to generate dependencies on the supplies of 'resources', or perhaps more consciously capitalistic notions of dividing the communities, creating a layer of individualistic market-orientated small farmers. Which strand will win through in the long run is far from certain - and judgements have to be based on a very long time scale. In one zone where the Indians (CAMPESINOS is the appropriate term) now have control of 2/3 of the land, this has been the fruit of 50 years of land invasions and, to a degree, there is a long term strategy of who can realistically be challenged when - divide and rule in reverse!

If agriculture is the key issue, a similar story can be told about others: over education to maintain the Quechua language; over culture to keep flourishing the traditions and the many different kinds of local festivals; over health, to get access to those real advances of modern medicine whilst retaining the genuine wisdom and efficacy of traditional herbal cures (and whilst weeding out the crap in both systems); over artesanía - seeking to turn the many traditional craft skills, particularly weaving, into major sources of income for the communities without succumbing to the corrupting influence of tourism or capitalist notions of small business. In a sense all the political issues in Britain - about types of education, culture, health service, collectives/cooperatives, the benefits/dangers of state aid, etc being fought out in a situation where there are real communities to start from.

Another example is housing. 18 months ago a small part of the highlands were severely affected by an earthquake. Loss of life was small but destruction of/damage to houses was widespread. The government did next to nothing, the liberal foreign aid agencies (Red Cross, UN etc) rushed in with disaster relief, often inappropriate and creating dependencies based around a 'donor-victim' syndrome, and with medium-term programmes for building new houses 'for' the Indians. But too few in number and too costly, thus benefitting a small minority and creating divisions within the community.

There was, fortunately, a different response, based around the communities themselves with the support of an agricultural agency who'd been working with them for 10 years who provided the channel for the necessary resources and technical support. The programme centred on providing a new home for everyone affected, in a priority order based on urgency of need which was decided by the community themselves (and examples of queue-jumping/favouritism were rare) using the labour of families and neighbours in an interlocking exchange system, using largely the traditional building techniques

everyone knew and could afford, but incorporating new ideas from sympathetic architects that made the houses structurally much more resistant (earthquakes are common) but which could be integrated technically and financially into the traditional methods. 10 months later everyone was housed, in improved buildings, and in the process more than 2,000 houses had been built.

Up till now I've talked mainly about the Campesinos of the mountains, because they form the vast majority (4 million). The Indians of Ecuador's bit of the Amazon jungle number only 70,000, half of whom belong to the SHUAR tribe, the rest scattered amongst races numbering 50 to 2000. By reason of race, language, geography they are immensely divided and often traditionally have had inter-tribal border conflicts over hunting and fishing 'rights'. For centuries they remained untouched by the Spaniards because the jungle was too inhospitable for anything that interested the Spaniards, and one foray into Shuar territory got a very 'warm' response. But slowly from the early 19th century onwards, settlers and gold prospectors nibbled away at the margins, following in the wake of 'civilising' missionaries. And then in the 60s, liquid gold - oil - was discovered in the jungle. The multi-national oil companies came, followed by the timber companies, followed by the African palm oil plantations, followed by the small scale, land-hungry settlers - in Ecuador as in Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, though in Ecuador's case the cocaine barons have yet to emerge - give them time. The jungle is now a strategic growth area of the economy, and its traditional residents an obstacle with their demands for 'their' land, protected only by the size of the region and, slowly, their own organisational efforts. Largely it has been another history of defeat, but not totally - for instance the large missionary grouping has been kicked out. The Shuar, by virtue of their relatively larger numbers, strong tradition of tribal organisation, and the fact that their lands are not in the main oil zone, have managed to hold their own. For the smaller groupings the effect has been decimating, but they have come together with the Shuar to form a unifying confederation. Its main activists clearly see the need for internal unity and for alliances with the Quechuan Indians and other popular organisations like the trade unions - but the divisions remain strong and the odds seemingly overwhelming. At the time of writing this, one grouping, the Huaranis, were calling for support for a plan to demarcate with fence posts their territory and physically defend it from invasion.

And to end - the future - 1992 is the 500th anniversary of the 'discovery' or the 'conquest' depending on your viewpoint. Many Latin American governments will be making plans for their own beans to distract peoples attention from their exploitation. But throughout the continent an alternative is being hatched - 500 Years Of Resistance is its title. In Ecuador CONAIE - the organisation which links both mountain and jungle Indians in a confederation is taking the lead in bringing people together to discuss an alternative festival/celebration linked in to a thorough study of what has happened in those 500 years, sector by sector, topic by topic and leading on to proposals/demands for the future. It could be very powerful and the initiative and power within it is coming from the right place - the main potential weakness is a romanticisation of Indian culture - a failure to look at their internal problems, e.g. as everywhere, the subordinate position of women, or the inadequacies of the past. Inca society may have been vastly better than life under the Spaniards - but it was a class society all the same and in the particular case of Ecuador, the country had been forcibly conquered by the Inca empire only 50 years previous to the arrival of the Spaniards.

Even so - it could be tempting to come back here in 1992.

ISCUMBAGS!

THE RCP STOLE MY SUNGLASSES!

I would like to warn your readers of a dangerous trend prevalent amongst the RCP - the indiscriminate commandeering of fashion accessories.

As I sat on the Forest one pleasant sunny Sunday afternoon, the calm was shattered by a large (Typist: joke?) group of RCP recruits attempting a "kickabout" - the "working class practical" as it is known within the ranks.

Having given up after ten minutes (most of which was taken up by a heated discussion of what their goals actually were, and much moving of the posts), they reclined on the grass not far from where I sat. What actually happened next I do not know: I was left literally dazzled by the disappearance of my sunglasses, commandeered before you could mention the inevitable collapse of capita....

What does this mean? Have supplies of standard-issue RCP Rayburns run out? Is there a clothing and accessories crisis within the RCP? All property is theft, eh? I should Top Shop! Don't point out the speck in someone else's eye until you've removed the Soviet tank from your own!

It seems that this reported shortage of fashion accessories has had a devastating effect on the RCP and its trendy members. Discontent showed itself at the recent "Preparing for Power" (sic) conference and has resulted in a split. Of course, local (loyal) members deny it, but a split there has been. One immediate benefit of this is that their paper "the next step" has gone fortnightly instead of weekly. With a bit of luck the RCP and all its arrogance will soon be a thing of the past, but a problem might be created by all those ex-RCPers wandering round looking for a home. I'd suggest they either join the Communist Party (terribly chic nowadays) or the Labour Party and help that nice Mr Kinnock with his Yuppy revolution.

Can the day be far away when the Labour Party joins with Thatcher in campaigning against sanctions on South Africa? The argument that nothing should be done if it might effect the poorest sections of society has already been accepted - the advice on the Poll Tax from the Scottish Labour Party is that they cannot support any campaign for non-payment because it would create more problems for those most likely to suffer from the tax. The message to all is clear; if you can pay, pay; if you can't pay, pay.

Would any scumbags be complete without a Mushroom story? In recent months that most trendy of all bookshops has stepped up its war against shoplifters. As well as redesigning the shop to keep a closer eye on the "at risk" sections, Ross-the-boss Bradshaw has admitted that he, too, was a shoplifter. This was nothing more than a feeble attempt to gain sympathy from those who find Mushroom an easy target - honour among thieves and all that. Congratulations, then, to whoever walked off with most of a window display (several large T-shirts) right in front of their noses. Keep it up!

Class War's "Rock Against the Rich" tour has provoked much interest and outrage around the country. One local paper in Dorset devoted a whole front page denouncing this "irresponsible" gig as a "forerunner to anarchy and the break down of law and order". They needn't have worried. It was just another gig by another media-hyped rich man. Rocking against the Rich at £4.50 a time! The date in Nottingham was at Rock City to the normal crowd of gobbing morons; political input was just about non-existent apart from the RCP flogging papers outside and the homophobic ravings of some geezer on stage. Class War has dropped its "anarchism" and gone into Politics. In the Kensington by-election they polled even fewer votes than Cynthia Paine. Perhaps they're entering the world of rock promoters to recover their election expenses?

The New Realism is pushing further and further into the Trades Unions. Gone are the days when they appealed to the collective instincts of solidarity and the strength of sticking together. Now the incentive to join a union is to get on better in the yuppie world. The GMB has already offered cheap mortgages to new members. Others are shortly to follow with all sorts of financial services. But are the members recruited like this going to risk anything for their workmates? Unions are just another arm of capitalism, reinforcing the corporate message of the state: You are what you owe; happiness is an overdraft.

The Orange Order march in Chesterfield occasioned the usual sectarian strife among the left, with every group claiming sole credit for halting the fascist march. It was actually halted by the police, who stopped transport on the way into Chesterfield with the question "whose side are you on?". Realising that the Orange Order march was the smaller and more easily stopped than hoards of unwashed anarchists, they stopped it. A shadowy organisation posing under the name "Anti Imperialist Action" has claimed more credit than most, though their six (be generous) members had less to do with it than anybody at all. The Orange Order was stopped even before these mad militants even went looking for it. The nature of AIA can be illustrated by a story about one of them who we will refer to as Mad Mao: a government minister was coming to visit Nottingham and Mad Mao contacted some anarchists. "What we want", he said, "is a real militant welcome for this bastard. I don't mean a namby pamby banner-waving session or just chanting things. No, we've got to give the bastard a welcome to remember. We've got to get some young proletarians to pelt the bastard. Rough him up a bit. Show the bastard what we think of him. A real militant welcome! Unfortunately, we won't be able to attend the demonstration. But we will provide the tomatoes." And these people want to be taken seriously!!

Full marks for the local political group who have got over the difficulty posed by council hassle of the owners of venues where meetings are advertised by flyposting. What this group does is advertise the meeting at one place, then meet people outside and take them just down the road. Clever, eh?

DON'T PAY THE

POLL TAX

'THIS HOUSE WON'T