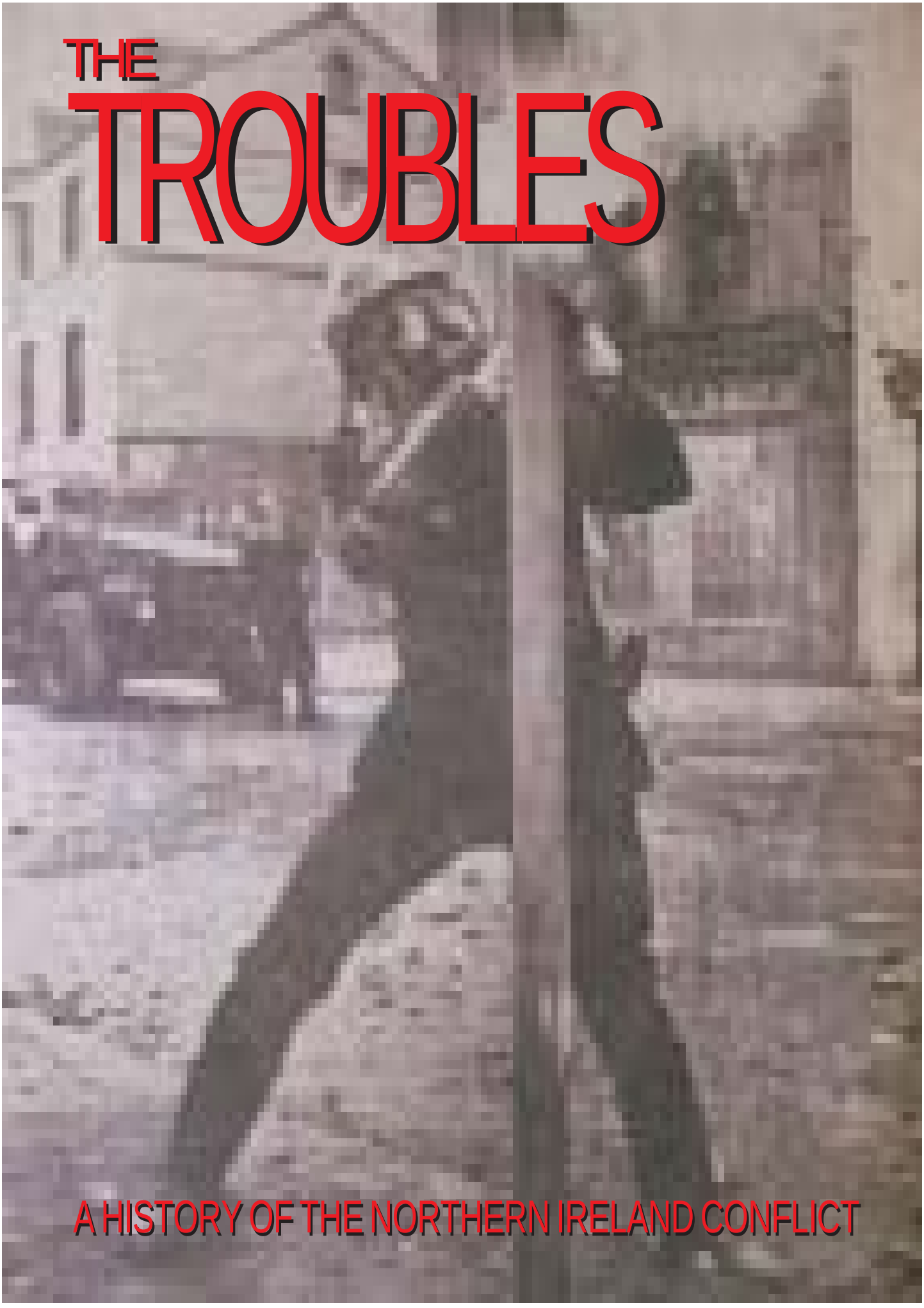

THE TROUBLES

A HISTORY OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND CONFLICT

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It can often be a contentious issue of debate of when and how Northern Ireland's 'Troubles' began, who and what is to blame, and even which event in case led us to where we are now. You can go back 30 years, or even 300 years and beyond for in reality Ireland has been engaged in conflict with England for centuries.

Therefore, in order to compile a chronological record of the modern Troubles - the term usually given to the most recent conflict, we must mark a defining point of start, which we have taken as partition itself. In turn again, we feel it is equally important to give you the reader some understanding why events spiralled as they did into a bloody civil war.

This is not another view of the Troubles, this has been done and redone. This is the historical recording of events compiled by people from different parts of Belfast who lived through them. Our objective as local historians is to compile what we hope will be as near as possible a definitive reference to events as they unfolded through the last three decades.

In terms of research we have used as much material as possible and from diverse perspectives. We are confident that we have covered events in a factual manner as they occurred. If however you feel that we have either left something out or indeed got something wrong we are more than happy to hear from you. As mentioned above this series of publications is the historical recording of the Troubles and all corrections are more than welcome.

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INTRODUCTION TO THIS ISSUE

The Troubles. This is the term given to years of conflict in Northern Ireland which has seen thousands dead, widespread destruction and unbelievable horrors. But what was it all about. In this first **BUMPER ISSUE** we have endeavoured to cover the build up to partition, and the bloody events that thus unfolded from 1920 onwards. While a truce ended the fighting in the south of the country, the north and in particular Belfast spiralled into bloody sectarian fighting. It could well be described as Northern Ireland's forgotten conflict, when during the period between July 1920 and June 1922, 439 men, women and children were killed with a further 1,782 wounded.

The 1930's highlight the often forgotten Out Door Relief riots of 1932 when, for a short time and in a common cause, both communities stood together on the streets against state injustice.

In 1935, Belfast returned to sectarian fighting, while in the forties, as the country witnessed World War, the IRA continued to make its presence felt, continuing its fight into what became known as the 'Border campaign' of the 1950's.

The 1960's marked a defining point for the north, with the attempted reforms of the O'Neill Government at Stormont, the violence from a fledging UVF and the eventual storm that broke out in Derry and Belfast plunging Northern Ireland into 27 years of conflict.

Using as many original documents and primary sources as possible, this is the sad and often bloody history of the northern state, and the lead up to the recent conflict as we know it.

A STATE FORGED IN CONFLICT

At the turn of the twentieth century a new confidence within Irish Nationalism on a national scale, reinvigorated the Catholic community of Belfast. Supported by a reviving sense of Irish identity and Gaelic culture and by a growing influence of the Irish Party at Dublin Castle and also at Westminster a Catholic Association had been formed uniting religion and politics. The Catholic claim to political expression and social opportunity within the city had been already boosted when the Unionist controlled corporation was forced to concede two Catholic wards within the extended city of 1896. In 1903 a torch-lit parade of 12,000 Catholics welcomed Joseph Devlin's return to West Belfast after his election as M.P.

HOME RULE

Within Unionism this reinvigorated advancement of Catholic Nationalism sparked sectarian propaganda, fear and suspicion, and animosity again came to the fore with the Belfast Protestant Association beginning to build again. Edwardian Belfast was a city of sectarian ethnocentrism, were the politics of 'Home Rule' or the 'Union' overshadowed the common need of the working class to survive.

CITIZENS ARMIES

It was to be the Home Rule issue that sparked such a fear within Unionism, and from that emerged a determined resistance mainly within their strong base of Ulster which they considered solidly and homogeneously Unionist. This policy of resistance was to have its political stance supported by a newly formed group called the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) created to oppose Home Rule by force of arms.

This policy of resistance was to have its political stance supported by a newly formed group called the Ulster Volunteer Force

This was countered by a similar Nationalist force, the Irish National Volunteers (INV) established throughout Ireland. The military element of Unionism and their over confidence of holding Ulster had a catalytic effect on the growth of the Irish Volunteers in the north as it incensed Nationalists of the western counties. In March 1914 branches of the Nationalist force was established throughout Tyrone, Fermanagh and Derry, whilst in Belfast some 150 members were enrolled. By October, the Belfast membership would rise to 3,200. Overall in the North the new organisation increased at a phenomenal rate and by May 1914 of the 129,000 Irish Volunteers throughout Ireland, 41,000 were enrolled in Ulster, including some 18,000 in counties Tyrone, Derry and Donegal alone.

OUTBREAK OF WAR

Both sides had now created a menacing citizen army. However, the outbreak of war in August 1914 brought a 'party truce' between the two major British political parties, the Liberals and Conservatives in the face of 'external danger.' This left the still unresolved Irish Question in a state of suspended animation. Britain worked the Irish problem to its advantage promising both sides a positive outcome at the War's end in return for their support to the war effort.

This was forthcoming from both leaders of the two respective sides,

Below - Military cordon at the junction of Carrick Hill and Upper North Street.
The city of Belfast in the North was about to witness a campaign of terror never seen before in its entire history.



Pictures courtesy of the Belfast Telegraph

Edward Carson on the part of Unionism, and John Redmond on behalf of the Nationalist movement. Carson's UVF was quick to rally to the colours when called to do so.

The adventure of war, escape from poor social conditions, and loyalty to the British Crown made it very easy for Britain to recruit this organised semi-trained volunteer army. Redmond's task was an invidious one: he had to demonstrate the loyalty of Nationalists in the crisis whilst maintaining his party's supremacy in Irish politics so that he might win the most favourable settlement of the Ulster question after the war.

But the imperially-minded Redmond seriously miscalculated the way the tide was flowing at home and his British recruitment policy precipitated a split in the volunteers.
A small anti-war section who believed in fighting for Ireland, and not Britain led by Eoin MacNeill, left and joined forces with the revolutionary Irish republican Brotherhood (IRB) which was led in Belfast by Denis McCullough.



Thousands of Anti-Home Rule postcards were printed of which these are typical



SPLIT IN SUPPORT OF WAR

Those who split now designated themselves the 'Irish Volunteers', and although their numbers were small, the split marked the end of the 'National Volunteers' as an effective force in the North. Redmond still held the majority of support within the Volunteer movement which reflected that most Nationalists even in the North hoped his policy of supporting Britain's war effort might succeed in delivering a settlement which would prevent permanent partition.
With Irishmen flocking off in their thousands to fight in the war, the National Volunteers fell into decline.

In Belfast, the INV was tightly controlled by the Devlinite business and professional class, and by the early months of 1916 it had ceased route marches and military activity. A decisive factor in the city was the enlistment in the Royal Navy of the Regiment's commander, Dr. Hugh McNally, later killed with Lord Kitchener in the sinking of *H.M.S. Hampshire*.
The view of Anglo-Irishman G.F.H. Berkeley is important to note. He acted as organiser of the Volunteer Movement in Belfast in 1914, and distinctly formed the impression that the Home Rule leaders wished to *let the Volunteers die* in the North-East since they *rather feared disturbance amongst the Nationalists* in the event of their exclusion from Home Rule. Devlin, he records, had aroused 'resentment' amongst the local Volunteers over his reluctance to provide them with arms. Many of the 800 rifles obtained by Devlin for Belfast were as Berkeley described *of a strange foreign bore, which were hard to get ammunition for.*

UNIONIST INFLUENCE IN GOVERNMENT

By the end of 1915, the National Volunteers suffered a bad degree of apathy. Unlike the UVF who enjoyed the support of the Orange Order, the INV in areas such as Tyrone for example found only limited support from the Hibernians.
Thousands of the rank and file had marched off to war against Germany, and the politics of war left Ireland much in the background.
The Nationalists influence at Westminster had ceased to be of serious importance, yet despite the establishment of a Coalition Government in May 1915 which included Unionists, Redmond continued to call for recruits. Unionism, it appeared, now had acquired a dominating influence in a government upon whose good-will the future of the Home Rule act depended.

The Belfast National Volunteers remained in existence until October 1918 when what was considered its remaining arms '210 rifles of old Italian pattern ... in bad condition' were handed over to the British military. (In 1920, 60 INV rifles found their way into the hands of the Belfast IRA but not by direct choice.)

Below - John Redmond, Irish Nationalist Party Leader, inspecting Irish Volunteers in 1914.
Bottom - Sir Edward Carson inspecting a UVF unit in 1914.





THE RISE OF SINN FÉIN

Redmond's prestige was now fatally flawed, and events of Easter 1916 in Dublin would mark the beginning of the end for his Nationalist Party and its pro-British policy. The revolutionary Republican movement struck a blow against British Forces in Dublin in what became a 'blood sacrifice.' It was originally conceived by the IRB as a national revolt, but with the struggle effectively narrowed to Dublin, the theme of sacrifice became paramount. Military failure turned to martyrdom as the British engaged in harsh retribution.

The rising had initially engendered feelings of bafflement, verging on hostility, but the execution of sixteen of the leaders, over a period of ten days, together with the mass arrest of 3,400 Sinn Féin activists and sympathisers, worked a sea-change in Irish public opinion as condemnation of the rebels turned to resentment of their treatment.

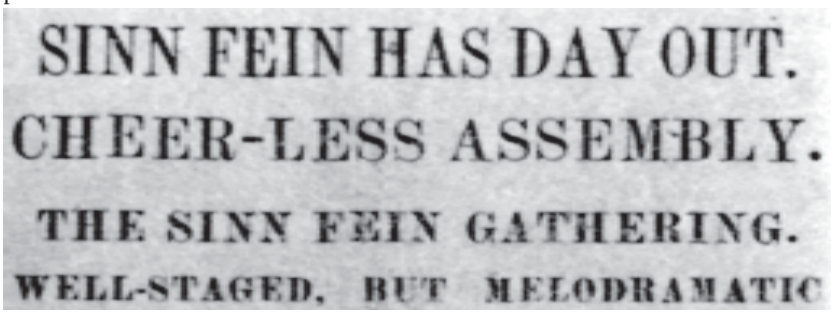
While Devlin saw the need to turn the tide by striking a more critical, independent stance at Westminster, Redmond who had already condemned the rising as a 'German Plot,' overruled any stance that may upset the British into relinquishing any Nationalist gains in favour of the Unionists. However, as political events swayed to and fro, the pendulum was now swinging in favour of Sinn Féin.

By mid 1916, Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, came up with a scheme to appoint Home Rule to all but the six north-eastern counties of Ireland which would be 'temporarily' placed under a Provisional Government led by Edward Carson.

This proposal to the Nationalist Party was voted on at a stormy conference in St Mary's Hall in Belfast on the 23rd of June, 1916. The resolution in favour was proposed by Councillor Patrick Dempsey, J.P., chairman of the Irish News and one of Devlin's leading supporters. For five hours the two sides were locked in bitter dialectic battle for the hearts and minds of the delegates. Redmond and Devlin won the day in accepting Lloyd George's scheme, with the main opposition coming from the Tyrone, Fermanagh and Derry counties.

CREATION OF DÁIL EIREANN

But the anti-exclusionists, however, refused to accept the decision breaking away to form the National League (later to amalgamate into Sinn Féin.) This convention of June 1916 and the subsequent split was a watershed in northern nationalist politics. The Nationalist organisation in Ulster began to disintegrate, as in the latter part of 1917, Sinn Féin clubs spread throughout the northern counties as the younger generation looked to the attainment of Independence without partition.


SINN FEIN HAS DAY OUT.
CHEER-LESS ASSEMBLY.
THE SINN FEIN GATHERING.
WELL-STAGED, BUT MELODRAMATIC

Belfast Telegraph, 22nd January, 1920

The release of prisoners from the rising saw a new tide of passion sweep Ireland in favour of Sinn Féin. This was bourn out when in 1918 Sinn Féin eclipsed the Irish Parliamentary Party in the general election, although they maintained their political hold in the north. Over the country as a whole, the old style Nationalist Party, who had held 68 seats at the dissolution, were reduced to a mere 6, of which 5 were in Ulster. Sinn Fein, by contrast, was confirmed as the motive power in Nationalist Ireland, with 73 seats, while the Unionists (assisted by a redistribution) had increased their commons strength to 26, of which 23 were in the north-eastern six counties. Sinn Féin took north-west Tyrone, Derry City and south Fermanagh, while they polled double the vote over the Nationalist candidate in south Tyrone. The party abstained from Westminster and set up Dáil Eireann in Dublin. In their eyes and in that of the majority of the people of Ireland, this was now the Governing body of Ireland with, or without, British recognition.

The Nationalist Party, who remained at Westminster, believed that the abstention of the 73 Sinn Féin members would enable Carson to use a strengthened Ulster Unionist representation to press for the permanent exclusion of the six counties in any future Irish settlement. Devlin contended, that the presence of a sizable Nationalist Party in the House of Commons during 1919-21 might have shaped the future of the Northern minority rather differently.

UNIONIST RESPONSE

Sinn Féin had fought the election led by Eamon De Valera asserting the inalienable right of Ireland to self-determination and sovereign independence, and declared its intention of appealing to the Versailles Peace Conference on these grounds. It had also declared that it would make use of 'any and every means available to render impotent the power of England to hold Ireland in subjection by military force or otherwise.'

Unionist newspapers in the northern six counties veiled Unionist anxiety of the Dáil's first meeting in the Mansion House on the 21st of January, 1919, with ridicule, which in turn showed the absurdity of such foolish reaction.

But in reality behind the ridicule lay a realisation that events in Dublin had serious implications for the future of Ireland. The claim to national self-determination in the atmosphere of 1919 was potentially a most powerful one, despite northern Unionists *initial response* that no Irish nation existed. This can only be described as political nievity, which within less than a year had quickly changed.

In March 1920 the Ulster Unionist Council agreed not to oppose the new Government of Ireland Bill embodying partition and two Home Rule Parliaments in Ireland. Thereafter, Unionists were more anxious to stress the distinctiveness of two Irish entities and their people's than they were to disprove the existence of an Irish Nation. They were in fact pursuing the policy once again of a six county Northern State with a Unionist controlled parliament.

GUERRILLA AND SECTARIAN WARFARE

When the first military action was taken by the new Irish Republican Army at Soloheadberg in Co. Tipperary on the 21st of January, 1919 on the day the Dail sat in Dublin, it was clear that widespread action would begin throughout the country. The claim to national self-determination in the atmosphere of 1919 was potentially a most powerful one. Sinn Fein had established a self styled Government and 'Cogadh na Saoirse,' a guerrilla war against the British occupation of Ireland got underway. Raids for arms were carried out against the Unionist 'big houses' throughout Ireland one of which was Ballyedmond Castle, near Rostrevor in Co. Down. The estate house had been the home of Major O.S.W. Nugent, a UVF leader who had died in 1914. The raid was carried out by up to a hundred IRA members in May and netted quite a substantial amount of weaponry. Three months later in August, Drumkilly House in Armagh was targeted, while guns and ammunition were landed from a fishing boat on the beach at Minerstown in Co. Down in January 1920.

By the end of 1919, the IRA had succeeded to make it impossible for the Royal Irish Constabulary to operate in the south and west of the country. Meanwhile Dail Eireann had set up a Republican infrastructure throughout Ireland. In many areas taxes were no longer paid to the British Exchequer and only Republican courts sat. British rule had in effect broken down.

However, the British were striking back and implementing their own strategy of repression. An example of this was the shooting dead on the 20th of March, 1920 of Tomás MacCurtáin, Sinn Fein Lord Mayor of Cork and leader of the 1st Cork Brigade of the IRA by an RIC assassination squad.

ATTACKS

The Irish Times reported on the 1st of May, 1920, that the Government was fighting a losing battle, and the Forces of the Crown were being driven back on Dublin. The King's Government had virtually ceased to exist south of the Boyne and west of the Shannon. The Newsletter of the 10 and 14th, was talking of a Sinn Fein campaign in the north as barracks were attacked and burned.

In Co. Down, were Sinn Fein had organised branches throughout 1918, a series of attacks were carried out on Easter Sunday within the 4th Northern Division IRA area. Barracks in Mayobridge, Rostrevor, Loughbrickland and Clough were attacked. On the same night Inland Revenue offices in Newcastle, Newry and Ballynahinch were also burnt. An attack on the Downpatrick Inland Revenue office failed, but the IRA returned two weeks later and burned it down.

In May 'exaggerated reports' in the Unionist press told of 200 Sinn Feiners besieging Newtownhamilton barracks in Co. Armagh, which also came under the 4th Northern area of operations. A similar report in early June talked of a major attack being launched on Crossgar RIC Barracks, then part of a terrace in Downpatrick Street, by 200 Republicans who blocked all roads leading into the village. The IRA did indeed launch an attack on Crossgar, which lay within the 3rd Northern Divisional area, and was led by Loughinisland Republican, Hughie Halfpenny. However, overall command of the operation fell to Joe McKelvey who at that time was in command of the 1st Battalion, Belfast Brigade.

BELFAST

The IRA in Belfast had began to operate on a proper basis early in 1917. According to Rodger McCorley who was to become a leading figure within the Belfast Brigade, there were five Company's of Irish Volunteers in Belfast in March 1917. It was more a case of organisation, and recruits were raw and inexperienced. He was 16 when he joined C.Coy, 1st Battalion of the Belfast/South Antrim/East Down Brigade. C.Coy had grown out of the Seán McDermott branch of the Volunteers based in the Clonard area. Having already come through the Seán O'Neill Slua which he joined in 1912 at the age of eleven, he needed no education in the cause of struggle, which each company had an education officer to instruct in. C.Coy's was Harry Dobbins. Companys were structured as follows:- A Company was split into two Platoons with each Platoon Commanded by a Lieutenant. A Platoon was split into two Sections, each with its own Commander. A Section was in turn split into two Squads each with a Squad Commander. At the age of 17, McCorley was a Squad Leader. Training was basic, and individual empowerment was essential. Each Saturday evening there would be extended order drill, and training took place in the hills around Belfast.

Nothing really began to happen until the attacks of Easter 1920, when as already mentioned attacks were

The IRA in Belfast had began to operate on a proper basis early in 1917.

Below - The funeral of Colonel Smyth at Banbridge. After his killing there was serious rioting in Banbridge - all of it against the local Catholic population.



Picture courtesy of the Belfast Telegraph

carried out against RIC barracks and Inland Revenue offices in the city were burned.
The Corner's Jury into the murder of Tomás MacCurtáin in Cork had found that the 'murder was organised and carried out by the Royal Irish Constabulary officially directed by the British Government.'

District Inspector Oswald Swanzy, and RIC Commissioner G.F.S. Smyth, the Divisional Commander for Munster were implicated in the murder. Smyth, a former British Army colonel, was a native of Banbridge, Co. Down, and was swiftly shot dead by three IRA men (led by Dan 'Sandow' Donovan) as he visited the Cork Country Club on the 17th of July 1920.

BELFAST EXPLODES

Rioting erupted in Banbridge following Smyth's killing. Catholic houses and businesses were attacked, burned and wrecked by rampaging mobs. The sectarian attacks which had been brought to boiling point by a continued stream of vehemence anti-Catholic comments and reports in the Unionist press, spread to Dromore, Lisburn and Newtownards.

Smyth's body was brought north for burial in Banbridge, and on the day of his funeral, 21st July, the spark that lit the fires in Belfast was ignited. This was the excuse used 'to activate the pogrom' against Catholics.

A violent onslaught was made upon the Catholic employees in the Belfast Shipyard. Serious sectarian rioting and sniping began, Catholic public houses were looted, homes and business premises attacked and burned and nineteen people killed in the opening week as the war reached Belfast. Protestant mobs and snipers defied a weak and indulgent police, while the British Army indiscriminately swept the streets with gunfire in order to clear them.

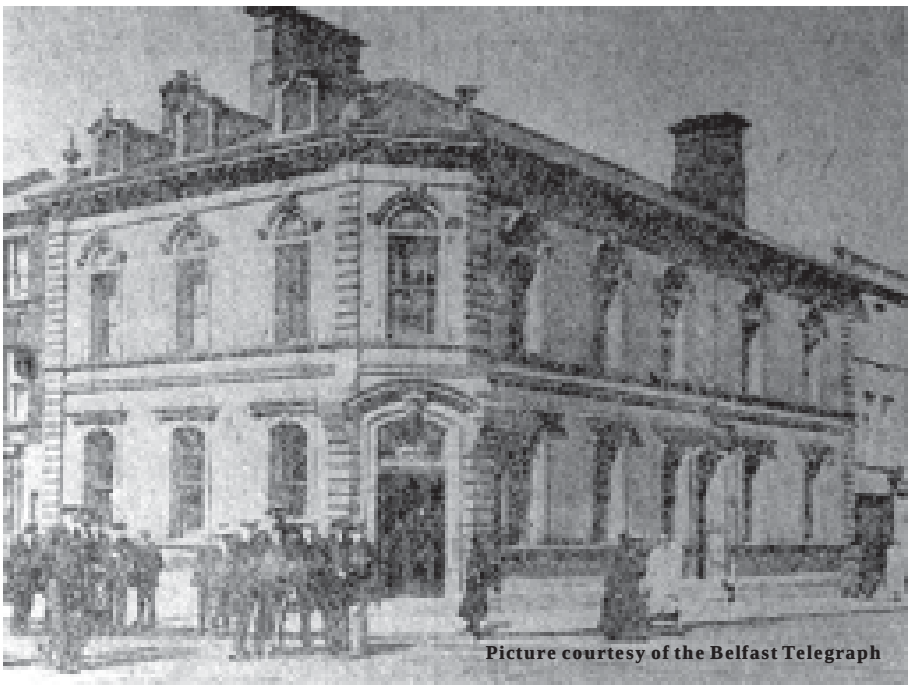
They would at times remain indifferent, as IRA snipers did what they could in order to repel mob onslaughts.
The scene was set and the cast dyed as Belfast was engulfed in daily shooting around the working class Catholic areas of Belfast. Over the next five months, 73 would be killed and 395 wounded on both sides.



THE HUNT FOR SWANZY

Following Smyth's killing, the British decided to move Swanzy up North were they thought he would be safe. However, the IRA in Cork City were determined to avenge Tomás MacCurtáin, as was the overall Director of intelligence, Michael Collins. Swanzy's first northern posting was to Downpatrick but the IRA quickly moved on locating him, and orders were issued to Northern Divisional H.Q., who in turn sent word to Downpatrick to have him shot. A member of the IRA in the town had daily access to the RIC Barracks, so they were able to collate accurate information as to Swanzy's movements. Here the story takes a strange twist. Apparently feelings were bitter over the decision to reduce Hughie Halfpenny in rank, and men within the local company refused to do the shooting unless his rank was restored. (This arose over an earlier incident involving an attack on Crossgar Barracks.) It was established by Intelligence that Swanzy was to leave the barracks at a certain time one night. An armed IRA member was positioned in a door way half way down Irish Street to carry out the shooting. It was a windy night and the gas lamps on the street were extinguished leaving the area in poor light. When Swanzy eventually came out there were three others with him, all with their collars up and heads down to shield themselves from the wind. Unable to identify which was Swanzy, the IRA man decided to shoot nobody, a decision which apparently enraged Collins when he heard of it. The news would not have been well received by any measure in Cork City. The IRA there took a decision to send men up north and shoot Swanzy themselves. But Collins and the Dublin G.H.Q. were also determined that the job be done and the 1st (Belfast) Brigade were ordered to begin planning the operation. The man who would oversee it was Rodger McCorley. Swanzy in the meantime had been moved to what was considered a safer town - Lisburn. Several men from Cork did travel up to Belfast to liaise with their Belfast counterparts and study the possibility of hitting Swanzy in the Protestant town.

Above - Disctict Inspector Swanzy.
Below - The Northern Bank in Lisburn outside of which Swanzy was shot dead



Picture courtesy of the Belfast Telegraph

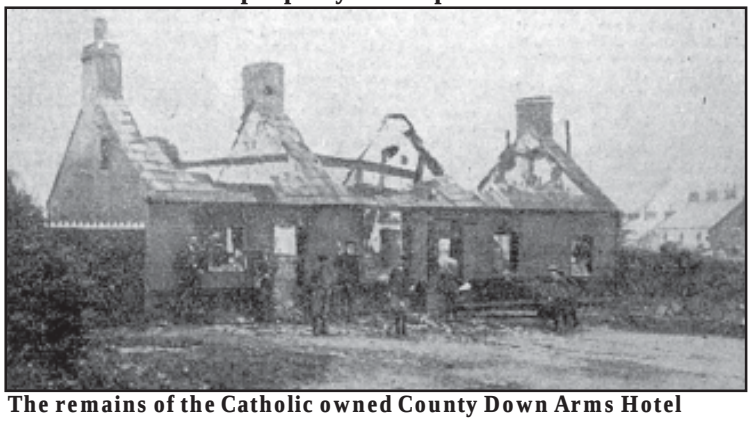
The shooting dead of District Inspector Swanzy in the safe town of Lisburn shocked and outraged the Unionist community. Shortly after the killing a declaration was compiled for people in the town to sign. It read as follows:- ***I_____ hereby declare that I am not a Sinn Feiner nor have any sympathy with Sinn Fein; and do declare that I am loyal to King and country.*** **Those who refused to sign it were attacked and forced out of Lisburn. On top of this an organised campaign was put into place to force all Catholic's out. The following pictures show the aftermath.**



Market Square where the Comrades' Club was burned



Burnt out Catholic property in Chapel Hill



The remains of the Catholic owned County Down Arms Hotel



Catholics fleeing their homes



The gutted Parochial Hall



The burnt out remains of the Hibernian Hall and several Catholic homes



Chapel Hill

They would have found life in the north-east of the country in stark contrast to their native Cork. The population was not united, and it was much more difficult to operate. Sectarian killings and rioting were rampant in Belfast and the British Forces were making life uncomfortable for active Republicans, as the Unionists engaged in 'their holy war' against Nationalism.

INTELLIGENCE

Cork accents in Belfast with British Forces active across the city in large numbers would put not only the men at risk, but the operation itself. It was however decided at the beginning of August 1920 to make an attempt to shoot Swanzy without proper organised preplanning. In an ironic twist of fate the car carrying the men to Lisburn, broke down, and the plan was cancelled. A second attempt was planned this time with preplanned organisation. Rodger McCorley travelled to Lisburn on Thursday 18th August, and remained there following Swanzy, building up some intelligence on his movements, and, as McCorley stated himself, more importantly identifying the man. This done, he returned to Belfast, and that Sunday morning he joined a four man execution party consisting of two Cork men; one by the name of Murphy and the other Sam Culhane the Intelligence Officer for the 1st (Cork City) Brigade who had carried MacCurtáin's own revolver to Belfast especially to shoot Swanzy, Tom Fox of the Belfast Brigade (later to become a Colonel in the pro-treaty Free State Army, as was McCorley himself) and the driver, Seán Leonard originally from Tobercurry, Co. Sligo who was working in Belfast as a taxi driver.

In total five men, including McCorley travelled to Lisburn on the morning of Sunday 22nd August, 1920. They had decided to shoot Swanzy as he went to church, and it was also agreed that Culhane would fire the first shot from MacCurtáin's revolver.

Seán Leonard was to stay in the car which contained rifles and hand grenades as a back up should they need to fight it out with pursuing RIC men.

THE KILLING

As the four men approached Swanzy, McCorley accounts how strangely that morning there were more people than usual around the streets. But this was nothing more than coincidence, perhaps even a sense of edginess or a more acute alertness as to the surroundings, or activity felt on behalf of the men. Once identified by McCorley, Culhane opened fire first, before the other three proceeded to follow. Swanzy fell dead, and the men retreated to the car, now pursued by a gathering crowd. One old ex-British Officer tried to hit McCorley who had stopped to fire towards the crowd to halt their advance in order to give the others time to reach the car. The old man attacked McCorley with a blackthorn stick, which with 'a flukshot', he dislodged from the old man's hand. By this time, Rodger McCorley found himself way behind the others, and the car had moved some 20 yards when Tom Fox noticed him missing. It came to a sudden halt as McCorley bundled in, and they began at haste for Belfast. As for the RIC the only car they could find to begin any immediate pursuit was outside the town hall. It had gone a short distance when one of its wheels fell off!

AFTERMATH

At that time communications did not allow for any form of quick reaction, but the RIC and British military would before the day's end, begin a search for the IRA unit. They had stopped outside the city, sending Seán Leonard on his way with a cover story.

But, with the British Forces already checking all taxi movements within the city that morning Seán was later arrested. He was later tried and sentenced to death, but a good defence case was instrumented by Tim Healy and the sentence was commuted to 12 years.

The two Cork Men returned south satisfied that their comrade had been avenged.

Collins message was that there would be no safe haven anywhere in Ireland, even the Unionist controlled counties of the north-east. At the same time, it was the ordinary Catholics of Belfast who were paying the price of IRA success as the pogroms reached a worsening level.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

14th December 1918	**General elections. In Ireland Sinn Féin win 73 seats, Unionists 26, Irish Parliamentary Party 6.**
21st January 1919	**Dáil Éireann assembles in Mansion House, Dublin, only 25 Sinn Féin present, many others in jail. Same day IRA ambush at Soloheadbeg, Co. Tipperary, marks beginning of Anglo-Irish War.**
1st April 1919	**DeValera elected President of Dáil Éireann. IRA and Sinn Féin in control over much of south and west of country.**
25th February 1920	**Lloyd George introduces Government of Ireland Bill at Westminster.**
10th March 1920	**Ulster Unionist Council decides not to oppose Government of Ireland Bill, thereby accepting partition and devolution for Northern Ireland.**
June 1920	**Serious communal violence in Derry. 18 dead.**
July 1920	**Communal violence in Belfast. The 'Pogrom' begins. Expulsion of Catholic workers from shipyards and other works. Attacks on Catholics in Lisburn, Banbridge and Dromore. Catholics expelled from their homes, following the killing of D.I. Swanzy in Lisburn by IRA.**
21st November 1920	**'Bloody Sunday' in Dublin. 11 British Officers shot, 12 people killed in reprisal at Croke Park.**
23rd December 1920	**Government of Ireland Act becomes law, proposing devolved parliaments in Belfast and Dublin.**

SNIPERS, FEAR AND MURDER

It could well be described as Northern Ireland's forgotten conflict. In the period between July 1920 and June 1922, 439 men, women and children were killed with a further 1782 wounded. But what makes this period of conflict so frightening was the onslaught made upon the Catholic community in Belfast. These were pogrom's organised by elements within the Government who wanted to cleanse Ulster of any Sinn Féin elements but it was the ordinary working class Catholic community (many of whom fought in the First World War on the side of the British) who were to suffer.

Overall 9000 men (all Catholic), were driven from employment, and 23,500 Catholics were driven from their homes. It was a bloody onslaught against the Catholic community who had massed against it thousands of armed 'Specials' and regular British troops.

THE SPECIALS

The Ulster Special Constabulary was divided into three groups: the A Specials, who were full time and were used to reinforce the police: the B Specials who were fully armed but part time and used for local patrol duty: and the C Specials, who had no regular duties but formed large units that could be quickly mobilised. By the summer of 1921 there was a total strength, throughout the North, of 3,500 A Specials (rising to 5,500 by the summer of 1922), 15,000 B Specials (rising to 19,000 by the summer of 1922) and 5,000 C Specials (rising to 7,500 by the summer of 1922) This strength was added to by sixteen battalions of British soldiers, which the C Specials would replace if withdrawn, establishing a Loyalist force controlled by the new Government of Northern Ireland.

These C Specials were armed, trained and formed into Brigades which were called Groups, of which there were three (the 1st and 2nd being based in Belfast). Each group had four Battalions or Districts, each of four Companies. It was estimated that the Specials had cost £1,500,00 in 1921-22, rising to £2,700,000 for the period of 1922-23.

THE ATTACKS BEGIN

The Orange parade on the 12th of July 1920 was described in the 'Times Editorial' as a "parade of anarchistic intolerance." Extreme speeches brought to prominence by the Unionist press inflamed what was without doubt a planned onslaught against Belfast Catholics set to begin on the 21st of July in the shipyards. 5,000 Catholics worked there, of these 1,025 were ex-servicemen.

Following a lunch time meeting a violent onslaught was made upon the Catholic employees, many being kicked and thrown into the water twenty five feet deep, and pelted with bolts as they struggled for life. No one was killed but ten were seriously injured and taken to hospital, while many others badly hurt were treated at home. That evening Catholic owned shops and pubs in Ballymacarrett were looted and burned - the pogrom in Belfast had begun.

SHOOTING

The following day the looting continued as crowds of shipyard workers and other hostile mobs forced Catholic workers from the Sirocco Works. The same action was taken in other engineering and foundry works and in various establishments throughout the city. Ballymacarrett was a scene of looted shops and business houses, the contents of which were distributed amongst the mobs. In west Belfast Catholics were expelled from Mackies on the Springfield Road, however, that evening as Protestants left the factory they were fired on from the Clonard area with several being wounded. Two hours later a large crowd descended upon St Matthew's and began stoning the windows, others began climbing the railings in an attempt to enter the grounds.

Lieutenant John Woodthorpe commanding a platoon of eighteen



R.I.C. raiding party in Ballymacarrett

Pictures courtesy of the Belfast Telegraph

soldiers of the 1st Norfolk regiment entered the church grounds and drove back the mob who began stoning the soldiers. When shots rang out Lieutenant Woodthorpe ordered his soldiers to open fire, killing three, two of whom were women. At the subsequent inquest, Lieutenant Woodthorpe gave evidence (see Belfast press 10th August, 1920). He stated:- *About 7.30pm on the 22nd July, I saw a dense and hostile crowd around the Roman Catholic Chapel, Bryson Street. They were climbing the railings of the chapel. I rushed up about eighteen men and entered the chapel grounds. They managed to clear away the crowd who were stoning the chapel and the troops. Shots were fired and I gave the order to fire.*

In stark contrast the same regiment swept Cupar Street and Kashmir Road with gunfire as Catholics and Protestant mobs clashed. Women with babies fled along Cupar Street as gunfire showed no compassion in its indiscriminate bearing on the people. The day ended with twelve dead and forty six injured.

OPEN WARFARE ON STREETS

The following day (23rd July 1920) was to see no let up in the trouble as crowds numbering several thousand gathered on the Lower Newtownards Road in an attempt once again to target St Matthews and the Cross and Passion Convent in Bryson Street. The area still remained in turmoil, and at 10.30pm hundreds broke into the top of Bryson Street to attack the Convent. The military drove them back.

In a period of four days, twenty people had died, four hundred Catholic families had been put out of their homes and damage totalling £1,000,000 had been caused. However this was only the beginning, much worse was to come in every respect.

DESPAIR

This reign of terror left a pathetic sight of many homeless people wandering the streets looking for shelter. In many cases whole families were affected, the situation being made worse by the cries of distressed children. Dispirited and hopeless they sought shelter wherever they could find it. This was a time of poverty and survival as there was no welfare state to support these people who can only be described as refugees.

COUNTY INSPECTOR HARRISON

Richard Dale Winnett Harrison was born in Kilkenny in 1883, his father being a District Inspector in the local RIC. After his education in Trinity College, Dublin, he followed in his fathers footsteps and joined the RIC in 1906 and became a Third Class District Inspector the same year. After serving in many parts of Ireland he became an Officer in charge of the Detective Office in Belfast. Shortly before the partition of Ireland Harrison teamed up with the infamous District Inspector Nixon and their reign of terror began. Their murder squad was named the Cromwell Club and it was led by Harrison and not Nixon as some historians believe. After the formation of the new RUC Harrison disowned Nixon after the promise of promotion which was soon granted when he was appointed City Commissioner. He died at his Upper Malone Road home on the 22nd of April 1982 at the age of 99.



Church halls and relatives were the only options open to them, and bearing in mind that people lived in cramped, basic terraced houses many of which already accommodated large families also added to the hopelessness and despair brought about by the pogrom.

PROVOKE MILITARY REACTION

The military tended in general (although there were exceptions) to sweep indiscriminate gunfire into the streets as a method of simply clearing them of crowds. This gunfire favoured no one and killed many. Of the nine killed in Ballymacarrett in 1920 by military gunfire, seven were Protestant, one of whom was a fifteen year old girl shot during disturbances around the convent at the top of Bryson Street on July 22nd.

A tactic used by the Specials was that during the curfew hours, introduced on the 30th of August 1920 and the height of the conflict, they would open fire with the purpose of causing a reaction from British troops who would direct gunfire into Catholic streets which were tightly bound small kitchen terrace houses. There was also the danger of gas pipes being punctured which could cause lung poisoning.

MURDER SQUADS

In August 1920, a clergyman outside Belfast handed over 60 Martini rifles to the IRA in the city, thinking they were going to the Hibernians. He was keen that the weapons be used to defend Nationalist areas, but he stated that under no circumstances that they be given to the IRA. Unknown to him, the men who picked them up were in fact IRA. Rodger McCorley stated the rifles were distributed throughout the various Company's in Belfast. They used the MK.6. 303 bullet which McCorley says the IRA had plenty of, having obtained them from a UVF source.

The role being undertaken by the IRA during this period was mainly defensive around convents, schools

and churches. But on Saturday night, September 25th, the IRA opened fire on two RIC men at Broadway, killing one who was ironically a Catholic named Thomas Leonard based at Roden Street Barracks.

The killing of Constable Leonard sparked the Belfast RIC murder squad (known as the Cromwell Club) into action. Within the next three years up to three of these squads would operate throughout the city leaving behind them a trial of carnage and murder.

The squads were controlled by County Inspector Harrison, head of the Belfast Detective Division, with his No. 2 being District Inspector John Nixon. Nixon was posted to Belfast in November 1920 to take charge of C Division of the RIC based at Brown Square Barracks in the lower Shankill area. He had already earned himself a reputation during various postings in the South, and upon his arrival in Belfast he began to organise the murder squads to kill Catholics.

THE TRODDEN/GAYNOR MURDERS

Eamon 'Ned' Trodden had joined the IRB early in life, and at the inception of the Volunteer Movement in 1913 he became a member, remaining loyal to the IVF after the split. His home at No. 68 Falls Road was a regular meeting place for local IRB men and he also held the position of secretary of the Seán MacDiarmada Sinn Féin branch. In the early hours of Sunday, September 26th 1920, four men with blackened faces and carrying rifles, broke into the Trodden home and shot him dead. On the same night two other men died at the hands of the murder gang. Seán McFadden and Seán Gaynor, who were also murdered in their homes on the Springfield Road.

SHOT IN HEAD

As in the case of the Trodden shooting armed men arrived at the Gaynor home at 236 Springfield Road in the guise of a raiding party. Both sons of the household were Republicans. Liam who had been in the Volunteer Movement pre-1916, and Seán who was a member of B coy, 1st Battalion Belfast Brigade which he had joined two years earlier in its early conception.

Liam's absence from the house (he was in Dublin) saved his life, but Seán was shot, firstly in the chest, and then in the head. Along the same road at No. 54, Seán McFadden was cut down by revolver fire. Thousands turned out for the funerals. Ned Trodden was buried in Milltown on the following Tuesday, September 28th, while the Belfast Brigade led by Joe McKelvey and Seán O'Neill marched behind the hearse at the funeral of Seán Gaynor.

IRA INTELLIGENCE

Seán McFadden, a blacksmith by trade, was a strong trade unionist, and not a member of the IRA. He lived some fifty yards from Springfield Road Barracks and two men were involved in his murder. No one was ever charged, but definitive identification of who fired the fatal shots was made by IRA intelligence some of which came from a few Catholic members of the RIC (but much later from a highly placed agent). He was able to identify the members of the murder gangs all of whom were serving members of the RIC. Remarkably two members of these murder gangs were Catholics, both of whom were shot by the IRA, one surviving his fatal wounding.

Because of the Catholic RIC and the agent the intelligence obtained was phenomenal and extremely detailed and involves almost all of the attacks carried out by this RIC murder squad. In relation to the above killings it tells us:-

At midnight, a party of RIC, under County Inspector Harrison, left Springfield Road Barracks, separated into three bands and proceeded shooting up the Falls and Kashmir Road districts, afterwards entering the houses of the following men who were shot dead:-

Edward Trodden, who was in bed when the party under Harrison entered, was pulled out of bed and dragged by the hair downstairs and shot in the yard. This party then proceeded to the Springfield Road, entered the house of Sean McFadden who met the party in the passage, and was there shot in three places.

A second party led my Head Constable Giff forced an entrance into Gaynor's house and shot him in the bedroom. Giff, before leaving the room drove a bayonet through Gaynor's body, fired shots through the rooms in the house and threatened Gaynor's mother with the butt of his rifle for refusing to disclose the whereabouts of her elder son, Liam.

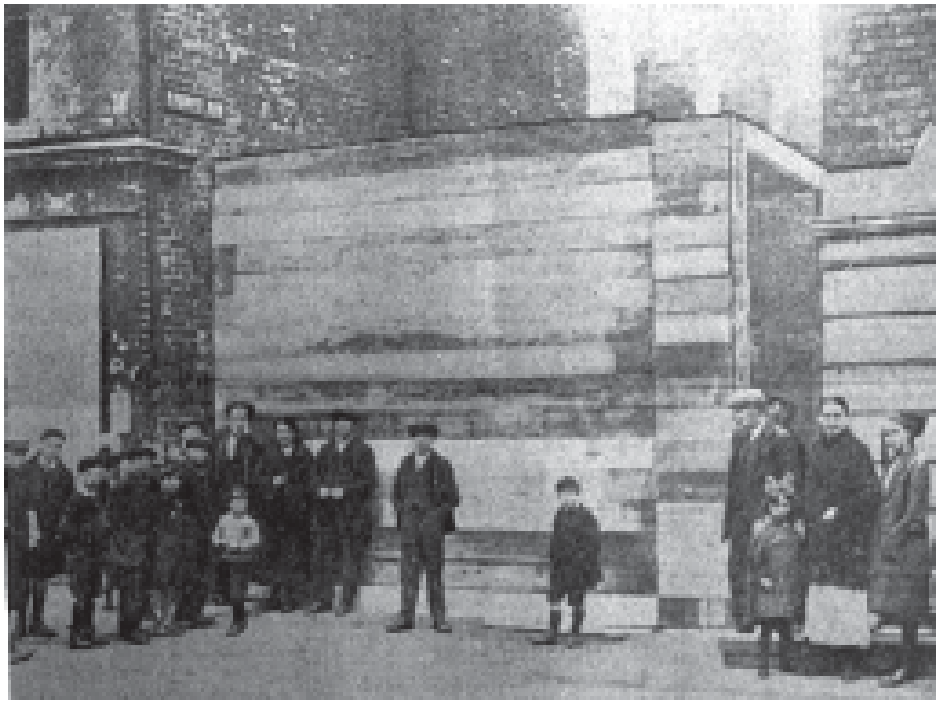
The members of this gang were:- Harrison, who shot Trodden and McFadden; Giff, who shot Gaynor. Sergeant C. Clarke (killed in March '22); Sergeant Glover (killed in July 1921); Sergeant Hicks of College Square Barracks and Constables Golding, Cladwell, Sterrit, Gordon, Cooke, Packenham and Norton.

IRA RETALIATION

The Trodden and Gaynor murders led to grave discontentment amid the rank and file of the IRA's 1st Batt. that the Brigade Staff would not sanction enthusiastic reprisals.

They preferred to strengthen defence plans for the Nationalist areas, which

Below - One of the first 'Peace Lines' in Belfast at Young's Row. The first 'Peace Line' was across Nelson Street in Belfast.



was very much a method of trial and error. Rodger McCorley recalls that at a Battalion Council meeting before the years end, younger members especially from B and C Company's, himself included, forced the issue again of carrying out executions of known members of the murder gangs. As a new and more bloody year dawned on Belfast, McCorley would get his way, and the IRA began to strike back.

PARTITION BILL

In the latter months of 1920, the British Government showed no sign of modifying its Irish policy, and its Partition Bill went ahead without any notable concession. The creation on an official level of the Ulster Special Constabulary which was in reality the UVF under a new name, was, as James Craig (Carson's lieutenant and now Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty) said *a solution to the mounting unrest in the province, and, in particular the spread of rebel influences.*

The creation of such a force of Specials aroused bitter resentment amongst the Nationalist population. Joe Devlin epitomised his fear *that the Specials would be used to exterminate the Catholics of Belfast.*

The Newry Frontier Sentinel, on the 20th November 1920 said "These Special Constables will be ... nothing less than the dregs of the Orange Lodges, armed and equipped to overawe Nationalists and Catholics."

Hammer Greenwood, Britain's Chief Secretary to Ireland, answered Devlin's cry in the British House of Commons on the 22nd of October that the creation of the Specials was an "Organised conspiracy to place the lives and liberties of the Catholic minority at the mercy of opponents, armed by the British Government," by saying that the new force contained "well disposed citizens who could be used to assist the police in the preservation of the peace."

By the 11th of November, 1920, Greenwood would inform the House that 2000 applications had been received, but refused to answer Devlin's query as to how many Specials were former UVF men. Andrew Bonar Law, leader of the Conservative/ Unionist Party, a ruthless political partisan of Ulster stock, referred to the Specials as being "selected solely because of their reliability in dealing with a specially difficult situation."

SINN FÉIN SUCCESS

By the summer of 1920, the tactics of the IRA had achieved a considerable measure of success in the South, despite the reinforcement of the RIC by the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries and the increasing resort to counter-terror by the British authorities.

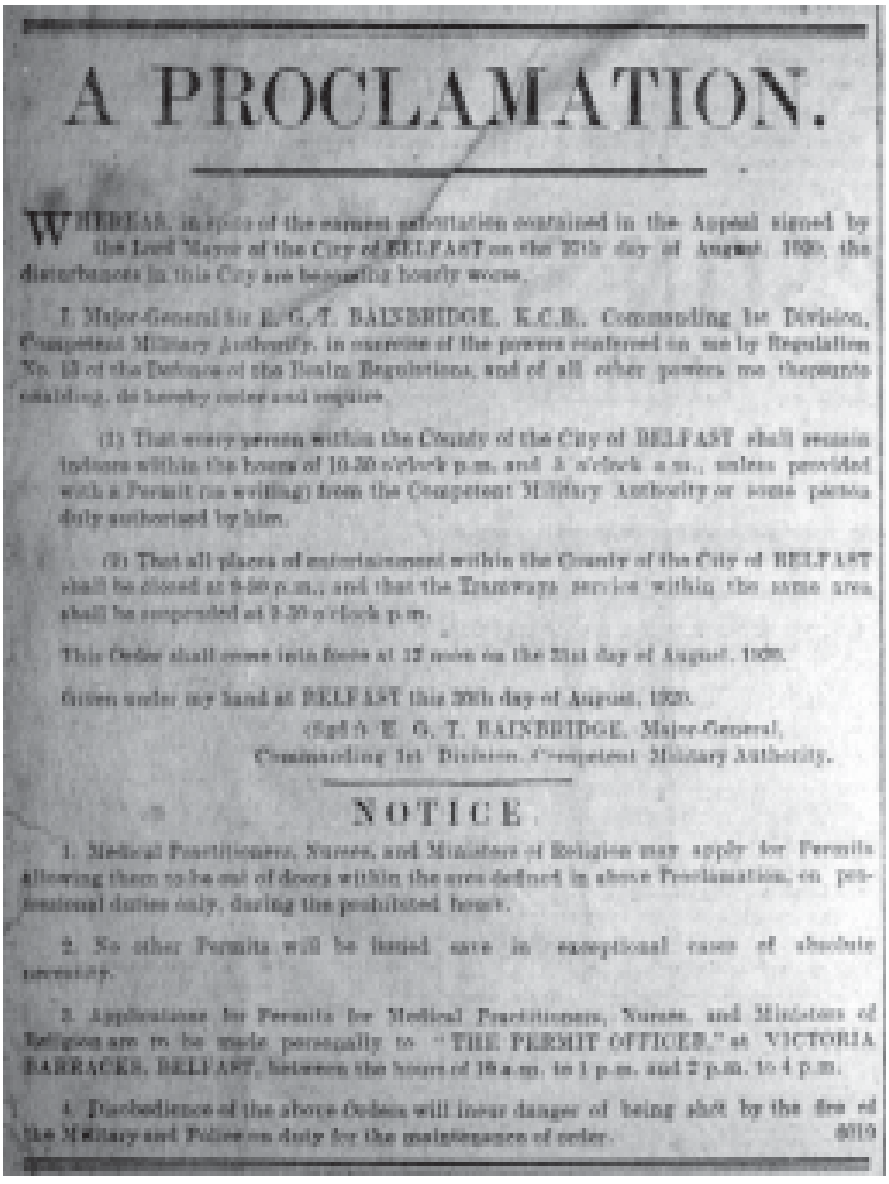
Sinn Féin dominated local Government in rural Ireland. Even in the North the party was making advances on the old Nationalist Party. In the council elections of June 1920, the Unionists suffered a severe set back when counties Fermanagh and Tyrone returned anti-partitionist majorities, made up of both Sinn Féin and the Nationalist Party. In South Armagh, the leader of the IRA's 4th Northern Division, Frank Aiken, headed the poll in the Nationalist division, while in the Unionist controlled Down County Council, Sinn Féin won four seats to the Nationalist's one.

In the wake of these elections a sudden outbreak of sectarian violence in Derry claimed 19 lives.

FAILURE OF NORTHERN POLICY

Despite the whole Sinn Féin success, the Nationalist minority in the six northern counties were in a rather different position to the rest of Ireland. Their vulnerability was not fully appreciated in the political arena of Diál Eireann, which tended to rank the Ulster question as a poor second to 'independence' in its scale of priorities.

This was certainly the view of one of the Northern leadership, Louis Walsh. It was partly the Sinn Féin leadership's continued failure to evolve a practical Northern policy which left the Northern Nationalists so divided and ill equipped to meet the reality of partition in the months, and years, after December 1920.



A PROCLAMATION.

WHEREAS, in spite of the earnest exhortation contained in the Appeal signed by the Lord Mayor of the City of BELFAST on the 20th day of August, 1920, the disturbances in this City are becoming hourly worse,

I, Major-General Sir E. G. T. BAINBRIDGE, K.C.B., Commanding 1st Division, Competent Military Authority, in exercise of the powers conferred on me by Regulation No. 13 of the Defence of the Realm Regulations, and of all other powers me thereunto enabling, do hereby order and require

(1) That every person within the County of the City of BELFAST shall remain indoors within the hours of 10.30 o'clock p.m. and 5 o'clock a.m., unless provided with a Permit (in writing) from the Competent Military Authority or some person duly authorised by him.

(2) That all places of entertainment within the County of the City of BELFAST shall be closed at 9.00 p.m., and that the Tramways service within the same area shall be suspended at 9.30 o'clock p.m.

This Order shall come into force at 12 noon on the 21st day of August, 1920.

Given under my hand at BELFAST this 20th day of August, 1920.

(Sgd.) E. G. T. BAINBRIDGE, Major-General,
Commanding 1st Division, Competent Military Authority.

NOTICE.

1. Medical Practitioners, Nurses, and Ministers of Religion may apply for Permits allowing them to be out of doors within the area defined in above Proclamation, on professional duties only, during the prohibited hours.

2. No other Permits will be issued save in exceptional cases of absolute necessity.

3. Applications for Permits for Medical Practitioners, Nurses, and Ministers of Religion are to be made personally to "THE PERMIT OFFICER," at VICTORIA BARRACKS, BELFAST, between the hours of 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

4. Disobedience of the above Orders will incur danger of being shot by the Troops of the Military and Police on duty for the maintenance of order. 8919

1921 - A FURIOUS UPSURGE

The new year was marked by a massive escalation of the military conflict between the British Forces and the IRA whilst the British Cabinet oscillated between a policy of coercion and one of conciliation.

In the Dáil, the Ulster problem was now being subjected to careful consideration by the Cabinet.

Michael Collins in his position as Minister for Finance, pushed the President, deValera, to work toward a political policy on the North. "The North east must not be allowed to settle down in the feeling that it is a thing apart from the Irish Nation" he impressed on deValera.

He believed an effort be made to work with Republican/Nationalist controlled councils such as in Tyrone and Fermanagh. By bringing them under the Dáil it would be possible to reduce the partitioned counties to four. This policy could be broadened to Derry Corporation, and other numerous small bodies and to certain fairly large districts within counties. **By internal fragmentation render the state non-viable.**



Eamon de Valera



Michael Collins



James Craig(right) and Edward Carson

NATIONALIST PACT

DeValera took this view on board and then pursued to create a pact with the Nationalist Party which was backed by Dr. MacRory, the Bishop of Down and Connor. Meantime, on 21st February 1921, Hamar Greenwood, informed the British House of Commons that elections for both Irish Parliaments would be held 'within two months' and that the Northern Ireland Parliament would be functioning by June.

Ulster (Unionist) Party are impossible and unrelenting in their hatred of Catholics, and are as violent against the constitutional Nationalists as against Sinn Féiners, indeed more so.

WANTED LIST

The Nationalist campaign for the elections was handicapped by a lack of funds and a dearth of manpower. Sinn Féin's election campaign organiser, Middletown man, Eamon Donnelly, and a number of their nine candidates, were on the British wanted list. James Craig warned Unionist supporters that ***failure to secure an effective working majority would mean immediate submergement in a Dublin Parliament*** His secret meeting with deValera in Dublin on the 5th of May ***to see if the two parts of Ireland could exist in harmony was a distinct failure.***

He suggested shooting recruits for the Auxiliaries who having landed in Ireland by boat in Larne would stay at Roddy's hotel...

With elections looming in the North, secret talks got underway to form a working agreement between the two Nationalist parties. This was finalised at the end of March 1921 and was co-ordinated by one of the Sinn Féin leadership in Belfast, Seán MacEntee, who represented South Monaghan in the Dáil. This resultant pact was endorsed by an 800 strong Nationalist conference in Belfast on the 4th of April, chaired by the West Belfast M.P. Joseph Devlin. The pact motion was entered by Canon Crolly, P.P. St Matthews, Ballymacarrett, and Downpatrick solicitor, Michael Johnston. They called for the establishment of an all Ireland constituent assembly.

It is interesting to note some dissenting views, such as that of the former Irish Party M.P. for North Kerry Thomas O'Donnell, who criticised the agreement on the grounds that Devlin ought to be devoting his energies to bringing about peace with the Ulster Unionists and co-operating with them in the Northern Parliament.

Devlin wrote to O'Donnell in correspondence on the 9th of April, saying ***the people here who run the***

When the elections came at the end of May 1921, the Unionists in the North had a sweeping victory cementing their claim to a separate parliament. The Nationalists secured 12 seats, with Sinn Féin winning the majority of the Nationalist vote (104,716) although the seats were split evenly.

Widespread intimidation of Catholic voters was orchestrated by the Specials - the Irish News reported that, particularly in East and West Belfast, "thousands of Catholic voters were forcibly and brutally prevented from exercising the franchise."

In the South, 120 Sinn Féin candidates were returned unopposed, simply creating a second Dáil.

TARGETS OF OPPORTUNITY

The younger members within the Belfast IRA were keen to strike back at the RIC within the city. A change within the command of the 1st Battalion which covered the Falls area was to signal a change in tactics. The commanding officer of the Battalion, Joe McKelvey, was transferred to the Divisional Staff and Rodger McCorley took over. He suggested shooting recruits for the Auxiliaries who having

landed in Ireland by boat in Larne would stay at Roddy's hotel in Oxford Street during a stop over in the city. The hotel (the Railway View) was considered safe because it was beside Musgrave Street Barracks which was the RIC headquarters in Belfast. McCorley's proposal found credence with a G.H.Q. order which stated that Auxiliary cadets and members of the Black and Tans were not members of the proper constituted British Forces, and would therefore not be given the status accredited to such, and would be shot. Within the 1st Battalion it was decided to begin hitting 'targets of opportunity.

ANOTHER ORDER FROM COLLINS

RIC activity within Roddy's hotel flowed to and fro at a steady rate feeling secure in the knowledge they were in the shadow of the Musgrave Barracks. But the IRA were watching from within. A barman named McGarvey, who worked in the hotel, was a member of the 1st Battalion's C.Company.

He noticed that in one of the rooms no one was allowed to enter; all meals were sent up, and it was kept under guard by two RIC men. This was reported back, and it materialised that a former IRA man named Gilmartin had been brought North for safe keeping as he was prepared to give evidence against a former comrade by the name of Gray who had been arrested in connection with the killing of an RIC District Inspector in Thurles. G.H.Q. in Dublin ordered his execution. On the 26th of January, 1921, Rodger McCorley, Seamus Woods and two others entered Roddys and proceeded straight to the room known to accommodate the three men. They forced entry and opened fire, pouring a hail of bullets into the occupants. RIC Constable Michael Quinn died immediately, his colleague Constable Thomas Hefferon was seriously injured and died soon afterwards. Gilmartin fell seriously wounded, but survived the shooting. The execution party then calmly walked back down the stairs out into the darkened street and disappeared back in to the close net streets of the Falls. Once again, as with Swanzy, Michael Collins was sending out a clear message that the North-East was not a safe haven for British personnel. As with the majority of the RIC in the South, both dead men were Catholics.

BELOW - Head Constable Packenham



RETALIATION AGAINST THE INNOCENT

McGarvey fell under the suspicion of the RIC and the Brown Square Barracks murder squad under District Inspector Nixon acting on poor and misinformed intelligence, moved immediately to kill McGarvey. But their victim, although of the same name and occupation was the wrong man. The unfortunate victim was shot dead in bed in his lodgings at Bray Street in the Protestant Shankill area. It was afterwards learned from Constables who were passing on intelligence to the IRA that Constable Gillen of Brown Square Barracks had seen Harrison, Nixon and Packenham driving in a Ford car down the Shankill Road from Bray Street a few minutes after the murder. (The IRA's McGarvey was later arrested and charged with conspiracy to murder).



DISTRICT INSPECTOR NIXON

Of all the members of the 'Cromwell Club' RIC murder squads District Inspector Nixon is the most infamous. The reason for this is due to the fact that Nixon went into politics after being removed from the newly formed RUC. Much of his political support was based on the common knowledge of his involvement in incidents such as the McMahon family murders and extreme anti Catholic speeches.

John William Nixon was born in Co. Cavan in 1880. He joined the Royal Irish Constabulary in 1899 and served in Belfast, Donegal, Dublin, Lisburn and Galway. he was then posted to Belfast for a second time and based in Springfield Barracks. In November 1920 he was transferred to Brown Square Barracks and it was here that his branch of the 'Cromwell Club' operated under the overall command of County Inspector Harrison.

He was personally involved in several killings and once the RIC were disbanded the chiefs of the new police force wanted rid of him. Numerous attempts failed but their opportunity came when he mad a political speech in Clifton Street Orange Hall. After his police career he entered politics and became an Independent Unionist MP, a position he held until his death on the 11th of May, 1949.



Funeral of William Kennedy making its way along Royal Avenue. He was shot dead by an IRA sniper from the New Lodge area on 30th August 1921



Funeral of Robert Bowers. He was shot dead in York Street by an IRA sniper on the 30th August 1921



Funeral of 5 year old Annie Watson. She was shot dead by an IRA sniper at her front door on North Queen Street on the 30th August 1921



Funeral of R.I.C. Head Constable Edward Mulrooney being borne along York Road



Funeral of Thomas Finnegan who had been shot dead by a Protestant sniper



Funeral of Harbour Constable Alfred Craig who was shot dead at the Ship Street entrance of the York Dock, 11th May 1921



Funerals of the Duffin brothers making their way along Royal Avenue. Both had been shot dead by an RIC murder squad led by County Inspector Harrison and District Inspector Nixon

Meantime, the defence of Nationalist areas and the tactics involved were being changed to what McCorley described as 'an elastic system,' moving men around from point to point, forming a new firing position as soon as one is lost. Another idea developed was to break holes in the inter linking walls of the terrace backyards to enable men to pass down streets without being observed or shot at by military patrols. Rodger McCorley states the system of the holes was created due to the fact they were losing men climbing over yard walls. In any previous accounts written on this period it has always been mentioned that the system was to protect civilians from sniper fire. They certainly did use it for such protection, but it was designed primarily for use by the IRA.

Attacks on the RIC were stepped up, one was shot on the 4th of March, and died ten days later. Two more were shot and killed on the 11th of March.

The following month, two Auxiliary cadets were shot dead in the centre of Belfast. The increase in attacks was the result of a formation of a special active service unit set up following the Roddy's hotel shooting. This unit was based in a tailors shop in Rosemary Street in central Belfast.



Sergeant James Glover

THE DUFFIN MURDERS

Following the killing of the Auxiliaries on the 23rd of April, the murder gangs struck again, this time in the Clonard area. The victims were two brothers, Patrick and Daniel Duffin, both Republicans who lived at 64 Clonard Gardens. Those involved were Sergeant's Hicks and Clarke along with Constables Caldwell and Golding. It was Hicks who fired the fatal shots using a silencer.

IRA STRIKE AT MURDER GANG MEMBERS

The following month District Inspector Ferris of Springfield Road barracks was just leaving St Paul's Presbytery on the Falls Road, when he was cut down by a volley of revolver shots fired by three IRA men. Ferris was one of several men Rodger McCorley had marked for execution because of their links to the RIC murder gangs. Ferris survived the shooting, but was very seriously wounded. Not so fortunate was Sergeant Glover who was implicated in the Gaynor/Trodden killings. He was shot and killed on the 10th of June, and two others with him, Constables Sullivan and Sharkey wounded.

...in one incident in the Raglan Street area on the 9th of July, the IRA carried out an attack on an RIC patrol killing Constable Thomas Conlin of Springfield Road barracks. Reinforcements who rushed from the barracks themselves rushed into another ambush when a mine was detonated.

DEFENCE LIGHTS

Once again improvements were made in the IRA's defence system in Nationalist areas. An effective, but simple idea was the use of multi-coloured torches, which the IRA had managed to get their hands on. Pickets were based at the main entrance to the districts in view of each other. A white signal indicated sighting of RIC/ military patrols. If the patrols passed, a green signal was indicated, but if they entered into the area, a red light was signalled. Another picket armed with rifles would be positioned behind the signal picket and they would then engage the patrols.

The system was used with great effect,





and in one incident in the Raglan Street area on the 9th of July, the IRA carried out an attack on an RIC patrol killing Constable Thomas Conlin of Springfield Road barracks. Reinforcements who rushed from the barracks themselves rushed into another ambush when a mine was detonated. The patrol of which Thomas Conlin was a member was described by the IRA's officer in that area, Rodger McCorley, as a 'reprisal gang'. He also issued orders that no prisoners of reprisal gangs were to be taken.

BLOODY LEAD UP TO TRUCE

On a national level the guerrilla war waged by the IRA had spearheaded a political drive to settle the problem. Negotiations were underway between the Republican leadership and the British Government and on Friday 9th July, 1921, an order was dispatched to all IRA divisional area:

In view of the conversation now being entered into by our Government with the Government of Great Britain, and in pursuance of mutual conversations, active operations by our troops will be suspended as from noon, Monday, 11th July.

Risteard UaMaolchatha
Chief of Staff

The truce was signed on Friday 9th July, and was to take effect from noon on Monday 11th July. But while the rest of Ireland celebrated, Belfast bled. That weekend in Belfast, the truce was ushered in with blood letting. The Specials, backed by Protestant gunmen, were determined to launch an onslaught on Nationalist areas. The IRA all over Belfast was mobilised in order to defend their areas, as the Specials and UVF unleashed sniper fire and armoured cars against the Nationalist enclaves. Rodger McCorley records that 'every weapon was in action'. Carrick Hill in particular was near to breaking point and was only one hour short of running out of ammunition when the British military commander in the city, organised an implementation of the truce.

Sunday 10th July 1921 in Belfast became known as 'Bloody Sunday.'
The IRA G.H.Q. in Dublin sent Eoin O'Duffy, the overall IRA commander for Ulster up to Belfast to act as a liaison officer with the British military in the city a week later. He set up his head quarters in St Mary's Hall but found Belfast not on the same level as other cities in the country. The British military seemed happy enough to respect the truce in its initial stages, but the Specials who were acting as the armed wing of the Northern administration which had been officially constituted by the British King in June, continued to act against the Nationalist areas with full endorsement by the Belfast Parliament.
Reference to the period is made in an IRA divisional report sent by Seamus Woods to G.H.Q. on the 27th July, 1922 when he states.

Until the signing of the treaty in London the perfecting of our organisation, training and equipping had been pursued with great earnestness on the part of all officers and men. As

Below - RIC and military patrols at the junction of Seaforde Street and Newtownards Road



Picture courtesy of the Belfast Telegraph

both Numbers 2 and 3 Brigades were very much below strength in July '21, a large number of recruits were taken on in these areas.

This increase in recruits was due to the truce and the fact that as Woods states in the same report ***the Catholic population believing for the moment that we had been victorious and that the Specials and UVF were beaten, practically all flocked to our standard, with the exception of the aristocratic minority.***

The IRA throughout the country used the truce for intensive training. It was important to maintain discipline as grievances on both sides were still sore. Referring to Woods report of 27th July '22 again in relation to the 3rd Northern Division he states:- ***From the ratification of the treaty for a period of two or three months the Army had no definite policy to pursue, and although a 'truce' had been agreed between the IRA and the Crown Forces, this was not observed in our area, and officers and men were being arrested by British military, RIC, Specials, Auxiliaries and Black and Tans without redress. This was a period of demoralisation in this division. After the raid on the liaison office, St Mary's Hall, Belfast, in which the name of practically every officer in the division was found, all the divisional and many brigade officers demanded an inquiry into the circumstances of the raid, and were asking the divisional commandant*** [Joe McKelvey] ***to resign.***

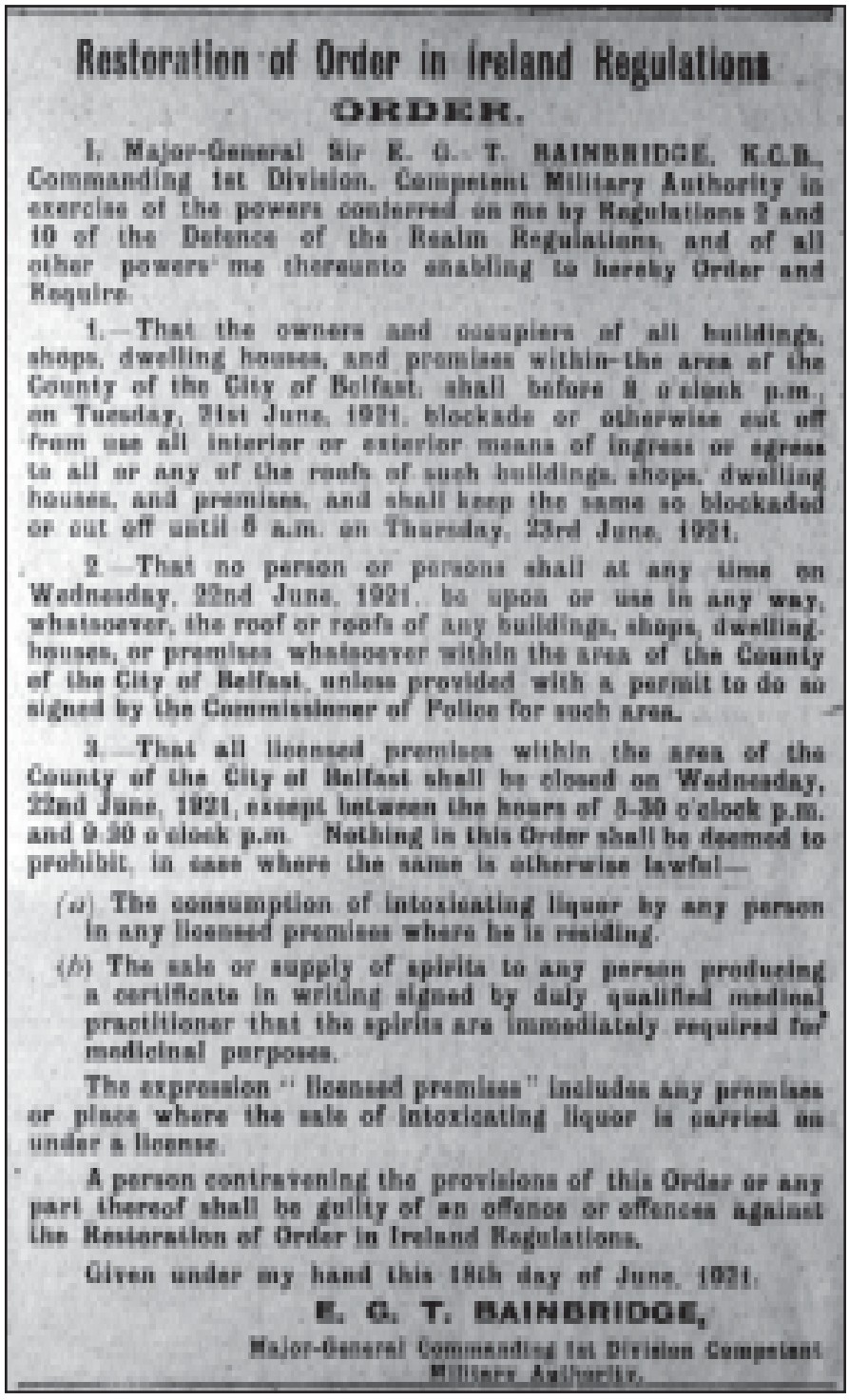
The truce appeared to have little effect on the situation in Belfast. In August 1921, the local RIC Commissioner observed in a confidential report - ***Poverty is still rife in the Nationalist quarters where so many people are existing on charitable donations received from the 'Expelled Workers Fund', which continues to receive fairly large subscriptions from various sources, particularly from the White Cross of America.***

In Fact, over the year following the 1920 expulsions, some £150,000 was raised in the South for the alleviation of distress whilst, as late as mid-1922, the American White Cross was contributing and estimated £5,000 - £7,000 weekly, in addition to a large grant for the rebuilding of houses which had been destroyed.

Ulster Loyalists were galled at British policy toward the IRA during the truce. This view can be summed up in the words of one RIC County Inspector in July 1921:

The prestige of Britain has been lowered by giving any recognition to the murder gang, and that the government may try to make peace with them at the expense of Ulster. Any such policy would be bitterly resented in Ulster. (County Inspectors report (Derry), July 1921)

The IRA's Belfast Brigade reached peak membership in August 1921, and within the 3rd Northern Divisional area, training camps were set up at Hannastown (Belfast), Seaforde, Castlewellan in Co. Down , Glenarrif and Torr Head in North Antrim. Peak figures of membership rose to 1200 throughout Belfast, East Down and Co. Antrim, of which 700 made up the Belfast Brigade. The whole mood of political uncertainty was the signal for



Restoration of Order in Ireland Regulations

ORDER.

I, Major-General Sir E. G. T. BAINBRIDGE, K.C.B., Commanding 1st Division, Competent Military Authority in exercise of the powers conferred on me by Regulations 2 and 10 of the Defence of the Realm Regulations, and of all other powers me thereunto enabling, to hereby Order and Require.

1.—That the owners and occupiers of all buildings, shops, dwelling houses, and premises within the area of the County of the City of Belfast, shall before 8 o'clock p.m., on Tuesday, 21st June, 1921, blockade or otherwise cut off from use all interior or exterior means of ingress or egress to all or any of the roofs of such buildings, shops, dwelling houses, and premises, and shall keep the same so blockaded or cut off until 6 a.m. on Thursday, 23rd June, 1921.

2.—That no person or persons shall at any time on Wednesday, 22nd June, 1921, be upon or use in any way, whatsoever, the roof or roofs of any buildings, shops, dwelling-houses, or premises whatsoever within the area of the County of the City of Belfast, unless provided with a permit to do so signed by the Commissioner of Police for such area.

3.—That all licensed premises within the area of the County of the City of Belfast shall be closed on Wednesday, 22nd June, 1921, except between the hours of 3-30 o'clock p.m. and 9-30 o'clock p.m. Nothing in this Order shall be deemed to prohibit, in case where the same is otherwise lawful—

(a) The consumption of intoxicating liquor by any person in any licensed premises where he is residing.

(b) The sale or supply of spirits to any person producing a certificate in writing signed by duly qualified medical practitioner that the spirits are immediately required for medicinal purposes.

The expression "licensed premises" includes any premises or place where the sale of intoxicating liquor is carried on under a license.

A person contravening the provisions of this Order or any part thereof shall be guilty of an offence or offences against the Restoration of Order in Ireland Regulations.

Given under my hand this 18th day of June, 1921.

E. G. T. BAINBRIDGE,

Major-General Commanding 1st Division Competent Military Authority.

a renewed wave of bloody sectarian violence at the end of August 1921 in which 21 lives were lost in three days between 29th-31st August. (10 Catholics, 11 Protestants). The worst of this violence was centred around the Catholic York Street/North Queen Street area. The attack was planned to wipe out the York Street area and send a message to Britain that no settlement involving the IRA was possible in Ulster.

However, O'Duffy mobilised the IRA to defend the area which broke the siege. Seven Protestants were killed, and the *Manchester Guardian* reported that the IRA was ***retaliating in kind and quite as effectively as the Loyalist gunmen.*** To make matters worse for the Loyalists, Michael Collins visited Armagh on the 4th of September and along with his Ulster Chief O'Duffy, he told the 10,000 strong gathering which included a large force of IRA, that the Dáil would not desert them.

CONCERTED GUN ATTACKS

September 1921 saw an upsurge of gun attacks in Belfast. Following the failure of the attacks on York Street, the onslaughts shifted across the Lagan to the Ballymacarrett/Short Strand area. The weekend beginning on the 20th September, saw the IRA reply to attacking gunmen, as a gun battle swept the streets and an attempted invasion of the Seaforde Street area was successfully repelled.

EXTENSIVE SEARCHES

The IRA defence of the Seaforde Street area infuriated the Northern authorities to the point that on the 21st of September, 1921, one of the most extensive raids to be seen in Belfast was carried out by the RIC and British Army in Short Strand. For nine hours they engaged in searches for weapons. Houses and yards were searched by the RIC as the military were posted on the streets. The raids failed to unearth any weapons. The Ballymacarrett/Short Strand areas were under the control of the IRA's B.Company, 2nd Battalion. The 2nd battalion area covered Short Strand, Market, York Street, North Queen Street and the Marrowbone. The Battalion commander was Seán Cunningham, an ex-British Army Sergeant Major who lived in Comber Street.

BOMBS

The area continued to suffer consecutive weekend sieges with Loyalist snipers repeatedly raking the streets with gunfire. A pattern developed through September into November with snipers concentrating their fire into Seaforde Street, while mobs attacked the church and convent which was located on the Lower Newtownards Road/Bryson Street junction vulnerable to the tightly bound Protestant streets opposite. In one attack on the 25th September, a bomb thrown at defending Catholics around the church was quickly returned killing two and wounding over 30 of an attacking crowd.

The IRA remained active across the area, its own snipers firing into Protestant streets. 'Offensive' attacks also continued and trams carrying shipyard workers were fired at and bombed as retaliation for the expulsion of Catholic workers.

Pictures courtesy of the Belfast Telegraph



ABOVE - Military raid in Union Street
BELOW - Raid on Eglinton Street



BELOW - Military patrol on North Queen Street



TRAMS BOMBED

The IRA had an extensive stock of Mills Bombs and also a large stock of homemade bombs. In places such as Short Strand they were used against attacking mobs.

Bomb stocks were also kept in North Queen Street and the Marrowbone. On the 24th of November, the IRA bombed a shipyard tram in Corporation Street killing one man and wounding several others. The bombing had come within 24 hours of a day that had saw 14 deaths, ten of whom were catholic. Two days later another tram was bombed in Royal Avenue in the centre of Belfast causing another two deaths. November 1921 ended with a total of 30 dead and 142 wounded in Belfast.

THE BARRICADES GO UP

December 1921, continued much in the same vein with snipers active on a daily basis. But it was the weekend of Friday 17th and Saturday 18th December around the Short Strand that saw the worst shooting in the city since York Street at the end of August. The area was assailed with unparalleled vigour by Loyalists and Special gunmen. Not even the thought of Christmas just days away inspired any thought of good will as the streets of the district were shattered with the ritual of the snipers bullets. Barricades were now erected at the top of Seaforde Street and Young's Row at the Newtownards Road entrance to the district. The *Irish News* reported in its columns: ***Driven to desperation by the intensity of the onslaught at so many points, the Catholics to maintain their lives and property were compelled to reply and a regular gun battle was in progress.***

In reality it was the IRA replying with gunfire as the area came under attack from every end. it was repelled, but once again, heavy raids for weapons were conducted on the Sunday, while Loyalists openly carried service rifles. 1921 had ended as it had began with snipers bullets sweeping the streets amid fear and death. Sadly 1922 would give no respite to a besieged people, the bloody climax of the civil war would descend upon Belfast. As for the city's Catholics, it would be sheer defence for survival, while the IRA would attack the Unionist business class in a sustained burning campaign.

The IRA had adopted a new policy of burning down business premises belonging to Unionists



Pictures courtesy of the Belfast Telegraph





1922 - CATHOLIC AREAS UNDER SIEGE AS IRA TAKE OFFENSIVE ACTIONS

As if Christmas was a myth and peace something to be denied, the new year opened as the old one had ended with daily shootings throughout the Catholic quarters of Belfast. The killing continued and age proved no barrier to the gunmen who imposed their rule amid the tightly bound terrace back to back kitchen houses. On the 16th of February, a group of small children were playing at the top of Seaforde Street, when a Protestant gunman managed to fire a single shot through the barricade from the Newtownards Road at the children. But the shot proved fatal as it struck five year old John Devlin in the stomach. Despite the child being rushed to the Mater Hospital, he died a short time later. The boy's death caused anger throughout the Short Strand, despite such shootings now being a part of life in a city torn by civil war. The same day Special Constable McAdam based at Mountpottinger Barracks was shot and wounded.

MASSACRE OF CHILDREN

Three days before the killing of five year old John Devlin another attack was made against Catholic children who once again were playing in the street. However, this time the attack was made in a venerable Catholic street in the York Road area. Milewater Street and Jennymount Street were located close to a mill near the Midland Counties Railway Station in what was an overwhelming Protestant area. But these two streets as well as Shore Street and Weaver Street, both of which ran off Milewater Street, contained Catholic families who before the pogrom of 1920 had found work in the mill which hovered over their small mill houses.

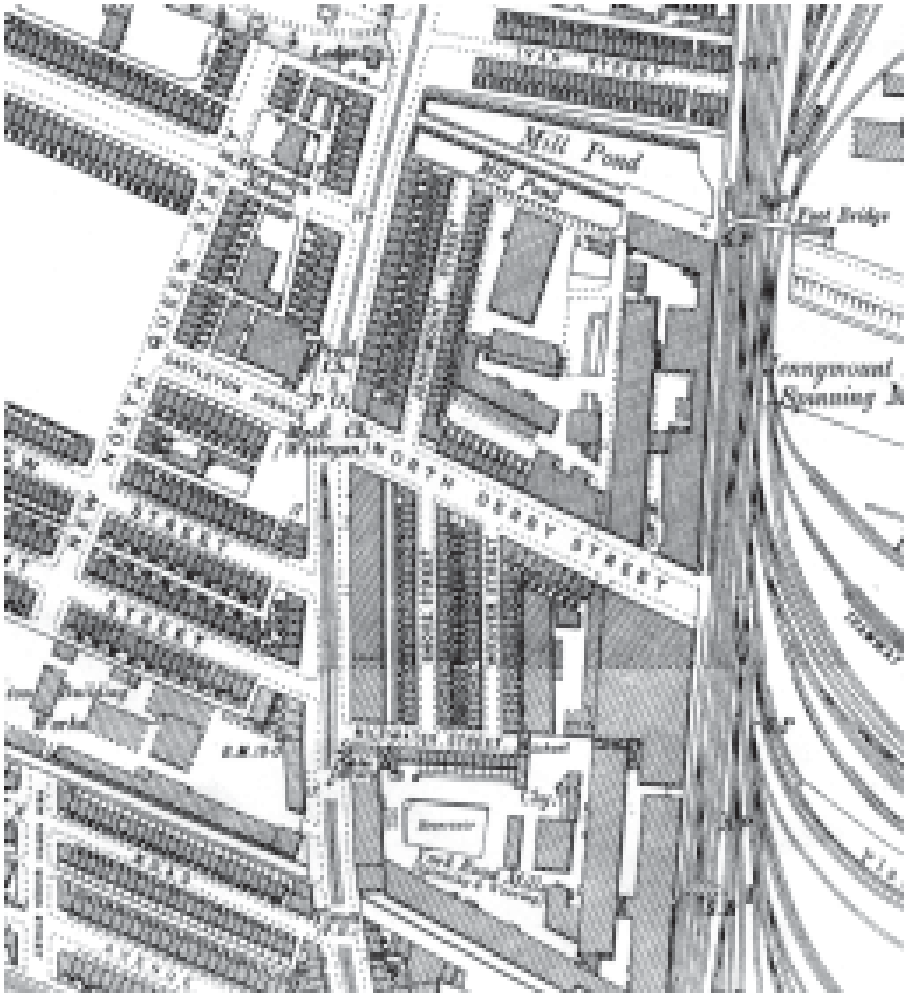
It was in the small neighbourhood of Weaver Street on the 13th of February, 1922, that children were slaughtered simply because of their religion. A bomb was callously thrown into the group with the intent of killing all on the street. The savagery of the deed achieved its result, two girls, Catherine Kennedy, aged 14 and Mary Johnston, aged 13, died immediately, amid the carnage that left children and adults alike laying dying and wounded. Eliza O'Hanlon, aged 11, would die the following day, while Mary Owens, aged 56, of Shore Street, and Maggie Smith, aged 55, two of sixteen wounded would die later, as would another child Rose O'Neill, aged 12.

This was not the first time the area had suffered from bomb attack, and the Catholics of these few streets had to endure several shootings. On the 21st of September, 1921, several children were wounded in Milewater Street and two Catholic men, George Barry and Thomas McCaffrey, both of Shore Street, were to died in separate incidents. On the day of the Weaver Street massacre twelve people died in Belfast, one newspaper headline read:-

Black Day in Belfast
Twelve Dead
Over Forty Wounded
Bomb Throwing and Sniping

It simply summed up daily life in Belfast, the following day would see even more killed.

Despite February's death total amounting to 47, with up to 100 wounded, worst was yet to come as the Spring and early Summer months would boil to a bloody climax.



THE MOST DANGEROUS PLACE IN BELFAST

Concentrated gun battles began around the Short Strand described in the local press 'as the most dangerous place in Belfast' on March 12th which began a week long series of sniping and bomb attacks in that area. After three days of shooting, raids by the military and Specials were carried out in the district on the 15th. But the fighting continued, and a murder gang penetrated into the area to throw a bomb into the bedroom of a house in Thompson Street killing a woman as she slept in her bed. That morning two Protestants were shot and wounded as they entered the Galvin Stables at the corner of Thompson Street, with a third being shot and wounded in the Corporation Yard on the Short Strand.

SPECIALS SHOT

There was an increase in the shooting of Specials by the IRA. Two were shot and wounded on the 4th of March, one of whom, Special Constable Henderson, was shot in Short Strand. Several days later two RIC constables based at Springfield Road Barracks were shot and killed.

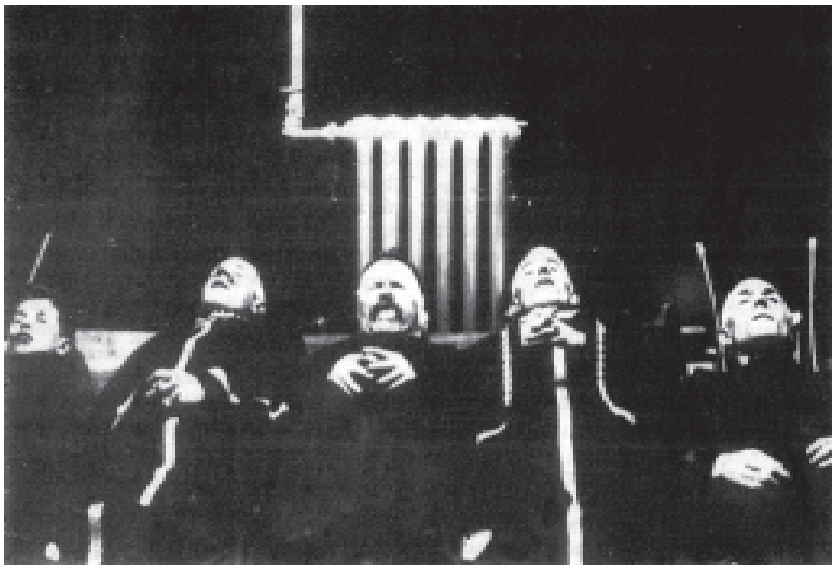
Shooting continued around the Ballaymacarret area and on the 19th of March, an IRA sniper shot dead a member of the Ulster Protestant Association.

Four days later, on the 23rd of March, two more specials were shot and killed at the corner of May Street but this particular date is remembered more for the murder atrocity of a family in a quiet residential area of the Antrim Road.

THE McMAHON FAMILY MURDERS

This was a brutal slaughter which was carried out by the Harrison/Nixon murder squad. Once again because of agents working with the RIC Michael Collins was soon to find out the ghastly details and more importantly, for him, the names of those who carried it out. The following is part of the detailed report which was supplied to Dublin.

The shooting of the McMahon family was the next job perpetrated by the gang. Constable Furlong informed (the IRA) that Sterrit and Gordon came to the hut of a Corporation workman at Carlisle Circus and took away a sledge hammer. With the hammer the door of the McMahon home was broken down and all the male members of the party were taken into the drawing room and placed against the wall. One lad of fourteen years succeeded in hiding himself under a Chesterfield, but the remainder were shot one after the other.



The bodies of the McMahon family and one of their servants lie in the morgue of the Mater Hospital



Bombs were often thrown at trams carrying shipyard workers. This one was attacked in Royal Avenue in the centre of Belfast

ANOTHER ATROCITY ATTEMPTED

The brutal slaying of the McMahon's and the outrage felt throughout Catholic Ireland and beyond had little effect on the specials or the RIC murder gangs.

The following day, three men entered a house in Altar Street within sight of Mountpottinger Barracks in Short Strand and proceeded to shoot anyone in the house. Peter Murphy, aged 61, was the first to be shot, followed by Sarah McShane, aged 15, and then the gang turned their guns on three year old Mary McCabe. As they ran from the house they fired at, and wounded Nellie Whelan.

Amazingly, all those shot survived their wounds in what was intended to be another murder atrocity.

The killers were said to be Specials, but like many murders of that period proof of identity or justice was not forthcoming. Within a week of the attempted massacre, again in the Mountpottinger area, two Specials were attacked and shot by the IRA, one of whom, Special Constable Hale, died. As well as being based in Mountpottinger Road Barracks, the Specials of No. 23 Platoon were also billeted in the Sirocco Works east yard on Mountpottinger. The yard backed on to Seaforde Street/Chemical Street, and the Specials used this vantage point to fire into the adjoining streets around the works which although situated in a Catholic area did not employ Catholics

March 1922 also saw the death of Sergeant Christie Clarke who was one of the original Harrison/Nixon murder squad members.

The amazing feature about Clarke is although he was involved in the slaughter of innocent Catholics he himself was a Catholic. He was shot dead by the IRA on the 13th of that month.

THE ARNON STREET MASSACRE

On the night of April 1st 1922 regular R.I.C. Constable George B. Turner was on patrol on Peter's Hill with a member of the B-Specials. Just after 11 o' clock a sniper opened fire on the pair and a bullet struck Constable Turner. The bullet entered through the back of his head and came out through his mouth, he died instantly. The Special who was with him then ran to the nearby Brown Square barracks and reported what had happened. A short time later R.I.C. Constable Gordon entered the barrack guard room, seized a sledge hammer, (reported to have been the same hammer used in the McMahon attack,) and called for volunteers for a reprisal. The killing was the excuse Nixon (who was based in Brown Square) had needed and was waiting for. He immediately organised his murder squad and a number of 'Specials' and ordered them into the barrack lorries and tenders. They then drove out and into the nearby Nationalist area of Carrick Hill. What was to follow rivalled the McMahon family murders in its savagery and ruthlessness. The murder squad arrived first in Stanhope Street and jumping from their lorries they began to smash their way into the houses. At the same time a Lancia armoured car was firing indiscriminately through the windows and doors not caring whether or not if it was men, women or children who were behind them.

"LOOK AT DADDY"

The first house to be attacked was number 15 Stanhope Street and after forcing an entry they came across Joseph McCory, aged 40, whom they ordered to put his hands up. McCrory placed his hands above his head exclaiming 'Oh, son, I never harmed anyone.' 'None of your sonning me,' was the reply before Joseph McCrory was shot dead. The killers then burst into a few more houses but left when the found no men present within them.

Mr. Spallin was seventy years old and was in bed with his twelve year old grandchild. When the 'Cromwell Club' members burst into his bedroom they aimed their weapons at the pensioner and shot him dead were he lay.

At the same time a different group burst into number 26 Park Street where they came upon a sailor, who had just returned from sea, named Bernard McKenna. Rushing up the narrow staircase and into the small bedroom they found McKenna standing near the fire and shot him eight times killing him instantly. Mr. McKenna was the father of seven young children. The next house singled out for attack was number 16 Arnon Street. A man named William Spallin lived here and that very day he had buried his wife. Mr. Spallin was seventy years old and was in bed with his twelve year old grandchild. When the RIC murder squad burst into his bedroom they aimed their weapons at the pensioner and shot him dead were he lay. A short time later the young child was found sitting up in bed gazing in horror at the murdered man crying 'look at grandaddy.'

BEATEN AND SHOT

Number 12 Arnon Street was the next home to be forced into. In this house lived the Walsh family and the two adult men who lived here were both ex-soldiers who had fought in the Great War. As the R.I.C. were beating the front door the mother thought it wise to open it and let the police enter as she thought it was just another raid. As soon as the door opened the armed gang pushed their way past the frightened woman and pushed them to the ground. They then proceeded up the stairs and into the bedroom where they found Joseph Walsh in bed with his seven year old son Michael and and two year old daughter Brigid. They then dragged Joseph Walsh from the bed and threw him to the floor where they smashed in his head with a sledgehammer. He died instantly. The gang then opened fire on the two screaming children and both were hit a number of times. The girl survived but the boy died a short time afterwards. Fourteen year old Frank Walsh was shot and beaten in the kitchen and survived as did Joseph Walsh's brother who had hid in the yard with two young children.

REQUIRED EXCUSE

Nixon's excuse to launch this attack was that constable Turner was shot from this area, but was he ?

At this period the area was under the control of the 2nd Battalion, Belfast Brigade I.R.A. and all their arms and movement of members in the district were all accounted for at the time the R.I.C. constable was shot, so if it was not the I.R.A. who shot him then who

IRA SUFFER LOW FATALITIES

Despite the high casualty list among the Catholic population in Belfast, the IRA itself was not suffering a high ratio loss of men, in fact it was very low. It was enduring against overwhelming odds. IRA losses to date were Seamus Leadie, Squad Commander, who died from gun shot wounds in Norfolk Street on the 11th July, 1921

Murtage McAstocker, who died from gun shot wounds on the 24th September, 1921 on the Lower Newtownards Road.

James Bradley, who was killed in the battle around York Street/North Queen Street at the end of August, 1921. A native of South Derry (where he is buried in Granaghan graveyard) he was working as a barman in Belfast and living in McCleery Street.

Another South Derry IRA member who died as a result of the Belfast shootings was John McKenna. His name is not to be found in the casualty listings, but he died in his home town of Maghera on the 6th of July, 1921, after being brought home from Belfast.

Born in Maghera, he worked in Belfast as a barman, a trade many Catholics found work in due to the fact that many of Belfast's public houses were Catholic owned.

On the 6th of February, Thomas Gray, aged 19, who worked as a barman in Boyle's of Earl Street, died when gunmen entered the bar and shot him dead.

A week later on the 14th of February, Frank McCoy of Forfar Street in the Cavendish Street area was killed near Springfield Avenue. He was a Section Leader.

The following month on March 6th, Andrew Leonard, aged 21, of Mary Street, was shot and wounded by a Protestant sniper during exchanges with the IRA. He died a week later on March 13th, 1922.



Constable Turner

was it? Nixon and his murder squad said that he was shot from Stanhope Street and that is the reason why they attacked this area. But what really happened was a simple plan conducted by Nixon to gain an excuse to attack the area. Constable Turner was shot dead by one of his fellow officers from the roof of nearby Brown Square barracks. The spot in which he was shot could in no way be seen from the Stanhope Street area. In this area the main sniper activity itself mainly came from the roof of Brown Square barracks as snipers had fired from here on numerous occasions beforehand. However the wound which Constable Turner received would also suggest that he had been shot from this place. The spot he was shot at was near the Peter's Hill baths and the bullet fired came through the top of his head and out through his mouth, this alone suggests that he was shot from a high position and the nearest high building was Brown Square barracks.

EYEWITNESSES

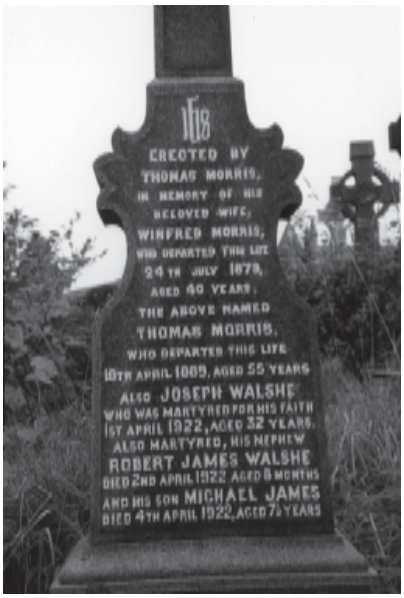
This is just one of the many occasions in which the R.I.C. sought to create their own excuse to murder Catholics. They had at times also fired on the military based in the nearby Victoria Barracks with the intentions of getting them to 'shoot-up' Catholic areas but the military were mainly aware of this. It is also another of the many incidents in which District Inspector Nixon showed his absolute brutality in the killing of completely innocent Roman Catholics. As stated there are many many more incidents including the 'reprisal' killings in Millfield after two 'Specials' were shot dead by the I.R.A. in July 1922. On this occasion Nixon ordered out every available armoured car and men. They then set off to the nearby Millfield area and once there raked the whole area with machine-gun fire before bursting into many houses. When they left fourteen people lay dead or badly injured. Although their main plan was to shoot male Catholics (one case being the McMahon family) there are also incidents were Nixon was seen by eye-witnesses who recognised him and who made statements testifying that he openly shot at and killed women and children.

The spot he was shot at was near the Peter's Hill baths and the bullet fired came through the top of his head and out through his mouth, this alone suggests that he was shot from a high position ...

One incident of this is the shooting of the Walshe children but others have included the shooting of a four year old girl named Skillen who was shot dead on the Crumlin Road and also of a baby boy who was shot dead as his sister held him in her arms in Upper Library Street.

BRUTAL KILLER

Another member of this unit who was particularly brutal in his method of killing. It was Head Constable Giff who tried to ensure that his victims died a slow and painful death and one of the ways in which he done this was by using his bayonet before shooting them as he considered it prolonged their agony. The wounds he usually attempted to inflict on his Catholic victims were the same wounds as those suffered by Christ on his hands and feet. There are many cases of Giff doing this but two of the most brutal cases were in the murders of James Gaynor of 136 Springfield Road and Malachy Halfpenny of 21 Herbert Street in the Ardoyne area.



The Walshe grave in Milltown Cemetery

THE BLOODY CLIMAX

To describe the months April and May 1922 as the 'bloody climax' would not be an overstatement. In the 'battle worn' areas of Belfast the savagery and ferocity of the attacks was stepped up; added to this was the added dimension of a planned IRA offensive in the North that would take place in May following the breakdown of indirect negotiations that were happening between Collins and Craig to try and reach an agreement and build cordial relations between the Provisional Government of the Free State, and the six county state of Northern Ireland. Collins was now privately approving preparations for a major IRA offensive within the Northern State. Despite the split in the IRA in March 1922 over the Treaty and the impending Civil War in the South, Collins authorised arms to be transferred to the four Northern Divisions to strengthen their attacks. It should be highlighted at this point that the vast majority of the IRA in the North remained loyal to the Provisional Government GHQ. This was in part a reflection of the immense organisational and operational difficulties created by the presence of a large Unionist population, the reliance of the minority, especially in Belfast, on the moral and material support of the Provisional Government and the widespread acceptance of the Boundary Commission solution in border areas. GHQ had acted quickly to prevent the defection of Northern units to the anti-Treaty forces. The officer commanding of the 2nd Northern Division (which covered Tyrone and South Derry), Charley Daly was peremptorily dismissed and replaced with the pro-Treaty Thomas Morris. Joe McKelvey, officer commanding the 3rd Northern Division (which covered Belfast), joined the 'irregular' executive and was replaced by Seamus Woods. Woods convinced the majority of the

men under his command that by supporting the Treaty there was a better chance of 'overcoming the position in the North.' Within the 4th Division (Armagh/South Down/North Louth), their officer commanding averted a split by convincing his men that they should remain loyal to the Provisional Government pending the publication of the Free State constitution.



Seamus Woods

However, despite this their objective remained 'a republic for an undivided Ireland.' GHQ arranged the Northern IRA staff would be paid as part of the pro-Treaty army. It is worth noting that the 3rd Northern Division was not formally constituted in Belfast until May 1921. Its operational area covered the city, Antrim and North Down. Its membership peaked during the summer of 1921 as the sectarian blood letting and destruction was beginning to intensify. Perhaps there were expectations that the Truce and the talks that were taking place that were cementing the Treaty leading to British withdrawal might spearhead an overall political drive by the Provisional Government to draw in the North and unite the country.

THE STORM ERUPTS

The first week of April ended in Ballymacarrett with a gun battle, not between the military and the IRA but Protestant gun men and the military. Shooting erupted around the lower end of the Woodstock Road, concentrating on the Woodstock/Lisbon Street area. It started what was to become the most concerted attack yet against the Short Strand area and Bone in North Belfast.

The first attacks came on the Bone on Monday 17th April, when a siege was made upon the area and Antigua Street and Saunderson Street were burned. It was the start of a bloody week that continued the following day when concerted gun attacks were made again on the Short Strand mainly from the Woodstock and Albertbridge Road areas. This continued into the following day when, upon the lifting of the curfew at 6.00am, heavy gunfire erupted around the top of Short Strand with snipers firing down Lisbon Street and Woodstock Street and from the Woodstock Road down into Thompson Street. As was now a familiar pattern, members of the Catholic Defence Committee, and IRA men returned fire where and when possible, as Crossley and Lancia armoured cars carried RIC and military reinforcements into the area. The battle soon spread to a three way affair between the IRA, Protestant gunmen and the RIC/military.

The first victim was 15 year old John Scott, a Protestant from Well Street who was shot in the head by a sniper at the corner of the Mountpottinger Road. The shooting continued for two hours, but after 8.00am it began to subside and a lull fell over the area. But this was only a temporary respite and just after 3.00pm a fresh attack began when an attempted invasion was made from the Albertbridge and Woodstock Roads. A large number of gunmen and a Protestant crowd penetrated into Altcar Street and set fire to a number of houses.

KILLINGS

The shooting was resumed with even greater intensity, and a pitched gun battle ensued. Heavy fire erupted around the Albert Bridge, which was now busy as trams carried people from work. Other streets were swept by gunfire and opposing crowds confronted each other at border line streets.

At around 5.30pm, 32 year old Rose Dougan was in the kitchen of her home at 15 Arran Street. Also in the house were her two young children and a friend, 29 year old Mary Berry. One of the children, Mary, who was aged 8, was holding her mothers hand when two men in uniform appeared at the upstairs window of a house backing onto their own and fired down into the kitchen. Rose Dougan and Mary Berry both fell victim to the gunfire. Young Mary watched her mother die and the added tragedy was that she had been nine months pregnant.

The murders of Rose Dougan and Mary Berry were sadly not the last that evening. At around 6.00pm, Protestant gunmen entered the shop of Patrick McGoldrick in Prim Street and shot him dead.

The following day events continued on the same bloody scale beginning yet again on the lifting of the curfew. The first victim was James Johnston, aged 50, a Protestant from My Lady's Road. He was shot on his way to work at Andersons Felt Works where he was a foreman. In the same area 15 year old John Walker from Quinn Street was shot by a military patrol and died a short time later.

In the course of the afternoon casualties mounted on both sides. A Protestant, James Greeves, was shot and seriously wounded in his own home by a stray bullet. Two B-Specials were shot and wounded in Lisbon

Albert Bridge/Short Strand junction



Picture courtesy of the Belfast Telegraph

Street. Daniel Diamond, aged 25, was shot by a Protestant sniper and died shortly afterwards in the Mater Hospital. At around the same time a 14 year old Protestant, James Greer, was shot and wounded. He also died in the Mater Hospital.

The situation in Belfast was so bad that on the night of Friday the 2nd of April, the Belfast Protection Society, wired the following urgent message regarding the plight of the people:

The Right Honourable Winston Churchill and Right Honourable Austin Chamberlain
Belfast Catholics being gradually but certainly exterminated by murder, assault and starvation: their homes burned, streets swept by snipers; life unbearable; military forces inactive. Special police hostile; Northern Government either culpable or ineffective.
Your Government saved the Armenians and Bulgarians. Belfast Catholics getting worse treatment; last two days here appalling.
Rev. B. Laverty
Chairman

CHURCH ATTACKED

No practical help materialised from the appeal. The campaign continued with unabated fury and without hindrance or intervention by either the British Government or the subordinate Belfast Parliament. On the afternoon of Sunday the 23rd, St Matthew's Church came under attack again. A bomb killed a 35 year old mother of two young children, Mrs McCabe who lived at 45 Seaforde Street, and wounded a constable, John Moriarty from Mountpottinger Barracks. While people carried the two victims into the church gunfire was directed against them and the constable was further maimed by a bullet. Whilst Mrs McCabe was anointed women in a state of panic prayed at the alter while safety was sought through the sacristy door to the church grounds. Soldiers provided protection as an ambulance arrived. Later that evening a 68 year old blind Protestant named Robert Miller, was sitting in the parlour of his home in Beechfield Street when two Catholic gunmen burst into his home and shot him dead. A friend who was also in the house was shot but miraculously survived.

The incident at St Matthew's was mentioned in a letter from Michael Collins to James Craig, the Prime Minister of the Belfast Parliament on the 28th of April, 1922. The incident was referred to among others as Collins raised the question of the persecution of Catholics by armed mobs unhindered by the military or police. Reference was also made to Constable Moriarty. Collins was hard hitting in his words and his letter was detailed and well informed as to events in Belfast. He was concerned that no charitable action had been taken by the Minister for Home Affairs, Dawson Bates, for a shelter to house Catholics burned out of their houses in North Belfast and who were herded together in a pitiful way - men, women and children in wooden huts on waste ground. He assured Craig ***that citizens of Orange proclivities and their property will never be refused ample protection by us.*** Also in the letter he said ***I am determined that the awful conditions that have been existing in your area since the devolution of certain powers on you will not be tolerated in the rest of Ireland, but if you want quick results in this respect the best way to get them is to protect the lives and property of the 25% of the population of Belfast which is being gradually exterminated. Many members of the RIC at present in Belfast are anxiously awaiting the termination of their contracts with you in order to enjoy security elsewhere in Ireland and avoid the fate intended for Constable Moriarty and meted out to other Constables under your Jurisdiction***

BELOW - Military raid on Grove Street in the North Queen Street area.
BOTTOM - Herbert Street in North Belfast after a bomb was thrown into it.





NEW CAMPAIGN

A new campaign by the IRA began at the beginning of May, 1922, with a series of raids on RIC Barracks by the Second Northern Division in Tyrone and South Derry. On the 3rd of May, three RIC men on patrol at Ballyronan were shot dead by the IRA. But actions provoked brutal reprisals, notably at Desertmartin where four young Catholics were murdered and a number of homes burned following a raid by B-Specials.

But the worst bloodshed in May was in Belfast where 75 people (42 Catholics and 33 Protestants) died in an upsurge of shooting, bombing, arson and intimidation which was not to reach its peak until the end of the month.

The main thrust of the IRA campaign began, as arranged, on Wednesday 17th May with a dramatic dawn raid on Belfast RIC Headquarters at Musgrave Street. The intention was to capture the armoured cars which were to be taken up to the Glens of Antrim. A party of IRA men, led by Seamus Woods, managed to gain entry to the barrack which housed around 150 men. In the ensuring gunfire an RIC man was killed and a Special wounded with the raiders escaping. (See report on facing page)

Later that morning, the RIC and military along with the Specials raided into Ballymacarrett. The searches began at 7.00am and continued through to 8.30 am and even included the Cross and Passion Convent. That day, and evening, fierce exchanges of gunfire took place between Protestant gunmen and the IRA. A bloody week-end commenced as Woods' Third Northern Division immediately launched a concerted campaign of burning and raids in its three brigade areas of Belfast, Antrim and North Down beginning on the 19th of May. It was directed mainly at police barracks, Unionist ancestral homes and railways in the rural areas. The first of the 'big houses' targeted were:- Shane's Castle, home to Lord O'Neill, the head of one of the most eminent Unionist families, he was also the father of Sir Hugh O'Neill, speaker of the new Northern House with its 39 Unionist representatives: Old Court, near Strangford, Crebilly House near Ballymena and Glenmona House at Cushendun.

The coordinated nature of the raids came as a severe shock to the Craig



Maghera RIC Barrack which was a target at the opening of the May offensive

Government and Unionist opinion in general. But their main effect was to unleash a sectarian backlash against the Catholic population in Belfast. The Ballymacarrett area, the Bone and Ardoyne districts came in for an on-slaught over that weekend (20th - 21st May). Constant sniping occurred around the lower end of the Newtownards Road. Around 3.30pm three hours of intermittent cross divide sniping took place as Protestant gun-men positioned themselves on the rail bridge running across Bridge End to direct gunfire toward the Short Strand. The military engaged snipers on both sides.

In the Bone and Ardoyne the people were subjected to a week of having their streets raked with machine gun and rifle fire for about two hours each night up until Curfew hours (10pm-6am) by the Specials. They would advance from their bases in extended order to the fields at the back of Ardoyne and generally about 8.45pm assume prone firing positions and rake the streets.

As the weekend came to a close on Sunday 21st May the Market district suffered from a regular invasion of Specials on foot and in cage cars. From the safe distance of the Gas Works and the old Slaughter House. They were observed lying on the streets firing into the houses, as people were forced to lie on the floors avoiding the windows, as everybody and everything became a target.

Musgrave Street RIC Barrack pictured shortly after the raid



Oglaigh na h-Eireann

Department o/c .....

Headquarters

3rd Northern Division

19 May 1922

MY REFERENCE NO.
YOUR REFERENCE NO.

PLEASE QUOTE MY NUMBER AND DATE

TO:
Chief of Staff

I have to report that on Wednesday the 17th instant at 8 p.m. with a party of twenty (Officers and men) I proceeded to a buildings, of which we had previously secured impressions of the keys, adjacent to Musgrave Street Barracks, the Headquarters of the Police in Belfast. Here we remained till 3 a.m. on the following morning when we moved up Oxford Street to a school, of which we had also got impressions of the keys: from the back yard of the school there is a door opening out into an entry at the rear of the Barracks and through this we moved at 3.35 a.m. towards the back gateway of the Barracks. We had co-operation from a ..... who opened the door and admitted the whole party of twenty one while he kept watch on two police who were on guard at the rear of the Detective Office as shown on attached plan. He actually had these two previously decoyed away a few yards from their actual post in order that they would not see us entering or suspect anything.

We moved round the rear (inside) of the Barrack and simultaneously two parties proceeded to hold up two men in the Guard Room and the Sergeant in charge of the Arms Room. The names of the two in the Guard Room were Constable Collins (now dead) and Special Constable McKeown (wounded), Sergeant Toomey was in charge of the Arms Room.

The first party under Col. Comdt. MacCorley succeeded in disarming Constable Collins, Special Constable McKeown who is 6'2" in height tried to draw his revolver but Col. Comdt. MacCorley got into grips with him and beat him on the head with his revolver causing terrible loss of blood. When. Constable Collins saw this he screamed and at once the whole area was awakened. The sentry outside (marked D) fired a shot and then the guard on the first floor of the Detective Office opened fire with a machine gun on us.

The second party in the Arms Room had the Sergeant bound up and were preparing to tie the rifles in bundles of six and to put the revolvers into sacks.

I was at this time trying to get the armoured cars and Lancias reading for travelling. When the firing started Special Constable McKeown tried to draw an Auto from his pocket and ran out but Col. Comdt. MacCorley dropped him. Collins also tried to draw an Auto and run but Capt. Murray dropped him - fatally wounded him.

Col. Comdt. MacCorley came running towards where I was and I asked him if he was alright. He said "No, I think I'm hit". I saw we had no chance of doing more, and as the Machine Gun was now playing on our position. I decided we would clear out. Everyone got out of the Barracks unhurt, and under heavy fire the whole party succeeded in getting away to the 2nd Battalion area where we joined our night patrols.

It was now 3.55 a.m. and we had hardly reached safety when the area was flooded with Lancia and armoured cars filled with Specials. They swept the streets with machine gun fire and for three quarters of an hour the area was a regular battle field. Our men replied with rifles and P.P.'s and succeeded in driving them off by 5. a.m. Large forces of police and Specials then returned to search the district. During the search they were in the back yard of the house I was in, but fortunately they made no attempt to enter. They also raided the house in which Col. Comdt. MacCorley was, and saw him in bed but did not search him room.

From their attitude it was clear they had the "wind up" and were very careful in their movements. The whole Loyalist population is at a loss to know how such a raid could be attempted during Curfew hours on the Headquarters in Belfast and the largest Barrack in Ireland. They are in a state of panic.

I must specially mention ..... who assisted us in the job. Without his aid we could not have attempted it and he certainly took great risks.

I must also mention the names of Co. Comdt. MacCorley, Lt. Comdt. Keenan, Comdt. Timoney, Capt. Harte and Capt. Murray for their coolness and courage under such trying circumstances. I should say most of these are our old pre-truce City A.S.U.

(SIGNED)

S.MacC
O/C/. Division.

EXTENSIVE BURNING

While the IRA fought gun battles in many areas of Belfast, the small Catholic enclave around Weaver Street found itself at the mercy of Protestant attackers who, armed with revolvers, drove 148 families from their homes. The little enclave had suffered in previous shooting and bomb attacks, and now a final purge was being made to clear Catholics from the York Road area. The previous day, any Catholic families in Mountcollyer Street were put out of their homes. Within the next few days nearly 1000 penniless refugees reached Glasgow. The **Manchester Guardian** referred to the evictions:- ***These people have committed no offence unless it is an offence to be born a Catholic. Hundreds of families are being continually driven from their houses. In these operations the Specials provide the petrol, fire-arms and immunity from interruption.***

The let up in intimidation would not end, more families would be evicted in the first week of June (436) than in the whole of May. Several thousand poured into Dublin and Glasgow, while many others absorbed in some way into the already congested Catholic districts.

IRA RETALIATIONS

On the day the purge was carried out against the Catholics of York Road (19th May, 1922) armed men entered Garrets Co-Operative in Little Patrick Street off Nelson Street close in the Docks area, and proceeded to line the workers against the wall. Only one was a Catholic and he was singled out and made to stand against another wall. This man must surely have thought he was about to die, but the guns were not turned on him but his fellow workers, as a hail of bullets struck down the unfortunate men killing four as IRA reprisals began.

POLITICAL TARGET

Monday, 22nd May, 1922, will not be remembered or recorded in the annals of the conflict for the daily cross divide sniping around the Short Strand which saw two Protestants killed and two B-Specials shot and seriously wounded on the Albert Bridge. It is an event which occurred earlier that morning that was sending shock waves through-out the Unionist hierarchy. William Twaddell, a member of the Northern Parliament and an outspoken Loyalist, was walking along lower Garfield Street where he had a business. Two IRA men approached him, drew revolvers and promptly shot him dead. The two men then made their escape across Royal Avenue, through Smithfield and into Divis Street.

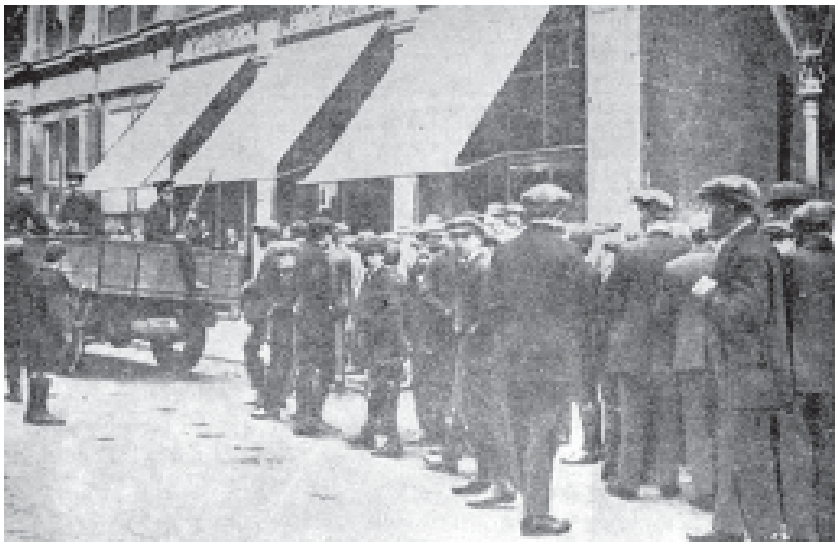
A Republican, Michael Pratley, from Thompson Place, was later arrested in connection to the shooting, but was not charged.

This man, although connected to the IRA was not involved, as this killing had actually been carried out by Divisional Staff Officers. Pratley was executed soon after in Belfast Prison for another shooting.

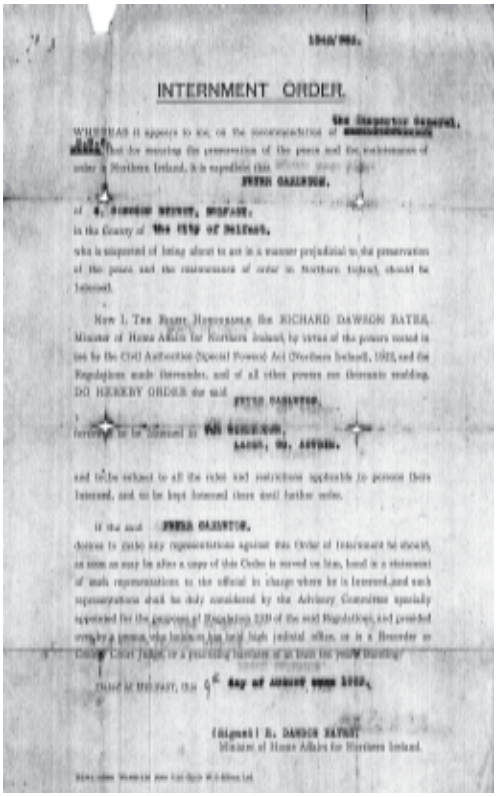
INTERNMENT

The killing of Twaddell prompted the Northern Parliament to introduce Internment without trial. Belfast and Derry jails began to fill up with internees, so a ship, the *SS Argenta*, was moored off Carrickfergus having been specially fitted as a prison to house 300 men in conditions that were described as appalling. The middle deck was the main prison complex, which was divided into eight metal cages. Each cage measured 40 feet by 20 feet and was 8 feet high. In each cage there were 56 hammocks stacked two deep. The deck compartments were segregated by means of steel wire netting. Toilet conditions consisted of a few buckets placed openly at the end of each compartment, and the food was execrable. The men were forced to use the soiled floor of their sleeping cages on which to cut up their food. Clean air was also a problem, and no hospital accommodation was in place. The men had been transferred to the hulk in June 1922, but after a summer of vile conditions, groups of prisoners

Police round up and search civilians in Garfield Street directly after the shooting of William Twaddell







INTERNMENT ORDER.

Internment Order of Peter Carleton, Carrick Hill

began to organise protest action against their detention, and they were transferred to Derry Jail on the 14th of September. A huge hunger strike followed, and just before Christmas 1922, 200 men were also moved off the ship to Derry. The ship remained in existence until 1924 when it was sold off to be broken up.

CHILDREN SHOT

The week beginning Monday 22nd May continued much as it began with the Carrick Hill, Short Strand and Falls areas much to the fore in cross divide shooting. On Wednesday 24th May, the IRA opened fire at a worker's tram as it travelled along the Mountpottinger Road. In the same area, a bomb thrown at B-Specials wounded Special Constable Hanna, and the British Army post at the Corporation Yard on Short Strand also came under fire. Thirteen Protestants were wounded throughout Belfast, and three killed, while five Catholics suffered gunshot wounds. Casualty figures fluctuated up and down each day. The following day two children, Lizzie Curran, aged 9, and Mary Morrison, aged 12, were shot and wounded by Protestant snipers around the Seaforde Street area, another child, Jennie Bell, aged 9, was wounded by a bomb in the same area.

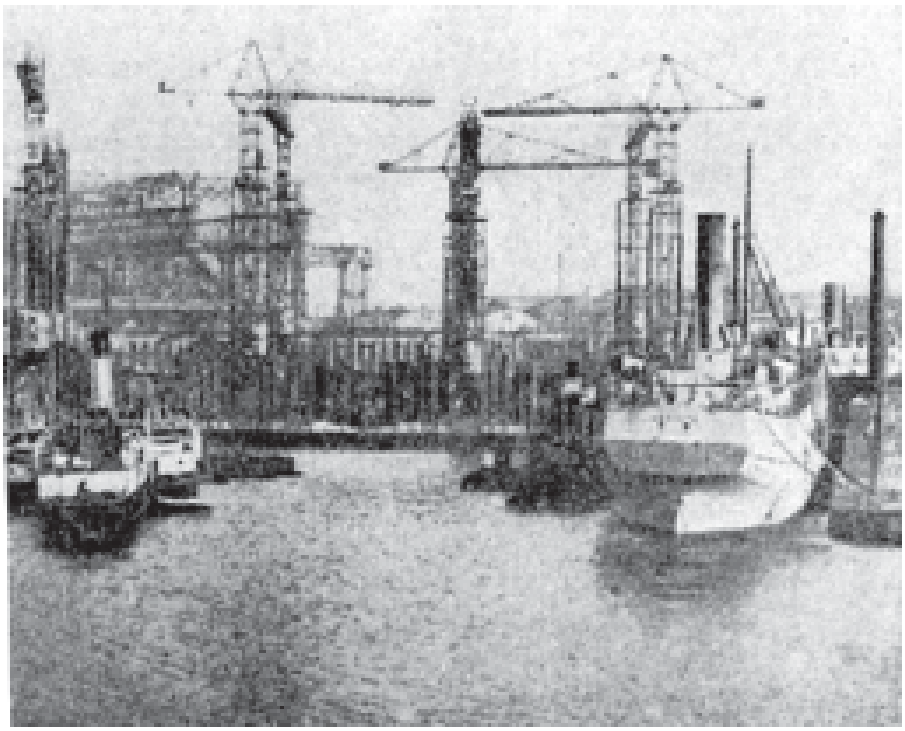
INTIMIDATION

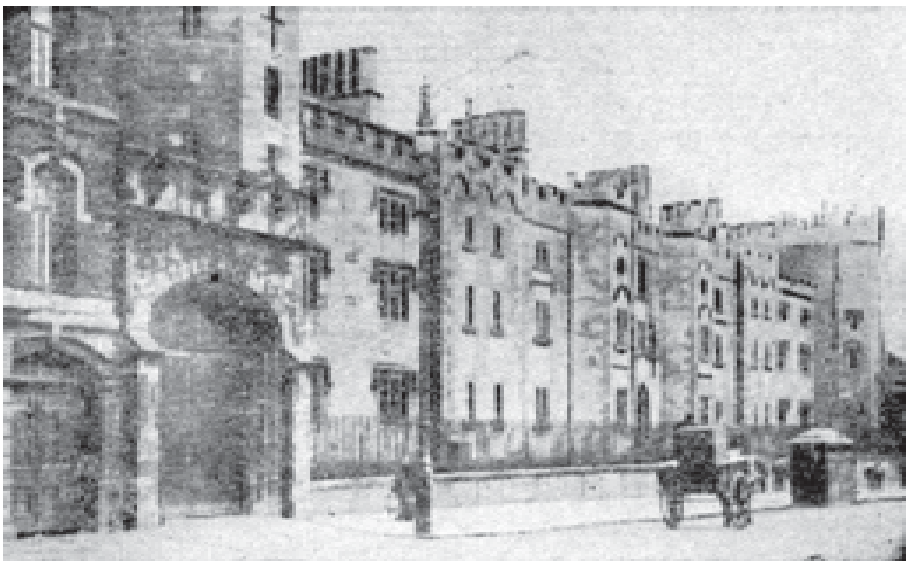
The flurry of diplomacy still taking place between the governments North and South as with the British, was done so against a background of decreasing violence in Belfast and along the border. In the city the month of June 1922, saw a marked fall in the number killed with 25 victims, (18 Catholics, 7 Protestants) and 100 wounded, compared to the figure of 75 fatalities in May.

However, June was also marked by a dramatic increase of Catholic families evicted from their homes by Loyalists. According to G.B McKenna's records of the period, these reached a total of 436 in the first week of June alone. The scale of these evictions was reflected in the large numbers of Catholic refugees crowding into Dublin and other Southern towns as well as into several British cities.

The IRA continued its actions into June but on a greatly reduced scale. This was a result of not so much the effect of internment, but of the deliberate decision of the pro-Treaty IRA leadership in Dublin not to activate the border divisions as originally intended, due to the political activity and the sectarian blood letting which the initial raids provoked. This left the Third Northern Division in East Ulster in an untenable position, and it was forced to call off rural operations in June.

BELOW - The SS Argenta (right) lies in the Musgrave Channel
BOTTOM - Derry Jail







THE BORDER AREAS

In its last phase pro-Treaty IRA activity in the North was largely contained to a campaign of burning, mainly of Unionist owned commercial property in Belfast throughout the month of June.

The purpose of this campaign was, as the then Officer Commanding Seamus Woods explained "to hit the authors and promoters of the pogrom." Nationalists support for the IRA had also increased because of the role played by them in defending the Catholic areas. Even the British military was restricted in taking action against the Loyalists in an 'offensive manner.' It would be rare for them to be ordered to do so. It was left for soldiers on the ground to take action, and this, it would appear, took place when soldiers found themselves under fire from Protestant snipers. They did not hesitate to return fire and hit targets, but they were not ordered to engage in follow up raiding operations, these were primarily geared at Catholic areas.

Unlike Belfast the border areas were dominated by IRA action throughout 1921/1922. As the offensive was being 'run down' in June 1922, activity on the border was still high. In the first week of June 'regular' IRA men found themselves fighting British troops despite the truce, as the British, on Churchill's orders, recaptured the Pettico/Belleek triangle.

Catholics dug holes through their yard wall to protect themselves from snipers. Those pictured are in Vere Street in the North Queen Street area.





THE 4th NORTHERN DIVISION AND THE BORDER CAMPAIGN

On the 9th of May 1920, a large unit of IRA men under the command of Camlough man Frank Aiken took over the village of Newtownhamilton in South Armagh, and proceeded to lay siege to the barrack. Sergeant Traynor, of the local RIC, and five constables endeavoured to repel the attack but failed when the IRA managed to set alight the building. This was done by using potato sprayers filled with petrol or paraffin to soak the front of the building, before setting it alight.

Some months later in December, the 22 year old (who would soon be spearheading a ruthless campaign of IRA operations in South Armagh) led an attack on Camlough Barracks. As with the Newtownhamilton attack, the roads were blocked with felled trees, and an IRA group gathered on the Egyptian Arch, a 100ft. high railway bridge just outside the village, and dropped bombs on top of the British troops as they rushed from Newry. A mills grenade was used to blow open the steel shutters in front of one of the windows of the barrack, which then resulted in B-Specials burning houses in Camlough as reprisal.

The following day, the Aiken family home in the townland of Carrickbracken was burned down. Now on the run, Frank Aiken operated from what he would now describe as 'our loyal allies, the hills.' He stepped up the number of attacks against British forces and became Commandant of the 4th Northern Division covering South Armagh, North Louth and South Down.

THE ADAVOYLE AMBUSH

On the 22nd of June, 1921, the British King, George V opened the new Northern Parliament after arriving in Belfast on board the Royal Yacht 'Victoria and Albert' and being escorted to the City Hall in a carriage flanked by the 10th Royal Hussars. Restrictions had already been put in place, and a special order was released by Major General Bainbridge, the military commander for Belfast, on the 18th June outlining the restrictions which included the closing of all licensed premises between 5.30pm - 9.30pm (see page 19). The speech by King George appealed for 'forbearance and conciliation,' but did nothing to address the oppression against the city's Catholic population. While the Southern Irish press accorded a favourable response to the Royal gesture, the Belfast based Irish News editorial spoke of the tainted 'hand of Lloyd George in every sentence.' (Irish News, 23rd June, 1921)

The following day, the Royal Hussars, having completed the ceremonial duty, boarded a military train and the G.N.R. in Belfast to return to their barracks in Dublin. On board the train were 113 men, more than a hundred horses, and four officers of the regiment under the command of Captain Lord W.W. Montagu-Douglas Scott.

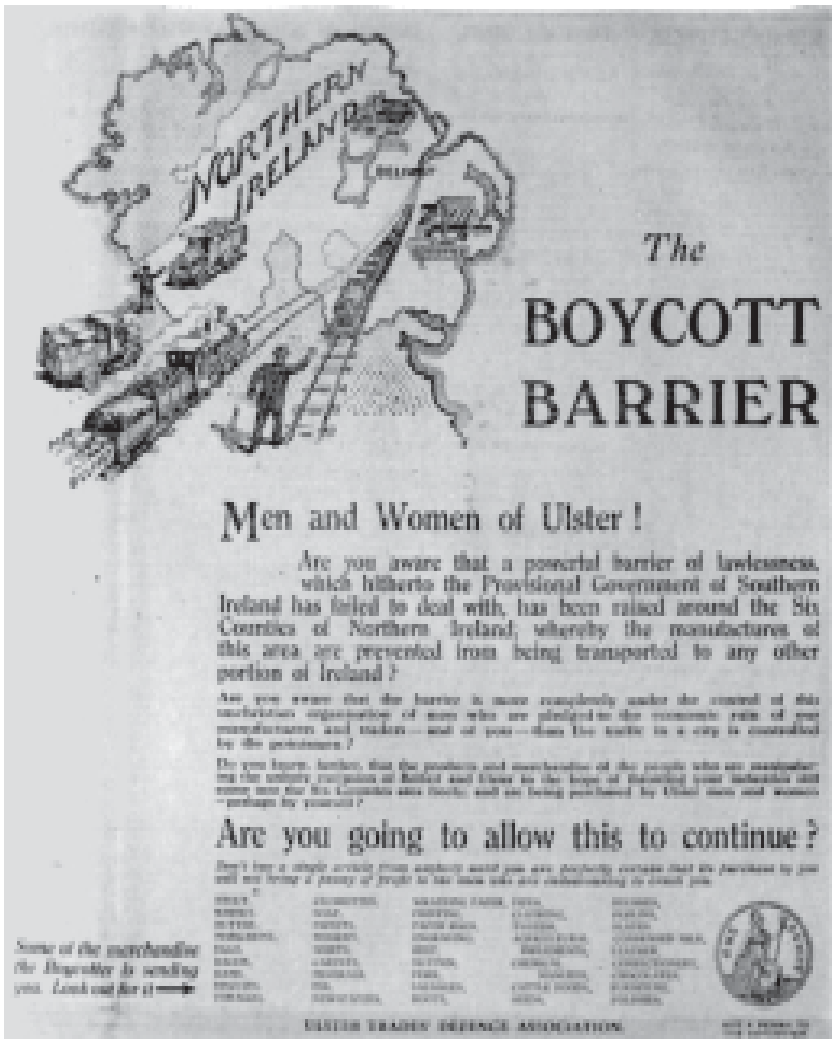
The Unionist population of Belfast had celebrated the arrival of the King to their city, they had been given their parliament, and now the IRA was intent in making its contribution to the Royal visit.

As the train approached the Gap of the North on the main Belfast - Dublin line, an IRA unit under Frank Aiken lay in wait next to the railway track at Adavoyle near Jonesborough. Armed IRA members had earlier 'arrested' men working on the line and placed bombs between the sleepers.

They exploded beneath the luggage van, derailing the carriages and 18 wagons containing horses, toppling them over a 15ft. embankment.

Sergeant Dawson, who had been manning a Hotchkiss machine-gun, Trooper Harper, the train guard Frank Gallagher, and 63 horses were killed while Trooper Telford died later in hospital.

Shots were fired by British troops at local men in fields nearby and one of them, Patrick McAteer a farmer, died of his wounds. Local men were also



made to clear the wreckage and bury the horses.

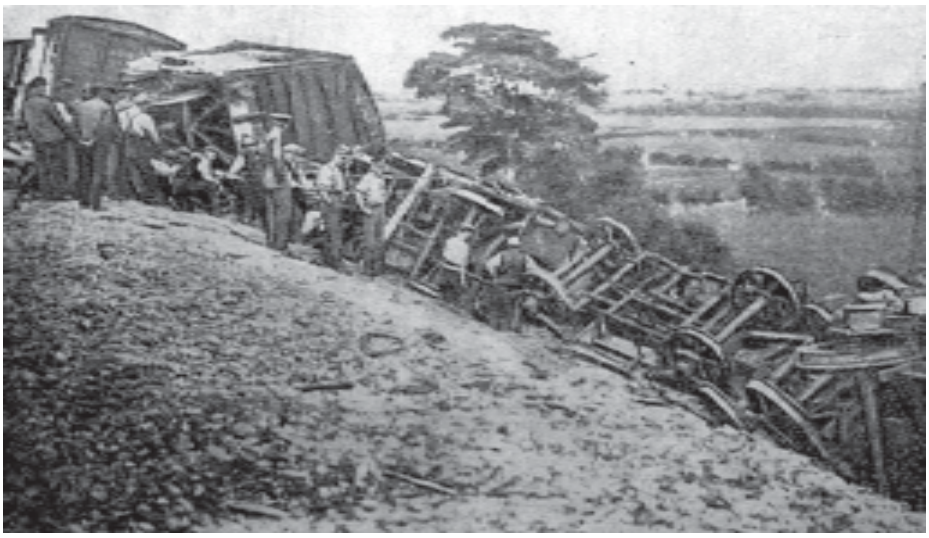
South Armagh became fertile killing ground with reprisal and counter reprisal killings between the IRA and the B-Specials. In June 1921, four Catholics were taken from their homes at Altnaveigh near Bessbrook, and shot dead on the roadside. Amid ambushes on Special patrols by large IRA units, Frank Aiken's men, as part of the overall burning campaign being carried out against Unionist property throughout May and June 1922, burned the homes and farms of Orange Order members in County Armagh. One date that stands out in the memory of Protestants is the 17th of June, 1922, the date of what is termed the 'Altnaveigh Massacre', when six Protestants and a Special were shot and killed, as the IRA, around 50 strong, raided selected Protestant homes killings residents and burning their houses. The killings were the result of four burnings, while five further homes were burned without fatalities.

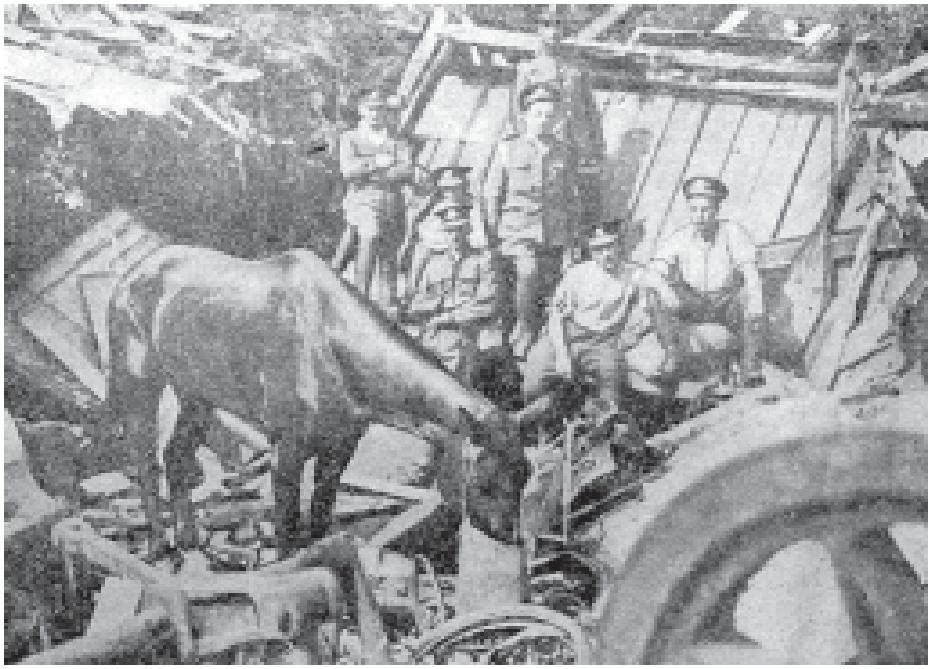
The Altnaveigh raids had been proceeded by an ambush on a 14 man Special patrol at Drumintee in which a B-Special was killed and another wounded. The ambush was carried out from James McGuill's public house (himself a leading Republican in the area) which sat on a short steep hill with a turn which would necessitate a considerable slackening of speed in cars coming from Forkhill and was therefore well situated for an ambush. The bar was burned after the attack and its walls knocked down in what County Inspector W.S. Moore described 'as a matter of military necessity.' Another element of the War of Independence at that time was the abduction of RIC men, or suspected spy's and informants. In some cases these men were executed by the IRA and their bodies buried in bogs never to be seen or heard of again.

The family of a Protestant, William Frazer from Newtownhamilton, were fortunate in that following his shooting at the end of June 1922 in South Armagh, the RUC were told, in 1924, that his body was buried in a bog on the Ballard Mountain, about four miles from Camlough.

When the Civil War broke out on the 28th of June, 1922, with the bombardment of the Anti-Treaty forces in the Four Courts, Aiken ensured his 4th







Right - The attack at Adavoyle



The Gray home at Lisdrumliska where Joseph Gray had been shot dead and the house set alight by the IRA

Northern Division stayed intact and took an anti-treaty 'stance' pulling them out from the control of the Provisional Government in Dublin who were secretly intending to disband the Northern Divisions anyway as part of their new policy toward the Northern administration.

Frank Aiken's earlier policy was not one of joining the Executive Forces, he believed it was 'bad tactics' to fight against each other. In a letter to the Minister for Defence (Michael Collins) on the 6th of July, 1922, he told him ***that if ordered, I would not attack the Executive Forces, but on the other hand I thought the Executive should quit.***

After a meeting with Liam Lynch, Commander in Chief of the anti-treaty forces on the 8th of July, 1922, Aiken returned to his H.Q. in Dundalk were orders from G.H.Q. awaited him, with instructions to attack the Executive Forces in his area.

He also received an order for him and his Divisional Staff to report to G.H.Q. on Saturday 15th July.

On Friday 14th July, Frank Aiken met all (including Executive) Brigade and Battalion Commanders and Divisional Staff. This meeting was to set future policy and was a deciding factor for the future of Aiken and his 4th Division.

In a Divisional report of July 17th, 1922, he says of the meeting:- ***we agreed that if the Provisional Government did not give the anti-treaty parties, civil and military, a constitutional way of carrying on for the Republic, such as withdrawing the oath for admission to Parliament, we would give them no support moral or material. On that day, July 14th, I ordered all arms and war material in the Division to be concealed, and that if we finally broke with G.H.Q. all military posts and camps were to be evacuated, the Divisional organisation to be kept intact along Volunteer lines until we could attack the North, with a chance of getting a United Ireland, which was always the immediate job to us as Northerners.***

When negotiations broke down, Frank Aiken moved against his old H.Q., Dundalk Barracks, on the 14th of August, 1922.

He had lost it to Free State Forces in July in a surprise attack and Aiken as normal was determined to level the score. In 'textbook' military terms it was a perfect operation resulting in 200 anti-treaty prisoners being released, five members of the Free State Forces killed, and ten wounded, while Aiken lost just one man.

It was Frank Aiken who brought the Civil War to an end on the 30th of April,1923, when, as IRA Chief of Staff, he called a ceasefire. A month later, he ordered his men to 'dump arms.'

SITUATION OF IRA IN BELFAST

On the 20th of July, 1922, Seamus Woods, who had been appointed Divisional Officer Commanding of the IRA at a Divisional Council meeting on Sunday 9th April, forwarded a detailed situation report to G.H.Q. on No.1 (Belfast) Brigade. He stated the strength of the Brigade to be 800 men (despite Internment and the split which caused no big defection to the Executive Company's).

Armament was as follows:-

181 Rifles and 11,600 rounds of ammunition.
308 Service Revolvers and Autos plus 7,400 rounds of ammunition.
5 Thompson Guns and 1,220 rounds of ammunition.

Engineering Material:-
156 Detonators
12 Stone of War Flour
20lbs Cheddar
12lbs Gelignite
20ft. Time Fuse.

Enemy Strength in area:-

British Military	**5,500**
RUC	**2,650**
Uniformed and Semi-Uniformed RUSC	**26,680**
Total Strength	**34,830**

One interesting aspect to the report is the listing for the Thompson machine gun as five. Despite the image of every IRA man running around carrying a Thompson, they were rarely used in Belfast.

In his report Woods went on to say:-

For a period of three months previous to our resuming the offensive, the enemy was running loose murdering and harassing our people, and as the Army was not very active the people were gradually loosing the respect they had for the IRA. This respect had been won not so much out of sympathy with our National aspirations, and our fight for National Freedom, but more on account of the part the Army had played in defending the minority against organised attacks by uniformed and non-uniformed Crown Forces.

When, however, we commenced a campaign of destruction of enemy property which hit the authors and promoters of the Pogrom, and was having the effects of stopping the murder campaign, the sympathy and support of the people was slowly coming back to us.

Seamus Woods in the same report referred to the shooting of two Specials (Special Constables McGarrety and Roulston) at Millfield by the Executive, and the reaction by the Specials who, backed by armoured cars, launched indiscriminate gun fire into Catholic streets in the Millfield and Carrick Hill areas. Catholic homes in Boyd Street and California Street were burned, and families forced to flee. Several people died and many were wounded in the attacks which spread to other districts, and culminated in a gun attack on St Mary's Presbytery by Specials drunk on looted alcohol.

Woods reported that most of the IRA Officers, including Company Captains, were attending a Brigade meeting when the attacks took place, and the morale of the Catholic people was nearly broken.

In the report Woods describes a deterioration in Company areas despite their burning campaign continuing. This report shows the first signs of real moral problems within the Belfast Brigade. Woods continues:- ***Several of our dumps have been captured within the last few weeks, and in practically every case the raiding party went direct to the house. In many of these raids, Company and Battalion papers have been found with the result that many Officers and men are forced to go on the run necessarily in their own restricted areas. They find it difficult to get accommodation with the people now, and in a particular area seventeen of our best officers and men had to sleep in a refugees home, where they were all captured.***

As I mentioned before, the economic position is very acute. To give a rough idea there are 171 married men with 405 dependents, and 346 single men with 936 dependents. These figures are taken from cards returned by each company.

It is clear from Seamus Woods report, senior figures within the Dáil had turned its back on the North in pursuit of the growing problems arising in the South over the Treaty. This fact is recognised by Woods when in another detailed report seven days later, he says:- ***The people who supported us feel they have have been abandoned by Dáil Eireann. They feel that all their suffering has been in vain and cannot see any hope for the future.***

Events after the death of Michael Collins would prove as such, with Mulcahy, Collins' successor, and the Cosgrove Government cutting the life line to the Northern Divisions.

PORTOBELLO MEETING WITH COLLINS

Woods persistence was rewarded when the Northern Commanders were called to a conference at Portobello Barracks in Dublin to consider the whole position of the Pro-Treaty IRA in the North. The urgency of the conference had been emphasised by the defection of Frank Aiken and his 4th Northern Division to the Anti-Treaty side. Michael Collins was due to leave Dublin for an inspection tour of West Cork, and he assured his Northern Comrades ***that the Government in Dublin intended to deal with the Ulster situation in a very definite way.***

A number of firm decisions were made concerning the IRA in the North. It was agreed that IRA men who could not remain in the Six County area, could be trained in the Curragh under their own officers in guerrilla warfare, and that finance would be provided for the continued payment of Divisional Staff and intelligence work.

Seamus Woods, and the four other Northern Commanders who attended - Rodger McCorley, Vice o/c 3rd Northern; Tom Morris o/c 2nd Northern; J. Mallin, Quarter Master, 2nd Northern and J. Casey an Officer, and 2/I.C of the Newry Brigade, were greatly heartened by the result of the Portobello meeting. By the end of August 1922, 379 men had arrived at the Currage under the training scheme.

UNDERHAND POLITICS AND CHANGE IN ULSTER POLICY

Unknown to the Northern IRA men who left Portobello after that 2nd August meeting, they were in a false position. While Michael Collins was genuine in his efforts to support the North and create a policy of direction for the Northern Divisions, others within the Provisional Government were pursuing a different approach. The day before the Portobello meeting,



Sir Henry Wilson

the Government appointed a committee to see how it could shape a fundamental change in its Ulster policy.

Mulcahy, who was present at Portobello, knew of this and he recorded at the meeting that 'a peace policy (was) essential.'

The architect of the new policy was a Northern Protestant and Minister for Home Affairs, Ernest Blythe. He rejected any continuation of an aggressive policy, involving either physical coercion or economic pressure as counter productive. He recommended that on receiving British assurances, the Northern Divisions should be urged to disarm. Blythe's views were taken on board and on the 19th of August, 1922, the Provisional Government formally adopted ' a peace policy' with the Northern Parliament.

MICHAEL COLLINS

Michael Collins is often illustrated as the image of the Free State and its forces after the signing of the Treaty. He was a charismatic figure who imaged the whole concept of Irish resistance, and many photographs taken of Collins in uniform depict this whole image. He took great pride in his role as Commander in Chief of the new National Army (so called), but behind this public image was a man who felt a deep sense of dismay over the split within the IRA, and for the six northern counties.

He was very much aware that the treaty he had helped to broker had cut them off from the rest of the country, leaving its Nationalist inhabitants feeling isolated and betrayed. Two of three

Northern Divisions had remained loyal to the Government in Dublin, in reality they had no where else to turn. Their life line led south, and despite the civil war, Collins fed that life line ensuring the IRA in the North received weapons to foremost defend the Nationalist people, but also to enable them to carry out offensive operations. It was Collins who instrumented the May campaign in the North and it was also his directive that allegedly was responsible for the assassination of Field Marshall Sir Henry Wilson in London on the 22nd of June 1922.

Although the evidence is inconclusive, the balance of probability is that Collins, outraged by the 'excesses and murders' being carried out against the Catholic minority under the Northern Government, to which Wilson, a member of the British parliament, had recently been appointed military adviser, had him executed.

The cabinet in Dublin was appalled at Wilson's killing, which Michael Collins had ordered without their knowledge. But while the Cosgrove led Government was condemning and deploring the deed, Collins was consulting with both Liam Lynch and Rory O'Connor, leaders of the Anti-Treaty forces, as to the possibility of their being able to assist in a rescue operation of Reginald Dunne and Joseph O'Sullivan, both former British Army veterans of Ypres, who had been captured after shooting Henry Wilson. Both men were held in Wandsworth Jail, but no plan that would succeed could be formulated to secure their release, and they were later hanged.

TURNING POINT

The killing of Wilson was a turning point in many ways. First it incensed the British who dictated that the Free State forces move against the Anti-Treaty forces held up in the Four Courts and secondly it caused Collins to leave the cabinet to take up duties as Chief of the Army. He had lost the confidence of the cabinet, and he in turn had no faith in them, especially the hawks - Desmond Fitzgerald, Ernest Blythe and Kevin O'Higgin's. Collins was no longer Chairman of the Government, but he was Commander of the Army, and still, until his death, attended cabinet meetings despite their critical attitude toward him for not always following their directives.

When Free State troops began shelling the Four Courts on the 27th June, 1922 (ironically as a pressure move from the British on the Free State over the Wilson killing which the Anti-Treaty forces had nothing to do with as it was the own commander Michael Collins), the Civil War began and the last shipment of arms left the courts for Donegall and the 2nd and 3rd Northern Division.

In the North there was a feeling of hope that after the Treaty Collins had intended to reorganise and rebuild, but the Civil War was quickly putting pay to such thoughts as the Free state cabinet changed policy on the North, and gave way to British pressure to destroy Republican opposition. But for Collins the North still weighed on his mind, and he visited Tom Malone, now a Republican prisoner in Maryboro Prison, Limerick in early August,1922. There he told Malone he was surrounded by 'spies and traitors,' and if he could get his old comrades now on the opposing side, Tom Barry and Tom Hales to end the Civil War and enlist in the National Army, would he (Malone) be willing to join them? Malone agreed and Collins showed his delight by driving his right fist into the palm of his left hand saying "That's fine, with the three Toms we will fix it and together free the North." However, the death of Michael Collins on the 22nd of August, 1922, on a narrow road at Beal na mBlath in West Cork made all the hopes, the maybe's and what could have been irrelevant. The Cosgrove led Free State Government turned it's back on the North, and the rest is history.

Historians have been left to speculate, some even to judge, but while the death of Collins gave the Cosgrove Government an excuse to unleash a purge of killing and murder under the direction of its new army commander Richard Mulcahy, against Republican forces, the untimely killing of Michael Collins, was to have more far reaching consequences upon the six Northern counties, the price of which was paid in blood some fifty years later and at a much higher rate than experienced during 1919 - 1922 which cast independen ce for 26 of Ireland's 32 counties.

LEGEND

The name of Michael 'Mick' Collins provokes much interest and debate in Irish history. Like all great characters of history there is a sense of aura, a mystique person whose image portrays everything that is an embodiment of Ireland's conflict during this period. In reality he was a man who fitted the hour and used his strength of character to pursue his objectives. He was suited to the period and deserves his standing in Irish history.

For many years controversy has surrounded the death of Michael Collins, various theories of murder have been put forward which in turn have been countered by those who believe he died from a Republican bullet during the Beal na mBlath ambush, which is the official version of what happened, and many historians prefer to run with this. Others do not, and therefore the Collins 'legend' remains very much alive to this day.

EMMET DALTON

Of all the people blamed or partly blamed for shooting Collins by those in the conspiracy camp top of the list is Emmet Dalton who, as a close advisor to Collins, was travelling with him on the inspection tour. Before joining the Dublin Brigade he had served in the British Army during the First World War, rising through the ranks **to become A.D.C. to General Sir Henry Wilson.** He left the British Army holding the rank of Major. He had a smooth introduction into the Dublin Brigade, and it is not known if Collins knew of his past position in relation to Wilson. There is no doubt that Dalton's own account of the ambush provokes many questions as to its accuracy, not to mention **several contradictions** before reaching a plausible conclusion to his story.

None of the evidence against Dalton, strong as it may be) can be validated to a point were it becomes 'solid,' but two crucial statements are worth noting which are sound:

I used to see [Desmond Fitzgerald, Minister for Foreign Affairs up until 1932] ***occasionally. One evening we were walking around the rectangle*** (at Leinster House) ***when he stopped and said to me 'Dan, would you like to know who killed Michael Collins?' I said it was a bullet from the retreating IRA. 'No' he said, 'it was not. It was Emmet Dalton who shot him.***

Dan Ryan, September 1981

This was the same Desmond Fitzgerald who, when the Government was about to hand over

to Fianna Fail for the first time in February 1932, ordered all papers relating to Collins to be burnt.

SWORN AFFIDAVIT

Six years after Dan Ryan's statement, Simon Dalton, nephew of Emmet swore out an affidavit to a Dublin solicitor, P. Laurence Murphy on the 25th February, 1987, that his uncle told him he had shot Michael Collins at point blank range with a Luger pistol. He also claimed his uncle had said that Eamon De Valera would be assassinated on the same day by Liam Lynch (Chief of Republican Forces). Lynch stopped De Valera's assassination, but that he (his uncle) had kept his part of the bargain.

Both Collins and De Valera were anxious to end the war, does this entail that the 'hawks' wished to remove the peace makers on each side. This speculation is far from being a solid notion, but it is a case of truth being stronger than fiction!

MATRON BACKS POINT BLANK KILLING

The accusation of a 'point blank' killing is not a new one and there has always been a strong body of evidence to suggest Collins was killed at point blank range. The strongest of these concerns Eleanor Gordon who was the Matron at Shanakiel Hospital were Collins was brought after the shooting. She was ordered at gunpoint by Free State soldiers to personally lay out the body, and all telephone communications were disconnected. Eleanor Gordon, who had been a military nurse in the First World war, was more than familiar with bullet wounds, and she repeated often to her nephew in the thirties that Collins' body had a deep gash on the side of the head, and there was also a singed hole on the back of his tunic, which looked like a bullet hole.

Oliver St.John Gogarty, who carried out a post-mortem, maintained for years that there was only one wound. Then, in the early sixties, he changed his story, and for the first time admitted that there had been **two holes.**

NOT KILLED BY IRA

In one book written on the subject, after much research, the author came to the conclusion, that an IRA man, Sonny O'Neill, shot Collins during the ambush.

But such a conclusion is simply circumstantial as informed sources have already stated that Sonny O'Neill left the ambush scene **at least 30 minutes** prior to any shooting.

Further valuable evidence came from Bill McKenna who, in 1981 as one of the last survivors of the Collins escort, spoke at length to the late John Feehan (author of a book on the subject). Bill's recollections spoke only of what he saw and what came within his personal experience. Bill's parting words to John Feehan upon being asked who he thought shot Collins was ***I do not know but I am quite sure, as were most of my fellow soldiers, that he was not shot by an IRA bullet.***

In July 1922, Kevin O'Higgins (nephew of Tim Healy) was appointed an army post, and he transferred from his Government post to Portobello Barracks, Collins' H.Q.

O'Higgins was not a military man and was one of those that Collins needed to be wary off within the Cabinet. He sought tough action against Republican forces and he is said to have commented after Sir Henry Wilson's death:- ***Assassination is a game that two can play and men may be lost to Ireland of greater potentialities and more constructive ability than Sir Henry Wilson.***

The appointment of Kevin O'Higgins to a military post at Portobello was probably made to permit him to observe Collins' activities at source.

It was O'Higgins who received the uncoded message from Dalton in Cork City of Collins' death. He in turn notified Mulcahy. But why O'Higgins? Portobello holds the key to many questions.

First, O'Higgins taking up a post there from the Cabinet **to which he returned after Collins' death.**

Second, a file given to Collins by one of his agents Thomas Markham on the 4th August informing him of the identity of the British agent 'Thorpe' (the Dublin Castle mole) was placed in a safe at Portobello by Collins, for acting upon on his return, disappeared.

Third, the night before his departure for Cork from Portobello, Collins' normal driver, Dublin man Jack Swan, was told that he was being replaced, and the driver chosen in his place was an Englishman from Cheshire, Private Corry - why?

Once again it was Portobello were this decision was made.

Even if Dalton was working for the British, and shot Collins, it is Dublin and certain elements of the Cabinet and not London who appear to be the instigators.

If Dalton did shoot Collins as his nephew claims, and Dan Ryan claims Fitzgerald confided to him, it was the Dublin Cabinet hawks who were directing him, possibly with British Intelligence knowledge.

Was Collins' death the culmination of a concerted campaign to remove him from the scene, directed by 'Irishmen' who feared his efforts to end the Civil War and reunite the IRA as the National Army, regroup, reorganise and look North?

Collins' death allowed the new Cabinet policy of August 2nd as constructed by Ernest Blyth to be implemented. Mulcahy took over as Commander of the army and a bloody purge was launched against Republican forces which included roadside murders, atrocities and executions at the behest of military courts. Many of these actions were nothing short of war crimes.

There is no doubting Collins real intentions on his visit to West Cork was for a meeting to end the in fighting. In his own words to Captain Seán McCarthy - "I am going to put an end to this bloody war as quickly as possible." Sadly his killing allowed those that he described as 'spies and traitors' to escalate the war, and create bloodshed and murder to surpass anything the Black and Tans did. Sir Neville McCready, the G.O.C. of British Forces in Ireland between 1918-1920 said ***that the pro-Treaty forces had achieved victory by means far more drastic than any which the British Government dared to impose during the worst period of rebellion.***

82 men in total were executed within ten months. The deeds carried out by the Free State Government under Cosgrove, O'Higgins (shot dead by the IRA in July,1927), Fitzgerald and Mulcahy were in stark contrast to the ideals of the men of 1916, they murdered their own and deprived Ireland of one of its greatest modern leaders.

ABSORB

The Cosgrove Government made no hurried move to disband the Northern IRA divisions after Collins' death for

fear of their defection to the Republican Forces in the South. Policy was designed to absorb the northerners into the Free State army while providing a special fund for the relief of Pro-treaty volunteers in Woods' divisional area.

This decision was taken in October 1922, and Mulcahy informed Woods on the 22nd of December. However, Seamus Woods remained unhappy with the evasive answers he received from Mulcahy about future policy regarding the Northern IRA, while he shared his men's anger at the Free State's execution of Joe McKelvey in December. Mulcahy had already declined a request from Woods in October to explain the position to the Northern IRA officers, stating merely that Government policy on the North 'is the policy of the Treaty.'

To General Mulchay
The Commander-in-Chief
Dublin
29th September 1922

As, I am inclined to believe, the attitude of the present Government towards its followers in the Six Counties, is not that of the late General Collins, I am writing this memo with a view to ascertaining from you what exactly the position of my Division is now, and is likely to be in the future relative to G.H.Q. and I would also like to know through you what policy the Government has for its followers in the Divisional area.

When the Treaty was signed in December last we were given to understand by General O'Duffy that although the Six Counties did not benefit as much as the rest of Ireland by it, it was the best that could possibly be got at the time, and it was the intention of the Dail members and members of the G.H.Q. staff who supported it, to work to try to overcome the Treaty position with regard to Ulster.

During the three months following the signing of the Treaty I am satisfied that G.H.Q. did their best to assist the army in the Six Counties, and when the split came in March I recommended to Officers and men to stand with G.H.Q. as I considered by so doing we were giving the people who supported the Treaty a better chance of overcoming the position in the North.

After the outbreak of hostilities between G.H.Q. and the Executive there was a danger that the position in Ulster would be more or less overlooked, and allowed to drift, and in order to have a definition of our position, and of the policy of the Government here, I asked for a meeting of the senior officers of the Six County area.

Before that meeting was held I sent you a memo with the events in the Division from the time I took over command, and outlining the position generally at the end of July as regards morale and tactics of the enemy; the moral of our troops and the morale of the Catholic population and their attitude towards the IRA.

On August 2nd the meeting was held and the late Commander in Chief presided. At that meeting the situation in the Six Counties was discussed at great length, with a view to improving our organisation and training, and decided on a policy to be adopted by our people in the North which would have the sanction of the Government in Dublin. The late C.I.C. made it clear to us that the Government in Dublin intended to deal with the Ulster situation in a very definite way, and as far as this Division was concerned, every officer present felt greatly encouraged to carry on the work when we had a definite policy to pursue and an assurance that the Government here would stand by us.

After the death of the late General Collins it was encouraging for us to see the Government were determined to carry out his policy. I took it that this meant his policy regarding Ulster also.

A new situation has now arisen. F. McArdle (Belfast IRA officer) was up a fortnight ago with President Cosgrove regarding the course of action to be adopted by our people in connection with the signing of a declaration of loyalty to H.M. the King and the Northern Government, which that Government imposing on certain people, and I expect through time will impose on every citizen in the Six County area. McArdle informed me that the President brought the matter before a meeting of the Cabinet and that the decision was that the Government in Dublin had no objection to our people signing this. Owing to the position that has arisen in the rest of Ireland I take it the Government feel that they are not equal to the task of overcoming the Treaty position with regard to Ulster. If it their position to recognise the Northern Government, it is well they should be acquainted with the present position in Ulster, and have an idea of what the future of Ulster is likely to be as we visualise it.

There is grave internal trouble in the Northern Government. When their terror policy was broken up by our campaign of burning and destruction in Belfast, they turned to a policy of placation towards the Catholic population and this proved fairly successful, (we, of course, were at this time becoming inactive owing to the war in the rest of Ireland), they began to dispense with their Specials. A desire for peace became popular with the better classes and the Northern Government took up the task of restoring order in good faith. There were a number of high officers in the



The body of Michael Collins laid out on a bed in the Shanakiel Hospital hours after his death.

Police Force who had been given unlimited powers during the terror campaign, notably D/I Nixon and all his staff. Such people, while they were in power would always be a menace to peace, and during the past few months have been pressing for promotion or reward, and D/I Nixon was asked to resign. He is at present organising the disbanded Specials and has threatened to lead them against the Northern Government on the same lines as the Irregulars in the South. He has also warned Col. Wickham, Inspector General of the RUC, and the City Commissioner of Belfast, that their lives are no longer safe. Last week Nixon and Co. attempted to shoot up the Catholic districts of Belfast in the hope that the IRA would take the field and it would become evident to the Northern Government that there was a necessity to strengthen their forces rather than deplete them. I have issued a special order against retaliation until we see how the official forces of the Northern Ireland Government are going to deal with this trouble. In a particular area last week in Belfast the Official Specials returned the fire of some of the Nixon gang: this is a great change in Belfast.

Owing to the capture by us of all the files and military plans from H.Q. RUC, and the office of General Solly-Flood, Craig's military adviser, the Northern Government has been holding enquiries in all their Departments, and the position at the moment is that every official is suspecting the other.

Recognition of the Northern Government, of course, will mean the breaking up of our Division. None of the Divisional Brigade, or Battalion Officers could remain in the area except under guarantee from the Northern Government, if such will be arranged, those men would not be safe from unofficial murder gangs. With the departure of those officers it would be possible to maintain the IRA Organisation, which is the only Irish Organisation in the Six Counties, at the present time. The breaking up of this Organisation is the first step to making partition permanent. If it must come, then there is very little hope of organising in Ulster on Gaelic lines for a long time.

The Government here (Dublin) has still a certain responsibility to its followers in the Six County area and the following points will require their serious consideration.

(A) The question of our prisoners who are not recognising the Northern Government as per the late C.I.C.'s instructions.

(B) The position of the people who assisted us during the war against England and who now are singled out for harsh treatment by the Northern Government.

(C) The position of our officers and men who have lost their means of living because of their activities against England.

(D) The position of our officers and men from County Antrim and County Down, who are mostly of farming class, and who can not return to their homes, and those people who are accordingly victimised.

(E) The question of people who have come away from their areas for no reason whatever and on a plea of being refugees have been taken into Government position in Dublin. This is encouraging emigration.

On these points it is essential for me to have definite ruling from you and I would be glad if you would let me have this by Tuesday next 3rd prox. Everyone is anxious to know how and where they stand.

Beir Bennacht

Seamus Woods (O/C Third Northern Division)

By January 1923, Seamus Woods was sufficiently disillusioned to request GHQ to relieve him of his 'anomalous' commission which he did on the 5th of January, 1923.

He was subsequently captured and interned by the Unionist authorities. In the resulting uncertainty the bulk of the Northern IRA men at the Curragh (almost 300) applied to join the Free State army, however others returned to the North, in some cases drifting into the ranks of the anti Treaty force, whilst the remainder were disbanded on the 31st of March, 1923. The divisional staffs of the two divisions continued to be paid by G.H.Q. in Dublin until this date.

For the Nationalists in the North-East, it is not a question of Free State versus Republic; unfortunately they had neither. Cahir Healy, March 1925

There is no doubt that the Nationalists of the new six-county state along with the Dail leadership in Dublin, failed to realise the full extent of the crisis facing them in 1918-21, and never succeeded in agreeing upon a united policy towards the partition threat.

The divisions in northern Nationalism ensured that the minority in the North was effectively precluded from any say in influencing its own fate at a critical juncture.

Sinn Féin's strategy in the North of abstaining from the British Parliament left the political initiative with the accredited representatives of Dail Éireann, on the one hand, and with the British on the other.

Whilst DeValera's anti-Treaty forces had a minority following among the northern Sinn Féin organisation of the IRA divisions, the rift in the South and the subsequent civil war increased the confusion and demoralisation of the northern Nationalists. It effectively prevented the formulation of a policy which might have had the support of both Nationalist wings. Collins stands out as the only Republican leader in the south for whom partition and the plight of the northern Nationalists were major concerns. Yet, his desperate efforts to assist the latter led him to adopt a confusing blend of 'non-recognition,' diplomacy and coercion towards the Unionist Government. His death in August 1922, and the new policy of Cosgrove's Cabinet in recognising the Belfast Parliament, spelt the end of Republican resistance in the North.

THE TURBULENT THIRTIES

After the dreadful conflict of the early 1920's Ireland was to turn very much to normal. This 'uneasy peace' remained until the 1930's when conflict was to break out again in Belfast. This time the battle was slightly different.

In a city steeped in a legacy of sectarian conflict, one dramatic moment in Belfast's history saw a political landmark when in 1932 the working class of both communities came together in a struggle to raise the relief rates set out by the state. The climax of this successful struggle came in October 1932 in what became known as 'The Outdoor Relief Riots.' However, despite the unity on the ground, the sectarian nature of the state ensured that while the RUC was told by Dawson Bates to use batons in Protestant areas purportedly to stop looting of shops by trouble makers, firearms were directed against the Catholic protesters.


IRISH WEEKLY INDEPENDENT

WILD SCENES IN BELFAST STREETS

Six Persons Killed in Week of Terror

SHOOTINGS AND BURNINGS

TENSE ATMOSPHERE IN THE CITY

TROOPS CALLED OUT

PAY OF ARMY RESERVISTS

QUESTIONS IN THE DAIL

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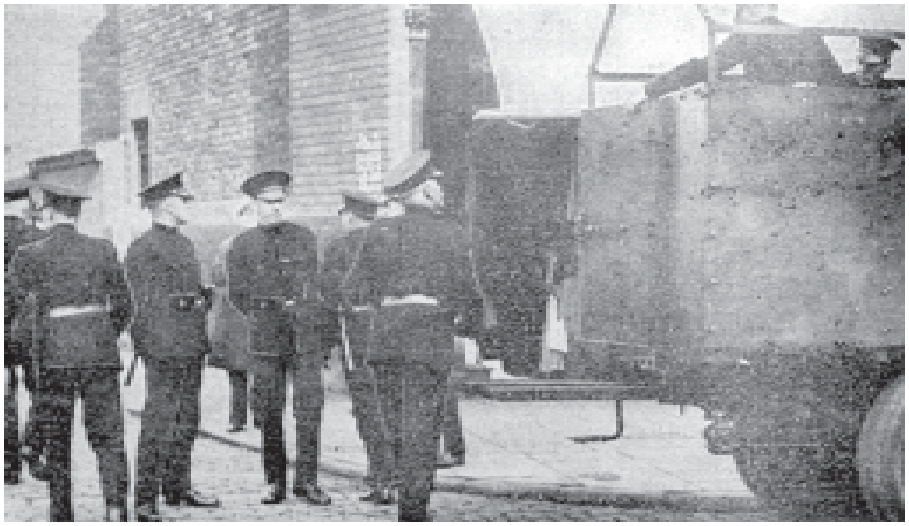
DUBLIN'S POOR



The worst of the rioting occurred over the 48 hour period of Tuesday 11th and Wednesday 12th October 1932, in the working class areas of East, West and North Belfast. As barricades were thrown up amid the terrace streets, the RUC moved on these areas in large numbers heavily armed and backed up with armoured cars in an attempt to take control of the major thoroughfares.

SHOT DEAD

The two day mayhem resulted in two Catholics being shot dead, and fifteen others wounded. Nineteen other people, sixteen of whom were Protestants, were recorded as having suffered injuries. Seventeen Belfast Councillors, including ten Unionists were so alarmed by the rioting that they signed a motion for debate in the City Council calling on the Stormont Government "promptly to take such action as may be necessary to relieve distress and starvation amongst the unemployed people of the city.' The Government, clearly shaken by events instructed the Board of Guardians, whose responsibility it was to set the scale rate, to increase payments and family allowances. But as the unemployed rejoiced, the burials of the two men killed were underway.

REVOLVER FIRING

On Friday October 14th, 1932, the funerals of John Keegan of Leeson Street and Samuel Baxter of Regent Street proceeded to both Milltown and the City Cemetery as tens of thousands marched to the graveyards. The R.U.C. denied they were responsible for shooting the men saying their men had fired into the air to disperse a crowd when in imminent danger of being killed. An R.U.C. Sergeant in charge of a party of 8 men said: *As they advanced down Leeson Street, the*

TOP - Thousands of unemployed Catholics and Protestants march to the Belfast Union Workhouse on the Lisburn Road.
BOTTOM - An RUC patrol on the Newtownards Road

During the period of 1933-35, the IRA had reached a peak of membership. In Belfast, the Outdoor Relief riots of October 1932 had pushed many men toward joining. Three months later in January 1933, a rail strike broke out in the North. It was to prove prolonged and bitter.
The IRA began to participate in the dispute, as at ground level the more hard-line or militant strikers would have welcomed IRA back-up. However the Unions, especially at a high level in Dublin did not welcome, or perhaps feared such an alliance.
Had such an association been bonded, a devastating blow could have been dealt against the State, especially at the time when the IRA North and South had no focus. No matter how one looks upon its forays, its parades and its battalions, the IRA in these years, and in the subsequent years up to 1938 had no real notion of direction. Only when Sean Russell became C.S. in 1938 did the IRA begin to focus on its role to fight the British. Before this, in the South it was purely agitationery toward Free State aggression,

POLITICAL STRIFE

In January 1933, Fianna Fáil regained power. However, De Valera having used the IRA to gain control of government, now turned on them. He split the movement by offering them pensions and appointments in what was a Twenty Six County government. Those who accepted entered the establishment, and just as in 1922 those who remained loyal to the Republic were outlawed and persecuted. De Valera wrecked the IRA when it had regained its strength following the Civil War. He took from it its political soul in order to pursue 'his' political aims. His actions contributed greatly in cementing partition, and he and his government became the new pro-treaty Free State. He broke the strong standing of the IRA. by enticing republicans into a new Free State Army in order to isolate what he saw as 'Militant Republicanism'.
Frank Aiken, from South Armagh an IRA Commander in the 1920-22 conflict, and formerly C.S. of the IRA would become De Valera's Minister of Defence, and a man most opposed to the IRA, who rejected his new army. Military Tribunals (today's Special Criminal Court) were re-established on 22 August 1933, and in November a new Volunteer Force (today's F.C.A.) was created, all designed to break up the IRA

REPUBLICAN CONGRESS

On 17 March, 1934, the IRA rejected a radical socialist motion put forward by a section of senior figures within the movement. The IRA was a Nationalist movement, the military element was always primary with social and economic questions taking second place. The people of Ireland would determine what social or economic programme would evolve upon the establishment of a Republic.
In Belfast, the majority of the movement saw themselves as 'national republicans', 'Socialism' was a deviation from the classical republican aims and objectives. There was also the added element of the IRA in Belfast being the only defenders of the Catholic community. If they laid down their weapons and joined a 'cross-divide' socialist movement, who would protect the Catholic areas?
Against this background, three leading IRA men (Frank Ryan, George Gilmore and Peadar O'Donnell) resigned following the failure of their 'socialist motion' at the 1934 convention held in St. Stephens Green, Dublin attended by 120 delegates. The Republican Congress met in Athlone over the weekend of April 7 and 8, largely to decide in their own minds in what direction they wished to go, and also to prepare for what they hoped would be their first major congress of September 29 and 30, in Dublin.
Within a month of the Dublin walk out, an IRA courtmartial under Major-General Sean Russell, presiding, with the O.C.s of the North Tipperary, Clonmel and the Fourth Dublin Battalions, tried Commdt. General Michael Price and Staff Captain Peadar O'Donnell in absentia. Charged with a series of insubordinations, both were dismissed with ignominy. The others involved were, George Gilmore, Frank Ryan and Bobby Edwards.
Later that year the Republican Congress held a convention at Rathmines town hall over the weekend of September 29 and 30. It was heavily picketed by demonstrators with religious emblems. Some carried banners saying - "God Save the Pope" and was attended by 186 delegates.
Mick Price and Nora and Roddy Connolly, called for a drive toward a 'Workers Republic', and the formation of a Workers Republican Party, while Peadar O'Donnell, Frank Ryan, George Gilmore and the Edwards brothers, put forward the more moderate sounding 'United Front' of the working class and small farmers resolution. After a long debate which was presided over by William McMullan of Belfast, the latter won by 99 to 84. The party of 'unity' was already fragmented after only six months of being created.
Support for the Congress in the North was minimal. William McMullan was a respected Protestant Socialist Republican, as was another congress member Bill Craig. Both were union men, as was Murtagh Morgan, James Primley and J. Swinderbank. Earlier in the year these men attended the huge gathering (20,000) at Bodenstown held on June 17. A small Congress group had travelled from Belfast and attempted to carry a banner with the wording, "Wolfe Tone Commemoration 1934 - Shankill Road Belfast Branch". The Shankill men were members of the tiny Socialist Party and included Clr. John Campbell, John McConnell, Don Loughran and Peter Hadden. Other Protestant Socialists from the two areas who would later fight and die in Spain were, Bill Henry and Bill Beattie from the Shankill, and Ben Murray from Ballymacarrett.
No unauthorised banners were to be carried and the Congress group were approached by stewards of the East Tipperary Brigade, under Mattie Ryan, who attempted to remove the banner. They failed in the scuffle at the grave yard gates, but the group had to wheel about and return to the assembly field at Sallins, where they were addressed by Peadar O'Donnell, George Gilmore and Seamus McGowan.
The Congress was dealt another blow when two leading female members, Sheila Humphreys and Eithne Coyle resigned in August prior to the September Rathmines convention 'because of its attacks (verbal) upon the IRA. They re-joined Cumann na mBan. That same weekend at the Trade Union Congress in Galway a resolution to support the Congress, saw only 16 out of 170 delegates register support.
The Congress was short lived lasting until about February 1936, when it began to fall apart. It had failed as a political grouping, and had created a further split in the IRA at a time when it least needed it, as De Valera had already split the movement on returning to power.
However, despite its political failings it was the Congress who provided the pool of recruitment for the Irish Volunteers who made their way to fight in the Spanish Civil War. Whether you agree or not with their politics, at least in Spain they found a focus for which to steer their fight. The men that went to Spain were Socialists and Socialist Republicans, by going there they would have been stood down and dismissed by the IRA whose policy dictated that volunteers should remain in Ireland.
But there was no conflict as such in Ireland, there was no focus or no real notion of its role. De Valera was draining its ranks although a majority held firm with the movement.
In Northern Ireland sporadic attacks and raids were carried out upon the R.U.C. in the North in 1936, but there was no concerted offensive strategy by the IRA.

mob increased to nine or ten hundred persons, who continued to shower stones, while some of their number opened fire with revolvers. The R.U.C. took shelter in doorways, and as a last resort the R.U.C. Sergeant ordered his men to fire their revolvers in the air, as they were in imminent danger of being killed. "The mob scattered, but stone throwing was kept up, and there were occasional bursts of revolver firing by the rioters," he went on to say.

The Coroner remarked that *The moral responsibility for the two deaths lay with those who had advised the men to defy the proclamation.* He concluded: *That both men died as a result of bullet wounds, stating that there was insufficient evidence to show by whom the shots were fired.* He added that there was nothing to show that "either of the men had been participating in the riots."

ARRESTED AT FUNERAL

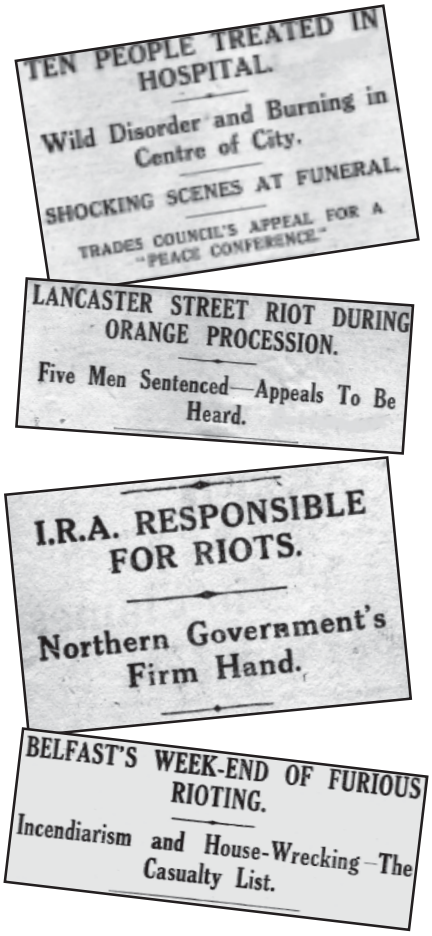
Watched by armed R.U.C. men who lined the route. John Keegan was the first of the two men to be buried with



Aftermath of rioting in Belfast
Top - Lancaster Street
Middle - Leeson Street
Bottom - Grosvenor Place







TEN PEOPLE TREATED IN HOSPITAL.

Wild Disorder and Burning in Centre of City.

SHOCKING SCENES AT FUNERAL.

TRADES COUNCIL'S APPEAL FOR A "PEACE CONFERENCE."

LANCASTER STREET RIOT DURING ORANGE PROCESSION.

Five Men Sentenced—Appeals To Be Heard.

I.R.A. RESPONSIBLE FOR RIOTS.

Northern Government's Firm Hand.

BELFAST'S WEEK-END OF FURIOUS RIOTING.

Incendiarism and House-Wrecking—The Casualty List.

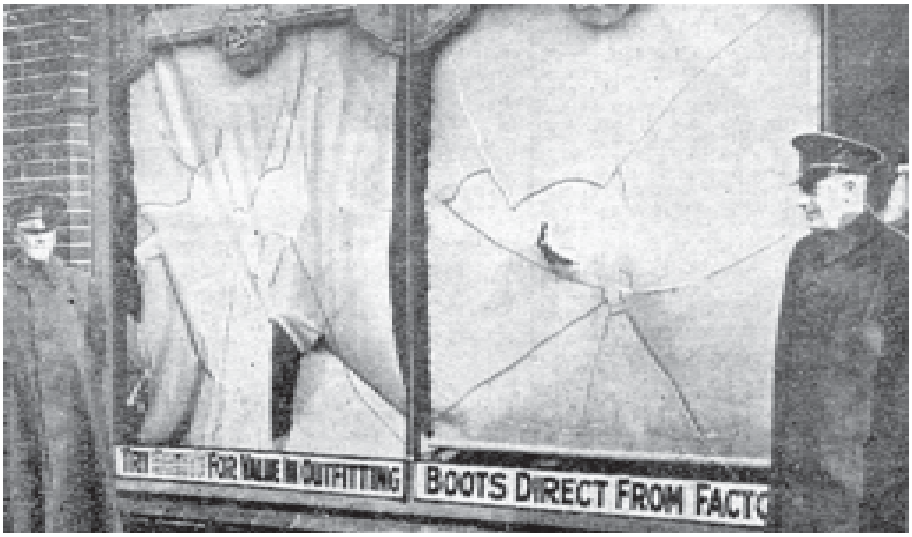
Samuel Baxter's funeral later in the afternoon. His coffin was led by Tom Mann, leader of the National Unemployed Workers Movement, as armoured cars accompanied the cortege amid the thousands who packed the Falls Road.

At the gates of Milltown Cemetery Tom Mann was arrested, apparently because of his communist affiliations, and taken to a nearby R.U.C. barrack. Tom Mann himself described what happened:-

I arrived in Belfast at 6.30am on Friday morning, October 14th, and my first surprise was to see 500 soldiers disembarking and lining up for marching. I had the attention of the 'tecs from the first jump off the boat; they didn't interfere with me in any way during the morning beyond that of following me wherever I went. I joined in the great funeral procession of Comrade Baxter in the afternoon, the other comrade having been buried during the morning. I was by the coffin the whole two and a half hours - the time it took to march through the city, whilst hundreds of thousands lined the sidewalks to the gates of the cemetery. Whilst the funeral ceremony was on, I turned away from the general body to proceed to an important meeting to discuss the arrangements for a big demonstration later in the evening. With the vast crowd unaware of what was happening, I reached the gates of the cemetery; a police detective touched me on the shoulder and said sharply, "You'll come along with us Mr Mann." I said 'What are you the police? "Yes, the police station is only two minutes away. You'll accompany us there and learn what is wanted."

On arrival at the police station I was informed that I must go at once to police headquarters and that a conveyance was waiting to take me. This conveyance turned out to be an armoured car covered by a bird cage arrangement. Suffice it to say, this was packed with police, with their revolvers handy and only just enough room left for me. A police head-quarters I was told by the Chief Superintendent that he was responsible for my arrest and that deportation would follow. He asked 'was it your intention to hold public meetings?' I said it certainly was, and that I was intending to hold a meeting at the Custom House steps on Sunday night. He then said that would be impossible as they could not allow such a gathering. A long talk ensured, but it finished by my being handed an expulsion order to be







TOP & MIDDLE - Two shops attacked by Protestant demonstrators in Sandy Row and Agnes Street 1932
BOTTOM - Patrol of RUC and B-Specials at the junction of North Queen Street and New Lodge Road

operated forthwith. This was at 5.30pm and at 8.30 the same evening I was taken in a car to the boat which left at 9.15.

POLITICAL RIGHTS

The Outdoor Relief riots in Belfast were inevitable because of the Poor Law Guardians rigid attitude towards the poor of the city and because of the Stormont Government's failure to protect the political rights of its parliamentary opposition.

Hardships created by harsh economic laws were imposed by a so-called democratic government that confined its ideas of democracy to the majority of votes recorded without regard to other democratic essentials.

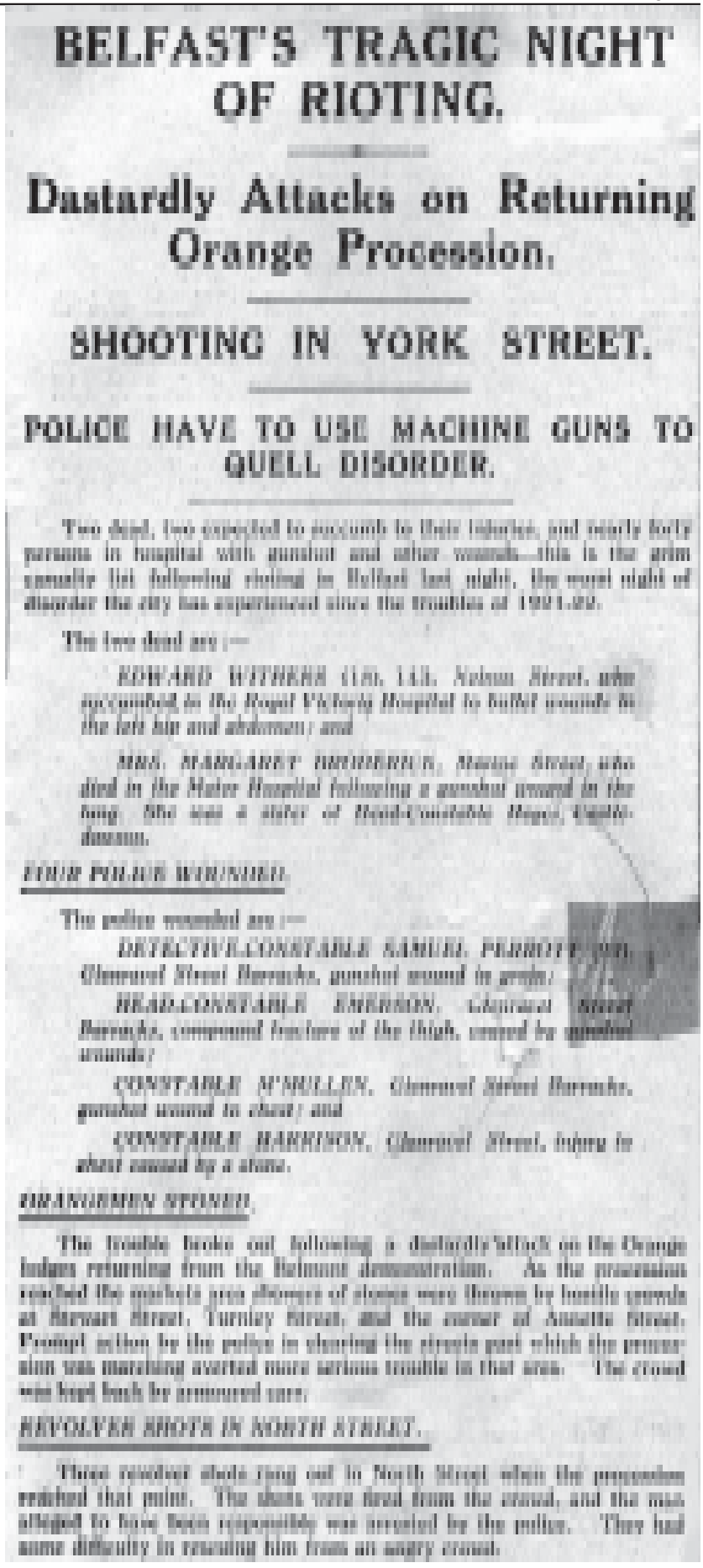
Considerable changes had taken place in the administration of Outdoor Relief in the wake of the riots of 1932. Unionists in Belfast were taken by surprise that rioting against their own institutions could take place with the participation of their own working class supporters. The blame was placed almost entirely on the Poor Law Guardians because of their failure to respond to the Government's suggestions to treat the poor more humanely and to stretch out with their relief facilities to the supporters of the Government amongst the city's destitute.

SECTARIAN RIOTS

By 1935, the Unionist Party had recovered its position in the working class areas, and was again able to influence events in ways that suited their strategy. Sectarian riots returned to inner Belfast and before they were finished, 430 Catholic homes had been burned, and 514 Catholic families (2,241 people) intimidated out of their homes in Protestant areas. Hundreds of people suffered gunshot wounds or injuries and thirteen people were killed.

SHORT LIVED

The partnership of working class standing against the state was short lived, it had been spurred by a common cause of economic hardship and poverty brought to an end by the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939.



BELFAST'S TRAGIC NIGHT OF RIOTING.

Dastardly Attacks on Returning Orange Procession.

SHOOTING IN YORK STREET.

POLICE HAVE TO USE MACHINE GUNS TO QUELL DISORDER.

Two dead, two expected to succumb to their injuries, and nearly forty persons in hospital with gunshot and other wounds—this is the grim casualty list following rioting in Belfast last night, the worst night of disorder the city has experienced since the troubles of 1921-22.

The two dead are :—

EDWARD WITHERS (18), 113, Nelson Street, who succumbed to the Royal Victoria Hospital to bullet wounds in the left hip and abdomen; and

MRS. MARGARET BRODERICK, Marine Street, who died in the Mater Hospital following a gunshot wound in the lung. She was a sister of Head-Constable Hayes, Castledawson.

FOUR POLICE WOUNDED.

The police wounded are :—

DETECTIVE-CONSTABLE SAMUEL PERROTT (23), Glenravel Street Barracks, gunshot wound in groin;

HEAD-CONSTABLE EMERSON, Glenravel Street Barracks, compound fracture of the thigh, caused by gunshot wounds;

CONSTABLE M'MULLEN, Glenravel Street Barracks, gunshot wound in chest; and

CONSTABLE HARRISON, Glenravel Street, injury in chest caused by a stone.

ORANGEMEN STONED.

The trouble broke out following a dastardly attack on the Orange lodges returning from the Belmont demonstration. As the procession reached the markets area showers of stones were thrown by hostile crowds at Stewart Street, Turnley Street, and the corner of Annette Street. Prompt action by the police in clearing the streets past which the procession was marching averted more serious trouble in that area. The crowd was kept back by armoured cars.

REVOLVER SHOTS IN NORTH STREET.

Three revolver shots rang out in North Street when the procession reached that point. The shots were fired from the crowd, and the man alleged to have been responsible was arrested by the police. They had some difficulty in rescuing him from an angry crowd.

THE FORTIES

On the national front within Ireland, De Valera and his Fianna Fáil government introduced a new constitution to An Dáil on March 10th, 1937, which would become law by 1938. Within that constitution would be the clause defining Ireland "as the whole island of Ireland, its islands and its territorial seas." The terms, Saorstát Éireann/Irish Free State were gone, being replaced by Éire/Ireland.

As the year came to an end, there was little sense of accomplishment or even of direction for a shrunken Republican movement. De Valera engrossed in a growing confidence began to release republican prisoners from the Curragh Glasshouse.

BOMBING CAMPAIGN

While DeValera revealed in his new policies, his self-confidence in thinking the IRA was obsolete was misplaced. It still held tight a skeletal organisation throughout the thirty two counties of Ireland and also in the principal cities of England and Scotland. It was also dotted over the United States. It still retained a vigour and muscle power to make itself felt. The IRA was planning a bombing campaign in England, but it lacked proper strategy. They were not concerned with the material damage done to Britain, but more the psychological effect brought about by random attacks. There was to be no firm direction, and target selection was left to the discretion of local commanders. The campaign was designed to give the IRA a focus, and it did, but it left internal discord within G.H.Q. in relation to direction. In reality, the English campaign had, in the words of Moss Twomey "a level of weakness and inexperience." Events on the ground, although largely insignificant by the standard of the 1919-1923 conflict, were enough to lay the preparations of internment by the two Governments, north and south, as the IRA held its second 1938 convention at St. Stephen's Green West in Dublin to reconfirm the intention to attack targets in England.

INTERNMENT

On Thursday, 22nd December, 1938, dawn raids by the RUC spearheaded internment. Known Republican homes were targeted throughout Belfast and 34 men were arrested and interned in Crumlin Road Jail. In the course of the next few years they would be joined by hundreds more, interned in both the Crumlin Road and Derry Jails, and also for a period on the Prison ship *Alrawdah*, which was moored off Killyleagh on Strangford Lough.

The December raid in Belfast had taken its toll. Prior to the round-up, all known members of the Belfast Battalion were ordered not to sleep at home. The alert continued for three weeks until an order came from G.H.Q. in Dublin that they all return home again. In response to this many of the battalion staff and company officers found themselves arrested that night of December 22nd.

The following day those who had escaped the round up met in Belfast to review the situation and to re-establish the battalion staff. Success for the IRA came, two months later, when, on the 24th of February 1940, they carried out a successful raid on the armoury at Ballykinlar Camp in Co. Down. They also created a new Auxiliary section to compensate arrests caused by internment.

THE HAYES AFFAIR

The same month, the Belfast Command having carefully reviewed a series of major mishaps actively affecting the IRA with disastrous results to the organisation and personnel over a period of two years, unanimously came to the conclusion that all the problems lay at the door of Stephen Hayes, acting Chief of Staff.

Hayes was not a suitable candidate for this position. he had been thrown in at the deep end by Sean Russell (who had gone to America) because he was one of the 'old school' (War of independence). he lacked strength of character, and the IRA in the forties was not the force it was in the twenties. Desperate times need strong but acute leadership and Hayes could not provide that. Perhaps what Belfast should also have taken into consideration was that in the south, and especially Dublin, IRA security was weak and working in a different environment.

Many of those watching and hunting them were former IRA men themselves. They knew the tactics and layout of the city. Within the Special Branch, De Valera had created the 'Broy Harriers' under the direction of Colonel 'Ned' Broy. The Harriers were all former IRA men and showed no compassion to the new pall bearers of the organisation.

As it was, Hayes was 'arrested' by three senior Belfast IRA men in Dublin on 30th June, 1941, and northern mistrust of a southern leadership came to an end. A northern influence was stamped on the IRA G.H.Q., something that would remain throughout the forties campaign.

The Hayes affair was a disaster, he escaped prolong custody, and those responsible ended up in Portlaoise (the Bastille of Ireland) being denied political status which was afforded to their colleagues in the Curragh. Locked in solitary confinement, refusing to wear prison clothes, they resorted to the 'blanket.'

The Hayes affair caused much harm within the IRA. A lengthy statement of guilt to the charge of treason given by Hayes to his captors (which he later retracted as an effort to buy himself time) was released by the IRA, and this caused damage to morale among the rank and file. There was also some resentment shown toward the northern leadership for their action. To the day he died in December, 1974, Hayes proclaimed his innocence and swore that he never entered into any conspiracy with the Free State Government against the IRA. No action was taken against him, but at the same time, the IRA never officially issued a statement clearing him of the charges. The arrests continued after Hayes' removal, and the IRA was fighting with its back to the wall.

EMERGENCY LEGISLATION AND CENSORSHIP

At the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, DeValera introduced legislation to provide his Government with emergency powers to keep Éire out of the war. But despite his strong belief in a United Ireland, he had sympathy with Britain in its fight against the Nazis. under a veil of censorship, he facilitated the Allies and exercised 'a strong benevolent neutrality policy.' Also introduced were 'special courts'. These were military courts set up in the form of tribunal with the power of a death sentence if needed. Although pro-


Belfast Prison, Crumlin Road

claiming neutrality, the country was being run under war time conditions. it was under these conditions that the most horrific experiences of political prisoners occurred. Under the Emergency Power (Amendment) Act of 1940 some 500 were interned in Éire. People could be arrested for 'refusing to answer questions' and for 'possessing illegal radios.' Censorship covered up the brutality and conditions suffered by republican prisoners in Portlaoise, Arbour Hill, Mountjoy and the Curragh. There were executions and hangings, he (De Valera) even brought from England a British hangman to carry out the deed.

Most internees were released from the Curragh by November, 1944, and it should be stated that men could ensure their release from internment (north or south) at any time by making a signed declaration not to engage in any action, or associate in any action against the State. Very few 'signed out' and if they did it was for a good valid reason, or personal problems. Families were deprived of husbands and sons who were the natural 'bread winner.' Despite social and domestic problems, the majority of the men remained firm to their principles. It was not until a change of Government in Dublin in 1948, that the new Minister for justice, general Sean MacEoin, who himself had been sentenced to death by the British in 1921, released the political prisoners.

IRA ACTIONS

The IRA in the North, and in particular Belfast, was justifiably on a different level to their counterparts in the South. They saw themselves as a National movement driven by military conviction. The Unionist state with its built in sectarian system was no place to create an economic or social policy. But in reality the IRA of the period was nothing in comparison to what it was to become in 1970. They remained bonded to the military structures of the twenties, but their numbers were small and support from within the communities that they operated from was at a low level. An exception to this would have been seen in the large sympathic out-cry created at the hanging in Belfast Jail of a nineteen year old IRA member, Tom Williams, on the 2nd of September, 1942. The young Clonard man was one of six sentenced to death following a shoot out with RUC members on Easter Sunday, 1942.

A huge campaign was launched to have the men reprieved, and Irish/ American opinion was instrumental in ensuring five of the six were reprived. But, Tom Williams in taking responsibility went to his death, as protests were organised throughout Ireland. Even Dublin came to a standstill on the morning of his execution. It exposed the hypocrisy of the De Valera regime, as no such protests were allowed when he executed IRA men in the south.

IRA actions were sporadic and raids were carried out when and where possible, but internment north and south had restricted their numbers, and key figures were either in jail of internment camps. However, despite this, the young hardened men who persisted in keeping the organisation alive did not lack dedication or resolve. There was a strong northern input that kept the structures of the IRA intact.

ESCAPES

Organising escapes is something the IRA tend to master and the forties period was no exception. Belfast (Crumlin Road) Jail witnessed two in 1941 and 1943, and Derry Jail was the scene of a tunnel escape which saw a mass break-out of twenty one internees in one of the successes the IRA had during the period. The operation had taken 4 months to complete, during which time the men had to sink a fifteen foot vertical shaft before burrowing a tunnel eighty feet long. The majority were rearrested over the border by the Free State and interned in the Curragh, although eight were ordered to 'sign out' and return north to help remake the Belfast staff. Prior to the Derry jail-break, the IRA's Chief of Staff, Hugh McAteer, along with Jimmy Steele, Ned Maguire and Paddy Donnelly from Portadown, had made a successful escape from Belfast Jail on the 15th January, 1943. A £3,000 reward was put on the men's heads, while the biggest security operation Belfast had seen since 1921 got underway. The large cordon was to no avail as the men found safe houses in North Queen Street and Short Strand.

LAST IRA CONVENTION

Hugh McAteer's escape prompted him to organise an IRA convention in mid February in the Short Strand area to assess strategy, reorganise the G.H.Q. and discuss planning of the impending Derry escape. The key figures of the IRA came together, hardened young men holding senior posts, and who now engaged in the art of survival. When the meeting ended that day, unknown to those present, it would be the last of its size and nature for the period, as events would dictate the IRA was entering the last phrase of its fight during the war years.

The Derry escape was the last big success for the period, the net was tightening all the time throughout Ireland. Arrests were stepped up in April 1943 and in May Jimmy Steele was recaptured in Amcomri Street. Hugh McAteer lasted until November, being recaptured at Crocus Street after leaving St. Paul's Church on the Falls Road.

By 1945 it was all over, ironically as the world looked at the coming to an end of the Second World War, republican internees began to filter home upon release north and south.

THE FIFTIES AND SIXTIES

When the IRA internees walked free from jails they found their organisation fragmented by politics and policy of direction. There was a drive to launch North again and under the command of Tony Magan, a series of arms raids were authorised against British barracks mainly in the North. The most successful of these was carried out in June 1954 when an IRA unit mounted a daring raid on a British Army barracks in Armagh, which brought them 250 rifles, 37 sub machine guns, nine Bren guns and forty training rifles. The next raid on an army barracks at Omagh ended in a fire fight and the capture of eight of the unit, but the mere fact that the IRA were in action again was enough to maintain morale and attract recruits.

The IRA were encouraged by the Westminister elections of that year, when two Republican candidates, Thomas Mitchell and Philip Clarke, were elected. Indeed Sinn Fein attracted over 50 per cent of the Catholic votes (152,310). Both men, however, were then in the Crumlin Road Jail in Belfast, serving sentences for their part in a raid on the barracks at Omagh. In addition, the loss of several of their best men and the diversion of resources in efforts to spring them from jail, along with a crackdown on the organisation by the police in the South, meant that the mounting of the main IRA offensive was necessarily delayed, and it was not until December 1956 that it began.

Below - The scene outside a shop in Caledonian Road, London, in August 1955. Armed police burst in and discovered a hoard of ammunition seized by the IRA from a military base in Berkshire.
Bottom - Linaskea Police Barracks after an IRA bombing in December 1956





The overall plan was to direct attacks against the R.U.C. and the B-Specials. It was hoped this would draw the British Army into the conflict and thus produce an atmosphere of British repression, which might trigger off a massive popular reaction on both sides of the border. All this was to be achieved by means of 12 flying columns, which would launch simultaneous attacks on customs and R.U.C. posts in the border area. There were, however, three main drawbacks: **firstly**, there was a force consisting of around 200 activists; **secondly**, most of these men were unfamiliar with the terrain over which they would be operating, and **thirdly** the population of the areas were either apathetic or hostile, although there was also many Republican supporters.

These began on the 11th of December, but in reality, the targets did not warrent a proper Northern offensive, if indeed such a thing was even within their means.

Two days later the attacks resumed with more success, with attacks against R.U.C. barracks, firstly at Lisnaskea, and later at Derrylin and Roslea. These attacks were carried out under the command of Dubliner Seán Garland whose second-in-command was a young schoolteacher from Co. Cork, Daithi O'Connell. (Conaill). Both men later became prominent, Garland remaining with the left wing socialist Republican movement, while O'Conaill would move forward with the Provisionals who became the main IRA

This became the set pattern of what became known as the 'border campaign'.

Attacks continued into January 1957, but arrests began in the Free State including that of the current Chief of Staff Seán Cronin, and by the end of January, several members of GHQ were in jail. This caused a split in the Finn Gael led Coalition party, when Clann na Phoblachta, led by Seán MacBride, forced a vote of no confidence in John Costello the Finn Gael leader over his treatment of the I.R.A.

INTERNMENT AGAIN

In the ensuing general election, Sinn Fein won four seats to the Dail, but it once again placed a new and more formidable opponent in power.

De Valera had proved in the past that he was capable of unflinching toughness against Republicans. He ordered wholesale internment.

Stormont had introduced internment just ten days after the campaign began, and although Belfast played no part in this campaign with the exception of moving some material down South, Belfast Republicans found themselves re-interned in Crumlin Road jail. In total, 256 were interned in the North, of whom around 50 were Belfast men.

The combination of arrests, lack of funds and equipment and poor organisation began to erode the high morale of the early part of the campaign, especially as it became clear that the political effects of the conflict were far less dramatic than the IRA had expected.

Their opponents, the R.U.C. and the B. Specials, had a comprehensive knowledge of the social geography of their areas, which enabled them to identify Republican sympathisers and shut down the supply of possible safe houses. Many IRA teams were forced to operate out of dark and freezing tunnel-hides cut into inhospitable hillsides. A makeshift first-aid post was established underground on the Monaghan border. In one incident, four IRA men were killed while in the process of preparing a gelignite mine in a cottage on the County Louth border in November 1958.

CEASEFIRE

The ability and the will to carry on operations began to run down, and on the evening of 26th February, 1962, the IRA Army Council announced, "All arms and other material have been dumped and all full-time active service volunteers have been withdrawn". A ceasefire was declared. In all there had been between 500-600 incidents ranging from road craterings to full scale attacks. Over one million pounds worth of damage to property had been caused, little in comparison of what was to come.

POLICICAL PHILOSOPHY

The Republican movement began to reassess itself, and most agreed with the necessity to develop an attractive political philosophy. Two of the leading dissenters who went on to found the Provisionals, Ruairi Ó'Bradaigh the last IRA Chief of Staff during the border campaign and Daithi Ó'Connaill, both enthusiastically supported the injection of some socialism into the moribund philosophy of the movement. But the argument that was to develop through the decade and ultimately to split the movement did not concern the desirability of developing a new political formula.



An armed RUC member guards a police station in 1957. The poster is for information on the killing of Sergeant Arthur Ovens who was killed by an IRA landmine.

It concerned the nature of the recipe and the proportions of the ingredients it contained. It was generally agreed that the IRA needed to develop a coherent political philosophy that had some relevance to modern day thinking, but moving it toward a Marxist analysis was to prove the wrong type of revision.

The Goulding leadership steered by the intellectual thinking of Roy Johnston moved the Republican movement into Socialist Republicanism, a goal sought by the Republican congress thirty years earlier.

Perhaps it was a trend of the sixties, but it took little account of the historical realities of the North and this was the crucial principle that ended up paralysing them when sectarian violence broke out in October 1968.

CAPITAL PLANNING

By 1964 training had more or less ceased, Goulding believed, 'the day of the Thompson' was over. In Belfast the IRA was in a state of confusion. The O.C. of the city Billy McKee had resigned in a petty row that had developed over the carrying of the Tricolour during a commemoration into Milltown. He was replaced by fellow Falls Road man, Billy McMillan who was more in line with the Goulding policy of political thinking. Thus the IRA went into decline. The leadership grew steadily more remote from the rank and file in most of the rest of the country.

Under Goulding, communications became tenuous, as the leadership sat in the capital planning their policy of social and economic agitation. The movement's energies were now poured into poor housing conditions, and the rights of the fishermen.

The Goulding leadership steered by the intellectual thinking of Roy Johnston moved the Republican movement into Socialist Republicanism, a goal sought by the Republican congress thirty years earlier.

FOR GOD AND ULSTER

In 1965, Terence O'Neill, recognising a need to improve economic ties with his closest neighbour, invited Seán Lemass the Taoiseach to Stormont for cordial talks. What would be considered a normal move in any other state, was viewed as a near sign of treachery in the North, especially in the eyes of the firey Free Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Ian Paisley. Paisley instilled a messianic devotion in his followers, who saw him as a protector of the Protestant faith, the one man who would stand against all that was the enemy and 'the threat' to the stability of Protestant Ulster. He had already began to rally his followers, making an impact when he threatened to lead a crowd into Divis Street to remove the Irish flag from Sinn Feín's election office the previous year. Faced with this threat, and 'to avoid serious public disturbance,' the RUC moved its men in to remove the 'offending flag.' The result was the worst disturbances Belfast had seen since 1935 when fierce rioting broke out around Divis Street, and the RUC needed armoured cars and water canons to quell the fighting.

PROTEST

Paisley saw himself as voicing the strong resentment of the Ulster people, and stood with his supporters outside the Stormont Parliament during the Lemass visit declaring 'No Mass! No Lemass!, Down with the Lundy's," and "IRA Murderer Welcomed at Stormont!"

Terence O'Neill had taken a brave stand, not only had he broken with tradition and Unionist policy since partition to have no dealings with the Dublin Government until it recognised Northern Ireland's right to exist, but he also went ahead with hosting the visit without the prior knowledge of his Cabinet colleagues. Amid this tense atmosphere, sinister developments were unfolding involving Loyalists who were prepared to replace the placards with guns to counter "what they perceived as a growing Republican threat." In reality, the Republican movement was moving away from armed struggle.

However, with the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising and the Battle of the Somme on the horizon, there were those who felt the landmark dates would 'and could' be used to resurrect the threat of street violence.

RECRUITS

The fiftieth anniversary of the Somme would provide no better opportunity to resurrect the UVF. This began in a very small way when four young men in Belfast's Shankill Road became the first recruits of the new UVF. The move to recruit the men was allegedly instigated by two Unionist politicians. They joined others and together with around a group of thirty plus men they were sworn in at a farm outside Pomeroy in Co. Tyrone.

Some months later at the beginning of 1966 another organisation, the Ulster Protestant Volunteers, was created across the North as a group which could be mobilised quickly should the IRA strike. The UPV had within its ranks members of the B-Specials who were already armed with .45 Webleys and Sten Guns. The UPV was not a secret organisation and was not formed in military structure, but within its ranks, secret cells were to be set up and armed. These cells would consist mainly of B-Specials, who could be activated immediately using a code word.

Despite Republicans blowing up Nelson's stature in Dublin, a month before Easter (which caused RUC and Specials to place a round the clock guard on Carson's statue at Stormont) the Easter commemorations throughout Ireland and in particular Belfast passed off peacefully. Large crowds were seen at the rallies, and in Belfast were 10,000 turned out at Milltown, Jimmy Steele, Jim Sullivan and Leo Martin presided on the platform. At Coalisland in Tyrone, 20,000 attended were the main speaker was Ruairí Ó Brádaigh, and in Derry Seán Keenan addressed a large crowd in Celtic Park.

THE KILLINGS BEGIN

Despite the feared IRA uprising not materialising, the new small UVF grouping based on the Shankill Road, began a series of petrol bomb attacks on Saturday, 7th May, 1966, under the guise of attacking the IRA (a strategy that would develop on a large scale for the next 30 years.)

The attacks ranged from throwing petrol bombs at two Catholic schools on the Falls Road, a parochial hall in Glenavy, to attacks on two houses in the Shankill area. One of the houses petrol bombed was that of 77 year old widow, Matilda Gould whose home at Upper Charleville Street was next door to a Catholic run off licence. For this reason, the house was mistaken for a Catholic and daubed with sectarian slogans. On the night of May 7th, as Ms Gould was asleep in bed, a petrol bomb was thrown through her window, sending the house up in flames. Although the widow, along with her son Samuel, were rescued from the house, she died seven weeks later in hospital as a result of her injuries. Although not the first death in historical terms, this woman became the first victim of the recent conflict.

STATEMENT

A fortnight after the attack on Ms Gould, a Captain William Johnston (a fictitious name) issued the following statement:- ***From this day, we declare war against the IRA and its splinter groups. Known IRA men will be***

below - Brown Square Barracks where the UVF gang were charged with the murders.



executed mercilessly and without hesitation. We solemnly warn the authorities to make no more speeches of appeasement. We are heavily armed Protestants dedicated to this cause.

The Shankill UVF decided to target Belfast IRA man Leo Martin and sent four men in a car to drive around the Clonard area of the Falls Road. Failing to locate their intended target they shot an innocent Catholic, John Scullion who they encountered making his way home worst-the-wear with drink. John Scullion was in the wrong place at the wrong time and he became the second victim of the Shankill UVF. A third killing followed late on Saturday night of June 27th, 1966. That night, three young Catholic barmen - Peter Ward, Richard Leppington and Liam Doyle, left their workplace at the International Hotel in the city centre along with their manager Andrew Kelly to go for a late night drink. The decision for the drink was made after another barman had been dropped off home. Richard Leppington who was only 16 and a non drinker stayed with the company. Andy Kelly knew a late drink could be got at the Malvern Arms in Malvern Street off the Shankill Road, and on knocking the door around 1am, the publician who knew him as he had been before, admitted the four men. In those days Catholics going to a bar in a Protestant area or vis-versa, would not have been unusual.

WARD KILLING

The bar was busy that night, probably as a result of Orange marches earlier that day. The men stayed in their own company. unknown to them the four UVF members who had recently been involved in sectarian attacks, decided to target the four having identified them as Catholics. The barmen left the Malvern Arms around 2am being quickly followed by the UVF, who began shooting immediately. Peter Ward was hit first and was dead before he hit the ground. Despite constant and indiscriminate shooting, Liam Doyle and Andy Kelly were also shot but survived. Doyle had been hit in the leg and thigh, and Kelly was seriously wounded.

Richard Leppington managed to run and was taken into a house until the RUC arrived. Peter Ward was buried within two days of his killing, but even before his funeral cortege left St Paul's Church for burial in Milltown Cemetery, the UVF killers had been quickly rounded up and arrested. The RUC had them in custody at Brown Square Barracks within 24 hours of the killings, and four men were charged with murder, while four others faced charges of being in possession of explosive substances and ammunition. Terence O'Neill moved quickly and declared the UVF an unlawful organisation. Three local men Gusty Spence, Hugh McClean and Robert Williamson, all of whom had served in the British Forces, were found guilty of murdering Peter Ward and sentenced to twenty years imprisonment.

BOMBINGS

The UPV in the meantime was putting its energy into opposing the up and coming Civil Rights movement, as O'Neill was being put under pressure to resign from within his own party. Both the UPV and the UVF decided to play their part in bringing about O'Neill's downfall by attacking



Above - Loyalist bomb attack on the Silent Valley Reservoir.

Belfast's electric and water supplies.

The first attack was planned for Sunday 30th March, 1969 the eve of the critical meeting of the Ulster Unionist Council at which a vote of confidence was being sought for O'Neill. The target was Castlereagh electricity substation and an explosion knocked it out just after midnight, blackening out most of Belfast.

The following day, having survived the vote of confidence O'Neill ironically mobilised a thousand B-Specials to guard sensitive installations. It was no surprise that the explosions continued with blame falling on the IRA. On 4th April , a bomb wrecked Belfast's main water supply pipe at Dunadry, Co. Antrim. On the 20th April another explosion destroyed the pipeline at the Silent valley reservoir which carried water to much of Belfast and North Down. Four days later, on the 24th April, there was an attack on the pipeline carrying water supplies from Lough Neagh to Belfast, and two days after that, on 26th April, a further explosion wrecked another of Belfast's main water supply pipes.

The bombings achieved their result and Terence O'Neill resigned on the 30th April, 1969, having just managed to get his Parliamentary party to accept the principle of 'one man, one vote' for local government elections, which had been the main demand of the Civil Rights movement.

Later in the year one of those involved in the bombings, Thomas McDowell, was killed trying to blow up a hydroelectric power plant near Ballyshannon in County Donegal. McDowell was a member of both the UPV and UVF. Five other men were later arrested in connection with the bombings.

CIVIL RIGHTS - STATE WRONGS

The closing years of the 1960's will be remembered in history as a period 'when the road to democracy opened up'. The march for civil rights and equality had come to the fore in America among the black population, especially in the Southern states. Disillusionment with the Vietnam war began to over-spill as television images brought the war into the American living room. In Paris and London CND and anti-war rallies turned into clashes with the police as another generation took its views and policy for a better world onto the streets. Rightly or wrongly, the sixties was making its mark as a period of change, and as that decade came to a close it was a change that would leave society facing a rapidly changing world.

BITTER LEGACY

In the tiny state of Northern Ireland, the drive for civil rights came very much to the fore in 1968, causing an insecure Stormont Government to over-react to such an extent that an overspill of resentment and frustration resulted in rioting on a scale never before experienced. Suddenly not only the British media, but the International media began to focus on this small corner of Ireland and the ferocity of street violence which was sweeping this little known part of the United Kingdom. No-one could have known then just what lay ahead, the sowing of the whirlwind had begun. Within two years the words 'Belfast' 'Derry' and 'killing' would be on the lips of journalists across Europe and the rest of the world.

The North had exploded and a quarter of a century of conflict was on the horizon as a bitter legacy of history emerged with a vengeance.

EDUCATIONAL CHANGES

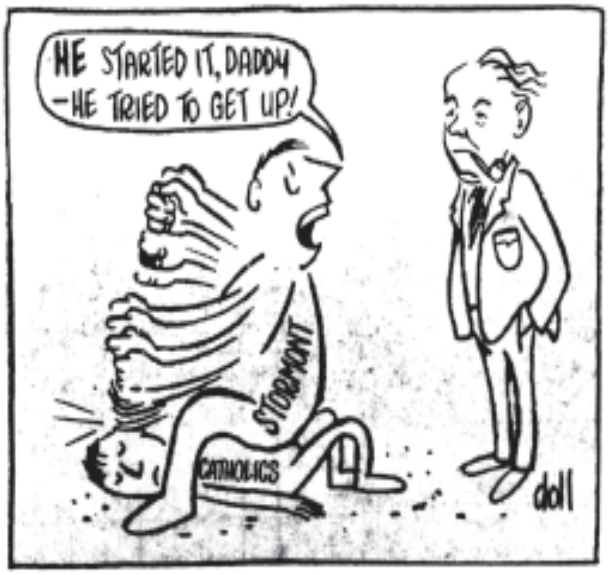
The early sixties began to show signs that blatant economic discrimination against Catholics were softening. A reasonably-sized Catholic middle class had started to form, the result, to a large extent, of the British 1948 Education Act which established a grants system and opened up higher education to the working class. By the mid-sixties the children of Catholic publicans and bookmakers who could be funded by their parents through the non grant aided extra years of study, went to university, many becoming teachers and doctors.

CIVIL RIGHTS

The problem with the O'Neill government of the sixties was that although it promoted liberalism that raised Catholic expectations, it dodged real reforms.

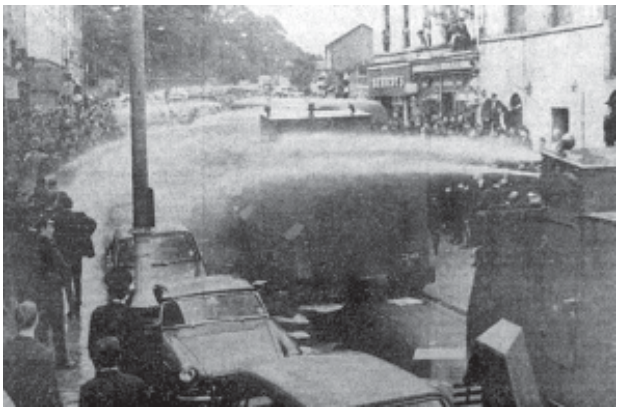
Terence O'Neill himself fostered liberalism, but he led a Unionist party that would not stand for change and he therefore reduced himself to trying to improve relations between North and South and in the North itself between the two communities. His inability to translate his desires into actual and concrete reform increased Catholic frustration. A climate of dissatisfaction was created and powerful currents began to run through the community resulting in the emergence of the Civil Rights movement.

The Northern Civil Rights Association (NICRA) sprang up as a result of the campaign by several small parties to obtain civil rights in housing, jobs and to demand a single non transferable vote and the redrawing of electoral boundaries. The NICRA program also was to call for the repeal of the Specials



Below - Police (two without caps) struggle with demonstrators in Derry's Duke Street
Bottom - A water cannon being used against demonstrators in the same area





Powers Act and the disbandment of the B.Specials. Their first major rally took place in August 1968, when 2,500 people walked from the Nationalist town of Coalisland to Dungannon in Co. Tyrone.

Two months later on 5th October, 1968 another rally was called for Derry. Despite being banned by the Stormont Government, 2,000 gathered on the Protestant Waterside at Duke Street and began to try and cross the River Foyle over the Craigavon Bridge to the city centre and the Nationalist Bogside.
The protesters were met by a large presence of R.U.C. men who charged into the marchers wielding batons, injuring 77 people. At the next march in Derry, 15,000 turned out on 15th November and the R.U.C. was careful to adopt a low profile. At the end of the month, 8,000 turned out in Armagh as a mass movement began to take shape. The events of 5th October had for the first time brought the North to the attention of not only Britain but also to other countries across Europe, as shocking scenes of police violence were televised, springing the Labour government at Westminster into insisting that O'Neill institute reforms without delay. He announced reforms in housing and the voting system, much to the anger of extreme Loyalists. Within his own party, he met opposition from his minister of Home Affairs, Bill Craig.
However, in December 1968 Terence O'Neill went on television, warning that Ulster now stood at a crossroads and that unless reform was instituted, violence and disruption would inevitable follow.





Encouraged by the way in which his speech went down with the people, O'Neill now dismissed Craig from his cabinet and received as overwhelming vote of confidence from his party. To his credit, he did try, but events would overtake him, as the North was about to plunge into all out conflict in the ghettos and enclaves of Belfast and Derry.

In the same month as Terence O'Neill was appealing to the people of the North for support in his bid to institute reforms, the Goulding leadership was also being appealed to at the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis for help in protecting civil rights marchers. However, Goulding felt a strong reluctance to do anything that smacked a reversion of the militaristic policies of the past, despite pressure from within by Seán MacStiofain and the O'Bradaigh brothers, Seán and Ruairi.

Top - Steel helmeted police move in against demonstrators in Derry.
Left - A demonstrator is arrested

RETURN TO CONFLICT

Despite the reforms, a more radical group grew out of the NICRA, called the Peoples Democracy', who continued to organise marches.
In January 1969 they decided to organise a march from Belfast to Derry over a three day period which involved several hundred people. As the march would have to pass through Protestant areas between Dungiven and Derry's Waterside, the NICRA, and the newly formed Derry Citizens Defence Committee which was led by Republican Seán Keenan, were against it, but it went ahead on New Years day.
The following day it was persuaded to stop and spend the night in the Gaelic Hall of the Catholic townland of Brackaghreilly near the town of Maghera in South Derry. The hall was strategically placed at a crossroads, with good views in all directions. With the marchers settled in, after dark groups of men, several of whom were armed set up road blocks at the

approaches to the town land. They were the local company of the IRA whose O.C. had been told of an impending attack upon the marchers and, acting on his own initiative, he persuaded the leaders to halt in the town land. The next day the marchers who were mostly young students moved on across the nationalist Glenshane Pass area resting again at Claudy, again under guard from a handful of veteran IRA men.

But beyond the Catholic town of Dungiven on the approach to Derry, the 500 young marchers were now in Protestant territory and despite being flanked by R.U.C. men, they were savagely attacked in a prelaid ambush at Burntollet Bridge on the morning of 4th January 1969. A mob of 200 armed with iron bars and nail-studded coshes, many of whom were B-Specials, descended on the unarmed and unprotected march which, now bruised, stumbled into Derry. The R.U.C. had failed to protect the march and that night they ran amok into the Bogside assaulting people and causing malicious damage to homes. Innocent people were batoned and abused with sectarian abuse. The systematic violence that had been done to the Peoples Democracy and the cynical role of the R.U.C. hardened attitudes of many of the large section of ordinary civil rights supporters who had been opposed to the march going ahead.

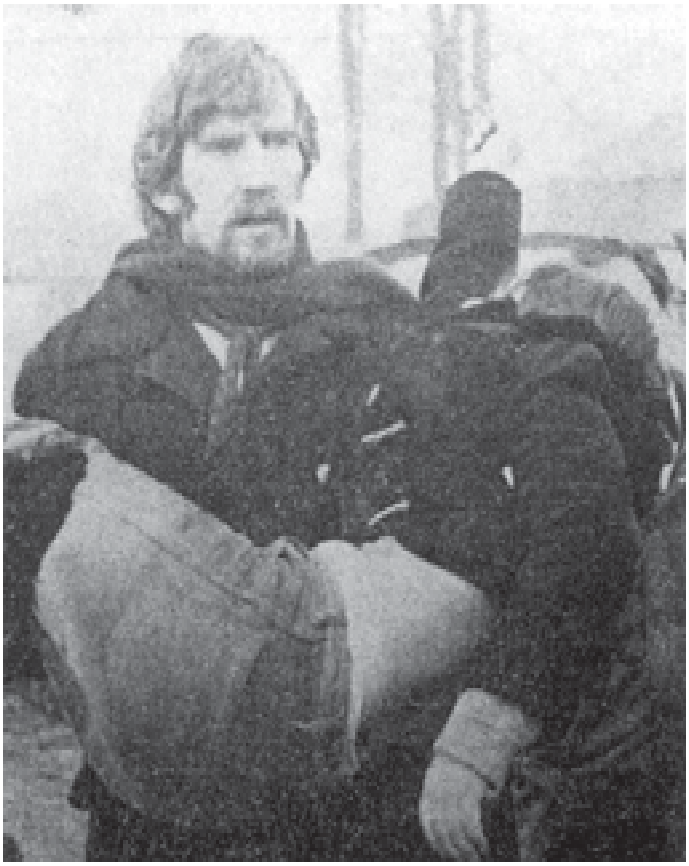
SERIOUS RIOTING

With a hardening attitude coming from right-wing Unionists against the O'Neill reforms, events on the streets became worse. Again in Derry on 19th April, 1969 serious rioting broke out in the Bogside, with large sections of the R.U.C. turning into a sectarian mob attacking people, even as they sat in their homes. If the 5th October, 1968 is hailed as the launch date of the recent conflict, then the 19th April, 1969 was certainly the defining day of what lay ahead and marked the beginning of the end for the Stormont regime. April was also the month that the symbol of liberalism within Unionism, Terence O'Neill was forced to resign as the hawks within his Cabinet refused to back his policy of reforms. His most bitter opponent was Brian Faulkner, the man who would later introduce Internment. O'Neill's cousin, Chichester-Clark, took over as the North's spiralled toward disaster.

In July of that year, the remains of James McCormick and Peter Barnes were returned to Ireland from Birmingham for re-burial. Republicans gathered at Mullingar, and Jimmy Steele gave an oration in which he launched into a vivid denunciation of the movement's politically accented approach, claiming that the leadership was more or less accepting the existence of the six-county state. His speech is regarded by many as that which gave birth to the Provisional I.R.A.

The traditionalists had friends on the Army Council notably Ruairi Ó'Bradaigh, Seán MacStiofain, and Daithi Ó'Connaill and as the situation in the North began to cause disillusionment with the leadership, prominent Republicans began to talk about a Northern split. IRA units and individuals had stopped expecting any encouragement from Dublin and prepared to fight. In Derry, the Defence Committee was already established with Seán Keenan and his handful of IRA men. With the 'marching season' in full swing, the stage was set for a decisive showdown between them and the forces of the State. Preparations began to establish a defence of the Bogside, with a wide representation now making up the organising committee. When the

Below Left - A female marcher is injured during a Loyalist attack on a Civil Rights parade at Burntollet. Below Right - A demonstrator is attacked by police





expected trouble came on the 12th August, 1969 it climaxed into a running battle between the Bogside and the R.U.C. which lasted two days and nights, and did not end until British troops deployed into Derry.

BARRICADES

When the rioting started in Waterloo Place on that fateful Tuesday afternoon of the 12th August, the R.U.C. began to push the crowds up William Street into the Bogside. But as they did, the Catholics fell back on to prepared defenses and as the R.U.C. advanced into the narrow streets around the Bogside in armoured vehicles and on foot, they were brought to a standstill by a sustained barrage of petrol bombs, bottles and bricks. Across the East Bank down to Little James Street, the R.U.C. encountered barricades, as they battled up toward the main Rossville Street were the flats provided ideal height to launch petrol bomb attacks down on the R.U.C. lines.

A radio station set up in the Creggan estate kept up morale, as the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch broadcast from Dublin saying that the South "would not stand idly by". The Irish Government in Dublin contacted London asking that a United Nations Peace-keeping Force be sent in to Derry as Stormont was no longer in control. The following day, the R.U.C. was exhausted, lolling in the doorways of the narrow streets and dazed with fatigue. Their commanders decided to deploy the B-Specials and withdraw the R.U.C. who despite being reinforced from other areas, had failed to break down the defence structure of the Bogside. It became impregnable to the R.U.C.

Right - The headlines say it all.
Middle Right - Bernadette Devlin address a Civil Rights protest at Guildhall Square
Bottom Right - Police run from a Loyalist attack in Irish Street
Bottom Left - County Inspector Harry Ballie and Councillor James Doherty pictured at St. Colulmb's Well, Derry

ARRIVAL OF BRITISH TROOPS

By the the second day of the siege of the Bogside - Westminister knew that troops were inevitable. The Ulster commander, General Freeland, had a senior officer in civilian clothes on the streets of Derry; he reported that the R.U.C. could not possibly contain the Bogside for more than thirty-six hours. When they retreated, he said, there would be considerable blood-letting between the communities.

Quietly, Freeland, based on this report, sent 300 troops to the Sea Eagle naval base on the Waterside close to Craigavon bridge, ten minutes drive from the centre of Derry. It was these troops, men from the First Battalion, the Prince of Wales' Own, who were deployed into Waterloo Place at tea-time on Thursday, 14th August, 1969. History was in the making


THE IRISH PRESS

Derry explodes in riots

INSIDE TODAY

Casualties are heavy

Paisleyites break siege

Minister hears rival views

Lynch invites







as these young British soldiers marked the beginning of what was to become a quarter of a century of British Army deployment in the state of Northern Ireland.

Seán Keenan and the small group of Republicans, who had to a large extent been responsible for organising the defenses of the Bogside, looked on in dismay at the arrival of British, and not the hoped for Southern troops, who had also been deployed to Fort Dunree in Co. Donegal. But Jack Lynch would not move them across the border, and the Nationalist population welcomed the British troops which in a way was a relief as they expected to have engage in a struggle unarmed against armed B-Specials biting at the tooth to get into the Bogside. Had that happened, Lynch may have had no alternative but to move troops in, ill-prepared as they were.

BELFAST EXPLODES

The situation in Belfast in August 1969 was tense and on the verge of boiling over on to the streets. Catholics were convinced that they were about to become victims of another Protestant pogrom, whilst the Protestants believed they were on the eve of a Republican insurrection. This was not helped by the R.U.C. intelligence who backed the insurrection plot, leading to a decision to deploy Shorland armoured cars. These Shorlands were brought into service in 1968 by the Minister of Home Affairs, Bill Craig. They were supposed to be used for border patrols and were mounted with Browning 0.30-inch medium machine-guns. These have a range of almost two-and-a half miles, and fire six to eight bursts, never single shots. The fact that the R.U.C. was prepared to use these in the huddled streets around the Lower Falls, shows the conviction that dictated the disastrous police response over the next forty-eight hours.

In reality, any idea of an uprising in Belfast by the IRA in August 1969 was no more than an obsession of fear by Stormont. The IRA had no more than 80 full time members, backed up by about 200 auxiliaries. Even these were not involved in any military activity. Despite the events in Derry earlier in the year, the IRA leadership under McMillan made little attempt to get the depleted battalion into any military posture. The tension in Belfast developed into skirmishes between the Catholics and the R.U.C., firstly in Ardoyne and then in the Springfield and Divis area.

However, the Divis area escalated into rioting on Wednesday 13th August and an R.U.C. Humber armoured car came under rifle and grenade attack at Leeson Street. It was this attack that convinced the R.U.C., that the IRA was taking the lead in an insurrection, and the Shorlands were armed up and deployed from Hasting Street R.U.C. Barracks out into Divis Street with inexperienced crews manning them. There was no IRA planning, manpower, or weapons sufficient enough for such a coup. The IRA's armoury had been stripped by the socialist left leadership and consisted of two Thompsons, a sten gun, one Lee-Enfield rifle and nine handguns. Other sources put this estimate even lower.

That night Shorlands roared up Divis Street as barricades went up and petrol bombs were prepared. The following day, Stormont mobilized the B-Specials and the news was flashed that afternoon. To the Catholics this armed Protestant militia ment only one thing, aggressive conflict. A large crowd of Catholics assembled around the Divis Street area and Hastings Street barracks, and the R.U.C. deployed their armoured cars sending the Catholics running into Dover and Percy Streets, mixed streets that led on to the Shankill. Protestant mobs had already gathered behind a line of B-Specials and seeing the Catholics they surged forward down Dover and Percy Street, petrol bombing Catholic homes as they advanced spearheaded by the Specials. A running battle began as the Catholics pushed them back. The





Left - A blazing car on the Shankill Road.
Below - Troops move in on rioters on the Shankill Road

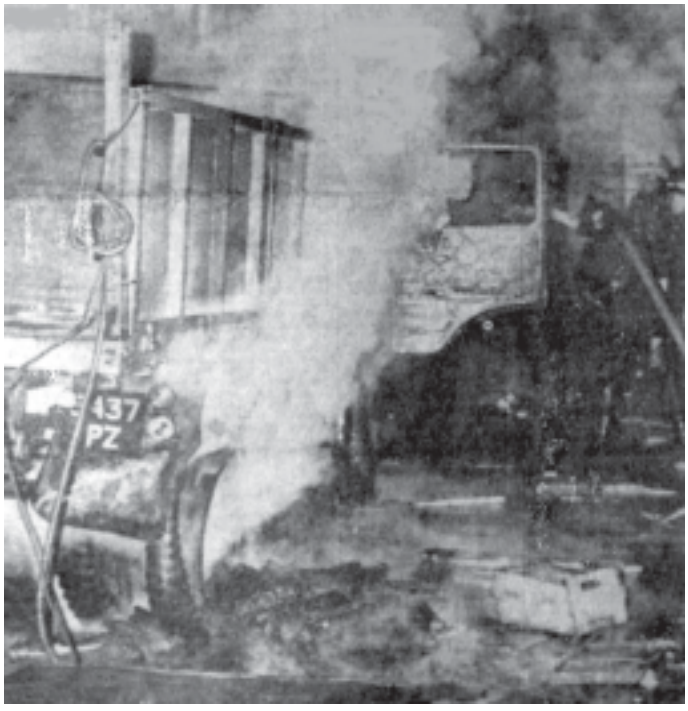


R.U.C. began an advance on the Catholics from Divis Street only to be attacked themselves from the Divis Flats complex adjacent to Dover Street.
The rioting stretched the length of Divis Street amid the interceting streets that led to the Shankill. Conway Street and Northumberland Street were ablaze as the Catholic stronghold left of Divis Street, the Pound Loney was barricaded and crowds surged out into Divis Street with petrol bombs to defend their area.
To the North East of Divis, Cupar Street had also erupted as hundreds of rioters battled with each other amid burning buildings. The R.U.C. launched charges against the Catholics. During one charge, a man emerged from the crowd, dropped on one knee and opened fire with a pistol. In Conway Street, Catholic homes were ablaze as Protestant mobs and B-Specials ran amok. Here to a small group of IRA men opened fire with pistols as the R.U.C. attempted to drive back the Catholics. Back down at Percy Street, it was planned to set up a defensive position in St. Comgall's school which provided a commanding field of fire and also blocked the way into St. Peter's Cathedral. At midnight the Protestants and the R.U.C. broke out into Divis Street from Dover Street only to be fired on from Gilford Street. One Protestant was killed by a .38 revolver, and three R.U.C. men wounded.
The R.U.C. responded with their Shorland's sweeping tracer bullets along Divis Street toward the flats. Forensic evidence later established that a large area of the buildings had been sprayed with bullets: at least thirteen flats were damaged. On his balcony, Trooper McCabe, home on leave from the British Army was killed instantly.

Four high-velocity bullets pierced two walls before entering the room of nine year old Patrick Rooney killing him in bed. With a lull in the fighting, Catholic families in Dover Street, Percy Street and Beverley Street, struggled to recover whatever possessions they could, some even being helped by B-Specials and weighed down made their way to shelter across Divis Street. The R.U.C. Shorland crews were taking a breather, smoking and talking to Protestant civilians. The Shorlands had scattered the Catholics back into the flats complex and the streets of the Loney.

Right - A police man throws a brick at rioters in Derry.
Below Right - A burning barricade across Hooker Street in North Belfast.
Below Left - Troops move up Derry's William Street









Rioters attack police in William Street



The 'Battle of the Bogside.'



Derry M.P. Ivan Cooper receives medical attention for a head wound



British troops in the Bogside



Rioters attack police in the Bogside



Police use CS Gas in the Bogside



Remains of a barricade in Derry



John Hume pleads with the police to withdraw



A bomb explodes in Derry



RUC men take a drink during a lull in the fighting



Demonstrators confront troops in the Bogside



Rioting in the Bogside

St. COMGALL'S SCHOOL

In the early hours of Friday, 15th August, following a lull, a 200 strong Protestant mob advanced down the darkness of Percy Street from the Shankill end toward Divis Street. The warm dark night was illuminated with the red flames from the burning terrace houses, the smell of burning crackling ashes mixed with the smoke filled air. The mob carried petrol bombs and they began to hurl them at the masionets beside St. Comgall's school. A group of IRA men replied in kind from the school, which itself became a target. If the school burned, a direct line would be open into the Loney and St. Peter's. Earlier a small group of IRA members had been positioned in the school but had since left.

During the turmoil of the rioting, former IRA men who had left the movement over the Goulding policies reported back. They were mostly, but not all 'forties men', veterans of the traditionalist mould. They had warned against disarming and running down the military aspect of the movement and now they were in the fore of doing what they could with so little to do it.

It was now well after 2am at Percy Street and the situation was becoming bad, gunfire now began to hit down toward St. Comgall's as the young defenders held on with fading hope. But that hope became one of confidence when seven armed men moved in from the back of the school. One carried a Thompson and he positioned himself above the front door on the roof. Others took up position on the ground floor of the school with a .303 rifle and pistols. The defence party included Billy McKee , Albert Price, Seamus Twomey and Liam Burke.

The small group of vetran defenders began directing fire across into Percy Street as the mob scattered. Gunfire hit the school and bullets showered the ground in front of the building. However the defenders returning fire took its toll on the attackers, despite the fact that armed Specials and R.U.C. men were deployed at the top end of Percy Street on the Shankill side and Specials may have also been firing down toward the school.

For an hour and a half the veterans kept up a stream of fire, only leaving when their ammunition was spent. Eight Protestants were shot and wounded and the defence action saved the area from even greater destruction.

To the North of the city in Ardoyne a similar pattern of attack had developed with Protestant crowds attempting to invade into Catholic streets.

From behind barricades, the Catholics launched petrol bombs as an R.U.C. armoured Humber smashed through a barricade followed by a mob who set fire to Catholic shops, pubs and homes. A group of ex-Servicemen opened fire with the little weapons they had and the R.U.C. replied with an fusillade of revolver and sub-machine gun fire. Two innocent Catholics died, one of whom was in his Herbert Street home at the time.

At dawn on Friday, 15th August, the Catholic residents in the streets abutting the Protestant areas began evacuating their homes. Windows were boarded up and people piled their possessions into cars and lorries, some of which had been hi-jacked for the purpose of evacuating families, many up to the new housing estates of West Belfast, later to become the battle grounds in the war against the British Army.

The flow of events now began to submerge both the British Army and the politicians. The tragic results, twelve hours later, was that the British Army went into Belfast too late to protect the Catholics from attack, too

Below - Police stone rioters in the Bogside






The Irish News

NORTH'S WEEK-END OF TURMOIL

9 City Post Offices hit by fire bombs

Massive protest demonstrations against police

early to be prepared and too sparsely to be effective.

When British troops went into Derry on Thursday the 14th, the Northern Commander, General Freeland, realised that they would have to cover Belfast too. But although Whitehall had known from midday on Wednesday the 13th that troops would be going into the North, 'no reinforcements were sent to Freeland until more than forty-eight hours afterwards'. This stemmed from a decision on the 14th by the British P.M., Harold Wilson and his Home Secretary, James Callaghan, that the troops should only go to Derry.

They were still trying to minimise the British military involvement and Westminister was not keen in getting drawn into the political arena of Northern Ireland. Stormont was also concerned that the arrival of British Troops would mean Westminister taking control. As events were to prove, lack of understanding of the politically created Northern state by the British, allowed Stormont to remain intact, and worst still put British troops under the control of the Northern regime.

On the morning of Friday, 15th August, 1969, Freeland only had three companies of the newly arrived First Battalion, the Royal Regiment of Wales and two companies of the garrison battalion, the Second Queen's Regiment, to cover Belfast. It was originally planned not to send troops in until the Saturday to allow them time to be strengthened and deployed. But at an early morning meeting on the Friday morning, the R.U.C. Commissioner told the Stormont Home Affairs Minister, Robert Porter that the R.U.C. could not cope with another night's rioting. The Stormont Cabinet met at noon and decided to ask London for troops immediately. At the same time in London, Callaghan faced a press briefing, with the morning papers full of stories and photographs of the burning of Belfast. Facing hostile questions, he pre-empted Stormont and reassured the press - 'Gentlemen', he announced, 'the troops are going into Belfast'.

BOMBAY STREET BURNS

A few hours later at 3pm that Friday, British troops returned to the streets of Belfast and deployed along Divis Street from Hasting Street up toward Conway Street. Their arrival however failed to prevent the burning of Bombay Street for they misunderstood the sectarian geography of West Belfast and ignored the Clonard having no knowledge what-so-ever of the environment they had been thrust into.

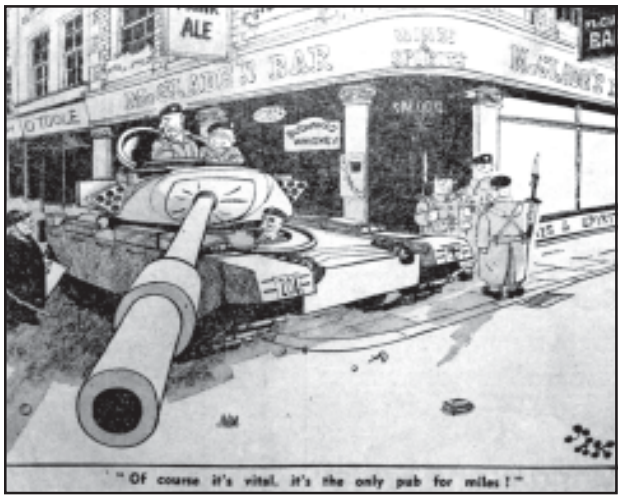
At the same time as these soldiers took up position, a handful of veterans again led by Billy McKee with only a few weapons of low calibre firepower were doing what they could to protect the area around Clonard monastery. To the north and east, the Clonard is bordered by the semi-circle of Cupar Street, to the south by the Falls Road and to the west by the Springfield Road. Cupar Street was the borderline and once again, as in the 1920 pogrom, the Catholic families of the







Top Right - Police charge rioters in Waterloo Place
Right - Police move as a petrol bomb explodes beside them
Below Right - British troops arrive



street were forced to flee their homes by mobs of Protestants.
By late afternoon, most of Bombay Street was ablaze. Gerard McAuley, a 15 year old member of Na Fianna Eireann was helping Catholics evacuate their homes when he was shot and killed by a Protestant sniper in Waterville Street. That Friday night, a reinforcement battalion, the Third Light Infantry, landed at R.A.F. Aldergrove ten mile outside the city and drove straight to positions along the Crumlin Road.

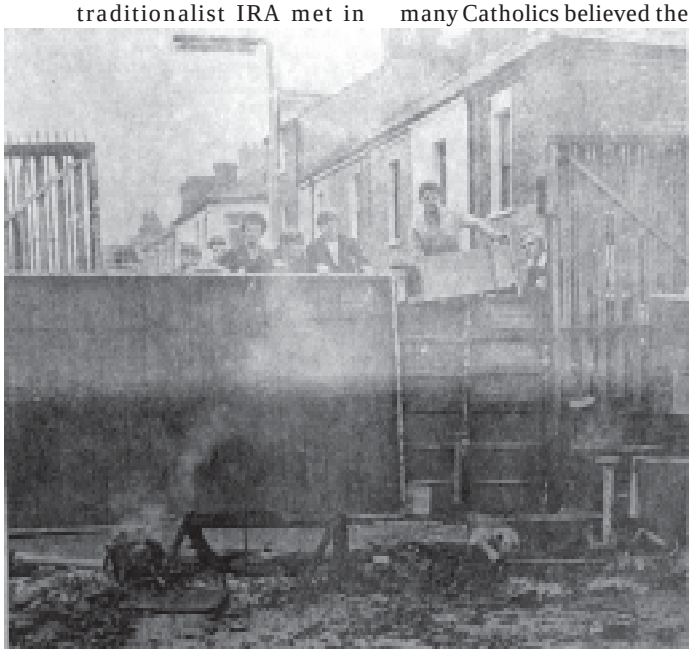
DISSENT AND SPLIT

As the British troops encamped into R.U.C. barracks, schools, church halls, mills and factories, a dissident group of the traditionalist IRA met in Andersonstown and decided to issue an ultimatum to the pro-Goulding IRA leadership that unless Goulding and three of his key supporters on the IRA G.H.Q. staff in Dublin resigned, they would break away and go it alone. The vast majority of the IRA in Belfast would support a break with Dublin.

Running parallel with these political moves, was the establishment of a defence committee for the Nationalist areas of Belfast which was led by Jim Sullivan. He began entering into negotiations with the British Army over the barricades that still blocked Nationalist streets and were manned by members of the Defence committees. In reality, many Catholics believed the British Army would protect them, they were not to know that Stormont could and would influence the future role of these troops who it appeared at the time would save the Catholics from further attacks.
The B-Specials would be stood down, and the R.U.C. had for the time been withdrawn out of Catholic areas. However, no matter what line Jim Sullivan took, General Freeland moved on the 5th September to begin removing barricades. Freeland now had 6,000 troops at his disposal. The IRA was busy searching North and South for weapons. An initial small number was brought into Belfast in August. These had been unearthed from dumps scattered throughout the South and consisted of a few Thompsons and Sten sub-machine guns, some .303 rifles and the rest were .22s and revolvers.
This was followed by occasional cargoes of rifles and ammunition which would buy some time until sufficient funds could be put in place to purchase 'shipments' of modern weapons from the U.S.A. The first of these was to arrive a year later, when a huge consignment of weapons mostly Armalites an ideal weapon for close quarter fighting, equipped the fast growing Provisional IRA.
The problem before this was that the guns in their armoury were of W.W. II vintage. These were heavy and slow firing and at times prone to jamming. The men they were going to were young 'volunteers' with inadequate military training, as a full and proper training programme had yet to be introduced.
The weapons were M1 Carbines, Garand semi-automatic rifles, bolt-action Springfields and Lee-Enfields. Finding ammunition posed a formidable difficulty. Almost every weapon was of a different calibre. The Thompson took a .45 bullet, the M1s and Garands .300 and the Lee-Enfield .303.

THE END OF THE B-SPECIALS

In December 1969, Britain sent a representative to Stormont to set up office and ensure Stormont addressed Catholic grievances. The hated 'B men', the armed militia of the State, was abolished and the R.U.C. was to disarm while local government was to reform and fair employment practices introduced.
As Christmas 1969 approached, the date when many soldiers had expected to return home, their job well done, there was an earthquake in the republican camp, although it hardly seemed like it at the time. The split in the IRA



Left - A barricade goes across Cupar Street.
Below - Conway Street





which had become more and more inevitable as the months rolled by, finally happened. Ironically it came about not over the failure of the IRA to defend nationalists in August 1969 but over the principle that had sustained the IRA for the previous fifty years: 'abstentionism', the Republican Movement's cardinal article of faith. Although republicans could stand in elections to the parliaments at Westminster, Stormont and Dublin, no successful candidate ever took his or her seat since to do so would be to recognise the legitimacy of these institutions. The IRA's whole existence and self-styled legitimacy rested on its refusal to recognise these parliaments which, to republicans, had no moral or legal authority. It claimed that, as the Army of the Irish Republic, it owed its allegiance to the all-Ireland parliament, Dail Eireann, established after Sinn Fein's sweeping victories in the general election of 1918. Abstentionism was the moral certainty on which the IRA had drawn for over a half a century. But to the Goulding wing of the IRA, abstentionism was part of the baggage of history which had become an impediment to the socialist revolution the IRA was now committed to undertake through the political process. This, of necessity, entailed taking seats in Leinster House, the seat of the Dublin parliament.

IRA SPLIT

The issue came to a head at an Extraordinary IRA Army Convention held in an isolated country village in the heart of the 26 Counties. Sean MacStiofáin, as Director of Intelligence, knew what was coming and had a car and driver standing by to take him to Belfast once the result was known, not that there was any doubt what that result would be.

There were two main items on the Convention's agenda. First, a motion that the IRA should enter a 'National Liberation Front' in alliance with 'the radical left'. Second, that the policy of parliamentary abstentionism should be ended. Technically, the latter was a matter for Sinn Fein, but Sinn Fein could not have acted without the IRA first giving its agreement. The same principle applied to the second split in 1986. The meeting was packed with Goulding's supporters. There was no representation from Belfast as by then Belfast had broken with Dublin and other delegations who might have been expected to support MacStiofáin had not, for whatever reason, arrived.

There were allegations that dissident delegates had been prevented from getting to the Convention - some were reported to have been left at a pick-up point - and that delegations known to be favourable to the leadership line were given extra representation. MacStiofáin tried, unsuccessfully, to get the second motion debated first before delegates' heads started to spin.

The National Liberation Front motion was passed. On the second motion Sean MacStiofáin spoke last, urging the delegates to vote against it. But they did not. The outcome was a foregone conclusion. Sean recalls the historic decision.

The Convention was packed. The atmosphere was very tense, unlike any Convention I can remember. The motion was steam-rollered through. I remember saying that this was the end of the IRA as we knew it.

He left at the end of the proceedings and gathered his supporters around him. Before he did so, Cathal









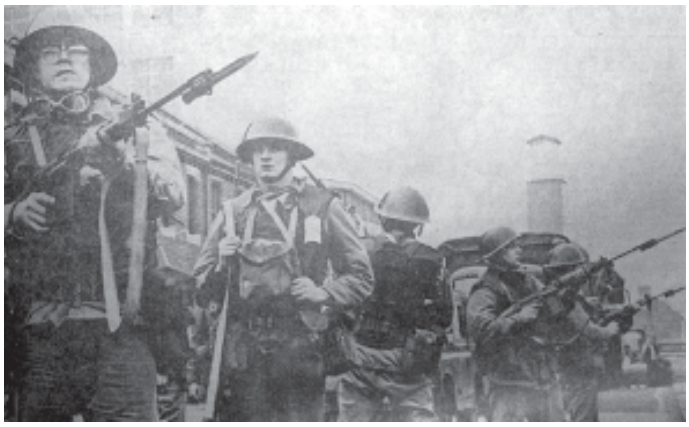
Top Right - British troops at Divis Street
Right - The burnt out remains of the Edenderry Inn on the Crumlin Road
Below Right - The Conway Street Mill in ruins.
Below - A Loyalist waves a flag in Cupar Street as British troops march up behind him.

Goulding approached without hostility and asked Sean MacStiofáin to have a talk before he decided to do anything. The conversation was academic as the split was irrevocable. The decision was made to contact those IRA units who had not been represented at the Convention and to canvass support throughout all thirty-two counties of Ireland. Sean's priority was to go to Belfast as soon as possible and break the news to the dissidents who had not attended the Convention, having already broken with Dublin following their 'coup'. He walked out to his car and told his driver to head north.

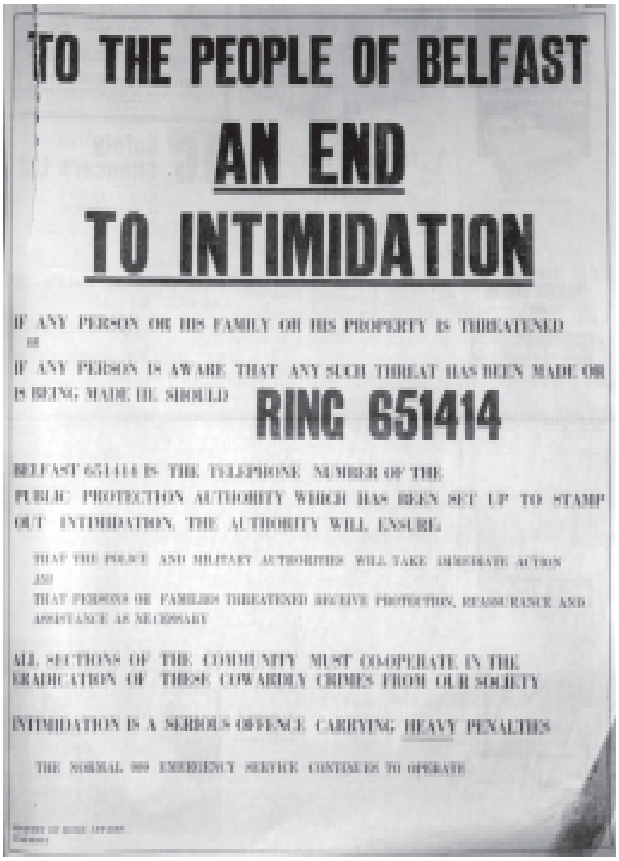
Veterans like Billy McKee were appaled at the Convention's rejection of abstentionism. In his eyes, it was a betrayal of all the IRA stood for.

As far as MacStiofáin was concerned, those who had split from Goulding had no standing in the IRA's constitution without ratification by an Army Convention. In Belfast, he addressed a meeting of twenty IRA men and a special Convention was called. He could count on the support of nine of the thirteen IRA units in the city. Billy McMillen and Jim Sullivan were not amongst his supporters.

The Convention elected a new provisional Army Executive which in turn elected a new provisional IRA leadership with Seán MacStiofáin as the provisional Chief of Staff. They became known as the 'Provisionals' because that is precisely what they were. Those who stayed with Cathal Goulding became known as the 'Officials' - or







the National Liberation Front (NLF) - to those who had walked out of the meeting or already split with Goulding.

The new 'Provisional' leadership agreed to hold another Army Convention within the next six to twelve months to place the organisation on a proper constitutional footing. In fact, the Convention met nine months later, in Sept. 1970, and ratified the change so that technically the 'Provisionals' ceased to exist. Nevertheless, the name stuck.

On 28 December 1969, the Provisional Army Council issued its first public statement in which it said that the split was:

". . . the logical outcome of an obsession in recent years with parliamentary politics, with the consequent undermining of the basic military role of the Irish Republican Army. The failure to provide the maximum defence possible of our people in Belfast and other parts of the Six Counties against the forces of British Imperialism last August is ample evidence of this neglect. "

The statement said it all. But the parting of the ways was not complete until Sinn Fein had been through the same process, which happened a fortnight later. There was even less doubt as to the outcome this time.

The difference was that now the divisions were out in the open as Sinn Fein, unlike the IRA held its meeting in public, or at least in a public place. On 11 January 1970, Sinn Fein delegates met for their Ard Fheis (annual conference) at the Intercontinental Hotel in Dublin. Delegates knew that the decision had already been made but Seán MacStiofáin and Ruairí Ó'Brádaigh, the President of Sinn Fein still tried to swing

Left - British troops arrive in Belfast

the argument their way. Ruairí Ó'Brádaigh recalls: *The atmosphere was highly charged. The press were excluded and the television cameras were mounted outside the doors. It was a very difficult time. According to the Sinn Fein constitution, a two-thirds majority was necessary. The 'Officials' did not secure that majority but pressed their luck and put forward a resolution giving recognition to the 'Official' Army Council. Whereupon Seán MacStiofáin countered by going to another microphone and announcing that he was giving his allegiance to the 'Provisional' Army Council. So there he had the crux. It was obvious that with their simple but not two-thirds majority, they would push this through and this would compromise those of us who disagreed. So I jumped up and said it was time to leave and we had to force our way out. In fact, we had to fight our way out. An attempt was made by the 'Officials' to overturn the cameras outside. It was all very, very tense and very highly charged. So we made our way to another venue and elected a caretaker Sinn Fein Executive (Ard Chomhairle) to carry on and reorganise the country.* The historic split was complete. The 'Provos' were born.

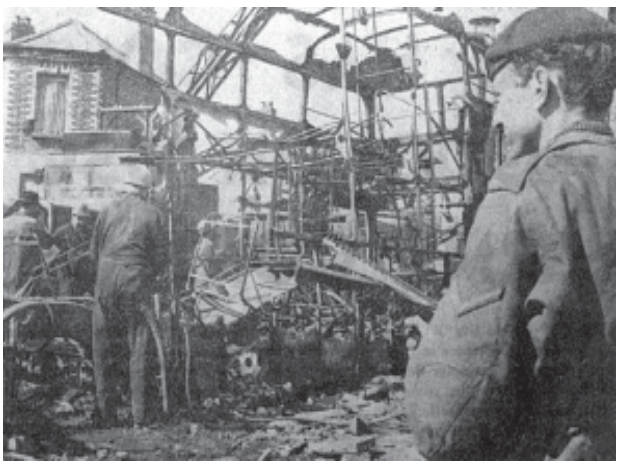
Right - Burnt out homes on the Crumlin Road
Middle Right - Troops in Gilford Street
Bottom Right - Troops in Dover Street
Below Left - British troops on the Falls Road
Bottom Left - Troops remove barricades from Hooker Street













The Shankill Road after a night of rioting

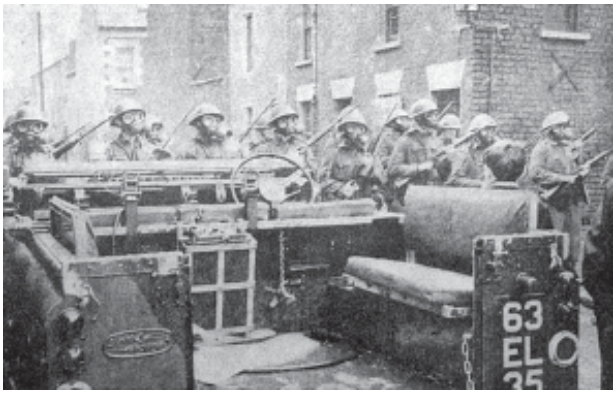


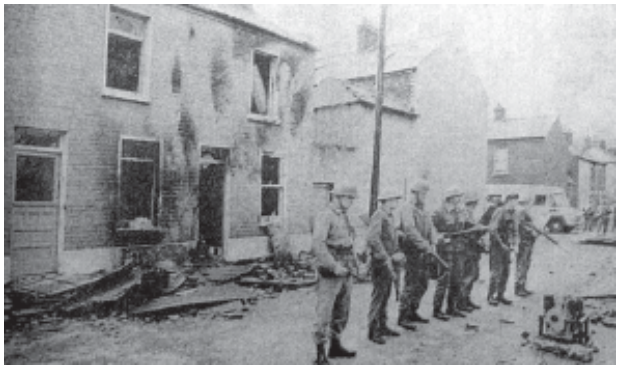
Police Constable Victor Arbuckle moments after being shot by Loyalist gunmen on the Shankill Road.



Above & Below - British troops on the Woodstock Road









British troops in Coates Street in the Millfield area





Troops in armoured cars equipped with 80mm guns arrive on the Shankill Road.



Protestant residents of Sandy Row block the road protesting against 'British Army Brutality.'



Troops guard the church of the Rev. Ian Paisley durings its opening



Bottom Left & Right - Gerry Fitt guides RUC Chief Constable Sir Arthur Young around Unity Flats



Above and Below- British troops kitted out with new riot gear.





Troops move in against demonstrators in Derry's Foyle Road



THOSE WHO DIED

The mid 1960's in Northern Ireland was a turbulent period. Loyalist's were extremely paranoid of the IRA which, at this time, was totally inactive..

Loyalist's were responsible for all the main events of the recent conflict. These include the first killings which occured three years before Northern Ireland erupted into a bloody civil war.

JOHN SCULLION
AGED 28
11th June, 1966
John was shot by a tiny gang which called itself the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) near his home in the Clonard area of West Belfast and died two weeks later. At first the hospital and police believed that he had been stabbed, however, a local girl was positive that she had heard gunshots and the matter was investigated further. On the 22nd of June his body was exhumed from Milltown cemetery and an autopsy proved that he had in fact been shot.



PETER WARD
AGED 18
26th June, 1966
Peter worked as a barman in the International Hotel in Belfast city centre. After work on the above date Peter (pictured above right) went to a late bar in the Loyalist's Shankill area with some friends. When leaving he was shot dead by the UVF.

MATILDA GOULD
AGED 77
27th June, 1966
Ms Gould died on the above date after her home was attacked by firebombs on the 7th of May. Once again this attack was carried out by the UVF who believed that the woman was a Catholic.



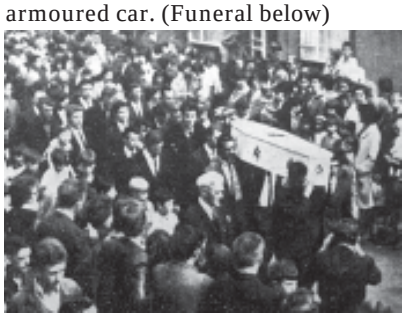
FRANCIS McCLOSKEY
AGED 67
14th July, 1969
Found badly injured after an RUC baton charge at Dungiven. He was buried with full Republican honours (Above).

SAMUEL DEVENNEY
AGED 42
16th July, 1969
Beaten to death by the RUC at his home in William Street, Derry. At Mr Devenney (pictured below) was standing at his front door watching rioting when the police launched a baton charge.



HERBERT ROY
AGED 26
14th August, 1969
Mr Roy was killed by Republican gunfire at the corner of Dover Street during intense rioting between the Catholic Falls and Protestant Shankill areas.

PATRICK ROONEY
AGED 9
14th August, 1969
Patrick had been lying in his bed in Divis Flats when an RUC bullet came through the wall and killed him. The shot came from a Browning high powered machine gun mounted on an armoured car. (Funeral below)

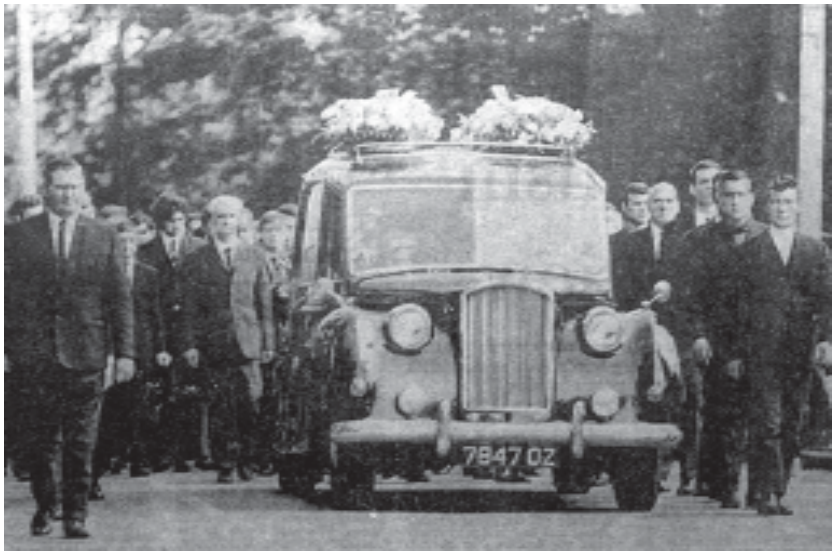


SAMUEL McLARNON
AGED 27
14th August, 1969
Shot dead in the front room of his home in Ardoyne by the RUC who were shooting into the street.

MICHAEL LYNCH
AGED 28
14th August, 1969
Shot dead by the RUC in Ardoyne.

JOHN GALLAGHER
AGED 30
14th August, 1969
Shot dead by the B-Specials at a Civil Rights march in Armagh.

HUGH McCABE
AGED 20
15th August, 1969
Hugh was a British soldier who had returned to his Divis Flats home on leave. The RUC had opened fire on the Divis complex and Hugh was shot dead as he attempted to drag an injured man to safety. His funeral was attended by military officers. This was the first soldier to die in the conflict.



Funeral of Trooper McCabe

GERALD McAULEY
AGED 15
15th August, 1969
Shot dead by a Loyalist gunman in the Clonard area of West Belfast. A member of the IRA's youth wing he was the first Republican activist to die in the conflict.

DAVID LINTON
AGED 48
16th August, 1969
Shot dead by Republicans during rioting between Catholic's and Protestant's at Palmer Street.

JACK TODD
AGED 23
8th September, 1969
Mr Todd had been a member of a Protestant vigilante group manning a barricade in Alloa Street in the Manor Street area. He was approached by a Republican gunman armed with a shotgun who pointed the weapon at his head and fired from a few feet away.

WILLIAM KING
AGED 49
25th September, 1969
Kicked to death by a Catholic group during a confrontation between rival groups in Derry Troops stood by and watched as they had no instructions to intervene in such incidents.

VICTOR ARBUCKLE
AGED 29
12th October, 1969
Shot dead by the UVF during rioting in the Loyalist Shankill area. He was the first RUC man to die in the conflict.



Funeral ofGeorge Dickie makes its way down the Shankill Road

GEORGE DICKIE
AGED 25
12th October, 1969
Shot dead by troopsduring rioting on the Loyalist Shankill Road.

HERBERT HAWE
AGED 32
12th October, 1969
Shot dead by the army during rioting on the Loyalist Shankill Road.

THOMAS McDOWELL
AGED 45
20th October, 1969
Mr McDowell, a member of the Loyalist UVF was found badly injured after a bomb he was planting exploded. He had been attempting to destroy the power station at Ballyshannon in Co. Donegall.



Patrick Corry

LIAM McPARLAND
AGED 43
6th November, 1969
The first member of the IRA to die in this conflict Mr McParland was struck by a car on the M1 motorway while on IRA 'active service.'

PATRICK CORRY
AGED 61
1st December, 1969
Mr Corry was badly injured after being attacked by the RUC in the Nationalist Unity Flats area the previous August. He had underwent two brain operations and had been in a coma four weeks before his death.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

In issue number 2 of THE TROUBLES we will cover the period January 1970 - June 1970. The split within the IRA after the events of August 1969, saw the newly formed Provisionals begin to structure itself in the early months of 1970, while at the same time introduce a programme of arming and training young recruits.

The first sign of hostile relations between British troops and the Nationalist community came in March 1970 when serious rioting broke out in Ballymurphy. By the time the marching season began to reach its climax in June, the Provisionals waited for a decisive opportunity when it could prove itself to the Nationalist community. It did not have long to wait, when on the 27th June, 1970 its men made their presence felt, firstly on the Crumlin Road around Ardoyne and later that evening in Short Strand.

If one event is to be recorded as the most definite landmark that launched the Provisional IRA it was the 'Battle of St Matthews' in East Belfast. Historically this fierce all night gun battle was the first recorded engagement between the IRA and UVF since the 1920's. The following morning as the Lower Newtownards Road and other borderline areas around the Short Strand smouldered with burning buildings, St Matthews Church and parish stood intact.

Protestant casualties were high, five were killed and fifty four had gunshot wounds, forty of whom were shot during the Short Strand battle. Two others died later.

Stormont was furious and ordered British troops to move against the IRA. The Falls Road Curfew came as a direct result of the Short Strand battle. (This will be covered in issue number 3). On the Loyalist front, frustration was high. Defence groups were set up as the RUC was disarmed, and the B-Specials stood down, being replaced by the UDR. The uprising they had feared for fifty years was upon them, and the path was open for armed conflict.









SOURCE MATERIAL FOR THIS ISSUE

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Various issues for period covered

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David McKitterick, Seamus Kelters, Brian Feeney & Chris Thornton

A REBEL VOICE
Raymond Quinn

MILLTOWN CEMETERY
Raymond Quinn & Joe Baker

THE IRA AT WAR
Eamon O'Doherty

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Charles Messenger

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Edited by Keith Jeffery

IN THE HEAT OF THE HURRY
Mark Rodgers

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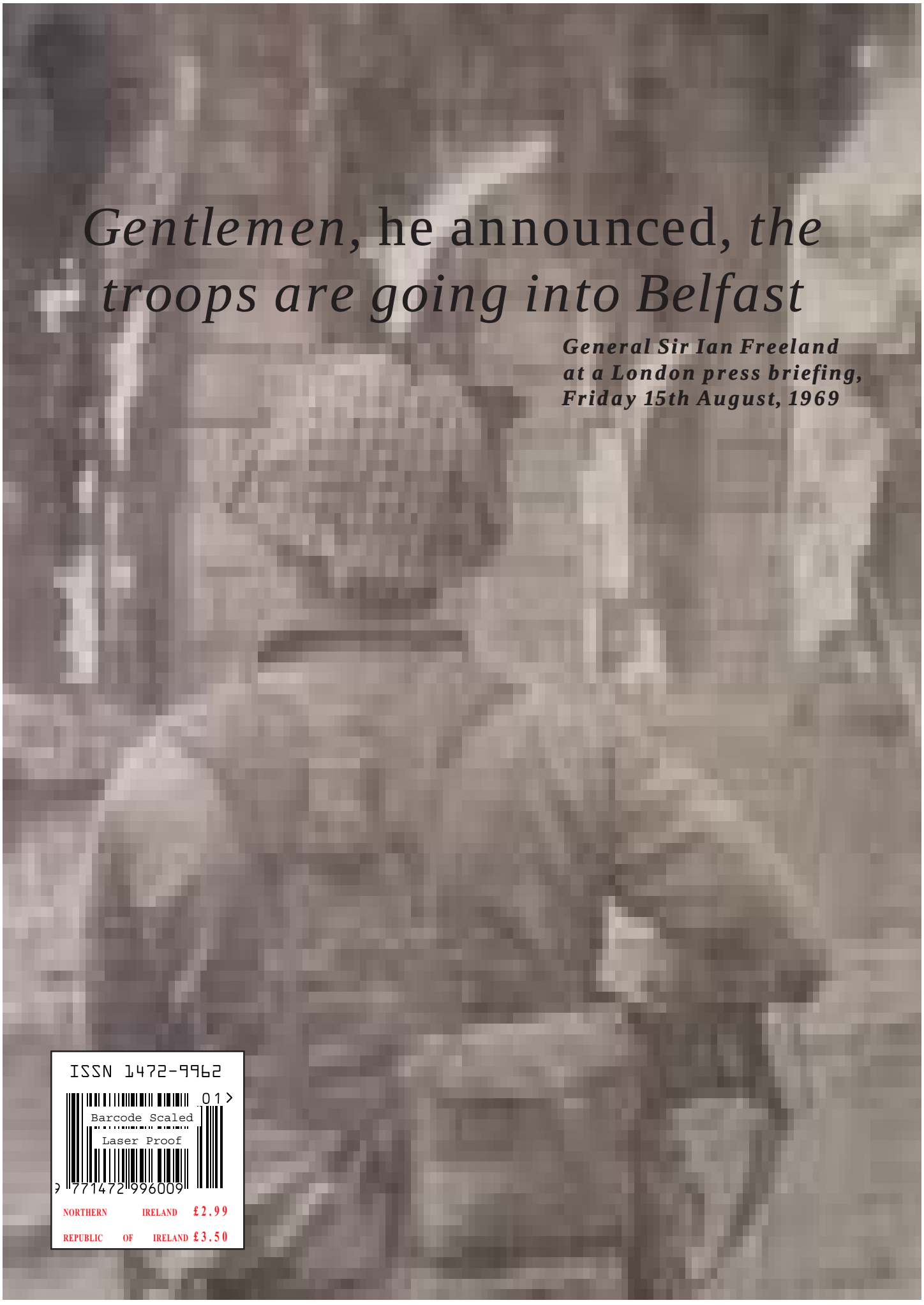

Gentlemen, he announced, *the troops are going into Belfast*

General Sir Ian Freeland
at a London press briefing,
Friday 15th August, 1969

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