

B. de Brún

**iris**



Volume 1, Number 2. Iris Quarterly, November 1981.

# IRA salute martyred dead



**Bobby Sands**

**Francis Hughes**

**Raymond McCreesh**

**Patsy O'Hara**

**Joe McDonnell**

**Martin Hurson**

**Kevin Lynch**

**Kieran Doherty**

**Thomas McElwee**

**Micky Devine**

# 'For those who understand, no explanation is necessary – for those who don't understand, no explanation is possible'

—TWINBROOK WALL SLOGAN

*THIS COMMUNICATION was written by Bobby Sands in early December 1978. At that time he was the PRO of the protesting republican prisoners. This 'comm's' contents say more of the conditions which the prisoners were subjected to in the H-Blocks than any external publicist of the H-Block protest ever could and is an explanation in itself of the conditions and the political commitment of the prisoners which eventually forced them to use the hunger-strike weapon as their last alternative means of protest having exhausted every other method.*

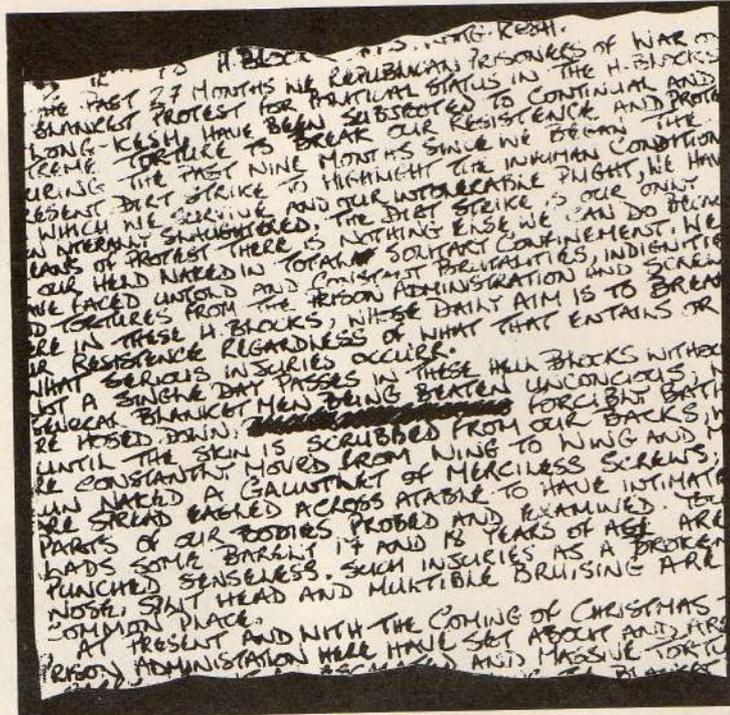
**I**N THE past 27 months, werepublican prisoners of war on the blanket protest for political status, in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh, have been subjected to continual and extreme torture to break our resistance and protest.

"We have faced untold and constant brutalities, indignities and torture from the prison administration... whose daily aim is to break our resistance..."

"Not a single day passes in these hell blocks without several blanket men being beaten unconscious. We are hosed down, forcibly bathed until the skin is scrubbed from our backs. We are constantly moved from wing to wing and made run, naked, a gauntlet of merciless screws. We are spread eagled across a table to have intimate parts of our bodies probed and examined. Young lads, some barely 17 and 18 years of age, are punched senseless. Such injuries as a broken nose, split head and multiple bruising are common place.

"At present, and with the coming of Christmas, the prison administration here have set about and are carrying out an escalated and massive torture offensive aimed directly at breaking the blanket protest.

"Within the past week here the prison administration have claimed that an epidemic of head lice has broken out in H-Block 3, and using this as an excuse – with the backing of their own medical cronies – they have dragged blanket men



from their cells, beat them senseless, threw them into baths of disenfectant, forcibly scrubbed them, cut their hair and shaved their beards of with a razor. This is simply another blatant brutal attempt to brutalise us into submission.

"Within the past nine months we have seen outbreaks of jaundice, ringworm, dermatitis, dysentery and severe diarrhoea – as well as dozens of minor and serious rashes. Never have the medical staff here blinked an eye or even handed out a painkiller to a sick man. We have suffered until men have collapsed and had to be taken out to hospital.

"Our resistance to the daily brutalities has been token, in that, when the screws come to drag us out to be forcibly bathed or subjected to a degrading body search, we have sat on the floor of the cell and refused to move.

"The media has reported the barbarities taking place in these hell blocks. For anyone to say they don't know what is taking place here is an untruth. Many people have sought, to their everlasting shame, to remain silent. We have also listened to many people speak of the atrocious conditions and torture here and we have heard of many seeking

solutions, making proposals and investigations. There has been too much talk and too much talk of talk but no ease in the torture of 345 naked men in these H-Blocks. The torture has multiplied while we have suffered and bled; while people have remained silent or talked in circles.

"We have now reached the stage where we have not a single thing left to lose except the loss of life among us and we know that even this is imminent. We are not prepared to sit back and be battered to pulp, to be literally torn apart, to have our naked bodies scalded and scarred.

"In our naked state we are easy prey and very vulnerable to attack. We have little to fight back with. We can suffer no more than is being inflicted upon us now. If necessary we shall fight to the death. We will not allow ourselves to be tortured to death in this modern day stalag which has nothing to offer but a modern day holocaust and remembering Germany after the war, it cannot be said "We didn't know."

Republican POWs  
H-Block 3,4 & 5  
Long Kesh

A Chara, have had to rush this. Can you issue it as a statement. This is the seriousness of the situation here. It's very, very bad. But we shall not be broken."  
Venceremos  
Marcella.

# Contents

## EDITORIAL

Criminalisation smashed but at horrific cost 1

## HUNGER-STRIKE

Four years on the blanket	5
Euro-Commission — exercise in deceit	8
Attempt to impose end to hunger-strike fails	12
Fr. Faul: 'A conniving treacherous man'	18
Why we ended the hunger-strike	23
Bobby Sands	27
Francis Hughes	29
Raymond McCreesh	31
Patsy O'Hara	33
Joe McDonnell	35
Martin Hurson	37
Kevin Lynch	37
Kieran Doherty	41
Thomas McElwee	43
Micky Devine	45
Trade unions and the hunger-strike	53

## WOMEN

Women in the New Ireland	57
The oppression of women	60

## FEATURES

Plastic bullets	65
A sticky end	76
Na Fianna Eireann	78

## ELECTIONS

Hunger-strike opens up election front	81
Election interventions	86
Owen Carron	95
The IRA attitude to elections	98



## THE ARMED STRUGGLE

War News	99
----------	----

## FOREIGN

El Salvador — beginning of the end for dictatorship	114
Angola — new threats to peace	115

## BOOK REVIEWS

'Survivors' — History lives on	117
'Irish nationalism' — Useful interpretation of Irish republicanism	118

## INFORMATION

Sinn Fein offices	119
Support groups	120
Green Cross and An Cumann Cabhrach	

# Criminalisation smashed but at horrific cost

THAT THE British government did not, in the end, grant the protesting republican prisoners in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh and Armagh women's prison the five demands which constitute political status is no mystery.

At no stage throughout the two-hundred-and-seventeen days of continuous hunger-strike was the Thatcher government under pressure from any section of the Irish nationalist establishment to do so. Thatcher herself quite pointedly demonstrated this on at least two occasions — in Belfast, shortly after the deaths of Raymond McCreesh and Patsy O'Hara, and again in Melbourne, Australia, at the end of September — when she correctly asserted that she was under no pressure from any "responsible" political or church leader in Ireland to do so.

What she was, in fact, saying was that Garret FitzGerald, Charles Haughey, Michael O'Leary, John Hume and Cardinal Thomas O'Fiaich had not at any time attempted to influence or press her government into granting the five demands. The validity of that assertion is clearly seen in the lack of even a qualified rebuff to it by any of those people to whom it implicitly referred.

So, from as early as the beginning of June, the Brits were saying that in the absence of pressure from those elements in Ireland on whose co-operation and collaboration partition depends, their intransigent death policy in Long Kesh would remain unshakeable. Therefore, while it is an undeniable fact that the British occupation of the six counties murdered ten political prisoners-of-war in Long Kesh it is also an equally undeniable fact that the decisive factor in maintaining that death policy was the intransigent refusal of the leaderships of Fine Gael, Fianna Fail, the Irish Labour Party, the SDLP and the Irish Catholic hierarchy, to actively support the prisoners' demands.

## RAMIFICATIONS

The international ramifications of that stubborn refusal on the hunger-strike campaign cannot be ignored either. Support from substantial sections of international society was stymied by the adherence of many international organisations — to which the various sections of the Irish establishment are affiliated or associated with — to the position which their Irish affiliates or associates adopted.

Two examples clearly demonstrate this.

Firstly, there was the disgraceful episode of the Dublin government's advice to the French socialist government, of Francois Mitterand, to send a representative to the British royal wedding in August. The French government had been prepared to refuse the invitation as a protest against Britain's death policy, but the 'west Brits' of Fine Gael and their allies in the Labour Party advised against such a snub, precisely because they could hardly advocate a course of action to an-

other government which they themselves were not prepared to take.

The Free State government's representative was wined and dined by British royal decadence, in the midst of three million unemployed, while Kevin Lynch and Kieran Doherty lay on their death-beds.

Secondly, despite all the protestations of FitzGerald and establishment apologists like Fr. Faul (that they were doing everything within their power to resolve the hunger-strike) it took the Libyan government to put the hunger-strike on the agenda for discussion at the United Nations — an initiative which neither FitzGerald nor Haughey would ever entertain.

### NO MYSTERY

The intransigent refusal of the Irish nationalist establishment to actively support the prisoners' demands was the single greatest contributory factor which permitted, even condoned, the persistence of the British government's bloody-mindedness.

But the reasons behind the intransigence of the nationalist establishment are, likewise, no mystery. They were opposed to the granting of the five demands because they fully supported the objectives of the British government's criminalisation programme and for the same reasons as the British government itself.

The objectives behind that programme were not solely to criminalise the prisoners by the removal of the overt political prisoner-of-war status which was inherent in the internment camps (until internment was phased out in December 1975), and still exists in the cages of Long Kesh where prisoners have 'special category status'. The attempted criminalisation of the prisoners via the actual physical conditions of their imprisonment was but part of the attempt, nationally and internationally to pose the liberation struggle as no more than a criminal conspiracy by a small minority of people who enjoy no popular base of support. Ultimately, the purpose of the criminalisation policy was the isolation of republicans from popular support, bringing in its wake an inevitable defeat to the liberation struggle.

But Britain's major mistake was in assuming that criminalisation could be implemented by removing the physical conditions of political status from the prisoners; a mistake which was compounded by the assumption that the introduction of fifty-per-cent remission of sentences (compensated for in real terms by simply **doubling** the length of sentences) would induce captured republicans to be amenable to their criminalisation programme. The four years of resistance to this inside the prison, before the first hunger-strike began in October 1980, evoked a concentration of such pig-headed intensity on the part of the Brits to make prisoners conform, that in so doing the ultimate objective of the criminalisation programme — the isolation and defeat of the IRA — was not only lost sight of but totally reversed.

### MARTYRDOM

The second hunger-strike which the Brits' blind and arrogant stupidity provoked, the subsequent martyrdom of ten heroic young Irishmen, and the political consequences which have flowed from their sacrifice, have not only nullified the overall objectives of the criminalisation programme but have, in the process, exposed — in an acute manner not witnessed in Ireland since the 'twenties — the bankruptcy of partition in Ireland and eroded the influence of its political adherents.

Most obvious of the failed objectives of criminalisation has been the attempt to isolate the resistance movement. Quite the reverse has been achieved with a concomitant raising of national consciousness throughout Ireland as has been evidenced in the countrywide participation in the hunger-strike campaign involving, despite directives from the Fine Gael headquarters for instance, grass-roots members and supporters of all the constitutional nationalist parties. Tens of thousands of people joined demonstrations and involved themselves in agitating, lobbying and organising support for the prisoners. Rather more poignantly, an estimated one-hundred-thousand people paid their respects at the funeral of Bobby Sands, giving public acknowledgement to the first of the only ten national heroes to be recognised as such by the Irish

people since pre-civil war days.

### YOUTH

One factor of enormous importance has been the mass involvement of nationalist youth in all aspects of the campaign, bringing with them a vibrancy to all the activities in which they participated and an overall sense of rejuvenation to the struggle.

Given that the oldest of the hunger-strikers to die, Joe McDonnell, was a youth of eighteen, and that the youngest, Thomas McElwee, was only twelve, when Derry's Bogside was under attack from the RUC and 'B' Specials in 1969, it is more probable than just possible that the traumatic days between March 1st and October 3rd, and the inevitable imperialist-initiated traumas of the days ahead, will similarly motivate the Irish youth of today, ensuring that the ranks of the resistance movement are filled for another decade if necessary. In the particular circumstances of the hunger-strike Irish people of all generations, but particularly Irish youth, have been deeply inspired by the sacrifices of the hunger-strikers.

### ELECTIONS

But clearly the most dramatic rebuttal of the attempted isolation of the resistance movement manifested itself in the thousands of votes cast in support of the prisoners on both sides of the border.

In the six counties the nationalist electorate of Fermanagh and South Tyrone, on two occasions, fully endorsed the prisoners with more than thirty-thousand votes, electing Bobby Sands in April and, after his death, returning Owen Carron, with an increased majority, as their representative for the Westminster seat for that constituency.

In the local elections in the north several councillors supporting the prisoners were also elected.

In the twenty-six counties the late Kieran Doherty was elected to the Dublin parliament as was H-Block blanket man Paddy Agnew. Other prisoner candidates, against all the predictions of the media pundits, polled extremely well, with Joe McDonnell and Martin Hurson narrowly missing being elected by only a few hundred votes.

The effects of those elections were equally dramatic both in terms of their actual political consequences in Ireland as well as in creating an unprecedented international media interest.

By electing Bobby Sands the people of Fermanagh and South Tyrone, at the stroke of thirty-thousand pens, obliterated a primary objective of criminalisation — the isolation of the IRA — by declaring their popular support for the prisoners cause.

Attempts to devalue that support, at the time, by attributing to it a purely emotional motivation were subsequently completely undermined by the election of Owen Carron with an increased majority. Overt nationalist opponents of the prisoners — the 'Sticky Republican Clubs' and the Brits most consistent ally, Gerry Fitt — were wiped out at the local elections in Belfast.

In the twenty-six counties, the intervention of political prisoner candidates produced an unstable, but more reactionary, Dublin government which, tellingly, relies on 'Sticky' support to remain in power.

### SDLP

Most affected by the electoral interventions, of course, has been the SDLP, which, devoid as it is of policy or political activity in any area other than elections, has had its influence greatly eroded. One indication of that was that despite the fact that a large proportion of the party wanted to contest the Fermanagh and South Tyrone seat in opposition to Owen Carron, even if only to ruin his election chances, the political reality of the situation demanded that they keep out.

But it must also be said that a major republican mis-judgement allowed the SDLP to escape relatively unscathed in the six-county local government elections when an active republican intervention may have placed the SDLP in an irreversible downward trend.

### BRIT REACTION

Throughout the period the Brit reaction was typical.



■ BOBBY SANDS MP



■ KIERAN DOHERTY TD



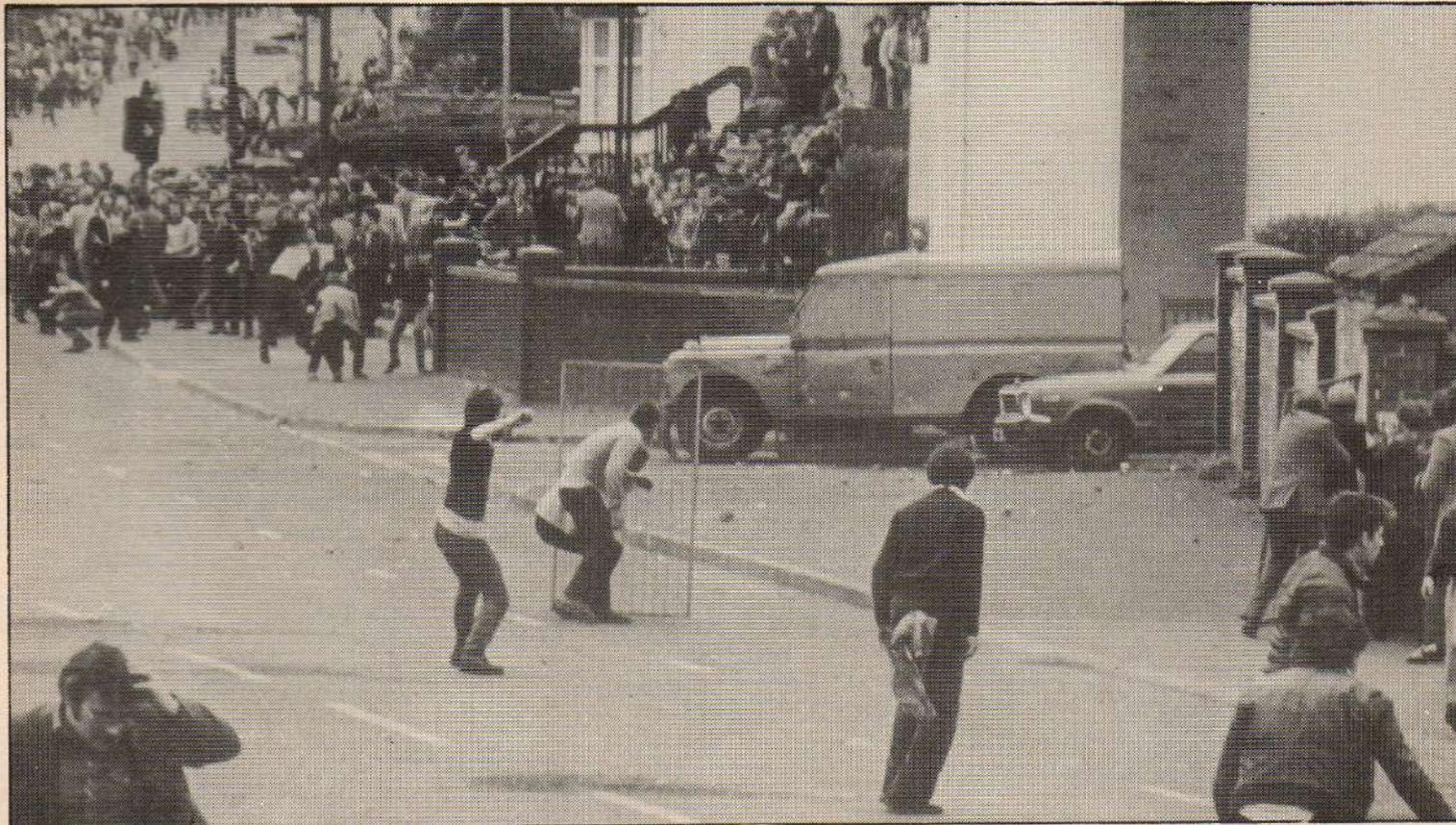
■ PADDY AGNEW TD



■ OWEN CARRON MP



● (above) An estimated one-hundred-thousand mourners attended the funeral of IRA Volunteer Bobby Sands MP



Repression was unleashed on a scale not witnessed since the early 'seventies. Indiscriminate gunfire by the British army and the RUC seriously injured and claimed the lives of children, young mothers and old people. 'Seal and search' operations have once again become a regular feature of the British occupation. The British government's means of retaining its rule in Ireland — bloodymindedness, repression and terror — have again been highlighted and have generated emotions which far outstrip even the revulsion created by Brit butchery on Bloody Sunday or the deep sense of injustice created by four years of internment without charge or trial.

One sure proof of that is the raising of not just the people's tolerance level of military operations against the occupation forces but the many, many instances of actual demands and expectations from the people for such activity, which was subsequently applauded.

Nor were those expectations disappointed. Given even the limited military hardware available to the IRA and the systematic saturation of nationalist ghettos by occupation forces, attacks on those forces since Bobby Sands' death have left them with thirty fatalities and hundreds of casualties. Importantly, none of this has been lost on the greater international audience much of which has been given a different, more favourable and realistic perspective of the Irish struggle.

## SUPPORT

In reality, the whole hunger-strike period was a magnification of the partition of Ireland, as if under a microscope, showing the attitudes of all involved in a stark relief. It is no exaggeration to state that support for the prisoners and their five demands equates support for an independent united Ireland and that, conversely, opposition to the prisoners and their demands equates opposition to the ending of partition.

In this the ordinary nationalist people of Ireland shone like a beacon, giving their support without prevarication to a just and reasonable cause — on the streets, organising in their spare time, donating financially, displaying support in the windows of their homes with posters, at the polling booths and in many cases, like the hunger-strikers themselves, giving their lives to a vengeful, oppressive British government.

On the other hand, the would-be political and moral leaders of the Irish people squirmed and manoeuvred in every direction to avoid taking up the leadership presented by the people. Fully recognising the popularity of the prisoners' cause amongst their own grass-roots support they paid lip-service to finding a 'just solution' to the hunger-strike just as they pay lip-service to the re-unification of Ireland. One indication of the support for the prisoners' cause which they perceived among their own supporters and the nationalist people generally is the fact that at no stage did any of them feel politically strong enough to attack the hunger-strikers. Instead they opted for a role of creating diversions aimed at undermining the hunger-strike while attempting to pose themselves publicly as supportive of a 'just solution'.

## CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Catholic church's political role in Ireland has become more evident than usual, its opposition to the hunger-strike having a political rather than a moral basis.

On that premise the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace (ICJP) involved itself in attempting to impose an end to the hunger-strike. On that same premise baseless moral pressures were exerted on the families of hunger-strikers which eventually brought an unconditional end to the hunger-strike. It is no accident that the public position of the entire nationalist establishment was that which the ICJP laid out — a position which was far short of the prisoners' demands and which did not constitute the political status the prisoners were seeking.

It is little wonder then that the Catholic church's condemnation of military attacks on occupation forces, in the total absence of a corresponding condemnation of the murders of innocent people perpetrated by the British army, the RUC and loyalist murder-squads, rings hollow in the ears of most people.

The universal attitude of the Catholic church of supporting



● The three ICJP commissioners (from left) Bishop O'Mahony, Hugh Logue and Fr. Oliver Crilly who met the republican prisoners' representative, Brendan McFarlane, on July 5th

any political status quo which does not prohibit the church from operating, — however repressive and unjust that status quo may be (for example, South Africa and, with a few honourable exceptions, in most of the South and Central American dictatorships) — is more evident than ever and is increasingly being recognised as such.

## NECESSITY

That the British government will not willingly give up its six-county colony, no more than it would willingly concede political status, remains as evident as ever. That is what necessitates armed struggle as part of a campaign to force a British withdrawal.

But just as the Brits have ignored the will of the Irish people with regard to the prisoners' demands, so also it can continue to ignore the majority right to, and desire for, a united Ireland if the armed vanguard of the people — the IRA — is insufficiently armed to make itself felt, heard and heeded.

They cannot continue to ignore the will of an organised, risen people struggling on all fronts — political, military, electoral, social, economic and cultural.

In this context the losses incurred by the nationalist establishment during the hunger-strike cannot necessarily be assumed to be republican gains. The Establishment's present instability, lack of credibility and loss of authority may be but a transient thing which can be restored over a period if republicans do not actively and energetically involve themselves in organising and articulating the just grievances in every area of political, social, economic and cultural dissidence and disaffection throughout the country.

In the absence of sufficient military material to effect a British withdrawal through the armed struggle alone, only the pursuance of the struggle for national liberation on a successful multi-faceted front can, in the end, bring about a democratic, socialist republic.

Despite the fact that the prisoners have not won political status, the sacrifice of ten heroic young Irishmen has won them universal recognition as political prisoners-of-war. That sacrifice has also smashed the attempt to criminalise the war. The resistance movement is now more integrated with the Irish people than at any time since the early 1920's. But that is only a base from which to move forward. The cost of smashing criminalisation has been too horrific for us to be simply marking time. ■



# Four years on the blanket

A HUNGER-STRIKE which IRA prisoners commenced in Belfast Prison in May 1972 ended 35 days later when British direct-ruler William Whitelaw gave in and granted 'special category status', that is political status to the political prisoners. From then, until 1976, many thousands of Irish men and women served their prison sentences under this special category regime. In the cages of Long Kesh, and in a wing of Armagh women's prison, political prisoners continue to serve their sentences under this regime. Between the years 1971 and 1975 thousands of additional prisoners, interned without trial, 'enjoyed' a similar status in Armagh, Magilligan, Belfast prison, the prison-ship Maidstone, and Long Kesh.

The existence of thousands of prisoners, interned and sentenced under a regime which recognised them as political prisoners coupled with the popular support they enjoyed, the intensity of the armed struggle plus popular dissatisfaction with British policies, and in some quarters with the British presence itself, forced the British government, after some earlier political and military miscalculations, to instigate a number of classical counter-insurgency measures. Primarily, the objective was to isolate those engaged in the

resistance struggle from their support and to 'normalise' life in the six-county state.

This attempted 'isolation and normalisation' policy took on a number of forms, all interlocked. For example, there were various attempts at political normalisation, the so-called 'primacy of the police', the gradual withdrawal of British army units and the Ulsterisation of British military forces plus the 'criminalisation' of the prison population. This criminalisation attempt was part of the over-all effort to project the resistance struggle as a criminal conspiracy and ran parallel, during a confused period of the armed struggle, with a propaganda thrust which saw the use of such terminology as 'paramilitaries, Godfathers, mafia' etc., etc., by British government spokespersons.

A major obstacle to this criminalisation policy was the fact that almost two thousand prisoners, recognised by the British government as political prisoners, were held under a British prison regime which directly contradicted the British government's propaganda claims. Long Kesh, by name, internal regime and appearance was known world-wide as a concentration camp and the large number of political prisoners drawn from all over the six counties enjoyed through family, community and local connections, maximum support.

In January 1975, a British commission (The Gardiner

Commission) made a number of important recommendations. These included the phasing-out of political status and the ending of internment. Long Kesh had already been re-named HMP The Maze. A 50% remission scheme was introduced to accommodate the release of sentenced prisoners and to add to an already confused situation the internees, in an exercise thinly disguised as a humanitarian gesture, were released.

An arbitrary date, March 1st, was set and the British declared that anyone arrested after that date would not be treated as political prisoners and would serve their sentences in new cellular accommodation. The H-Blocks, designed to maximise the control of prisoners in four small wings of twenty-five single cells instead of the traditional large wings, was born. In British terms, the strategy was simple. Linked with other counter-insurgency measures, against the background of a de-escalating and politically confused resistance struggle, the prison population was to be decreased to a small number of 'ordinary' prisoners accommodated in HMP Maze.

Outside the prison however, the situation started to change, resistance recommenced and without the benefit of internment orders the British employed new 'legal' methods to intern their opponents and to demoralise an uncompromising population. Castlereagh torture centre came into its own, rules of evidence were changed, extra Diplock (non-jury) courts were brought in, judges were appointed and the H-Block conveyor-belt went into full gear. Now instead of internment the British had a legal-looking process of arrest, charge, remand, trial and sentence. That the arrests were arbitrary the charges based on forced confessions, the remands lengthy, the trials farcical and the sentences totally unjust was incidental. The propaganda-machine adequately covered all that. At least in the beginning.

It failed however to take account, as did all the policy makers, of the new generation of political prisoners. Instinctively they refused to accept the new status quo, refusing to co-operate with the prison regime or to accept prison discipline. Refused their own clothes the political prisoners were clad only in a blanket, and as their numbers increased and the Blanket Protest strengthened news of beatings, deprivations and maltreatment began to leak out of the H-Blocks of Long Kesh and the women's prison in Armagh.

In March 1978, eighteen months after the start of the blanket protest, with over three hundred protesting prisoners the prison administration stepped up its harassment and forced the blanket men on to the no-wash, no slop out protest. This was to last for a full three years and arose essentially because the men were refused washing or toilet facilities. The same thing was to happen later in Armagh in February 1980 when the prison administration attacked the women political prisoners assaulting them and withdrawing toilet facilities.

The majority of protesting prisoners, both men and women, were in their late teens or twenties and over 80% were imprisoned solely on the strength of forced confessions. They were refused from the beginning of their sentences all exercise facilities, reading or writing material, and access to radio or newspapers. Kept in cells on a punishment diet, with loss of all remission and without furniture, they were constantly beaten and harassed. A protest campaign, mostly confined to the six county ghettos was conducted on their behalf by Sinn Fein and Relatives Action Groups.

It was not until Cardinal, then Archbishop, O'Fiaich, visited the prisoners on July 31st, 1978 and condemned the conditions under which the prisoners were being held that greater public interest increased. He said "Having spent the whole of Sunday in the prison, I was shocked at the inhuman conditions prevailing in H-Blocks 3,4 and 5 where over 300 prisoners were incarcerated. One would hardly allow an animal to remain in such conditions, let alone a human being. The nearest approach to it that I have seen was the spectacle of hundreds of homeless people living in sewer pipes in the slums of Calcutta. The stench and filth in some cells, with the remains of rotten food and human excreta scattered around the walls, was almost unbelievable. In two of them I was unable to speak for fear of vomiting"

"The prisoners cells are without beds, chairs or tables. They sleep on mattresses on the floor, and in some cases I

noticed they were quite wet. They have no covering except a towel or blanket, no books, newspapers or reading material except the Bible (even religious magazines have been banned since my last visit) no pens or writing material, no TV, or radio, no hobbies or handicrafts, no exercise or reception. They are locked in their cells for almost the whole of every day and some of them have been in this condition for more than a year and a half."

Public interest had also been aroused by the Amnesty International report of June 1978 which stated categorically that: "maltreatment of suspected terrorists by the RUC, has taken place with sufficient frequency to warrant establishment of a public inquiry to investigate it."

However the plight of the H-Block and Armagh prisoners again faded to some degree through the public view, until the establishment of the National H-Block/Armagh Committee in October 1979. This committee, elected from a broad based campaign, advocated, with endorsement of the prisoners, 5 basic demands whose implementation would resolve prison deadlock:

The five demands are:

- (1) No prison uniform
- (2) No prison work
- (3) Free association
- (4) Full remission
- (5) Visits, parcels, and recreational/educational facilities.

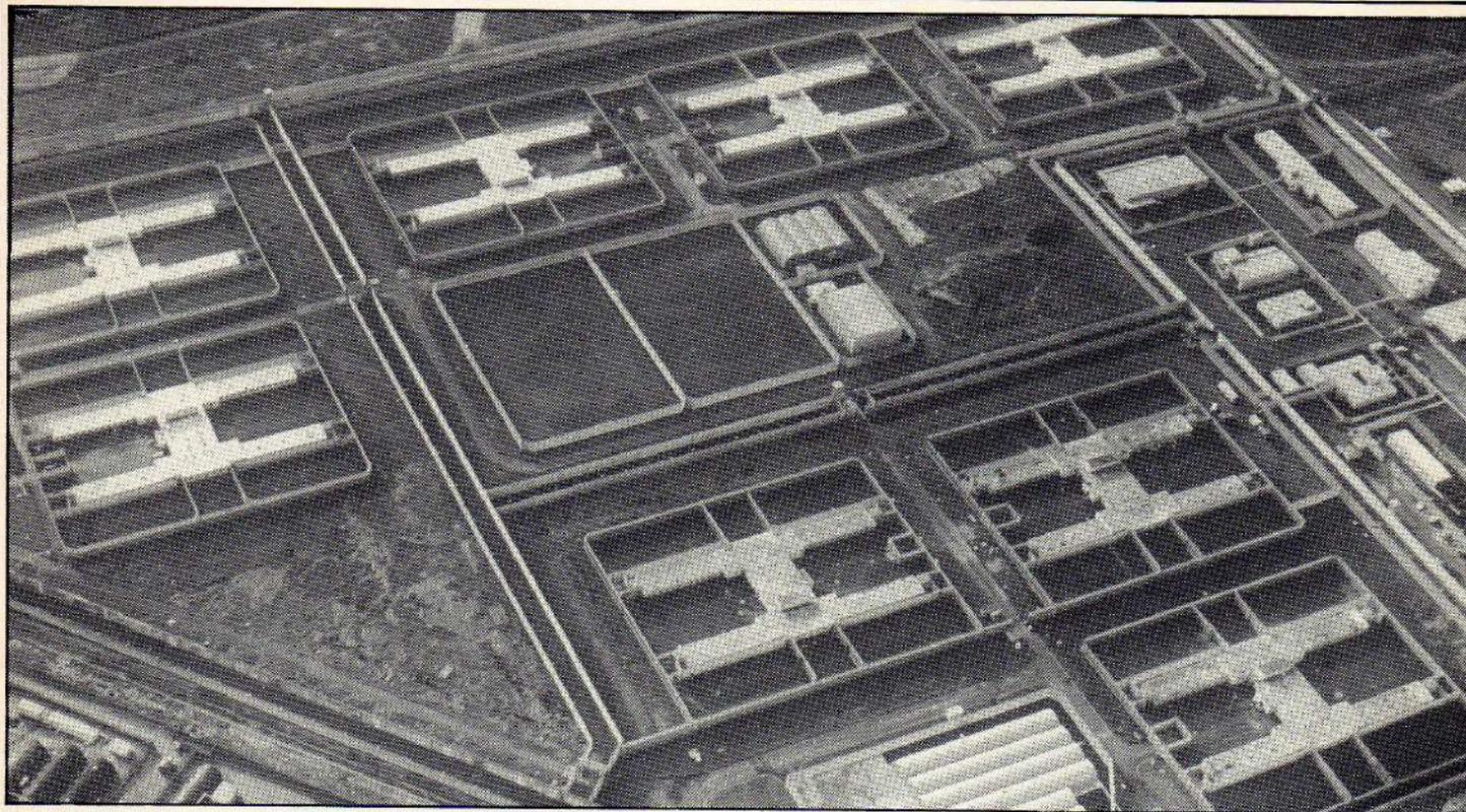
In March 1980 Cardinal O'Fiaich again visited the prison and the following day he and Bishop Edward Daly met direct-ruler Humphrey Atkins for talks to attempt to settle the crisis, especially since the blanket men were now advocating hunger-strike as a way out of the deadlock.

In an attempt to create an atmosphere conducive to a settlement and to take pressure off the British administration, the IRA quietly ceased its attacks on prison officials. These talks dragged on for over six months before Cardinal O'Fiaich and Bishop Daly had to admit they were getting nowhere. The blanket men and protesting women prisoners, totally exasperated, finally commenced hunger-strike on October 27th 1980. The first H-Block hunger-strike which was to last 53 days saw the greatest nationalist mobilisation in Ireland since the early days of the civil rights' anti-internment campaign. That peaceful and disciplined campaign, organised by the National H-Block/Armagh Committee, attracted on a single issue scores of thousands of people and united people of different political persuasions. The campaign itself came under attack from British and pro-British elements and campaign leaders John Turnley, Miriam Daly, Noel Little and Ronnie Bunting were murdered and Bernadette and Michael McAliskey were wounded.

This hunger-strike ended on December 18th last year when the British government presented to the seven men who had fasted 53 days two documents. The three women hunger-strikers ended their hunger-strike the following day. On Thursday afternoon of the 18th December, as the condition of hunger-striker Sean McKenna rapidly deteriorated the British minister in charge of the six counties, direct-ruler Humphrey Atkins, suddenly and without public explanation postponed a statement he had been due to make to the British parliament and ensured that it was delivered to the seven hunger-strikers in the prison hospital along with a 34-page document entitled 'Regimes in Northern Ireland Prisons, Prisoners' day to day life with special emphasis on Maze, that is the H-Blocks, and Armagh.

This document was new to the men and to the general public and was a major elaboration of how far the British government had gone in meeting the political prisoners' five demands. "If they choose to live, the conditions available to them meet in a practical and humane way the kind of things they have been asking for", said Atkins.

The fact that a British cabinet minister postponed a parliamentary statement to send it to protesting republican prisoners in order to seek a settlement to the 53 day old hunger-strike, was a unique act of political recognition in itself and the delivery of the 34-page document reinforced this political recognition for up until then there had been no bending from the British government apart from one incident on Wednesday



● The infamous H-Blocks of Long Kesh introduced by the British government as part of an attempt to 'criminalise' the national liberation struggle

December 10th when a senior member of the colonial Northern Ireland Office, a Mr. Blallock, met the seven H-Block hunger-strikers in the prison hospital and read out to them the prison reforms that were then available but refused to answer questions or negotiate with Brendan Hughes, former O/C of the blanket men.

The delivery of the document and the ending of the hunger-strike ushered in a new atmosphere and Bobby Sands, the blanket mens' O/C, was given freedom to liaise and meet with the hunger-strikers in the prison hospital, and each of the blanket Block O/C's and it was with him that the jail governor met directly, thus conferring recognition of the republican command structure. This recognition was reinforced when on Friday 19th December, all of the H-Block O/C.s were brought out of their blocks for a further meeting with Bobby Sands in H-Block 3. Bobby Sands himself publicly expressed satisfaction at the new era of co-operation inside the jail, unprecedented since the British government embarked upon its policy of criminalisation in March 1976.

However, to the dismay of the prisoners, within days the atmosphere in the prison changed as soon as the spotlight shifted away from the jails. All the document's phrases about the situation not being static, work not being interpreted narrowly and the prison regime being progressive, humane and flexible were soon shown not to be worth the paper they were written on.

The blanket men had hoped to move about 30 men off the blanket and no wash protest before Christmas day but were stopped by Governor Hilditch who told Bobby Sands that nobody would be moving anywhere until they put on prison-issue clothing and conformed. In Armagh jail, where women are allowed to wear their own clothes, the women prisoners met with a similar response, with George Scott the governor refusing even to discuss with them the question of self-education classes as outlined in the document.

On January 9th, in the British Parliament Humphrey Atkins publicly reneged on his December 18th statement by reversing the order in which the men received their own clothes.

The prison administration tried to force the men to unconditionally end their protest but at a further meeting between all the H-Block O/C's on January 11th it was decided to attempt in a step by step process the de-escalation of the protests in a principled fashion. Thus, following a period in which the prisoners co-operated to their utmost with a stubborn

regime, on January 27th ninety-six prisoners smashed up cell furniture in a fit of frustration. The reaction from the prison administration was swift and brutal. Over eighty prisoners were assaulted, beaten in wing shifts, left overnight without bedding or blankets or drinking water, refused toilet facilities and had meals interfered with or withdrawn altogether.

It was back to square one. Despite calls from the blanket-men to those who had appealed to them to abandon their hunger-strike, no one, from bishop to politician, spoke out. Then on March 1st, Bobby Sands commenced hunger-strike. In a statement announcing the commencement of the hunger-strike the political prisoners said:-

**"We the Republican POWs in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh, and our comrades in Armagh prison, are entitled to and hereby demand political status, and we reject to day as we have consistently rejected every day since September 14th, 1976, when the blanket protest began, the British government's attempted criminalisation of ourselves and our struggle.**

**"Five year ago this day, the British government declared that anyone arrested and convicted after March 1st 1976 was to be treated as a criminal and no longer as a political prisoner. Five years later we are still able to declare that that criminalisation policy, which we have resisted and suffered, has failed.**

**"If a British government experienced such a long and persistent resistance to a domestic policy in England then that policy would almost certainly be changed. But not so in Ireland where its traditional racist attitude blinds its judgement to reason and persuasion.**

**"Only the loud voice of the Irish people and world opinion can bring them to their senses and only a hunger-strike, where lives are laid down as proof of the strength of our political convictions, can rally such opinion, and present the British with the problem that far from criminalising the cause of Ireland their intransigence is actually bringing popular attention to that cause.**

**"We have asserted that we are political prisoners and everything about our country, our arrests, interrogations, trials and prison conditions, show that we are politically motivated and not motivated by selfish reasons or for selfish ends. As further demonstration of our selflessness and the justness of our cause a number of our comrades, beginning today with Bobby Sands, will hunger-strike to the death unless the British government abandons its criminalisation policy and meets our demand for political status."**



● Lawyer Michael O'Boyle (left) with European Commissioner Carlaage Norgaard

# Euro-Commission -exercise in deceit

The first serious attempt to bring an end — rather than a resolution — to the hunger-strike took place in April. The vehicle towards that end was the European Commission of Human Rights (ECHR). The prime mover was the then Free State premier, Charles Haughey, and the attempt, in a somewhat uncharacteristic manner, was abetted by Humphrey Atkins, the then Brit direct-ruler in the six counties.

This, of course, was not the ECHR's first involvement in the H-Block situation. In August 1978 four H-Block prisoners — including Tom McFeely, who was one of the initial seven blanket men to go on hunger-strike last year — lodged complaints against the British government with the commission. In its first partial ruling the commission, while slating the British government for its 'intransigence', ruled also that there was no

case for 'political status' for the protesting prisoners.

## SUSPICIONS

For very good reasons, this ruling made the prisoners suspicious and cautious of any future involvement with the commission. In the first place the commission's ruling on political status was gratuitous. The prisoners complaint to the commission concerned only the actual physical conditions of their imprisonment under Articles 3,6,8,9,10,11, 13,14 and 18 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Secondly, the commission does not have the competence to rule for or against political status in any case brought before it. Such a ruling is completely outside its terms of reference. The next result was that — totally outside its declared brief — the commission had presented the British government with a major propaganda weapon — no political status for republican prisoners — which it duly flaunted

throughout every capital and media outlet in the world.

The prisoners, understandably, were determined not to be bitten by the same dog twice.

## FACTORS

The climate for the reintroduction of the ECHR was set by three factors. Foremost of these was, of course, the need of Irish nationalist politicians to bring a conclusion to the hunger-strike. In the short as well as the long term the political fall-out of the ongoing hunger-strike was affecting them more adversely than their Westminster counterparts.

Secondly there was the need to be doing something, however ineffective, by the Irish people, who were rapidly — and for possibly the first time since partition — uniting in a common view of both active and passive hostility to the British government, itself a dangerous development for constitutional politicians whose power base and survival depends on the maintenance of par-

tion.

And, thirdly, there was the advanced stage on hunger-strike of foremost hunger-striker Bobby Sands, who by the time the ECHR's delegation set foot in Belfast on April 25 had been 56 days without food — four days longer than Sean McKenna, who on the 52nd day of his fast last year lapsed into a coma.

In the preceding fortnight there had already been calls from John Hume, of the SDLP, and three Euro MP's for an ECHR intervention.

One indication of the amount of pressure which the SDLP was coming under at that time came in a statement issued on Friday, April 17 in the wake of a meeting which the party had held, the previous day, with a delegation from the National H-Block/Armagh Committee. They said that the present crisis was the most serious to date and was derived directly from the inflexible and vindictive attitude towards punishment in the prisons of the previous Roy Mason regime in the North. The responsibility for resolving the crisis rested, they said, with the British government who should 'act immediately'.

## VISIT

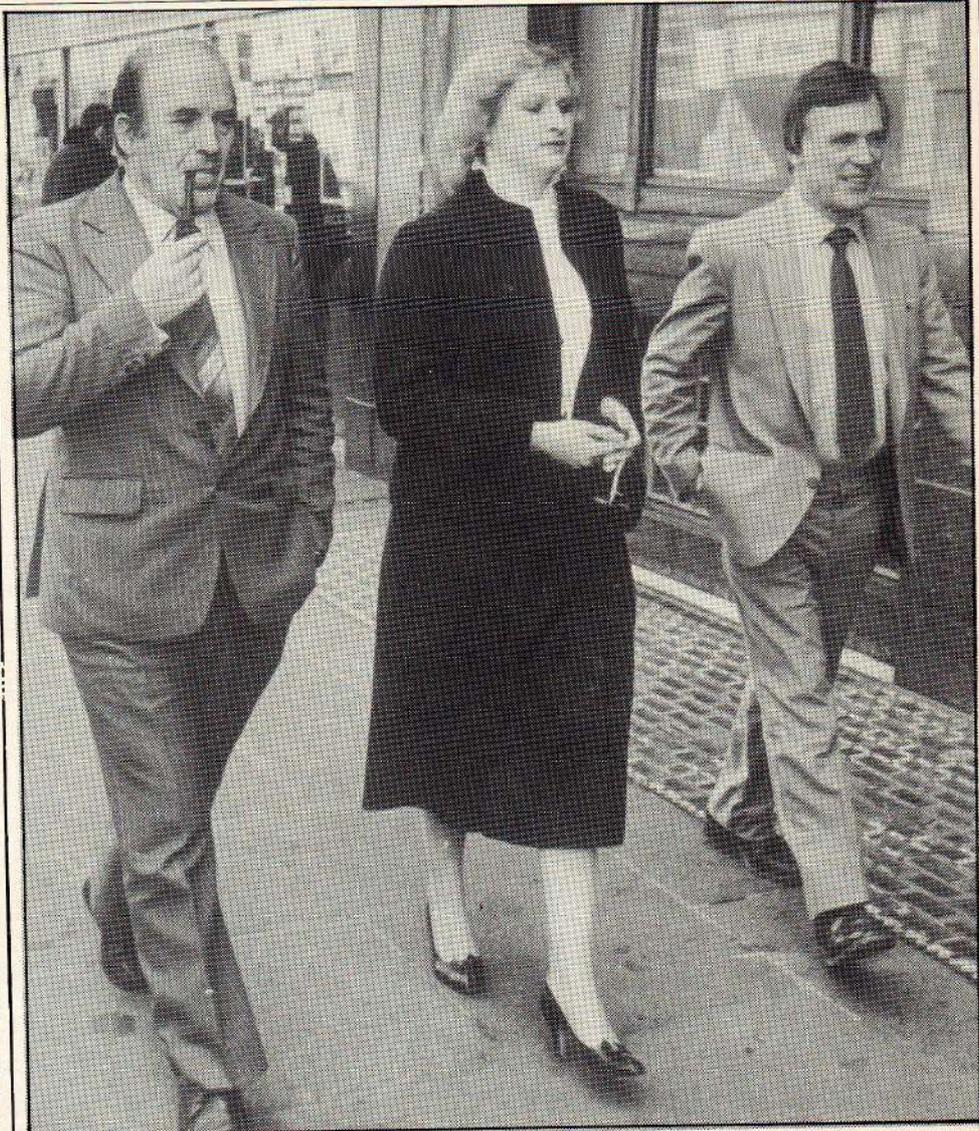
Within days of this, on Monday, April 20 three Irish Euro MP's — independents Neil Blaney and Dr. John O'Connell and Fianna Fail's Síle de Valera — were, on the request of Bobby Sands, permitted to visit him in the prison hospital. It is significant that de Valera had sought and received Haughey's 'express permission and approval' for her visit, although the significance lies only in the fact that even Haughey himself felt the need, in the full glare of the Irish people, to be seen to be doing something.

The British government readily afforded visiting facilities in the hope that the three would attempt to talk Sands off the hunger-strike. In the event, only one, Dr. John O'Connell, did so — but to no avail. The visit — or more precisely its epilogue — contrary to Brit hopes, created rather than solved problems for them — even if only minor and transient.

## THATCHER

After the visit the three MPs requested a meeting with British premier Thatcher — then in retreat in Saudi Arabia, a sojourn which was designed to be as much personally beneficial to Thatcher — removing her from the flak — as to psychologically undermine the hunger-strikers — posing her, the head of the British government, as being so totally unconcerned by the hunger-strike that she absented herself at a critical stage — by inculcating a sense of hopelessness.

Characteristically, Thatcher rebuffed the request with well practiced arrogance. Speaking at a press conference, in Saudi Arabia, she said "It is not my habit or custom to meet MP's from a foreign country about a citizen of the United Kingdom resident in the United Kingdom.



● The three Irish Euro MPs (from left) Neil Blaney, Síle de Valera and Dr. John O'Connell who were allowed by the British to visit Bobby Sands in the prison hospital in the vain hope that he could be talked off his hunger-strike

*If they wish to make representations they should do it through their own government in the customary way and it would come to our government in the customary way''.*

## HAGHEY

Even Haughey could not publicly and passively brook such a snub to his proxy — de Valera — and in a face saving exercise called in the British ambassador to Dublin. But, naturally, the matter went no further. No public statement of dissatisfaction ever manifested itself.

The circumstances, within days of this rebuff, in which the ECHR eventually became reinolved in the H-Block situation must surely rank amongst the most dishonourable, exploitative and — in the end — most inept pieces of political chicanery ever perpetrated in any such similar or comparable situation. The move to reintroduce the commission was executed by Charles Haughey.

On Wednesday, April 22 on the same day Haughey called in Leonard Figg, the British ambassador, in a supposed response to Thatcher's rebuff of the three Euro MP's request for a meeting, Haughey himself refused a similar request from the relatives of the then current hunger-



● Charles Haughey striving to preserve his own political power and prestige chose to manipulate the relatives rather than call on Thatcher to negotiate

strikers — Bobby Sands, Francis Hughes, Raymond McCreesh and Patsy O'Hara.

The premise for that refusal is quite simple. With his own party colleagues, and other Free State ideologues, it is quite normal to discuss and expound on the political reasons why nothing should be said or done to prevent the deaths of

Irish hunger-strikers in a British prison camp, if such were to mean supporting the reasonable demands of the prisoners.

It is, indeed, quite normal in those circles to pose such deaths as being politically preferable to giving public support to those demands. But at a meeting with relatives of the hunger-strikers, whose motivation is not political, but deeply and understandably personal and of the best of human motives — they went to save the lives of their loved ones — such political considerations could not possibly be mooted because of the resulting public exposure — the overriding concern.

Alternatively, such a meeting can take place with evasion, prevarication and private expressions of concern — for media consumption — being the order of the day. But implicit in evasion and prevarication is the reality of opposition, which can also be dangerous for public exposure. And, of course, inherent in any such meeting is a stark personal confrontation with the reality and practice of partition — which Free State politicians fully co-operate with — with its subsequent conscience pricking. Not pleasant. And thirdly there is the straight rebuff — a refusal to meet — couched in practical terms — 'serve no useful purpose at this juncture' etc. The latter was the course which Haughey opted for on this occasion.

### INVESTIGATION

As stated earlier, the profile of the ECHR as a possible vehicle towards a solution had already been raised by John Hume who said "that the informal method of intervention would eliminate a lot of procedural red tape, and so speed up the whole process."

The climate was further enhanced by Humphrey Atkins who, in an unusually astute statement, said that the British government would welcome 'a formal or informal' investigation by the commission which, he said, would be provided with 'every facility'; a statement which most media speculators interpreted as indicating a willingness on the part of the Brits to move towards a resolution, but which, conversely, hardened the prisoners already serious suspicions in relation to the commission.

Given this background, Haughey made his bid on the evening of Thursday, April 23. A phonecall from Haughey's office to the Sands' household that day, requesting an urgent meeting, resulted in a meeting taking place at Haughey's home late that evening between Haughey and members of Bobby Sands' distraught family, including his sister Marcella.

### DECEIT

Using a combination of deceit and emotional exploitation, Haughey bulldozed Marcella into making an application on Bobby's 'behalf' which was immediately telexed to the commission's headquarters in Strasbourg. He told the family that the intervention was merely a formality, that the British

government wanted 'off the hook' and that it would accept the recommendations of the commission — which would satisfy the prisoners — and thus end the hunger-strike. The family's only other alternative he told them was to go home and prepare for Bobby's funeral.

Haughey's initiative, however despicable his tactics, was politically a very clever, if totally dishonest, device.

Overtly, in the public arena, it posed him as active in attempting to bring about a resolution of the hunger-strike on terms favourable to the prisoners and was lauded, by the media, as somewhat of a coup in that context. Unnoticed or ignored were the facts that on at least two counts it put him firmly in the Brit camp in relation to his attitude to the hunger-strike.

### BRINKMANSHIP

Firstly, he was lending himself to the Brit tactic of brinkmanship — raising a red herring at a critical point for one of the hunger-strikers, where uncertainty as to motivation and the ensuing confusion

could lead to the hunger-strikers ceasing their fast. The Brits had employed this tactic in December 1980 when Sean McKenna, then 52 days on hunger-strike, lapsed into a coma and were to use it again in July of this year before Joe McDonnell died.

Secondly, the prisoners were fully aware of the ramifications of the commission's gratuitous ruling on 'political status'. An overruling of that decision by the commission would not only be unprecedented but totally unlikely as it would place the commission's credibility and competence at stake. On that basis they feared that the commission's role would be no more than to further bolster the intransigence of the British government. A reaffirmation by the commission of its existing attitude of opposition to the prisoners' demands would set their struggle back indeterminedly.

This was further complicated for the prisoners by the fact that a refusal on their part to co-operate with the commission could reverse the generally



● Bobby Sands' mother and sister Marcella. Marcella was cruelly deceived by Haughey into making an application to the Euro-Commission on her brother's behalf

acknowledged inflexibility and intransigence of the British government and pose the prisoners as the intransigent party.

## SANDS

Moreover, having given due consideration to this nuance in circumstances and having stated his reservations, Bobby Sands made known his attitude to meeting the commission. He said, "I am prepared to meet formally or informally a European commissioner or commissioners provided I have with me Brendan McFarlane of H(-Block) 3 (O/C of the protesting prisoners) and two external nominees - Gerry Adams and Danny Morrison" (joint Vice-President and National Director of Publicity for Sinn Fein, respectively)"

Sands' attitude was both reasonable and understandable. Firstly, the hunger-strikers were representing not just themselves but all the protesting prisoners on whose behalf they had embarked on the hunger-strike in the first place and whose agreement was required before an end could be brought to all the prison protests. The presence of Brendan McFarlane, the prisoners representative, was therefore required at any meeting which supposedly would discuss conditions which would bring those protests to an end.

Secondly, by the time the commission arrived at Long Kesh, on April 25, Sands had been on hunger-strike for 56 days and was in a very weak condition. It was therefore reasonable that he request the presence of external advisors and that the request be accepted.

However, as events were to prove, the deceitful basis of the Haughey inspired intervention by the commission precluded the necessity for the presence of even Bobby Sands at a meeting with the commissioners.

## DELEGATION

The delegation for the commission-comprising two commissioners, Professor Torkel Opsahl (Norway) and Professor Carlaage Norgaara (Denmark), Commission secretary. Hans Christion Kruger and Michael O'Boyle of the commission's secretariat - first flew to London on Friday, April 24, where they had a ninety minute meeting with officials from the British Foreign Office and the Northern Ireland Office before coming to Belfast the following day. After meeting Marcella Sands and Bobby's solicitor Pat Finucane, the delegation went into Long Kesh where they were informed of Sands reasonable pre-conditions to any meeting, that is, that he would only see them in the presence of McFarlane and his external nominees.

## McFARLANE

Stormont officials raised 'serious objections' to the presence of the latter, but, on request the commission was afforded access to McFarlane. McFarlane recounted what happened at that meeting. The delegation outlined the purpose of



● Bobby Sands naturally refused to meet the commissioners unless two nominees (Gerry Adams and Danny Morrison) were present to prevent any British duplicity



● The Officer Commanding the IRA prisoners in Long Kesh, Brendan McFarlane, supported Bobby Sands' pre-conditions not wishing to see a repeat of the ending of the 1980 hunger-strike

its visit and stated that they were seeing McFarlane to see if, in view of Sands' pre-conditions to any meeting "there could be any way forward by which they could see him to confirm his application." "They" (the commission) said McFarlane, "said that they had certain rules of practice and could not really see how Danny Morrison and Gerry Adams could be brought in.

"O'Boyle said that this, of course, did not preclude their being brought in at some later stage if for instance mediation

was in progress. But he pointed out that this was looking pretty far ahead of what we were talking about at present.

"The Norwegian said they wanted to ascertain if Bobby wished to continue the application. I asked who was blocking the outside witnesses and the Norwegian commissioner answered 'the government'. I asked was the British government actually blocking them from getting in and he said that this was correct.

"But immediately Dr. Kruger cut in and said, 'They would prevent the two advisers...' I stopped him and pointed out that this was merely an assumption on his part and what he was now actually saying was that they had not asked the British government to allow them in. He said this was correct and they could not really ask for them."

A subsequent meeting between Sands and McFarlane re-affirmed the pre-conditions, and upon this being relayed to the commission by McFarlane, they left the prison having seen no one else.

## EXPOSED

What is apparent from McFarlane's uncontested account of that meeting is that neither the commission itself or the British government wanted the external nominees present, perhaps confirming the prisoners suspicions about the commission.

But more importantly, the entire bogus basis for the commission's intervention in the first place was exposed. Firstly, the commission could not go ahead with its investigation, taken out on Sands "behalf" by his sister Marcella as a result of Haughey's persuasive cajoling and his portrayal of the grim alternative; a totally needless alternative, in fact, if what Haughey was saying with so much conviction was true, Sands would have to adopt Marcella's application himself before any enquiry could begin.

Secondly, Sands would have to come off the hunger-strike for there to be any point in the "mere formality" of this enquiry taking place because the commission could not make a ruling on this "mere formality" before May 14, eighteen days hence. As the whole world now knows, Bobby Sands died on May 5 to be followed seven days later by Francis Hughes on May 12.

## HOSTILE

The political attitude of John Hume, who proposed the commission's intervention, but more particularly of Charles Haughey who brought it about is clearly one which is hostile to the granting of the prisoners five demands. Haughey's attempt to undermine - by subterfuge and deceit - what he had not the courage to oppose publicly - because of the political consequences - floundered on the determined and principled stand of Bobby Sands, Francis Hughes, Raymond McCreech and Patsy O'Hara.

So conditioned are Haughey and his ilk to the rules of partition politics - opportunism and chicanery - that they would not recognise a principle if it crept up and bit them. ■

# Irish Commission for Justice and Peace

## Attempt to impose end to hunger-strike fails

ONE OF the most serious attempts aimed at bringing an end to the hunger-strike, came in June and July with the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace (ICJP) imposing itself on the situation.

If not actually politically inspired — in the same sense as was the case with the European Commission for Human Rights — the ICJP's general political outlook, as well as the particular political outlook of those of its members involved in this intervention, could hardly be construed as sympathetic to the prisoners' political concept which is the basis of the prison struggle.

Of its five members involved in this particular initiative, two, Bishop Dermot O'Maloney and Fr. Oliver Crilly, were Catholic clergymen, one, Jerome Connolly, an academic, one, Brian Gallagher, a solicitor and one, Hugh Logue, quite incredibly, a member of the SDLP which is totally opposed to the objectives of the organisations to which the prisoners belong.

### BACKGROUND

As stated, while not directly politically inspired — vis-a-vis Haughey and the ECHR — the political, social and economic background of the ICJP's members cannot have failed to influence its objectives in imposing itself on the situation in the first place and in drafting the proposals, for a settlement of the hunger-strike, which it eventually agreed with the Northern Ireland Office (NIO).

Before and after the period of intense activity in which they were involved in late June—early July, the commission kept in regular contact with the Dublin government and with the other Free State parties. It is no stretch of the imagination either to assume that Hugh



● Members of the ICJP leave their Belfast hotel for talks with the then direct-ruler for the North, Humphrey Atkins

Logue kept in regular contact on developments with his own party the SDLP. It is also not unreasonable to presume that the political attitudes of all those parties, to the hunger-strike and the prisoners' demands — though not necessarily in those terms — was brought to bear at those meetings and conceivably had some influence on the members of the ICJP whose own political attitudes generally concurred.

### FAMILIES

Learning nothing from the earlier Haughey-inspired adventure with the ECHR the ICJP adopted a similar tactic in attempting to use the hunger-strikers' families as a vehicle towards the commission's objective of an imposed settlement. Vincent Browne, for instance, in

the August edition of *Magill* reports "The commission realised that the families could become a pressure group of their own to force a settlement, if necessary over the heads of the Provisionals and the IRSP.

"At a meeting with the leaders of all three main political parties in Dublin on June 19, the commission stated that new possibilities had arisen with the possible emergence of the families as a force in their own right, although, the commission emphasised, the families didn't want a dishonourable settlement."

By this stage, four hunger-strikers — Bobby Sands, Francis Hughes, Raymond McCreesh and Patsy O'Hara — were dead. Six other prisoners — Joe McDonnell, Kieran Doherty, Kevin Lynch, Martin

Hurson, Thomas McElwee and Paddy Quinn were already on hunger-strike, to be joined within three days of that meeting, on June 22nd by a seventh man, Micky Devine.

## ASSUMPTION

The commission's assumption, like that of Haughey, — inferring as both did — that outside manipulation of the prisoners was the barrier to a settlement, set about attempting to use the families to their own ends. In the event — predictably, given the recent history of the Haughey debacle — the commission was proved wrong, but not before they put the families through the same emotional hoop. The ICJP were to see — though never to acknowledge — that no outside force — Irish Republican Movement, IRSP, families, Pope's emissary or commission of whatever kind — could impose on the prisoners any settlement or cessation of their protests which they themselves did not agree to.

The commission's involvement began tentatively, with a statement issued on June 3rd, recommending concessions on prison clothes, prison work and association (which it did not define). It also asked for a response from the British government and from the prisoners. The Brits ignored it. The prisoners made a considered response on Wednesday, June 17th. In their statement they said, *"We appreciate the efforts of the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace in seeking a solution to the present hunger-strike."*

*"While disagreeing with the entire political slant of their statement, they... have realised that until British intransigence is breached, no effective dialogue can take place...."*

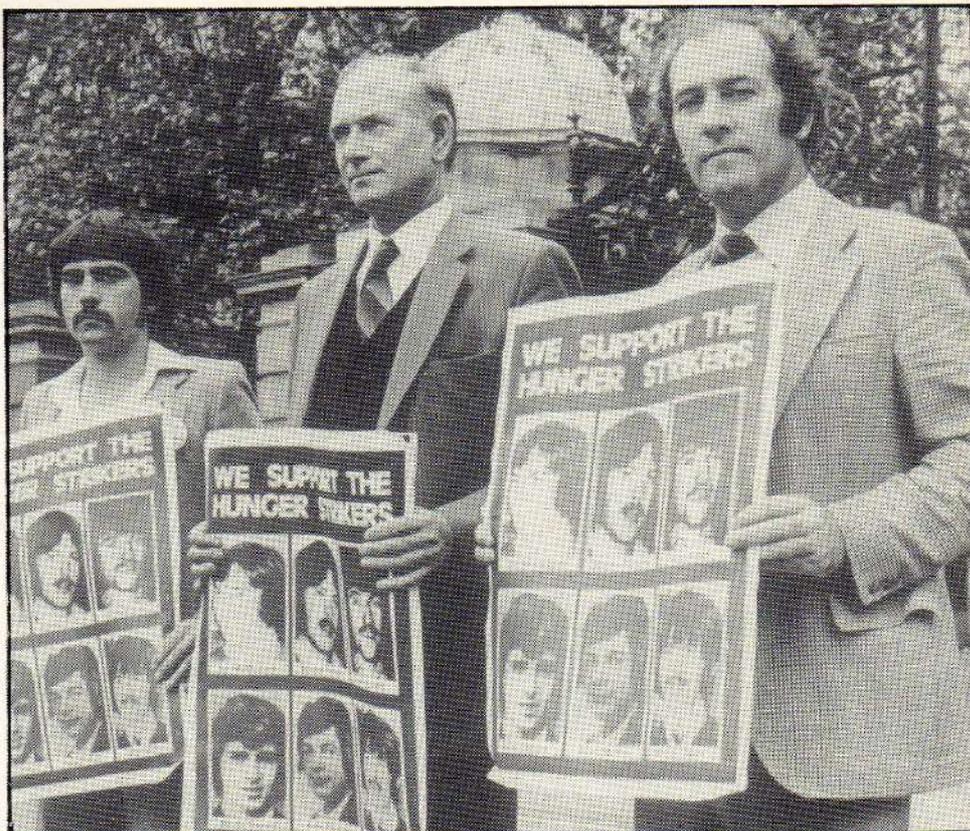
*"With this in mind we feel that the commission must realise that their recommendations are so diluted and so far removed from our five demands, for which four of our comrades have already died, that we could not accept these proposals as the substance of a solution."*

## IGNORED

The commission, however, chose to ignore the prisoners response to their proposals, just as the British government had ignored the proposals themselves, and forged ahead. An excuse to do so was provided by an enquiry, on June 18th, from Laurence Quinn — brother of hunger-striker Paddy Quinn — to the commission, asking if the Brits had made any response to their proposals.

On June 19th, the commission met with the leaders of the three main Free State parties (for consultation?). On June 22nd Fr. Oliver Crilly visited hunger-striker Thomas McElwee — his second cousin — to whom he stated that the commission was pleased with the prisoners response (?) and agreed that the prisoners, *"were genuinely pursuing a settlement of the hunger-strike"*.

This was a prologue to a series of meetings between the commission and various people including the hunger-strikers' families, the NIO, the National H-Block/Armagh Committee (NHB/AC),



● Relatives picket the Free State parliament on June 24th (left to right) John Quinn, brother of Paddy; Alfie Doherty, father of Kieran; and Michael Lynch, brother of Kevin

Free State politicians, and reluctantly, on a couple of occasions, members of the Republican Movement. Eventually they even met the hunger-strikers.

On Tuesday, June 23rd, the five members of the commission met the Minister in charge of prisons in the North, Michael Alison, at Stormont. No statement was issued but it has been reported that the issue of clothing was the main subject discussed. Contrary to any public statement from the Brits at that time, or since, Alison, at that meeting, said that allowing the prisoners to wear their own clothes would present no problems.

Coincidentally, that night, a delegation from the NHB/AC also met the commission to press it to support the prisoners



■ MICHAEL ALISON  
Minister for prisons in the North

five demands. That was not forthcoming. Jim Gibney, who was on that delegation, later reported that he *"was frightened at their lack of knowledge of the situation"*. He need not have been. They or at least some of them knew exactly what they were doing.

A second meeting with Alison took place on Thursday of the same week. The commission said they were seeking 'clarification' of points raised at the meeting earlier in the week. Reportedly, what was discussed was an elaboration on an enlarged number of prisoners who could take part in the 'limited association' already given to conforming prisoners; that is, on what structural requirements were needed in the H-Blocks to allow the inmates of two wings of the H-shaped cell blocks to associate together during the three hours daily and week-ends which are the normal periods of association for conforming prisoners. Numbers, of course, had never been publicly in contention with the prisoners — as was to become evident the following week — but the hours of association were. The prisoners want free association between the hours of lock-up, that is, from when the cells are opened in the morning until they are locked again in the evening.

## DANGEROUS

So, as far as the prisoners were concerned, this meeting was a dangerously futile exercise and while they were not privy to the contents of the discussions they nevertheless raised their fears of what seemed to be emerging. At a hunger-strike rally in Belfast, three days later, on Sunday, June 28th, in a statement read out by Kieran Nugent, the first blanket man, the prisoners reiterated their position of



● Despite picketing of his office by hunger-strikers' relatives Haughey refused to take any positive action in support of the prisoners' demands

June 17th, referring to the commission's proposals again as, "a major dilution" of their demands which "must be recognised as such".

The commission met the families of the hunger-strikers in a Belfast hotel immediately after that rally and again two days later in Dublin, but no details of their discussions with Alison were disclosed. Deliberately or otherwise a donkey and carrot situation had evolved, with the people most directly affected by the protest — the hunger-strikers and their families — being kept in the dark. Judicious press leaks, however, ensured that a public perception of progress on the commissions part prevailed.

### ATKINS

The first public fruition of the commission's activities in terms of a response from the British government, came, in what was billed as a major statement, from Humphrey Atkins on Tuesday, June 30th — one day after Laurence McKeown had embarked on the hunger-strike bringing the number of hunger-strikers to eight. The statement, a six page document, was sent to the hunger-strikers, their families, and to all protesting prisoners.

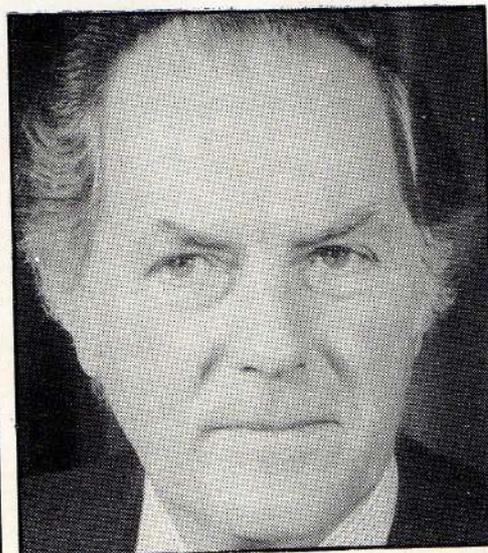
In a patronising introduction Atkins gratifyingly refers to the 'concern' shown over the hunger-strike by Haughey and the ICJP. He goes on in vague and undefined terms "...the government is committed to ... further improving an enlightened and humane regime with flexibility in its administration". Not a single issue is defined but its general tone was such that the media adjudicated it as 'conciliatory' and indicative of a change in British attitudes, while ICJP member Hugh Logue's political party, the SDLP, welcomed it.

Reporting the statement at the time 'An Phoblacht/Republican News' said "... the language in the document is aimed at



● Jim Gibney of Sinn Fein was "frightened" at the lack of knowledge about the hunger-strike shown by the ICJP

impressing the Irish commission (ICJP) and at raising hopes which when shattered would lead to demoralisation". Of the ICJP and its response to Atkins document it said, "...the commission helped create a climate of unwarranted relaxation by stating that Atkins' statement 'together with



■ HUMPHREY ATKINS  
"arrogant, misleading and callous"

clarifications received over a number of days' had encouraged them to continue..."

### BLANKET MEN

Republicans, in deference to the wishes of the hunger-strikers families declined to comment. But on the afternoon of the following day, Wednesday, July 1st, the blanket men dismissed Atkins statement as "arrogant, misleading, and callous".

They said: "The purpose of this statement is to buy the silence of various genuinely concerned bodies — such as the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace... — by vaguely guaranteeing unspecified further developments of the prison regime at some unspecified time in the future.

"The Atkins statement cannot be taken as a sincere attempt — based on the need to find a solution and avoid any further tragedy — to end the hunger-strike, for no-one with even the most basic grasp of the situation can expect us to submit to such an ambiguous and distorted statement.

"To do so would be an insult to our selves, our comrades who died, our steadfast relatives and supporters....

"It is becoming blatantly obvious that the British are intent on creating a worsening situation....

"Even as one of our comrades linger on death's doorstep we call on the British.... to act in a responsible manner by initiating meaningful dialogue with we prisoners to find the solution."

Even at this stage, having already been told twice by the prisoners in unequivocal terms (June 12th and June 28th) that the proposals were unacceptable and now, in their statement to Atkins seeking direct talks to find a solution, the commission persisted in imposing itself on the situation.

Obviously the cause for Gibney's fright — commission's ignorance of wh

exactly was at stake for the prisoners — was turning their involvement into a laughing and ineffectual adventure through their inability to grasp the prisoners' exact and precise understanding of prison regimes gained at bitter first-hand experience.

Or, more sinisterly political forces inside and outside the commission were determined to create a climate where a settlement could be imposed which would not necessarily meet the prisoners demands. Or perhaps, as is more likely, it was a combination of both factors.

### FORTUITOUS

The British government was also finding the commission's self-imposition fortuitous stringing it along, allowing the climate for a settlement — on its terms of course — to build up by allowing press leaks on the commission's progress to go unchallenged directly. They were also dictating the pace of the proceedings. By the time they permitted the commission to have its third meeting with NIO officials, on Friday, July 3rd, Joe McDonnell, the foremost hunger-striker at that time, had been without food for 56 days — the exact same stage at which the ECHR had arrived in Belfast during Bobby Sands' hunger-strike.

The British government was, again, — for the third time — cynically employing brinkmanship as an added lever on the hunger-strikers in an attempt to get them to accept, what in more normal circumstances — if such exists at any stage during a hunger-strike — they would reject out of hand.

### REMARKABLE

Indicative also of the commission's attitudes — as well as possibly of its motives — is the remarkable fact that, until the following day, Saturday July 4th — with the exception of Fr. Oliver Crilly's visit to Thomas McElwee — it had never consulted either the hunger-strikers themselves or the prisoners representative, Brendan McFarlane, to solicit their view of what would constitute a settlement. And this despite having been strongly prompted to do just that as far back as its first meeting with the NHB/AC.

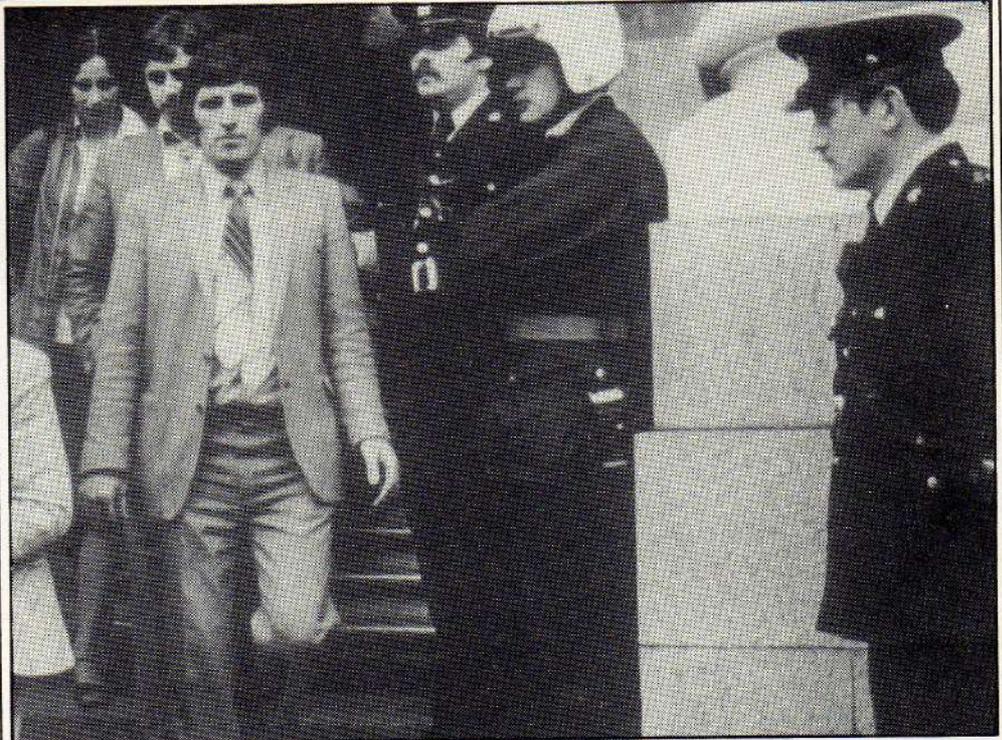
It was in this vein that Fridays meeting with Alison — lasting several hours — was conducted.

Without ever having consulted the prisoners the commission and Alison agreed on a settlement formula on.

Work — which was merely redefined;

Association/segregation — the enlargement (in terms of numbers only) of the already existing limited association<sup>2</sup> was agreed as well as an unlikely position on segregation (in practice but not in principle); all of which were totally unacceptable dilutions of the prisoners demands.

At the Friday meeting, inexplicably, Alison also retracted his no problem<sup>3</sup> stance on the question of granting the prisoners their own clothes; a position which had been agreed at their first meeting and reconfirmed at their second.



● Francis Hurson, brother of hunger-striker Martin leaves the Free State premier's office with other disappointed relatives on July 3rd following a fruitless meeting with Garret FitzGerald

Equally inexplicably Alison reversed that situation again the following morning.

### INTERESTING

One interesting feature of Friday, July 3rd was the meeting in Dublin between the hunger-strikers families and Garret FitzGerald — by then the new premier of the Dublin government which illustrates to what degree the Dublin politicians were tied in with the commission.

The families had gone to Dublin for pre-arranged meetings with FitzGerald and the British ambassador, Leonard Figg. They never made the second appointment. They were detained for several hours by FitzGerald, who, awaiting the green light from the commission (after presumably successful discussions with Alison) had on the account of one of the hunger-striker's relatives, 'a fleet of Mercedes on standby' to take them to Long Kesh.

It never happened Alison's strange, but temporary — even stranger — reversal of the British government's position on the clothes issue obviated the need for the well prepared arrangements.

### HUNGER-STRIKERS

After Alison's second votte-face on the clothes issue, at their meeting on the morning of Saturday, July 4th, the commission decided, at last, to involve the prisoners. They went to Long Kesh where they met the eight hunger-strikers in the prison hospital but were not permitted to meet McFarlane, the prisoners representative. Only the insistence of McFarlane and the hunger-strikers led to their being able to meet each other that evening after the commission had left the prison camp. A similar insistence led to a meeting between McFarlane and three members of the commission the following day, Sunday, July 5th.

At no stage during any of their dis-

cussions did any of the hunger-strikers or McFarlane indicate that the commission's proposals would constitute an acceptable settlement to the prisoners' protests.

### INDICATIVE

Even the matter of the commission's visit to Long Kesh on Saturday is indicative of the attitudes of both the British government and the ICJP. The refusal of the British government to permit a joint meeting between McFarlane, the hunger-strikers and the commission clearly illustrates that the British government was still only concerned with trying to break the hunger-strike rather than attempting to resolve the whole prison problem. This they hoped to do by working on the hunger-strikers whom they assumed to be a weak link. Likewise, the commission's singular lack of real protest when they were presented with this situation must indicate either a total acceptance of authority on their part or, more likely, an inarticulated preference on this part to deal solely with the hunger-strikers whom they would also have viewed as the weaker party.

### STATEMENT

On that Saturday also, an important statement from the prisoners, elaborating on their position was issued. The statement had actually been smuggled out of the prison the previous day but had not been delivered to the H-Block Information Centre until Saturday morning. In this statement of some 21,000 words the prisoners spelt out their position. On the main areas of their five demands they said:

On prison work; 'What the British government recognises as 'prison work' we do not. Besides self-education which would be the main prop in any agreement, we are prepared to maintain our



● Goretta McDonnell wife of hunger-striker Joe. As her husband's life slowly ebbed away the NIO engaged in a ghoulish game of brinkmanship with the ICJP

cells, wings and blocks and engage in any activity which we define as self-maintenance."

On free association/segregation: "Free association means that there would be freedom of movement within the wings. Supervision need not be restricted. There would be no interference with prison officers..."

"It is unrealistic to expect loyalists and republicans to integrate satisfactorily together. Forced integration.... is wrong and can only lead to trouble."

On prison clothes: "Prison clothes are prison clothes. The women in Armagh wear their own clothes, and there is no objectionable reason why all prisoners should not be allowed to wear their own clothes."

On remission: "Lost remission is as a result of the protest and is not connected with the cause of it. This should not be an area of disagreement, for it does not directly affect the running of the system. But it is of mutual benefit to all whom it affects that full remission is given back to we prisoners."

#### WELCOMED

The statement was generally welcomed by the media as 'conciliatory' and further enhanced the just and reasonable nature of the prisoners demands.

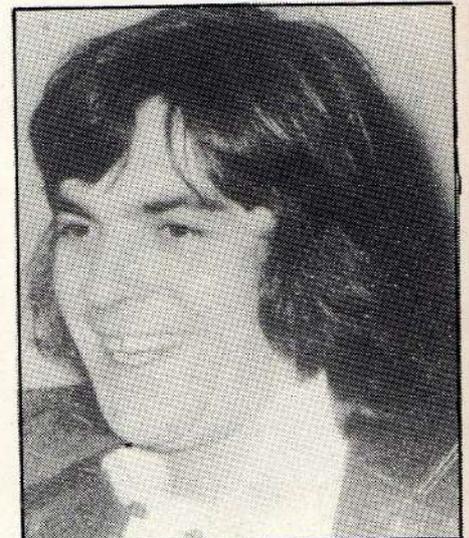
But it made no difference to the intransigence of the British government or to the ICJP's attempt to impose its agreed proposals with the NIO, which encompassed only one of the major demands — clothes — as a settlement.

On Sunday night, July 5th, at 10.00 p.m. one final meeting took place between the commission and the hunger-strikers, or rather, with seven of them — Joe McDonnell, then 58 days on hunger-strike, was too weak to attend. The meeting lasted two and a half hours and again the hunger-strikers did not indicate at any stage throughout the meeting that the commission's proposals were acceptable as a settlement to the prison protests.

Yet, on the basis of those discussions and the proposals agreed between the commission and Allison — which fell far short of even the prisoners', July 4th, statement, in the major areas of work, association/segregation — the ICJP by the evening of Monday, July 6th, was posing a visit to the prison by an NIO official, to finalise a deal with the prisoners, as the only barrier to a settlement.

#### COMMITMENT

That the NIO had given the commission a commitment to send an official into the prison to talk to the prisoners is



■ JOE McDONNELL

incontrovertible. But it is difficult to conceive of why they had given that commitment or, indeed, to what purpose, in view of the fact that the prisoners had not given their assent to the commission/Alison proposals as an agreed settlement to their protests.

#### McDONNELL

However, having once given it, the commission was intent that the NIO



● The political naivety of the ICJP was clearly exploited by the British in creating an illusion of movement on the H-Block crisis

should fulfil their commitment. In due course, throughout Tuesday July 7th, and into the early hours of the following morning, they harried Alison and his minions in that direction, actually threatening to expose the entirety of their agreement — which was common knowledge anyhow, through press leaks — at a press conference on Tuesday afternoon. The only effect this had was in getting Alison to reaffirm his commitment to send an official into Long Kesh.

At 5.12 a.m on Wednesday, July 8th, Joe McDonnell died on the sixty-first day of his hunger-strike.

At 10.00 a.m on the same day, a prison official named Jackson, accompanied by the governor of Long Kesh, Stanley Hilditch, did eventually go into the prison to see the hunger-strikers but only to read out a five page document issued by Humphrey Atkins which did no more than reiterate previous public positions of the British government on the hunger-strike. The commission/Alison proposals were not mentioned.

## ACRIMONY

The affable relationship which had developed between the commission and the NIO broke down in bitter acrimony with claim and counter-claim being made on the contents of their limited agreement.

Within a short time it was publicly evident and generally agreed that the commission's version of that limited agreement was the correct one and that the NIO had been guilty of both lies and 'duplicitous'.

But in the commission/media-created euphoria which preceded Joe McDonnell's death and the acrimony which followed in its wake, the fact that what had been agreed between Alison and the commission was not sufficient to effect

a settlement was ignored. A situation which was not reversed until the prisoners sent out a statement which was issued on Saturday, July 11th, confirming the commission's version of the agreement as related to them, and pointing out its inadequacies.

The prisoners said that the proposals, which were totally unsatisfactory in the major areas of work, association/segregation, were 'an unacceptable dilution' of their demands. They felt that the commission had been used against them by the British government and that in order to prevent that happening again they asked the commission 'to forfeit their role' and to publicly support their five demands. The failure, as yet, of that support to manifest itself can only be construed as opposition.

The ICJP's role was covertly political



■ GARRET FITZGERALD  
obvious involvement

with the full backing of the Free State political parties and the Irish Catholic hierarchy. SDLP interests were represented by Hugh Logue. Its objectives too — seeking to impose a solution far short of the prisoners demands — were also clearly political. Irish nationalist constitutionalist politicians obviously do not want the prisoners to be granted those demands.

## FITZGERALD

Garret FitzGerald's deep involvement throughout is obvious. Firstly, in his regular consultations with the commission throughout the period of their involvement. Secondly, in his failed attempt to have the commission's July 3rd meeting brought forward. Thirdly, in his stupid and baseless attempt to whisk the hunger-strikers families from his Dublin office to the Long Kesh prison hospital, on the evening of July 3rd to assist — hopefully — in the attempted imposition on the hunger-strikers of any agreement which the commission/Alison discussions of that day reached. And finally, after Joe McDonnell died, he sent John Kelly and Professor James Dooge (acting Foreign Minister and Foreign Minister designate, respectively) to London, for talks with Sir Ian Gilmour of the Foreign Office and Northern direct-ruler Atkins, in an attempt to retrieve what was not a tenable position in the first place.

But in the end, all the forces ranged on the commission's side — the British government, the Free State government and political parties and the SDLP — could not match the prisoners commitment, determination and political astuteness.

The attempted imposition of an unsatisfactory end to the hunger-strike failed.

# Fr. Faul: 'A conniving, treacherous man'

THE HUNGER-STRIKE begun by Bobby Sands on March 1st, 1981 ended two-hundred-and-seventeen days later on October 3rd, 1981. Between 1.17 a.m. on Tuesday, May 5th, and 7.50 a.m. on Thursday, August 20th, ten young Irishmen — the youngest, twenty-three, the oldest, thirty — died on hunger-strike. Their sacrifice was as much aimed at gaining for their comrades on the blanket protest the overt physical conditions of political recognition as it was individually a personal testimony of their refusal to be branded 'criminal' by the foreign and oppressive British regime which occupies the six north-eastern counties of Ireland by armed might.

The hunger-strike ended after four families had intervened medically to prevent their loved ones from dying and six other families had intimated that they would do likewise. The prisoners had not entered into the hunger-strike protest lightly. They fully realised that only their deaths or the threat of their deaths would create the political conditions which would force the British government into conceding their five just and reasonable demands.

The actual and intended medical intervention by their relatives precluded both the threat and the actuality of on-going deaths in the H-Blocks, removed the pressure being maintained on the British government, and negated the effectiveness of hunger-strike as a prison protest weapon.

But ten prisoners had already died on hunger-strike and their families had not intervened. Their relatives loved them at least as much as did the families who did intervene or declared their intention to intervene. Their families wanted to prevent their deaths at least as much as the families whose actions and intentions did prevent the death of their loved ones. Not one of those twenty families was not fully behind and actively supportive of the hunger-strikers five demands.

So why did a situation arise where those families did take the steps which effectively brought an end to the hunger-strike by negating its value as a protest weapon?

## IRISH ESTABLISHMENT

Firstly, the deaths of all the hunger-strikers and all the other evils which have flowed from the partition of Ireland lie squarely on the shoulders of imperial Britain. But the Irish establishment whose craven acquiescence in the British partition of Ireland and its maintenance, have made, are making, and will continue to make a major contribution to the general evils of partition as well as to the specific circumstances whereby Westminster was permitted to murder ten young Irishmen in the hospital wing of the H-Blocks rather than make five simple concessions to them.

It was against this background of slavish acceptance by the Irish establishment of Britain's right to do what it will in Ireland, and after the deaths of six prisoners on hunger-strike, that the campaign of demoralisation, instilling of defeatism, undermining the prisoners and vilification of the prisoners' supporters, got underway in July of this year.

Chief advocate of that campaign was Fr. Denis Faul, an assistant chaplain to Long Kesh and civil rights activist, who is prominent in the activities of the respected Association for Legal Justice (ALJ).

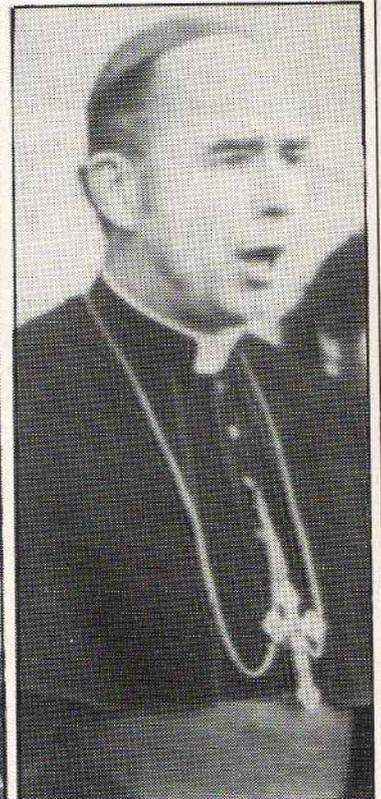
However, his hunger-strike breaking activities cannot be ascribed to those of an individual. He, like Fianna Fail leader, Charles Haughey, or Sinn Fein president, Ruairi O'Bradaigh,



■ FR. FAUL



■ CARDINAL O'FIAICH



■ BISHOP DALY

cannot be viewed as having taken unilateral action on this most acutely political situation in isolation from the body of which he is a prominent member, the Irish Catholic church.

The Catholic hierarchy's attitude to the hunger-strike campaign was stated on March 1st, the day Bobby Sands embarked on hunger-strike, by Bishop Edward Daly of Derry. At a conference of Catholic youth held in Derry city he attacked the hunger-strike as not being "morally justified" and urged the nationalist youth not to support hunger-strike protests by H-Block action groups unless such groups dissociated themselves from "groups which have a policy of guerilla warfare". He also attacked the continuation of the no-wash protest, which, when it coincidentally ended the next day, drew no commendation from him, or immediate call on the British administration to reciprocate.

On several occasions throughout the hunger-strike both Cardinal O'Fiaich and Bishop Daly called for an end to the hunger-strike whilst of the British government they asked only "flexibility" or the implementation of the Alison/Irish Commission for Justice and Peace (ICJP) agreement, reached in early July, which they knew to be far short of the prisoners' five demands, but which, indicative of the church's political attitude, was the agreed position on the hunger-strike of the Irish political establishment. And despite appeals from the hunger-strikers on several occasions to the Irish Catholic hierarchy to support their five demands no response was ever forthcoming.

It is therefore only fair to deduce that given the hierarchy's total support of the Alison/ICJP agreement and their total lack of response to the prisoners' appeals that the Catholic hierarchy were, in fact, politically opposed to the granting of the five demands.

It was on this basic premise of broad political agreement with the church hierarchy's political attitude — despite his own declaration of support for the five demands which never manifested itself in actively mobilising similar support within the church — and against a background of Free State and SDLP slavish co-operation with Westminster — that Fr. Faul set about actively mobilising against the hunger-strike.

## MEETING

A prelude to his first major offensive against the hunger-strike on July 28th, took place the previous week.

A meeting with Sinn Fein, at Fr. Faul's request, took place during that week. Present were Fathers Faul and Murray (chaplain to Armagh Jail), a member of the ALJ and Eamonn McCrory of Sinn Fein. Though inconsequential in itself the meeting and its immediate aftermath were indicative of what was to follow.

Fr. Faul's declared purpose in requesting the meeting — with people whom he would later call "thugs" to advance his case — was allegedly to acquaint himself with Sinn Fein's then current attitude to the hunger-strike situation. At that stage six hunger-strikers were already dead and Kevin Lynch and Kieran Doherty were rapidly deteriorating.

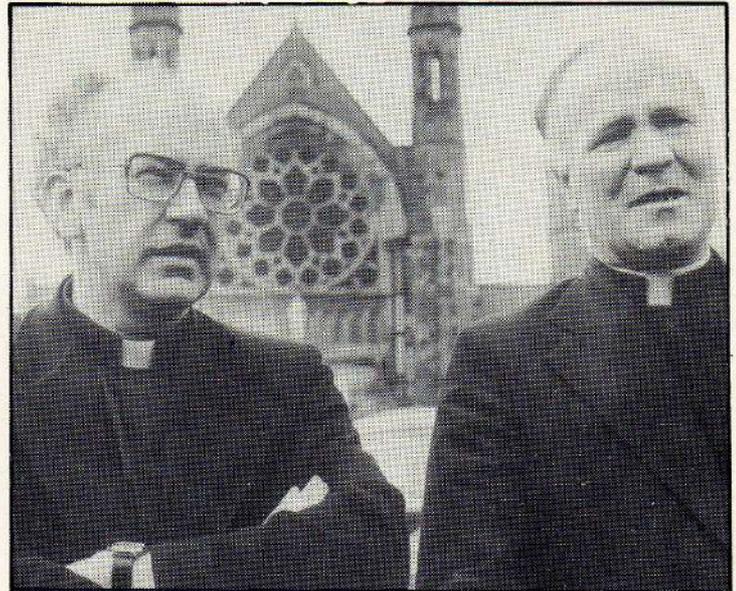
McCrory put the position that republicans believed that the hunger-strike would continue and that prisoners would continue to die while the people whose co-operation and collaboration Britain depended on to maintain its rule in Ireland — the Free State government, the SDLP and the Irish Catholic hierarchy — withheld their active support for the prisoners' five demands. That took about ten minutes. The rest of the meeting which lasted about forty minutes in total was used by Fr. Faul to expound on the 'hopelessness' of the situation. At one point he described the hunger-strikers' determination and self-sacrifice as being no more than a 'lemming-mentality' saying that, 'they must be helped to help themselves by getting them off the hunger-strike'. He spoke of a 'suspension' of the hunger-strike and, with an insight into his intentions, of the hunger-strike ultimately breaking down in recriminations.

Within twenty-four hours of that meeting, Fr. Murphy, another Catholic chaplain to Long Kesh, was to tell Thomas McElwee, then about forty days on hunger-strike, that at the meeting McCrory had described the hunger-strikers' situation as 'hopeless'. When challenged on this Fr. Faul dismissed ever having said such a thing to Fr. Murphy.

But the circumstances of the meeting with Fr. Faul where



● Thomas McElwee (left) and Brendan McFarlane were both lied to, and about, by Catholic chaplains in the attempts to break the hunger-strike



● Fr. Murray (left) and Fr. Faul were both present at a meeting with hunger-strikers' relatives where the tangled web of deceit weaved by the clergy was exposed by Sinn Fein representatives

this challenge was made would tend to indicate that he may not have been truthful. That meeting itself, beginning at about 11.30 p.m. on the evening of Tuesday, July 28th, and continuing into the early hours of the following morning, was called on the basis of a proven lie by Fr. Faul which was told simply to bring that meeting about and in circumstances most favourable to his purposes.

## SINN FEIN

Earlier that evening, at a meeting in Toomebridge with relatives of most of the hunger-strikers — relatives whose emotional and moral exploitation was the other prong of Fr. Faul's offensive — he stated that in a conversation he had had with Brendan McFarlane (O/C of the IRA prisoners in the H-Blocks and representative of all protesting prisoners), McFarlane had said that Gerry Adams, vice-president of Sinn Fein, had the power and authority to call off the hunger-strike. He urged the relatives to press Adams into doing that.

That untrue assertion led to the meeting late that night in Sinn Fein's offices in Belfast. Present were Fathers Faul, Murray and McIlDowney (from Dungiven), a group of people who accompanied Fr. Faul but who had no apparent role, relatives of most of the hunger-strikers, Adams, McCrory and Jim Gibney of Sinn Fein and two representatives from the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP).

Not only was Fr. Faul's assertion about Adams proved to be untrue but the circumstances in which he alleged it had been made to him by McFarlane were equally proved to be entirely bogus.

Firstly, the conversation Fr. Faul had had with McFarlane had taken place weeks previously and not, as he had been inferring to the relatives, within the few days prior to the

Toomebridge meeting. Secondly, the conversation was only in the context of the role prescribed by Bobby Sands for Adams and Danny Morrison (Sinn Fein) during the Haughey-inspired intervention by the European Commission on Human Rights in April. At that time Bobby Sands had stated that he was not prepared to meet members of the commission unless two external nominees, Adams and Morrison, and the prisoners representative, McFarlane, were present.

All of this was proved to the mutual satisfaction of all present, and strangely with no obvious embarrassment to Fr. Faul, by a communication from McFarlane which was in the files of the H-Block Information Centre and which detailed the contents and timing of that conversation weeks earlier. Fr. Faul himself assented to the correctness of those details when they were read out.

But his complete and deliberate distortion of the truth had achieved for him what he wanted. He had created a chink in the hitherto unified front of prisoners, hunger-strikers' relatives and prisoners' supporters.

### DOUBTS

Unashamedly, and with single mindedness after having been proved in the presence of more than a score of people to have been deliberately untruthful, Fr. Faul pressed ahead with his primary intention of having the hunger-strike ended immediately. Like the ICJP before him, he was attempting to use the families of the hunger-strikers as a pressure group towards that end. However, even in this he didn't have things his own way, coming under vociferous attack, particularly from Mrs. Margaret Doherty — Kieran's mother — and members of Thomas McElwee's family who were aghast at the idea of removing pressure from the Brits and putting it on the prisoners.

But given that Fr. Faul's premise for forcing this meeting to take place in the first instance was entirely incorrect — a fact of which he himself was fully aware — the meeting was largely inconclusive.

Only one of the several aspects of the discussion could be dealt with. Some of the families raised doubts about whether their relatives on hunger-strike were fully appraised of the political situation outside the prison and its grim consequences for those on hunger-strike.

Despite the fact that this was not the case — communications detailing all the known facts accompanied by a full assessment of their implications, were being smuggled into the prison on a daily, and often on a twice daily, basis — Adams, the following day contacted Fr. Faul to see if arrangements could be made whereby he could see the hunger-strikers in order to allay those particular fears of the families.

After some initial failures, Adams eventually contacted Fr. Faul at Cardinal O'Fiaich's residence in Armagh city. It was in fact the Cardinal who made the necessary arrangements with the British administration at Stormont to facilitate an unprecedented visit between Adams, the hunger-strikers and the prisoners' representative McFarlane on the afternoon of Wednesday, July 29th. Also present at this meeting were Owen Carron of Sinn Fein and Seamus Ruddy of the IRSP.

The content and outcome of that meeting are now well recorded historical facts. Over a period of hours the three saw all the hunger-strikers with the exception of Kevin Lynch whose deteriorating condition prevented him from being present. Having outlined the reasons for their visit the deputation, as requested, gave a painful but necessarily frank assessment of the situation to the hunger-strikers.

In a statement, prepared in conjunction with the hunger-strikers, Adams said afterwards: *"We gave them a factual and hard breakdown on their position — that is, that they would all be very soon dead.*

*"They told us, individually and collectively, that they were determined to continue with the hunger-strike until the British government was pressurised into meeting in a common-sense manner with the protesting prisoners on the hunger-strikers' position as outlined in their July 4th statement."*

The hunger-strikers were fully aware of the situation outside the prison, of its inevitable consequences to themselves

but they were totally determined to continue.

### MONITORING COMMITTEE

But one other previously unknown fact arose at the meeting. Fr. Oliver Crilly of the ICJP had been in the prison the previous day to see Thomas McElwee with a proposal that the hunger-strike should be suspended to allow a monitoring committee to ensure the implementation of British government commitments. Fr. Crilly was to attend the meeting with the families later that day at Toomebridge but did not accompany them to the Belfast meeting late that night.

This strange proposal was obviously a non-starter simply because it had no basis. **The British government had not given any public commitments.**

There was nothing to monitor and as such it was rejected that night as totally implausible by the hunger-strikers and Brendan McFarlane who had been brought from the cells to the hospital wing.

What had emerged over a two day period was the involvement in varying degrees and roles of Fr. Faul, Fr. Crilly and Cardinal O'Fiaich in an attempt to bring an immediate and unconditional end to the hunger-strike. Fr. Crilly was tasked with providing a completely implausible and incredible 'way out' for the hunger-strikers in which was inherent all of Fr. Faul's reasoning the previous week at his meeting with Mc Crory — 'help the prisoners to help themselves', etcetera.

Fr. Faul provided the pressure on the prisoners supporters through subterfuge and exploitation of the emotions of the hunger-strikers' families. And Cardinal O'Fiaich, to whom Fr. Faul was conceivably 'reporting-in' on the morning of Wednesday July 29th, when Adams was attempting to contact Fr. Faul, was on hand to arrange any necessary facilities with regard to prison visits which might arise.

The following morning, Thursday, July 30th, Adams rang Fr. Faul who expressed his satisfaction that Adams had done everything possible in appraising the hunger-strikers of the grim reality of their situation. But at another meeting he held with the families, again in Toomebridge, later that day he cast aspersions on the credibility of Adams' account of what took place inside the prison. To his arsenal of lies and emotional exploitation Fr. Faul had now added the undermining of the prisoners' supporters as a weapon towards his ends.

### MORAL EXPLOITATION

From this point onward Fr. Faul ignored the bulldozer tactics he had employed on the evening of Tuesday, July 28th, opting for a more sedate pace involving moral exploitation, undermining the prisoners and vilification of the prisoners' supporters on the outside while all the time maintaining his public image by reiterating his support of the prisoners' five demands.

On Friday, July 31st, Paddy Quinn's mother authorised medical intervention to save her son's life because she could not bear 'the sight of him kicking and screaming in so much pain'.

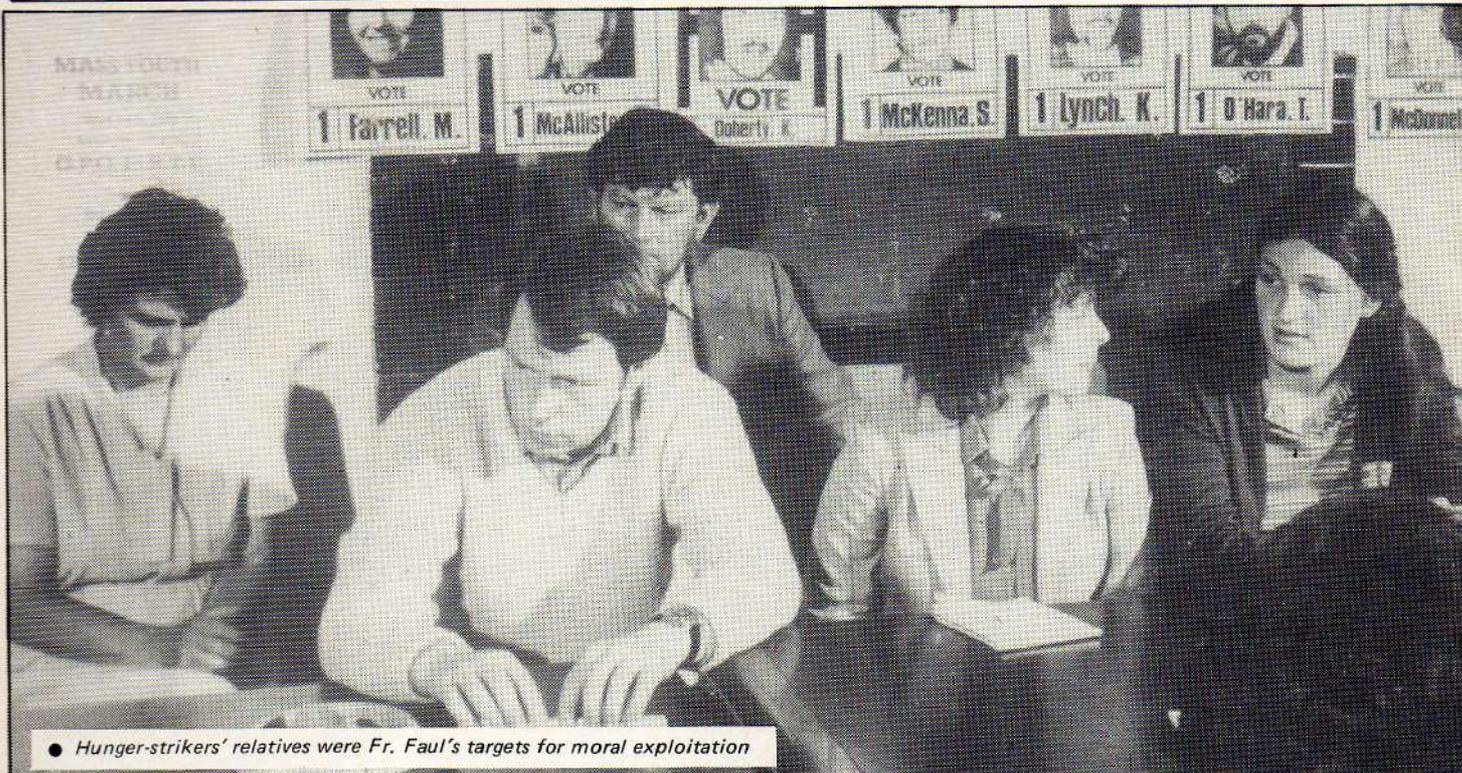
Paddy had prematurely slipped into a coma after forty-seven days on hunger-strike.

Bishop Daly of Derry lost no time in exploiting the situation by recommending Mrs. Quinn's action to the mothers of all the hunger-strikers.

At 1.00 a.m. on August 1st, Kevin Lynch died after seventy-one days on hunger-strike. That evening, at a meeting which was attended by, amongst others, Cardinal O'Fiaich, Fr. Faul, Bernadette McAliskey (of the National H-Block/Armagh committee and a staunch defender of the prisoners) and Belfast solicitor Oliver Kelly, the 'monitoring committee' proposal was formally dropped and in its place the 'Help the Prisoners Committee' was formed. All that was missing was the 'to help themselves'.

The committee issued a statement supporting the prisoners July 4th position. That was one of only two statements issued by the committee to find its way into print.

On Sunday, August 2nd, Kieran Doherty TD died at 7.15 p.m. after seventy-three days on hunger-strike. His father Alfie, who along with Kieran's mother, Margaret, had been exhaustingly active in the hunger-strike campaign, had



● Hunger-strikers' relatives were Fr. Faul's targets for moral exploitation

attacked Fr. Faul for putting pressure on the prisoners and their families instead of on the British. On the same day Fr. Faul announced a meeting of relatives of all protesting prisoners to take place in Clonard Hall, Belfast on Friday, August 7th. The idea for such a meeting came from Mrs. Alice McElwee, mother of Thomas McElwee who viewed it as a means of mobilising all the families of H-Block prisoners to involve themselves in the hunger-strike campaign. The McElwee family's involvement prior to and during Thomas' hunger-ike had brought them almost to the point of exhaustion.

**But it was suspected that Fr. Faul viewed such a meeting as a potential nucleus for an anti-hunger-strike movement.**

In the event though the families of all the prisoners rallied behind them. After the meeting that Friday night they issued a statement which was read by Mrs. Eilish McDonnell, mother of dead hunger-striker Joe McDonnell, which said:

*"It is unknown in Irish history for eight young men to die on hunger-strike for the principle to human dignity. We, the prisoners wives, fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters welcome the statements from the protesting prisoners in the H-Blocks and Armagh of July 4th and August 6th.*

*"We find them clear, responsible statements. We find the British government guilty of the most callous cruelty and lack of responsibility, care and compassion in the present hunger-strike crisis. We, the relatives, stand in full support of the protesting prisoners and the hunger-strike."*

Fr. Faul was instrumental in having an attack on the Free State government, the SDLP and the Catholic hierarchy deleted, saying that it was all too much for one statement. Thwarted for the time being Fr. Faul's offensive, in the public arena at least, was dormant for a week.

## POLITICAL ATTITUDE

On Friday, August 14th, he launched a public attack on the IRA and the hunger-strike, daubing the latter as 'hopeless' and 'a situation of despair'. More interestingly he did not confine his attack to further instilling defeatism, but at one point in an attack on the aims of the hunger-strike (which is indicative of his own political attitudes and which cannot be isolated from his political attitude to the hunger-strike and his activities therein), he suggested that maybe the real issue was 'the control of the voice of Irish Catholic nationalists'.

This was a ridiculous suggestion to be posing to republicans who were opposed to the hunger-strike from the start because of the personal tragic consequences for their comrades and their families but which must surely counterpose the question, were Fr. Faul's hunger-strike breaking activities aimed at ensuring that its political consequences, by default on the part

of the nationalist establishment as much as anything else, did not lead to the total erosion of the establishment's influence over the nationalist people?

More interestingly, later on in his attack, again indicative of his general as well as specific political attitude to the hunger-strike, he defended the establishment, whose continuing co-operation with the British government, republicans had correctly pinpointed as the chief buttress of its intransigence:

*"It is not a 1916 situation. People have not changed their political consciousness to any great degree. It is foolish to expect salvation from an increased effort from the Dublin government, the hierarchy and the SDLP ..."*

Prominent among his other ludicrous assertions was that the statements issued by the prisoners were written by people on the outside. But more serious was the implication of external manipulation of the hunger-strikers, inherent in that ridiculous assertion.

Overall the purpose of Fr. Faul's attack was to further instill defeatism, defend the establishment which relected his own political views and vilify the prisoners' supporters.

## INTERVENTION

On Thursday, August 20th, Micky Devine, the tenth and final hunger-striker to give his life for political status, died at 7.50 a.m. after sixty days on hunger-strike. The nationalist people of Fermanagh and South Tyrone cast their votes to elect Owen Carron as the prisoners' candidate that day also. Early that evening, Mrs. Pauline McGeown sought medical intervention to prevent her husband Pat — at that stage forty-two days on hunger-strike — from dying.

From this point on an insidious campaign of moral exploitation took place involving clerics who not only adopted Bishop Daly's recommendation of family intervention but posed it as a moral duty for Catholic mother's to do so.

So conspiratorial were they in their endeavours that when three Belfast men, Pat Sheehan, Jackie McMullan and Bernard Fox joined the hunger-strike consecutively — on August 10th, 17th and 24th respectively — it drew the somewhat neurotic response from Fr. Faul that this was a deliberate ploy aimed at making their families more amenable to ghetto discipline!

The reality of the situation was, however, that as Belfast men constituted the biggest percentage of all the H-Block prisoners it was unavoidable that at some stage a geographic spread of hunger-strikers from throughout the six counties could not be maintained by the prisoners.

What Fr. Faul was in fact decrying was that he believed Belfast families to be less amenable to his influence.



● Over 2,000 people marched in support of the prisoners in Derry on October 4th despite the ending of the hunger-strike the previous day

On Sunday, August 23rd, Fr. Faul eventually rectified the scurrilous and baseless assertions made in the *'Irish News'* on August 14th, villifying hunger-strike supporters outside the prison and implying manipulation of the hunger-strikers. But it took a blistering row with Brendan McFarlane and other prisoners to achieve that. Emerging from the prison after saying Mass there on Sunday, August 23rd, Fr. Faul put the public record straight on that score. Still declaring the situation as 'hopeless' he nevertheless said that the prisoners, "insisted that the chain of command on the hunger-strike is inside the prison and that they are not taking commands from outside. They asserted very strongly that all statements issued in their name do, in fact, come from them ..."

The public record was one thing -- enforced as it was by a confrontation with the prisoners who needed a public response from Fr. Faul to satisfy them -- but privately, as part of his ongoing campaign of undermining and vilification, Fr. Faul was to adhere to his untruthful claims about the authorship of prisoners' statements in order to wean the hunger-strikers' families to his ends.

Fr. Faul's more subtle and less dramatic tactics paid off in the end.

#### STATEMENT

On Friday, September 4th, Matt Devlin's family sought medical intervention to prevent him from dying. He had gone fifty-two days on hunger-strike. Two days later on Sunday, September 6th, Laurence McKeown's family did likewise. He had fasted for seventy-days. On Friday, September 25th, Bernard Fox dropped out of the hunger-strike after thirty-two days, because of a serious, premature deterioration which would have caused death within days. On Saturday, September 26th, Liam McCloskey came off the hunger-strike after fifty-two days when his mother, accompanied by Fr. McIlDowney, convinced him that she would intervene in the event of him lapsing into a coma.

On the same day the prisoners issued a statement calling on Fr. Faul to cease his hunger-strike breaking activities and to mind his own business by staying out of their affairs. Their statement continued:

*"From recent experience we have found Fr. Faul to be a conniving, treacherous man, not in the least shy about twist-*

*ing the truth to achieve his own ends. Once he decided to oppose the continuation of the hunger-strike, he threw himself into a vigorous campaign to discredit both we prisoners and the National H-Block Committee. Realising the futility of such a campaign, he turned his attention to the hunger-strikers' families, who are under tremendous pressure as it is, and he actively set about increasing the pressure on them.*

*"He has insinuated that those mothers who so courageously stood by their sons were somewhat less than 'loving mothers'; and we utterly deplore such devious manipulation of emotional words to maximise the pressure on families, and especially on mothers, to go against their sons' expressed wishes.*

*"At one stage Fr. Faul was seen to be a sincere cleric who was genuinely concerned about the attainment of justice for prisoners, but now he has forfeited that moral standpoint on justice and emerged as the best friend the British government has."*

But the prisoners' statement was in reality no more than putting their view on the historical record.

The irreversible trend of family interventions which Fr. Faul had nursed, cajoled and nourished with emotional and moral exploitation, distortion of truth, vilification and down-right political hostility to the hunger-strike and the achievements of the prisoners' demands, was in the ascendancy.

The *coup de grace* to the hunger-strike was achieved at a meeting the following day in the Lake Glen hotel in Belfast where all but one of the families attending a meeting there with Fr. Faul indicated that they too would seek medical intervention.

Challenges from the O'Hara and Fox families about the implied slurs and the baseless moral pressures which utterances of Fr. Faul's had subjected the mothers of those families to were waved aside with the same arrogance as when on previous occasions Fr. Faul had been exposed as untruthful.

Once again he trotted out the rubbish of external authorship of prisoners' statements, and perhaps sensing victory, embellishing his point by referring to members of Sinn Fein as 'thugs' and to the National H-Block/Armagh Committee as 'cowboys'.

All that was left after that was the formal announcement by the prisoners of the ending of the hunger-strike at 3.00 p.m. on Saturday October 3rd, 1981. ■

THE FULL TEXT OF THE H-BLOCK BLANKET MEN'S STATEMENT  
ANNOUNCING THE END OF THE HUNGER-STRIKE

# Why we ended the hunger-strike

**WE**, the protesting republican prisoners in the H-Blocks, being faced with the reality of sustained family intervention, are forced by this circumstance, over which we have little control at the moment, to end the hunger-strike.

After four years of continual protest, and after the failure of the Cardinal O Fiaich / Humphrey Atkins talks, and having exhausted all other means of protest to bring about a settlement, we embarked on hunger-strike on October 27th, 1980.

That hunger-strike ended on December 18th, 1980, when the British government intimated to the hunger-strikers that they would implement a workable and just solution which was forwarded to the hunger-strikers on December 18th, 1980.

In the course of the immediate post-hunger-strike period it became increasingly clear that the British government had reneged on their commitment to implement that solution and so we were back in a pre-hunger-strike predicament and thus forced to go back on hunger-strike.

## EMBARKED

On March 1st, 1981, Bobby Sands embarked on hunger-strike.

On April 9th, 1981, 30,492 people in the Fermanagh and South Tyrone constituency elected him as their MP and by doing so they recognised him as a political prisoner and demanded that the British government respect the mandate given by them and by the entire nationalist community on the streets by implementing the five demands.

The British government, caught in the hypocrisy of their own 'democracy jargon', ignored the people's wishes and mandate.

On April 23rd, 1981, Charles Haughey, then Dublin premier, met relatives of Bobby Sands and by playing on their distress convinced them that the intervention of the ECHR (European Commission on Human Rights) could, and would, solve the issue. Bobby's sister, Marcella, acted on Haughey's advice and signed an intervention document.

The ECHR delegation came to Long Kesh and Bobby Sands said he would

meet them providing Brendan McFarlane, O/C of the prisoners, Mr. Gerry Adams, and Mr. Danny Morrison were present. This reasonable proviso was refused and the ECHR left Long Kesh. Bobby released a statement that night attacking Haughey for un-scrupulously exploiting his family's anxiety to cover his own inactivity.

On May 5th, 1981, Bobby Sands died on hunger-strike, murdered by British callousness and vindictiveness.

Frank Hughes, Raymond McCreesh, and Patsy O'Hara were soon to follow.



Bobby to the grave, and still the British government remained steadfastly and inhumanly inflexible.

## ELECTION

On June 11th, nine prisoners stood in the Southern general election.

Of these, Paddy Agnew topped the poll in Louth, and Kieran Doherty was elected for the Cavan/Monaghan constituency. In the other seven areas the prisoners polled exceedingly well considering the lack of organisation and the short period of time there was to organise the election campaign.

The ordinary people of the South cast their votes in thousands. In Cavan/Monaghan, Kieran Doherty polled first preference 9,121 (15%); Paddy Agnew, Louth, 8,368 (18%); Joe McDonnell, Sligo/Leitrim, 5,634; Martin Hurson, Longford/Westmeath, 4,573 (10%); Sean McKenna, Kerry North, 3,860; Kevin Lynch, Waterford, 3,337; Tony O'Hara, Dublin West, 3,034; Mairead Farrell, Cork North Central, 2,751, and Tom McAllister, Clare, 2,120.

On July 4th, 1981, we issued a major policy statement outlining our five demands, and emphasising the fact that we wanted our five demands to be available for all prisoners (rejecting an assertion to the contrary, made by the British, which we regarded as nonsense and a red herring to justify the barbarity of the British government). This statement was almost universally accepted as 'remarkably conciliatory'.

## COMMISSION

On the same day, the ICJP (Iris Commission for Justice and Peace) entered the prison and put proposals to the hunger-strikers. They put the same proposals to Brendan McFarlane the next day.

On July 8th, Joe McDonnell died and the British government issued their policy statement.

We released a statement rejecting the government's statement and ambiguous proposals as even less than what we were originally led to believe was offered via the ICJP. We also rejected the ICJP's proposals which totally evaded the crux of the issue and we expressed our belief that the government had used the ICJP to



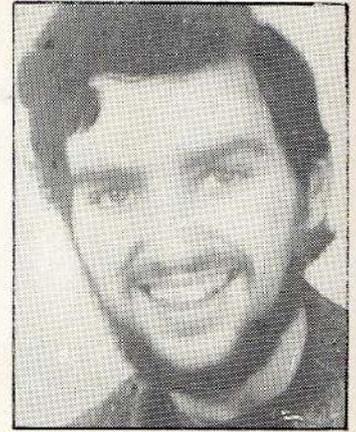
● **BOBBY SANDS**  
aged 27, Belfast  
commenced fast March 1st  
died May 5th  
after 66 days



● **FRANCIS HUGHES**  
aged 25, South Derry  
commenced fast March 15th  
died May 12th  
after 59 days



● **RAYMOND McCREESH**  
aged 24, South Armagh  
commenced fast March 22nd  
died May 21st  
after 61 days



● **PATSY O'HARA**  
aged 24, Derry city  
commenced fast March 22nd  
died May 21st  
after 61 days



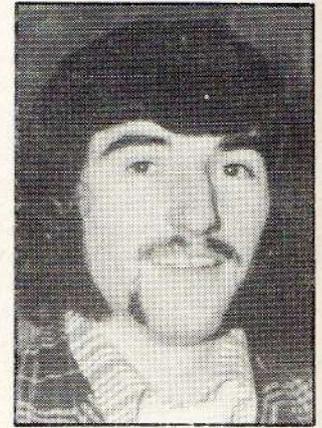
● **JOE McDONNELL**  
aged 30, Belfast  
commenced fast May 9th  
died July 8th  
after 61 days



● **BRENDAN McLAUGHLIN**  
aged 29, North Derry  
commenced fast May 14th  
ended fast May 27th  
after 14 days



● **KIERAN DOHERTY**  
aged 25, Belfast  
commenced fast May 22nd  
died August 2nd  
after 73 days



● **KEVIN LYNCH**  
aged 25, North Derry  
commenced fast May 23rd  
died August 1st  
after 71 days

foster the impression that a settlement was imminent.

The government's reneged on their own commitment to the ICJP compounded our belief that the ICJP were being used, and the ICJP dismissed the government's proposals as not a genuine attempt at a settlement.

### SHOCKED

On July 13th we were shocked and dismayed to hear that Martin Hurson had been violently ill and had died unexpectedly and prematurely.

The next significant development was the British government-sponsored intervention of the IRC (International Red Cross). The IRC tried to initiate direct dialogue between the Brits and ourselves, but the British rejected this and suggested mediation based on their July 8th statement, which was aimed at defeating us and unproductive, and we rejected this as futile.

We pointed out to the IRC that, as the Brits were not interested in an honourable settlement, their interest in the IRC must logically be to use them. A Red Cross delegate asked for a further breakdown of our July 4th statement and was initially refused. However, after dis-

cussion, we complied and issued the August 6th statement and asked the British government, the Dublin government, the SDLP and the Catholic church to respond to our statement.

Soon Kieran Doherty, Kevin Lynch and Thomas McElwee were to be murdered by Britain.

The British government, having been exposed for the hypocrites they are at the first Fermanagh and South Tyrone by-election, had instigated and passed legislation which erased our right to participate in elections and, this done, they fixed the by-election for Bobby Sands' seat for August 20th.

### TREACHEROUS

By this time, a new, active, treacherous, and vigorous campaign was under way to break the strike. This campaign was orchestrated by clerics who received approval from the Catholic church. On occasion other individuals were involved also.

Attempts were made to discredit we prisoners and the National H-Block/Armagh Committee. More damaging was the promotion of the 'hopeless' syndrome. The projection of this 'hopeless' syndrome plus the private lobbying of relatives to effect intervention when

strikers were going into a coma was proving to be a serious threat to the continuation of the hunger-strike.

On August 20th, 1981, Owen Carron was elected with an increased majority as proxy political prisoner MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone. Even so, the British premier, Thatcher, again spurned this mandate for we prisoners and with encouragement from Dr. FitzGerald she went further, by refusing even to meet with him to discuss the continuing spiral, and gruesome spectre, of death.

On August 20th, Micky Devine was the tenth hunger-striker to die.

Mounting pressure and cleric-inspired demoralisation led to further intervention and at present five strikers have been taken off their fast. We accept that it is almost a physical and psychological impossibility to recommence hunger-strike after intervention. Also, two men ended their fast to avoid a premature, non-hunger-striking death.

The situation exists at present that a considerable majority of present hunger-strikers' families have indicated that they will intervene and under these circumstances we feel that the hunger-strike must, for tactical reasons, be suspended.

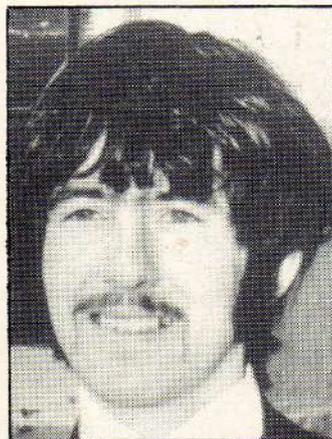
We feel that it is of paramount importance that the political revelations, lessons,



● **MARTIN HURSON**  
aged 24, East Tyrone  
commenced fast May 29th  
died July 13th  
after 46 days



● **THOMAS McELWEE**  
aged 23, South Derry  
commenced fast June 8th  
died August 8th  
after 62 days



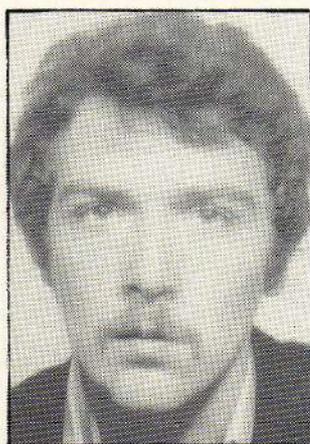
● **PADDY QUINN**  
aged 28, South Armagh  
commenced fast June 15th  
ended fast July 31st  
after 47 days



● **MICKY DEVINE**  
aged 27, Derry city  
commenced fast June 22nd  
died August 20th  
after 60 days



● **LAURENCE McKEOWN**  
aged 24, County Antrim  
commenced fast June 29th  
ended fast September 6th  
after 70 days



● **PAT McGEOWN**  
aged 24, Belfast  
commenced fast July 10th  
ended fast August 20th  
after 42 days



● **MATT DEVLIN**  
aged 31, East Tyrone  
commenced fast July 15th  
ended fast September 4th  
after 52 days



● **LIAM McCLOSKEY**  
aged 25, North Derry  
commenced fast August 3rd  
ended fast September 26th  
after 55 days

and consequences of the hunger-strike are recognised and perpetuated in the minds, the hearts and demeanour of the nationalist population of Ireland.

One of the primary lessons to emerge from this second hunger-strike is that the nationalist community is politically inconsequential and impotent in the context of the six-county statelet.

Despite the electoral successes, despite the hundreds of thousands at hunger-strikers' funerals, despite massive and unprecedented displays of community support and solidarity, the British government adhered rigidly to the precept that 'might is right' and set about hammering home the point that nothing has really changed since the fall of Stormont or from the inception of this state. That is, that nationalist Ireland must always be subjected to the British and loyalist veto.

On the same theme, the lesson of Fermanagh and South Tyrone is that the self-exalted 'British democracy' is an expediency manufactured — again from the setting up of the border (the 'first and biggest gerrymander') — to preserve a continued British presence in Ireland.

When defeated by their own rules at the polls the British government's concept of democracy altered and the rules were changed to suit them. When they are

defeated even by their new rules, they ignore the democratically expressed voice of the electorate and thus undermine the entire principle and purpose of using their 'democratic' processes to effect social or political change.

The logical conclusion of this analysis is that nationalist pacifism in the Northern Ireland context dooms the nationalist population to subservency, perpetuates partition, and thwarts the quest for a just and lasting peace in Ireland.

## CHURCH

Another facet of this hunger-strike was to expertly expose the true face of the present Irish establishment, consisting of the Catholic church, the Dublin government, and the SDLP.

From the outset the Catholic hierarchy opposed the hunger-strike even though they offered no alternative course of action.

We contend that their position has at all times been established by political consideration rather than the Christian values of truth and justice. Therefore, their stance has been extremely immoral and misleading.

At no time did the church publicly support the five demands or for that matter reject them. Equally when spec-

ifically asked to respond to our August 6th statement, they kept silent — even though hunger-strikers were dying virtually on a weekly basis.

We contend very strongly that the reason why the British didn't respond to our August 6th statement is that the prison regime we proposed was inarguably superior and better than the present Victorian regime and that the church accepted this, but to support our demands would be to oppose the British government.

And the logical conclusion, again, would be to consciously incite the Irish Catholic population to oppose the British policy. Therefore, they remained ambiguous on the entire issue and the reason, as we stated, is that they are intricately immersed in the field of politics and deceit.

It was the Catholic clerics, more than anyone, who were involved in the back door and public pressuring of families to get them to intervene.

## BLOC

We believe that the Dublin bloc of Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, and Labour are accessories to the legalised murder of ten true and committed Irishmen who died heroically in the long tradition of republican resistance to British occupation,



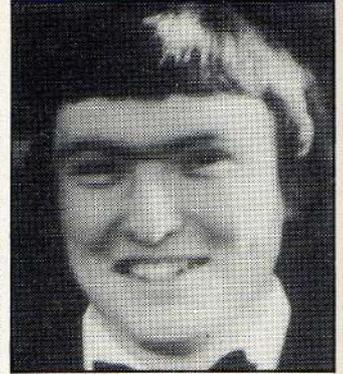
● **PAT SHEEHAN**  
aged 23, Belfast  
commenced fast August 10th  
ended fast October 3rd  
after 55 days



● **JACKIE McMULLAN**  
aged 25, Belfast  
commenced fast August 17th  
ended fast October 3rd  
after 48 days



**BERNARD FOX**  
aged 30, Belfast  
commenced fast August 24th  
ended fast September 25th  
after 33 days



● **GERRY CARVILLE**  
aged 25, South Down  
commenced fast August 31st  
ended fast October 3rd  
after 34 days



● **JOHN PICKERING**  
aged 25, Belfast  
commenced fast September 7th  
ended fast October 3rd  
after 27 days



● **GERARD HODGINS**  
aged 21, Belfast  
commenced fast September 14th  
ended fast October 3rd  
after 20 days



● **JIM DEVINE**  
aged 24, Strabane  
commenced fast September 21st  
ended fast October 3rd  
after 13 days

oppression, and injustice in Ireland. They are accessories to murder by virtue of the fact that they sat idly by and thus encouraged the British to continue with the death policy.

The sheer hypocrisy of their position is that at no time did any of these three parties unequivocally or even tacitly support our demands, even though our five demands are implemented in their entirety (even more than we were looking for) in jails in Southern Ireland.

Well may they hang their heads in shame, for they are a pathetic reflection of republicanism and the spirit that traditionally earmarked the Irish patriot's pursuit of nationhood and justice, and by their cowardly collaborationist and quiescent stand on the H-Block issue they have debased the memory of generations of Irish freedom fighters who fought for a separatist Ireland.

If John Bull doesn't actually rule the twenty-six counties physically, he still rules in spirit.

And it must not be forgotten that Garret FitzGerald's concept of democracy parallels with Maggie Thatcher's.

### LICKSPITTLE

There was only one positively injurious action available to the SDLP which would help to save lives in the H-Blocks and that was to isolate the British administration by withdrawing from the council chambers. This they consistently refused to do,

preferring instead to cling tenaciously to their role of imperialist lickspittle.

Rather than take action to secure an honourable solution and save lives, they occupied their time trying to make political gain by attacking those who did genuinely endeavour to end the issue honourably, namely the National H-Block/ Armagh Committee and those councillors who answered our call to withdraw from the councils.

This party should now be recognised for what it is, an amalgamation of middle-class Redmondites, devoid of principle, direction, and courage. This party is spineless and weak and is very capable of selling-out to unionist intimidators for imperialist perks. Their whole leadership combined do not possess a fraction of the moral fibre demonstrated so valiantly by our comrades.

### ADVANCE

There were several reasons given by our comrades for going on hunger-strike. One was because we had no choice and no other means of securing a principled solution to the four-year protest.

Another, and of fundamental importance, was to advance the Irish people's right to liberty. We believe that the age-old struggle for Irish self-determination and freedom has been immeasurably advanced by this hunger-strike and therefore we claim a massive political victory. The hunger-strikers, by their selflessness, have politicised a

very substantial section of the Irish nation and exposed the shallow, unprincipled nature of the Irish partitionist bloc.

Our comrades have lit with their very lives an eternal beacon which will inspire this nation and people to rise and crush oppression forever and this nation can be proud that it produced such a quality of manhood.

We pay a special tribute to the families of our dead comrades. You have suffered greatly and with immense dignity. Your loved ones, our comrades and friends, were and would be very proud of you for standing by them. No tribute is too great.

Also, we give a special mention to those families who could not bear to watch their loved ones die in pain and agony. We prisoners understand the pressure you were under and stand by you.

We thank the National H-Block/ Armagh Committee, the H-Block movement, the nationalist people of Ireland, and all those who championed our cause abroad, we are indebted to you and ask you to continue your good work on our behalf.

Lastly we reaffirm our commitment to the achievement of the five demands by whatever means we believe necessary and expedient. We rule nothing out.

Under no circumstances are we going to devalue the memory of our dead comrades by submitting ourselves to a dehumanising and degrading regime.

# Bobby Sands

## The revolutionary spirit of freedom

**BOBBY SANDS** was born in 1954 in Rathcoole, a predominantly loyalist district of north Belfast. His twenty-seventh birthday fell on the ninth day of his sixty-six-day hunger-strike. His sisters Marcella, one year younger, and Bernadette, were born in April 1955 and November 1958, respectively. All three lived their early years at Abbots Cross in the Newtownabbey area of north Belfast. A second son, John, now nineteen, was born to their parents John and Rosaleen, now both aged 57, in June 1962

The sectarian realities of ghetto life materialised early in Bobby's life when at the age of seven his family were forced to move home owing to loyalist intimidation even as early as 1962. Bobby recalled his mother speaking of the troubled times which occurred during her childhood; "Although I never really understood what internment was or who the 'Specials' were, I grew to regard them as symbols of evil".

Of this time Bobby himself later wrote: "I was only a working-class boy from a Nationalist ghetto, but it is repression that creates the revolutionary spirit of freedom. I shall not settle until I achieve liberation of my country, until Ireland becomes a sovereign independent socialist republic."

When Bobby was sixteen years old he started work as an apprentice coach builder and joined the National Union of Vehicle Builders and the ATGWU. In an article printed in 'An Phoblacht/Republican News' on April 4th, 1981, Bobby recalled: "Starting work, although frightening at first became alright, especially with the reward at the end of the week. Dances and clothes, girls and a few shillings to spend, opened up a whole new world to me."\*

Bobby's background, experiences and ambitions did not differ greatly from that of the average ghetto youth. Then came 1968 and the events which were to change his life. Bobby had served two years of his apprenticeship when he was intimidated out of his job. His sister Bernadette recalls: "Bobby went to work one morning and these fellows were standing there cleaning guns. One fellow said to him. Do you see these here, well if you don't go you'll get this"; then Bobby also found a note in his lunch-box telling him to get out.

In June 1972, the family were intimidated out of their home in Doonbeg Drive, Rathcoole, and moved into the newly built Twinbrook estate on the fringe of nationalist West Belfast. Bernadette again recalled: We had suffered intimidation for about eighteen months before we were actually put out. We had always been



**BOBBY SANDS**

Aged 27 from Belfast. Commenced hunger-strike March 1st, died May 5th after 66 days

used to having Protestant friends Bobby had gone around with Catholics and Protestants, but it ended up when everything erupted, that the friends he went about with for years were the same ones who helped to put his family out of their home.

As well as being intimidated out of his job and his home being under threat Bobby also suffered personal attacks from the loyalists.

At eighteen Bobby joined the Republican Movement. Bernadette says: "... he was just at the age when he was beginning to become aware of things happening around him. He more or less just said, right, this is where I'm going to take up. A couple of his cousins had been arrested and interned. Bobby felt that he should get involved and start doing something."

Bobby himself wrote: "My life now centered around sleepless nights and stand-bys dodging the Brits and calming nerves to go out on operations. But the people stood by us. The people not only opened the doors of their homes to lend us a hand but they opened their hearts to us. I learned that without the people we could not survive and I knew that I owed them everything."

In October 1972, he was arrested. Four hand-guns were found in a house he was staying

in and he was charged with possession. He spent the next three years in the cages of Long Kesh where he had political prisoner status. During this time Bobby read widely and taught himself Irish which he was later to teach the other blanket men in the H-Blocks.

Released in 1976 Bobby returned to his family in Twinbrook. He reported back to his local unit and straight back into the continuing struggle: "Quite a lot of things had changed some parts of the ghettos had completely disappeared and others were in the process of being removed. The war was still forging ahead although tactics and strategy had changed. The British government was now seeking to 'Ulsterise' the war which included the attempted criminalisation of the IRA and attempted normalisation of the war situation."

Bobby set himself to work tackling the social issues which affected the Twinbrook area. Here he became a community activist. According to Bernadette: "When he got out of jail that first time our estate had no Green Cross, no Sinn Fein, nor anything like that. He was involved in the Tenants' Association... He got the black taxis to run to Twinbrook because the bus service at that time was inadequate. It got to the stage where people were coming to the door looking for Bobby to put up ramps on the roads in case cars were going too fast and would knock the children down".

Within six months Bobby was arrested again. There had been a bomb attack on the Balmoral Furniture Company at Dunmurry, followed by a gun-battle in which two men were wounded. Bobby was in a car near the scene with three other young men. The RUC captured them and found a revolver in the car.

The six men were taken to Castlereagh and were subjected to brutal interrogations for six days. Bobby refused to answer any questions during his interrogation, except his name, age and address.

In a ninety-six verse poem written in 1980, entitled 'The Crime of Castlereagh', Bobby tells of his experiences in Castlereagh and his fears and thoughts at the time.

*They came and came their job the same  
In relays N'er they stopped.  
'Just sign the line! they shrieked each time  
And beat me 'till I dropped.  
They tortured me quite viciously  
They threw me through the air.  
It got so bad it seemed I had  
Been beat beyond repair.*

*The days expired and no one tired,  
Except of course the prey,  
And knew they well that time would tell  
If I had words to say,  
Each dirty trick they laid on thick  
For no one heard or saw,  
Who dares to say in Castlereagh  
The 'police' would break the law!*

He was held on remand for eleven months until his trial in September 1977. As at his previous trial he refused to recognise the

\* THIS article was first published anonymously in 'Republican News', December, 16th 1978. The smuggled out article recalls how the spirit of republican defiance grew within him, and is a semi-autobiographical account.



●IRA Volunteers pay a final tribute to their martyred comrade Bobby Sands MP, freedom fighter and revolutionary writer

court.

The judge admitted there was no evidence to link Bobby, or the other three young men with him, to the bombing. So the four of them were sentenced to fourteen years each for possession of the one revolver.

Bobby spent the first twenty-two days of his sentence in solitary confinement, 'on the boards' in Crumlin Road jail. For fifteen of those days he was completely naked. He was moved to the H-Blocks and joined the blanket protest. He began to write for *Republican News* and then after February 1979 for the newly-merged '*An Phoblacht/Republican News*', under the pen-name, 'Marcella', his sister's name. His articles and letters, in minute handwriting, like all communications from the H-Blocks, were smuggled out on tiny pieces of toilet paper.

He wrote: *The days were long and lonely. The sudden and total deprivation of such basic human necessities as exercise and fresh air, association with other people, my own clothes and things like newspapers, radio, cigarettes books and a host of other things, made my life very hard.*

Bobby became PRO for the blanket men and was in constant confrontation with the prison authorities which resulted in several spells of solitary confinement. In the H-Blocks, beatings, long periods in the punishment cells, starvation diets and torture were commonplace as the prison authorities, with the full knowledge and consent of the British administration, imposed a harsh and brutal regime on the prisoners in their attempts to break the prisoners' resistance to criminalisation.

The H-Blocks became the battlefield in which the republican spirit of resistance met head-on all the inhumanities that the British could perpetrate. The republican spirit prevailed and in April 1978 in protest against systematic ill-treatment when they went to the toilets or got showered, the H-Block prisoners refused to wash or slop-out. They were joined in this no-wash protest by the women in Armagh jail in February 1980 when they were subjected to similar harassment.

On October 27th, 1980, following the breakdown of talks between British direct

ruler in the North, Humphrey Atkins, and Cardinal O'Fiaich, the Irish Catholic primate, seven prisoners in the H-Blocks began a hunger-strike. Bobby volunteered for the fast but instead he succeeded, as O/C, Brendan Hughes, who went on hunger-strike.

During the hunger-strike he was given political recognition by the prison authorities. The day after a senior British official visited the hunger-strikers, Bobby was brought half-a-mile in a prison van from H3 to the prison hospital to visit them. Subsequently he was allowed several meetings with Brendan Hughes. He was not involved in the decision to end the hunger-strike which was taken by the seven men alone. But later that night he was taken to meet them and was allowed to visit republican prison leaders in H-Blocks 4, 5 and 6.

On December 19th, 1980, Bobby issued a statement that the prisoners would not wear prison-issue clothing nor do prison work. He then began negotiations with the prison governor, Stanley Hilditch, for a step-by-step de-escalation of the protest.

But the prisoners' efforts were rebuffed by the authorities: *We discovered that our good-will and flexibility were in vain*, wrote Bobby. *It was made abundantly clear during one of my co-operation' meetings with prison officials that strict conformity was required, which in essence meant acceptance of criminal status*

In the H-Blocks the British saw the opportunity to defeat the IRA by criminalising Irish freedom fighters but the blanket men, perhaps more than those on the outside, appreciated before anyone else the grave repercussions, and so they fought.

Bobby volunteered to lead the new hunger-strike. He saw it as a microcosm of the way the Brits were treating Ireland historically and presently. Bobby realised that someone would have to die to win political status.

He insisted on starting two weeks in front of the others so that perhaps his death could secure the five demands and save their lives. For the first seventeen days of the hunger-strike Bobby kept a secret diary in which he wrote his thoughts and views, mostly in English but occasionally breaking into Gaelic. He had no fear of death and saw the hunger-strike as something much larger than the five demands

and as having major repercussions for British rule in Ireland. The diary was written on toilet paper in biro pen and had to be hidden, mostly carried inside Bobby's own body. During those first seventeen days Bobby lost a total of sixteen pounds weight and on Monday, March 23rd, he was moved to the prison hospital.

On March 30th, he was nominated as candidate for the Fermanagh and South Tyrone by-election caused by the sudden death of Frank Maguire, an independent MP who supported the prisoners' cause.

The next morning, day thirty-one, of his hunger-strike, he was visited by Owen Carron who acted as his election agent. Owen told of that first visit *'Instead of meeting that young man of the poster with long hair and a fresh face, even at that time when Bobby wasn't too bad he was radically changed. He was very thin and bony and his hair was cut short.*

Bobby had no illusions with regard to his election victory. His reaction was not one of over-optimism. After the result was announced Owen visited Bobby *'He had already heard the result on the radio. He was in good form alright but he always used to keep saying. In my position you can't afford to be optimistic. In other words, he didn't take it that because he'd won an election that his life would be saved. He thought that the Brits would need their pound of flesh. I think he was always working on the premise that he would have to die.*

At 1.17 a.m. on Tuesday, May 5th, having completed sixty-five days on hunger-strike, Bobby Sands MP, died in the H-Block prison hospital at Long Kesh. Bobby was a truly unique person whose loss is great and immeasurable. He never gave himself a moment to spare. He lived his life energetically, dedicated to his people and to the republican cause, eventually offering up his life in a conscious effort to further that cause and the cause of those with whom he had shared almost eight years of his adult life. In his own words: *"Of course I can be murdered but I remain what I am a political POW and no-one, not even the British, can change that."*

# Raymond McCreesh

**'A quiet, good-natured and discreet republican'**

THE THIRD of the resolutely determined IRA Volunteers to join the H-Block hunger-strike for political status was twenty-four-year-old Raymond McCreesh, from Camlough in South Armagh: a quiet, shy and good-humoured republican, who although captured at the early age of nineteen, along with two other Volunteers in a British army ambush, had already almost three years active republican involvement behind him.

During those years he had established himself as one of the most dedicated and invaluable republican activists in that part of the six counties to which the Brits themselves have — half-fearfully, half-respectfully — given the name 'bandit country' and which has become a living legend in republican circles, during the present war, for the courage and resourcefulness of its Volunteers: the border land of South Armagh.

Raymond's resolve to hunger-strike to the death, to secure the prisoners' five demands was indicated in a smuggled-out letter written by Paddy Quinn, an H-Block blanket man — who was later to embark on hunger-strike himself — who was captured along with Raymond and who received the same fourteen-year sentence: *I wrote Raymie a couple of letters before he went to the prison hospital. He wrote back and according to the letter he was in great spirits and very determined. A sign of that determination was the way he finished off by saying: Ta seans ann go mbeidh me abhaile rombat a chara' which means: There is a chance that I'll be home before you, my friend!*

Captured in June 1976, and sentenced in March 1977, when he refused to recognise the court, Raymond would have been due for release in about two years' time had he not embarked on his principled protest for political status, which led him, ultimately, to hunger-strike.

## FAMILY

Raymond Peter McCreesh, the seventh in a family of eight children, was born in a small semi-detached house at St. Malachy's Park, Camlough — where the family still live — on February 25th, 1957.

The McCreeshes, a nationalist family in a staunchly nationalist area, have been rooted in South Armagh for seven generations, and both Raymond's parents — James aged 65, a retired local council worker, and Susan (whose maiden name is Quigley), aged 60 — come from the nearby townland of Dorsey.

Raymond was a quiet but very lively person, very good-natured and — like other members of his family — extremely witty. Not the sort of person who would push himself forward if he was in a crowd, and indeed often rather a shy person in his personal relationships until he got to know a person well. Nevertheless, in his republican capacity he was known



## RAYMOND MCCREESH

Aged 24 from South Armagh. Commenced hunger-strike March 22nd, died May 21st after 61 days

as a capable, dedicated and totally committed Volunteer who could show leadership and aggression where necessary.

Among both his family and his republican associates, Raymond was renowned for his laughter and for "always having a wee smile on him". His sense of humour remained even during his four-year incarceration in the H-Blocks, as well as during his hunger-strike where he continued to insist that he was "just fine."

## SCHOOL

Raymond went first to Camlough primary school, and then to St. Coleman's college in Newry. It was at St. Coleman's that Raymond met Danny McGuinness, also from Camlough, and the two became steadfast friends. They later became republican comrades, and Danny too then a nineteen-year-old student who had just completed his 'A' levels was captured along with Raymond and Paddy Quinn, and is now in the H-Blocks.

At school, Raymond's strongest interest was in Irish language and Irish history, and he read widely in those subjects. His understanding of Irish history led him to a fervently nationalist outlook, and he was regarded as a 'hot-head' in his history classes, and as being generally "very conscious of his Irishness".

He was also a sportsman, and played under-sixteen and Minor football for Carrickcruppin Gaelic football club as well as taking a keen interest in the local youth club where he played basketball and pool, and was regarded as a good snooker player.

When he was fourteen years old, Raymond got a weekend job working on a milk round through the South Armagh border area, around Mullaghbawn and Dromintee. Later on, after leaving his job in Lisburn, he worked full-time on the milk round, where he would always stop and chat to customers. He became a great favourite amongst them and many enquired about him long after he left the round.

## RESISTANCE

During the early 'seventies, the South Armagh border area was the stamping ground of the British army's Parachute regiment, operating out of Bessbrook camp less than two miles from Raymond's home. Stories of their widespread brutality and harassment of local people abound, and built-up then a degree of resentment and resistance amongst most of the nationalist population that is seen to this day.

The SAS terror regiment began operating in this area in large numbers too, in a vain attempt to counter republican successes, and the high level of assassinations of local people on both sides of the South Armagh border, notably three members of the Reavey family in 1975, was believed locally to have been the work both of the SAS, and of UDR and RUC members holding dual membership with 'illegal' loyalist paramilitary organisations.

Given this scenario and Raymond's understanding of Irish history, it is small wonder that he became involved in the republican struggle.

## JOINED

He first of all joined na Fianna Eireann early in 1973 and towards the end of that year joined the Irish Republican Army's 1st Battalion, South Armagh.

Even before joining the IRA, and despite his very young age, Raymond — with remarkable awareness and maturity — became one of the first Volunteers in the South Armagh area to adopt a very low, security conscious, republican profile.

He rarely drank, but if occasionally in a pub he would not discuss either politics or his own activities, and he rarely attended demonstrations or indeed anything which would have brought him to the attention of the enemy.

It was because of this remarkable self-discipline and discretion that during his years of intense republican involvement Raymond was never once arrested or even held for screening in the North, and only twice held briefly in the South.

Consequently, Raymond was never obliged to go 'on the run', continuing to live at home until the evening of his capture, and always careful not to cause his family any concern

# Raymond McCreesh

**'A quiet, good-natured and discreet republican'**

THE THIRD of the resolutely determined IRA Volunteers to join the H-Block hunger-strike for political status was twenty-four-year-old Raymond McCreesh, from Camlough in South Armagh: a quiet, shy and good-humoured republican, who although captured at the early age of nineteen, along with two other Volunteers in a British army ambush, had already almost three years active republican involvement behind him.

During those years he had established himself as one of the most dedicated and invaluable republican activists in that part of the six counties to which the Brits themselves have — half-fearfully, half-respectfully — given the name 'bandit country' and which has become a living legend in republican circles, during the present war, for the courage and resourcefulness of its Volunteers: the border land of South Armagh.

Raymond's resolve to hunger-strike to the death, to secure the prisoners' five demands was indicated in a smuggled-out letter written by Paddy Quinn, an H-Block blanket man — who was later to embark on hunger-strike himself — who was captured along with Raymond and who received the same fourteen-year sentence: *I wrote Raymie a couple of letters before he went to the prison hospital. He wrote back and according to the letter he was in great spirits and very determined. A sign of that determination was the way he finished off by saying: 'Ta seans ann go mbeidh me abhaile rombat a chara' which means: There is a chance that I'll be home before you, my friend!*

Captured in June 1976, and sentenced in March 1977, when he refused to recognise the court, Raymond would have been due for release in about two years' time had he not embarked on his principled protest for political status, which led him, ultimately, to hunger-strike.

## FAMILY

Raymond Peter McCreesh, the seventh in a family of eight children, was born in a small semi-detached house at St. Malachy's Park, Camlough — where the family still live — on February 25th, 1957.

The McCreeshes, a nationalist family in a staunchly nationalist area, have been rooted in South Armagh for seven generations, and both Raymond's parents — James aged 65, a retired local council worker, and Susan (whose maiden name is Quigley), aged 60 — come from the nearby townland of Dorsey.

Raymond was a quiet but very lively person, very good-natured and — like other members of his family — extremely witty. Not the sort of person who would push himself forward if he was in a crowd, and indeed often rather a shy person in his personal relationships until he got to know a person well. Nevertheless, in his republican capacity he was known



## RAYMOND MCCREESH

Aged 24 from South Armagh.  
Commenced hunger-strike March 22nd, died May 21st after 61 days

as a capable, dedicated and totally committed Volunteer who could show leadership and aggression where necessary.

Among both his family and his republican associates, Raymond was renowned for his laughter and for *"always having a wee smile on him"*. His sense of humour remained even during his four-year incarceration in the H-Blocks, as well as during his hunger-strike where he continued to insist that he was *"just fine."*

## SCHOOL

Raymond went first to Camlough primary school, and then to St. Coleman's college in Newry. It was at St. Coleman's that Raymond met Danny McGuinness, also from Camlough, and the two became steadfast friends. They later became republican comrades, and Danny too then a nineteen-year-old student who had just completed his 'A' levels was captured along with Raymond and Paddy Quinn, and is now in the H-Blocks.

At school, Raymond's strongest interest was in Irish language and Irish history, and he read widely in those subjects. His understanding of Irish history led him to a fervently nationalist outlook, and he was regarded as a 'hot-head' in his history classes, and as being generally *"very conscious of his Irishness"*.

He was also a sportsman, and played under-sixteen and Minor football for Carrickcruppin Gaelic football club as well as taking a keen interest in the local youth club where he played basketball and pool, and was regarded as a good snooker player.

When he was fourteen years old, Raymond got a weekend job working on a milk round through the South Armagh border area, around Mullaghbawn and Dromintee. Later on, after leaving his job in Lisburn, he worked full-time on the milk round, where he would always stop and chat to customers. He became a great favourite amongst them and many enquired about him long after he left the round.

## RESISTANCE

During the early 'seventies, the South Armagh border area was the stamping ground of the British army's Parachute regiment, operating out of Bessbrook camp less than two miles from Raymond's home. Stories of their widespread brutality and harassment of local people abound, and built-up then a degree of resentment and resistance amongst most of the nationalist population that is seen to this day.

The SAS terror regiment began operating in this area in large numbers too, in a vain attempt to counter republican successes, and the high level of assassinations of local people on both sides of the South Armagh border, notably three members of the Reavey family in 1975, was believed locally to have been the work both of the SAS, and of UDR and RUC members holding dual membership with 'illegal' loyalist paramilitary organisations.

Given this scenario and Raymond's understanding of Irish history, it is small wonder that he became involved in the republican struggle.

## JOINED

He first of all joined na Fianna Eireann early in 1973 and towards the end of that year joined the Irish Republican Army's 1st Battalion, South Armagh.

Even before joining the IRA, and despite his very young age, Raymond — with remarkable awareness and maturity — became one of the first Volunteers in the South Armagh area to adopt a very low, security conscious, republican profile.

He rarely drank, but if occasionally in a pub he would not discuss either politics or his own activities, and he rarely attended demonstrations or indeed anything which would have brought him to the attention of the enemy.

It was because of this remarkable self-discipline and discretion that during his years of intense republican involvement Raymond was never once arrested or even held for screening in the North, and only twice held briefly in the South.

Consequently, Raymond was never obliged to go 'on the run', continuing to live at home until the evening of his capture, and always careful not to cause his family any concern

or alarm.

Fitted in with his republican activities, Raymond would relax by going to dances or by going to watch football matches at weekends.

## WORK

After leaving school he spent a year at Newry technical college studying fabrication engineering, and afterwards got a job at Gambler Simms (Steel) Ltd. in Lisburn. He had a conscientious approach to his craft but was obliged to leave after a year because of a fear of assassination.

Each day he travelled to work from Newry, in a bus along with four or five mates who had got jobs there too from the technical college, but the prevailing high level of sectarian assassinations, and the suspicion justifiably felt of the predominantly loyalist work-force at Gambler Simms, made Raymond, and many other nationalist workers, decide that travelling such a regular route through loyalist countryside was simply too risky.

So, after leaving the Lisburn factory, Raymond began to work full-time as a milk roundsman, an occupation which would greatly have increased his knowledge of the surrounding countryside, as well as enabling him to observe the movements of British army patrols and any other untoward activity in the area.

## ACTIVITY

Republican activity in that area during those years consisted largely of landmine attacks and ambushes on enemy patrols.

Raymond had the reputation of a republican who was very keen to suggest and take part in operations, almost invariably working in his own, extremely tight, active service unit, though occasionally, when requested — as he frequently was — assisting other units in neighbouring areas with specific operations. He would always carefully consider the pros and cons of any operation, and would never panic or lose his nerve.

In undertaking the hunger-strike, Raymond gave the matter the same careful consideration he would have expended on a military operation, he undertook nothing either in a rush, or for bluff.

## CAPTURE

The operation which led to the capture of Raymond, his boyhood friend, Danny McGuinness, and Patrick Quinn, took place on June 25th, 1976.

An active service unit comprising these three and a fourth Volunteer arrived in a commandeered car at a farmyard in the townland of Sturgan a mile from Camlough — at about 9.25 p.m.

Their objective was to ambush a covert Brit observation post which they had located opposite the Mountain House Inn, on the main Newry — Newtonhamilton Road, half-a-mile away. They were not aware, however, that another covert British observation post, on a steep hillside half-a-mile away, had already spotted the four masked, uniformed and armed Volunteers, clearly visible below them, and that radioed helicopter reinforcements were already closing in.

As the fourth Volunteer drove the commandeered car down the road to the agreed ambush point, to act as a lure for the Brits, the other three moved down the hedge-line of the fields, into position. The fourth Volunteer, however, as he returned, as arranged, to rejoin his comrades, spotted the British Paratroopers on the hillside closing in on his unsuspecting friends and, although armed only with a short range Sten-gun, opened fire to warn the others.

Immediately, the Brits opened fire with SLRs and light machine-guns, churning up the ground around the Volunteers with hund-



● Raymond McCreesh receives a soldier's farewell from his IRA comrades

reds of rounds, firing indiscriminately into the nearby farmhouse and two vehicles parked outside, and killing a grazing cow!

The fourth Volunteer was struck by three bullets, in the leg, arm and chest, but managed to crawl away and to elude the massive follow-up search, escaping safely — though seriously injured — the following day.

Raymond and Paddy Quinn ran zig-zag across open fields to a nearby house, under fire all this time, intending to commandeer a car. Unfortunately, the car belonging to the occupants of the house was parked at a neighbour's house several hundred yards away. Even then the pair might have escaped but that they delayed several minutes waiting for their comrade, Danny McGuinness, who however had got separated from them and had taken cover in a disused quarry outhouse (where he was captured in a follow-up operation the next day).

The house in which Raymond and Paddy took cover was immediately besieged by berserk Paratroopers who riddled the house with bullets. Even when the two Volunteers surrendered, after the arrival of a local priest, and came out through the front door with their hands up, the Paras opened fire again and the pair were forced to retreat back into the house.

On the arrival of the RUC, the two Volunteers again surrendered and were taken to Bessbrook barracks where they were questioned and beaten for three days before being charged.

## REMARKABLE

One remarkable aspect of the British ambush concerns the role of Lance-Corporal David Jones, a member of the 3rd Battalion, the Parachute regiment. According to Brit statements at the trial it was he who first opened up on the IRA active service unit from the hillside.

Nine months later, on March 16th, 1977 two IRA Volunteers encountered two Paratroopers (at the time seconded to the SAS) in a field outside Maghera in South Derry. In the ensuing gun battle, one SAS man was shot dead, and one IRA Volunteer was captured. The Volunteer's name was Francis Hughes, the dead Brit was Lance-Corporal

David Jones of the Parachute regiment.

In the eighteen months before going on hunger-strike together neither Raymond McCreesh or Francis Hughes were aware of what would seem to have been an ironic but supremely fitting example of republican solidarity!

After nine months remand in Crumlin Road jail, Raymond was tried and convicted, in March 1977, of attempting to kill Brits, possession of a Garand rifle and ammunition, and IRA membership. He received a fourteen-year sentence, and lesser concurrent sentences, after refusing to recognise the court.

In the H-Blocks he immediately joined the blanket protest, and so determined was his resistance to criminalisation that he refused to take his monthly visits for four years, right up until he informed his family of his decision to go on hunger-strike on February 15th, this year. He also refused to send out monthly letters, writing only smuggled 'communications' to his family and friends.

The only member of his family to see him at all during those four years in Long Kesh two or three times — was his brother, Fr. Brian McCreesh, who occasionally says Mass in the H-Blocks.

## HUNGER-STRIKE

Like Francis Hughes, Raymond volunteered for the earlier hunger-strike, and, when he was not chosen among the first seven, took part in the four-day hunger-strike by thirty republicans until the hunger-strike ended on December 18th, last year.

Speaking to his brother, Malachy, shortly after Bobby Sands' death, Raymond said what a great loss had been felt by the other hunger-strikers, but it had made them more determined than ever.

And still managing to keep his spirits up, when told of his brother, Fr. Brian, campaigning for him on rally platforms, Raymond joked: "He'll probably get excommunicated for it."

To Britain's eternal shame, the sombre half-prediction made by Raymond to his friend Paddy Quinn — *Ta seans ann go mbeid me abhaile rombat* — became a grim reality. Bhi se. Raymond died at 2.11 a.m. on Thursday May 21st, 1981, after 61 days on hunger-strike.

# Francis Hughes

**'A determined and totally fearless soldier'**

THE SECOND republican to join the H-Block hunger-strike for political status — a fortnight after Bobby Sands — was twenty-five-year-old Francis Hughes, from Bellaghy in South Derry: a determined, committed and totally fearless IRA Volunteer who organised a spectacularly successful series of military operations before his capture, and was once described by the RUC as their 'most wanted man' in the North.

Eluding for several years the relentless efforts of the British army, UDR and RUC to track him down, Francis operated boldly throughout parts of Tyrone and north and south Antrim, but particularly in his native South Derry, with a combination of brilliant organisation and extreme daring — until his capture after a shoot-out with the SAS — which earned him widespread popular renown, and won general support for the republican cause, as well as giving him an undisputed reputation as a natural-born soldier and leader.

## ROOTED

Francis Hughes was born on February 28th, 1956, the youngest son amongst ten children, into a staunchly republican family which has been solidly rooted, for most of this century, in the townland of Tamlaghtduff, or Scribe Road, as it is otherwise called.

His parents who married in 1939, are Patrick Joseph Hughes, aged 72, a retired small cattle farmer born in the neighbouring townland of Ballymacpeake, and Margaret, aged 68, whose maiden name is McElwee, and who was born in Tamlaghtduff.

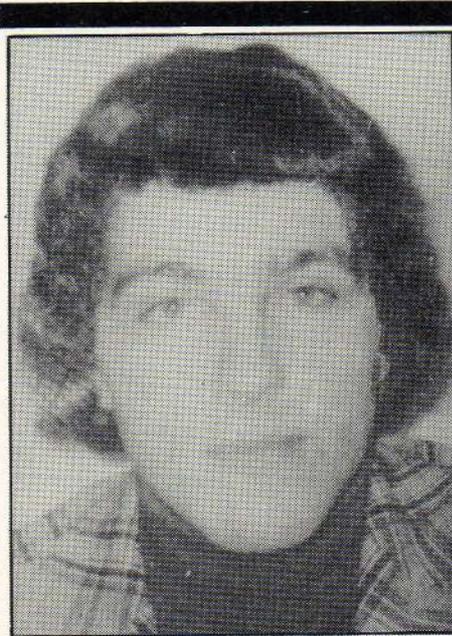
A quarter-of-a-mile away from the Hughes' bungalow, on the other side of the Scribe Road is the home of Thomas and Benedict McElwee — first cousins of Francis. Benedict is currently serving a sentence in the H Blocks Thomas — the eldest — embarked on hunger-strike on June 8th, and died sixty-two days later on August 8th.

In Tamlaghtduff, as throughout the rest of Bellaghy, sympathy as well as active support for the republican cause runs at a very high level, a fact testified to by the approximately twenty prisoners-of-war from around Bellaghy alone.

Francis was an extremely popular person, both to his family and to his republican colleagues and supporters.

His father recalls that as a boy he was always whistling, joking and singing: a trait which he carried over into his arduous and perilous days as a republican, when he was able to transmit his enthusiasm and optimism both to Volunteers under his command and to sympathisers who offered them — at great personal risk — food and shelter.

It was qualities like these, of uncomplaining tirelessness, of consideration for the morale of those around him, and his ruling wish to lead by example, that have made Francis



**FRANCIS HUGHES**

Aged 25 from South Derry. Commenced hunger-strike March 15th, died May 12th after 59 days

Hughes one of the most outstanding Irish revolutionary soldiers this war has produced, and a man who was enormously respected in his native countryside.

## BOY

As a boy, Francis went first to St. Mary's primary school in Bellaghy, and from there to Clady intermediate school three miles away.

He enjoyed school and was a fairly good student whose favourite subjects were history and woodwork. He was not particularly interested in sport, but was very much a lively, outdoor person, who enjoyed messing around on bikes, and later on, in cars.

He enjoyed dancing and regularly went to *ceilidh* as a young man, even while 'on the run', although after 'wanted' posters of him appeared his opportunities became less frequent.

His parents recall that Francis was always extremely helpful around the house, and that he was a "good tractor man".

## DECORATOR

Leaving school at sixteen, Francis got a job with his sister Vera's husband, as an apprentice painter and decorator, completing his apprenticeship shortly before 'going on the run'.

In later days, Francis would often do a spot of decorating for the people whose house he was staying in.

On one occasion, shortly after the 'wanted' posters of him had been posted up all over

South Derry, Francis was painting window frames at the front of the house he was staying in when two jeep-loads of British soldiers drove past. While the other occupants of the house froze in apprehension, Francis waved and smiled at the curious Brits as they passed by, and continued painting.

It was such utter fearlessness, and the ability to brazen his way through, that saved him time and time again during his relatively long career as an active service Volunteer.

On one such occasion, when stopped along with two other Volunteers as they crossed a field, Francis told a Brit patrol that they didn't feel safe walking the roads, as the IRA were so active in the area. The Brits allowed the trio to walk on, but after a few yards Francis ran back to the enemy patrol to scrounge a cigarette and a match from one of the British soldiers.

A turning point for Francis, in terms of his personal involvement in the struggle, occurred at the age of seventeen, when he and a friend were stopped by British soldiers at Ardboe, in County Tyrone, as they returned from a dance one night.

The pair were taken out of their car and so badly kicked that Francis was bed-ridden for several days. Rejecting advice to make a complaint to the RUC, Francis said it would be a waste of time, but pledged instead to get even with those who had done it, "or with their friends."

Notwithstanding such a bitter personal experience of British thuggery, and the mental and physical scars it left, Francis' subsequent involvement in the Irish Republican Army was not based on a motive of revenge but on a clear and abiding belief in his country's right to national freedom.

## INVOLVEMENT

During the early part of 'the troubles', the 'Officials' were relatively strong in the South Derry area and Francis' first involvement was with them.

However, disillusioned, as were many others, with the 'Sticks' unilateral ceasefire in 1972, he left to set up and command an 'independent' military unit in the Bellaghy area. About the end of 1973 the entire unit — including Francis — was formally recruited into the IRA.

Francis' involvement brought him increasingly to the attention of the British army and RUC and he was regularly held for a few hours in Magherafelt barracks and stopped on the road by British patrols; and on one occasion he was held for two days at Ballykelly camp.

As the 1975 IRA/British army truce came to an end Francis, fearing his imminent arrest, went 'on the run'. From that time on, he led a life perpetually on the move, often moving on foot up to twenty miles during one night then sleeping during the day — either in fields and ditches or in safe houses; a soldierly sight in his black beret and combat uniform, and openly carrying his rifle, a handgun and several grenades as well as food rations.

The enemy reacted with up to fifty early morning raids on Francis' home, and raids on the homes of those suspected of harbouring him. Often, houses would be staked out for days on end in the hope of capturing Francis. Often, it was only his sheer nerve and courage which saved him.

One night, Francis was followed to a 'safe house' and looked out to see the Brits surrounding the place and closing in. Without hesitating, the uniformed Francis stepped outside the door, clutching his rifle, and in the darkness crept gradually through their lines, occasionally mumbling a few short words to British soldiers he passed, who, on seeing the shadowy uniformed figure, mistook him for one of themselves.

On numerous occasions, Francis and his comrades were stopped at checkpoints along the country roads while moving weapons from one locality to another but always calmly talked their way through. Once, a UDR soldier actually recognised Francis and his fellow Volunteers in a car but, fully aware that Francis would not be taken without a shoot-out, he waved their car on.

### ACTIVE

The years before Francis' capture were extremely active ones in the South Derry and surrounding areas with the commercial centres of towns and villages like Bellaghy, Maghera, Toome, Magherafelt and Castledawson being blitzed by car bombs on several occasions, and numerous shooting attacks being carried out as well.

Among the Volunteers under his command Francis had a reputation of being a strict disciplinarian and perfectionist who could not tolerate people taking their republican duties less seriously, and selflessly, than was necessary. He also, however, inspired fellow Volunteers by his example and by always being in the thick of things, and he thrived on pressure.

During one night-time operation, a weapon was missing and Francis gave away his own weapon to another Volunteer, taking only a torch himself which he used to its maximum effect by shining it at an oncoming enemy vehicle, which had its headlights off, to enable the other Volunteers to direct their fire.

Francis' good-humoured audacity also showed itself in his republican activity. At the height of his 'notoriety' he would set up road-blocks, hoping to lure the Brits into an ambush (which by hard experience they learned to avoid), or he would ring up the Brits and give them his whereabouts!

Such joking, however, did not extend only to the enemy. One day, lying out in the fields, he spied one of his uncles cycling down a country road. Taking careful aim with his rifle he shot away the bike's rear wheel. His uncle ran, alarmed, into a nearby house shouting that loyalists had just tried to assassinate him!

### BATTLE

The determination of the British army and RUC to capture Francis Hughes came to a head in April 1977. In that month, on Good Friday, a car containing three IRA Volunteers was overtaken and flagged down on the Moneymore Road at Dunronan, in County Derry, by a carload of RUC men.

The Volunteers attempted to make a U-turn but their car got stuck in a ditch as the armed RUC men approached. Jumping from the car, the Volunteers opened fire, killing two RUC men and injuring another before driving off. A hundred yards further up the road a second gun battle ensued but the Volunteers escaped safely.

Subsequently, the RUC issued a 'wanted' poster of Francis Hughes and two fellow



IRA Volunteers honour their fallen guerilla comrade, Francis Hughes

republicans, Dominic McGlinchey and Ian Milne, in which Francis was named as the 'most wanted man' in the North.

When his eventual capture came, it was just as he had always said it would be "I'll get a few of them before they get me."

### STAKE-OUT

At 8.00 p.m. on March 16th, 1978, two SAS soldiers took up a stake-out position opposite a farm, on the south side of the Ronaghan road, about two miles west of Maghera, in the townland of Ballyknock.

At 9.15 p.m. they saw two men in military uniform and carrying rifles, walking in single file along the hedgerow of the field towards them. Using their 'night sights' in the darkness, the SAS men observed the military behaviour of the two on-comers and having challenged them, heard the men mumble a few words to each other in Irish accents and assumed that the pair were UDR soldiers.

One of the pair, in fact, was Francis Hughes, the other a fellow Volunteer, and with only a second's hesitation both Volunteers cocked their rifles and opened fire. One SAS man fell fatally wounded but the other — though shot in the stomach — managed to fire a long burst from his sterling sub-machine gun at the retreating figures, and to make radio contact with his base.

Within three minutes, nearby Brit patrols were on the scene and the area was entirely sealed off. The following morning hundreds of Brits took part in a massive search operation.

Fifteen hours after the shooting, at around 12.15 p.m. the next day, they found Francis Hughes sitting in the middle of a gorse bush in a field three hundred yards away, bleeding profusely from a bullet wound which had shattered his left thigh. As he was taken away on a stretcher he yelled defiantly, through his considerable pain: "Up the Provies".

His comrade, though also wounded, slightly, managed to evade the dragnet and to escape.

### SURVIVED

How he survived the night of the shooting, possibly the coldest night of that year, bears eloquent testimony to Francis' grim determination to evade capture. After being shot, he dragged himself — unable to walk — across the Ronaghan road and across two fields without a sound, before burying himself in a thick clump of gorse bushes.

At one point, en-route, Francis fell down a sharp drop between fields, and his left leg — the muscle and bone completely disintegrated — came up over his shoulder; but Francis worked it carefully down before continuing to crawl on

his way. In his hiding place, he lay through the night, motionless and soundless, till his capture.

When he was found, unable to move through the cold, pain and stiffness, Francis, knowing that both Brits and RUC were on instructions to shoot him on sight, gave his name as Eamonn Laverty and his address as Letterkenny, County Donegal.

Francis was taken to Magherafelt hospital and from there to Musgrave Park military hospital in Belfast, and it was only then that his true identity was revealed. He spent ten months in Musgrave Park where his leg was operated on, reducing his thigh bone by an inch-and-a-half and leaving him dependent on a crutch to walk.

### CASTLEREAGH

On Wednesday, January 24th, 1979, Francis was taken from Musgrave Park hospital to Castlereagh interrogation centre where he spent six days before being charged on January 29th. For more than four days Francis refused food and drink, fearing that it might have been drugged to make him talk.

His behaviour in Castlereagh was typical of the fiercely determined and courageous republican Volunteer that he was. His frustrated interrogators later described him as "totally unco-operative".

Nevertheless, at his trial in Belfast in February 1980, after a year on remand in Crumlin Road jail, Francis was found 'guilty' on all charges.

He received a life sentence for killing the SAS soldier, and fourteen years for attempting to kill the other SAS man. He also received fifty-five years on three other charges.

### H-BLOCK

In the H-Blocks, Francis immediately went on the protest for political status and, despite the severe disability of his wounded leg, displayed the same courage and determination that had been his hallmark before his capture.

And, just as always wanting to be in the thick of things and wanting to shoulder responsibility for other political prisoners as he had earlier looked after the morale of fellow Volunteers, Francis was one of those to volunteer for the hunger-strike which began on October 27th, 1980. He was not one of the first seven hunger-strikers selected but was among the thirty men who joined the hunger-strike in its closing stages as Sean McKenna's condition became critical.

That utter selflessness and courage came to its tragic conclusion on Tuesday, May 12th, when Francis died at 5.43 p.m. after fifty-nine days on hunger-strike. ■

# Patsy O'Hara

## 'A determined and courageous Derryman'

Twenty-three-year-old Patsy O'Hara from Derry city, was the former leader of the Irish National Liberation Army prisoners in the H-Blocks, and joined IRA Volunteer Raymond McCreesh on hunger-strike on March 22nd, three weeks after Bobby Sands and one week after Francis Hughes.

Patsy O'Hara was born on July 11th, 1957 at Bishop Street in Derry city.

His parents owned a small public house and grocery shop above which the family lived. His eldest brother, Sean Seamus, was interned in Long Kesh for almost four years. The second eldest in the family, Tony, was imprisoned in the H-Blocks — throughout Patsy's hunger-strike — for five years before being released in August of this year, having served his full five-year sentence with no remission.

The youngest in the O'Hara family is twenty-one-year-old Elizabeth.

Before 'the troubles' destroyed the family life of the O'Haras, and the overwhelming influence of being an oppressed youth concerned about his country drove Patsy to militant republicanism, there is the interesting history of his near antecedents which must have produced delight in Patsy's young heart.

### GRANDFATHER

Patsy's maternal grandfather, James McCluskey, joined the British army as a young man and went off to fight in the First World War. He received nine shrapnel wounds at Ypres and was retired on a full pension.

However, on returning to Ireland his patriotism was set alight by Irish resistance and the terror of British rule. He duly threw out his pension book, did not draw any more money and joined the Republican Movement. He transported men and weapons along the Foyle into Derry in the 'twenties.

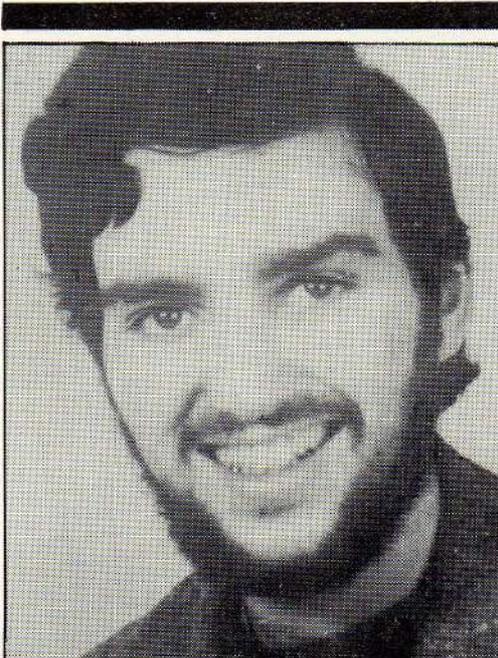
He inherited a public house and book-makers, in Foyle Street, and was a great friend of Derry republican Sean Keenan's father, also named Sean.

Mrs. Peggy O'Hara can recall 'old' Sean Keenan being arrested just before the outbreak of the Second World War. Her father's serious illness resulted in him escaping internment and he died shortly afterwards in 1939.

Mrs. O'Hara's aunt was married to John Mulhern, a Roscommon man, who was in the RIC up until its disbandment in 1921.

*"When my father died in 1939 — says Mrs O'Hara, — John Mulhern, who was living in Bishop Street, and owned a bar and a grocery shop, took us in to look after us. I remember him telling us that he didn't just go and join the RIC, but it was because there were so many in the family and times were hard.*

*"My father was a known IRA man and my uncle reared me, and I was often slagged about this. Patsy used to hear this as a child, but Patsy was a very, very straight young fellow*



**PATSY O'HARA**

Aged 24 from Derry city. Commenced hunger-strike March 22nd, died May 21st after 61 days

*and he was a wee bit bigoted about my uncle being a policeman.*

*"But a number of years ago Patsy came in to me after speaking to an old republican from Corrigans in Donegal, and Patsy says to me, 'You've nothing to be ashamed of, your uncle being a policeman, because that man was telling me that even though he was an RIC man, he was very, very helpful to the IRA!'"*

### FAMILY

The trait of courage which Patsy was to show in later years was in him from the start, says Mr. O'Hara. *"No matter who got into trouble in the street outside, Patsy was the boy to go out and do all the fighting for him. He was the fighting man about the area and didn't care how big they were. He would tackle them. I even saw him fighting men, and in no way could they stop him. He would keep at them. He was like a wee bull terrier!"*

Apparently, up until he was about twelve years of age, Patsy was fat and small, *"a wee barrel"* says his mother. Then suddenly he shot up to grow to over six foot two inches.

Elizabeth, his sister, recalls Patsy: *"He was a mad hatter. When we were young he used to always play tricks on me, mother and father. We used to play a game of cards and whoever lost had to do all the things that everybody told them.*

*"We all won a card game once and made Patsy crawl up the stairs and 'miaow' like a*

*cat at my mother's bedroom door. She woke up the next day and said, 'am I going mad? I think I heard a cat last night', and we all started to laugh."*

The O'Haras' house was open to all their children's friends, and again to scores of the volunteers who descended on Derry from all corners of Ireland when the RUC invaded in 1969. But before that transformation in people's politics came, Mrs. O'Hara still lived for her family alone.

She was especially proud of her eldest son, Sean Seamus, who had passed his eleven plus and went to college.

### PROTESTS

When Sean was in his early teens he joined the housing action group, around 1967, Mrs. O'Hara's conception of which was Sean helping to get people homes

*"But one day, someone came into me when I was working in the bar, and said, 'Your son is down in the Guildhall marching up and down with a placard!"*

*"I went down and stood and looked and Finbarr O'Doherty was standing at the side and wee fellows were going up and down. I went over to Sean and said, 'Who gave you that? He said, 'Finbarr!' I took the placard off Sean and went over to Finbarr, put it in his hand, and hit him with my umbrella."*

Mrs. O'Hara laughs when she recalls this incident, as shortly afterwards she was to have her eyes opened.

*"After that, I went to protests wherever Sean was, thinking that I could protect him! I remember the October 1968 march because my husband's brother, Sean, had just been buried.*

*"We went to the peaceful march over at the Waterside station and saw the people being beaten into the ground. That was the first time that I ever saw water cannons, they were like something from outer space.*

*"We thought we had to watch Sean, but to my astonishment Patsy and Tony had slipped away, and Patsy was astonished and startled by what he saw."*

### INCIDENT

Later, Patsy was to write about this incident: *"The mood of the crowd was one of solidarity. People believed they were right and that a great injustice had been done to them. The crowds came in their thousands from every part of the city and as they moved down Duke Street chanting slogans, 'One man, one vote' and singing 'We shall overcome' I had the feeling that a people united and on the move, were unstoppable."*

### IRSP

Shortly after his release in April 1975, Patsy joined the ranks of the fledgling Irish Republican Socialist Party, which the 'Sticks', using murder had attempted to strangle at birth. He was free only about two months when he was stopped at the permanent check-

point on the Letterkenny Road whilst driving his father's car from Bunrana in County Donegal.

The Brits planted a stick of gelignite in the car (such practice was commonplace) and he was charged with possession of explosives. He was remanded in custody for six months, the first trial being stopped due to unusual RUC ineptitude at framing him. At the end of the second trial he was acquitted and released after spending six months in jail.

In 1976, Patsy had to stay out of the house for fear of constant arrest. That year, also, his brother, Tony, was charged with an armed raid, and on the sole evidence of an alleged verbal statement was sentenced to five years in the H-Blocks.

Despite being 'on the run' Patsy still fond of his creature comforts!

His father recalls: "Sean Seamus came in late one night and though the whole place was in darkness he didn't put the lights on. He went to sit down and fell on the floor. He ran up the stairs and said: 'I went to sit down and there was nothing there'.

"Patsy had taken the sofa on top of a red Rover down to his billet in the Brandywell. Then before we would get up in the morning he would have it back up again. When we saw it sitting there in the morning we said to Sean: 'Are you going off your head or what?' and he was really puzzled."

### IMPRISONED

In September 1976, he was again arrested in the North and along with four others charged with possession of a weapon. During the remand hearings he protested against the withdrawal of political status.

The charge was withdrawn after four months, indicating how the law is twisted to intern people by remanding them in custody and dropping the charges before the case comes to trial.

In June 1977, he was imprisoned for the fourth time. On this occasion, after a seven-day detention in Dublin's Bridewell, he was charged with holding a garda at gunpoint. He was released on bail six weeks later and was eventually acquitted in January 1978.

Whilst living in the Free State, Patsy was elected to the ard chomhairle of the IRSP was active in the Bray area, and campaigned against the special courts.

In January 1979, he moved back to Derry but was arrested on May 14th, 1979 and was charged with possessing a hand-grenade.

In January 1980, he was sentenced to eight years in jail and went on the blanket.

### HUNGER-STRIKE

What were Mrs. O'Hara's feelings when Patsy told her he was going on hunger-strike?

"My feelings at the start, when he went on hunger-strike, were that I thought that they would get their just demands, because it is not very much that they are asking for. There is no use in saying that I was very vexed and all the rest of it. There is no use me sitting back in the wings and letting someone else's son go. Someone's sons have to go on it and I just happen to be the mother of that son."

### PRINCIPLES

Writing shortly before the hunger-strike began, Patsy O'Hara grimly declared: "We stand for the freedom of the Irish nation so that future generations will enjoy the prosperity they rightly deserve, free from foreign interference, oppression and exploitation. The real criminals are the British imperialists who have thrived on the blood and sweat of generations of Irish men.

"They have maintained control of Ireland through force of arms and there is only one



● The world's press look on as the INLA honour Patsy O'Hara

way to end it. I would rather die than rot in this concrete tomb for years to come."

Patsy witnessed the baton charges and said: "The people were sandwiched in another street and with the Specials coming from both sides, swinging their truncheons at anything that moved. It was a terrifying experience and one which I shall always remember."

Mr. and Mrs. O'Hara believe that it was this incident when Patsy was aged eleven, followed by the riots in January 1969 and the 'Battle of the Bogside' in August 1969 that aroused passionate feelings of nationalism, and then republicanism, in their son. "Every day he saw something different happening," says his father. "People getting beaten up, raids and coffins coming out. This was his environment."

### JOINED

In 1970, Patsy joined na Fianna Eireann, drilled and trained in Celtic Park.

Early in 1971, and though he was very young, he joined the Patrick Pearse Sinn Fein cumann in the Bogside, selling Easter lilies and newspapers. Internment, introduced in August 1971, hit the O'Hara family particularly severely with the arrest of Sean Seamus in October. "We never had a proper Christmas since then" says Elizabeth. "When Sean Seamus was interned we never put up decorations and our family has been split-up ever since then."

Shortly after Sean's arrest, Patsy, one night, went over to a friend's house in Southway where there were barricades. But coming out of the house, British soldiers opened fire, for no apparent reason, and shot Patsy in the leg. He was only fourteen years of age and spent several weeks in hospital and then several more weeks on crutches.

### BLOODY SUNDAY

On January 30th, 1972, his father took him to watch the big anti-internment march as it wound its way down from the Creggan. "I struggled across a banking but was unable to go any further. I watched the march go up into the Brandywell. I could see that it was massive. The rest of my friends went to meet it but I could only go back to my mother's house and listen to it on the radio," said Patsy.

Asked about her feelings over Patsy becoming involved in the struggle, Mrs. O'Hara said: "After October 1968, I thought that that was the right thing to do. I am proud of

him, proud of them all".

Mr O'Hara said: "Personally speaking, I knew he would get involved. It was in his nature. He hated bullies at his life, and he saw big bullies in uniform and he would tackle them as well."

Shortly after Bloody Sunday, Patsy joined the 'Republican Clubs' and was active until 1973, "when it became apparent that they were firmly on the path to reformism and had abandoned the national question".

### INTERNEED

From this time onwards he was continually harassed, taken in for interrogation and assaulted.

One day, he and a friend were arrested on the Briemoor Road. Two saracens screeched to a halt beside them. Patsy later described this arrest: "We were thrown onto the floor and as they were bringing us to the arrest centre, we were given a beating with their batons and rifles. When we arrived and were getting out of the vehicles we were tripped and fell on our faces".

Three months later, after his seventeenth birthday, he was taken to the notorious interrogation centre at Ballykelly. He was interrogated for three days and then interned with three others who had been held for nine days.

"Long Kesh had been burned the week previously", said Patsy, "and as we flew above the camp in a British army helicopter we could see the complete devastation. When we arrived, we were given two blankets and mattresses and put into one of the cages

"For the next two months we were on a starvation diet, no facilities of any kind, and most men lying out open to the elements...

"That December a ceasefire was announced, then internment was phased out. Merlyn Rees also announced at the same time that special category status would be withdrawn on March 1st, 1976. I did not know then how much that change of policy would effect me in less than three years".

Patsy O'Hara died at 11.29 p.m. on Thursday, May 21st — on the same day as Raymond McCreech with whom he had embarked on the hunger-strike sixty-one days earlier.

Even in death his torturers would not let him rest. When the O'Hara family received his remains in the early hours of the following morning, his nose had been broken and his corpse bore several burn marks inflicted after his death.

# Joe McDonnell

'A deep-thinking republican with a great sense of humour'

THE FOURTH IRA Volunteer to join the hunger-strike for political status was Joe McDonnell, a thirty-year-old married man with two children, from the Lenadoon housing estate in West Belfast.

A well-known and very popular man in the Greater Andersonstown area he grew up, married and fought for the republican cause in, Joe had a reputation as a quiet and deep thinking individual, with a gentle, happy-go-lucky personality, who had, nevertheless, a great sense of humour, was always laughing and playing practical jokes, and who, although withdrawn at times, had the ability to make friends easily.

As an active republican before his capture in October 1976, Joe was regarded by his comrades as a cool and efficient Volunteer who did what he had to do and never talked about it afterwards.

Something of a rarity within the Republican Movement, in that outside of military briefings and operational duty he was never seen around with other known or suspected Volunteers, he was nevertheless a good friend of the late Bobby Sands, with whom he was captured while on active service duty.

Not among those who volunteered for the earlier hunger-strike last year, it was the intense disappointment brought about by the Brits' duplicity following the end of that hunger-strike, and the bitterness and anger that duplicity produced among all the blanket men, that prompted Joe to put forward his name the next time round.

And it was predictable, as well as fitting, when his friend and comrade Bobby Sands met with death on the sixty-sixth day of his hunger-strike, that Joe McDonnell should volunteer to take Bobby's place and continue that fight.

## RESOLVE

His determination and resolve in that course of action can be gauged by the fact that never once, following his sentencing to fourteen years imprisonment in 1977, did he put on the prison uniform to take a visit, seeing his wife and family only after he commenced his hunger-strike.

The story of Joe McDonnell is of a highly aware republican soldier whose involvement stemmed initially from the personal repression and harassment he and his family suffered at the hands of the British occupation forces, but which then deepened — through continuing repression — to a mature commitment to oppose an occupation that denied his country freedom and attempted to criminalise its people.

It was that commitment which he held more dear than his own life.

## FAMILY

Joe McDonnell was born on September 14th 1951, the fifth of eight children, into the family home in Slate Street in Belfast's Lower Falls.

His father, Robert, aged 59, a steel erector, and his mother, Eileen (whose maiden name is



**JOE McDONNELL**

Aged 30 from Belfast. Commenced hunger-strike May 9th, died July 8th after 61 days

Straney), aged 58, both came from the Lower Falls themselves.

They married in St. Peter's church there, in 1941, living first with Robert's sister and her husband in Colinward Street, off the Springfield Road, before moving into their own home in Slate Street, where the family were all born.

These are: Eilish, aged 38, married with five children; Hobert, aged 36, married with two children; Hugh, aged 34, married with three children; Patsy, aged 32, married with two children, and now living in Canada since 1969; Joe; Maura, aged 28 and single; Paul, aged 26, married with two children; and Frankie, aged 24 and single.

Frankie is currently serving a five-year sentence on the blanket protest in H6-Block on an IRA membership charge, following his arrest in December 1976, and is due for release this December.

A ninth child, Bernadette, was a particular favourite of Joe's, before her death from a kidney illness at the early age of three.

"Joseph practically reared Bernadette", recalls his mother, "he was always with the child, carrying her around. He was about ten

at the time. He even used to play marleys with her on his shoulders."

Bernadette's death, a sad blow to the family, was deeply felt by her young brother Joe.

## DATING

One of his friends at that time was his future brother-in-law, Michael, and he began dating Goretti from around the time he was seventeen.

Joe and Goretti, who also comes from Andersonstown, married in St. Agnes' chapel in 1970, and moved in to live with Goretti's sister and her family in Horn Drive in Lower Lenadoon.

At that time, however, they were one of only two nationalist households in what was then a predominantly loyalist street, and, after repeated instances of verbal intimidation, in the middle of the night, a loyalist mob — in full view of a nearby Brit post, and with the blessing of the raving Reverend Robert Bradford, who stood by — broke down the doors and wrecked the houses, forcing the two families to leave.

## INTERMENT

The McDonnells went to live with Goretti's mother for a while, but eventually got the chance to squat in a house being vacated in Lenadoon Avenue.

Internment had been introduced shortly before, and in 1972 the British army struck with a 4.00 a.m. raid.

Joe was dragged from the house, hit in the eye with a rifle butt and bundled into a jeep. Their house was searched and wrecked. Joe was taken to the prison ship Maidstone and later on to Long Kesh internment camp where he was held for several months.

Goretti recalls that early morning as a "horrific" experience which altered both their lives. One minute they had everything, the next minute nothing.

On his release Joe joined the IRA's Belfast Brigade, operating at first in the 1st Battalion's 'A' Company which covered the Rosnareen end of Andersonstown, and later being absorbed into the 'cell' structure increasingly adopted by the IRA.

## RAIDS

Both during his first period of internment, and his second, longer, internment in 1973, as well as the periods when he was free, the McDonnell's home in Lenadoon was constant target for British army raids.

During these raids the house would often be torn apart, photos torn up and confiscated, letters from Joe (previously read by the prison censor) re-read by infantile British soldiers, and Goretti herself arrested.

In between periods of internment, and before his capture, Joe resumed his trade as an upholsterer which he had followed since leaving school at the age of fifteen. He loved the job, never missing a day through illness, and made both the furniture for his own home



● After IRA Volunteers had given the traditional military salute to Joe McDonnell British troops desecrated the funeral by attempting to capture the firing party, firing both live rounds and plastic bullets indiscriminately despite the huge numbers of civilians present

as well as for many of the bars and clubs in the surrounding area. His job enabled him to take the family for regular holidays but Joe was a real 'homer' and always longed to be back in his native Belfast.

### BOMBS

Part of that attraction stemmed obviously from his responsibility to his republican involvement. An active Volunteer throughout the Greater Andersonstown area, Joe was considered a first-class operator who didn't show much fear. Generally quiet and serious while on an operation, whether an ambush or a bombing mission, Joe's humour occasionally shone through.

Driving one time to an intended target in the Lenadoon area with a carload of Volunteers, smoke began to appear in the car. Not realising that it was simply escaping exhaust fumes, and thinking it came from the bags containing a number of bombs, a degree of alarm began to break out in the car, but Joe only advised his comrades, drily, not to bother about it: 'They'll go off soon enough.'

Outside of active service, Joe mixed mostly with people he knew from work, never flaunting his republican beliefs or his involvement, to such an extent that it led some republicans to believe he had not reported back to the IRA on his second release from internment.

The Brits, however, persecuted him and his family continually, with frequent house raids, and street arrests. He could rarely leave the house without being stopped for P-checking, or held up for an hour at a roadblock if he had somewhere to go. A few months before his capture, irate Brits at a roadblock warned him that they would 'get' him.

Outside of his republican activity Joe took a strong interest in his children — Bernadette, aged ten and Joseph, aged nine — teaching them both to swim, and forever playing football with young Joseph on the small green outside their home.

### CAPTURE

His capture took place in October 1976

following a firebomb attack on the Balmoral Furnishing Company in Upper Dunmurray Lane, near the Twinbrook estate in West Belfast.

The IRA had reconnoitred the store, noting the extravagantly priced furniture it sold, and had selected it as an economic target. The plan was to petrol bomb the premises and then to lay explosive charges to spread the flames.

The Twinbrook active service unit led by Bobby Sands, was at that time in the process of being built up, and were assisted consequently in this operation by experienced republican Volunteers from the adjoining Andersonstown area, including Joe McDonnell.

Unfortunately, following the attack, which successfully destroyed the furnishing company, the escape route of some of the Volunteers involved was blocked by a car placed across the road.

During an ensuing shoot-out with Brits and RUC, two republicans, Seamus Martin and Gabriel Corbett were wounded, and four others, Bobby Sands, Joe McDonnell, Seamus Finucane and Sean Lavery, were arrested in a car not far away.

Three IRA Volunteers managed to escape safely from the area.

A single revolver was found in the car, and at the men's subsequent trial in September 1977 all four received fourteen-year sentences for possession when they refused to recognise the court.

Rough treatment during their interrogation in Castlereagh failed to make any of the four sign a statement, and the RUC were thus unable to charge the men with involvement in the attack on the furnishing company despite their proximity to it at the time of their arrest.

### ADAMANT

From the day he was sentenced Joe refused to put on the prison uniform to take a visit, so adamant was he that he would not be criminalised. He kept in touch instead, with his wife and family, by means of daily smuggled

'communications', written with smuggled-in biro refills on prison issue toilet paper and smuggled out via other blanket men who were taking visits.

Incarcerated in H5-Block, Joe acted as 'scorcher' (an anglicised form of the Irish word, *scairt*, to shout) shouting the *scail*, or news from his block to the adjoining one about a hundred yards away. Frequently this is the only way that news from outside can be communicated from one H-Block to the blanket men in another H-Block.

It illustrates well the feeling of bitter determination prevailing in the H-Blocks that Joe McDonnell who did not volunteer for the hunger-strike last year because, he said, "I have too much to live for, should have become so frustrated and angered by British perfidy as to embark on hunger-strike on Sunday, May 9th, 1981.

### IMPACT

In June, Joe was a candidate during the Free State general election, in the Sligo/Leitrim constituency, in which he narrowly missed election by 315 votes.

All the family were actively involved in campaigning for him, and despite the disappointment at the result both they and Joe himself were pleased at the impact which the H-Block issue had on the election, and in Sligo/Leitrim itself.

Adults cried when the video film on the hunger-strike was shown, his family recall, and they cried again when Joe was eliminated from the electoral count.

### MARTYR

At 5.11 a.m., on July 8th, Joe McDonnell, who — believeably, for those who know his wife Goretti, his children Bernadette and Joseph and his family — "had too much to live for" died after sixty one days of agonising hunger-strike, rather than be criminalised. ■

# Martin Hurson

**'A hard-working and extremely likeable republican'**

IN THE early hours of Tuesday morning, November 9th, 1976, a series of British army and RUC swoops in the Cappagh district of Dungannon in East Tyrone led to the arrest from their homes, under Section 10 of the Emergency Provisions Act, of three young local men: Pat Joe O'Neill, Dermot Boyle and Peter Kane. Two days later, November 11th, in similar dawn swoops in the area, four other men, James Joseph Rafferty, Peter Nugent, Kevin O'Brien and Martin Hurson, were arrested from their homes.

Over the next few days all seven men were held in Omagh RUC barracks, interrogated about IRA operations in East Tyrone since 1972, and systematically tortured by detectives from the newly established Regional Crime Squad.

The men had their hair pulled, their ears slapped, they were made to stand for prolonged periods in the 'search position' against a wall, they were kicked and punched and forced to do exercises for lengthy periods.

## INJURIES

Finally, two men, Peter Nugent and James Rafferty, were released without charge, Rafferty to Tyrone County Hospital in Omagh where he spent four days recovering from his injuries. The remaining five were charged (and subsequently convicted) on the sole basis of statements made during that interrogation.

One of the five is now in the cages of Long Kesh, the other four became blanket men in the H-Blocks.

Four-and-a-half years later with revealing ironic insight into the nature of the British judicial system in Ireland, while four RUC detectives involved in those Omagh interrogations were awaiting trial on charges of assaulting James Rafferty during interrogation, in the prison hospital of Long Kesh, one of those convicted on the basis of a tortured 'confession' — Martin Hurson — lay dying on hunger-strike for political status.

## CAPPAGH

Edward Martin Hurson was born on September 13th, 1956, in the townland of Aughnaskea, Cappagh, near Dungannon, the eighth of nine children: six girls and three boys.

Both of his parents, John, aged 74, a small hill farmer, and Mary Ann (whose maiden name was Gillespie) who died in April 1970 after a short illness, came from the Cappagh district, and the whole of their family — including Martin — were born into the white-washed farmhouse perched precipitously on top of the thirty hilly acres of rough land that make up the Hurson farm.

The Cappagh district is a wholly nationalist area of County Tyrone, composed mainly of farmers, and comprising between two and three hundred closely knit families. The land is infertile, lowland hills, good only for grazing



**MARTIN HURSON**

Aged 24 from East Tyrone. Commenced hunger-strike May 29th, died July 13th after 46 days

cattle and rearing a few pigs, yet the roots of families like the Hursons stretch back maybe two or three hundred years. The land may not be much but it is theirs.

Over by Donaghmore, a few miles away, where the fields are bigger and the grass more lush, most of the farmers are loyalists.

Martin was close to the land as he grew up. Although he went first to Crosscavanagh school in Galbally, and then to St. Patrick's intermediate in Dungannon, when he was not at school he was more often then not helping out about the farm, driving a tractor, helping to rear 'croppy pigs' or looking after cattle.

A 'typical' country lad in many ways, part of a very close and good humoured family, Martin was a quiet, very religious, and easy-going young man, who nevertheless, before his arrest, enjoyed social pursuits such as dancing and going to the cinema, and enjoyed the company of other people, among whom he had a well-earned reputation for being a practical joker and a bit of a comedian.

Like many others, he was capable of being very outgoing and talkative on occasions, while remaining essentially a rather shy and quiet personality.

Perhaps because he was one of the youngest of the family, Martin was particularly close to

his mother, whose premature death in 1970 when he was only thirteen, came as a deep shock to him.

It was Martin who returned home one day to find his mother taken seriously ill and who ran to a neighbouring farm to ring a doctor. That day, a Saturday, Mrs. Hurson was taken to Omagh hospital, and from there to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast where she died the following Thursday, April 30th.

Martin was so shocked by the tragedy that he lost his memory completely for a week, only regaining it when a tractor he was driving up a steep slope, with his father, overturned, throwing the pair to the ground, this fresh shock dramatically restoring his memory.

That period of his life was also the time when 'the troubles' began to have an impact.

Although the family did not discuss politics, and internment did not affect anyone from the Cappagh area, it was impossible not to be keenly aware of British oppression so close to Dungannon which — spearheading the civil rights campaign through the late sixties — had fostered such a strong current of republicanism in the process.

However, Martin's personal resistance to that British repression and his subsequent intense suffering at the hands of it were not to occur for several years. In his teens his great delight was to play practical jokes on his family and neighbours, particularly on April Fool's Day and on Hallowe'en.

## JOKE

"He liked a joke and a laugh" remembers a long-time friend of Martin's "him and Peter Kane were a comical match". Or, as his brother Francis remembers with a laugh, "if he thought it would make you mad he would do it".

Like the time he ran breathless to Paddy Donnelly's to tell him that Sylvie Kane's cows had toppled his milkchurns and the milk was going everywhere. And as Paddy dashed down to save his milk, Martin called out, "Hey Paddy, April Fool!" before disappearing through a gap in the hedge.

Leaving school, Martin started work as an apprentice fitter welder at Findlay's, and after a stint there he went across to England for a while, living in Manchester with his brother Francis and his wife, and working for McAlpine's. But not long after Francis and his wife returned to Tyrone, Martin too returned, when the particular job he was working on had finished at Christmas in 1974, rather than move to another job.

He had spent almost a year-and-a-half in England but wasn't particular about it, a view confirmed early on after his arrival, when he was forced to spend two weeks in hospital, having been struck by one of McAlpine's mechanical diggers!

Back in the farmhouse at Cappagh, Martin bought himself a car on hire purchase and got himself a job in Dungannon at Powerscreen International. He paid for the car within a

year, having always had a gift for scraping money together.

As a child, whenever he managed to get hold of a penny or a shilling, here or there, instead of spending it he would take it to a nearby farmer and family friend who put it into a box for him until he had enough to buy, once, a white cob, or a pig to rear. He was "old fashioned" in that way, his brother Francis recalls.

He also loved to work and was a "great riser" in the morning, his father says, never missing a day's work until his arrest.

### BERNADETTE

Late in 1975, he met and started going out with Bernadette Donnelly, at the wedding of her sister Mary Rose to a cousin of Martin's, at which he was best man.

Bernadette, aged twenty-three, comes from Pomeroy: she was extremely active in the hunger-strike campaign, along with members of Martin's family, appearing on rally platforms and taking part in marches and pickets all over the country.

Before his arrest, Martin and Bernadette were often both behind the practical jokes he loved playing. His brother Francis was often the victim.

On one occasion, Francis, his wife, and their two children, were asleep in a caravan in the Donegal resort of Bundoran. They awoke however to find themselves not on the caravan site but on an adjacent road, Martin and Bernadette having towed it off-site during the night.

On another occasion the pair borrowed Francis' almost new cine-camera to film the wedding of a friend, Seamus McGuire, in Donegal. Somewhere along the route back from Donegal they found out they'd lost the camera and lost it remained.

Afraid to tell Francis, they kept quiet about the camera for several weeks, before Francis remembered to ask for it back. Instead of owning-up, Martin gave Francis an almost identical replacement hoping he wouldn't notice. But when he did, Martin, not lost for words, just explained: "I left it into a shop for fixing, but they said it wasn't worth fixing."

### RUC

But those relatively light-hearted and easy-going days were coming to an end.

East Tyrone, like many other areas in the North, was a centre of highly proficient republican operations against the enemy forces.

To combat the level of republican military activity, deputy chief constable of the RUC, Kenneth Newman (shortly to be promoted to chief constable), was one of those behind the restructuring of the RUC in early 1976, which led to the setting up of what were called Regional Crime Squads.

Their primary function was to ensure convictions for all 'unsolved' republican activity by extracting signed statements, in effect to 'clear the books' of an embarrassing list of unattributable republican operations.

Under the torturer Newman, and the then direct-ruler Roy Mason, the Regional Crime Squads only responsibility was to 'get results' (a guarantee of promotion) without undue regard to the methods they employed. One method they did employ was torture.

### TORTURE

Martin was arrested and taken to Omagh RUC barracks on November 11th, 1976, along with the six others arrested that day and two days previously.

He was badly, and professionally tortured in Omagh for two days, beaten about the head, back and testicles, spread-eagled against a wall and across a table, slapped, punched and



● The grief-stricken sisters of Martin Hurson, Josephine (left) and Rosaleen (centre) and his fiancée Bernadette Donnelly at his funeral

kicked. He heard Rafferty's screams as he was tortured in the adjoining room.

To escape the torture Martin signed statements admitting involvement in republican activity.

He was then transferred to Cookstown barracks, but as soon as he arrived he made a formal complaint of ill-treatment. Back in Omagh barracks, chief inspector Farr, realising this could prejudice the admissibility of Martin's statements at his trial, got the Cookstown detectives to re-interrogate Martin and extract the same statements, which they did by threatening to 'send him back to Omagh'.

On Saturday night, November 13th, Martin was charged, along with Kevin O'Brien and Peter Kane. Dermot Boyle and Pat Joe O'Neill had been charged the day before.

Martin was charged with a landmine explosion at Galbally in November 1975. This charge was later dropped, but he was then further charged with IRA membership, possession of the Galbally landmine, conspiracy to kill members of the enemy forces, causing an explosion at Cappagh in September 1975, and possession of a landmine at Reclain in February 1976 which exploded near a passing UDR landrover.

### STATEMENTS

Even though the alleged speciality of the East Tyrone active service unit operating around Cappagh was explosives, the RUC offered not one shred of forensic evidence, against any of the five men, merely signed statements extracted by torture.

These statements, however, were good enough for Judge Rowland at the trial of the five men in November 1977, after a year on remand in Crumlin Road and in the remand H-Block of Long Kesh.

Admitting as evidence the statements Martin made in Omagh, and dismissing doctor's evidence about the extent of Martin's injuries, Judge Rowland sentenced Martin to twenty years for possession of landmines and conspiracy, as well as two other sentences of fifteen and five years respectively, the sentences to run concurrently.

The other four men received sentences ranging from fifteen to twenty years.

Martin appealed his conviction on the grounds that the judge had ignored medical evidence about his ill-treatment. The appeal was dismissed but he was granted a retrial.

At the four-day trial in September 1979, before Judge Murray, the Omagh statements were rule inadmissible, but instead of Martin walking free the judge went on to accept the admissibility of the Cookstown statements, themselves extracted under threat of renewed torture.

One of the consequences of the retrial was the further postponement of the enquiry into James Rafferty's allegations of brutality in Omagh, on the grounds that it might prejudice the retrial (to the RUC's detriment!).

The enquiry had been reluctantly acceded to by the RUC Police Authority following the persistent endeavours of Authority member, independent Dungannon councillor, Jack Hassard. He, however, later resigned from the Authority, describing it as being "as independent as a sausage without a skin" when the tribunal which was set up failed to begin its enquiries. The tribunal finally collapsed earlier this year when the RUC detectives from Omagh refused to give evidence to it on the grounds that they might incriminate themselves!

Subsequently, four of the detectives who tortured James Rafferty, Martin Hurson and the others at Omagh that November: chief inspector Harold Colgan, and constables Michael O'Neil, Kenneth Hassan, and Robert McAdorey, were charged with assaulting Rafferty.

Those four torturers, however, are only convenient scape-goats representing the tip of the iceberg in what was an orchestrated and widespread attempt during the Roy Mason era to jail republicans on the flimsiest of pretexts by means of torture extracted statements. Such men make up a substantial proportion of those political prisoners in Britain's Northern and English jails today.

Martin Hurson went straight on the blanket after his first trial, and following his retrial he appealed once again against conviction, challenging the admissibility of the Cookstown statements, but his appeal was disallowed in June 1980.

### HUNGER-STRIKE

On May 29th, this year, Martin joined the hunger-strike, replacing South Derryman Brendan McLoughlin who was forced to drop out because of a burst stomach ulcer.

In the Free State general election, in June Martin was a candidate in Longford/Westmeath, and although missing election, obtained almost four-and-a-half thousand first preference votes, and over a thousand transfers, before being eliminated at the end of the sixth count, outlasting two Labour candidates and a Fine Gael contender.

Barely one month after election the Free State government's bolstering of Britain's barbaric intransigence led to the death of Martin Hurson, the sixth hunger-striker, at that stage, to die.

Having seriously deteriorated after forty days on hunger-strike, he was unable to hold down water and died a horrifically agonising death after only forty-four days on hunger-strike, at 4.30 a.m. on Monday, July 13th. ■

# Kevin Lynch

**'A loyal, determined republican with a great love of life'**

THE EIGHTH republican to join the hunger-strike for political status, on May 23rd, following the death of Patsy O'Hara, was twenty-five-year-old fellow INLA Volunteer Kevin Lynch from the small, North Derry town of Dungiven who had been imprisoned since his arrest in 1976.

A well-known and well liked young man in the closely knit community of his home town, Kevin was remembered chiefly for his outstanding ability as a sportsman, and for qualities of loyalty, determination and a will to win which distinguished him on the sports field and which, in heavier times and circumstances, were his hallmarks as an H-Block blanket man on hunger-strike to the death.

Kevin Lynch was a happy-go-lucky, principled young Derry man with an enthusiastic love of life, who was, as one friend of his remarked — a former schoolteacher of Kevin's and an active H-Block campaigner: *"the last person, back in 1969, you would have dreamed would be spending a length of time in prison."*

The story of Kevin Lynch is of a light-hearted, hard-working and lively young man, barely out of his teens when the hard knock came early one December morning nearly five years ago, who had been forced by the British occupation of his country to spend those intervening years in heroic refusal to accept the British brand of 'criminal' and in the tortured assertion of what he really was — a political prisoner.

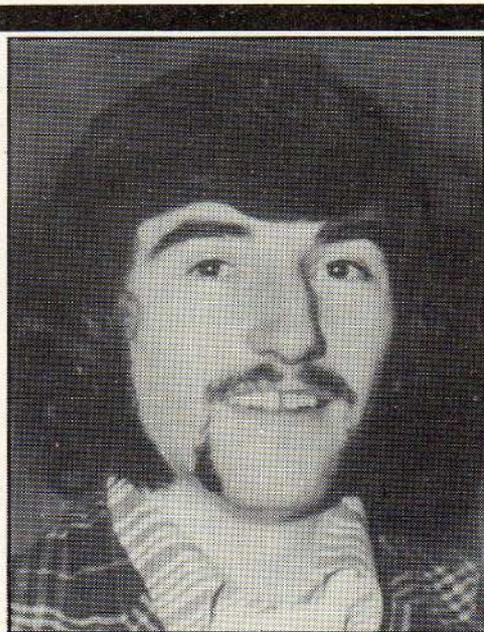
## PARK

Kevin Lynch was born on May 25th, 1956, the youngest of a family of eight, in the tiny village of Park, eight miles outside Dungiven. His father, Paddy, (aged 66), and his mother, Bridie, (aged 65), whose maiden name is Cassidy, were both born in Park too, Paddy Lynch's family being established there for at least three generations, but they moved to Dungiven twenty years ago, after the births of their children.

Paddy Lynch is a builder by trade, like his father and grandfather before him — a trade which he handed down to his five sons: Michael (aged 39), Patsy (aged 37), Francis (aged 33), Gerard (aged 27), and Kevin himself, who was an apprenticed bricklayer. There are also three daughters in the family: Jean (aged 35), Mary (aged 30), and Bridie (aged 29).

Though still only a small town of a few thousand, Dungiven has been growing over the past twenty years due to the influx of families like the Lynches from the outlying rural areas. It is an almost exclusively nationalist town, garrisoned by a large and belligerent force of RUC and Brits. In civil rights days, however, nationalists were barred from marching in the town centre.

Nowadays, militant nationalists have enforced their right to march, but the RUC still attempt to break up protests and the flying of the tricolour (not in itself 'illegal' in the



## KEVIN LYNCH

Aged 25 from North Derry. Commenced hunger-strike May 23rd, died August 1st after 71 days

six counties) is considered taboo by the loyalist bigots of the RUC.

Support in the town is relatively strong, Dungiven having first-hand experience of a hunger-strike last year when local man Tom McFeeley went fifty-three days without food before the fast ended on December 18th. Apart from Tom McFeeley and Kevin Lynch, other blanket men from the town are Kevin's boyhood friend and later comrade Liam McCloskey — himself later to embark on hunger-strike — and former blanket man Eunan Brolly, who was released from the H-Blocks last December.

## SCHOOL

Kevin went to St. Canice's primary school and then on to St. Patrick's intermediate, both in Dungiven. Although not academically minded — always looking forward to taking his place in the family building business — he was well-liked by his teachers, respected for his sporting prowess and for his well-meant sense of humour. *"Whatever devilment was going on in the school, you could lay your bottom dollar Kevin was behind it,"* remembers his former schoolteacher, recalling that he took great delight in getting one of his classmates, his cousin Hugh (*"the biggest boy in the class — six foot one"*) *"into trouble"*. But it was all in fun — Kevin was no trouble-maker, and whenever reprimanded at school, like any other lively lad would never bear a grudge.

Above all, Kevin was an outdoor person, who loved to go fishing for sticklebacks in the river near his home, or off with a bunch of friends playing Gaelic (an outdoor disposition which must have made his H-Block confinement even harder to bear).

## GAMES

His great passion was Gaelic games, playing Gaelic football from very early on, and then taking up hurling when he was at St. Patrick's.

He excelled at both.

Playing right half-back for St. Patrick's hurling club, which was representing County Derry, at the inaugural Feile na nGael held in Thurles, County Tipperary, in 1971, Kevin's performance — coming only ten days after an appendix operation — was considered a key factor in the team's victory in the four-match competition played over two days.

The following season Kevin was appointed captain of both St. Patrick's hurling team and the County Derry under-16 team which went on in that season to beat Armagh in the All-Ireland under-16 final at Croke Park in Dublin.

Later on, while working in England, he was a reserve for the Dungiven senior football team in the 1976 County Derry final.

Kevin's team, St. Canice's was beaten 0-9 to 0-3 by Sarsfields of Ballerin, and he is described in the match programme as, *"a strong player and a useful hurler"*. Within a short space of time after this final, Kevin would be in jail, as would two of his team mates on that day, Eunan Brolly and Sean Coyle.

## QUALITIES

The qualities Kevin is remembered for as a sportsman were his courage and determination, his will to win, and his loyalty to his team mates. Not surprisingly the local hurling and football clubs were fully behind Kevin and his comrades in their struggle for the five demands, pointing out that Kevin had displayed those same qualities in the H-Blocks and on hunger-strike.

He was also a boxer with the St. Canice's club, once reaching the County Derry final as a schoolboy, but not always managing as easily as he achieved victory in his first fight!

Just before the match was due to start his opponent asked him how many previous fights he'd had. With suppressed humour, Kevin answered *"thirty-three"* so convincingly that his opponent, overcome with nervous horror, couldn't be persuaded into the ring.

At the age of fifteen, Kevin left school and began to work alongside his father. Although lively, going to dances, and enjoying good crack, he was basically a quiet, determined young fellow, who stuck to his principles and couldn't easily be swayed.

Like any other family in Dungiven, the Lynches are nationally minded, and young Kevin would have been just as aware as any other lad of his age of the basic injustices in his country, and would have equally resented



● INLA Volunteers fire a volley of shots over the coffin of Kevin Lynch

the petty stop-and-search harassment which people of his age continually suffered at the hands of Brits and RUC.

The Lynchs were also, typically, a close family and in 1973, at the age of sixteen, Kevin went to England to join his three brothers, Michael, Patsy and Gerard, who were already working in Bedford.

Both Bedford and its surrounding towns, stretching from Hertfordshire to Buckinghamshire and down to the north London suburbs, contain large Irish populations, and the Lynchs mixed socially within that, Kevin going a couple of times a week to train with St. Dymphna's in Luton or to Catholic clubs in Bedford or Luton for a quiet drink and a game of snooker. He even played an odd game of rugby while over there.

But Kevin never intended settling in England and on one of his occasional visits home ("he just used to turn up"), in August 1976, he decided to stay in Dungiven.

#### INLA

Shortly after his return home, coming away from a local dance, he and nine other young lads were put up against a wall by British soldiers and given a bad kicking, two of the lads being brought to the barracks.

Kevin joined the INLA around this time, maybe because of this incident in part, but almost certainly because of his national awareness coming from his cultural love of Irish sport, as well as his courage and integrity, made him determined to stand up both for himself and his friends.

"He wouldn't ever allow himself to be walked on", recalls his brother, Michael. And he had always been known for his loyalty by his family, his friends, his team mates, and eventually by his H-Block comrades.

However, within the short space of little more than three months, Kevin's active republican involvement came to an end almost before it had begun. Following an ambush outside Dungiven, in November '76, in which an RUC man was slightly injured, the RUC moved against those it suspected to be INLA activists in the town.

On December 2nd, 1976, at 5.40 a.m. Brits and RUC came to the Lynch's home for Kevin. "We said he wasn't going anywhere before he'd had a cup of tea", remembers

Mr. Lynch, "but they refused to let him have even a glass of water. The RUC said he'd be well looked after by them."

Also arrested that day in Dungiven were Sean Coyle, Seamus McGrandles, and Kevin's schoolboy friend Liam McCloskey, with whom he was later to share an H-Block cell.

Kevin was taken straight to Castlereagh, and, after three days' questioning, on Saturday, December 4th, he was charged and taken to Limavady to be remanded in custody by a special court. The string of charges included conspiracy to disarm members of the enemy forces, taking part in a punishment shooting, and the taking of 'legally held' shotguns.

Following a year on remand in Crumlin Road jail, Belfast, he was tried and sentenced to ten years in December 1977, immediately joining the blanket men in H3, and eventually finding himself sharing a cell with his Dungiven friend and comrade, Liam McCloskey, continuing to do so until he took part in the thirty-man four-day fast which coincided with the end of the original seven-man hunger-strike last December.

#### LONG KESH

Since they were sentenced in 1977, both Dungiven men suffered their share of brutality from Crumlin Road and Long Kesh prison warders, Kevin being 'put on the boards' for periods of up to a fortnight, three or four times.

On Wednesday, April 26th, 1978, six warders one carrying a hammer, came in to search their cell. Kevin's bare foot, slipping on the urine-drenched cell floor, happened to splash the trouser leg of one of the warders, who first verbally abused him and then kicked urine at him.

When Kevin responded in like manner he was set upon by two warders who punched and kicked him, while another swung a hammer at him, but fortunately missed. The punching and kicking continued till Kevin collapsed on the urine-soaked floor with a bruised and swollen face.

In another assault by prison warders, Kevin's cellmate, Liam McCloskey, suffered a burst ear-drum during a particularly bad

beating, and is now permanently hard of hearing.

#### DETERMINATION

Even as long ago as April 1978, just after the 'no wash' protest had begun, Kevin was reported, in a bulletin issued by the Dungiven Relatives Action Committee, to "have lost a lot of weight, his face is a sickly white and he is underfed".

His determination, and his sense of loyalty to his blanket comrades, saw him through, however, even the hardest times.

His former H-Block comrade, Eunan Brolly, who was also in H3 before his release, remembers how Kevin once put up with raging toothache for three weeks rather than come off the protest to get dental treatment. It was the sort of thing which forced some blanket men off the protest, at least temporarily, but not Kevin.

Eunan, who recalls how Kevin used to get a terrible slagging from other blanket men because the GAA, of which of course he was a member, did not give enough support to the fight for political status, also says he was not surprised by Kevin's decision to join the hunger-strike. Like other blanket men, Eunan says, Kevin used to discuss a hunger-strike as a possibility, a long time ago, "and he was game enough for it".

Neither were his family, who supported him in his decision, surprised: "Kevin's the type of man", said his father, when Kevin was on the hunger-strike, "that wouldn't lie back. He'd want to do his share."

In the Free State elections, in June, Kevin stood as a candidate in the Waterford constituency, collecting 3,337 first preferences before being eliminated — after Labour Party and Fianna Fail candidates — on the fifth count, with 3,753 votes.

But the obvious popular support which the hunger-strikers and their cause enjoyed nationally was not sufficient to elicit support from the Free State government who share the common, futile hope of the British government — the criminalisation of captured freedom fighters.

The direct consequence of that was Kevin's death — the seventh at that stage — in the Long Kesh hospital at 1.00 a.m. on Saturday, August 1st after seventy-one days on hunger-strike.

# Kieran Doherty

'A dedicated republican and an outstanding soldier'

WHEN the family, friends and former comrades of Belfast IRA Volunteer twenty-five-year-old Kieran Doherty learnt that he was joining the H-Block hunger-strike, as a replacement for Raymond McCreesh, it came as no surprise to them.

Although Kieran had spent seven of the last ten years imprisoned, his complete selflessness and his relentless dedication to the liberation struggle left no-one in any doubt that Kieran would volunteer for this terrible and lonely confrontation with British rule inside the H-Blocks of Long Kesh. Last December he was amongst those thirty prisoners who were on hunger-strike for four days prior to the ending of the original seven-strong strike.

Kieran was born on October 16th, 1955 in Andersonstown, the third son in a family of six children. His two elder brothers, Michael, aged 28, and Terence, aged 27, were interned between 1972 and 1974.

Kieran has two younger sisters, Roisin and Mairead; and his younger brother, Brendan, aged twelve, is still at school.

## BACKGROUND

Kieran's mother, Margaret, is a Catholic convert from a Protestant background. His father, Alfie Doherty, who is a floor-tiler by trade, is a well-known figure in Andersonstown.

Kieran's paternal grandfather comes from Limavady, County Derry, and after his people moved to a house in North Belfast in the 'twenties, they were threatened that the house was going to be burnt.

This was during the loyalist initiated pogroms which followed partition.

They had to flee to West Belfast enacting a tragedy which was to repeat itself in front of Kieran's eyes in the early seventies, and stir him to take action.

Alfie's uncle, Ned Maguire, took part in the famous IRA roof-top escape from Belfast's Crumlin Road jail on January 15th, 1943.

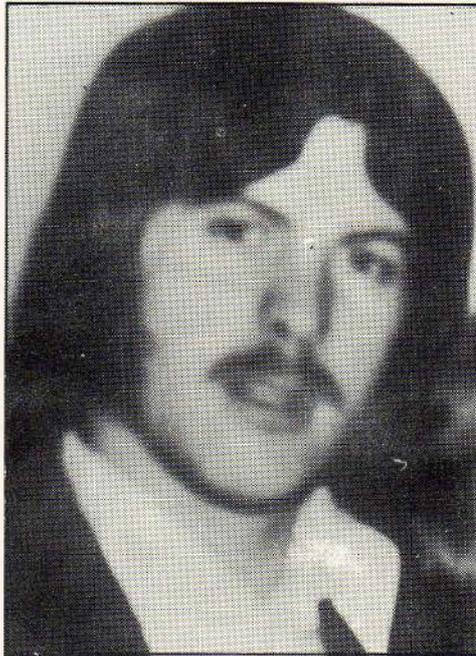
Ned Maguire's son, also called Ned, and a second cousin of Kieran, was an internee in Cage 5 of Long Kesh in 1974, when he took part in the mass escape from the camp during which Hugh Coney was shot dead by the British army. Young Ned Maguire was one of the three who managed to reach Twinbrook before being recaptured. He is now on the blanket.

Ned's sisters (and Kieran's second cousins), Dorothy Maguire, aged 19, and Maura Meehan, aged 30, were shot dead by the British army on October 23rd, 1971, in a car in the Lower Falls area of Belfast. Both were members of Cumann na mBan.

Another relative of Kieran's, his uncle, Gerry Fox, was part of the famous Crumlin Road jail 'football team', who escaped from the jail by climbing over the wall in 1972.

## CHILDHOOD

However, Kieran's childhood was relatively ordinary. He loved sport more than anything



**KIERAN DOHERTY**

Aged 25 from Belfast. Commenced hunger-strike May 22nd, died August 2nd after 73 days

else, and was always out playing Gaelic football, hurling or soccer.

Kieran went to St. Theresa's primary school, then moved to the Christian Brothers secondary school on the Glen Road, where he studied until the age of sixteen.

A keen Gaelic footballer, he won an Antrim Minor medal in 1971 for St. Theresa's GAC.

Kieran took up cycling for a while, following his brother, Michael, in St. Thomas' cycling club. His mother recalls him taking part in a race with a faulty bicycle: "Although the chain came off at least twenty times through the race, he was so stubborn that he finished with a bronze medal."

St. Thomas' cycling club was later decimated by internment. Kieran, his brothers, and many other Andersonstown boys were to end up behind the wire. To such an extent, that Kieran's young brother, Brendan, asked his mother one day in 1975 when it would be his turn to go where all the 'big boys' were kept. Brendan was then six.

In the summer of 1971, Kieran got a job as an apprentice in heating engineering but was laid-off when the firm closed down a few months later. He worked for a while at floor-tiling with his father.

## JOINED

In the meantime, however, internment had burst open the lives of many Andersons-

town families. Kieran had never been interested in politics until then: nor had his family ever discussed the political situation in front of him.

Like hundreds of other boys and girls of his age, he was moved by the sight of uprooted families leaving a home in cinders behind them. As all of the evacuees were being catered for in local schools, Kieran and his brothers begged their parents to allow them to go and help. Kieran saw the British army on the streets, his friends and their families harassed. He joined na Fianna Eireann in the autumn of '71.

Kieran proved himself to be an outstanding member of the Fianna. Reliable, quick on the job, he was obviously giving the best of himself to every task assigned him with the aim of being noticed and recruited for the IRA as quickly as was possible.

Even at this early stage of his involvement, he is remembered for his initiative and his discreet ways. Unlike some boys of his age, he never boasted about his activities.

But the British army soon noticed him too and Kieran, his family, and his home, became a target for frequent British army harassment.

On October 6th, 1972, the British army came to arrest Kieran, despite his father's objection that Kieran was under seventeen. The Brits had checked up, they said, and after a heavy house raid they took Kieran away in the middle of the night. His father got him released eventually after waking up the sexton of St. Agnes' chapel and obtaining Kieran's birth certificate.

The Brits were ten days too early.

True to form, on October 16th, the British army were back in force and swamped Kieran's district, waiting for his return from work. But relatives managed to warn him and he was driven over the border to an uncle in Limerick.

He did not much enjoy his enforced exile and, bursting to get back into action, he made his way back to Belfast at the beginning of '73.

## INTERNEED

A week or so later, he was arrested, taken to Castlereagh, and then interned in Long Kesh where he spent over two years from February '73 to November '75. He was among the last internees released.

Always even-tempered and quiet-spoken, he used his time developing his military skills.

In a letter to his mother he wrote: "They might intern all of us, but we will come out fighting."

He made a lot of handicrafts during his two-and-a-half years in captivity.

His parents' home displays a lot of his work, in particular a hand carved wooden plaque commemorating Dorothy Maguire and Maura Meehan.

On the eve of his birthday in October '74, Long Kesh prison camp was burned. When visits were eventually resumed he did not complain to his parents of brutality but just

remarked jokingly on the 'birthday party' he had been given.

He was released from Long Kesh in November '75, as undaunted as he sounded in his letters, and reported back to the IRA immediately. Always eager to operate, he was included in a team of Volunteers from around Rossmore which gave the British army in Andersonstown many sleepless nights until a wave of arrests in the summer of '76.

As the IRA/British army truce petered out at the beginning of '76, 'Big Doc', as he was known by all, soon had to move out of his parents' house. Raids were a fortnightly occurrence, at least, with furniture wrecked and floorboards lifted.

Mrs. Doherty was tidying up a first-floor bedroom after such a raid when she fell through the carpet, the floor, and partly through the sitting-room ceiling. The Brits had omitted to replace the floorboards. The scar on the ceiling can still be seen.

Many friends who met Kieran after his internment period found him extremely mature for a lad of twenty, not boisterous like most people of his age. He obviously, by then, had thought things out, made a definite choice, and assessed the dangers.

As an operator he was a perfectionist and his comrades recall feeling extremely safe with him. Even in the eventuality of things going wrong they knew Kieran would not give anything away.

### ESCAPES

He had many narrow escapes.

One night, as he was shifting 'gear' in Andersonstown, he was chased up and down the side streets for over five minutes by two Brit landrovers.

Another time, as he was driving to a night job as security man for a firm, armed, as he often was, he drove into a British army roadblock.

He calmly took his tie out of his pocket, put it on, tidied himself up, and, winding down the window, shouted: "What's up lads? Let me through, please, I'm going to my work, over there, security staff."

And the British soldiers opened the way for him. 'Big Doc' was welcome in many Andersonstown homes and highly respected by all who knew him.

Families with whom he billeted remember how security conscious he was, staying away for days, using billets in no regular pattern.

### ENJOYED

Through those months of intense involvement Kieran had little chance to unwind. He mostly liked to go to local clubs for a quiet pint with a few friends.

He also had a reputation as a practical joker. One day he rang a friend from a pub and told him they were wrecking the place, simply to have his friend rush over in his car to pick him up.

In July '76, a few weeks before his arrest, Kieran enjoyed one of the rare holidays he ever had since the arrival of British troops on his local streets. With a few close friends he drove to the South and was able to indulge in his love for outdoor activities, exhausting his friends with long walks and swims.

By that time he had met his girlfriend, Geraldine, the only steady relationship he ever formed during his short period of freedom.

They did not get much of a chance, as Kieran's heavy republican involvement often interfered with their dating and since August '76 they only met for a few minutes once in a while under the gaze of prison warders.

### SEAN McDERMOTT

Kieran's comrades-in-arms recall one par-



● Kieran (right) is seen here enjoying his short period of freedom with John 'Pickles' Pickering, a close friend and comrade who was later to also go on hunger-strike in the struggle for the restoration of political status

ticular operation, of the many he was involved in, when one Andersonstown Volunteer — Sean McDermott — was shot dead.

Kieran got away and was told to lie low for a few days, but nevertheless he appeared at his comrade's funeral.

Sean McDermott's mother has a photograph of the funeral cortege in which Kieran can be seen, standing on the footpath, sombre, alone, looking on as the coffin is carried to Milltown cemetery.

Sean's death, and the arrest of other comrades involved, hit Kieran very hard.

### BOMBING

In August '76, as Kieran and his unit were on a bombing mission, the van in which they were travelling was chased by the RUC near Balmoral Avenue in Belfast.

Kieran got out of the van and commandeered a car, which he left some streets away and walked off.

Meanwhile, the others in the van were cornered, Liam White being captured immediately, and the others, Chris Moran, Terry Kirby and John 'Pickles' Pickering — himself later to embark on hunger-strike — finally giving themselves up when surrounded in a house they had taken over.

The RUC picked Kieran up one-and-a-half miles away from the scene, unarmed.

He was later charged with possession of firearms and explosives and commandeering the car. Forensic tests could not link Kieran to the first two charges, and although it was impossible for the RUC to have spotted him escaping, seventeen months later, at his trial, RUC Constable Bryons perjured himself twice in order to see Kieran locked up.

On remand in Crumlin Road jail he met Francis Hughes and developed a great admiration for him. Friends often speak of the similarities between the two, always defiant, always fighting, born free.

In Crumlin Road, Kieran was often 'on the boards' as punishment for his refusal to acknowledge the warders in any way. He carried this attitude into the H-Blocks after he was sentenced, in January 1978, to eighteen years imprisonment for possession, and four years for commandeering the car.

### BLANKET

Kieran joined the blanket protest immediately as did his comrades sentenced with him. He spent all but two weeks of his three years and almost eight months in the H-Blocks, in

H4-Block (the temporary spell was in H6), before being moved to the prison hospital during his hunger-strike.

Recollections of Kieran's experiences in the H-Blocks give an impression of relentless conflict between himself and the warders, who made him a target both because of his height and because of his stubborn defiance of the prison regime.

On 'appeal' visits he always had to be dragged away, ignoring all calls to end the visit. He never looked a warder in the face when one addressed him and never replied to their orders. He always refused to submit to the anal searches over the mirror before and after visits and was beaten for this.

The worst incident occurred in July '78 when Kieran refused a mirror search before a legal visit. Eight warders jumped on him, one squeezing his testicles until he became unconscious. He received blows to every part of his body and was taken to the prison hospital.

Although people who visited him recall how often he arrived pale or with grazes on his arms or bloodshot eyes, he never complained, brushing their questions off with a shrug: "I'm OK. What's the sceal?"

### CHESS

Although Kieran had not been taught Irish at school, and had no time to learn it, later he became a fluent speaker in the H-Blocks like hundreds of his imprisoned comrades.

Another skill mastered by Kieran, whilst in the H-Blocks, was playing chess — crude chessmen were made from scraps of paper and the game was played on a mock board scratched out on the cell floors.

Displayed proudly in his parents' sitting-room is an engraved plaque bearing a stunning yet heartbreaking story in eight words: 'Kieran Doherty, 1980 Champion, Ciaran Nugent Chess Shield'.

And, next to it, another shield, again engraved 'Ciaran Nugent Chess Shield', but this time with twelve metal tags, the top of which bears Kieran Doherty's name and '1980', the other eleven still blank. A clue to Kieran's patience and ability, a clue to the blanket men's grim determination to outlast the H-Blocks.

### CAVAN/MONAGHAN

In June of this year, in the Free State general election, Kieran was elected a member of the Leinster House parliament for the Cavan/Monaghan constituency with 9,121 first preference votes — only 303 votes behind the then sitting Free State Minister of Education.

### HUNGER-STRIKE

To a friend who visited him after the first hunger-strike, which ended last December, Kieran said: "They (the warders) are really rubbing our noses in it. By God, they will not rub mine!"

Asked whether he would not settle down — after all, with five years done and remission, another six years would soon be over. He replied: "Remission has nothing to do with it. There is much more than that involved."

So he went on hunger-strike on Friday, May 22nd, having put his name forward for it long ago, as undaunted and full of fighting spirit as when he roamed free on the streets of Andersonstown.

A child, like hundreds of others a product of British brutality and stupidity in the North, who revealed himself to be an outstanding soldier of the republic.

Kieran was shy, reserved, easily embarrassed young man who was single-minded and determined enough to have become, in himself, a condensed history of the liberation of a people. ■

# Thomas McElwee

**'Sincere, easy-going and full of fun'**

THE TENTH republican to join the hunger-strike was twenty-three-year-old IRA Volunteer Thomas McElwee, from Bellaghy in South Derry. He had been imprisoned since December 1976, following a premature explosion in which he lost an eye.

He was a first cousin of Francis Hughes, who died after fifty-nine days on hunger-strike, on May 12th.

One of the most tragic and saddening aspects of the hunger-strike was the close relationships between some of the hunger-strikers.

Joe McDonnell following his friend and comrade Bobby Sands on hunger-strike and then into death, both having been captured on the same IRA operation in 1976.

Elsewhere, similar close ties, parallels, between one hunger-striker and another: the same schools; the same streets; the same experiences of repression and discrimination.

And for those families, relatives and friends most acutely conscious of the parallels there is of course an even more intense personal sadness than for most, in the bitter tragedy of the hunger-strike.

But of all those close relationships, none was surely as poignant as that between Thomas McElwee and his cousin, Francis Hughes: two dedicated republicans from the small South Derry village of Bellaghy, their family homes less than half-a-mile apart in the townland of Tamlaghtduff, who were close friends in their boyhood years and who later fought side by side in the towns and fields of South Derry for the freedom of their country.

It came then as no surprise to those who knew them when Thomas and Francis stood side by side again in the H-Blocks (along with Thomas' younger brother, Benedict) in taking part in the thirty-strong four-day fast at the end of the original seven-man hunger-strike last December.

And when the deaths of Bobby Sands and Francis Hughes, on the subsequent hunger-strike, only months later, failed to break the Brits intransigence, the McElwee family were already certain that either Thomas or Benedict, both of whom had volunteered, would soon be joining the hunger-strike as well.

## QUALITIES

What are the qualities that make a twenty-three-year-old South Derry man ready to die a painful death on hunger-strike, in defence of his political principles and to end, for himself and for his comrades, the horrors of the H-Blocks in which he had already spent almost four years?

The story of Thomas McElwee is not of a uniquely courageous, or uniquely principled young man, any more than were any of the hunger-strikers unique in some way.

But it is the story of a fairly typical young Derryman, kind and good-natured, full of



**THOMAS McELWEE**

Aged 23 from South Derry. Commenced hunger-strike June 8th, died August 8th after 62 days

life, and with a craze for cars and stock-car racing who is also filled with a love of his country and its way of life, who (like many others) had watched that country overrun by foreign and hostile troops, torn by sectarianism and discrimination, and who had spent over half of his young life striving to achieve the liberation of his country.

Within those few years he had become part of a tradition of the resistance of ordinary Irish people, that will never be criminalised.

## CHILDREN

Thomas McElwee, the fifth of twelve children, was born on November 30th, 1957, into the small, whitewashed home built by his father, along the Tamlaghtduff Road in the parish of Bellaghy.

His father, Jim (aged 65), a retired builder, has lived in Tamlaghtduff all his life, coming from a family of farmers which settled in the area at the turn of the century. One of his sisters, Margaret, married into the Hughes family, and is the mother of the late Francis Hughes. Thomas' mother, Alice (aged 56), lived in Philadelphia until she was seven years

old, her family having moved there from County Derry but later returning, and she has lived in Bellaghy for most of her life.

Jim and Alice married in 1950 and had twelve children, the oldest thirty, the youngest fourteen. They are: Kathleen, the eldest; Mary; Bernadette; Annie; Enda; Thomas; Benedict; Joseph; Nora; Pauline; Majella; and the youngest James.

Even within the Irish countryside where strong family bonds are the rule, the McElwee family are considered to be particularly close and considerate to one another, and there are strong ties too between them and the Hughes family.

As children, Thomas and Benedict and Francis Hughes, along with other neighbours' children, used to walk together each day to the bottom of the Tamlaghtduff road to catch the bus to school, returning home again each evening. They went to St. Mary's primary in Bellaghy, and then to Clady intermediate, three miles away.

Thomas got on pretty well at school. His favourite subjects were English and Maths, and he was also good at Geography and History.

At home he was quiet, very good natured and sincere, and particularly good towards his mother, helping out around the house and with jobs like cutting the hedge and putting up fencing.

He was also, however, very much an outdoor person, and although more serious than Benedict (who would usually have started off the devilment the pair got involved in), he was full of fun, with a strong sense of humour and adventure.

One of the pranks they sometimes got up to along with other local lads, earning them the temporary wrath of neighbours, was climbing on to the roof of a house, blocking the chimney, and then watching as the smoke began to appear in the kitchens. "They weren't too popular when that happened", remembers one of their sisters, laughing.

## NEIGHBOURS

But frequently too, Thomas was out — at week-ends and during school holidays — helping neighbours, including Protestant farmers, with their crops and machinery. He also used to go to work, picking gooseberries, at the monastery in Portlengone, staying there for maybe ten days at a time, during school holidays.

He had always been a determined person, arguing his point of view with his sisters and brothers, and if he wanted something, often a present for a member of his family, he would work hard to earn enough for it.

From the time he was eleven Thomas had an intense interest in working with cars and all types of machinery. On one occasion his mother brought a lawn mower which Thomas immediately dismantled, to see how it worked. When he reassembled it, it worked, but perhaps not just quite as well as before!

As he grew older, his fascination for engines grew stronger. He got his driving licence as soon as he was old enough, and got his own car. He used to travel all over the place to watch stock-car racing, particularly at Aghadowey near Coleraine, in North Derry, and once he even got his own stock-car for a while.

At weekends he used to go to local dances in neighbouring towns and villages such as Ardboe and Clady. Usually, if it was *ceilidh* dancing, he had to be dragged along, but he enjoyed it once he was there.

### REPUBLICAN

Yet, though full of life, there was a serious, reflective side to Thomas too.

He enjoyed playing records, often of traditional music sometimes of republican ballads, at a time when the 'troubles' had barely begun. Even before 1969, the McElwees, including Thomas, would sometimes go to folk concerts in the village where many of the ballads recalled the tradition of resistance to British mis-rule.

Given that background and Thomas' personal qualities of courage and concern for his neighbours it was not surprising that he joined na Fianna Eireann when he was only fourteen, and subsequently joined the independent unit led by his cousin, Francis Hughes, which concentrated on defence of the local area and ambushes of British forces, before it was recruited in its entirety, after a period of time, into the IRA.

The following few years, before Thomas' capture in October '76, were active ones in the South Derry area with a succession of successful bomb blitzes of the commercial centres of towns like Magherafelt, Bellaghy, Castledawson, and Maghera, and a high level of ambushes and booby-traps which made the British forces reluctant to wander into the country lanes surrounding Bellaghy.

Thomas had a reputation of a dedicated and principled republican who knew what he was about, and knew moreover what he was fighting to ultimately achieve. He was particularly interested in local republican history and knew what had happened in Bellaghy and the surrounding areas over the past fifty years.

### COLLEGE

Because of his discretion as a republican, and, doubtless, good luck as well, Thomas — unlike Francis Hughes — was not forced to go 'on the run' and continued to live at home.

After leaving school he had gone to Magherafelt technical college for a while, but later changed his mind and went to Ballymena training centre to begin an apprenticeship as a motor mechanic. But harassment from loyalist workers there forced him to leave and he then went to work with a local mechanic.

Although not 'on the run' Thomas was still subject to the extreme harassment at the hands of the Brits and the RUC that began to be felt in the area in the mid-seventies, even before the IRA's military campaign in the South Derry countryside, led by Francis Hughes, began to bite deep against the occupation forces.

Like many young men, whenever Thomas went out he was liable to be stopped for lengthy periods of time along empty country roads, searched, maybe threatened, and abused.

### RAIDS

There were also house raids.

The McElwees' home was first raided in 1974, and Thomas was arrested under Section 10, for three days. That time it was over twenty-four hours later before the family learned that Thomas was being held in Bally-



● Thomas' eldest sister Kathleen and his father look on in love and grief



● Oliver Hughes, brother of dead hunger-striker Francis, and Benedict McElwee, a blanket man, carry Thomas' coffin

kelly interrogation centre. On another occasion, both he and Benedict were arrested, and taken to Coleraine barracks, after a raid on their home.

The last time that the family would be together, however, was on the evening of October 8th, 1976. That evening the 'Stations' took place in the McElwees' home, a country tradition where Mass is said in one house in every townland during Lent, and during the month of October. That month in Tamraghtuff it was taking place in the McElwees' and most of the neighbours were there as well. After the Mass there was a social evening, with food and music.

The following afternoon — Bernadette's birthday — at 1.30 p.m. on October 9th, Kathleen answered the phone, to be told that both their brothers Thomas and Benedict were in the Wavery hospital in Ballymena following a premature bomb explosion in a car in the town, shortly beforehand.

### EXPLOSION

In the explosion, Thomas lost his right eye, while two other Bellaghy men were also injured: Colm Scullion losing several toes and Sean McPeake, losing a leg.

Benedict McElwee, fortunately, suffered only from shock and superficial burns. Following the explosion, several other republicans in the town were arrested, later to be charged.

These included Dolores O'Neill, from Portglenone, Thomas' girlfriend, and Ann Batson, from Toomebridge, both of whom joined the protest in Armagh women's jail.

Thomas was transferred from the Ballymena hospital to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast for emergency surgery to save his remaining eye. It was three weeks, however, before he was able to see at all.

After six weeks he was transferred again, this time to the military wing of the Musgrave Park hospital, where Benedict also was. One week before Christmas, both brothers were charged and sent to Crumlin Road jail.

At their subsequent trial in September 1977, having spent over eight months on remand in Crumlin Road, Thomas was convicted, although he made no statements, not only of possession of explosives but also of the killing of a woman who accidentally died in a bomb attack elsewhere in Ballymena that day and with which other republicans were also charged.

That 'murder' conviction was, on appeal, reduced to manslaughter but a twenty-year sentence remained, and Thomas returned to the blanket protest he had joined immediately after his trial, in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh.

### BRUTALITY

Their imprisonment was particularly harsh for the McElwee brothers who were frequently singled out for brutality by prison warders, outraged at the stubborn refusal of the two to accept any form of criminal status.

For a while they were able to keep in touch with each other as they were both in H6 Block, but they were split up and had hardly any opportunity to see each other at all for over two years.

Both Thomas and Benedict have been frequently mentioned in recent years in smuggled communications detailing beatings meted out to blanket men. On one occasion Thomas was put on the boards for fourteen days for refusing to call a prison warden 'sir'. In a letter smuggled out to his sister Mary, one time, Benedict wrote of the imprint of a warden's boot on his back and arms after a typical assault.

Throughout, though, the brutality and degradation they had to endure served only to deepen yet further, and harder their resistance to criminalisation.

The McElwee family weren't surprised last December when they discovered that both Thomas and Benedict had joined the thirty strong hunger strike, as Sean McKenna neared death, but even then the partial breakdown in communications between H Blocks at that critical time meant that the family learnt first that Benedict was going on hunger-strike, only to be informed an hour and-a-half later that Thomas was going the fast too.

### HUNGER-STRIKE

Speaking of the hunger-strike and her sons and their comrades, during Thomas' strike, Mrs McElwee said: 'I know Thomas and Benedict would be determined to stand up for their rights. In the Blocks one will stand for another. If this hunger-strike isn't settled one way or another they'll all go the same way. There'll never be peace in this country'.

Thomas McElwee died at 11.30 a.m. on Saturday, August 8th. Indicative of the callousness of the British government towards prisoners and their families alike neither had the comfort of each other's presence at that tragic moment. He died after 62 days of slow agonising hunger-strike with no company other than prison warders colleagues of those who had brutalised, degraded and tortured him for three-and-a-half years.

# Micky Devine

## 'A typical Derry lad'

TWENTY-seven-year-old Micky Devine, from the Creggan in Derry city, was the third INLA Volunteer to join the H-Block hunger-strike to the death.

Micky Devine took over as O/C of the INLA blanket men in March when the then O/C, Patsy O'Hara, joined the hunger-strike but he retained this leadership post when he joined the hunger-strike himself.

Known as 'Red Micky', his nickname stemmed from his ginger hair rather than his political complexion, although he was most definitely a republican socialist.

The story of Micky Devine is not one of a republican 'super-hero' but of a typical Derry lad whose family suffered all of the ills of sectarian and class discrimination inflicted upon the Catholic working-class of that city: poor housing, unemployment and lack of opportunity.

Micky himself had a rough life.

His father died when Micky was a young lad; he found his mother dead when he was only a teenager; married young, his marriage ended in separation; he underwent four years of suffering 'on the blanket' in the H-Blocks; and, finally, the torture of hunger-strike.

Unusually for a young Derry nationalist, because of his family's tragic history (unconnected with 'the troubles'), Micky was not part of an extended family, and his only close relatives were his sister Margaret, seven years his elder, and now aged 34, and her husband, Frank McCauley, aged 36.

### CAMP

Michael James Devine was born on May 26th, 1954 in the Springtown camp, on the outskirts of Derry city, a former American army base from the Second World War, which Micky himself described as "the slum to end all slums".

Hundreds of families — 99% (unemployed) Catholics, because of Derry corporation's sectarian housing policy — lived, or rather existed, in huts, which were not kept in any decent state of repair by the corporation.

One of Micky's earliest memories was of lying in a bed covered in old coats to keep the rain off the bed. His sister, Margaret, recalls that the huts were "okay" during the summer, but they leaked, and the rest of the year they were cold and damp.

Micky's parents, Patrick and Elizabeth, both from Derry city, had got married in late 1945 shortly after the end of the Second World War, during which Patrick had served in the British merchant navy. He was a coalman by trade, but was unemployed for years.

At first Patrick and Elizabeth lived with the latter's mother in Ardmore, a village near Derry, where Margaret was born in 1947. In early 1948 the family moved to Springtown where Micky was born in May 1954.

Although Springtown was meant to provide only temporary accommodation, official lethargy and sectarianism dictated that such inadequate



### MICKY DEVINE

Aged 27 from Derry city. Commenced hunger-strike June 22nd, died August 20th after 60 days

housing was good enough for Catholics and it was not until the early 'sixties that the camp was closed.

### BLOW

During the 'fifties, the Creggan was built as a new Catholic ghetto, but it was 1960 before the Devines got their new home in Creggan, on the Circular Road. Micky had an unremarkable, but reasonably happy childhood. He went to Holy Child primary school in Creggan.

At the age of eleven Micky started at St. Joseph's secondary school in Creggan, which he was to attend until he was fifteen.

But soon the first sad blow befell him. On Christmas eve 1965, when Micky was aged only eleven, his father fell ill; and six weeks later, in February 1966, his father, who was only in his forties, died of leukaemia.

Micky had been very close to his father and his premature death left Micky heart-broken.

Five months later, in July 1966, his sister Margaret left home to get married, whilst Micky remained in the Devines' Circular Road home with his mother and granny.

At school Micky was an average pupil, and had no notable interests.

### STONING

The first civil rights march in Derry took

place on October 5th, 1968, when the sectarian RUC batoned several hundred protestors at Duke Street. Recalling that day, Micky, who was then only fourteen wrote:

*"Like every other young person in Derry my whole way of thinking was tossed upside down by the events of October 5th, 1968. I didn't even know there was a civil rights march. I saw it on television.*

*"But that night I was down the town smashing shop windows and stoning the RUC. Overnight I developed an intense hatred of the RUC. As a child I had always known not to talk to them, or to have anything to do with them, but this was different.*

*"Within a month everyone was a political activist. I had never had a political thought in my life, but now we talked of nothing else. I was by no means politically aware but the speed of events gave me a quick education."*

### TENSION

After the infamous loyalist attack on civil rights marchers in nearby Burntollet, in January 1969, tension mounted in Derry through 1969 until the August 12th riots, when Orangemen — Apprentice Boys and the RUC — attacked the Bogside, meeting effective resistance, in the 'Battle of the Bogside'. On two occasions in 1969 Micky ended up at the wrong end of an RUC baton, and consequently in hospital.

That summer Micky left school. Always keen to improve himself, he got a job as a shop assistant and over the next three years worked his way up the local ladder: from Hill's furniture store on the Strand Road, to Sloan's store in Shipquay Street, and finally to Austin's furniture store in the Diamond (and one can get no higher in Derry, as a shop assistant).

British troops had arrived in August 1969, in the wake of the 'Battle of the Bogside'. 'Free Derry' was maintained more by agreement with the British army than by physical force, but of course there were barricades, and Micky was one of the volunteers manning them with a hurley.

### INVOLVED

At that time, and during 1970 and 1971, Micky became involved in the civil rights movement, and with the local (uniquely militant) Labour Party and the Young Socialists.

The already strained relationship between British troops and the nationalist people of Derry steadily deteriorated — reinforced by news from elsewhere, especially Belfast — culminating with the shooting dead by the British army of two unarmed civilians, Seamus Cusack and Desmond Beattie, in July of 1971, and with internment in August.

Micky, by this time seventeen years of age, and also politically maturing, had joined the 'Officials', also known as the 'Sticks'.

He became a member of the James Connolly 'Republican Club', and then, shortly after internment, a member of the Derry Brigade of the 'Official IRA'.

'Free Derry' had become known by that

name after the successful defence of the Bogside in August 1969, but it really became 'Free Derry', in the form of concrete barricades etc., from internment day. Micky was amongst those armed volunteers who manned the barricades.

Typical of his selfless nature (another common characteristic of the hunger-strikers), no task was too small for him.

He was 'game' to do any job, such as tidying up the office. Young men, naturally enough, wanted to stand out on the barricades with rifles: he did that too, but nothing was too menial for him, and he was always looking for jobs.

Bloody Sunday, January 30th, 1972, when British Paratroopers shot dead thirteen unarmed civil rights demonstrators in Derry (a fourteenth died later from wounds received), was a turning point for Micky. From then there was no turning back on his republican commitment and he gradually lost interest in his work, and he was to become a full-time political and military activist.

### TRAUMA

Micky experienced the trauma of Bloody Sunday at first hand. He was on that fateful march with his brother-in-law, Frank, who recalls: *"When the shooting started we ran, like everybody else, and when it was over we saw all the bodies being lifted."*

The slaughter confirmed to Micky that it was more than time to start shooting back. "How" he would ask, *"can you sit back and watch while your own Derry men are shot down like dogs?"*

Micky had written: *"I will never forget standing in the Creggan chapel staring at the brown wooden boxes. We mourned, and Ireland mourned with us."*

*"That sight more than anything convinced me that there will never be peace in Ireland while Britain remains. When I looked at those coffins I developed a commitment to the republican cause that I have never lost."*

From around this time, until May when the 'Official IRA' leadership declared a unilateral ceasefire (unpopular with their Derry Volunteers), Micky was involved not only in defensive operations but in various gun attacks against British troops.

Micky's commitment and courage had shone through, but no more so than in the case of scores of other Derry youths, flung into adulthood and warfare by a British army of occupation.

### TRAGIC

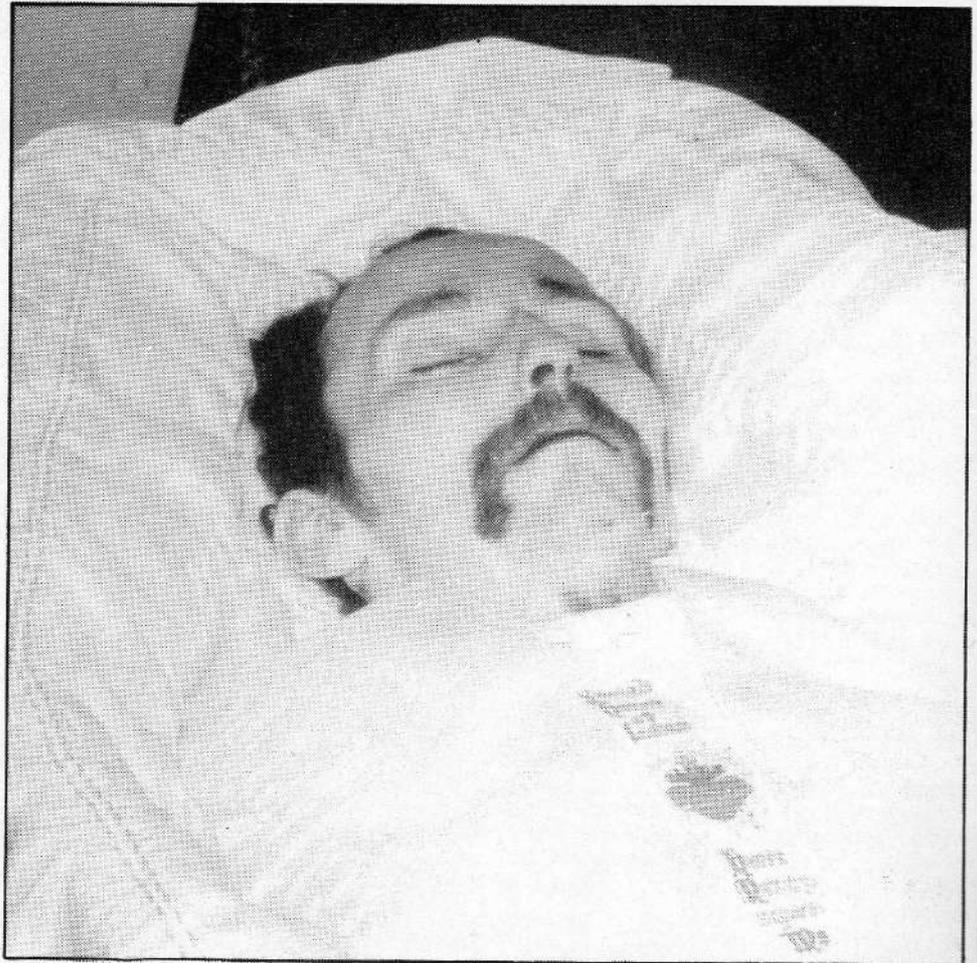
In September, 1972, came the second tragic loss in Micky's family life. He came home one day to find his mother dead on the settee with his granny unsuccessfully trying to revive her.

His mother had died of a brain tumour, totally unexpectedly, at the age of forty-five. Doctors said it had taken her just three minutes to die. Micky, then aged eighteen, suffered a tremendous shock from this blow, and it took him many months to come to terms with his grief.

Through 1973, Micky remained connected with the 'Sticks', although increasingly disillusioned by their openly reformist path. He came to refer to the 'Sticks' as *"fireside republicans"*, and was highly critical of them for not being active enough.

Towards the end of that year, Micky, then aged nineteen, got married. His wife, Margaret was only seventeen. They lived in Ranmore Drive in Creggan and had two children: Michael, now aged seven and Louise, now aged five.

Micky and his wife had since separated.



● Micky Devine—a dedicated republican socialist finally rests in peace

In late 1974, virtually all the 'Sticks' in Derry, including Micky, joined the newly formed IRSP, as did some who had dropped out over the years. And Micky necessarily became a founder member of the PLA (People's Liberation Army), formed to defend the IRSP from murderous attacks by their former comrades in the 'sticks'.

In early 1975, Micky became a founder member of the INLA (Irish National Liberation Army) formed for offensive operational purposes out of the PLA.

The months ahead were bad times for the IRSP, relatively isolated, and to suffer a strength sapping split when Bernadette McAliskey left, taking with her a number of activists who formed the ISP (Independent Socialist Party), since deceased.

They were also difficult months for the fledgling INLA, suffering from a crippling lack of weaponry and funds. Weakness which led them into raids for both as their primary actions, and rendered them almost unable to operate against the Brits.

Micky was eventually arrested in the Creggan on the evening of September 20th, 1976, after an arms raid earlier that day on a private weaponry, in Lifford, County Donegal, from which the INLA commandeered several rifles and shotguns, and three thousand rounds of ammunition.

### ARRESTED

Micky was arrested with Desmond Walmstey from Shantallow, and John Cassidy from Rosemount. Along on the operation, though never convicted for it, was the late Patsy O'Hara, with whom Micky used to knock around as a friend and comrade.

Micky was held and interrogated for three days in Derry's Strand Road barracks, before being transported to Crumlin Road jail in Belfast where he spent nine months on remand.

He was sentenced to twelve years imprisonment on June 20th, 1977, and immediately embarked on the blanket protest. He was in H5-Block until March of this year when the hunger-strike began and when the 'no-wash, no-slop-out' protest ended, whereupon he was moved with others in his wing to H6-Block.

Like others incarcerated within the H-Blocks, suffering daily abuse and inhuman and degrading treatment, Micky realised — soon after he joined the blanket protest — that eventually it would come to a hunger-strike, and, for him, the sooner the better. He was determined that when that ultimate step was reached he would be among those to hunger-strike.

### SEVENTH

On Sunday, June 21st, this year, he completed his fourth year on the blanket, and the following day he joined Joe McDonnell, Kieran Doherty, Kevin Lynch, Martin Hurson, Thomas McElwee and Paddy Quinn on hunger-strike.

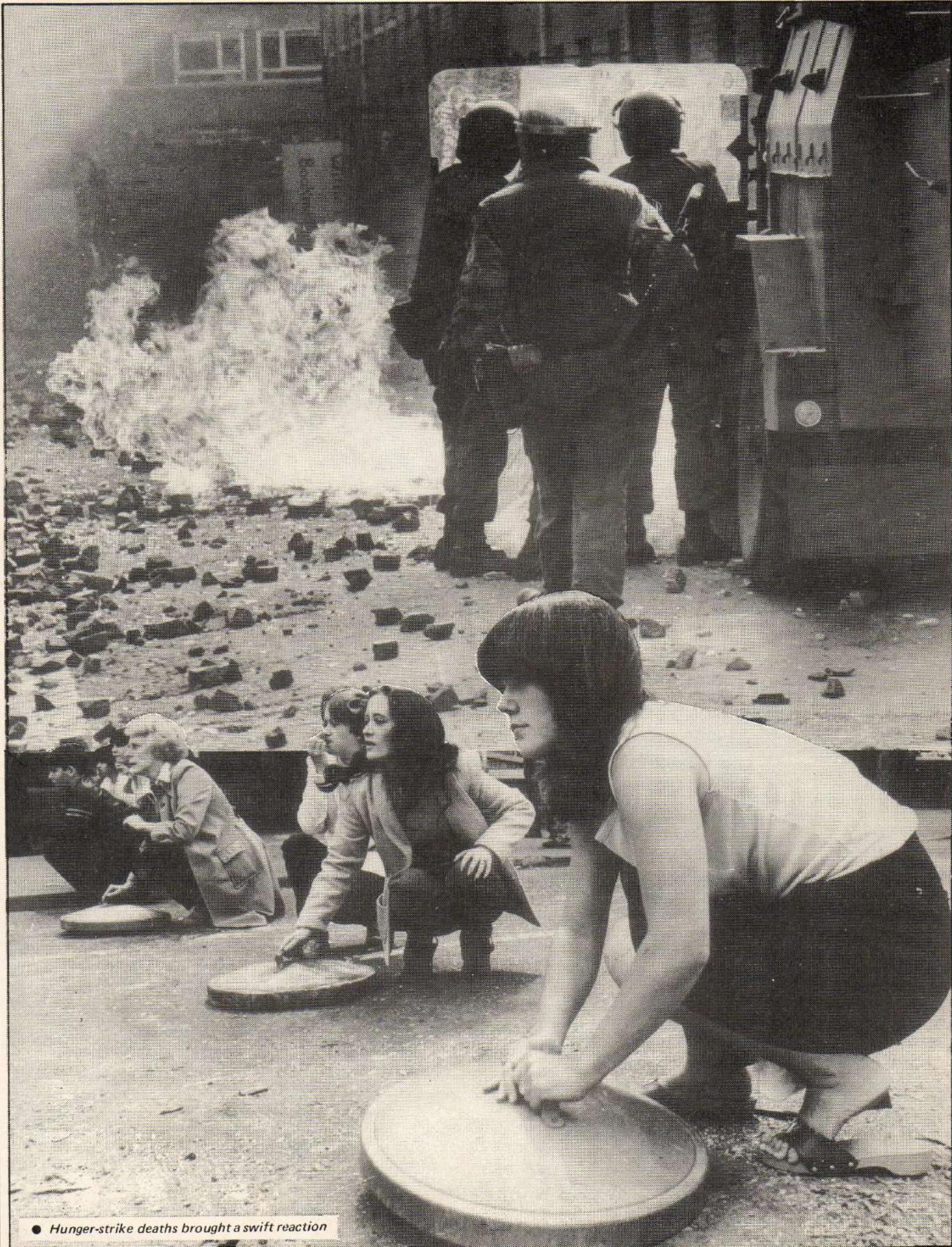
He became the seventh man in a weekly build up from a four-strong hunger-strike team to eight-strong. He was moved to the prison hospital on Wednesday, July 15th, his twenty-fourth day on hunger-strike.

With the 50% remission available to conforming prisoners, Micky would have been due out of jail next September.

As it was, because of his principled republican rejection of the criminal tag he chose to fight and face death.

Micky died at 7.50 a.m. on Thursday, August 20th, as nationalist voters in Fermanagh/South Tyrone were beginning to make their way to the polling booths to elect Owen Carron a member of parliament for the constituency in a demonstration — for the second time in less than five months — of their support for the prisoners' demands.

**CAPTURED ON CAMERA**



● *Hunger-strike deaths brought a swift reaction*

# CAPTURED ON CAMERA



● The funeral cortege of Patsy O'Hara enters Bishop Street, Derry



● Marcella Sands grieves for her brother Bobby with his young son Gerald



● Thomas McElwee's sisters carry his coffin

**CAPTURED ON CAMERA**



● Thousands pack the narrow lanes of the Derry countryside to mourn Francis Hughes

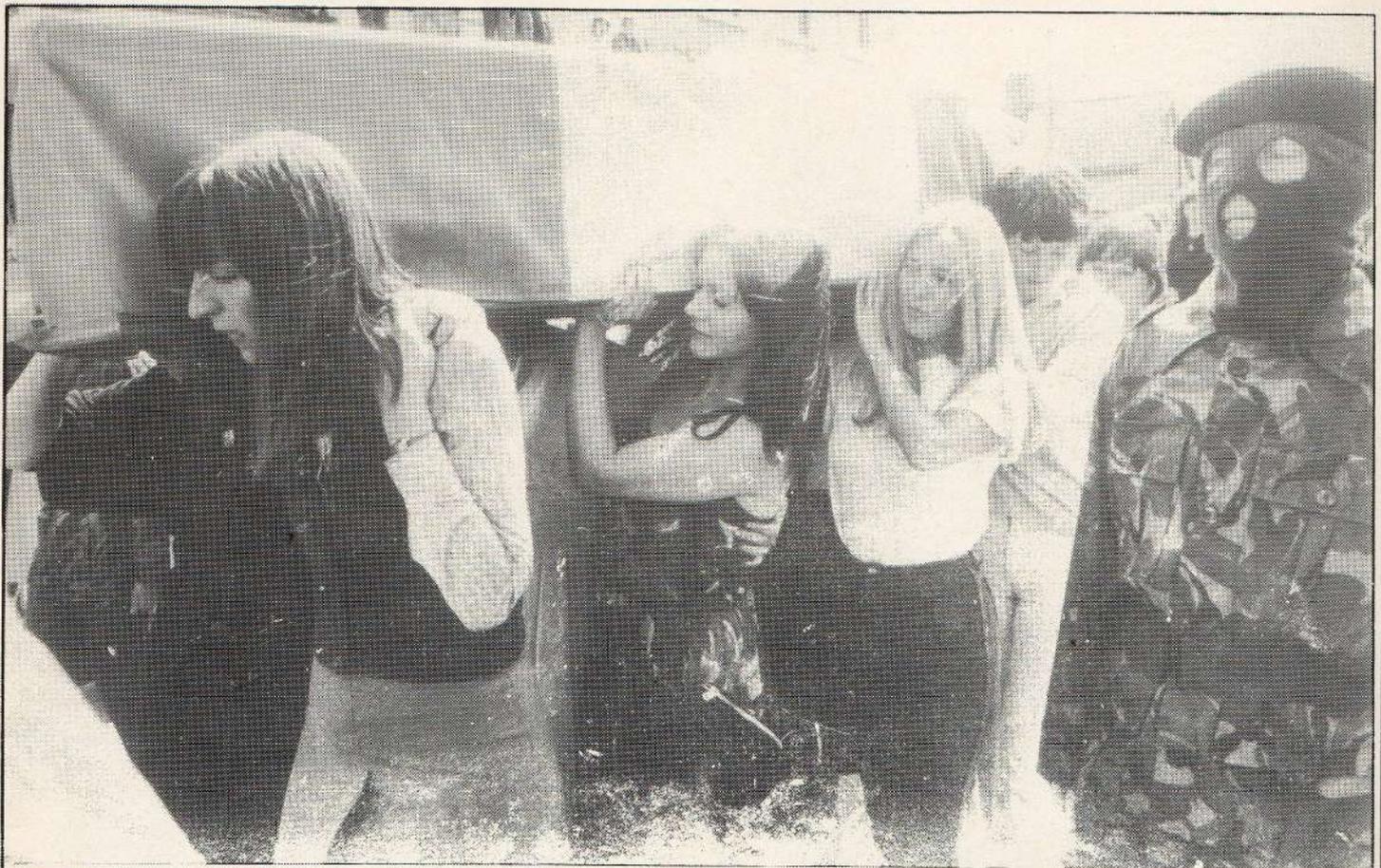


● Members of the IRA and na Fianna Eireann salute their fallen comrade Raymond McCreesh

# CAPTURED ON CAMERA



● Goretta McDonnell proudly kisses her husband's flag-draped coffin



● The coffin of Kieran Doherty, TD, being carried by Christina Carney, National H-Block Committee, Elizabeth O'Hara, sister of Patsy, Goretta McDonnell, wife of Joe; and Pauline McElwee, sister of Thomas

**CAPTURED ON CAMERA**



● Kevin Lynch's coffin draped with the Tricolour and Starry Plough



● Micky Devine's aunt Theresa Moore; his sister Margaret; and his two children Michael and Louise



● Martin Hurson's father, John, his fiancée Bernadette; and his brother Brendan quietly mourn

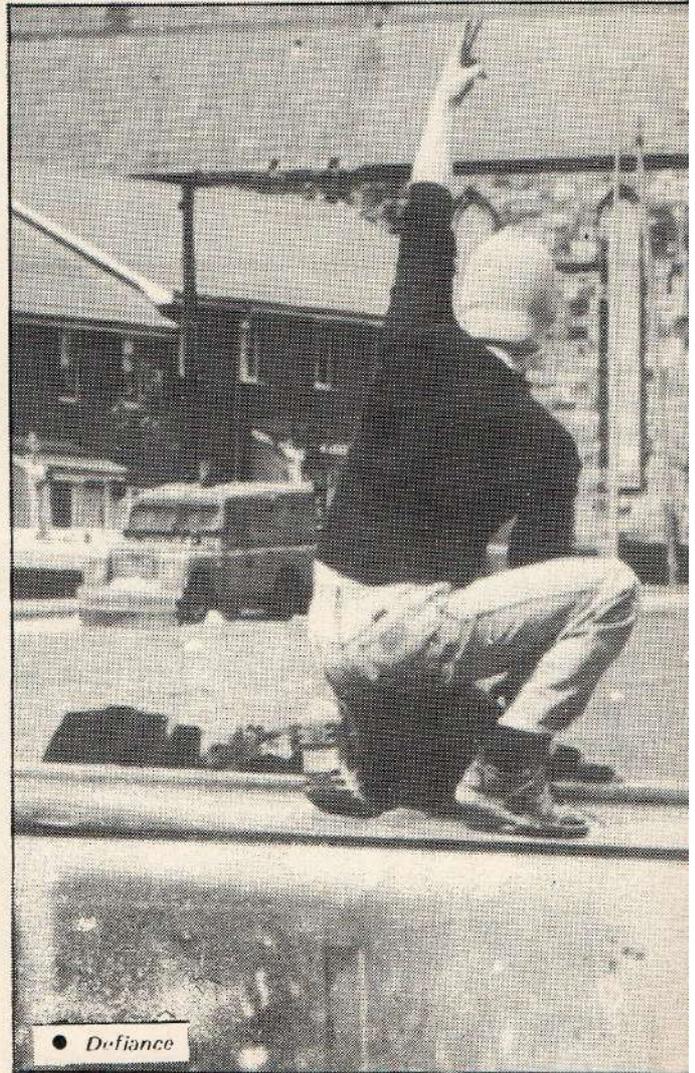
# CAPTURED ON CAMERA



● Angry nationalist youths challenge the might of the British army



● Petrol bomb: crude but effective



● De-fiance



● *H-Block march in Belfast led by workers from the De Lorean car plant and the Royal Victoria Hospital*

# Trade unions and the hunger-strike

MEETING for their annual conference, in 1978, the delegates to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions adopted a resolution on prison reform — the major points of which were statements of principle as to how a modern penal service should be run.

The resolution was carried, after intensive lobbying, by delegates who supported the protesting prisoners in the H-Blocks and Armagh. Notable among these lobbyists was Philip Flynn, deputy general secretary of the white collar Local Governments and Public Services Union, who is currently a member of the Sinn Fein national executive.

The resolution was recently explained to 'Iris' by Philip Flynn. "The section of that resolution which applies most directly to the present hunger-strike, basically states that deprivation of liberty is sufficient punishment for any crime, and that the prison regime, which obtains subsequent to a person's incarceration, should be as conclusive as possible to a dignified and humane existence for prisoners and warders." He explains further, "This resolution encompasses the spirit

of the five demands of the protesting prisoners and was understood, at the time it was being carried, by all involved as a statement of principle in relation to the then two-year-old struggle against criminalisation."

"The debate was also greatly influenced by the murder of Brian Maguire."

## BRIAN MAGUIRE

Brian Maguire was a prominent Belfast activist in the AUEW/TASS a British-based white collar union for people working in the engineering industry — the Irish section of which has a left-wing tradition. In May '78 he was taken to Castlereagh torture centre for interrogation about the shooting of an RUC man.

He died in police custody after a strenuous interrogation which his friends and family allege involved repeated semi-strangulation. The RUC attempted to suggest that Maguire hanged himself from a ventilation grille in his detention cell. Previous victims of the seven-day detention orders in Castle-

reagh observed that the grilles in question were inaccessible — being some 12ft. from the floor — and anyhow, the grilles were of a size which did not permit anything being tied to them.

Most Irish people, and trade unionists in particular, believe that Brian Maguire was murdered by the RUC Special Branch. Brian missed his place on the "conveyor belt" which leads from Castlereagh into the H-Blocks. His death gave a new urgency to the anti-repression struggle and provided fresh impetus for trade union involvement in the prison issue.

### PORTLAOISE — HUNGER-STRIKE 1977

During the Portlaoise hunger-strike in the South — which ended after 47 days on Good Friday 1977 — the ICTU executive issued a statement calling upon the Coalition government of Fine Gael and Labour — to agree to a just settlement of the protest by conceding the prisoners their demands.

The ICTU, through some of its executive members, was also active in pressing behind the scenes for a settlement.

The hunger-strikers had been protesting against constant harassment by warders and gardai — including unnecessary strip-searches — and what they considered to be the authorities' efforts to claw back on original concessions made to the political prisoners when they were detained in Mountjoy prison, Dublin, in 1973.

These prisoners have enjoyed the demands sought by the present H-Block hunger-strikers since 1973.

### CONTRAST

This position of support by the leadership, for political prisoners protesting against an established Irish government, contrasts significantly with its attitude to the hunger-strike in Long Kesh.

In 1980, during the first phase of the hunger-strike led by Brendan Hughes, the ICTU executive not only refused to support the prisoners but also, without qualification, called upon the prisoners to unilaterally end their fast.

More recently, the ICTU refused to meet with relatives of the hunger-strikers saying, "It would be unproductive to do so," while suggesting that to support the prisoners would alienate loyalist workers and lend succour to the overall IRA campaign.

The original concession of political status for IRA prisoners was made in 1920 by the British government. Thomas Ashe died on hunger-strike during that prison struggle, and central to a victory for the IRA prisoners, at that time, was a nationwide general strike organised by the official trade union movement.

### SECTARIANISM

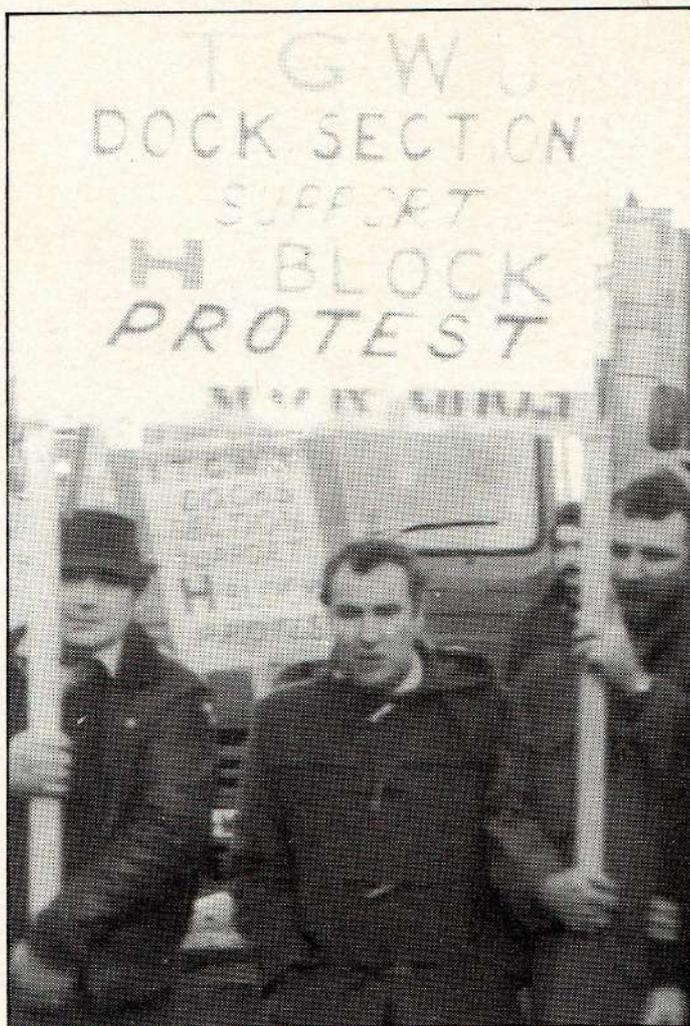
Uniquely amongst the general trade union movement, the executive of the ICTU is exceptionally anti-nationalist and adheres loyally to the confused and stumbling politics it has borrowed, on the national question, from the Labour Party.

Dominated by Labour Party supporters, — members of a party which never turns down the opportunity to coalesce with the ultra-conservative Fine Gael — the ICTU leadership conjures up many spurious arguments to justify its otherwise inexcusable immobility on what is now a major national and international issue.

The spectre of a loyalist backlash, within the trade unions in the six counties, is a figment of the ICTU's imagination. In fact, the Belfast Trades Council — which is loyalist dominated — has a long-standing policy of sympathy with three of the hunger-strikers' demands, and an implied desire to see the hunger-strike ended by the British moving towards full concessions to the protestors.

Even the Rev. Martin Smyth, Grand Master of the Orange Order — to which many loyalist workers belong — has pointed out that the conceding of political status poses no great problems for his organisation.

In fact, the hunger-strike is not the question which could seriously divide the organised trade union movement. Rather, the presently dominant elements on the ICTU executive ignore their own body's precedents, and because of their



● Support amongst rank and file trade unionists for the prisoners was evident when some 250,000 downed tools during the funerals of Bobby Sands and Francis Hughes

political orientation try to obscure the real issue at hand, which is in line with their own policy because of their entrenched opposition to the Republican Movement and, by extension, to the prisoners.

### TRADE UNION SUPPORT

Fortunately, the above-explained situation is not at all typical of the actual reality of wide support for the hunger-strikers demands which exists within the trade union movement in Ireland and abroad.

### T.U.C.A.R.

Since 1977, trade unionists have been active, in a co-ordinated fashion, in support of the H-Block and Armagh prisoners. Much of the initial work was done by the Trade Union Campaign Against Repression (TUCAR) which was a Dublin-based thirty-two county organisation composed of representative trade unionists and shop stewards.

TUCAR organised the first industrial action for many years against British repression, when, in protest against the murder of Brian Maguire, it led thousands of workers from West Belfast in the first anti-British demonstration in the city's centre since 1969.

TUCAR lobbied extensively, in Ireland and Britain, until it was eventually absorbed in 1979 into the National H-Block/Armagh Committee campaign — of which it was genuinely broadly based industrial predecessor.

### CONFERENCE

Following the Green Briar (Belfast) conference of the National H-Block/Armagh Committee, in June 1979, at which the five demands of the prisoners were launched, a number of notable trade unionists rallied to the campaign.

Michael Mullen, general secretary of the largest union in Ireland — the ITGWU — himself an ex-political prisoner from

the 1940s, headed an eminent list.

Matt Merrigan, Irish district secretary of the second largest union – the ATGWU – of which the late Bobby Sands, MP, was a member, has appeared on numerous platforms since 1979 in support of the prisoners.

Others include: Philip Flynn, LGPSU; Seamus De Paor, general secretary of the Irish Post Office Engineering Union, the largest and most militant blue-collar union in the twenty-six counties' civil service; Sean Redmond, general secretary of the Marine, Port and General Workers' Union, the largest dockers' union in the twenty-six counties; and dozens of other members of union national executives, local branch officials and hundreds of shop stewards and union section representatives.

All of this initial support was built on to the stage where, presently, the annual conferences of the following unions have unanimously adopted positions of sympathy towards the prisoners: LGPSU, ITGWU, MPGWU and IPOEU. Also, the majority of branches of other unions have endorsed the prisoners' demands.

In Ireland local trades councils, which are an all pervasive force in the labour movement, have moved very strongly behind the prisoners.

Headed by the Dublin Council of Trade Unions – which was the moving force in the massive campaign in recent years against the South's inequitable tax system – the following trades councils have carried sympathetic motions on the prisoners' demands: Belfast, Derry, Dundalk, Drogheda, Waterford, Navan (Meath), Longford, Carrick-on-Suir, Galway and Sligo.

Some well known groups of workers who had given consistent support are the 3,000 workers in Waterford Glass the De Lorean car workers in West Belfast.

Combined with the formal annual conference support of the above mentioned unions, the support from the trades councils means that the vast majority of trade union members in Ireland – approx 80% – through their affiliated organisations support the prisoners' demands.

This is further proven by government conducted polls which showed that 68% (December '80) of those polled thought that the British should concede the five demands. This would naturally be higher in the organised labour movement.

## BRITAIN

There is substantial support for the hunger-strikers in the British trade union movement. The Scottish Trades Union Congress is the most notable body. Many trades councils and trade union branches, too numerous to enumerate in this article, are sympathetic.

Prominent members of the labour movement – Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone, etc. – have been vocal on the issue. The Labour Party-based Labour Committee on Ireland has ensured that there are over forty resolutions, mostly pro-nationalist, on the agenda for this year's Labour Party conference.

Agitation around the hunger-strike by British trade unionists has begun to seriously threaten the bi-partisan policy of the Labour Party leadership and the Tory establishment.

## INTERNATIONAL

International labour and trade union support has been enormous with over 100 union organisations in North and Central America, Europe, Africa, Australasia and Polynesia, expressing solidarity with the hunger-strikers. Major forces such as the Prague-based World Federation of Trade Unions, the Longshoremen in the USA and the CFDT and CGT in France, are some of the best-known supporters.

## INDUSTRIAL ACTION

Industrial solidarity action has been a significant aspect of the hunger-strike campaign. The continuous and intense nature of this action surpasses in extent and degree any industrial action on the national question related matters since the Tan War of 1919-1921.

Major days of industrial action have taken place in both phases of the hunger-strike. On December 10th last, thousands



● Philip Flynn (left) of the LGPSU and Matt Merrigan of the ATGWU were amongst leading trade unionists who supported the prisoners' five demands despite opposition from the bureaucrats of the ICTU

of workers responded to a strike call issued by the National H-Block/Armagh Committee.

Each death of the hunger-strikers has also been marked by a day of vigils across the country coinciding with token industrial action.

The days of mourning, after the deaths of Volunteer Bobby Sands, MP, and Volunteer Francis Hughes, brought out the greatest number of workers.

Approximately 250,000 workers downed tools on the day of each of the funerals of Bobby Sands and Francis Hughes with every major industrial centre registering a total shut-down for some part of the day in protest at Britain's death policy in the H-Blocks.

Because of the massive unemployment in Ireland and because the other eight deaths were not as shocking – though of course they moved the people no less – industrial action, though still widespread, has been more on the scale of one-hour stoppages at the time of the funerals.

Some sections of workers merit special thanks for their support. These are the Belfast dockers and De Lorean workers, the Shortt factory workers of Derry, the Dublin building workers, Waterford Glass workers, and the 3,500 construction workers at Aughinish – the largest construction site in Ireland on the Shannon river estuary – who have taken strike action to mark the loss of each of the hunger-strikers.

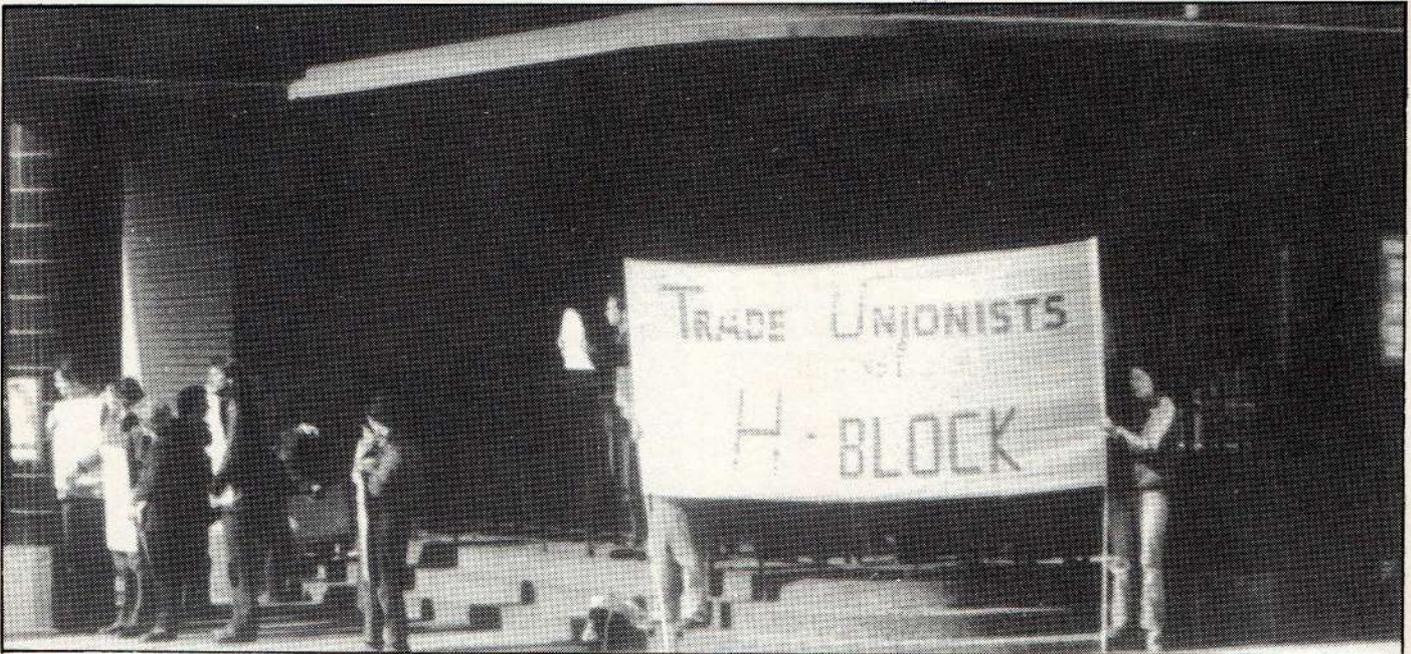
Evidence of the consistent support enjoyed by the prisoners among trade unionists came in the recent Southern general election and the Fermanagh/S. Tyrone by-election brought about by the death of Bobby Sands.

## ELECTIONS

In the twenty-six county general election on June 11th last, trade union support was evident in the election of two prisoner TDs – the late Kieran Doherty for Cavan/Monaghan and Paddy Agnew for Louth – and in the performance of their seven comrades around the other constituencies in which prisoners intervened.

Against all odds and the predictions of his opponents Paddy Agnew topped the poll in his native Louth, with 8,368 first-preference votes.

Central to Paddy's victory – alongside other strong factors such as an excellent republican organisation historically and his being a popular local IRA Volunteer – was the unanimous



● Belfast trade unionists picket Transport House, Belfast, in support of the prisoners



■ PADDY AGNEW TD

support he received from the trade union movement in the county. The Dundalk trades council had long sent official representatives to the county H-Block/Armagh committee and it was on the basis of this and massive support for strike action in both Dundalk and Drogheda — the two major towns in the county — that there were numerous defections from the Labour Party to Paddy Agnew's camp. His chances, which were good because of the extent of republican organisation in the area were assured by the active sympathy of organised workers throughout Louth.

In Longford/Westmeath, the late Volunteer Martin Hurson received 4,573 votes and narrowly missed a seat. Martin's candidacy was endorsed by the Longford trades council.

Kieran Doherty came second in his area and many of the

votes which elected him came from workers in the furniture-making and meat-packing industry which dominate the constituency. In one chicken-processing factory, in Monaghan town, Kieran took 100% of the vote and this was reflected, though not absolutely, in most of the area.

The late Volunteer Kevin Lynch contested the Waterford seat. His campaign (led by an ex-SFWP member) was responsible for the defeat of the SFWP candidate, Paddy Gallagher, who had also been defeated in the previous general election.

In the other areas they contested, the prisoner candidates beat the discredited Labour Party into fourth place.

Jim Kemmy, a self-styled 'socialist' and confessed anti-nationalist who won his Limerick seat on the strength of a protest vote against the major parties, and later went on to vote for anti-worker budgets submitted by the reactionary Fine Gael government whilst attacking the hunger-strikers at every available opportunity, recently received a bitter rebuke from some of his fellow union members.

The Dublin branch of the Bricklayers' Union, which comprises over half the union's membership, recently voted by over two to one in favour of the prisoners' demands. This was an implicit rejection of Kemmy's position which he was vocal on subsequent to his election.

In the Fermanagh/S. Tyrone by-election on August 20th, Owen Carron, who was Bobby Sands' election agent, received not only 32,000 votes plus, and victory from the people of the area, but also a rapturous response from the workers at the world-famous Beleek pottery plant. This was in contrast to one of his unfortunate opponents, SFWP candidate Tom Moore, who not only suffered a derisory vote but who was also severely embarrassed by his own Newry work-mates.

Moore, who works in a Newry factory, was condemned for opposing Owen Carron by the workers who once elected him as their union representative. The workers also sent financial donation to Carron's campaign.

### CONCLUSION

Industrial solidarity ending in substantial strike action is a central part of the National H-Block/Armagh Committee's strategy.

The response to date has been extensive and encouraging. The committee has the full support of the Republican Movement in this regard.

The ideal aim of the campaign is to secure a general strike which would be a major force in making the British concede.

The ICTU's craven attitude to partition is the major stumbling block preventing that eventuality and must be overcome. Work in that direction is continuing. ■



## SINN FEIN POLICY DOCUMENT

# Women in the New Ireland

WOMEN IN IRELAND face significant difficulties in their daily lives as a result of the long years of discrimination and injustice endured by them. James Connolly described the women of Ireland as "the slaves of the slaves".

This situation will not be resolved until the abysmal ignorance which surrounds it is wiped away. Men must realise that there is no innate threat to their position in the liberation of women, rather that they will be equal and this equality will help to liberate us all.

Sinn Fein says that in the New Ireland there will be no second class citizens. Once this premise is accepted it is obvious that close attention must be paid to the special repression directed against women and the resultant status of second class citizens. This repression is not merely, nor even primarily, legislative. It is deep rooted, mainly inherited from Victorian England. It is interesting to note that in Celtic Ireland women had more equality with men than at any time since, and that divorce was allowed, and that the concept of illegitimacy was unheard of.

Sinn Fein is not content just to recognise these problems. We are prepared to make these issues our own. The production

of this policy document is an attempt to make men and women alike give deeper and more detailed consideration to this problem.

We recognise that thought alone is not enough and that additional safeguards to protect women's rights will be necessary in the future New Ireland. Only then can it be said with truth that we "cherish all the children of the nation equally."

### SEXISM AND STEREOTYPING

Sinn Fein commits itself fully to equality between the sexes.

In the New Ireland we would envisage: (a) co-education at all levels; (b) all subjects would be made available to every student and a conscious effort would be made to reverse the current result of sexism where predominantly boys take some subjects and girls do others; (c) at secondary level all students would be required to complete housecraft, home repairs, sex education, home economics, marriage and parenthood classes; (d) the physical education and development of all children will be given equal importance and remedial programmes would be developed, especially for girls, to bring all children to a peak level of fitness; (e) schools would make a conscious effort to combat the crippling emotional effects

of present-day sexism and stereotyping, such as relegating certain emotions and characteristics to one sex or the other — (e.g. boys don't cry, girls are emotional etc).

In the interim Sinn Fein will campaign to combat sexism within the educational system. We believe that education should be changed to promote the equality of the male and female.

Although we believe that sexism and stereotyping can only be gradually eradicated through concentration on the education of our children to accept the equal role of the sexes, there are many blatant aspects of sexist thinking that should be discontinued in the interim. We particularly condemn the use of women's bodies in the advertising of commodities and the portrayal of women as mindless house robots in advertising and publicity campaigns.

### EQUAL PAY AND EQUAL WORK

In the New Ireland Sinn Fein envisages the following improvements being included in future legislation:

The enactment of new laws to govern equal pay for women to replace the present Equal Pay Act in the six counties and the Employment Equality Act in the twenty-six counties which would avoid the weaknesses and loopholes of the present laws and eradicate the means by which employers are able to dodge the requirements of the present acts.

The introduction of a comprehensive programme of paid maternity/paternity leave for all workers before and after they have had their child.

The introduction of adequate training schemes for women employees to ensure that women enjoy equal opportunities with men to obtain job qualification. This would cover, for example, apprenticeships and day-release training. Jobs done at home (outworkers) should be abolished as they are non-unionised and tend to isolate the women. They are generally low-paid and in fact they represent slave labour.

The achievement for women of total equality with men in regard to state and community benefits and grants. These would include all aspects of tax, national insurance, unemployment benefit, sickness benefit, invalidity benefit, industrial injuries benefit, pensions supplementary benefits, students loans, grants, hire purchase agreements, mortgages and general

The rejection of a partner's right to sell the family home without consent of other partner and the protection of a partner's right to stay in the family home.

An end to discrimination against women with regard to loans grants, hire purchase agreements, mortgages and general shopping.

The introduction of legislation to protect women's rights in the New Ireland will be monitored both at national level through federal constitutional courts and at district level where councils are responsible for employment opportunities and social development.

In the interim, Sinn Fein will denounce (for instance picket) firms and companies which openly discriminate against women or treat women as second class workers.

Sinn Fein members active in trade unions should voice Sinn Fein policies on these matters, for instance, denounce unjust treatment of women regarding promotion or new labelling of jobs within a firm allowing a better wage for male counterparts e.g. cleaner (male), assistant cleaner (female).

### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In the New Ireland Sinn Fein envisages that the protection of women against violence will be the responsibility of the lowest level of government at local or district level who will enforce legislation and provide facilities for the victims of maltreatment, whether physical or mental. That legislation should ensure that the private life and character of the victim and dependants are protected during the enquiries and judicial proceedings.

In the interim, Sinn Fein will take its responsibility seriously and support campaigns against such violence, such as rape crisis centres, homes for battered women, marches against



rape etc., and Sinn Fein public representatives will be encouraged to support such campaigns as much as possible.

### CONTRACEPTION

Sinn Fein recognises that the use of contraception is a matter of conscience for the couple involved and that safe contraception should be available from Family Planning Clinics, under community control, with adequate safe-guards for the protection of the young.

We also recognise the necessity of encouraging research and education on contraception and we will promote women's health collectives to educate women on their health and the abuses they are now subjected to by the medical profession, especially as regards control of their fertility. At the same time men should be educated to realise that contraception is equally their responsibility.

### ABORTION

There is a need to face up to the problem of abortion no matter what individual opinions are. We do not judge women who have had abortions but recognise that it is an indictment of society that so many women should feel the need to avail of abortion. We are opposed to the attitudes and forces in society that impel women to have abortions. We are totally opposed to abortion.

### ILLEGITIMACY

We demand the abolition of the legal status of illegitimacy. No child in the New Ireland will be forced to live under the stigma of illegitimacy.

### MARRIAGE LAWS

There are several areas of marriage law, particularly in the twenty-six counties, which require drastic reform. Sinn Fein must campaign for the removal of the laws in the Free State regarding conjugal rights, loss of consortium, criminal conversation and harbouring.

Separated women and widows are discriminated against by society and by law; separated women should have the right to free legal aid to obtain a legal separation.

In keeping with our demand that the powers of church and state be separated, we accept in principle the introduction of divorce for those who wish to avail of it.

In this context we recognise the importance of making available pre-marriage classes and advice for young people and marriage guidance for couples contemplating divorce.

### CHILDCARE

Childcare must be shared as an equal responsibility between both parents, and also as a responsibility of society as a whole who must organise its economic life in accordance with this responsibility.

The aim must be to give all women the choice of being full-time mothers, working in the home, or working outside the home, or a combination of these roles. For economic reasons and due to an inadequate system of childcare, neither option is a free choice at present.

Twenty-four-hour childcare centres must be provided, staffed by qualified, caring, well-paid persons, in an adequate setting to provide a safe, secure and stimulating environment for children while their parents work. This is particularly necessary for one-parent families and for equal opportunities for women, since many must work shifts and weekends when nurseries presently do not operate.

Childcare benefits must be on realistic scales, taking into account that costs increase with every child rather than remain static or decrease. Subsidies should be designed to avoid the poverty trap, such as present in the six counties, where those on supplementary benefits see their child benefits increased on the one hand and then subtracted from their total benefit, leaving them worse off than before.

We envisage adequate maternity/paternity leave on the birth of a child, with pay, which can be taken by either parent

or shared, with a guarantee that one's job will be available when one returns after the regulation leave. Maternity/paternity leave should be able to be utilised on a shared basis, so that both parents may share the task of caring for the very young child in their own home if they wish.

In keeping with Sinn Fein's overall principle of decentralisation and local control of personal services, we advocate decentralised maternity care, ensuring that women are not subjected to highly institutionalised care at this time in their lives, and with special efforts to cope with the extremely common syndrome of post-natal depression. Where possible, every woman should have the choice of women obstetricians.

The Eire Nua constitution will embody the extending of the family unit to a community concern, in that all members of the community will participate fully in the welfare and care of its children. Instruction in childcare would be an important part of school education for both sexes so that all the community can benefit from the effort of maintaining the well-being of the child.

In the New Ireland an allowance will be paid to a father or mother to encourage him/her to stay at home and near his/her children, so that he/she does not have to take on a job during the first years of the child's life and as a recognition of the importance of the role of parenthood in society.

A Charter of Children's Rights will be drawn up which will guarantee legal protection to children who do not get a fair deal in education or are submitted to violence.

### THE NEED FOR SEX EDUCATION

Parents will be educated in matters of sex so that they can pass their knowledge on to their children with confidence and competence.

Sex education will be available in all schools and will deal with the full emotional and social aspects of sexuality, including current sexual oppressions. We envisage that this would be provided through proper courses at second level school.

In the interim, Sinn Fein will campaign to achieve these aims and to emphasise the need for such education. ■



# The oppression of women

Foreword by Rita O'Hare

*SINN FEIN'S Department of Women's Affairs was formally launched at the Ard Fheis of 1980. It came out of informal discussions among women in Sinn Fein who were anxious that Sinn Fein should raise as strong a voice as possible against the oppression of women in Ireland at the same time as it was coming to a new realisation of the need to pursue radical policies on the overall social and economic front.*

*Sinn Fein women are also hoping to convince sisters outside of the Republican Movement, but already involved in women's struggle, that women's liberation is an integral part of national liberation and cannot be established until the imperialist yoke is cast off.*

*The Sinn Fein Department of Women's Affairs aims at ensuring a unity of struggle which will guarantee women's freedom in a free Ireland.*

HERE we reproduce the bulk of the text of a lecture on 'the oppression of women' delivered by Rita O'Hare at Sinn Fein's National Education Seminar in September, 1980 (first published in AP/RN, October 18th 1980) and the text of the Sinn Fein policy document — Women in the New Ireland, adopted by the Ard Fheis — annual congress — of Sinn Fein last year.

MORE than sixty years ago, Constance Markievicz spoke of three great movements in Ireland at that time — the national movement, the labour movement and the women's movement. All three converged in 1916 in one fateful attempt to achieve the dominant goal: national freedom.

Afterwards, they were to drift apart on separate roads.

In recent years republicans have begun to reach a concrete understanding of the vital necessity of uniting the labour movement with the national movement once again, in order to forge together the struggle against foreign occupation with the struggle of workers against social and economic repression.

The third element — the struggle against the oppression of women — has still to be understood, and then incorporated into overall republican policy for future action.

Republicans are sometimes smug about the current position of women in the movement. It is often claimed that no bar nor restriction is placed on women reaching any position or being involved in any action. In theory this is now true, but it ignores the reality of male attitudes towards women — a product, not of something specifically republican, but of society in which we live. It is worth therefore, examining briefly the results of these attitudes in practice.

## RISING

When Cumann na mBan was founded in 1914 it quickly



● RITA O'HARE

became the dominant women's movement, concentrating its energies more and more on the expected Rising. Many suffragettes joined its ranks, others were disappointed that it was not emphasising women's rights. Inghinidhe na h'Eireann ('Daughters of Ireland'), led by Helena Moloney and Maude Gonne, merged with Cumann na mBan, but always kept an

identity within it as a feminist grouping.

The heroism of the women of Cumann na mBan in 1916, later on the prisoners' issue, and through the Tan War and afterwards, is indisputable. However, their role was not the same as an IRA Volunteer's role. Cumann na mBan concentrated on such duties as scouting, despatch-carrying, intelligence work and first-aid. It has remained a separate body until today.

The role of Cumann na mBan was a vital one, but Markievicz, herself, criticised this role as being primarily a back-up one, and it was in the ranks of the Irish Citizen Army that she fought in Stephen's Green in 1916.

### FIGHTING

There are many women today, however, fighting in the ranks of the IRA and Cumann na mBan, side-by-side with male comrades. And fighting does not only mean shooting at the enemy, bombing economic and military targets, and so on. In Armagh jail republican women prisoners are at the same height of resistance and depth of degradation and suffering as the male prisoners in the H-Blocks.

However, it is also true that the number of leading posts held today by women (and this applies also to Sinn Fein) does not yet correspond to the number of women in the movement, to their ability, and to their revolutionary determination and enthusiasm.

Because of the indoctrination of all of us, the idea of 'grey-haired old ladies' or 'middle-aged mothers' as leaders of our revolutionary army appears incongruous. Yet the concept of 'white-haired old gentlemen' in the same role has been almost a point of honour over the years.

Why do so many speakers refer to the 'girls' in Armagh, rather than the 'women'? Is it because 'girls' can be allowed the wild impetuosity of becoming involved in the military struggle, whilst once they are 'women' they must settle back into their appointed roles as wives, mothers and other more subservient, auxiliary roles, dictated by the norms of male-dominated society?

### ROOTS

Before going on to examine women's oppression in Ireland, it is necessary first to understand that this oppression — although in the mould of world-wide oppression of women — has its own definite roots in Ireland.

By the end of the seventh century, early Irish society had evolved a system — enshrined in the Brehon laws — where there was, in theory at least, a considerable amount of rights accorded to women.

At that time women kept rights to their own property brought into marriage — men could not make contracts affecting that. A woman's family retained a protective interest, even when she was married, and this attitude was reflected throughout society.

A wife also had considerable protection physically, being able to claim back her dowry and compensation if ill-treated or beaten, or even if slandered by her husband. These were also grounds for divorce, as were madness or incurable illness of her husband, or his loss of his property, or refusal to maintain her, or his being sexually unsatisfactory. Even where no marriage contract was involved in a relationship, women were protected by law; polygamy existed; and illegitimacy was an almost non-existent concept.

The early Irish church, of course, opposed all this, but the Irish insisted on keeping their civil laws separate from church law, and the system existed well into the twelfth century.

(When people speak today of alien concepts being foisted on Irish women they could well look back to this period, before the Anglo-Norman invasion, and before the later imposition of English law in the early seventeenth century.)

### INVASION

With the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1169 came the influence of English common law. Under this, a woman's property passed wholly to her husband on marriage, and her ability to inherit from him was restricted. The concept of illegitimacy was also introduced, with only children born in wedlock able



● Women unloading arms during the 'Howth gun-running' for the Irish Volunteers in 1914



● The armed struggle and the campaign within the prisons continue to produce revolutionary fighters such as Shirley Devlin (above) a former protesting prisoner in Armagh

to inherit, and divorce was excluded. A woman could now inherit totally from her father only if there were no male heirs.

These new laws exposed women to great exploitation: women's property passing to their husband made marriage a business proposition. Women were often forced by their families into marriage. A woman's total dependence on her

At this time, the mid-nineteenth century, the Catholic church was growing in strength and the number of clergy was growing rapidly. These clergy were mainly drawn from the solid farming families — another economic outlet for them — and therefore possessed the values of the farming society which they spread into the urban areas.

These attitudes were not confined to the Catholic church alone. The Protestant church and the English rulers reflected the Victorian morality of overpowering prudence — a concept foreign to Irish culture until then — and this spread through Irish society.

The moral values of the church were also spread by the takeover of the educational system by these clerics. Before the famine, school-masters were often an alternative authority

### CHURCH

Society being dominated, at the time, by the farming community, was therefore dominated by these problems, arising unconsciously from economic necessity.

The long wait of sons for marriage, and the number of unmarried daughters, meant that sex, itself, became a major problem. Thoughts of marriage, temptations of the flesh, and matters of that kind had to be kept out of their minds and distance had to be put between the sexes. Sex became an obsession in society and equated with sin.

In addition, increased life expectancy meant sons were awaiting their parents' death in order to inherit. They, therefore, married at a much older age and when they did, married much younger women — thus adding age domination to male domination of wives.

Two daughters on the marriage market was often unviable for a family, so only one would be married off, thus increasing the family's wealth. Choice of a spouse was also severely affected by this. The marriage rate fell drastically.

The loss of a woman's independent economic usefulness meant the loss of independence for a couple wishing to get married — because a woman solely performing domestic cooking and house-work was unable to contribute financially. This also meant that many young people could not afford to marry. It also meant that a woman's dowry, now representing her sole contribution, was of great importance.

The famine of the mid-nineteenth century changed women's role again. Domestic industries, such as spinning, were smashed, and only in the north-east were women diverted into the livestock made agriculture much less labour-intensive, apart from in dairying, so that economically women became less useful, and therefore even less independent. Domestic service was the only major employment outside of the north-east.

### CHANGED

By the end of the eighteenth century, women like Mary Ann McCracken were involved in revolutionary and radical politics, as they were later in the Young Ireland Movement.

Although women were subject to men in a totally domestic role, among the lower classes this domestic role often meant a domestic industry also, such as spinning. Labour-intensive tilling, sowing and reaping in agriculture also made women economically very necessary to society, and this afforded them some independence. However, it is interesting to see in this period the dominant poetic theme of the sad passive women of the 'Aisling' poetry, always awaiting male deliverance — reflecting society's view of the proper order of things.

At this time, of course, women were without formal political rights, although strong-minded women could be influential. This position continued under the conquest and plantation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The church now insisted, successfully, that all matrimonial matters be dealt with in the ecclesiastical courts. However, it was common for wealthy men to gain annulments in these courts by false evidence and procured witnesses.

children and their mothers.

The inheritance laws, as did society's attitude to illegitimate to wives, widows and children altered drastically because of husband left her open to physical abuse. Society's attitude

Women became increasingly militant in their demands, coming into conflict with the Redmondites, who refused to support women's suffrage or to include it in the Home Rule Bill. This refusal led to a joint protest meeting of the suffragettes, feminists, trade unions, and Sinn Fein.

Women began to receive prison sentences for their protests, which included the throwing of a hatchet at the English prime minister, Asquith, on a visit to Dublin in 1912. The same year Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington went on hunger-strike in Mountjoy jail — the suffragettes were the first Irish group to use this tactic.

### CLOSER

Encouraged by Michael Davitt, Fanny and Anna Parnell had set up the Ladies' Land League in 1881 whilst their brother was in jail. But this was dissolved when Parnell was released as the women were too radical and militant.

In 1876 the Irish Suffrage Society was set up, and twenty years later women gained the right to be elected as Poor Law Guardians and to some local councils.

Throughout the nineteenth century a growing consciousness of women's rights had led to a demand for participation in government, as well as for the organisation of women's trade unions. Since the Famine women had set up, and run, schools and hospitals.

### DEMAND

It was ironic that as educational opportunities for women rose, so too did the attitudes of accepting male dominance by their teachers. Nuns, once pioneers in social and educational change, now became the epitome of the prevailing male image of women — obedience and docility.

training colleges turned out indoctrinated teachers to the clergy in a community. Now church-dominated teacher-



## WOMEN

## IRIS



● The Irish Women Workers Union, formed in 1913 by Delia Larkin and Helena Moloney, whose members were imprisoned during their struggle for equal rights

movements closer together. Delia Larkin and Helena Moloney had already formed an Irish Women Workers Union. Louie Bennett, from being a middle-class onlooker of the lock-out, became deeply involved in the labour movement.

Cumann na mBan then became the dominant movement channeling the major energies of women into the national movement. Even those who disagreed with the 1916 Rising were drawn into the national struggle as Cumann na mBan, campaigning for the prisoners, got suffragettes like Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington on to their platforms. (Perhaps there is a parallel today with the feminists who are becoming closely concerned with the Armagh women prisoners' campaign and therefore the wider national issue.)

In 1917, Helena Moloney, Constance Markievicz, Mrs. Ginnell, Kathleen Lynn and Rosie Hackett – all of whom were involved in the Easter Rising – joined with Louie Bennett and Helen Chevenix to successfully pursue two important strikes in women's industries.

But the Treaty broke up all this unity in struggle, as it did every other progressive development. In the Treaty debate all six women members of the First Dail voted for the republican side. Thus republican women effectively lost their voice, and this was a contributory factor to the complete absence of any



● **CONSTANCE MARKIEVICZ**  
urged a more positive role for women



women's politics from the Treaty until more recent days.

### PROGRESS

In the Free State women have made some major progress in the trade union movement — with the increase in women members. They have also been responsible for the widening of trade union demands, and the Irish Women Workers Union broke major ground in obtaining improved working conditions and safety regulations, winning two weeks' holiday as a norm throughout industry, and gaining full health and hospital insurance — all of these gains were made by women workers for male and female workers alike.

But in the area of specific women's rights, women have not made such progress, often being confused and divided on such matters as the employment of married women.

The 1937 Free State constitution of de Valera typifies the attitude of society to women, accepted, unfortunately, by many women.

This constitution insists that *"by her life within the home, woman gives to the state a support without which the common good cannot be achieved,"* and that *"the state shall endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home"*.

### BLOCKADE

Laws such as those governing contraception; the ban on literature on that subject; the prohibition on divorce contained in the 1937 constitution; those parts of the Factories Act controlling women's working hours; the laws governing women's control of home and property in marriage; the criminal conversation laws, which treat women as mere chattels of their husbands; the weak laws supposed to enforce equal pay, but so easy to find loopholes in; the laws governing rape, inside and outside marriage; the position of women's entitle-

ment to social welfare payment; discrimination in regard to obtaining loans and grants; the continued denial of legal aid in separation cases; the absence of child-care facilities; and so on: all of these constitute the massive blockade that legislation puts up to women achieving an equal place in society.

In addition to this there is the attitude of stereotyping children into definite roles according to sex — this happens through the home, through educational differences (both in subjects taught and in opportunities), through the presentation of women in advertising, and through the media, especially in its presentation of violence towards women.

### BURDEN

All this mountain of oppression crushes women in Ireland. Although in some regards women in the North have an advantage over their sisters in the South, they have to face a further burden — not only the brutality of the forces of military oppression — but they have the weight of coping with thousands of families stripped of the husband and father — thrown into jail.

A burden which can only be thrown off with the forced withdrawal of Britain from this country.

But, in other areas, republicans cannot wait for the end of British rule, nor can we merely make promises about the things we will do in the New Ireland. Republicans must work, as we must on other social and economic issues, on hammering at the oppression of women now.

It is only when the Republican Movement recognises the oppression of women, and sees clearly where it comes from — imperialism, social and economic — that the selflessness, the dedication, and the ultimate sacrifice paid by women Volunteers and Cumann na mBan, and by the tireless women workers in Sinn Fein and An Cumann Cabhrach, will be truly recognised. ■



# Plastic bullets



THE PLASTIC BULLETS, used by the British army and RUC in the six counties are solid PVC cylinders weighing 107 grammes with a length of 99 mm.

More properly described as ANTI-RIOT BATONS (either L3A1 or L5A2) they are fired from the Webley-Schermuly anti-riot gun which is as accurate as a high quality shot-gun.

The plastic bullet replaced the rubber bullet, as the chief anti-riot weapon, following public outcry against the number of deaths and grievous injuries caused by the rubber bullet up to 1972, but did not become fully operational until 1975.

The plastic bullet is manufactured by Schermuly Ltd., High Post, Salisbury, Wiltshire, England.

Both rubber and plastic bullets have been used by British forces as an anti-

people terror weapon and the majority of deaths and injuries inflicted by either weapon have occurred outside riot situations.

## RUBBER BULLET

The immediate precursor of both rubber and plastic bullets was introduced by the Hong Kong police in 1958 and was promptly dubbed a 'baton round'. A sort of police baton on a longer arm.

The baton round was a wood cylinder which was fluted giving it a whistling sound while in flight. Because of its propensity to split on impact, and its tendency to scatter splinters in all directions, the wooden baton round, considered suitable for the yellow oppressed of Hong Kong, was ruled out as "too dangerous" even for the Irish "wogs" of the six counties.

The introduction of the rubber bullet coincided with the Tory government's

departure from the short-lived policy of reform initiated by James Callaghan's Labour government — which was marked by recourse to the standards of direct military repression of an insurgent community — epitomised by the Falls Road curfew of June, 1970.

Up until 1974, approximately 55,000 rubber bullets were fired, resulting in three deaths.

Ostensibly introduced as a more discriminative weapon than CS gas, and one which would arouse less general community resentment than CS, the rubber bullet was nonetheless replaced by the plastic bullet for the reason explained in 'Janes Infantry Weapons' 1979 — "the disability and serious injury rates" inflicted "were not acceptable". The three people killed in the four years of extensive use of these bullets were, Francis Rowntree (aged 11) of Belfast, killed on April 23rd, 1972;

Tobias Molloy (aged 18) Strabane, killed on July 16th, 1972; and Thomas Friel (aged 21) of Derry, killed on May 22nd, 1973. Of these three, two were of a likely age to be guerillas the youngest, Francis Rowntree, would be typical of the younger people who participate in the street disturbances.

These three dead are typical of the many others injured in the same period and indicate that besides its role as a riot weapon, the rubber bullet was used to intimidate likely militants.

### FACTS ON RUBBER/PLASTIC BULLETS

Most published research data on these weapons emanates from US army laboratories. Tests were conducted on sheep and pigs and the degree of damage inflicted at various ranges was assessed.

These tests have shown that "severe damage" will result if the impact energy is higher than 90 foot pounds. The stated effective range of the weapon is 36 to 72 yards, even though at 50 yards the energy is 110 foot pounds. So when fired at the British army's medium effective range the impact of a plastic bullet is well above the "severe damage" limit.

The projectile has a muzzle velocity of 200 m.p.h. and at its normal riot situation operational range of 40 yards is still dangerously near the stated danger energy level.

Of course most deaths inflicted have been at ranges of less than 20 yards and result from direct hits to the head. The plastic bullet is not bounced as the rubber bullet should have been and is quite accurate.

'Jane's Infantry Weapons' states that: "severe bruising and shock" is "the maximum injury likely to be sustained".

The long range L3A1 version is meant to compensate for loss of impact over the greater distance required to counter stone-throwers. This weapon is invariably fired well below the army's recommended "safe" limit. "Rules for engagement for PVC baton rounds: (1) Baton rounds may be used to disperse a crowd wherever it is judged to be minimum and reasonable force in the circumstances. (2) The rounds must be fired at selected persons and not indiscriminately at the crowd. They should be aimed so that they strike the lower part of the target's body directly. (3) The authority to use these rounds is delegated to the commander on the spot. (4) Rounds must be fired at a range of not less than 20 metres except when the safety of soldiers or others is seriously threatened. (5) The baton round was designed to disperse crowds. It can also be used to prevent an escape from HM prisons if it is, in the circumstances, still considered to constitute the use of minimum and reasonable force. If a prisoner can be apprehended by hand, the baton round must not be used."

Even these fearfully careless standards have been breached with ranges of as



● MICHAEL DONNELLY  
*shot while returning home by plastic bullet*

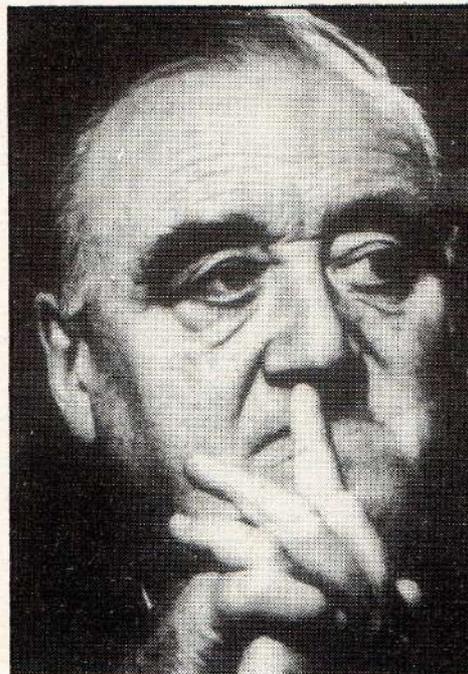
little as five yards being common results in an impact energy of 242 foot pounds, nearly three times the "severe damage" rate.

### USE AND ABUSE OF PLASTIC BULLETS

Up until March '81 13,000 plastic bullets were fired resulting in three deaths. The first victim was 10 year-old Stephen Geddis, shot in August '75. The next was Brian Stewart, aged 13 years, from Belfast's Turf Lodge estate. Brian was shot at point-blank range near his home. No rioting was going on at the time.

In August '80 Michael Donnelly a 21 year-old Belfast social worker was shot while passing a foot patrol in Leeson Street.

RUC Chief Constable Jack Hermon expressing his support for the weapon,



● WILLIAM WHITELAW  
*"Someone might get hurt"*



● BRIAN STEWART  
*shot at point blank range*

has compared its impact to receiving a "hard punch" (see reference to "severe bruising" in 'Jane's', above).

After the summer riots in British cities, Home Secretary William Whitelaw rejected the use of plastic bullets there because, "Someone might get killed..." He later refined his attitude after the media exposed his duplicity.

John Alderson, Chief Constable for Devon and Cornwall, giving evidence before the recent Scarman Tribunal on the British riots, said that he would not be training his men in the use of such "lethal instruments". Whatever about contradictions within the British security establishment on the issue, the Irish people have no such problems in assessing the weapon. Speaking in a recent newspaper interview a resident of Belfast's Divis Flats said, "The penalty for rioting



● JACK HERMON  
*"hard punch" plastic bullets*

is, at most, six months, not death. The penalty for ten-year-olds throwing stones at heavily armoured vehicles should be a clip on the ear, not death, but we now have the situation that the penalty for being a Catholic (no plastic bullets have ever been fired in Loyalist areas) and walking in your own street, or even standing at your own window, is now death."

Most people in nationalist areas now prepare to duck instinctively if they see that the apertures on passing armoured vehicles are open, or if a soldier or RUC man has raised his riot gun to hip or shoulder.

The plastic bullet is a murder and terror weapon used systematically against the nationalist people. The weapon is now used almost casually in a way that conventional bullets could never be, in propaganda terms.

Many ill-informed people believe that the plastic bullet is simply what the name implies, that is, something similar to an imitation bullet from a child's toy rifle, and not in fact the deadly weapon which it is.

### SPECIFIC CASES

Since the middle of April 1981, the plastic bullet has been used in an attempt by the British to drive the people off the streets.

The turnout for Bobby Sands' funeral marked a departure in mass passive protest -- which surpassed even the attendance at the funerals of the fourteen victims of the Bloody Sunday massacre perpetrated by British paratroopers.

The British authorities had immediately, upon Bobby's death, launched an assault on peaceful vigils, prayer meetings and street meetings in which the plastic bullet had a central role. This has been repeated on the occasion of each death in the H-Blocks.



● Plastic bullets being used as a murder and terror weapon



In April, 1,955 plastic bullets were fired — a rate of one every 20 minutes over the month. This was more than in the whole of 1980.

Plastic bullets do not arouse the indignation that normal bullets excite. Over 7,000 have been fired since the death of Bobby Sands.

The intent of the British is that the mass protests can be shot off the streets without international opinion responding, as it would to news of large numbers of civilians being shot-up with buck shot or live rounds in, for example, South Africa.

### CASES SINCE APRIL

(+ denotes plastic bullet death)

#### April 22nd. +

Paul Withers, fifteen years, Derry. Shot from three yards by British soldier. Suffered massive fracture of skull and died later. Paul was shot near the scene of a minor riot.

#### April 23rd.

Brendan Kelly, twenty-one years, Dungiven, Co. Derry. Shot at close range by RUC. Lost his right eye, seventeen stitches to head, teeth loosened by impact. No riot was going on at the time.

#### May 5th. (day of Bobby Sands death).

Martin Hamill, fifteen years, Turf Lodge, Belfast. Shot at close range by British soldier. Hit by two bullets. Severe damage to face. He was walking home with a friend when shot. No rioting in area.

#### May 6th.

Bridget Maguire, mother of six, Belfast. Shot by RUC. Received twenty-six stitches to face. She was kneeling at an open-air prayer meeting when shot.

#### May 7th.

Paul Logue, sixteen years, Waterside, Derry. Shot by RUC. Received six stitches to forehead.

#### May 8th.

Patrick Doherty, sixty-eight years, Shantallow, Derry. Shot at close range by British soldier. Kicked on ground after shooting. Suffered fractured skull. Shot near home, no rioting in area.

Derry man, twenty-one years, Creggan, Derry. Shot at point-blank range by RUC. Lost an eye, which was completely shattered, despite two-and-a-half hours in surgery. He was returning home from a night out with two friends. No rioting in area.

John Wasson, twenty-two years, Ardoyne, Belfast. Shot with two bullets. Injured in head and chest. Paralyzed down one side. No riot in area.

Alfred Parker, thirty-six years, White-rock, Belfast. Shot in head, received sixteen stitches.

#### May 9th.

Dominic Marron, fifteen years, Falls, Belfast. Shot by RUC. Severely injured, many days in intensive care, suffered brain damage.



● JULIE LIVINGSTONE

shot at point-blank range, died May 13th 1981

#### May 11th. + (Day of Francis Hughes' death.)

Julie Livingstone, fourteen years, Lenadoon, Belfast. Shot from rear of armoured car. Julie had two brothers in H-Block. Died in hospital May 13th. Julie was walking home with a bottle of milk from a local shop. There was no riot in the area.

#### May 12th.

Pauline Donnelly, twenty-one years, Falls, Belfast. Mother of five-month-old child. Shot at point-blank range from rear of RUC landrover. Badly bruised behind left ear. Two men, Frankie Short and Victor Angels, who came to her assistance were also hit.

#### May 13th.

David Madden, four-and-a-half years, Turf Lodge, Belfast. Shot by RUC while leaving school. Other children were fired at but not hit. David received six stitches to his head.

Neil Lynash, five years, Grosvenor Road, Belfast. Shot by RUC. A skin graft over serious burn wounds was ripped off by the bullet. He was sitting outside Lappin's sweet shop when shot.

#### May 15th.

Paul Lavelle, fifteen years, Ardoyne, Belfast. Shot at point-blank range in

head after being dragged up a side street by British soldiers. Serious head injuries.

Joseph Mullan, eleven years, Ballymurphy, Belfast. Shot from rear of British armoured car.



● DERRY MAN,

"eye completely shattered"

Damien McKenna, nineteen years, Beechmount, Belfast. Shot by British soldier. Received ten stitches in right ear. No riot was going on in the area.

**May 17th.**

Sarah Wildy, grandmother, St. James, Belfast. Shot by British soldier from armoured car. Severe bruising to stomach.

**May 19th.**

Kevin McLoughlin, thirteen years, Whiterock, Belfast. Shot from British armoured car. Suffered severe head injuries. Kevin was sitting on a fence near his home when shot.

**May 19th. +**

Carol-Ann Kelly, twelve years, Twinbrook, Belfast. Shot by British soldiers from rear of jeeps. Carol-Ann was knocked unconscious by the bullet. The British army delayed the arrival of an ambulance for fifteen minutes. Due to the resultant loss of blood Carol-Ann died three days later in hospital.

Carol-Ann was shot while carrying messages home for her mother. A neighbour, Kathleen Robinson said: *"This young child was shot for absolutely no reason. There was no trouble in the area at the time"*.

**May 21st. (Day of deaths of Patsy O'Hara and Ray McCreesh.)**

Margaret McElorum, fifteen years, New Lodge, Belfast. Shot by British soldier. Wounded in small of back. Margaret was just approaching an open-air prayer meeting when shot.

Marie McKernan, fifteen years, Markets, Belfast. Kathleen Hanna, twenty-four years, mother of two. Both shot by British soldiers in same incident. Marie suffered bruising to her chest. Kathleen received twelve stitches to her head.

**May 21st. +**

Harry Duffy, forty-five years, Creggan, Derry. Hit by two bullets fired by British soldiers while coming home from local bar. His skull was split wide open by the second bullet. He suffered a massive coronary due to the loss of most of his blood. Harry was buried on the day his three youngest children made their holy communion.



● CAROL-ANN KELLY, died May 19th 1981 after being struck with a plastic bullet



● MICHAEL KELLY (Carol-Anns' brother) holds killer bullet and her shopping



May 22nd.

Tommy Cupples, thirty-two years, Short Strand, Belfast. Shot three times by RUC. Wounded in eyes, arms, thighs and buttocks. Thirty stitches in head. Suffered subsequent epileptic fits.

Rosaleen McGee, mother-of-three, Grosvenor Road, Belfast. Shot by RUC. Her right arm was shattered. Rosaleen was taking part in a peaceful protest when shot.

Margaret McDonald, Falls, Belfast. Shot from two yards by RUC. She was wounded in her stomach and will require a skin graft.

Brendan McNally, Markets, Belfast. Arrested after bullets were fired through the door of his home. The next night his wife and children were threatened by soldiers armed with riot guns.

May 23rd.

Paul Fitzsimmons, fifteen years, New Lodge, Belfast. Shot by RUC. Paul was hit on his eye and requires extensive skin grafts.

May 24th.

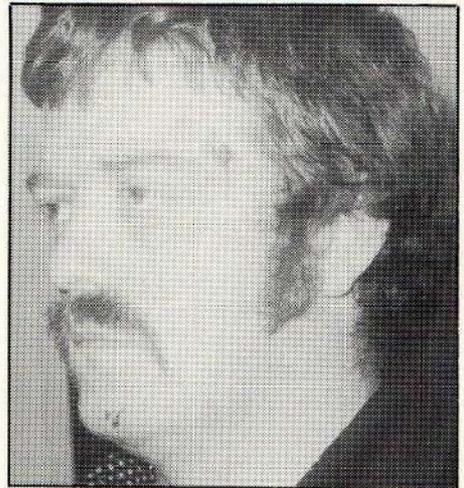
Thomas Torney, seventeen years, Ballymurphy, Belfast. Shot by British soldiers. Thomas suffered a fractured



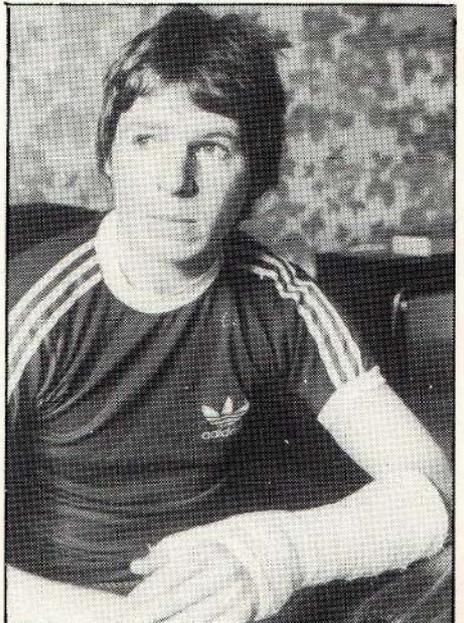
● SARAH BEGLEY  
suffered broken jaw, received sixty stitches



● ROSALEEN MCGEE  
her right arm was shattered by plastic bullet



● TOMMY CUPPLES  
wounded three times, received thirty stitches



● THOMAS TORNEY  
fractured left arm caused by plastic bullet

left arm, bruising to his groin and a torn muscle in the same area.

### May 30th.

Sean Tumilty, twenty-six years, Divis Flats, Belfast. Shot at point-blank range by British soldiers. Sean was first shot in the stomach following which he was dragged into an alleyway and shot point-blank in the head. Sean is paralysed down his right side.

### June 4th

Desmond Linden, fifty years, Divis Flats, Belfast. Shot at point-blank range by British soldiers. He was struck just below his left ribs while standing outside his own flat. While on the ground he was kicked repeatedly. The ambulance which collected him was detained on two occasions by the troops leading to a complaint being lodged by the ambulance-mens trade union.

### June 12th.

Sarah Begley, forty-three years, Unity Flats, Belfast. Shot by the RUC. Sarah was hit from close range. She suffered a broken jaw and sixty stitches to her face. Sarah may lose her left eye if follow-up surgery is not successful. She was going in the door of her flat when hit.

### June 17th.

Michael McAlorum, ten years, Turf Lodge, Belfast. Shot from passing British armoured car. Michael was playing with his friends when hit. He received a depressed fractured skull in the incident.

### June 25th.

McKevin family, Moyard, Belfast. A plastic bullet was fired into their home while they were sleeping.



● SEAN TUMILTY

paralysed down his right side, pictured (above) on life support system in RVH

**July 8th. + (Day of Joe McDonnell's death.)**

Nora McCabe, twenty-nine years, mother-of-three, Belfast. Brother Patrick Cosgrove is in H5-Block, Long Kesh. Shot from a passing RUC vehicle while walking near the Belfast National H-Block/Armagh Committee office. Hit in the head at close range Nora afterwards died. She was shot a hundred yards from her home and was not near any rioting.

**July 9th.**

Martin Tumelty, brother of Sean Tumelty (see above) of Divis Flats, Belfast. Martin was shot in the head by the RUC — fortunately at long range. He suffered severe facial bruising.

**July 22nd.**

Brian McDonnell, twenty-six years, Springhill, Belfast. Shot by British soldier at point-blank range while standing at door of his taxi. He suffered from extensive bruising to his back.

**July 24th.**

Peter Doherty, forty years, Divis Flats, Belfast. Shot by British Royal Marine Commandos. Peter was standing inside the window of his own flat when hit. He died a week later from massive head injuries.

**July 27th.**

Martin Rooney, thirteen years, Divis Flats, Belfast. Shot by British soldiers while coming home from working on a milk-round. A passing lorry which was taking Martin to hospital was delayed by soldiers. Martin was taken to hospital suffering from a fractured skull.

**August 1st. (Day of Kevin Lynch's death.)**

Pauline Quigley, sixteen years, New Lodge, Belfast. Shot in head at point blank range by British soldier. Pauline received a hair-line fracture to her skull, with four stitches on the outside.

Vincent McGee, thirty-four years, Belfast. Shot by British soldier at point-blank range. Vincent suffered permanent kidney damage.

**August 2nd. (Day of Kieran Doherty's death.)**

Patricia McGivern, thirty-three years, mother-of-three, Belfast. Shot by a British soldier from two feet. Several tendons were severed in her right hand and her flesh was torn away.

James Kavanagh, sixty-nine years, lower Falls, Belfast. Shot from passing British armoured car. James lives near Patricia McGivern. His lower left leg was severely bruised. Because of his age he will require medical treatment for a long period.

**August 9th. + (10th Anniversary of introduction of internment without trial.)**

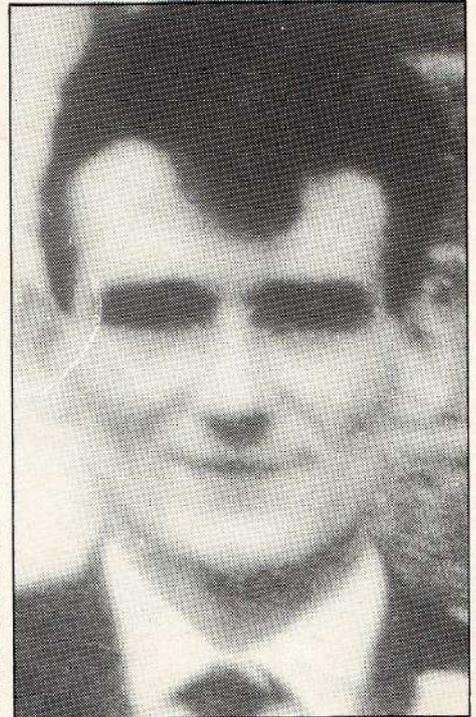
Peter Magennis, forty years, father-of-five, Bawnmore, Belfast. Peter was shot through the window of his home by a passing RUC landrover patrol. Peter died. He was the seventh to be murdered in this recent phase. Like



● NORA McCABE  
mother-of-three, murdered by RUC



● PETER DOHERTY  
killed by plastic bullet fired through his window



● PETER MAGENNIS  
father-of-five, murdered by plastic bullet

the others he was nowhere near a riot when killed.

**August 21st.**

Martin O'Neill, nine years, Ardoyne, Belfast. Shot by RUC at twenty-five yards range. Martin was struck in the face. Luckily, the bullet only grazed him and he "escaped" with a large graze and acute shock.

Dermot Gallagher, eleven years, Twinbrook, Belfast. Shot by British soldier. Dermot was nowhere near a riot but was returning home from his local shop. His skull was fractured by the bullet.

Moya Quinn, fifteen years, Dermott Hill, Belfast. Shot by RUC. Moya was badly bruised about the neck.

**August 28th.**

Paul Corr, twelve years, Beechmount, Belfast. Shot by British Royal Marine Commandos from a passing open-back landrover. The downward travelling bullet hit Paul on the side of his nose tearing part of it off and carried on down to the roof of his mouth, shattering and ripping out his pallet and driving his teeth down into his mouth. Paul was coming home from his local sweet shop when shot. There was no riot going on in the area.



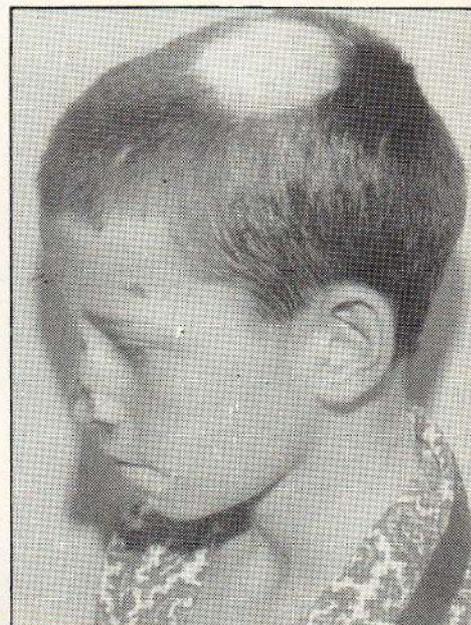
● MARTIN O'NEILL  
grazed and shocked — lucky escape



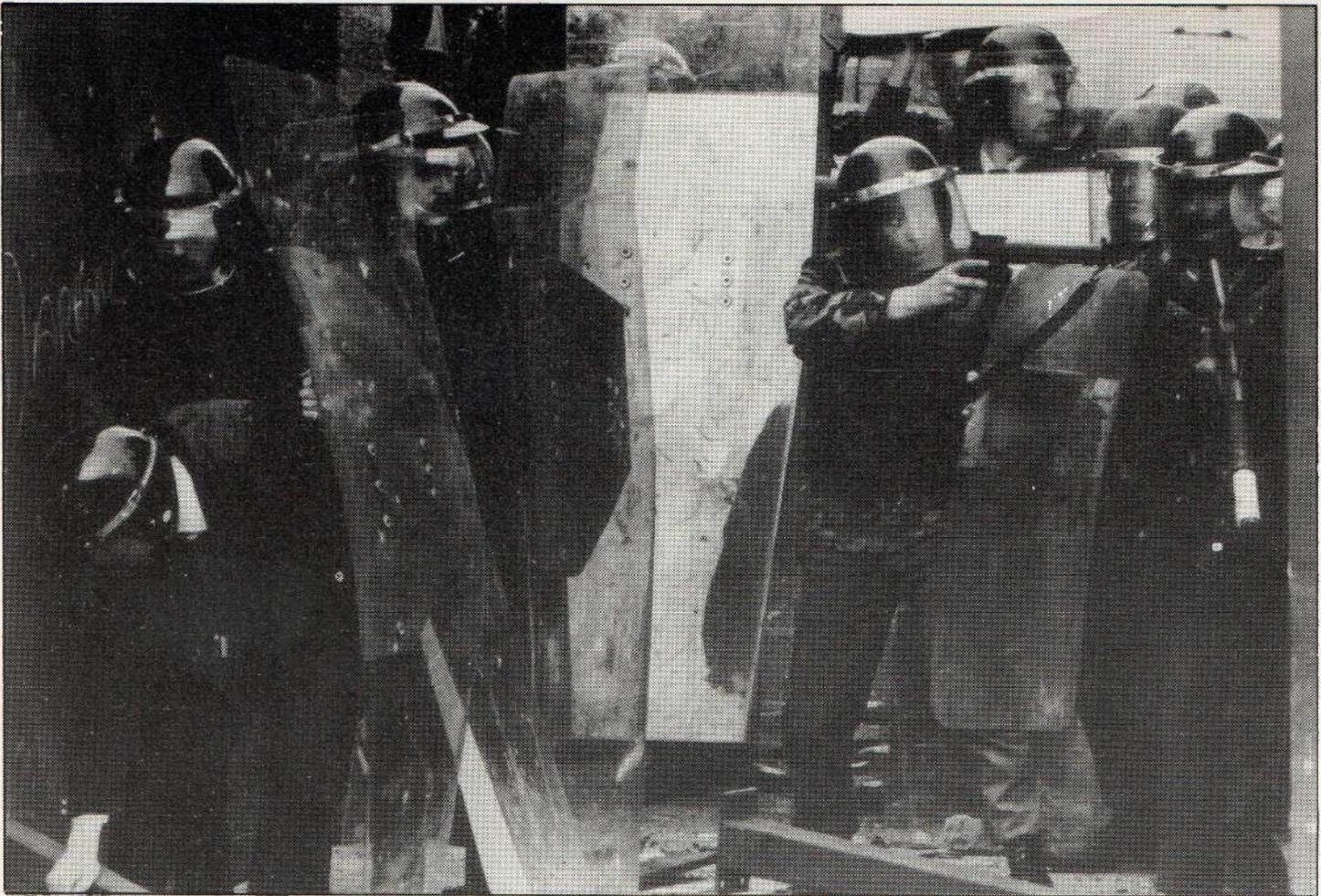
● NEIL LYNAGH, aged 5,  
plastic bullet tore skin graft off burn wound



● MARTIN TUMILTY  
hit on side of face, severely bruised eye



● DERMOT GALLAGHER  
had skull fractured by plastic bullet



● Many Brits and RUC men 'doctor' plastic bullets by inserting razor blades, jagged bottle tops and slivers of glass

Most of these people, young and old, were shot in non-riot situations. Many more are hit and receive treatment secretly because of fear of harassment. Thousands survive with lesser but painful injuries. Thousands more are lucky enough not to be hit.

Many soldiers and RUC men doctor their plastic bullets by inserting razor blades, jagged bottle tops and slivers of glass.

Most people are shot with these terrible weapons in a casual manner. No soldier or policeman has ever been charged for misuse of these weapons.

Concerned by general reports of the deaths and injuries, sketched out above, an independent International Tribunal recently came together in Belfast to examine use of the weapon. Tribunal

members attending the evidence sessions, chaired by the Association for Legal Justice, were; Dr. Tim Shallice, respected English neuro-psychologist; Dr. Antoine Comte, a French lawyer; Denis Dillon, the District Attorney for Nassau County, USA; and Republican New York councillor, Peter King.

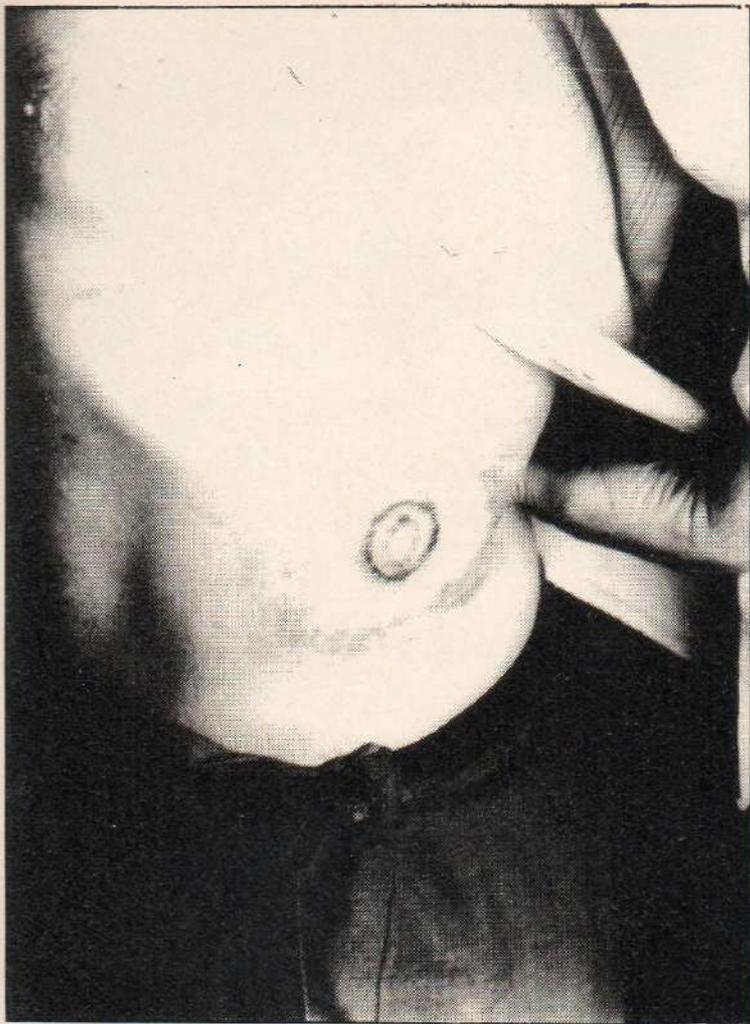
They found that "these lethal weapons" should be banned immediately. Like many others they found that the plastic bullet is not being used as a riot control weapon but rather as a community control device.

The people of the six counties walk in fear on their own streets.

Only international intervention can end the officially sanctioned mis-use of this murderous weapon. ■



Independent Tribunal on the effects of plastic bullets organised by the ALJ in August in the Greenan Lodge Hotel, (left to right) Dr. Antoine Lazarus, (Paris); Antoine Comte, (France); Tim Shallice, (London); Sean McCann, (Chairman ALJ); Denis Dillon, (USA); and Peter King, (USA)



● **DESMOND LINDEN**, hit in stomach by plastic bullet



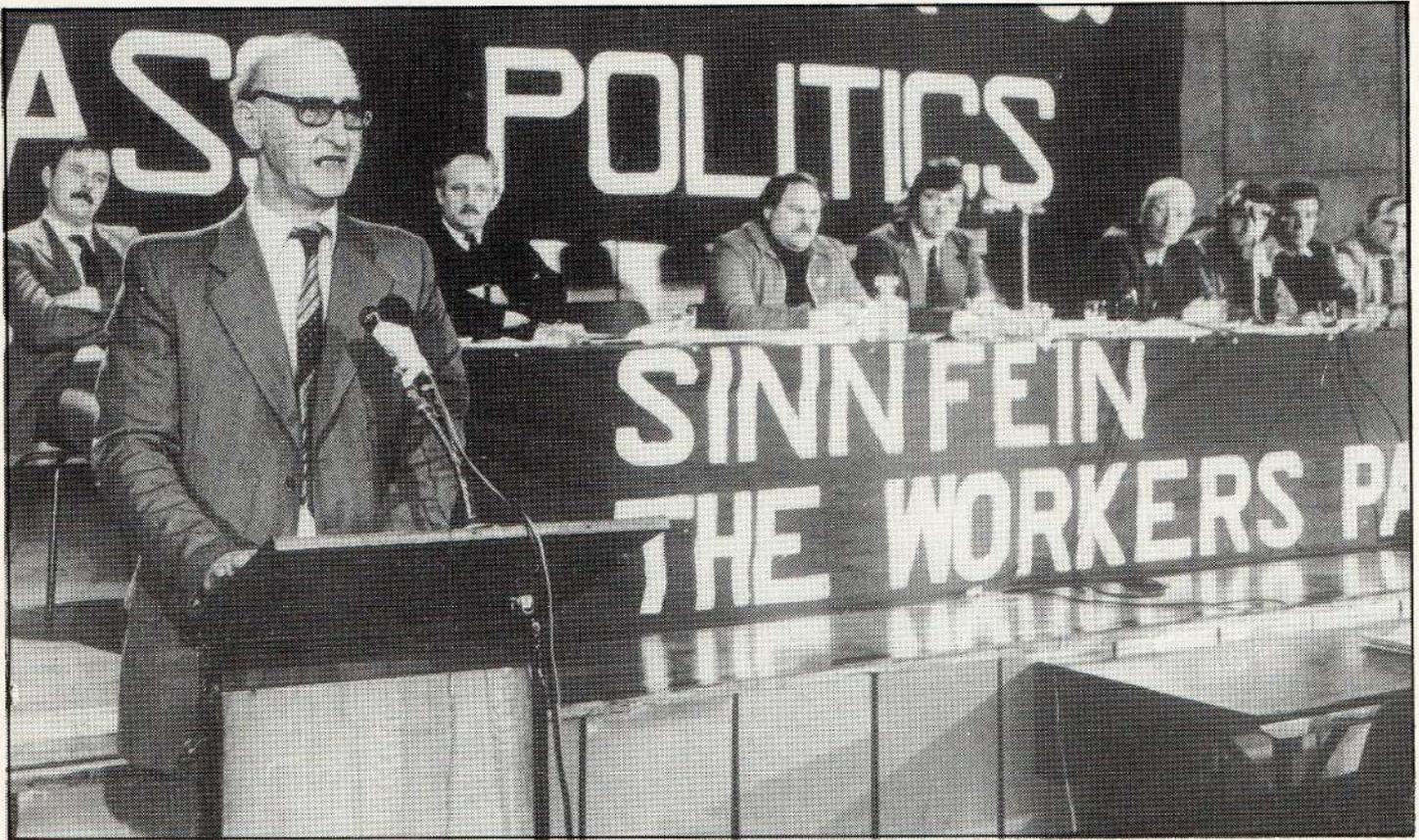
● **PAUL CORR**, required extensive plastic surgery



● **BRENDAN KELLY**, hit by RUC plastic bullet, lost right eye



● **MICHAEL MERVYN**, shot by plastic bullet 25th September. Received a broken nose and twenty stitches



# A STICKY END

(or rise and decline of the 'Officials')

In August 1969, the nationalist ghettos of Belfast were virtually defenceless when a fierce Orange pogrom was unleashed. This was mainly the result of a turn by the Republican Movement of the time towards social and economic agitation (quite laudable in itself) but which also meant a total run-down of the military organisation. On top of this, the reformist and electoral direction of the movement was taking it towards recognition of the puppet parliaments of the twenty-six counties (Leinster House) and the six counties (Stormont).

By the end of 1969, militant republicans in the North were beginning to reform the IRA, supported by people up and down the country. The split-off of the reformist elements was consummated in 1970. The media attached the titles of Sinn Fein 'Provisional'

and 'Official' which have stuck. The 'Provisionals' have moved ahead to become the undisputed Republican Movement, whereas the 'Officials' have written themselves out of the republican tradition. How did this happen?

## NATIONAL QUESTION

In 1971, the 'Officials' still posed as a revolutionary current. In their journal *'Teoiric'* (No. 1, Summer 1971) we already see the seeds of their future trajectory — *"There is a danger that our fight to establish ourselves among the people, and in our fight to establish the rights of the people... we would tend to ignore... the question of National Independence"*.

That is precisely what was happening. Uniting Protestant and Catholic workers is something we all want to see, but it cannot be done by ignoring the partition of our country and the presence of British imperialism here. Likewise, taking up 'day to day' issues does not mean setting aside the question of British troops on our streets, which is very



● The British imperialist presence in Ireland cannot be ignored in any serious struggle for a socialist republic

much a 'day to day' question for many people. Reaction throughout Ireland to the heroic hunger-strikers shows how real the question of imperialism is — the 'Officials' now refer to a 'mythical national question' diverting our attention from the 'real (?) issues'.

## TWO NATIONS THEORY

By 1972, the 'Officials' had declared a unilateral ceasefire on the grounds that a continued military campaign would cause sectarian conflict. It is hard to take this justification seriously. The six county state was built on sectarian discrimination and thrived on it until the 1970's when the final stage of the liberation struggle began. Sectarian conflict is there because British imperialism built up a pro-imperialist minority in Ireland with the crumbs from its imperial table — the Labour aristocracy.

The truth is that by this stage the 'Officials', or 'Sticks' as they became known, had moved towards a 'two nations' theory. The collapse of Stormont in March 1972, which was a great victory for the risen nationalist people, was bemoaned by them because loyalists saw it as their institution and hence it was 'legitimate'.

On this basis Hitler's Third Reich was also 'legitimate'. The 'two nations' theory was, of course, one of the reactionary justifications for partition — loyalists had 'the right to national self-determination'. However, this theory has absolutely no historical or practical validity, it is just an imperialist smoke-screen to maintain an anti-nationalist beachhead in Ireland.

## ELECTORAL DECLINE

As the 1970's wore on, the 'Officials' settled down to an electoralist path, regularly running candidates in the North and South, and trying to win official positions in the trade unions. In the North, particularly, they entered enthusiastically into local councils, trying to replicate William Walker's 'gas and water socialism', so soundly criticised by Connolly.

The logic of this course was to become 'Sinn Fein — The Workers Party' in 1977 and one wonders why they did not drop the Sinn Fein tag altogether. The collapse of this reformist course came in the 1981 local elections in the North when they lost their three seats in Belfast. In their journal *Workers Life* (June 1981), they say that this was due to "an assault from two ultra-left groupings" referring to the two councillors elected for PD and IRSP on a H-Block ticket (the remaining 'Sticky' prisoners had long since been disowned by their organisation).

But, bemoaning the fate of Gerry Fitt who lost his seat, they say that the results "indicate a sharp swing to the right in the Roman Catholic ghettos". It is the height of political bankruptcy to blame one's failure on an assault from the 'ultra-left' and the 'right' at once.



●The collapse of Stormont, symbol of institutionalised sectarianism in the six counties, was mourned by none save the right-wing bigots of loyalism and the pseudo-socialists of the 'Sticks'

But then the 'Sticks' always did slander the Republican Movement in precisely this way.

The truth is that the nationalist people of Belfast showed their determination to fight British imperialism and support the hunger-strikers. There is nothing 'ultra-left' or 'right' about this, it is just a resurgence of Republican resistance. The 'Officials' were now so far away from that tradition that they could not recognise the fact.

## INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

'Sinn Fein — The Workers Party's' politics, such as they are, can best be seen in the remarkable document *The Irish Industrial Revolution* (Repsol, 1978). The main aim is to pin the blame for Ireland's problems on the nationalist middle class — "They refused to industrialise. They refused to create a modern society. They refused to spend their money".

This is all a bit simplistic but, worse than that, it totally ignores the role of imperialism which is recognised by most historians as the cause of Ireland's failure to industrialise in the 19th century. Anyone working on the land is also automatically a reactionary according

to this document, thus writing-off the small farmer at one stroke.

The way out is simple — call in the multi-national corporations, a 'progressive force', and build-up the state sector. All this within the twenty-six counties of course because the north must be allowed its devolved (Orange) government. Only 'terrorism' from the 'starry-eyed Hibernian nationalists' prevent this wonderful scenario from materialising.

If it was not so sad this would be funny. Even their long time allies of the Communist Party were forced to issue a heavily critical pamphlet on this disgraceful document. So, what happened between 1968 and 1978? This current emerged from republicanism with an imported version of 'socialism' known as the 'stage theory' (apparently invented by Stalin). It said: (1) democracy in the six counties, (2) national unification, (3) socialism. However, they seem to have got stuck at the first stage, ignoring that in the real world the tasks of all three are posed simultaneously.

Republicanism is the Irish revolutionary thought answering to the needs of the Irish people. The lesson of this current, today a mere trickle, should be that you get lost if you leave that tradition. ■

# Na Fianna Éireann

**'Their courage and daring, their discipline and determination are an inspiration to their older comrades in Sinn Fein, the IRA and Cumann na mBan'**



EACH Easter *'An Phoblacht/Republican News'* publishes the **Roll of Honour** — a list of those who have died in the service of their country in this phase of the struggle for Irish freedom. Among those names are the names of eighteen young martyrs — members of na Fianna Éireann. They gave their young lives at different ages (the youngest was twelve; the oldest eighteen) and in different ways.

Na Fianna Éireann is the youth organ-

isation of the Republican Movement, the revolutionary vanguard of Irish youth. Throughout its long history, longer indeed than that of either Sinn Fein or the IRA, it has been called upon to play an often vital role in the fight for national liberation.

The organisation was founded by Countess Markievicz in 1909 "to train the youth of Ireland to fight Ireland's fight when they are older". A Gaelic renaissance was sweeping Ireland at the time and the Fianna were to be an

Irish and Gaelic answer to the pro-British Baden-Powell scouts. Indeed the National Youth Council of Ireland cites na Fianna Éireann as the first national Irish youth movement.

They looked on the mythological Fianna of Fionn MacCuamhail as their exemplars, and took their motto, "GLAINE 'NAR GCROI NEART 'NAR NGEAGA AGUS BEART DO REIR AR MBRIATHAR" ("PURITY IN OUR HEARTS, STRENGTH IN OUR ARMS AND TRUTH ON OUR LIPS") as their own. The legends of old Ireland ex-

toll the courage and the daring, the discipline and the determination of the country's defenders of Cuchulainn and the Red Branch Knights, and of Fionn and the Fianna. Their own courage and discipline were soon to be tested in the great lock-out of 1913, the training of the Irish Volunteers throughout 1914, 1915 and 1916, and the Easter Rising.

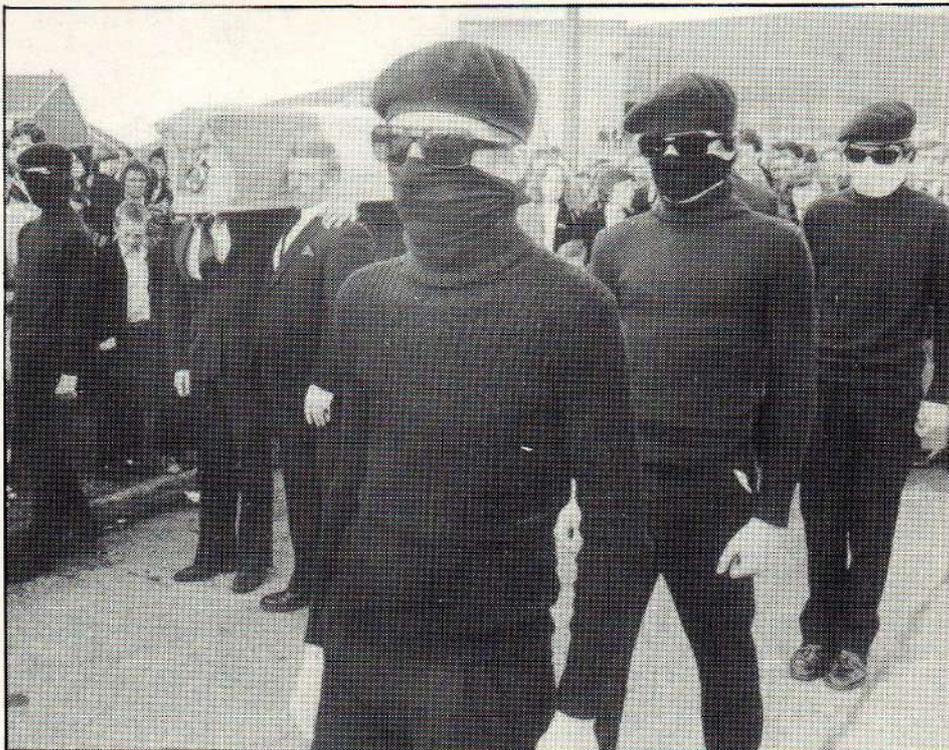
## 1913--1922

Na Fianna played an active part during the 1913 strike. The great lock-out of 1913 was the first confrontation between the Irish working-class and the bosses and it saw united actions by republicans and socialists in defence of the people. Patsy O'Connor, a Fianna officer, was batoned savagely on the head while giving first-aid to an injured worker during a baton-charge by the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) on the strikers. He died shortly afterwards.

When the Irish Volunteers (the forerunners of today's IRA) were formed in the same year, the value of the work undertaken by the Fianna became obvious. The senior Fianna were ready and competent to train the Volunteers and accustom them to discipline. Fianna stewarded the inaugural meeting of the Volunteers and four of their members were elected to the first Executive Council of the Volunteers. The following year, 1914, saw na Fianna Eireann taking part in the Howth gun-running and shortly afterwards organising a gun-running expedition at Kilcoole.

The history of the Easter Rising in 1916, when the republican forces took over the centre of Dublin, proclaimed an independent Irish Republic and held off vastly superior British army forces for six days, is interwoven with Fianna exploits and Fianna heroes. Fianna officers were given command of important sections of the operations. A party of Fianna and Volunteers successfully attacked and destroyed the arms and munitions in the Magazine Fort in Phoenix Park, thus signalling the start of the Rising. Fianna officers Sean Houston, Con Colbert and Constance Markievicz were in command of the Mendicity Institution, the College of Surgeons and the Marrowbone Lane units. Members of the organisation were also engaged in fighting in other parts of the city where they carried out the dangerous work of despatch-carrying and scouting. Six members of Na Fianna Eireann were killed in the fighting and Fianna officers Sean Houston and Con Colbert were executed by firing squad on 8th May 1916.

After the Rising and the release of many Fianna from prison at the end of 1916 and 1917 na Fianna Eireann was re-organised. From 1919 to 1921 the organisation took an active part in the fight for freedom throughout the country. They carried despatches for the Volunteers, reconnoitred barracks, engaged in intelligence work and rendered first-aid to the wounded. These years saw a rapid growth in membership (twenty-five thousand in 1921) and in organisation for



● Members of the Fianna can often be seen performing ceremonial duties such as guard of honour at the funerals of martyred Irish freedom fighters (above) but will be seen most often working within their own communities seeking to raise the revolutionary awareness of the youth of Ireland

the Fianna.

They saw too, great sacrifices and grievous losses. The agony Ireland went through was played out to the full in the Fianna - Fian Billy Myles killed in action at Tralee, County Kerry; Fian Toghd O'Sullivan died after hunger-strike, Cork, 1917; Fian Patrick Hanly, murdered in reprisal by the RIC in 1920 and many, many more of their comrades. Na Fianna Eireann stood solidly behind the Republic after the split in 1922 over the Truce. The Truce and the civil war between republicans and Free Staters which followed it, were to result in the setting up of two states in Ireland - the twenty-six counties which was to have Dominion home-rule under Britain, and the six counties which were to be represented in the Westminster parliament as well as having their own loyalist government in Belfast.

These years were to see more resistance, more deaths and imprisonment and more sacrifices. This type of militant resistance and the sacrifices which resistance demands were to continue long after the end of the civil war. Indeed in the six counties where na Fianna Eireann has always been an illegal organisation, they continue the struggle to the present day. Victimisation and harassment, from being stopped and questioned on the street, to being arrested, sometimes charged, convicted and imprisoned for dubious offences (such as membership of na Fianna, collecting or organising for the Fianna, possession of Fianna documents etcetera), all these are a regular occurrence both in the North and South.

## 1940-1981

From the 1940's when Fianna defied

the ban on the main Republican commemoration at Bodenstown by hiking the 23 miles there and laying a wreath on Wolfe Tone's grave under the guns of Free State soldiers, to the 1960's when Fianna sold the banned Easter Lily publicly and like many other republicans were prosecuted for it, the organisation has refused to be bullied or brow-beaten. They proudly refuse today, and continue the glorious heritage of militant resistance bequeathed them by Markievicz, Colbert, Houston, Mellows and Frank Ryan.

Na Fianna Eireann is the youth organisation of the Republican Movement. It is a national youth movement organised throughout Ireland (and in the U.S.A.), involved in a broad range of activities, scouting, political and cultural, and deeply committed to the freedom of Ireland and the Irish people. Says a spokesperson for the Fianna, "We're playing an important part in mobilising young people behind the demands of the prisoners. Our last 'Youth Against H-Block/Armagh March' was the largest youth march ever seen in Dublin. We were very pleased with that. It shows that young people do care. They link the oppression the prisoners are suffering under with the oppression they see around them every day - in employment, education, housing, in every aspect of life."

Asked if Fianna are going totally political, he replied, "Na Fianna Eireann was never non-political. We're a republican youth organisation, and in that sense we were always political. The Fianna is involved in a whole range of activities - we have Irish classes, we go on hikes and camps, we put up posters and give out leaflets. We are, if you like, at the service of the Republican Movement. Wherever

the pressure is greatest, the Fianna will be there. At the moment the pressure is coming from the prisons and naturally we are straining at the leash to do everything we can to support the prisoners. Especially since many of the prisoners are our prisoners -- members, or former members, of our organisation. Pro members, of our organisation. Probably most of them are former members. Raymond McCreesh was a member of na Fianna, Kieran Doherty, TD, and Jackie McMullan were also former members.

So na Fianna Eireann is a political youth organisation as well as being a scouting and cultural one. We believe there is a great need for such a political youth organisation to combat British imperialism and its effects in both parts of Ireland; and let's not forget that British imperialism isn't just a cliché. British imperialism has resulted in the deaths of several children since May of this year in the North -- murdered by plastic bullets. It has been responsible for the deaths of eighteen of our members since 1969 and hundreds of other young people, children and teenagers."

### IMPERIALISM

"British imperialism," he continued, "means the armed and aggressive occupation of Ireland. It means baton-charges, snatch-squads, bullying and torture. It means the bolstering up of a sectarian statelet in which a third of the population have no rights, and play no part. It means that a nationalist school-leaver in the North is twice as likely to be unemployed as his unionist counterpart. Believe you me, the youth of this country are getting a rough lesson in what 'imperialism' is all about."

To the charge that all this means little to the young people in the South who do not experience sectarian discrimination and who have probably only ever seen British troops on the television, he replied: "Well, I think the recent elections in the South where two prisoners were elected, and where all the prisoner candidates did very well, has put paid to the idea that Southern people don't care about the North. Most commentators have accepted that the prisoners won a large section of the young vote, and H-Block/Armagh demonstrations, North and South, have been notable by the large youth presence in them. So H-Block repression, the whole Northern question, is felt to be important and relevant to young people in the South.

"Further, young people in the South suffer a wide range of problems -- youth un-employment is twice the national average, working-class youth are effectively denied the right to a third level education through the miserable grants scheme operating there; apprentices and young workers (especially girls) are discriminated against in pay. There's the whole question of illegitimacy, the age of criminal responsibility, the care of young offenders, the provision of adequate sports and recreational facilities. These



● "British imperialism isn't just a cliché British imperialism has resulted in the deaths of several children since May of this year in the North..."



● The militant nationalist youth of Ireland, North or South, who seek a disciplined revolutionary alternative to the bankruptcy of the established political systems could do no better than to turn to the ranks of na Fianna Eireann

are just a few of the problems facing young people in the South -- problems which na Fianna Eireann as a youth organisation is vitally concerned about.

"We believe that such a bad situation is made worse by the absence of any effective and comprehensive policy document on youth by the twenty-six county government. This clearly shows the lack of commitment on the part of the establishment parties in the South to solving the real issues facing young people today. The twenty-six county government lacks both the vision to see the measures that would be needed to solve these problems, and the will to put these measures into practice."

Na Fianna Eireann, the Irish republican youth movement, was founded seventy-two years ago, and in that time, in a his-

tory that few youth organisations can parallel, it has served the Republican Movement and the cause of Irish freedom well. Young people, mostly in their teens, have always been found in the ranks of na Fianna: who were prepared to endure death, torture, intimidation, victimisation and harassment. Their courage and daring, their discipline and determination are an inspiration to their older comrades in Sinn Féin, the IRA and Cumann na mBan.

Today, the Fianna is growing and new sluaite (units) are being set up practically every week. Increasingly it is taking a more publicly prominent role in the Republican Movement and addressing itself more and more to the day-to-day problems facing Irish youth. The Fianna is forging a future for itself, worthy of its past.

# Hunger-strike opens up election front

The Long Kesh prison crisis is five years old. The hunger-strike which has claimed the lives of ten men is seven months old. What has passed for normal politics in both parts of Ireland since partition in 1921 has been paralysed by the refusal, on the one hand, of the hunger-strikers to be broken by the daunting prospect of death, and on the other hand by the refusal of the Irish political establishment to attempt to shift the British government from its obdurate stance.

The political fall-out arising from the deaths of the ten martyred hunger-strikers has transformed the face of nationalist politics in Ireland. It has made a resolution of the hunger-strike not only an immediate political priority — but has exposed as non-existent the much flaunted claims that the major parties in the South of Ireland, when in government, pursue a united Ireland programme.

## BOBBY SANDS

The seeds for the transformation were planted when Bobby Sands started the epic-making marathon hunger-strike on March 1st this year and blossomed on Friday 10th April when in the tranquil and picturesque town of Enniskillen, in County Fermanagh, the world learned the news that Bobby Sands, then 41 days on hunger-strike was elected MP to the Westminster seat of Fermanagh/South Tyrone.

Bobby Sands' death, some 25 days later, captured the imagination of the Irish people and one-hundred thousand people attended his funeral in west Belfast. Noted poets, in India, Egypt and Iran put pen to paper and immortalised his death in verse. Workers all over Ireland staged strikes in protest at



● Bobby Sands' sister Marcella and his mother in Enniskillen following the election of Bobby Sands, IRA Volunteer and hunger-striker, to be the Member of Parliament for the people of Fermanagh/South Tyrone

his death. He was likened to the national martyr, Terence McSwiney, Lord Mayor of Cork, who died after 74 days on hunger-strike in Brixton prison in 1920.

## WATERSHED

The election victory was a watershed and a major repudiation of Britain's criminalisation policy of Irish republicans. It made the British government look ridiculous in the eyes of the world. Their propaganda claims suffered a major setback then which was to be shattered when in the by-election caused by Bobby Sands' death, Owen Carron, his election agent and Sinn Fein member, standing as an agreed H-Block candidate won the seat with an increased majority.

These election coups in the six counties

were complemented in the South with the election of two prisoners to the Southern parliament, — one of whom, Kieran Doherty, was on hunger-strike — and the sweeping from power of the ruling Fianna Fail government who had refused to support the hunger-strikers demands.

The replacement, a Fine Gael/Labour coalition government, tenuously holds power with the help of six independents and its future is as much at the mercy of hunger-strike supporters as was the downfall of Fianna Fail.

The result of the imminent by-election in Cavan/Monaghan caused by the death on hunger-strike of Kieran Doherty, TD, could sound the death knell of the coalition government and could



● The platform party at a pre-election press conference for Bobby Sands included (from second from left): Euro-MP Neil Blaney; Jim Gibney, Sinn Féin; Owen Carron, Bobby's election agent (later to succeed him as MP); Bernadette McAliskey, H-Block activist; and Pat McCaffrey, Irish Independence Party councillor

produce another general election while the hunger-strike is in progress.

The dramatic electoral victories throughout the country show that the national struggle plays a dominant part in the people's thinking whether they live directly under the jackboot of British imperialism or not.

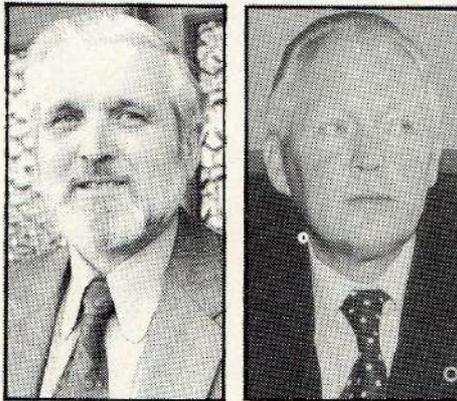
They confirm what republicans have been claiming for over a decade — that their political viewpoints and the methods used to achieve them enjoy widespread popularity.

Moreover the emergence of Owen Carron as the sole militant nationalist voice in the six counties threatens the SDLP's power base and their hitherto almost total monopoly as the elected voice of the nationalist people.

### FERMANAGH/SOUTH TYRONE

The emergence of the late Bobby Sands MP as an agreed candidate in the Fermanagh/South Tyrone Westminster by-election in April arose following discussions with two definite candidates — Bernadette McAliskey and Noel Maguire (brother of the late Frank Maguire MP, whose death created the by-election). They both stood down in favour of Bobby Sands.

Until this point hunger-strike supporters had been increasingly worried that the hunger-strike was not receiving adequate media coverage. It was clear that a conspiracy to suppress interest in the hunger-strike was underway in British and Dublin government circles. Humphrey Atkins, the north's direct-



● Noel Maguire (left) brother of the late Frank Maguire MP stood down as a prospective candidate in favour of Bobby Sands

ruler declared in the House of Commons that he would not be mentioning the hunger-strike in his regular reports to the Commons.

### SDLP

For Sands to stand a chance of winning the seat McAliskey and Maguire's agreement to stand down was only half the battle. The other half was the SDLP whom it was felt could not be persuaded from contesting. However, in a somewhat surprising, if understandable decision, the SDLP executive decided not to run and overturned the decision of the constituency party members who on a narrow majority — (59-42) — had selected pro-British collaborator, Austin Currie, to fight the seat.

The executive's decision was based on the SDLP's instinct for survival as a political party. When it was made, Noel Maguire had not withdrawn from the contest, and it appeared at that stage as if he was set to take on Bobby Sands.

The SDLP knew that their party would have suffered irreversible harm had they contested a seat which they had no prospect of winning. They also had their eye on the local government elections which were less than a month away. The prospect of being blamed for the defeat of a man on hunger-strike and the possible consequences this would have on their electoral prospects at local council level, steered them clear of involvement in what would be a definite debacle.

### UNIONISTS

Despite the initial threats from Ian Paisley's DUP, to stand a candidate against the Official Unionist candidate Harry West — in the event, West was the sole unionist candidate. Local republicans explain that "Paisley's weakness in the constituency was that the unionists there were Paisleyites before Paisley was heard off."

### NATIONALIST UNITY

Bobby Sands' election campaign provided, for the first time since the formation of the broadly-based National H-Block/Armagh Committee, the opportunity to unite the divergent stands of nationalism associated with the prisoners campaign.

The broadest political platform was sought to conduct the election. This

included Sinn Fein, Irish Independence Party, Bernadette McAliskey, Noel Maguire, Tommy Murray — who was then a member of the SDLP but was later expelled from the party for supporting Sands — and Neil Blaney, independent Fianna Fail TD and a European MP.

The uncertainty of whether the field was clear against West lost the Sands' election team an invaluable week but the ground was quickly restored as the "grande olde men" of the hustings came out of seclusion and put flesh on the bones of the election campaign being led by newcomers.

For republicans, because of their long standing non-involvement in parliamentary elections, it was a case of sitting and listening to those with experience — in some instances into the early hours of the morning — as election worker meetings were held one after the other across the sprawling constituency.

## POLITICAL PRISONER

On the nomination papers Bobby Sands was described as an 'Anti-H-Block, Armagh Political Prisoner', linking the womens' struggle with their male comrades in the H-Blocks.

In a personal message to the nationalist electorate from his hospital bed he said: "there is but a single issue at stake — the right of human dignity for Irish men and women who are taking part in this period of the historic struggle for Irish independence."

## SABOTAGE

Attempts to sabotage the election campaign before it got off the ground were made by the social democratic wing of the SDLP, in the persons of the party chairman, Sean Farren, Paddy O'Hanlon from Newry and Austin Currie — the nominee withdrawn by the executive. They called on the voters to boycott the election or spoil their votes by writing Austin Currie across them.

As the election moved into first gear this offensive continued and the nationalist versus non-nationalist struggle inside the SDLP sharpened with the absentee party-leader, John Hume, joining those calling for a boycott.

Paradoxically, the avowed constitutionalists overnight turned into boycotters.

It was left to Seamus Mallon, deputy leader, to politically defend the party's decision not to involve itself — on the grounds that the British government created the problem, by its stubbornness on the prison crisis, and the SDLP did not wish to get it off the hook.

Former prominent members of the SDLP, Gerry Fitt and Paddy Devlin, waded into their erstwhile colleagues and denounced their decision as "sectarian" — conveniently ignoring their own exploitation of sectarianism when it suited.

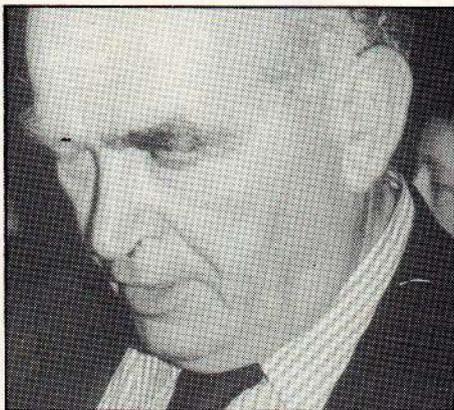
Other obstacles were placed in the way of the Sands' campaigners. Television coverage was non-existent because the candidate was behind bars. Direct-ruler, Atkins, refused to allow TV cameras or journalists into the prison to interview him. A high level media campaign supported by the leadership of the SDLP was directed against the nationalist voters warning them that their Protestant neighbours would view a vote for Sands as a vote for the IRA. This theoretical threat was backed up by a consistent



■ PADDY DEVLIN  
slated SDLP boycott



■ AUSTIN CURRIE  
withdrawn nominee



■ HARRY WEST  
defeated unionist

campaign of harassment from the RUC, UDR and British army, who arrested Sands' election workers, detained them unduly at checkpoints, disrupted their meetings and tore down thousands of posters.

## RESULT

Despite the overall advantage on paper of a constituency with a nationalist majority the odds were firmly stacked against Sands campaigners.

Therefore the announcement was all the more sweet, on Friday 10th April, that Bobby Sands had captured the seat by 30,492 votes against 29,046 for the loyalist candidate, Harry West. Jubilation spread through the nationalist areas of the six counties. Bonfires were lit in west Belfast and Derry as nationalists revelled in the significant and

historic victory.

## REACTION

The British government reacted swiftly to the announcement. Within two hours, the leader of the British House of Commons, Tory Cabinet Minister, Francis Pym, — who was Northern direct-ruler for a few months in 1973 and 1974 — called a meeting of representatives from all parties to discuss the unseating of Bobby Sands.

The threat this line of action posed to the future of British parliamentary democracy created a backlash in sections of the establishment media, followed by a mini — revolt inside all parties except the Unionists. It was obvious from the reaction that any attempt to unseat Sands would cause as much embarrassment to the British government as did his election. Pym quickly announced the impracticality of the unseating but declared that legislation banning prisoners from standing in future elections was being seriously considered.

The loyalist community was totally demoralised by the election victory. Loyalist politicians denounced the nationalist electorate as mindless terrorists and the UDA, the largest of the loyalist paramilitary groupings, went into emergency session to decide whether to escalate their murder campaign against the nationalist community.

The SDLP did a somersault in their reaction to the result. Contrary to what they were saying all along about how such an election win would be regarded as a victory for the IRA they now declared it was not a vote for violence.

Reaction from the Dublin government and politicians in the South was much more muted. Charles Haughey, the then prime minister, declared it a democratic result which had to be accepted.

International reaction to the result was incredible. Hundreds of television networks, journalists and photographers poured into Belfast to record what to them was a phenomenon.

## H-BLOCK DEATHS

Unfortunately the drama of Bobby Sands hunger-strike and his election as a Westminster MP was not enough to shift the British. He died on the 66th day of his fast and within three weeks his comrades Francis Hughes, Raymond McCreech and Patsy O'Hara followed him to a martyr's grave.

While the deaths did not shift Thatcher they had a profound impact on the nationalist people.

## LOCAL ELECTIONS

The first public test of the effects of the hunger-strikers deaths was reflected in the results at the six county local government elections on May 20th. H-Block candidates, wherever they stood, received overwhelming support. Anti-nationalists, like Gerry Fitt, who was twenty three years on Belfast City Council and three members of the Republican Clubs — Workers Party, were humiliated and lost their council seats to four H-Block candidates. The brother of dead hunger-striker Francis Hughes, topped the poll and set a new record for the highest number of votes cast in Magherafelt.

This was tangible evidence that the

tidal wave of sympathy displayed at the funerals of the dead hunger-strikers had settled down into a solid mass of electoral support.

The lack of direct involvement by the Republican Movement in the elections is now recognised as a serious miscalculation. It is now clear that an opportunity has been lost by republicans to make some permanent gains from the hunger-strike and to further erode the sway the collaborationist SDLP holds over the nationalist people.

### 26 COUNTIES ELECTIONS

The hunger-strike campaign was given another major boost when four hunger-strikers, Joe McDonnell, Kieran Doherty, Kevin Lynch and Martin Hurson and five other protesting prisoners — Tony O'Hara (brother of dead hunger-striker Patsy) Mairead Farrell, Sean McKenna, Paddy Agnew and Tom McAllister — stood as candidates in the southern general election.

The then incumbent prime minister in the south, Charles Haughey, had prevaricated over the timing of the general election, actually postponing it twice. His concern was for the growing sympathy throughout the twenty-six counties for the hunger-strikers and the damage being done to his image as the leader of a 'republican' party and the Dublin government.

This weakness, on a major issue related to the national question, taken against the background of a disastrous economic policy which had led to mass unemployment and rampant poverty throughout the South, spelt defeat for Haughey.

The nine areas selected for the prisoners to stand in, gave the widest possible geographical spread to the hunger-strike campaign and undoubtedly revitalised interest in the prisoners plight and gave a focus to the latent nationalism of the people in the twenty six counties.

The election of two prisoners to Leinster House and the respectable vote cast for the other seven prisoners caused a major sensation through the south and proved all the "experts" wrong. Predictions that the prisoners campaign would be ineffectual were tripping from the mouths and pens of those alleged to have their finger on the pulse of the electorate during the election.

The result demonstrated that Bobby Sands election was not a fluke and showed — contrary to the media expounded theory — that the people of the South cared about the prisoners and supported the republican cause. It focused world attention, yet again, on the hunger-strike and more importantly, it challenged the Southern political establishment to act.

But the election victory did not generate enough pressure to demonstratively shift the Free State establishment. Although shaken by the result they clung to their position and ignored the appeal from the hunger-strikers supporters to expell the British Ambassador and recall the Free State Ambassador from Britian. They snubbed the wishes of over forty-thousand people who voted for the prisoners in the same way as the British had, the previous month, when they ignored the democratic voice of the electorate of Fer-



● Polling station vigil in Belfast



● The happy parents of Paddy Agnew celebrate his election as TD for Louth in the 1981 Free State general election



■ KIERAN DOHERTY ■ PADDY AGNEW

managh/South Tyrone and let Bobby Sands die.

### SANDS BILL

Three months after the Southern election hunger-strike supporters were

oiling their machinery to contest yet another election — the Fermanagh/South Tyrone seat left vacant by the death of Bobby Sands.

From the day of Bobby Sands election, and long after his death, controversy raged inside the British House of Commons among the so-called defenders of democracy as to how best to disenfranchise the nationalist electorate of the six counties. They were at pains to ensure that the embarrassment caused by an IRA prisoner's election would never reoccur.

This they attempted to ensure by passing legislation banning prisoners from elections. The bill has since become known as the "Sands Bill" and is a testament to the true nature of British democracy — if the current law does not suit — change it to suit.

However while the British government thought they had closed one door



● Owen Carron with Sean Sands brother of the late Bobby Sands during Owen's election campaign

in the propaganda battle against the hunger-strikers, another one opened. Dafydd Thomas, Plaid Cymru MP, moved the writ for the by-election in Fermanagh/South Tyrone. It was set to take place on August 20th.

**OWEN CARRON**

A convention of H-Block activists from the constituency selected Owen Carron, Bobby Sands election agent, to stand as a proxy-political prisoner and challenge the anti-democratic manoeuvres of the British government.

He appealed to all political parties — particularly the SDLP — to stay out of the contest and not to split the nationalist vote. But the SDLP — bound by a declaration to contest the seat made in the wake of the barrage of criticism with which they were assaulted at the time of Bobby Sands' candidature — declared their interest in contesting the election.

For two weeks it appeared that the hunger-strike issue would be rent asunder in the by-election because of the SDLP's intervention but wise counsel prevailed and at the last minute the SDLP declared they would not contest.

**SPOILERS**

However, hot on the heels of their withdrawal, the Republican Clubs — the Workers Party nominated Tom Moore from Newry to contest the election. He was followed by two more candidates from England. One declared himself a peace lover the other a general amnesty candidate. With an Alliance Party candidate and an Official Unionist can-

didate that brought the number of contestants to six.

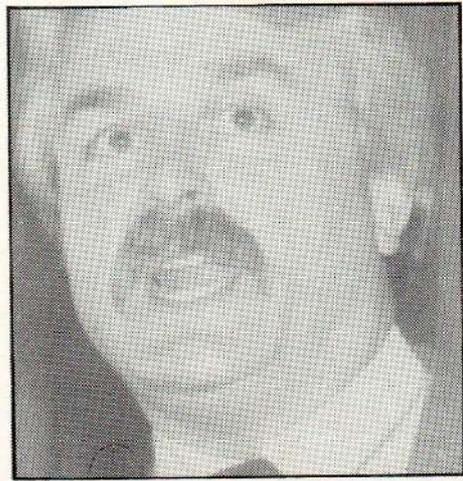
**CAMPAIGN**

The two major contenders were Owen Carron and Ken Maginnis who had temporarily removed his UDR uniform.

Carron's election workers suffered the same high level of harassment from the British forces during the campaign and his brother John and another election worker were fired on by a loyalist farmer for putting posters on poles close to his land.

Most disadvantages were outweighed by the advantage of having a candidate which the people could clearly see and relate to.

Owen Carron conducted an unpre-



■ **KEN MAGINNIS**  
UDR major

cedented campaign in the constituency. He visited sixty towns over the five day period preceding polling day. Thousands of posters were plastered everywhere and tens of thousands of leaflets were distributed.

To those working in the campaign it was obvious that Owen Carron was a very popular figure and that he would retain the seat for the prisoners. The main question was would he hold or increase Bobby Sands majority? In the event he polled 31,278 votes — a majority of 2,230 votes over Maginnis — and an increase of almost eight-hundred over Bobby Sands' majority.

The effects of the results were even more devastating than the election of Bobby Sands. It shook the London and Dublin governments and the SDLP leadership. The loyalists were predictably outraged, hypocritically denouncing the result as illegal due to mass personations. Loyalists paramilitaries wrecked the partially built home of Owen Carron's brother in a retaliatory bomb attack.

The election result showed that the nationalist community is firmly behind the prisoners demands and is a cause of major embarrassment to those so-called political leaders who refuse to stand up and challenge the British government over their death policy in the H-Blocks.

The publicity value of these electoral successes has had a shattering effect on those who not only oppose the prisoners but are also opposed to what the prisoners stand for — the freedom of this country.

# Election interventions



*DESPITE THE FACT that Sinn Fein has been contesting local elections, in the 26 counties for more than two decades, much comment has been passed and incorrectly interpreted about republican involvement in elections – north and south of the British imposed border – in the past several months.*

*Here we review republican interventions in the electoral process for the past century and more.*

REPUBLICAN INTERVENTION in the British electoral process dates back to the elections of Charles Kickham and O Donovan Rossa, while a political prisoner, between 1869 and 1875, to the Westminster Parliament. Five years later John Mitchel was elected MP for Tipperary and Cork City. When this election, in which he was returned unopposed, was declared invalid (because 'Mitchel had not purged himself of his felony') he stood again and was returned with an 80% majority against his opponent.

These men were Fenians, members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, jailed for their political affiliations and their opposition to British rule in Ireland. The question, therefore, of Republican intervention in electoral politics is not a new one and an exploration, even a cursory one, of such interventions gives an interesting and, at times, an illuminating insight into many of the questions which have bedevilled nationalist politics in Ireland for centuries. Constitutionalism versus physical force. Social issues versus national issues. Constitutional nationalism versus militant nationalism versus republicanism and the many and varied efforts by republicans to bring all these tendencies together against British colonial-



■ CHARLES  
KICKHAM



■ O'DONOVAN  
ROSSA



■ JOHN  
MITCHEL

ism. The period 1878–1887 is particularly interesting in this respect.

## THE FENIANS

The Fenian movement, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, was founded in 1858, and had as its objective the winning of Irish Independence by armed rebellion. In its reports and communications, incidentally, mention of the IRA is made for the first time. That apart, and more interestingly, Fenianism was the first truly nation-wide lay secular society which was

distinctly radical and committed to founding 'a Republic based on universal suffrage which shall secure for all, the intrinsic value for their labour. The soil of Ireland belongs to us, the Irish people, and to us it must be restored. We declare, also, in favour of absolute liberty of conscience, and the complete separation of Church and State.....' Fenianism was the first Irish political movement to channel the energies of agricultural labourers and small farmers — hitherto expressed through ribbonism and faction fighting — into the national organisation. By involvement in agrarian agitation and by a process of linking local discontents with the national question the Fenians fostered and developed a sense of national political consciousness. While their recourse to physical force came to little in the ill-fated and badly planned 'insurrection' of 1867 the IRB served as a school for sedition for the next generation.

All this lies outside the scope of this article, but in passing, it is worth mentioning James Connolly's view of this period, when he observed, that 'a close study of the events of that time would immensely benefit the militant socialists of all countries. It would help to demonstrate how the union of the forces of social discontent with the forces of political agitation converted the latter from a mere sterile Parliamentary impotent for good into a virile force transforming the whole social system and bringing a political revolution with-in the grasp of the agitators'.

The failure of the insurrection in 1867 and recriminations between the Irish and Irish American leaderships left the IRB considerably weakened. Many of its members had become involved in the Home Rule Movement of the 1870s which was led by Isaac Butt. Butt supported a system of Home Rule within a federal framework. He enjoyed the sympathy of many Fenians because of his efforts to secure amnesty for Fenian political prisoners. Following the election of 1874 with the backing of a Parliamentary party of about sixty Butt embarked upon a policy of convincing, by reason and debate, the British Government of the desirability of conceding Home Rule to Ireland based on the federal solution.

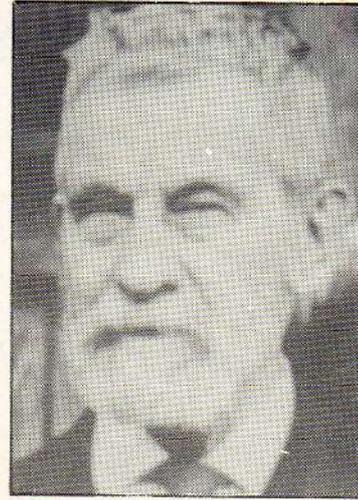
In 1875, Joseph Biggar, at that time a member of IRB which he joined while MP for County Cavan, initiated a policy of obstruction in the British House of Parliament. While this policy, aimed at delaying and frustrating the British Government from passing Irish coercion acts, outraged Butt, it was regarded with approval by even the most militant varieties of Nationalist opinion, including some prominent Fenians. Having said that, however, it should also be stressed that many Fenians, especially Kickam and O'Leary, remained totally opposed to any form of constitutionalism and the development of the IRB's attitude to the constitutionalists was an uneasy process, leading almost to the destruction of the IRB itself.

## NEW DEPARTURE

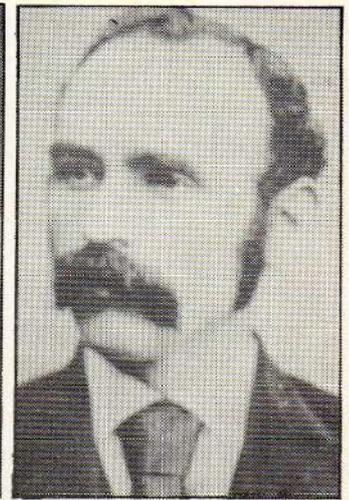
In 1877 Biggar was joined by Parnell and other Irish MPs and the policy of obstructionism and filibustering undertaken by them increased their standing among militant nationalists, especially the Clann na Gael (the IRB's American) leadership.

At the same time John Devoy was finding the relative absence of publicly expressed opposition to British rule in Ireland an impediment to enlisting foreign support for the Republican cause. The Clann na Gael leadership were already sold on the idea of an alliance of sorts with Parnell in which they hoped he would espouse separatism. Discussions between Parnell and individual Fenians, like J. J. O' Kelly and Dr. William O' Connor, led them to believe that Parnell was committed to the principle of absolute independence, something to which he was not in fact disposed. In 1878 Parnell was re-elected, with Fenian help and against Butt's wishes, as President of the Home Rule Confederation of Great Britain. At this point Devoy offered Parnell the 'New Departure' package and the support of American (Irish) nationalists on the following conditions:-

1. Abandonment of the federal demand and substitution of a general declaration in favour of self government.
2. Vigorous agitation of the land question on the basis of a peasant proprietary, while accepting concessions tending to abolish arbitrary eviction.



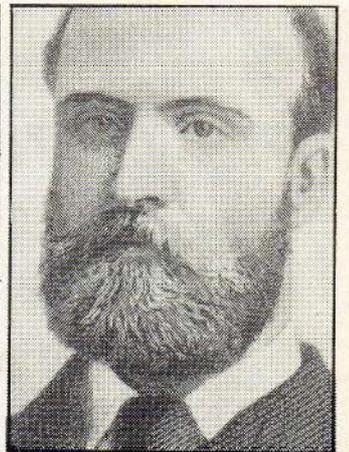
■ JOHN DEVROY



■ MICHAEL DAVITT



■ ISSAC BUTT



■ CHARLES PARNELL

3. Exclusion of all sectarian issues from the platform.
4. Party members to vote together on all imperial and home questions, adopt an aggressive policy and energetically resist coercive legislation.
5. Advocacy of all struggling nationalities in the British Empire and elsewhere.

Devoy further publicly suggested that a majority of members of Parliament, secured by such an alliance, should eventually meet as an Irish legislative 'making that declaration a signal for a war of independence' if the country 'were otherwise ready'. In relation to the land question he advocated involvement in the Land League, started in Connaught in 1879 by Michael Davitt and a handful of Fenian allies and poor tenants. While deeply involved in land agitation, this section of the Fenians also felt that the land question was the 'material for victory' in the sense that James Fintan Lalor had first advocated.... 'Let the occupiers of the soil refuse all further payment of rent to the present usurping proprietors, until the people, the true proprietors... have in national congress... decided what rents they are to pay and to whom'. Devoy further believed that the British government's certain refusal of the full Irish demand for land reform, (peasant proprietary was seen as more radical and far reaching a settlement than Butt's policy of the three F's\*) would create the condition for a withdrawal from the British Parliament.

In this belief (that the demands of land agitation could not be met by the British Government) at no time was Devoy advocating that the demand for Irish independence be suppressed in favour of agrarian agitation. On the contrary, he argued that the land question had to be expanded to give it a nationalist character. In fact he accepted the risk of Britain undercutting the agitation by conceding compromise demands, as a justifiable risk because 'good work will have been done, sound principles will have been inculcated and the country aroused and agitated'. In other words in the event of a failure to win complete victory Devoy felt that at least a step forward

\*The 3 F's were Fair rent, Fixity of tenure and Freedom to sell the tenement right.

would have been taken in the building up of nationalist forces. He called on the Fenians to enter political life to fight, in particular on the platform of land reform, and by doing so to strengthen their organisation and end their isolation.

The full political programme of the New Departure was never agreed upon let alone implemented. The IRB Supreme Council rejected it at a meeting in Paris in January 1879 although individual members were left free to take part in open political activity, though not to enter parliament.

### LAND LEAGUE

Furthermore, the economic crisis of Irish agriculture in 1879 plus the commencement of the agrarian agitation in Mayo reduced to some extent the relevance of these plans.

In recognition of this, Devoy modified his ideas while maintaining his political position. Instead of the type of movement outlined in the New Departure proposals he accepted a purely agrarian one as advocated by Davitt and was later to claim that he and Davitt 'speaking for large bodies of Fenians, although not official representatives' reached an agreement with Parnell in 1879. Parnell consistently denied such an agreement. It had four main points.

1. In the conduct of the public movement, as far as Parnell and Davitt were able to influence it there should not be anything said or done to impair the vitality of the Fenian movement or to discredit its ideal of complete national independence to be secured by the eventual use of physical force.

2. The demand for self government should not for the present be publicly defined, but nothing short of a national parliament with power over all vital national interests and an executive responsible to it should be accepted.

3. The settlement of the land question to be demanded should be the establishment of a peasant proprietary to be reached by compulsory purchase.

4. The Irish members of parliament elected through the public movement should form an absolutely independent party, asking and accepting no places, salaried or honorary, under the British government, either for themselves, their constituents or anyone else.

This policy was something of a gamble for Devoy, who while admitting that the movement could be sidetracked into mere reformism, strongly insisted that the 'demands of the Land League will not be granted by a Parliament of British Landlords'. Devoy insisted consistently that the Land League could provide a stepping stone to separation and that the refusal of the British Government to concede the Land Leagues demands could still create the condition for a possible withdrawal from the British parliament.

In the final analysis the New Departure policy was aimed at changing Fenian strategy. It called for a combination between revolutionary and constitutional nationalists on prescribed terms aimed at breaking the union of Ireland and Britain. The agrarian struggle was one of a series of its objectives aimed at a radical land settlement the pursuance of which would further revolutionary aims and create the potential for further revolutionary action.

### FENIANS

The Fenians were deeply involved in the Land League and in the agitation which continued from 1879 to 1881. Those Fenians at leadership level in the Land League certainly believed that by smashing landlordism in Ireland they would also smash the British connection. At the end of the day the British Government succeeded in undermining the impetus of the agrarian struggle by reaching a compromise with Parnell through the Land Act and the Arrears Act. During the height of the agitation the British had introduced internment and a Coercion Bill. In what is known as the Kilmainham Treaty in 1882 Parnell agreed to use his influence to restore order in Ireland while the British Government would release the prisoners, would deal with the question of rent arrears in a manner satisfactory to the tenants and would amend the Land Act of 1881 in certain ways, in particular by extending the benefit of its fair rent clauses to leaseholders. In fact the Land Act legalised the three 'F's', and while this did not ease the pressing social problems which remained especially in the West, it was seen to be a considerable victory.



● A Land League meeting in Kildare in 1881 where leasers of the Duke of Leinster were burned on a '98 pike



● The land courts introduced by Gladstone in 1881 sought to provide tenants with a forum to appeal against excessive rents and sought to halt the growing influence of the Land Leagues

In national terms, the power of the landlords was considerably reduced over large areas, the I.R.B. had become increasingly involved in mass organisation of the people and in agitational action by them together with localised armed actions. There was a partial undoing of the conquest but not the progression into a nationalist war of independence with full peasant backing as anticipated by many Fenians. This was based on the presumption, widespread among most quarters at that time, that the British would not concede the full demand of the land agitation. Parnell with whom an alliance of sorts — unofficial but there all the same — was forged did not subscribe to this view. He believed that a good measure of land reform, sufficient to end the agrarian social conflict, could be got from the British Parliament and that such reform would bring the landlords into the nationalist ranks and from there to a Home Rule Government.

Essentially Parnell was not a Republican. That such opposite positions governed the land agitation and that the entire Fenian leadership was not in agreement on the land issue is a key to the national question and speaks volumes on how it was possible for such a compromise to be forced upon the radical republican activists. The inevitable result was the integration of many ex-Fenians into conventional Parnellism. Involvement with constitutionalism had badly divided the I.R.B. and when Parnell's party itself split in 1887, the IRB split too. Up to this time regardless of the official I.R.B. attitude there had been a considerable Fenian involvement in constitutional politics. In fact 21 out of 83 listed Parnellite M.P.'s are believed to have been Fenians, 4 were believed to be Fenian supporters and 2 were regarded as ex-Fenians.

The conditions for a withdrawal from Westminster of Irish M.P.'s to set up an Irish Parliament with massive peasant support had been removed when Gladstone defused the land movement with his Land Act. The Land Act had detached a



● The burnt-out shell of the GPO in Dublin following the 1916 Rising. The Rising and its aftermath increased nationalist feeling but divisions remained on what future political course to take

sufficient number of Land Leagues to make the project impossible and anyway Parnell had never embraced such a policy. For many prominent Fenians the failure of even partial new departure policies was taken as an endorsement of their total reliance on a purely physical force strategy — there had been a number of significant physical force actions during the period covered here — and left the Fenians facing yet another bout of Irish/American factionalism as well as ongoing problems about finances and war materials. But, as stated earlier, the whole period was to serve as a school of sedition for the next generation.

### HOME RULE

Republican intervention in the British electoral process in this century, dates back to February 1917. A year had passed since the proclamation of the Irish Republic. In 1916, and many of the internees released before Christmas 1916 were back in Ireland. While they and other Republicans had differing political attitudes on future policy, the political climate during the eight months of their imprisonment had changed dramatically. A number of factors had contributed to this change.

Foremost of these were the executions by the British government of the leaders of the Easter Rising and the loss of credibility by John Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party among Nationalists. In 1914 a Home Rule Act for all Ireland, without any mention of a separate treatment for any Ulster county, had been passed by the British parliament and signed by the English King. The act had then been suspended for 12 months or for the duration of the war, a war in which at the behest of Redmond, many Irishmen had fought on the British side *'for the independence of small nations'*.

Now, with the war over, the British government's only response to such a sacrifice was to amend the Home Rule Act to exclude six of the Ulster counties and to repudiate the basic

nationalist idea of an undivided Ireland. In this climate the actions of those who had gone out in the 1916 rising, and the subsequent murders of their leaders was seen in sharp contrast to the collaborationist policies of the Irish Parliamentary Party, especially as such collaboration had achieved far less than had been promised.

Sinn Fein itself had changed. While still without a coherent policy on social and economic matters and with no clear idea of how it could achieve independence, it at least had rejected partition. Among its ranks it included a mixture of IRA volunteers who had gone out at Easter, I.R.B. men who were committed to an Irish Republic at all costs and many exponents of the orthodox constitutional Sinn Fein doctrine of pre-war days as preached by Arthur Griffith. While a new mood was sweeping the country Sinn Fein had virtually no organisation at all and nothing like a coherent political organisation needed to co-ordinate the new mood.

However with the death of J.J. O'Kelly, the M.P. for Roscommon and a by-election in that constituency scheduled for February 1917, Sinn Fein had its first opportunity to oppose Redmond's Party. Count Plunkett, father of Joseph Mary Plunkett and of two other imprisoned sons stood against Redmond's man.

Plunkett faced a number of practical disadvantages. His opponent was a well known local man. His election machine was inexperienced. Much of the constituency was snow-bound and he himself remained in England where he had been deported, ill, until a few days before polling. On top of that he remained ambiguous on whether he would take his seat at Westminster if elected. Furthermore, Sinn Fein had contested and badly lost a North Leitrim by-election in 1908, tho' it fought that election on Arthur Griffith's dual-monarchy policy.

Now, however, the bulk of dissident Nationalist voters were concerned about only one thing. That was, voting for a man who would not accept partition of Ireland in any form and against a party which had shown itself too easy or too willing

Nt. Roscommon Parliamentary Vacancy

# WHY YOU SHOULD SUPPORT COUNT PLUNKETT

1. BECAUSE he is a man of dignity and a man of learning
2. BECAUSE he represents all that is best in Irish Nationality
3. BECAUSE he is not a tool of any Political Party
4. BECAUSE he is so intent to promote the best interests of the Constituency
5. BECAUSE his sufferings, and the sufferings of his family, in the cause of Irish Nationality entitle him to your sympathy and active support
6. BECAUSE by returning Count Plunkett as your representative you do honour to yourselves and to your constituency
7. BECAUSE he is the only man of his rank today who is fit to represent Ireland at the Peace Conference to settle the fate of Small Nationalities

## VOTE FOR PLUNKETT!

● A campaign poster for Count Plunkett's campaign in the 1917 Roscommon election

to be duped into doing so. Plunkett won with a majority of almost twice as many votes as Redmond's man.

Afterwards he declared that he had been considering whether or not to represent the people of Roscommon in a 'foreign parliament' but had decided that his place was beside them in their own country, 'for it is in Ireland that the battle of Irish Liberty is to be fought'. While the press speculated that the writing was on the wall for Redmond's party, there was still no proper organisation to oppose him. In an effort to remedy this ten days after Easter 1917 over 1,200 delegates attended an 'Irish Assembly', convened in Dublin's Mansion House, by Count Plunkett. Sixty eight public bodies were represented and forty one Sinn Fein cumainn. The only practical step agreed upon was that an organising committee be formed to establish some form of organisation for the next general election. At the same time there was an affirmation proclaiming Ireland a separate nation and asserting her right to freedom from all foreign control and denying the authority of any foreign parliament in Ireland. The acceptance of such an affirmation was evidence of the continuing hardening of Nationalist thinking which was now taking its national demand far beyond the Home Rule Act on the statute book. At the same time Count Plunkett had declared that a policy of abstention from Westminster was an indispensable commitment for all members of such a new organisation as might form his committee, which, with another by-election pending at Longford, now had the opportunity of a further electoral test.

Here the candidate chosen was Joe MacGuinness, at the time a prisoner serving penal servitude in Lewes prison. His name went before the electorate with the simple slogan 'Put him in to get him out'. MacGuinness, incidentally had no wish to let his name go forward as he felt that to do so would compromise the traditional republican attitude of contempt for 'parliamentary methods'. The IRB, mindful of the need to retain a republican influence over the new political movement, ignored MacGuinness's reservations, with the result that Mac Guinness, after a recount, won by thirty eight votes over the

Redmond candidate.

Redmond could clearly no longer afford to consider partition on any terms — the prevailing mood in the country was determinedly against it. He rejected partition but agreed with Lloyd George to an Irish Convention, a device clearly suited to British needs, not least because of American pressure, insofar as it passed the buck from the British government to the Irish unionist and nationalist 'factions'. While this appeared plausible in British terms, it was of course completely impractical and doomed to failure. Sinn Fein decared its intention to boycott the proceedings and before the convention could get down to its deliberations, another Sinn Fein candidate Eamonn De Valera was returned as MP for East Clare with a majority of 2,975 over the Redmonite, a popular local man named Lynch. By now released Republican prisoners were being greeted on their return to Ireland by enthusiastic crowds.

Against this background the re-organisation of the IRA continued with predictable counter-measures by the British government, who continued to ignore the open military organisation of the UVF in the North. The election of another Sinn Fein candidate, William Cosgrove, in Kilkenny by a two to one majority led to more repression from the British. Arrests increased and during a period when some political commentators were noting that the lack of really positive Sinn Fein policies was giving rise to serious second thoughts among nationalist voters, the British government's ill-treatment of those arrested became known.

### STIMULUS

Over forty republican prisoners were being force-fed in an effort by the British to break a hunger-strike by the prisoners in pursuance of political status. The Republican prisoners, as part of their campaign were refusing to work or to wear prison clothes. They had smashed their cell windows, demanded segregation from ordinary prisoners and were generally refusing to co-operate with the prison regime.

Thomas Ashe died after force-feeding and the brutal details of the force-feeding plus the conditions in which the prisoners were being held were read by an outraged public. Thomas Ashe was buried on September 30th 1917, following a funeral attended by some 40,000 people and marked by a day of mourning throughout nationalist Ireland.

All commentators agreed that a new and much needed stimulus had been given to the Sinn Fein movement. The Daily Express remarked 'The circumstances of Ashe's death and funeral have made 100,000 Sinn Feiners out of 100,000 constitutional nationalists', while the Daily Mail recalled, that a month earlier, Sinn Fein, despite its electoral successes, had been a waning force. It said, 'It had no practical programme, for the programme of going further than anyone else cannot be so described. It was not making headway ... but Sinn Fein today is pretty nearly another name for the vast bulk of youth in Ireland'.

In October 1917, a convention in Dublin was able to give more coherence to the political side of the national movement, when two thousand people including delegates from over a thousand Sinn Fein cumainn agreed on a new broadly nationalist constitution and elected a 24 person national executive. Despite the fact that the movement owed much of its public support to the discipline and organising skill of the republicans, its weakness, with the election of many anti-physical force constitutionalists to the executive, was becoming obvious to close observers. However, with the need to build a genuinely broad based national movement, which drew maximum support from all nationalist tendencies while still permitting the republicans to manoeuvre in the background, their differences were successfully covered up, at least from the attention of the general populace. The National Executive contained such diverse personalities as Eoin MacNeill who had tried to cancel the 1916 rising and Cathal Brugha, an uncompromising Republican who was badly wounded during the rising. Interestingly, MacNeill headed the poll by more than 200 votes over Brugha who was his closest rival.

Against such political manoeuvrings the I.R.A. stepped up their raids for arms and drilling and re-organisation continued.



● The principle duty of the executive is to put the Volunteers in a position to complete by force of arms the work begun by the men of Easter Week... The Volunteers are notified that the only orders they are to obey are those of their own executive"

An interesting insight to their attitude to the new Sinn Fein movement, in which some of them held executive positions, is given in a letter from the army executive, which had come to light some months earlier: "The principle duty of the executive is to put the Volunteers in a position to complete by force of arms the work begun by the men of Easter Week ... the volunteers are notified that the only orders they are to obey are those of their own executive". They (the volunteers) were reminded that, in the past, the conjunction of Fenianism with constitutional politics had led to the abandonment of physical force as a policy and were warned to join Sinn Fein only in order to propagate the principles of their own organisation which was the only one to which they owed allegiance.

Sinn Fein, attempting to win 'moderate' nationalists to its side was much embarrassed by this letter and by the increasing actions of armed volunteers throughout the country. In particular, the actions of groups of volunteers, especially in the West of Ireland, in commandeering private land (with compensation for the owners) in the name of the Irish Republic and ploughing it up for food cultivation as a necessary precaution against famine, caused some discomfort to the Sinn Fein executive, especially, given the criticism of these and other 'ill-considered agitations' by the Catholic Cardinal Logue and by many constitutional nationalists.

Against such a background Sinn Fein fought and lost three by-elections in the early part of 1918. However none of these by-elections — a consoling factor for Sinn Fein — could be said to provide a representation of a cross section of the country as a whole. All three defeats were at the hands of the old Home Rule Nationalist party; one in Waterford and the other two in South Armagh and East Tyrone. None of the three results were seen as decisive defeats for Sinn Fein, given the lack of organisation in the northern counties and the fact that the Waterford by-election, caused by the death of John Redmond, was contested by his son.

### CONSCRIPTION

The results showed that while Sinn Fein was still a very vital political force that its strength lay, not in clear policies or organisation, but in the enthusiasm, discipline and organ-



● Eamon de Valera addresses an anti-conscription meeting in Ballaghadreen in 1918

isational abilities of the Republican volunteers. The extension, by the British government, of the Conscription Act to Ireland on April 9th 1918, was to make things easier for them. The Catholic Bishops in Ireland unanimously condemned conscription as did local public bodies all over Ireland and the Irish Nationalist Party left the British House of Commons in a block and returned to Ireland. Such an endorsement of abstentionism was obviously welcome to Sinn Fein and on April 18th an unprecedented conference representing all sections of nationalist opinion issued — in consultation with the Irish Catholic Hierarchy — a call for 'all true Irishmen to resist (conscription) by the most effective means at their disposal'. The hierarchy, for their part, declared conscription to be 'an oppressive and inhuman law' and stated that the Irish people had the right to resist it by all means consonant with the law of God.

In such an atmosphere, tolerance to I.R.A. activities

increased, and increased still further when the British Government arrested Sinn Fein leaders on the strength of a 'German Plot', which the British government declared in a sensational proclamation 'would be put down'. Sinn Fein, having been given notice of the pending arrests through an I.R.A contact in Dublin Castle, simply made its political leadership open for arrest, while those with military associations went on the run. The result was as they had correctly anticipated and in a by-election in East Cavan, Griffith, back in gaol, won easily with a majority of 1,204.

Continued arrests and harassment increased the popular prestige of Sinn Fein and the volunteers while the anti-conscription campaign permitted a vehicle for recruitment and spreading republican influences. The British temporarily abandoning their conscription idea, initiated a voluntary recruiting campaign and one indication of the weight of nationalist opinion of the old Redmonite school was that, despite an efficient counter campaign by Sinn Fein, 14,013 voluntary recruits were secured for the British Army.

The winning over of such nationalist votes was to be the principle task which faced Sinn Fein in the general election called for December, 1918. Sinn Fein faced many diverse disadvantages in this election, including censorship and the arrests of consecutive Sinn Fein election directors. But the quickness with which the election was called was certainly in its favour, as was the greatly enlarged new register which almost trebled the previous Irish electorate and the extension of the vote to all males over twenty one and to women over thirty. The poor people and the young people, always supportive of republicanism were voting in greater numbers than before. This allied with the number of prominent nationalists of the old school who came out publicly in support of Sinn Fein candidates and the failure of the Nationalist Party to muster an election machine, in no less than 26 constituencies, meant that these constituencies, representing nearly a quarter of the total Irish electorate, went to Sinn Fein even before polling day.

The Sinn Fein election manifesto made it clear that Sinn Fein stood for an Irish Republic and that its elected candidates, refusing to attend at Westminster, would form a national assembly in Dublin. The results of the election were Sinn Fein 73 seats, Unionists 26. The Nationalist Home Rule Party retained

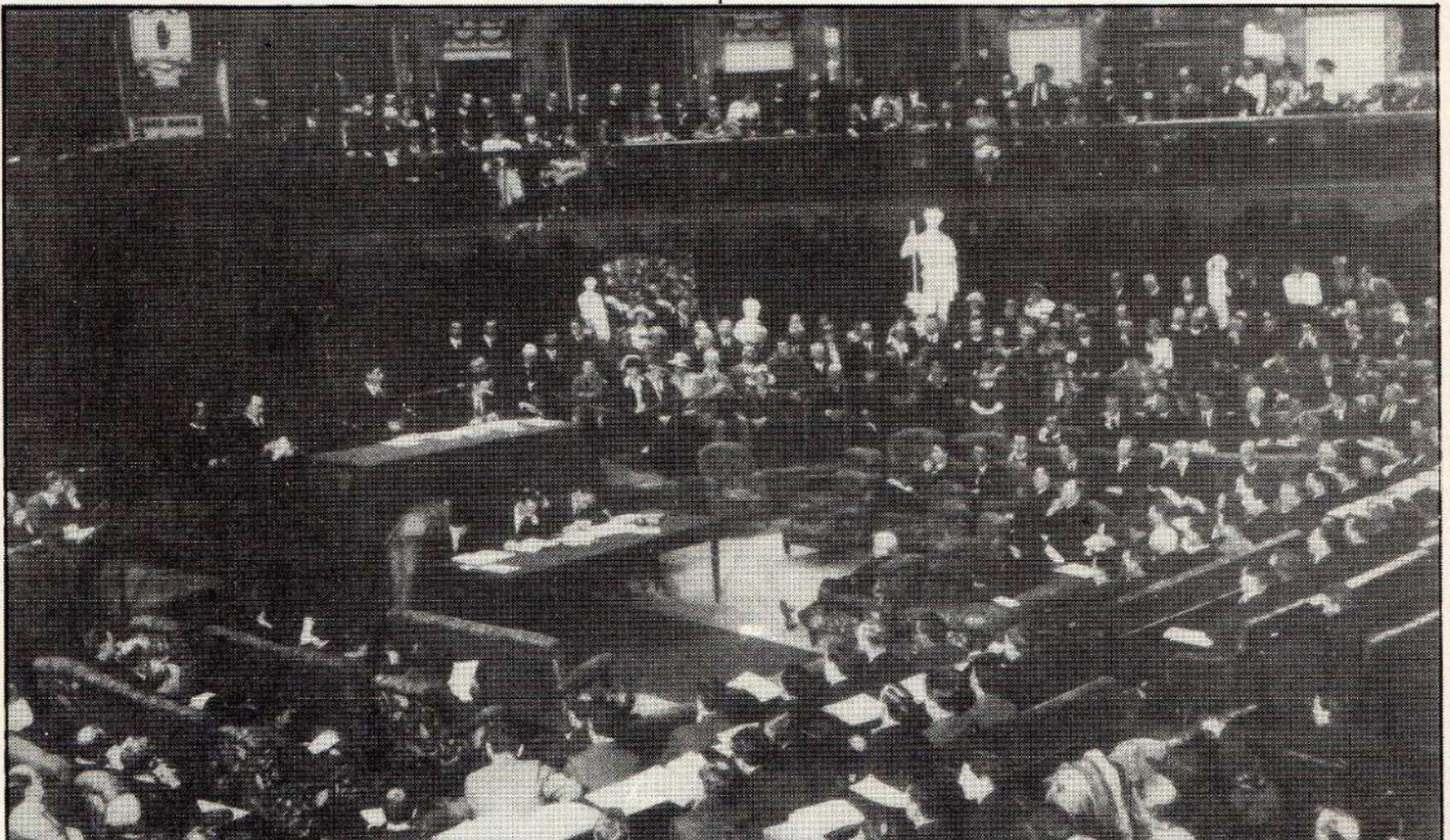
only 6 seats, four of which it held thanks to an electoral pact with Sinn Fein. Of the Unionist vote there was a unionist majority in only four of the nine Ulster counties and in only one of these, Co. Antrim, was it as high as two to one. Equally interesting was that although Sinn Fein with a vote of 485,105 had won nearly all the nationalist seats, 237,293 nationalists voted for the Nationalist Party, and, presumably, against Sinn Fein.

Despite this however, for the first time in Irish history a party demanding total sovereign independence for Ireland, had received a massive national mandate from the Irish people and the Republic, proclaimed in arms in 1916, was ratified by popular vote. The old Nationalist Party, which had dominated Irish (constitutional) politics for over thirty five years and held sixty eight seats in the British House of Commons had been virtually obliterated, at least in terms of seats. Sinn Fein won 47% of all votes cast and almost 65% of the votes cast in what afterwards was to become known as 'the 26 counties'.

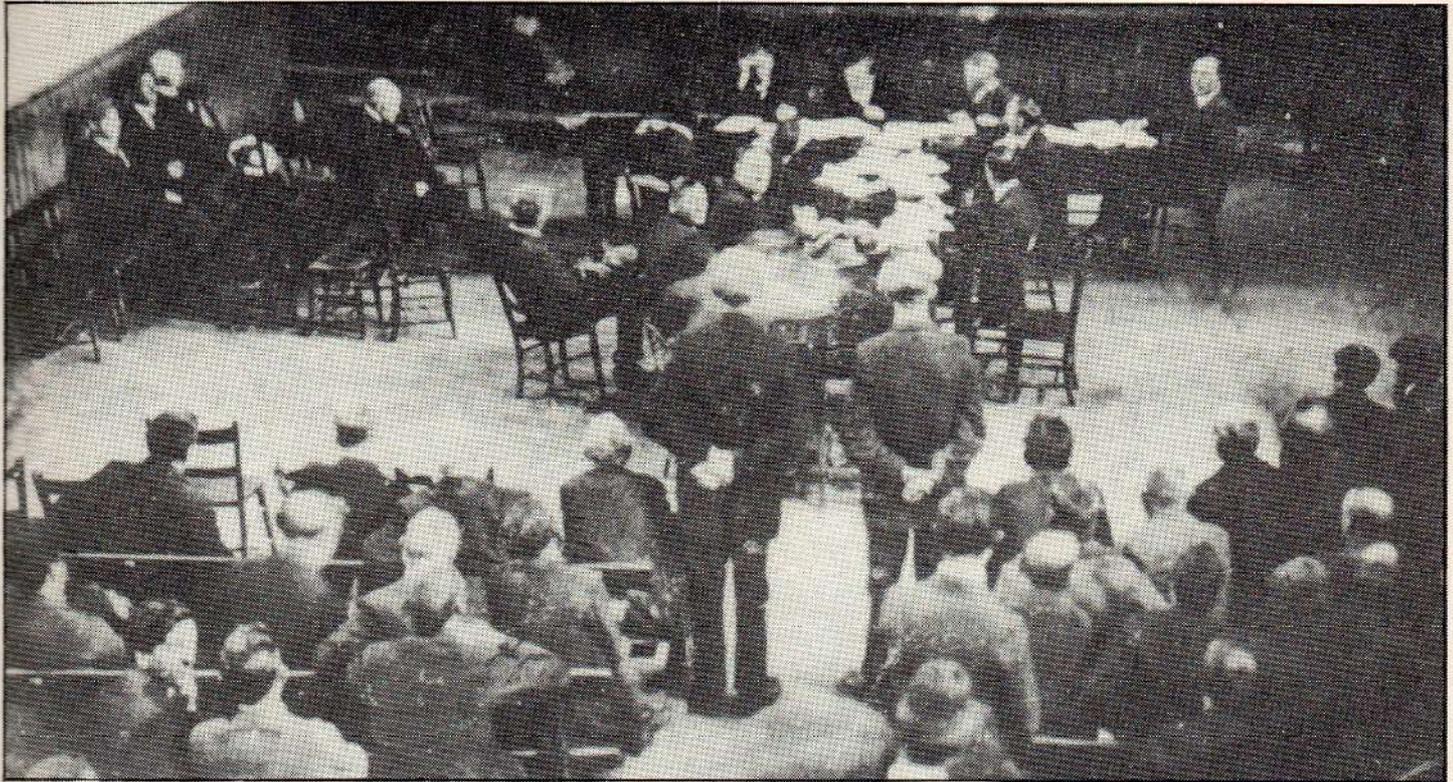
### DAIL EIREANN

Early in January 1919 Sinn Fein representatives convened the constituent assembly promised in their manifesto. The successful candidates in all Irish constituencies, of whatever political complexion, were invited to take their seats in Dail Eireann at its opening session on 21st January. As expected only the members of parliament elected as Sinn Fein candidates attended. They approved a provisional constitution, endorsed a declaration of independence, appointed delegates to the Peace Conference in Versailles — sanctioned a message to the free nations of the world and adopted a democratic programme of social and economic reform.

While, initially, merely a de jure government the 1st Dail were quickly successful in establishing some really workable ministries. In particular, the Ministry of Finance, which raised £358,000 in a 'Dail Eireann National Loan', in Local Government to the extent that by 1920 virtually all local bodies switched their allegiance from the Local Government Board to the Dail Local Government ministry, and in Agriculture where a Land Bank, which advanced small loans for land purchase, flourished. The most successful aspect of the 1st Dail machinery was in the system of 'Dail Courts' or Sinn Fein



● The first meeting of Dail Eireann, convened by Sinn Fein but open to all elected representatives of the people regardless of political hue, held in the Mansion House, Dublin, in January 1919



● By 1920 political commentators were beginning to refer to Sinn Fein as the 'de facto government in three-quarters of Ireland' and the spread of revolutionary republican courts emphasised this fact

Courts which made decisions in various spheres from land to criminal activity and which managed to supplant to a very large degree the British judicial system.

All this took place against the background of an increasingly escalating I.R.A. campaign to the point where even British political commentators were beginning to refer to the Dail and Sinn Fein as the 'de facto government in three-quarters of Ireland'.

In the local government elections of 1920 Sinn Fein won a overwhelming endorsement of their position. In Ulster, both Tyrone and Fermanagh County Councils with twenty three town councils were out of unionist control. Unionists had a majority in only twenty two.

In the meantime the British government had passed their Better Government of Ireland Bill — a throw back to the Home Rule days with the added mixture of two domestic bicameral parliaments in Ireland — one for the six north easterly counties and the other for the remaining twenty-six counties. An all-Ireland council with equal representation for the two parts of Ireland was to provide a forum for six and twenty-six county interests and there were to be provisions whereby various functions of both parliaments could be transferred to the council. The Westminster Parliament was to retain control of all imperial concerns, including trade, customs and excise, defence and foreign affairs. As can be seen, the powers devolved to the two partitionist parliaments were very limited. Finally the Act declared that if the majority of members of either parliament had not taken their oath of allegiance to the British Crown within fourteen days of the date fixed for the opening of the Parliaments, then the assembly in question would be dissolved and that part of Ireland administered as a crown colony.

This Act came nominally into force on May 3rd 1921. On May 19th the first Catholic Viceroy of Ireland, Lord Fitzalan, came into office. He issued a proclamation summoning the 'Parliament of Northern Ireland' and the 'Parliament of Southern Ireland' to meet in June. Elections were to take place in the twenty-six counties on May 19th and in the six counties on May 24th. The House of Commons of 'Northern Ireland' was to have fifty two members; that of 'Southern Ireland' was to have one hundred and twenty eight. The six counties were to be entitled to send thirteen M.P.'s to Westminster, the twenty-six counties to send thirty-three.

While Sinn Fein rejected the 'Better Government of Ireland Act' it fought the elections on the premise that they were

to take place as demonstrations (as decreed by the Dail) of the peoples will and were to be regarded as elections for the Second Dail. Elections for the Senate were not to be recognised as the constitution's proposal for these bodies by the British were regarded as undemocratic, a certain number of Senators being nominated by the British Government. The representatives of all Ireland as elected would constitute the Dail and would be permitted to take their seats on subscribing to the Republican oath. That Sinn Fein contested this essentially partition election was undoubtedly making partition a reality but contest it they did with 124 Sinn Fein representatives being returned without opposition in any constituency in the twenty-six counties.

In the six counties, the unionists led by Craig won forty out of fifty-two seats.

### TREATY

Tyrone and Fermanagh returned nationalist and republican majorities, while Down and Armagh elected republican MP's. The unionists formed, as expected, the six county government which was boycotted by the Irish Nationalist Party and Sinn Fein. Stormont was opened by the British monarch, George V on June 22nd 1921. Partition was now a reality and the truce negotiations which were to follow between the republican leadership and the British government merely formalised this arrangement.

Sinn Fein split on the treaty and, by a majority of seven, Dail Eireann recommended the people of Ireland to surrender the Republic proclaimed in 1916, ratified by democratic sanction in 1918 and defended since its proclamation by immeasurable effort and sacrifice. Sixty-four TD's voted for acceptance of the treaty and fifty-seven voted against.

A proper analysis of why this happened — or the bloodshed which followed — is outside the scope of this article, dealing as we do here, merely with republican involvement in the electoral process. While every effort has been made to do this against an outline of the social and political conditions which prevailed — and of the forces at play within both British and nationalist camps — to get a detailed view of this, or any other, period readers are advised to read any of the many informative studies available.

For our purposes it is sufficient to state that the treatyites formed a provisional government and prepared to implement the treaty while the republicans prepared to defend the Republic. On March 8th 1922 the British government passed the Irish Free State (Agreement) Bill, which, among other

things, stipulated that an election should be held before July 31st, to elect a provisional parliament which would be ratified and given powers, under a Free State Constitution, by another British act which was to be passed no later than December 6th, 1922.

A pact was agreed between the Republicans and the Treatyites in which it was agreed that this election would not be considered as deciding the issue of the treaty, but as creating a government to preserve peace.

It provided for a national coalition government. Sinn Fein was to put forward a panel of candidates; sixty six nominated by the treatyites and fifty eight by the republicans. The new government would consist of four republicans, five pro-treaty members, a President, to be elected by the Dail -- presumably pro-treaty -- and the Minister of Defence, to be elected by the army -- and therefore most likely to be a republican given the army's opposition to the treaty.

Contrary to the agreements of the pact the new Free State Constitution appeared in the newspapers the following day. This had the obvious and intended consequence of confusing the election results. The treaty party proclaimed the return of 94 coalition candidates as an endorsement of the treaty while the republican faction obviously contested this. The constitution for the Free State was in fact the British government's interpretation of the treaty -- a diluted Home Rule type of arrangement and a basis upon which republicans obviously could not co-operate. The disaster of becoming involved in the election for the Second Dail had tied the parliamentary republicans to a semantical debate about the integrity and status of a "Third Dail" which had, in fact, been diluted to a Constituent Assembly, tied to implementing British policy and supplied with British legislation and British guns for that purpose.

Then, with the country swept by rumour, with the IRA holding on to their garrisoned positions and Belfast fired by pogroms, Eamonn de Valera awaited a call from Michael Collins to forward the names selected by his party for the coalition cabinet. That call, understandably, never came. Sinn Fein -- a nationalist movement more than a doctrinaire republican party -- was broken and while the legitimacy of the First Dail remained intact, de jure legitimacy was to be no match for the de facto control exerted ruthlessly by those who now formed the first Free State government.

### OPTIONS

For parliamentary republicans -- with the repudiation by the IRA of all civil control and a policy of coercion from the parliament itself -- only a limited number of options were available. Some held the view that until the Second Dail was formally resolved no other assembly should be recognised as legal. Among these, some contended that those deputies who had broken their oath by conspiring to overthrow the Republic had forfeited their right to sit in Dail Eireann and that the Dail deputies who had remained faithful to the Republic would have the constitutional right to act as the 'Second Dail'. Others, including de Valera, believed that republican TD's should go and claim their seats, whether in a 'Second' or a 'Third Dail'. He discussed this with Mulcahy (of the Free State government) who insisted that the treaty must be accepted as a condition for attendance in the parliament. This the parliamentary republicans rejected.

In fact, as a means of keeping the de jure government -- Dail Eireann -- in being, the IRA initiated a meeting of republican deputies who had remained faithful to the Republic. This meeting was held on September 9th, 1922. It constituted itself as the "Second Dail", elected de Valera as President and appointed an Emergency Government.

This action, taken by the army, was in accordance with a resolution of Dail Eireann which provided for the army having the power to proclaim an emergency government if enemy action at any time prevented democratic means of securing a republican government.

This re-constituted republican government was not able to function -- a fact which Liam Mellows was at pains to

criticise. Although regarded by a large section of the population as the only de jure government it could do little more than represent the protest against the seizure of power by the pro-treaty party and place the logical and constitutional facts of the situation on record by means of statements and proclamations.

### FIGHTING SUSPENDED

In May 1923, the defence of the Republic by armed struggle was suspended. From April 1922 until May 1923, the fighting had raged throughout the country until the republican forces, encircled and isolated, were forced to dump arms. The army had lost some of its best leaders. The republican institutions had been smashed and British interests were being protected "with an economy of English lives".

The Free State government called a general election for August 27th, 1923. Although 11,316 republicans were still interned Sinn Fein contested eighty seven seats on an abstentionist ticket -- because of the oath to the Free State constitution and the English king. Harassment of election workers, arrests and attacks on Sinn Fein members (one man was killed) seriously disrupted Sinn Fein's election machine. Despite this they returned 44 TD's. The Free State party won 63 seats. Later, in by-elections in November 1924, Sinn Fein increased its vote in all five constituencies contested. The republican underground government of the Second Dail continued to meet -- in consultation now with those TD's elected in 1923 and 24 -- and although the republican vote continued to rise in every by-election contested since the general election of 1923, massive discriminatory laws against republicans were forcing more and more activists -- released from prison or home from a life 'on the run' -- into exile. The Free State government's system of patronage and its use of the oath to the Free State constitution as a condition of employment in almost every sphere of work, made it most difficult for republicans to live in Ireland. In 1925 more than 30,000 people emigrated to countries outside Europe.

The victory of 1918 was reduced to ashes. Nine short years after the Easter rising -- exhausted and demoralised by a bloody war against the British and by a shorter but bloodier war between Irishmen -- the Irish people had nothing but partition and embitterment to show for their aspirations and struggle.

### REALISATION

Republican Ireland is still recovering from the effects of that period. Partition, with its effects, has become one of the single greatest obstacles to the unity of the Irish people.

Republicans have contested elections since then -- with varying degrees of success -- in twenty-six county, six county and Westminster elections. There is not and never has been a republican principle on the issue of intervening in the electoral process although the Republican Movement has split on a number of occasions on the issue of attendance in colonial, neo-colonial or imperialist institutions. The Movement has suffered to some degree through the years from the effects of the various tendencies which have been in the ascendancy during different periods. Whether constitutional, militaristic or revolutionary, their lack of complete success -- inevitable in the absence of a proper social and political consciousness -- in achieving conditions by which the Irish people can re-establish the Republic has tended to thwart and obstruct efforts to apply the proper mixture of all three strategies to this end. Only now, with a protracted war in the six counties -- and the increasing politicisation which flows from it -- sixty three years after 1918, is there the start of the beginning of a realisation of the need to secure such a strategy. ■

**SOURCES:** *'Land and the National Question in Ireland, 1858-82'* by Paul Bew.  
*'Revolutionary Underground'* by Leon O'Broin.  
*'The Modernisation of Irish Society 1848-1918'* by Joseph Lee  
*'Ourselves Alone'* by Robert Kee  
*'The Irish Republic'* by Dorothy McArdle  
*'Northern Ireland -- The Orange State'* by Michael Farrell

# Owen Carron

**Anti-H-Block/Armagh political prisoner candidate  
MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone**

OWEN CARRON is a twenty-eight-year-old, unemployed school teacher from Macken in County Fermanagh.

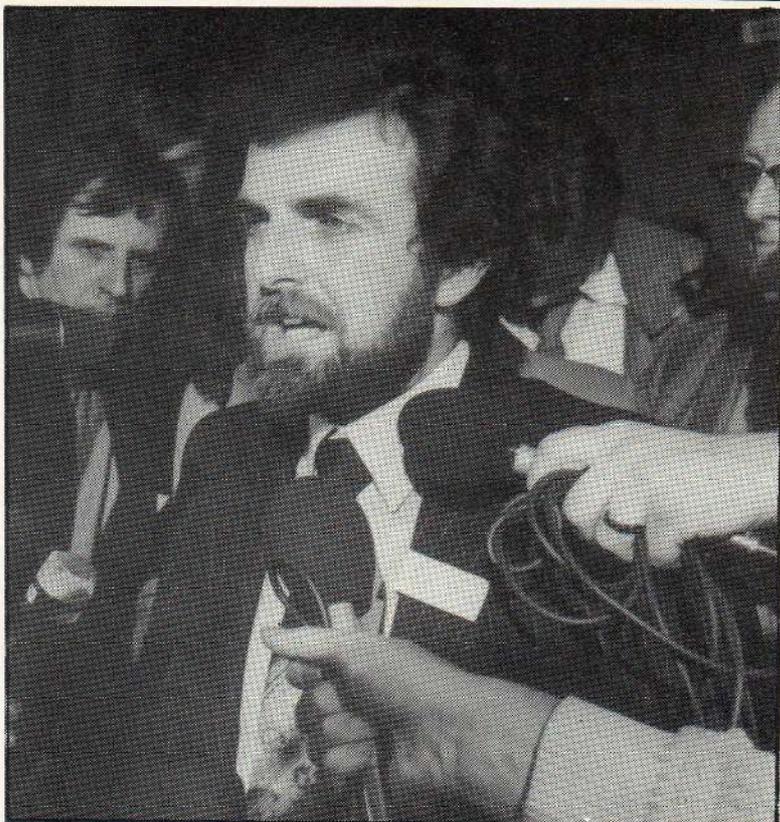
He has been involved in the Irish struggle for over ten years and came to national and international prominence as election agent for the late Bobby Sands MP who died on May 5th, after 66 days on hunger-strike.

In the subsequent by-election Carron stood, on a broad based political platform, as an H-Block candidate and increased the Sands majority over the unionist candidate who was a former member of the UDR — a loyalist regiment of the British army.

Like the Sands election his election focused international attention on the hunger-strike and on the British governments' war in Ireland.

He has travelled extensively abroad arguing for a resolution of the hunger-strike based on the prisoners five demands and has caused considerable embarrassment to the British government.

Here he gives his views on the significance his election success has had on the hunger-strike campaign and the national liberation struggle.



**IRIS:** Why did you contest the Fermanagh/South Tyrone by-election?

**O.C.:** Well obviously there was a new by-election caused by the death of the late MP Bobby Sands. The British government refused to allow a prisoner to stand. They brought in a special law to prevent prisoners standing in the new election. It was then up to a "live" candidate and it so happened that I was the candidate because of my close affinity with the prisoners and with the Bobby Sands election campaign.

**IRIS:** How significant is your victory for the prisoners struggle and the overall struggle for national liberation?

**O.C.:** My victory is significant because it proves once again that the prisoners have electoral support, not just sympathy, and the fact that I increased the electoral

majority of Bobby Sands, proves that a growing number of people stand behind the prisoners.

It is also significant in the national struggle. I stood as a broad nationalist candidate. Everybody understood — indeed the media played up the fact — that I am a member of Sinn Fein. So the result shows the people had no qualms about voting for a person who is a member of Sinn Fein. I believe that people have come to the conclusion that the grey area has been removed from politics in Ireland. You are either for the prisoners, or you are against them. You are either for Irish independence, or for British domination.

**IRIS:** What do you say to those people who claim your election campaign and the result further polarises the divisions between the Nationalist and Loyalist

communities?

**O.C.:** Britain bears the responsibility for bringing division to this country and for perpetuating that division. It is Britain and its policies that have polarised the situation here. The only obvious remedy to the situation is for the British to withdraw its forces, its government and its rule and allow the people to come together and form a government that is acceptable to all the people in Ireland.

**IRIS:** Many people believe you could highlight the prisoners' course more dramatically if you took your seat in the British House of Commons. Why don't you?

**O.C.:** I was elected on a policy of not taking my seat. I refuse to take my seat because I am an Irish republican and because I don't think that parliament has

any legitimate right to rule over any part of my country. I don't see why I should attend a British parliament. I wish to take my seat in an Irish parliament when and wherever it is convened.

Some people say we could highlight the H-Block situation by attendance at Westminster. The H-Block issue is well known at Westminster. So well known, that they allowed the last MP to die on hunger-strike and so well known that they brought in a special law to prevent another H-Block prisoner standing. There is no need for me to go to Westminster to tell them about the H-Blocks, they know about it only too well.

## POLITICAL STRUGGLE

**IRIS:** The Republican Movement has engaged itself in a number of election battles since the hunger-strike began. Does this in your opinion represent a shift away from armed struggle to solely a political struggle?

**O.C.:** There is no shift from armed struggle. An intergral part of the Republican Movements' strategy is based on the use of armed struggle to remove the British military presence. Armed struggle backed by mass political struggle is the only way the British will be removed from this country. All wars — and this one is no different — are about determining political power and who should govern a country. Parallel with the use of physical force there must be a political programme. What is being fought here is a political war and therefore we must have a political organisation and we must engage in political battles, like the election battles we have successfully fought and won. Those elections have been significant in the overall context of the war.

## FUTURE ELECTIONS

**IRIS:** What attitude do you think Republicans should have to future elections north and south of the border?

**O.C.:** If it is beneficial to the advancement of the freedom struggle for republicans to get involved in elections then I think they should. It has been proved that electoral success is a potent force in the situation. We are talking about coming to power in this country. At the end of the day — when the fighting has ended — we have to go to the people and to gain electoral power and if we can go some way along that road while the war is going on — so much the better.

**IRIS:** As a member of Sinn Fein and an H-Block candidate do you see yourself able to advance republican policies in your area?

**O.C.:** I stood as an H-Block candidate not as a member of Sinn Fein. At this present juncture it is very difficult for me to concentrate on social and economic issues. But, as I stated in my election manifesto, I do provide a service in which people can have their problems highlighted



● Owen Carron on election 'walkabout' enjoys a joke with people in Newtownbutler



● Jubilant supporters outside Enniskillen technical college celebrate Owen Carron's election as MP thereby reaffirming the mandate given to Bobby Sands on behalf of the political prisoners

and dealt with where possible. I do deal with social issues and all sorts of other problems such as harassment by the occupation forces. At this point in time I'm a H-Block MP but as time progresses and the H-Block issue is resolved I can then make the transfer to being a republican MP, fighting the national, social, economic and cultural battles of our people.

**IRIS:** Do you think the SDLP's influence as a political party is waning?

**O.C.:** I would hope so. I think it is obvious from the previous two by-elections in Fermanagh/South Tyrone, where they could not — because of the political risk — put forward a candidate, that they are losing ground. They no longer are

the representatives of the Nationalist people. Whatever claim they might have had to that role has now been shifted away from them because of their refusal to take a stand on the H-Block issue.

I believe that the people are more and more turning to the Republican Movement to be the representatives of the nationalist people.

**IRIS:** What impact do you think the deaths of the hunger-strikers is having on nationalist opinion in Ireland?

**O.C.:** It has hardened the nationalist people and solidified them. It has given them a fresh insight into the true situation in the six counties. It has shown that Britain is prepared to put the boot, as always, into the Irish people, and that



● Owen Carron acknowledges the people's gesture of solidarity with the prisoners

at this point in time they are putting the boot into the weakest section of our people who are the prisoners.

The middle ground, as I said earlier is rapidly eroding and the people are either pro-prisoner or pro-British. More and more ordinary Irish people are coming to the conclusion that Britain had better get out of this country and so they stand with the prisoners and the prisoners organisations.

### IRA CAMPAIGN

**IRIS:** Turning now to the war situation. What is your attitude to the IRA's campaign?

**O.C.:** I support the objectives of the IRA, just as tens of thousands of ordinary people on this island support them. I see the IRA as the only organisation capable of eventually driving the British government and its army out of this country.

I nor the thousands of people who support the IRA want a war situation in our country. If there was some other way then I would personally welcome it. But the facts — contemporary and

historical — show that armed struggle is the only way.

Look to any country which was dominated by the major colonial powers. How did they achieve national sovereignty other than by the overthrow of the occupying force, by the use of arms. The struggle here is no different. All the parallels are there for those who are interested in finding them.

**IRIS:** The IRA shoot RUC, UDR and RUC reservists, all of whom come from the Protestant community. This being construed by many quarters — particularly the media — as a sectarian war. What is your view?

**O.C.:** Well firstly, I'm not a spokesman for the IRA nor am I a military strategist. To develop your line of questioning to its logical conclusion it would be fair to assume that the IRA is a racist, anti-working class organisation because it shoots British soldiers who came from the dole queues of Britain. This is patently absurd.

The obvious answer to your question is, no, the IRA are not engaged in a sectarian war. The IRA makes no distinction between the various armed forces



● During the campaign enthusiastic supporters flooded in all over the constituency to help in any way they could. These young canvassers were active in Enniskillen Co. Fermanagh

in the pay of the British government. I presume it views these groupings you mentioned as a vital prop for the British government and deals with them appropriately. ■

# The IRA attitude to elections

IN SEPTEMBER a spokesman for the IRA authorised to speak on behalf of the leadership outlined the attitude of the Army to republican participation in elections.

He spoke about the republican attitude to contesting the West Belfast Westminster seat presently held by Gerry Fitt and how the IRA generally view constitutional politics, especially given the experience of republicans of a bitter split with the 'Sticks', part of which was their reformist attitude to elections.

This was first published in AP/RN, September 5th, 1981. Here we reprint in full.

THERE can be no doubt that media speculation regarding Sinn Fein contesting the West Belfast constituency may have caused some confusion among republicans, especially given the intensity of feeling between republican supporters and their erstwhile comrades in the so-called Republican Clubs.

Sections of the Republican Movement have, over the decades, had vastly differing attitudes to an intervention in the British or Free State electoral process.

Generally speaking what was wrong with the 'Sticks' was not just that they contested elections but that they had a totally incorrect analysis of the nature of British imperialism. They believed that the six-county state could be 'democratised' from within and that the so-called democratic process was one method by which this reformation could be made.

There was also, at the time of the split, a simplistic republican attitude, heightened by the 1969 pogroms, to the 'Stickies' position. Therefore, there was a reaction within the Republican Movement against taking political control within the nationalist community or examining methods, even electoral, for doing this.

The 'Sticky' attitude towards elections is one of complete involvement with the system and cannot be divorced from their collaborationist attitude towards the RUC and loyalist paramilitaries and reactionary elements within Fine Gael, and towards the whole national question, and the partitionist state, Leinster House and the old Stormont.

Similarly, the republican attitude towards elections cannot be divorced from our total rejection of the six-county state, our struggle for the last twelve years, of unbroken resistance to the British government and to its crown



forces, and our refusal to compromise with loyalism.

Republicans have periodically contested elections in both six and twenty-six county states. In 1917, 1918 and 1919, before partition, and from then until the 1950s and in 1964, republicans contested elections on an abstentionist ticket.

There is no reason now, where practical, as it appears in West Belfast, that

republicans should not oppose nationalist collaboration. If Sinn Fein contests this election the IRA will obviously whole-heartedly support their decision.

Sinn Fein spokespersons and prisoners' supporters have demanded Fitt's resignation over the hunger-strike when it was obvious that Fitt was totally out of step with those whom he purported to represent. There is an obvious need to give the people of West Belfast the opportunity of showing whether they support the politics of Gerry Fitt, the benign unionism of the SDLP or a republican candidate.

For those who would be concerned that such an intervention in the West Belfast election is a new tendency, or departure, they can be assured that the military struggle will go on with all the energy at our disposal, and, in fact, victory would actually be hastened with the development of a complementary radical political offensive.

Our attitude to constitutional politics is quite simple and clear cut.

There is no such thing as constitutional politics in this country. The last legitimate constitutional forum in Ireland, Dail Eireann, was proclaimed illegal and subverted by the British and the Free Staters. Outside of a thirty-two county sovereign, independent, democracy the IRA will have no involvement in what is loosely called constitutional politics.

There is room for republicans to examine if the struggle for independence can be improved by an intervention in the electoral process in order to show clearly that people support radical republicanism and resistance to the British presence more than they support any other collaborationist tendency.

There is fundamentally a need for republicans to bring about conditions whereby the Irish people may seize political and economic control of their own destinies.

Whether this can be assisted by an intervention in the electoral process should be the basis for discussion within republican circles. What should not be the basis for discussion is whether this intervention means a run-down of the armed struggle. It patently does not.

We must fight on many fronts and the armed struggle has been historically and contemporarily shown to be the most important. It must be coupled, of course, with political and economic resistance.

# War news



UNLIKE THE PERIOD of relative military inactivity which prevailed during the first hunger-strike last year, the IRA maintained the armed struggle, at a constant pace, over the last six months.

Gun, bomb, rocket and mortar attacks have been mounted against all sections of the British war machine — British army, RUC, UDR, and Special Branch. Many fatalities and scores of casualties have been inflicted on the occupation forces as well as severe damage caused to heavily fortified barracks.

Enemy morale continues to deteriorate, as is evidenced by the regular suicides — particularly amongst the RUC and UDR — while trigger-happy nervous wrecks in the British army continue to kill each other more often than they do, resistance fighters.

The commercial bombing campaign has also been maintained — throughout the occupied six counties — with individual as well as co-ordinated bombing strikes taking place regularly, causing millions of pounds worth of damage for which the British exchequer is liable.

#### Thursday, April 2nd

An RUC man was killed, when his car blew up as he drove away from Bessbrook barracks in South Armagh. IRA Volunteers, successfully attached the bomb to the underside of the RUC man's car as it was parked in Bessbrook village between 3 p.m. and 11 p.m.



● The remains of a car in which an RUC man was killed by an IRA booby-trap bomb in South Armagh

that Thursday. Shortly after 11 p.m. the bomb detonated, killing the RUC man immediately.

#### Tuesday, April 7th

An IRA sniper shot and seriously wounded a British soldier hitting him in both legs. The attack took place, in the Ardoyne area of Belfast

on Tuesday morning. Immediately after the shooting, the area was flooded by British troops, but the IRA Volunteer made good his escape.

#### Thursday, April 16th

A part-time UDR soldier, who was also a leading member of the Official Unionist Party, was shot dead in Moy, Co.

Tyrone on Thursday April 16th. IRA Volunteers carried out the successful ambush in the centre of Moy village at 10 p.m. The Volunteers shouted a warning to local bystanders, before shooting dead fifty-year-old Jack Donnelly. The IRA Volunteers made good their escape in a waiting car.

**Tuesday, April 28th**

A plain clothes member of the UDR was killed in a successfully laid ambush by IRA Volunteers near Castlewellan, County Down, on Tuesday April 28th. The UDR soldier — a lance corporal, — was being driven, in an unmarked UDR van, along the Dublin road, with other members of C Company 3rd Battalion UDR, when IRA opened fire on the van, killing the lance corporal, and seriously wounding another UDR man. Immediately after the attack British soldiers and RUC men sealed off the area, helped by a military helicopter, and spotter plane. The IRA Volunteers successfully returned to base.

**Tuesday, May 5th**

An RUC patrol came under an IRA gun attack on Belfast's Glen Road. One RUC man was wounded. On the same day a British army patrol was attacked in Derry. IRA Volunteers using a nail bomb injured one soldier. In both incidents, Volunteers returned safely to home base.

**Wednesday, May 6th**

A number of commercial bomb attacks were carried out by the IRA in Co. Tyrone. The Golf Club in Fintona was destroyed by two bombs. The Halfway Home bar (frequented by the RUC), near Cookstown, was also bombed. In Dungannon, a supermarket, and Finley's Concrete Products were also damaged in bomb attacks.

An RUC patrol on the Donaghmore Road came under fire but no hits were recorded by the IRA.

Again in Dungannon, three RUC men were injured in an IRA hand-grenade attack in Ann Street.

In a carefully laid ambush, IRA Volunteers shot dead one RUC man and injured two others, late on Wednesday May 6th, at Duncairn Gardens, Belfast. The RUC men were on guard duty at a security gate. On the same evening two British soldiers were wounded when they came under fire in Crossmaglen and in Derry City an RUC man was hit in the chest when the IRA Volunteers sprayed him with automatic gun fire.

**Thursday May 7th**

IRA Volunteers manning a checkpoint on the Derry to Dublin road near Crossmaglen, opened fire on a British army



● The aftermath of a successful IRA ambush of a UDR plainclothes squad near Castlewellan, County Down

helicopter, hitting it as it flew over. The helicopter did not return fire, but flew rapidly back to the heavily fortified Crossmaglen barracks. The Volunteers returned safely to base. An RUC man was wounded in the arms and legs when a bomb exploded near him in the Fountain area of Derry city.

**Friday, May 8th**

A mortar bomb and gun attack was carried out by the IRA against Newtonhamilton barracks in South Armagh. Nine missiles were fired from the back of a lorry causing considerable damage to the heavily fortified barracks and injuring two soldiers. When British troops moved in to examine the lorry it blew up.

In Belfast, British soldiers and RUC men came under attack from a number of IRA units. In Turf Lodge, a single shot was fired at troops but no hits were recorded. Ten shots were fired at the RUC in Etna Drive Ardoyne, injuring four RUC men, and a blast bomb was hurled at an RUC landrover, injuring five of the occupants — one seriously.

In Derry, shots were fired at RUC men and British soldiers in four separate attacks but no hits were recorded. All Volunteers from the various areas returned safely to their bases.

**Saturday, May 9th**

An IRA unit placed a bomb on the oil terminal at Sullom Voe, Shetland Islands

The bomb exploded at mid-day on Saturday May 9th, as the British monarch Queen Elizabeth — was touring the oil terminal, for its inauguration ceremony. This was the second time the IRA had breached her security. The first was at Coleraine University in 1977, when bombs exploded shortly before and after her visit to the University. In a statement shortly after the explosion at the oil terminal, the IRA pointed out *"Whie the British occupation of Ireland continues then members of the British ruling class and administration will continue to be subject to IRA attacks. They have a choice. The Irish people who live under British terror, do not"*.

The Roslea barracks in Co. Fermanagh came under mortar bomb attack from the IRA. Three British soldiers were injured — one seriously. The mortars were detonated by remote control.

A British soldier was seriously injured in West Belfast when shot by an IRA sniper. The soldier — one of a seven-man foot patrol — came under fire near Lenadoon Avenue at about 10 a.m. that morning. The patrol did not return fire. In Derry, there were a number of shooting attacks against the RUC and the British army.

**Sunday, May 10th**

Six blast bombs were thrown at British soldiers and RUC men in the William Street area of Derry. There were

no recorded injuries.

**Monday, May 11th**

The IRA mounted a successful gun attack against British troops in West Belfast. A four-man Royal Military Police unit escorting a post office van was ambushed by IRA Volunteers who had commandeered a house near the White-rock post office. Two of the Brit escort were injured — one seriously. The Volunteers made good their escape.

A British army mobile patrol came under IRA fire in Derry city. There was an exchange of shots but no injuries were reported on either side.

**Tuesday, May 12th**

Against the background of fierce rioting, following the news of Francis Hughes' death, IRA units in Belfast launched a number of gun attacks against British troops and RUC patrols. Attacks took place in Lenadoon, Twinbrook, Turf Lodge, Ballymurphy, Beechmount, St. James, Lower Falls, Ardoyne, and the Old Park district. Attacks were also carried out in Derry, where over 300 petrol bombs were thrown at occupation forces.

**Wednesday, May 13th**

In an IRA ambush, shots were fired at an RUC patrol in Beechmount, Belfast. No injuries were recorded. But in a bomb attack, at the junction of Herbert Street and the Crumlin Road, a British soldier was seriously wounded in the chest when his patrol was caught in the ensuing blast.

Thursday, May 14th

In a highly successful ambush, one RUC man and four others were injured when their landrover was hit by an RPG-7 rocket launched by the IRA.

The rocket hit the back of the vehicle, piercing the armour-plating, exploding inside and ripping the roof off the landrover. The rocket was fired from a position of approximately 100 yards, from a hand-held launch tube. Following the successful operation the IRA Volunteers returned safely to base.

On the same day, the IRA mounted a gun attack on a British army foot patrol in the Lower Falls. No hits were admitted by the Brits but a military ambulance was brought to the scene of the ambush.

Saturday, May 16th

The IRA mounted a series of successful commercial bombing attacks in Co. Tyrone on Saturday, May 16th. An estimated £1 million worth of damage was caused in Dungannon alone. Over £¼ million damage was caused at Tyrone brickworks where ten lorries — worth £25,000 each — were totally destroyed. The operation was carried out by twelve armed IRA Volunteers. Other targets in Dungannon were a cinema, a furniture store, a fancy goods store, and the Associated Tyre in Newell Road.

On the same day, an hotel and a drapery shop in Omagh were targets for IRA active service units.

In Derry, an IRA sniper fired two shots at British troops attempting to remove barricades in the Creggan. No hits were claimed.

Sunday, May 17th

Dungannon again was the target for two successful commercial bombing operations. IRA Volunteers destroyed offices of the Housing Executive and a coal yard in John Street.

Monday, May 18th

A UDR soldier narrowly escaped injury when a two-pound booby-trap bomb, planted underneath his car by the IRA, failed to explode. The UDR man, from Newcastle, Co. Down, had set out from his home and whilst driving down Tullymore Road there was a small explosion under his car. The explosion came from the detonator which failed to activate the bomb.

In Belfast, the IRA launched two gun attacks against the RUC — one in Twinbrook



● An IRA rocket exploded inside an RUC landrover blowing off the roof and killing one of the occupants

and one in the Lower Falls. No hits were claimed.

Tuesday, May 19th

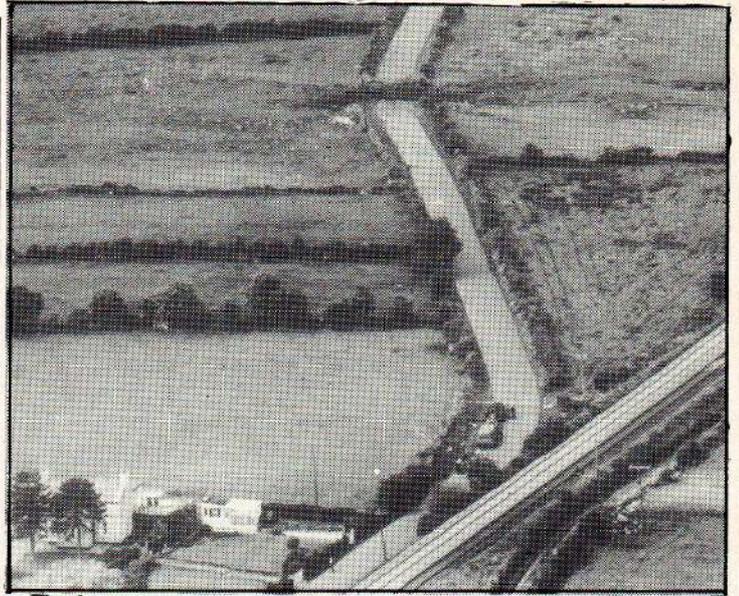
On Tuesday, May 19th, IRA Volunteers in South Armagh carried out the most successful land-mine attack against the British army since Narrow Water in August 1979 (when eighteen Brits were killed). This time five British soldiers — four from the Royal Green Jackets and one from the Royal Corps of Transport — were killed.

Two British army saracens were on routine patrol at Attnaveigh, near Newry, at about 10.30 a.m. that morning. The two saracens were proceeding down Chancellor Road, which runs parallel to the main Dublin-Belfast railway line, when the IRA struck.

The first saracen was allowed to pass over a massive 1000 lb bomb hidden in a culvert beneath the road but as the second saracen drove directly over the bomb, IRA Volunteers detonated it.

The saracen totally disintegrated with the five soldiers inside dying instantly. Soldiers in the first saracen escaped injury but suffered severe shock. The force of the explosion left a huge crater in the road and scattered remnants of the saracen over a radius of 300 yards.

Immediately after the explosion the area was flooded with British troops and RUC



● The bomb crater caused by a massive IRA land mine at Altnaveigh in South Armagh was about one hundred and fifty yards from the Belfast — Dublin railway line.



● One of the wheels of the British army saracen destroyed was found two to three hundred yards away from the explosion

men but none dared go near the scene of the explosion for fear of more land-mines.

A massive search was launched on both sides of the border for the IRA active service unit but to no avail. Once again, the Volunteers returned safely to their base.

On that evening, two armed IRA Volunteers, commandeered a house in Ballymurphy, Belfast, from where they launched a gun attack against a British army foot patrol. There was an exchange of shots, with the Brits firing wildly and without any concern for civilian lives. No hits were reported.

#### Wednesday, May 20th

An RUC man miraculously escaped death in a gun attack — suffering only a foot wound — when he dived for cover as more than 50 shots were fired at him by an IRA unit. The attack took place in Portlengone, Co Antrim.

In Belfast, a British soldier was wounded, when an IRA sniper shot him as his patrol passed the Suffolk primary school. Also in Belfast a UDR patrol came under fire near Unity flats from IRA snipers. No hits were reported.

#### Thursday, May 21st

As news of Ray McCreesh's death came through, the IRA launched another series of gun attacks against British troops in Belfast. A foot patrol at the junction of Whiterock road, and Springfield road came under fire. No hits were reported. Another Brit patrol in the Suffolk road came under similar attack, but again no hits were reported.

During the whole of that day in Belfast and Derry, more than a dozen gun attacks were launched against enemy forces.

#### Friday, May 22nd

At 3.30 a.m. on Friday morning, shortly after news of Patsy O'Haras' death was announced, the RUC came under fire from IRA volunteers, at Springfield Rd. barracks racks, Divismore Crescent, Stratford Gardens, and the Old Park/Ardoyne district.

The British army were fired on in the St. James area, New Barnsley and at Ballymurphy drive.

In Derry, IRA Volunteers exchanged fire with the British army, in the Brandywell area, and gun attacks were mounted against the Rosemount barracks, and at soldiers in the Chapel Road area.



● The wreckage of a car, booby-trapped by the IRA in South Armagh, in which a Brit bomb disposal expert was killed

In Derry on Friday afternoon an RUC landrover came under rifle fire from an IRA Volunteer, but no hits were recorded. And just after 7 p.m., in Belfast, a British army personnel carrier was hit by an RPG-7 rocket — fired by IRA Volunteers, in the Andersonstown area.

The rocket hit the front wing of the 'pig', exploded, and injured two of the soldiers inside the vehicle. This was the second rocket attack launched by the IRA's Belfast Brigade in just over a week.

During Friday evening and night several more gun attacks were launched against British forces in Belfast and Derry by the IRA.

#### Saturday, May 23rd

An IRA sniper shot and wounded a British soldier, in Derry city. The soldier was part of a patrol passing the junction of Cromore Gardens, and Lislane Drive in the Creggan. The IRA Volunteer opened up on the patrol, hitting the soldier in the left thigh.

#### Sunday, May 24th

IRA Volunteers driving a commandeered milk float, down the Grosvenor Road in Belfast, caught an RUC landrover by surprise. The milk float pulled up beside the landrover, and the volunteers opened fire, shooting one RUC man in the arm. The Volunteers drove off, and returned safely to base.

#### Monday, May 25th

In a carefully laid IRA ambush, at Gulladuff South Derry, a UDR man was shot

dead. The IRA Volunteers lay in wait near the Bellaghy Road as two landrovers containing the UDR patrol drove past. The Volunteers opened fire — killing one UDR soldier, and injuring three other UDR men. Despite the massive follow up operation by Brits and RUC, the active service unit made good their escape.

A burst of automatic fire was directed at a RUC mobile patrol, at Waterloo street Derry, and in Belfast a single shot was fired at a British army patrol in Corrib Ave, in both cases no hits were reported.

#### Tuesday, May 26th

An RUC man was seriously injured in Derry city. The RUC man was investigating two milk crates containing petrol bombs, when a bomb exploded, badly injuring him. The force of the explosion, sprayed burning petrol onto his landrover, injuring two more RUC men.

#### Wednesday, May 27th

An out of uniform RUC man was shot dead by IRA Volunteers in the South Armagh village of Whitecross. The RUC man — an ex-B Special based in Newry, was leaving a pub in the village, when IRA Volunteers drew alongside in a car, and opened fire, killing the RUC man. The Volunteers drew alongside in a car, and opened fire, killing the RUC man. The Volunteers returned safely to base.

On Wednesday night, a nail-bomb was thrown at an RUC jeep in the Ardoyne area of Belfast. No injuries

were reported.

#### Friday, May 29th

A part-time UDR soldier was shot and wounded near Strabane, Co. Tyrone, on Friday morning May 29th. The UDR were standing on the main Strabane — Omagh road, when armed volunteers in a commandeered car fired several shots at him, wounding him in the arm and shoulder.

Blast bomb attacks were also launched against British soldiers in the Shantallow, Waterside and William Street areas of Derry. Over half a dozen British troops were wounded in these successful attacks by the IRA. All IRA Volunteers returned safely to base.

#### Sunday, May 31st

A British Army bomb disposal expert was killed by an IRA booby trap, near Newry, South Armagh, on Sunday morning.

The soldier — a sergeant-major — was closely examining a car placed by the IRA at Drumalane Road, two miles from Newry, when the bomb was triggered. In the ensuing blast, the car was shattered, hurling the soldier several yards down a bank. The soldier was the seventeenth British army explosives expert to be killed.

On the same day an RUC man was shot dead in Belfast. The successful ambush took place in the Royal Victoria Hospital on the Falls Road — where the RUC man was on armed guard duty — and was carried out by three Volunteers, one woman and two men.

**Tuesday, June 2nd**

Five RUC personnel narrowly escaped death, when their landrover — which was travelling towards the Bogside in Derry City — was rocked by the blast of an IRA landmine. The armour plated landrover was only slightly damaged.

**Wednesday, June 3rd**

In one of the most daring actions during the past twelve years, eight republican prisoners shot their way to freedom in broad daylight.

The eight — who had been charged with IRA membership, and an attack with an M60 machine gun on an RUC patrol in Andersonstown in 1980 left the prison the way they had come in — through the front gate at 4 p.m. Wednesday, June 3rd. The "ex-prisoners" broke up into two groups — the first group reaching the outside with no difficulty. The second group encountered Brits and RUC, and a shoot out ensued. The British soldiers and RUC scattered, and the IRA men made good their escape.

**Friday, June 5th**

A UDR lance corporal was shot dead by IRA Volunteers in South Fermanagh. He was driving a delivery van, when he was ambushed and shot dead at Tully south. The IRA unit made good its escape in the dead UDR man's delivery van.

**Saturday, June 6th**

The Belfast Brigade, IRA, launched a gun attack on an RUC patrol in North Belfast. No hits were recorded.

**Saturday, June 13th**

Three IRA attacks were carried out, in Belfast, Derry city, and Co. Tyrone.

In Belfast, the IRA narrowly missed killing Lord Gardiner — the former British Lord Chancellor — when a bomb which was attached to his car fell off, without exploding. Lord Gardiner was the 'political architect' of the Brits criminalisation policies of the H-Blocks.

In Derry City an RUC man was seriously wounded, when hit in an IRA sniper attack. The ambush happened at the Magazine Gate, Waterloo Place.

Meanwhile, a part-time member of the UDR, who is also an Official Unionist councillor for Dungannon, was shot three times, when he drove into an IRA ambush on the road between Dungannon and Ballygawley. The UDR man

escaped with a punctured lung.

**Wednesday, June 17th**

An RUC man was shot and fatally wounded in an IRA ambush, near Carrickmore, Co. Tyrone, in the evening. The RUC reservist was driving from Omagh, when he was shot in the chest by IRA Volunteers. He died in hospital.

**Thursday, June 18th**

Belfast Brigade, IRA, shot and wounded an RUC man at 6.35 p.m. near the New Lodge Road.

The sniper attack, came from the top of Churchill House flats, from where the sniper shot the RUC man, who was in the yard of North Queen Street barracks.

**Saturday, June 20th**

There were two attacks against security forces, by the IRA on Saturday, June 20th. The first took place in Newry, where an RUC man in plain clothes was shot dead. Two armed IRA Volunteers carried out the successful ambush. The RUC man was the 100th full time member of the force to be killed in the last twelve years of war.

In Belfast, where the second attack took place, five British soldiers were injured, when the IRA launched a mortar bomb attack on the heavily fortified Fort Pegasus British army base.

More than half a dozen mortar bombs, each containing 40 lbs of explosives, were fired from a commandeered lorry, parked on the White-rock road. The ensuing explosions rocked the surrounding area, and an intense gun battle broke out between the IRA and the British army. The IRA Volunteers returned safely to base.

**Sunday, June 21st**

Four members of the RUC, had a narrow escape when their landrover was caught in an IRA bomb blast in Derry city. The explosion occurred in Sackville Street. The RUC personnel only received minor injuries, although the bomb devastated a number of derelict buildings.

**Wednesday, June 24th**

An IRA sniper shot and wounded an RUC man in the centre of Derry city, and in Belfast an IRA Volunteer seriously wounded a British soldier. The Belfast operation was particularly daring, as the Volunteer walked calmly up to the back entrance of Springfield Road barracks, and shot the

British soldier. The Volunteer made good his escape.

**Friday, June 26th**

A UDR soldier was wounded in an IRA ambush at White-bridge Co. Tyrone. The UDR man was driving an empty bus near Sixmilecross when he ran into the IRA ambush. He was hit in the head and arm.

In Belfast, two RUC men were wounded in an IRA ambush at Alliance Ave. The RUC men had arrived to investigate the sighting of two masked youths. On alighting from the landrover, they were hit by seven shots, fired from the nationalist area of Ardoyne. Also in Belfast an RUC man had a lucky escape, when a bomb planted under his car was unfortunately discovered and defused.

**Saturday, June 27th**

Two UDR soldiers manning a vehicle checkpoint on the outskirts of Lurgan, were wounded in an IRA attack. The IRA Volunteers, in a commandeered car, approached the checkpoint and opened up on the UDR man with automatic fire. The IRA Volunteers made good their escape.

**Sunday, June 28th**

An RUC mobile patrol was ambushed in Andersonstown, Belfast, on Sunday afternoon. Volunteers of the IRA's Belfast Brigade fired on the landrover, hitting it twice, but none of the occupants were wounded.

**Wednesday, July 1st**

On Wednesday afternoon the IRA's Belfast Brigade ambushed an RUC vehicle on the Andersonstown road. The IRA unit overtook an RUC unmarked car, and fired at point-blank range, causing the vehicle to crash. The RUC men were later treated in hospital for shock.

**Saturday, July 4th**

A massive van bomb destroyed the main Newry Customs clearing station, shortly after 9 p.m. on Sat. July 4th. Three IRA Volunteers in the commandeered vehicle, containing 150 lbs of explosives drove the van into the customs station, took over the security office, and then drove the van into the station complex. The volunteers gave a 30 minute warning, and then made good their escape.

**Monday, July 6th**

IRA Volunteers, who had taken over an office block, opposite the Strand road RUC barracks in Derry, sprayed automatic fire at an RUC

car leaving the barracks. One RUC man was slightly injured.

**Wednesday, July 8th**

Following the death of hunger-striker Joe McDonnell, IRA Volunteers launched a number of attacks on the British army and the RUC, when they moved out to attack protestors in Belfast.

Sixteen rounds were fired at the Woodbourne army base and in Lepper street three British soldiers and one RUC man were injured in a grenade attack launched by the IRA.

IRA Volunteers also ambushed a British army convoy on the Shaws Road, Andersonstown. One soldier was reported wounded. On Wednesday evening IRA Volunteers wounded one RUC man when they fired two shots at a mobile patrol in Springfield Ave. This was followed by attacks against one RUC landrover, and a British army vehicle.

In Derry IRA Volunteers fired shots at the RUC on two occasions in Westland Street. Also, there was a dramatic gun battle when IRA Volunteers uncovered a British army spy post in derelict flats in Lindfort Drive. One British soldier was wounded.

**Thursday, July 9th**

There were numerous attacks by IRA Volunteers in Belfast against the RUC and the British army. In Ardoyne active service units attacked British Army and RUC patrols on Brompton Park, Flax Street, Butler Street and the Crumlin Road. Rifles and grenades were used.

An RUC man was injured in Springhill Ave, when IRA volunteers fired shots at an RUC patrol. Twelve shots were fired at British soldiers outside Andersonstown Leisure Centre.

In Middleton, on the Armagh/Monaghan border, an RUC man was shot in the legs by IRA Volunteers operating in the area.

**Friday, July 10th**

Following the British army attack at the funeral cortege of Joe McDonnell, the IRA in Belfast launched a number of attacks against the British army and RUC.

Twenty shots were fired at the British army in the Shaws Road. In the New Lodge area a British army patrol came under fire. Blast bombs were thrown at an RUC vehicle in Twinbrook, and at

McCrorry Park British army fort on the Whiterock Road.

In Dungannon, a bomb left in Goerge's Street shortly before midnight exploded causing extensive damage to commercial premises.

#### Saturday, July 11th

IRA Volunteers fired at a UDR patrol in the Short Strand area of Belfast, and a grenade was thrown at an RUC patrol in the Alliance area of Ardoyne.

#### Sunday, July 12th

In Belfast an IRA active service unit fired shots at an RUC patrol in Alfred Street in the city centre. No casualties were reported.

#### Monday, July 13th

With the unexpected death, of hunger-striker Martin Hurson, widespread protests and rioting occurred. IRA Volunteers in Belfast hit back at the RUC and the British army. Three British soldiers were wounded when IRA Volunteers sprayed them with bullets. The Volunteers made good their escape, but not until after firing at the RUC who were giving chase.

Later in the day another British soldier was wounded in Springfield Ave, when he was shot by an IRA sniper. An RUC man was injured in a grenade attack at Lepper Street and 25 shots were fired at an RUC/Brit patrol in the Ardoyne area.

#### Thursday, July 16th

The premises of the Commercial Tyre Company in May Street Belfast was totally destroyed when IRA Volunteers left a number of bombs in the building. All staff were cleared from the building, whilst petrol was sprinkled around. The Volunteers ignited the petrol, the blaze spreading rapidly and detonating the bombs. The Volunteers returned safely to base.

IRA Volunteers launched an attack on a British army spy-point at Glassdrumand, between Crossmaglen and Forkhill in South Armagh.

The six strong IRA active service unit, used armalites and an M60 machine gun in the attack. The attack initiated a fifteen minute gun battle, which resulted in the death of one British soldier, and two other British soldiers being injured. The active service unit returned safely to base.

Also on Thursday a bomb planted by IRA Volunteers exploded at Adaf Doyle, close to the Belfast - Dublin railway



● Greenan Lodge Hotel in Belfast was destroyed as part of a well co-ordinated IRA bomb blitz

line, causing disruption to rail traffic.

#### Thursday, July 23rd

A British soldier was injured, when IRA Volunteers fired at him, as he was manning a vehicle check-point on Kennedy Way, West Belfast.

The Volunteers fired four shots from a commandeered house, hitting the soldier in the stomach. The Brits did not return fire and the Volunteers made good their escape.

#### Sunday, July 26th

The IRA planted a bomb beneath a train stationed overnight at Portadown, North Armagh. Unfortunately the bomb was defused by the British army; But the railway line was closed for some time.

#### Monday, July 27th

IRA Volunteers opened fire on an RUC landrover in the Markets area of Belfast. No hits were recorded.

#### Tuesday, July 28th

A British army footpatrol came under IRA fire, as it was leaving Fort Jericho, overlooking Turf Lodge in Belfast. The only injury was caused by the Royal Marine Commandos, who wildly returned fire, hitting a 'black taxi' the driver of which was cut by flying glass.

#### Wednesday, July 29th

Over forty shots were fired by IRA Volunteers, using Armalites, at a British army mobile patrol on the Shaws Road in Andersonstown Belfast. No hits were recorded, and the Volunteers returned safely to base.

#### Thursday, July 30th

IRA Volunteers detonated a landmine under an RUC car on the Newtownhamilton Road

near Newry. The force of the explosion overturned the car, trapping the RUC men inside. The RUC men were eventually freed by firemen.

#### Saturday, August 1st

Following the announcement of the death of H-Block hunger-striker Kevin Lynch, there were several attacks against the British army and RUC in Belfast.

In the early hours of Saturday morning IRA Volunteers threw hand grenades at a British army patrol at Lenadoon Ave. A hand grenade and gun attack was also launched on the British army on the Shaws Road.

Other attacks took place at the Henry Taggart army base where an RUC jeep was immobilised in a bomb attack. And in the Beechmount area IRA Volunteers threw four hand grenades at a British army patrol, injuring a number of the soldiers.

#### Sunday, August 2nd

Within hours of the death of Kieran Doherty TD, IRA Volunteers launched an RPG7 rocket attack on a British army saracen in Beechmount, Belfast. One British soldier lost both legs, and the other soldiers suffered minor injuries. The British soldier who lost both legs, had been previously injured in an earlier IRA rocket attack.

IRA active service units were also in action in other areas of Belfast. Two separate grenade attacks were launched against the British army and RUC in the Ballymurphy area, immobilising an RUC vehicle.

Two British soldiers were injured in a mine explosion in the Cupar Street/Kashmir Road area. Five shots were

fired at a British army patrol, and a grenade was thrown at the RUC in the Ardoyne area of the city.

In Derry IRA Volunteers fired shots at the RUC in the Waterside area of the city. No hits were claimed.

Two RUC men were killed, when their two car patrol was caught in a landmine explosion at Loughnacrorry, near Omagh in county Tyrone. One of the cars was hurled into a field, and the explosion left a ten foot wide crater in the road. The IRA Volunteers returned safely to base.

#### Monday, August 3rd

IRA Volunteers in Belfast fired shots on two different occasions at the British army, once in Flax Street, and again at the British army Sainger Fort in the Whiterock Road.

Belfast city traffic was brought to a standstill by a number of hoax bombs, which tied down RUC and British army personnel for a number of hours.

#### Tuesday, August 4th

IRA Volunteers fired shots at an RUC patrol in Great James Street Derry, but no hits were recorded.

#### Wednesday, August 5th

There was a well co-ordinated bomb blitz around the North, on a scale not seen for a month. The bombs exploded over a period of three hours between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m.

The first explosion took place at the Greenan Lodge Hotel Belfast. Five IRA Volunteers, one armed with a machine gun, placed 300 lbs of explosives, packed in two beer kegs on the premises. The bombs exploded destroying the building.

A car bomb, containing again 300 lbs of explosives was parked in Donegall Square Mews Belfast. Warnings were given, and the bomb exploded causing extensive damage to nearby buildings, and smashing windows over a mile area.

The centre of Lisburn, Co. Antrim was extensively damaged when a car-bomb exploded in the town's Market Street. Major damage was caused to surrounding buildings. The car bomb slightly injured one British soldier, and completely destroyed a robot belonging to the British army explosives team that was examining the bomb.

Other explosions took place in Armagh city, where an RUC woman was slightly injured, Newry where two garages were completely destroyed, Portadown where a car-bomb wrecked the British Legion Hall, and at Kilnasaggart Bridge, where two bombs exploded, closing the Belfast to Dublin railway line.

The last bomb to explode was a car bomb in Derry city's Diamond area, causing major damage to several buildings.

**Friday, August 7th**

A British soldier was hit in the shoulder by an IRA sniper operating from the Divis Flats Belfast.

**Saturday, August 8th**

Two RUC men were wounded in Derry City, when their mobile patrol was ambushed by IRA Volunteers. The attack took place in the Shantallow area of the city.

In Belfast two RUC men escaped serious injury in the New Lodge Road, when they were caught in a booby-trap bomb, placed in a derelict house in Upper Meadow street.

A British army patrol in the Springfield road came under fire, when an active service unit of the IRA, fired fifteen shots at them. One British soldier was wounded.

**Sunday, August 9th**

The IRA launched two attacks against the British army and RUC in Belfast. A hand grenade was thrown at the Henry Taggart British army fort, and a further hand grenade was thrown at an RUC patrol in the Ardoyne area. No hits were recorded. That evening, Coulter's business premises was destroyed when an active service unit successfully firebombed it.

**Monday, August 10th**

A British army patrol was

ambushed by IRA Volunteers in Andersonstown. One British soldier was injured.

**Friday, August 14th**

An IRA sniper fired a single shot at British troops in Beechmount Ave. Belfast. No hits were claimed.

**Sunday, August 16th**

A bomb attack was carried out by the IRA, against a British army observation post in North Belfast. The observation post, in Lepper street, was extensively damaged, and two soldiers were injured.

**Monday, August 17th**

An RUC man was hit in the legs by shrapnel, when his colleague attempted to remove a booby trapped tricolour at Aughlisnafin Co. Down. A number of tricolours had been erected in the area, and had been removed by the UDR and RUC.

In Belfast, eight shots were fired at a British army foot patrol by the IRA. No hits were claimed.

**Thursday, August 20th**

An active service unit placed a bomb underneath an RUC man's car parked in the Malone Road Belfast. Unfortunately the RUC man spotted the bomb, which was later defused.

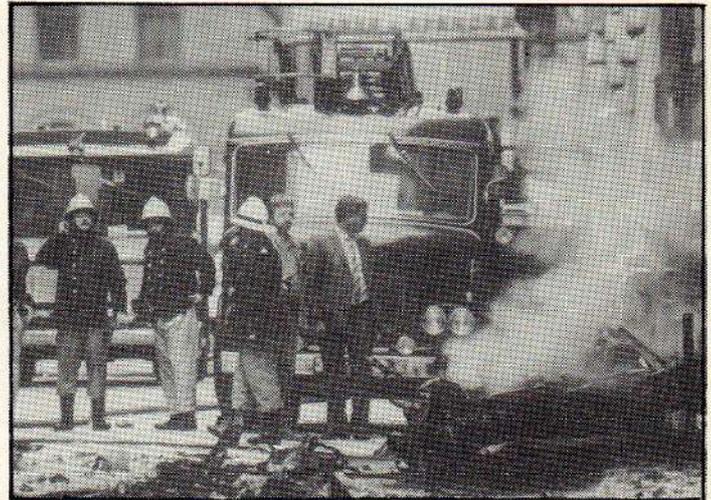
**Saturday, August 22nd**

Three British soldiers were injured, one seriously, when IRA Volunteers threw a hand grenade at a Brit patrol near the Ardoyne bus depot in North Belfast.

In Derry city the IRA launched two gun attacks against the RUC, before and after hunger-striker Micky Devine's funeral. In the first attack two RUC men were seriously wounded when IRA Volunteers opened up with automatic fire on two RUC constables as they left the Waterside RUC barracks to go on patrol. In the second attack, the IRA fired at the Foyle Road RUC barracks. No hits were recorded. Both active service units returned safely to base.

The same day the IRA breached the high security city centre of Belfast and the seaside resort of Bangor, with two simultaneous car-bombs.

The IRA placed a 600 lb van bomb next to Stokes House in Fisherwick Place, Belfast. When it detonated, it caused massive damage to the office block and surrounding buildings. In Bangor Co. Down, a car-bomb, exploded causing massive damage to nearby



● A car bomb exploded in Belfast city centre



● Lisburn town centre was extensively damaged



● A van bomb in Belfast's Fisherwick Place caused massive damage

buildings in Main Street were no civilian injuries in both cases. And during the evening Belfast's Errigle Inn, was bombed by the IRA for the second time in three months.

#### Sunday, August 23rd

In an "own goal" a Marine Commando was shot dead by his own comrades, in the grounds of Musgrave Park Hospital Belfast after an armed intruder was reported in the hospital grounds.

Five British soldiers were injured when they approached a crate of petrol bombs at the bottom of Hillman Street, in the New Lodge district of Belfast.

The crate was left by the IRA, and as the soldiers approached, a booby trap bomb exploded.

#### Monday, August 24th

IRA Volunteers, in a commandeered car, ambushed a UDR man near Swatragh, in South Derry. The Volunteers drew up behind the UDR man, fired one shot, but unfortunately caused no injury to the UDR man.

There was a second attack, in Strabane, West Tyrone, when two IRA Volunteers seriously injured a UDR man, when he answered a knock to his door. He was shot several times in the stomach, and once in the left leg. Both units returned safely to base.

#### Wednesday, August 26th

There were a number of hoax bombs in Belfast which completely tied up the whole city. The IRA claimed responsibility. In the second "own goal" in four days, a British soldier was shot dead by a colleague in Portadown, Co. Armagh.

#### Thursday, August 27th

An IRA car bomb blasted the centre of Lisnaskea, Co. Fermanagh, causing structural and blast damage to a number of buildings in Church Street and Main street. An RUC man was slightly injured in the blast.

#### Friday, August 28th

Extensive damage was caused to several commercial buildings, when an IRA car bomb, containing several hundred pounds of explosives, exploded rocking the centre of Ballymena Co. Antrim. IRA Volunteers commandeered a red Peugeot car in Rasharkin, and loaded it with explosives. The ensuing explosion could be heard miles away.

#### Saturday, August 29th

IRA Volunteers fired a single

shot at an RUC man standing in Shipquay street, Derry city. No hit was claimed.

#### Tuesday, September 1st

Crossmaglen's 2nd Battalion, South Armagh IRA, came very close to seriously injuring a number of British soldiers, when a bomb planted on the Castleblaney road exploded, showering the Brits with debris. A number of British soldiers were slightly injured.

#### Wednesday, September 2nd

A UDR man was shot and seriously injured, when he was ambushed by the IRA in Castlewellan, Co. Down. The UDR man was struck in the chest by a single shot, fired by an IRA Volunteer, as he got into his car.

#### Friday, September 4th

In a very coolly executed, well planned operation, the IRA's Belfast Brigade shot dead one British soldier and critically injured another.

The two British soldiers had been chatted up by two female IRA volunteers at a Lisburn pub. At closing time the two Brits drove the Volunteers into Belfast to a flat in Stranmillis Park. Shortly after midnight, other IRA Volunteers burst in, and raked the Brits with automatic gun fire. One soldier died. The other soldier was hit five times, and was in a critical condition.

#### Sunday, September 6th

The IRA, in Armagh city, shot and wounded an RUC detective, who was believed to be involved in the jailing of the late republican hunger-striker Martin Hurson. Two IRA Volunteers opened fire at the RUC man, as he was preparing to drive off in his car, hitting him in the head and chest.

#### Monday, September 7th

Two RUC men were killed, when their armoured Cortina car, was blown to pieces, in a 500 lb IRA landmine at Cappagh, East Tyrone.

They were in the second car of a two vehicle patrol, when the bomb exploded, blowing the car apart. The IRA Volunteers returned safely to base.

Meanwhile in Derry city two bombs went off causing damage to shops, and massive disruption of traffic. The first bomb contained 200 lb of explosives and was placed in a van outside Glenvale bakery. It exploded damaging fourteen shops. The second, was a car bomb, parked outside



● The crater left by the land-mine at Cappagh in County Tyrone



● Shocked RUC men pick up the pieces after the IRA's devastating Cappagh attack

the entrance to Commercial Buildings in Foyle street. Unfortunately, British bomb disposal men managed to defuse part of the bomb before it exploded, causing minor damage to nearby buildings.

On the same day, in Dunganon, Co. Tyrone, IRA Volunteers penetrated the security barriers with a 200 lb car bomb, when they unscrewed the gates drove through, and replaced the gates. The bomb unfortunately was defused by a British army bomb disposal team. It took six hours to render it harmless.

#### Saturday, September 12th

Both Belfast and Lisburn were disrupted by a number of hoax bombs on Saturday

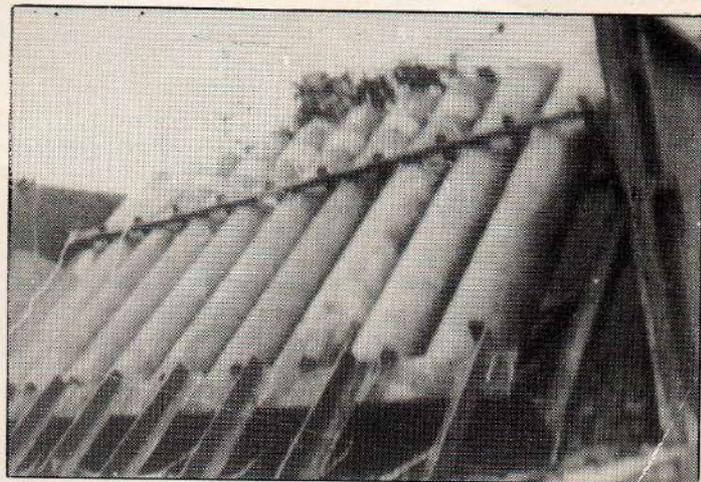
afternoon. Belfast's IRA placed a number of commandeered vans at vital road junctions, and a number of hoax telephone calls were made. In Lisburn the bus station was closed after a telephone bomb warning, and a commandeered bus was parked across the Castle Street area causing maximum disruption.

In Maghera, Co. Derry, a UDR soldier was shot dead by the IRA. The UDR soldier had just turned off the town's main street, when IRA Volunteers, drew up beside him in a car, and fired several shots at him, fatally wounding the UDR man. The Volunteers returned safely to base.

British army bomb disposal experts spent the whole of



IRA Volunteers preparing the mortar bombs for the attack on Bessbrook barracks in South Armagh on Saturday, 12th September. Ten home-made mortar bombs were mounted on the back of a commandeered lorry which was parked near the barracks. The mortars were controlled by timing devices but, unfortunately, a premature explosion rendered them ineffective.



Saturday night, and most of the next day, trying to defuse ten home made IRA mortars aimed at Bessbrook barracks in South Armagh. The mortars, mounted on a lorry, were rendered ineffective in a premature explosion.

#### Monday, September 14th

An RUC man was shot dead by the IRA in Magherafelt, Co. Derry. The RUC man was getting into a car near the Mid-Ulster hospital at 9 p.m. when a number of IRA Volunteers opened up with Armalites, fatally wounding the RUC man. The Volunteers returned safely to base.

#### Tuesday, September 15th

A culvert bomb had to be detonated by the West Tyrone Brigade of the IRA, because it presented a danger to civilian life. It was intended for the British Army or RUC, but none had ventured near the area of Plumbridge, Strabane.

In Derry City an RUC man was lucky to escape injury, when he was fired on by IRA Volunteers, as he was driving out of Strand Road barracks.

#### Wednesday, September 16th

An anti-personnel bomb was detonated by the IRA injuring three RUC men, in the centre of Armagh city. The RUC men, were part of a five man patrol. As they were passing the Charlemount Hotel, the bomb exploded, causing extensive damage to the hotel and the old city hall.

#### Thursday, September 17th

Two RUC men narrowly escaped injury in Derry city, when they came under fire from IRA Volunteers near the Waterside barracks in Spencer Road.

#### Friday, September 18th

An RUC man was shot and seriously wounded by the IRA in Co. Tyrone. IRA Volunteers ambushed the part-time reservist as he walked along the road at Ballygawley. Four shots were fired, and the RUC man was hit once. The Volunteers returned safely to base.

#### Saturday, September 19th

The IRA mounted a blast bomb attack against an RUC mobile patrol in the Cupar Street area of West Belfast. No injuries were reported.

#### Sunday, September 20th

An IRA sniper fired a single shot at a British army mobile patrol, in the Stewartstown Road area of Belfast. No hits were claimed.



● The windscreen of the Brit landrover shattered in an IRA ambush on Belfast's Springfield Road, which left two British soldiers seriously injured

#### Monday, September 21st

Belfast Brigade, IRA, successfully penetrated the tight security surrounding Musgrave Street RUC barracks, Belfast and planted a 10 lb bomb under an official car belonging to the RUC.

Unfortunately the bomb was spotted, and British army bomb disposal experts were called in to defuse it. One hour later the bomb exploded, hurling the car one hundred feet into the air. The explosion wrecked part of the barracks, and other RUC vehicles.

#### Tuesday, September 22nd

Two British soldiers were very seriously injured, when three IRA Volunteers, ambushed a British army landrover on the Springfield Road Belfast. A gun battle opened up, but the Volunteers made good their escape in a commandeered car.

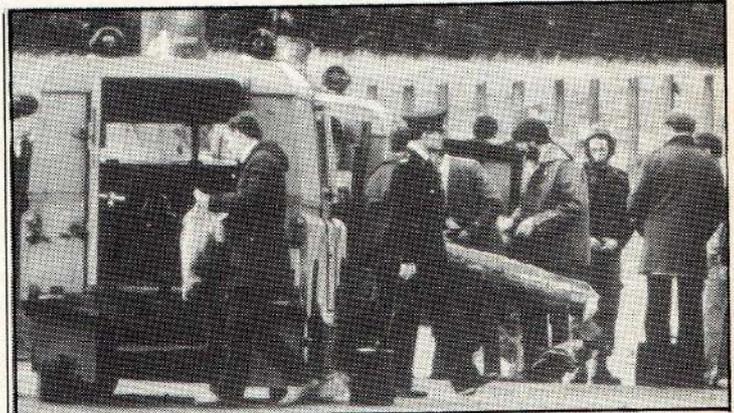
#### Saturday, September 26th

On Saturday night, an RUC man was shot dead by the IRA in Killough village in Co. Down.

Shortly after 11 p.m. he was ambushed by two IRA Volunteers who shot him at close range and he died instantly. Although a cordon of road blocks was immediately thrown up on all the main routes in the area as the British army UDR and RUC combed the countryside, the Volunteers made good their escape.

#### Sunday, September 27th

A full-time member of the UDR escaped injury when he was ambushed driving his car in a laneway near Pomeroy



● British soldiers and RUC men study the damage done by an RPG-7 rocket in Belfast.



● The armoured RUC landrover hit by the rocket leaves the scene.

#### Monday, September 28th

The driver of an RUC landrover was killed and another RUC man injured when their landrover was successfully caught in the full force of an IRA rocket blast in west Belfast. The armoured landrover which was the first of a two vehicle patrol was hit on the drivers side by the rocket. The driver was killed instantly by the explosion. The RUC man in the front passenger seat received exten-

sive wounds to the legs and lower part of his body and had to have both arms amputated.

The first nine months of this year have been the worst for the RUC since the war started after the riots of 1969.

Nineteen RUC men have been killed as the British policy of Ulsterisation has forced them to the fore in place of British troops. Nine UDR soldiers have also been killed in the same period.

## Friday, October 2nd

The IRA carried out a gun attack on an RUC landrover in Strabane, county Tyrone. Volunteers commandeered a house in the Liskey Road area and lay in wait for their target. At 3.45 p.m. an RUC landrover turned into Marian Park and an IRA Volunteer opened up with a burst of fire from a high velocity weapon. About fifty rounds were fired at the vehicle, some hitting their target, although the RUC admitted to no casualties. Enemy fire was not returned. The five-man active service unit made good their escape in a commandeered car and returned safely to base.

## Monday, October 5th

A soldier who had resigned from the UDR just four weeks before was shot dead by an IRA active service unit in the predominantly loyalist Waterside area of the city. The ambush took place at 5.30 p.m. in the grounds of Altnagelvin hospital and the unit returned safely to base.

## Friday, October 9th

IRA bombs were planted in three commercial centres — Strabane, Derry and Armagh — on Friday afternoon, October 9th.

The most successful attack was in Strabane, where the Crown Buildings was the target.

The blast wrecked the hallway of the Crown Buildings — which houses various government department offices — in Barrack Street, and caused lesser damage to the rest of the building.

Two armed and hooded IRA Volunteers planted the bomb in the hallway before making good their escape in a commandeered car.

After the alert was raised the area was cleared twenty minutes before the bomb exploded just before 5 p.m.

It was a daring attack: the target building is only seventy yards from the RUC barracks.

In Derry city, a van bomb exploded at a garage in Foyle Road, near the city end of the Craigavon Bridge. The garage was damaged, as was the former shirt factory of Tillie and Henderson (now used as a shopping arcade), overlooking Carlisle Square, and in Abercorn Road, where hundreds of windows were broken.

Telephone warnings were given prior to the explosion.



● The aftermath of the IRA's coolly-executed and precisely-timed urban guerilla ambush in London, which blasted a British army bus

In Armagh city, serious damage was only narrowly avoided when just the detonator of a car bomb exploded.

## Saturday, October 10th

Twenty two British soldiers were injured, nine seriously, in a daring IRA bomb attack outside Chelsea barracks in London, England.

Despite two regrettable civilian fatalities the attack was acclaimed by the republican people throughout the beleaguered nationalist ghettos and countryside in the occupied six-counties, as part of the very necessary extension of the war outside of the north, particularly into the very heart of British imperialism's headquarters — London.

It was last January when the IRA last attacked a target in Britain: Uxbridge RAF barracks in west London; then also claiming responsibility for bomb attacks the previous December in London on Hammersmith Territorial Barracks and the Bromley-by-Bow gas-works.

The attack in Chelsea inflicted military casualties on a bus load of the First Battalion of the Irish Guards regiment who were returning to their barracks from ceremonial duties at the Tower of London.

The bomb, of a devastating shrapnel-type, which was in a laundry van parked near the Chelsea barracks in Ebury Bridge Road in London was command-detonated by an IRA Volunteer shortly after noon as the bus carrying twenty-three Irish Guards passed by.

Twenty-two of the troops were injured as the side of the

bus was ripped out and wreckage strewn across the road. The van bomb had been precisely placed in position just over half-an-hour beforehand.

The IRA claimed responsibility for the attack on the soldiers, in a statement which said:

*"The attack is attributable to the state of war which exists between the British government who occupy Ireland, and the Irish people who strike out through the IRA.*

*"We await the hypocrisy which will undoubtedly follow from British political leaders whose attitude to Irish victims of their violence in our country only strengthens our conviction in our cause and methods."*

## Sunday, October 11th

An IRA monster bomb attack on British troops on the Derry/Donagall border unfortunately misfired, causing no enemy casualties.

The troops who had the narrow escape were in the permanently-manned British military checkpoint on Letterkenny Road, just outside Derry city on the Northern side of the border.

A commandeered lorry was fitted out with mortar bombs by IRA Volunteers and set in position two hundred yards to the South of the checkpoint.

## Tuesday, October 13th

Commercial premises in Strabane and Armagh were again the targets for IRA active service units.

A 50 lb. bomb exploded in the centre of Strabane causing extensive damage to Elliott's

drapery store where the bomb had been planted by IRA Volunteers.

Blast damage was widespread and windows were broken in almost every building along Main Street.

The bomb went off a few minutes before 10 p.m. A forty-five minute warning had been given by the IRA and the area was cleared of civilians.

The street, one of the main traffic arteries, was sealed off until early Wednesday.

In Armagh city's main shopping centre only slight damage was caused when three grille bombs were planted at shops by an IRA active service unit.

The explosions occurred between 9.25 p.m. and 9.40 p.m. on Tuesday. The targets were Wilson's shoe shop, Wright's furnishing shop, and Johnston's shoe shop.

The area was cleared of civilians prior to the explosions, and as in the Strabane attack, there were no civilian injuries.

Volunteers returned safely to base after both operations.

## Friday, October 16th

An out-of-uniform soldier belonging to the Ulster Defence Regiment was shot and seriously wounded in Strabane, county Tyrone, as he left a jeweller's shop.

The soldier was shot twice by an IRA Volunteer, a pillion passenger on a motor-cycle which had been commandeered earlier. The two IRA Volunteers escaped safely and so serious was the condition of the UDR soldier that he had to be flown by military helicopter to a Belfast hospital for emergency treatment.

■ THE FOLLOWING PHOTOGRAPHS SHOW A UNIT OF THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY ON RECENT MANOEUVRES



■ AMBUSH POSITION



■ LYING IN WAIT



■ ROAD CHECK





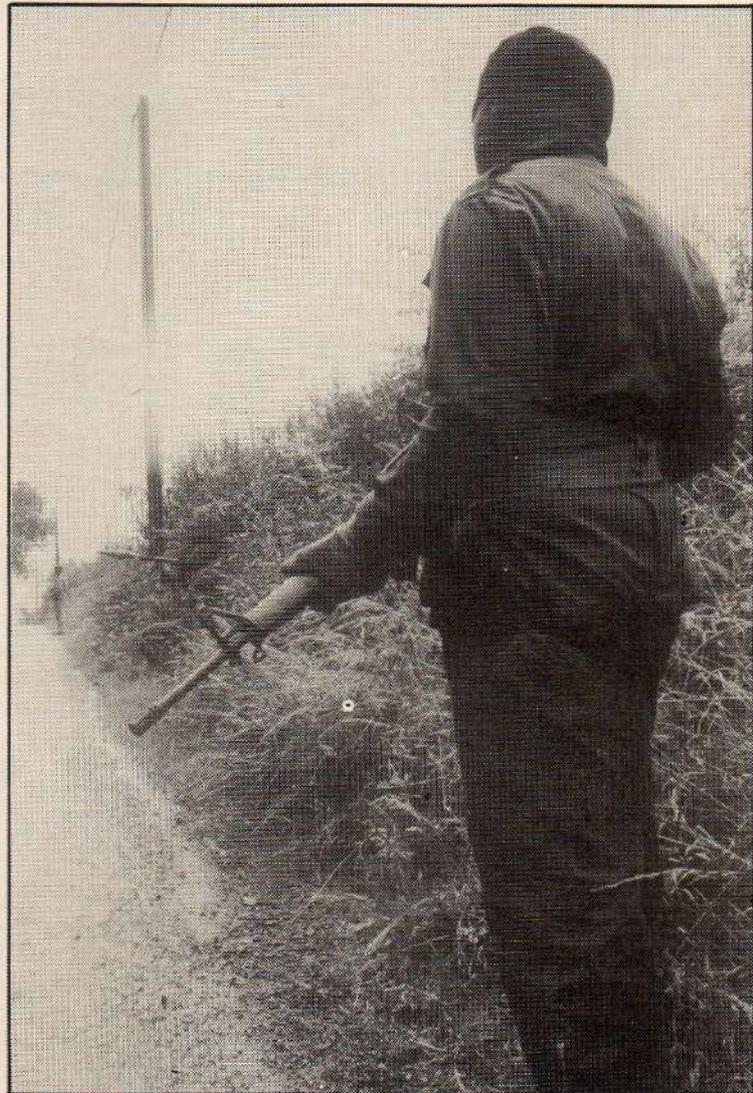
■ FOOT PATROL



■ IDENTIFICATION CHECK



■ SURVEILLANCE





● Junta troops terrorise civilians in San Salvador

# EL SALVADOR — beginning of the end for dictatorship

At the beginning of this year the Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation (FMLN) said — *"The time has come to begin the decisive military and insurrectional battles for the seizure of power by the people and for the establishment of the democratic revolutionary government"*. The long-awaited general offensive began with attacks on four fronts. The FMLN was able to capture key cities in the western province of Santa Ana and Sonogonate, and there were also important defections from the Salvadorean Army in that area.

However, a general strike called in the capital San Salvador was thwarted when the army arrested and murdered many of the strike leaders. The FMLN called a tactical retreat of its forces to prepare a second stage of the insurrection, but they continued to hold large areas in the north and west of the country.

## GENOCIDE

The military junta stepped up the level of repression in the months following the insurrection attempt. One night in January more than one hundred people were killed in the township of Santa Ana (which had been seized earlier by the guerillas) including a number of doctors and nurses. From then on a knock on the door meant swift death as the

civilian population was made to pay for their democratic aspirations.

Meanwhile, the FMLN and the broader political organization of the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) made repeated attempts to arrive at some form of international mediation. The military rulers seemed more intent on eliminating the four-and-a-half million people of this small country.

The following is a typical incident. On January 22nd the people's mass organisations called a march and rally in the capital city at which 300,000 people appeared. The peaceful and disciplined march arrived at the city centre where it was met by troops with tanks and helicopters — fifty were killed and more than two-hundred-and-fifty injured, many seriously. The political forms of mass protest were losing their effectiveness and a rapid rise in military action began.

## CONSOLIDATION

By mid-June of this year the liberation forces had consolidated their position in many parts of the country. The crucial area around the San Vicente volcano, which controls communications between the eastern and western parts of the country, was finally abandoned by the army in a bid to cut its losses. The guerilla radio station Radio Venceremos hailed this as a considerable victory, giving the lie to the official version that the guerillas had been routed.

In fact, the freedom fighters are

increasingly able to move around freely in the countryside and they clearly hold the initiative. Heavy fighting has been going on in the capital with regular gun battles of up to six hours, between the army and the guerilla forces. There are daily ambushes of police patrols and army convoys resulting in twenty to thirty enemy losses. Early in June the FMLN forces overran the army barracks in the northern town of Arcatao where they captured an airforce helicopter and supplies which it was delivering to the garrison.

## ESTABLISHMENT DIVIDED

Now, every revolution reaches a point when the people decide they will not go on under the old system, and the rulers lose the will to maintain the old order. The people decided long ago they had had enough, the rulers are rapidly losing their resolve. Big businessmen, ranchers and bankers have been sending their money abroad since the beginning of the year. Their families have since followed, and it is only a question of time before they buy their own one-way air tickets out of the country.

The military are divided. Some want to repeat the massacre of 1932 when tens of thousands (including Farabundo Marti the peasant leader) were butchered in the fields of El Salvador. However, Defence Minister Garcia was recently voicing the increasing pessimism within the army when he admitted that *"although we have been winning so far, the insurgents have the advantage of surprise, along with the initiative"*. He went on to say *"the communist's (sic) organisation is admirable and their hospitals are better than ours"*, concluding — *"We are defending our position, but we want a political solution through elections"*. And elections in El Salvador today would mean an overwhelming victory of the liberation forces.

Total support for the FMLN until final victory! ■



● Armoured units of racist South Africa violate Angolan territory once again

# ANGOLA-



## new threats to peace

ET again the South African armed forces have invaded the southern provinces of Angola, and again they have got away with it as their international supporters (primarily Britain and the USA) blocked any United Nations protest moves.

### BACKGROUND

The background to this flagrant breach of Angola's national sovereignty is this country's long and difficult struggle for independence which was finally victorious in 1975. That year the South Africans invaded Angola in an attempt to prevent independence and they were finally repelled with the aid of Cuban volunteers who were called in by the then president, Agostinho Neto. Since then the South African forces have made repeated air and ground incursions into

Angolan territory, causing a widespread destruction of crops and cattle and innumerable civilian casualties.

The 'justification' for this is Angola's principled stand in support of SWAPO, the liberation movement fighting for the independence of Namibia, illegally occupied by South Africa. This is really a smokescreen for the apartheid regime's determination to destabilise the two ex-Portuguese colonies, Angola and Mozambique which became independent in 1975 and adopted a democratic socialist political course.

This was a frightening example for the exploited black majority in South Africa, and helped encourage the young fighters who launched the Soweto protests.

### INCURSIONS

In 1978, the South Africans carried out the infamous massacre of Kassinga,

which compares with My Lai in the long list of imperialist atrocities. Then half-way through 1980 they threw in 2,000 troops backed by 40 Mirage jets and 40 armoured cars which caused havoc in the southern provinces of Angola. At the beginning of this year their attention was shifted to Mozambique when they launched a murderous attack on South African exiles in the capital of Maputo.

Later, in mid-August of this year, the most serious invasion of Angola since 1975 began, the culmination of Pretoria's five year undeclared war against that country. South African bombers first flattened the town of Cahana and others on the main road to the provincial capital of Lubango. Then, three motorised infantry columns (40,000 men) and around 100 tanks moved in behind, destroying and killing as they came. Inevitably they came into

conflict with the Angolan armed forces and fierce fighting ensued, but the Angolans with remarkable forbearance kept the Cuban volunteers out of the fighting so as not to internationalise the conflict. They could have expected United Nations backing for this, but the Western imperialist nations are too closely linked, economically and politically, with South Africa for this.

The Angolans invoked Article 51 of the UN Charter which provides for collective defence if a member-state is a victim of external aggression, but by then the South Africans had begun to withdraw.

### THE IRISH CONNECTION

There is considerable Irish interest in this area. For example the village of Catequero, which the South African troops passed through, is only two miles from a mission run by the Irish Medical Missionaries of Mary, and where two civilian buses were bombed by the invaders killing 28 people. The Leitrim Observer dedicated its front page in the first issue of September to this question concluding in an editorial that: *"Ireland's United Nations Security Council seat is a golden opportunity to instil new life into the UN organisation. It will not do it by whittling down purposeful resolutions of South Africa's aggression as happened last week."*

The neo-colonial Fine Gael regime seems more concerned to follow Britain's lead in this than to assert an independent and progressive foreign policy. At around the same time, the Angolan ambassador in Paris, Luis de Almeida, visited Dublin as a guest of the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement. He said that some 10,000 South African troops remained in the southern part of Angola with the intention of creating a 'no-man's land' along the border, sown with landmines to prevent re-occupation. He condemned international support for South Africa's attempts to destabilise the democratic regimes in the area and said: *"Namibia will be independent with SWAPO in power. You can't stop the wind blowing with your hands."*

Clearly the question of the Cubans, so often brought up by Angola's enemies is a red herring, because Angola has always made it clear that when South Africa withdraws from Namibia, and the constant threat to national sovereignty disappears, the Cubans will go home.

### LIBERATION STRUGGLES

The stakes in Southern Africa are high indeed — the area is rich with gold, diamonds, uranium and oil, all products that the superpowers are keen to keep hold of. The independence of Angola meant that this country could provide oil to the other African states thus reducing their dependency on the apartheid regime.

Pretoria's ambition is a vast economic network across the area dominated by itself and the powerful international corporations which invest in the region.



● Indiscriminate South African air raids have caused innumerable civilian casualties



● The Angolan defence forces have heroically resisted the racist regime's incursions

Nationalist regimes such as those of Angola and Mozambique represent the aspirations of a people long oppressed by racism and colonialism. South Africa itself is a seething cauldron of unrest with black workers and students daily confronting the white supremacists in power through the force of arms. Thus the African National Congress in South Africa itself, and SWAPO in occupied Namibia were forced to launch a guerilla campaign to assert the rights of their people.

We must support the rights of these people in struggle and those who back them up, such as independent Angola. South Africa offers a bleak and terrible prospect to the people of the area unless victory is soon achieved. With the help of the Zionist regime in Israel they now have a nuclear capability which they will not hesitate to use if cornered. The apartheid system of racial superiority must be destroyed before it is too late.

'SURVIVORS' by Uinseann Mac Eoin (Argenta Publications, Dublin, 1980).

This truly remarkable book covers the story of Ireland's struggle as told through some of her outstanding living people (the "Survivors") recalling events from the days of Davitt, through James Connolly, Collins, Liam Mellows and Rory O'Connor to the present time. We often forget that there are people still alive today who can remember the Easter Rising, lived through the Tan War, the Civil War and the difficult years of the 1930's. These recollections are a rich repository of historical knowledge; not the dry history of the textbooks but the real history of living people.

**FAMILIAR NAMES**

Some of the twenty-three "survivors" are familiar names, people who have written extensively and so on. Thus we have Peadar O'Donnell of Land Annuity Campaign and Republican Congress fame. He is particularly critical of Labour after 1916 – *"One of the reasons Dublin voted Republican rather than Labour, was because the masses in Dublin are very Republican. They resented the fact that Labour had deserted the Republic"*.

He is also critical of the abstract "leftist" critics of Republicanism – *"Though the IRA was often dubbed a purely nationalist organisation, those critics forget that nationality itself is a progressive force. A nationalist movement generally speaking gathers its strength from the working class. If the working class pushes up to the front, they can carry on the revolution to the social revolutionary stage"*.

A similar theme – the relation between national and social liberation – is developed by Frank Edwards (Lieut. Waterford City Battalion IRA, sergeant XV International Brigade, Spain) in his recollections. He tells of agitation in the 1930's in Waterford over the slum landlords, the organisation of tenants and the unemployed, and, of course, strikers, concluding simply – *"Most of the local IRA supported us. They were working class"*.

Nora Connolly O'Brien, the late daughter of James Connolly provides fascinating glimpses of her eventful life as does Sean MacBride, one time Chief of Staff of the IRA, today international statesman.

**IRA VETERANS**

There is another group of recollections from the legendary commanders of the Republican Army during the Tan War and after. There is Thomas O'Maileoin (better known as Sean Forde), Commandant General, IRA, who remained on the Army Council until 1938. Apart

# History lives on



from his fascinating account of military operations he notes how in the 1930's: *"with the right political organisation, we could sweep the land... Without a real revolution -- a revolution of the spirit -- the wheel, I knew, would turn full circle again"*. It did of course.

He ends with an uncompromising statement on the present: *"I see no difference in the fight being waged against English domination of this country today, and the fight we fought in Westmeath in 1916, and in East Limerick in 1920 and 1921. As far as I am concerned, they are the same people at grips with the same enemy"*.

John Joe Sheehy (Commandant Kerry No 1 Brigade, IRA) ends on a similar note: *"I admire the struggle of the oppressed Northern people, and how they are hitting back at an invading army trying to do the 'cos ar bhog' on them"*. So much for the spineless commentators who tell us "the old

IRA was never like this", etc, etc.

Others who provide us with a personal view of the historic battles and ambushes are Pax O'Faolain (Brigadier General IRA), Tom Kelleher (commandant General, IRA 1st Southern Division), Tony Woods, Con Casey, Walter Mitchell, Connie Meenan, and Dan Gleeson. From the North there is Neil Gillespie (Volunteer 2nd Northern Division IRA), who tells of the struggle in Derry, as does James McElduff (Captain 2nd Northern Division, IRA).

Most interesting of all I found Peter Carleton of Belfast who was a Section Leader in na Fainna Eireann. He tells of when Frank Ryan came up to Belfast in 1925 for the Wolfe Tone Commemoration which was held on the summit of Cave Hill at MacArts Fort. Referring to the Union Jacks flying about the city he declared: *"where I come from, if we can't pull them down, we shoot them down"*. A new generation of Republican fighters is now carrying out this task.

**WOMEN IN STRUGGLE**

Until recently we knew about Republican men in the past but little about women – this book makes up for this to a large extent. Apart from Nora Connolly O'Brien it collects the memoirs of a number of very brave and dedicated fighters – Marie Comerford, Eithne Coyle (President Cumann na mBan), May Dalaigh, and Sheila Humphreys (Vice-President Cumann na mBan).

The story of Cumann na mBan is still largely untold – the steady, hard and unrewarding work they did in the political and military spheres. Their militancy was incredible – Eithne Doyle recalls how: *"as things developed in 1922, we could see that the Free State was toeing the line for Britain. Nearly all the girls stayed Republican, but the men seemed to waver"*.

Later, in a political address to Cumann na mBan in 1935 she is uncompromising in her radicalism: *"We offer no apology to the rulers North or South of this partitioned land in asserting our rights as freeborn Irish women to repudiate that Treaty and the Imperial Parliament of partitioned Ulster. (We fight) for an Ireland where the exploitation of Irish workers by imported or native capitalists will be ruthlessly exterminated... and put an end for all time to that state of chaos and social disorder which is holding our people in unnatural bondage"*.

**UNFULLFILLED DREAM**

In this book Republican women and men recall for the first time the vivid and historic epoch through which they lived; the high hopes, the scrambles, the fights, the escapes, periods of imprisonment, executions; the long weary road back into civilian life, back to an Ireland where the reality fell far short of the dream.

'IRISH NATIONALISM — A history of its roots and its ideology' by Sean Cronin (The Academy Press, Dublin, 1980).

# Useful political interpretation of Irish Republicanism

A book on Irish nationalism by a one-time Republican is bound to attract attention. Cronin's study deals with the roots, history, growth and development of Nationalist thinking in Ireland, particularly its revolutionary form — Irish Republicanism.

One could be forgiven for dismissing the book as the product of a renegade Republican turned academic, and, even worse, one whose books are published by the mis-named Sinn Fein — The Workers' Party's Repsol Publications. That would be mistaken on two counts — 1) the book is a generally useful political interpretation of Irish Republicanism, superior in that sense to Bowyer Bell's history of the IRA, 2) in spite of repeating the standard slanders on the 1970 'split' in the Republican Movement it provides a damning indictment of those reactionaries masquerading behind the SFWP label.

## 1795 — 1970

The history Cronin takes us through is a familiar one: Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen, Thomas Davis and Young Ireland, the Fenians and the Land War, and the great Easter Rising. He then traces the IRA through the Tan and Civil wars, the difficulties of the 1930's, the war years, and the Border Campaign of the 1950's where Cronin of course played an important role himself. His last chapter is entitled significantly "The Final Rebellion in the 1970's", presumably an admission that this is the final, inevitably victorious phase of the struggle.

Cronin gives us one quite valid conclusion — "The lesson of Irish history, is that England never yields to right, reason or justice, only to force. Consequently, armed rebellion is an essential element in any attempt to win Irish independence".

## PARALLELS

Current debates and discussions within the Republican Movement find interesting parallels in the discussions going on in the 1930's. Father Michael O'Flanagan, President of Sinn Fein in 1934-35 noted how "the immediate task that lies before us is to clarify our minds on the essential principles of pure republicanism, to apply them with unswerving consistency in the daily activities of our organisation, to show how their general application would solve all the pressing problems of



● 'We must... provide constructive revolutionary leadership in the day to day struggles of the people of no property'

the whole people of Ireland, and work out, in detail a plan of government".

A governmental programme was in fact worked out, which said of Republicans — "Not only must they be the organised and armed vanguard but they must also supply leadership and guidance in directing the thoughts of the people along constructive revolutionary lines". The lessons for the 1980's are obvious — we must move beyond abstract policies and pious declarations, to provide **constructive revolutionary** leadership in the day to day struggles of the people of no property. A "plan of government" should aim at taking us from the real, concrete situation of today towards the united democratic-socialist republic we are committed to.

## SFWP EXPOSED

As I already said, Cronin has not become converted overnight into an ardent supporter of the Republican Movement, but the pressure of events has forced him to recognize the bankruptcy of 'Sinn Fein — the Workers Party'. Following Cronin then — "In their efforts to unite Protestant and Catholic workers — they seemed to have abandoned the small farmers, North and South — the Officials have come to some surprising conclusions on the national

question, given their tradition and history. They blame the Catholic middle class, not British rule, for Ireland's failure to industrialize... They favour devolved government in the North... (i.e. return to Stormont's Orange state). They have been accused (rightly) of betraying the national question by adopting the "two nations" (Protestant and Catholic) theory... Finally they support industrialisation via the multinationals..."

Cronin does not draw out all the conclusions from his obvious disillusionment with the Sticks, but it is a clear sign that their one time "radical" credentials are well and truly tarnished.

## RADICAL REPUBLICANISM

Cronin ends up with a brief look at Republicanism proper, quoting from Sinn Fein vice-president Gerry Adams, and concluding that, "his political ideas reflect a natural radicalisation of an armed struggle conducted among the Catholic ghettos of Belfast and Derry... he seems much closer to Connolly's analysis than other voices". One wonders what has happened to the "Hibernian gunmen" we used to hear of... Cronin and his ilk never understand that pure republicanism has always been radical, in the sense that it looks to the roots of our problems, in our case, British imperialism and partition. ■

# Sinn Fein offices

HEAD OFFICE,  
44 Parnell Square,  
Dublin 1,  
IRELAND  
Tel: Dublin 726932

AN PHOBLACHT/REPUBLICAN  
NEWS  
44 Parnell Square,  
Dublin 1.  
Tel: Dublin 747611

BELFAST OFFICE  
51/53 Falls Road,  
BELFAST.  
Tel: Belfast 46841/23214

P.O.W. DEPARTMENT  
51/53 Falls Road,  
Belfast.  
Tel: Belfast 23214  
5 Blessington Street,  
Dublin.  
Tel: Dublin 308738

DERRY OFFICE  
15 Cable Street,  
Derry.  
Tel: Derry 68926

REPUBLICAN PUBLICATIONS  
2a Monagh Crescent,  
Turf Lodge,  
Belfast.  
Tel: Belfast 620768

DUNDALK OFFICE  
The Silver Buckle,  
Clanbrassil Street,  
Dundalk,  
Co. Louth.

LURGAN OFFICE  
77 North Street,  
Lurgan,  
Co. Armagh.

ALL OTHER DEPARTMENTS  
of Sinn Fein  
Foreign Affairs Bureau,  
Womens Department,  
Youth Department,  
Contact head office at,  
44 Parnell Square,  
Dublin 1.  
Tel. Dublin 726932

MONAGHAN OFFICE  
Dublin Street,  
Monaghan.

## JOIN SINN FEIN

ANYONE, in Ireland, interested in joining Sinn Fein should contact their local cumann or head office at 44 Parnell Square, Dublin, Telephone 726932.

*I am interested in becoming a member of Sinn Fein*

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

# SUBSCRIBE

## An Phoblacht/Republican News

To ensure a weekly copy of *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, subscribe to the paper directly.

Annual subscription rates are:

- Ireland and Britain ..... £15.50
- Europe ..... £20
- Elsewhere ..... \$60

TO: An Phoblacht/Republican News, 44 Parnell Square, Dublin, or 51/53 Falls Road, Belfast. Please find enclosed £..... for a subscription for six months/one year to be sent to:

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

# Support Groups

## AUSTRALIA

Adelaide H-Block Committee,  
P.O. Box 141,  
Brighton 5048,  
South Australia.

Australian Irish Republican Movement,  
Box M 329,  
Sydney Mail Exchange,  
Sydney,  
New South Wales 2012.

H-Block Committee, Melbourne,  
Lot 1, High Street Road,  
Near CNR, Fonteyn Drive,  
Wantirna South 3153,  
Melbourne,  
Victoria.

Sydney H-Block Committee,  
P.O. Box K703,  
Haymarket,  
N.S.W. 2000.

## EUROPE

### BELGIUM

Colectif Irlande Libre,  
c/o J.L. Fauchet,  
123 Rue De La Mutualite,  
1180 Brussels.

H-Block Komitee Gent,  
p/a Wim Wabbes,  
Jan Verspeyenstraat 16,  
9000 Gent.

Werkgroep Irland,  
c/o Jan Hertoghs,  
Scotensteenweg 118,  
2100 Deurne. Tel: 031-24915

### BRITAIN

Charter '80,  
P.O. Box 353,  
London NW5

H-Block/Armagh Action Group,  
69 Durham Road,  
Sparkhill,  
Birmingham.

Information on Ireland,  
1 North End Road,  
London W14.

Troops Out Movement,  
Box TO,  
c/o 2a St. Paul's Road,  
London N1.

Women Against Imperialism,  
c/o A Woman's Place,  
48 Williams Place,  
London WC1

### DENMARK

Danish H-Block/Armagh Campaign,  
c/o Annelise Faber,  
Sankt Knudsvej 4,  
1903 Copenhagen V.

Ireland Initiative Group,  
c/o Lars Nielsen,  
Vester Ringgade 543,  
8000 Arhus.

Irish Komitee,  
c/o Bjarne K. Mortensen,  
Smedevaenget 10,  
5230 Odense M.

### FRANCE

Collectif 'Irlande Libre',  
H L M Le Grand Basque,  
3 Allee Potus,  
64100 Bayonne.

Colectif Irlande Libre,  
c/o C.E.P.,  
44 Rue St. Georges,  
B.P.6,  
69005 Lyon.

Colectif Irlande Libre,  
1 Place Major,  
44400 Reze,  
Nantes. Tel: 40-842490.

Colectif Irlande Libre,  
1 Rue Keller,  
Paris 75011.

Colectif Irlande Libre,  
4 Impasse De La Croix Blanche  
3400 Rennes.

Colectif Irlande Libre,  
19 Rue Pierre-Hevin,  
35100 Rennes. Tel: 672756.

C.L.S.R.P.I.,  
c/o Peuples En Lutte,  
B.P. 2503-35025,  
Rennes, Cedex.

Comite De Soutien Aux Prisonniers  
Politique Irlandais  
Alternatives Sociales,  
B.P. 5002,  
14021 Caen, Cedex.

Comite De Defense,  
Des Prisonniers Politique,  
Irlandais (C D P P I)  
14 Rue de Nateuil,  
Paris 75015.

C D P.P.I.  
101 Grand Rue,  
67000 Strasbourg.

Comite Irlande Amiens,  
4 Rue des Archers,  
8000 Amiens.

Comite Irlande De Besancon,  
c/o Librairie Au Plaisir Solitaire,  
16 Rue Claude Pouillet,  
25000 Besancon.

Comite Irlande Brest,  
c/o Jakez Gloanec,  
89 Rue De Sebastopol,  
29200 Brest.

Comite Irlande,  
Centre Social De Penn Ar Creac'h,  
Rue Dupr. Cretien,  
29200 Brest.

Comite Irlande Clermont,  
Ateneo,  
8 Rue De L'Ange,  
63000 Clermont-Ferrano.

Comite Irlande De Montpellier,  
Librairie 'La Breche',  
34 Rue De L'Universite,  
34000 Montpellier.

Comite Irlande,  
14 Rue De Nanteuil,  
Paris 75015.

Comite Irlande,  
MJC Centre,  
Quai De L'Odet,  
29000 Quimper.

Irish Political Prisoners Defence  
Committee,  
77 Rue Gabriel Peri,  
76600 Le Harve.

### HOLLAND

H-Block Komitee Nederlands,  
c/o Hannes Walraffen,  
Laurierstraat 31,  
1016 DG Amsterdam.  
Tel: 020-253928.

Ierland Komitee Nederlands,  
P.O. Box 11-618,  
Amsterdam.

Ierland Komitee Nijmegen,  
Postbus 1.344,  
Nijmegen.

### ITALY

Comitato Irlanda Di Milano,  
c/o Centro Sociale G. Amoroso,  
Piazzale Dateo 5,  
20129 Milano.

Ireland Support Committee,  
Eraldo Alenghi,  
Caselle Di Crotta D'Adda,  
26020 Cremona.

Ireland Committee,  
Sandra E Flavia Busatta,  
Via N. Tommaseo N. 24,  
35100 Padova. Tel: 949-663072.

### NORWAY

Irlandsfronten,  
Box 87 Furuset,  
Oslo 10.

Irlands Komiteen Norge,  
Postboks 13,  
Blindern,  
Oslo 3.

Irlands Komiteen-Trondheim,  
c/o Bjorn Engen,  
Korsgata 17,  
7000 Trondheim.

### PORTUGAL

C.S.P.P.I.,  
Av. D. Carlos 1,132,  
1200 Lisboa. Tel: 662629.

### SPAIN

Comite De Solidaridade Galicia-Irlanda,  
Asociacion De Vecinos Vigo-Oeste,  
Auda. Camelias, 57-Baixo,  
Vigo (Galicia).

### SWITZERLAND

I.S.C.S. Ireland Committee Switzerland,  
c/o L. Greissmann,  
Altmoosstrasse 19,  
8157 Dielsdorf.

### WEST GERMANY

Anti H-Block Komitee,  
Westdeutctchland,  
c/o F. Gallagher,  
Arnsburge Strabe 21,  
6000 Frankfurt 60.

Egon Testroet,  
Hiltruper Str. 72,  
4400 Munster-Wolbeck.

Irlandgruppe HD,  
c/o Postfach 104520,  
6900 Heidelberg.

Ireland Komitee West Berlin,  
Postfach 311248,  
1000 Berlin 31.

Ireland Komitee Bochum,  
Westenfelderstr 22,  
4630 Bochum.

### WISK

c/o Manfred Huschka,  
Brahmstr 12,  
D 7080 Aalen.

### WISK

Postfach 35,  
637 Oberursel,  
5 Frankfurt.

## NORTH AMERICA

### CANADA

Irish Political Prisoners' Support  
Committee,  
331 University Avenue,  
Charlottetown,  
Prince Edward Island.

Irish Prisoner of War Committee,  
Erewhon Book Store,  
10815 B-82 Avenue,  
Edmonton.

Irish Prisoner of War Committee,  
P.O. Box 5035,  
Station E,  
Hamilton,  
Ontario.

Irish Prisoner of War Committee,  
P.O. Box 86545,  
North Vancouver B.C.

### UNITED STATES

Irish Northern Aid Committee,  
4951 Broadway,  
New York,  
N. Y. 10034. Tel:212-5671611.

Irish Prisoner of War Committee,  
4951 Broadway,  
New York, N. Y. 10034,  
Tel: 212-5671611.

### QUEBEC

Comite Quebec-Irlande  
C P 126,  
Station E  
Montreal

## NEW ZEALAND

H-Block Committee,  
c/o James O'Dea,  
107 Kufe Street,  
Orak, Auckland 5.

N.Z. H-Block Committee,  
Box 39132,  
Auckland West,  
New Zealand.

*Help the  
prisoners*



**SUPPORT**

**AN CUMANN  
CABHRACH**

Donations, enquiries and offers of help to:  
The Secretary,  
The Central Committee,  
An Cumann Cabhrach,  
c/o 44 Parnell Square, Dublin.  
Telephone 747611 or 726932.



**and GREEN CROSS**

Donations, enquiries and offers of help to:  
The Secretary,  
Green Cross '73,  
11a Springfield Road, Belfast.  
Telephone 29635.

# POLICE STATE BLUES

THE ROYAL  
ULSTER CONSTABULARY  
IS PROTECTING US!

WE ARE  
DEFENDED BY THE  
BRITISH ARMY!

NOT TO  
MENTION THE  
ULSTER DEFENCE  
REGIMENT AND THE  
POLICE RESERVISTS!

ALL THIS I HAVE BEEN  
TOLD BY NEWSPAPER, RADIO  
AND TELEVISION ...  
... HOW AMAZINGLY WELL-  
PROTECTED WE ARE!!

BUT IF WE ARE SO WELL  
PROTECTED HOW COME KIDS  
ARE BEING MAIMED AND  
MURDERED BY THUGS WITH  
PLASTIC BULLETS...

THUGS? THUGS!?!  
YOU ARE MALIGNING  
OUR SECURITY FORCES,  
YOUNG MAN!!

PEOPLE LIKE YOU MAKE ME SICK!  
SNIDE REMARKS AND JIBES!  
SUBVERSION!! THAT'S YOUR  
GAME!!!



IF I HAD MY WAY  
I'D TAKE OUT EVERY  
TROUBLE-MAKING  
AGITATOR AND...

# BLANG!

POOR MAN! YET ANOTHER  
VICTIM OF THE DREADED  
"EXPLODING BRAIN  
SYNDROME"!!

THIS CHARMING LITTLE  
POLICE STATE IS LITTERED WITH  
SMALL BITS OF THE VICTIMS OF  
THIS FOUL DISEASE!

THE MAIN CAUSE OF  
THIS DISEASE IS BELIEVING  
WHAT YOU READ IN THE  
BRITISH PRESS...

...THERE'S ONLY ONE CURE...  
SMASH THE POLICE STATE!

