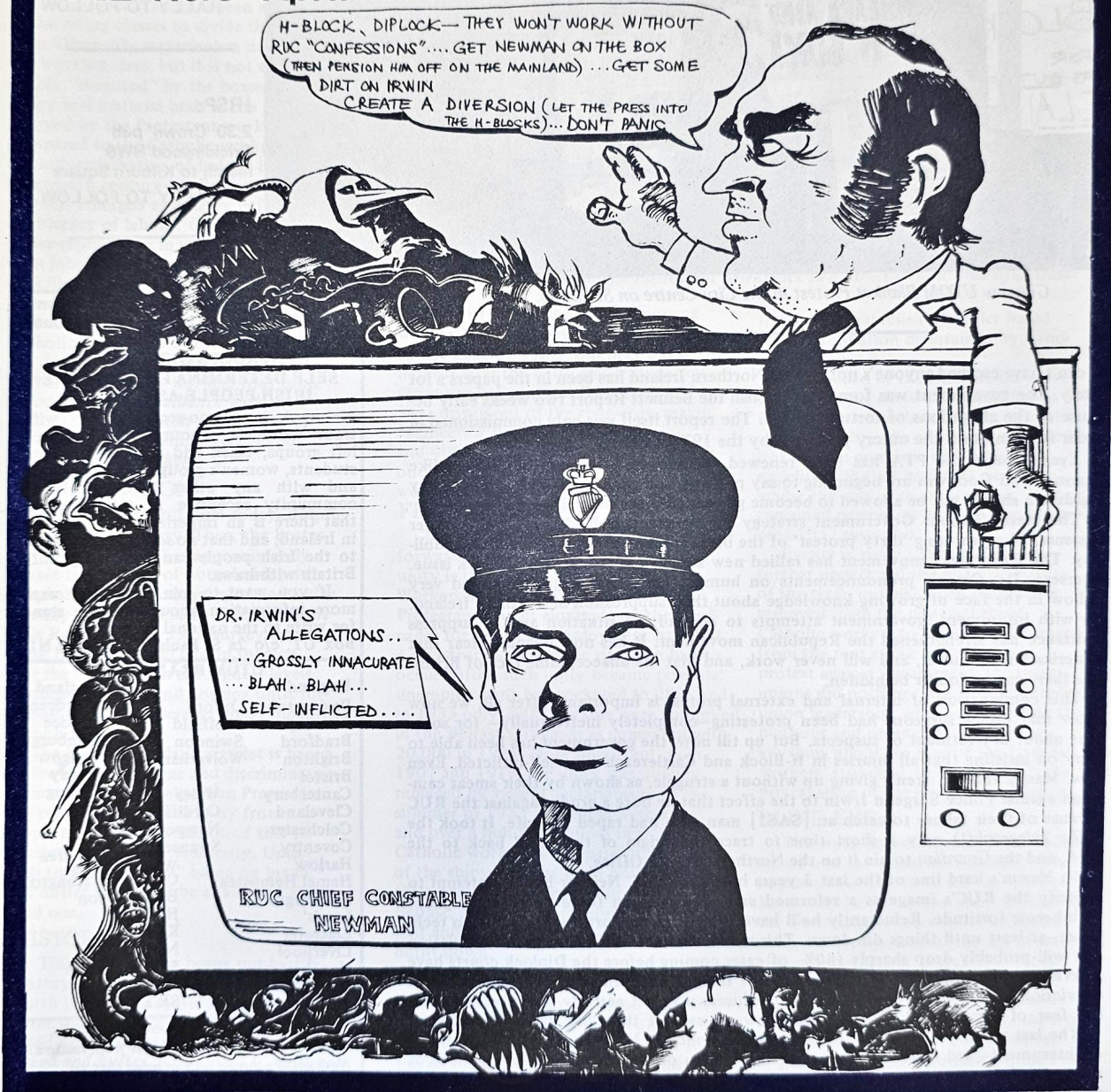


TROOPS OUT

Paper of the United Troops Out Movement

10p

Vol.2 No.6 April 1979



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



Glasgow UTOM Blanket Protest in the City Centre on St Patrick's Day

It can't have escaped anyone's notice that Northern Ireland has been in the papers a lot lately. The government was forced to publish the Bennett Report two weeks early because of the allegations of torture on TV. The report itself was only commissioned in order to calm down the outcry provoked by the 1978 Amnesty Report.

Even though the PTA has been renewed, as expected, 'respectable' judges like Scarman and Goodwin are beginning to say publicly that such 'temporary' emergency legislation should not be allowed to become permanent automatically.

The Mason/Labour Government strategy for Northern Ireland is collapsing under pressure. The year-long 'dirty protest' of the blanket men has generated a lot of publicity. The Republican movement has rallied new supporters around the H-Block issue. Overseas, Dr. Owen's pronouncements on human rights have begun to sound very hollow in the face of growing knowledge about their suppression in Northern Ireland. As with internment, government attempts to control the situation and to suppress resistance has strengthened the Republican movement. It has now become clear that Ulsterisation has never, and will never work, and that the unacceptable face of British rule there can no longer be hidden.

This combination of internal and external protest is important: after all, we now know that police surgeons had been protesting—completely ineffectually—for some time about ill-treatment of suspects. But up till now, the government has been able to carry on insisting that all injuries in H-Block and Castlereagh were self-inflicted. Even now, Mason and Co. aren't giving up without a struggle, as shown by their smear campaign against Police Surgeon Irwin to the effect that he bore a grudge against the RUC because of their failure to catch an [SAS?] man who had raped his wife. It took the *Daily Telegraph*(!) only a short time to trace the origin of the 'leak' back to the RUC, and the *Guardian* to pin it on the Northern Ireland Office.

So Mason's hard line of the last 3 years hasn't worked. Neither has his attempt to beautify the RUC's image as a reformed and non-sectarian force keeping the peace with heroic fortitude. Reluctantly he'll have to restrict the torture interrogation technique—at least until things die down. This means that the much-trumpeted conviction rate will probably drop sharply (80% of cases coming before the Diplock courts have as evidence nothing but the 'confessions' of the suspects; and 94% of cases result in convictions) and more Republican sympathisers may get actively involved now that the fear of being tortured into signing away years of their life has been lessened.

The last major defeat of British government policy in Northern Ireland—the ending of internment—led to the setting up of the system of no-jury courts, long periods of remand before trial and attempted criminalisation of the IRA, a strategy which is now in ruins. The government will have to change direction again in its efforts to defeat the Republicans. Or (with the prospect of an early election before us) will it be a Tory government's turn to attempt the impossible—holding on to the last bit of Ireland still in British hands?

The page 2 photo of the Bloody Sunday March in the last issue should have been credited to REPORT..

Typeset by Bread and Roses [TU], 30 Camden Road, London N1
Printed by Community Press [TU], 2a St Pauls Road, London N1

EASTER MARCHES

SINN FEIN:

2.30 Speakers Corner
March to Birchington St
Kilburn NW6
RALLY TO FOLLOW

IRSP:

2.30 'Crown' pub
Cricklewood NW6
March to Kilburn Square
RALLY TO FOLLOW

UTOM is a national movement based on a network of branches campaigning around the two demands:

TROOPS OUT NOW

SELF DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE AS A WHOLE

We work in a non-sectarian way with trade unionists, labour party branches, left groups, black and anti-racist groups, students, women's groups and gay groups, and with any other sections of the community receptive to the argument that there is an imperialist war going on in Ireland, and that no solution acceptable to the Irish people can be reached until Britain withdraws.

If you want to join UTOM, or want more information about what we stand for write to the national address:

Box UT, c/o 2a St Pauls Rd, London N1.

UTOM BRANCHES

England	Wales	Scotland
Basingstoke	Cardiff	Aberdeen
Birmingham	Newport	Dundee
Bradford	Swansea	Edinburgh
Brighton		Glasgow
Bristol		Paisley
Canterbury		Stirling
Cleveland		
Colchester		
Coventry		
Harlow		London area
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Leeds		East London
Leicester		Haringey
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Manchester		NELP
Manchester Poivy		South London
Norwich		Southeast
		SE London

The Literature Collective welcomes articles, cartoons and ideas for the paper from readers. New writers should bear in mind that we cannot guarantee to publish everything submitted, so don't get demoralised.

The articles in 'Troops Out' represent the views of the Editorial Collective or of the individuals or branches who sign them. They do not necessarily represent the views of the UTOM as a whole. UTOM policy is made by general conferences of the whole membership.

DISCUSSION - BRANCHES PUT TROOPS OUT CASE

WHY NOT CAMPAIGN ON 'BREAD & BUTTER' ISSUES?



The Sirocco factory: a 90% Protestant workplace in a 90% Catholic area of Belfast

The idea that campaigns around "bread and butter issues" (housing, low pay, unemployment, etc.) are more important than the demands raised by UTOM exists both in the North of Ireland, where it forms the basis of the now largely defunct "Better Life for All Campaign" and also in Britain where above all the "Militant" tendency in the Labour Party uses this argument as a reason for not being involved in the work of UTOM. Such an argument, however, rests on a number of false assumptions.

Firstly, sectarianism is seen as a "plot" of the ruling classes to divide the working class. Obviously sectarianism does divide the working class, but it is not something simply "invented" by the bosses: it has a very real material basis in the privileges enjoyed by the Protestant workers as compared to the Catholic workers. With the industrialisation of Ireland in the nineteenth century the Protestant workers emerged as a clearly defined aristocracy of labour: Catholics were under-represented in skilled working class jobs but over-represented in unskilled jobs. In Belfast, for example, where 24% of the population were Catholic, only 7% of engineers were Catholic at the turn of the century, but 36% of domestic servants were Catholic. *Protestant workers thus came to look towards an alliance with their bosses to preserve such privileges and lined up with their employers against fellow Catholic workers.*

DISCRIMINATION

Such privileges still exist today, despite claims to the contrary. Thus, the Protestant Shankill Road has approximately double the number of households with cars, half as many unemployed and twice as many owner-occupiers as the Catholic Falls Road, and the 1976 survey by the Child Poverty Action Group showed that the regions with the highest levels of unemployment and housing unfit for human habitation were all predominantly Catholic.

The Northern Ireland statelet is based on Protestant privilege and discrimination against Catholics. Only when Protestant workers have been won away from supporting the perpetuation of this statelet can there be real unity. Until such time any "unity" based on bread and butter issues will be a false and short-lived one.

HISTORY

This conclusion is borne out by the history of the labour movement in the north during this century. *Three times in three-quarters of a century Protestant and Catholic workers have united around bread and butter, but in next to no time such "unity" collapsed.*

In 1907 Larkin organised both Catholic and Protestant workers in the Belfast shipyards strike. But the brief unity quickly fell apart, and in the following years Connolly's attempt to build an Irish-based union encountered either the apathy or physical hostility of Protestant workers.

The 1919 shipyard and engineering workers' strike likewise saw a brief unity on the issue of wages. But only a few months later the unity was replaced by vicious sectarian riots: Catholic workers were driven out of the shipyards, major engineering firms and the linen mills, and 400 families were forced to move out. In August 1920 alone, 20 people were killed in rioting.

FRAGILE UNITY

The example most frequently put forward to "prove" the possibility of unity is the 1932 Outdoor Relief Workers strike, when Catholic and Protestant fought alongside on the barricades for higher unemployment pay. But a catastrophic economic situation had to occur before such unity became possible: unemployment had rocketed to 28%, and in 1933 only 2000 workers were employed in the Belfast shipyards as compared with 20,000 in 1924. More important, as in 1907 and 1919, the unity was quickly replaced by violent sectarianism: in the summer of 1935 12 people were killed and over a hundred injured in riots. Catholic workers were again driven out of the shipyards, the linen mills and their homes, and the Labour Hall in Belfast, scene of the meetings of Protestant and Catholic workers in 1932, was burnt down.

TRADE UNIONS

Those who claim that bread and butter issues are all-important also argue that the trade unions can lead the workers in such struggles; presenting the unions as in some way "standing above" the sectarian divide.

In fact it would be fairer to say that the trade unions are a Loyalist stronghold which help prop up British rule in the North of Ireland. For fear of alienating its Protestant members, the trade union movement in the North accepts the "right" of Britain to divide

Ireland and establish a statelet based on discrimination maintained by Army occupation.

The record of the trade union movement gives the lie to the claim that it is non-sectarian. In the workplace expulsions of 1920 only one union defended its Catholic members and ended up expelling 2000 of its 2,600 members, whilst the rest of the movement remained passive, as was the case in the post-1932 riots also.

Events in more recent years have further underlined the sectarian nature of the trade unions. When money was removed from the pay packets of Catholic workers to make up for arrears from the rent strike organised as a protest against internment, the trade unions did nothing. Similarly, the trade union leadership, whilst condemning the methods and organisers, failed to say anything about the goal of the Loyalist workers' strikes of 1974 and 1977: the preservation of the Orange ascendancy.

BLIND EYE

The trade union movement has called for an end to "sectarian violence", which in practice is a demand for the IRA to lay down their arms and cease defending the Nationalist population, but has had not a word to say about the use of state violence against the Republican movement.

To concentrate on bread and butter issues rather than on the right of the Irish to self-determination and the removal of the British army is to turn a blind eye to what occupies the centre of the political stage in Ireland.

Leicester UTOM



Apologies to Kilburn UTOM for not crediting them for last months Discussion article.

CARYL CHURCHILL — AUTHOR OF THE BBC- CENSORED PLAY *WILLIE* TALKS TO 'TROOPS OUT'

In November the BBC Play for Today 'Willie' was shown by the BBC only after they had censored it against the wishes of its writer, producer and director. The play showed the trial of Willie Gallagher for the bombing of the Legion Hall in Strabane. Since his conviction, his father, Brendan Gallagher has campaigned strenuously for his son's release and argued that he was a victim of a miscarriage of justice, that was not unique but a part of the whole no-jury court system in Northern Ireland. It is this system that the play revealed. On the day the play was to be shown Brendan Gallagher was arrested under the PTA as he flew into Britain. Recently *Troops Out* talked to Caryl Churchill who wrote the play

How did you come to write the play 'Willie'?

In November 1977 a friend gave me the transcript of Willie Gallagher's trial. I showed it to Margaret Matheson, a producer of BBC Play for Today and she suggested that we make a play about the trial. The current series of Plays for Today was covering a wide variety of social and political issues, and included plays like "Scum" and a Barry Keefe play that was also to run into censorship problems. My aims were limited. Really I just wanted to air the case because it looked an obvious gross miscarriage of justice and to let people know what was going on in the Diplock Courts.

Had you been involved in Northern Ireland politics before?

No. But in preparing the play we visited Northern Ireland several times and especially talked to lawyers and others about the Gallagher case and about the general position of the courts. What struck me was how casual and quiet all the proceedings were — without a jury it's very much a case of lawyers dealing among themselves. There are rarely witnesses who aren't from the police etc., and they are all very experienced and deal with the evidence as a technical/professional matter, always speaking directly to the judge etc. Our designer wanted to get a sketch of the court for the set of the play but he was stopped from doing any drawings in court.

What sort of play did you produce?

I don't really think of "Willie" as a play. Really it's just the transcript of the trial cut down from 9½ hours to 1½ hours. I feel qualified to write a play about all the issues involved in Northern Ireland.

Here though I could just bring a technical skill to bear on the issue. All we did was to put in a paragraph of commentary at the beginning and the end explaining how and why the Diplock Courts had been set up. We pointed out that at the trial the Court had accepted an unsigned statement put forward by the police and rejected the evidence of an eye-witness. We pointed out that the role of courts may change in time of stress. This commentary was dubbed on in March 1978 and nothing was said then about it being unacceptable.

When did the censorship problem begin?

First of all the play was postponed from its original date in February 1978 because of the BBC's concern over the situation in Northern Ireland. Then it was rescheduled for August 22nd. But on July 19th we received a memo asking us to make several cuts and changes in the commentary. This memo arose from the play being referred to the BBC Controller N.I. The memo I got said: "following referral to Controller Northern Ireland, would you please make the following changes." The final commentary was to be deleted completely. At first they justified this by saying that "we anticipate that this will be covered by the discussion afterwards". But on August 10th they told us that this discussion was no longer to be broadcast. Anyway, the producer, director and writer all refused to make the cuts, and were told that they would be made anyway. We asked for a meeting with the BBC to discuss the commentary, but we didn't get one. The Head of Plays said that the cuts were necessary because the commentary would be seen by the viewer as the BBC's editorial comment. I replied suggesting that

the BBC could make a disclaimer pointing out that the commentary expressed the viewpoint of the makers of the play. He replied that this would be a "shabby cop-out". The BBC commentary cut out any hint of criticism of the courts or suggestion of a miscarriage of justice. In its present form, with the BBC commentary it is not clear what is being said: if anything it seems to imply that all is well with the trial.

What action did you take?

We considered an injunction to stop the censored play being shown. But finally we decided that after the two had been covered in the press most viewers would know that the play had been censored and that it was better that they should see the trial and judge the issues for themselves. Instead we just had our names removed from the credits.

What conclusion do you draw from your experience?

Our intention in making the play was clear to the BBC from early on. We researched it thoroughly and it was accurate. The BBC did not ban the play, but they distorted it so that its meaning is changed. This kind of censorship is more subtle and dangerous than simply banning plays.

**FREE WILLIE
GALLAGHER**



Join the Army and See the ^{next} World

by an ex-soldier

What's it really like to be a British soldier in Ireland today? This question was asked by most of the British media in the aftermath of the incident at the Woodburn army base in Belfast when Trooper Edward Maggs shot dead Quartermaster Corporal John Tucker, seriously injured another soldier and was subsequently shot dead himself on the orders of his unit officers.

The obvious way to get an answer to the question would have been to ask serving or ex-soldiers what their experiences and feelings were. However almost all the media ignored this obvious option and instead we were subjected to a barrage of opinion from psychiatrists, senior army officers and assorted army experts who all came to the same conclusion—that yes, there was some tension and yes, sometimes some soldiers do crack, but this was due to the 'jolly difficult circumstances' in which they had to work and overall 'our chaps' were doing a 'damned fine job'.

An exception to this biased coverage appeared in the *Daily Record*, a Scottish daily paper, which did print an interview with an ex-Black Watch corporal who had left the army after serving six tours in Ireland. Entitled 'I've seen strong blokes crack into bits', this interview gave some clues to what is really happening.

"When we first went in, we couldn't tell the difference between the Catholics and the Protestants, where there areas were. We learned. We had to.

"The worst was Turf Lodge, high blocks of flats built on high ground. There were hundreds of windows to watch, hundreds of roofs where a sniper could have been aiming at any of us.

"The times your nerves really scream are on border patrols. The worst was after-dark patrols there. Each battalion had its own area and if you got close to another unit's area it could be very bad.

"It doesn't get talked about, but several times some pretty fierce firing has broken out between two of our own battalions."



DIFFERENCE

The present round of struggle in Ireland has come after a series of colonial wars since 1945. The British army has suffered more casualties in Ireland since 1969 than in all the other small wars put together.

But besides the fear of becoming just another quickly forgotten casualty, the biggest contradiction for soldiers serving in Ireland is the difference between the actual role of the army and the role which the government claims it is carrying out.

The British Government knows it would not win support from the British population for a colonial war in Ireland, so it carefully nurtures the fantasy that the army is 'peace-keeping' and that if it were withdrawn a bloodbath would occur. The soldiers however know that they are billeted in and carry out patrols through areas which are totally hostile to their presence. The civilian population in these areas sees them as a foreign army of occupation, while the

soldiers themselves, as part of their training, are taught to regard the bulk of the civilian population in these areas as their enemy.

One just has to visit any nationalist area and see the wriggly tin forts and the patrols on the streets to understand that the army is still attempting to stamp British rule on Irish people, a role it has carried out for centuries. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the border area. In South Armagh, for instance, there is no question of a divided community: the people are solidly against the presence of the army and soldiers and supplies can get to the outpost fort in Crossmaglen by air only, as after a series of ambushes road convoys are considered too dangerous.

RECRUITMENT

Conscription in Britain was phased out in the late fifties not because of public opposition but because army chiefs considered that for a counter-insurgency role in colonial wars a professional army would be more stable and would cause less challenges to British involvement from the civilian population.

Present army recruitment is geared to providing a supply of as young as possible recruits: the idea is to get school leavers who have little experience of civilian work or life, who are taken to barracks, cut off as much as possible from the rest of the population and indoctrinated with current army ideology.

Because of their training, most new soldiers are keen to do a first tour in Ireland, but their attitudes quickly change when they come to grips with the reality of the situation. A minority, mostly those with an Irish or Catholic background or those with a sense of humanity, determine to get out of the army as soon as possible, legally if they can but if not then by deserting.

Another somewhat larger minority readily accept or even like the situation. Most of these become increasingly brutalised and some go on from the legalised violence—part of their role as an occupying army—to carrying out thefts, rapes and other acts of violence on their own account.

The vast majority of soldiers occupy a position somewhere between these two extremes. Most try to make the best of their role in Britain's Irish war, considering it as 'doing their duty', but certainly the majority do not like serving in Ireland nor do they want to do another tour there.

OPPOSITION

New recruits are generally at a low educational and cultural level and the army tries to ensure that this does not change. Most soldiers have difficulty articulating their opposition or disenchantment. The most determined usually just go absent and would not consider trying to organise opposition within the army.

The UTOM in its pickets of army events in Britain has experienced two attitudes from soldiers: extreme hostility from officers, NCOs and 'professional' individual soldiers, and on the other hand most ordinary soldiers are friendly and some even volunteer to give out leaflets because 'the last thing they want to do is to go back to Ireland'.

The UTOM also printed as a poster a spoof version of a recruitment advert which first appeared in *Republican News*. Although produced as a piss-take of the original, the poster made some cutting criticisms of the normal recruitment lies. Apparently when these posters are put up in windows in Republican parts of Derry, squaddies are ordered immediately to have them taken down. Is the message getting across? What happens when the posters are confiscated? Perhaps there has been a slight overspill from the British anti-war movement into soldiers' consciousness, and they can now be reached with the right material in the right place.

The question of the armed forces is an issue neglected by the British left: recent events in Portugal and Iran show how important to a change in society the attitude and politics of the armed forces can be.

The incident of Trooper Maggs suggests there is a flood of disaffection ready to burst forth within the army providing some way is found to unleash it.

R.U.C. ARE TERROR

REPORT ADMITS IT —

In the last 3 years, 10,203 people have been interrogated by the RUC in Northern Ireland as suspected 'terrorists'. Of these some 4,650 have been charged with 'terrorist offences'. All of these charged appear eventually before Diplock no-jury courts. In 80% of the cases the sole evidence against the accused is a confession produced by the police and often strenuously denied. Despite this, 94% are convicted.

Why do so many, mainly young people, 'confess' to terrorist offences, knowing that in effect by doing so they may be signing away the next 10 years of their lives to a prison cell?

The Bennett Report on Police Interrogation Procedures in Northern Ireland mentions several that the police put forward — the shock of arrest, the wish to unburden a crime weighing heavily on the conscience, persistent and incisive cross-examination etc. But also, for the first time from any official source, he speaks the unspeakable.

Despite his 'admiration for the RUC' and his recognition of the 'almost impossibly difficult job' that they do, Judge Harry Bennett, a respected English circuit judge and pillar of the establishment par excellence is forced to admit that confessions have been obtained by what he calls in his measured legal language 'ill treatment in police custody'. . . 'This is indicated', he continues, 'beyond all doubt by the nature, severity, sites and numbers of separate injuries in one person. An example would be haemorrhage into the eye, a swollen nose, a cut lip, and multiple bruises on various parts of the body, all in one prisoner'. And, he goes on, 'if, as we have found, on the basis of medical evidence, ill-treatment causing injury could occur, so could ill-treatment which leaves no marks.'

TIP OF THE ICEBERG

In fact, these admissions are only the tip of an iceberg of brutality and police torture of suspects, that for so long the government have been trying to deny. In the last 3 years 1,382 people have filed sworn complaints of brutality and assault on them by the RUC while in police custody. Not all of these may be true. Some may be exaggerated. But day by day the independent and incontrovertible evidence to support these claims is beginning to mount. This has been one of the pressures that has forced the government to make these recent damaging admissions.

BIZARRE

RUC brutality has been consistently documented throughout by legal organisations in the North such as Association for Legal Justice (ALJ) and Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA): they have been publicised continually in the Republican press. The attitude of the government has always been to dismiss this evidence outright as a campaign of slander against the RUC and instead has

Castlereagh interrogation centre, Belfast

launched a bizarre campaign claiming that all injuries in police custody have been self-inflicted. Prisoners, they allege, have been banging their heads against radiators, jabbing themselves in their eyes with their fingers, and swallowing razor blades to create internal injuries. IRA sympathisers apparently can get prizes of cigarettes and whiskey from their 'political bosses' if the injuries they inflict on themselves are good enough.

DOCUMENTATION

Maybe people believed the government, maybe they didn't look too closely at what was being said. But in November 1977 they fully documented investigation by Amnesty International confirmed these reports in great detail in a substantial number of cases and international pressure on the issue of human rights began to simmer.

Moreover, the extent and persistence of the brutality was beginning to cause problems even within the police apparatus. In early 1977, Northern Ireland police surgeons privately communicated to the Chief Constable that their position was becoming embarrassing and that they wanted something done about the more overt brutalisation. As the Bennett Report says: 'At one stage, when demands of ill-treatment were made by the police, some of the medical officers who had examined prisoners and found injuries had reason to fear for their reputation.'

In October 1977 Robert Irwin, Secretary of the Northern Ireland Police Surgeons Association, led a deputation to Chief Constable Newman to express their concern. Nothing changed. In late 1978,

Jack Hassard resigned from the Northern Ireland Police Authority because, he said, it was unwilling to face up to the issue of ill-treatment. Finally, with the Bennett Report looming and the possibility of his continued silence discrediting the whole police surgeon structure in Northern Ireland, Irwin appeared on Weekend World to admit that he himself had seen 150-160 prisoners who had been physically injured in police interrogations.

DELIBERATE POLICY

The current admissions, though significant are still, however, a whitewash. The aim is to present the cause as a handful of 'bad apples' in the police or blame a few over-enthusiastic officers. In fact there are very precise political reasons why the brutality is so sustained and systematic. While internment existed the government was able to lock its political opponents away by a stroke of the pen. When they were forced to phase that out they could only lock their opponents away by convictions through the courts. So they abolished juries and to make up for an almost total lack of evidence, they set the police to beat confessions out of what they now labelled 'terrorist suspects'. In the first year of the new system allegations of assault by the RUC, common enough before, soared by 113%. Since then it has stayed at that level. Police torture is an inevitable part of the strategy of 'criminalising' political opposition in Northern Ireland. The facts of Castlereagh have been well-known and specifically approved by Mason and Newman for years.

We should demand the immediate release of all those convicted on the basis of statements made under duress and the prosecution of the RUC men concerned. But the only end to this brutal system will come with the total and unconditional withdrawal of Britain from Ireland.

INTERVIEWERS



Castlereagh Barracks in Belfast is a purpose built interrogation centre. It has 38 cells and 21 interview rooms. It is designed to provide facilities to hold suspects during prolonged 3-7 day periods of interrogation. It is bleak and forbidding: its reputation locally is horrendous. Every street in Republican areas has several people who have been through it and can report what goes on. As the local saying goes: "The blind and the deaf know what goes on in Castlereagh".

Below we print a shortened first-hand account of what happened to one individual pulled in on suspicion. This account is only one of hundreds.

Bernard O'Connor, a schoolteacher from Enniskillen was arrested at his home at 5.30a.m. by the RUC and driven to Castlereagh in Belfast. At first he was treated formally and correctly, details and finger-prints etc recorded. He was put in a cell for a few hours. Then an RUC man came and took him for interview.

The interviewer was "a very tall man. He had a beige folder under his arm. He told me to stand in front of the table. He looked at me and said, 'so you are Bernard O'Connor, man but you are an insignificant bastard'. He then put me standing on my toes, made me bend my knees and hold my two hands out in front of me. I was told to stay in that position. When my heels touched the ground I was hit a slap on the face. Several times I wobbled to my heels and each time I was struck on the face.

They wanted me to admit taking part in several bombings and shootings in Enniskillen.

2nd Interview: Three different officers "approached the subject in a completely different vein. They said that an open confession at that stage might even guarantee release. They told me that if I had only fringe involvement with terrorists the Courts would be extremely lenient on me. I would get a very small

prison sentence. I would get remission which means that I would be away from my wife and children for a period of 2 or 3 years. If I didn't take this course and was found guilty of a serious offence like murder there would be nothing else for it but for me to do a prison sentence of approximately 35 years. I would not see the outside world in that period and I should understand what the world would be like in 35 years and how I would not be able to adapt myself to the community then. They then went on to quite a religious theme of how the Lord looks for sinners to repent. After about 4 hours of this it didn't seem to have any effect so they took me back to my cell."

4th Interview: They said to me: 'Bernard O'Connor, you have refused to help'. And I said: 'I haven't been involved in anything'. Well, they said, their job was to prove that I had. I said they were wrong and the younger one asked me what did I want to get. I asked him what did he mean and with that he drew out and hit me a box in the face. He landed me back in the corner against the wall. He said that was the way they meant. Each time I denied things I kept getting hit in the head.

One of the detectives tried to jump across the table and chairs screaming he was going to kill me. The other one restrained him. Then I was made to stand on my toes again like the first time and slapped about the face again for about 15 minutes. Several times one hit me punches in the stomach. They both then took off their coats and ties and rolled

up their sleeves. I was kicked around the room by both men on my legs and buttocks. I was fired around the room from one to the other. I was made to get down on the floor and do press ups and if my body touched the floor I was kicked by the younger man. Finally they decided that it might be even better if I took off my clothes, so I was told to take my trousers off, then the rest of my clothes, leaving me naked.

I was pumped up and down with my head between my knees. The track suit top which I had been wearing was put down over my head by the younger man and the arms tied round my neck. My nose was closed off with their fingers and my mouth was sealed off with another hand. I couldn't breathe. I heard the older man say: 'choke the bastard'. I found even my stomach trying to come up to my throat until finally I could remember no more for a short stage. When I came round I was made to run on the spot and they kicked my legs and buttocks: they couldn't get me to run fast enough. The younger fair haired CID person started to shadow box in front of me, and at no time did he hit me in the face with any of his punches until suddenly he would hit me very hard in the stomach.

Later I was told to put my clothes on again. Then two more men joined them. One of them, a tall black haired man took me and spun me round above his head and then he threw me through the air and I landed on my back on the ground. When he was spinning me he held me straight up above his head and threatened to break me back on the table. I remember seeing a most beautiful shade of violet for at least half a minute. Later I was stripped again and my soiled underpants were put over my head. I was made to run around the room while they mocked and jeered at me concerning my private parts. I never in my life sweated as much as I sweated in that period.

Later one took the waste paper bin and dumped it down over my head and the litter and papers and cigarette butts went all over the floor. I was made to pick up each tiny piece of paper and each cigarette butt had to be picked up in my mouth and if I wasn't doing it quick enough I was getting kicked again. A couple of them stopped for a fish supper. When they had finished they asked me did I want a drink. I said yes. He handed me a plastic beaker of water into my hand and with his other hand smacked it out of my hand on to the floor. I was then made to get down on the floor on my hands and knees and lick the water off the floor, and I was delighted even to get it like that. After 5 hours or so of this, they threatened to put me into a car and drive me to the top of the Shankill Road where they would already have informed the UVF and let me free and that would solve their problems."

The above account covers just the first 24 hours of O'Connor's 'interrogation'. In all it continued in similar vein for 3 days. There is not space to print the whole catalogue of brutalities. O'Connor did not confess and was free to tell his story. Many others are not so lucky.

Glasgow

Despite driving snow 40 members of Glasgow UTOM took part in a blanket protest and open air meeting in the City Centre on St Patrick's Day. 2000 leaflets were handed out and every copy of *Troops Out* and *Republican News/An Phoblacht* sold. Amongst the speakers were 2 school students, aged 14 and 15, from the socialist youth group 'Revolution'.

This was the first blanket protest to be held in Scotland and attracted wide attention. Several hundred people saw the conditions in which the H Block prisoners are held and heard UTOM spell out its message that Britain get out of Ireland once and for all.

The protest followed a series of pickets held on the main recruitment centre on Saturday morning which succeeded both in attracting press publicity and in dissuading a number of unemployed youth from joining the British army.

UTOM intends to follow this up by continuing to point out the British Army isn't about skiing in Norway and sun in Cyprus but about killing and being killed in Ireland. An open letter is being circulated amongst prominent trade unionists demanding the Labour-controlled Strathclyde Regional Council stops the Army visiting schools in search of new cannon fodder.

On April 21st Glasgow UTOM and Glasgow Sinn Féin have organised a demo which will go into the City Centre and finish with a rally. It will be the first such march to the City Centre since 1971.

The links between Glasgow and what's happening in the six counties was clearly seen in the two UVF bombings of Catholic pubs and the recent roundup of a UDA arms ring. With 80,000 unemployed youth Glasgow is a happy hunting ground for the recruitment sergeant. UTOM intends to show opposition does exist to British rule in Ireland and to spell out one clear message within a city which is overwhelmingly working class: Britain get out of Ireland now, the only justice Irish people can expect from the British Government is the justice of Castlereagh torture centre.

Merseyside

Merseyside UTOM's blanket protest in Liverpool City Centre on March 3rd got a brief, but explanatory mention on the front page of the local *Weekend Echo*.

The Branch also received a letter from David Alton, Liberal Candidate in the Edge Hill bye-election which said "I fully support the two demands which your organisation is making and will give any assistance possible."

Dundee

The Dundee Branch of UTOM, which was formed two months ago, held its first public mobilisation with a picket on a Monday Club meeting, which was to have been addressed by Ulster MP Willie Ross,

speaking on "Ireland as a target for international subversion". This meeting of a motley handful of students, retired Brigadiers and ladies in Margaret Thatcher look-alike hats was duly 'internationally subverted' by some 25-30 UTOM supporters and about 20 Zimbabwean students, who had come to heckle a character calling himself the 'President of the Friends of Rhodesia Society'.

On the arrival of the UTOM members, the Zimbabwean students immediately took up the chant: 'Ireland and Zimbabwe is the same struggle.' If only those of the British Left who favour the policy of 'the further away the struggle the better' could realise that!

The Monday Clubbers were forced to close their meeting, leave the room and, inevitably, call the police. UTOM never got to heckle Willie Ross—or even see him—but that didn't really matter. The main purpose of the mobilisation, after all, was to bring the Irish question to the people of Dundee.

It was therefore decided to stage an impromptu march through the city centre to the Army Recruiting Office.

LETTERS

My name is Mrs Mary McLaughlin. I have just read the review in your paper *Troops Out*, Vol. 2, 5 March.

First of all I would like to say that I am not a member of *any* group and I am not taking sides.

You said the latest issue of the 'Hands off Ireland' journal done by the RCG contains some very useful articles, which was fine, my interview was one. And a few other things as well.

But the next item was nothing soever to do with us, and if you had anything to say to RCG you should not put other people in the same articles.

But I hope that people, whoever the reader, do not think or believe the articles were ruined by different views with other people.

Only, my husband and all the Irish P.O.W.s are getting a hard time, and when you live with that as one of the families, different views do not seem as important, if you understand what I mean. Also when you say attacks on you, if that review was written as one back, you should not put in other people's names that have nothing to do with it. It's unfair, do you not think?

Because our interviews, etc., are done so that they might help our men, not to attack *any* groups, and that is the only reason, but it is a pity people cannot work together to help the prisoners. Maybe if they did lots more could be done for them, or is it a may be.

Could you print this letter for me just to get things right.

Mary McLaughlin

BRIT BITS

The Northern Ireland Office in Belfast must be a very busy place, trying to remain impartial over the vociferous claims and accusations of the Protestants and Catholics. But it does seem to have a carious way of shedding its workload.

A visiting radio journalist from America got in touch with the office to see if he could ask Northern Ireland Secretary Mr Roy Mason about the controversy over conditions in the H-Block prison unit.

He was told, quite reasonably, that Mr Mason was too busy to see him. But instead of answering his questions, the Northern Ireland Office suggested that the journalist get in touch with Mr Norman Hatton, the chief of the official Ulster Unionists—who, the officials said, would be able to put the Government's view quite adequately.

(From: *Guardian Diary*, 17th March)

ARMY MANOEUVRES

A British soldier left a trail of destruction through West Berlin when he commandeered an armoured troop carrier, rammed three parked cars, snapped off a street lamp and tore up sections of road surface. During a police chase 190 traffic lights were switched off.

• • • • •

(From the poetry magazine *Voices*)

You gave space in your last issue of *Voices* to a working-class army officer with his poem on Northern Ireland (not Ulster) and those who will die there. May a working-class railway guard be given the same space to reassure the working-class officer his fears are not groundless. He will not be remembered.

I have read about half of your issues and I hope this is the last time I have to reply to such a poem. I don't believe in letting the enemy have a word in edgeways. If that working-class Major isn't the enemy I'll eat my guards red flag.

I WILL NOT REMEMBER YOU WHEN YOU'RE DEAD

(Not a dedication, not an oration)

*I will not remember you when you're dead
you're not that complex.*

*Your actions basic bullet is a fraud
like the romantic lily,
like the environmental wrench your words
are not that complex.*

*I will not remember you
remembering who to blame for what you
are*

*I will not remember your naming game,
your port-arm words today.*

*My celebrations will have nothing to do
with killings
on streets you may have helped to die.*

*Your numbers up and you know it
or maybe you don't*

*either way, you're right,
I'll not remember you when you're dead.*

Joe Smythe

ELVIS FINGERS THE FORCES



ARMED FORCES

by Elvis Costello and The Attractions

The title "Armed Forces", together with "don't join" postcards within the sleeve, and the promotion of the most overt anti-army song (Oliver's Army) as a hit single, leave no doubt as to the artist's stance as regards H.M.'s troops. But a further search for definitive statements is greeted by a personal universe of

imagery and impressions within a barrage of elusive lyrics, which frustrate any attempts to box him up too neatly.

The power of the music lies more in its conveyance of emotional images through hook-lines and head-lines and accentuated words perfectly complimented by sharp, snappy and varied music. The elusiveness of the lyrics means the messages are never pedantic or preachy.

Worried Male

Despite this his contempt for models of male behaviour are a dominant theme: "worrying about your physical fitness? Tell me how you got this sickness" (Big Boys). He also maintains a clarity as to who the victims are in a class society: "They've come to look you over. They're giving you the eye — they want you to come out and play — you'd better say good-bye" (Goon Squad).

Further lines like "All it takes one itchy trigger — one more widow — one less white nigger" ambiguously identify with both the Irish and the working-class British squaddie. In fact his main strength

is in identifying with British soldiers as victims and fellow human beings: "Put them all in boots and khaki — better blame it on the Darkies" (Sunday Best).

Arms Versus Fingers

It's all particularly relevant with recent attempts to expose the limitations within the anti-racist/anti-fascist movement (concentrating on the Front and ignoring the racism of our army in someone else's country) and to try and link it with the Troops Out Movement. It's clear at least that these Brits are definitely anti-army — who else in the rock field is? This is very important considering the prominence and popularity within Rock Against Racism of a band like Stiff Little Fingers, from Belfast, who point to sectarian hatred and violence as the underlying problem in "Ulster" — "They take away our freedom in the name of liberty" (Suspect Device) and ignore the role of the army in maintaining that situation — "Oliver's Army's On Their Way".

P.M. Camden & Islington UTOM

BUT "FINGERS" FUNK OUT

STIFF LITTLE FINGERS are a punk band from Belfast. At the huge Anti Nazi League Carnival last year they criticised anti-racists for ignoring the centuries of English racism towards the Irish. But then they went on to dissociate themselves from people calling for Troops Out Now, saying that the army was keeping the peace.

These confused politics run through their first album, *Inflammable Material*, which has recently been released. There are plenty of attacks on state repression:

Take a look where you're living
You got the Army on your street
And the RUC dog of repression
Is barking at your feet

Is this the kind of place you wanna live?

And what happens if you're a punk in Belfast?

Everybody's down in the centre of town
Doing nothing wrong we're only hanging around

They put you up against the wall
Make loud mouthed jokes just to make you feel small

Laugh at your appearance and the clothes you wear

Call that justice just isn't fair

Talking about their law and order
They don't do what they ought to do
Law and order

There's no justice in it
None!

I had a friend who was lifted by the law
Lifted and shifted and dumped on the floor
They treated him like shit

Kicked him in the head and then laughed
when he bled
Spat in his face and pulled his hair
Call that justice just isn't fair

But Stiff Little Fingers' mistake is to equate the violence of repression with the violence of rebellion. In their view anti-imperialists are the same as Loyalists — no better than fascists:

I could be a hero
Live and die for their 'important cause'
A united nation
Or an independent state with laws
And rules and regulations
That merely cause disturbances and wars
And that's all I have got now
All thanks to the freedom-seeking hordes

The best song on *Inflammable Material* is White Noise, a look at the racist views of many English people. It places anti-Irish racism in the context of stereotyped racist views of blacks and makes the point that racism against the Irish is not a secondary issue. People who will be shocked by the sentiments in the first half may be provoked into thinking about the views presented in the second half:

Rastus is a Nigger. Thug mugger junkie.
Black golly wog. Big horny monkey.
Pimp pusher coon. Grinning piccaninnies.
Send him home soon. Back to the trees.
Black wogs. Black wogs. Your face don't fit.
Black wogs. Black wogs. You ain't no Brit.
Ahmed is a Paki. Curry coffee queer.
Ten to a bed. Flocking over here.
Tax-sponging canker. Smelly thieving kids.

Ponce greasy wanker. Worse than the yids.
Brown wogs. Brown wogs. Your face don't fit.

Brown wogs. Brown wogs. You ain't no Brit.

Stick together we'll be all white me and you
The only colours we need are red, right and blue.

Paddy is a moron. Spud thick Mick.
Breeds like a rabbit. Thinks with his prick.
Anything floors him if he can't fight or drink it.

Round them up in Ulster. Tow it out and sink it.

Green wogs. Green wogs. Our face don't fit.
Green wogs. Green wogs. We ain't no Brit.

If the victim ain't a soldier why should we care?

Irish bodies don't count. Life's cheaper over there.

Green wogs. Green wogs. Face don't fit.

Green wogs. Green wogs. Ain't no Brit.

Green wogs. Green wogs. Grab 'em boys.

Green wogs. Green wogs. Turn up the white noise.

Inflammable Material and *Fingers' gigs* in this country will hopefully raise further interest amongst English youth about what is happening to their sisters and brothers in the six counties, just as the growth of Punk involved wider numbers of youth in the fight against the National Front. And increasing interest, questioning and awareness, even if it begins with confused politics, can only be good for those of us opposed to British rule in Ireland.

Harry Roberts, Leeds UTOM

CONVICTING THE MEDIA

This month sees the publication of two pamphlets that will put paid once and for all to any illusion that the British media are providing proper coverage of Ireland.

The two pamphlets are *The Media and Ireland—Truth the First Casualty*, produced by the Campaign for Free Speech on Ireland, which will be out after Easter, and *Belfast Bulletin No. 6* by the Belfast Workers Research Unit.

The Campaign for Free Speech on Ireland's 56-page pamphlet provides a comprehensive picture of how the media ban, censor and distort Irish coverage. Many of the contributions come from people working in the media: among others Peter Taylor and David Elstein of *This Week*, Edward and Mrs Simpson producer Andrew Brown (who condemns anti-Irish jokes), media lecturers Philip Elliott and Philip Schlesinger, dramatists Margaretta D'Arcy and John Arden, and *Republican News* editor Danny Morrison.

The pamphlet sites Irish coverage in the context of war reporting in general, and shows how the army and government try to manipulate the media for their propaganda purposes. It shows how the media have responded to such pressures, and also goes back in history to show how today's coverage—and today's anti-Irish humour—finds echoes in Victorian days.

It covers TV and the press, drama and the visual arts, and contains the most detailed chronology to date of censored TV programmes.

Well-illustrated and easy to read, this pamphlet will appeal to media workers, the Irish community and everyone who is interested in Britain's war in Ireland.

It will be available after Easter from: Information on Ireland, 1 North End Rd, London W14. Cost: Britain and Ireland, 50p per copy plus 15p p&p, 10 copies for £3.40 plus 60p p&p. Other countries, 50p plus 50p p&p, 10 copies for £3.40 plus £1.20 p&p.

INTERFACE: IRELAND

Also out this month is a novel by former *Sunday Mirror* reporter Kevin Dowling titled *Interface: Ireland*.

The novel is evidently partially autobiographical, and tells the story of a Belfast-based reporter for an English tabloid. A main theme is a thinly disguised version of the true story of the Army's efforts to put out a fictitious story about Provisional embezzlement.

The strength of the book lies in the hatchet job it does on the Army's press relations department, and there are some cutting pen-portraits of its propaganda ventures—such as an Army PR man planting geraniums in a sandbag to set up a photo of a squaddie 'making himself feel at home' in Belfast.

However the book is marred by its lack of political analysis and the way the author/central character takes a doom-laden middle-class view of the situation in

Free Speech on Ireland



Belfast Bulletin No. 6 is subtitled *Media Misreport N. Ireland!* and devotes 46 of its 52 pages to this question.

It complements the Campaign for Free Speech on Ireland's pamphlet and will also be of interest to *Troops Out* readers.

The Bulletin includes a fine introductory analysis and an interesting description of the propaganda that the Army produces for the consumption of squaddies. Also useful is a biography of Chris Ryder of the *Sunday Times*, who is shown as having made his career by retailing Army propaganda. Among the other items are an analysis of Belfast newspapers and an extensive list of 'The Other Irish Press'.

The final pages of the Bulletin are taken up by a revealing piece on the RUC and sectarian assassinations and an article on the dispute at Ballantyne's Sportswear factory at Coleraine.

The Bulletin is available from: Workers Research Unit, c/o 52 Broadway, Belfast 12. Cost: 65p plus postage.

the north of Ireland—which he sees as an insoluble 'farce' in which all the participants (at least he includes the Army) are equally and inexplicably barbaric.

Interface: Ireland is published by Barrie and Jenkins and costs £4.95.

SOCIALIST SCOTLAND No. 2 SPECIAL IRISH ISSUE

Articles include:

John MacLean

Provisional Sinn Fein

The Orange Interest

40p from Box 5, 45 Niddry Street, Edinburgh

As *Troops Out* readers may know, when the pamphlet *British Soldiers Speak Out on Ireland* sold out its first printing of 5,000 copies, the printer, Interlink Longraph, refused to reprint it. We are glad to say that another, more principled, printer agreed to do the reprint, so *British Soldiers Speak Out on Ireland* is once more available from Information on Ireland, 1 North End Road, London W14. Price: 30p + 15p p&p, 10 copies for £2.00 + 80p p&p.

IRELAND SOCIALIST REVIEW No.4

The fourth issue of ISR is again of a high standard. It looks at several aspects of the war in Ireland and attempts to analyse them instead of making crude and simplistic propaganda noises. In a section on TV coverage of the war, an attempt is made to show censorship as something more subtle than dictates being sent out from Whitehall enforcing cuts and deliberate misinformation. It shows how censorship is an institutionalised product of 'shared ideologies and implicitly political assumptions between most sections of the ruling hierarchy'. It shows how coverage is determined by a process of referring up of news and investigative coverage of the war to various controllers; this having the effect of censoring and influencing journalists not to blot their copybooks. There is also of course the attitude and conceptions of the journalists themselves. It would be helpful if a future issue could look at the complete ban on Provisional Sinn Fein and the IRA on RTE in the Republic.

There is an extensive analysis of the present security policy enforced in the North. The influence of the army's experience on the framing of laws for certain ends, after a period of 'illegal' army activity is clearly pointed out. This article also looks at techniques of mass surveillance, the role of the army and the policy of Ulsterisation.

The debate article analyses why the British labour movement supports some liberation struggles (S. Africa, Chile) and not the one in Ireland. The 'chauvinism' of the movement as an argument is (perhaps too easily) dismissed, in favour of a 'democracy test'. It is argued that the deciding factor for support is the existence of 'democratic' structures and organisations or the lack of them. In S. Africa, where no voting or union rights exist for blacks the contribution that the liberation struggle intends to make can be clearly seen. In Ireland, where voting and union rights exist the role of the liberation struggle is not clearly evident and the right of an armed opposition is questioned by the labour movement.

The article argues that at a time when the British labour movement is questioning its own democracy—eg. devolution, industrial management, racial and sexual discrimination—the question of Ireland can be more forcibly put and the notion of democracy there held by the labour movement can be fully challenged.

ISR is essential for activists over here; its level of debate and investigation a must if we are to understand how to build an effective solidarity movement. Available from ISR, 60 Loughborough Rd London SW9. Price: 30p plus 15p p&p.

NEWS FROM NOWHERE IRISH BOOK LIST

5 A4 sheets giving a selected listing of material available, particularly concentrating on the North of Ireland. Includes history, economics, plays, poetry, and journals. Send s.a.e. to: News From Nowhere, 100 Whitechapel, Liverpool 1

DIARY OF EVENTS

- FEB**
26 Defence Minister announces that following Maggs incident a psychiatrist may be stationed in N.I. barracks.
Prime Minister Lynch at Fianna Fail annual conference calls for 'agreed structures' between North and South; points to more favourable economic situation in Republic.
27 Massive protest at Portlaoise by Irish farmers against proposed levy of 2% on farm produce. Government hastily backs down.

- MAR**
1 Workers tax revolt begins in Howth with half-day strike.
2 RUC 'community relations' vehicles scab on ambulance strike.
3 3 soldiers injured by IRA attack on helicopter near Crossmaglen. N.I. gay law reform delayed again as sop to Unionist MPs.
4 Gerard McLaverty offered only £750 compensation by N.I. Office after surviving attack by 'Shankill butchers' and helping police trace them. Families of 3 other victims refused compensation.
Sinn Féin - The Workers Party (Officials) congress drops 'aspiration' for a 32-county socialist republic from its N.I. policy document. Condemns H-Block protests as 'elitist'. Affirms (in case anyone was in doubt) that it is a 'party of reform' and calls for a 'devolved Parliament' for North.
Communist Party of Ireland holds annual conference in Belfast for only third time in its history. Gen. Secy says 'to show solidarity with those fighting for national independence', among other reasons.
6 Warning from Grundig in Germany that Belfast plant employing 1,000 may be closed if 'industrial troubles' don't stop.
7 Cache of 42 bombs found by RUC in Short Strand area. Speculation that they were to be used in attacks on ships in Belfast Harbour.
Identity of 2SAS men charged with Boyle murder revealed in court: both remanded in military custody on £2,000 bail.
8 250 lb car bomb explodes in Dugganonn. No injuries. Warnings given. 11 members of Women Against Imperialism Group, Belfast, arrested after being attacked by RUC while picketing Armagh Women's Jail in act of solidarity on International Women's Day.
In Brussels women's groups picket Irish Embassy in protest against ban on sale of contraceptives and inadequacy of Haughey's Bill. Ireland chosen because its laws in this area 'most oppressive in Europe'.
10 Belfast woman and her 2 children held at Heathrow under PTA, along with 3 male relatives and 2 of their children who came to meet her. All four children held all day long, and older ones interrogated.
11 ITV *Weekend World* features Police Surgeon Irwin, who worked at Castlereagh, claiming to have examined 150-160 cases of injuries received in custody which could not have been self-inflicted. Another doctor claims Brian Maguire died during interrogation. 50,000 workers march in Dublin against unfair tax laws.
12 Mason attacks ITV program as 'irresponsible' and 'a thinly-disguised attack on RUC'.
Publication of Bennett Report promised by N.I.O. 'within a fortnight'. Delay explained by necessity for Mason to have time to consider it. (He has had a copy for several weeks).

Sample reactions to *Weekend World*
Belfast Orange Order leader: 'The British Government should take a leaf from the legislative book of the Irish Republic in banning programs aimed at boosting the morale of the IRA'.
N.I. Police Federation: 'Highly irresponsible'.
Official Unionist MP McCusker: 'If the police occasionally use strong-arm methods as perhaps some people would describe them, in order to get confessions you'll get no complaints from me'.
OUP MP Jeremy Burchill: 'There are too many mischief makers employed in certain organs of the media who glory in the denigration of the bulwarks upon which civilised society is based'.
Alliance Party Head Oliver Napier: 'I view the remarks [Irwin's] with disquiet'.

- 13 RUC Chief Newman calls Irwin a liar at press conference.
14 Dublin Government finally concedes Post Office telephonists equal pay demands, affecting several thousand women.
Guardian leaks Bennett Report.
'Peace People' announce they will be back on the streets. Kieran McKeown says they will call for Newman's resignation, political status and repeal of all anti-terrorist legislation.
Selected reporters and TV crew allowed to see some of H-Blocks, but not the 'blanket men'.
16 Bennett Report presented to Parliament. Praises RUC but finds evidence of injuries which could not be self-inflicted. Newman at press conference 'welcomes' report and says cases will be investigated, but when pressed admits that the RUC have never yet carried out a prosecution resulting in conviction against any RUC man charged with brutality.

- Smear campaign against Dr. Irwin, callously making use of his wife's rape, is traced by journalists to N.I. Office and RUC.
17 H-Block protesters are barred by Gardai from taking part in Dublin St Patrick's Day Parade.
18 N.I. Police Authority puts blame for non-prosecution and investigation of allegations of ill-treatment against police on Police Complaints Board.
All 5,650 RUC regulars (male) and RUC Reserves to be given new, more powerful handguns. American-made Ruger .38 Magnum 6-shot revolvers.
19 Labour MP Paul Rose, in *Irish Times*, says his decision not to stand again is result of years of frustration over raising Ireland in Commons: Bill to give Unionists more seats was last straw.
President of Police Surgeon's Association in Britain writes to *Daily Telegraph* in defence of Dr Irwin.
Official Unionist compares 'peace people' to IRA for their demands (see 14 March).
Guardian claims Newman soon to be retired, but long enough after Bennett Report that no blame for its findings attaches to him.
20 150,000 workers in Dublin, 10s of 1,000s elsewhere strike and demonstrate over PAYE taxing. Biggest demo ever in Republic. Four Republicans, 3 men and a woman, arrested on way from North to Dublin. Men named as Martin McGuinness, Brian Keenan, Joe Geary. Woman not named.
N.I. Equal Opportunities Commission report finds day-care provision in North far behind that in Britain.

Background to the biggest workers' protest in the history of the Irish Republic is the country's unequal tax system, which puts the overwhelming income tax burden on workers whose tax is taken out at source by PAYE, while farmers and to some extent self-employed people pay much less (workers pay 16% of pre-tax income, and their taxes account for 86.6% of all income tax revenue, while farmers pay an estimated 6% of income, providing only 1.2% of revenue. There is no wealth tax in the Republic.

The protest blew up at a time when the government was attempting to negotiate wage restraint with the unions. In the recent Budget a 2% levy on agricultural produce at point of final sale was introduced, but faced with the big farmers' lobby, the government hastily backed down. Agriculture is now the most prosperous sector of the Irish economy and this capitulation, so different from the government's treatment of workers demands, was just too much. Bigger demos are promised for May Day.

- 21 ICTU names April 30 as day government must deliver the goods in return for union cooperation on incomes policy.
N.I. unemployment figures: 11.4% overall.
PTA renewed, 33 votes against. Shackleton Inquiry recommendation to bring holding time at ports into line with other police stations accepted, but recommendation to drop Section 11 (which provides for charges of 'withholding information in relation to terrorist offences-Catch 221) is rejected. Not surprisingly, as this charge has come back into prominence recently.
RUC man shot in error by soldier awarded £80,000.
22 IRA bomb wave in 14 towns; banks main targets.
Chief Medical Officer at Gough Interrogation Centre, Armagh, asks to be transferred as he can no longer carry out his medical duties as prescribed by international law.
British Ambassador to Netherlands shot dead in Hague along with an embassy employee. Several hours later a bank official in Brussels shot dead, perhaps in mistake for member of British NATO delegation. Later Belgian police claim to have identified Irish killer; arrest member of Belgian left wing group. Ironically, the Ambassador was an expert on security for diplomatic staff.
Thatcher tables censure motion which may bring down British Government, survival depending on votes of N.I. MPs.
23 Brian Keenan, one of 4 Republicans arrested earlier in week, is brought to London 'in connection with explosives offences'.
24 Five prisoners on rooftop protest at Parkhurst Prison (4 of them Irish political prisoners).
Judge in Republic claims British government has paid more attention to Bennett Report than Dublin has to his similar report.

Judge Barra O'Briain was appointed by the Dublin Government to conduct an inquiry into allegations of Gardai brutality following an Amnesty investigation which found claims substantiated. He is now complaining that his report has been ignored. Justice Minister Collins, when asked why none of the complaints were investigated, said that Amnesty had not released details, but this, says Judge O'Briain, is not so. Most of his recommendations were rejected by the Justice Ministry, including many similar to those in the Bennett Report.

a look at Bennis rights

The issue of human rights in Northern Ireland is increasingly being raised, not only in Ireland and Britain, but throughout the world. The specialised terror operations of the British Army's elite squad, the SAS, and the brutal treatment of political prisoners have received considerable publicity now, and the British Government is back on the defensive.

The broader issue of civil liberties is also coming under scrutiny; for instance in the context of the *berufsverbot* law in West Germany being investigated by the Bertrand Russell Tribunal. And in Britain, Tony Benn, in conjunction with the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party, is raising the issue of civil liberties and the question of democratic control of security policies. In a recent paper to the House Policy Committee of the Labour Party, he wrote:

"Second, citizens must be concerned at the possibility that extensive surveillance, computerized dossiers and secret files may be compiled covering a wide range of people, beliefs and activities that extent far beyond any possible threat to our security and which could develop into an apparatus that is not under proper democratic control, nor is really accountable to the responsible Minister, to the Cabinet, to Parliament, or to the community."

EXTENSIVE SURVEILLANCE

Scandalously, though, Benn has ignored the situation in the North of Ireland where precisely the measures he is talking about have been incorporated into every aspect of the state; from the law, through computers to the day-to-day army operations in the streets of the Catholic community.

As early as 18th April 1974 the *Times* reported that 40% of the adult and juvenile population had their names and family details on an intricate system of card indexes built up by the army. A recent book by an officer who served in Belfast during this period (*Peace-keeping in a Democratic Society* by Colonel Robin Eveleigh) describes how these files were updated, and boasts of how the Emergency Provisions Act section allowing arrest for up to four hours by the army merely to establish identity was used "tens of thousands of times" to harass and detail the behavioural patterns of the minority community.

STATE SECURITY SYSTEMS

In 1975 these files were incorporated into the most advanced state security computer system in the 'free' world, at Thiepval army camp, Lisburn, near Belfast. Well over half a million files are divided into four sections; personal, street, vehicle and movement records continually updated and allowing instant access, via battalion HQs, by army patrols. (The fiercely loyalist UDR is now also able to utilise this system). The RUC is also in-

creasingly being trained in computer surveillance techniques, using its powers under the Official Secrets Act to obtain information on the Catholic population from social services data.

NORMALITY?

If, as Mason argues, "normality is returning to Northern Ireland" and the Republican movement is a "handful of common criminals" isolated from the community, why is such an extensive surveillance system required? Our army officer supplies the answer:

"Ultimately these Catholic areas could only be governed by the British by the methods, however modified, that all occupying nations use to hold down all occupied territories."

Each and every non-unionist is now regarded as an actual or potential enemy of the state and is treated as such. The permanent suspension of civil liberties that such a system requires should no longer be tolerated by the British labour movement.

Tony Benn, concerned at the possibility of such surveillance must be confronted by the *actuality* of it in the six counties. If he was prepared to absent himself from Parliament during the vote on the Bill to increase Unionist MPs he should also be prepared to lead a campaign against the 1984-style computerised repression of the Irish people.

Peter Chalk. Haringey UTOM

