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— THE R.U.C. —

The foundation of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) in 1920 is intimately connected with the partitioning of Ireland and the setting up of the Six County Northern state. Their predecessors, the 32 County Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), had been the "eyes and ears" of Dublin Castle, the centre of British administration in Ireland.
The RUC retained this function and adapted several more. They were drawn mainly from the "loyal" section of the population with the result that the majority of their number has been protestant. Thus they became identified with one section of the people - the protestant Loyalists - and came to see as their enemy the other side - the catholic Nationalists. Their role became one, not merely of enforcing the law, but of keeping the nationalist "minority" from destroying the state, the old story of croppy boy lie down. To do this ordinary law was suspended and a Special Powers Act, which included internment without trial, suspension of habeas corpus, entry of homes without search warrants, flogging, etc, was passed. These powers were used until very recently exclusively against the Nationalist people and the group which enforced was the RUC.
It could be said that the RUC was the private army of the Unionist party since they were under the direct control of the Minister of Home Affairs who was always a Unionist.

The nature of the RUC was clearly shown during the Civil Rights agitation of the late sixties. In any confrontation between Civil Rights marchers and Loyalists the RUC invariably had their backs to the Loyalists and faced the Loyalists. Almost all the violence of this period came from the RUC - the batoning to death of Samuel Devenney in Derry, the kicking to death of Mr McCluskey in Dungiven after a Civil Rights march in the town, the murders in the Belfast pogroms of August 1969, including that of 9 year old Patrick Rooney of Divis Flats in Belfast. Apart from causing deaths and serious injuries, the RUC violently broke up many peaceful Civil Rights marches. In the Burntollet ambush of January-1969 they collaborated with Loyalists, including many "B" Specials, in viciously attacking a small group of students marching from Belfast to Derry in support of the Civil Rights movement.

Because of these crimes (for which no-one has ever been charged) these sectarian gangsters have been kicked out of Nationalist areas all over the Six Counties. They can enter these areas only at the risk of sudden death.

The British have been gradually equipping and training the RUC in the hope that they can withdraw their troops and hand over security to the local "security forces". A massive propaganda campaign has been carried out with the aim of convincing us that the RUC is reformed and non-sectarian. There have even been some RUC men including two sergeants, who have been charged with murder, attempted murder, kidnapping and causing explosions. This propaganda does not wash with the anti-imperialist working class. The RUC who have been arrested represent only the tip of the ice-berg. Their conduct during the 10th anniversary commemoration march of the Burntollet ambush (see within) where they ruthlessly attacked the marchers with rifles and boots revealed that they had not changed one iota. They were the same corrupt, sectarian police of 10 years ago. All they had learned was to attack unarmed people when the TV cameras weren't there. They still go unpunished for the dozens of cases of torture doc umented by Amnest International.

Until the Irish working class smash the Northern Orange state and the bourgeois republic in the South and build a 32 County Workers Socialist Republic, forces like the RUC will continue to exist to defend capitalism and imperialism.





BURNTOLLET COMMEMORATION MARCH ATTACKED BY RUC AND LOYALIST GUNMAN

A march from Toome to Burntollet bridge in Co Derry was attacked on three separate occasions by the RUC Special Patrol Group and by a Loyalist gunman, Democratic Unionist Party (Paisley's party) ex-Convention member and Councillor "Black Bob" Overend of Bellaghy. The RUC, yielding to local Loyalist pressur e, had banned the 40 mile march from the predominantly Republican areas of Bellaghy and Claudy and part of Maghera. The attacks took as the marchers defied the ban and tried to reach Bellaghy across the fields, and on an isolated stretch of road near the Glenshane Pass.

The march, organised by the United Burntollet Commemoration Committee, which consisted of different Socialist and Republican groups, was to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Burntollet ambush in January 1969. The ambush 10 years ago took place during a 4 day march from Belfast to Derry organised then by the Peoples Democracy, a mainly student group at that time. The march had been organised during a political "lull" when the Prime Minister, Captain Terence O'Neill, was attempting to win support for his policies among those who were supporting the Civil Rights Movement. The purpose of the march was to bring out more clearly the sectarian and repressive nature of the Orange state. Throughout the march the students were harassed by right-wing Loyalists with the collaboration of the RUC, culminating in the RUC leadingthe marchers into a carefully prepared ambush at Burntollet bridge. This attack later became known simply as the Burntollet Ambush. The RUC did nothing to protect the marchers many of whom were seriously injured with spiked clubs and stones. Photographs were taken which showed the RUC fraternising with the attackers many of whom were later identified as "B" Specials (Protestant police reserve recruited exclusively from the Orange Order). This unprovoked attack proved to many that the RUC and the sectarian Orange state could not be reformed.

THe original march was based on the demands of the Civil Rights Movement, especially, "one man, one vote" and the abolition of the Special Powers Act. The commemoration march was held around the much clearer demands of: an end to all repressive legislation; political status now; and, most importantly, British withdrawal from Ireland. However Provisional Sinn Fein publicly denounced the march on the grounds that it had been filed for to the RUC. The filing for the march was purely a tactical move and in fact the bans imposed by the RUC were ignored. The huge success of the march and the fact that thousands of Provisional supporters joined in showed how narrow was Sinn Fein's attitude in this case.

FIRST DAY: TOOME to MAGHERA.

About 200 people set out on the Friday morning from Toomebridge. The RUC were present but during most of the first leg of the march they limited their presence to a land-rover at the head of the marchers. The trouble began as the column of marchers approached the mainly catholic town of Bellaghy. The crossroads were blocked by heavily armed RUC in riot gear, so the marchers, including old men and women, decided to make a detour through the fields. After clambering over bridges and fences and rivers for about 2 miles evading the black uniformed RUC, they finally came in sight of Bellaghy village.

It was at this point that Robert Overend, DUP councillor, ex-convention member and member of the RUC Reserve, produced his legally held guns, first of all a rifle, which the Ruc took off him, rather gently, and then a hand gun. Overend then attempted to murder some of the marchers by discharging the pistol. It is still not known whether Overend is being charged with attempted murder. The liklihood is that there will be no charge, since Overend was let off scot free after attempting to murder catholics in Toome in 1977.

After this the RUC attacked the marchers to prevent them entering the town and in the scuffles several marchers were badly beaten and 2 were arrested. Eventually the marchers held a sit-down protest one field away from the hall where there were refreshments. Immediatly the RUC terror squad, the Special Patrol Group surrounded them. However, feeling that the point had been made, the marchers continued the rest of their journey.

However from this point the SPG completely surrounded the marchers in order to prevent them from deviating from the route, the RUC route. Each cop was armed with a pistol and most carried rifles and machine guns. This was to attack the marchers more easily and not to protect them.

AS the march approached Gulladuff, after a detour which doubled the length of the journey, dozens of people from the countryside joined the marchers or applauded as they passed their farms. Finally the marchers reached Maghera,the first nights stop. Since it was already dark, it was decided not to oppose the police ban through part of the town. Againthe detour added 2 or 3 miles to the already weary marchers route. Again the local people extended a magnificent hospitality, providing refreshments and accomodation in the local GAA hall.

SECOND DAY: MAGHERA TO DUNGIVEN

The new tactics of the RUC were evident right from the start of the second leg of the jouney. The marchers took the shorter road leading to Dungiven and immediatly the nazi-style police attacked them with rifle butts, fists and boots. A 50 year old man was seriusly injured after being struck on the face with a rifle-butt. After a short time in hospital he re-joined the march. The RUC refused to allow the first aid men to examine him.

Eventually the march was pulled together again and continued towards the bleak country of the Sperrin Mountains. It was on this stretch when the T.V. cameras were absent, that the RUC engineered their next attack. Although it was supposedly "legal" to march on this stretch of the road the cops tried to push the marchers to one side, on the pretext that traffic couldn't pass. Now this is a new road and has 2 side lanes where the bulkiest truck could easily have got through. Naturally the marchers refused to budge and the SPG got stuck in with boots, fists and rifles and arrested 5 peole. Paddy Walsh, secretary of the Belfast Branch of TUCAR was bundled into a land rover, kicked and punched and had his glasses stamped on. However the marchers continued, albeit weary and bruised.

The most encouraging feature of this section of the march was the fact that the numbers on the march continued to swell from about 200 on the Glenshane Pass to about 1000 as they entered Dungiven. Hundreds came to the streets to welcome the marchers and generously opened their homes to provide food and accomodation. The RUC "protectors" stopped at the outskirts of Dungiven since they were particular ly hated in this 95% Republican town.. In 1968, during a Civil Rights march the RUC had kicked a Mr McCloskey to death opposite the Orange Hall.

That evening a celebration was held in the GAA hall with entertainment from local singers and musicians.

THIRD DAY: DUNGIVEN TO BURNTOLLET BRIDGE

The unprovoked RUC thuggery of the previous day and the publicity it had recieved had obviously embarrased their chief. This time the march was allowed to proceed in relative peace. However this may also have been due to the fact that hundreds kept swelling its ranks as contingents arrived from Belfast, Derry and other areas. By the time the marchers reached Burntollet bridge it numbered between 2000 and 3000. At the rally on the bridge a statement of solidarity from the prisoners on the blanket was read out. There were speeches from the represen--tatives of Peoples Democracy,TUCAR, and the Irish Republican Socialist Party. The rally broke up peacefully.

This march, like its predecessors 10 years ago, once again revealed the true nature of the Northern State and especially of the fascist-like RUC. When Orange men wish to march they can take over whole towns and are assisted by the RUC and the British Army. When a handful of anti-imperialists wish to march they are banned, attacked physically and arrested. The massive local support given the marchers also threw in Mason's face his claim that no-one supports the prisoners in "H" Block. In this one small area of the 6 counties thousands came out to show that they did support the prisoners andto display their hatred of British Rule in Ireland.

RUC ASSAULT BURNTOLLET MARCHERS

The RUC have begun to victimise people who took part in the Burntollet march. 3 people, Micheal Conlon, Bernadette McAnulty and Eamon McMahon were arrested in Belfast on Saturday, 20.1.79 in the evening, When the police who stopped them recognised them from the Burntollet march they kicked and beat them. The police held them until the next morning and told them it was because they took part in the march.

The police who assaulted them were part of the RUCs Special Patrol Group, SPG. It was the SPG who took part in the vicious attacks on peaceful protesters on the march in Bellaghy, the Glenshane Pass and outside Maghera. A group of marchers who were staying overnight in Maghera after the first day of the march were stopped by the SPG early the next morning on their way to the departure point of the second day of the march. After having their names and adresses taken they were told that they would be "hearing a lot more from the SPG".

The above incident clearly shows that the SPG intend to carry out their threat. This is clearly an attempt by the RUC to stamp out protest on the "H" Block issue. In the last few months massive protests on this issue have clearly shown to the rest of the world that Roy Mason and the British Government have been lieing when they say that the prisoners have no support.
SOURCE: IFP.

IRA ACTIVITY CONTINUES

The Provisional IRAs bombing campaign was temporarily "exported" to England the week before Christmas. Coventry,Bristol,Manchester, Liverpool, Southampton and London were the targets for car bombs and incendary devices. Though only a few minor injuries and some inconvenience was suffered by the general public, and damage to commercial property was by no means devastating, the authorities reacted swiftly by mounting a massive security operation. Dozens of Irishmen were detained at Liverpool and Stranraer, combat soldiers and armoured vehicles occupied Londons Heathrow airport, and over 2,000 uniformed and plain-clothed police saturated London's West End shopping precinct in what was termed "Operation Santa".

The fact that the bombs had exploded in the capital city was almost forgotten as the media gushed out the latest security measures effected by the police, army or anti-terrorist squad. A semblance of police efficiency was maintained as the authorities kept themselves busy in the search for the bombers getaway car, reportedly a white Opel. Scotland Yard, for years plagued by corruption scandals all over the headlines, "leaked" the "identity" of the bombers to the gutter press. The Daily Mail named the man, by now nick-named the "bald eagle" by the press, reponsible for the bomb attacks, and claimed thathe was an IRA bomb expert from Andersonstown in Belfast. The unfortunate victim of the accusation was indeed from Andersonstown but interview later that day in his Belfast home stated that he had never even been to England in his life and was now said to be considering libel action against the newspapers concerned. Significantly, such was the regard for the Scotland Yard revelation that neither the RUC nor the British Army has approached him through-out the whole incident.

IRA activity continued in the NOrth:- December 19th one RUC man seriously injured in Belfast, Car bomb and a British soldier shot dead by a sniper onDecember 20th, 2 hotels destroyed and 4 damaged in bombing offensive across 3 counties. December 21st 3 British soldiers shot dead in Crossmaglen, South Armagh. Bombing continued, culminating in a 300 pound car bomb exploding in Cookstown at 2 minutes to midnight on New Years Eve.

If anything beneficial can result fromthis latest offensive, it will be to make the British presence in Ireland a real issue in 1979, the year of a British General Election. At present the Liberal Party is split on the question of British withdrawal, and sections of the Labour Party, obviously concerned with the Irish vote, are exerting pressure for the replacement of Roy Mason over his "handling" of Northern Ireland, notably the "H" Block prisoners inhuman conditions.

SOURCE: IFP Correspondent.

BLOODY SUNDAY

On the 5th January 1972, 5000 attended a N.I.Civil Rights Association rally in Belfast against internment, introduced by Brian Faulkner the previous August. At that meeting NICRA stated that they were going back onto the streets.

In response to the meeting the Ministry of Home Affairs announced the following day the opening of another Internment camp in Magilligan in Derry.

As opposition mounted to internment, Faulkner placed a one year ban on marches fromthe 18.1.72. Four days later Civil Rights marchers were attacked in Armagh and at Magilligan by British troops.

Within a week, several thousand troops in Dungannon were using rubber bullets and C.S. gas against marchers who continued to come out onto the streets despite the Government ban. Following the Dungannon attack, 20,000 Civil Rights marchers met at "Free Derry Corner" the next day, Sunday, January 30th to attend a rally.

As the rally dispersed troops from the 1st Battalion,t he Parachute Regiment stormed into the area shooting from S.L.R. rifles at the crowds. 14 people were to die, half of them teenagers, and a further 13 were seriously injured. The event was to be known throughout the world as "Bloody Sunday".

Today we are approaching the 7th anniversary of this brutal example of imperialism in action. Marches are planned in London and Derry (Sunday 28th) to commemorate thatday and to continue the Struggle against imperialism.

In the North of Ireland this demonstration is significant in that it will be a continuation of the mass demonstrations begun last year at Coalisland(August) and continued in Derry(October), Armagh(December) and Burntollet(January).

To date all the major events od '68 and '69 have been revisited with a new and more vigourous determination by the working class built up from 10 years of hard struggle. The demands are different, there will be no calls for reform of the state, it will be a straight demand for the end of imperialist domination in Ireland, whether it be British or anything else.

What is more important is that like 1972, 1978/9 is seeing the realisation that the struggle must not be solely an isolated armed struggle, but a strong mass struggle of the working class out on the streets and directed by the political realisation that imperialism can only be defeated by mass opposition.

The 28th January will commemorate the Victims of B loody Sunday, but it will also be a re-affirmation of our determination to continue till the end of imperialism in Ireland and beyond is achieved.

SOURCE: IFP.



SOLIDARITY ACTIVITY ABROAD

AMERICA

A considerable number of cuttings from the Boston Globe arrived at our offices this month which outlined the on going debate on the "Irish Question" prompted it would appear by a propaganda letter from Barbara Eachus, British Vice Consul, and by Senator Biaggi"s visit to Ireland,(see last issue,IFP).

On the one hand Ms Eachus letters to the Globe began by painting a favourable and humanitarian picture of the British prison camps in Ireland (B.G. Oct.17). She was quickly contradicted by T.M.Fitzgerald,(B.G.Oct.30) who pointed out the reality of no jury courts which have imprisoned thousands of Irish working class people on the flimsiest of evidence or torture extracted "confessions". Alluding to the favourable prison conditions, Mr. Fitzgerald rightly pointed out that these excellent recreational facilities were merely show pieces, as many prisoners are locked up 24 hours a day in punishment blocks with nothing other than a blanket to wrap themselves in. He continued by accusing Britain of holding thousands of prisoners without charge or trial.

Ms Eachus replied by defining political prisoners as someone"in prison for his political views", thus proving that Britain has no political prisoners - she gave figures of 2186 convicted prisoners, 405 of whom were convicted for "murder", 688 on firearms charges and explosives charges and 372 for armed robbery and other offences - but she continued by pointing out that the political motivation behind these actions were not enough to make them political prisoners, despite the fact that her government granted political status for these same actions between 1972 and 1976.

On her denial of prisoners being held without trial or charge she conveniently ommited to point out that Britain practises "internment by remand", which means thousands of men and women could spend up to two years in prison waiting for "trial", often to be released at the end.

Mr Harry Clement replied to her comment about the'exceptional cases' whereby suspects can be held for 7 days without formal charge by quoting the case of Joe Edwards, a militant worker, who suffered such detention many times and was deported from the British mainland after one such holding - he can be jailed if he returned- but otherwise he has never been charged after any of these detentions.

Mr Clement could have quoted thousands of these "exceptional cases".

Concerning Sen. Biaggi's visit to Ireland as a member of the Ad Hoc Congressional Committee on Irish Affairs, Jack Lynch, Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland, held a cabinet meeting to announce a boycott of Mr. Biaggi, though 3 members of his party did meet him.

In the North the situation was the same with the Social Democratic and Labour Party, a re-actionary nationalist grouping; they too decided to ignore him. In fact John Hume (SDLP) had criticised Biaggi's "forum for peace" by associating him with thr Red Brigades - ie: "How do you think Italy would like it if you held hearings and invited the Red Brigades to speak?"

In an earlier Globe article, Ed Blanche had written of the lessening of the violence in N.I. by the guerillas, but he pointed out that this was more of a stabilising of the struggle rather than a defeat and supported this by quoting senior security officials, including the Chief Constable of the police - they believe, he said, that the Provisionals have a hard core of 500 activists in the North, but these are well armed and retain a "holding power" (nb. the pre-Christmas offensive) - He also noted that the security forces numbered 35,000 armed troops militia men and police as well as Loyalist extemists.

One senior British Defence Department official was quoted as saying "There's no reason to doubt the IRA can, and willgo on for several years yet if no political solution is found. And there doesn't appear to be much chance of that happening in the immediate future".

In another issue Joseph Dillon severely criticised the American media's hypocritical position on the Human Rights issue. They attacked constantly Iran, Russia, Chile etc. but rarely a word about Britains concentration camps in Ireland.

He compared the Long Kesh "H" Blocks with the "Hitlerian destruction of the Jews" and asked Americans to bring an end to this "psychological genocide" of the Irish by boycotting English owned or produced services and products until they are out of Ireland.

SOURCE: IFP friends in USA

The following has been extracted from a lengthy article on foreign propaganda in the American T.V. media.

"The British Information Service, BIS, offers a news report about Ireland to the 3 networks news departments. It is an official government film, promoting the British position in Belfast. ABC and NBC send edited versions of the propaganda film to their affiliates as part of their regular news service.

"BIS has a $1.6 million budget for its U.S. operation. 5 of its 45 employees are detailed to the BIS television department. BIS syndicates a 15 minute science show in half a dozen local markets. It also provides short spots

for local stations, its message is low key and proffessional. BIS spokesmen also pitch network news operations about stories complimentary to the British Government. One, for example, claims 'a small part of the credit' for planting a favourable story about North Sea Oil recently with NBC news.

"BIS makes a point of inviting network anchormen, correspondents and news executives to off-the-record breakfasts and lunches when British big-wigs visit New York. It also delivers free government made 'news-spots' to any station or network willing to take them.

"One of the most successful of these was a 2 minute segment released last December 21.77. Entitled "Christmas in Belfast", the short film showed how well Protestants and Catholics existed side by side during the holiday season. BIS submitted its film with a suggested script to the 3 networks. CBS turned it down. But ABC and NBC both used the piece on Dec.22.77 as part of the nightly syndicated "newsreel" they send to affiliated stations. ABCs spot ran 40 seconds; NBCs one minute, 34 seconds. A BIS source estimated that more than 100 stations used the piece.

"Even though both networks superimposed identifications of the film as British-Govt. issue, they based their scripts on material furnished by the BIS (and provided their own narration). Thus the piece was given the imprimatur of the news operation. Says one ABC producer, 'Even from our friends, that's a dangerous thing to do.'"

SOURCE:U.S. correspondent/T.V. Guide, Nov.78

GERMANY

INFORMATION TO THE PRESS
Concerning: Notice of refusal to leave to land because of suspician to go to Northern Ireland or Great Britain.

My clients Claudia Lenze and Wieland Giebel and their son Till wanted to celebrate the Holy Night with friends in Belfast.

Unfortunately it was not possible to come through to Belfast: they first were stopped at Dublin Airport for more than 2 hours. After some questions, especially if they intended to go to Northern Ireland, an immigration officer handed the following note to Mr Giebel:

> "Aliens Act, 1935 - Notice of refusal of leave to land to Mr Wieland Ernst Giebel
> This is to inform you that you are being refused leave to land in accordance with the provisions of the Aliens Act,1935 and the Aliens Orders, 1946 and 1975. You are being refused leave to land because I am satisfied that you intend to travel, (whether immediatly or not), to Great Britain or Northern Ireland and I am satisfied that you would not qualify for admission to Great Britain or Northern Ireland if you arrived from a place other than the State.
> You will be detained in Mountjoy Prison, until such time, being as soon as practible, as you are removed from the State.
> Signed: (James Doran), Immigration Officer."

Mr Giebel had to leave the land next morning with the next aeroplane to Germany. He had to spend the night in Mountjoy prison.

Mr Giebel was imprisoned in August 1977 for 7 days under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in Heathrow, because police found reports concerning mistreatment and torture in Northern Ireland in his suitcase.

Mr Giebel is writing a book about the situation of young people in Belfast.

In contrary to Mr Giebel, Mrs. Lenze was told she and the 9 month old baby were free to move in the Republic of Ireland or go to the North;. but the officer suggested to Mrs. Lenze to take the next flight to Germany, too. For she had to change the ticket - the next flight to Dusseldorf would start only 2 days later - the officer was able to help extremely quickly and unbureaucratically to change the ticket.

Together with my collegue, Micheal Conneely, 4 Avoca Raod, Blackrock, Dublin, I will try every thing to counter--act the entry prohibition, which is linked with the restriction of free information and free report.

Signed: Micheal Dornieden, Rechtsanwalt.

The above statement from Wieland Giebels lawer concerns his arrest and deportation from the Republic of Ireland when he returned to Ireland last month, Dec.78,. His first visit to Ireland,(North) was in August 1977 when he arrived here to collect information on a book he was writing about youth who had grown up in war conditions.

His first arrest was on 23.8.77 in Belfast when 10 British soldiers held him and a prof ess or from Frankfurt for a couple of hours - the reason was that he had on him 17 statements from people who had suffered harrassment, arrest, and torture etc. by British soldiers.

After a trying period when they were threatened with guns they were released with the documents - but were followed constantly for the next two days.

On the 25.8.77 he was arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act at Heathrow Airport, London and held until 31.8.77. He was photographed, fingerprinted and interrogated over 10 times during that period, (often for two hours at a time).

He was not suspected of terrorist activities but the onus was on him to prove his innocence , difficult when he had no idea of what crime he was innocent of.

To help prove his innocence he was recommended to give a detailed list of his movements in Belfast and the people that he talked to,(teachers,parents,young people, youth workers and some para-militaries) but he declined to mention any names as it would be a breach of trust and these peole would then be subjected to repressive measures.

During his imprisonment he was alowed to contact no-one, not even his embassy. On release he was not deported and was informed he could return to Great Britain or Northern Ireland anytime.

SOURCE: IFP corresepondent/ Michael Dornieden, Rechtsanwalt.

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The International Ireland Conference due to take place last November in Frankfurt has been postponed till January 19-21.79. The postponement was due to a confusion with the anti-imperialist week(Frankfurt, Oct.78) as being identical with the Ireland conference as well as the fact that many didn't recieve the rectified second conference paper.

It is pointed out that the conference is not exclusively of the West German Ireand Solidarity Committee in as far as the issues and points of discussion arn't only up to them, but to all comrades wishing to participate. They do not disguise the fact that they have difficulties discussing future policies and practice on such an international struggle, nor do they wish to continue with a series of meetings where everyone unpacks their baggages of ideas. "Substance, character as well as the intention and purpose of the conference should be named as precisely as possible in advance".

They are under no illusions about the outcome of the conference making everything run smoothly - but point out that the effectiveness, co-ordination and substance of the Ireland Solidarity are central issues.

Whilst we in the IFP are unable to be in attendance at this conference - we send our full support to the efforts of the committee and await the results of the conference.

SOURCE: Westdeutches Irland Solidaritatskomitee

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In the last six months the Daily Mirror has twice called for the withdrawal of troops. These calls again can be traced back to the worried personel of Transport House. The furore caused by the Mirrors call showed clearly that sections of the Labour Party hierarchy now accept that majority opinion in Britain is in favour of troops withdrawal.

It is hoped that this situation will enable UTOM to increase its influence within the British Labour and Trade Union Movement. UtoM has been growing rapidly in the last few months and marchers on the Burntollet Commemoration march were encouraged by the show of solidarity that was given by a contingent from UTOM who took part in the march. UTOM speakers also spoke at rallies in towns along the route.

The message they had was one of optimism because of their growth over the last year and determination to carry on building the anti-imperialist solidarity movement in Britain.

SOURCE: IFP/ Hibernia.

IN SCOTLAND

There are significant differences in the problems of solidarity work in Scotland and in England. They stem largely from the fact that a large proportion of the population do actually have a position on Ireland which is not simply that handed down by the media and the state. There is a large organised cohesive Orange loyalist population and a smaller, but substantial, catholic community which is unorganised, except in the West. The divide extends throughout the working class and is most noticeable in things like football (Hibbs/Hearts in Edinburgh, and Celtic Rangers in Glasgow) and segregated education.

Unfortunately, we have to live with the problem of always having a substantial force who are prepared to fight us. In Glasgow in 1971 a demonstration was beaten from the streets and there were no more demonstrations in Glasgow for 7 years. We cannot rely on the active support of the broadly sympathetic catholic community outside Glasgow. We have a strong impression that they feel that violent sectarianism is a problem of the west and what we are doing could bring it back to Edinburgh.

This situation has led to threats of physical attacks on people leafletting (even in the Trades Council). In Aberdeen a demonstration had its placards torn up, and the security problems caused by such events have severely curtailed our activity.

The Edinburgh Irish Solidarity Campaign was formed after a conference held in Edinburgh at Easter, and from the start we were encouraged by the number of people not previously involved in "Left" activity who expressed interest. The conference was attended by some 150 people, at least half to two thirds of whom had not been involved before. Though we might not have had the response we might have hoped for on the practical level it has given us confidence in the belief that there is real potential for solidarity work in Edinburgh.

Since our formation we have undertaken a number of initiatives in the form of pickets, public meetings and street leaflettings which have been fairly well supported by the left. Our most recent activities have been mobilising for the abortive November 18 demonstration in Glasgow which was unfortunately cancelled, and for November 26th demonstration in London.

Our experiences have firmly convinced us that there is a real necessity for Scottish national organisation and we hope that the Scottish U.T.O.M. conference in Glasgow on the 16th December will make this a reality. To further this end we shall be producing an Irish Solidarity Journal based in Edinburgh, but distributed throughout Scotland, which will complement *Troops Out* while taking the important differences between solidarity work in Scotland and England into consideration. The other major area of work at the moment is a Scottish speaking tour.

IN WALES

In September of this year fresh moves were made to restart an Irish Solidarity Campaign in South Wales. A conference attended by people from Swansea, Cardiff and Newport, some from left groups, some involved in U.T.O.M., and others from Plaid Cymru and the welsh-speaking Friends of Ireland group decided to have a meeting and distribute literature at the Plaid Cymru conference.

The campaign also worked to send a sizeable contingent to the November 26 march. The organising conference agreed to gather sponsors and evidence for the Tribunal. What was clear at the conference was that despite all sorts of differences there is a general willingness among groups and individuals involved to work for the basic demands of Troops Out and Self Determination, and for political status.

EX-SOLDIER SPEAKS IN PUBLIC

An ex-soldier who left the army over its role in Ireland spoke for the first time in public at the film showing, during the Plaid Cymru Conference. This brought commitment from a number of people to anti-recruitment work, which the solidarity campaign feels is central, especially as Merthyr Council has decided to ban army recruiting.

IN NORWAY

When the subject of British censorship of coverage of Ireland was raised at the Norwegian Writers' Union seminar on censorship in September, some of the British delegates objected strongly. Ireland, they argued, was a "special case".

They were put firmly in their place when a resolution calling on the British Government to withdraw its army from Northern Ireland was passed by an overwhelming majority.

"The long-lasting conflict in Northern Ireland has caused so much bloodshed and violence which has had a destructive effect on the national and cultural development of both and Irish and the English peoples", the resolution continued.

It was later handed to the British ambassador in Norway.

The IFP is now entering its second year of publication and we are marking this by changing from our old form of duplicated sheets to a new and better printed format.

It is partly because of this change over that the IFP has not been produced since before Christmas, however we hope that we are now in a position to avoid all those delays that bedevilled us in our first year of production.

We intend carrying on this year by turning out the IFP once a month instead of the irregular bi-monthly that was our old paper. However we hope that the increased contents in this printed format will offset the decrease in the number of issues being produced.

In the coming months we intend expanding on the number of pages in each issue and thus on the information available. We plan also to include photographs, which our last format didn't allow us to do.

Financially, printing costs us many times the price of the old duplicating, but we believe that it has been necessary to make the change. We believe that it will be of greater benefit to you and hope for your continued support in the coming year.

Yours in struggle, IFP Collective.

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