

IRELAND

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EDITORIAL

British murder with impunity

● Recent events in Ireland have focussed attention once again on what is now widely called the 'shoot-to-kill' tactics — if not policy — of the British forces:

● Three young men gunned down in Belfast by a British undercover squad when they could have been arrested.

● The resurfacing of the 'Stalker affair', the English policeman who was suspended from his job because of what he had found out in the course of leading an inquiry into killings by the RUC.

● The questions asked by the widow of a Loyalist shot dead last year by another British undercover squad after he had killed an innocent Catholic.

● The ongoing struggle of Mrs McKerr from Armagh to have the RUC brought to justice for killing her husband in 1982.

In January, the 18th Bloody Sunday commemoration took place in Derry. On January 30th, 1972, a regiment of British paratroopers opened fire on Civil Rights demonstrators, killing fourteen and injuring nine.

The circumstances surrounding Bloody Sunday and the incidents mentioned above, together with many, many others, such as the shooting dead of three unarmed Irish Republicans in Gibraltar in March 1988, point to one inescapable truth — that these killings were deliberate, planned actions and not spontaneous or panic reactions.

While the British have always produced the same explanation, couched in the same terms, that their soldiers or police acted because they thought their lives or the lives of the public were being threatened, such explanations convince fewer and fewer people, least of all when passers-by actually witness the shooting. Internationally, also, the excuses are wearing thin.

The real purpose behind these killings seems to be either the intimi-

dation of political protesters, as on Bloody Sunday and in the case of killings by plastic bullets at demonstrations, or quite simply the execution of individuals who are considered 'suspect' by the British.

Between 1969 and 1985, the British crown forces in uniform shot over 183 civilians in the Six Counties. This would be equivalent to the shooting of seven thousand people in Britain.

The British government is very image conscious and spends millions of pounds annually to convince the international community that what it is doing in the North of Ireland is keeping the peace between gangs of criminals and terrorists, and that Britain does so while respecting democratic principles and abiding by the rule of law.

There have been countless calls for investigations, inquests, public inquiries and tribunals — and some have taken place. However, only one member of the British forces has ever been convicted of carrying out a murder while on duty — Private Ian Thain who killed Thomas 'Kidso' Reilly in Belfast in August 1984. Thain only served eighteen months of a life sentence and then rejoined his regiment.

The killings listed above are not considered by the British government to be mistakes or crimes committed by errant members of their armed forces. They are acts of war against the nationalist population of the Six Counties.

The reason why people protest on the streets against these killings, the reason why relatives of the victims subject themselves to years of legal proceedings, is not in order to win some kind of legal argument with the British government. It is because of a yearning for justice and for peace — the justice and the peace which spring from the freedom of a people to determine their own future, free from interference.



Sinn Féin

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British shoot to kill in Belfast

● A British army undercover squad shot three robbers on January 13th as they were attempting to rob a betting shop on the Falls Road in Belfast. Several eye-witnesses, later interviewed on television, described how the British squad first shot the driver sitting in the robbers' car, then two members of the gang (who were carrying imitation firearms) as they came out of the shop, continuing to fire into their bodies as they lay on the pavement, in effect finishing them off.

The British version of events, as explained by the RUC and subsequent British government statements, was that "two soldiers happened upon an armed robbery and acted to prevent a threat to life posed by what they believed were armed and dangerous men". Several hours after the incident, the RUC produced imitation firearms and hoods in justification for the shooting.

These explanations were belied by eye-witness accounts and further contradicted by the facts which emerged from an investigation personally conducted by West Belfast MP Gerry Adams. Namely, four robbers had taken part — the fourth managed to run back into the shop as the shooting started, mingle with customers and escape in the ensuing confusion. He and his three accomplices were part of a gang which had earlier purchased two guns stolen from an unmarked British army car. Since then they and their families had felt they were under surveillance. On the morning of the raid, one of the gang said he thought a British army helicopter was following them.

The British government has so far refused demands for an independent inquiry which have been made by Sinn Féin, the SDLP and even Bishop Cahal Daly. Instead, the British argued that an RUC investigation would be sufficient and pointed out that British forces were acting under difficult circumstances in areas like West Belfast — an area which was labelled by Peter Brooke, the present British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, as a "terrorist community".

On January 21st, a rally was called on the initiative of local campaigner Fr Des Wilson to protest against the killings and object to Peter Brooke's jaundiced view of West Belfast. The rally took place at the spot where the three were killed. West Belfast MP Gerry Adams told a crowd of several hundreds that:

"Regardless of their activities, no terrorist of a foreign army or of a foreign government has a right to kill, wound or imprison any Irish citizen."

Adams was also critical of some of the media for their complacency towards British propaganda:

"It is now clear that the gang involved had bought the weapons stolen from undercover British army agents, and the RUC had tried to get those weapons back, but most of the media failed to ask the forensic history of the weapons."

Stalker affair resurfaces

● The collapse of a fraud case brought against Manchester businessman Kevin Taylor has focussed attention once again on the 'Stalker affair'. John Stalker was deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester police in 1984 when he was appointed to head an inquiry into killings perpetrated by the RUC.

In the space of a few months around November 1982, the RUC had killed six unarmed nationalists in three separate incidents. One of the RUC officers involved in the third incident later admitted in court that he had been told by his superiors to lie in his statement about the shooting.

Widespread suggestions of a deliberate policy of 'shoot-to-kill' by the British government forced them to set up an inquiry in June 1984. Within two years, John Stalker had unearthed sensitive material and, by May 1986, was preparing to question the then RUC Chief Constable John Hermon. He had also requested British military intelligence tapes made from the bugging of a County Armagh hayshed where one of the shootings had occurred.

Stalker never questioned Hermon or saw the M15 tapes — later M15 said the tapes had been "destroyed". On May 9th, 1986, the Manchester house of Kevin Taylor, a successful property developer, member of the local Conservative Party and personal friend of John Stalker, was raided by the police who took away documents. Later, allegations were made of a link between Taylor and a local group of criminals called the 'Quality Street Gang'. The unproven allegations led to Stalker's removal from the inquiry and his suspension on the charge of "professional misconduct".

Stalker was eventually cleared but resigned from the police in January 1987. The case against Taylor continued. However, in January of this year, police officers admitted they had lied to a judge in order to gain access to Taylor's bank account. Police files relating to the case have already "gone missing".

Meanwhile, the Stalker inquiry, which was taken over by West Yorkshire Chief Constable Colin Sampson, led to reprimands for a few RUC officers and further complaints by the nationalist population that the British crown forces are operating beyond the law. John Stalker has described the events of those years in his book, *Stalker* (published by Harrap, London, 1988, £12.95, ISBN 0 245-54616-2).

Since the collapse of the Taylor case, Stalker has come forward with a document which he says reveals details of a meeting which took place in May 1986 in Scarborough, England, and at which his removal from the inquiry was discussed. The document bears three sets of initials, RA, PM and CS. The last two are widely thought to be Peter Myers, a home office inspector of constabulary, and Colin Sampson who was later to replace Stalker on the inquiry. RA may be the then British civil service chief Robert Armstrong, or top Northern Ireland civil servant Robert Andrews.

These latest developments have once again highlighted the lengths to which the

British authorities are prepared to go to protect their armed forces from public scrutiny as they go about the business of tackling political dissent in the North of Ireland.

Sinn Féin publicity director arrested

● Danny Morrison, Sinn Féin's National Director of Publicity, was among nine people arrested by the British forces on January 7th. Among those arrested was a 31-year-old man, Alexander Lynch, whom the RUC claim had been "abducted" and was being held by Morrison and the others against his will. Within 72 hours, Morrison and four others were remanded in custody on charges of conspiracy to murder Lynch, falsely imprisoning him and membership of the IRA.

In court, Morrison conducted his own defence and declared that the charges were "unsustainable". He added that because he had remained silent during interrogation (a right which no longer exists under the North's emergency legislation) the RUC had drawn references "which are insupportable".

That morning, Alexander Lynch's father, Billy, held a press conference and totally refuted the RUC's allegations that his son had been kidnapped. He said, in summary, that Alexander Lynch had told him that the RUC had threatened to shoot and/or imprison him if he refused to supply them with information. Billy Lynch inferred that his son would be particularly susceptible to RUC blackmail as he was very frightened by the threats and was convinced that the RUC would carry them out. His fear came from the fact that he had already been shot and seriously injured by the British army in the mid-70s and he had spent almost one-third of his adult life in prison and did not wish to return there.

Billy Lynch said he had approached Sinn Féin with these details so that public exposure would end this spiral of intimidation. It was at a meeting between Alexander Lynch and Sinn Féin to discuss holding a press conference that the RUC launched its arrest operation.

The situation at present is that the RUC have removed Lynch and his wife Jackie to an unknown location where they are being held incommunicado from their families. The British government perceive Danny Morrison, a leading Republican spokesperson and National Executive member of Sinn Féin, to be one of their main political opponents in Ireland. It would be in their interests to neutralise him by removing him from the political arena, via internment-by-remand, for an indefinite period of time. In the North of Ireland the neutralisation of political opponents is accommodated by the use of emergency legislation, which allows for special powers of arrest, detention and trial. An integral part of this classic counter-insurgency strategy is that the legal and judicial system is then moulded to accommodate the maximum number of convictions in the juryless Diplock courts. This is compounded by the removal of an individual's right to silence.

PAID PERJURER

It is highly probable, therefore, that the RUC intend to pressurise Alexander Lynch into becoming a paid perjurer (supergrass), a person who, in return for immunity from prosecution or a reduced sentence, and large sums of money, will falsely incriminate other individuals whom the RUC and its British political masters wish to remove off the streets.

The paid-perjurer tactic was widely used in the North between November 1981 and 1983. More than 600 people were charged on the mainly uncorroborated word of over 20 paid perjurers, both Loyalist and Republican. Many were held for three years in prison on remand before their eventual acquittal. The mass show trials, in which the paid perjurer gave 'evidence' were farcical large numbers of defendants were tried by pro-British judges in juryless Diplock Courts. The strategy invoked widespread international criticism which largely led to its downfall. However, it remains on the statute book and can be reactivated at any time, a feature which again has been criticised by international human rights organisations.

ISSUE FOR EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Danny Morrison's arrest prompted various degrees of protest action in Italy and it is scheduled to be raised in the European Parliament on February 15th within the context of British occupation in Ireland.

MEPS Dacia Valent and Casare De Piccoli of the Italian Communist Party, Eugenio Melandri of Democrazia Proletaria and Green Party MEP Alexander Langer sent an initial letter of protest to the Italian Foreign Affairs Secretary, and the British and Irish Ambassadors. The protest letter stated that the undemocratic nature of the Northern Ireland state had been "upheld for the last 20 years under military law which denies the very basis of the European Convention on Human Rights" and that the full civil and democratic rights of every citizen should be upheld instead of "every political action obtained by force, creating political discrimination and injustice".

Meanwhile in Venice, the British Consul's office is to be picketed on January 26th in protest against Morrison's arrest.

Disquiet over Stevens inquiry

● Last Autumn, John Stevens from Cambridgeshire police was appointed to head an inquiry into the leak of RUC and UDR intelligence files to Loyalist paramilitaries, some of which later resulted in assassinations and assassination attempts.

After a few months, a number of worrying trends have emerged. The first is that only three members of the British crown forces have been charged so far in relation to the leaks. The majority of those charges are described as having "loyalist paramilitary links".

Another is the fact that last October the Stevens team had recommended the arrest of approximately 100 members of the British army's Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) but, after the UDR Commander

raised objections with the RUC, the number was reduced to 25.

The extent of RUC collusion with Loyalists is so deep that in Derry the RUC members involved in an investigation into the finding of a Loyalist cache of intelligence documents had to be removed from the case.

On January 10th, a fire broke out in the locked office in a disused Carrickfergus factory which the Stevens team had been occupying with files and computer equipment. Stevens later pointed out that, while the equipment had been destroyed, all their records were duplicated and the investigation was "progressing vigorously".

Section 31 renewed

● The Dublin Minister for Justice and Communications, Ray Burke, has signed an order renewing the ban on radio and television interviews with Sinn Féin under Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act.

The ban was first introduced in 1971, when it applied only to RTE, the Southern state-owned radio and television, and has now been extended to the new, privately-owned radio stations. Under the order, it is forbidden to broadcast any interview or declaration from a spokesperson of Sinn Féin, the IRA, and a number of other organisations including any organisation proscribed under the North of Ireland's emergency laws.

Party political broadcasts at election time, as well as declarations by elected representatives of Sinn Féin, are also banned. On the day following the renewal of the censorship order, six Sinn Féin councillors sent a letter of protest to Minister Burke, in which they described Section 31 as "flagrant breach of every known principle of freedom of speech."

Derryman excluded from Britain

● The attempted frame-up of Daniel MacBrearty, from the Creggan area of Derry, ended on January 8th in Lambeth Magistrates Court, London, when the prosecution offered no evidence against him. The British police had charged him with possession and conspiracy to cause explosions. MacBrearty had spent three months in a top security prison in Britain.

However, minutes after his acquittal, he was rearrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1989 and a police application for an exclusion order was upheld by the British Home Secretary, David Waddington.

MacBrearty was expelled four months after he went to Britain to seek work on construction sites. He was arrested in London on October 5th, the same week as the Guildford Four were finally released after 15 years in prison.

At Paddington Green police station, his hands were swabbed for forensic evidence which Scotland Yard claimed linked him to RDX, a component of Semtex. Lambeth Court was told that the forensic scientists had not proved any of the charges of possession and conspiracy to cause explosions and that traces on his hands had either

come from contact with people at work or where he lived.

The prosecution stated that MacBrearty could offer no explanation why traces of RDX came to be on his hands while consistently denying contact with explosives.

Gareth Pierce, MacBrearty's lawyer, attacked the British judicial system saying that the exclusion order process was "profoundly unfair. The prisoner is not told what the reason is. It is an executive decision not a judicial one".

She pointed out that this was the second case in 12 months where the same forensic scientist, Lynda Jones, had not been asked the relevant questions.

Pierce explained that the British Attorney General had to give his permission for a prosecution and this he had done in both instances without a *prima facie* case. This adherence to the *prima facie* case is one of the reassurances given to the 26-County government when the British are seeking extradition of Irish people to the British jurisdiction.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act has been declared illegal by the European Court of Human Rights because of its lack of provision for judicial scrutiny. In 1987, Lord Colville, whose review of the Act recommended that exclusion orders be abolished because they were a severe infringement on human rights, stated that he would be unable to defend the Act in the United Nations.

Andrew Puddepfart, general secretary of Liberty, The National Council for Civil Liberties in Britain, condemned this executive power to exclude without declared reason or right of appeal as "a form of internal exile which is rapidly going out of fashion in the Soviet Union... It remains to be seen how long Britain can maintain this sort of power."

The practice of de-barring people from the Six Counties from entry into Britain gives the lie to the British government's claim that the North is as "British as Finchley". It shows that the North of Ireland is seen as a colony whose people do not have the same rights and privileges as the British.

European Court litigant victimised by British

● A nationalist man who, together with three others, was a successful litigant in the European Court of Human Rights over the use of seven-day detention orders by the British government, has since been targeted for intimidation by British forces.

County Tyrone man Dermot Coyle has been beaten, threatened with death and now is awaiting the outcome of an incident over the Christmas period when he was detained for nine days on completely false charges.

The incident occurred on December 23rd when Coyle was stopped in his car at a British army checkpoint. For ten minutes, his wife and 14-year-old daughter were verbally abused by the soldiers. Coyle was not provoked, which was their intention. He was then ordered to drive on, was again obstructed and told to wait until the RUC had been summoned. When the RUC ar-

rived at the checkpoint, Coyle was arrested and charged with assaulting a British soldier.

The following day, the charge was elaborated on to include the equally false accusation that Coyle had threatened to kill an RUC inspector. Coyle denied the charges, which were clearly brought as a result of his legal action in Strasbourg. The European Court had found Britain guilty of breaching the European Convention on Human Rights because of its use of legislation to detain people for seven days. Britain derogated from the Convention on the issue.

Coyle spent Christmas in prison on these spurious charges. He is now out on bail pending trial in the juryless Diplock courts, which are geared to convicting the maximum number of the state's political opponents. The incident demonstrates that, at a time when repressive regimes throughout Europe have been tumbling to the ground, the RUC remains as bigoted as it was when the Six-County state was first founded. It also reveals that British rule is based on a recipe of terror and repression.

Strip-searching — Institutionalised sexual abuse

● *"Strip-searching is an unjustifiable assault upon the person. It has no security value and has, rather, been used as a method of degradation".* This is the finding of a report published by the United Campaign against Strip-Searching (UCASS) as a result of their enquiry into the psychological effects of this degrading and punitive exercise.

The report was launched on December 12th last in the British House of Commons, attended by British Labour MPs Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Grant, and Errol Smalley, uncle of Paul Hill of the Guildford Four.

The enquiry, convened in 1987 by senior psychiatrists, has declared that strip-searching evokes *"reactions specific to rape... Such an insult to human dignity... cannot be justified on security grounds."*

The report highlights the case of Irishwomen Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer currently serving life sentences in Durham Jail in England who have been repeatedly strip-searched. However, the report states that the women interviewed come from various backgrounds and underwent the ordeal in different circumstances.

Historically, strip-searching was a technique of colonial repression and it continues to be used to target dissidents, as well as singling out Black youths, Irish Republican women and other Irish people, lesbians and gay men.

The findings define those of the Northern Ireland Office-appointed Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, which issued a report in 1987 aimed at dissuading the growing public concern regarding the use of strip-searching against Republican women in Armagh and Maghaberry Jails.

British forces ransack Sinn Féin offices

● Two of Sinn Féin's key operational offices in Belfast were illegally entered by the British forces in the early hours of January 8th. Considerable damage was caused and the contents of filing cabinets, documents and computer discs were removed.

Clearly, the raids were aimed at causing the party maximum disruption. However, both offices were fully functional that same day.

In a letter of protest to the British Ambassador in Washington, the human rights organisation American Protestants for Truth about Ireland (APTI) said that the break-in *"too closely resembles the tactics used by the secret police in totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe which have finally been toppled in a mass outcry for democracy and an end to repression in those countries. For the forces of the crown to be engaged in similar repressive measures makes a mockery of Britain's claim to be a democracy."*

APTI pointed out that Sinn Féin was a democratically elected political party and that the raids demonstrated further evidence of increased censorship by the British government:

"For the British government to applaud events in Eastern bloc countries while continuing to deny democratic rights — freedom of speech and equal treatment under the law in their own backyard is supreme hypocrisy compounded by arrogance and will be regarded as such by all those who seek to enhance, rather than deny, human rights in this world."

The letter closed by requesting that the confiscated materials *"be returned and an apology rendered: a democratic government could do no less."*

LOYALISTS

Sectarian killing

● Martin Byrne, a Catholic taxi-driver from Lurgan, County Armagh, became the first victim of pro-British death squads in the Six Counties in 1990.

The father of two young children was assassinated on January 6th by the Protestant Action Force, a cloak of convenience for the Ulster Volunteer Force. Responding to a telephoned booking to his depot, Martin Byrne had picked up a fare at the Corner Bar in Derrymacash and had been missing for some time before the alert was raised. Twelve hours later, his body was found slumped over the steering-wheel of his car. He had a single gunshot wound to the back of the head.

The victim had been randomly selected by the sectarian Loyalist death squad — any one of a number of drivers in the taxi depot at the time of the telephone call could have suffered the same fate.

POLITICAL NEWS

Sinn Féin on Eastern European developments

● In a New Year statement analysing the dramatic events in Romania and in

general in Eastern Europe, Sinn Féin stated that the central issue involved in those countries, as in Ireland, is the right of peoples to national self-determination.

In a considered statement, Sinn Féin drew comparisons with developments in Eastern European countries in the sense that their freedom has come about largely as a result of the non-interference by the USSR and its acceptance of the inevitability of self-determination. In Ireland, however, the situation is vastly different. People power, which proved an important strategy in the European countries, was used between 1968-72, during the Civil Rights demonstrations in the North of Ireland.

The peaceful protesters who sought moderate reforms to the sectarian Northern state of the Six Counties, which discriminated against the Nationalist community, were viciously beaten off the streets by the state forces. State violence culminated with the Bloody Sunday massacre in January 1972 when British paratroopers shot dead 14 unarmed Civil Rights protesters in Derry City.

Twenty years on, the British government refuses to begin the process of decolonisation and, unlike the situation in Eastern Europe, has demonstrated its preparedness, time and again, to use excessive military force and terror to maintain partition for its own political, economic and strategic interests in Ireland.

Sinn Féin's statement came in response to various misleading calls by Irish 'constitutional' politicians for the IRA to follow the example of peaceful protests and to abandon its armed struggle against British rule. Sinn Féin responded:

"If these politicians were genuinely concerned in bringing about the conditions for peace in Ireland they would use their influence and commit themselves to beginning a mass people power struggle against the British presence in Ireland. They would not find Republicans unwilling to support that campaign."

Sinn Féin went on to dismiss a spurious attack by SDLP leader John Hume to the effect that the IRA were the equivalent to the Romanian Securitate and are the *"only people in Europe today who need guns... apart from the dictators"*. Sinn Féin stated:

"Attempting to couple the IRA with the Securitate is the latest example of Mr Hume's inability to come to terms with the reality of politics in Ireland. It is an absurd comparison and he knows that. If he really wants to find an Irish equivalent of Ceausescu's Secret Police then he need look no further than the RUC: an organisation that has been condemned by various human rights organisations; that operates a policy of murder, oppression and torture; that deals in stealth and intrigue; that has close links with Loyalist death squads; that ransacks homes; that terrorises all those who disagree with it; and is distrusted by a considerable section of the nationalist community."

"That, however, is a comparison that Mr Hume is unable and unlikely to make, given his current dependence on the British government."

Irish National Congress inaugurated

● On January 20th, over 400 people

attended the founding conference of the Irish National Congress (INC), a political movement aimed at the "promotion of unity, freedom and peace in Ireland". The INC's objectives assert that a "declaration of intention to withdraw from Ireland by the British government" is a "prerequisite" to the development of an "independent, sovereign nation", itself the basis of true democracy in Ireland.

Bernadette Devlin-McAliskey described the INC as an attempt to draw together people involved in many campaigns so as to "mobilise the maximum dissension against those who are oppressing us nationally, economically, politically and socially".

The conference discussed and voted on a number of resolutions covering issues of emigration, the environment, extradition, culture and the arts, education and the teaching of history. Further resolutions called for: the release of the Birmingham Six, the Winchester Three and Judith Ward; justice for the Maguire family; and the banning of plastic bullets.

The newly-elected 15-member INC executive includes Bernadette McAliskey, artist Robert Ballagh, Fianna Fáil members Nora Comiskey and Jim Doyle, political campaigner Nicky Kelly, Father Des Wilson and trade unionist Matt Merrigan.

Among the well-wishers whose messages of solidarity were read at the conference were Tony Benn and Jeremy Corbyn of the British Labour Party, Cardinal O Fiaich, the Irish American Unity Conference, Irish Northern Aid, the Irish in Britain Representation Group and several European solidarity groups.

Belfast City Council — Anti-worker, anti-woman, anti-nationalist

● In a blatantly sectarian start to the new decade, Belfast City Council ratified its decision to deny funding to the Falls Women's Centre in Nationalist West Belfast when a casting vote by Unionist Lord Mayor, Reg Empey, ended a 21-21 stalemate. A £2,000 council grant was to be axed on the grounds that the centre had met with a delegation of women from the British-based Troops Out Movement last year.

At a full council meeting on January 2nd, an attempt to reverse the Community Services Committee's decision was narrowly defeated when Workers' Party Councillor Seamus Lynch abstained and in doing so secured a Unionist victory. Mr Lynch claimed that the centre was "politically motivated".

However, some Unionist women councillors did not concur with this position and crossed the political divide to support the West Belfast centre. Last year, the centre dealt with 5,000 cases, ranging from housing and welfare to rape, incest and violence against women.

The sectarian stance of the council was exposed when funding for the Shankill Women's Centre, in Loyalist West Belfast,

whose activities broadly parallel that of the Falls Centre, was endorsed without opposition.

In the same council chamber, a series of vicious cut-backs were announced against advice workers and leisure centres on January 5th. In North and West Belfast, community workers are preparing contingency plans to counteract what Unionist Councillor Fred Cobain described as "good house-keeping by the Unionist family". Block grants to hard-hit community councils will be cut by 20% whilst plans have been endorsed to begin work on a £20-million concert hall/conference centre.

One community activist declared: "We will fight these measures tooth and nail. This amounts to a purge of every advice centre in town which offers information critical of the Thatcherite policies of the British government and its City Hall cronies."

JUSTICE

Birmingham Six — New evidence

● Lawyers for the Birmingham Six have lodged a submission containing new evidence and new witnesses with David Waddington, the British Home Secretary.

Waddington has stated that he will consider what he called the "complicated and detailed" information to decide whether or not the case should be re-opened. This information was leaked by the British Home Office shortly before Birmingham publican Noel Walsh came forward and publicly stated that the police had prevented him giving evidence on behalf of one of the Six, John Walker. Walsh said that he now wanted to tell the truth in the light of the recent disbanding of the West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad.

Shortly before Christmas, the Birmingham Six were downgraded from the high security Category 'A' to Category 'B'. This change means very little to men who have always protested their innocence but it may be an indication of the pressure that the British government are under to release the Six. This pressure was stepped up following the release of the Guildford Four and has led to renewed calls from all sections of the community for their immediate release. The most recent calls came from the Catholic bishops in Ireland and from US Senator Brian Donnelly, who has pledged to raise the issue within the US Senate and with Northern Secretary Peter Brooke when he visits the US at the end of January.

Dublin's Parade of Innocence

● Over 10,000 people joined a massive carnival in Dublin in December celebrating the release of the Guildford Four and demanding the release of the Birmingham Six and all imprisoned victims of British justice. The 'Parade of Innocence' demonstration was led by relatives of the Birmingham Six and the Winchester Three.

The parade ended with a rally in the

floodlit forecourt of the Central Bank in Dame Street which was addressed by Fr Bobby Gilmore who works with prison campaigns in Britain. He stated that:

"Justice is not an optional extra. Justice is the fibre that holds society and people together. Justice generates peace. In the search for justice, global concern is not enough. It must be expressed locally as we are doing today."

Bernadette McAliskey attacked the anti-Irish racism inherent in the British government and the British media:

"We have got to make it clear to our own government, to the British government and to the international community that the wrongful imprisonment of people to feed public hysteria is wrong. The British media bears a major weight of responsibility for the wrongful imprisonment of Irish people."

The rally was also addressed by two of the Guildford Four, Paul Hill and Gerry Conlon. Hill attacked the extradition policy of the Dublin government saying that:

"...morally, intellectually, humanely, it is barbaric to hand people back to the same state that perpetrated so many evils. The Prevention of Terrorism Act put me in prison. I was imprisoned because I was Irish. It was used exclusively against the Irish community. I epitomise the spirit that is in us all. It is an example of the spirit that tells us we will win."

Dublin government seeks more extraditions

● Dublin District Court recently ordered that Dublin man Dessie Ellis should be extradited to Britain to face conspiracy charges, despite a failure on the part of the British to supply the defence with sworn information, saying that it was "neither appropriate nor necessary" and despite the fact that a Supreme Court judge had stated that conspiracy charges can "operate most unfairly".

District Judge Mary Kotsounouris accepted the warrants and ordered that Dessie Ellis be handed over to the British Metropolitan Police. Ellis is to appeal to the High Court against the District Court decision.

Meanwhile, another prisoner, Dermot Finucane, has had judgement reserved in his case against extradition. Finucane, who escaped from Long Kesh with 37 others in 1983, argued that his life would be in danger if sent back to face charges in the Six Counties.

Christmas parole for lifers

● Over 150 life-sentence prisoners were granted six days' parole by the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) over the Christmas period. For the first time too, lifers in Portlaoise prison in the 26 Counties were also granted Christmas parole.

The NIO announced initially that any prisoner having served over 13 years would be eligible for the parole. Later, it stated that any POW who was classified as

'Red Book' (high risk) would be ineligible. (The 'Red Book' classification can be applied arbitrarily to any prisoner, without explanation.) This new criteria affected two Republican POWs who later sought a judicial review of the decision in the High Court, an application which was rejected.

Three other prisoners, who have served over 13 years of determinate sentences were also refused parole and they too sought a judicial review. They submitted that prisoners serving determinate sentences should be considered for parole in the same way as those serving indeterminate sentences. The judicial review found in their favour and the three were granted parole.

While welcoming the Christmas parole, the Campaign for Lifers warned that the NIO was using the whole issue of parole to give the illusion of movement in regard to their treatment of long-term prisoners. However, these prisoners have still not been given release dates and the NIO continues to refuse to make any changes to the Life Sentence Review Board.

ECONOMY/FAIR EMPLOYMENT

Economic outlook for 1990 unpromising

● A comprehensive report, *The Northern Ireland Economy: Review and Prospects*, was launched on January 16th by a Belfast firm of economists, Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte. The report warns that the economic outlook for the Six Counties in 1990 is not good. They forecast that by the year 2000 there will be 8,000 new jobs, while people seeking work will be 44,000 — a job gap of 36,000 in addition to those currently looking for work.

The retrospective section of the report shows that the Six Counties ended the decade no better than it started. In 1989, industrial output in the North of Ireland rose by an estimated 8% while unemployment fell by almost 10,000. In 1988, Gross Democratic Product per head was 78% of the UK average, the lowest of any region and exactly the same as it was in 1979. Unemployment stood at 14.6%, almost twice the 7.9% level in 1979.

Unemployment and emigration remain high on the forecasted economic consequences of British rule in Ireland.

Sinn Féin spokesperson Mitchel McLaughlin stated:

"If we are to tackle the fundamental political and economic problems facing us in this new decade, we must have control over our own affairs. If we fail to remove the artificial border dividing our nation and if Britain retains its suffocating hold on the North, then we will remain a political and economic backwater, unable to negotiate or determine our own political and economic developments, bedevilled by political instability, violence and economic stagnation."

New fair employment legislation ineffective

● The Fair Employment Act, which came into being on January 1st and

replaces the 1976 Act, has been heavily criticised by Gerry Adams, Sinn Féin MP for West Belfast. Adams declared that the new act "lacked the teeth necessary to tackle the fundamental issue of increasing levels of discrimination in employment experienced by Catholics in the North".

He attacked the British government for failing to tackle the structural political and religious discrimination which "is woven into the fabric of the Northern Irish State", declared the Act to be a begrudging effort to appease US supporters of the MacBride Principles and to divert international attention.

Peter Bottomly, the British government minister responsible for overseeing the new Fair Employment Commission and for spending tens of millions of pounds in anti-MacBride Principles campaigning in the United States, declared that results would be seen within ten years.

This ignores the recommendation of the British government's own Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights to reduce unemployment differentials between Catholics and Protestants from two-and-a-half to one to one-and-a-half to one in the space of five years, a fact highlighted by Obair, the campaign for employment in West Belfast.

Mitchel McLaughlin, Sinn Féin Councillor in Derry, pointed to the claims made by the 1975 Act to reduce discrimination:

"In April of last year, the Continuous Household Survey revealed... that the position of Catholics in employment and living standards had grown worse."

He criticised the Department of Economic Development (DED) which has a record of sectarian bias. The DED will have the power to draw up the essential subordinate regulations to support the original legislation and to decide where new industry and investment will be located. McLaughlin said:

"New legislation is needed with real teeth that takes decision-making out of the hands of those who have helped to create and to maintain inequality and discrimination."

Bishop in clash over MacBride

● Catholic Bishop Cahal Daly has been criticised for attacking the MacBride Principles and upholding the British government line during a visit to the United States last November. Bishop Daly claims that he was misrepresented in the US press. However, the Bishop was further criticised when he refused to answer letters from or to meet with the four pro-MacBride bodies in the North.

A spokesperson for the Fair Employment Trust, The Upper Springfield Resource Centre, Concerned Community Organisations and Springhill Community House said:

"It is utterly deplorable that Bishop Daly, who repeatedly professes the non-political nature of his role, should continue to ignore all communications from members of his own flock on issues of job discrimination."

Jobs bias proven

COLERAINE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Coleraine Borough Council has been cited by the Fair Employment Agency as not giving Catholics a real opportunity in employment.

Of 286 council employees in September 1987, 221 (77.3%) were Protestants; 50 (17.5%) were Catholics. Although Protestant/Catholic representation in council jobs was not significantly different to that of the local population, all 15 of the senior posts were occupied by Protestants.

The report stated that the council failed to take account of the 'chill factor' which is shown by the low numbers of job applications from Catholics.

It expressed concern that the council had refused to commit itself to the principle of equal opportunity by signing the Declaration of Principle and Intent.

QUEENS UNIVERSITY, BELFAST

The Fair Employment Agency launched a scathing attack on Queens University last December, where a survey has shown substantial discrimination against Catholics at almost all levels.

The survey showed that the composition of employees was 79% Protestant and 21% Catholic — the population ratio was 65% and 35% respectively. In the faculties there was an imbalance of 80% Protestant and 20% Catholic, the latter falling to 14% in Economics and Social Studies, though rising to 30% in Education.

However, in the two largest groups, Administration and Other Staff, Catholic representation was under 15%, and less than one-fifth in the Academic, Clerical and Administrative staff.

On the Clinical staff, it was only 5%, Administrative 11% and Supervisory grades 15%.

THE FIRE SERVICE

The Northern Ireland Fire Authority was found guilty of jobs discrimination against Catholics during a case of unlawful discrimination against a Catholic job applicant. Sean Kerr had applied for part-time work on four occasions in a five-year period and each time the job was awarded to a Protestant. The FEA investigation found that all 19 fire-fighters stationed at Dunganon fire station were Protestant.

Bob Cooper of the FEA said that: *"Within memory no Catholic had been employed there... quite a deplorable situation and it reflects a gross inequality in the community."*

CULTURE

International solidarity with Irish schools

● During a recent visit to Belfast, a representative of the CEQ teachers' federation in Quebec presented a cheque for \$1,000 Canadian to Naiscoil na Fuiséige, the Irish-medium nursery school for the Twinbrook/Poleglass area of West Belfast. This is the largest response to the North American appeal launched by the Naiscoil last year when it be-

came clear that British government funds would not be made available for the project, which includes an Irish-medium nursery school and cultural centre, and will make provision for adult education in after-school hours.

Meanwhile, a group in Northern Italy has pledged support for Gaelscoil na bhFál, the Irish-medium primary school on the Falls Road, which has also been denied all forms of government assistance. The Ireland-Italy Association has adopted the school as a clear example of the strength of Irish culture and the determination of local people to overcome discrimination against their culture.

To date, there are ten Irish-medium nursery schools and three Irish-medium primary schools in Belfast alone, of which Bunscoil Phobail Feirste on the Shaws Road is the only school to have received funding to date. Maintained status was granted to the school in 1984 after a 13-year battle for official recognition and grant-aid assistance.

Translation facilities at Ard Fheis

● **Sinn Féin will this year become the first political party in Ireland since partition to conduct a large measure of their annual conference through the medium of Irish.**

Until now, Sinn Féin, in keeping with other parties, has organised language conferences and supported calls for the increased use of Irish in public life and in the media, but the main language of their annual conference has been English. Irish has been regularly heard from the platform of the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis but its use in crucial debates was often limited in the past in deference to those delegates who were not sufficiently fluent in the language. Now simultaneous translation facilities will be made available to ensure that delegates may address the conference in the language of their choice.

Not since 1919 have the major debates on vital political questions of the day been conducted through the medium of Irish. The initial proceedings of the first Dáil Éireann (Irish parliament) were entirely in Irish but, with the advent of partition and the development of two separate states in Ireland, the use of the language by government bodies gradually declined.

Church attitudes to the language

● **Controversy has once again flared about the role played by the Catholic Church in the erosion of services being provided in Irish for those living in Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) areas. The recent appointment of an English-speaking priest in the Corca Dhuibhne area of Kerry has put an end to church services in Irish and caused anger among local people.**

The provision of church and other services in English has long been a bone of contention in the traditional Gaeltacht areas along the West coast of Ireland. For four years now, a local schoolteacher in the Bun na gCnoc area of Galway, Bríd Ní

Dhómhnaill, has had to endure a boycott of her classes organised by the local priest, due to her stand against the removal of Mass in Irish in the parish. Bríd has not been removed from her post and has the full support of teachers' unions, language organisations and progressive political parties but, although Mass in Irish has been restored to the parish, her classroom remains empty of pupils and the boycott remains unresolved.

Prison author attends book-launch

● **Eoghan Mac Cormaic (33) from Derry, who in recent years has had published a wide range of poetry, prose and articles both in and about the Irish language, was for the first time able to attend the official launch of one of his books at Christmas.**

Because he had spent over 13 years of a life sentence in Long Kesh, Eoghan was amongst those allowed home for a few days at Christmas. Almost one year to the day from the launch of his Irish-language crossword book, *Fite Fuaite*, language activists and local politicians gathered for the official launch of his children's crossword book, *Lúb ar Lár*, which was timed to coincide with the Christmas parole so that Eoghan could be present at the ceremony.

Speaking at the launch, Sinn Féin Councillor Gearóid O hEára praised the contribution of the prisoners to the language revival in recent years. He said:

"It is a sad indictment of the attitude of the Dublin government to the language that such an example of popular literature should emanate first in the jails of the Six Counties rather than in what is supposed to have been an independent Irish state since 1922."

INTERNATIONAL

Britain indicted in Oslo

● **The influential Norwegian Helsinki Committee (NHC) — one of a number of bodies set up to monitor human rights abuses after the Helsinki Conference in the '70s — has produced an 80-page report on human rights abuses in the Six Counties. The report, *Human Rights in Northern Ireland — Irish Terrorism or British Colonialism*, was launched in Oslo on January 11th. Belfast Human Rights campaigner Fr Des Wilson attended the launch and welcomed the increased international attention given to repression in Ireland.**

General secretary of the NHC and co-author of the report, Bjorn Cato Funnemark said:

"At a time when democracy in Europe has never been stronger, Northern Ireland remains an isolated issue, pushed onto the fringe of Western Europe."

He dismissed the concept of Britain as a peace-keeping force or the problem as "one of mindless terrorism" and described the situation as "a long ignored" political and economic problem. He welcomed the MacBride Principles and called on Fred

Olsen Ltd, the Norwegian-based owners of Belfast shipbuilders Harland and Wolff, to implement the Principles.

Reuiff Steen, former President of the Norwegian Parliament, welcomed the report and also backed the Principles.

IRA military operations

● **The effectiveness of the IRA campaign to cause maximum disruption within the heart of the British establishment in the Six Counties was illustrated when a leaked report of a secret British government report revealed a staffing crisis within the Ministry of Defence (MOD) at Stormont in Belfast.**

The report, leaked to the English Sunday newspaper *The Observer*, shows that in the two years up to June 1989, 567 Civil Servants have left the MOD in the North, more than half resigning altogether or taking medical retirement. This total represents one in five of the civilian staff of the MOD at Stormont.

From December to mid-January, the IRA continued to strike against the British forces and their military bases in occupied Ireland.

Three British military bases at Belleek, Derry and Sion Mills were destroyed, three members of the British army were killed and a further 14 were seriously wounded, an RUC inspector was killed and three RUC members were seriously wounded.

A leading member of a Loyalist paramilitary group, the Ulster Freedom Fighters, Harry Dickie, was killed by the IRA for his part in organising the sectarian assassination of Nationalists. Two economic bombing operations destroyed or seriously damaged part of the garrison town of Lisburn in County Antrim and the Victoria Commercial Centre in the heart of Belfast city centre.

Books

● ***Nationalist women and the RUC* — a pamphlet which examines the repressive role of the RUC and the implications for Republican and Nationalist women. Price 50p each. Available from Republican Publications, 44 Parnell Square, Dublin 1 or 51/55 Falls Road, Belfast 12.**

● ***Women in a War Zone — Twenty Years of Resistance*. This is a rare and valuable contribution to the neglected documentation of women's crucial role in the struggle for national liberation in Ireland — particularly over the past 20 years. In their own words, the women graphically relate the realities of life under British occupation, in a war zone which is recognised as one of the most undemocratic and militarised states in Western Europe. Essentially, it is a book which shows that these women, and their communities, do not want war but the right to live in a free and democratic Irish society devoid of British interference.**

Price: Paperback £2.95, Bulk orders £2.10; Hardback £4.25, Bulk orders £3.75. Available from: Republican Publications, 44 Parnell Square, Dublin 1 or 51/55 Falls Road, Belfast 12.

