

IRISH FRONT BULLETIN

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BLOODY SUNDAY ANNIVERSARY 1977

OUR AIMS AND NATURE

Throughout our little island's sad history the words of that famous ballad, "The Bold Fenian Men" must surely have passed through the minds of many a young freedom fighter, political activist, and every honest Irishperson who dreamed a dream of an Ireland free and independent. This great ballad tells us, "OUR FOES WERE UNITED, BUT WE WERE DIVIDED"... and certainly our imperialist 'masters' have on every occasion took steps to turn Irishperson against Irishperson, group against group, and movement against movement. They have even backed one 'side' with guns and finance if England's imperial interests was protected, by Irish blood flowing, as in the days of 1922-3. We in the Irish Front have a dream, and its one which we have set ourselves the task of turning it into a living reality. Our dream, which we hope you will share, is to build a strong, united anti-imperialist movement to end foreign domination, once and for all time.

In recent weeks the IRISH FRONT has established local area committees to propagate the agreed aims and objectives of the Front and bring home to the people the vital necessity for unity in this phase of the struggle against British imperialism. From its inception the Front had tried to make clear the reason for its existence and the nature of its structure. However, one common factor has emerged from our initial area meetings, and that is there still exists in the minds of many people a confusing and contradictory notion as to what the Irish Front is. Therefore we would like to take this opportunity to spell out very clearly the nature of our organisation.

In the first instance the Front is a political pressure grouping, but it is not a political party. In society there exists many such pressure groups, for example; the Trade Unions, Chambers of Commerce, Consumers Council, Civil Liberties, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, or indeed the Troops Out Movement. All these bodies have within them various points of political opinion, and even people who don't have a political thought in their heads, but just feel that they want to see justice done without really understanding who, what or why it is not so.

The basic concept of our pressure group, is that we are a united front. This means that agreement has been reached between all the groups and individual who realise that we must unite on a common endeavour, and this unity is based on total and wholehearted support for our four basic demands. When the IRISH FRONT came into existence almost four months ago, an invitation was extended to all political organisations who supported the following demands to represent themselves on the Front Committee....

- (1) END HARRASSMENT, TORTURE, AND REPRESSION
- (2) FULL SUPPORT FOR THE POLITICAL STATUS CAMPAIGN LEADING TO AN UNCONDITIONAL GENERAL AMNESTY FOR ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS AT HOME & ABROAD.
- (3) THE REPATRIATION OF ALL IRISH POLITICAL PRISONERS IN BRITISH JAILS.
- (4) THE WITHDRAWAL OF BRITISH OCCUPATION TROOPS AND AN END TO BRITISH INTERFERENCE IN THE POLITICAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE OF OUR NATION.

At this point and time the political groups and tendencies represented in the IRISH FRONT are — The Provisional Republican Movement, the Irish Republican Socialist Party, the Irish Nationalist Party, The Political Prisoners Action Committee, the Magilligan Prisoners Welfare Committee, ex-members of the Republican Clubs, and many other individuals who are active in tenant, trade union, and cultural groups. It has been that approaches were made to individuals of other political viewpoints inviting them to join the Front, but at no point was any group excluded. The IRISH FRONT has set itself the task of mobilising support amongst the people for the demands already stated. This in effect means the creation of a mass movement which will agitate publicly on the stated programme of the Front. The central idea behind the area committees is to lay the organisational foundations for such a mass movement. The logic being that a mass movement cannot be realised unless there is mass grass root participation, which can only come about after the necessary groundwork has been completed. It is our intention to call a conference at an early date of all area committees, plus others, to further hammer out a programme of practical action based on the agreed objectives.

THE SCOPOLAMINE COLUMN

"I do not speak of rocks and soil,
Or mountains, lakes and streams,
When I speak of Ireland,
I speak of human beings."

by SCOPOLI

THE FELONS OF OUR LAND

At present over 80 men and women are serving sentences in English prisons for political offences connected with the current British Trouble in Ireland. Of those so convicted, Three have died in prison.

On June 3, 1974 Micheal Gaughan, Manchester, died while being forced fed in Albany.
On Feb. 12 1976 Frank Stagg died during a hunger strike in Wakefield.
On Oct. 9 1976 Noel Jenkinson died in the top security unit in Leicester in unexplained circumstances.

Noel had been beaten badly on three occasions and spent 6 months in solitary. Frank had spent nearly 3 years in solitary in a cell stripped of furniture and heating. Micheal contracted pneumonia after a force feeding tube penetrated his lung.

According to figures released by the Home Office 46 Irish political prisoners have been held in solitary in the last 12 months "for their own protection" but against their will. According to the same source in the same period, 33 of them suffered beatings in prison, sometimes from other prisoners, more often from warders. Liam Mc Larnon spent 2 years in solitary. Gerry Conlon spent six months in solitary with only jigsaws for company. In Albany in September 1976 Sean Campbell had an arm, a leg, a finger and ribs broken; Fr. Fell got a fractured nose; Eddie Byrne was beaten unconscious; in Liverpool May 1975 Sean Kinsella had a broken arm; Brendan Dowd had his teeth kicked out; in Manchester at the same time Paul Norney and Noel Gibson received severe bruising from beatings in custody; in Winson Green prison in November 1974 Tony Madigan, Ray Mc Laughlin, Gerry Young, Gerry Snell & Jimmy Ashe were all beaten by warders; in the same month John Walker (DERBY CITY), Billy Power, Gerry Hunter, Hugh Callaghan, Noel McKenny and Paddy Hill were beaten both by police and warders. Paul Hill has been beaten in Guilford, Hull & Wandsworth. In November 1975 Kevin Murphy was attacked in his cell in Parkhurst with an iron bar.

During the period 1972-75 according to Government figures, 27 Brit soldiers convicted of crimes in Ireland were moved to serve their sentences in England. In the same period 22 'civilian' prisoners were also transferred to English prisons, from Ireland.

Only 4 Irish political prisoners have been moved from England to Ireland, Dolours and Marian Price, Gerry Kelly and Hugh Feeney. They endured 205 days of force feeding while on hunger strike.

The Prisoners Aid Committee, (P.A.C.) in London has placed a full page advert in THE IRISH POST, which is read by some 300,000 Irish exiles each week in Britain. The PAC are foremost in the struggle for REPATRIATION OF PRISONERS, and have made an appeal to Irish people at home and abroad to help their efforts. They publish a regular bulletin, and a journal called THE IRISH PRISONER, both of which can be had from the PAC, c/o 142 Drummond Street, London NW 1. Write to them TODAY.. send a donation, BUT NOT CASH, as the London Special Branchers are getting greedy, postal orders and cheques they can't cash.

The PAC deserve mention in this column, in spite of the fact that we here are up to our eyes in all types of ventures and protests to aid the prisoners here, but they are also in the process of taking legal action against the Home Secretary and require all the help they can muster. These actions are because they are totally opposed to White-washing and Wiggeryism in the form of "investigations", "reports/inquires" etc.etc. This column will keep a close watch on their progress and report on the welfare of our comrades in England.

BRIT QUALIFICATIONS

It would now appear that one of the qualifications for entry into the British Army is a proven ability to rape young or old women. It would also appear - from newspaper reports this week - that such an ability will be looked upon favourably by both the judiciary and by the Army Command. The Winter Assizes in Downpatrick was told on Tuesday, 25th January that a Private Surch of the Kings Regiment, a self-confessed rapist would be welcomed back with open arms by his regiment. Not only was he lightly dismissed by being given a suspended sentence but the judge laid the blame fairly and squarely on the woman. The Judge, Lord Justice Gibson said "I have never done this before, but I think the circumstances justify me not sending him to jail".

Over 50 area committee delegates and members of the Central Committee (C.C.) attended the first all-city conference of the IRISH FRONT on the afternoon of Sunday January 23rd. in the Bogside. Representatives of prisoners welfare and anti-imperialist groupings showed a sense of unity which prevailed throughout. This was indeed an historic occasion reminiscent of the solidarity and determination of the great days of 1968 & 1969. The conference put the lie to those who argued that unity was impossible, and proved that the determined day in, day out political activity, over this past few months, proves that nothing is impossible and dreams can materialise if we work hard at their realisation.

LONDON.

CENTRAL TELEPHONE ~~and~~ HARRY. 61285, is the number established to combat the daily harassment and intimidation of the forces of occupation, and this will be operational daily between 2-5 p.m., except Sunday. Another number, 68926 will be in operation on every day except Saturday and Sunday, between the hours 7.30 and 10 P.M. All cases will be recorded and acted upon where possible. A volunteer rota has been drawn up to handle the complaints. Many of these cases will appear in the regular issues of the IRISH FRONT BULLETIN, which will be sent to local and national papers, as well as socialist papers in Britain, and publications all over the world who have shown a keen interest in our endeavours for Ireland. Each area committee will see the bulletin and the phone service as a means of combatting imperialism in their respective areas and will help to give the people information and assistance which are desperately needed as the level of repression rises with each passing day.

IRISH FRONT CHARTER: A charter for the Irish Front was read at the conference by its author, and was warmly applauded, and recommended to the C.C. which has since given its approval without any amendment being made. It will be read publicly, at our rally calling for an end to repression and the retention of political status on February 6th. The Charter, together with details of the rally appear in this issue of the bulletin.

MEETINGS: Shantallow and Creggan area committees reported great difficulty in the obtaining of premises for meetings. It seems that the great white chiefs of the Housing Executive have in their 'almighty wisdom' put a ban on the Irish Front. It was decided to write a letter to the Town Clerk, pointing out at the Front had within its ranks hundreds of rate-payers, and also to emphasize the humane aspect of our work particularly in relation to prisoners and their families. It was stressed from the platform, that this ban should be seen not only as a compliment but also as a challenge, which we must take up. No amount of establishment and other sanctions will deter us from our work to achieve all the points of our programme, the speaker said.

REPRESSION & THE PRISONERS: The greater part of the conference was filled with a series of reports from area committees, and from inside the jails, which can only be described as horrific. Welfare groups expressed their angry emotions, as indeed many of the mothers and relatives at the beatings, and other aspects of jail life in 1977. Details were graphically given of naked prisoners in their cells 24 hours each day; naked accused in the court-rooms, on visits and refused to attend Mass; solitary for long periods and for the slightest reason like talking in church; regular degrading strip searches; indifference and even bloody-mindedness on the part of prison officers and the Northern Ireland Office (N.I.O.); prison transfers without next of kin being informed; state visiting passes not being honoured; long journeys to southern jails without even a guarantee of seeing loved ones; the ruining of food by mixing in glass and even nailsets, etc...the list is unending. The conference secretary pledged that no amount of time, energy or finance would be spared in taking what action we could to highlight these facts and endeavour to have them redressed.

A.O.B. (AND OTHER BUSINESS): Letters were to be sent by the C.C. to the Ombudsman on the complaints of prisoners and relatives. All areas requested that the General Secretary write to the Association of Legal Justice (A.L.J) requesting a public meeting to outline the rights of prisoners, relatives and citizens facing repression. Conference viewed with concern the fact that young persons, under 15 years, were being put into prison and were daily mixing with hardened criminals and members of the UVF assassination squads in spite of repeated protests from their parents to the N.I.C. The N.S.P.C.C. was also approached on the subject, as indeed they were on the question of children being arrested and taken from their homes, school teachers, and playgrounds - the organisation seems to be powerless in these respects, but hasn't even said one word publicly on such a matter of urgency. Conference also was distressed to hear that relatives of comrades in Portlaoise Prison were forced to leave the city at the unearthly hour of 2 A.M. and make long journeys through the morning hours, and past dangerous loyalist murder spots, to be in a queue of the first 17 persons who are permitted a visit. State visiting passes are not honoured if they don't be in that first 17. The platform was very distressed at this situation and action would follow.

THE IRISH FRONT

DECLARATION TO THE PEOPLE OF DERRY

LONDON.

We the Irish Front, declare to pursue through the strength of our unity, four demands which will ensure the future PEACE, STABILITY and PROSPERITY of our nation. These demands are as follows; (1) An end to harrassment and legalised brutality: (2) Retention of political status with a view to an amnesty for all political prisoners: (3) The repatriation of all Irish prisoners: (4) The withdrawal of British troops and an end to British interference in Irish affairs. Every available peaceful method will be adopted to gain our just demands. The path will be rough and at times may seem impossible, but we will not sway or will we falter in our determination or resolve.

We have come to a period in time, when we must stand together, for the alien Government that rules us from so many miles away, has abandoned the letter of the law; withdrawn the rights of the individual, and adopted the rule of the baton and the gun. We must link together like a great chain, drawing courage, strength and resolve from each other. The Irish Front is your chain, reach out to it and secure a better way of life for our future generations, leave them a heritage you and they can be proud of.

The Irish Front excludes no one. Political affiliation is of no consequence to the Irish Front, for we are of many voices, all united for the good of our nation. We make no demands, nor have we any desire to replace any political organisations. All we seek is the strength of your support and unity, in a common aim to stand with dignity in our own land.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE NATION,
THE IRISH FRONT

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IN MEMORIAM

TO FOURTEEN FELLOW CITIZENS WHO MARCHED PEACEFULLY

FOR JUSTICE SAKE ON

JANUARY 30th. 1972

AND WERE KILLED BY THE FORCES OF BRITISH IMPERIALISM

"Life springs from death; and from the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations. The Defenders of this Realm have worked well in secret and in the open. They think they have pacified Ireland. They think that they have purchased half of us and intimidated the other half. They think that they have purchased everything, think that they have provided against everything; but they have foreseen the fools! they have left us our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace".
P.H. Pearse, 1915.

the Kesh!

THE late BBC news on 22/1/77 carried a statement from the N.I.O. which said that 'minor scuffles had broken out at the Maze Prison visits'. One eye-witness said, "I was a visitor to Long Kesh on that date and was witness to a 'minor scuffle'. Five uniformed Prison Officers beat an unarmed prisoner with batons which was during the visiting period. They then dragged him off, no doubt for a further beating out of sight of the other visitors. I had seen enough to sicken me and to confirm my opinion of Prison Officers. If this is what they call a 'minor scuffle', I would like to see them describing a fight".

CLONARD: Man dies during Para search. Medical attention refused. Priest had to force his way into the dwelling past Paras to administer Last Rites. Wife dragged away from the window while shouting for a doctor and a priest on two occasions by Paras who used abusive and vulgar language. "It was tantamount to murder" says Local M.P. 25/1/77

ARDOYNE

"Oh my God", cried a Belfast mother, "My Baby, My baby", as she was gunned down by SAS guns while walking along shopping in Ardoyne. The event happened just two weeks before this 32 year old mother, Mary Gilmore gave birth to a baby girl arriving into 'this vale of tears' at 7 lbs. The child was called Catherine, and the mother believed it would be still born, but mercifully it survived in spite of the fact that it had a bullet in its spine. Mary has had to learn a few baby hints, that please goodness no other mother will have to know. "Its awful to think that I have to be taught how to change a bandage covering my baby's bullet wound. When they first showed me the bandage and the horrific wounds underneath, I was appalled, and broke down in tears. Most mother are given tips hanging nappies, feeding and caring for their child, and I never dreamed that any mother would have to go through what I've had to go through. I pray to God they will never be any (more mothers) who will experience the same", says Mary.

NEW PAMPHLET entitled "APARTHEID IN BRITAIN" dealing with the effects of the Prevention of Terrorism on the Irish exile community in Britain will appear within the next few weeks. It covers many aspects, the actual law, the bombings, the peace movement, and the treatment of political prisoners. Although written by mainly English people, with the legal section written by a Jewish barrister, it is strongly on the side of the right of the people of Ireland to self-determination. Ask your newsgagent to stock it when it appears. Get your area committee to order some. Further details later.

POLY STUDENTS CONFERENCE BACK TROOPS OUT: the national conference of British Polytechnics Ltd. & Lth. Jan. 1977 passed a motion reading, "SELF DETERMINATION FOR IRELAND AS A WHOLE IS THE ONLY BASIS FOR PEACE, JUSTICE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORKERS UNITY". The Peace Movement was strongly condemned as a front for Brit imperialism, "for one had only to look at the reactionary elements supporting it, to know that it was a sham" said a leading member of the National Union of Students in Britain. A pledge of support was given to the organisers of the Bloody Sunday march and rally in London on Jan. 30th. and special buses will travel from all over Britain. The rally has been banned from the centre of London by the Brit Home Office, who were only too glad to give the Fur coat peace-Brigade the run of the city, and hundreds of coppers boots, fists and baton to protect them. Still and all the chant of "TROOPS OUT" echoed all over the place during the whole period of their rally. Even Madam Williams couldn't ignore the 600 or so voices in the background, and in front of the world press and T.V. camera gave a Churchill 'V', which certainly isn't the hallmark of a lady, let alone someone who is supposed to be full of love and peace for her fellows. When the Troops Out people were being attacked, Betty was shouting, "Give it to the B.....s", and others lovers of peace joined the police in some boot and fist exercises. My! My!

EX-PROFESSIONAL WRITES The report in the Irish News about cowardly attacks on individuals by the Paratroopers is typical of this regiment. On Monday 17/1/77, I witnessed an intoxicated man being struck and kicked by Paras when he fell. This happened near the junction of the Whiterock and Falls Road. The Only time I saw paratroopers fighting on level terms was just before the '69 troubles when their boxing champions took on the Holy Family Club, and lost, significantly, eight bouts to nil, including three K.O.s. Since then they have refused challenges to man-to-man punch-ups. The last challenge, in Newry, six weeks ago, was npt accepted. Obviously the Paras believe in fighting only when the odds, and circumstances, are very much in their favour. I would like to see a boxing ring erected in Dunville Park and the so-called Red Devils invited to meet local boys, Yours etc.

OFFICE PREMISES WANTED: The IRISH FRONT require premises for daily office work. We wish them to be inside or on the fringe of the Bogside, Brandywell or Creggan. As we are not a rich organisation, the rent should be reasonable. If you know of any ring the telephone numbers issued in this issue...we will follow them up...Thank you.

