Gays law reform which will result from the Strasbourg ruling must be welcomed especially as it involves acting upon recommendations of the government Wolfenden report of nearly a quarter of a century ago! It is of course the barest minimum and it is needed. However it must be recognised that as called 'reforms' are often merely an effort to disguise an existing legal fact.

The introduction of such laws are usually accompanied by enforced rhetoric on the part of a vindictive police force wishing to be seen to be enforcing the newly clarified legal situation. The problem of the '67 Act in England is the number of persons convicted of a decency between males quadrupled. Tailed by 'reform' fever, looks the totally oppressive nature of the remaining laws against homosexuals and the discriminatory nature of law enforcement against gays.

The '67 Act sets the age of consent for gay men at the absurdly high age of 21 years. The exceptions for young offenders (with the power over life [parenthood and marriage]) and death (in the armed forces) in their old age yet would not allow individuals of the same age the basic right to express love for another.

Furthermore whereas heterosexuals can freely associate it is a serious offence for gays to meet one another publicly or to make any public expression of affection. Even holding hands! Finally, private and public bodies, housing, publications, pubs, town halls, employers etc. can all blatantly refuse to provide gay equality on the grounds of homosexuality.

Although the Strasbourg ruling establishes for the first time the rights of gays to a private life it did not deem it necessary to consider the wider implications of these rights. The clear contradiction seems to be that while every human being has equal human rights, some are less equal than others. The court decided not to consider the rights of male gays under the age of 21. Likewise the court failed to consider the question of discrimination (1) on the basis of residence in N.I. (13) on the point of discrimination compared to female homosexuals and heterosexuals, under Article 14 of the Convention which states: "The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion.' The court deemed that having found Article 14 breached that there was no need to consider Article 14 as well. They seemed to fear that consideration of this article would raise wider issues. This would raise the basic question about rights being equal for everyone. There is scope for bringing a future complaint on the grounds of Article 14, but that could take another 5-6 years! The court stated that marked changes had occurred in laws regarding homosexual behaviour throughout member states. The discriminating Irish judge feared that this might suggest that a Euro norm in the law on gays has been or can be evolved. To some extent such a Euro norm would hardly be likely nor would be desired by gays. For example to get an agreed Euro age of consent would mean accepting an arbitrary generally agreed age. What can and must be done instead is to establish the principle that there should be equal treatment for heterosexuals and homosexuals. The court ruled that it is up to National bodies to decide an appropriate age under which young people should have the protection of the law. This should mean equal protection for heterosexuals and homosexuals. A favourable ruling under Article 14 would have meant that governments would need to bring about anti-discriminatory laws such as in Norway, the ruling of the court ensures the British Government to act S.E. in line with the existing laws on homosexuality in the rest of the U.K. However this does not mean that all future legislation on homosexuality will automatically be extended to N.I. The courts failure to consider discrimination, under Article 14 on the grounds of residence in N.I. means that regional discrimination can continue. Should legislation based upon the recommendations of the Policy Advisory Committee be introduced in the mainland it could be a decade or more before such legislation would be extended to here - if ever at all!

The RUC have ingratiated themselves with a usually hostile community and struck a blow for puritan morality.

The opportunity arose recently in the Springfield area of Ballymurphy, Two young boys, aged 15 and 8, extended their play to include exploration of each other's bodies. When the mother of the 15 year old learned of this, she asked the boy's uncle to take him to the local priest for advice. The priest suggested the social services. Instinctively bureaucratic, they took out a "Place of Safety Order" and brought the boy to an assessment centre. Here he was examined by a Psychiatrist, who found his behaviour to be "as expected in most child ren of his age range", and recommended a return to home.

The social worker concerned wanted to take him home, but the RUC, who have a direct information flow from the social services, objected and charged the boy with "Gross Indecency." They fought bail, so he was still held in the centre.

To forestall the RUC, the social worker brought a civil case (on the same day as the RUC's criminal case) asking for a "Fit Person Order", which would give the Social Services responsibility as a parent. The social worker maintained in court that they would allow the boy to return home. The mother has been on her own ever since. She has been confined to a wheelchair for 14 years with multiple sclerosis. Her husband left her shortly after the boy's birth, so as an only child he has taken care of her all of his life - giving her baths, running errands etc.

Some of the local community have threatened the boy, should he return. The mother cont. on back page...
prison report

CLOTHES
The initial 28-day 'breathing space', since the Hunger Strikers ended, is over. All prisoners in Long Kesh now wear their own clothes, though there is controversy about what the screws decide to let in. One day a navy jacket is allowed in, the next it's not.

ARMAGH
But the real problem now is work. In Armagh, where the women have always worn their own clothes, Marian Farrell put forward the names of 4 'Volunteers' to do wing maintenance. Recent, the governor, refused to accept them. He soon announced his own choice of which they should do that work - it was the same 4 women! Ellis O'Connor, just released, explained that he takes this of not recognising Marian Farrell.

KESH
In the H-Blocks, the first 36 men to start work were involved in cleaning and maintaining their wings. But the rest of the prisoners, in groups of ten, were invited to take part in an assessment process where work would be allocated. After the experience of the first 10, the rest decided not to take further part.

MENIAL
The prisoners have repeatedly suggested a wide variety of work and education acceptable to them, but the authorities have offered nothing new. A statement last week said, 'To the prisoners it is clear that the British are attempting to use these men to cause division among the rest of us who are prepared to engage in exactly the same form of work, but who are still being punished for "refusing to work"'.

T.B.
Marian Clegg has reportedly contracted TB, in Armagh prison. She has been moved to the prison hospital, whose facilities are inadequate for even the common cold. It is vital that Marian is moved to an outside hospital for immediate treatment, and not left to deteriorate like Pauline McLaughlin, or the Price Sisters.

GAYS FOR SELF-DETERMINATION!
Brixton gays and Irish gays in London were among the many banners on the 300-strong Troops out delegation to Belfast on August 8th. One of the reasons for a gay presence on the delegation was to force support for the most oppressed section of gays in Ireland - those under army occupation. It is bad enough facing the outright hostility of the churches with the added brutality of the forces controlling every aspect of your life.

Throughout Ireland gay people are denied the right to exist. We are told at school how sinfull and evil we are. The mass media subjects us to insults and attacks, by perpetually portraying us to think and behave in heterosexual terms. We are disowned by our families and friends. Homosexuality, like tattooing or boxing, has very little place in the established code of morality. The medical profession attempts to treat us with hormones or having therapy, with disastrous results. In the eyes of the law we are criminals, deserving of long prison sentences. Is it any wonder that so many gays are committing suicide or self-mutilating?

A number of gay groups have been set up in Ireland over the past few years. They are beginning to mould the isolation of homosexuals and to challenge the institutions which oppose us. David Norris brought a case against the Northern government last year on the grounds that its anti-gay laws were unconstitutional. Typically, the case was lost, but at the subject was brought to the public eye. In the North, Jeff Goudge, from the Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association, took the Westminster government before the High Court of Human Rights to force it to extend the law reform to Northern Ireland. The court found against Westminster, but the wrath of Ian Paisley and the comformity of Cardinal O'Flaherty ensured that Ulster would be saved from sodomy.

The future of these cases raises the question of the usefulness of demanding reform from the state. NUGA, by mounting Westminster's alleged right to reform it, has been exposed to the public eye. It has been shown that, most nationalist homosexuals, it has only shown them contempt by stating that the British army is strong enough to remain on the streets and by not questioning the whole nature of Ulster's society.

AUTHORITY HAS NO TEARS
Recently published is a pamphlet by Gerry McQuitty, Authority Has No Tears. Gerry, is presently an inmate of Long Kesh. He has political status. He wrote the pamphlet between 1977-80, and it presents his own ideas for the Present, along with the help of other prisoners. The pamphlet consists of one large poem, which appears to be a quite personal analysis of today's society. Relaxed of course in Ireland, but the reader can understand that it could have been anywhere.

In poetic form Gerry manages to give a criticism of modern-day issues like women's rights, the family, sectarianism and the cops and the State. Although it takes a lot of concentration to understand the poem fully, it is well worth it, if just to get an understanding of what many prison are thinking.

It costs 20p and is available from 'Just Books', 7 Winseavern Street, Belfast.

Rafferty Released
The RUC's attempted frame-up of James Rafferty fell apart 2 weeks ago. Their two star witnesses, neighbours of Rafferty, admitted they were pressed into giving identification evidence against him by the RUC. One week later Rafferty was freed. Four RUC officers are currently awaiting trial for assault against Rafferty back in 76, when he was tortured in Omagh Barracks. The RUC's latest apparent bungling might reflect a deal whereby if they let Rafferty go, the officers, too, might get off.

As the coming RUC trial will be the first of its kind, we patiently await ULSTER justice!
...last Saturday saw the opening of the 'A' Centre in Long Lane, of North Street in the City centre.

On the bill for the day were several bands, two cafés, a bookshop, and a film ('The Life of Brian' - previously banned by the City Council and publicly denounced by the DUP).

The opening of the building provides the opportunity for a break-in by Anarchist squatters at the 'A' Centre,100 people and their friends. The police have taken no action.

Perhaps not surprisingly, most of those attracted to the centre were punks...possibly drawn by the circle 'A' used as an emblem for the centre. Should one be interested to see if any real affinity with anarchist practice develops in the days ahead.

At first glance, the building was created for the exclusive use of punks...it is there for anyone who wants to contribute to the general happenings.

The building itself is spacious, with different activities going on simultaneously, including a party and a theatre show. The building is being used for a variety of purposes.

In the future we would like the present activities extended to include theatre, discussion, possibly craft workshops, times devoted to themes such as culture and oppression, reggae, feminism, etc...but above all the emphasis will be on participation from all those who use the building. Difficult but not impossible to make a break from the stereotyped passive consumption scene and to move on to greater things.

Anyone with ideas, skills, crafts etc which they would like to put into practice should contact: 'A' CENTRE c/o Just Books, 7, Westmoreland St, Belfast 1. Ph: 25426.
HARD DAYS AHEAD

At a recent conference in Dublin on the Irish economy a grim future was predicted for all. The conference was organised by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) whose basic function is to carry out research into various aspects of the Irish Economy and make recommendations to the Government. The ESRI is supposedly independent and its independence was stressed in the Taoiseach's speech to the conference. But basically it's only interested in making capitalism work more efficiently. It never challenges the basis of capitalism and its exploitative nature. But even for an institute such as this the main conclusion of the conference was that there will be little change in living standards over the next decade, and poverty and hardship will be experienced by many.

UNEMPLOYMENT

There was also a lot of talk about unemployment. This is not surprising given that at the end of September the number of people officially unemployed was 131,800. This marked an increase of 3,000 over the figure for August and is the largest monthly rise in nearly 4 years. At the conference it was predicted that by 1990 unemployment could run at a rate of 25% with 300,000 on the dole. These people will be expected to live on the poverty line. As was pointed out in the last Duttia Control, inflation is now running at 20%. The recent increase of 3% in the dole did not compensate for this at all.

SOLUTIONS?

Unemployment poses a real threat to the Irish state (and other states too), Fitzgerald recognized this in his speech to the conference when he said that 'economic unemployment will seriously disturb the stability of our society'. To him and his government it is vital that the unemployment problem is dealt with.

It seems that the old solution to the problem, emigration, is now being used as a safety valve. The 1981 census revealed that emigration has been increasing since 1979.

The unemployed can become a threat to the state itself (as Fitzgerald recognized) and need to be controlled. This explains, to a large extent, why the new government is continuing to recruit the 2,000 cops which the last government claimed were badly needed. The present government has put a ban on any new recruitment to the public service except for these cops. This helps to emphasize their importance.

FIGHTING BACK

As the unemployment problem is getting worse people are beginning to realize the necessity of fighting back. For this reason the Dublin Unemployment Action Group has been set up. The group is made up of unemployed people themselves, and recognizes the importance of them taking up the fight.

The group wants to end the situation where unemployed people are expected to live on the poverty line. It hopes to start a campaign for free buses for those on the dole, and runs the Electricity Supply Board's workers to refuse to cut off those who cannot afford to pay their bills. Such is the case on the dole. Also the group wants to provide some kind of cheap entertainment for the unemployed by holding gigs etc. It also runs an information service for those claiming benefits. In the speeches at the conference there was a lot of talk about pay restraint and increased taxation. Workers are being asked to make sacrifices and accept a lower standard of living in order to solve a problem which has been created by the bosses and the government.

There has been talk about early retirement for those in the civil service. It is reckoned that this scheme would result in the creation of an extra 10,000 jobs in 1982. This does not cost nearly the 17,000 that will be needed every year between now and 1991 if unemployment is not to rise ANY FURTHER. Anyway, retired and old people get a raw deal in this society. They are left to fend for themselves and survive on the pittance of a pension.
Six of the envelopes were given to Jo Richardson, a prominent pro-choice M.P., to be delivered personally to the top dogs—Thatcher, Foot, Prior, Concannon and the Mins. Pailey and Powell. Jo Richardson has pledged support to the campaign and another pro-choice M.P., Bob Crick, attempted to raise a supplementary question during the debate on Northern Ireland that day. It should now be raised in this current session.

To have the law extended to Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Abortion Campaign is going to have to concentrate on British M.P.s. As far as our lot is concerned it is a dead loss. Opposition to any progressive social legislation has always been inevitable. The late M.P. for Fermanagh/South Tyrone, Frank Maguire, flew to London specially to vote on the four or five occasions during his time against the 67 Act and any progressive amendments to it—so much for an abstentionist policy. He was well capable of accepting Westminster when it suited him, and although Jim Kilfedder is the only Northern Irish M.P. with an impeccable record on abortion he may well say one thing privately and another publicly (as what appears to have been the case over homosexuality law reform) or may even vote in his vote on some concession on “Ulster’s security”.

Straight press coverage in Northern Ireland publicity was good although what with the Beeb with their rent a speech demands at half and hours notice and the Belfast Telegraph, after breaking the embargo date (will they be receiving news statements in future?) being more concerned in creating scandal and rows between British Airways and the Northern Ireland Abortion Campaign for using a British Airways ticket on the information sent to M.P.s, as one of the ways in which women travel to England (and with the closure of the Liverpool ferry just about the only way). Something has to be said about the persistent harassment of women in the N.I.A.C. over this issue—are they that low on stories? However, the following day they did come out in favour of abortion law reform in their editorial plus a “much more effective programme of sex education in the schools, together with ready availability of contraceptives and greater financial assistance for mothers who decide to keep their babies”—a significant step onwards when one considers the taboo surrounding the subject less than five years ago. Views have changed and the subject is being discussed more and more openly. There are thousands of women in Ireland who have experienced that uphill struggle to get an abortion. Some women, like Lottie Hutton for example, have died horrific deaths after botched abortions. The arguments of LIFE and SPUC are not going to be strong enough to maintain the ban on abortion in Northern Ireland now that the ignorance is being dispelled.

Both the Abortion Law Reform Association and the National Abortion Campaign in London were tremendous in their support of the action. Both organisations have fairly recently included Northern Ireland in their aims and will support us in any future action that we decide to do. Added to this is a growing Irishwomen Support Group in London which is arranging help/support/accommadation for women from both North and South when they go to London for an abortion.

Whilst a change in the law will not change people’s opinions, especially in the medical profession, it may for instance, prove impossible to obtain an abortion on the N.H.S. outside of Belfast—it will allow the charitable clinics to operate, it will mean that thousands of Northern and Southern Irish women coming north, will not have to make the often traumatic journey to England and in more enlightened conditions, we would hope that the whole question of abortion on demand, contraception, sexuality, childcare and single parenthood will be discussed and recognised as valid social issues.

Since we have come home there has been a letter from the Pro-Abortion Labour lobby (a group of M.P.s) who have pledged their support to the campaign.
The Dunn family have been in the news a lot recently, with all the publicity surrounding the kidnapping and the dramatic release. Especially intriguing were the stories about the half million pounds that the police kept taking away. While you may have sympathy with any family in such a situation, it is instructive to look behind the headlines, at the Dunn family and the empire that they have built up, to the point where they can raise half a million pounds at such short notice.

The Dunnes are self-made millionaires. The father started in a small way, and eventually through various means built up a chain of stores rivaling, British chains like Littlewoods, and Marks and Spencers, for markets in Ireland. They sell products cheaper than many other retail outlets, and have shares in many of the new big shopping precints opening all over Ireland. It is only through in the last few years that they have ventured into the north. Like all good businessmen though they have not got to where they are now by running charities, they have built up a reputation for hardheadedness, in their dealings, and with a lot of employees. The Dunnes like to run things their way and new staff soon learn that what Dunnes say goes. One thing they say categorically is that joining a union is not on, and mention of it is likely to result in the sack. Work in shops has never been the best paid or the best conditions. Shop workers are particularly in the lower leves i.e. on the floor or at registers are nearly always women. The work while not being dirty, is largely unskilled and very badly paid, this often means a high turnover in staff though with unemployment running as high as it is now most shop workers are holding on to their jobs no matter what the conditions. Shops also employ a great deal of part-time workers again nearly all women, and these workers are perhaps the worst off of all in terms of conditions and benefits. In all shops most of the managerial staff are men and few women ever find themselves promoted from the shopfloor. Unionisation among shop workers is very poor, often because the workers are fragmented, and also because of the attitude of employers, in particular the big chains, women don't join out of fear. Consequently, most of them do not possess even the limited protection afforded by union membership.

The new Dunnes store in North St is a case in point. The women there have complained of the conditions they are forced to work in, this includes few breaks, and hard work as the place is not well staffed - a typical Dunnes cost cutting move. As all of these women need their job and even the poor money it brings they are forced to put up with these conditions. But Dunnes aren't the only people in town to take a dislike to the union. C&A also don't allow the union in their premises, like Marks and Spencers next door (who don't exactly ban the union but are not happy about it) they argue that they pay their workers above the union rates and so their is no need for complaint. Woolworths hold the same view, all these stores try to promote a family atmosphere in their shops, with the personnel managers acting as big daddies there to solve the children's problems. As we all know though a good way to keep the workers in their place is to make them act as individuals, in unity lies strength and so they have to do everything they can to make sure that it can't exist, as usual its the women workers who suffer, and the bosses who live off the profits.

DUNNES STORES - BETTER VALUE?

"Monday 1st - Started the New Year right did the washing, had to, the laundry basket is not a bottomless pit. Don't know how I found the strength to tackle the washing after grappling with a two stone, very determined Katie who seems to have half a dozen legs and four or five arms. She'd rather spend the whole day in a stinking nappy than go through the ordeal of a wash."

So begins Jane Bennett's diary of one year than forms the basis of Diane Harwood's new novel "Tea and Tranquillisers", just published by Virago. Jane is married with two small children, and a very traditional husband, who is totally helpless when it comes to doing anything in the house. Jane and her family had to leave the north of England, and her family and friends when David found work in the south. Now resigned to spending a good deal of the rest of her life here she keeps a diary to stop her from going mad. In it she charts the day to day existence of a housewife coping with small children and with very little money - a constant source of friction between her and her husband. In the diary she describes with great feeling the utter monotony of her life. Everyday is the same to such an extent that picking her eldest daughter up from school becomes the high point of her days.

Later in the book David gets a better job with more money and the financial problems are eased, but this doesn't change Jane's life that much. Diane Harwood has captured well the existence of many young mothers and through the lives of the other women who live in the same estate as Jane has given us a picture of women's lives. The book is often very funny as Jane surveys her life with a great deal of wit, but there are also very sad moments, which are handled in a realistic and not a sentimental way. Diane Harwood has denied that the book is in any way autobiographical, or that she is in any way in the situation that Jane is in, she who describes as 'a loser'. I find it hard to believe that anyone could write so convincingly had they in some way experienced some of the trials of Jane.

A book well worth reading. It costs £2.95, and is available from Just Books, 7 Wistream Street, Belfast.
Towards the end of the speeches at the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament march and rally in London on October 24th, we were told that the last of the march was entering Hyde Park. It had taken over five hours for the 250,000 people to march the three quarters of a mile from Victoria Embankment and even then the police had had to open up a second route in the afternoon to accommodate all the marchers. People had arrived from everywhere, from as far away as Shetland and Northern Ireland, from all sorts of backgrounds, groups, classes as the amazing banners proclaimed....mother and toddler groups, first generation CNDers singing the golden oldies, trade unionists, anarchists, lots of feminists in carnival originals of purple and green and CND groups from all and everywhere.

Everybody seemed to be under the impression that there was going to be a lot "on" when we reached Hyde Park, particularly lots of live music. But in the event none of the groups had been allowed to play inside the park—police orders—although the Jan set up at the Park gates as we all filed through to the street theatre and the street peddlers of badges, newspapers and leaflets. What should and could have been a dynamic afternoon dwindled in the end to applause or otherwise for the many speakers. The main theme of most of the speeches was of organising, of reaching out to the apathetic masses and giving them a good shake before they slip into eternal sleep during world war three. Although there were big cheers for Tony Benn and E.P. Thompson, they didn't manage more than the usual rhetoric and to our minds the best speaker of the day was Peter Kelly, a libertarian and feminist from West Germany who told of the difficulties of organising in an occupied country which was also first on the hit list. She spoke of the non violence of Martin Luther King and of Gandhi, of the strength and power of their message in contrast to the insane and corrupt power of the warmongering patriarchy.

Ann Pett from the Women's Peace Camp also spoke. She was very repetitive and it was a shame that she sounded like Pam Ayres which led the group we were surrounded by to ridicule her, which belied the achievements that she and the fifty people, mostly women and several babies had made over the previous month. They had all walked from Wales to Greenham Common to Berkshire, a journey which had taken ten days. For many of them it had been their first taste of public protest. Greenham Common is the site where the first batch of cruise missiles will be delivered in 1983. The women had chained themselves, suffragette style, to the fence at Greenham Common in an attempt to get a television debate going between them and the government, unsuccessful but they did get the local radio to interview them. The women have set up camp at Greenham Common, in tents at the moment, although they are hoping for caravans to come down and either join them or be left for them to live in, and for people to move into onto the Common in protest and commute from there. The women had spoken at meetings all over the country and had marched for four days from the Common to London to join up with the CND march.

Ann Pett's speech emphasized the importance of grass roots support and activity. The CND march was an amazing show of support but how many of those quarter of a million people will spread the message in the community, in the shops, factories, pubs and streets where they came from? The straight media certainly didn't think it deserved a great deal of comment, particulary the telly. CND itself tends to put forward an apolitical image and channel people's energy and enthusiasm into meetings, resolutions and lobbying of various political and religious dignitaries. This didn't work in the sixties and won't work today and with the whittling down of civil liberties, the experience gained by the State in Ireland and during the recent rioting in Britain means tougher opposition to any direct action taken in the future...for a campaign to disarm nuclear weapons is not an apolitical campaign, it is a rejection of a state which is preparing for war, and that total disarmament a revolutionary action.

Derry District Council and their equivalent in cork, have declared their areas "nuclear free zones"...a novel decision though radiations will hardly stop at the council boundary and it won't stop the mining companies if they find their uranium samples to be "satisfactory" (ie: profitable)...nor will it stop the Derry air base being used as a link in the nuclear bombing chain.

But if an interesting decision none the less. Meanwhile a member of the Unionist Party Executive wants cruise missiles to be stationed in "Ulster". (Cruise missiles are the gift of Reagan and Co. to his western allies...so that cruise war can be fought out in Europe without harming the USA).

The Unionists feel that cruise missiles will bring money, jobs and strengthen their somewhat shaky political position. Foals, undoubtedly, but dangerous ones....and its people like them who are making the nuclear decisions in Britain, America and Russia. And it is such fools who have given the go-ahead for the huge nuclear underground complex being built at this moment in South Armagh near Forkhill. Daily—huge mahogany beams are being flown in by helicopter to strengthen the underground structure. Whether it will house nuclear missiles or merely serve as a hide out for top military and bureaucrats is as yet unknown. Its an official secret!

We were distressed to hear of the death of our friend and comrade Sylvia Jeffares who was knocked down and killed two weeks ago on her bike in London (Sunday 25th October), whilst visiting her friend in Bromley. We remember Sylvia for so many reasons, her expressiveness and sensitivity, her resistance to authority with its constraints and its conventions and her interest in Ireland over the last ten years and her support for the women in Armagh and prisoners in England. Our sympathy to all her friends and her daughter Eileen Rose.
7 am and the day starts as usual with the baby crying, who needs an alarm clock? Within minutes Karen who is three is also up and ready to go, I can’t take on two at the same time, get up, go down and put the kettle on. It’s really cold these mornings. Mike follows like an extra from nights of the living dead, but manages to hold the baby still so that not only can I make the breakfast, but his lunch as well.

Finally everyone fed, and Mike leaves. The prisoner of Zendal stays behind with her two torturers, at the rate they are going they’ll be ready for Castle-nag in no time. Make an attempt at cleaning up, and refereeing the battle at the same time - impossible. Decide to go out to the shops, not to buy anything its too near the end of the week but it does break the monotony. By 11.30 we’re back and I have to think of lunch. We have soup, Karen goes to nursery for two blissful hours every day and if I’m very lucky the baby might sleep.

At 12.15 the electrician calls to read the meter, I complain about the price, he agrees and then tells me that we used the same as last year but the price is a lot different. Loud banging...gunshots.... I run to the door, but a man opposite yells to get down. Get back inside with me the electrician and the two kids on the floor. Shooting goes on for what seems like forever, finally silence, I start to breathe again.... an ambulance arrives, the police, then running. Large black figures run by screaming, one deposits itself at my front door yelling ‘shoot the fenian bastards, everyone of them’, I panic, have we been taken over by the UDA/UVF? No its a friendly RUC man so much for the non-sectarian police force. It now sounds like the gunshot at the OK corral outside. It goes quiet, and the police come in just to make sure we’re really cringing.

A UDR man has been shot at the top of the street, women are now shouting outside it seems that the police/army reckon as a result that anyone in the street is fair game. I go out to find Mary my next door neighbour hysterical. Her back door had been open so the police had run mad through her house yelling she was harbouring guns. At the same time another bunch had gone into the house opposite, and seeing a comotion in Mary’s house had fired straight into her house, leaving her walls and wardrobe very airy—

how did they know she was having trouble with condensation? What also emerges is that all the shooting in the street had been the police - at the bottom plain clothes men had arrived, at the top the uniformed branch, they then proceeded to shoot each other, there were no casualties except all the people who lived in the street and their nerves.

The street starts to calm, women swap babies and comfort each other. The electrician still lying on the floor rings in the central office, hes had enough, hes going home. Now the fun begins.....search operation begins. Every house is to be searched by the police,... they even empty my nappy bucket. Eventually though they go, its now 1.30, no point sending Karen to nursery, baby goes to sleep, and Mary comes in for a cup of tea. Door knock its the army, they want to search.....same routine, they take everything out and I put it away again. They leave and we go back to the sea, door goes again, its the police, they want to search, I can’t believe this my home is beginning to feel like the local barracks. They leave, and the door go two more times before 3.00 - five searches in all. At 3.10 the door goes again - its the army, I’ve had enough, amazed at my own courage I tell them that they’re not getting in and shut the door in their faces. After a bit they go, and I settle the children, and send Mary for a half bottle of whiskey. Another loud noise this time at the back, I go out to find 6 Brits in the kitchen and my backdoor lying in the yard, I start screaming but it gets me no where except house, and the two children crying. Finally the nappy bucket searched for the sixth time they leave, just as Mary gets back. Hot whiskies all round, bang goes this weeks family allowance. Mike made his own tea, and ours. Fell into bed about 8.00 with the kids. Just another day in Belfast...