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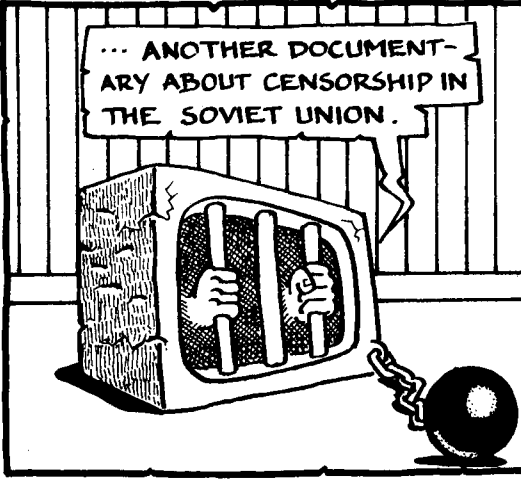
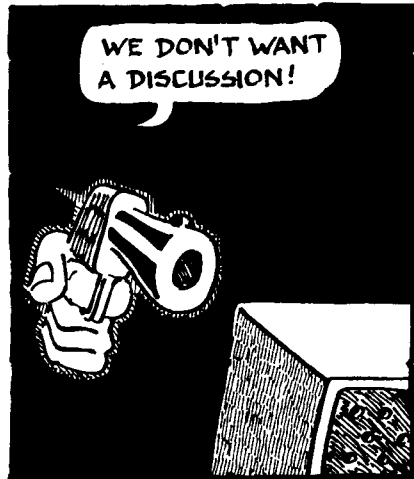
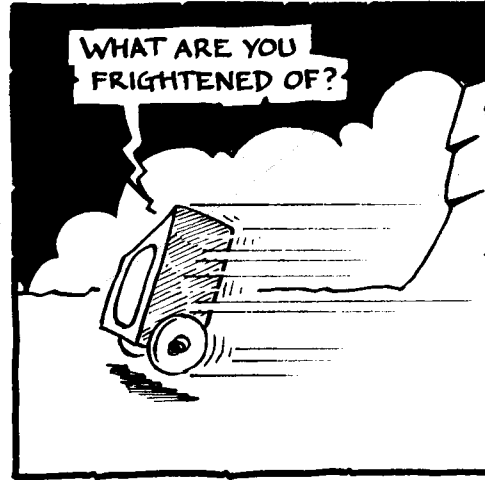
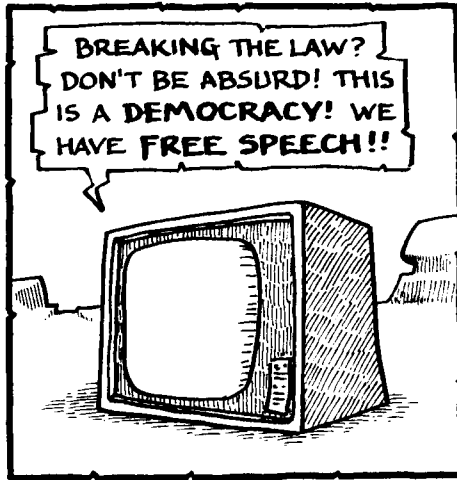
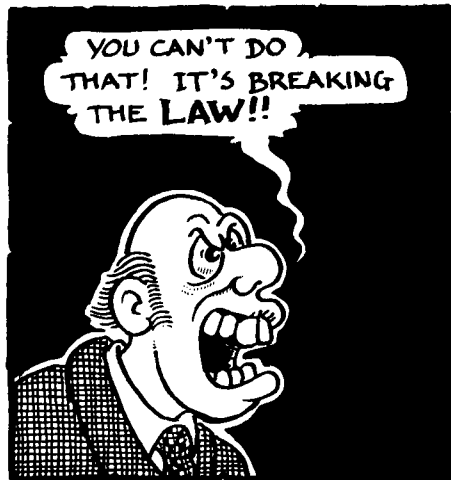
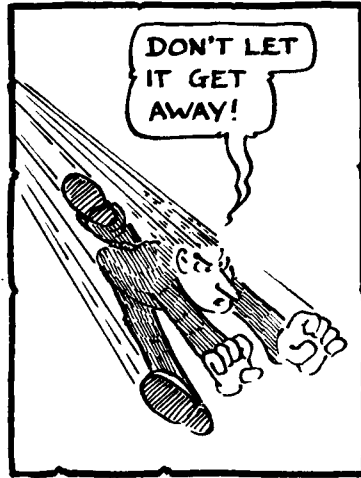
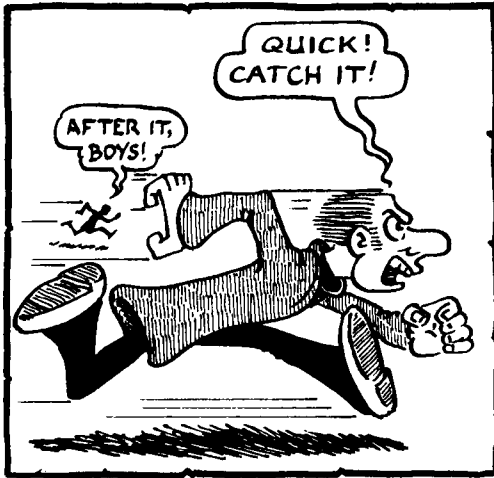
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the republican magazine





# LIVING IN A FREE STATE





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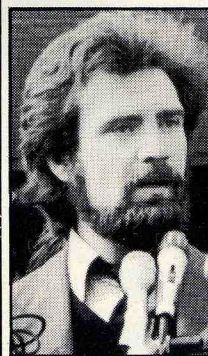
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● The history of the Free State has been one of progressively solidifying partition — cross-border collaboration is only one aspect of this

# THE 26 COUNTIES: A state but not a nation

**T**HE PARTITION of this island is all too often thought of as just a single event which took place 62 years ago and has remained a static piece of unfinished business from that period. But that is not so.

The effects of British occupation — social, economic and cultural, as well as military — over several centuries, were part of the evolution of partition. And equally, since 1921, those same factors have continued to solidify partition, in an ongoing process, on both sides of the artificial border.

The Stormont government was rather obvious in its efforts to buttress the 6-county state — pogroms, special powers, housing and job discrimination, and electoral gerrymandering. The Dublin government's contribution was a combination of a passive role of abandoning any thought of action to end partition — substituting meaningless verbal platitudes — and then the very active role of repressing those in the 26 counties who sought to take practical steps towards achieving the national objective.

That national objective has been reduced by the two major

Free State parties — Fianna Fail and Fine Gael — to a mere cypher, to a mere 'difference in emphasis' between two essentially conservative parties, which successfully creates a smoke-screen behind which the vested interests of capitalist economics can be protected in a state which has — because of its history of militant social as well as national agitation — a potentially dynamic working class.

As part of the overall restriction of such dynamism, the creation of a closed confessional state — in direct negation of all the principles of republicanism — has played a very significant role in turning the 26-county state inwards on itself.

The collapse of the Stormont government, and therefore, in effect, the collapse of the 6-county state, should have seen a dramatic acceleration towards a united Ireland — even though the British prop remained. It did not do so because of the determination of Dublin governments that it should not do so. The establishment parties and the economic interests they represent could not hope to sustain the comfortable position they had built in a new 32-county Ireland.

So today's 26-county state is very different from what it



was 62 years ago — very much the stable unit that suits those who rule it and who profit from it.

It does, however, *lack* an essential ingredient for totally solidifying that stability — the ability to portray itself as something more than an apparently independent state, in short — to portray itself as a nation.

**B**ECAUSE of the all-too-obvious contradictions of their true actions on nationalism, the establishment Free State parties have to restrict the national expressions of the people, lest these flow to their natural conclusions.

In verbalising, Fianna Fail allows itself freer rein in this regard, but has successfully created an unwholesome cocktail of rhetoric which includes friendship with Britain and rejection of force even as a conclusion to a traditional rebel-rousing oration.

If this exists as a safety valve to nationalist emotions, underneath the stifling of national characteristics is much more in evidence.

Thus, the distinctive culture — a keystone of any nation — including the Irish language, is deliberately neglected and allowed to wither. Instead an alien mish-mash of mid-Atlantic culture is imported.

Equally, social values of a most conservative type, in keeping not with the historic spirit of the people, but rather with the objectives of the economic system, are used as shackles to development.

And economically, following the logic of this inability to create a truncated *nation*, the solutions are not sought within the state itself in the development of resources, but are sought from outside in attempts to attract multinationals or to beg from Brussels.

Politically, all of this trend can easily be seen in the most recent developments.

The so-called abortion referendum — which ignored the social problems surrounding abortion — was a reflex action of a long socially-repressed people, which in its underlining of the confessional state could not have caused any great dismay to the Free State upholders of partition, whatever their public position on the issue.

That issue, as the question of divorce now is, was deliberately put into a fallacious context of 'concession to the Northern Protestants', rather than an examination of an actual social problem in the Free State, with the inevitable partitionist result.

In the Forum, the absence of any unionists — even the Alliance Party — is not seen as a major drawback at all. The Forum is in fact being hailed as a success by the Free State establishment parties on the basis of a procession of unionist academics, who graciously tell it that unity is not on, and a handful of 'nationalists' who suggest a variety of federal, confederal and dual-sovereignty solutions which would leave the North safely separated. Fianna Fail is happily pontificating in that area of a '6 and 26' solution.

The absence of unionists from the Forum allows the reality of the sectarian nature of such a new 6-county state to be ignored. The exclusion of Sinn Fein from the Forum allows that sectarian reality, the brutal presence of British force, and the major advantages of real unity to be ignored.

The Forum is being hailed as a success at this stage because it continues to externalise the North.

Equally, while it may appear hopelessly illogical to maintain Section 31 against Sinn Fein elected representatives when they are beamed into the 26 counties on BBC and UTV, the very fact that they are on those channels and not RTE also psychologically externalises them from the point of view of the Free State viewer.

**S**O CONFIDENT is the Dublin government of this strengthened partition that the courts are on the verge of introducing political extradition and can authorise the Free State army to officially take part in a British army remembrance ceremony which celebrates British involvement in the whole array of military imperialism, including Kenya, Cyprus, Aden and today's involvement in the North.

The ripples that this latter has caused is a sign that there is still a national spirit of some kind alive in the 26 counties. Yet the illogicality of overlooking Free State army collaboration on the border with the British army, whilst condemning it in remembrance ceremonies, emphasises that opportunities continue to exist for republicans in the 26 counties to raise that national spirit higher.

In the same way, the attempt to introduce extradition, whilst expressing reservations about the use of paid perjurers in the courts to where they are being sent, is yet another contradiction which presents itself for action.

The repressive effects of partition, in their brutal reality for the nationalist people of the North, remain, in spite of all efforts, a strong call to the people of the 26 counties — the popular concern felt by people in the Free State during the hunger-strikes was an expression of this. But the effects of decades of solidifying partition in the South have also been strong on those same people.

There may be no nation in the Free State, which can foster real patriotism, but the vast majority of the 26-county people have come to accept the mechanisms of that state — or economic unit — which does exist. They have come to see Sinn Fein only as an isolated group relevant in the 'external' context of the North. For the vast majority of people politics is primarily concerned with elections and in the Free State those elections are to institutions which have come to be accepted and, however criticised, there is no mood for gambling on a revolutionary alternative.

**I**N PURSUING a strategy in the 26 counties, Sinn Fein, which is a revolutionary party, therefore has to consider two major aspects.

First of all it has to retain its republican analysis of partition as the major block to the development of a nation which can achieve political, economic, social and cultural justice.

It therefore has to campaign against the present negations of that justice and attempt to build a revolutionary awareness of cultural pride and development, social freedom and economic independence — the reverse of the partitionist strategy — not in a vague or general way but on the specific issues.

Secondly, it has to communicate with the audience it wishes to reach in a way which that audience can, in today's context, trust and understand.

The proposition then that, somehow, republicans are bent on plunging the 26 counties into an armed revolution must be totally scotched. And the habit of republicans of isolating themselves in their political campaigning must be reversed.

This means involvement in existing relevant organisations — trade unions, cultural bodies, tenants groups and so on — not the creation of new ones. It also means approaching the people in the electoral context where they are familiar with, and receptive to, political argument.

The republican view of the elected institutions is not an excuse to stand aside from the political discussion altogether.

Sinn Fein has made enormous progress in the North, without surrender of principles, by coming to the people in a way that is seen as straightforward and understandable. The lessons for the one non-partitionist party on this island are there to be learnt



# Which way forward in the Free State?

*IN THE WAKE of Sinn Fein successes in the North, republicans are increasingly having to confront the problem of building a realistic strategy for the very different political situation that exists in the 26 counties. In this controversial analysis, Sinn Fein ard comhairle member Paddy Bolger argues that the Sinn Fein concept of an Economic Resistance Movement, put forward in 1971 and expanded eight years later, is seriously over-optimistic, and that the 'national question' remains the central revolutionary issue on which Free State workers can be mobilised in a painstaking and gradualist approach.*

**T**HE MOST regularly-drawn contrast in relation to Sinn Fein's position is that between the situation that existed for the party in the North prior to 1981 and the massive increase in Sinn Fein's influence and credibility in the North that has occurred since then.

But what about the other major contrast, as massively relevant to republican strategy as the Northern electoral interventions – the contrast between the state of the party in the North and in the Free State? While few people would challenge the strong possibility of Sinn Fein securing majority electoral support among Northern nationalists in the not-so distant future, would anyone venture a comparable optimism about Sinn Fein's prospects in the 26 counties? Undoubtedly not.

And yet, the current social and economic situation in the South is almost identical to that projected in the Sinn Fein policy document adopted in early 1980 – *Eire Nua: The Social, Economic and Political Dimensions* (a revision of the 1971 Social and Economic Programme). That document urged the immediate forging of an Economic Resistance Movement centred on the trade unions and co-operatives and mobilising the people for national aims around issues such as unemployment, women's rights, youth, withdrawal from the EEC etc.

It asserted with optimism: "It remains to indicate the lines along which Sinn Fein may win the support of the majority of the Irish people for the realisation of its objectives. It is clear that resistance to the British forces of occupation in the 6 counties is alone insufficient. It will be necessary to

develop the unity of the people around a programme of economic resistance to the non-military aspects of imperialist interference in Ireland. By this means it will be possible to safeguard the livelihood of the people, to frustrate the plans for a completely export-orientated, dependent, industrial economy on the East coast, and at major sea ports, with the rest of the country a depopulated 'tourists' paradise', and to build up an institutional structure which will foreshadow certain state organs of the future Republican Government."

While this aspiration (with its primary intended application obviously being in the 26 counties, rather than the North) is undoubtedly correct, it is increasingly necessary to look critically at the short and long-term feasibility of Sinn Fein building such 'extra-constitutional' mass agitation along the



lines of the Economic Resistance Movement.

In so analysing, it is essential not to look through the rose-tinted spectacles of republican enthusiasm, but in the cold and uncomfortable light of the actual political situation in the Free State. Just as the Republican Movement can, with hindsight, be accused of naivety in the early '70s in its confident assertions that each coming year would be 'Freedom Year', it may well be that we are now assuming naively that the Free State establishment faces a politically insoluble economic crisis, and that all that is needed to spark the crisis is the touch-paper of republicanism's socialist ideology.

Let us begin by accepting honestly that we are not currently a major political force in the Free State (except in the reflective context of events in the North), and look briefly at the areas of unemployment (of youth in particular), the trade unions, women's rights and EEC withdrawal as issues on which we can potentially mobilise.



## Unemployment

**O**NE frequent assertion by republicans is that the effect of the seemingly endless rise of unemployment will be to alienate the working class, and the young in particular, from the capitalist system. By the beginning of 1984 — most observers agree — the toll of jobless in the Free State

**will top 200,000, or about 22% of the working population — but where is the expected bubbling ferment of disillusioned youth?**

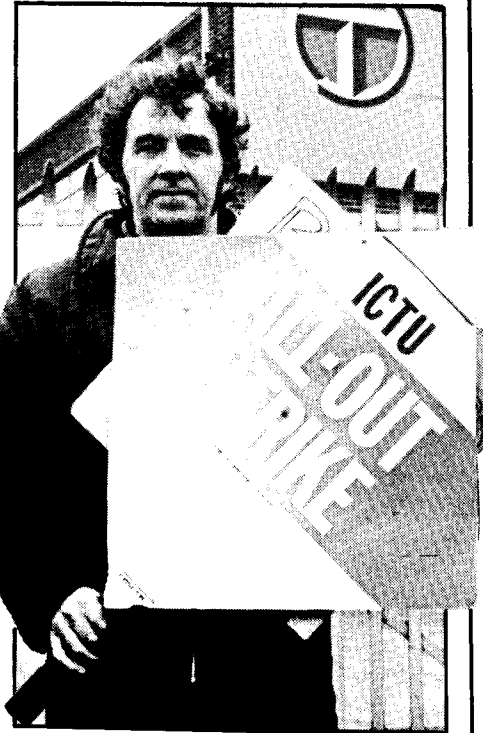
A look at the annual live register goes some way to providing an answer. Unemployment in the 12-month period up to August 1983 increased by **36,000** to 192,000, yet despite this increase the most notable feature is the high turnover on the register. For example, from December 1982 to April 1983, while 66,000 went on to the unemployment register, 48,000 came off it. Currently, only 46,000 (or approximately 25% of those on the register) have been receiving unemployment benefits for longer than 15 months. This figure represents roughly 5% of the total potential workforce and actually compares favourably with the 7% to 8% level of long-term unemployment which was the norm during the '60s.

In the supposedly explosive Dublin area there are currently 18,000 recent school leavers on the dole. Yet they are concentrated in relatively few areas of the city, such as Finglas and Ballyfermot, which have traditionally experienced high levels of deprivation.

Outside of Dublin, the scattered nature of the Industrial Development Authority-sponsored industrial base means that with few exceptions (e.g. Dunlop, and potentially Ford's at Cork) no great concentrations of industrial workers exist in any one area which could provide a strong impetus for anti-unemployment action. This is despite the harsh reality that more industrial workers are currently unemployed than are in work, and that traditionally major sources of jobs (such as the construction industry) are in collapse.

Therefore it seems likely that as long as most unemployed are relatively short-term and protected to some extent by Pay-Related Social Insurance (PRSI), and until the young urban jobless spread out of the traditionally disadvantaged communities, the spiralling growth of unemployment will nonetheless not have any substantial effect on the political balance.

In fact, a mildly reflationary policy by a future Fianna Fail government might well be enough to defuse the discontent which rising unemployment is undoubtedly causing but which, even so, is not causing any real challenge to the acceptance of capitalism in the 26 counties.



## Trade unions

**T**HE political problems facing trade unions in the South, despite the affiliation to them by 65% of the insured workforce, are as substantial in their way as those confronting hopeful revolutionaries.

Published figures by the Federated Union of Employers on the last wage round show the pressure workers are currently under despite the demise of the objectionable 'national wage agreements'. In the annual pay round up to October this year, a massive 71.3% of all agreements contained a 'no strike' clause, while in only 12 out of 655 pay negotiations involving the FUE was there any industrial action in pursuit of wage claims.

In the public service sector, with almost 100% trade union membership, the unions have shied away from large-scale industrial action despite Garret FitzGerald's threat of cuts of £500 million in the 1984 budget which will result in thousands of white-collar redundancies. Even the notably militant National Busworkers' Union has developed a caution in taking industrial action which contrasts with its previous practice. The Civil and Public Services Staff Association was forced to suspend its strike action when other public service unions — including the progressively-led Local Government and Public Services Union — decided the climate was not right for major industrial action.

Even where relatively advanced lead-



ership has been provided by the Dublin Congress of Trade Unions, the results have been transitory or disappointing — for instance the PAYE protest marches and the attempted unemployment campaign of 1981-82.

The hard fact is that the prevailing mood in the organised working class in the South is one of fear of unemployment rather than real anger at the underlying political system. Progressive political groups can point to a poverty of ideology as the root of this trade union quiescence, but it will only be when socialist ideology has been developed *within* the unions under a broad progressive leadership — not foisted patronisingly from outside — that there will be hope for improvement. Sloganising will achieve nothing, hard work by republicans within trade unions might do something.

# OPINION

## Republicans and youth

JACK MADDEN WRITES:

**E**STABLISHMENT parties in the 26 counties have in recent years been reacting to what they view as an increasingly worrying phenomenon — the alienation of growing numbers of youth from the political system.

The sudden realisation by political parties that they can no longer rely on traditional hereditary political affiliations, with children voting as their parents before them, has led to a flurry of activity and the emergence of youth sections such as Young Fine Gael, Ogra Fianna Fail and Labour Youth.

Yet few have been fooled by this apparent new concern for youth welfare, and the youth sections have tended to recruit among the families of people already involved in establishment politics. There they are generally used by aspiring party hacks as an easy way to climb the ladder and catch the eye of the party leaderships. But for the majority of youth, their alienation is so complete that they view these aspiring power-mongers with the same healthy contempt they display to their political elders.

For more than sixty years the political system of the Free State has ignored its young people. Patronage has been, and is, the means of winning power, with real or imaginary favours to people being traded in return for votes. With the possible exception of queue-jumping into jobs in the civil and public services, young people were irrelevant to this system of patronage.

For years emigration existed as the easy way to forget youth. The unemployed and malcontents could always

be expected to leave the country, and to leave the political system which had betrayed them unchallenged. From birth to emigration the needs of youth were ignored, while an exam-orientated education system geared (and continues to gear) children towards expectations which the state could not fulfil.

Nowadays, with emigration no longer an option, many youth — on leaving school and being confronted with the trauma of the dole queue — are drifting into a morass of apathy, or at best into an undirected hostility towards society.

This antagonism, unfortunately, extends to all political parties, left and right, and it has been helped by the consistent failure of a radical movement such as Sinn Fein to show that an alternative is possible which will be beneficial to today's youth.

A survey conducted in Dublin last year by Fianna Eireanna revealed the result of this failure. Conducted among young unemployed, the survey confirmed the degree of youth alienation from establishment parties but also showed that a large majority considered Sinn Fein to be only 'fair' or even 'poor' in terms of its relevance to young people's interests.

Platitudes about the tragedy of youth unemployment are not enough and the Republican Movement — besides developing radical policies on issues such as child-care and education — needs to evaluate its attitudes to schemes such as the Youth Employment Agency and towards the voluntary organisations working with young people, such as unemployment groups. It is high time such work was begun ■



## Women's rights

**T**HE women's movement is not of course in any sense a mass movement, and where women have mobilised it has been in the area of civil liberties on issues which primarily affect them. But the anti-amendment campaign, and campaigns for contraception and divorce, are democratic demands which cross class divides and are not in themselves revolutionary demands (except insofar as they challenge the confessional nature of the 26 counties). Although changes in family law and other areas are absolutely worth fighting for, can

anyone seriously argue that they have any real revolutionary potential?

Class demands for women — equal employment opportunities for working-class women, equal pay and the release of working women from the family home — are of central importance for the building of a progressive women's movement, but the current potential of these demands (and for the foreseeable future) is as limited as is the current revolutionary potential of the working class as a whole.



## The EEC

**S**INN FEIN is the predominant group among a small number of organisations in Ireland calling for withdrawal from the EEC. In 1972 Sinn Fein correctly predicted that EEC membership would result in the destruction of native industries and warned that the parallel policy of welcoming multinationals would not provide a long-term alternative.

The 23,000 jobs lost by the collapse of industries such as textiles and leather-working were replaced in the short-term by the Industrial Development Authority, and, as has been discussed earlier in this article, the massive increase in unemployment since 1972 has not yet led to a total collapse of the Free State economy, which of course no longer exists as an independent reality.

In agriculture it is the small farmers who have suffered from the EEC. Another 5,000 farmers currently face ruin over the EEC milk super levy. But the medium and large farming sectors have benefitted substantially from the net

balance between Free State contributions to the EEC and EEC subsidies to the Free State, at the expense of other social groups.

Total grants, subsidies and loans from the EEC during the period of membership up to 1981 amount to a total of £3,777.7 million, while the total Free State contribution to the EEC in the same period amounts to £360.5 million.

Most people in the South believe that the 'recession' is due solely to world market forces, and that it will improve. And so despite the actual effects of the EEC on jobs and on small farmers there is no concrete mood for EEC withdrawal. An anti-EEC campaign based solely on economic opposition would not command support across a sufficiently wide spectrum of people. Sinn Fein may well grasp the political realities that underlie the EEC, but the fact is that, as yet, the mass of people does not.



## Conclusion

**T**HE consideration of these complex issues in the confined space of this article has arguably been rather trite. But its basic assertion is that in the identified areas of economic and social issues Sinn Fein will not in the near future begin to build anything approaching an Economic Resistance Movement in the South. In this we are faced with no different a situation than that which faces socialist movements in countries as socially and politically developed as France, Spain or Italy. Scattered pickets on laudable issues, or minority industrial action, cannot compensate for the realities of the general political situation.

Politics in the Free State, as in most bourgeois democracies, take place only at election times — at least insofar as political action visibly affects the mass of the people. There is no social revolutionary potential in the Free State at present. It must therefore be in the superficially reformist area of advice clinics and elections that we will build our base, and in principled and patient work in other organisations, notably the trade union movement.

We cannot get around this gradualist process under the conditions that exist. As Che Guevara said: *"Where a government has come into power through some form of popular vote, fraudulent or not, and maintains at least an appearance of constitutional legality, the guerrilla outbreak cannot be prompted, since the possibilities of peaceful struggle have not yet been exhausted."*

How can we make progress then, given that we rule out (as in common-sense we must) revolutionary armed struggle in the Free State, and given that economic and social circumstances are not hopeful.

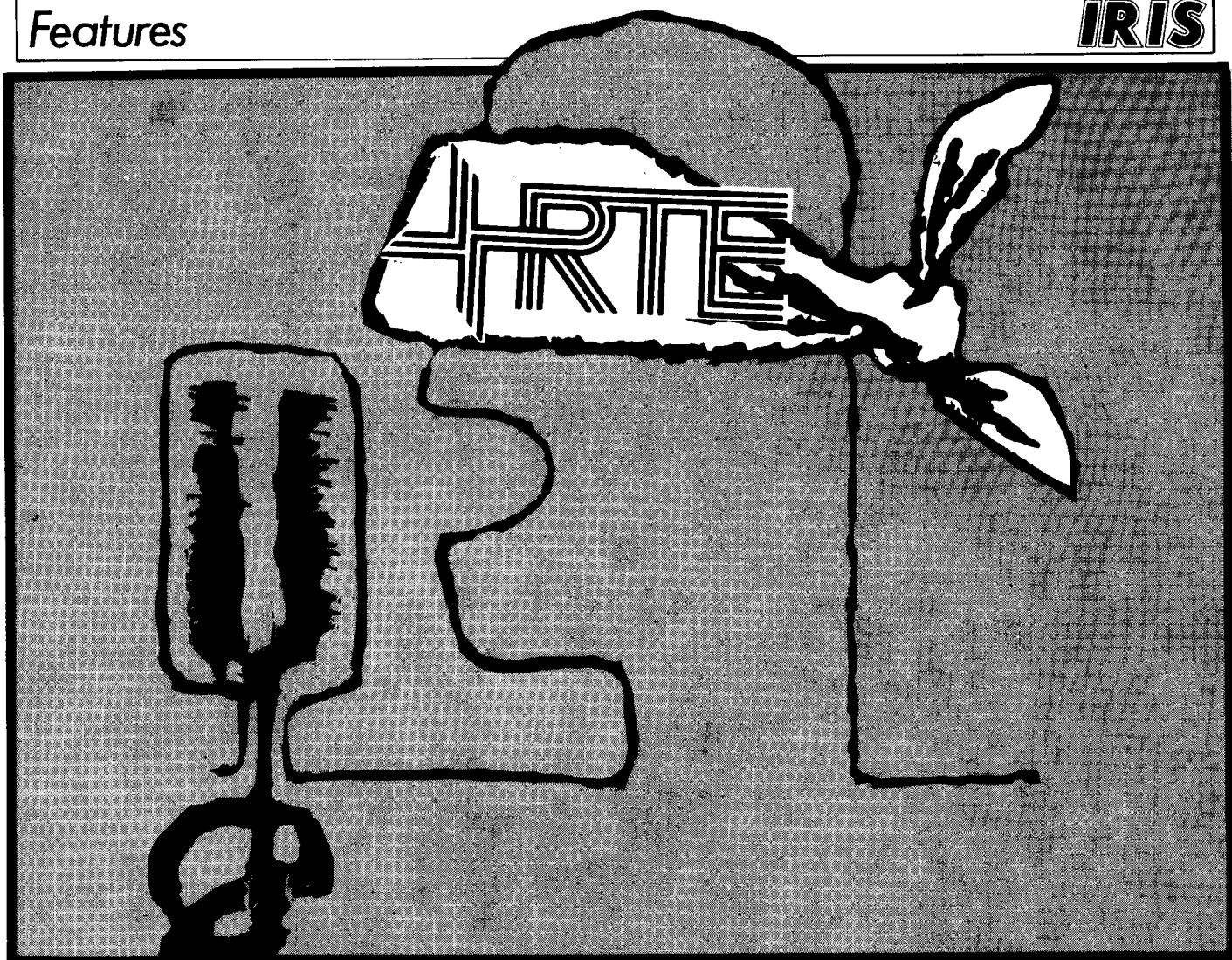
I believe that the central economic question in Irish history is the national question. Sometimes in the South the national question can be lost sight of by republicans who see the ending of partition as a future goal to be accomplished by building a mass republican organisation on social issues.

In fact, apart from its centrality to Irish political life, the national question is the only question in the Ireland of today with a revolutionary political potential. And so, while we cannot fail to be socialists in all areas of work identified in the economic resistance programme in 1979, we may err too far in a direction that is only superficially revolutionary unless the national question is at all times kept to the fore.

We may have to accept that the furthest we can go in the foreseeable future is to secure majority nationalist representation by electoral gains in the North, and aim to progressively improve our electoral situation in the South based on intelligently presented national and economic positions, by building a movement for British withdrawal and economic renewal, and eventually achieving what could be called a democratic, neutral, united Ireland. I believe this would be an historic gain.

In those circumstances it would then be the strength achieved by Sinn Fein and the working class that would be the factor making possible any further movement from that point towards a socialist republic





# A DECADE OF CENSORSHIP

**BERNADETTE QUINN** looks at the development of Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act, used by the Free State government to suppress the republican viewpoint on state radio and television – and extended by Radio Telefis Eireann itself into a regime of self-censorship.

**S**ECTION 31 was first proposed as part of the Broadcasting Act of 1960 by the then Minister for Posts and Telegraphs in the Free State, Patrick Hilliard. It was intended

to provide the Free State government with a veto which would make broadcasting an instrument of government policy and was supposedly intended to ensure that 'foreign governments were

not embarrassed'.

Paragraph 1 of the section stated: "The Minister may direct the (RTE) Authority in writing to refrain from broadcasting any particular class matter or matter of any particular class, and the

Authority shall comply with the direction."

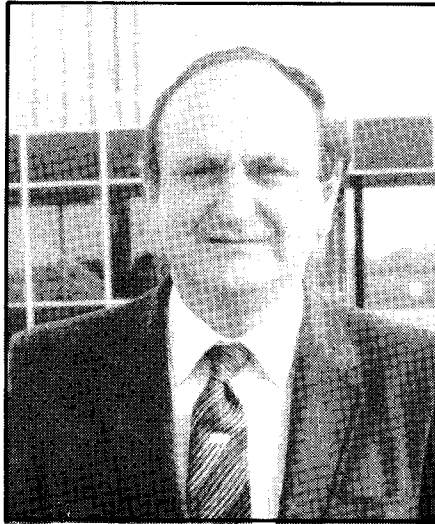
Admitting that the provision of the veto was "restrictive", Hilliard said: "It is the Government's wish that the Authority should act as its own censor, recognising the absolute importance of safeguarding truth and preserving intact the moral integrity of our people."

Exactly ten years later, the Fianna Fail government's lack of action in response to the Northern crisis was becoming an embarrassment to it, as events there increasingly showed up the hollowness of the party's claim to republicanism. In July 1970 the Minister for Justice, Des O'Malley, wrote to his counterpart at Posts and Telegraphs, Gerry Collins, protesting bitterly about the "irresponsible behaviour of RTE in glamourising persons who are well known to have engaged in subversive or criminal activities."

RTE had been warned. A little over a year later, Collins went further. In October 1971 the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs invoked his authority under Section 31 of the 1960 act to issue a directive instructing RTE to refrain from "broadcasting any matter that could be calculated to promote the aims or activities of any organisation which engages in, promotes, encourages or advocates the attaining of any particular objective by violent means." The organisations alluded to were unnamed, but the implication was clear.

But it was the Kevin O'Kelly affair in November 1972 that was to kill off any remaining spark of independence in the corridors of RTE, and ensure that what Hilliard had alluded to twelve years earlier - "that the Authority should act as its own censor" - would become as restrictive to political news coverage as would the veto contained in the legislation itself.

On November 19th the RTE radio news features editor, Kevin O'Kelly, broadcast a summary of an interview which purported to be with Sean MacStiofain, said at that time to be the IRA's Chief of Staff. A court case followed, with MacStiofain receiving a six-month sentence for IRA membership, and O'Kelly receiving a three-month sentence for contempt of court (later appealed against successfully) after he refused to identify the voice on the interview tape as MacStiofain's. But equally important was the RTE sequel to the interview. The Free State government immediately demanded that RTE take disciplinary action against O'Kelly, but RTE instead defended the editor and denied that the



● GERRY COLLINS

broadcasting of the summary was in breach of Gerry Collins' 1971 directive. The Free State government responded by sacking the nine-member RTE Authority.

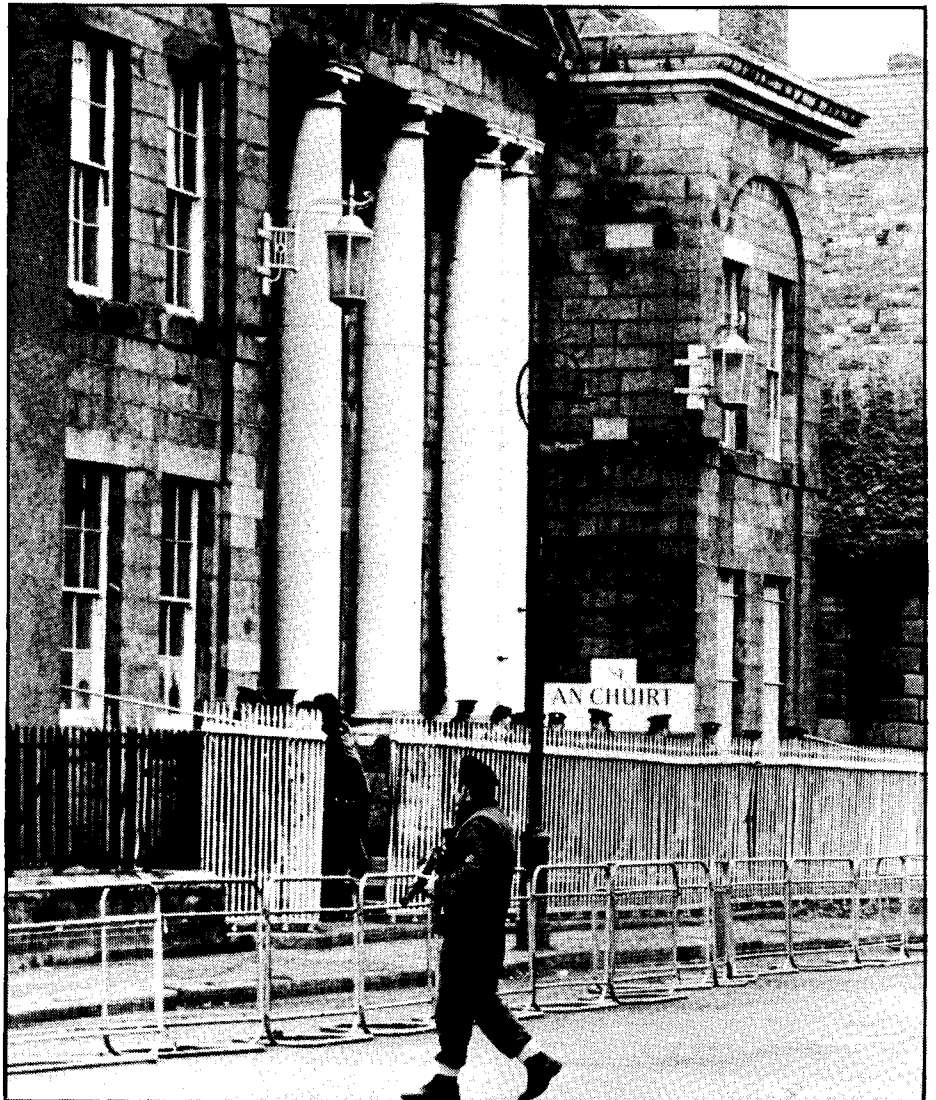
The new Authority was predictably quick to demonstrate its willingness to uphold Section 31, by issuing

a set of 'guidelines' to RTE broadcasters. These guidelines are interpreted however by RTE journalists as strictly-enforceable rules which result in dismissal if broken.

The guidelines stated: "In view of the consequences which can be anticipated if RTE is again judged to have contravened the directive, it will be clear to all concerned that the strictest care must be taken in all these matters and that action will be called for where the individuals are deemed to have disregarded the instructions or to have been careless in observing them."

**I**T WAS Fianna Fail who had used and strengthened Section 31 to suppress the voice of republicanism, but the situation did not change under the Fine Gael/Labour coalition government which came to power in 1973.

The new Minister for Posts and Telegraphs was the Labour politician, Conor Cruise O'Brien. In 1972 he had



● In 1972 RTE news features editor Kevin O'Kelly received a three-month sentence for contempt of court when he refused to identify the voice on a taped interview alleged to be that of Sean MacStiofain - he later appealed successfully



opposed the sacking of the RTE Authority, saying in a Leinster House debate: "We believe that in modern conditions the degree of autonomy possessed by a body like RTE is a major bastion of democracy." Yet two years later, this 'champion of democracy' was accusing any journalists who were opposed to Section 31 of being "crypto-Provos and fascists", and it was he who re-amended Section 31 to specifically ban members of *named* organisations – Sinn Fein, the IRA, and all other organisations banned in the North – from appearing on RTE.

The amendment that gave O'Brien the power to do this read (paragraph 1): "Where the Minister is of the opinion that the broadcasting of a particular matter or any matter of a particular class would be likely to promote or incite to crime, or would tend to undermine the authority of the State, he may by order direct the Authority to refrain from broadcasting the matter or any matter of the particular class and the Authority shall comply with the order." Paragraph 1a) of the amendment made Section 31 renewable every 12 months by the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, and it has been religiously renewed ever since.

This has meant that not only have Sinn Fein members, including elected representatives, not been allowed to appear in RTE coverage of events in the six counties, but that even Sinn Fein councillors in the Free State have not been allowed to be interviewed on matters such as hospital closures, water charges or the provision of school buses.



● CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN

There are innumerable instances since then of the use of Section 31 against republicans. In 1976 the RTE programme *Feach* was not allowed to transmit a short report of that year's Sinn Fein Ard Fheis, despite the fact that it did not contain any comments by members of Sinn Fein. In 1977 the radio programme *This Week* highlighted the case of the late Guiseppe Conlon, a Belfastman with no connection with the Republican Movement, who had been jailed in England on explosives forensic evidence so flimsy that even Gerry Fitt and arch-Tory MP John Biggs-Davison had taken up his case. Nonetheless, the Director-General of RTE sharply criticised *This Week* for even mentioning that there were Irish political prisoners in English jails!

The absurdity of Section 31 was



● ALBERT REYNOLDS

thrown into sharp relief by the screening of *Ireland: A Television History*, a series co-produced by RTE and BBC and screened on both channels in 1982. One of the episodes which had been allocated to a BBC production team contained interviews with a number of identifiable Sinn Fein members from the North. After some media speculation, Albert Reynolds, the then Minister for Posts and Telegraphs (who had himself renewed Section 31), was forced to lift the Section 31 restriction for that one episode to save RTE from the ridiculous position of censoring a production that they had partly made and financed.

Yet the clearest exposure of Section 31 censorship occurred during the 1982 general election in the Free State. Sinn Fein fielded seven candidates and as such were entitled to make a party political broadcast on RTE. RTE agreed, but Patrick Cooney at Posts and Telegraphs ordered that Section 31 should be extended to include electoral broadcasts.

The Sinn Fein candidate in Cooney's own constituency, Longford/Westmeath, Sean Lynch, took an action in the High Court claiming that Section 31 was unconstitutional and interfered with his rights. The High Court agreed, and ruled that Section 31 of the 1976 (Amended) Broadcasting Act was repugnant to the Free State constitution. Making the ruling, Justice Hanlon said that the amendment to Section 31 "appeared to contain insufficient safeguards for the constitutional guarantee of the right of freedom of expression of opinion, with particular reference to the freedom of the press."

Cooney immediately took the case to the Supreme Court, where the Chief Justice, Kevin O'Higgins, over-ruled the High Court and upheld Cooney's ban on a Sinn Fein election broadcast.



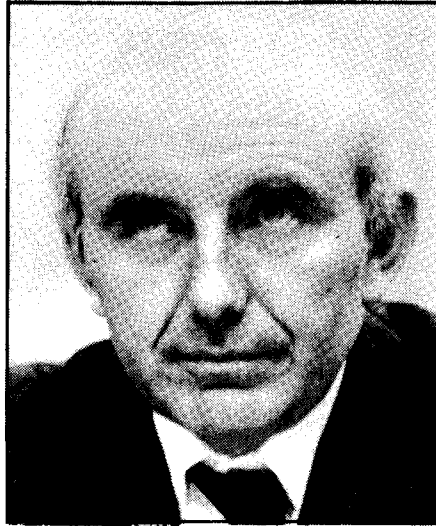
● Ruairi O Bradaigh (left), president of Sinn Fein, and other party members picket Mountjoy jail in support of Carrick-on-Suir Sinn Fein councillor and ATGWU branch secretary Eddie Doherty who was imprisoned for non-payment of his TV licence fee in protest against Section 31





● SEAN LYNCH

As well as being used to suppress any political comment by Sinn Fein, the indirect effect of Section 31 creates a self-censoring atmosphere in RTE that even prevents the playing of certain records. *The Men Behind The Wire* topped the charts in the South for weeks during the 1970s but was never played on RTE. More recently, Christy Moore's song *On the Blanket* was banned, as was his song about Nicky Kelly, *The Wicklow Boy*. Even *traditional* rebel songs are no longer played. Most of them are never specifically banned by 'directive' or 'guidelines', but RTE presenters – in the atmosphere of fear that pervades RTE – do the censoring themselves.



● PATRICK COONEY

**D**URING the last Westminster elections, in June 1983, the Free State coalition government refused a request from RTE to lift the ban on Sinn Fein members for the purposes of election coverage. Charles Haughey opportunistically issued a statement saying that he "had always taken the view that elected representatives should have the fullest possible access to the public media" – although it had earlier been Fianna Fail who refused Owen Carron MP and Sinn Fein's five Assembly elected represent-

atives access to RTE!

In protest at the refusal by Jim Mitchell, the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, to lift the ban, RTE journalists covering the election in the North said they would refuse to interview any of the other candidates. They kept this stand for one week.

There have been a few other protests by some principled journalists, and in March this year the *Committee for the Freedom of the Press and Broadcasting* was set up, whose main objectives are the abolition of Section 31 along with the repeal of the laws on libel and contempt of court. Most RTE journalists, however, not only accept the ban but reinforce and extend it themselves.

The code of conduct in the NUJ



● CHRISTY MOORE

**EAMONN McCANN**, author of *War and an Irish Town*, former Sunday World columnist, and now a freelance journalist, has always opposed Section 31 and is a member of the *Freedom of the Press and Broadcasting Committee*. In this interview with IRIS he talks about the effects of Section 31 on the coverage of events by RTE, and how it should be actively opposed.

**A**NY journalist should be instinctively opposed to state control of the media. Section 31 is clearly against the code of conduct of the NUJ and against their stated policy. It has proved impossible to have union policy implemented on RTE and has led to a situation where RTE news and current affairs programmes are quite unable to give an accurate account of what is happening in the North.

"The effect of Section 31 is not just to cut republicans out of coverage, but it also seriously distorts the coverage itself because in effect it is impossible to report the political views of the Catholic working class. That is an absolutely incredible

thing for journalists to allow to happen – even journalists who are personally hostile to Sinn Fein. It's like covering the Middle East without allowing any mention of the fact that the Palestinians want a homeland. It's ridiculous.

"It would be far better and more honest if journalists at RTE were to refuse to cover stories which involve republicans and republicanism, rather than cover them in the inadequate and inaccurate manner which Section 31 forces on them. For instance, recent coverage of the informer phenomenon has been seriously distorted because the view of the biggest element centrally involved cannot be included in any account.

"Even if the majority of RTE journalists find that for whatever reason they could not go along with blacking coverage altogether, then it would still be useful if the union made it clear that any journalist refusing to implement Section 31 on an individual basis would have full and automatic union support if the RTE management tried to retaliate.



● EAMONN McCANN

rulebook includes the following...

**Rule 2:** A journalist shall at all times defend the principle of the freedom of the press and other media in relation to the collection of information and the expression of comment and criticism. He/she shall strive to eliminate distortion, news suppression and censorship.

**Rule 3:** A journalist shall strive to ensure that the information he/she disseminates is fair and accurate, avoid the expression of comment and conjecture as established fact, and falsification by distortion or misrepresentation...

**Rule 9:** A journalist shall not lend himself/herself to the distortion or suppression of a truth because of advertising or other considerations.

Clearly, journalists on RTE are in breach of their own rules, as suppression of views and distortion of facts

is part of the everyday running of RTE.

On September 28th this year, on RTE's current affairs programme **Today Tonight**, Fr Denis Faul and unionist MP Harold McCusker were interviewed at length on the use of paid perjurers in the North. There was no representative of Sinn Fein interviewed, although there were repeated references to Sinn Fein's 'motives' in opposing the use of perjurers. There was not even a mention that Sinn Fein would deny the charge that they were using the campaign against show trials for 'their own ends'. Was this not selective and distorted, as well as untrue?

Section 31 of course is not just about the suppression of the views of Sinn

Fein. It is about suppression of the views of the working-class nationalist community in the North. It is denying information to people in the South not just about Sinn Fein policies but about the beliefs and aspirations of a significant section of the Irish population. By contrast, Section 31 has not been used to deny access to RTE by the UDA, despite that organisation's massive involvement in sectarian murders of Catholics in the North – not to mention its bombing of Dublin and Monaghan in 1974 when 31 civilians died.

The majority of RTE journalists justify their implementation of Section 31 by saying that they have to abide by the law – but it is surely not for journalists to do the Free State government and RTE Authority's political dirtywork for them when it flagrantly contravenes their own code of conduct. For instance, why did the **Today Tonight** production team not interview a Sinn Fein spokesperson on September 28th and leave RTE to cut out the interview, rather than themselves censoring Sinn Fein in the first place? Why didn't they do that during the elections?

Section 31 is a political act suppressing political opinion. In order to be non-political, to do their job in presenting facts uncoloured by political bias, RTE journalists should take direct action against Section 31. And the NUJ should defend them – otherwise admit that they are taking a political stand – admit that they are anti-republican, pro-Free State establishment and pro-British. There can be no excuse for them any longer



● RTE's Montrose House headquarters, and (inset) Jim Mitchell

## IRELAND UPON THE DISSECTING TABLE

James Connolly on Ulster & Partition

When the spectre of a Partitioned Ireland first loomed on the political horizon, James Connolly saw with adequate clarity what was at issue, and he opposed it. Why he did so can be readily gleaned from the collection of his writings assembled and arranged in chronological order in this pamphlet. Here, the reader is presented with the greater body of his work pertaining to Ulster. It is not suggested that herein is provided the answers to current problems; the writings of no man can do this on their own. What is offered, however, is a ready insight into the values and considerations that influenced Connolly, as a revolutionary Socialist, in his opposition to Partition.

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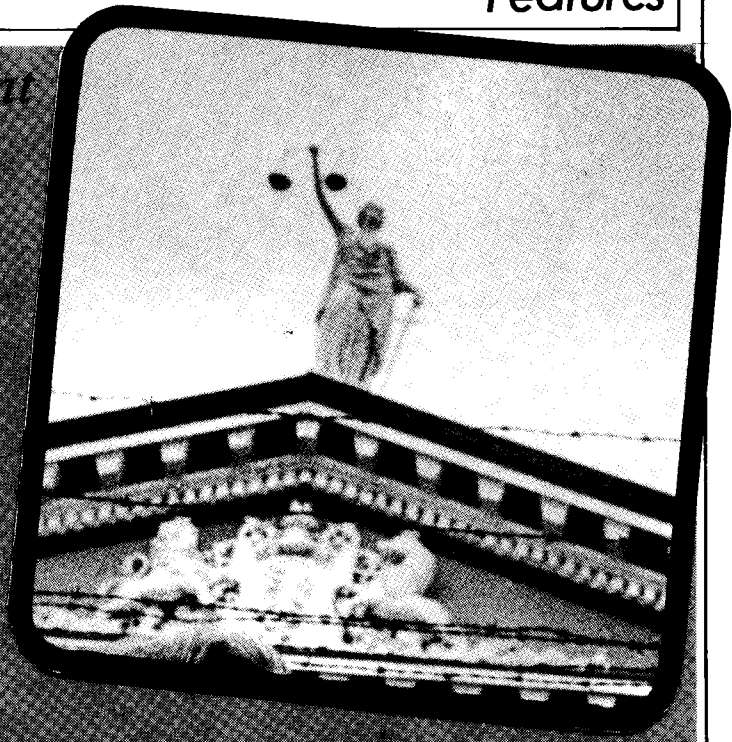
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SEAN DELANEY *looks at recent developments in the use of perjurers in the North*

# UPS AND DOWNS FOR RUC'S PERJURER STRATEGY



**E**VEN BY Northern standards, where dramatic political developments have a tendency to follow one another with unnerving rapidity, Wednesday 19th October and the week that followed was an unusually active period in the psychological warfare between the British government and the republican struggle that continues to focus around the use of paid perjurers. It was a week which, at least in terms of propaganda, republicans won on points — but it also heavily underlined the British government's commitment to the perjurer strategy in the face of mounting opposition.

The retractions by Robert Lean (Belfast) and Patrick McGurk (Dungannon) of their incriminating statements against a total of 37 people accused of republican activities, by Lean on October 19th and by McGurk on October 24th, was a crushing embarrassment to the RUC. Lean, in particular, had been portrayed in 'leaks' to a sensationalist media to be the IRA's No.2 in Belfast, and in a classic exercise in 'trial by media' the RUC claimed that his evidence had secured the imprisonment of the IRA's Chief of Staff and its Belfast Brigade O/C. Both of the individuals against whom these claims had been made were among those released two days after Lean's retract-



Some of the men implicated by Robert Lean (top) at the press conference on their release



● The press conference held in Dungannon by those released after Patrick McGurk's retraction

ion.

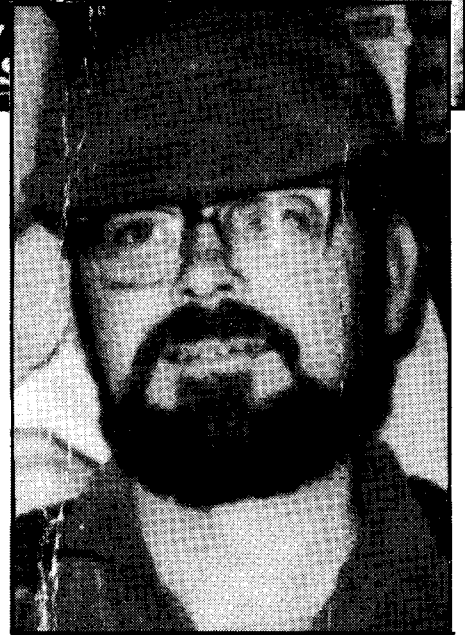
McGurk's retraction a few days later was equally damaging to the image cultivated by the RUC around its use of perjurers. McGurk had implicated nine Dungannon men as far back as February 1982, five of whom had been held on remand for twenty months – the longest remand period involved in any of the perjurer cases. On September 20th last year the RUC, apparently doubtful that McGurk would go through with his 'evidence' if produced in court, instead invoked the obsolete Bill of Indictment to by-pass the preliminary enquiry stage of the case against the nine accused. This meant that, until his return to Dungannon on Wednesday 26th October, McGurk had been held incommunicado, without access to family or friends, throughout the 20-month period.

If, as seems to be the case, McGurk was unwilling to testify but was *prevented* by the RUC from retracting and *prevented* from contacting his family, it makes a nonsense of RUC assertions that – once having been given immunity from prosecution – their perjurers (or 'converted terrorists' in RUC jargon) are 'free agents' voluntarily in protective custody. Not surprisingly, some of the defendants in the McGurk case are said to be considering suing the RUC for wrongful imprisonment.

The Lean episode, too, has gone a long way to publicly undermining propaganda about 'converted terrorists' and 'free agents'. Not only did Lean feel so *unfree* that he felt it necessary to escape from 'protective custody' in Palace Barracks, Hollywood, by climbing out of a window and stealing the car of his

RUC 'minder', but on leaving a press conference in West Belfast the following afternoon he was immediately arrested under Section 12 and held in Castle-reagh for a further seven days.

Apparently the RUC seriously intended to charge him with a killing on 'new evidence' obtained from the perjurer, William Skelly, who had originally implicated Lean, in a revenge act for his retraction, but finally changed their minds. It is highly improbable that the crown prosecutor could have persuaded even a Diplock court that Skelly had forgotten this 'evidence' until *after* Lean retracted, and then miraculously remembered it. The inference that the



● PATRICK McGURK



● Robert Lean is re-arrested on October 19th and bundled into the back of an RUC landrover



RUC had been aware of 'evidence' linking Lean to a killing at the outset, but had suppressed it in order to do a 'deal' with him, and so imprison prominent republicans, would have been unavoidable.

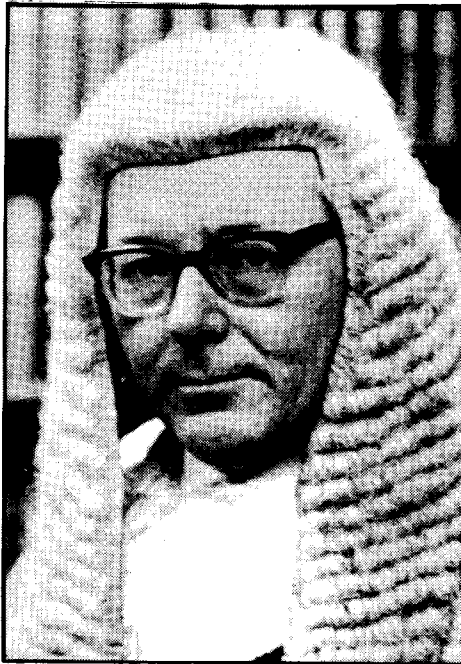
Most damaging of all from the RUC's viewpoint was Lean's assertion that his 'deal' for immunity was to sign statements already prepared by the RUC incriminating specific individuals wanted 'out of the way' by them. Top of the list was Gerry Adams, but it seems the RUC were unable to charge him because Lean refused to co-operate with a face-to-face confrontation. On their release, two of those actually imprisoned on Lean's statements — Edward Carmichael and Ivor Bell — confirmed that they had also been offered immunity if they would incriminate Sinn Fein elected representatives, Adams, Danny Morrison and Martin McGuinness. Additionally, Carmichael had been offered £300,000 and Bell was told to "name my own figure".

**B**UT IF THE RUC's optimism for the potential of their perjurer strategy has been tempered by a series of retractions in recent months — Walter McCrory (Derry), Charles Dillon (County Derry) and now Lean and McGurk — and if they have been forced to the realisation that it will continue to be an imperfect strategy, with perjurers as much subject to the persuasion of the nationalist community's abhorrence of their actions as they are to RUC threats and inducements, nevertheless the third major event in this momentous week ensured the continued successful use of paid perjurers as a means of securing convictions. It was an event that marked a further and fundamental diminishing in the standard of evidence required in Diplock courts for conviction.

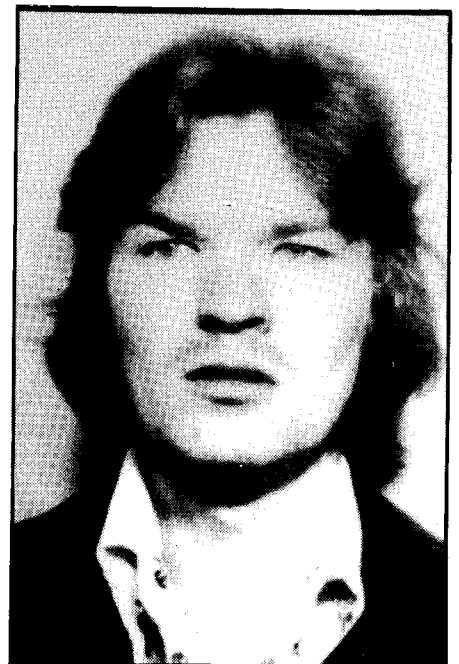
Lord Chief Justice Lowry's sentencing of seven men on IRA charges, in Belfast crown court, on Wednesday 26th October, on the uncorroborated evidence of Kevin McGrady, was incredible even by Diplock standards. Three weeks earlier, on October 5th, he had released two of the ten defendants and thrown out 13 of the original 45 charges (including charges of murder), saying that in respect of these he found McGrady's evidence "so unsatisfactory and inconsistent that I could not contemplate allowing myself, as a tribunal of fact, to say that guilt has been proved beyond a reasonable doubt."



● Gerry Adams MP meets some of those released from Crumlin Road following Lean's retraction



● LORD JUSTICE LOWRY



● KEVIN McGRADY

Yet in his final summation on the 25th, despite acknowledging that McGrady's evidence had contained "some glaring absurdities" and was "contradictory, bizarre and in some respects incredible", and despite finding the remaining eight defendants innocent of a further 19 charges, Lowry nonetheless returned verdicts of guilty against seven of them on the remaining 13 charges. In one case, the former Sinn Fein national

organiser Jim Gibney (28) was sentenced to terms of 12 years and 5 years on two charges, even though he was cleared of no less than 20 others on McGrady's "bizarre" evidence.

Lowry went on to rub salt into the wounds of incredulity by using his summation for the purposes of a policy statement on the use of perjurers, in which he formally signalled the willingness of the Northern judiciary to accept

## Features

uncorroborated evidence of an 'accomplice witness' as the sole basis for a conviction.

Arguing that the judiciary was, and remained, independent of the Northern Ireland Office and was not in any form of collusion, Lowry stated: "*The resort to supergrasses has been described by some people as a method of convicting suspected terrorists... But the expression 'method of conviction' is a complete misnomer, since it is likely to give the impression that the executive and judges are together implementing a trial process with the joint object of convicting and imprisoning suspects.*

*"It is for the executive to prosecute a case if, on the available evidence, that seems to be the right course. But the function of the judges, acting quite independently, has not altered; it is simply to decide whether or not in any individual case the allegations of the prosecutor have been proved."*

A mere two days earlier, on October 24th, the British attorney-general, Sir Michael Havers, in a statement obviously timed to coincide with Lowry's in the wake of the Lean/McGurk affair, also defended the 'independence' of the judiciary — but added, in response to loyalist criticisms of the system, that in future all 'financial arrangements' made with 'accomplice witnesses' would be disclosed to defence counsels.

(The utter worthlessness of this 'concession' lies of course in the fact that the RUC deny, and will continue to deny, that cash bribes — such as Carmichael's offer of £300,000 — are made to perjurers in the first place.) Havers' sincerity should be judged in the light of his flagrant dishonesty in saying that the practice surrounding the use of 'accomplice witnesses' was identical in England, Scotland and Wales with its use in the North!

The Lowry verdict in the McGrady trial was a crucial one for the future of the perjurer strategy. Although the principle of accepting uncorroborated perjurer evidence had earlier been accepted by the judiciary in the UVF Joe Bennett trial which ended on April 11th this year with convictions for 14 of the 16 accused, and in the Christopher Black trial in which Judge Basil Kelly convicted 35 of the 38 defendants on August 5th, both judges in these cases had gone to considerable lengths to emphasise the credibility of Bennett and Black and the general consistency, 'in all important respects', of their testimony. While this was incredible enough, the fact that Lowry convicted on McGrady's evidence, which was substantially bizarre, contradictory and unsatisfactory, is an indication that the North-



● CHRISTOPHER BLACK



● JOSEPH BENNETT

ern judiciary has fallen completely into line, contrary to Lowry's denial, with the political objective of securing convictions, and has cynically redefined even the previously low standards regarding acceptable evidence.

**A**LL THIS, however, has come at a time when the perjurer system has started to come under attack from a variety of directions, while among the nationalist community itself — buoyed by the retractions and less open than it initially was to demoralisation over the issue (since it has seen the IRA's continued ability to inflict losses on the British) — there have been the unmistakable signs of a 'fight back'.

The first clear example of this was the mass rally at Beechmount Avenue in West Belfast on September 11th, which announced the holding of an open conference in Dungannon on October 2nd to establish a broad-based committee on the non-exclusive lines of the National H-Block/Armagh Com-

mittee established during the hunger-strikes. Up until that point public protest action on the perjurer issue had mainly been confined to small and isolated groups, such as Relatives For Justice and Campaign Against the Show Trials (CAST), which although active had drawn support primarily from relatives of the victims — in much the same way as the Relatives Action Committee had campaigned between 1976-79 on the H-Blocks.

The Dungannon conference announced the setting up of a new umbrella organisation, the Stop the Show Trials Campaign, calling for an end to the use of perjurers, an end to show trials and the release of all the (sentenced and remanded) victims of perjurers. It voted to mount a campaign of political opposition to the perjurer system, at the same time embracing those sections of the community whose opposition to the use of perjurers is based on humanitarian or civil liberties motives and who endorse the campaign's central demands. It is inevitable that the campaign structure, and mobilisations, will focus heavily on the North, though it is envisaged that support groups will be established in the 26 counties and abroad.

To date, the response on the perjurer issue from sections of the Catholic establishment has been a muted one, explicable by their obvious ambivalence to a strategy which although seriously eroding the already blackened 'judicial process' is clearly seen to be aimed at undermining the political advance of republicanism — a shared objective, after all, with the Catholic hierarchy and the SDLP.

In response to such a taunt by West Belfast MP Gerry Adams on September 11th, SDLP spokesperson Seamus Mallon retorted that the use of perjurers was 'law bending', but the thrust of his attack was aimed not at the British but at Sinn Fein and republican resistance. On September 28th, however, the SDLP met the Relatives for Justice group and condemned the use of perjurers — though they have maintained a low profile on the issue since then.

So too, has the Catholic church, with the exception of Dr Edward Daly, Bishop of Derry, and a handful of priests, who have condemned the use of perjurers. (Bishop Cahal Daly, previously so vocal on political issues, has adopted a studious silence.) For his part, Dungannon priest, Fr Denis Faul, having failed to limit the opposition to perjurers to relatives (whose emotions, his experience during the hunger-strikes leads him to believe, can, at critical points, be exploited against republicans) has concentrated much of his efforts on vitriolic





● The inaugural conference of the Stop the Show Trials Campaign held in St Patrick's Hall, Dungannon, on October 2nd

attacks on Sinn Fein — on one occasion going as far as to allege that Sinn Fein were 'using' the perjurer campaign to finance their involvement in the EEC elections!

Also ranged against the use of perjurers have been the SDLP-controlled Derry council, the Belfast and District Trades Council and a number of British MPs and British and American legal figures. British Labour MP, Martin Flannery, has said that the use of perjurers is bringing "the whole of the British system of justice into disrepute. It is the kind of thing that Hitler and company engaged in."

**W**HILE SO FAR the real pressure exerted within the nationalist community on the perjurer system has been largely 'internal' (perjurers retracting in response to their families' efforts) — since the Stormont administration will only feel pressurised by 'external' political pressure from nationalists when the campaign achieves its full impetus — there is undoubtedly strong concern among sections of the loyalist community too, which may event-

ually cause headaches for the British government.

That concern stems, obviously enough, not from any opposition to the clinging of the Northern judiciary to the coat-tails of Stormont, which after all is unionist policy, but from the increasingly heavy losses which perjurers are inflicting on loyalist paramilitary groups, and the spin-off effect which this undoubtedly has on loyalist political parties, particularly the DUP.

Although the Official Unionist Party has taken a strong line in support of paid perjurers under their law and order spokesperson, Edgar Graham, individual members of the OUP including John Carson have identified themselves with a campaign of opposition.

In April of this year, DUP leader Ian Paisley condemned the use of perjurers as 'undermining the rule of law' and he specifically opposed the granting of immunity to perjurers. Immediately after Lean's 'evidence' began to lead to the arrest of several prominent republicans, the DUP appeared to modify its stance considerably when leading spokespersons Peter Robinson and Jim Allister — at a press conference on September 13th (from which, strangely, Paisley was absent) — supported the use of uncor-

roborated evidence and only opposed the granting of total immunity (implying that perjurers should instead be given heavily reduced sentences for their own admitted involvement).

Yet significantly, in a *Panorama* programme screened on BBC1 on October 24th — after Lean's retraction — Paisley again appeared to resolutely oppose the use of perjurers. More than most politicians, he, arguably, has a great deal to lose from future loyalist perjurers bringing up parts of *his* past life!

For loyalists, under greater pressure from the judiciary than for a long time, the use of paid perjurers must be causing a further crisis of identity and resulting in a heavy demoralisation. But for nationalists, existing under a constant regime of repression, the situation is clearer-cut and the option a simple one — resistance.

With scores of nationalists and republicans still imprisoned on the word of paid perjurers, there is certainly no room for complacency despite recent retractions and the ever-present hope of more, but there is now a will and an ability to mobilise on the issue in the nationalist community that was not fully there before ■



# A QUESTION OF LIBERATION ♀

*FEMINISTS and anti-imperialists in Ireland have often regarded each other's struggles with misunderstanding, mutual suspicion, and sometimes outright rejection. What then is the relationship between them? Eibhlin Ni Gabhann surveys the emergence of women's liberation groups in Belfast and Dublin over the past decade or so, and some of the questions they have faced.*

**T**HE issue of women's liberation was slow to come to Ireland. By comparison, in America and England the women's movement grew in strength during the early 1960s, raising the question of women's oppression on many fronts and challenging the male dominance of politics nationally and internationally.

In America, women activists in the Civil Rights movement found that their



fight for equal rights for black Americans did not expand to include equal rights for American women – white or black. Parallel to that, those women involved in the campaign against the war in Vietnam found that their male comrades were hostile to their emerging consciousness of women's oppression in the United States.

In England, women workers active in the trade unions began to organise themselves *as women* to fight for equal pay and equal employment opportunities. In 1970 the first Women's Conference was held and four demands were agreed:- free 24-hour nurseries; free contraception and abortion on demand; equal pay; and equal education and employment opportunities. That year too, English feminists demonstrated at the Miss World contest against the exploitation of women, resulting in six arrests and maximum publicity.

Greater social conservatism generally, and in the six counties the re-emergent questions of civil rights and partition, made it far harder for Irish women to organise themselves in any corresponding movement around the same period. Although it was often women in the North who were dominant in the marches and protests for civil rights, the most politicised among them found – like their American sisters – that this involvement in mass movements against the Orange state was not raising any questions about the oppression of women within that state. So that despite the massive upsurge of militancy among working-class nationalist women in the Northern ghettos it was to be left to radical middle-class women, with their traditional hostility to nationalism, to do so.

In the South too, without the politicisation of events on the scale seen in the six counties, it was middle-class women and students who took the initiative. By 1974 there were women's groups in the two Northern universities and in Dublin and Cork universities. These groups were in contact with one another, but their mutual refusal to take any stand on the national struggle, which so many women were involved in or were affected by, effectively limited both their growth and impact.

**I**N 1975, out of the women's group in Queen's University Belfast and another group based in the Ormeau Road area of South Belfast, came the formation of the Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement. Its main platform called for the extension of the Sex Discrimination Act – already law in Britain – to the



● Following the dissolution of Women Against Imperialism, many WAI activists saw that the way forward for the women's issue was within the main anti-imperialist groups, and joined either Sinn Fein or the IRSP

North, a move which would mean as the NIWRM expressed it: "parity of rights for women in Northern Ireland with women in England." Sentiments such as this not surprisingly had the effect of widening the gulf between the NIWRM and women politically active in the Northern resistance struggle.

That year too, the Belfast Socialist Women's Group was formed, but relations between this and the NIWRM became increasingly difficult. The Belfast Socialist Women's Group was later to say of the NIWRM:

What women were offered was a reformist and objectively pro-imperialist women's movement in the guise of 'non-sectarianism'. Its demands were for parity with Britain and attempts to suggest co-operation with women's movements in the South were rejected. Its failure to state a position on British imperialism quite evidently meant that it would never attempt to involve women in anti-imperialist areas in the women's movement, since to do so would have compromised its real political position.

The Socialist Women's Group was however itself critical of the failure of the Republican Movement, and of the women involved in it, to raise the question of women's rights either internally or as part of the liberation struggle.

But it was another organisation formed by women in 1976 that was to prove the cause of the final split between the NIWRM and the Socialist Women's Group. The emergence of the Peace Women and the totally opposed

reaction to them by the two groups highlighted their different political thinking.

The NIWRM supported the Peace Women, and a statement issued at the time voiced its "general support for the peace movement" and called on feminists in England to reject the 'troops out' movement and any women who supported the anti-imperialist war. Its failure to see that the Peace Women were controlled and supported by the British, the media and the Church for cynical political reasons, permanently isolated them from the politically active socialist women.

**I**N 1977 the Belfast Women's Collective was formed to organise working-class women and to agitate for proper child care and more employment opportunities for women.

But a more important development was the establishment of Women Against Imperialism by women activists in the nationalist ghettos, mainly in West Belfast, many of whom had been working in the Relatives Action Committees campaigning for political status for republican prisoners in the H-Blocks and Armagh.

At the All-Ireland Women's Conference in 1978 they organised a tour of women relatives of political prisoners throughout the South, and publicised the situation of women in the Northern ghettos facing British army and RUC re-



● Feminists protest at the opening of the 1980 national forum of the middle-class reformist Council for the Status of Women

pression. Together with women in Sinn Fein they were instrumental in the early efforts to publicise the conditions of women prisoners in Armagh jail, and eleven members of Women Against Imperialism were arrested at a picket outside the jail on International Women's Day 1979. Two of these, Margaretta D'Arcy and Liz Lagrue, eventually served short sentences in Armagh themselves as a result of their refusal to pay fines arising from the arrests.

Ironically, not long after the campaign organised to highlight these arrests and the subsequent court case, Women Against Imperialism dissolved.

Some of the women involved believed that the way forward for the women's issue was to take it up directly within the main anti-imperialist grouping, the Republican Movement, and that circumstances now favoured this more than had previously been the case. At any rate, many of the WAI group went on to join Sinn Fein or the IRSP and to raise the question of women there.

**D**OWN South it was perhaps even more difficult for women to take up the issue of women's liberation. Irish women have been brought up to model themselves on a certain image of the 'ideal woman': a mixture of the passive and docile, and Pearse's 'Mother', stoic in suffering:

Lord, thou art hard on mothers: We suffer in their coming and their going; And tho'

I grudge them not, I weary, weary of the long sorrow.

A woman's role was in the background, raising sons for Ireland, yet the 'Irish Mammy' was a figure of fun. Marriage or the nunnery were for years the only real choices, and yet women who did devote their lives to the family were then caricatured. Added to this were the blatant anti-woman laws of the Free State, which denied women rights to property or indeed any identity but that of chattel.

When in 1970 an Irish Women's Liberation Group was formed in Dublin, as in Belfast they were mainly middle-class, journalists and students. Four of its prominent members — Nell McCafferty, Mary Maher, Mary Kenny and June Levine — were all working as journalists on Free State daily newspapers. As in Belfast too, the resistance struggle in the North was left unmentioned. Republicanism was dismissed as 'male politics', while women involved in the Republican Movement were seen as 'fighting a man's war'.

However, they did take up issues that were important to women in the South. Their most effective protest was the 'Contraceptive Train' to Belfast in May 1971, when members of the group travelled North to buy up large numbers of contraceptives (illegal in the Free State) and publicly 'imported' them into the South. Their aim — maximum media coverage — was achieved and no action was taken against them.

Differences however surfaced within the group when some of the women who had been active in housing action groups wanted it to state an opposition to the proposed Forcible Entry Act then going through Leinster House. This Act gave the gardai the right to enter any building and evict the occupiers without a court order. Other women in the group did not see this as being particularly a 'women's issue'.

Nonetheless, since so many of the founding group were journalists and women involved in the media, publicity for the issues they raised was not hard to get. The invasions of 'men only' pubs and bathing places got maximum coverage, and many women were attracted by their image of flouting authority. Mary Kenny in particular, who emerged as the principal spokesperson of the movement, delighted in shocking Irish conventionality.

There was little attempt though to organise or recruit working-class women, who of course were suffering most from the Free State's repressive laws and attitudes. It is especially significant that no demands on child care were ever formulated by the Irish Women's Liberation Group. But their activities did raise the public consciousness of women's rights in the South, and it was through their agitation that, for instance, deserted wives and unmarried mothers now have the right to social welfare allowances.



**A** breakaway group of socialist and radical feminist women, Irish Women United, emerged in 1976 – but the same inability to get to grips with the situation in the North remained. To those who raised the question of the war the stock objection put forward was that it did not 'prioritise' women and as such was not an issue for feminists.

The fact remains that many of these objectors had perceived no difficulty in supporting women struggling in anti-imperialist wars in other countries. Mairin de Burca, for instance, one of the most vociferous women who spoke against any support for the republican women prisoners in Armagh jail, had been arrested at a demonstration against the war in Vietnam held outside the American embassy in Dublin, and subsequently served a sentence in Mountjoy jail where she demanded and got privileges as a political prisoner!

One founder member of Irish Women United recalls:

A major problem in IWU was the issue of the North. Some women were members of anti-imperialist organisations, but others didn't want to hear about any struggle other than our own. Historically the reasons for this are quite apparent and indeed valid. Republicans had, like all other men, written women out of history. Anne Devlin had been relegated to the position of Robert Emmet's girlfriend – no mention of her part in the organisation of the Rising. The militant and radical Ladies Land League led by Anna Parnell was disbanded and made out to be just a stand-in while Parnell was in jail. How many 'heart-broken sweethearts, widows or sisters' were activists!

More recently, some republicans had been prepared to use the suffragettes, and support the women's right to vote, while others felt it was too trivial to even discuss. Republicans had dismissed the suffragette hunger-strike as 'a very womanish thing to do'!

Young angry women in IWU only had to look at the position of women in Dublin, Belfast, Cork or Kerry to see that nothing had been gained for women through fighting beside men. Republicans had been as guilty as imperialists in their eyes. Now seemed the time for women to fight on their own, undistracted by calls for support from anti-imperialist but essentially male struggles.

Ultimately though, the damage done by the non-discussion of the North led to the break-up of IWU.

**F**OR their part, republican women raised the question of women's rights formally for the first time at the 1979 Ard Fheis. Both Northern and Southern women spoke, convinced that Sinn Fein had to take up seriously the oppression of women, and that it was not enough to say – as some argued – that women in the Republican Movement were not



● The middle-class Free State feminist movement made little attempt to address itself to the problems faced by working-class women – above: women in Dublin's Ballymun occupy Corporation offices after being evicted

discriminated against within the Movement.

Whether that were true or not, our concern had to be for the people of Ireland, for all the women who were not just second-class citizens but, as James Connolly said, "the slaves of slaves".

Out of the Ard Fheis intervention came the Sinn Fein Department of Women's Affairs which submitted a policy document – Women in the New Ireland – to the 1980 Ard Fheis (reproduced in IRIS No. 2, November 1981). It had the backing of the Ard Comhairle of Sinn Fein and was passed almost unanimously. Since then 'women's affairs' officers have been appointed in most Sinn Fein cumainn and comhairli ceantair, and the Women's Affairs head of department is automatically co-opted to the Ard Comhairle. Although the Department, focussed on Belfast, Dublin and Derry, is still in a formative stage it has been responsible for some important initiatives as well as heightening generally the republican consciousness concerning women's rights.

Republicans aside, in the 26 counties the women's movement is trying to re-organise following the collapse of Irish Women United. Most of those formerly

involved in IWU and the Irish Women's Liberation Group were involved recently in campaigning against the 'abortion amendment' to the Free State constitution. Sinn Fein too, although not involved in the campaign which implicitly recognised the legitimacy of that 'constitution', which republicans of course do not, condemned the hypocrisy of the amendment which was a piece of opportunist political gimmickry that will make no difference to the tragedy of thousands of Irish women forced to have secret abortions in England.

**T**HE Free State government-funded Council for the Status of Women perhaps points up best of all the relative failure and inconsequence of the women's movement in the South.

With a plush office in Dublin's fashionable Merrion Square and a budget of IR£90,000 its brief is supposed to be to make recommendations to the government about women's rights, about the need to promote women in positions of authority, and to press for Irish women's demands. But its origins and nature prevents this. Run exclusively by middle-class women whose outlook is at

best reformist, it sees its limited demands being met by getting women elected to Leinster House.

The total inadequacy of this is exemplified by the fact that it is, after all, a woman – Fine Gael TD Gemma Hussey, to be precise – who has implemented education cuts affecting so many 26-county school children. Yet another Fine Gael TD, Nuala Fennell, was a member of the Irish Women's Liberation Group but has made no representation about women's rights while in Leinster House. The Council for the Status of Women put thousands of advertisements in the papers during the last elections, calling on women to 'Vote for a Woman' but making no reference to the politics of the women candidates.

A few streets away, the Women's Centre in Dame Street, opened on International Women's Day 1982 after a long fight to find funds and premises, is struggling for its existence. Run by an ad-hoc committee it provides a meeting place for any women's group or individual women ("We would only draw the line," says spokesperson Ita Gannon, "at fascists.") to meet and discuss, and provides typing and duplicating facilities as well as running a small cafe. The centre deliberately has no overall policy so that all women's groups can meet here.

The gap between the Women's Centre and the pampered Council for the Status of Women, in terms of their usefulness to campaigns on women's rights, is as glaring as the difference in their budgets.

**Q**UESTIONS then must be raised in any feminist movement worthy of its name. What struggles can be interpreted as feminist? Can issues which do not 'prioritise' women be considered as legitimate areas of concern for feminist groups? Or alternatively, is any campaign which does 'prioritise' women a feminist campaign, irrespective of its political direction?

Imperialism affects the lives of women in ways that may not be specific to them as women. Women living in imperialist-dominated countries live in poverty, political repression and discrimination, but these are oppressions of both men and women – not of women specifically. Does this mean that they cannot then be supported?

Speaking at the Irish Women United conference in 1981 on the implications of this, Rita O'Hare, the head of the Sinn Fein Department of Women's



● In contrast to the pampered Council for the Status of Women, the Women's Centre in Dublin's Dame Street fulfils a useful purpose in assisting campaigns on women's rights



● RITA O'HARE

Affairs, said:

*"Campaigning for women's rights under the capitalist and imperialist system is essential both in increasing awareness in women's situation and achieving whatever improvements can be wrung from the present system, and which are so urgently needed. But the capitalist system will inevitably, as in every other field of struggle, yield only the minimal reforms it can. Such reforms as have been achieved have often been hailed by middle-class women as progress, but in fact, as intended, have served so often to defuse rising feminist militancy, and to that end put back the struggle. Women's demands are revolutionary demands and can only be fully achieved in the aftermath of a revolut-*

*ionary change in the system.*

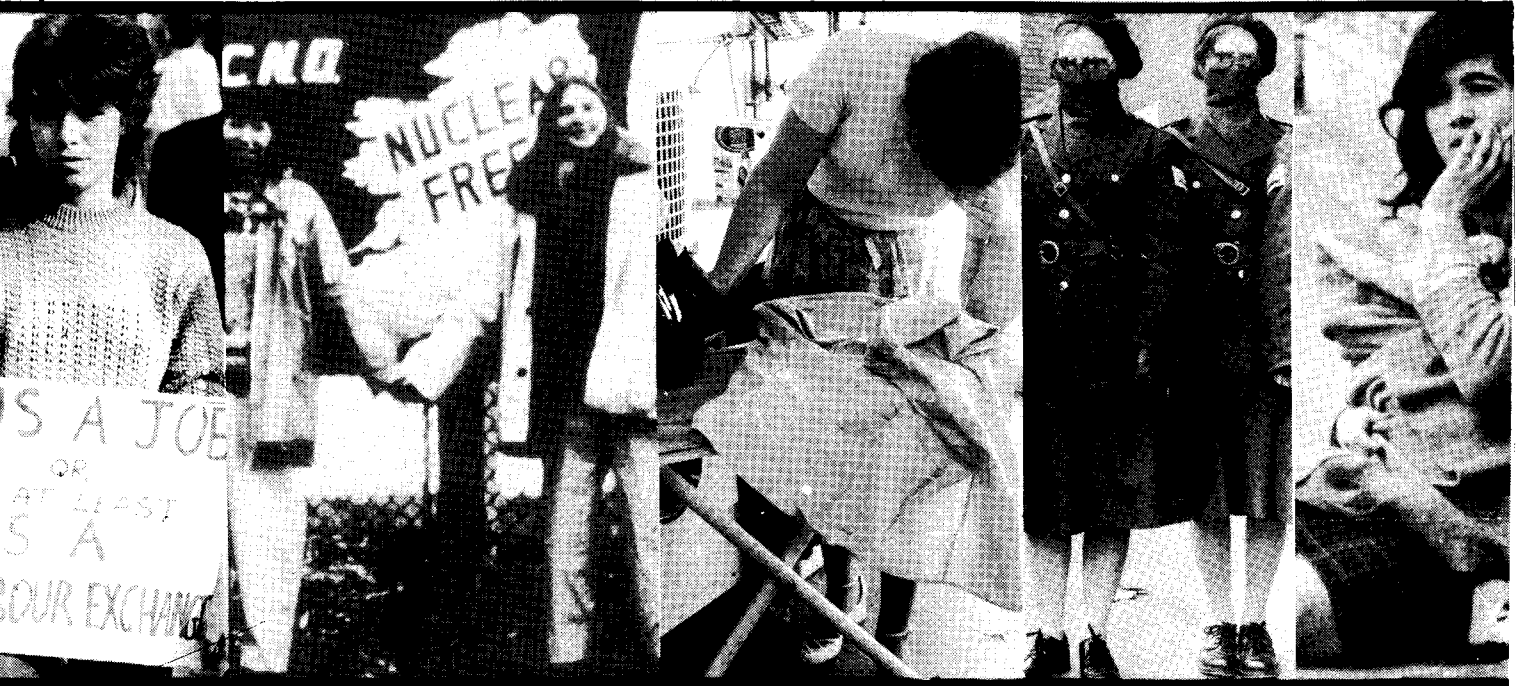
*"While many women in the North, open to all different types of oppression in addition to the over-riding burden of oppression as women, have seen this connection and reality, women in the South, perhaps beginning at the converse position – identifying their oppression as women first – have not always taken the logical and vital step of becoming involved in the mainstream struggle for Irish liberation.*

*"Women in the Republican Movement have worked for, and welcomed, in recent years, the recognition by that Movement of the importance of building and developing a real policy on women's struggle and attempting to carry that out, just as it has realised the importance of developing the struggle in the labour movement, without which socialism cannot be built.*

*"Women both inside and outside the Republican Movement should also realise the importance of their necessary actions within the liberation struggle, not solely concentrated on women's issues, but active in all possible areas of that struggle.*

*"In the aftermath of national liberation struggles around the world we have seen attempts made to force women who were active in those struggles alongside men back into subordinate roles in the new society. This danger cannot be overcome by standing on the sidelines. It can only be totally negated by the fullest possible involvement of determined women in the heart of that struggle. It is time that all of us faced up to these realities."*





# 'We are all part of the same struggle'

**MARGARET WARD**, *author of a recent book Unmanageable Revolutionaries on the role of women in the national struggle, argues critically that republicans need to develop a non-elitist attitude of support for the feminist movement as an integral part of the liberation struggle.*

**T**HE STRUGGLE for a new society takes many forms: the struggle against British rule in Ireland, campaigns on behalf of prisoners, workers' struggles in factories, community struggles around issues such as housing and tenant rights, the campaign for nuclear disarmament, for the right of women to have freely available abortion.... The list is endless. But, for feminists especially, our personal relationships with family and friends, and the fight against women's subordination within the family, at work, in political groups, is an integral part of this struggle.

In a most fundamental sense, 'the

personal is political', and a political movement that fails to recognise the importance of developing non-hierarchical, mutually supportive relationships, both within the movement itself and in the wider society, will find itself perpetuating the same injustices and oppression. And this stark fact cannot be dismissed as some 'middle class luxury', to be enjoyed solely by the privileged while the masses struggle to combat the ravages of Brit harassment, poverty and despair. There is violence in the home as well as on the streets, and violence in the streets comes not only from the British army and RUC: men rape women and that ever-present threat diminishes the freedom of all women.

Feminists are inspired by the ideal of a future society in which there is no oppression, no exploitation, no forms of

domination. But the ultimate achievement of such a society cannot be separated from the process of its making: if full democracy does not exist in the struggle today, how can there be in the future? It won't drop from the sky, it can only come, slowly and painfully, from ourselves. Feminists also believe that, because of the specific gender oppression of women, we must have an independent political movement so that we can develop our own strengths and decide upon our own demands. In other words, a movement that defines itself, that is 'autonomous', but one which does not shut itself off from other struggles taking place.

The experience of organising as women increases our self-confidence, heightens our feelings of solidarity and

enriches our participation in all political activities. It also gives us the strength to assert our own demands within the wider political context.

If this sounds irrelevant to readers of IRIS, then let us take concrete examples to make the point more strongly. Can there be socialism without the liberation of women, can national liberation be more than an abstract phrase, if women remain oppressed within the new nation state? There are many instances, Iran being the most recent, where a national revolution was accompanied by the increased enslavement of women. If we are to have a fully human society, it cannot contain within it the restricting, deformed remnants of old ideologies. We must have the courage to break free, to develop now – in however limited a manner – our new vision of the future.

This will entail encouraging people to fight for their own interests within their communities, not to take them over, to impose a leadership, but to provide comradely support. It will involve recognising the legitimacy of other organisations – women's groups, claimants' unions, tenants' organisations, prisoners' action groups – and working with them. It will involve a principled commitment to human liberation that challenges the power of church and state. It *should* have involved active participation by Sinn Fein in the anti-amendment campaign, which was one of the most important challenges to the ruling class and church power to have emerged in Ireland. The defeat of the anti-amendment campaign is a terrible defeat for Irish women and for all who have fought for a more just society – one based on compassion, not dogma, on freedom, not fear. The demoralisation that has resulted from this defeat will have serious repercussions unless a mass movement can be regrouped, particularly if the victorious Right now decide to campaign against the limited freedoms that do exist in the 26 counties, such as the contraceptive law.

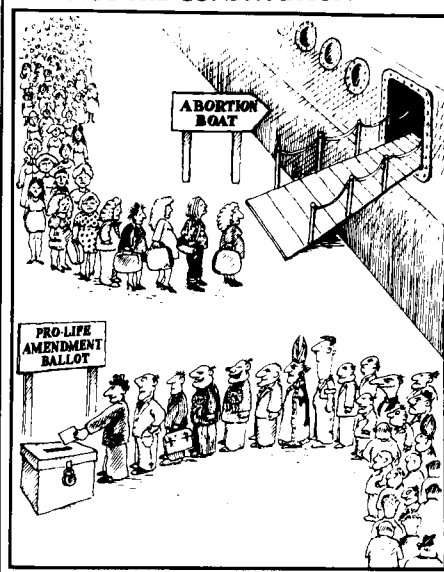
**I**f a political movement that claims to represent the aspirations of the Irish people decides not to confront the reactionary might of the Catholic church, not to add its considerable weight and political experience to a campaign desperately in need of all the support it can muster, because of a fear that it might alienate some of its supporters, can it expect the unconditional support of women in the future?

At the very least, this failure to support women provides feminists with over-



● Sexist advertising is all too prevalent – but that doesn't mean that it has to go unanswered

### "ITS LIFE THAT NEEDS AMENDING, NOT THE CONSTITUTION"



● "The defeat of the anti-amendment campaign is a terrible defeat for Irish women"

whelming confirmation of the wisdom of their insistence that women must continue to organise separately in their own interests, that they cannot automatically expect other political organisations to come to their defence.

We are all part of the same struggle, with its many layers of oppression. Women, gays, children, tenants, prisoners, claimants, pensioners – who can decide on the most worthy categories for attention? We are all oppressed and we are all struggling for our freedom.

Women's groups and women's caucuses in trade unions and political organisations cannot take on the burden single-handedly of fighting for women. While they can formulate policy to be

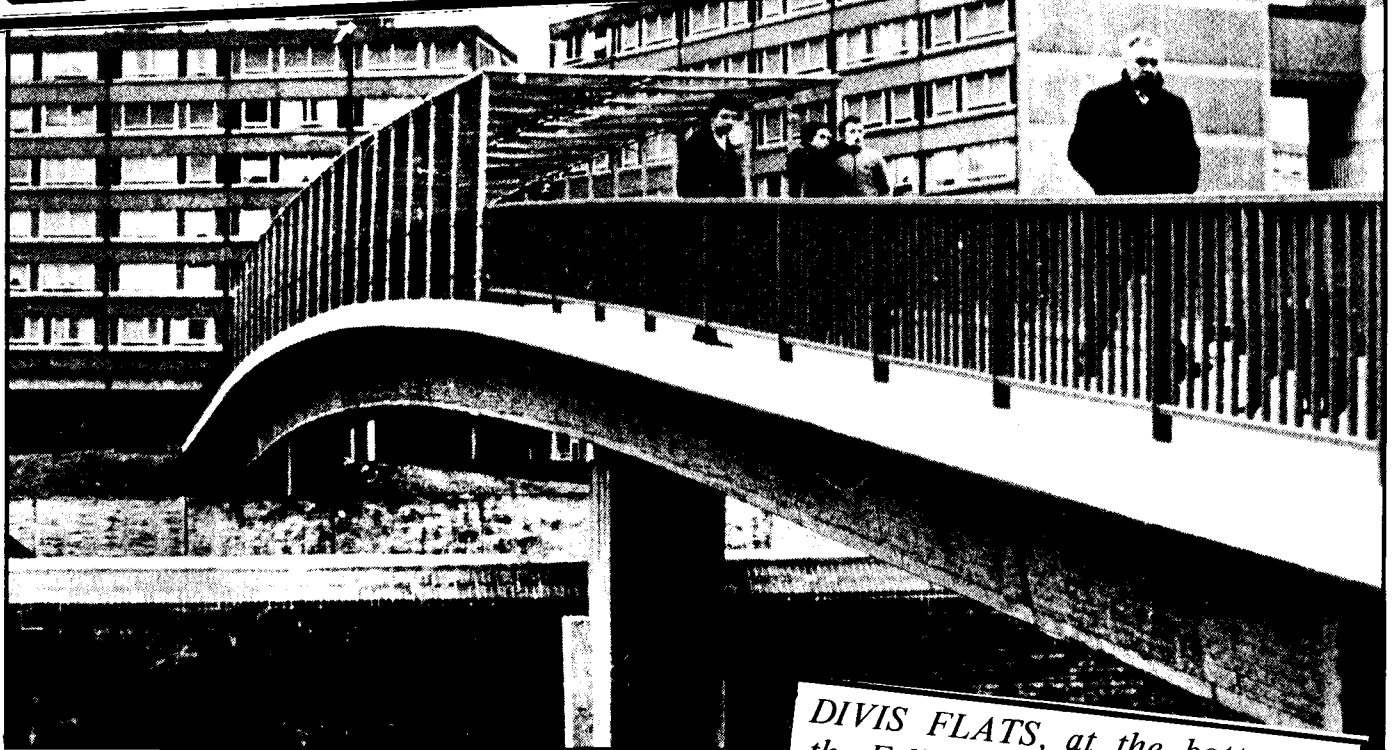
adopted by their organisations, those policies should be taken seriously and fought for by all members – male and female. To the outsider, it sometimes appears as though the setting up of separate women's departments becomes a mechanism which allows men to escape from the necessity of having to think or do anything about the problems facing women. Feminists within organisations are thereby penned in and contained – or at least, the more reactionary elements can hope this will be the case. But solidarity begins at home, brother!

We have only to look back on our history to see how much women are capable of, and how much more we will achieve when we have developed a strong, unified movement. We threaten male power and male power does not reside only in the ruling elite of our society. All men benefit from woman's domestic labour within the home and from her unequal position within the workplace. There is no doubt that male socialists and republicans find it difficult to accept women as political equals. But power is never relinquished without a struggle and that struggle will take place wherever men and women are gathered together.

The final battle, however, will never be won until women discover their own identity and devise a programme that incorporates the reality of women's lives. That is the task facing all Irish feminists today. Instead of continually debating what it is that divides us, is it utopian to hope that we can begin to discover how much we have in common? ■



# DIVIS FLATS



## Building towards a demolition campaign

**M**UCH has been happening on the political front in West Belfast's Divis Flats complex since the Assembly and Westminster elections mobilised local residents to work and vote for Sinn Fein. People who had never taken much interest in political activity before could then be seen addressing election manifestos, canvassing, making tea for election workers, and generally feeling part of the fight. Sinn Fein's victories have

renewed hope that the day will be hastened when the flats will be totally demolished and we can all live on the ground in decent homes again.

The victories also showed Divis people what they themselves could achieve by coming together and working hard to achieve what they want. They have not looked back since, and have gone on to form new groups to tackle the many problems faced by the community.

One of these is the Divis Youth and Cultural Development Group which has

*DIVIS FLATS, at the bottom of the Falls Road in West Belfast, have acquired a reputation for 'trouble' – of all kinds – and social deprivation ever since they were built in the 1960s. They have also endured some of the severest British repression meted out during the past 14 years, and replied with some of the fiercest resistance. Local resident and community activist Jim Faulkner examines the new resurgence of morale in the flats complex and the prospects it faces in its biggest battle yet – for total demolition.*

recently opened a new 'drop-in' centre for youth of the area in an attempt to tackle the epidemic of joyriding and other anti-social activity going on in the flats. The centre will provide a place for young people to meet, play pool, listen to music and discuss their future. It is an important development where one-third of the 2,000 population is under 16 years of age.

The Divis Education Project, which was formed about three years ago by social and community workers to tackle truancy (or 'beaking' as it is known loc-

ally), has formed a new committee with more local involvement and set up a craft workshop for unemployed teenagers – with facilities for making harps and other ornaments as well as practical household goods and furniture. The workshop has attracted so much interest among the huge number of young unemployed that people have had to be turned away for lack of space and financial resources, and a fundraising drive has been undertaken to expand facilities over the next couple of years. The project has also set up a library in Divis, including books in Irish to reflect the great interest in the language locally. Two Irish language classes a week are held at the Education Project's school ('Crazy Joe's') and the local Sinn Fein cumann also holds classes.

Sinn Fein has opened an advice centre in Divis (where its Belfast housing department is based) where voluntary workers deal with the array of day-to-day social, housing, benefits and Brit/RUC harassment problems faced by the local people. Over 80% of householders are receiving some degree of state benefits, while over 60% of the working population is unemployed.

Debt to the Housing Executive and to the electricity service is a major worry for people. The exorbitant cost and inefficiency of the old, gas central heating means that residents use electric heaters and 'Supersers' to heat living-rooms and bedrooms, with some families facing quarterly electricity bills of £150-200. The inevitable consequence for those on supplementary benefits is high debt, with the NIHE and NIES routinely using the Payment for Debt Act to deduct arrears at source from benefits. In some of these cases, a family with, say, three children is left after deductions with less than £30 a week to feed and clothe themselves.

Both Sinn Fein and the locally-backed Welfare Rights project have been trying over the last year to tackle these problems by providing support and getting people to understand how the system works and how to take on bureaucratic agencies themselves. A 'Benefit Take-up Campaign' was launched in Divis a few months ago, on similar lines to last year's campaign in Ballymurphy which netted over £100,000 for people in that area. Financially the Divis campaign has already been a

success, but additionally it has helped people to fight for what is theirs of right and not to regard it as a charity.

**H**OWEVER, the biggest problem in Divis is the flats themselves, they simply aren't fit to live in. In surveys carried out in the area since 1981 by a local study group, an overwhelming 96% of householders stated that they didn't wish to continue living in Divis. 2,000 people live on top of each other in 12 blocks totalling 700 flats and a further 100 flats in the tower block.

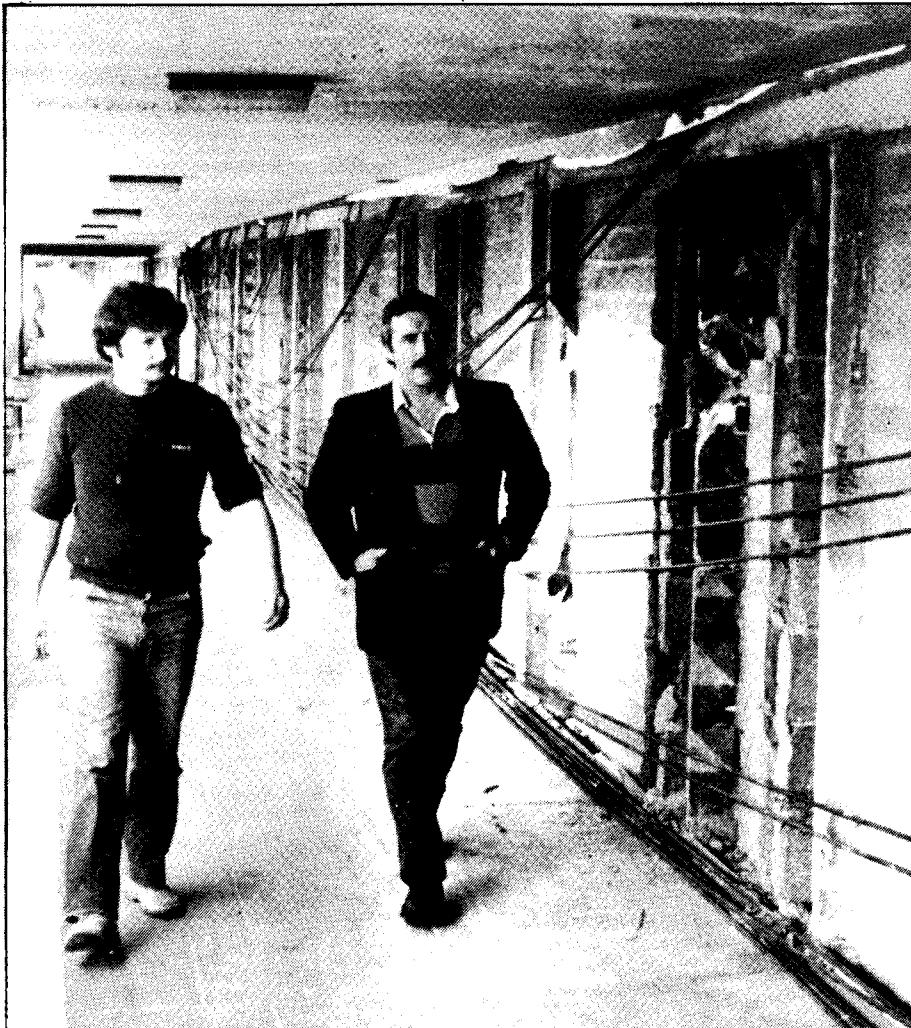
The British army observation post on top of the tower – with a commanding view of the flats complex and of the Falls Road as far as the Royal Victoria Hospital (where there is another observation post) – is an obscenity that emphasises the reality of Divis as, in effect, an open prison, with the inhabitants under continual surveillance.

The surveys have shown that about half of the flats have serious dampness, especially in the bedrooms; in 60% of damp flats personal belongings such as clothing, bedding, carpets and furniture have been damaged by mould and blackening; and 57% of affected households felt that some of the family had health problems (e.g. bronchitis/asthma) as a result of sleeping in damp conditions over a long period.

The health profile of the area generally is no better than that of Moyard (another flats complex in nationalist West Belfast) where there have been recent cases of polio. Divis, for its part, has a number of families affected by tuberculosis, dysentery and other contagious diseases. The rats in and around the complex are bigger than the cats and the dogs are afraid of them.

There are only three passenger lifts to service the 12 blocks of flats, and they are constantly breaking down. In November 1982 a woman and her 2-year-old son were trapped in a lift for 1½ hours. The child became hysterical and his mother had to climb through the roof of the lift to summon help. For days after the incident the child suffered from convulsions, vomiting and nightmares.

28% of households have a family member who has been injured (including broken limbs) as a result of accidents on broken staircases or holes in the pavements and balcony walkways. And in one tragedy in February this year, 4-year-old Jimmy McGivern from Cullingtree Walk in the complex was drowned



● Sinn Fein community workers inspect exposed live electricity cables along Divis' Whitehall Row – an obvious danger to local children





● The failure by the Housing Executive to provide adequate waste disposal facilities has led to some tenants having to burn their rubbish to stem the plague of rats which infests Divis

after falling into an open sewer near his home, while playing at the site of the multi-million-pound Westlink motorway then under construction. Farran's, the British construction company building the motorway, were fined only a few hundred pounds for criminal neglect in leaving the sewer uncovered.

On the morning of young Jimmy's funeral the Housing Executive despatched their cleaning staff to the balcony where he had lived – knowing that TV cameras would be there the balcony was made spotless, while the balcony directly above – Cullingtree Row – had not been swept for three days and stayed littered with rubbish.

A similar preoccupation with their 'image' had prompted the Executive to replace a broken pane of glass in the front door of the Valliday family's flat (which they had been asking for all year) immediately after young Kevin Valliday was killed in an INLA bombing tragedy in September 1982 – knowing that TV cameras would soon be around.

**D**IVIS FLATS' agonising housing and environmental conditions have forced 64% of householders surveyed to apply for a transfer out of the flats. About 50% want to be rehoused within the Divis area, 20% would



● Firemen and a diver search the open sewer where 4-year-old Jim McGivern drowned



be prepared to move to other estates in Catholic West Belfast and the remaining 30% would be prepared to move outside the Divis area but would want to remain within the lower Falls.

If these statistics accurately reflect the preferences of Divis residents, they are an important guide to the future planning strategies of the Divis Residents' Association, which has the task of taking action on behalf of local people to secure the demolition of the flats.

The residents' association was set up towards the end of the 1981 hunger-strike by Fr Pat Buckley, a curate of St Peter's parish, and with the assistance of some local women organised a successful 'clean-up campaign' to repair the environmental devastation of that riotous summer. It also restored relationships with the Housing Executive which had been curtailed by its more militant predecessor – the Divis Demolition Committee – and met the Tory housing minister at Stormont, David Mitchell, to discuss total demolition. Mitchell praised the association for their efforts but made no firm commitment to any additional demolition over and above the two blocks – Whitehall and Farsset – already scheduled to be knocked

down because of their proximity to the new Westlink motorway.

In August 1982 Fr Buckley's residents' association organised a festival in Divis to restore community morale – and it too was a great success, with games and open-air concerts which woke everyone up and brought neighbours out to socialise in a way which had not been seen since the high-rise complex replaced the old terraced streets of the Pound Loney neighbourhood in the 1960s.

However, sadly, the successes were short-lived. The main problem with the Divis Residents' Association was that it failed to attract the active participation of a representative cross-section of the Divis community and focussed largely on the personality and leadership of Fr Buckley himself. When he was transferred to another parish early this year the association became very much a shepherdless flock. The activities engaged in by the association in its heyday were essentially geared towards a restoration of morale but had no lasting effect, and its AGM in the autumn of 1982 attracted only a handful of Fr Buckley's helpers.

However, developments outlined in this article which have taken place since the elections augur well for the association's future, with this year's AGM approaching and the likelihood of a more broadly-based committee of residents

being elected.

There is a need now for a new demolition campaign led by Divis residents themselves. The first task of the campaign must be to confront the Stormont administration on its policy for Divis, and to use the Sinn Fein public representatives, whom Divis people helped to elect, to apply whatever political pressure is at their disposal if that administration refuses to agree to further demolition.

Surveys have indicated that half the people want to stay where they are – but in houses not flats, and that the other half might be prepared to move if there was somewhere to move to. What this means is that the demand for new building at Poleglass and elsewhere in West Belfast is of as much concern to the people of Divis as it is for other West Belfast nationalists. There is certainly a need for Divis Residents' Association to co-ordinate its campaign with other groups, such as the newly-formed West Belfast Housing Action Group which is currently campaigning for better housing throughout the West Belfast area.

There is, then, great hope for the future of Divis, and it is up to the people of Divis themselves to transform this hope into reality which decent two-storey houses can offer them and their children – in a future community of a new Pound Loney



# The GAA and the hunger-strikes

*"We declare that political status is ours of right and we declare that from Monday 27th October 1980 a hunger-strike by a number of men representing H-Blocks 3, 4 and 5 will commence. Our widely-recognised resistance has carried us through four years of immense suffering and it shall carry us through to the bitter climax of death, if necessary."*

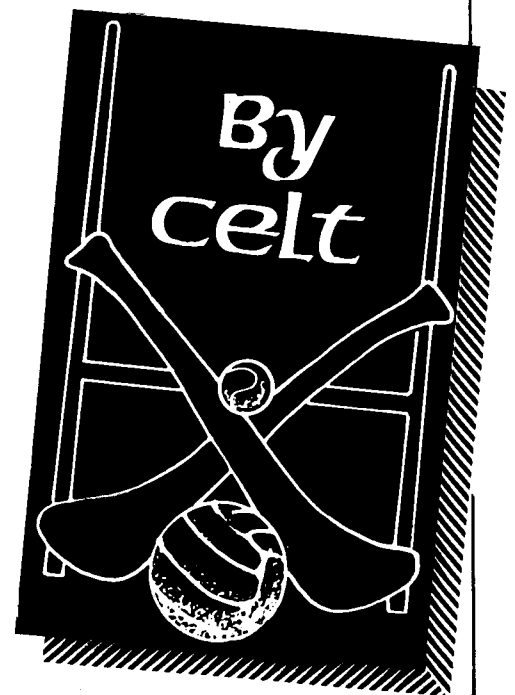
**S**O was announced the decision by republican blanketmen in the H-Blocks to commence the first of the two major hunger-strikes during 1980 and 1981. Impassioned messages urging support were smuggled out of Long Kesh from the prisoners — with over 150 of the H-Block men from every Ulster county having connections with GAA clubs it was no surprise that the Association was asked to use its influence at every level to raise the prisoners' five demands.

One letter smuggled out put the case in simple terms:

*"We appeal to you in the GAA to act now to avert death in the H-Blocks. We urge you to mobilise to divert the British government from its illogical and wholly*

*insane stance. We hope that our plea will not fall on deaf ears within the GAA. We also hope that the GAA will not allow the barbed wire, the concrete walls and the iron bars of Long Kesh to stifle those cries for justice."*

Individual clubs immediately rallied to the call for support with advertisements being inserted in *The Irish News*. The grassroots reaction, in particular from counties like Derry, Tyrone and Antrim, was swift, recognising that the Association was more than simply a sporting body. The occupation of GAA grounds and premises as in Crossmaglen and Casement Park, Belfast; the banning of the carrying of hurling sticks as if they were offensive weapons; and the day to day harassment of GAA members, had all brought a deeper understanding of why the GAA had been formed, and the reality of the consequences of promoting the Association's





ideals — those of national freedom and cultural identity — in the bigoted Orange state.

With GAA activists working and co-ordinating support in the North, demonstrations were held at half-time during National League matches, pamphlets were issued to spectators and collections taken up. Some GAA clubs had taken the decision not to play football and hurling at all during the hunger-strike; in the South Antrim Division the 25 clubs came out and fully supported the five demands, agreeing to cancel fixtures on days of national demonstrations to encourage members to attend.

It was at one of these demonstrations in Belfast, on Sunday 30th November 1980, that 3,000 GAA members marched up the Falls Road from the Dunville Park to the GAA grounds at Casement Park where the rally was held. Buses had ferried in the GAA supporters from all parts of the North, but the loudest cheer was reserved for the contingent that had travelled all the way from North Tipperary.

On an administrative level, with the example of prominent GAA individuals such as the legendary Kerry footballer Joe Keohane throwing their weight behind the campaign, various County Boards answered their members' concern by issuing statements of support.

The Antrim County Executive Committee of the GAA declared: *"We call on the British government to take immediate steps to afford normal decent standards and humane treatment to the prisoners, to relieve further distress for their relatives... We confirm our support for the principles embodied in the five demands of the prisoners on hunger-strike."* Telegrams were sent by clubs in the Antrim area to the Northern Ireland Office, and the British and Free State premiers.

**O**RGANISED protests in the North took up again with the commencement of the second hunger-strike in March 1981, intensifying with the dark news that Bobby Sands was growing weaker.

Every team travelling North from the 26 counties experienced H-Block demonstrations at half-time and were continually made aware of the feelings of Northern GAA members about the dilemma of their fellow Irishmen in Long Kesh. GAA banners were familiar sights on H-Block marches across the six counties and GAA grounds were frequent venues for demonstrations and rallies. The H-Block video film was distributed around many GAA social centres



● GAA members taking part in a seven-day fast and vigil outside Casement Park in August 1981



● The legendary Kerry footballer Joe Keohane (right) canvassing for Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams during the October 1982 Assembly elections

and enthusiastically received.

In August 1981, a seven-day token fast and vigil was held outside Casement Park in Belfast by South Antrim GAA members. It was to be expected that the British army would not allow the picket to go by without harassment, and indeed two plastic bullets were fired into the protestors without warning. The protestors stood their ground and refused to be intimidated.

Over £2,000 was collected at this fast and vigil in an illustration of the unstinting generosity of the people of West

Belfast, who simultaneously were being called upon to contribute to a constant stream of other collections to provide the finance necessary for the hunger-strike campaign.

However, concern began to grow among the GAA's conservative hierarchy that the organisation, and particularly its Northern members, were going too far. These people feared that the support shown for the blanketmen would tarnish the nice respectable image the GAA nurtured, and that full backing for the prisoners' five demands would

be interpreted as support for the armed struggle.

The whole question of the role of the GAA in nationalist affairs was raised, with it becoming blatantly clear that the courage was lacking from top officials in the Association to come out openly, and support with direct action, motions passed at successive GAA congresses which backed the prisoners' demands.

The influence of Fianna Fail and Fine Gael members, and the ever-present voice of the Garda Síochána in the GAA, was beginning to cause even more alarm among headquarters' staff. The grassroots' support at Northern level was understandable as many clubs had at least one member in Long Kesh, but the gulf in understanding of many Southern GAA personnel was a reflection of how removed from the realities of the Northern situation they had become. GAA headquarters kept one careful eye on events in Long Kesh and the other on those middle-class conservatives who wanted the Association to steer well clear of involvement in the H-Blocks crisis.

Statements from the GAA's management committee referred to bringing *"the whole sad situation to an end... in the interests of peace."* Hardly words calculated to cause Southern politicians to take seriously the degree of GAA concern over the prison situation. Other statements talked of *"humanitarian concern"*, while the increased pressure exerted by some GAA members in the South gave rise to terms such as *"condemnation of violence and men of violence"* being increasingly included in policy statements from the management committee.

**I**T was the decision to stand prisoners in the Free State general elections held in June 1981 that saw the divergence of views within the GAA coming to the front. Several of the hunger-strike candidates were known to have had close links with GAA clubs in their native areas. Kevin Lynch had captained his County under-age team which had won an All-Ireland trophy at Croke Park. (His old club in Dungiven have since renamed themselves the Kevin Lynch hurling club.) Kieran Doherty from Andersonstown in West Belfast was also well-known in GAA circles. Yet incredibly, the GAA's management committee directed that the GAA could not get involved in 'party politics'!



● County Derry captain Kevin Lynch receives the 1972 All-Ireland under-16 hurling trophy at Croke Park — he was to die an agonising death on hunger-strike in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh on August 1st 1981

The GAA hierarchy now regarded the H-Blocks issue as 'party political' whereas earlier their statements had called it 'humanitarian'. It seemed that as long as the protest was kept north of the border the GAA would show signs of support, but that once brought home to the twenty-six counties, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael influence, worried by the effect of prisoner candidates in marginal constituencies, was enough to secure a change in policy.

The then outgoing president of the GAA, Paddy McFlynn, was now caught wearing two caps. Caught between Northern GAA activists and the Fianna Fail element, which had most to lose by the intervention of prisoner candidates in the elections, McFlynn now pointed out that as the controlling body of the Association the management committee did not wish to commit itself further in support of the five demands.

But near-panic spread through the headquarters' staff when one leading GAA member in the North appeared on a television interview confirming that every support would continue for the prisoners and that directives to the contrary from the management committee would be completely ignored!

The GAA's involvement in the hunger-strike showed up clearly the basic grassroots' support for the suffering prisoners, but also highlighted the GAA hierarchy's apathy and conservatism. As a national cultural and sporting body, the GAA has of necessity to embrace many shades of political persuasion. But it also undeniably has an obligation to support its members in Northern jails.

With the ending of the hunger-strike which saved the GAA from further polarisation on the issue, the problems remain of the denial of Gaelic games, language and traditions to the republican prisoners. The GAA hierarchy has yet to give voice to these grievances ■

## A REVIEW OF IRA MILITARY OPERATIONS DURING THE PERIOD JUNE - OCTOBER 1983



# Turning the screw on the UDR

All operations referred to were  
claimed in supplied statements by  
the IRA

THE five-month period of war history recorded here was a memorable one in several respects. Firstly, although it covered a period when the British were claiming for the umpteenth time (on the heels of further mass arrests on the word of a new paid perjurer — who has since retracted) that the IRA was in severe and possibly terminal difficulties, the last five months have in fact witnessed a continuing sturdy level of armed attacks across the six-county area and the same degree of flexibility of target and of mode of attack as has always hall-marked the IRA's activity.

Secondly, the period has been a distinctly unhappy one for the UDR which suffered its biggest loss in a single IRA attack since the regiment's formation in 1970, when the Tyrone Brigade killed four of its members (and seriously injured a fifth) in a landmine explosion on the Ballygawley-Omagh road on July 13th. (The previous biggest number of fatalities inflicted on the UDR was on January 6th 1980, near Castlewellan, County Down, when a 1,000lb culvert bomb killed three UDR soldiers.) Nine weeks later, the IRA came within seconds of a spectacular repeat at Gulladuff in South Derry, when the detonation of a landmine was marginally mis-timed as a three-member UDR patrol drove by. Even so, the IRA executed a further four UDR soldiers

during the period under review, bringing UDR losses to eight dead and four wounded.

Other enemy losses at the hands of the IRA were two British soldiers killed (both in bomb attacks) and seven wounded, and three RUC men killed and ten injured (plus two more injured when a landmine at Coalisland, County Tyrone, was prematurely detonated by only seconds, on October 14th).

The third noticeable feature of the period under review has been the IRA's increasingly successful use of blast incendiary bombs to inflict major economic damage to stores, warehouses, filling stations and depots — including the use of co-ordinated blitzes across a commercial centre, or between two or three commercial centres simultaneously. It seems likely, in view of the extensive disruption caused by the incendiaries (frequently exacerbated by deliberate hoaxes), which drastically undermine the policy of 'normalisation', as well as their crippling economic impact, that this is a tactic which will continue to play an important part in the flexible armoury of the IRA.

In total, between June-October 1983 the IRA in the North carried out fourteen separate series of incendiary attacks (including several major blitzes). It also carried out twenty-one separate shooting attacks, eight bombings (including three landmines), five booby-trap attacks, and two mortar attacks — both on Crossmaglen Brit/RUC barracks!





● A British soldier examines the remains of a lamp-post, in Belfast's Ballymurphy estate, where a concealed IRA bomb killed one Brit on June 10th

## JUNE

**THREE** days after Belfast Brigade IRA Volunteers launched a sniping attack on an RUC landrover at Springfield Avenue, in the first operation of the month, the Tyrone Brigade claimed the first fatality in a successful booby-trap bombing.

The target — a UDR soldier notorious in the Dunganon area for his intimidation of Catholic families and his harassment of Sinn Fein election workers — died instantly on June 4th when he started the engine of a JCB digger which had earlier been booby-trapped.

### BRIT KILLED

The IRA kept up the pressure, killing a member of the Brits' Light Infantry regiment in the Ballymurphy estate in West Belfast, on June 10th. Volunteers had skilfully concealed a 15lb bomb in a lamp-post and detonated it by command wire as a Brit patrol passed by.

### INCENDIARY BLITZES

Demonstrating the effectiveness of blast incendiary attacks, the South Down and Belfast Brigades of the IRA launched two separate series of attacks in the space of 24 hours, causing damage costing hundreds of thou-

sands of pounds. In the early hours of June 13th eight incendiary bombs detonated inside two car showroom garages at Newry and Rostrevor, and at Warrenpoint golf club, while around 11pm that evening a series of incendiaries which had been smuggled inside the Belfast city centre 'security zone' by a 10-strong active service unit detonated and gutted two large fashion stores and damaged surrounding shops.

### BOMB HOAXES

On June 16th the Belfast Brigade followed up their earlier attacks by commandeering three vehicles and leaving them at strategic points in the city with hoax bombs on board. These, and a series of telephoned hoax warnings of further city centre incendiaries, caused major disruptions throughout the day.

### BALLYMENA ATTACK FOILED

A potential media coup on the eve of the British Queen Mother's



● This IRA photograph of the lorry carrying mortars for the Crossmaglen attack on June 22nd was taken as the ASU moved into position

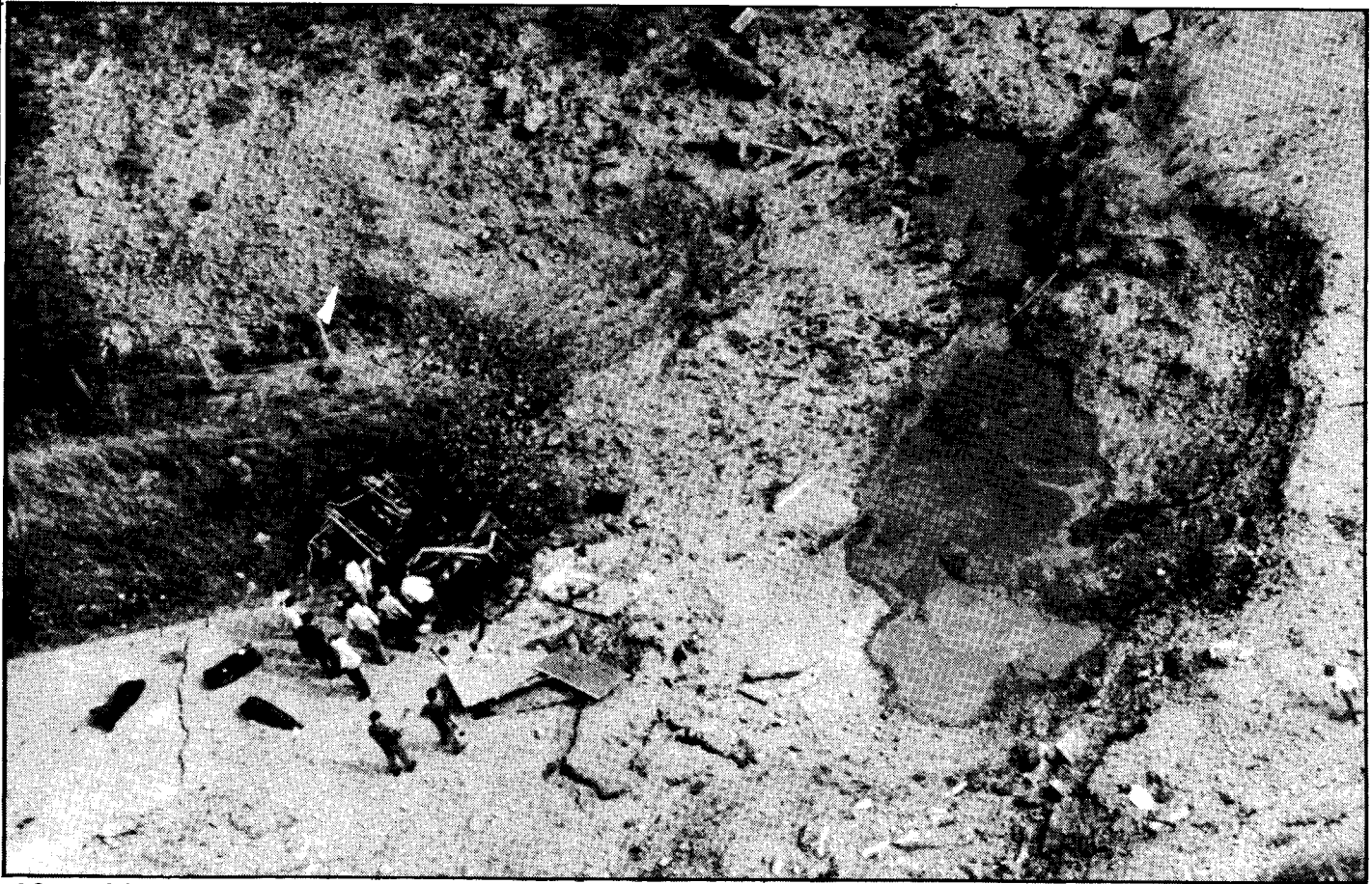
'secret' visit to Ballymena was unfortunately lost when a proxy van bomb being driven from Belfast to Ballymena on June 18th was intercepted at a routine roadblock outside the town. Despite the massive cordon thrown up, IRA Volunteers following the van in a car returned safely to base. Subsequently, on June 20th — the day of the British Royal visit — the IRA caused some chaos with a string of telephoned bomb hoaxes in the town.

### CROSSMAGLEN MORTAR ATTACK

A dozen or more IRA Volun-

teers were involved in a massive mortar bomb attack on Crossmaglen Brit/RUC barracks in broad daylight, on June 22nd. Ten mortars were fired, causing injuries to at least one Brit as well as structural damage to the base. A Wessex helicopter coming in to land seconds before the attack was launched, took off in a hurry, jettisoning its cargo of supplies.

The IRA had postponed an earlier mortar blitz in the South Armagh village on May 7th because of a civilian presence too near the barracks, but this time they coolly set up roadblocks



● Scene of the morale-shattering Tyrone landmine attack on July 13th which killed four UDR soldiers

beforehand and cleared the occupants of houses in the vicinity.

### MORE HOAXES

Belfast Brigade IRA again demonstrated the impact of a co-ordinated spate of hoaxes on June 23rd, only seven days after an earlier hoax campaign. More vehicles were commandeered and left at strategic points, and a series of bomb hoax warnings was given.

### POST OFFICE BLITZ

A five-strong Armagh city IRA unit, backed up by a second unit, successfully breached the 'security zone' and the security fencing of the main post office in the early hours of June 25th, to plant a total of 22 incendiaries in the petrol tanks of post office delivery vans. Sixteen vans were completely destroyed and several others were damaged in the attack.

## JULY

**JUST** six weeks after a massive IRA van bomb had devastated Andersonstown Brit/RUC barracks in West Belfast, Belfast Volunteers launched a brief gun attack on British soldiers engaged in reconstruction work. Three shots were fired in the attack on July 4th, despite heavy enemy surveillance through-

out the area around the barracks, though there were no hits.

### FURNITURE STORES GUTTED

In another co-ordinated blitz, a furniture store and a timber yard in Castlewellan, County Down, were extensively damaged on July 9th by a number of incendiary explosions, while in Belfast five furniture stores were either gutted or extensively damaged the following morning by a series of a sophisticated new type of electronic delayed-action incendiary which had been planted the day before.

### DOWN ATTACKS

A South Down ASU planted four incendiaries in the Ulster-bus depot at Portaferry on July 11th, but these were later discovered and defused by the British army. However, the next day, an ASU in Downpatrick hurled a hand grenade into the local RUC barracks.

### LANDMINE SUCCESS

Four UDR soldiers were killed (and a fifth seriously injured) in a massive 700lb landmine explosion on the Ballygawley-Omagh road, on July 13th, by Tyrone Brigade Volunteers. The soldiers — part of a convoy on a training exercise — were members of the regiment's 6th Battalion stationed in Omagh. The deaths brought to 133 the number of UDR fatalities officially



● Belfast Brigade Volunteers display their new anti-tank weapon

conceded since 1970 (not including so-called ex-UDR members killed).

The operation was a further reminder of the Tyrone Brigade IRA's warning on April 9th that they would make the garrison town of Omagh 'completely unsafe' for the occupation forces.

### SHRAPNEL BOMB

Tyrone Brigade Volunteers detonated a 50lb shrapnel bomb at Loughmacrory on July 15th, as a four-man RUC patrol passed by, causing slight injuries to one member of the patrol.

### ANTI-TANK ATTACK

Two Belfast Brigade ASUs

were involved in an attack on the Springfield Road Brit/RUC barracks on July 15th. A Volunteer in the first unit fired a missile from a new anti-tank weapon — its first 'public appearance' — which struck a sentry post, while several other Volunteers opened fire from automatic weapons. The second ASU covered the withdrawal of IRA personnel from the immediate area.

### CASTLEWELLAN AMBUSH

An RUC man was seriously injured on July 16th at Castlewellan, County Down. He was hit four times from shots fired by an ASU which had taken over a nearby house the previous night.



## DERRY AMBUSH

Three members of an RUC patrol — two men and a woman — were wounded (two of them fairly seriously) in a Derry Brigade IRA ambush on July 17th. An ASU had taken over a house in Maureen Avenue and opened fire as the RUC patrol walked towards nearby flats.

## DERRY ROCKET

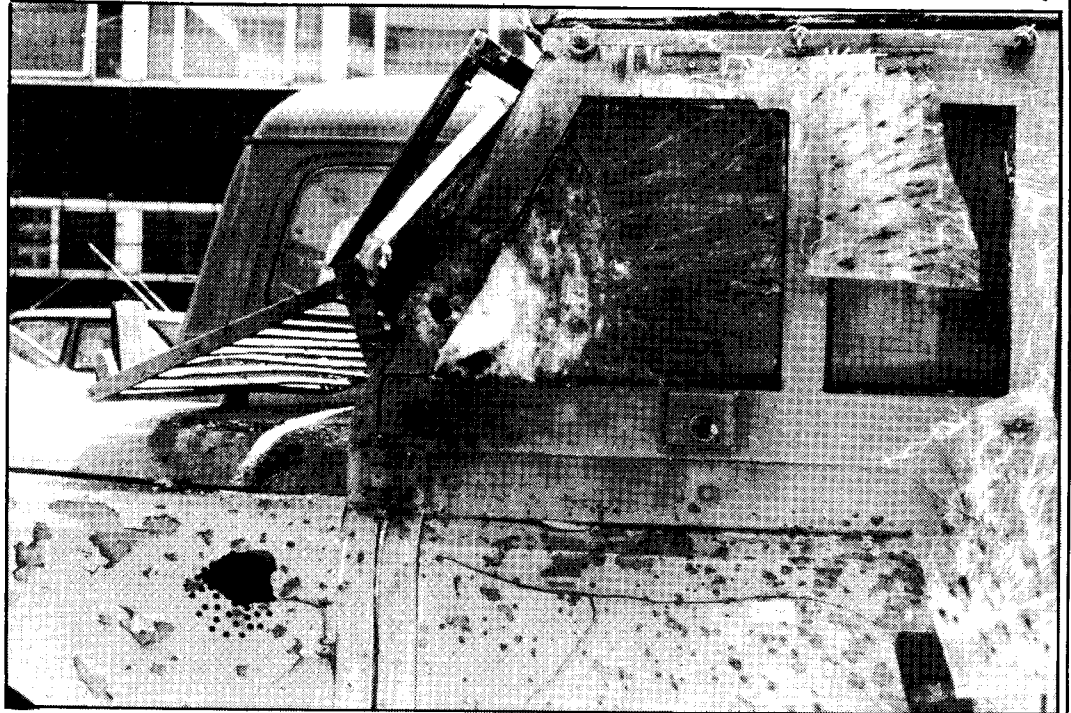
Four days later, the IRA in Derry city struck again, this time using an RPG7 rocket launcher. As an RUC landrover passed along the Lecky Road on Thursday morning, July 21st, one Volunteer fired a rocket, hitting the passenger-side door. Four other Volunteers immediately opened up from within yards of the landrover, using two M15 rifles, an FN-FAL and a sub-machine gun. Two RUC men were injured in the attack, one of them seriously.

## SANGAR ATTACKED

Belfast Brigade Volunteers again used their anti-tank rifle on July 24th, in an attack on the British army observation sangar at the junction of Cupar Street/Springfield Road in West Belfast. A missile from the anti-tank weapon successfully struck the post, as did a hand grenade and automatic gunfire from back-up Volunteers.

## NEW 'BASE' BLITZED

Later that day, Belfast Brigade Volunteers planted four strategically-placed bombs at the Lake Glen Hotel on the Andersonstown Road, which all detonated, demolishing the building. Explain-



● Two RUC men were injured, one seriously, when Derry Brigade IRA scored a hit with an RPG7 rocket on their landrover

ing this action, the IRA revealed that intelligence reports indicated that the RUC had intended taking over the hotel as a temporary base while their Andersonstown barracks nearby — which the IRA had blitzed on May 24th — was completely rebuilt.

## OMAGH INCENDIARY

Extensive damage was caused to a drapery shop in Omagh's High Street on July 31st, after an incendiary bomb planted by Tyrone Brigade Volunteers the previous day successfully detonated.

ated.

## AUGUST

**CROSSMAGLEN IRA Volunteers opened the month with yet another mortar blitz on the local Brit/RUC barracks. Two ASUs escorted a lorry containing ten mortar bombs into the South Armagh village on August 1st, and after warning local civilians they detonated the bombs, several**

**of which struck the base.**

In a follow-up search the Brits stumbled across a booby-trap bomb left by the IRA in a derelict house, which injured one soldier when it exploded.

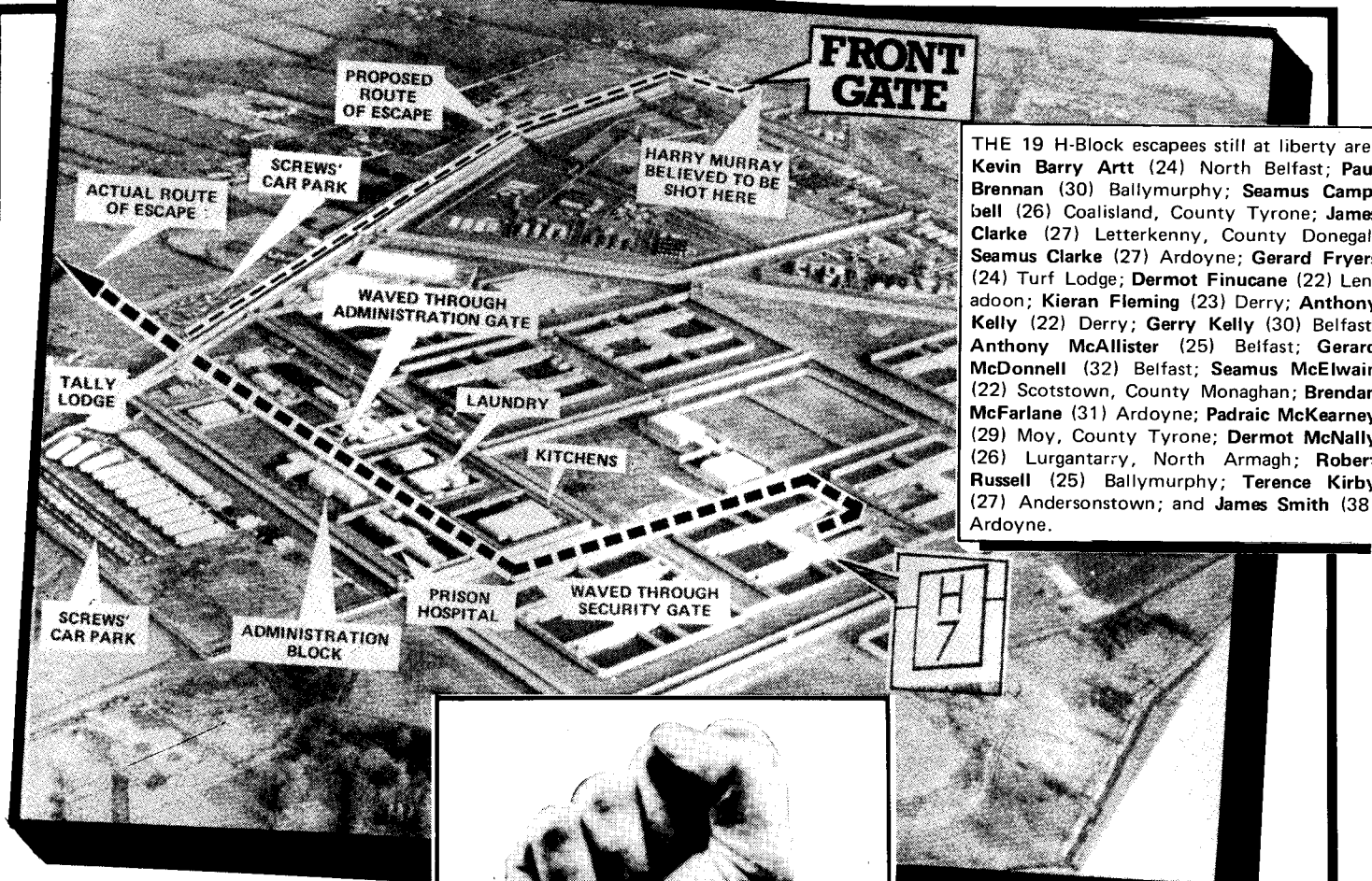
## TYRONE INCENDIARIES

Extensive damage was caused in the County Tyrone towns of Omagh and Strabane over the weekend of August 4th/5th in a series of incendiary attacks. In Strabane, damage was caused to a furniture shop in the town's Main Street, while in



● IRA Intelligence reports led to a four-bomb attack on Belfast's Lake Glen Hotel on July 24th to prevent it being occupied by the British army





THE 19 H-Block escapees still at liberty are Kevin Barry Artt (24) North Belfast; Pau Brennan (30) Ballymurphy; Seamus Campbell (26) Coalisland, County Tyrone; James Clarke (27) Letterkenny, County Donegal; Seamus Clarke (27) Ardoyne; Gerard Fryer (24) Turf Lodge; Dermot Finucane (22) Lenadoon; Kieran Fleming (23) Derry; Anthony Kelly (22) Derry; Gerry Kelly (30) Belfast; Anthony McAllister (25) Belfast; Gerard McDonnell (32) Belfast; Seamus McElwair (22) Scotstown, County Monaghan; Brendan McFarlane (31) Ardoyne; Padraic McKearney (29) Moy, County Tyrone; Dermot McNally (26) Lurgantery, North Armagh; Robert Russell (25) Ballymurphy; Terence Kirby (27) Andersonstown; and James Smith (38) Ardoyne.

*"WE perceived the escape as a military operation from beginning to end. It could not have been achieved in any other way, and the ASU – as Volunteers in the Irish Republican Army – were under strict orders throughout from an operations officer whose judgement was crucial and whose every order had to be obeyed. Every Volunteer was under a tight brief."*

It was this precision of planning, exclusively revealed to *An Phoblacht/Republican News* in a detailed interview by key ASU personnel involved, that lay behind the almost incredible escape of 38 republicans on Sunday 25th September from what is generally believed to be the most secure prison in Western Europe – the H-Blocks of Long Kesh.

At 2.15pm that day three Volunteers carrying concealed pistols fitted with silencers, which had been smuggled into the prison, moved into the central administration area (the 'circle') of H7-Block on the pretext of cleaning out a store. Fifteen minutes later they were joined by a fourth armed Volunteer. Control of the 'circle', with its numerous alarm bells, was vital for the escape's success and had to be carried out simultaneously with the overpowering of prison Screws in the four wings of H7-Block. Minutes later three other Volunteers – armed with pistols, hammers or chisels – took up key positions near Screws positioned by alarm buttons, on the pretext of carrying out orderly duties, while Brendan 'Bic' McFarlane (the H-Block O/C during the hunger-strike) was allowed through two locked grilles into the hall of the Block on cleaning duties – his job was to arrest the Screw there.

On a given signal, once everyone was in position, IRA Volunteers overpowered and arrested all the Screws in the Block, many of the Volunteers subsequently changing into their uniforms. During the seizure of control



# The Long Kesh escape

one Screw – on duty in a locked control room – was shot twice in the head when he ignored orders to lie on the floor and instead made a lunge for the alarm. Control of the Block was completed when 'Bic' McFarlane, accompanied by two Volunteers dressed as Screws, arrested the Screw on duty in the

front gate enclosure. It was now about 2.45pm.

Some time later the food lorry bringing evening meals to H7 arrived. 37 Volunteers climbed into the back while another lay on the floor of the cab holding a gun on the Screw driving the lorry. The lorry then drove through a series of 'security gates' in the Long Kesh complex manned by unsuspecting Screws and in full view of armed Brit sentry posts. It eventually arrived at a 'tally hut' close to a back gate of the camp. The plan was to arrest the Screws in the 'tally hut' and, leaving five Volunteers in control, drive the food lorry a further ¼ mile to the front gate 'tally hut' which the escapees would then take control of, leaving two Volunteers there, before driving out in the food lorry to freedom. Meanwhile the five Volunteers in the first 'tally hut' would obtain a Screw's car from the adjoining car park, drive to the front gate where the two Volunteers in control there would clamber into the boot, and also make their escape.

Unfortunately the plan began to go wrong at the first 'tally hut' due to there being larger numbers of Screws coming on duty than anticipated. While the escapees kept arresting more and more Screws, the situation got out of control and the alarm was raised. At this point the escapees were forced to make a run for it on foot across fields, many of them successfully commandeering local cars. In the final melee several Screws were stabbed, and one escapee, Harry Murray, was shot and wounded.

It was inevitable, given the eventual breakdown of the plan, that there would be some rearrests, some within minutes and some within two days of the break-out. Nonetheless, the massive total of 19 republican prisoners of war did successfully escape and eventually reach freedom – to the massive embarrassment of the British and the jubilation of nationalists throughout the 32 counties!

Omagh bombs detonated in a furniture shop and a draper's shop in the town centre.

## BOOBY-TRAP ESCAPE

In Kesh, County Fermanagh, an RUC man had a lucky escape on August 6th when only the detonator of a booby-trap attached to his car exploded as he drove it away.

## UDR FATALITY

Tyrone Brigade IRA Volunteers ambushed and shot dead a 32-year-old corporal in the UDR on August 23rd, as he drove into Beechmount Avenue in Strabane. Just before 5.30pm, two IRA Volunteers on a commandeered motorbike approached and fired several shots, hitting the soldier in the head.

## SHANKILL ATTACK

In the IRA's third use of its anti-tank rifle, on August 28th, an ASU in West Belfast made an opening in a corrugated iron barricade and then fired a missile from Cupar Street at an RUC landrover parked at the corner of Lawnbrook Avenue, in the loyalist Shankill district. Back-up Volunteers opened fire immediately afterwards using FN-FAL and Ruger rifles.

## SEPTEMBER

**YET** again the IRA in Belfast showed its ability to penetrate the city centre 'security zone', when on September 3rd several active service units planted a number of incendiary bombs in commercial premises across the city. Damage was caused to three shops, including a menswear shop inside the security barriers.

## DERRY ATTACKS

After several days' patient planning by no less than five Derry ASUs, a large contingent of Brits and RUC were lured into the Rossville Flats complex in the Bogside on September 5th to conduct a search. The enemy found a crate of petrol bombs (skilfully booby-trapped by the IRA), but it went up with a bang when they moved in to examine it, injuring two RUC men.

In a further attack that night at Culmore Road, Derry Volunteers opened fire on an RUC landrover. The vehicle was hit but no casualties were claimed.

## BARRACKS AMBUSH

In a daring attack on Cloughmills RUC barracks — in a predominantly loyalist area of North Antrim — IRA Volunteers on September 11th opened fire on RUC men leaving the base, wound-



● North Armagh Brigade IRA struck at a long-serving member of the crown forces when they executed a UDR captain in Portadown on September 20th

ing one in the leg. The ASU had taken up position in a nearby school hours before the attack.

## SNIPER FIRE

A single-shot snipe was fired by a Derry IRA Volunteer, on September 12th, at a mobile RUC patrol in the Shantallow estate. Fire was returned by the RUC but there were no casualties on either side.

## ARMAGH/BELFAST BOMBS

IRA active service units in Belfast and Armagh carried out a co-ordinated incendiary bomb attack in the two cities over the weekend of September 17th/19th.

In Armagh, on Saturday 17th September, bombs detonated at around 11pm in the triple-storey premises of Auto Supplies, gutting the building. Fifteen minutes later the heavily-fortified customs post on the Armagh/Monaghan road was blasted and reduced to ashes.

In Belfast, early on Monday morning, three delayed-action incendiary bombs detonated at one East Belfast furniture store, and two bombs detonated at a second furniture store in the area, causing extensive damage. Other incendiaries in the area were located and defused before they could explode.

## DERRY INCENDIARIES

On September 20th six blast incendiaries planted inside a fertiliser warehouse in the Waterside area of Derry city exploded, causing a huge fire which gutted

the building.

## UDR DEATH

The IRA's North Armagh Brigade was responsible for the execution on September 20th of a captain in the UDR, when his booby-trapped car exploded outside his house in the Woodside estate in Portadown. The soldier was a former member of the British Royal Engineers regiment, a former 'B' Special, and a prominent local member of the Territorial Army.

## LANDMINE ATTACK

Three UDR soldiers narrowly escaped death on September 21st as a massive IRA landmine was detonated when their landrover drove past. The attack happened on the Knockloughrim Road, near Gulladuff in South Derry, shortly after 11pm.

## MORE INCENDIARIES

Also that night, seven IRA Volunteers placed three bombs at Dean's Bridge filling station in Armagh, which gutted the building and an adjoining garage. One hour later, in Newry, an IRA active service unit placed several more incendiaries in a timber yard at Butter Crane Quay, resulting in large fires and destroyed timber.

## POMEROY BOMBING

A pub in Pomeroy's Main Street was severely damaged in the early hours of September 29th, when several incendiary bombs planted by Tyrone Brigade IRA Volunteers successfully det-

onated.

## TYRONE BLITZ

Later on that same day, September 29th, Tyrone Brigade IRA Volunteers carried out a co-ordinated incendiary blitz on several targets, centred on Dungannon and involving well over 20 personnel. In the space of two-and-a-half hours two petrol filling stations on the outskirts of the town and a shop in the town centre were gutted by the bombs, while a shoe warehouse and a supermarket suffered less devastating damage. At the same time, the County Buildings in Strabane were seriously damaged in a bomb attack by West Tyrone IRA Volunteers.

## OCTOBER

**BELFAST** Brigade IRA Volunteers launched another incendiary bomb blitz on October 1st, this time on the western outskirts of the city and in neighbouring Lisburn. A carpet showroom in Dunmurry and a cash-and-carry store half-a-mile away were both damaged by blasts, while furniture and menswear shops in Lisburn had lucky escapes when incendiaries planted in them were located and defused.

Earlier that day, the IRA's Tyrone Brigade was unlucky when a 400lb bomb planted outside Sion Mills RUC barracks failed to properly detonate, and was eventually defused. In a previous attack on January 27th,

an IRA van bomb had completely devastated the barracks — on this occasion, unfortunately, there was no repeat.

## SOUTH DOWN ATTACKS

Slight damage was caused at Sands' Mill in Newry on October 3rd by the detonation of some of the four incendiaries planted there. Some miles away, in Rostrevor, another ASU planted an incendiary at Campbell's garage, but it was unfortunately defused.

## CHECKPOINT AMBUSHES

Twelve IRA Volunteers in two separate ASUs simultaneously fired several shots at two British army checkpoints on roads leading into the South Armagh village of Crossmaglen, on October 4th. In one of the ambushes, on the Creggan Road, the IRA unit claimed to have hit at least one enemy soldier.

## RUC PAIR KILLED

Shortly before 9pm on October 6th, two South Down IRA Volunteers opened fire on two armed RUC men patrolling the Meadowlands estate in Downpatrick, killing one instantly and fatally wounding the other.

## ARMAGH AMBUSH

A six-strong Armagh city IRA active service unit launched an automatic rifle-fire and grenade ambush on a mobile RUC patrol as it drove through the Drum-breda estate on October 9th. Regrettably, two teenagers sitting watching TV at home were injured by shrapnel as a result of the attack, and the IRA subsequently apologised.

## BARRACKS SHOT UP

Members of a four-strong Belfast ASU poured heavy automatic gunfire into Woodbourne RUC barracks in West Belfast, on October 10th, from a firing position in a vacant flat 200 yards away. A chief inspector — the barracks' commanding officer — was hit in the arm and thigh in the attack and underwent emergency surgery.

## NEWRY MISTAKE

Tragically, later that afternoon in Newry, an IRA active service unit ambushed and shot dead Sean McShane — an innocent civilian — in a case of mistaken identity. The victim was said locally to bear a strong physical resemblance to a Newry RUC man. Apologising to his family for its mistake, the IRA announced that it had set up an urgent internal enquiry into the circumstances surrounding the incident.

## UNDERCOVER BRITS AMBUSHED

Derry IRA Volunteers fired



● A British soldier in Belfast's Turf Lodge had a lucky escape when he was blown across the road by an IRA bomb on October 26th

several shots at an undercover Brit unit hiding in the grounds of Magee College, on the night of October 13th. No hits were claimed.

## TYRONE LANDMINE

Two RUC men travelling along the Moor Road near Coalisland, County Tyrone, had a lucky escape on October 14th when IRA Volunteers detonated a 600lb bomb seconds prematurely. Their car was unable to stop in time and ended up in a huge crater caused by the bomb.

## COURTHOUSE BOMBED

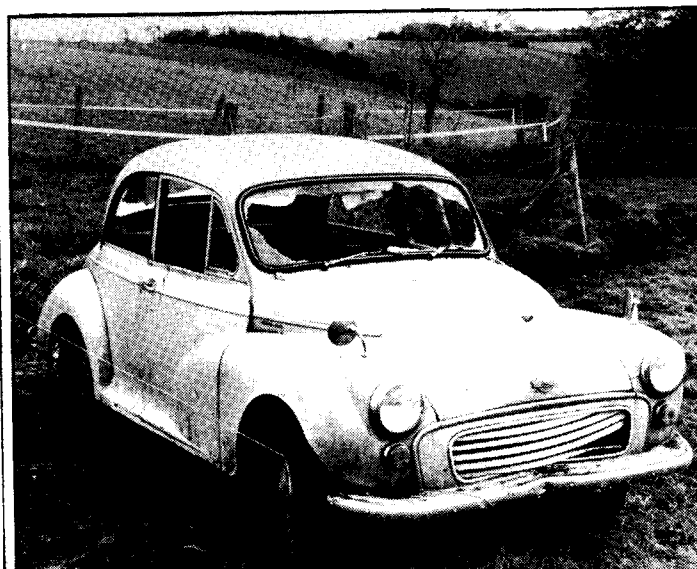
Hours later in Omagh, Tyrone Brigade IRA Volunteers devastated Omagh courthouse with a beer-keg bomb after penetrating the town's security zone. Two Volunteers, supported by an armed ASU, pushed the bomb into position in a shopping trolley!

## BRIT KILLED

One member of a Brit land-rover patrol was killed, and a second seriously injured, in a carefully-executed bomb attack on October 16th that had been several weeks in the planning. Volunteers detonated a 10lb remote-control shrapnel bomb which they had built into the city cemetery wall on the Lone Moor Road as a two-landrover patrol passed by. The dead Brit was killed instantly. As the ASU withdrew a Volunteer fired two shots at the patrol.

## UDR FATALITY

A five-strong Tyrone Brigade ASU, using automatic rifles, ambushed and shot dead a member of the UDR as he drove along a



● The bullet-riddled car of a UDR soldier who died in a Tyrone Brigade ambush on October 24th

lane on the outskirts of Dungannon on October 24th.

## TURF LODGE AMBUSH

A British soldier on foot patrol in the Turf Lodge estate in West Belfast was blown across the street, but escaped serious injury, when Belfast IRA Volunteers detonated a concealed bomb, on October 26th, as he passed by.

## CROSSMAGLEN CAR-BOMB

Later that day, in Crossmaglen, one member of the Grenadier Guards regiment was critically injured, and a second Brit only slightly less seriously, when South Armagh Volunteers detonated a small car-bomb in the village

square as their patrol approached.

## ARMAGH CAR-BOMB

One RUC man was injured in a commercial car-bomb attack in Armagh city carried out by Volunteers of the IRA's 1st Battalion, North Armagh Brigade, on October 28th. Three shops and a restaurant were devastated by the explosion in Scotch Street in a major disruption of the city's commercial life.

## DERRY RUC MAN KILLED

The following day, Derry IRA Volunteers executed a 35-year-old RUC man as he drove through the city's Ballymagroarty estate. Three Volunteers opened fire, hitting the RUC man in the head and killing him instantly



FROM THE MOMENT a new recruit enters the Irish Republican Army he or she undergoes a rigorous and intensive training to assess the individual Volunteer's level of commitment, general ability and particular aptitudes. After the initial recruitment lectures this period includes training in personal security

and anti-interrogation, basic intelligence work, political education — and of course training in the use of weapons.

In this supplied article, a Volunteer in the IRA's Belfast Brigade describes his experience of taking part in an IRA training camp.



● An IRA Volunteer field-strips a Ruger Mini-14

# FIVE DAYS IN AN IRA TRAINING CAMP

ons maintenance. The fourth poster is the simplest and most striking. A black-and-white sketch beneath the caption: "Faceless Men — British terrorists who rule our country," it takes a while before we realise that it is meant to depict the peaked cap and shoulders of an RUC man and is the target we'll be using for shooting practice. The 'face' has no shape and no features: when you look through the sights of an automatic rifle at a target 100 yards away, we will be told later on, the outline of the uniform — not the face itself — is all you see.

Almost the only other contents the room can boast of are a pile of books on the table, weapons manuals, republican literature, political books and pamphlets. The one surprise in the collection is a copy of Frederick Forsythe's *The Day Of The Jackal*, but on reflection even that doesn't seem to be out of place here. Finally, the black plastic sheeting tacked up across the window reinforces our awareness that the semi-derelict farmhouse we have just arrived in is thought locally to be uninhabited, and that despite its relative isolation the next few days will be spent on the alert against the possibility of garda raids. None of us is keen on spending the next few years in Portlaoise prison...

We had left Belfast about twelve hours earlier, travelling separately to avoid the risk of being arrest-



**S**HORTLY before midnight. The four of us, after scrambling across rock-strewn fields from where the last car dropped us off, are ushered quickly, without a word spoken, into a cramped and sparsely furnished room by two IRA Training Officers, and left on our own to look around.

Four sets of combat fatigues are laid out neatly beside a pile of folded sleeping bags. An assortment of pistols, two sub-machine guns, rifles, stand stacked against a wall next to plastic tubs full of ammunition. A few posters sellotaped to one wall provide the room's only decoration. One is of Bobby Sands. Two more are hand-drawn wallcharts illustrating operations procedures, breathing control, ammo calibres and weap-



● IRA weapons in common use: from top: shotgun, M1 carbine, Biretta sub-machine gun, 9mm automatic pistol, M1 (Garand) rifle, Ruger Mini-14

ed together if anything went wrong. We reached our first pick-up point in the Free State without incident, however, and made the pre-arranged contact with the local IRA. We then found ourselves waiting silently in a draughty bedroom until after dark, the four of us spending hours trying to find a game we all knew, with the 51-card pack which was all we could find in the room.

Night fell at last, thankfully, and we were smuggled out of the house and into a car, on our way now to the camp itself. Two changes of car later, several delays while other cars scouted ahead or while we doubled back, and an endless succession of winding country lanes behind us, we were just beginning to appreciate how the IRA is able to organise a regular flow of training camps for Volunteers across the North, despite the best efforts of the Garda Task Force. Just then, the car glided to a halt, two figures stepped forward from the shadows towards us, and the driver said: 'Okay. We're here.'

... The same sense of security and anticipation that we had experienced on the way is echoed again now, the moment the Training Officers enter the room from the adjoining kitchen. Each of us is immediately assigned responsibility for some of the weapons stacked against the wall. In the event of a raid on the camp at any time our first job is to grab our own particular weapons, and so throughout the camp we will always have to know exactly where the weapons have been left down. IRA Standing Orders forbid the use of firearms in the 26 counties other than for training, but the T/Os reckon

we've a fair chance of getting away if we're raided, as long as we're quick enough not to get surrounded in the farmhouse. In that case, we've no intention of leaving much-needed IRA weapons in Free State hands. The T/Os explain what direction we're all to head in if raided, and the spot where we'll all try and regroup.

After the raid procedure we're told to clean the weapons. It's something we'll do repeatedly in the course of the camp. One of the most frequent causes of a gun jamming is dirt and excess oil, and the result of this happening on an operation could be disastrous. On this occasion it's as well we're only training, as most of us aren't that sure what we're doing. Come to think of it, only one of us seems to know what exactly most of the weapons are, and maybe even he's bluffing it a bit... Hopefully we'll make up for the ignorance over the next few days.

It's now 2am and we get a cup of tea (at last!) and make tired conversation with the T/Os for a while in the kitchen, before four of us head for sleeping bags and the floor, leaving two to start the all-night 'staggered watch' in the kitchen. I'm shaken/kicked awake around 5am to start my three hours of 'stag' — propped up in a kitchen chair with a copy of *Small Arms Of The World* it's the only comfortable part of the night.



**B**REAKFAST at 11am, and it's a lot less leisured than it sounds. The water tank outdoors can't be cleaned (in case a passer-by sees movement)



● The Biretta 9mm sub-machine gun, field-stripped

and somehow it's full of frog spawn – most of it melts when the water's boiled, but it does nothing for the flavour of the tea. And the margarine tastes like gun grease.

The next nine or ten hours, almost without a break, are put to intensive use. The six of us – including the T/Os – huddle in the cramped bedroom around the pile of weapons: the Colt .45 and 9mm Browning Hi-Power pistols, a .357 magnum revolver, the semi-automatic M1 carbine and Ruger Mini-14 (a standard-issue RUC weapon), the fully-automatic (C)AR15 and AK47, a bolt-action .22, the Italian Biretta and Israeli Uzi 9mm sub-machine guns, a shotgun and the heavy Gewher that feels like an elephant gun.

One of the T/Os summarises the characteristics and capabilities of each of the weapons as we come to it – the accurate range, the practical killing range, ammo calibre and magazine size, the weapon's length and weight, how the firing action works, methods of concealment. Each of us then takes turns to field-strip the weapon and reassemble it, naming the parts and repeating the characteristics etc. It's unlikely that if a weapon jammed in the course of an operation the Volunteer would have the time to field-strip it, but the constant handling of the component parts helps to 'demystify' the guns, which most of us haven't handled before, and so to feel comfortable with them.

'Safe handling' becomes a constant training theme, and we go through the procedure repeatedly:- remove the 'mag' and check that the breech is clear as soon as you handle a weapon, check the 'safe' mechanism is working, apply the 'safe', finger off the trigger except when firing, never point the weapon at anyone when not in action. Like the field-stripping, we all keep forgetting bits at first (laughter when someone inadvertently swings round with the carbine, everyone ducks melodramatically though knowing it's unloaded), but gradually the safety procedure beats itself into a routine.

Firing technique comes next. We look at the different

postures a Volunteer can adopt when firing from ambush positions: prone, standing and kneeling; or for short-range executions. How to work in pairs, one shooting, the other covering. How to grip the weapon properly to maximise accuracy. How to fire:- sight the target steadily, take a breath, breathe out taking the first pressure on the trigger with the finger tip, and as the final bit of air 'drifts' from the lungs the weapon should fire almost without your being aware of it, and so without jerking at the last moment. Later, when we get to 'live' firing, we realise to our cost just how much the slightest tremor or 'flinch' affects accuracy over a range of 100/200 yards, and how much relaxed concentration is needed to get the necessary accuracy.

By this time the acquired information is starting to form kaleidoscopic patterns inside my head, and it's just as well we're almost finished for today. The whole process gets slowed down from time to time when we hear noises outside the farmhouse. Then we have to sit rigid and in silence, eyes swivelling only to locate the weapons we've been assigned in case it's a raid. Invariably, of course, it turns out to be a car passing on the road below, or a grazing cow that's strayed near!

Ambush technique concludes the lessons for today. The Brits and RUC have introduced a new flak jacket in the past two years which is practically invulnerable to present calibres of ammunition used by the IRA. So Volunteers are now trained not to bother attempting body shots on uniformed enemy personnel, but to aim instead for the head. The disadvantage in terms of diminished target area is more than offset by the advantages, both that it encourages Volunteers to 'get in close' instead of attempting improbable long shots, and that it requires more concentration and so produces greater accuracy. The T/Os also elaborate on what parts of an armoured vehicle to aim at, how to fire most effectively in teams, and where and how to fire constructively after the all-important first aimed shot.

We're feeling knowledgeable enough now to take the Brits



## The armed struggle



An Irish Republican Army Volunteer re-assembles the Biretta 9mm sub-machine gun (in sequence from top to bottom) and (right) inserts the magazine



on straightaway, hand to hand if necessary, although we've yet to fire a 'live' round, so it's maybe just as well the T/Os decide to call it a day and reintroduce reality with something to eat. More frog spawn and gun grease, but it's well received after long hours of concentration.

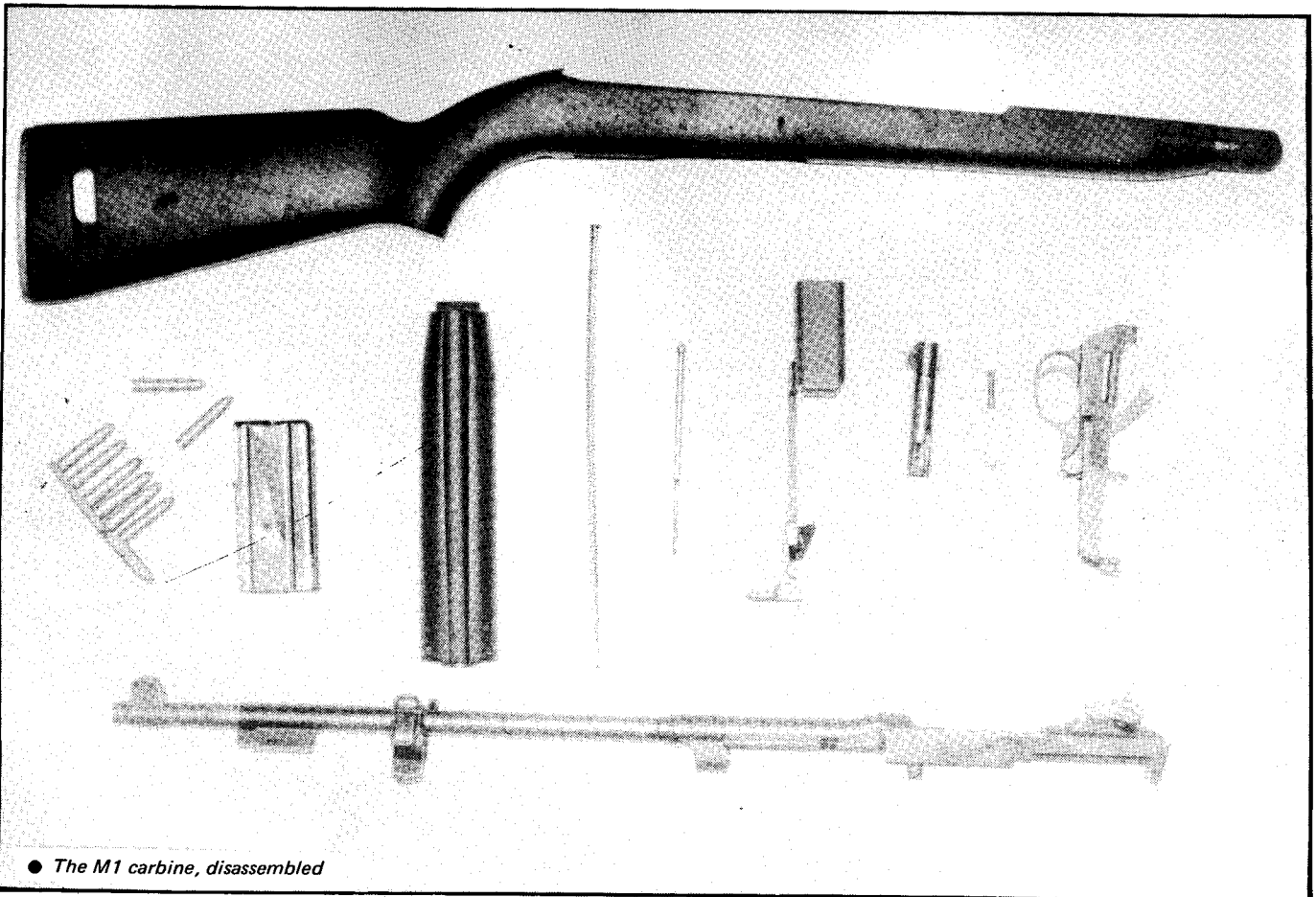
Tomorrow's going to be a long day too. We'll be moving on to the firing range after dark, and there'll be no proper sleep until we get back on the following night. So, after an hour or two of yarning in the warmth of the kitchen, five of us head for the sleeping bags leaving the remaining one to start the 'stag' by himself. I'm so tired tonight that even the floor looks soft.



**I**T'S early afternoon before we're up and about, but once breakfast is over we're quickly busy again.

We take turns first of all to fix the .22 rifle firmly in a vice, and then to line the sights up precisely on a drawing pin one of the T/Os has stuck into the door six feet away. When we're satisfied that our aim is spot on, the T/O checks it. The point of the exercise, obviously, is to encourage absolute precision of aim. The T/O emphasises that even the slightest inaccuracy at six feet is multiplied 50 times at 100 yards range. In practical operational terms, it means at least the difference between an enemy 'kill' and a graze or near-miss. The vice technique will also come into use later on, when, maybe at a subsequent camp, we learn how to 'zero' a weapon fitted with a telescopic sight, for maximum sniping accuracy. 'Zeroing' itself is dependent on total consistency of accuracy.

While one of us uses the vice, the others work away individually, stripping and re-stripping weapons, practising breathing control, testing steadiness of aim, going through the jamming procedure ('if the weapon jams, first re-cock and try



● The M1 carbine, disassembled

to fire again; failing that, if you're using a sub, turn the weapon upside down and try to shake the jammed round clear; if it still won't fire, remove the 'mag' and clear the breech before reloading...').

After an hour or so of working like this, and recapping over some of yesterday, we pin up a "Faceless Man" target and fire some air pistol shots at it. The 'enemy' survives with only a few flesh wounds. We're beginning to think we can't hit the proverbial barn door when one of the T/Os (perhaps only to boost morale!) says that the pistol isn't very accurate.

A break for tea, and then back to look at a card on which about 20 rounds of ammo of assorted calibres have been pasted. We're told to memorise these calibres and the specific weapon or weapons they fit:- 7.92 (Gewher), 7.62 Short (AK47), 7.62 NATO (SLR, FN-FAL), .30 Carbine (M1), .223 (AR15), .45, 9mm, .38, .22, 22.250, .45 Colt and so on. If we're sent to an ammo dump one day to collect rounds of a specific calibre, this will come in useful. Right now, our heads are spinning with the effort of it.

With all this talk of guns and ammunition, it'd be wrong to give the impression that an IRA training camp is purely a military experience. Practical limitations make it largely so – time is short, with a lot of weapons training that can't easily be done elsewhere, and there's not much point having formal political lectures surrounded by IRA guns, with all the risk of a raid – but there is a political element to the camp nonetheless, mostly informal (at meals and tea-breaks) but quite informative at times. On one occasion, somehow, we get talking about Reagan and American politics, and that develops into a discussion about the Tories and the Labour left, and then about republican electoral strategy. It all ends up pretty intense and animated, with camp democracy meaning that even the T/Os have to shout to get their point of view heard (a very republican style of discussion!).

It'll soon be pitch-black outside, and we're getting ready to

move. Almost the last task is to check the assorted rounds of ammo we'll be taking with us, smooth any rounds that are a bit pitted with rust from being buried in a dump using emery cloth, and discard any dud or badly corroded rounds. The camp's low on food now, so we each get handed a small rations pack which will have to do us for about 26 hours.

A car pulls up outside, its lights switched off as it approaches, and two of us climb in, along with one of the T/Os. The three of us are moving off first to establish a camp at the firing range several miles away, with the others following on an hour later. We're getting driven the first part of the journey, but we still have a couple of miles to march after that.

Lying flat on the folded-down car seats for concealment, dressed in IRA combat uniform and clutching an array of automatic weapons between us, I can visualise the looks of astonishment there would be if any republican-harassing gardai inadvertently stopped our car and found us jumping out. The hypothetical situation doesn't arise of course – the roads having been thoroughly scouted beforehand – and we reach the drop-off point without incident.

The cross-country hike takes just under an hour. It's an unusual sensation to be marching through the countryside uniformed and armed, even though it's dark and we don't expect to be seen.

We've been marching in single file behind the T/O and suddenly he stops as the ground rises steeply. We're grateful for what we imagine is a short breather before marching on, but then he stoops to pull some strips of foam from behind a rock, and then scrapes away the surface of a patch of ground to reveal some canvas bags. Soon we're busy constructing a makeshift shelter and camouflaging with materials that have remained hidden since the previous shooting camp. There's even a gas bottle and a small stove (I pity the poor devil who had to haul them here!), so we'll be able to brew tea.

It takes about another hour to complete the shelter in the darkness, and we're just collapsing thankfully inside, the tea-

pot almost boiling, when the other three arrive breathless.

Too cramped to stretch out for any sleep, we sit around drinking tea and talking through the night...



**A**S SOON as one of the T/Os has constructed an acoustic 'tunnel' we're ready to start firing. The 'tunnel' on this occasion consists of a triangular wire frame with narrow wooden supports, placed on top of a large flat rock several feet high, which we'll be using to rest on while shooting. The wire frame is covered by strips of foam, with our sleeping bags laid over the top. The whole structure is about ten feet long and eighteen inches at its apex. (Another method of constructing a firing 'tunnel' is by using a series of car tyres arranged rim to rim.)

Its practical effect is to muffle the initial percussion of the bullet as it's fired, although the 'crack' as it breaks the sound barrier is still audible for some distance.

The firing range itself has been carefully chosen so that the land relief acts as a barrier to sound travel. The shooting takes place in a hollow, so that the bulk of the sound is caught by the higher land around it and deflected upwards rather than outwards. Despite these precautions there are always two of us positioned in the high ground keeping watch on the approaches.

This is a 'standard camp' for beginners, so unlike the more specialised 'sniper camps' we do most of our shooting at only 25 yards range with a few shots at 100 yards. The object is for the T/Os to get a rough guide to our standard of heavy calibre shooting, and then to gauge our ability more precisely with a series of shots from the .22 bolt action rifle. The results will be used to determine whether we will come back later for sniper training.

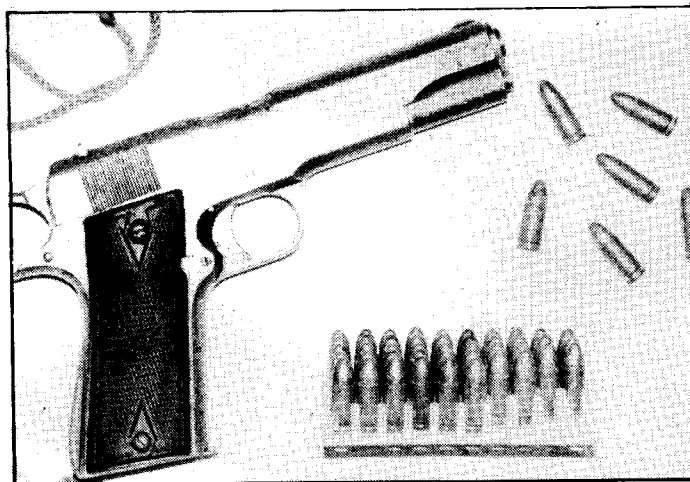
Taking it in turns for each calibre of weapon we fire off a few shots. The thing that surprises most of us is that there's no noticeable 'recoil', although the 'flash' is bigger than I expected and there's a terrible smell of cordite. Firing the Ruger, which has a great 'feel' to it, produces a ringing in the ears, and the Gewher not only looks like an elephant gun but sounds like one as well. We're told it's an accurate sniping weapon at ranges up to 500 yards.

Our confidence is on the increase after seeing the results of the heavy calibre shooting, though there are certainly no Annie Oakleys among us. One of the T/Os is patiently explaining the distinction between a marksman and a sniper. The latter may not be a crack shot, but unlike many of the former category he does possess the toughness of character and individualist aptitude of mind to 'create' the right conditions for a successful snipe. Above all, he tells us, it comes down to total concentration, self-confidence and an unflagging desire for perfection.

The adrenalin's pumping but the total self-confidence has still to be acquired as we each get down to fire 25 rounds of .22 ammunition, in groups of five into the five miniature "Faceless Men" on each target. The point of the exercise is to get tight grouping on all five shots in the centre of the blank white space between the peaked cap and the shoulders of the 'RUC man'. Four great shots and the last pulled an inch off centre is no good, we learn to our regular frustration. We see the point when it's explained that a one-inch miss at that range represents four inches at only 100 yards, the difference between a 'kill' and whistling a bullet past the enemy's ear.



● A 9mm automatic pistol, field-stripped, and (below) assembled



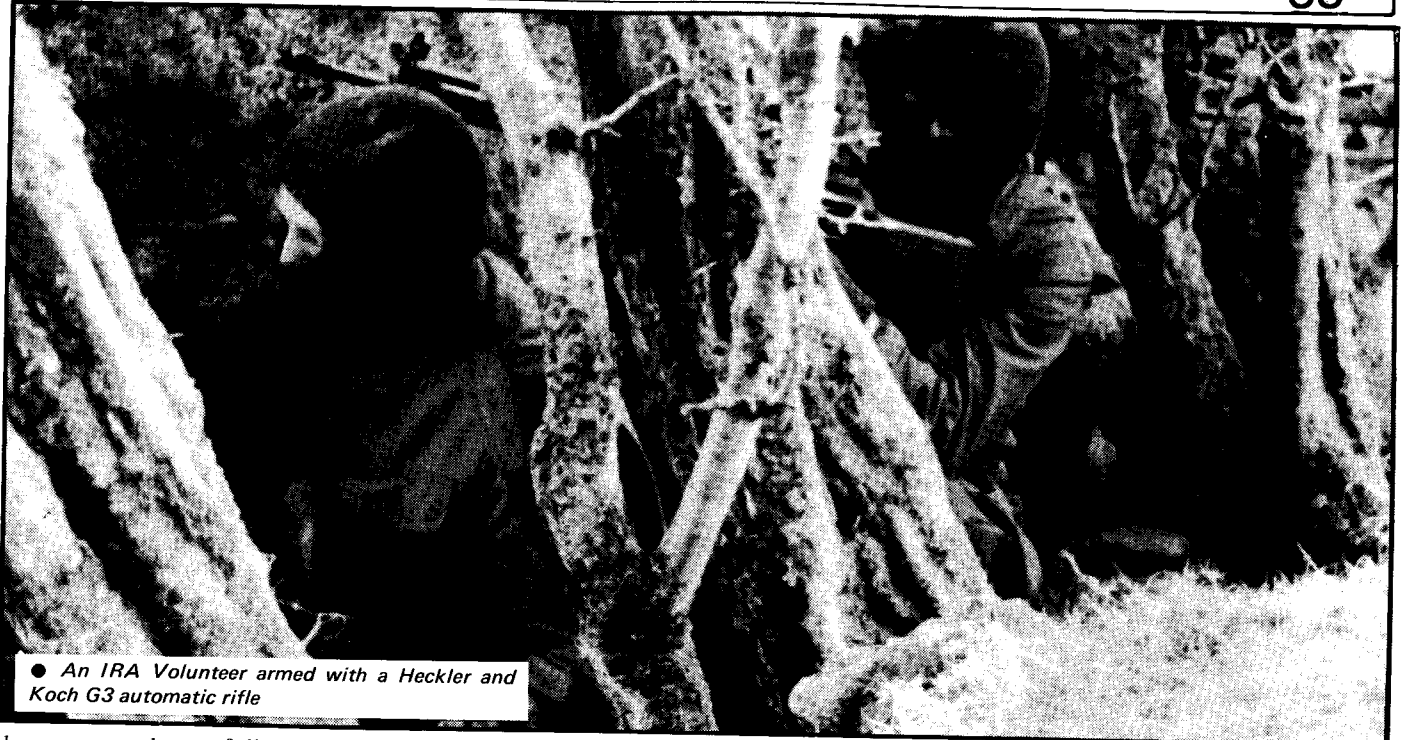
A Volunteer's 'grouping' is worked out by adding together the furthest distances between shots over the five groups, adding one-fifth to the total, and dividing by five. From this the T/Os can work out the probability (expressed as a percentage) of a particular Volunteer achieving a 'kill' at a given range with a given number of shots.

Eventually the shooting's over, the shooting 'tunnel' dismantled, and the hundreds of spent ammo cases (and the cigarette butts) gathered up. Then all that remains to do is to dismantle the camp itself, carefully cover our tracks so that even aerial reconnaissance would not know we had been there, and prepare to move out.

This time there won't be any car to bring us back part of the way, so it's a long, long march across rough country weighed down by packs and rifles. A heavy blanket of cloud has covered the moon so we make slow progress, one uncertain step after another, making it all the more tiring. The T/Os tell us that if at any stage we're confronted by the Task Force as we approach the camp, we'll move back the way we've come and try and lose them in the darkness. But the four of us are so exhausted from this unaccustomed country march, too used to Belfast's tarmac pavements, that I reckon we'd just surrender if anyone mentioned retracing our steps!

At last, the shadow of our farmhouse camp comes into view. First a quick reconnaissance, during which a grazing cow momentarily gets mistaken for a Free State raiding party,





● An IRA Volunteer armed with a Heckler and Koch G3 automatic rifle

then we crawl gratefully indoors and collapse. Even the tea tastes good after all that.



**N**OT surprisingly perhaps, the final day is more relaxed than those that have gone before, the anticlimax after the shooting. Everyone had been a little keyed-up beforehand, wondering how he or she would do, but now – for better or worse – the results are a pile of used targets which the T/Os are scrutinising as part of the individual assessment of each Volunteer which will be sent back to the Brigade area. The assessment covers all aspects of behaviour and ability while at the camp, and is important insofar as it may affect a Volunteer's future deployment by the Army.

The tension which is inevitable when six strangers are forced upon each other without a break, for five days, and which has flared up briefly now and again, has its uses too in giving clues to a Volunteer's character, as well as giving us an understanding of the type of personality clashes we will inevitably have to cope with in operational conditions. I, for one, am weighing up my three Belfast comrades and trying to assess how I'd feel about being in the same Active Service Unit with them (none of us knows at this stage if we'll be working together when the camp is over), and I'm sure they're all doing the same.

Back to work in the afternoon, talking about other aspects of a Volunteer's work (other than firing a gun, that is). The first topic is operational intelligence, how to build up patterns of the enemy's movements, and to develop initial sources of intelligence to identify potential targets. Then we itemise the actual planning of an operation: the 'run-back' deployment of personnel, limiting their involvement to the 'need to know', the use of houses and vehicles, the choice of weapons, and so on. We discuss the need to cover every contingency for what may go wrong in the original plan of operation, the need for personal security, how informers utilise loose-talk, and how to

maximise the anonymity and operational independence of an ASU.

Finally, we discuss the all-important topic of building popular confidence in the integrity and professionalism of the IRA and its Volunteers, to the extent where sympathetic civilians are prepared to help in some aspect of military activity or to increase the level of their assistance. This covers areas such as providing houses for arms dumps, houses from which to group before an operation and to return to afterwards, meeting houses, call houses, wash houses (for after using weapons), grub houses, snippets of local intelligence on the enemy... The list of possible assistance is endless, and includes of course the equally valuable non-military help which civilians can provide the republican struggle with.

It's now early evening. Time to get ready to leave. A lengthy process which involves once again stripping, cleaning and oiling the weapons before they're taken away to be buried in a dump. Once we leave there'll be little evidence that the farmhouse has been occupied recently, until the next camp begins. We all strip and clean too (no oiling for us, just a bit of frog spawn in the shampoo rinse), we don't anticipate any problems on our way back from the camp but we want to get rid of forensic evidence that we've been in contact with firearms.

...A car pulls up outside, its lights switched off as it approaches, and we're ready to go. Hurried goodbyes. See you again. Good luck. Squashed up on the floor of the car (again!), this time unarmed and in civilian clothes. Another series of cars and detours. Back in the draughty bedroom waiting for the morning and the return journey...

What happens next? More training camps perhaps. Into an operational unit hopefully, to put what we've learned into effect. Our experience of a training camp, tiring but enjoyable and completely functional, has made two things clear. One is that however long the British army takes to train its mercenary squaddies for combat, they can never be as well-prepared both politically and psychologically, or so highly motivated, as republican soldiers (and in most cases no better trained in any military sense). The other is that for as long as British occupation continues, the IRA will retain the organisational ability and ingenuity to ensure that, no matter how many republicans are killed or imprisoned, there will never be any shortage of trained Volunteers to spearhead the revolutionary warfare of the IRA!

FOR MANY YEARS the Black community in Britain has been oppressed by the British establishment. Many of the older members of that community spent their childhoods in British colonies and went to England for exactly the same reasons as many Irish people. Today the younger people, the sons and daughters of those earlier economic exiles, are struggling for their rights and for ways to develop their struggle. The last decade has seen many changes within the Black community, and like all living struggles these changes have been marked in verse. IRIS publishes these poems, some of them in dialect which may be awkward to Irish people (read them slowly — then in reggae) as an expression of solidarity with Black brothers and sisters in Britain and throughout the world.

# FORCES OF VICTORY

## Stand firm

ON January 18th 1981 thirteen Black teenagers died in what became known as the New Cross massacre when the house in which a birthday party was taking place (No. 439) was fire-bombed by racists (a fourteenth later died). Despite numerous racist attacks in the area that had preceded the massacre, the police did little to discover who was responsible, instead speculating that not racists but Black gatecrashers were responsible, and then that the blaze had been caused by a heater overturning!

The Black People's Day of Action was a massive demonstration through the centre of London on March 6th 1981 protesting against the police failure to carry out a proper investigation, and against the distorted press coverage of the tragedy.

*We met at the Moonshot, a light rain fell.  
Some said the sky was crying in sympathy  
for the thirteen we lost.  
The bull horn roared time and again.  
"Stand firm Brothers and Sisters. Stand firm,"  
said the voice.  
Two thousand or so had gathered this day,  
to let the world know we had something to say.*

*Stand firm Brothers and Sisters,  
Stand firm from today.  
We're gonna show these people  
that we're here to stay.  
Had the party from the North arrived on the spot?  
Had the people from the South arrived yet or not?  
We'll go without them, for we're marching today.  
"Stand firm Brothers and Sisters. Stand firm,"  
said the voice.*

*The light rain fell as the march got underway.  
What was to happen? What would we achieve?  
Would we get results?  
Questions that passed through everyone's head;  
No answer was needed because thirteen were dead.  
Moonshot behind us, 439 to come.  
"Stand firm Brothers and Sisters, Stand firm,"  
said the voice.*

*The flock of two thousand had now swelled to four,  
Black people in unity, marching ready for war.  
"Keep in the road please," the stewards would shout.  
"Stand firm Brothers and Sisters, Stand firm,"  
said the voice.*

*While the African drums pounded and warmed up our blood,  
and the sky cried lightly and soaked through our clothes.  
Stand firm Brothers and Sisters. Stand firm on this day.*

*We paused for a few moments outside 439,  
in tribute to the thirteen who'd committed no crime.  
Mother in sympathy cried with the rain,  
Four thousand people vowed  
it should not happen again.  
In defence of our rights we're ready to fight,  
Stand firm Brothers and Sisters. Stand firm on this day.*

*As we slowly moved off from outside 439,  
few people looked back for a second time.  
On this day we move forward Black Brothers and Sisters.  
No more hoping and praying or following behind.  
No more hoping and praying or following behind.  
Today we stand firm to make our voice heard,  
for thirteen are dead; they don't say a word.  
"Stand firm Brothers and Sisters, Stand firm,"  
said the voice.*

*New Cross to Blackfriars, and five thousand strong.  
Now only the police could make things go wrong.  
Black Brothers and Sisters, stand firm on this day,  
We'll make these policemen get out of our way.  
Riot shields and truncheons, fire-bombs and guns.  
They'll not stop us now.  
The march has begun.  
Stand Firm Brothers and Sisters. Stand Firm From Today.  
6 March 1981*

— Burt



South University  
The 1960s  
Feb 1964 - 12.1.1981

BLACK PEOPLES DAY  
OF ACTION  
NEW YORK MASSAGE ACTION CTEE



# It dread inna Inglan

(for George Lindo)

dem frame-up George Lindo  
up in Bradford Toun  
but di Bradford Blacks  
dem a rally roun

mi seh dem frame-up George Lindo  
up in Bradford Toun  
but di Bradford Blacks  
dem a rally roun....

Maggi Tatcha on di go  
wid a racist show  
but a she haffi go  
kaw,  
rite now,  
African  
Asian  
West Indian  
an' Black British  
stan firm inna Inglan  
inna disya time yah

far noh mattah wat dey say,  
come wat may,  
we are here to stay  
inna Inglan,  
inna disya time yah.....

George Lindo  
him is a working man  
George Lindo  
him is a family man  
George Lindo  
him nevah do no wrang  
George Lindo  
di innocent one  
George Lindo  
him noh carry no daggah  
George Lindo  
dem haffi let him go  
George Lindo  
dem bettah free him now!

--Linton Kwesi Johnson



# Forces of victory

(for Race Today Renegades and  
the Carnival Development Committee)

wi comin' wid wi army  
soh don't y'u get balmy  
wi comin' wid wi plane  
it gonna drive y'u insane  
wi comin' wid wi guns  
an' wi mekin wi roun's  
wi comin' wid wi tank  
an' Babylan get vank

beg y'u call a physician  
fi di poor opposition  
dem gat no ammunition  
an' dem gat no position  
beg y'u call a physician  
fi di poor opposition  
dem gat no ammunition  
an' dem gat no position

we're di forces af vict'ry  
an' wi comin' rite through  
we're di forces af vict'ry  
now wat y'u gonna do

we're di forces af vict'ry  
an' we comin' rite through  
we're di forces af vict'ry  
now wat y'u gonna do!

— Linton Kwesi Johnson



# Fite dem back

we gonna smash their brains in  
cause they ain't got nofink in 'em  
we gonna smash their brains in  
cause they ain't got nofink in 'em...

some a dem say dem a niggah haytah  
an' some a dem say dem a black beatah  
some a dem say dem a black stabah  
an' some a dem say dem a paki bashah

fashist an di attack  
noh baddah worry 'bout dat  
fashist an di attack  
wi wi' fite dem back  
fashist an di attack  
den wi countah-attack  
fashist an di attack  
den wi drive dem back

we gonna smash their brains in  
cause they ain't got nofink in 'em  
we gonna smash their brains in  
cause they ain't got nofink in em

— Linton Kwesi Johnson

GEORGE LINDO, a working-class West Indian living in Bradford, was arrested in August 1977 and convicted of the armed robbery of £67 from a betting office on the basis of a signed 'confession' to police. He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment despite asserting his innocence at the trial. A year later, another man confessed that he had in fact carried out the robbery, and subsequent enquiries revealed that two detectives involved in obtaining the Lindo 'confession' had been suspended from the West Yorkshire police, having been found to have forged statements in two previous investigations. George was eventually released in March 1979 after serving the bulk of his sentence, and was later awarded £24,000 when he sued the police.

# The Kitson experiment



● FRANK KITSON

*'BRITAIN'S MILITARY STRATEGY IN IRELAND: THE KITSON EXPERIMENT'*  
by Roger Faligot — published by Brandon/  
Zed Press, 1983 (p/b IR£6.95; h/b IR£15.00)

REVIEW BY CATHAL MCGIVERN

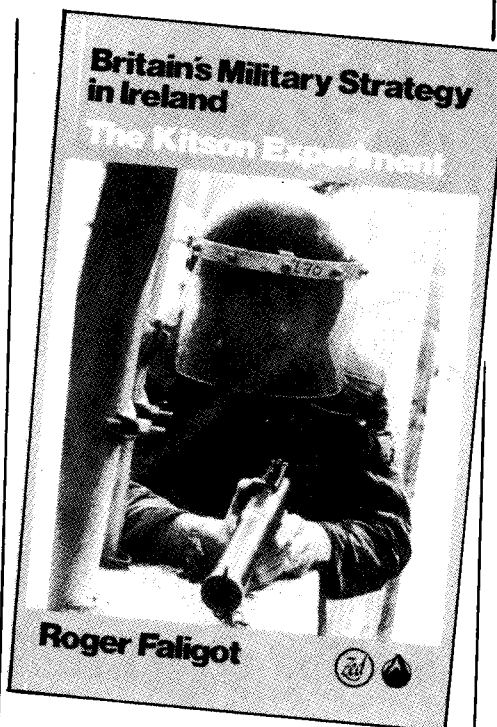
**T**HIS book is a detailed survey of Britain's military confrontation with the IRA. Roger Faligot, a well-known Breton-French journalist and author, argues that with the putting into practice of General Frank Kitson's theory of low intensity operations, the deployment of the SAS, MI6's dirty tricks department, and tough measures against political prisoners, the six counties have become a laboratory to experiment with new methods of controlling civilian populations.

Kitson, who became a full general in July 1982 and commander-in-chief of the British Land Forces had served in British colonial wars in Kenya, Malaya and Cyprus before coming to Ireland. His book *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency and Counter Insurgency* was published in 1971, but later withdrawn from circulation. From 1970 to 1972 Kitson was in Ireland commanding the 39th Infantry Brigade which covered Belfast. Faligot's account of the implementation of Kitson's theories in Ireland, which came into full operation about 1975, makes fascinating, if chilling, reading.

Though Kitson had no sympathy for the hundreds of Irishmen thrown into prison without trial on August 9th 1971 he was a reluctant participant in internment for he knew that, carried out as it was without any real knowledge of IRA infrastructure, it would not only fail to put the IRA out of action, but would intensify support for it in the nationalist areas.

Within the British politico-military establishment he pushed the view that the situation had developed to such a point that, in order to isolate the IRA, it would be necessary to: initiate a fake peace movement; manipulate loyalist gangs and orchestrate a campaign of assassinations that would terrorise the population; and wage a massive psychological war — using the SAS and other special units — to discredit the IRA and, in the short term, to try and split them between left/right, doves/hawks, North/South, and military/political axes.

The programme was too ambitious however for the Whitelaw regime who, apart from implementing the propaganda war and an invasion of the no-go areas to engage in control of populations, adopted a more traditional plan: direct rule, brutal repression, indiscriminate



inate internment without trial and Bloody Sunday.

In 1972 Kitson had failed to convince his superiors of the need for a *co-ordinated* counter-insurgency offensive, but some of his more brutal suggestions, like the assassination campaign against Catholics were kept in mind. And though on April 22nd 1972 he was returned to Britain, gradually his ideas made headway in the North, so that — to quote Faligot — *"from 1975 onwards, they were totally implemented and his theories reached the top circles in the British army, research centres, lobbies and think-tanks within NATO, and the ruling classes within Europe, beginning with West Germany, where he continued his career."*

The book contains detailed and well-documented evidence on events about which the general public were successfully hoodwinked by British army propagandists and an eagerly collaborationist establishment media. I myself clearly recall how, on the day the IRA successfully executed five agents of the British army's Military Reconnaissance Force in the Four Square Laundry van in Twinbrook, and in a massage parlour on the Antrim Road, an inhabitant of Twinbrook, prompted by a TV reporter, supplied the ritual remark for the TV screens, about *"an ordinary man* (the MRF driver of the van!) *just going about his daily work."*

Faligot shows that among British reporters and editors there were always plenty willing to put out any story, however fantastic, as long as it served the British war effort in this

country. Eamonn McCann of the Dublin-based *Sunday World* is quoted: *"The media have been active participants in the war, not disinterested observers of it... history has proven that the artificial state of Northern Ireland cannot be maintained except by force of arms. To support the existence of the state is therefore to accept the necessity for violence. No newspaper which supports the British troops in Ireland can afford to tell the truth."*

Active support for the British army of occupation in Ireland from the British press has on occasions been so obvious that it gave rise to jokes like the one quoted by Faligot as going the rounds in Irish press circles: *"I never remember which one is which: The Observer is MI6 and The Sunday Times is MI5 — or is it the other way around?"*

The history of the Peace People is admirably traced. As early as 1971 Frank Kitson had dreamed up the creation of a 'movement for peace' which would stimulate the political isolation of the IRA from the population of the ghettos, on the lines of a similar tactic that had already been used in Vietnam and Algeria.

The tragedy that actually sparked off the formation of the Women's Peace Movement in August 1976 is also examined. Contrary to the story put out by the British army within the hour, only British soldiers fired shots. Volunteer Danny Lennon was already shot dead at the wheel when his car careered into the Maguire children. Moreover, according to various statements, including those of the late Mrs Maguire, and to indications that filtered down from the post-mortems (the findings of which the authorities have always declined to reveal) her children had been hit by British army SLR bullets *before* the car struck them. Such realities did not of course prevent the British cynically manipulating for political ends the initially emotional response that occurred.

I have really only managed to skim the surface of an excellent, information-crammed book. Get it and study it.

## Spies under a spotlight

*'British Intelligence and Covert Action'*  
by Jonathan Bloch and Patrick FitzGerald  
— published by Brandon/Junction, 1983  
(IR£6.95 p/b)

REVIEW BY PETER HAYES

**T**HE 'Casuro holidays affair' — in which two Irish couples revealed that they had unwittingly been guests of British Intelligence on expensive 'prize' holidays in Spain, in failed bids to recruit them as informers — might well make it appear that there's more money involved than actual intelligence in the murky world of British covert operations.

Indeed, Bloch and FitzGerald's comprehensive account of the British government's covert attempts to give an added impetus to its official diplomacy, particularly in the affairs of the Middle East and post-colonial Africa, is frequently a tale of costly Foreign

Office and MI6 miscalculations and follies that at best delay rather than fundamentally alter the course of political events.

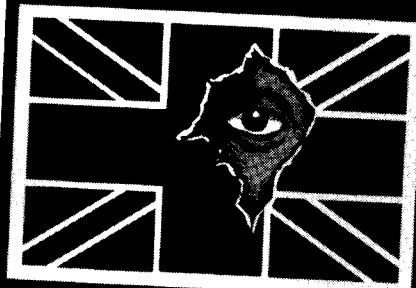
Nevertheless, the centrality of intelligence operations in every aspect of British political affairs, both domestic and foreign, is well argued by Bloch and FitzGerald, particularly in their detailed survey of the links between intelligence and the popular media, and the use of the SAS in 'unofficial' and often mercenary wars.

The book reveals, for instance, how the post-war Labour government in Britain set up an Information Research Department to create 'grey' propaganda (a mixture of slanted facts and total fiction) against 'international communism'. As well as sponsoring publishing houses who would publish propagandist tracts, IRD set up a number of news organisations in the Middle East that were little other than 'fronts' for MI6. One of these, the Arab News Agency, became Reuters' sole news gathering agent in the Middle East between 1954-1969.

The shadowy use of supposedly 'retired' members of the SAS to stiffen the ranks of mercenary forces recruited by security specialists *officially* frowned on by the British Foreign Office is perhaps one of the most illuminating areas covered by Bloch and FitzGerald. The SAS are perceived primarily as a specialist assassination unit, and assassination (unofficially of course) is an integral feature of British covert operations — MI6, for instance, repeatedly plotted to kill the Egyptian premier Nasser (then regarded as the Ghaddafi of the Arab world) in the years after 1952.

## British Intelligence and Covert Action

Jonathan Bloch & Patrick Fitzgerald



with an introduction by PHILIP AGEE

**British Intelligence and Covert Action** contains useful insights into the organisational structuring of the British intelligence world — a Who's Who of military personnel and senior civil servants. One interesting inclusion for

republicans is the mention of Lieutenant-General Sir James Glover as Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Intelligence) — obviously his candid (and complimentary) assessment of the IRA did his career prospects no harm at all. Elsewhere is a lengthy section on covert operations in Ireland, both North and South — interesting enough but little new, and republicans will be surprised to learn, for example, that according to the authors the Republican Movement has only recently rejected "the legitimacy of the Dublin government."

There's also a mention of Edward Heath's chairmanship of an international advisory council to a firm of political risk analysts known as IRIS — no, not *the republican magazine*, but the International Reporting and Information Systems. Though how he fits the job in among all his other non-political pursuits beats me.

Overall, an interesting and readable book; recommended.

A mention also for a new journal/newsletter about 'intelligence, parapolitics, state structures and so forth' called (somewhat curiously) **The Lobster**. Issue No. 1 (September 1983) contains an interesting article on intelligence involvement in the Kinvara Boys Home affair, and numerous 'shorts' on aspects of the dirty world of covert operations that don't really appeal to me but might to those more interested than I am in the nitty-gritty of spy-watching. Worth reading if you are. Available for 65p (sterling) — or a six-issue subscription for £2.50 — from Robin Ramsay, 17c Pearson Avenue, Hull, HU5 2SX (cheques made out to Steve Dorril).

# Republican Publications

REPUBLICAN PUBLICATIONS stocks a wide range of books, posters, records, badges, postcards and T-shirts, a brief selection of which is listed here.

A full list can be obtained by sending an SAE to Republican Publications, 2a Monagh Crescent, Turf Lodge, Belfast (telephone 620768); or 44 Parnell Square, Dublin 1 (telephone 726932). Postage to be added to all prices.

1984 Republican Diary (124 pages)	Sterling	Irish
1984 Republican Resistance Calendar	£2.00	£2.00
T-shirts (state size when ordering)	£1.00	£1.20
	£3.00	£3.25

### BOOKS

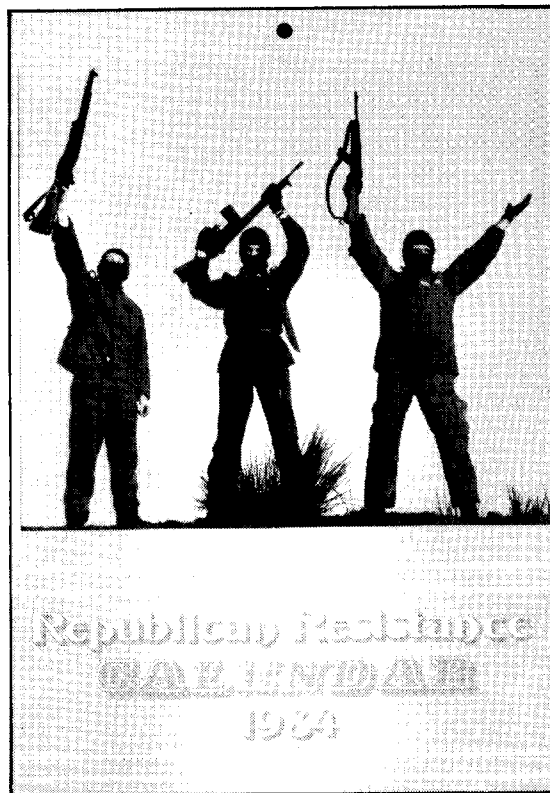
The Diary of Bobby Sands	.35	.40
The Writings of Bobby Sands	.50	.50
Prison Poems by Bobby Sands	£1.00	£1.10
Cormac Strikes Back (resistance cartoons from the North)	£2.50	£2.50
The Informers	.30	.30

### POSTERS

Guerrilla Days in Ireland	.30	.35
Ireland (British repression)	.35	.40
They May Kill the Revolutionary But Never the Revolution	.75	.80
Resistance	.30	.35
The Rhythm of Time	.30	.35
Bobby Sands	.65	.70

### RECORDS

Bobby Sands from Belfast by the Irish Brigade	£1.20	£1.30
The Time Has Come by Christy Moore	£1.30	£1.40
The Wicklow Boy (Nicky Kelly) by Christy Moore	£1.50	£1.60
The Ballad of Joe McDonnell by the Wolfe Tones	£1.50	£1.65





# Pamphlets and poetry

BY GEAROID MacARDLE

**D**ESMOND GREAVES is well known for his authoritative work on James Connolly and Liam Mellows, his writings in the *Irish Democrat* and his books on the British involvement in Ireland, so his latest literary offering, a book of poetry, comes as a pleasant surprise.

*Four Letter Verses and The Mountbatten Award*, published by Martin Brian and O'Keefe, is a collection (Greaves' first?) of 37 poems in which he reflects on Ireland, the Irish in Britain, the British in Ireland and other more mundane though — through Greaves' eyes — equally interesting topics.

*The Mountbatten Award* is the longest poem and one which I enjoyed immensely. Part of the enjoyment of poetry of course is that, unlike prose, you can discover new nuances and new verbal delights by reading and re-reading. Desmond Greaves' book of poetry is filled with such delights, with his very active social conscience adding its subtle, ironic touch to many of the subjects he scrutinises. If you enjoy poetry, you'll enjoy *Four Letter Verses and The Mountbatten Award*.

**S**EAMUS HEANEY'S work, even with those who don't enjoy poetry, has quite rightly won him acclaim as one of our foremost Irish poets.

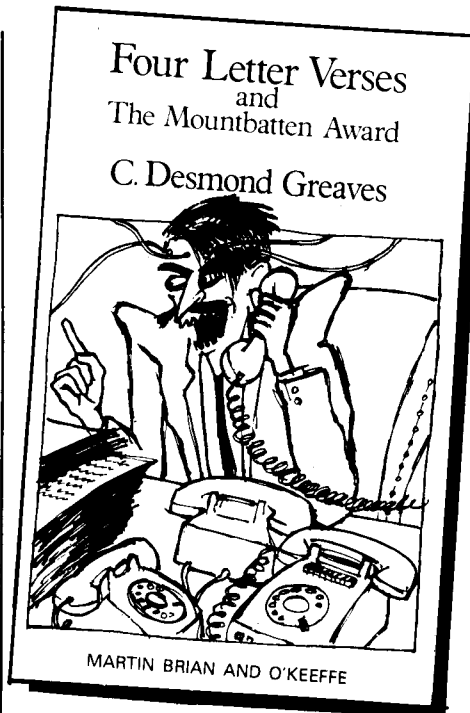
His latest venture, one of a series of three pamphlets from Field Day, is in the form of an open letter to the publishers of a new book of contemporary British poetry, in which Heaney objects to being called British. *An Open Letter* is an important work on its own, and an interesting part of what is a laudable attempt by Field Day to address the failure of most of our contemporary writers and poets to confront the issue of the British connection and the wider, if related, issue of Irish nationality.

The latter is a subject which Heaney has carefully skirted in the past, and though the essence of his nationality percolates through many of his earlier pieces it does so only shyly and momentarily. In *An Open Letter* he confronts the issue and although his reasons for doing so, after a decade with Faber, is unclear, his declaration is a welcome one. I take issue only with his assumption that:

*The party at Westminster,  
All passion spent,  
More down-and-out than sinister,  
Just pays the rent.*

But maybe I'm nitpicking in what is an excellent, quiet and finely-tuned assertion that:

*A British one, is characterized  
as British. But don't be surprised*



*If I demur, for be advised  
My passport's green  
No glass of ours was ever raised  
to toast The Queen.*

One of the other two Field Day pamphlets, Seamus Deane's *Civilians and Barbarians* is a closely-written examination of the way in which the British government has portrayed the Irish as barbarians, drunkards and idiots living under an immoral and unchristian code. In other words as criminals whom the British, or English, have been attempting for many centuries to reform. The British, or 'Civilians', endeavouring to fulfil such a moral duty, have of course cleverly developed a moral code which today makes, for example, killing by their forces legal and killings by their opponents murder. Deane examines how the British developed the Law — their moral code — while the Irish — outside the Law — became outside any moral code also.

Seamus Deane's essay deserves a better review than space permits here. It should also be required reading for those who fall back upon 'morality' of the established order — a political code disguised as a moral code — in defence of the civilised British ruling class efforts to reform the barbarous Irish.

Tom Paulin's *A New Look at the Language Question* is the most academic of these pamphlets, a scholarly work which examines the implications of the condition and situation of language in Ireland, the brand of English spoken, and the effects of the Irish language on the development of Ireland's English dialect. Paulin seems to

suggest that, "the three fully-fledged languages — *Irish, Ulster-Scots and Irish-English*" deserve their own dictionary as distinct from the standard English dictionary. An interesting essay, welcome together with the other two, not least for what it has to say but also hopefully because it heralds an effort by the Derry-based Field Day company to publish more material of this nature. My only criticism, because such a development and the discussion it will provoke is long overdue, is that these well-produced pamphlets are too expensive.

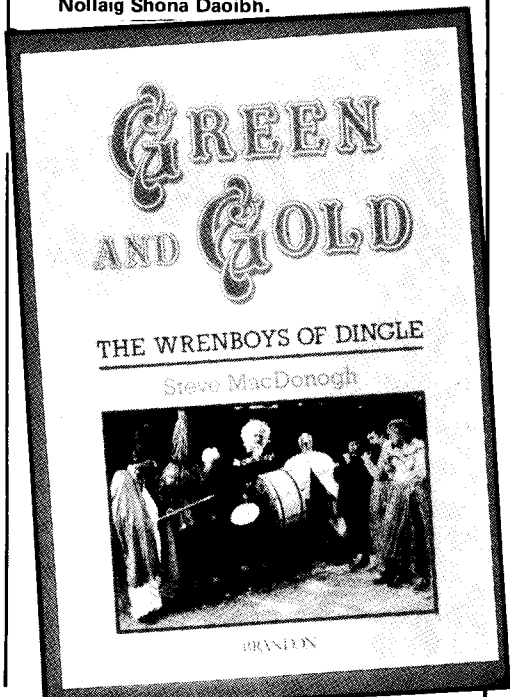
**F**INALLY, to two new books by Brandon, a publishing house which is building a sound reputation for itself, with the consistently high quality of its publications. It is also one of a few publishers which consistently sends *IRIS* review copies.

Steve MacDonagh, poet, and the moving force in Brandon, this time publishes one of his own books, *Green and Gold, the Wrenboys of Dingle*. At one time, wren (pronounced wran) boys paraded on St Stephen's Day in almost every part of Europe. Dressed in suits of straw, people paraded behind hobby-horses and bands. Today, this folk custom is almost extinct elsewhere but is thriving still in parts of the West of Ireland.

Steve MacDonagh, in photographs and words, records the event in Dingle, Co Kerry, plus the preparations and an outline of the history of this custom in this area and its hinterland. At £5.95 paperback and £12.50 hardback, unfortunately, the sales of this important little book will be restricted and its record and description of the wrenboys will reach less people than it should. Undoubtedly the inclusion of photographs has forced up the price — a pity.

The other Brandon publication requires no introduction here, merely a small piece of publicity. It is Patrick MacGill's *The Rat-Pit*, the sequel to his *Children of the Dead End*, published also by Brandon and reviewed in these columns a few issues back. A very worthwhile addition to any book-worm's Christmas stocking. Buy it and even if you don't get out with the wrenboys on St Stephen's Day you'll enjoy, and educate yourself nonetheless.

Nollaig Shona Daoibh.



# Coiscéim eile chun tosaigh

LE MARCAS MacDIARMADA

Léirmheas ar *'Gealach Reatha'* le Diarmaid Ó Súilleabháin (luach £3.00)

**T**Á GO LEOR duaiseanna litríochta bainte ag an Súilleabhánach cheana féin, Duais Acadamh na hÉireann, Duais na mBuitléarach, cáil agus duaiseanna bainte aige i ngnóithe drámaíochta agus úrscéalaíochta. Séard atá i n*Gealach Reatha* a chéad mhórchnuasach filíochta ina bhfuil a lán de na dánta a bhain na duaiseanna réamhluaithe abhus agam.

Tá tuairim is céad dán agus dhá scór, agus Diarmuid Ó Súilleabháin é féin i ngach dán acu. Tá a scéal pearsanta agus cás na tíre ann. Sárafonn sé suarachas an tsaoil chun an toradh liteartha a shroicheadh.

Tá aobhneas an tsaoil le fáil tríd síos Maidin Earraigh ina bhfuil crot nastata téagartha a chuid filíochta le brath:

*Breá é gile an Earraigh  
Grian an Aibreáin ag taitneamh  
Trí bhratóga boga ceo;  
Ga gréine 'ghealann léith spéire  
Go lonraíonn claí is cumar  
Faoi líonra drúchtach  
Geamhar is glaise ár dtíre  
Trí bhíláthbhreac.*

Tá idir shimplíocht agus úire fite fuaite tríd síos sa dán seo agus i ndán eile **Fréamha**. Is file maith é a bhfuil creach na Gaeilge faighte aige, agus spríoc aige dá bharr. Is breá an léiriú ar gharbhmhuintir ar díobh é:

*Scoilt mo mhuintir  
Mo shinsir mhuintir,  
Seancharraig –  
Gaineamhchloch ba chuid  
De Mhioscais na staire  
I nGort an Fháthaigh  
I nGort na Búlóige  
I bPointe Chill Chaitríona  
Sna hAirí Beaga;  
Ansiúd thógadar bothán  
Caenn tuí is scoilb de  
(uair theich ár nIarlaí)  
Suilleabhánaigh Bhéara.*

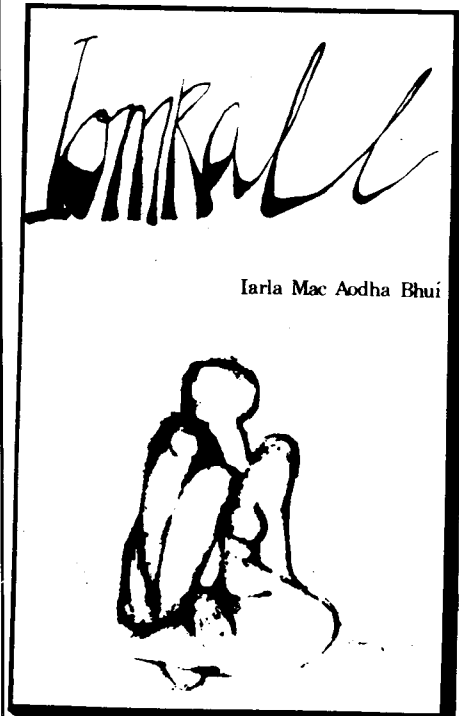
Cuireann sé scéal a dhúiche inár láthair go sleachtmhar agus is léiriú ar an Súilleabhánach gach dán anseo. A scéal agus a chás féin is práinní leis. Tá léaráidí cliste le Clíodna Cussen ar chlúdach an chnuasaigh agus is sár-mhargadh eile ó **Choiscéim** é.

Léirmheas ar *'Iomrall'* le Iarla Mac Aodha Bhuí (luach £1.50)

**T**IG an comhthéacs cultúrtha – cathair strainséartha, macalla na cogaíochta sna Sé Contaethe – chun tosaigh laithreach bonn san úrscéal breá seo, ar úrscéal grá agus cogaidh é araon.



(Thuas) Diarmaid Ó Súilleabháin a bhfuil clú agus cáil air de bharr feabhas a chuid scríobhnóireachta agus atá anois tar éis **Gaealach Reatha**, cnuasach filíochta a fhoilsiú; (Thíos) Clúdach an leabhair Iomrall le Iarla Mac Aodha Bhuí



Ó Ollscoil Chúil Raithin, an céimí seo, ag scríobh, le gearrscéalta ó 1976, ach spéis dírithe aige ar úrscéalta ó shin. Féachann Iarla Mac Aodha Bhuí le spiorad na nualitríochta a chur in iúl trí mheán na húrscéalaíochta agus is sár-shampla **Iomrall** air seo.

Tá tábhacht le logainmneacha sa scéal mar léiriú ar chúrsaí polaitíochta, cuirtear Bun-Dobhráin agus Port-Rois i gcoimheas le chéile mar shampla. Tig fuath ar Shasain chun tosaigh

tríd síos, go háirithe trí mhórcharachtar an scéil, trí Chonaí:

*"Dún na nGall? Tá sé sin i nDeisceart na hÉireann, nach bhfuil?" "Níl," A chluasain. "Tá sé chomh fada ó thuaidh is a thig leat dul in Éirinn. Tá sé sa Phoblacht, más é sin atá i gcaist agat."*

*Lean an póilín air ag scríobh gan aird aige ar an dtuirse ná an dírnheas i nglór Chonaí.*

Tá blas láidir polaitíochta le sonrú, ach a lán eachtraíochta chomh maith, in aon alt amháin tá tracht ar Stalin, Bena, Trotsky, ar an bPolítiburo, ar Mussolini, ar Hitler, Sun Yat Sen agus ar Roosevelt – deáshampla de litríocht eacnamaíoch!

Ar leathanach 58 tig coimhlint chreidimh in intinn Chonaí:

*Lig sé osna as agus tharraing chuige an Bóbla... Chuir sé gliondar air a fháil amach go raibh a leithéid d'fhilíochta sa tSeantiomna a shíl sé riamh a bheith chomh leadránach le seanmóirí an tsagairt pharóiste sa bhaile.*

Thig leis an údar íomhá iomlán a chruthú i bhfforbheagan focal. Cuirfidh an pobal náisiúnach suim sa leabhar seo, óir ná cheilt-ear an focal fírinneach (lch 92):

*Gabhadh triúr mac léinn as Doire agus fuarthas ciontach iad in iarracht dúnmharaíthe. Cuireadh go príosún Ard Mhic Giollagáin iad agus iad daortha chun fiche bliain príosúntachta an duine. Chuir duine amháin an téarma sin i gcomórtas go feargach le téarma trí bliana a gearradh ar bhall den UDR a ciontaíodh as dúnmharú cailín dhá bhliain déag d'aois.*

Rinneadh eagarthóireacht oilte uirthi mar leabhar, gan rō-chaighdeánú a mhillfeadh blas nádúrtha canúnach na Gaeilge ag an údar. Tá saibhreas Gaeilge anseo, is fiú a léamh ar mhaithe leis sin chomh maith le úire smaointe. Seasann scoth na nGaeilge romhainn anso, sin earra atá ag dul i ngainne in aghaidh na bliana.

**S** fearrde nualitríocht Ghaeilge **Coiscéim**, foilsitheoirí fiúntacha a bhfuil réimse chuimsitheach leabhar acu. Molaimís iad mar cheannródaithe, a bhfuil áit bharrthábhachtach acu i bhforbairt na Gaeilge.

Mar fhocal scoir, molaim dár léitheoirí na leabhra seo a cheannach is a léamh. Cheal spáis, níl fail agam a réimse uilig a lua, ach is fiú go mór:

**An Sloinnteoir Gaeilge agus an tAinmneoir** le Muiris Ó Droighneáin – leabhar barrthábhachtach ag múinteoirí agus úsáideach ag Gaeil ar suim leo an leagan ceart d'ainmneacha na tíre seo a bheith ar eolas acu, deá chuntas ar úsáid sloinnteoirí (luach £2.00).

**Innilít Bhóthair (Dánta 1966-76)** le Greagóir Ó Dúill a tógadh i gContae Aontrama, duaiseanna go leor aige cheana.

**Cliseadh**, mar an gcéanna, leabhar eile leis an Dúilleach.

**Rex**, le Padraig Ó Snodaigh, úrscéal neamhghnáthach a ghnóthaigh duais ar leith ag Oireachtas 1979.

**Dánta Aduaidh**, le Liam Mac Carráin, file Bhéal Feirste (luach £1).

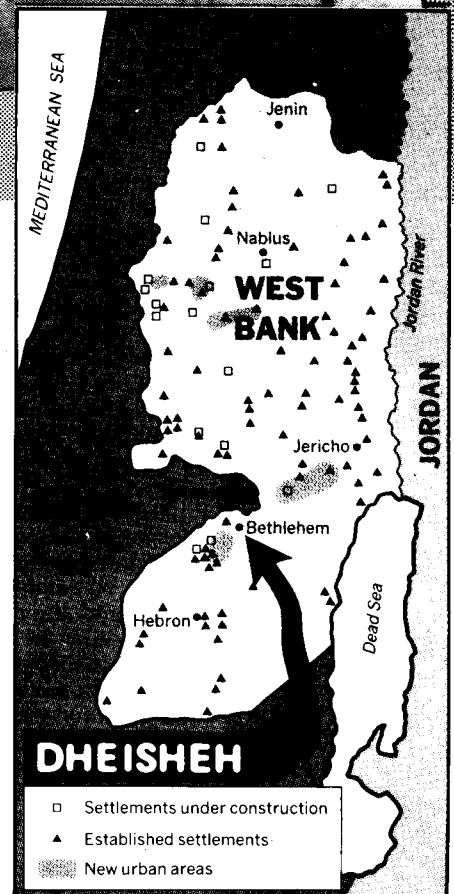
**Nead Lán Sneachta**, le Conleth Ellis, cnuasach filíochta le fear a theagasc tamall i mBéal Feirste agus a ghnóthaigh duais don Dán Fada ag an Oireachtas i 1981.

Cé nach bhfuil a gcuid praghsanna an-ard, tá céimíúlacht agus cáilíocht thar barr i bhfoilseacáin **Choiscéim**, 127 Br. na Trá, Dumhach Trá, Baile Átha Cliath 4.



● Arab women protest at the Israelis' deportation of two West Bank mayors

# No 'home' in the occupied West Bank



*THE outcome of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war enabled the Israelis to occupy the West Bank of Jordan and the Gaza strip, pushing over 700,000 refugees into the Jordanian east bank and forcing the Palestinians who remained into a squalid existence as permanent refugees under Israeli rule. Since then, the Israeli authorities have engaged in a concerted campaign to 'Zionise' the West Bank by expanding Israeli 'settlements' and attempting to compel Palestinians to leave.*

*Having spent two weeks recently in the West Bank, Simon Taggart reports on the Palestinian battle for survival at Dheisheh, a 35-year-old 'refugee camp'.*

**D**HEISHEH camp was built in 1956. It is the largest refugee camp in occupied Bethlehem and stands less than a mile from one of the most holy Moslem and Christian sites – but few tourists go to Dheisheh. Many of the 18,000 Palestinian inhabitants have been refugees since 1948, driven from their homes and lands by Zionist tanks after years of



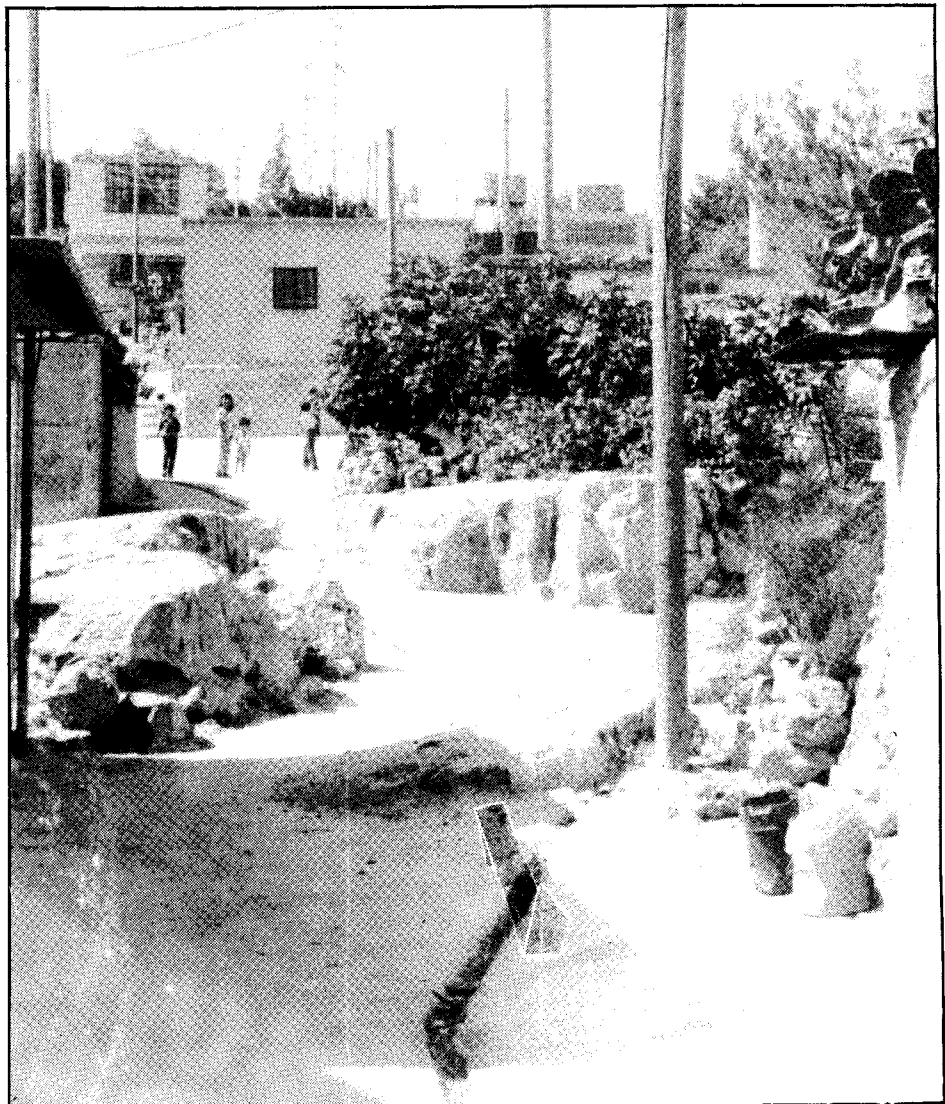


● Most of the inhabitants of Dheisheh live in UN-built relief shelters — this one houses a family of 20

colonial repression under Britain. The very old can remember the Turkish occupation before that as well. For the most part people live in UN-built relief shelters which measure 3m by 3m and 2m high. Some have been extended with breeze blocks but only after years of up to 20 people in the one room. Occasionally the Israeli army dynamite a house if a relative of the occupants is suspected of PLO activity.

Dheisheh is fortunate, unlike some camps it has electricity; but it also has open drains. A tiny clinic, constantly short of supplies, attempts to serve a community where as many as 40% of children have mild malnutrition and the infant mortality rate is around 10%. The playground of the primary school is sealed off by a seven foot wall which stops some of the worst excesses of the occupying Israeli army. Less fortunately, it is a further obstacle to the children after they negotiate barbed-wire and rooftops on their way to school when the camp is under curfew.

Children grow up in Dheisheh, they go to school in Dheisheh, they fight the soldiers in Dheisheh and they go to jail from Dheisheh, but it is never 'home'. The camp is green with vines which remind the children that they are of a farming people and, as such, the squalor of a refugee camp can never replace the memory of the domed-roof house in



● A 'street' in Dheisheh



● An Israeli army machine gun post in Dheisheh

the village of which their grandparents speak. Three and four-year-old girls give victory salutes and sing of Kalashnikovs and freedom.

Repression is ubiquitous and total. The poverty and confinement of the camp is one aspect and the military occupation another. Zionist army posts surround Dheisheh. I was shown bullet holes in walls and windows and enormous concrete barriers blocking entrances to the camp or placed within its boundaries to hinder access to the shops. Camps are periodically put under curfew and the people refused access to hospital for days. In March, this year, the Israeli army announced that 30 named inhabitants would henceforth be regarded as responsible for halting all stone-throwing within the camp: by the following morning most were being detained. Armed members of the quisling Village League (pro-Israeli Palestinian collaborators) patrolled the area.

It is a statistical fact that every West Bank Palestinian family has one son in jail and one in exile — the family I stayed with have two brothers in exile and two recently released from prison and daily expecting re-arrest for trade union and journalist activity. The older man bears the scars of torture.

**T**HE lives of West Bank Palestinians are dominated by a cocktail of legislation bequeathed by the British Mandate and the Jordanians, and amended by over a thousand dictats of the Zionist military governor.

A meeting of more than ten people is illegal. 'Suspects' are held for eighteen

days with access to no-one. The gathering of any kind of statistics is banned. Foreigners may not stay in refugee camps. All newspapers are censored and it is even illegal to say this or to leave a newspaper column blank; love poems are scrutinised as are announcements of deaths. Books containing the name 'Palestine' are banned. Planting trees without permission is forbidden as is digging wells. **Brave New World** is a banned book. The homes and lands of Palestinians can be taken from them at a moment's notice. As a song sung by students at Bir Zeit Palestinian University says: *"Ten years for throwing a stone/Ten years for singing a song."*

But the attack on the people of the West Bank and Gaza is more than brutal containment. The aim of the occupation forces is to create *"a land without a people"*. Since the period of British rule, Zionism has offered the Palestinians a stark choice: eviction or slaughter. Characteristically they have refused both options and decided on a policy of 'steadfastness'. Israeli governments — Labour and Likud — have therefore sanctioned policies of Zionist 'settlement' in the West Bank and Gaza in order to outnumber the Palestinians by the end of the century, armed repression to terrify them, and economic and environmental legislation to starve them.

Around a hundred 'settlements' are planned for the West Bank. These are strategically placed to surround Palestinian towns and villages which they then deprive of land and water. Despite luxurious accommodation and brimming swimming pools these 'settlements' are, unmistakably, fortresses. Built in defensive clusters on hills, with slit windows, they are the lair of legally-armed racist Zionist zealots intent on a pure Jewish state. These zealots are rewarded



● Faces of resistance and victory salutes

for their devotion to Zionism with enormous subsidies, free cars and a licence to murder Arabs. They drive through resentful Palestinian streets brandishing Uzi sub-machine guns, periodically carrying out massacres like that at Hebron/El Khalil this July.

The economic war is waged at several levels. Thousands of Palestinians are forced to find work in Israeli factories and construction sites so that their homes become like South Africa's Bantustans, pools of cheap labour with the armed forces ready to intervene in case of strikes. Paradoxically, this employment of Palestinians runs contrary to the general policy of depopulation as it ties the oppressor and oppressed together in a reluctant co-existence.

Palestinian trade unionists recognise this to be a weak point in the enemy's strategy. A battle is taking place between the corporatist Israeli trade union federation, Histadrut, and the semi-legal Palestinian unions. The battle is for the affiliation of the migrant workforce. The Palestinian unions desperately need the recognition of foreign unions, something which is slow in arriving from Western Europe.

**T**HE wholesale destruction of Palestinian agriculture is horrendous. The onslaught is three-pronged: confiscation, subjection to capitalist modes of production and the replacement of traditional markets. Confiscation has already been mentioned. Work by the Arab Thought Forum, a 'think tank' attached to the besieged university at Bir Zeit, confirms that in the Jordan Valley the Zionists are encouraging a return to share-cropping through the use of land agents, and a transition to single-crop farming. Using their traditional techniques which are perfectly adequate for feeding the community, Palestinian farmers are being forced to compete with Westernised high-tech methods, while simultaneously being deprived of water.

A graphic example of the consequence of this for the Palestinians is that in 1982 the average price for a box of tomatoes in a wholesale market was IS35: many West Bankers had to pay IS25 for transport costs alone, other expenses excluded, and then had to hand half of the profit to a landlord. As the market became glutted, the price fell to an impossible IS22 per box.

The third prong of the attack is the most insidious. Junk food is pumped into Palestinian communities replacing



● To the oppressed Palestinians, Israeli 'settlers' are no more than legally-armed racist zealots with a licence to murder Arabs

a healthy diet with packets and tins which further erode health, cause problems of waste disposal, replace local agriculture and create dependence on multinationals. In an interview given in July, Rita Giacamon, a noted Palestinian doctor, identified Western 'relief' agencies as perpetrators of this crime. In the name of the Palestinian people, the US-government supplied and funded Catholic Relief Service (American branch) doles out unnecessary food supplies in the same way that it did in Chile. In that country, once dependency had been created, the supplies stopped. This was a major lever used to topple the Allende regime.

Symptoms of a similar process are rumoured in Palestine — food given on the understanding that a family will support puppet councillors. CRS was ejected from the Yemeni Republic for similar activities. Horrifically this 'charity' is also systematically introducing lethal dried milk into villages. In Corba, near Ramallah, it was recently discovered that only 29% of babies are being breast-fed because women have been told that the dried milk, strictly controlled in other countries, is better for the child.

The war against the Palestinians on the West Bank is as total as that waged against them in Lebanon but the resistance is equally uncompromising. Young women and men slip away to join the Fedayi'i, children of six years resist interrogation, autonomous women's

organisations arise everywhere, irrepresible because they have no hierarchical command. Youth committees demolish the concrete road blocks in the camps or circumvent them with new tracks. Newspapers are produced and circulated illegally. Trade unionists combat gross exploitation, and prisoners hunger-strike. School students demonstrate in support of their teachers, literacy is learnt through discussion of riots. The people remain unbowed.

An old woman in Dheisheh who had lost eight children due to being a refugee, told me:

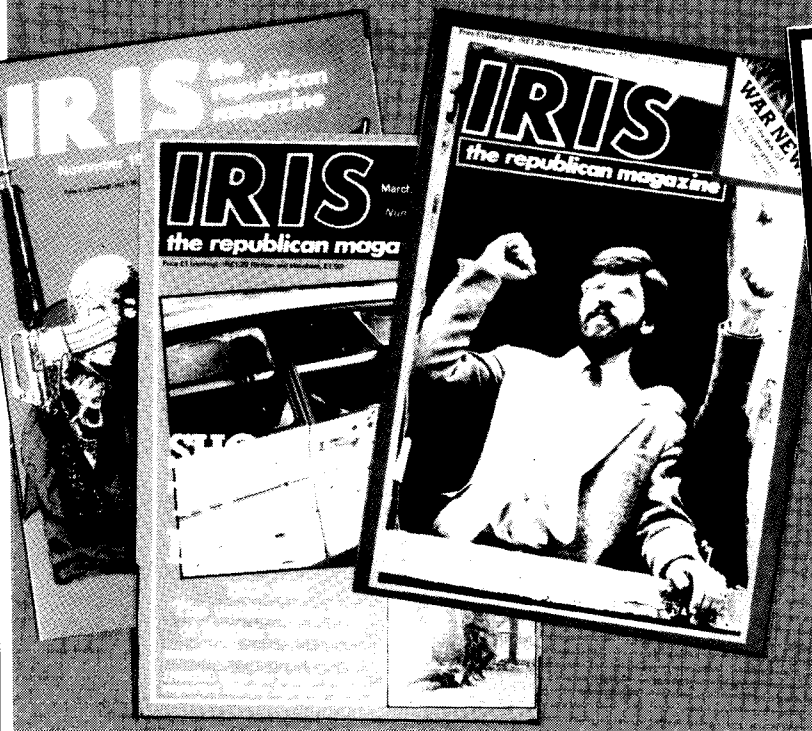
I will not see a free Palestine but my sons will keep fighting and, if it is necessary, so will their sons.

One of her sons added:

We are a people who can love, who can smile. They say we are animals but what kind of wild animals are they? We live in a forest here but we will not be like rabbits. We must be tigers to live. This is our situation — we feel bad sometimes but when we make demonstrations or conferences we do not make them just for ourselves but for other people too, like Iraq or El Salvador. We will not sing until we sing together.

Support for the struggle of the Irish people confirms the internationalism of the Palestinians. News of the Belfast PLO and IRA mural was spread with delight. "Bobby Sands is our hero too," I was told by a man in Dheisheh who begged me to send him a copy of *A Day in My Life* so that it can be serialised in an underground paper. Two thousand miles separate the Palestinian and the Irish people but a great deal more binds them together ■



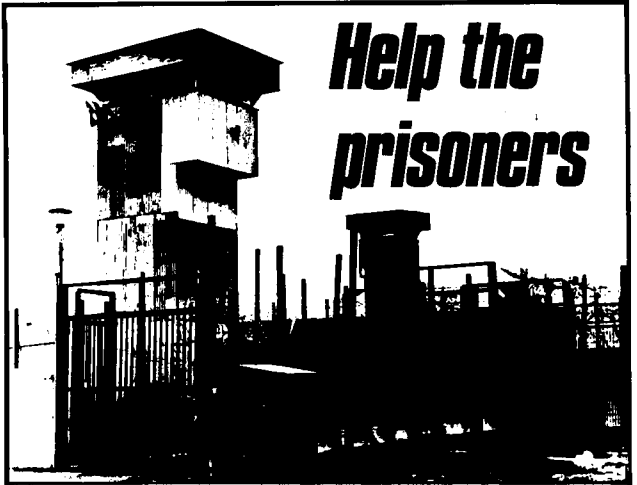


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