

TROOPS OUT

Vol. 3, No. 8, June 1980 **Paper of the Troops Out Movement 10p**



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



The SAS are everybody's heroes – Official!

The press left us in no doubt that the Army's wonder regiment had won the people's hearts by their glorious exploits in the Iranian embassy siege. Jean Rook in the *Daily Express* crowed over the fourteen minutes of violence that put Britain back on the map of great nations again; showed up that old bumbler Carter, didn't it?

And Mrs Thatcher and William Whitelaw became almost embarrassingly ecstatic over how proud it made them to be British. And what a fourteen minutes it was, to be sure! This small team of highly trained and deadly hardened killers practically blew the Embassy to pieces and hauled out the hostages before you could draw breath. And they shot dead five out of the six gunmen – after they surrendered, of course, and while they were kneeling facing a wall. But, as the *Sunday Times* told us, this was necessary, and the deaths an inevitable result of using such a military crack force in an urban situation. Their role is killing: if they are used, people are going to get killed; – that is what the SAS is for.

So now we know. The government has gratefully taken this opportunity to launch the SAS publicly in a fanfare of publicity. But, in fact, the SAS have been operating in just this way as professional killers in Northern Ireland for many years. Selective assassinations of republicans, undercover intelligence work and black propaganda have been their stock in trade for years. They shot fourteen-year-old John Boyle in the back of the head at point blank range (clearly a favourite SAS technique) when he walked into a stake-out. They shot Protestant Billy Hanna because he was a passer-by when they were shooting to pieces an *unarmed* IRA Active Service Unit – over 100 bullets per victim. And they shot James Taylor because he asked them what they thought they were doing when they let the tyres of his car down.

These are just three examples. The next issue of *Troops Out* will give a fuller story. But what matters at the moment is that this increasingly notorious and murky killing machine has been made acceptable to the public by a great propaganda coup. As so often, methods developed for the Irish war are coming home to Britain.



The Troops Out Movement is a national movement 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 1970's. We now have over 40 branches around the country. 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
If you want to see peace come to a free, united Ireland, Join Us!

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TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Saturday 28th June
Trade Union Centre,
14/15 Picardy St, Edinburgh

All TOM members welcome.
Accommodation available. Write to
Box UT, 2a St Paul's Rd, N1 for
further details.

TROOPS OUT is produced by an editorial collective drawn from TOM branches in the London area. We meet on Wednesday evenings. Write if you'd like to work on the paper. Contributions are welcome (although we can't guarantee to publish everything that comes in).

COPY DATES FOR *TROOPS OUT*

All copy for the following issues must be sent in to arrive *not later than*:
11th June for July issue.
23rd July for August/September issue.

Subs: £2 for 10 issues yearly. Make cheques and POs payable to Troops Out (Literature Committee). Send subs to Box 10, 2a St Pauls Rd, London N1.

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. Individual membership is £3, which includes a subscription to *Troops Out*. Membership of a branch is £2, payable through the branch.

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I would like to join / be sent information
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Name

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Thatcher's Hypocrisy

Leaders of the Tory Party and, more recently, members of the Royal Family, have been among the most outspoken in calling for a boycott of the Moscow Olympics this summer. Why? Because, say Thatcher and others, it is despicable that the Soviet Union should intervene militarily in another country and violate the people of Afghanistan's 'right to self determination' . . . But where is that place not 400 miles from Westminster where there have been 2,000 deaths and untold suffering since the British army went in eleven years ago?

Margaret Thatcher and her friends feign outrage when they accuse the USSR of ignoring basic human rights in Eastern Europe and Afghanistan. But in the North of Ireland British governments have been guilty of this for years and years.

Internment, which gave the police and army the right to imprison people without trial, has been replaced by measures flowing from Lord Diplock's 1972 report. If these are not breaches of human rights, then goodness knows what are. They include: the abolition of juries for trying 'terrorists'; stringent restrictions on the right to bail; conviction on confessions alone even if the prosecution cannot prove them to be voluntary (in other words, passive approval of the use of torture in order to convict people); the principle of being 'guilty until proved innocent' when being tried for possession of arms.

There are now 14,000 British soldiers in the North of Ireland (about half the number of Soviets in Afghanistan). Few reports of their gleeful harassment of local communities seep into the British establishment press. But many, many Irish people are only too aware of it. One Derry woman has the dubious honour of having had her house raided a record *four hundred* times since 1969; nothing incriminating has ever been found. Another woman, Mary, recently described a commonplace type of event:

"The soldier came into the house and put the gun up against my neck and said "Up against the wall . . ." I just couldn't think of that in terms of a law and order problem, to me that was war."

Hugh Herbert, writing in *The Guardian*, recently reported an army major saying what many others must think: 'Some people believe in selective internment. I believe in selective assassination.' (*The Guardian*, 19/2/80)

CONDEMNATION

Condemnations of Britain's breaches of human rights in the North of Ireland have come from many quarters. Amnesty International, who campaign for human rights world-wide, exposed the use of torture in trying to extract 'confessions' from 'suspects'. Dr Irwin, a police surgeon in the North, claimed on television that torture was a regular feature of interrogation techniques. The

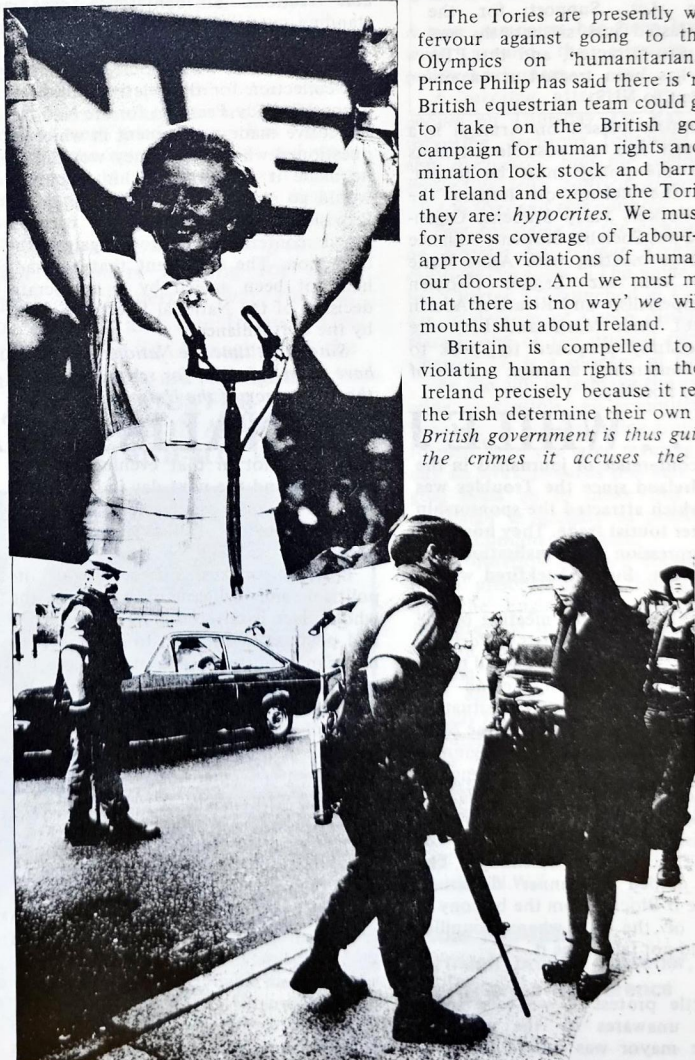
European Court of Human Rights found the British Government guilty of 'inhuman and degrading treatment' of 'suspects' and prisoners in Ireland. Judge Etienne Bloch, President of the French Magistrates Association, described Long Kesh prison as 'the only concentration camp in Europe.' And there are many more such examples.

Margaret Thatcher and other outspoken defenders of human rights are rarely embarrassed by the glaring hypocrisy of their pious proclamations. But a sordid deal between Moscow and the Tories at a United Nations Human Rights Commission in March showed that there is great potential for this. The Tories had tabled a motion condemning the Soviet treatment of the dissident Sakharov. The Soviet Union put a motion condemning the 'flagrant violations of human rights in Northern Ireland.' To avoid mutual embarrassment, *they both agreed to drop the motions*: 'if you shut your mouth, we'll shut ours.' And Amnesty's legal observer at the Commission described this as 'normal procedure.'

HYPOCRITES

The Tories are presently whipping up fervour against going to the Moscow Olympics on 'humanitarian grounds.' Prince Philip has said there is 'no way' the British equestrian team could go. We have to take on the British government's campaign for human rights and self determination lock stock and barrel, direct it at Ireland and expose the Tories for what they are: *hypocrites*. We must campaign for press coverage of Labour- and Tory-approved violations of human rights on our doorstep. And we must make it clear that there is 'no way' we will keep our mouths shut about Ireland.

Britain is compelled to carry on violating human rights in the North of Ireland precisely because it refuses to let the Irish determine their own future. *The British government is thus guilty of both the crimes it accuses the USSR of.*



NUS DIVIDES . .

The National Union of Students held its National Conference in April, and Ireland proved a contentious issue which drew clear political divisions within the union. Here is an account from a member of their National Executive.

Like many others I feel jubilant at the outcome of the debate at this year's conference: a resolution supporting the protesting women in Armagh Gaol and condemning the conditions was passed by 296 to 214 votes. The other positions around Troops Out now and political status were defeated but with a substantially higher vote in favour than has ever been seen.

For many years now the Irish issue has remained one of the untouchables in NUS. In 1976 the NUS adopted the 'Peace, Jobs and Progress' campaign which since that time has been a campaign in name only — one of those convenient mechanisms for forgetting about Ireland. Between 1976 and 1980 there have been two issues which have come up — the 'International Tribunal' and the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Support for the Tribunal lasted just six months and then it was retracted, and the PTA mandate has been treated as an embarrassment to NUS.

The Motion passed on Armagh is a breakthrough and all possible attempts to retract the policy must be fought.

Before the debate on Ireland the Socialist Workers Party Students Organisation and the Socialist Students Alliance held a fringe meeting with Anne Marie Loughran and Liz Lagrau (Women Against Imperialism and Relatives Action Committee). Ann Marie and Liz were also successfully proposed to speak to National Conference, amongst a wave of protest and hostility.



Left Alliance stay seated during standing ovation for Women against Imperialism

At the time I was sat on the platform and before they were due to speak the Left Alliance (students from the Labour, Liberal and Communist Parties) were fighting to sit on the other side of the platform, to get as far away from Anne Marie and Liz. After they spoke considerable sections of conference gave a standing ovation with chants of 'Troops Out Now' while the Left Alliance remained seated without clapping. When the collection for the relatives fund was proposed Andy Pearman for the National Executive made a statement in which he questioned where the money would go — he made it clear that in his opinion it would go straight into the coffers of the Provisional IRA. And on that basis he urged conference to vote against the collection. The statement that he made had not been agreed by a democratic decision of the National Executive — but by the Left Alliance.

Since that time the National Executive have been censured for seriously abusing the democracy of the Union.

When the motion on Armagh Gaol was passed, Union President and Left Alliance member Trevor Phillips was asked to make a ruling on the motion and he said that it was one which concerned 'human rights.' The question we ask is, Why then on that basis did the Left Alliance urge a vote against it? Presumably they are not in support of human rights in Ireland — then who do they represent? The Army? The RUC? The British Government?

For all those students reading this, remember what happened with the Tribunal — agitate, organise and make sure that it is impossible for the Left Alliance to slide out of this mandate on Armagh. And all you anti-imperialists, remember that if you are doing any work around Armagh, a union which represents 1.2 million members is committed to a campaign.

Contact NUS, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1

Pauline Roe — NUS Women's Committee
NUS National Executive
Birmingham TOM

. . . WHILE JOURNALISTS TAKE A STAND

The first conference of journalists in the north of Ireland since the Troubles was an event which attracted the sponsorship of the Ulster tourist trade. They hoped to give the impression of normalisation they so badly want. But it backfired with a vengeance.

For the April annual meeting of the National Union of Journalists in Portrush adopted policies demanding an end to the cover-up of the war in Ireland and promoted discussion of the situation there in a way that was new to the NUJ.

The tone was set right at the beginning of the long weekend when Councillor White, Loyalist mayor of Coleraine, opened the conference and was greeted with persistent heckling. He praised the role of the RUC: 'No!' we shouted, and someone draped a banner declaring: 'Smash the H Blocks' from the balcony at the back of the hall where Councillor White could not fail to see it.

RIOT

Our little protest — we were taken somewhat unawares by the speed at which the mayor was rushed onto the platform — was practically raised to the

level of a riot in that evening's Belfast Telegraph and the next day in the British press. For once media sensationalism worked in favour of those siding with the oppressed.

Portrush makes no secret of its political and religious leanings — the whole place is covered in religious graffiti and posters. In addition to its drab Presbyterian housing and atmosphere, it sports a particular kind of sexism. We discovered quickly that there are two sorts of breakfast served in its guest-houses: one for women (one egg, one sausage and one rasher of bacon) and one for men (two of each).

NEW GROUND

The Conference almost unanimously called for an end to direct and indirect censorship of reporting of the war in Ireland, and in particular for a report in the union paper of conditions in the H blocks, demanding open access to this and the main Republican organisations by British journalists.

It also condemned the interference with journalists on the Panorama team who filmed the IRA at Carrickmore, and

condemned certain national newspapers and agencies for their 'biased and distorted reporting and comment.'

Perhaps the most significant decision was to call a national conference open to delegates in the Labour Movement to discuss the problem of media censorship in Ireland.

The importance of the debate was, however, that it was the first time the NUJ has discussed the war in Ireland properly, where delegates were able to put a case against the British presence. But it will be a long time before national newspaper journalists stop using the sarcastic jokes of those they drink with as the basis for front-page headlines. One delegate who was the source of just such a trick described how a thirsty British journalist approached him in a Belfast pub and asked him: 'Why do you think the IRA blew up Airey Neave?' He supped his pint and replied with heavy sarcasm. 'Oh, they want the Tories to win the next election, of course.' The next day there it was on the front page of the Daily Mirror. 'It was a good story on the day,' said the journalist later.

By A. Delegate.

FROM HUNGER STRIKE TO THE 'NO WASH' PROTEST

Marian Price was released from Armagh Jail on May 1st, by a 'royal prerogative of mercy' — because *'her death was imminent if she remained in jail'* (N. Ireland office). Marian and her sister Dolours were sentenced in November '73 to 20 years for IRA bomb attacks in London. With Hugh Feeney and Gerry Kelly, they endured a 213 day hunger-strike, and 166 days' force-feeding, for the right to transfer to N. Ireland prisons. They ended the protest in June '74 and were finally transferred in spring 1975.

It is true Marian was near dying — from the body-wrecking effects of hunger strike and force feeding, *not* from a mere 'slimmers' disease'. She has been treated for three years in Armagh, and seriously ill for six months. Cardinal O'Fiach has asked for her release on humanitarian grounds.

The N. Ireland Office does not have humanitarian motives. Their real headache is the strong protest for political status in Armagh Jail, already *'a H-Block type situation'*.

Rose McAllister (41 years) from Ardoyne, was released from Armagh the following day, after serving a full two year sentence. She lost remission for refusing to accept 'criminal' status, by joining the other thirty in a 'no-work' protest.

The prison authorities responded to that protest by restricting access to toilets, washing facilities and sanitary towels, losing letters and harassing visitors. The food got worse — but the women stayed firm. So on February 7th

a squad of male warders from Long Kesh were sent in. It was a raid, the women were badly attacked and their cells wrecked. They were then totally confined, and a few days later moved to 'A' wing, where cell windows had been boarded up, also the spyholes. They were denied access to toilets and so had to smear the walls with excreta, when pots overflowed. So they began their 'no wash, no slop out' protest.

Atkins had gone to the insulting length of writing to the women's relatives, denying the attack and the lack of access to toilets/washrooms. If access is now available, after a three hour wait and with heavy guard — to accept it is to submit, and be humiliated.

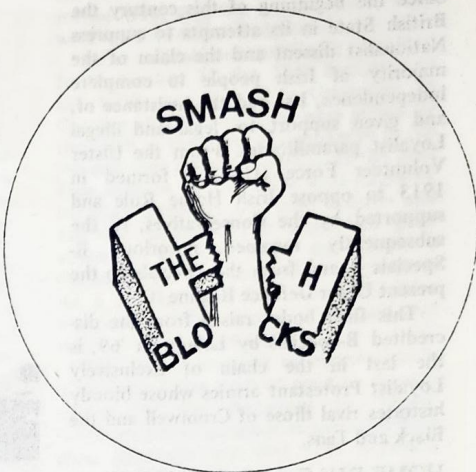
The February 7th attack forced the women to step up the protest, as warders in H-Block forced the blanket men to step up theirs, two years ago.

Conditions are awful in Armagh now. Another woman is so sick she weighs six stone. Not from anorexia, but from an undiagnosed and untreated illness.

Marian took no part in this protest, says the N. Ireland Office. She didn't — it is a protest for political status. Marian and Dolours were tried before Roy Mason Dolours were tried before Roy Mason removed the category in '76, and were held separately. She was released out of mere expediency, in case she died in there.

Marian was one of a long line of Irish prisoners fighting for their rights as prisoners of war, the war for a united and free Ireland. The other women in Armagh, and the men in H-Block, are still fighting.

P.O.W. STATUS FOR THE PRISONERS IN ARMAGH AND THE H-BLOCKS!



NEW CAMPAIGN ON IRISH POLITICAL PRISONERS

A new campaign has been launched to work around the question of Irish political prisoners.

A meeting attended by about 40 people on Thursday 1st May, took the following decisions following considerable discussion: *that the campaign work around all Irish political prisoners in the six counties and this country;*

that the name of the campaign would be 'Charter 80: Human Rights for Irish Political Prisoners.' (The name is inspired by 'Charter 77' launched in Czechoslovakia in defence of Czech dissidents. Ivan Hartel, one of the original signatories of Charter 77, is a sponsor of Charter 80.)

As the aim is to make the campaign as wide as possible, no committee has yet been set up but a working group has been formed from the large meeting on Thursday to work towards this aim. The other goal must be to make this a national campaign as quickly as possible, rather than a London campaign.

Information received about the plight of the prisoners in the H-Blocks, Armagh and the English and Scottish prisons, indicate that such a campaign is urgently needed and the growing strength of the 'Smash H-Block Campaign' in Ireland is very encouraging. Their committee has already sent a message of support.

Interested individuals and groups who want to get involved and/or send donations should write to:

Charter 80: Human Rights for Irish Political Prisoners,
P.O. Box 353
London N.W.5

Rose McAllister
Armagh protest prisoner,
at a press conference

Since the beginning of this century the British State in its attempts to suppress Nationalist dissent and the claim of the majority of Irish people to complete independence, has had the assistance of, and given support to, legal and illegal Loyalist paramilitaries. From the Ulster Volunteer Force (U.V.F.), formed in 1913 to oppose Irish Home Rule and supported by the Conservatives, to the subsequently renamed notorious B-Specials – and from the Specials to the present Ulster Defence Regiment.

This final body, raised from the discredited B-Specials by Labour in '69, is the last in the chain of exclusively Loyalist Protestant armies whose bloody histories rival those of Cromwell and the Black and Tans.

HOME RULE AND THE U.V.F.

With the United Irish League holding the balance of power at Westminster after the 1910 elections, Home Rule was mentioned as a serious prospect by Asquith, leader of the Liberal government. For the English landlords and the Irish business and merchant class this prospect severely threatened their interests, but the Conservatives, although divided on other issues, were united in opposition to any form of Irish Home Rule.

In the more industrialised North East of Ireland where anti-Home Rule feeling was strongest, the Protestant masses were won over to support for the Unionist ruling class by the age old policies of discrimination against Catholics and inflaming sectarian fears, aided by that virulently anti-Catholic organisation, the Orange Order. As English Tory M.P. Lord Randolph Churchill remarked,

'I decided some time ago that if the Government went for Home Rule, the Orange Card would be the one to play.' And as always the Orange card came up trumps – backed by the power and patronage of the British and Irish ruling classes such as Lord Churchill and Edward Carson along with General Hubert Gough and Captain James Craig. The slogan 'Home Rule is Rome Rule' (i.e. Catholic rule) was a common cry.

Meanwhile, in defiance of the majority of Irish people, Protestant Ulster set about arming itself. In January 1913 a body known as the Ulster Volunteer Force was formed with 100,000 men. Retired British General Sir George Richardson took command and with arms purchased in England and Germany drilling began. Money poured in from all sections of the Establishment including Waldorf Astor, Rudyard Kipling and Lord Rothschild. Meanwhile Carson, leader of the Unionists at Westminster said,

'The Volunteers are illegal, and the government knows they are illegal, and the government dare not interfere with them.'

Carson's claim 'to have all the best in England with us' and the support of 'some of the greatest generals in the army' was soon shown to have substance. In March 1914 with the U.V.F. armed and ready for a military coup, the West-

FROM THE UVF TO THE 'B' STILL DOING BRIT



UVF in action

minster government was forced to intervene, but news soon reached London that the high command of Brigadier-General Hubert Gough and fifty-seven officers had mutinied and refused to move against the U.V.F. However, with the onset of World War, Home Rule was suspended and large sections of the U.V.F. joined and formed complete units in the British Army, such as the 36th (Ulster) Division.

Reveiled again in 1920 during the war of independence, the U.V.F. took part in sustained attacks on the Catholic population, and although technically an illegal body this was soon overcome with their subsequent enrolment en masse into the new Ulster Special Constabulary (U.S.C.).

THE B-SPECIALS

After partition in 1921, the total force of the U.S.C., an auxiliary para-military group, reached its peak the next year at 48,000. Supplied with arms, ammunition and armoured cars from Britain and assisted by the new police force (R.U.C., formed in 1922) and 22 battalions of British troops they enforced the artificial and undemocratic partition of Ireland in the most brutal and barbaric way. There was roughly one member of the security

forces for every 2 Catholic males.

To the Catholic Nationalist population they earned a reputation in their first two years that they never lost. In June 1921 they entered a house near Newry, beat up its elderly owner and killed his two sons. In March 1922 Specials murdered five members of a single family (the McMahons) in Belfast. Then in June 1922, aided by the British army, they raided the village of Cushendall and killed three young Catholics. The list of their atrocities grew rapidly throughout their bloody existence and this caused even some members of the ruling-class to blush. Lloyd George himself compared them to Mussolini's fascists, while the *Manchester Guardian* commented,

'The Unionists have an important ally, they have a coercive police force of their own . . . the 'B' and 'C' classes parade their districts at night with arms, harassing, threatening, beating and occasionally killing their Catholic neighbours and burning their houses.' Although the 'A' and 'C' Specials were disbanded in 1925 the 'B' Specials remained at about 12,000 heavily armed Loyalist volunteers and assisted in the next 45 years of brutally suppressing the legitimate Nationalist sentiments of the Catholics in the Northern State.

'SPECIALS TO THE UDR AIN'S DIRTY WORK

Successive Labour and Tory governments in Britain turned a blind eye to colonial rule in the North of Ireland and to the numerous bombings and shootings perpetrated by the 'B' specials. In 1969 the specials waged a vicious attack against the Catholic communities who came out onto the streets in their thousands to demand basic civil rights. Homes were burned and Catholic working class areas were attacked with saracens and heavy machine guns. But the nationalist population stood firm in their demands, one of which was that the murderous 'B' specials be disbanded.

In 1969 the government's Cameron commission was forced to admit that the specials were a 'partisan and para military force recruited exclusively from protestants.' These findings and the government's anxiety over the organised strength of the nationalist population led to an attempt to form a 'non sectarian' alternative to the 'B' specials. This was called the U.D.R.

ULSTER DEFENCE REGIMENT (REGIMENT EXTRAORDINARY)

The UDR was welcomed by the SDLP on its merits — as a local 'policing' force which would restore law and order. Austin Currie, one of the party's leaders, encouraged Catholics to join. Membership in the first year was 20% Catholic, and its main role was to man roadblocks, leaving the Army to concentrate on patrolling/controlling the Republican ghettos. However, it didn't take long for the U.D.R. to build a reputation for itself. It was soon being used by the British Army as an intelligence force in rural areas and localities outside the Belfast ghettos, where the Army couldn't operate freely, and where 'locally recruited' soldiers could get info. on the nationalist people. Also clearly emerging was the increasingly sectarian nature of the force. By

November 72 it was not only 96% Protestant but well infiltrated by paramilitaries from the UDA/UVF. Many recruits came straight in from the disbanded B specials — and in some country areas particularly, battalions were indistinguishable from original Specials. David Miller (a former commandant of 5 UDR) admitted later that if he sacked his members for belonging to loyalist paramilitary groups he'd be left without a regiment. Needless to say, Catholic support declined rapidly as these extreme loyalists flooded into the regiment and as the guns of the British Army were once again turned on to the anti-unionist community. Understandably then, the UDR were seen as a real threat to, and an obvious enemy of, the nationalist communities. The first member of the UDR was shot by the IRA the day after internment was introduced (August 1971). Internment also saw most of the Catholics leaving the regiment.

The weaponry of the UDR was also steadily, and formidably, increasing: self-loading sub-machine guns, Bren guns, car mounted machine guns, Stanton tanks. So was its size. From the lightly armed force of seven battalions, the UDR had grown into an army within the Army, numbering 7,500 (5,000 of whom are part-time), a well-trained, highly armed and loyalist bulwark against the nationalist people. This role as the front-line militia of the British Army has been a clear part of the British policy of 'Ulsterisation' — the handover of control, not to the people as a whole in the North, but to one 'loyal' (to Britain) sector of it.

The criminal underside of this sectarian force — a whole Mafia network of intimidation, gangsterism, and terrorizing, can't be controlled and is covered up and suppressed. Stories pop out only now and again, they can be discounted as

the few bad apples rather than a whole rotten crop, and the whole web of links with the paramilitaries ignored.

Here is just one particular incident. In September 72 the 11th Battalion of the UDR was formed in Craigavon. In October all their weapons were stolen by the UVF — there was no resistance to the job and they got away with it. In the next four months 31 Catholics were killed by loyalists, some by the most sadistic and horrible methods. The word had gone about — for one UDR man shot, 6 Catholics to be murdered in retaliation. As a general fact, UDR members have marched at UDA members' funerals, and sent openly signed wreaths.

The whole network of connexions is horrifying — the method used to cover it up is for the Regiment to 'resign' members whose gangsterish activities have gone over the top and been exposed, before they come to trial, where they appear in their UDA/UVF hats. But these activities are a dreaded reality for the nationalist people.

The UDR's position in the British Army is extraordinary and privileged. Extraordinary because Irish recruits to the Army have never before been used in Ireland — for obvious reasons. Privileged, because it is the largest infantry regiment and yet only has to serve in the 6 counties. Its part-timers (2/3) can resign at will — unlike the British Army.

This is partly due to the IRA campaign of attacks on them, but short stays have their, more sinister, uses. Andy Tyrrie, supreme commander of the UDA, has said that his members are encouraged to join simply to get weapon training. This training and the weaponry are highly sophisticated. What this means is that the British Government has now efficiently trained 21,000 soldiers, most with dual membership or links with loyalist paramilitary groups. While Mason has praised UDR soldiers for being 'selfless in their service to the community' perhaps this explains why the IRA has recently shot dead ex-members of the regiment. They don't lose their training nor stop their activity after leaving.

ULSTERISATION

Throughout the 1970s the military attack on Republicans has been based upon 'Ulsterisation'. This is a strategy whereby the repressive role of the loyalist 'security forces' fully complements that of the British Army in maintaining colonial domination in the North of Ireland. But let's not be fooled into thinking that this link is a phenomenon peculiar to the '70s. Loyalist paramilitary groups have always been the instrument of the British government in preserving colonial interests in the north, and it is by no mere accident of history that this is so. Their loyal service to the 'mother' country has its basis in, and is sustained by, the fact of Protestant supremacy. Loyalists need Britain as much as Britain needs Loyalism. This relationship of mutual dependence, by its very sectarian nature, props up the undemocratic state of Northern Ireland. The nationalist population continues to struggle against its repressive might in their fight for self-determination for the Irish people as a whole.



'B' Specials in action

WITH THE ARMY ON YOUR DOORSTEP

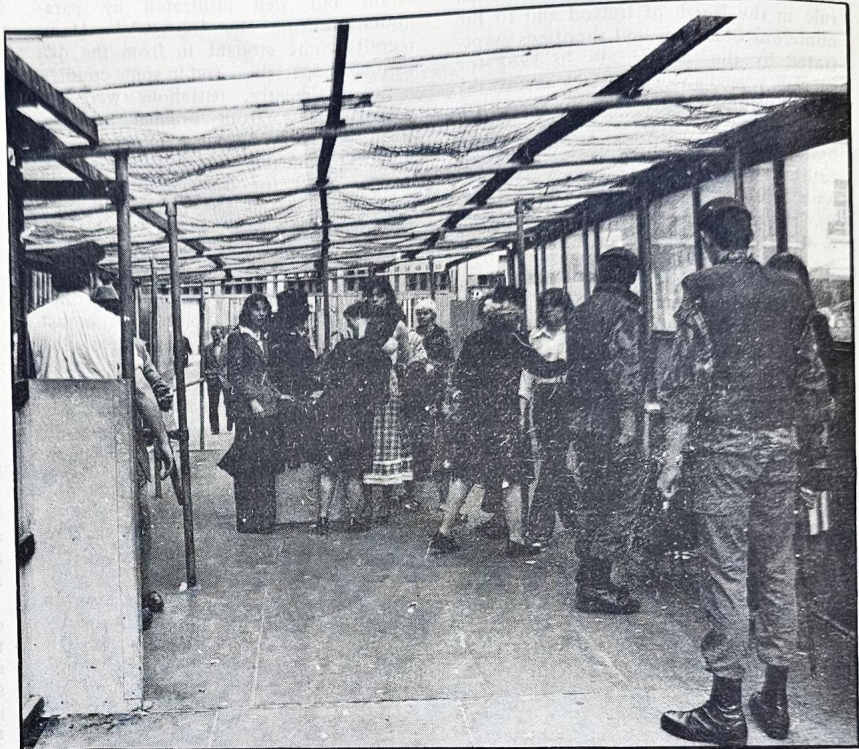
This is the second and final part of an interview *Troops Out* had with Lily Fitzsimmons, a Belfast member of the Relatives Action Committee which has been campaigning for political status for Irish prisoners. Here she talks about the dangers to be met every day on the streets of Belfast, and the work of the RAC.

Q. Over here, people often say 'If there's a withdrawal, there will be a bloodbath.' What sort of measures would you see as stopping a bloodbath?

Well I think in the event of a British withdrawal the first thing the British Government would have to do would be to disarm the police force. And the second thing they'd have to do would be to disband the UDR [the Ulster Defence Regiment - see centre pages - Ed.] It's a well-known fact that the UDR have dual membership with the UVF [Ulster Volunteer Force - armed loyalist organisation]; you just have to look through the newspapers, there have been cases like the Miami Showband of sectarian murders committed by members of the UDR.

So this is the only fear that the minority people would have. There's no fear from the Protestant population, because I think the majority of the Protestant population would accept it if the British decided for a withdrawal. It's just these politicians, the like of Ian Paisley, and the real hard-liners, that are keeping the pot boiling and threatening this big backlash and what have you. Because the majority of people want to live in peace. It's peace we want. But we have never had peace, because we can't have peace while there is no justice. And we will never have justice while we have the likes of the RUC and the UDR and the British Army patrolling the streets 24 hours a day.

They're mostly concentrated in the minority areas. They're coming in and there are house raids and arrests. And our young sons and daughters are being stopped every time they go out. Now my young son, whenever he's going to sign the dole I'm sitting waiting till he comes



checkpoint in Belfast

back again. If he's half an hour later than what he usually is I'm wondering has he been stopped, has anything happened.

At the bottom of Castle Street it's just a gift for the British Army when young lads of 17 or 18 go through those gates. Because if you go down there any time of the day they have two or three men standing there checking them out. And if a boy is on his own and he's taken away, nobody knows anything about it. It's a terrible worry for the mothers.

It's got so that even the likes of me, myself, going down into the town, you don't know then you're going to be stopped. I have been stopped and I've been arrested in this town, just simply because I wouldn't give my date of birth. I was arrested and brought to the police barracks and held for an hour and strip searched. Maybe they thought I had my date of birth tattooed on my body somewhere! I've been told that your date of birth is like a code to do with the big computer system they've got - if you give them your date of birth they can check out right away who you are and all about you. Because apparently they have data on practically everyone in the Six Counties. Well if you don't give them your date of birth it's going to take them that much longer to check up on you. It was only a form of harassment that they actually lifted me off the street at all.

Q. What sort of effect has it had on your life having your son and nephews in H Block?

Well, it's had a great effect on my life, because up to ten years ago I'd just have been an ordinary housewife. I never would have thought of being active in any sort of organisation. But as a result of this we decided to get together, the relatives, and we formed the Relatives Action Committee because we were concerned about our sons and we knew that something had to be done for them. We organised pickets and rallies and protests.

It has had a very great effect on our lives to the extent that we have become more aware, politically aware, than we would ever have been if this situation had not arisen. My son, for instance, he's 22, he was only 11 whenever all this started. And the majority of the young men inside are all the same. Some of the wives, even, that are active in the RAC were only schoolgirls when it all started.

It's a terrible worry and a terrible strain. I think if we hadn't organised ourselves, we really would have cracked up. You felt you had to do something. You just couldn't sit back and just let it happen. And personally myself I think it would have affected me very greatly emotionally if I hadn't got involved with the other women in the activities that we are involved in.

CORRECTION

In the first part of this interview in April's issue of *Troops Out*, we quoted Lily as saying her husband's average wage was £8 per week. Well, things are bad in Northern Ireland but not quite that bad. It was a typing error and it should have read '£48 a week.' Apologies all round.

AROUND THE BRANCHES



Despite police harassment Portsmouth TOM pickets Trooping the Colour parade.

PORTSMOUTH

Members of the TOM leafleted a Trooping of the Colour parade by the Wessex Regiment in Portsmouth Guildhall Square on 3rd May. Members were warned by police that leaflets distributed to soldiers would mean immediate arrest. Photos were taken of two comrades surrounded by military and civilian police when they protested against army involvement in Ireland. A passing Orange Lodge member remarked that scum like us should be placed in concentration camps or shot now.

On the 8th May members of Portsmouth TOM picketed the local army recruitment office: sixteen members distributed leaflets inside to potential recruits, to the horror of army staff whose response was to threaten physically and verbally TOM members. The police were called and made us aware of the limitation of rights, threatening arrests for obstruction and trespass. We replied by walking up and down with placards raised and shouting slogans until we dispersed some hours later.

NORTH OF ENGLAND

About 40 people held a picket of Hull Prison on Saturday 12th April. Organised by the North of England Irish Prisoners Committee, TOM members from Sheffield, Barnsley, York and Leeds attended. Others present included Sinn Fein, Bradford Women Against Imperialism, SWP, RCT and RCG. The next picket is at 1 pm on Saturday 10th May outside Durham Gaol, Old Elvet, Durham. Then on Saturday 7th June, 1 pm at Wakefield Gaol, Love Lane, Wakefield.

LEEDS

A benefit organised by Leeds TOM at Wakefield sparked off a furore in the local press — the front page headline of the Wakefield Express screamed 'ANTI-BRITISH POP ROCKS PARENTS.' It quoted one parent (who just happens to be a prison officer) as saying 'Young children do not go to a dance to be harassed by a political group.' The TOM position was put in the following week's paper and concluded 'No amount of intimidation will prevent us from putting our views across.' Two readers who had been to the concert also had their views published. One wrote 'There is a stupid and futile war in progress in Ireland and the sooner the government realises this and comes to terms with the fact that the great imperialist dream is over, then we will have more chance of seeing peace. It is about time that someone started dissuading young people from joining the army.'

BIRMINGHAM

The Birmingham group of the TOM has taken place to hold street meetings and to leaflet in a different area of the city on the first Saturday of each month. It has taken place on two occasions so far. In Acocks Green in March and in Erdington in April. It is hoped that this activity alongside the group's support for the monthly pickets of prisons called by Sinn Fein Birmingham will publicise the question of Ireland to people not normally reached. If anyone would like to be involved with the leafletting and street meetings, phone 021-773-8683 for information. The group meets every week on Thursday evenings in Birmingham Labour Club, Bristol Street at 7.30.

Brits & Pieces

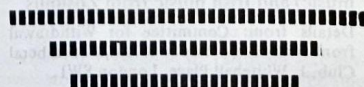
An interesting, but previously unexplored aspect of the Irish struggle for self-determination has recently been aired by an English 'expert on terrorism' interviewed on the BBC TV programme *Nationwide*. His erudite observations led him to conclude that Celtic people had the remarkable ability to 'disassociate one part of the brain from the other' and were thus more prone to 'hysterical and reckless acts'.

..... Still with the BBC, the Robin Day chat show produced, according to Day, 'the unprecedented act' of all four panelists agreeing. The panel consisted of a Liberal, a Tory, a Professor of Law and ex-Labour Minister of State for N. Ireland, Tribune member Stan Orme. There was dissension on every other issue until Northern Ireland came up. After cutting short a member of the audience with a radically different view, a perplexed Robin Day suggested that the panel 'move to another subject on which there is less agreement'. Enough to make you stop paying TV licences!

..... From the ex-Labour Minister of State for N. Ireland Stan Orme, to the present Tory equivalent Michael Alison, who seems to have a forte with sick jokes. While the men in the Long Kesh H-Blocks (and more recently the women in Armagh jail) have suffered for four years the most horrific conditions of foul, excreta-filled cells, losing their hair and eyesight, vomiting worms and getting regular beatings, Alison, an evangelical lay preacher, has helped found the Prison Christian Fellowship. According to his wife — 'We hold meetings to pray for prisoners and find out what their needs are'. Well, how's about starting with Political Status Now!

..... Ian Paisley has discovered a dollar-spinning source of income. Tape recordings of his sermons are now on sale at £1.50 each. He claims to be selling 50,000 copies of His Master's Voice annually.

..... Headline of the month, however, goes to the *Daily Telegraph's* 'Ulster Pressures Took Toll, Says Shoplift-case MP'. Poor Mr James Dunn, the Labour ex-Under Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, found that the job of repressing the Irish was all too much for him and led to a dastardly life of crime. Mind you, he didn't mean to steal anything, he just got paranoid when he saw two men watching him whilst out shopping and forgot to pay. Tell that to the men in the H-Blocks.





REVIEWS

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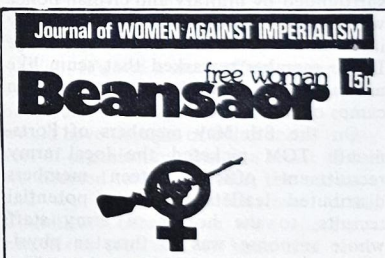
WOMEN PROTEST FOR POLITICAL STATUS

This is a pamphlet put out by Women against Imperialism. Written for the Tribunal organised by Women Against Imperialism on the women political prisoners in Armagh jail, it's a useful reference book for branches and individuals which collates all the information on their conditions. The first section contains interesting information (such as that 80% of all convictions are on confession alone) and also contains personal testimony of ill-treatment in Castlereagh and Grand Central holding centres.

The rest of the leaflet deals with the major areas of concern. These are the lack of medical attention coupled with extremely insanitary conditions and poor food; and the physical assaults on the prisoners which have been frequent since January of this year. Unwrapped sanitary towels, for example, are being thrown onto the floor where they lie amongst dirt, foods, excreta, posing a very high risk of infection when worn later. The prison doctor, Dr Cole, comes under special attack for his unethical conduct. One prisoner now has a permanent limp, because of non-treatment, and two others whose weights are very low are on normal prison diet and prison work.

The increasingly serious attacks on the women are also detailed; one being beaten until she passed out. Other harassment is also increasing. While some of this information is already known the use of personal accounts and individual case-histories make the telling more vivid. I do think that it is a pity though, that printing for general release could not have waited until after the Tribunal, so that any pertinent testimony could have been included.

Cost 50p, obtainable from Women Against Imperialism, 7 Riverdale Park Drive, Belfast 11.



BENEFIT FOR ARMAGH PRISONERS

On Sunday 27th April the Rio Cinema in Hackney, East London, put on an afternoon show to raise money for the campaign in support of the women in Armagh Gaol. It was for women only and was performed by the newly formed 'Women in Entertainment' who played for free. Both stalls and circle were packed out by the time it started with a reading of Jonathan Swift's satire 'A Modest Proposal', an 18th century attack on the poverty and suffering Ireland endured under British control. We also heard accounts of women's experiences of internment and interrogation at Castlereagh Torture Centre in recent years, and the afternoon ended with a mass rendering of the popular song 'Ballymurphy'. Most of the acts and songs that made up the bulk of the show were not about Ireland and it seemed at times that the point was being lost. But it was a welcome gesture of solidarity by the Women's Movement in Britain, and £860 was raised at the door and by a collection from the audience.

Northern Ireland - Tory Cuts, Common Misery, Common Struggle

A 'Labour and Trade Union Group' pamphlet by Peter Hadden, 47 pp. 30p from L.T.U.G., 18 Donegall St., Belfast.

The basic argument of this pamphlet is workers' unity through independent Trade Union action against Toryism, sectarianism, and poverty, with the eventual building of a Labour Party. But in all the 47 pages, with the exception of a couple at the end, it could be Tyneside or East London! No mention of over 2,000 dead and up to 20,000 armed troops. No mention of Nationalist workers in the army occupied ghettos subject to constant harassment, raids, torture and assassination. No mention either of the 400 men 'on the blanket' in the H-Blocks, the women in Armagh jail struggling for political status and the massive working-class support they are being given. In short, no mention of the popular war for self-determination.

According to the L.T.U.G., supported by the British Labour Party's Militant Tendency, what is needed is not, as the vast majority of the Nationalist working class think, a dismantling of the Orange State, but 'a Conference of Labour in order to form a Labour Party.' Of course the fact that working-class disunity has been fostered 100% by the British State, even with a Labour Party in power, is no obstacle.

'It is quite true that the forces of Labour have never managed to overcome sectarianism in N. Ireland,' and that must be the understatement of the century, but 'Common misery is the basis for common struggle. Against the present and future cuts, it is the existing unity of workers in misery which provides for unity in action.'

Sadly the whole pamphlet is written in cloud cuckoo land and every argument for 'independent Trade Union action' and 'workers' unity' can be refuted, if only by looking at the past 60 years and the power of the State to completely smash any attempt at unity. But although the L.T.U.G. is virtually non-existent in the North, since its formation six years ago, these ideas are prevalent within not only the British Labour Party but the C.P. and the official trade union movement here, and so the pamphlet is a useful insight into the thinking of those who claim to be socialists without being anti-imperialists.

D.M. S. London TOM

T. Kilburn TOM

VOICES FOR WITHDRAWAL

A forum on Northern Ireland

Saturday 14th June, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.
Registration 10am.
Delegates £2, Observers £1.

Speakers include: Clive Soley MP, Ernie Roberts MP, Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, Phil Flynn.

SOCIAL 7.30 with alternative cabaret (Andy de la Tour, Jim Barclay + music) and Irish music from Zosimus.

Details from: Committee for Withdrawal from Ireland, c/o Youth Office, Nat. Liberal Club, 1, Whitehall Place, London SW1.

DOWNING STREET PICKET

An extremely vocal picket was held outside Downing Street at 5.30 pm on Friday 9th May in support of the women in Armagh Jail and their fight for political status.

The newly formed Irish human rights group, Charter '80 (see page 5) was present and leaflets explaining the women's struggle were distributed to passing tourists and workers while the police looked on.

On the same day a one day H-block exhibition was given by T.O.M. in the London Central School of Art, sponsored and financially supported by students at the college. It consisted of slides, films and books with emphasis on the four year struggle for political status in Britain's concentration camp, Long Kesh. A taped letter and poems from H-Block were played while a 'blanket man' sat motionless in a typical excreta-filled cell.

Here Is The News

APRIL

11th An RUC reservist is shot dead in Belfast. IRA claims responsibility.

13th A 53-year-old woman, Mrs Mary Doherty, is shot dead by a British soldier as she is returning from celebrating her silver wedding anniversary in Strabane. The soldier, a member of the Argyll and Southern Highlanders, is remanded and charged with 'unlawful killing'.

The youth conference of Fianna Fail, the ruling party in the Republic, calls a debate on Northern Ireland in which several delegates call for an immediate withdrawal of British troops. Their leader, Charles Haughey, restates Fianna Fail's policy of bringing about unity 'by agreement and in peace'.

Ian Paisley predicts in a radio broadcast that the British government will set up an elected Assembly soon for Northern Ireland. He opposes any idea of power-sharing with the Catholic population but is quite happy for there to be an Opposition and a Bill of Rights.

A British helicopter illegally crosses the border to the South — 'a navigational error due to bad weather'.

15th Three bombs wreck hotels in Lisburn, Strabane and Armagh, causing £1 million damage. The IRA claim responsibility, explaining that they were timed to coincide with Atkins' talks with the Foreign Affairs minister of the Republic.

Atkins has his talks in Dublin, lasting two days. A communique issued afterwards managed to say very little but it does seem that the two governments are getting away from their obsession with 'security' (i.e. repression) since the Justice Minister was only called in for the last session. Neither government has yet come out with any decisive policy: the British line is that they won't 'impose a solution' on the North; the Republic's line is 'an internal settlement acceptable to both sections of the community in the North, an arrangement bringing the North closer to the Republic, and greater political cooperation on the problem between the Republic and Britain'. There are rumours of a meeting to be fixed up between Haughey and Thatcher, and this is officially announced on April 29th after the two met at the EEC summit. The meeting is scheduled for late May. Later, the date is fixed at May 21st.

The NUPE strike at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast ends after 7 days with a defeat for the workers. It began when a soldier's gun went off in a corridor of the hospital; the workers have long been opposed to the presence of large numbers of troops in the hospital which they correctly recognise to be a health hazard. They demanded that the soldiers be replaced by policemen, and struck when the hospital administration refused to negotiate with their shop stewards. Pickets were mounted and workers at the Mater Hospital came out as well. There was the usual barrage of anti-worker propaganda — patients at risk etc — like hospital workers in Britain faced during their strike. Then an even more sinister element crept in: Paisley announced in Westminster



that the strike was 'orchestrated by the IRA', and a Protestant woman on her way to picket duty was stopped by loyalist paramilitaries and told to get the addresses of strike leaders. A united stand by Catholic and Protestant was being broken up by the sectarian bogey as has so often happened before. The British NUPE leadership refused to give its backing to the strike and the British-appointed full-time official (who has past links with the loyalist UDA paramilitary outfit) smeared the leading shop steward as being 'political' and 'sectarian'. The workers are seeking an inquiry into the security system by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

16th-17th The Northern Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions hold their annual conference. They condemn the planned public spending cuts and call for more jobs. A motion calling for positive discrimination for women in TU committees is rejected.

17th An ex-UDR man shot dead in Newtownbutler.

A forum of the Irish Council of Churches comes out against restoring political status to prisoners.

At the NUS conference in Blackpool a collection is made for prisoners in the H-Blocks and Armagh (see p. 4).

20th An IRA mortar attack, Newry, damages police station and surrounding houses; 24 civilians are injured.

22nd Thatcher admits in the House of Commons that the US Government is not going to lift its ban on sales of guns to the RUC.

A report on unemployment in Northern Ireland records the worst figures since 1939. 68,265 out of work, totalling 11.8% of the population.

Official Unionist Euro-MP John Taylor attacks the role of the Irish Army in the UN peace-keeping force in the Lebanon: 'they represent a Government in Dublin which publicly sympathise with the PLO, and they come from the Republic of Ireland where many people in the IRA terrorist organisation have cooperated with the PLO terrorists for more than 10 years.' The bias of the British Army in Northern Ireland passed unnoticed.

23rd An RUC sergeant and constable plead guilty to kidnapping a priest in 1978. The constable is also charged with murder.

The case of *Connally vs. The Metropolitan Police* opens in a City of London court. Michael Connally, backed by The National Council for Civil Liberties, is suing the police for wrongful arrest under the PTA. His arrest and detention occurred when he and two friends visited the Old Bailey during the time of the IRA appeal. The only reason that Mr Connally could see for his arrest was the fact that he has an Irish name. He explained in court: 'I was a member of the public. ... I was plucked out of the crowd and accused of the most heinous crime there is ... worse than murder it seems to me.'

24th The European Commission on Human Rights rules that Britain is violating the rights of homosexuals in N. Ireland.

25th A man is shot dead in West Belfast. The IRA claim responsibility, explaining that he was an informer to the RUC.

Another British Army helicopter crosses the border.

27th The Provisional IRA claim responsibility for the £250,000 Mail Train robbery in March 1976, for which three members of the Irish Republican Socialist Party were convicted. Their appeals start in Dublin on May 12th. At their original trial they claimed they had been beaten up by the Gardai (police in the Republic) to force them to sign false confessions.

A popular Irish TV entertainer and puppeteer, Eugene Lambert, is arrested at Dover and charged with desertion from the British Army. A great outcry and Irish government protest to British Embassy. He is acquitted — 'I'm not bitter about it, because it's happening to other people every day of the week.'

29th The published figures for the Prevention of Terrorism Act show that there have been fewer arrests this year than last — 117 since January. Only 23 of these were charged or served with exclusion orders;



the total figures since the Act was passed in 1974 are 4,641 arrested and 4,125 of these not charged. It is obvious that the Act is being used to intimidate and gather information rather than detect crime, or else it would have been laughed off the statute books as being totally inefficient! At the same time, each exclusion means a deportation without trial for the victim.

A British Army captain in intelligence work is badly wounded by a booby trap in his car. IRA claim responsibility.
Merion Price, who was convicted for London bombings in 1973, is released from prison on the point of death. See page 5 for more news on political prisoners.)

MAY

1st Betty Williams, ex-leader of the Peace Movement, is arrested at Heathrow charged with 'terrorist' behaviour.

Fifteen people are arrested in Switzerland following a protest against Queen Elizabeth. A large banner was raised saying 'British Army Out of Ireland'.

At the TU May Day Rally in Dublin there are banners proclaiming 'H-Block Political Status Now' and 'Solidarity With the Women in Armagh Gaol', as well as speeches condemning cuts in public expenditure introduced in the Republic.

3rd The IRA bomb an electricity pylon near the border to stop a cross-border electricity grid from being set up. They argue that such cooperation implies an acceptance of partition.

6th In the House of Commons, Thatcher praises the 'brilliant operation' of the SAS in the siege of the Iranian Embassy: 'the performance of both the police and the SAS made us all, on all sides of the House, proud to be British'. A great publicity stunt for this vicious regiment which covers up their sinister role in Northern Ireland - *Troops Out* will be giving the fuller picture in the next issue.

Irish prime minister Charles Haughey pays his first visit to Northern Ireland, to watch the enthronement of the Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland who has publicly stated that the only solution to the war is the reunification of Ireland. Atkins is also present, while outside Paisley demonstrates against Haughey ('Charlie is the IRA's darling' read one rather inaccurate placard) and finally manages to persuade the police to arrest him.

Roman Catholic National Pastoral Congress meets in Liverpool with 2,000 representatives, mainly bishops and priests. Their discussion on Northern Ireland shows three major currents: Some favour a UN peacekeeping force, some want the British government to name a date for withdrawal, and some favour immediate withdrawal. Delegates call

for a major conference on Northern Ireland of all church leaders, but Cardinal Hume responds by saying, 'I am not sure we are the best kind of people to deal with this. . . . It is more prudent not to work too publicly on such an issue as Northern Ireland.'

In the Republic, the Justice Minister defends the use of the Curragh military detention centre for the use of civilian prisoners, denies that it has a harsher regime and denies that prisoners are kept on drugs there. Portlaoise Prison is being extended as a top security gaol.

The IRA blow up two railway bridges to disrupt the cross-border rail service. They warn passengers and rail workers that they will be at risk if they use the service.

8th The Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions decides to withdraw its representatives from the Police Authority - as a token of criticism either of police practice, or the ineffectiveness of the Police Authority as a watchdog - no public statement is made.

Atkins calms parliamentary nerves over the Thatcher-Haughey meeting by reaffirming that 'decisions on Northern Ireland's future are for the people of Northern Ireland, Her Majesty's Government and Parliament' - i.e. not the people or government of the Irish Republic, who will merely have things explained to them.

Also on the 'diplomatic' front, proposals from the Stormont constitutional talks are to be published in the next few weeks. Atkins says that it is up to the political parties of Northern Ireland to resume the talks if they want to. What form the proposals will take is still a mystery, since more of the same purely military campaign will satisfy no one, while any radical change will upset one or more of the parties which the British government is aiming to use as their tool for continued British control. Thatcher is to have talks with John Hume, leader of the SDLP (party which gets most Catholic votes in elections) before her meeting with Haughey.

And the Parliamentary Labour Party announce that they are going to have a debate on May 21st regarding a motion put by some back-bench MPs to reconsider the 'bi-partisan' policy (i.e. the common line between Labour and Conservative). Northern Ireland spokesperson Brynmor John hopes that the motion would not 'be pressed to a division'.

9th The IRA set off three bombs in the centre of Belfast.

Courtaulds lays off 600 from a total 900 workforce at its factory in Carrickfergus, Antrim. The factory opened only two years ago with the aid of government grants and tax concessions.

10th There is a demonstration in Armagh for political status for the prisoners in the H-Blocks and Armagh Gaol.

