

# TROOPS OUT

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1921: BRITISH STATE MURDERS PRISONERS OF WAR  
1981: BRITISH STATE MURDERS PRISONERS OF WAR



**GRANT THE PRISONERS' FIVE DEMANDS**



**TROOPS OUT NOW!  
SELF DETERMINATION FOR THE  
IRISH PEOPLE AS A WHOLE!**





## ARMAGH

There has been little news out of Armagh Jail recently. We do know that the women are continuing their 'no work' protest for political status, having come off their 'no wash' protest on March 2nd (along with men in the H-Blocks) in order to concentrate international attention on the hunger strikes and on the prisoners' five essential demands. Armagh prisoner and former hunger striker Mairead Farrell is to stand for election to the Irish Parliament in the forthcoming Irish General Election.

## MASS DELEGATION TO BELFAST

The TOM is organising a mass delegation to Belfast on the weekend 8/9 August. If you are interested in joining it, write for further information to:

TOM, PO Box 353, London NW5 4NH.

**TROOPS OUT** is produced by an editorial collective drawn from TOM branches in London. Contributions are welcome (although we can't guarantee to publish everything that comes in).

Copy for the next issue must be sent to arrive not later than the following date :

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Make cheques payable to Troops Out (Literature Committee).

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I would like to join/be sent information about the Troops Out Movement.

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Membership of a branch is £4, payable through the branch. Individual membership is £5 which includes a subscription to *Troops Out*.

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# EDITORIAL

The Troops Out Movement, appalled by the agonising deaths of the four hunger strikers in May, sends its deepest sympathy to the families of Bobby Sands MP, Frankie Hughes, Ray McCreesh and Patsy O'Hara. We mourn their deaths, and salute their bravery.

The British State is solely responsible for these terrible events. By its treachery and cold-hearted inhumanity it has become a leper in the eyes of the world and has proven once more that it "has no right in Ireland, never had any right in Ireland, and never can have any right in Ireland" (James Connolly, shot by the British in prison, 1916).

Last December the Government made an agreement with the prisoners which granted the main points of their five demands: no prison work; no prison uniform; free association; the right to organise their own education and recreation and for letters, visits and parcels; and restoration of remission. This agreement brought an end to the first hunger strike, but the Government betrayed its promise and gave the prisoners nothing. The second hunger strike began on March 1st. After five years of resistance on the blanket and then the no-wash protest, the prisoners have thrown their all into this hunger strike: they have nothing to lose.

The deaths of Bobby Sands, Frankie Hughes, Ray McCreesh and Patsy O'Hara have not defeated them. Joe McDonnell, Brendan McLaughlin, Kieran Doherty, Kevin Lynch and Martin Hurson have taken up the struggle. (Brendan McLaughlin has had to come off the hunger strike after two weeks because he has a perforated stomach ulcer: this is not "the first crack in resolve of terrorist campaigning" as the British newspapers would have us believe. The National H Block/Armagh Committee has stated: "We reiterate our support for Brendan McLaughlin and support his decision. We wish him a full recovery.")

The past two months have seen ever growing support for the prisoners, both in Ireland and around the world. The election of Bobby Sands as Westminster MP in April. The attendance of mourners for the funerals of the dead hunger strikers - the biggest demonstrations of republicanism for sixty years. The defeat of Gerry Fitt ("the Brit"), who lost his seat on Belfast Council after saying "A vote for me is a vote against the gunmen". The massive peaceful protests complemented by resistance on the streets by people of the nationalist ghettos: rioting has been more intense than at any time since the early seventies. The increased military activities of the Irish Republican Army and Irish National Liberation Army: this has not lessened support for the hunger strikers, as some people feared.

And the eyes of the world are still focussed on Ireland. Britain's colonial war is unjust and this injustice drives it to ever increasing barbaric cruelty, but the Irish are undefeated and the prisoners and the people have shown they will continue until victory.

## 4TH JULY MANSFIELD

'Fire Don Concannon!'  
'End the Bipartisan Tory/Labour Policy!'  
Called by the Labour Committee on Ireland.  
Assemble 2.00 p.m.  
Mansfield BR station  
Saturday 4th July.

Leaflets and further details  
LCI, 5 Stamford Hill, N16.

## 13TH JUNE LONDON

'Support the Prisoners' Five Demands! 'No more deaths!'  
Called by London H-Block/Armagh Committee.  
Assemble 1.00 p.m. Finsbury Park main gate (7 Sisters Rd, N7)

## 11TH JULY LEEDS

'Support the hunger strikers!'  
Called by the Leeds Hunger Strike Committee.  
Assemble 12.30 p.m., Potternewton Park, Harehills Ave., Leeds 7. Sat 11th July..

## TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT BENEFIT

13th June, 8.00 p.m., South Bank Polytechnic Students Union, Rotary St., London SE1 (Elephant & Castle tube).  
Featuring The Outskirts, The Dispossessed, and The Psychotics.  
£2 entrance (£1 for unwaged)..

# THE TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT



The Troops Out Movement is a movement in England, Scotland and Wales made up of people who believe that the cause of the 'troubles' in the north of Ireland is the continuing British presence there, both military and economic. We believe that British troops are in Ireland not as a peacekeeping force, but in order to maintain British rule, and that their presence is the most serious obstacle to any progress towards peace. For over ten years the troops have been occupying a part of Ireland, coercing and oppressing the nationalist people, maintaining the division of Ireland and ensuring that its people cannot unite to determine their own future.

We have been working as an organisation for immediate British withdrawal since the early 1970s. We now have over 40 branches in England, Scotland and Wales. These branches, working locally in whatever ways circumstances allow, are the backbone of the TOM. Membership, or affiliation; is open to any individual or group supporting the demands:

**TROOPS OUT NOW  
SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE AS A WHOLE**



The Funeral of Bobby Sands M.P.



# AFTER ATTENDING BOBBY SANDS' FUNERAL

Grey  
this Irish day;  
rain teeming  
tears stream  
from the vast array  
of people —  
whole community  
weep,  
pour on the street  
to pray,  
mourn,  
and say:  
No more.  
Let us lay  
the blame where it belongs;  
stay the injustice;  
slay the lie;  
cast a ray of sunlight,  
shaft of air,  
to play on  
the blurred scene  
and show the world  
who is brave,  
right,  
fair,  
in this affray.

Pat Arrowsmith  
9.5.81

## TRIBUTE TO BOBBY SANDS

Old as time  
at twenty-seven  
your ivory thin bones  
stab parchment flesh,  
all-but pierce your skin.

Bright I met you,  
lively eyed,  
still fresh  
in all the squalor of your jail;

talking fast,  
listening hard,  
resilient,  
resolute,

yet really an ordinary  
extraordinary young man.

Martyrs wear halos  
only in stained glass —  
are many kinds of people,  
young and old,  
every creed and race;

Christians thrown to lions,  
murdered dissidents,  
Gandhi,

Joan of Arc,  
Romero,  
Jan Pallach,  
also

Bobby Sands.

Pat Arrowsmith  
29.4.81

I visited Bobby Sands in Long Kesh a year ago.



The Funeral of Francis Hughes





# LABOUR CHANGE ON THE CARDS



Just days before Bobby Sands died, Don Concannon, the Labour Party spokesperson on Northern Ireland, marched unannounced into his cell to tell him to his face that the Labour Party stood four-square with Mrs. Thatcher in forcing him to his death. The visit had the clear backing of Michael Foot.

John Hume, the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, the largest parliamentary nationalist party in the Six Counties, described the visit as "a cheap and offensive publicity stunt". Fellow Labour M.P. Martin Flannery called it "totally insensitive and like sending a British tank to a Northern Ireland funeral". The Irish Post described it as a contemptible gesture that will stick forever in the minds of Irish people, and concluded that after this: "with the exception of a handful of individual Labour M.P.s .... I can't see the Labour Party getting any self-respecting Irish vote in the next general election or for many elections to come." One indication of the impact of this attitude on the Irish in Britain was highlighted by Steve Bundred who won Islington North for Labour in the recent Greater London Council Elections when he wrote personally to Michael Foot describing the "extremely disturbing" percentage of spoilt ballot papers marked with the name of Bobby Sands or with an 'H' stemming from the alienation of Irish voters and calling for the withdrawal of British troops. Meanwhile a Marplan opinion poll in *The Guardian* (22/4/81) showed 67% of Labour voters wanting the British army pulled out of Ireland.

## GROWING PRESSURE

Inside the Labour Party a lot of pressure is building up against what former Navy Minister Paddy Duffy M.P. described as Labour's "me-too-ism", their slavish following of anything the Tories say about Ireland. It took the death of Bobby Sands to get Duffy to speak out for the first time against Labour/Tory policies, but there are now 27 Labour M.P.s plus Plaid Cymru who have called for a change of policy. The 28 signed a Commons motion calling on the Government to negotiate on the Prisoners' demands.

Faced by these moves and the international pasting that the British Government is taking on the H Block issue, Labour Party leaders are beginning to

waver in their stand. Michael Foot told the *Guardian* that there is no formal bipartisan policy on Northern Ireland and that the policy for the 80s could not continue to be the same as the 70s. He added that he is strongly opposed to any move to alter the electoral law to prevent another prisoner succeeding Bobby Sands. And Merlyn Rees (with Don Concannon and Roy Mason the architect of the H-Blocks and the withdrawal of special category status) said on TV that the guarantee to the Unionists that they can veto any political change in the six counties "is not that important". This is a major shift of position. These chinks in Foot's wall of chauvinism are not big, but they show that the pressure is getting through.

## GRASS ROOTS

More important however are developments within the ranks of the Labour Party. The Labour Committee on Ireland is a rapidly growing pressure group within the Party calling for an end to bipartisanship and a commitment to British political and military withdrawal. They have lobbied strongly in the discussions on the Labour Party National Executive Committee on Labour's policy on Ireland. They are calling a national demonstration against Concannon and bipartisanship in Mansfield (Concannon's constituency) on 4th July. And now it seems that their message is getting through to some of the leaders of the Labour left.



Firstly, Ken Livingstone the new leader of the Greater London Council spoke out on the day after his election to say that the problem has always been Britain's colonial and military involvement in Ireland. Britain never had any right to be there, nor does it have any right now, he said. Livingstone has been a Troops Out supporter for many years, but it was good to see that his assumption of major office has not resulted in a more cautious approach.

Then Peter Hain, the prospective Labour M.P. for Putney, denounced Concannon as attempting to outflank Ian Paisley and described Government policy as an abject failure "doing nothing more than hoping to grind down the forces of republicanism in a war which the military concede they can never win". He went on to call for the Labour Party to commit themselves to withdrawal within six months of taking office, though he, like other leading Labour figures managed to take up the demand for Troops Out without taking a stand on the burning issue of the hunger strikers' demands.

## BENN ASKS THE QUESTION

Finally Tony Benn became the most prominent British politician so far to call for the withdrawal of British troops. On BBC radio he stated, "There is a very widespread feeling which I share, that the present policy has reached a dead end; that the idea of maintaining a standing army in Northern Ireland to maintain law and order without a political initiative is failing, has failed and is likely to fail. . . . The real question is not about prison clothes. The question is: 'Can Britain maintain an Army in Northern Ireland and hope to solve the problem.'"

The Labour Party is not turning yet. But the strains inside it are getting very great. Though Benn's speech on Ireland fudged the issue with talk of a UN peacekeeping force it still brought Michael Foot crashing down on him in the Shadow Cabinet and it is not clear whether Benn will stick to his position and include the demand for withdrawal in his platform for the Deputy Leadership. But for the first time in many years Ireland is becoming a very live issue in the Labour Party.

## MP's who signed motion to negotiate with hunger strikers

Norman Atkinson*	Raymond Ellis	Reg Race*
Guy Barnett	Frank Field	Alf Roberts
Sid Bidwell	Reg Freeson*	Ernie Roberts
Ron Brown*	Frank McElhone	Denis Skinner
Jim Callaghan (not the former P.M.)		Daffyd Thomas
Denis Canavan*	William McKelvey*	Stan Thorne*
Lewis Carter-Jones	Joan Maynard*	William Wilson
Bob Cryer*	Michael O'Halloran*	David Winnick
Paddy Duffy	Bob Parry	Sheila Wright
Ken Eastham*	Laurie Pavitt	

The 11 MPs marked \* also voted against the renewal of the PTA: other Labour M.P.s who voted against the PTA are as follows:

Joe Ashton	George Foulkes	John Maxton
Andrew Bennett	Stuart Holland	Ian Mikardo
Dale Campbell-Savours	John Home Robertson	Ray Powell
Donald Dixon	Robert Kilroy-Silk	Jo Richardson
Frank Dobson	James Lamond	Ernest Ross
Alf Dubs	Alex Lyon	Barry Sheerman
Ted Fletcher	David Marshall	Jock Stallard
	Edmund Marshall	Michael Welsh

When asked: "Do you think the British Army in Northern Ireland should be maintained or should we pull out?" Respondents said:

	Total (%)	Age 18-34	35-64	65+	Sex Male	Female	Voting intention Con	Lab	Lib/SD
Stay	31	28	30	41	35	28	44	24	32
Pull out	58	61	60	47	56	60	47	67	56
Don't know	11	11	10	12	9	12	9	9	12



# DATELINE\*\*\*BELFAST\*\*\*MONDAY\*\*BRITISH PRESS PRINT HYSTERICAL LIES ABOUT HUNGER STRIKERS\*\*COVER-UP OF ARMY ATROCITIES\*\*CHILDREN SHOT DEAD BY SOLDIERS\*\*GOVT EXPOSED IN INTERNATIONAL PRESS\*\*\*END\*\*\*\*\*

What the British public read in their newspapers about the hunger strike is very different from what the rest of the world reads. It may even come as a shock to us to realise that from America to Asia the deaths of the hunger strikers, Bobby Sands in particular, were front page headlines.

**La Republica (Italian Newspaper):** "One can only be impressed by the power of the passion, rage, love and suffering that expressed itself in this long patient, meticulous exercise in slow death . . . From a practical point of view, Ulster can exist only as a British military occupation but this cannot be a solution. The Northern Ireland problem is a decolonisation problem and must be solved at an international level."

**Headline in leading Portuguese paper:** *Hunger For Freedom Killed Bobby Sands.*

**Le Monde (French newspaper):** "Is London ready to watch a repeat of the events which followed the death of Ireland's most famous hunger striker, the Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence McSwiney, which is to say an open civil war?"

In Iran, a street has been named after Bobby Sands - running next to the British Embassy.

**Headline in the Indonesian Observer:** "Bobby Sands, A Modern Martyr."

**Hindustan Times:** "Mrs Thatcher allowed a member of the House of Commons, a colleague in fact, to die of starvation. Never had such an incident occurred in a civilised country."

**Noticias (Mozambique paper):** The simple and indisputable fact is that Bobby Sands was a political fighter."

The fact is, our newspapers and TV news give us a pack of lies, distortions and pure censorship of the facts.

**Lie Number One:** the IRA are responsible for all the deaths and violence in Northern Ireland.

There have been over 2,000 violent deaths in Northern Ireland since 1969: about 900 of them were done by the British Army, the police or by loyalist terrorists. Of the remainder most were soldiers or armed police killed by the IRA or Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) - that is, acts of war and *not* indiscriminate sadistic murderings. We all feel grief for any death or suffering, but we also know the difference between war and peace and that armies fighting each other are different from "rampaging mobs", "assassins" or "murderers."

From the time the hunger strike began on March 1st up to May 21st there have been twenty-seven people killed apart from the hunger strikers. The republican forces have directed their attacks only at the occupying army and State forces, resulting in five British soldiers killed by a landmine, three members of the police and four members of the Ulster Defence Regiment. In addition one man was mistaken for the UDR, and one INLA volunteer died when a bomb exploded prematurely. Attacks by the British Army and police, however, *are* indiscriminate (towards the Catholic people, that is): soldiers shot dead one INLA volunteer and the rest of their heroic record are children and civilians. Patrick McNally, (aged 21) shot by the UDR while joyriding; teenagers James Brown and Gary English, run over and killed by an army landrover; Harry Duffy, Paul Whitter, Carol Ann Kelly (11) and Julie Livingstone (14), killed by British Army plastic bullets. And three people were victims of loyalist sectarianism or SAS dirty tricks: Paul Blake, the census-form collector Joanne Mathews and a Catholic butcher Joseph Patsy Martin. It was put about in British newspapers that Martin was killed by the IRA for keeping his shops open on the day of Frankie Hughes' funeral, which is a blatant lie because in fact the did close his shops as a mark of respect and subsequently a loyalist group admitted doing it. The final two deaths are those of a milkman and his son killed after their milkfloat was attacked by rioters - the TV reported it as if it were a deliberate sectarian murder because they were Protestants and the rioters were Catholics, whereas it was an accident regretted by those concerned.

The riots following the deaths of the hunger strikers are the mass anger against the injustice institutionalised in the H Blocks: it does not need an IRA "orchestrated campaign" to express their anger when almost every nationalist family has its own experience of that horrific prison.

**Lie Number Two:** the hunger strikers had a choice about dying, which they did not allow their victims.

The "victims" being in the case of Bobby Sands, Ray McCreesh and Patsy O'Hara no one at all. In Frankie Hughes' case an SAS soldier, one of the elite dirty tricks squad despised even by regular soldiers. The republican armies and the British Army are volunteer forces, which makes the choice equal in that respect. That's just on the face of it; in fact the British soldier who signs up and goes to fight working class people in another country has far more choice than the men and women of the ghettos of Northern Ireland who have grown up with nothing but discrimination and oppression and an occupying army. What choice have they except to stand up and fight?

We have shown how the IRA and INLA direct their weapons against the security forces. And how the army and police direct theirs against the general Catholic population. Where is the greater choice?

And the hunger strikers have come from beatings and forced confessions at places like Castlereagh Interrogation Centre, from four and a half years in the H Blocks without clothes, without going into the open air, without washing for three years - who could say they have a "choice"?

**Lie Number Three:** they are ordinary criminals who don't deserve political status.

And so was Jomo Kenyatta. Until he became President of Kenya. So was Robert Mugabe, until he became Prime Minister of Zimbabwe; so were the guerrilla forces of ZANLA until they became part of the national army of Zimbabwe. In every liberation struggle the people's armies are terrorists and criminals in the eyes of the imperialists - until they finally boot the imperialists out of their country. *How many times do we have to be taught this simple lesson?*

## TERRORISTS DON'T SMILE

While reviewing their news coverage of the hunger strike, BBC chiefs had some qualms about the best way of referring to Bobby Sands: "It was agreed that the combination of Bobby Sands and a smiling photograph gave a misleading image of a convicted felon. Mr Woon (Editor of Television News) said that Television News had tried very hard to get another photograph of him out of the Northern Ireland Office, but had consistently failed."



**Daily Express:** "Why then do young men like Bobby Sands commit suicide for such a cause? Because they follow darkness, believing it to be a romantic dream. Hatred is their guide. Falsehood is their goal."

**Daily Telegraph:** Sands' courage was of the ruthless and corrupted sort which holds life in contempt."

**The Sun:** Rioting In Streets As IRA Mobs Go On The Rampage - Hunger Strike Assassin Is Dead"



"Bobby Sands was an ordinary young man from this city who, through a process of events, became politically educated and at 18 decided he would no longer accept the injustice of a partitioned Ireland with all its inherent evils. No longer could he accept second class citizenship in his own country. So he joined the IRA and embarked on a life of hardship and suffering and in the end made the supreme sacrifice of his life for the cause he believed in . . ."

These words, spoken by Owen Carron in the oration at Bobby Sands' funeral are in essence true of the lives of each of the hunger strikers, whose deaths are at the hands of the British government.

We should try to understand the "process of events" going back to the partition of Ireland, (and well before) which have led up to a guerrilla army and a risen people fighting the British army and state however they can, and laying their lives on the line. These brief stories of the lives of Bobby Sands, Frank Hughes, Raymond McCreesh, and Patsy O'Hara give some idea of how so many young people come to fight back, and recreate the four as ordinary, as well as extraordinary people.

## BOBBY SANDS 1954-1981

Born in the predominantly protestant area of Newtownabbey, Bobby's family were run out of their home by years of intimidation from their neighbours, when Bobby was 7. After living with relatives for a few months they got a house in Rathcoole which "was a massive estate, our street was the biggest ... and supposedly had the most Catholic families in one street. That was six, and that was classed as plenty. Bobby had gone about with Catholics and Protestants but it ended up, when everything erupted, that the friends he went about with were the same ones that joined tartan gangs, pointed him out, and got him beaten." (Bernadette, Bobby's sister)

Bobby became involved with the republican movement when he was about 17. He knew from his family about Britain's dirty history in Ireland, and saw it happening again - an Army of occupation, friends and family being hauled off to internment camps. "He more or less said 'right, this is where I'm going to take up.' " (Bernadette) The family were again intimidated out of Rathcoole, Bobby having been shown the end of a gun and told to leave his job. Many families, suffering the same threats, attacks, and the burning of their homes, came to Twinbrook, a new and

# BOBBY SANDS, FRANK HUGHES, PATSY O'HARA

unfinished estate, with what they had, sorting themselves out, as the Housing Executive failed to do it for them. Bobby's family came too, in June 72. By October, he had been arrested, and sentenced to five years in the cages of Long Kesh as a 'special category' prisoner. (The cages still lie by the H Blocks, the men there still have this prisoner of war status.)

"Bobby was always up to something. If it wasn't football, it was gaelic; if it wasn't gaelic it was playing the guitar; and if not that then he had his nose stuck in a book . . . He read intensely - Irish history . . . international struggles . . . He involved himself in many projects, especially the concept of people's councils, arguing the case for more republican involvement in the social problems of the people living in the ghettos across the occupied North." (Danny Devenny - a former prison comrade.) He was released in April 76 and returned to Twinbrook. "The six months he was out he worked continuously in the estate amongst the people, getting things going, organizing things . . . No matter what it was, should it be kids in the estate committing acts of vandalism or being harrassed by the Brits, the people came to him and he tried to sort it out . . . He used to get on great with the kids around the area . . ." (Bernadette)

His arrest on a bombing operation of business property sent him to the H Blocks as an ordinary criminal for 14 years, the prison where he became a blanketman, an O.C., a hungerstriker and an M.P.

"In the H Blocks the Brits saw the opportunity to defeat the IRA by criminalising the Irish freedom fighter. But the blanketman perhaps even more than those on the outside, appreciated before anyone else the grave repercussions of a defeat and so they fought . . . Bobby, in particular, insisted on going out (on hunger-strike) 2 weeks in front of the others so that perhaps his death could secure the five demands and save their lives . . ." (Danny Morrison, editor of Republican News) A few days before his death, he said to Owen Carron "The Brits have no sense, tell everyone I'll see them somewhere, sometime . . ." And Owen: "He was waving as he said goodbye to me. I kissed him goodbye on the cheek and the one eye that was open was crying . . ."



The Road to the H Blocks: Civil Rights, the Battle of the Bogside, and Catholic homes burnt out in Loyalist pogrom in 1971.



# FRANCIS HUGHES, RAYMOND McCREESH, PATSY O'HARA: WE SALUTE YOU!

## FRANCIS HUGHES 1956-1981

Branded as a murderer when his death was announced, Francis was a brave and committed freedom-fighter. He's remembered by his comrades in arms, by people who sheltered him, by family and friends as good-humoured, easy going, considerate and tireless. He was born in Bellaghy, S. Derry where sympathy and active support for republicanism is strong. In 68 people discussed the new civil rights campaign constantly. When loyalists and the sectarian armed police force tried to smash the campaign out of existence, because they felt the statelet (created for them by Britain) threatened — and when the British army were sent in to uphold that state, Francis became involved. Coming back from a dance with a friend, he'd been kicked and beaten up by British soldiers. He was 17 and bedridden for some days. At the same time, there was real fear of loyalist assassinations of Catholics in the North then). Francis organised and led a vigilante patrol to protect the people, and to set up ambushes for the security forces. His unit was recruited into the IRA in 73. By 1975, at 19, he was living on the run. His family home was raided over 50 times, and other houses staked out for days. Once, the Army surrounded a safe house he was in. Francis crept out through their lines, armed, and muttering to figures he met in the dark — who thought he was one of them. This daring elusiveness and self-reliance created the "most wanted man in the North" image, and made him a scapegoat for every action the security forces wanted to pin on someone. It was also a source of inspiration and confidence for other people. He was finally captured in March 78. The two SAS soldiers (not 'innocent people' by any stretch of the imagination) who saw Francis and another volunteer thought they were Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) soldiers. The error cost one soldier his life. How is it murder when opposing armies encounter each other? In the shoot-out Francis was badly injured in the thigh. He dragged himself across 3 fields and was found 16 hours later by one of the British soldiers who saturated the area, and was in a military hospital for 10 months before his 6 day interrogation at Castlereagh. His sentences added up to 69 years + life but didn't crush his spirit. Despite his injuries he went straight on to the protest, volunteered for the first hungerstrike — and took part in the mass one when Sean McKenna was at the point of death — and made up his mind to go on this hungerstrike to the death. He died for the freedom of his country on May 12th.

## RAYMOND McCREESH 1957-1981

*"There is a chance that I will be home before you, my friend."*  
(Written in the prison hospital from Raymond to his comrade Patrick Quinn, captured with him, and in the H Blocks)

What is known of this shy, goodhumoured hungerstriker, other than that he and his family were smeared by a dirty press campaign while he lay hallucinating, dying and attended to by lying prison doctors?

Raymond grew up in the "bandit country" of South Armagh, where Volunteer units have been both resourceful and courageous. In the early 70s the British Army's infamous Parachute Regiment (responsible for Derry's Bloody Sunday massacre) was provoking the anger and resistance of local nationalists by their brutality

and harassment. The SAS terror regiment followed them in and assassinations of local people both sides of the border began. The UDR/Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) often cooperated with these SAS hit squads. Raymond had been an apprentice craftsman at a steel works in Lisburn, but had to leave, along with other young men. The workforce was predominantly loyalist and the busride went through loyalist countryside. He then worked on a milkround, and at 16 joined the IRA, to play a part in defending the people and driving out the security forces — mostly through landmines attacks and ambushes. His involvement was not known and he continued to live at home. He was captured during a planned ambush on a Brit observation post on the Newry/Newtownhamilton road. The four Volunteers were spotted and the Paras had two of them under siege in a farm house after plastering the area with bullets, and killing a grazing cow. They also fired on Raymond and comrade when they came out with their hands up after surrendering.

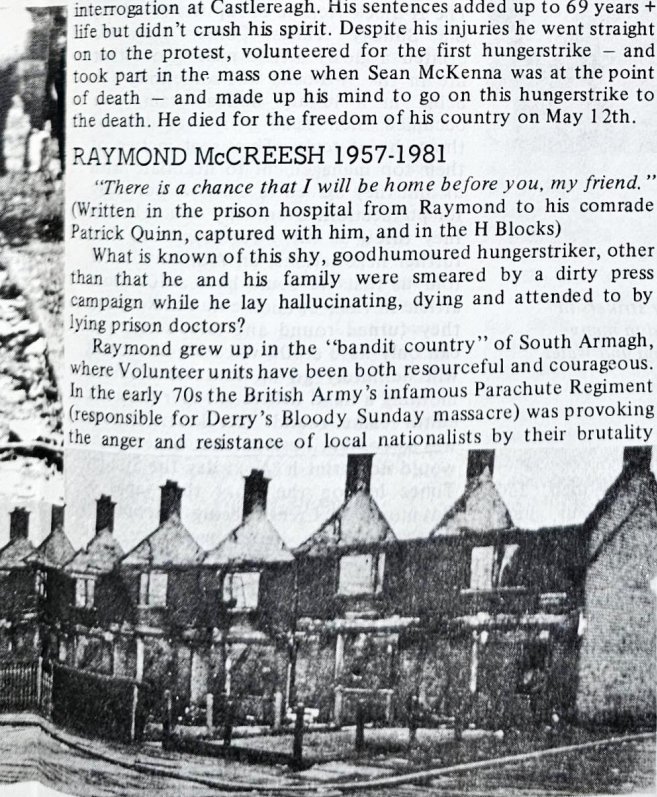
After 9 months on remand, Raymond was sentenced to 14 years for attempted murder and possession of weapons. He didn't recognize the court and right up till February this year, when he told his family of his decision to join the hungerstrike, he refused the visits, for that means wearing the uniform. Like Francis Hughes he volunteered for the first hungerstrike, and took part in the mass one on December 14th. Now another life is snuffed out, the life of a determined and courageous young man.

## PATSY O'HARA 1957-1981

Patsy wrote of the October 68 civil rights march through Derry *"People believed they were right and that a great injustice had been done to them. The crowds came in their thousands from every part of the city and as they moved down Duke Street chanting slogans 'One man, one vote' and singing 'we shall overcome', I had the feeling that a people united and on the move, were unstoppable."* On the subsequent baton charge of that crowd he said *"The people were sandwiched in another street and with the Specials coming from both sides, swinging their truncheons at anything that moved, it was a terrifying experience and one which I shall always remember."* Patsy was then 11 years old. Riots followed in Jan 69, and in the August the battle of Bogside, when people fought to defend their area from B Specials (auxiliary loyalist police), RUC and loyalist attack; just before the Army came in. So Patsy's environment was *"people being beaten up, raids and coffins coming out"* (his father). By Bloody Sunday in 72, Patsy, then 14, had been shot in the leg by a British soldier, for no reason, and on that day was still on crutches. Patsy had moved from Sinn Féin to the Official Republicans and when *"it became apparent they were firmly on the path of reformism and had abandoned the national question"* he joined the IRSP (after his release from internment). Continual harassment, interrogations and assault, and internment became his lot. He was released as a result of Rees' announcement following the ceasefire of Dec. 74 that both internment and special category status were to be phased out. *"I did not then know how much that change of policy would affect me in less than three years"* Patsy said. He was then planted with gelignite by the Army, suffered the "new internment" i.e. long remands followed by the charges against you being dropped before trial, 26 County victimisation through arrest without the case coming to court as a member of the IRSP, and finally the Diplock conveyor belt into the H Blocks, charged with possession of a hand grenade on the word of two British soldiers. He was sentenced to 8 years in January 80 and joined the blanket protest. Writing just before this hungerstrike began he said:

*We stand for the freedom of the Irish nation so that future generations will enjoy the prosperity they rightly deserve, free from foreign interference, oppression and exploitation. The real criminals are the British imperialists who have thrived on the blood and sweat of generations of Irish men. They have maintained control of Ireland through force of arms and there is only one way to end it. I would rather die than rot in this concrete tomb for years."*

British intransigence forced him to do just that.





# Help the prisoners

Now more than ever we ask for your help. Don't let July see more coffins come out of the H Blocks. Don't let the British Government make out that it has the support of the people for its cruel intransigence. Are Irish lives so cheap to us that we can passively watch the funerals and agony of the hunger strike and do nothing?

The newspapers and TV here lie to us, but more and more people are coming to support the prisoners' five demands, as the reports on this page show. If there is a TOM branch or a hunger strike committee in your area please get in touch with it. Raise the question wherever you can — the trade

union branch, Labour Party constituency, women's group, tenants association, youth club etc. We can supply speakers, pamphlets and leaflets or help arrange film shows. Press your MP to raise the issue in the House of Commons. Write to Humphrey Atkins, Northern Ireland Office, Great George Street, London SW1P 3AJ (tel 01-233 3000) and to Margaret Thatcher. Write to the national and local papers and phone your local radio station.

Contact the London H Block/Armagh Committee, PO Box 353, London NW5 4NH (tel. 01-267 2004, afternoons).



## LONDON

There have been pickets at Downing St. and Trafalgar Square, organised by the London H Block/Armagh Committee, and vigils at Kilburn Square organised by Sinn Fein.

On Sunday 24th May, eighteen supporters of the prisoners' five demands occupied the Irish Club in Eaton Square, the luxurious crash-pad of Irish diplomats. We were promised the right to stay for 24 hours on a hunger fast, but early Monday morning the police broke down the door to get us out. We left peacefully, having given our word to the Club that we would not do any damage.

There have also been occupations of the Labour Party headquarters and the Aer Lingus offices and pickets of the Labour Party and Michael Foot's house. The Smash the PTA Campaign held a picket outside the TUC on May 21st.

## BLACK PROPAGANDA FROM THE YELLOW PRESS

The H-Block Action Group writes: When the Sunday Times Colour Magazine printed a glossy article making out that life in the H-Blocks was something like being in a luxury holiday camp, we occupied their head offices to demand the right of reply. They sent in two of their top management to negotiate with us and they agreed to consider our reply for publication. Eventually we left before they threw us out. Four days later, after further negotiations, an Assistant Editor told us that we could have a 700 word article in their opinion column. Next day they turned round and said, sorry, you can only have a 400 word letter — but it will definitely go in. Then on Saturday morning a hand delivered letter from the editor came round. Our letter he said, was so contentious and inaccurate that he would not print it. Next day the Sunday Times led on the story that tapes of Raymond McCreesh being browbeaten into continuing his hunger-strike were circulating around Tory MPs. Three days later, the *Guardian* checked out this story and found that it was *utterly without foundation*. In other words the Sunday Times lied. We are continuing to press for space in the paper to get at least a bit of truth in their pages.

STOP PRESS: Friday 29th May: H-Block protestors occupied the TUC for several hours demanding that the TUC stop backing government policies on Ireland.



## BRIGHTON

A public meeting on St Patrick's day gained the sponsorship of three Labour Party wards and the chairperson of Brighton Labour Party was on the platform — an encouraging change. This meeting and a later benefit concert came under attack from the National Front.

We saluted Bobby Sands and Francis Hughes with vigils at the War Memorial: why, we figured, shouldn't a war memorial be used to commemorate those who died in battle against imperialism? If anyone has died "for their country's freedom" the hunger strikers have. On 23rd May, following a day school for supporters we repeated the vigil for Thatcher's latest victims, Raymond McCreesh and Patsy O'Hara. A wreath was laid and we stood silently with green and black flags. The police threatened mass arrest for "insulting behaviour"!

*Vigil for the dead hunger strikers in Oxford. A scene repeated in many cities in England, Scotland and Wales. (Photo: TOM)*

## LEEDS

On the night Bobby Sands died, 250 people took part in a 2 hour silent protest on the steps of the Town Hall. Police prevented a march. 150 people held another vigil followed by a noisy march on the night after Frankie Hughes died — the same when Ray McCreesh died. On Saturday 23rd May 350 people marched through Leeds. All these activities were organised by the Leeds Hunger Strike Committee, which is shortly organising a picket of Merlyn Rees, the ex-Minister for Northern Ireland.



# THE WRITINGS OF BOBBY SANDS

*'The Writings of Bobby Sands' (Available from Sinn Fein, 44 Parnell Square, Dublin. 50p + postage, ten for £4).*

Printed here are some excerpts from this booklet, published this April. It has an introduction by fellow republican Gerry Adams, talking about Bobby's life, describing how the British government reneged after the last hungerstrike, telling readers how the words are painfully put on toilet paper with a ball-point refill, how they are a "weapon against a regime which tries vainly to break and dehumanize him." They are also a most moving weapon for understanding and appreciating the bitter struggle endured by the prisoners and their bravery in continuing it.

"... During moments of weakness I try to convince myself that a prison uniform and conforming wouldn't be that bad. But the will to resist burns too strong within. To accept the status of a criminal would be to degrade myself and to admit that the cause that I believe in and cherish is wrong. When thinking of the men and women who sacrificed life itself, my suffering seems insignificant... It is frightening to see men become aged at eighteen and nineteen. Young men who were fit and strong in mind and body a year ago, now resemble shrunken shells of human beings."

## THE HARVEST BRITAIN HAS SOWN

"... But the ruler of the kingdom of my little twenty-yard arched view of the outside world is the seagull, who dominates, steals, pecks, and denies the smaller birds their share. The seagull takes it all. In fact, his appetite seems insatiable... Thus I dislike the seagull, and I often wonder why the starlings do not direct their attention to the predator, rather than each other. Perhaps this applies to more than birds."

"No one can take away from a person his or her ability to contemplate. Throw them into prison, give them hard labour, unimaginative work to do, but you can never take from them the ability to find the poetry and music in life." "And I also realised that here, my torturers have long ago started, and still endeavour, to block up the window of my mind."

## ALONE AND CONDEMNED

"They're watching me again. Ignore them. Let on you don't see them. Jesus, it's freezing. It's so quiet, it's ghostly. Walk again, keep moving, get your body warm. How long left now? What time is it? I'm losing track. Have a guess. Five hours left, maybe less. I must be ready. I'm shaking again. Don't fail now. Get it right, they'll be back. I'm depressed! Jesus Christ! I'm cracking, I'm going insane... I wish I had someone to talk to, even for a few minutes.

Keys! The jingle of keys. Footsteps! They're coming back. Jesus it's not time yet. They've tricked me, they're coming for me now. Don't fail, remember your spirit..."

I fought a monster today and once more I defeated the monster's army. Although I did not escape, I survived to fight another day. It was hard, harder today than ever before, and it gets worse every day...

... If we don't beat it soon it will murder me. Of this I am certain. It keeps me locked up in a dark, smelly tomb and it sends devils to keep me on edge, to keep the torture going... I think "is this really happening to me?" and "can this happen in this day and age?"

## I FOUGHT A MONSTER TODAY

(Bobby's grandfather had told him the story of the man who caged a lark so it would sing for him. When it refused he covered the cage with a black cloth, starved it, and murdered it.)

"... I feel something in common with that poor bird... I am a political prisoner, a freedom fighter. Like the lark, I too have fought for my freedom, not only in captivity, where I now languish, but also while on the outside, where my country is held captive. I have been captured and imprisoned, but, like the lark, I too have seen the outside of the wire cage.

I am now in H Block, where I refuse to change to suit the people who oppress, torture and imprison me, and who wish to dehumanise me. Like the lark, I need no changing. It is my political ideology and principles that my captors wish to change. They have suppressed my body and attacked my dignity...

Like the lark I fear I may eventually be murdered. But, dare I say it, similar to my little friend, I have the spirit of freedom that cannot be quenched by even the most horrendous treatment. Of course I can be murdered, but while I remain alive, I remain what I am, a political prisoner of war, and no-one can change that...

He concludes with his grandfather's story of the wicked man...

"One day he caught himself in one of his own traps, and no-one would assist him to get him free. His own people scorned him, and turned their backs on him. He grew weaker and weaker, and finally toppled over to die upon the land which he had marred with such blood. The birds came and extracted their revenge by picking his eyes out, and the larks sang like they never sang before.

'Grandfather,' I said, 'could that man's name have been John Bull?'



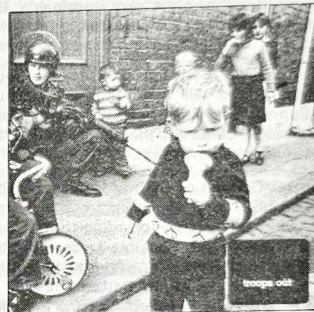
## BOBBY SANDS MEMORIAL BADGES

Prices: 20p each + 15p p&p (30p p&p overseas)  
8 badges for £1 + 30p p&p (£1 p&p overseas)

## BOBBY SANDS MEMORIAL POSTER

3 colours  
Britain & Ireland  
Prices: 40p each + 20p p&p  
10 for £3 inc. p&p  
Other countries: 40p each + 50p p&p airmail  
10 for £3 + airmail £1.50, rest of world £5.00

Available by post from: Information on Ireland, 1 North End Road, London W.14.  
Make cheques/POs payable to Information on Ireland.

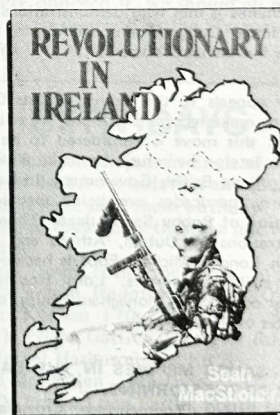


## NEW RECORD BY THE PASSAGE

### 'Troops Out'

('Hip Rebels' on the B side)

From most record shops, or Virgin Records, 4 Vernon Yard, London W.11



Sean MacStiofain's autobiography, first published as *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* has now been reprinted. We will review it next month.

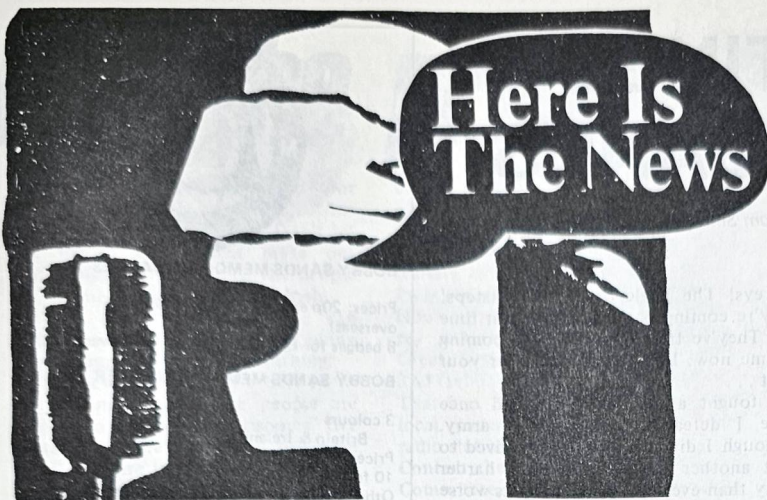
Available from:

York Community Bookshop  
73 Walmgate  
York YO1 2TZ

£4.85 + postage.

Well worth reading!





## MAY

This month saw the deaths of four hunger strikers, among the most tragic events in Ireland's recent history. They died as a direct result of the fraud carried out by the British Government last December, when it promised to grant the prisoners' demands but never did anything about it. They died after five years spent naked and three years without washing because they were in prison but were not criminals and would never accept being treated as criminals. They died in the most painful and long-drawn-out way imaginable. Bobby Sands MP, Frankie Hughes, Ray McCreesh and Patsy O'Hara will never be forgotten.

## 1st

Labour MP Don Concannon visits the four hunger strikers to tell them that the Labour Party supports the Government and therefore advises them to come off the hunger strike. "A piece of cynical opportunism."

The General Council of County Councils in the Irish Republic send a telegram to Prime Minister Charles Haughey pleading that he use whatever channels are available to save Bobby Sands' life. This is passed unanimously by the 200 councillors present. In Belfast the city is brought to a halt by hijacked vans and cars and hoax bombs.

## 3rd

In Dublin there is a march to the British Embassy by supporters of the H Block prisoners, and on the day before an occupation of British Home Stores that is broken up by heavily armed police. In Paris a British Airways Office is occupied by protestors and in the USA Prince Charles is met with demonstrations and letters from Congressmen calling for the prisoners five demands to be met.

## 4th

Haughey appeals to the Human Rights Commission to make recommendations "to end the impasse": this move is considered to be too little too late — he refuses to make a public demand of the British Government. In Belfast and Derry barricades are being erected in anticipation of Bobby Sands' death. There are demonstrations in Dublin, Athens and New York. In London Michael Foot is heckled by hunger strike supporters. Lord Rossmore's "country cottage" in Monaghan is burnt down in support of Bobby Sands.

## 5th

### BOBBY SANDS MP DIES IN THE EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING.

Riots in Belfast, Toomebridge, Crossmaglen, Dungannon and Derry. The police come under heavy attack and are replaced by the British Army, who fire massive amounts of live and plastic bullets in many places. The H Block Committees appeal for restraint; a number of their organisers are arrested in raids on their homes (in addition to the fifty arrested before). Five Republican prisoners in Long Lartin Jail, England, spend their second night on the roof in support of the hunger strike. In Australia and New York dockers impose a 24-hour boycott

against handling British goods. Throughout the USA there are demonstrations and vigils, and statements condemning the British Government are made by Governor Carey, Senator Moynihan, Cardinal Cooke and Mayor Edward Koch of New York. There are vigils and pickets in many cities in England, Scotland and Wales. In Toulouse a British tyre factory is bombed, as is the British Chamber of Commerce in Milan. The Indian, Danish and Portuguese Parliaments all observe a one minute silence for Bobby Sands.

## 6th

600 more British soldiers are sent to Northern Ireland.

Riots continue in Belfast and Derry with serious injuries on both sides. One armed policeman is shot dead. Virtual no-go areas are established behind the barricades in Derry. (The riots go on throughout the month.)

11 Labour MPs and one Welsh Nationalist sign a parliamentary motion that "Bobby Sands' life had been forfeited because of the intransigence of the Government."

Thousands march in Paris, mainly organised by the French Communist Party, in Milan, Lisbon and Brussels. In Portugal the Royal British Club and British-Portuguese Chamber of Commerce is bombed.

## 7th

Bobby Sands MP is buried in Milltown Cemetery at the biggest ever Republican funeral. Shops and factories shut down all over Ireland for the day.

There is a debate in the Euro Parliament about the H Blocks. A motion put by Irish MP Paddy Lalor calling for the British Government to be more flexible and supported by the Socialist Grouping (including British Labour Party) is defeated by the Conservative Grouping 106 to 65 votes.

## 9th

An IRA bomb explodes at the Sullom Voe oil depot as the Queen pays it a visit.

## 10th

Joe McDonnell starts on hunger strike to continue the struggle Bobby Sands began. He was arrested in September 1977 at the same time as Bobby Sands and like him is serving 14 years for possession of a gun. He has had no visits all that time because he refuses to put on a prison uniform.

The National H Block/Armagh Committee Conference in Belfast calls for a United Front of all who support the prisoners' five demands, regardless of other political differences.

## 12th FRANKIE HUGHES DIES IN THE EVENING.

"He was one of this struggle's bravest soldiers and never shirked in the face of the English enemy nor in its clutches."

There are further riots in Nationalist areas in Northern Ireland. An INLA volunteer, Emmanuel Joseph McLarnon, is shot dead on the Divis Estate in Belfast. Outside the British Embassy in Dublin police baton-charge demonstrators.

The summer cottage of Lord Farnham in Co. Cavan is burnt down: there are nine properties belonging to English lords, judges etc destroyed this month in protest about the hunger strike.

## 13th

14-year-old Julie Livingstone is killed by soldiers firing plastic bullets in West Belfast. Cardinal O'Fiaich appeals to Thatcher "In God's name, don't allow another death." John Hume (leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party) meets Thatcher to urge her to use great flexibility regarding prison clothing and association, but is rebuffed. Petrol bombs are thrown at police in Dublin after a march to Leinster House is turned back. Shop windows are smashed.

## 14th

Brendan McLaughlin joins the hunger strike. He is serving 12 years for possession of a rifle and ammunition.

The national H Block/Armagh Committee call off further demonstrations in Dublin as a result of the violence. The Justice Minister hints that the army is ready to back up the police in any further incidents.

There is an IRA rocket attack on a police landrover in Belfast, one dies the next day.

Relatives of Ray McCreesh and Patsy O'Hara visit Haughey: "We asked Mr Haughey to publicly call on Mrs Thatcher to implement the prisoners' five demands. Mr Haughey said he would not. He did not want to become involved in a propaganda battle. We asked Mr Haughey did he believe that the prisoners' five demands were justified. He replied that he was not willing to answer that question at this time."

Debate in the House of Commons. Thatcher: "They are murderers and people who use force and violence to attain their ends. They have made perfectly clear what they want, and they cannot, and will not, have it." (Of course the British State has never used force and violence . . .) Martin Flannery (Labour): "Recent events in Northern Ireland have initiated a profoundly new situation and many people are hoping that the love-in between the two Front Benches on Northern Ireland will gradually be broken." Don Concannon (Labour) urges "Ministers to publicise the truth about conditions in the Maze so that the rest of the world understands what is happening" and praises "the security forces for their handling of these terrible events."

Debate in the House of Lords finds unanimity that the BBC's news coverage is too pro-IRA! Paget (Labour): "Why don't we forbid any news of a hunger strike or of what is happening from coming out of jail, and when they die of it why don't we just bury them in jail?"

## 15th

Thousands and thousands attend the funeral of Frankie Hughes. The police block off the town where he grew up and which is 80% Catholic, forcing mourners to struggle across fields. Shops and factories close in many towns in Ireland.



Senator Edward Kennedy criticises the British Government: "Unfeeling inflexibility will achieve nothing but more deaths. The Prime Minister's response shows only the shadow of flexibility without the substance." Andy Tyrie, leader of the loyalist terrorist UDA also comes out in support of the prisoners: "There are special courts and special legislation, so why can't there be special prisoners?"

**16th**  
Loyalists in Glasgow hold an anti-IRA rally in spite of a ban. There are no arrests. An army medical officer, Captain Anthony Verghese, is court-martialled for refusing to go to Northern Ireland.

**18th**  
The McCreesh family call for the removal of two members of the prison hospital medical team after pressure was put on him to drink milk. The Executive of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union call on Haughey to get Thatcher to resolve the H Block dispute. And 31 priests in Armagh call on Thatcher: "We must say with the greatest emphasis that the attitude of the British Government to this prison problem over five years has shown little humanity, compassion or understanding of the complicated history of injustice, bigotry and reaction which has gone into the making of the present population of Long Kesh."

**19th**  
Five British soldiers are killed by an IRA landmine in S. Armagh. IRA statement: "British soldiers should recognise that the English public and English politicians do not give a damn about the waste of their lives. How many times have you been told that the IRA has been defeated? You are fighting a war which you cannot win." Belfast Trades Council calls on the British Government to settle with the prisoners and condemns its inflexibility.

**20th**

Local Government elections in Northern Ireland. The results show there is little "middle ground" left. The Official Unionists, SDLP, Alliance and The Workers Party Republican Clubs all lose seats. Paisley's extreme loyalist Democratic Unionist Party gains. There is a strong Republican vote to the Irish Independence Party, IRSP and PD, which all have a clear platform of support for the hunger strike.

12-year-old Carol Ann Kelly is fatally injured by a plastic bullet fired by British Army. There is a call for an enquiry into the use of plastic bullets. Two days later Harry Duffy (45) is also killed by a plastic bullet and at least twenty people end in hospital with serious plastic bullet injuries. This includes a BBC news cameraman!



21 year-old Derry man: eye shattered and destroyed by a plastic bullet.

Brendan McLaughlin is taken into hospital after seven days hunger strike suffering from a perforated stomach ulcer.

**21st**

Ray McCreesh dies in the early morning, Patsy O'Hara late that night.

There is intense rioting in Northern Ireland, including a rocket attack on an army Saracen. Kieran Doherty, age 25 from Belfast, begins hunger strike.

In the Irish Republic, Haughey dissolves Parliament and calls a General Election on June 11th.

**23rd**

Joseph Lynch (33) is run over and killed by a police landrover in Belfast.

The republican funeral of Ray McCreesh in Camlough, S. Armagh is attended by thousands of mourners.

Kevin Lynch (IRSP) begins hunger strike.

**25th**

Likewise the funeral of Patsy O'Hara in Derry. Serious rioting starts afterwards.

**27th**

Brendan McLaughlin has to end his hunger strike because his stomach ulcer would have killed him within days.

A police raid on the headquarters of the Ulster Defence Association nets a large amount of guns and ammunition. Leader Andy Tyrie and two others are taken for questioning and then released. This incredible incident shows how confident the UDA are of State protection for their armed activities that they keep weapons in their HQ — a confidence supported by the singular lack of arrests!

**28th**

Martin Hurson (aged 26) begins hunger strike. The four hunger strikers — Joe McDonnell, Kieran Doherty, Kevin Lynch and Martin Hurson are to stand as candidates in the Irish General Elections, along with four other H Block republican prisoners and one woman republican prisoner in Armagh Jail.

## Under The Prevention Of Terrorism Act

The PTA was slid in as a "temporary measure" in the wake of the Birmingham pub bombings and was reviewed again this March — eight years later.

It's taken a long time to dawn on several Labour MPs that the Birmingham bombings were the excuse for this Terror Act, not a reason for it. The Irish community in this country has been made all too aware of what it feels like to live under this shadow.

Figures just released by the Home Office tell the story. From November '74 to March '81:-

- 5,100 people have been held by police — at sea- and airports, or taken from their homes — and held incommunicado for three to seven days. Of this staggering number only:
- 73 people have been charged with offences relating directly to the Act; and
- 20 charged with conspiring to commit offences under the Act.
- 270 were eventually charged with other offences.
- 270 have been served with exclusion orders, but only 48 were subsequently charged on return to Ireland.
- 222 people have been excluded for no legal reason — and they cannot appeal against the order, or demand the reasons for the order.

This has horrific implications for civil liberties; it also makes people afraid to

speak out against what the British state is doing in their name, let alone organise support for the war going on in their country. It also disrupts and shatters people's lives, as Tommy O'Hagan's story shows.

Tommy was deported in 1979 under the PTA; no charges were brought against him in the Six Counties. He had served 2½ years in jail after being convicted of a post-office robbery in the North, and completed his sentence in Armley Jail, as his parents had moved to Keighley.

Released in 1977, he settled here with his parents, got work, and planned to marry. The arrival of his brother Patrick, paroled for a home visit, prompted both their arrests under the PTA. Both were excluded after five days' detention without any solicitor. Neither had any connexion with "terrorist" activities.

Tommy broke his exclusion order in January 1980 to marry Cherie Kerr. He was arrested by armed Special Branch detectives who broke into her house, and served seven months before being re-excluded. Cherie and their two children joined him in Derry but they couldn't find a home, or work, and Cherie was forced to return last November. Tommy is now in "A" wing (top security) of Armley Jail, for attempting to re-enter Britain to join his family. He now faces five years for breaking the order — the order that has broken up his family.

This year the Labour Party requested a Home Office Enquiry into the Act, which was at the time refused. The same few MPs voted against the Act. The Labour Party must be pushed to bring the issue up again. The Connolly Association publicly opposed it. We should all make a move — to ensure that the 'Terror Act' is thrown out by next year.

### BIRTHDAYS

Irish Prisoners in jails in England suffer a great deal from isolation and ill treatment. Please send them birthday cards, so they know they are not forgotten.

David Owen 16th June  
HM Prison, Hedon Rd, Hull, YORKS  
Brian Keenan 17th June  
HM Prison Gartree, Leicester Rd, Market Harborough, LEICS.  
Con McFadden 19th June  
HM Prison Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, YORKS.  
Robert Cunningham 12th July  
HM Prison Albany, Newport, Isle of Wight.  
Eileen Gillespie 17th July  
HM Prison, Old Elvet, Durham  
Jimmy Ashe 31st July  
HM Prison Albany, Newport, Isle of Wight.



# THE POLICIES OF SINN FEIN

In April, a new quarterly of the Provisional Sinn Fein Foreign Affairs Bureau made its appearance in Ireland. Named 'Iris', it aims at more comprehensive analysis of the twelve-year-old war in the North and at an airing of the political attitudes and programme of Sinn Fein. An interview with Ruairi O Bradaigh, President of Sinn Fein, ranges over the current issues

## THE THATCHER-HAUGHEY TALKS

O Bradaigh points out that there have been two meetings, in May 1980 and, the more highly-publicised one, in December last. From the first meeting Haughey accepted the so-called 'constitutional guarantee' of the British Government of Ireland Act, 1921. He agreed that any change in the constitutional state of the Six Counties could only come about with the consent of the people of the Six Counties and not with the consent of the majority of the people of Ireland. Seizing the initiative from this, Thatcher, says O Bradaigh, "could be thinking along the lines of loosening her grip on the north of Ireland (through Ulsterisation) and tightening her hold on all of Ireland... We've heard talk about voting rights for English citizens living in Ireland; about a joint Anglo-Irish Economic Council; a joint Anglo-Irish energy council. And, in particular, it looks as if the traditional 'neutrality' of the Free State in international affairs is to be thrown overboard and that there would be a mutual defence pact between the Dublin government and the London government. This could possibly be extended later to include the EEC, and later again America could be brought in on it."

## THE LOYALISTS

O Bradaigh stresses three points:—

- 1) The Loyalists act as a right-wing privileged class.
- 2) Their armed manifestations — which combine the state forces of the Ulster Defence Regiment and Royal Ulster Constabulary with the unofficial or illegal forces like the Ulster Defence Association or Ulster Volunteer Force — are similar to the French OAS (Secret Army Organisation) in Algeria.
- 3) Paisley and the UDA represent "the convulsions of an outdated imperialism trying to come to terms with the new arrangements for a new and more sophisticated imperialism."

O Bradaigh sees the option of an 'independent Six Counties' as a very dangerous one. "The nationalist people must liberate themselves, and in doing so they will liberate also the loyalist people who are caught in a trap of history and are unable to liberate themselves."

## THE HUNGER STRIKE

The British, O Bradaigh maintains, want to inflict a psychological defeat on the Republican movement in the prison struggle, to assist them in the overall struggle. "It is necessary to realise that at no time is the part greater than the whole. A diversion of energy into the H Blocks/Armagh struggle over a long period could be very bad organisationally. We have (through a quick build-up of international pressure) to get this criminalisation policy reversed once and for all and to move on then to the broad struggle, towards the full freedom in every aspect for the Irish people."

## THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

O Bradaigh emphasizes links between the Irish and other Celtic countries in Western Europe: Scotland, Wales and Brittany. He wishes to see them all 'free, independent and socialist... This of course pre-supposes the breaking-up of the so-called 'United Kingdom'."

Also, the EEC ("a coming together of old colonial powers to erect another world super-power") should be threatened by the struggles of the Basques, Catalans, Corsicans etc. at the periphery and the workers' movements at the centre of the member states. "Sinn Fein's objective is a Europe of peoples rather than states... We are opposed to the power blocs, east and west, political, military and economic. We wish the new Ireland to be non-aligned."

## EVOLUTION OF SINN FEIN

O Bradaigh stresses a continuity in Sinn Fein's social and economic objectives since January 1970, when the Party stated: "our socialism envisages the nationalisation of the monetary system, commercial banks and insurance companies, key industries, mines, building land and fishing rights; the division of large ranches, an upper limit on the amount of land owned by one individual, the setting up of worker-owned cooperatives on a wide scale in agriculture, industry and fishing."

"We had a political education programme within the movement since 1973 which has been geared clearly to indicating that we are a movement that is anti-imperialist, anti-colonial and not simply a movement to get the Brits out of Ireland."

"The success of the imperialists so far in Ireland has been that they contained the national struggle in one watertight compartment, the social and economic struggle in another compartment, and indeed the cultural struggle in a third compartment. They have managed to keep them separated, sometimes in an antagonistic manner. Whereas the strength of the whole movement lies in bringing them all together."

## What is the NATIONAL H-BLOCK/ARMAGH COMMITTEE ?

The bravery of Bobby Sands, Francis Hughes, Raymond McCreesh and Patsy O'Hara, and of those who may still have to die before the British Government meets the 5 reasonable demands of the prisoners, has brought Irish freedom and independence a whole lot nearer.

This hunger strike, and the last one, have united opinion throughout Ireland in a way not seen since the civil rights marches of 1969, and Bloody Sunday. Now, like then, the people's demands are clearly reasonable; the intransigence and savagery of the British Government plain for all to see. But what is different now is that the National H-Block/Armagh Committee has made it possible for that strong opinion to be organised so that it can be sustained.

The main feature of the Committee's politics has been the call for support for democratic demands. No-one who supports the 5 demands is required to support the armed struggle, or be socialists or revolutionaries.

And the Committee's success demonstrates that there is a lot of support for the prisoners' demands and by campaigning on this basis the Committee has drawn in a wider range of support than exists for the political programme of Sinn Fein and the Irish Republican Socialist Party.

At the same time, the National Committee could not exist without the Republican organisations and the armed struggle. The continued resistance of the northern people has been possible only through armed defence. The prisoners themselves are of course the captured prisoners in the war against foreign domination. So the success of the National Committee does not conflict with the job that is done by the Republican organisations. SF and IRSP will remain leading forces in the struggle for independence. But they clearly recognise that they are not the only forces. And by putting their weight behind the Committee they have made possible the broadest possible unity against the main enemy.

It is a unity that has brought many into politics for the first time; many others, inactive for years, are back in the centre of things. It is a unity that would be very hard to beat. And it is that very unity, behind democratic demands that has brought great support right across the world.

We can aid the struggle by doing just what is asked of us. The prisoners have 5 demands. They ask, the National Committee, Sinn Fein, IRSP — the Irish people ask that we campaign for those 5 demands.