

# THE INFORMERS

A SINN FÉIN  
PUBLICATION



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There was a dead silence for three seconds. Then a perceptible shudder ran through the room. Everybody remembered with horror that there was a suspicion abroad, a suspicion that an informer had betrayed Francis Joseph McPhillip. Informer! A horror to be understood fully only by an Irish mind.

-- *Liam O'Flaherty, The Informer, 1925*

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# THE INFORMERS

**L**AST year, 1982, will be chiefly remembered as the year Sinn Fein dramatically emerged as the authentic political voice of the most oppressed sections of the nationalist people in the occupied six counties. Significant electoral successes across the North in the October 20th Assembly elections, and a consequent mushrooming of republican political agitation, went hand in hand with a continuation of the popular armed struggle

against the British for national liberation. In the bitter wake of the hunger-strikes of 1981 there was a marked and ongoing shift amongst the nationalist community towards increased resistance on all fronts.

However, 1982 was also remarkable as the year in which the RUC began the widespread use of informers prepared to testify in court (in return for large sums of money and immunity from pros-

ecution), in a concerted attempt, echoing internment of a decade earlier, to railroad large numbers of selected activists and sympathisers into jail.

So far, up to 300 men and women, the large majority of them from the nationalist community, have been charged solely on the uncorroborated word of these bribed informers. Most have been held in jail for prolonged periods on their flimsy so-called 'evidence', awaiting trial.

1983 has witnessed the beginning of a series of these show trials in Belfast, manipulated by the loyalist judiciary and the RUC and aided uncritically by a subservient media to bolster the British state in its continuing war against Irish republicanism.

The systematic use of paid informers is part of a conscious strategy which the British administration has evolved in an attempt to weaken the Republican Movement, by creating distrust and self-doubt within the nationalist community. The current and forthcoming informer trials are designed to undermine and demoralise nationalist support for the resistance struggle by fostering an impression that the Republican Movement is riddled with informers (or 'leaking like a sieve' as one anti-republican media pundit expressed it) and that it is too risky to give active support to, or even voice support for that resistance.

Yet despite the propaganda it needs to be clearly understood that the informer tactic is directed primarily at this **community** support for the national liberation struggle, rather than at the IRA itself — which has repeatedly demonstrated by its unimpaired capacity for military operations that its organisational structure is not seriously affected.

The importance of the paid informer



to the British in propaganda terms can be gauged by their willingness to effectively change their own laws — such as they are — whenever necessity dictates.

In mid-1982 two men, UVF informer Clifford McKeown and IRSP informer Sean Mallon, retracted their earlier statements and refused to give evidence against people they had implicated, when they appeared at the routine preliminary enquiries. These retractions, and the possibility of future retractions, threatened an end to the RUC's use of informers. To counteract this development the RUC, with the connivance of the Director of Public Prosecutions, simply invoked an almost unheard-of piece of legislation, the voluntary Bill of Indictment, and used it in an unprecedented manner to completely bypass any preliminary enquiry.

Up until now, this Bill of Indictment has been used twice, including in the case of the 38 people implicated by Ardoyne informer Christopher Black, and effectively means that some people face the prospect of more than two years in jail before the basis of the 'evidence' against them is heard in court.

There is little doubt that the Bill of Indictment will be used again in future.



● Hunger-striker Joe McDonnell's family at his funeral; the British believed the deeply-felt deaths of ten H-Block men could be exploited by an increase in counter-insurgency tactics

Such is the nature of the British government's 'rule of law' in Ireland.

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The RUC's use of paid informers must not be viewed in isolation, or simplistically as a terrifying new phenomenon. It is only the latest weapon in the arsenal of repression that the British and their loyalist allies have relied on since the foundation of the six-county state in their efforts to quell the desire for national freedom.

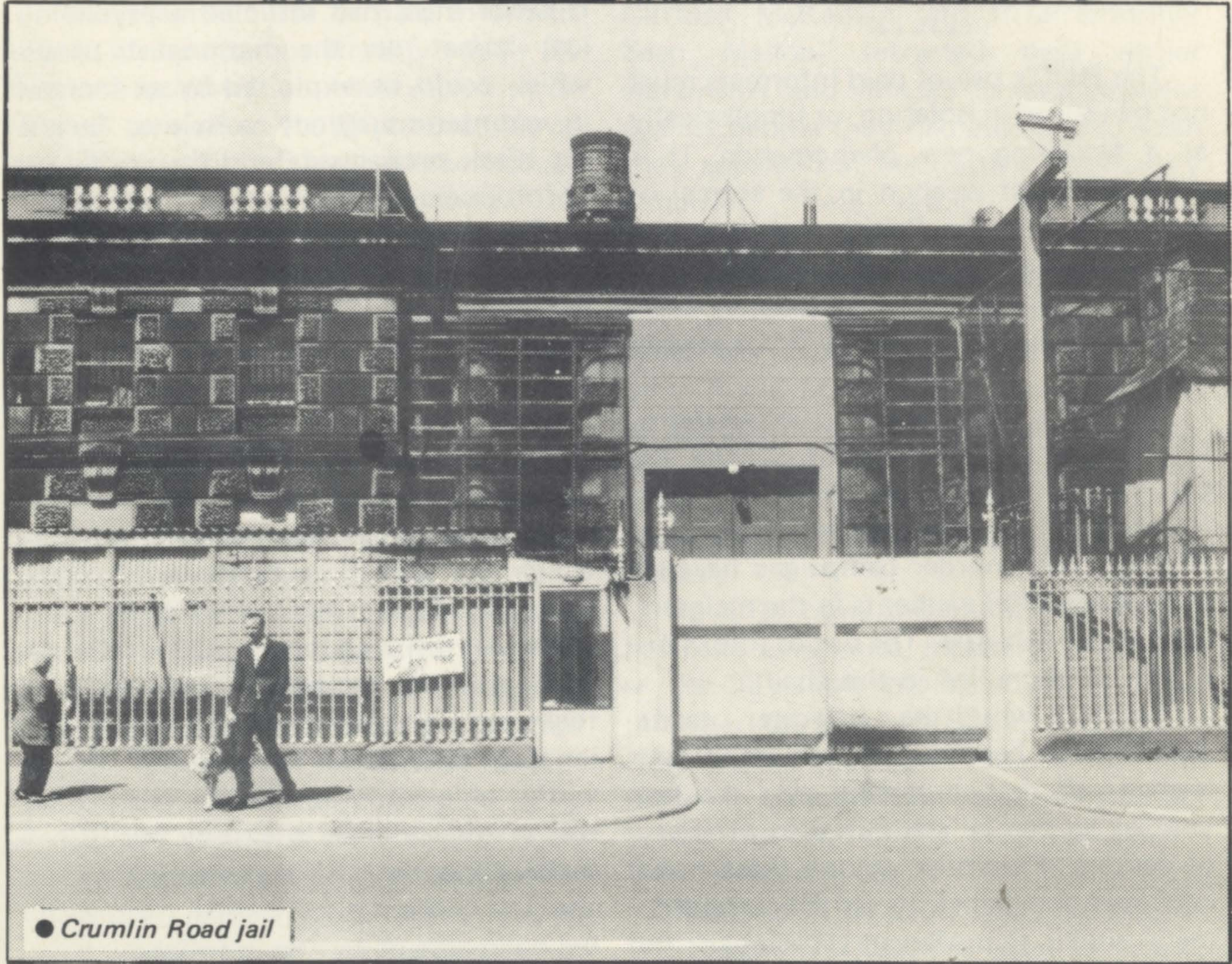
Economic deprivation, sectarianism, loyalist pogroms, internment, torture, CS gas, plastic bullets, criminalisation, manipulation of the legal system, black propaganda, and murder campaigns have all formed essential elements in the maintenance of British rule. The use of informers is just one more link in this chain.

Exactly why the informer tactic should have become such an important element of that repression over the last year or so can be attributed to a variety of factors. Foremost among these however was the belief in British establishment circles that Margaret Thatcher's in-

transigence during the hunger-strikes, and the resulting deeply-felt deaths of ten H-Block men, had inflicted a psychological defeat on the nationalist people which could be exploited by an increase in counter-insurgency activities, including black propaganda and the public use of informers.

The Assembly election results of October 20th 1982 proved how gravely the British warlords had miscalculated on the mood of nationalists, and in the same way they will be made to realise that informers cannot be used to drive a wedge between the Republican Movement and its nationalist support.

This pamphlet examines the way in which the British establishment is using informers. It is an attempt to dispel many of the myths assiduously built up by the RUC and the puppets in the media in their mutual efforts to undermine nationalist resistance. Putting the sordid world of paid informers in perspective will provide a basis to expose the British establishment's cynical hypocrisy and its absolute contempt for justice: historically the hallmarks of its rule in Ireland.



● Crumlin Road jail

# The legacy of repression

**T**HE British administration in the occupied North has always possessed wide-ranging repressive powers.

The Special Powers Act, enacted in 1922 as a 'temporary' measure but remaining in force until it was superceded by the Emergency Provisions Act in 1973, allowed for internment without trial; exclusion orders; search, arrest and detention without warrant; the prohibition of inquests, and a comprehensive catalogue of denial of civil liberties.

South African Minister for Justice, John Vorster (later Prime Minister), not surprisingly commented when introducing a new coercion bill in that country in 1963, that he 'would be willing to exchange all the legislation of that sort for one clause of the Northern Ireland Special Powers Act'.

In August 1971 the six-county regime again introduced sweeping internment without trial in the hope of smashing nationalist resistance and demoralising communities. But by 1975 Britain had been forced to suspend internment, primarily because its draconian use had proved politically embarrassing internationally, but also because of its signal failure to adversely affect the liberation struggle.

Nonetheless, just as the Special Powers Act was replaced by the similarly effective but less emotive Emergency Provisions Act, so internment was replaced by new Diplock courts, consisting of one judge and no jury. Diplock judges accepted written or verbal statements by the accused as the sole basis for conviction, in the absence of corroborative evidence, and this went hand in hand with the intensified use of physical and psychological tor-



● The 'B' Specials were one of the most flagrant symbols of the North's repression of nationalists

ture against suspects during interrogation. Castlereagh, Gough and Strand Road barracks became synonymous with torture, as centres where statements of admission were beaten out of men and women.

By the late 1970s torture had become institutionalised in the six counties. But once again 'bad publicity' was eventually to severely restrict its effectiveness as a means of securing convictions. In May 1978 Amnesty International produced a report on interrogation practices which substantiated claims that large numbers of individuals had been seriously maltreated in RUC custody. The report so compromised the British government that



● **Strand Road RUC barracks, Derry city, 1978: relatives protest against the torture of prisoners. Two RUC doctors subsequently publicised the widespread maltreatment used during interrogation**

it was forced to establish an enquiry, under Judge Bennett, to examine and recommend improvements in RUC interrogation methods.

Shortly before the report was due, the embarrassment of the British was intensified when two RUC doctors, Irwin and Elliott, publicly confirmed that senior RUC officers had persistently ignored their claims that arrested persons in Castlereagh and Gough were being maltreated.

In the glare of such damaging publicity it was inevitable that the Bennett report, when it was published in March 1979, would be obliged to recommend a number of interrogation safeguards, even though the report was essentially a white-wash that conveniently glossed over the torture that had been taking place systematically.

Subsequently, although physical torture during RUC questioning did continue to occur on a reduced scale, the embarrassing exposes of Amnesty International and Drs Irwin and Elliott, and the Bennett committee's pragmatism, im-

posed real curbs on the RUC's ability to employ brutality against suspects at will, and so to forcibly extract 'confessions' in many cases that would guarantee lengthy jail terms for suspected republican activists.

It is in the context, then, of this unchanged legacy of repression that the present British establishment strategy of using paid informers should be seen. It is simply another highly expedient politically-sanctioned response by the British to the constant need to develop new modes of repression as one strategy after another is exposed, both in Ireland and internationally, and rendered too damaging in terms of 'image' to be effective.

Informers serve not only the purpose of imprisoning our activists and supporters, their actions are a betrayal of the whole community from which they come, and that community's desire for peace and freedom.

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Informers occupy a particularly loathsome niche in the history of Ireland. They have been traditionally reviled and despised because of their sinister and sometimes damaging interventions at crucial periods in Ireland's revolutionary struggle. Not surprisingly they have invariably been harshly dealt with whenever discovered, throughout the centuries of that struggle.

However, while informers are an essential weapon in all counter-insurgency strategies throughout the world, only rarely in Ireland have the British managed to get any of these paid agents to give evidence in court. 1982 has seen a change in this regard and it is a development that seems likely to remain with us for some time.

Yet just as other repressive strategies have foundered on the rock of solidarity within the nationalist community, so the use of informers — if understood in context — will fail to have lasting or wide-reaching effects.

In the early 1970s the escalation in organised crime in the London area led the Metropolitan Police to rely heavily on a number of 'supergrasses' they had carefully cultivated. Yet after criticism and adverse publicity from a variety of legal sources this means of securing convictions was quietly dropped.

The RUC however, with the implicit backing of an exclusively loyalist judiciary, a compliant legal profession and a complacent media, has naturally been attracted to what it sees as a copper-fastened method of increasing the rate of convictions against republican activists, while effectively interning on remand for long periods those it even suspects of republican association.

Even the use of the term 'supergrass' by the media and RUC spokespersons, to describe informers, is cal-



culated to conjure up a vision of criminality such as the British establishment has persistently (and unsuccessfully) tried to associate with republican resistance, and to which the deaths of the ten hunger-strike martyrs in 1981 unequivocally gave the lie.

## Bribes and threats

**E**VER since the torture employed against the 'hooded men' during the internment round-up of August 1971, the British military services have been experimenting with a variety of (and often a blend of) physical brutality and psychological interrogation techniques, designed to comprehensively break down the suspect's will to resist and to increase his liability to acquiesce to his interrogators' demands.

It goes without saying that this has frequently resulted in people 'broken' under interrogation actually incriminating themselves and others in activities in which they have had no part.

Although republicans have been increasingly successful in recent years in



● RUC Special Branchmen and a uniformed colleague are photographed entering Springfield Road barracks, West Belfast

countering these interrogation techniques by correctly adopting a strict policy of absolute silence, the RUC's interrogators have without doubt been well trained to probe for potential psychological weaknesses in those they are questioning and appear to be able in some cases to identify in advance those most likely to succumb. It is this relatively small number of people that the RUC Special Branch endeavours to recruit as informers.

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Once having been recruited, the informer's effectiveness depends on the extent to which his RUC 'handlers' can force him to become reliant on them, and increasingly to 'identify' with them rather than with his own family, friends and community.

In January 1982 in an interview given to *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, the IRA 'went public' on the methods employed by the RUC Special Branch to compel informers using a combination of bribes and threats, and on the IRA's own successes in countering the problems pos-

ed by informers, some of whom had been secretly supplying details of Volunteers, arms and IRA operations over a period of years.

The IRA pointed out that most informers were recruited initially having 'broken' under interrogation and incriminated themselves, in many cases of things they had not even done. In return for non-prosecution the informer began to give information, trapped in the knowledge that his immunity from prosecution could always be revoked if he stopped, and his treachery made public.

To reinforce the informer's dependence on them the RUC 'handlers' regularly paid him small sums of money for pieces of information, gradually debasing him in his own eyes and weakening his sense of identity with his local community. When his information dried up he became, of course, wholly expendable to the RUC.

By the end of 1981 improved recruitment procedures and internal security had succeeded in largely drying up high-grade information to the RUC and British army from this type of source. Over

a fourteen-month period during 1980-1981 the IRA executed six informers and took less drastic action against a number of others. Many of these informers had been cynically used by the RUC to infiltrate the popular-based hunger-strike action committees established in that period, and from that position of trust to spy on republicans.

Nonetheless, recognising that in many cases informers were themselves trapped in a web of fear and shame woven for them by the RUC 'handlers', the IRA announced a two-week amnesty for informers at the end of January 1982 which further stemmed the flow of information from nationalist areas to the RUC.

Faced with the drying up of this vital information about the resistance struggle the RUC changed tactics. Instead of sending informers back into their communities, to provide information maybe over a period of years, the RUC has now decided to keep its handful of informers under 'protective custody', isolated from friends and relatives, bribed with the promise of huge sums of money and immunity from prosecution if they give evidence in court, and threatened with long prison sentences and with their families being 'set up' if they refuse.

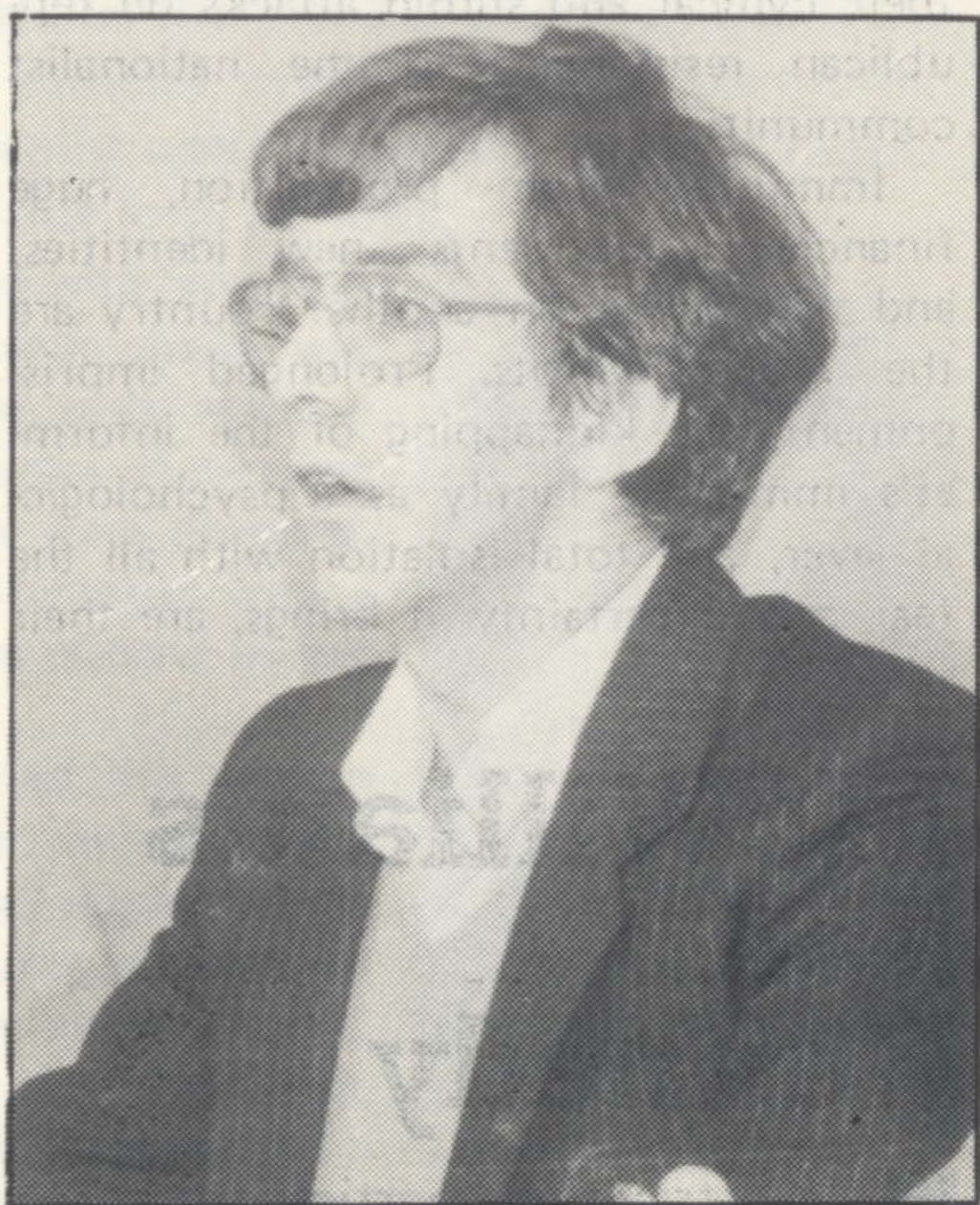
It is not surprising, given this combination of bribes and threats, that the RUC has consistently denied that these informers are promised massive financial inducements to give evidence. RUC Chief Constable John Hermon, for example, has described these paid agents as 'converted terrorists' as part of a general propaganda claim that they are 'conscience-stricken', 'disillusioned with their past life' and acting voluntarily. That of course is a lie.

Person after person released from Castlereagh has revealed that they were offered large sums of money in return for informing.

At a press conference in West Belfast in March 1982, Sean Seamus O'Hara — brother of dead hunger-striker Patsy O'



● RUC CHIEF CONSTABLE JOHN HERMON



● SEAN SEAMUS O'HARA

Hara — stated that the RUC had offered him £50,000 and a new identity in South Africa if he was prepared to give 'Queen's evidence' against people the RUC claimed were members of the INLA. O'Hara claimed that he didn't even know

some of those he was being asked to testify against!

John Carson from Ballymurphy in West Belfast was one of six men imprisoned on the word of an informer, James O'Rawe. O'Rawe subsequently retracted the incriminating statements he had made against the six, and on his release Carson told how he had been offered bribes of up to £50,000 and a new identity "anywhere in the world" if he would incriminate others and turn 'Queen's evidence'.

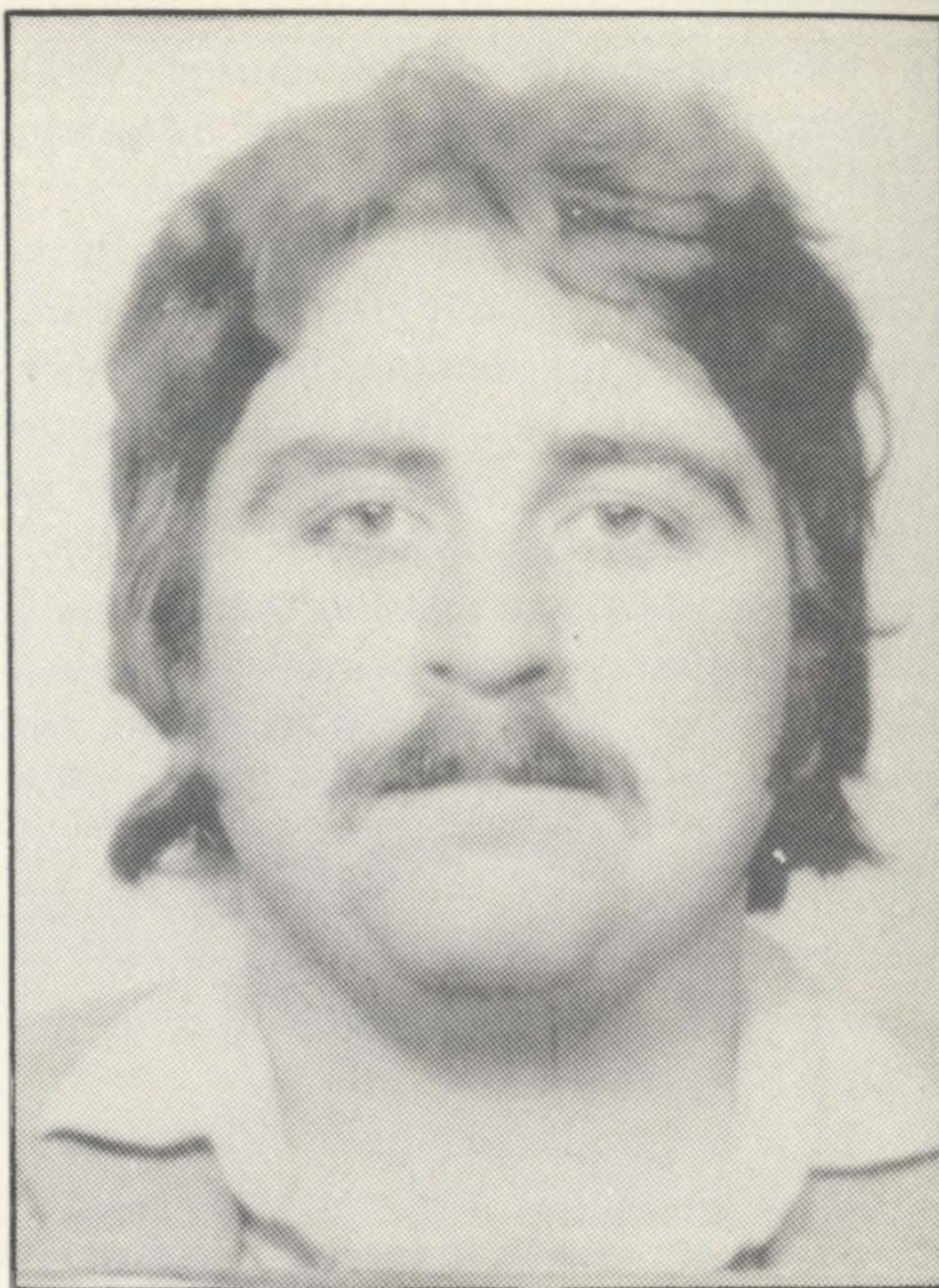
Others who have been interrogated in Castlereagh have been offered staggering sums of £250,000 or asked to 'name their own figure' in return for giving evidence against prominent republicans.

So then, far from informers being a symptom of 'disillusionment' or 'conscience', these initially wretched characters are recruited using the same old carrot-and-stick policy of bribes and threats as the RUC have always used in their cynical and sordid attacks on republican resistance and the nationalist community.

Immunity from prosecution, huge financial inducements, new identities, and new homes in another country are the RUC's carrots. Prolonged imprisonment, the kidnapping of the informer's immediate family as a psychological lever, and total isolation with all the fear and uncertainty it brings, are their sticks.

## McWilliams and Kennedy

**T**WO trials in particular, based on the informer evidence of Stephen McWilliams and James Kennedy, were to provide a 'dry run' for the RUC in the tactical switch from running informers for long periods of time to their new



● JAMES KENNEDY

attempt to use them to obtain convictions in court.

In March 1980 four Belfast men — Martin Meehan, Chris Doherty, Patrick Burnside and Kevin Mulgrew — came to trial charged with conspiring to kidnap Stephen McWilliams, a self-confessed petty thief who had for some time been in the pay of the British army in return for watching the movements of specific individuals, including Meehan.

Despite the controversial and doubtful nature of McWilliams' evidence, his own mercenary and devious character, and the lack of any corroboration or admission from the accused to supplement his claims, Meehan, Doherty and Burnside were convicted and sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment. Only Kevin Mulgrew, who had faced a number of RUC frame-ups in previous years and was to face others (*see inset*), was acquitted.

After the trial Stephen McWilliams was taken from the six counties by the British army and has remained in hiding ever since. But the world of informers

is a treacherous one in every respect, and despite all the promises he received McWilliams was soon discarded by the British army once he had served his purpose.

In November 1982 McWilliams wrote to the *Sunday World* confessing that he had been bribed to tell lies under oath. He said he was writing now because he had read of the RUC's use of informers to put men and women behind bars, and because he regretted what he himself had done. *"What I am trying to do is to warn people like (Christopher) Black that life will be so hard for him after the Brits are finished with him. I*



● MARTIN MEEHAN

## Interning by remand

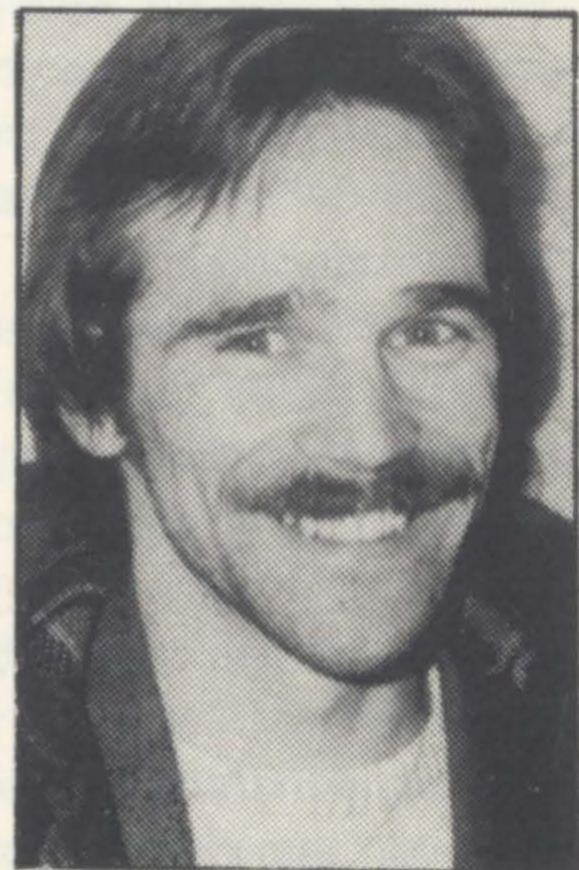
**T**HE extraordinary case of 27-year-old North Belfast man Kevin Mulgrew provides a thorough indictment of the manner in which the RUC manipulate an already bankrupt judicial system, and in particular the manner in which they have cynically used informers to hold republicans and supporters in jail on remand for long periods.

Mulgrew was arrested in 1973 and charged with 'attempted membership of the IRA', but this ludicrous charge was speedily dropped. In October 1976 he was again arrested and held for five months on remand on charges of carrying out a bomb attack. Once more the charges were dropped. A third time, in November 1977, he was charged with a bombing and was held for fifteen months on remand before being acquitted at his trial in February 1979.

Five months later he was once again arrested, this time on the informer McWilliams' evidence, but despite being acquitted at the trial in March 1980 he was not released until after a third trial on October 24th of that year in which he was acquitted of possession of a weapon with intent.

Yet despite having faced no less than five frame-ups, spending almost three years out of seven in custody *without ever having been convicted*, Kevin Mulgrew was once again arrested in November 1981 on the evidence of another bribed informer, Christopher Black, and held in custody in what for him had become most definitely a process of internment by remand.

Unusual as Mulgrew's case is, however, his misfortune is by no means a unique experience among those nationalists who refuse to bend the knee to Britain's occupation.



● KEVIN MULGREW



● British soldiers outside Crumlin Road jail examine the scene shortly after eight republicans (including seven the informer Kennedy had testified against) blasted their way to freedom, in June 1981

*say to anyone thinking of doing this terrible thing: DON'T. Your life will be a torturous one. You are only a fool and you are being used. From I told deliberate lies on Martin Meehan I have not been able to live with myself."*

The McWilliams trial was followed by that of James Kennedy in September 1980. Kennedy, a 23-year-old taxi driver from Andersonstown in West Belfast, gave 'Queen's evidence' against twelve Belfast men, some of whom were charged with conspiring to kidnap him, and others with taking part in a number of M60 machine gun ambushes.

Unfortunately for the Crown prosecution, on the day before they were due to be sentenced, seven of the M60 defendants successfully blasted their way out of Crumlin Road jail at gunpoint!

In the event, none of those against whom Kennedy's informer testimony was the sole uncorroborated evidence were convicted. Nonetheless, in both this case and that of McWilliams, the pre-

cedent of using uncorroborated informer testimony as the basis for possible conviction had been established without uproar from either the judiciary or the legal profession as a whole. The RUC were sufficiently encouraged to continue with the tactic even in the face of further set-backs.

## The McCormick affair

**T**HE third trial in which the RUC relied on the sole uncorroborated evidence of a paid informer involved, ironically, an RUC sergeant in the dock charged with murder — though it was a fellow RUC officer he was accused of killing.

The trial of 44-year-old Special Branch



● CHARLES McCORMICK

sergeant Charles McCormick hinged almost entirely on the evidence of a self-confessed RUC informer, Anthony O'Doherty, who had been involved early on with the 'Sticks' and later moved on the periphery of republican circles for a while. McCormick had recruited O'Doherty as an informer in 1971, and between then and 1977 the two built up a close personal interdependence.

However O'Doherty's real usefulness as an informer declined sharply when another Special Branchman, captured by the IRA in 1973, 'blew his cover', and from then on McCormick and O'Doherty conspired to keep their status high in RUC eyes largely by concocting information and even by mounting mock attacks on UDR and RUC patrols in the South Derry and North Antrim areas to keep the temperature hot!

(At O'Doherty's own trial later on, and again when he gave evidence at McCormick's trial in early 1982, O'Doherty stated that he had been supplied with a variety of weapons by the RUC and British army — which he

held 'illegally' and later used for mock attacks and robberies — and had received in-depth training in intelligence, surveillance and unarmed combat techniques from undercover British army units. None of these claims was denied by the RUC.)

According to O'Doherty's evidence, he and McCormick also engaged in a series of bank and post office robberies from 1974 onwards, in order to finance their lifestyles, and in 1977 McCormick shot dead RUC sergeant Joseph Campbell outside Cushendall RUC barracks because he had grown suspicious about the pair's extraordinary activities.

After the killing McCormick and O'Doherty drifted apart, and it was only after O'Doherty had 'broken' under interrogation at Castlereagh in August 1980 and had been charged and sentenced to eighteen years' imprisonment that McCormick was brought to trial.

Announcing his reserved judgement, however, on April 2nd 1982 in Belfast crown court, Justice Murray — to the embarrassment of the RUC and British government — acquitted McCormick of Campbell's killing and of 22 other charges against him for which O'Doherty's informer testimony was the only evidence.

McCormick was found guilty only on four counts, related to the robbery of the Northern Bank at Cushendall in 1974, for which there was corroborating evidence, and sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment.

Describing the case as "*most extraordinary if not unique*" Justice Murray stated: "**My firm conclusion is that it would be highly dangerous to convict the accused on any of the charges against him unless the evidence is supported by clear and compelling corroboration.**"

Murray went on to say that O'Doherty had been an accomplice in all the charges against Charles McCormick, and that accordingly he had kept in mind the established rule of judicial practice

that it was dangerous to convict on the evidence of such a person.

In the Christopher Black informer trial, almost all the charges against 38 people referred to activities in which Black himself claimed to have been fully involved. Again, in almost all cases his informer testimony provided the only, and uncorroborated, evidence.

Summing up in the McCormick trial, Justice Murray referred to the fact that the RUC inspector in charge of the case had made literally dozens of visits to Anthony O'Doherty in prison, and he said that he thought this blatant 'schooling' of the sole prosecution witness left the RUC's actions open to criticism.

How much more 'open to criticism' it is that the RUC now completely isolate their informers in 'protective custody', where in most cases even their families are unable to visit them, right up until the day on which they give evidence in court (the preliminary enquiry being dispensed with altogether when expedient). The RUC now have, and have fully used, unlimited scope and '24 hours a day' control in which to brief and 'school' informers about their evidence and how to present it, and in which to employ sophisticated psychological methods to supplant the informer's view of reality with an alternative 'reality' moulded by the RUC.

Embarrassing as the McCormick affair was to the RUC, it did not deter them from their belief that the Orange judiciary in the North, prompted by the British establishment and aided by the silence of an acquiescent media and legal profession, was moving towards a general acceptance of the admissibility of informer evidence as the basis for a conviction.

The next testing ground for the RUC's belief was the case against 38 Belfast people on the evidence of the Ardoyne informer, Christopher Black.



**T**HE McCormick/O'Doherty case was the first of the current series of informer trials to involve the use in court of a paid agent against his accomplice.

But the prosecution of McCormick, an RUC Special Branchman, was not an example of the RUC voluntarily weeding out a 'bad apple' within their ranks. In fact, despite McCormick having allegedly committed the 'unpardonable crime' of killing a fellow RUC officer, it was not until almost three years after Anthony O'Doherty first made statements implicating McCormick in robberies that the RUC man was suspended, on full pay.

Questioned in Castlereagh in September 1977 while himself under suspicion for robberies and extortion, O'Doherty said McCormick had taken part in attacks on RUC and UDR patrols as well as robberies, but his allegations were not investigated. Not until August 1980 when he 'broke' in Castlereagh and was charged on 46 counts were his claims about McCormick's involvement heeded.

That this was not an isolated instance is well shown by the subsequent testimony of UVF informer Clifford McKeown. McKeown, granted immunity from prosecution for his part in two brutal civilian killings, implicated in his original statements three serving RUC officers as being actively involved in UVF activities in the Portadown, Lurgan and Craigavon areas.

Despite the fact that all McKeown's other testimony was acted on by the RUC, and 28 alleged UVF men subsequently appeared in court, these three RUC men were never officially questioned, charged or subjected to internal disciplinary proceedings, and are presumably still on duty in County Armagh.

## Isolation and control

**A**FTER a person has 'broken' under interrogation and agrees to turn 'Queen's evidence' against men and women the RUC wish to put behind prison bars, his lifestyle undergoes a radical and startling change based on total RUC control.

A number of informers who subsequently retracted their incriminating statements and refused to give evidence have revealed the extent of that RUC control on both their own lives and those of their closest family.

One of those informers, County Armagh man Sean Mallon, who finally retracted his statements at a preliminary enquiry into charges against those he

had incriminated, in October 1982, stated that after his arrest and interrogation at Gough RUC barracks in Armagh, he and his girlfriend Patricia Hughes (who had also agreed to give evidence) were taken to Bangor, County Down, for two weeks and from there were spirited away to a police cadet training school in Guildford, Surrey.

There they were kept under surveillance by a team of six RUC detectives — a different pair each week — who lived in a house next door. The two houses were part of an estate for police cadets and their families inside the training school complex.

During this period they were not allowed to make phone calls, their mail was read, they could only buy English newspapers, and they were constantly accompanied by RUC detectives.

*'We were with them (the RUC) all the time. We were allowed to go to Mass but not allowed to go to confession —*



● Patricia Hughes, Sean Mallon and Fr Des Wilson at a press conference to highlight the RUC's psychological pressure on people to inform

*the RUC men said they had to hear what we were saying. We were completely isolated except for RUC detectives. We bought a radio but that was taken off us. We felt that the house was bugged. We had to pass notes to each other, or wait until we were out in the open and a short distance in front of the police before we could talk."*

So much then for RUC Chief Constable John Hermon's description of informers as 'converted terrorists'! Mallon's experiences indicate the reality that having initially persuaded someone to inform in return for immunity from prosecution, with the threat of lengthy imprisonment should he refuse, the RUC must then endeavour to totally isolate their informer, bringing him solely into contact with RUC personnel and RUC psychological propaganda, and eventually to complete this isolation with the promise of large cash pay-offs in return for convictions.

In Mallon's case RUC control was broken before the process could be com-

pleted. When he appeared to give evidence at a preliminary enquiry he re-established contact for the first time in months with members of his family and friends in the court.

The following day the defence counsel for those men Mallon and Patricia Hughes had incriminated produced affidavits from the couple in which they claimed their statements were made under duress while in RUC custody, and in return for inducements offered to them.

Thus two other informers, faced with the suffering of their families and relatives in open court, and freed momentarily from RUC psychological pressure, retracted their earlier statements.

Sean Mallon's experiences while in RUC hands coincided in many respects with what happened to informers Jackie Goodman and Clifford McKeown.

McKeown, a loyalist UVF informer, was initially held in Thiepval British army barracks in Lisburn and then stayed at a number of expensive hotels in London while a team of twelve RUC

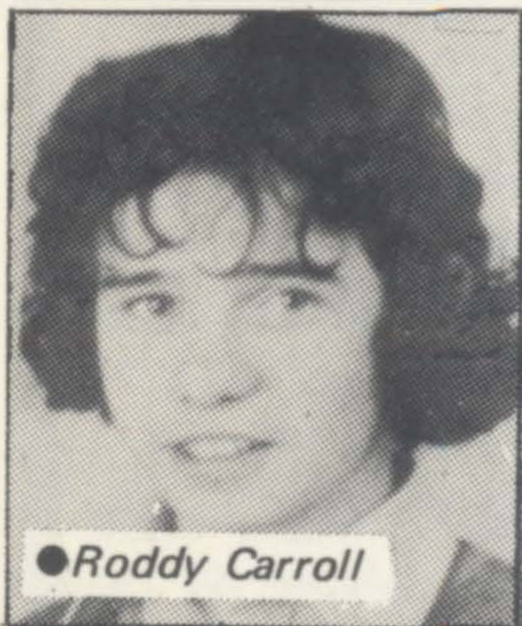
detectives guarded him. He too retracted his earlier statements and refused to give evidence shortly after the opening of the preliminary enquiry into charges against those he had incriminated.

Jackie Goodman, an IRSP informer responsible for the arrest of 36 people, also retracted in 1982, this time before the case reached the preliminary enquiry stage.

Goodman said that it had been fear of going back to prison, plus the inducements of a 'new life' and immunity from prosecution, that had inspired him to give false evidence against a number of people, and certainly not because of any new-found belief in the RUC! After agreeing to go 'Queen's evidence' Goodman was taken to an hotel on the Antrim coast with his wife and children under RUC guard.

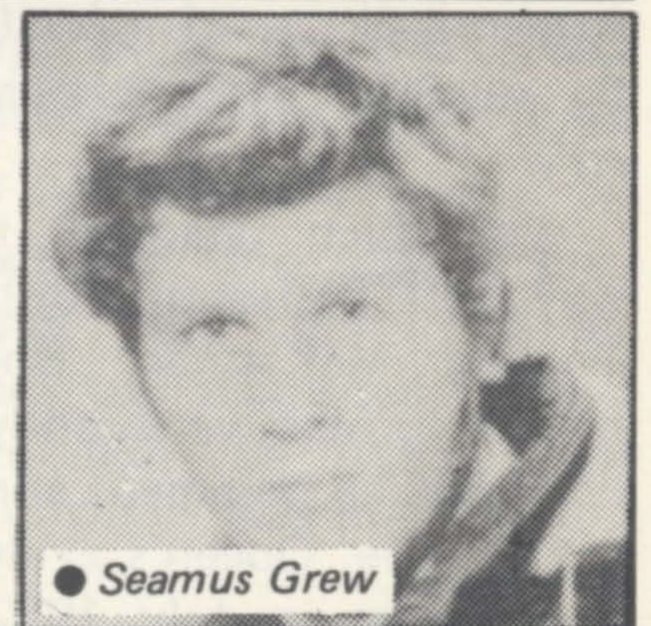
Over a three-week period they stayed at ten different hotels whilst every ounce of information and false accusation was milked out of Jackie Goodman. Then, like Mallon, they were moved to a house in the Sussex village of Battle. Three RUC men moved in next door and watched their every move.

This tactic of isolation is designed to maintain maximum psychological pressure on the informer. Disorientated, surrounded by Special Branch interrogators and intimidating RUC pressure, his total physical and psychological vulnerability is exploited to the full. Under such stress he becomes open to suggestion, and after a period of time in such conditions becomes largely unable to distinguish reality from what his interrogators tell him is reality.



● Roddy Carroll

## A summary execution



● Seamus Grew

**T**HE clearest demonstration of the cynical way the RUC view the role of the informer, as a straightforward mechanism for imprisoning suspected republican activists and supporters that they would otherwise have no evidence against, is provided by the fate of County Armagh men Roddy Carroll and his friend Seamus Grew.

On October 17th 1982, Roddy Carroll and Seamus' brother, Oliver, were both released from custody after the informer Sean Mallon retracted incriminating statements against them.

Exactly eight weeks later, on December 12th, Roddy Carroll and Seamus Grew were driving home. They were spotted by an RUC Divisional Mobile Support Unit, who pursued their car, overtook and stopped it, and cold-bloodedly gunned both men dead as they got out. Neither man was armed or made any attempt to escape.

Angry that Roddy Carroll had evaded their clutches when Mallon retracted, the RUC did not wait long to exact their revenge. Having failed to put him 'out of circulation' one way, the other face of the RUC's 'rule of law' — 'judicial' murder — did the job just the same.

# The Annex— an extension of Castlereagh

IN some cases, when informers have retracted their incriminating statements relatively soon after making them (long before the case reaches the preliminary enquiry stage), and so have relinquished the RUC's 'immunity from prosecution' bribe and cash inducements, they have nevertheless continued to be held in total isolation from other political prisoners — in the 'D' wing annex of Belfast's Crumlin Road jail — where they remain under extraordinary RUC supervision and constant pressure to resume their previous informer role.

Two such prisoners treated in this way were Belfastmen Bobby Brown and Tommy McKiernan. Both men were held in 'protective custody' in the Crumlin Road jail basement annex after agreeing to give 'Queen's evidence' following their arrest in July 1982. After assessing their position and the cynical use the RUC were making of them both men retracted. Yet, despite assurances from republican remand prisoners that Brown and McKiernan were in no danger from them, the two men's repeated requests to be transferred out of solitary confinement in the annex to associate freely with other remand prisoners in 'C' wing were rejected out of hand.

McKiernan took his case to the Belfast High Court, maintaining that the prison governor was holding him involuntarily in the annex and that he wished to be transferred to 'C' wing. He lost his case, a High Court judge arguing ludicrously that McKiernan was being separated

## LETTER FROM BOBBY BROWN

I was led to believe I was to put the community right about the events concerning my wife's disappearance which Sinn Féin has & there string of anti republican followers seem very concerned about. I am sure she is being looked after alright — better than what I was in Castlereagh. — I am being held hostage in the basement wing of Crumlin Road Prison by the British Government now from the 16th July in the hope that I take their rotten deal. I did not ask to be put down here but on a number of occasions have asked to be removed to the C wing and I was turned down. The requests go through the governor of the prison, answer comes back through the RUC. I am now refusing to see RUC as they use the chance to interview me hoping again that there isolation policy [worked out between RUC and prison Authorities] leaves you wanting to see them. My lawyer has taken the governor to court over the matter and has ~~worked back~~ worked back. I was in the same position as myself. Isolation is in the contravention of the European Declaration of Human Rights which Britain are a member of. So it speaks for itself?? We have made it clear that we will not be going witness against anyone and that our statement will be getting withdrawn but the D.P.P. does not seem to care they are at the minute Sinn Féin made a statement in the House of Commons showing concern about the rights of my wife and on the same day signed a statement holding me here for another month.

I would like to say that the RUC and all those figure heads are only using and abusing my wife's name against us — a FA for their propaganda aims. The ball is in the RUC's hands.  
Bobby Brown  
Crumlin Road Jail

from other remand prisoners 'for his own protection'.

It was not in fact until March 1983 — more than seven months after they were first incarcerated in the annex — that the prison governor was forced to transfer Brown and McKiernan to 'C' wing, after Sinn Féin enquiries into the case publicly exposed the RUC's role in dictating where and how remand prisoners were held in custody.

Exactly how the RUC have used the solitary confinement facilities in the annex to maintain psychological pressure on

informers, and to pressurise some who have or are on the point of retracting, has been spelt out in detail by remand prisoners since the transfer of Brown and McKiernan.

There are ten cells in the annex, each designed in such a way as to make contact between cells impossible. The RUC have continual access to the three visiting rooms in the annex and visit prisoners held there at any time of the day or night. There is no time limit to the visits which are arranged at the prisoner's request, through a prison warder directly linked up with the RUC Special Branch. The RUC also supply televisions to each of the cells holding a prisoner.

The prison warders on duty in the annex maintained constant pressure on Brown and McKiernan to go ahead and give 'Queen's evidence', even after they had retracted their statements. "*Get a short sentence and serve it in England,*" was their usual enticement. An RUC Chief Inspector was continually on hand to talk to both men should either have seemed at any time even partly influenced by this never-ending 'persuasion'.

At one remand hearing in Belfast, after Brown had retracted and refused to accept any more RUC visits in the annex, he was approached by two men claiming to be solicitors. It was only after they offered him immunity if he agreed once more to give 'Queen's evidence' that he realised they were Special Branchmen.

Regular enticements to those who have agreed to give 'Queen's evidence' and who are being held in the annex include being taken out occasionally by the RUC to an hotel for dinner and drinks, and if requested an hour or two in company with a woman.

Everything — food, visits, conversations — is continually monitored in the annex, with the information being forwarded to the Special Branch at Castlereagh. In fact the prison warders act throughout as the eyes, ears and whispering

tongue of the RUC.

The power and influence of the RUC in this operation is indicative of the involuntary pressure being exerted on prisoners in an effort to persuade them to continue with, or return to giving, their incriminating statements. In the RUC's 'dirty war' of informers the annex has become no less than an extension of Castlereagh.

## The Bill of Indictment

**A**FTER the chaotic ending of the Clifford McKeown and Sean Mallon affairs, in which both informers retracted their earlier incriminating statements during noisy and emotional preliminary enquiries, it became clear to the RUC that their informer strategy was in real danger of collapse.

The very fact that informers at preliminary hearings were confronted by defendants and by distressed family members meant that the RUC's total control of the informer was immediately weakened.

Desperately anxious to prevent this collapse of their strategy, the RUC — in collusion with the Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr Barry Shaw, and the British Attorney-General, Sir Michael Havers — resurrected an almost forgotten legal manoeuvre, the voluntary Bill of Indictment, and effectively reinterpreted its powers in such a way as to enable the DPP to dispense with the customary preliminary enquiry.

In practice this means that the informer does not have to be produced publicly until he gives evidence at the trial itself, prolonging his isolation and allowing the RUC to complete their psychological stranglehold.

Previously a Bill of Indictment had

only been used after a preliminary enquiry and after the defendants had been committed for trial.

The Bill of Indictment robs the accused of the opportunity of having the evidence against him assessed and probed by his defence counsel prior to the trial itself, as well as losing the opportunity of a decision at the preliminary enquiry that the accused had no case to answer.

One Irish lawyer stated (*Irish News*, 27/10/82): "Once proceedings have been initiated they should be continued in open court on the principle that the accused is entitled to a public preliminary hearing and the public is entitled to be satisfied, so that justice is seen to be done.

"Clearly, this is all the more important having regard to the Diplock non-jury system which involves major limitations on the rights of the accused person and also involves a major departure from the normal principles of criminal law."

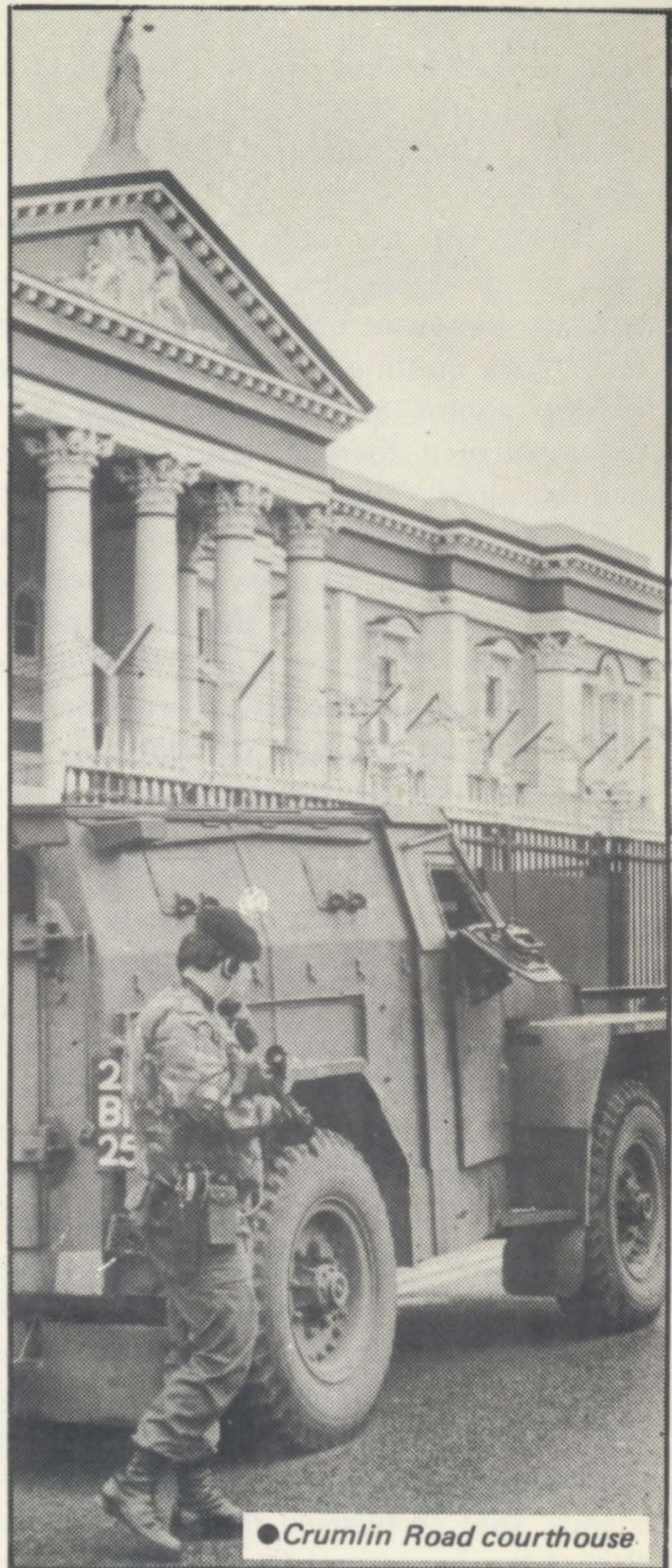
He continued: "The most unfavourable impression created by this bizarre scenario in the Black case is in the role of the prosecuting authorities. The law states that one must regard the evidence of an accomplice against fellow participants in offences with utmost caution and scrutiny. The prosecuting authorities in this case have sought to protect just such a witness and to screen him from the ordeal of proceedings in open court. The accused do not enjoy such luxuries."

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In reality, those accused by informers have lost what little legal rights remained to them in the six-county courts.

The response from the legal profession to the further dilution of the already much-diminished legal process in the occupied North has been as predictable as it is anaemic.

On October 15th 1982 a newly-formed body, the Criminal Bar Association, announced that representations



would be made to the Lord Chancellor's office, the Incorporated Law Society of Northern Ireland and the office of the DPP to express grave disapproval of the use of the Bill of Indictment and to demand that the practice be stopped immediately if legal representation was to be continued in the courts.

The Association said it would be consulting its members to ascertain whether they felt they would be performing any useful function in representing their clients if Bills of Indictment

were to become normal procedure. However, the legal profession, with the precedent of their acceptance of the Diplock courts and all the other erosions of judicial process that have occurred in the North in recent years, has failed to act.

While lawyers huff and puff occasionally they remain part and parcel of a corrupt and cynical judicial system that is built upon sectarianism and class privilege. They accept unquestioningly all the myths surrounding the legal profession. They believe that the six-county judiciary is independent and impartial. They consider the law to be neutral and fair. They have watched the introduction of various repressive emergency laws, and apart from the odd dissenting voice there has been little or no opposition to these frequent departures from hitherto-established legal 'principles'.

And so at present there seems to be no hope of any meaningful action from lawyers on the informer issue. They have remained silent while the British government has systematically dismantled all basic human rights in the North. If there is to be active opposition to this latest tactic it will not come from that quarter.

## Immunity

**T**HE legality of the RUC offering immunity from prosecution for self-confessed activities, as an enticement to informers, has yet to be challenged by lawyers, the media or the churches.

The attraction of such an offer to informers, and the temptation to concoct or 'doctor' evidence if necessary to maximise the involvement of others and to minimise the informer's own admitted involvement, is obvious when the nature of some of the activities for which immunity has been granted is considered.

UVF informer Clifford McKeown admitted his responsibility for the sectarian slaying of 20-year-old Catholic, Peadar Fagan in Lurgan, while being accused by those he had incriminated of the sexual attack and killing of 9-year-old Jennifer Cardy in Ballinderry, County Antrim.

Joseph Bennett, a staff officer in the UVF, admitted his part in the killing of 67-year-old postmistress, Miss Maureen McCann, during a robbery of Killinchy post office in County Down. Both informers received immunity.

The RUC now believe that they can pick and choose the informers that will be of greatest use to them in securing convictions. They can offer, and then withdraw, the promise of immunity to those under interrogation. This has resulted in some instances in men incriminating themselves under the mistaken belief that they had secured immunity for their actions.

William Calvert, a defendant in the Clifford McKeown case, claimed in court that the RUC had offered him immunity in return for information about his co-accused's involvement in UVF activities. Under the impression that his evidence would be used as corroboration of McKeown's testimony, Calvert signed a number of incriminating statements. The next day an RUC detective told Calvert that he would be remanded in custody for a few months and that he should plead 'guilty' when charged. Calvert was subsequently brought to trial and pleaded in vain that he had not realised when he signed statements admitting his own involvement that he would be put on trial instead of giving prosecution evidence.

Similar tactics have been revealed in other informer cases, notably in that of Christopher Black.

It is clear that the RUC will offer 'deals' to those it considers amenable to turning informer. There is no proof however that the RUC will keep the

promises they make. The evidence suggests otherwise. If necessity dictates, or circumstances allow, they are only too ready to withdraw immunity and throw a totally demoralised victim to the wolves.



## Echoes of internment

**O**NE sadly neglected aspect of the whole informer affair has been the social and emotional upheaval experienced by the families of those in prison, echoing the trauma of internment in the 1970s.

As many as 300 men and women have been interned on remand on the testimony of these paid agents. There are more people held in custody today on the evidence of these informers than were interned at the end of the first week of Brian Faulkner's August 1971 round-up.

In addition to many informer victims currently imprisoned in 'A' wing of Crumlin Road jail, the whole of the jail's 'C' wing is now populated by those remanded on the word of informers.

The consequent financial hardship and emotional distress suffered by the families is similar to that experienced by the relatives of the internees. But unfortunately today's relatives do not receive the same degree of support as did the internees' families.



● Josie Moore, whose 20-year-old daughter, Catherine, is charged with three murders and one attempted murder on the basis of evidence given by Derry informer Raymond Gilmour

Internment — with all the international opprobrium associated with it — could be openly opposed by the Catholic hierarchy, the SDLP, sections of the media and international humanitarian and civil liberties groups without fundamentally compromising their relationship with the British government. By contrast, the families of those interned on remand today have received no support from any section of the 'caring' middle-class.

And with the exception of the Republican Movement they have been ignored, and left angry, helpless and frustrated.

An important element of any initiative geared to highlighting the informer issue must be the ending of the real isolation experienced by relatives.

# Conclusion

**T**HE use of paid informers by the RUC in their present role is only one altered mode within the unchanging nature of British repression of the nationalist people in their legitimate desire for a free Ireland. It is a tactic which, while it offers dramatic short-term gains in terms of putting limited numbers of republicans and supporters behind prison bars, is most directly aimed at striking a deadly demoralising blow to that sore-pressed community.

In that the British establishment has made a critical mistake that can be and will be exposed. Just as the solidarity of the nationalist people with the resistance resulted in the defeat of the 1970s tactic of internment — despite the trauma and upheaval it caused in so many homes — so the British will find that nationalist solidarity with the Republican Movement cannot be undermined by the 1980s tactic of informers.

Indeed, their use reflects the RUC's total inability to gain even a foothold of support within the nationalist community. Faced with an absence of voluntary collaboration from sections of nationalists against the liberation struggle, the RUC has been compelled to resort to a mixture of bribes, psychological pressure and fear to extract a degree of collaboration from men 'broken' and weakened under intensive interrogation.

Even so, the retraction by most of those informers and the embarrassing exposure of the methods used by the RUC in recruiting them, has led the RUC to make drastic assaults on the already pitiable remnants of what passes for 'law' in the six counties, in an effort to prevent the collapse of this sordid tactic. In one case — that involving



● The silence of Bishop Cahal Daly and the Catholic hierarchy makes them as morally culpable as the RUC

Roddy Carroll and Seamus Grew — they have employed summary execution when even their informers failed them.

Those who have connived, by their silence, their concurrence or their indifference, with the RUC are just as morally culpable for the suffering that informers have brought in their wake. They include the constitutional nationalist politicians, the Northern judiciary and legal profession, the Catholic hierarchy and the media.

The British establishment is engaged in a life-or-death struggle with Irish republicanism, and will employ any tactic (however repugnant and cynical) in its search for a victory that will continue to elude it.

In contrast, the Republican Movement has the support of the oppressed nation-



● The solidarity of the nationalist people with the Republican Movement defeated the 1970s tactic of internment — that solidarity will not be undermined by the 1980s tactic of informers

alist people within an irreformable Orange state. That support can be mobilised in a meaningful way to combat the use of informers and expose it in the same way that internment, torture and criminalisation have all been progressively highlighted and made less effective within the catalogue of repression.

And one thing above all else remains certain. However the RUC attempt to gloss the motivations of their paid in-

formers, those who accept 'thirty pieces of silver' and freedom for themselves in exchange for the imprisonment, death and suffering of others, can never expect to be viewed with anything but outright contempt and odium by the Irish people. They will spend the rest of their lives looking over their shoulder.



North Belfast informer Christopher Black, whose informer evidence resulted in charges against 38 people, and who testified in court in January 1983. For his treachery Black received immunity from prosecution, a new identity and home in a foreign country, and a huge cash pay-off. Yet, for all of this, his new life will be a worried and uncertain one, forever 'on the run' from any friend of Irish freedom



Castlereagh RUC barracks