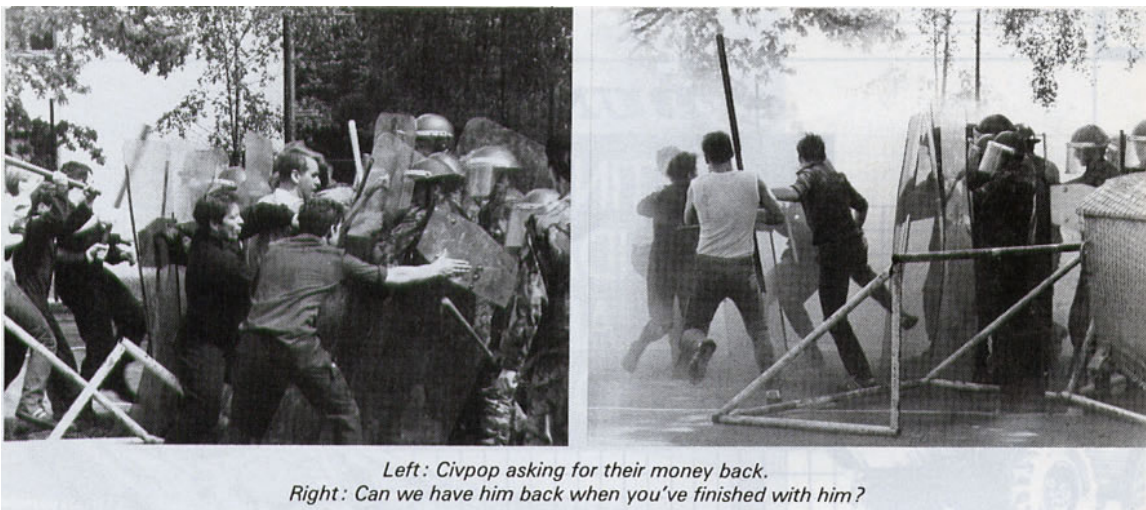


PGF TRAINING

by Lt R C Craven-Griffiths

The Prison Guard Force formed up for the first time on 28 April 1986. For those members of the infant squadron who were to meet the Sergeant-Major for the first time, this was to be a less than pleasant experience. It is difficult for people who have not come across W02 Skinner to visualise this experience, suffice to say that after a few minutes of tearing into the assembled ranks, he was beginning to enjoy himself. The Troop Leaders wandered onto parade (more by accident than design) and were immediately taken in hand by their Troop Sergeants; now the scene was set, and all were ready to commence training for the Squadrons tour at HMP Maze.

This began with a ritualised form of torture known as the 'Infantry PT Test', which involves a squad being force-marched over two miles in 18 minutes, a feat not unduly strenuous where it not for the fact that we were obliged to do this while wearing cunningly-designed portable sauna (known as the INIBA jacket). The PT aspect of training continued with a vengeance with two 45 minute periods per day, the end result being that we are now much fitter, if rather footsore.



As regards tactics, training began with a series of lectures designed to introduce all ranks to the mysteries of the internal security role. The squadron received a presentation by a NITAT team, covering a plethora of subjects, and this was backed up by a skills day at Tin City. Training progressed onto foot and mobile patrols, involving many 'incidents' sprung by the increasingly devious OS, who seemed to be at their happiest when officers were making a hash of things. By the third week, however, things were beginning to gel, and people were overheard talking with familiarity about ICPs, VCPs, P and V checks, IEDs and CWIEDs, etc.



In barracks training culminated in a one-day exercise designed to test Sabre Troops in all aspects of their future role. The fact that everyone enjoyed the exercise reflects the level of skills attained by all personnel, and we are confident that we will acquit ourselves without drama at HMP Maze.