

# TROOPS OUT

Vol. 5, No. 1, October 1981

Paper of the Troops Out Movement 15p



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





# EDITORIAL

The hunger strike has ended without winning the five demands the prisoners are fighting for, but the achievements of the hunger strike are beyond question. The prisoners were not sacrificing their lives simply to change prison conditions but also to continue the fight to free Ireland.

The stand of the prisoners in Long Kesh and Armagh Jail through the blanket protest to the no-wash nightmare to the extreme of two hunger strikes has smashed through the "criminalisation policy" which attempted to cut off the armed resistance from its support and played upon the exhaustion of seven years and more of war. The policy never fully worked - although the torture and the no-jury courts naturally had their effect - and it ended by rebounding on itself. For the hunger strike brought with it a new offensive which could and did involve the nationalist people on a scale not seen for sixty years.

The hunger strike has made Britain's war in Ireland a matter of concern across the world. It has brought about international recognition that a war of national liberation is going on just like the wars in Namibia and Afghanistan. Throughout the world people have demonstrated and picketed their support for the Irish and their condemnation of British imperialism.

The hunger strike has brought to public attention the facts of the British Army occupation of Northern Ireland, the violation of Ireland's national rights that is partition, and the extreme repression in Northern Ireland that inevitably accompanies British rule there. The consciousness of these facts is particularly important in Ireland as a whole, and the unity of the Irish people in the hunger strike campaign is a pointer to the future. Remember that two republican prisoners were elected to the parliament in Dublin. The campaign also made clear what side the Dublin Government is on, and the Catholic hierarchy and the Social Democratic and Labour Party. This clearness is vital for future strategy.

In England, Scotland and Wales, too, the consciousness is important: we who live in the British State have a particular responsibility to attack the State which continues to lord it over other countries. *Neither the struggle of the prisoners nor the wider struggle for national liberation is over.*

## PRISONERS' BIRTHDAYS

There are at present 59 Irish Republican prisoners in 11 English jails, many in solitary confinement. Please send them paperbacks and Irish music records and above all birthday cards to the following:

**STEPHEN BLAKE**  
507953 HM Prison, Hedon Road, Hull,  
Yorks 31st Oct

**HARRY DUGGAN**  
338638 HM Prison Parkhurst, Newport,  
Isle of Wight 31st Oct

**ROY WALSH**  
119083 HM Prison Albany, Newport,  
Isle of Wight 1st Nov

**MARTIN COUGHLAN**  
507955 HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs  
Du Cane Rd, London W12  
4th Nov

**SEAN KINSELLA**  
758661 HM Prison Gartree, Leicester Rd,  
Market Harborough, Leics  
5th Nov

**PAUL NORNEY**  
863532 HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs,  
Du Cane Rd, London W12  
11th Nov

**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:

28th October

Subs: Britain and Ireland £3 for 10 issues yearly. Europe £4. USA and Australia £6.

Make cheques payable to Troops Out (Literature Committee).

Send to Box 10, 2a St Pauls Rd, London N.1.

If you want to join one of the TOM branches listed below, or if you don't live near a branch and want to join as an individual, fill in the coupon below.

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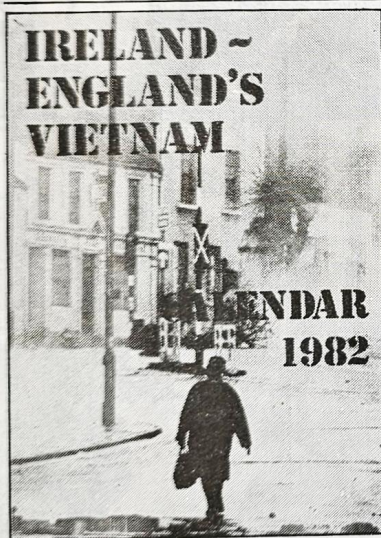
I would like to join/be sent information about the Troops Out Movement.

Name . . . . .

Address . . . . .

. . . . .

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



## VIDEO FILM SHOW ABOUT IRELAND

Haringey Troops Out branch are beginning a series of monthly discussion meetings on the situation in Ireland.

Tuesday 13th October  
New video film "We Ourselves Speak", and discussion

Tuesday 10th November  
Discussion on the common objections to the 'Troops Out' viewpoint.

Both at the Community Centre,  
Denmark Road (off Wightman Rd),  
near Turnpike Lane, London N8.  
8.00pm

New Calendar. £2 or £1.25 to TOM branches, Irish solidarity groups etc. Enquiries to Open Road Printing Co-op, The Basement, 57 Micklegate, York.



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**



# PRISONERS' RELATIVES VISIT ENGLAND

Between the 17th and 20th of September, a delegation of 92 relatives of protesting prisoners in the H Blocks and Armagh Gaol crossed the Irish Sea to London, Coventry and Manchester to lobby support for the hunger strikers' Pave Demands and to reaffirm their solidarity with the prisoners in the face of emotional blackmail by the British State and their collaborators in the North of Ireland.

Accompanied by Owen Carron MP, they held a Press Conference at Conway Hall, London and then went on to a reception at the Camden Irish Centre. Hundreds of people heard speeches by Goretti McDonnell, widow of Joe, Maura McCrory of the National H Block/Armagh Committee (Ireland) and Harry McHugh of the Federation of Irish

Societies in England, as well as by Owen Carron. The meeting was introduced by Labour Euro-MP Richard Balfe, who stated that *"no one who travels in Europe as I do can fail to realise that there is widespread support for the H Block men."* Messages were received from Dafydd Elis Thomas MP (Plaid Cymru) and ex-Bishop Colin Winter of Namibia, who spelt out the cause of the deadly impasse in Ireland: *"English imperialism, English colonialism, English intransigence, English policies, and English callousness."*

Solidarity with other anti-imperialist struggles was a feature of the visit, and of the embassies lobbied, amongst the friendliest were those of Algeria and Cuba. Tanzania, Sweden and Iraq also expressed support. Owen Carron

and groups of relatives lobbied Labour politicians, Union headquarters and Church leaders during their stay and the delegation ended with vigils at Downing Street and Westminster Cathedral, where Cardinal Hume read the relatives a prepared statement so empty and insulting to the hunger strikers' families that they walked out without another word.

An emotional farewell crowned the visit; for many of the relatives it was their first journey out of Ireland away from their families. In those few days we forged many new friendships and learned at first hand about the atrocities of British rule and prison 'life' in the Six Counties.

## Tribute to the Relatives

The relatives of the current hungerstrikers, and those who have already given up their lives have become a major target for attack. From the British Government through the media, from the Dublin government, the SDLP, and perhaps, most cruelly, by some clergy in the 6 Counties.

The prisoners have stood strong and united, for five years they have endured a living hell, and their politicisation within the prison has become very pure. The republican movement outside has the political strength to respond to the crude propaganda abuse heaped on them.

For the families of the hungerstrikers, and the families of all the blanketmen in the H Blocks, it is different and harder. Several of the relatives who came to London are mothers, wives and sisters of those brave men. Some have not seen their prisoners for years, since they must wear the uniform for those visits, and sometimes they lose them through their protest; they didn't see them till they had decided to go on hungerstrike. They have the responsibility of young children and keeping the home going outside, on their own. The isolation and bravery of doing that, even with the real support of family, friends and the prisoners' relatives organisations, is not obvious, neither did they make a big thing of it, but it is real enough.

But centrally, the wives, mothers and fathers of hungerstrikers have faced and are facing life and death, and know it is ultimately in their power to choose one or the other for their husband or son or daughter. They have to go through the torture of asking themselves if they made the right decision. This "power of choice" has been cruelly exploited to break them — for the decision to intervene or not intervene is a personal one, and the suffering involved is a personal hell. Relatives did talk to me of their personal suffering, it isn't something for interview material, it is moving beyond words, and none want their experience put before another's, a real unity lies there. Such a choice is the heaviest responsibility imaginable.

In spite of the fact that relatives' intervention in deciding to save the lives of their loved ones has been used by the British Government to crowningly spell out the collapse of the hungerstrike as a whole, you would find nobody in their communities or within the republican movement who would criticise them for that decision. The media doesn't tell us all they have done. They have travelled all over the world, spoken at huge public meetings, many for the first time. They have travelled all through Ireland, campaigning for prisoners and Owen Carron in the elections, talking and explaining the issues to people, meeting ambassadors, meeting the Taoiseach, being thrown out of his government offices, and they have come to London, to the heart of the imperialist country that is really responsible for the deaths on hungerstrike, and the war in their country.



*"I used to hear it said that the British army recruited more IRA volunteers that the IRA did themselves. It was certainly true with my son, that the British army recruited him into the IRA. From when he was 16, they kept lifting him, because he was very tall and they thought he was older than he was. Then when he was 17½ some soldiers went berserk after two policemen had been shot in a different district, and shot him in the leg with a live round. The next thing we knew he was involved in the IRA."*

Mrs. Belle Fitzsimons



# Tribute to the Relatives

# letters



(Photo: Nick Oakes)

'We lived in a mixed area, East Belfast. One year they had the pavements painted red, white and blue for the 12 July celebrations, and because my son wouldn't get down and kiss the footpath, or curse the Pope, he was hit and spat on. He was 14 then. Catholic houses were getting petrol bombed. We moved to Luton. I went to the Welfare to get a house, and this woman said to me, 'We have no houses here even for British people,' I said, 'Do you not realise that what all the fighting is about is whether we're British or not British?' She said, 'We can give you some help to send you back home.' I said, 'Back home I have no home.' She said, 'We can help you to get across the border to one of those refugee camps.'

Mrs. Kay Walsh

## Watching Him Die

PATSY O'HARA'S MOTHER,  
PEGGY

(From an interview in Republican News, 8.8.'81)

No word of mine could express what I felt on my lonely vigil watching my son's life ebb away, but I will try to tell you some things that might make others understand a little more.

From the day my son went on hungerstrike, I knew he was absolutely resolute about what he was doing, but he was always full of hope and told me not to worry. I, too, was full of hope, and in the back of my mind I was determined that my Patsy was not going to die. . . .

... Two days before Patsy's death every effort had failed. . . I decided it was time for me to intervene. It was

then I made it known to the leadership of the movement outside. . . My decision was met with sympathy and understanding. . . "We won't desert you", they said.

(Waiting for Patsy to go unconscious)

I was standing by Patsy's bedside wetting his lips and tongue with moistened cotton wool as he could no longer take water. His eyes were open but he could not see. He was very weak and seemed unable to speak but I knew when I held his hand that he was still conscious.

There I was, myself alone, consumed by grief, and torn by this dilemma. Then, as if he was reading my mind, he suddenly turned to me and spoke loudly and firmly. He said: 'Mammy, I'm sorry we didn't win, but please, mammy, let the fight go on.'

Those words gripped my heart like a vice, and only then did the reality of his dying hit me. I could never explain the torment of my mind and the pain in my heart in those last lonely hours. . . I prayed for strength, I prayed for help, it was so lonely. . .

On looking back, I realise that my being left alone was an extra agony imposed by the prison authorities\*. . . they felt they had broken me, and if left alone with Patsy, I, in turn, would break him.

But Patsy was unbreakable, either by me or anybody else, but at least now he is free from all the beatings, the torture, and degrading body searches which brought the prisoners to the desperation of hungerstrike in the first place.

\* Patsy's father, who returned directly to the prison from Derry when Patsy took a heart attack, was refused entry, after arriving ten minutes late, until the morning.

Dear Troops Out,

In all honesty I think that every citizen in the United Kingdom should be picked up and taken over to Northern Ireland in order that they should see exactly what is going on there "in their name". To be able to see for themselves the reality and the truth. These things which they are unable to see at home owing to the gross distortion of the truth, via the media of the television, the press and radio.

The courage of the Catholic people in Northern Ireland is something one has to admire, the strength of trying to carry on as normal, when you have an army of occupation, harassment, intimidation, downright callousness and indifference to life all the time. Despite the house searches, arrests, interrogations, tortures, imprisonments and murder committed by the British Army and the RUC, to say nothing of murders committed by paramilitary groups, these people have maintained a quiet dignity and resistance. By refusing to bow down to the forces of tyranny, they are an example to us all.

They carry the torches of freedom in their hearts. I was indeed honoured and humbled to be among them. Victory to the Irish People!

A member of the TOM delegation  
Newcastle

LETTER SENT TO THE LONDON H BLOCK/  
ARMAGH COMMITTEE

Dear Members of the Committee,

I feel it is my duty to draw your attention to the way in which the British media are making use of Mother Teresa of Calcutta as a propaganda tool.

Mother Teresa was invited to Corrymeela, Northern Ireland, and has been widely quoted by the British media as condemning the hunger strikers. She may or may not have done so, of course, but she is widely used as an alleged critic of the hunger strike.

Certain snippets have come to light.

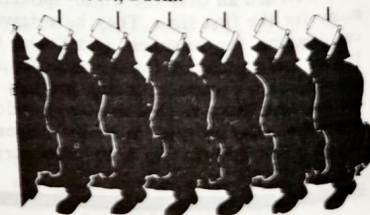
Number one: Army GHQ, Lisburn, was the source of a donation of £1,000 to Mother Teresa. Readers of the *Catholic Herald* - a British paper - sent £15,000 to Mother Teresa. The British Army in Germany contributed, so did Gibraltar.

Having celebrated her 70th birthday, maybe she is not aware that she is being made use of. Her mental powers may not be what they were - and probably she is mystically withdrawn from the awareness of intrigue. It looks as if she is now the equivalent of the Peace People who were finally a little frayed and frowsy, having received a lot of money for keeping the poor Papists praying while the economic and political mat was being pulled from under them.

Can you in any way counter the Mother Teresa campaign - or better, think up an equivalent to be used on behalf of the Calcuttas that exist in the ghetto of Northern Ireland? At least the poor of Calcutta die of hunger without being tortured while they die.

And why send a fortune to give dignity to the destitute in India while spending another fortune to deny the people of Northern Ireland and deprive them of every shred of dignity? Illogical.

Yours faithfully,  
Sister J. M., Dublin





# THE ARMAGH WOMEN

INTERVIEW WITH  
SILE DARRAGH,  
RELEASED IN AUGUST FROM  
ARMAGH JAIL

What is morale like in Armagh at present?

Morale at the moment in Armagh is sound. It's a very close crowd up there, and I mean very, very close. The women are holding together very well. They are strong, they've been through a lot together and that's what keeps us going. If you were isolated it would be a lot harder, but you have your friends and your comrades and that keeps you strong.

With the deaths of the hunger strikers it's a very hard, very, very sad time, but time is mostly taken up with PRO work where we have to get the message across to people throughout the world. We've written to thousands and thousands of people.

There is also a great bond between Armagh Jail and H Block. A lot of people, I think, tend to believe that because of the focus is on H Block — which the women in Armagh agree with — that Armagh and H Block are separate. They are definitely not separate. The men and women are on protest for the same thing. Then men are on hunger strike not just for the 450 men in H Block, they are also on hunger strike for the 27 women sitting in Armagh Jail. If it had been the case of the women going on hunger strike and the men not, the same principle stands: the women would have been on hunger strike for the men also.

We stand for the same thing, the same principles, the same beliefs and it is a very strong bond between the two prisons. When a hunger striker dies it is taken very badly and very, very personally within the prison. Perhaps you didn't know him in a personal sense but he was a comrade, he was a man who went to lay down his life, not just for the men in the H Block but also for me, for 26 other women in Armagh Jail. The hunger strikers know what they are doing, they're very, very brave men, they're prepared to go through the pain, they're prepared to face death, but it's still very sad when a comrade dies.

Last December three women, Mairead Farrell, Mairead Nugent and Mary Doyle, joined the first hunger strike. In March the Armagh women said they would not be joining the present hunger strike. Why was that?

It is a personal decision that you make yourself. Each person who has gone on hunger strike, each man who has died, it

*Sile Darragh  
addresses the Intern-  
ment Rally in  
Belfast last August  
(photo: Leeds  
Other Paper)*



has been his decision. When the hunger strike was discussed in Armagh Jail we sent out and said, "We want to have a hunger strike." We got the same comeback as the men in H Block did — that the Republican movement didn't want to see anyone die and that the British Government would allow hunger strikers to do so. But it wasn't looked upon that the women would be weaker or anything like that.

We've heard very little news recently from Armagh. Why is that?

Every woman in Armagh Jail would tell you herself that the women in Armagh at the moment aren't concerned with their own conditions, they're not very bad, but the main problem is the hunger strike, that's what everyone's thoughts are centred upon.

Women's groups shouldn't feel that maybe because they're not getting any details that we don't notice that they're working for us, or that we're feeling left out. We *don't* feel left out. We know that there are women working on behalf of the women in Armagh Jail and we appreciate everything they've ever done for us. But the problem is the hunger strike.

So what would the women in Armagh see as the most important task for their supporters on the outside to be doing at the present time?

Well, there are a lot of outlets for supporters. Support can't be kept quiet, it must be brought out onto the streets. The British must be shown that the common people of not only England, not only Northern Ireland, the South of Ireland, but the world, working class people, oppressed people, and everyone and anyone support the prisoners, believe in our struggle for freedom. The British Establishment have tried to criminalise us. If we can show the British that even the people of their own country don't believe that we're criminals, it's going to be a shock to British morale.

You know, we *do* hear what is going on. We heard the time of the Royal wedding about Ken Livingstone and letting off the black balloons — that was something good to hear. Anthing and everything which can bring notice to our position, to the position within the prisons.

If something is being planned, it would be good to let someone over here know before it goes ahead, and to let them know what happened during it. Because all that helps. It would be very demoralising to be sitting in prison and all these things going on and not hearing them, 'cos you'd say to yourself, No one supports us. But we *do* hear about it. And people should know that we do hear about it. Because it would also be hard to go out and march every night and say, Well nobody hears we're doing this. It helps both ways: it helps both on the outside and on the inside.

One thing that has come out of the hunger strike is that, because of the election victories in Fermanagh/South Tyrone and in the South, the British government now can't turn round and say the prisoners have got no support. They must have been a great boost for you in Armagh, too?

Yes, I remember — I'll never forget — the day Bobby Sands won the election in Fermanagh/South Tyrone. It was absolute jubilation. Armagh, A Wing of Armagh Jail just erupted. People were crying, people were laughing, people were dancing. It was just the highest of the high.

And then again when Kieran (Docherty) and Paddy (Agnew) won their seats in the Dail (Government in the South of Ireland), it was a sad but a good occasion at the same time. Sad because the whole thing just reminded us again of the Fermanagh election and Bobby winning, and Bobby had been dead for some weeks at that time.



# TRADE UNIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

- 1894 All-Ireland Irish Trades Union Congress (ITUC) formed including both Irish based and British based unions.
- 1921 Partition: but ITUC doesn't split. However, 6 County representation on ITUC declines from one third at the turn of the century to one sixth in 1930.
- 1945 ITUC splits when the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU)\* and ten other Irish-based unions leave to form the Southern Congress of Irish Unions (CIU).
- 1959 Reunification of the two Congresses as the Irish Congress of Trades Unions (ICTU). The terms of reunification are the acceptance of partition by the ICTU and the almost total autonomy of Northern trades unionists within the Northern Ireland Committee (NIC).
- 1964 Government of Northern Ireland at Stormont recognises NIC.
- Today: In theory Northern Ireland trades unionists belong to an all-Ireland Congress, but in fact the ICTU works as two trade union movements working independently of each other. At annual conferences, Southern delegates only vote on Southern issues and Northern delegates on Northern issues.

\*ITGWU: Irish based transport union founded by James Larkin and James Connolly in 1907 after the British based Union of Dock Labourers sold out the big dockers' strike in Belfast. The Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union is the name used in the Six Counties by the British based Transport and General Workers Union. Both recruit in the Six Counties.

The trade unions in the Six Counties claim that they are the biggest non-sectarian organisation in Northern Ireland. They claim to represent the interests of both Protestant and Catholic workers, to be a 'voice of sanity in the community' and an island of normality in a sea of abnormality. "With hardly any exception", they claim, "sectarianism stops at the factory gates". The British TUC agrees. So does the Labour Party. So does the Tory Party. So does the Queen — in 1979 she called the unions "the voice of the working people of Northern Ireland".

It's an impressive display of unanimity. But in fact these claims are simply untrue. The non-sectarian trade union movement is one of the great myths about Northern Ireland today. The Six Counties are divided by a fundamental political rift between Loyalist and Nationalist workers, a rift that broadly corresponds to a division between Protestant and Catholic. Far from overcoming that rift, the unions, by trying to ignore it, take sides in it. They support the status quo, and the status quo is itself partisan. It represents the Loyalist ascendancy.

## RELIGION AND SKILL

From their very beginnings the unions in the Six Counties have been unable to escape the consequences of the sectarian divisions built into the wider society. The early craft unions in the 19th century were almost exclusively Protestant. As Catholic peasants moved to the towns these unions closed ranks to protect their

jobs and positions. The skilled v. non-skilled division corresponded closely to the Protestant v. Catholic division, and this division was again reproduced when the 'new model' or amalgamated unions were formed in the late 19th century. Again these were almost exclusively Protestant and the exclusivity of the skilled went hand in hand with religious sectarianism in what the early British socialist Beatrice Webb described as the "contemptuous and indifferent" attitude of these unions to Catholic labourers.

The unionisation of the unskilled did not begin until the 1890s. It centred on the docks and was largely an attempt by Catholics to get organised. As such it was fiercely resisted by both the employers and the state. In the 1907 dock strike the army was brought in and billeted in the Catholic Falls Road where they opened fire and killed two Catholic workers.

## BOLSHEVISM AND REPUBLICANISM

During the War of Independence, the trade unions in the 26 Counties played an important role in driving out the British. A prolonged transport strike severely hit British military supplies, and general strikes in towns such as Cork and Limerick backed up the armed struggle. In the Six Counties, however, it was very different. In 1919 the Northern labour movement showed its strength in a giant dock strike, but in the following year the bosses were able to use a campaign against the "twin evils of Bolshevism and Republicanism" to divide the movement and defeat the unions. Instead of united action there was a massive anti-Catholic

pogrom in the shipyards and several thousand Catholics were driven from their jobs and often their houses too.

In the years that followed the Northern Ireland state was ruled by deliberate sectarian discrimination. The unions kept their heads down and made no significant challenge to the discrimination in jobs and housing against Catholics: indeed the Protestant-dominated unions often made alliances with their bosses whereby they were guaranteed jobs at the expense of their Catholic fellow workers in return for their docility or quiescence in wages and conditions.

## IGNORING REPRESSION

To this day the Northern unions refuse to take up issues of politics or even 'civil liberties', a major concern of British unions, since in Northern Ireland these are seen to be Republican issues. To talk of repression is to be seen as taking a pro-Republican stance. Thus when AUEW/TASS member Brian Maguire was killed by hanging in police custody in 1979, his union did nothing. When NUPE members struck against the presence of the British Army in the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast they were denounced as pro-IRA.

Catholic workers cannot challenge this situation in the unions. They are in an automatic numerical minority because unemployment and the gerrymandering of the border has made them a relatively small proportion of employed workers. If sectarianism does indeed 'stop at the factory gate' it's probably because most Catholics are locked outside.

## BETTER LIFE FOR WHO?

In a state founded on discrimination the solution to issues such as jobs and houses must be political ones. They must challenge the underlying nature of that state. Instead the Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU (see box) takes on a pose of 'neutrality' and hides behind the absurdly named Better Life For All Campaign. But, as one Derry Trades Council member put it: "it is extremely difficult to get support for a campaign for a better life for all in a state which has always encouraged one section of its workforce to get a better life for themselves at the expense of the other section". The so-called neutrality of the Northern trade unions collaborates in continued Protestant sectarian domination. Anyone who challenges it is accused of sectarianism. No wonder the Northern Ireland Committee is so wonderful in the eyes of Margaret Thatcher, Michael Foot, William Whitelaw, the Queen, Don Concannon, the Archbishop of Canterbury, David Steel, Len Murray, Roy Mason, etc. etc. etc. . . .

Note: There are of course a minority of trades unionists who organise, mainly unofficially, against the underlying causes of sectarianism in, for instance, the Trade Union Campaign Against Repression and the Trade Union Sub-Committee of the National H-Block Committee; the Belfast Trades Council also recently passed a motion in support of the five demands. Future issues of *Troops Out* will give more information on these activities.



# LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

On September 29th the British Labour Party Conference debated the constitutional position of Northern Ireland and how Britain should rule it for one and a half hours. The Conference voted in support of a policy document put by the National Executive which sets the unity of Ireland, North and South, as the goal of the Labour Party. This unity has to be achieved by "agreement and the consent of the people of Ulster". That consent will come about, it is claimed, by "better working class conditions and radical socialist policies". It also calls for the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and a review of the Emergency Provisions Act. The document further rejects the right of political status for the protesting prisoners in Northern Ireland and rejects the withdrawal of troops ("until the police can cope"). Two proposals in the document were remitted back to the National Executive for further consideration: these were a proposal for setting up branches of the British Labour Party in Northern Ireland and one for a constitutional conference.

There was some opposition to the document. From the far right a proposal

to "move the reference back" (that is, to reject it) failed even to find a seconder. There was more support for motions that recognised the right of Ireland to self-determination, although these were all voted down.

There was a motion to withdraw the Guarantee — whereby no constitutional change can be brought about without the agreement of the majority in Northern Ireland — and to call on the next Labour Government to set a timetable for withdrawal of troops. This seemed to win a majority on a show of hands from the constituency delegates at the conference but was defeated on a card vote, which most likely means that the trade unions power was against it.

A motion was put by Fulham for "full political and military withdrawal" and support for the prisoners' five demands. Merle Amory of Brent East seconded it: "How can we condemn the Russian invasion of Afghanistan or the South African invasion of Angola and yet still defend and support the British invasion of Northern Ireland?" This motion was rejected by the Conference.

The Troops Out Movement and the Labour Committee on Ireland were both

active outside the Conference. There was leafleting of the Conference on the Tuesday and Wednesday with a letter that was smuggled out of the H Blocks and a silent march for the hunger strikers on Wednesday evening which ended in a rally. Maurice McMullan, the brother of hunger striker Jackie McMullan, was warmly welcomed.

A fringe meeting was attended by about 500 people, who gave Owen Carron a standing ovation both at the beginning and the end of his speech. When asked from the floor to condemn violence he rightly replied, "I condemn the violence which causes all other violence — the violence of the British". He also said, "It is presumptuous for the Labour Party Conference to sit in debate on the future government of my country. In straight language it is nobody's business only that of the Irish to decide how Ireland is governed". Labour MP Kevin McNamara also pointed out that now the Labour Party had voted to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act he hoped that it would place a three-line whip on Labour MPs next time it comes up for renewal.

## Manchester to Blackpool MARCH ON TUC

The 100-strong march, which started out from Manchester on Saturday (5th September) and arrived in Blackpool on Monday evening (7th September), raised the banner of Irish freedom and solidarity with the hunger strikers along the 60-mile route. Supporters of the hunger strikers came out to greet the marchers and to join in.

Teresa Moore, aunt of dead hunger striker Micky Devine, and Brian Sullivan (NUPE, Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast), took part in the march through Blackpool to the TUC conference. Outside the Winter Gardens the marchers held a militant lobby of TUC delegates and demanded that they support the hunger strikers. A few sympathetic delegates stopped to talk to Mrs Moore but the majority scuttled quickly past and refused to make any comment.

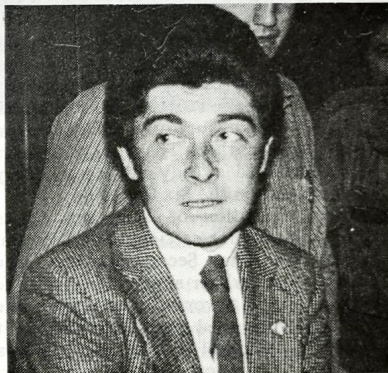
Dave Hallsworth, secretary of Tameside Trades Council, stood up in the afternoon session of the conference and called on the delegates to invite Mrs Moore to address them on the hunger strike. The platform was not impressed and Dave was bundled out by stewards.

At a lively rally held after the lobby, the marchers and supporters gave Teresa Moore a standing ovation. She emphasised the importance of taking the issue of the hunger strike into the labour movement and urged the audience to build on the success of the march. These points were also echoed in contributions from Dave Ayre (UCATT, Wear Valley Trades Council), Terry Matthews (London IRSP), Don Milligan (Revolutionary Gay Caucus) and Brian Sullivan, March organiser Keith

Tompson (Smash the PTA Campaign) outlined the work that needed to be done in the following months if Ireland was to become a real issue in the trade unions. Regional conferences, marches and interventions at next year's trade union conferences are in the pipeline.

The Workers March for Irish Freedom is seen by the organisers and participants as an important beginning: the broad support, enthusiasm and publicity generated by it indicates what can and must be done to win working people in Britain to the banner of Irish freedom.

(Contributed by Smash The Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign)



Maurice McMullan (photo: TOM)

## Prisoners' Letter

*A letter was smuggled out of the H Blocks written to the British Labour Party Conference. This was printed as a leaflet and handed to all delegates. It addressed "Members of the British Labour Party and Fellow Socialists", and ends:*

We prisoners are very aware of the fact that those who bear initial responsibility for the conveyor belt system and for the initiation of the ignoble criminalisation policy are present at this conference today. They know and everyone there knows that the inception of the criminalisation policy was a tactical rather than a moral decision. They are the men who sanctioned the use of brutality and degradation here in H Blocks. They are the men who shout "hear, hear" the loudest when Maggie Thatcher allows another Irish Republican Socialist prisoner to die in H Blocks for his dignity and beliefs. Had they but a fraction of the courage and commitment of those socialists who have died such a horrible death on hunger-strike for their beliefs they would call on Thatcher to act reasonably on this

issue but we expect them to simply chum out their old shallow clichés to defend their indefensible stance.

But we do appeal to those of you who are concerned about the horrifying spiral of death both inside and outside the prison to seek genuinely a just and practical solution to this impasse. We appeal to you to condemn the Tories for their blood-thirsty vindictiveness. We appeal to you to study carefully our policy statements of July 4th and August 6th in which we clearly showed that we sought neither elitist nor preferential treatment, nor the right to control the prison. Lastly we appeal to you to think of your ten ideological comrades who gave their very lives for their integrity and of your socialist comrades who face death at present on hunger-strike. You can be instrumental in saving the lives in Long Kesh and in the streets of Northern Ireland and not only we, but a united nationalist population in Ireland pray you do so.

P.R.O. *Protesting Republican Prisoners, H Blocks*



# TERROR ACT EXPLAINED

## What Was That About Democracy?

On 21st November 1974 bombs exploded at 'The Tavern in the Town' and 'The Mulberry Bush' pubs in Birmingham, killing 21 and injuring many others.

The reaction of the Home Secretary Roy Jenkins was to push through Parliament the Prevention of Terrorism Act (Temporary Provisions), which became law on 29th November 1974, after a long debate lasting only twelve hours, with not a single vote cast against it. Yet it significantly extended the powers of the police, and placed in the hands of the Home Secretary a discretionary power over which there is little or no control. It would be wrong however, to consider the Act, which remains law in an amended more repressive form, a rushed, spontaneous reaction to acts of 'terrorism'. The PTA is simply the most recent of a long line of repressive measures taken by the British state or in the UK concerning Irish affairs. In the 1790's an act was passed giving immunity to those repressing, with criminal acts, the United Irishmen; in 1922 The Special Powers Act was introduced in Northern Ireland giving wider powers of search and arrest, and permitting detention without trial, this becoming a permanent feature of Northern Ireland legislation in 1933; in 1973 it was repealed and replaced by The Emergency Provisions Act, which abolished trial by jury for certain offences, going further than The Special Powers Act which had already made a mockery of civil rights in the Six Counties.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act is divided into three sections. The first empowers the Home Secretary to proscribe organisations which appear to him to be concerned in terrorism occurring in the UK and concerned with Irish affairs. It also became illegal with the Act, to be a member, or support financially or otherwise a proscribed organisation, or to display support or arrange meetings for a proscribed organisation.

The second section empowers the Home Secretary to exclude from the mainland of Britain, anyone believed to be involved in the 'commission preparation, or instigation of an act of terrorism'. Ironically, this exposes the very thing that the British State likes to conceal: that in fact Ireland and Britain are two countries. Anyone who has travelled over to Northern Ireland knows that a 'border' exists, with a 'customs' far more stringent than most.

There is no appeal against an exclusion order, rather the arrested party may merely make 'representations'. There is no right to a formal public hearing with legal representation. Neither the detainee nor his/her lawyer are allowed to know the evidence on which the order is made. Indeed in the interview subsequent to 'representation' no legal representative is allowed. The normal juridical process is thereby circumvented. Like internment, exclusion is a negation of the principle of innocent until proven guilty.



The third section allows the police to arrest, without warrant, any person they 'reasonably suspect' to be involved in 'the commission, preparation, or instigation' of acts of terrorism. Also the Act with its calculatedly ambiguous definition of 'terrorism' allows for the banning and investigation of organisations opposed to violence, but who believe in the Irish people's right to self-determination and their right to choose their own tactics.

The Act legalised many previously illegal police malpractices. They now have the power to detain up to 48 hours or a further 5 days with the Home Secretary's permission (7 days with a further 5 for those entering or leaving the country); to take fingerprints and photos of detainees which may be retained even after the detainee is released. The Act also gives the police extensive powers of search and seizure, which enable them to stop and search almost anyone whom they wish.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act has effectively restricted political freedom, eroded freedom of speech, and contravened rights and liberties hard fought for in years of struggle. It has given the Police and Home Secretary wide ranging powers which are nevertheless themselves contravened, with the police not only refusing habeas corpus, as is allowed for by the act, but also holding suspects incommunicado. Even in 'non-terrorist' cases the police are loathe to grant access to a solicitor (one survey shows that 74% of those who asked to see a solicitor were refused). The majority of those held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act are never even charged.

The effect of the PTA on Irish people living in Britain has been absolutely vicious. They have been terrorised. Police have paid visits to their work or questioned their neighbours to create an atmosphere of suspicion — many have lost their jobs as a result. The Act says to the Irish, "You are all suspected criminals, keep your heads down or else."

saoirse

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## 1969 – The Peacekeepers?

I first went to Ireland in October, which was 2 months after the troops first went in. It's true to say that from the soldiers' point of view they were going in in a peacekeeping mission, to keep apart two religious communities who were at each others' throats. Now what the government believed in those early days I don't know, but the Army had the feeling of doing a worthwhile job, saving lives – you were doing the kind of soldiering for which you had joined up.

This was reflected in a number of things – for example in the training that soldiers were given then. The kind of training you would give to soldiers who had to adjust their duties from military duties into policing duties. The kind of work of supporting the civil police, instead of full battle training, which is a soldier's usual type. There was a lot of emphasis on lecture-room work: studying civil law, powers of arrest, the use of the Riot Act, arresting techniques.

The equipment the soldiers were issued with included their rifles with live ammunition, but the restriction on using those rifles was very strong. The expectation was that the role in Northern Ireland would be one of using batons, CS gas, riot shields – the kind of material you'd expect to use in support of the civil police.

And the operating procedures in Ireland in those early days were also policing procedures. Patrolling was very even-handed – or tried to be – between nationalist areas and loyalist areas. There was a great attempt to make friends with the local people. There was a campaign called the Hearts and Minds Campaign which a lot of Army money was pumped into, where soldiers and officers were very much encouraged into social contact with the local people, usually with the nationalist people. . . . Youth clubs were set up for local kids, and soldiers played in soccer matches against the local lads. A lot of soldiers . . . found themselves dating local girls, and all these things reinforced the contact really. . . .

But the initial period of peacekeeping didn't last very long. Within a year, certainly by the end of 1970 things had changed a lot. The initial welcome changed very quickly into a cooler welcome, to indifference, which moved into a degree of positive hate from the local areas where they were patrolling.

## 1970 – War against the people

By the end of 1970 the Army's tactics in Ireland had adapted considerably. The Army had accepted it was fighting in a war role, against the entire nationalist population. Training changed . . . soldiers were no longer sat in lecture-rooms being taught the niceties of civil law. They were now taken on the battle ranges, usual training was now reinforced with more battle training for service in N. Ireland. As for their equipment, more emphasis was placed on the use of rifles, sub-machine guns and live ammunition.

# INSIDE STORY

## Ex-Army officer Meurig Parri speaks



Operational procedures changed as well. In loyalist areas you'd do the occasional patrol – flag waving patrols, chat and have a cup of tea, any information going – pick it up and absorb it. On the other hand, in nationalist areas, where you did 85% of patrolling by this time, it was aggressive patrolling. You were looking for trouble, for ways to cow the people into submission. It was very apparent to ordinary soldiers that they were going into a colonial warfare situation, against the nationalist population.

The Government itself acknowledged this by a symbolic but very important step in 1972, after a lot of Army pressure. They said OK, from now on we accept that N. Ireland is a war and soldiers who serve there will be awarded with war medals. The Army has always rewarded soldiers who fight its wars with the general service medal. In '72 all soldiers who did the regulation qualifying period in N. Ireland, 30 days I think, were awarded the general service medal, N. Ireland clasp. Acts of bravery, previously rewarded with civil medals, like you'd get for rescuing dogs from mine shafts, were from 1972 rewarded with war medals. But the Government has never admitted the war to its own civilian population or to the rest of the world.

Another thing the Government – no matter if it's been a Tory or Labour one – has said from the beginning, with unbelievable consistency, to its own army and the rest of the world – is that its own army is winning. Every time a republican activist is picked up, or an arms cache is discovered, a press release is announced to a breathless world that the war is

virtually won, that the IRA is a spent force. The soldiers have been fed this line now for twelve years. But every time they go on tour they realise that the republican support is growing and growing, and that the Government's propaganda is a load of rubbish.

It's a question of the Government and the Army losing the war by their own mistakes, and there have been many stepping stones on this disastrous path.

## 1971 – Internment

In 1971 the Government suddenly realised they were fighting a disciplined, organised and very dedicated opposing army. Its response to this was internment. Because it was indiscriminate, the introduction of internment really put the lie to it being a religious war. People from all shades of Irish opinion were dragged into internment camps in the hope that the activists had been eliminated, neutralised. And the naive feeling of the Government was that the people left behind would not be concerned, would not be inspired to challenge British State rule in Ireland and the whole thing would die. Well, of course the exact opposite happened; many people who previously had not been involved more than superficially in the republican cause became active supporters in their resentment at internment, and the republican cause gained in recruits, in money and in strength.

*Next month: 1972 – Bloody Sunday in Derry, and the desertion rate shoots up. Also coming: Demoralisation; and 'Veterans Against the War'.*



# MARCHES, PICKETS,

## LEEDS

Following the TOM delegation in August, when 15 people from Leeds went to Belfast and Derry, the level of activity in support of the hunger strikers has shown no signs of waning. An impressive and dignified silent vigil with black flags marked the death of Mickey Devine. We joined a large picket of Wakefield Prison called by Sinn Féin.

In September we held a lunchtime picket of the Army Recruitment Centre, followed by a picket outside Aer Lingus, and a 24-hour hunger strike outside the BBC TV centre. Five people went without food, taking only water, on the pavement, joined by a rota of other Committee members. Even torrential rain during the night didn't drive the fasters indoors, and as the BBC workers turned up the next morning a number of them were obviously impressed by the dedication shown, and several gave donations. BBC TV did not cover the event, of course.

We sent a coachload down to the national hunger strike rally in Luton on 26th September.

## COVENTRY

Coventry Hunger Strike Action Committee would like to thank Bronagh and Tomas from County Down for their letter of support following arrests of the Committee's members. Your support is very much appreciated.

## MERSEYSIDE

Merseyside TOM has held silent vigils for the hunger strikers who have died, on the steps of St Luke's Church in Liverpool city centre. St Luke's was bombed and gutted during the war – and left ruined as a symbol of war's pointless destruction. Ironically, any German bomber crews captured would have received Prisoner of War status; worn their own clothes or uniforms, associated freely in their compounds, negotiated with prison authorities only through their own Officer Commanding and would certainly never be forced to do prison work!

## NORWICH

Support for the hunger strikers has continued in Norwich in spite of attacks by local fascists on our paper sales and pickets and hostility from the local Labour Party which refused us access to their meeting rooms. We had interviews with both of Norwich's MPs, neither of which were very fruitful – they regarded us and the situation in the north of Ireland as a "nuisance".

A visit by Thatcher was met by the banging of dustbin lids and saucepans in Belfast style. The demonstration was called at short notice but attracted good support and gave her a rough time.



Manchester picket (photo: TOM)

## MANCHESTER

## BIRMINGHAM

On September 19th the Birmingham H-Block/Armagh Action Group made their views known at the Labour Party Unemployment March.

At the start of the march we held a meeting at which the speakers included Gerard and Mary Fox (relatives of hunger striker Bernard Fox) and Paul Mackney (president of Birmingham Trades Council). The speeches were well received by the audience of about 100 people.

About 50 people marched through the city centre. At Aston Park they were greeted by more H Block activists, and again this was generally well received by the unemployment demonstrators. Once in Aston Park H Block banners were displayed in front of the platform for the benefit of the Labour leadership – and also appeared on national television news!

## SUPPORT FROM INDIANS

At the beginning of September a representative of the Indian Workers Association (GB) visited Belfast. He explained that the IWA had always supported the prisoners' demands and knew that the Irish struggle was a just one. "You are fighting the Brits, and we are fighting the British State's racism". British imperialism is the common enemy. He pointed out that the British claims of what terrible things would ensue if the troops left were shown up as hypocritical nonsense by the terrible things that their presence causes every day.

## NEWS FROM FRANCE

While the British Communist Party is nowhere to be seen in the Troops Out Movement, vast sections of the French Communist Party (CP) are doing their "utmost to support the Long Kesh hunger strikers in their struggle to obtain satisfaction for their well-founded claims".

At the end of August the Paris section alone of the French CGT (Communist-controlled union) organised an early evening demonstration in support of Irish Republicans which was 10,000 strong. The feeling of the demonstration was marvellous, as we spread across the road with hardly a policeman in sight.

The numbers alone tell you that in France, as in America, ordinary men and women are prepared to come out on the streets to show their support for the Irish hunger strikers.

Since that demonstration the Air France section of the French CP have come over on a delegation to protest to the British government in the name of thousands of friends and comrades, and there have been various events and activities to protest the cause all over France.

The French CP organise an enormous festival every year around their paper *Humanité* during the first few weeks of September, and when Owen Carron addressed a rally of 10,000 at this year's festival he had a rapturous reception. He also gave a press conference attended by all the French media, and an extensive interview on the French TV, and he met the French Commission for Justice and Peace and the Association of Christians Against Torture.

Meanwhile, a civic ceremony was held in the town of St. Etienne to rename one of the streets after Bobby Sands.



March in Paris (photo: TOM)



# VIGILS

by cancelling, at the last minute, an interview arranged with a relative of H Block blanket-men. On the day Owen Carron was being elected in Fermanagh/South Tyrone on the prisoners' five demands, they declared that the H Block hunger strike was "not newsworthy"!

## LUTON

On September Sinn Fein called a march and rally in Luton in support of the hunger strikers. However, the British Movement then announced a counter-demonstration and the police promptly slapped a ban on all marches at the last minute. By now a well-worn ploy: the State uses a spurious "threat" from some tin-pot fascist gang to outlaw demonstrations it finds disagreeable. It has hit Irish marches particularly hard this year and if British people continue to take these bans lying down, it is at their peril.

The rally in Luton went ahead and the large crowd heard, among others, relatives of hunger strikers, ex-soldier Meurig Parri and a spokesperson for Irish republican prisoners in England, two of whom are on the blanket. The prisoners are seriously considering hunger striking in the future for their demand to serve their sentences in Ireland.

## WOLVERHAMPTON

Wolverhampton H Block/Armagh Committee has a sustained campaign of picketing the Army Recruitment Office and leafletting churches and dole offices, to link the injustice of the army occupation of the north of Ireland with the justness of the hunger strikers' demands.

We supported the picket of Leicester Prison on 23rd August which was called by Sinn Fein in support of the republican prisoners who are held there, and travelled to Luton on 26th September for the Hunger Strike rally.

## HARLOW

Harlow report that they have a good base in the Irish community which comprises 10% of the town's population. The branch is also active in the labour movement, with supporters initiating discussion on Ireland at the Trades Council. Labour MP Stan Newens has been shifted from his previous hostile stance towards the hunger strikers, and is now urging government flexibility.

The Troops Out branch is well-known to the Press in the town and members' presence on the August delegation made front page news. They organise public meetings and would like to expand their activities regionally by linking up with St. Albans, Norwich, Cambridge etc.

## LEICESTER

Leicester TOM held a demonstration outside the Army Recruitment Office when it was heard that the Luton march on 26th September had been banned. We met a "Youth Opportunity Programme" youth who had come to sign up; he wanted to join the Coldstream Guards because he had heard that they didn't go to Northern Ireland. *This is not true*, and anyone having heard the same idea should think again – as in fact this boy did. The demonstration got good publicity: it was the first item on Radio Leicester, Centre Radio and was mentioned in the Leicester Mercury.

Each and every demonstration, picket and vigil adds its weight to the opposition in this country to the British State's rule over the north of Ireland and the government's vicious inhumanity towards the protesting prisoners. *Don't stand by, don't ignore the crimes perpetuated "in our name".*

# REVIEWS

## THE LOYALIST WORKING CLASS

Article in *World In Recession*, Revolutionary Communist Papers No. 7.

A divided working class is always disastrous for any social progress. We know this in Britain where racism abounds (let alone the division between men and women which is so much a part of the scenery that many people fail to see it staring them in the face). In Ireland the splits are dire: the country is divided into two and the working class are split by that; and on top the working class in the North are deeply divided between the Protestant and Catholic communities (thanks to Britain).

This nine-page article is packed with information to help us understand how this division in the North arose, what its effects are and how it will be resolved.

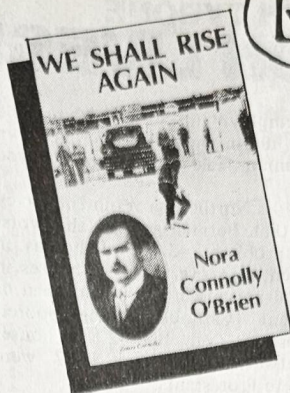
It describes briefly the history of the 16th and 17th century "Plantations" of English and Scottish settlers in Ireland who had a privileged position over the Irish. The privilege was maintained in the 19th century when capitalist industry was developed – primarily in the North East – by the simple matter of who got the jobs. The Protestant working class held onto the labour market and forced out the Catholics – physically where necessary – from all except the worst paid employment. The bosses at first opposed this (the *cheapness* of labour was their main concern) but then colluded with and operated sectarianism when they realised how much it made for a docile workforce. The sectarian privilege of access to work still exists today: the article describes the surveys done by the Fair Employment Agency and its impotence to do anything about it.

The patterns of discrimination also define the function of trade unions. Where there is a free labour market, trade unions are the organisations whereby workers strive to get the best price for their labour. But in Northern Ireland there isn't a free labour market: "A worker's Catholicism has always been a major constraint on his freedom to sell his own labour-power. The Protestants' key privilege under the British Union is their hard-won success in frustrating the development of a free labour market." This means that the trade unions serve to defend Protestant workers against Catholic workers, not against the employers. This is also the reason why there is only a very weak reformist or social-democratic tradition and the article gives a good little summary of the ups and downs of the Northern Ireland Labour Party. Labour-type politics doesn't have room for manoeuvre and ends up either colluding with reactionary loyalism or else losing its support.

These points are particularly important to grasp now when, for example, considering the implications of the Labour Party Conference this September. The article ends by rightly criticising those socialists who over-emphasise examples of standard 'trade union militancy' among Protestant workers to see in them hopes for unity by class interests. The authors point out that the Protestant working class' "special position in the labour market means that they cannot act as a working class as long as their privileges survive" – and conclude: "The call for Protestant-Catholic unity is a chimera which masks the real issue – the political oppression of Ireland by British imperialism."

Available from BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX. Price £1.00 (+ 20p postage).

Typeset by Bread 'n Roses (TU), 01 485 4432.  
Printed by Community Press, 2a St. Paul's Rd.



## WE SHALL RISE AGAIN

by Nora Connolly O'Brien. Published by Mosquito Press

Nora Connolly O'Brien was the daughter of the great Irish socialist James Connolly, who fought in the Easter Uprising of 1916 and was executed in prison. She died on June 17th this year, at the age of 88. The most incredible thing about her was her absolute and lifelong dedication to the cause of Irish freedom and unity which this book – dictated in the months before her death – expresses.

While still in her teens Nora became Belfast organiser of Cumann na mBan, the women's section of the republican movement, and was a member of the Irish Citizen Army which in 1916 united with the IRA. After the Uprising was crushed she went to the USA to win support for Irish independence (at this time the whole of Ireland was ruled by Britain), then returned to fight in the War of Independence. She was opposed to the Treaty that divided Ireland in 1921 and fought in the Civil War and was imprisoned by the "Free State" government in the South.

In the 1930s she took part in the Republican Congress which attempted – but failed – to link the national struggle with the socialist class struggle. This had also been the aim of her father.

During the first hunger strike last winter she came to London to address a rally. She said: "The unbroken tradition of each generation having an armed uprising against Britain... has not been broken by the generation which is now fighting to free Britain's last toehold in Ireland – the Six Counties."

This book, *We Shall Rise Again*, is very simple to understand as Nora explains her ideas often by means of stories. It is also very moving as she describes prison visits to her father, her own imprisonment and the present hunger strikes. She gives her views on socialists she has met (John MacLean, Trotsky, James Larkin and Seamus Costello) and her opinions of Provisional Sinn Fein and the Irish Republican Socialist Party. There is a chapter on women who took part in the struggle and one on republican songs – she shared James Connolly's view that politics is just abstract dogma unless it gets expressed in popular culture. She also ranges over international affairs such as Afghanistan, the Soviet Union and China (the national resistance in Afghanistan she compares to "our flying columns when we beat the Black and Tans").

We recommend this book for the insight it gives into the historical continuity of the national struggle in Ireland and the basis of its strength in popular support. "This book is not written to win your hearts, but to wring them, because we must all feel so serious and so concerned at this time."



# FERMANAGH-SOUTH TYRONE DISCRIMINATION LIVES!

The constituency of Fermanagh-South Tyrone, which this year elected Bobby Sands and then his election agent Owen Carron to Westminster, is often described in the British press as 'eccentric', 'bizarre' or 'weird'.

The journalists don't explain that election results in the area reflect deep underlying problems or that the responsibility for the 'unusual' nature of politics in Fermanagh-South Tyrone lies with Britain.

The pattern of the area's politics was set by the partition of Ireland in 1921. This intensified the antagonisms that had existed between unionists (usually Protestant) and nationalists (usually Catholic) since the first Protestant settlers arrived centuries before.

## PARTITION

In the 1918 general election the counties of Fermanagh and Tyrone, along with the vast majority of Irish constituencies, voted for Irish independence. Despite the majority vote, Britain partitioned Ireland. Despite the fact that both counties had nationalist majorities, both were incorporated into the new statelet of Northern Ireland.

**'The Northern Government is a Protestant Government put into power by Protestants and the welfare and safety of the Protestants should be its first consideration.'**

Senator Porter-Porter, Lisnaskea, July 1931

The North had its own parliament at Stormont. This was inevitably Unionist, because of the way the border had been drawn. After partition, the Unionist government immediately set about silencing the nationalist community.

The County Councils of Fermanagh and Tyrone, refusing to recognise the Northern government, were among the first to be suppressed. The police seized their offices, expelled their officials and dissolved the councils.

The Unionists abolished proportional representation first in local elections and later for Stormont elections (PR had been introduced at the time of partition as a safeguard for the minority).

They set about a massive gerrymander. As a result, in the 1924 local elections, in common with almost all nationalist areas, nationalists in Fermanagh lost all their councils, and in Tyrone retained only two urban councils. In Stormont elections, Fermanagh was 'rearranged' in 1929 so that it returned two Unionist MPs and one Nationalist.

## JOBS AND HOUSING

Unionist control of local government meant Unionist control of much housing and job allocation. In Fermanagh in 1969 out of 77 school bus drivers only three were Catholic. Catholics continue to bear the brunt of unemployment: in August

1981 unemployment in the North reached 18.9%, while in the South Tyrone town of Dungannon male unemployment stood at 37%.

In 1944 a Northern government survey showed that Fermanagh had the worst housing problem. 43.7% of houses in Enniskillen, and over 50% of houses in most rural areas, were in urgent need of replacement. Catholics, being poorer, were most in need: but 82% of houses built between 1945 and 1967 were allocated to Protestants.

**'We are not going to build houses in the South Ward and cut a rod to beat ourselves later on. We are going to see that the right people are put into these houses, and we are not making any apologies for it.'**

George Elliott, Unionist member of Enniskillen Borough Council

Unionists dominated in business and property ownership, and patronage flourished. Grants and loans were made to Protestant farmers, while Catholic farmers remained impoverished or were forced into emigration.

Today rural Catholics remain much worse off than their Protestant counterparts, who will usually have three sources of income: a plot of land, a job (such as a milk round) and a part-time job in the army (Ulster Defence Regiment) or police.

## POLICE AND SOLDIERS

Nationalist dissent was suppressed by the draconian Special Powers Act, now replaced by the Emergency Provisions Act. The Act was directed against all forms of protest, allowing the banning of organisations, demonstrations and publications as well as military activity.

**'The Nationalist majority in the county, notwithstanding a reduction of 336 in the year, stands at 3,604 . . . I would ask the meeting to authorize their executive to adopt whatever plans, and take whatever steps, however drastic, to wipe out this Nationalist majority.'**

E.C. Ferguson, Unionist MP for Enniskillen, 1948

To reinforce the Act, the Unionist government had the paramilitary Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the Special Constabulary, a part-time force. After the Specials were disbanded in 1969, many joined the newly formed Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR).

Today the UDR and RUC are hated by nationalists in Fermanagh and Tyrone, because they represent Unionist dominance in its crudest form. Most male Protestants are part-time members. As nationalists see it, the man who is their good neighbour or workmate in the day time, dons his uniform in the evening, picks up his licensed gun — and the next

thing you know he is stopping you at a roadblock and asking your name and address.

## PRISONER MPs

Nationalists not surprisingly expressed their rejection of the Northern statelet in elections for both the Westminster and Stormont parliaments.

In 1922 Fermanagh and Tyrone (then a two-seater constituency) elected its first prisoner MP to Westminster — Cahir Healy, who was interned on the prison ship *Argenta* in Larne Harbour.

At times, when participation in parliament seemed to offer hope, the constituency elected MPs who took their seats. When no results were forthcoming, they switched to abstentionism. The two MPs from 1935 to 1945 never took their seats. The 1945 Labour government, theoretically committed to Irish self-determination, seemed to offer hope. Abstentionism was abandoned, but was re-adopted again in 1950 as a result of Labour's indifference.

In 1950 the constituency was divided into two — Fermanagh-South Tyrone and Mid-Ulster. In 1955 both elected prisoner MPs — Phil Clarke and Tom Mitchell.

The civil rights campaign of the late sixties led to the election of Bernadette Devlin in Mid-Ulster in 1969 and Frank McManus, sympathetic to the Provisionals, in Fermanagh-South Tyrone in 1970. In February 1974 the SDLP split the nationalist vote in both constituencies, letting the Unionists in.

But in October 1974 Fermanagh-South Tyrone elected the independent nationalist Frank Maguire, and again in 1979. Maguire, who had been interned in the Fifties, never spoke in parliament. His only appearance was in March 1979 when he abstained from a vote of confidence because of government policy on the H Blocks and Armagh. Gerry Fitt also abstained — for different reasons — so they brought down the Labour government.

Maguire's sudden death was followed by the election of Bobby Sands in April this year. The British government responded in time-honoured fashion, spurning the wishes of the electorate. Instead of resolving the prison issue, they barred prisoners jailed for more than a year from standing for election. In August, Fermanagh-South Tyrone nationalists again showed where they stood on the prison issue by electing Bobby Sands' election agent, Owen Carron.

Since its foundation, the Northern statelet has determined the pattern of elections in Fermanagh-South Tyrone. The Unionists, a dominant minority in the area, vote to remain in the United Kingdom. The disinherited nationalist majority votes against it, and has several times elected MPs who were imprisoned while fighting for Irish freedom.

It is the Northern Ireland statelet which is 'weird', not its inhabitants.

*Note: Much of the historical material is taken from Michael Farrell's Northern Ireland: The Orange State (Pluto) and from an article by Farrell in the Irish Times, 16 April 1981.*