

TROOPS OUT



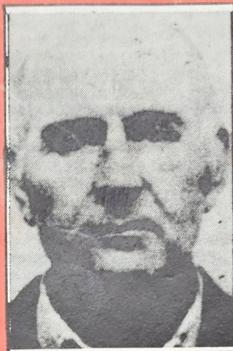
OF IRELAND

Vol. 13 No. 6
April 1990

75P



Patrick Joseph Hill



John Walker

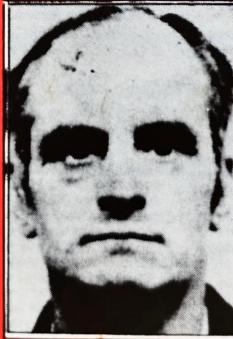


Robert Gerard Hunter

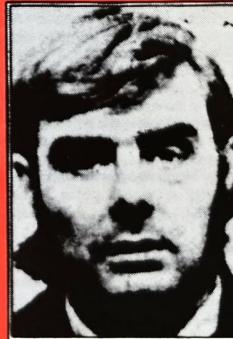
Free the Six Sack the Judges Jail the Police



Noel Richard McIlkenny



Hugh Callaghan



William Power

Inside:

Women and National Liberation, NATO and Neutrality, Irish Lesbians and Gay men Organise, Nicaragua, Gibraltar commemoration

TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT

The Troops Out Movement is a movement in England, Scotland and Wales made up of people who believe that the cause of the 'troubles' in the north of Ireland is the continuing British presence there, both military and political. We believe that British troops are in Ireland not as a peace keeping force, but in order to maintain British rule, and that their presence is the most serious obstacle to any progress towards peace. Ever since 1969 the troops have been occupying a part of Ireland, coercing and oppressing the nationalist people, maintaining the division of Ireland and ensuring that its people cannot unite to determine their own future.

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

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

PRICE INCREASE

Unfortunately we have to increase the price of the paper. We are sorry about this, but despite huge amounts of voluntary work from all concerned, production costs are increasing all the time and the paper now has a considerable debt.

(All donations welcome!)

JOINING TROOPS OUT

If you would like to join the Troops Out Movement in campaigning for a British withdrawal from Ireland you can do so in a number of ways.

- ★ Join a local branch and get involved in activities in your area.
- ★ Become a national member of Troops Out and we will keep you posted of developments, send you our discussion bulletins and inform you about national events. You will also automatically get a sub to 'Troops Out'.
- ★ If there is no local branch near you we can help you form one. We can provide videos, speakers, leaflets and advice about booking rooms etc.

National membership is £16, unwaged £12 (includes paper sub) or £2 (no paper).

'TROOPS OUT' SUBSCRIPTION



Why worry where your next copy of Troops Out is coming from when you can have it delivered to your door. A Troops Out subscription will ensure that every month you receive the news and analysis of Britains war in Ireland.

If you know anyone who is having difficulty getting a copy of Troops Out why not suggest they take a subscription as well.

The rate for 10 issues is £10 If you would like to further support the struggle against misinformation on Ireland you can take out a 'supporters subscription' at a rate of £15 £20 or ?

Name:

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Troops Out is now available on tape for people with sight disabilities. For further details write to P.O. Box 817, Camp Hill, Birmingham B11 4AF. or telephone: 021 773 8683/021 551 3166

Troops Out Paper

Troops Out is produced by a collective drawn from branches of the Troops Out Movement in London

Readers' views, articles and letters are always welcome (although we can't guarantee to publish everything that comes in).

All correspondence for Troops Out (the paper) and for the Troops Out Movement should be sent to:

PO Box 353
London, NW5 4NH

Copy for the February issue should reach us no later than Wednesday the 18th April.

Typeset by UNIDELL LTD. (TU) 01-241 2259
printed by BLACKROSE PRESS 01-251 3042

TROOPS OUT

OF IRELAND



Free them now

Recent events surrounding the Birmingham Six have shown the government to be involved in a sordid game of cat and mouse with the prisoners, giving them all sorts of hints that their innocence is acknowledged but refusing to release them.

First came the decision to down-grade the six from the high security Category A status usually associated with IRA prisoners, to the lesser Category B status.

This was followed by the decision to allow two of the prisoners to speak out on television about their case. This, despite the fact that prisoners in general are rarely allowed access to the media, and the IRA are specifically barred from the airwaves by the broadcasting ban. Yet Hugh Callaghan and John Walker, held by the courts to be responsible for the IRA bombing of Birmingham, were broadcast on the 6 o'clock and 9 o'clock News and Newsnight, saying that they would never accept parole for a crime they did not commit. The decision to allow this broadcast must have been taken with Home Office approval.

Then came the news that the Home Secretary has instructed the Devon and Cornwall police to carry out further inquiries into aspects of the case after the submission of yet more new evidence.

All these moves are prompted by the fact that it is becoming ever more widely known in government circles that the convictions are unsustainable. Instead of releasing the victims of the injustice the government is more concerned to massage public opinion and figure out a way of saving the reputations of those involved in the frame up.

International Women's Day delegation

This year over 60 women travelled to Belfast and Derry from England on a delegation organised by 'Women and Ireland' to celebrate International Women's Day and to join in solidarity action with women from the nationalist community. The delegation is hosted by Sinn Fein and delegates stay with families from the nationalist community.

The weekend consists of workshops, visits to prisoners and community organisations and culminates in taking part in the annual picket in support of women POWs at Maghaberry jail. Women came from a variety of backgrounds, a number sponsored by Trade Unions, etc. The aim of the delegation was for the women to show solidarity, bring back information, stimulate discussion and debate and mobilise support for British withdrawal.

In the workshops on censorship Lily Fitzimmons, a Sinn Fein councillor, talked of the British Government's overall strategy of marginalising republicans and closing off debate. She also described measures taken to counter this accelerating disinformation such as the production of the West Belfast Bulletin which is distributed to every house.

As a councillor she spoke of the difficulties of getting issues that affect women on the agenda. She is particularly interested in facilities for children, which have historically been very poor in nationalist areas, but her proposals are opposed simply because they are in nationalist areas and because she is a Sinn Fein councillor.

In a workshop on raids, a Derry councillor, Pauline Kennedy, gave detailed information on tactics used in house raids. A recent tactic is sketches being made of the inside of houses (particularly bedrooms) during raids. Given the well documented evidence of leaks by RUC to loyalist gunmen this is obviously very worrying. A man had recently been shot dead three months after his bedroom had been sketched during a raid. The gunmen knew exactly where he was sleeping. In February of this year there have been hundreds of house raids in the Twinbrook/Poleglass area and these were continuing.

For me one of the most informative workshops was that on POWs (of whom there are 800 in the six counties). A range of campaigns aimed to raise issues around prisoners such as those serving indeterminate sentences and the Review Board system, which determines parole, based on unseen reports, no objective criteria and composed largely of people with loyalist sympathies. They also campaign for prisoners to be transferred near to their families. More recently a policy of forced integration is being pursued in Crumlin Road jail. Again in the context of the Stevens Inquiry, prison officers can leave visiting cards with detailed information on families for loyalists to pick up.

Despite censorship of parcels, letters, which is generally worse for female prisoners, appalling conditions and lack of proper association, there is a tremendous amount of self-education which takes place in the prisons and reading material is therefore always welcome. From this workshop it was clear that women were at the forefront of campaigns around prisoners, playing an active and often leading role.

In visits to community groups we went to the local Sinn Fein Advice Centre, staffed by six full-time volunteers who covered a range of work including DHSS and housing problems.

We also spoke to Mairead Keane, from Sinn Fein's women's department about the women's movement both north and south of the border. She felt that there had been attempts to demobilise women through funding voluntary groups and playing groups off against each other, thus diffusing the power of the women's movement.

That week FADA (Forum for a Democratic Alliance) had organised a discussion in Dublin as part of a week of activities to

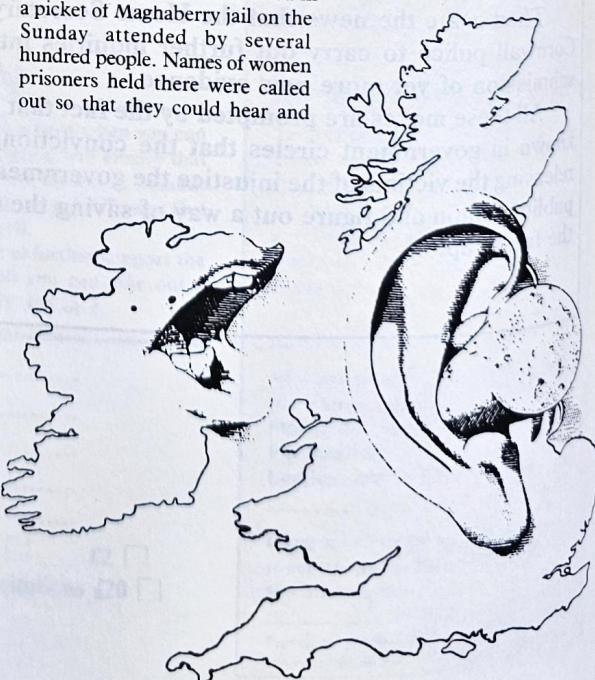
celebrate International Women's Day. The theme was 'that the worm in the heart of the women's movement is partition'. It aimed to address the issue of fragmentation of the women's movement and the need to emphasise how similar issues affected women north and south. Mairead felt that over the last twenty years the women's movement had taken up for example issues such as contraception but not issues to do with the north. She felt that protests in Armagh had forced some women in the 26 counties to take up issues. She saw the role of Sinn Fein's women's department as dual; both to liaise with women's groups outside Sinn Fein, including making international links, but also to promote women's issues within Sinn Fein.

The delegation culminated in a picket of Maghaberry jail on the Sunday attended by several hundred people. Names of women prisoners held there were called out so that they could hear and

solidarity messages from numerous organisations including Trade Unions and women's groups. Also special mention was made of Mairead Farrell who was murdered in Gibraltar a year ago.

In conclusion it is very important for women living in England, if they are genuinely interested in internationalism to find out for themselves what is happening in the north. Witnessing the many and various forms of resistance/struggle dispels the myth that women do not take an active role in the liberation struggle in Ireland. They are involved at all levels of resistance, in all aspects of the struggle. For many, ending partition is a condition for any fundamental change in the social status of women.

Kathleen Egan



Gibraltar killings remembered

A torchlit vigil of Downing St. on Tuesday 6th March marked the third anniversary of the shooting dead of three unarmed Republicans in Gibraltar.

Organised by the Troops Out Movement, the vigil attracted nearly one hundred people. Shouted slogans and placards drew attention to the 'Shoot-to-kill' policy that resulted in the deaths of Mairead Farrell, Sean Savage and Danny McCann at the hands of the SAS. The picket ended with a torchlit procession to a public meeting in the nearby Conway Hall.

The meeting was addressed by author and barrister, Tony Jennings, who spoke forcefully on the routine abuse of civil rights by the security forces in the north of Ireland. He highlighted the 'Shoot-to-kill' policy as merely the logical extension of succession of abuses determined by the sectarian nature of the northern state. The 'provinces' police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), bore as much resemblance

to the British 'bobby' image, as Rambo did to Ghandi, he said.

Mary Mason, for the Troops Out Movement, explained how British rule in Ireland had always relied on violence for its existence. The 'Shoot-to-kill' policy like the recently revealed collusion between 'security forces' and loyalist paramilitaries, was not an aberration, she pointed out, but part and parcel of a continuing war to deny the Irish people as a whole the means to determine their own future.

Eleanor McKerr, who's husband Gervais was killed by an RUC hit squad in 1982 sent a letter of support to the meeting. In it she described her long fight for a meaningful inquest into her husband's death, and the obstructions that had been put in her way. She told how eventually her solicitor, Pat Finucane, was

successful in establishing, by appeal, the principle that her husband's killers should appear at the inquest to face cross examination. It was only after a matter of days after this important victory that Finucane was shot dead by loyalist assassins, acting on the words of Junior Home Office minister, Douglas Hogg that "certain solicitors are unduly sympathetic to the IRA."

Several days after the meeting came the news that the decision Eleanor McKerr and Pat Finucane fought so hard for had been overturned in the House of Lords. Anticipating the decision, Eleanor McKerr ended her letter by saying that she was preparing to take the issue to the European Court.

The meeting ended with a final reminder of the events in Gibraltar by showing the award winning documentary, "Death on the Rock."



Eleanor McKerr

PACEMAKER

Mairead Farrell

A women's vigil to commemorate the death of Mairead Farrell, was held on Waterloo Bridge on Thursday, March 9th. The vigil is organised by the London Women & Ireland Group and was held in the same spot last year. Women from a broad range of groups in London working on issues related to Ireland attended.

A banner "We Remember Mairead Farrell - Murdered in Gibraltar by SAS" was held during the torchlit event. Over twenty women and children attended, including in the later stages, Teresa Smalley of the Guildford 4 Campaign.

After an hour of peaceful picketing, two men approached the vigil and began to take photographs of the women present. They then tried to stand beside the vigil banner, handing out leaflets and attempting to sell copies of 'the Flag' - the paper of the National Front. Unwilling to accept this form of intimidation, the women asked them to move on - the fascists replied that it was "a free country and they could picket where they liked". During the argument that ensued the two men began to barge the women

present, and then pushed one woman onto the road. The women responded to this and forced the fascists to move off within five minutes. Punches and kicks were exchanged but none of the women were injured in any serious way.

The two male attackers called the women "IRA scum" and told them to "go back to southern Ireland". One of them identified himself as "Paul Nash".

This event highlights the cowardice of the fascists, who chose to attack a women's vigil rather than say the Troops Out Movement vigil on Tuesday 6th. The fact that they were forced to leave, and the picket resumed within five minutes of their arrival, should teach them never to assume a women's event is 'fair game' again.



States of Emergency

As pressure grows on the South African government to lift the state of emergency imposed in 1985, it is worth considering that the state of Northern Ireland has never existed without one.

On Monday 12th March Parliament renewed the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act (EPA). This draconian piece of legislation was rubber stamped with hardly a murmur of protest for yet another year. Labour's spokesperson for Northern Ireland, Kevin McNamara, dug deep into the principles of his Party and managed to express some 'reservations' about maintaining a power to detain individuals indefinitely without arresting them for anything, but the Act as a whole was passed with a government majority of 90.

Special Powers

Emergency legislation has a long pedigree in Ireland. The current EPA, first introduced in 1973, is based on the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act (SPA) of 1922. With this Act the northern Unionist regime equipped itself with the legal framework for maintaining their position over the newly created nationalist minority. The SPA provided for a number of specific offences; whipping for firearms offences in addition to the normal sentence for example, but it also included a couple of more general clauses, just in case something unexpected cropped up. Section 1(3) reads: "The Minister for Home Affairs shall have the power to make regulations, - (a) for making further provision for the preservation of the peace and maintenance of order, and (b) for varying or revoking any provision

of the regulations." A useful enough clause for a dictator, but even more remarkable is Section 2(4), which reads: "If any person does any act of such a nature as to be calculated to be prejudicial to the preservation of the peace or maintenance of order in Northern Ireland and not specifically provided for in the regulations, he shall be deemed to be guilty of an offence against the regulations." It could be to this that the former S.African Premier, John Vorster, was referring when he stated that he would gladly exchange all of S.Africa's emergency legislation for one clause of the Special Powers Act.

Emergency Powers

The popular mobilisation of the Civil Rights movement and the armed struggle of the Republican movement eventually forced the suspension of the body responsible for the SPA, the Unionist Parliament at Stormont, in 1972. Direct rule was then imposed from Westminster and nationalist hopes were high that the powers provided for in the SPA would be gone for good.

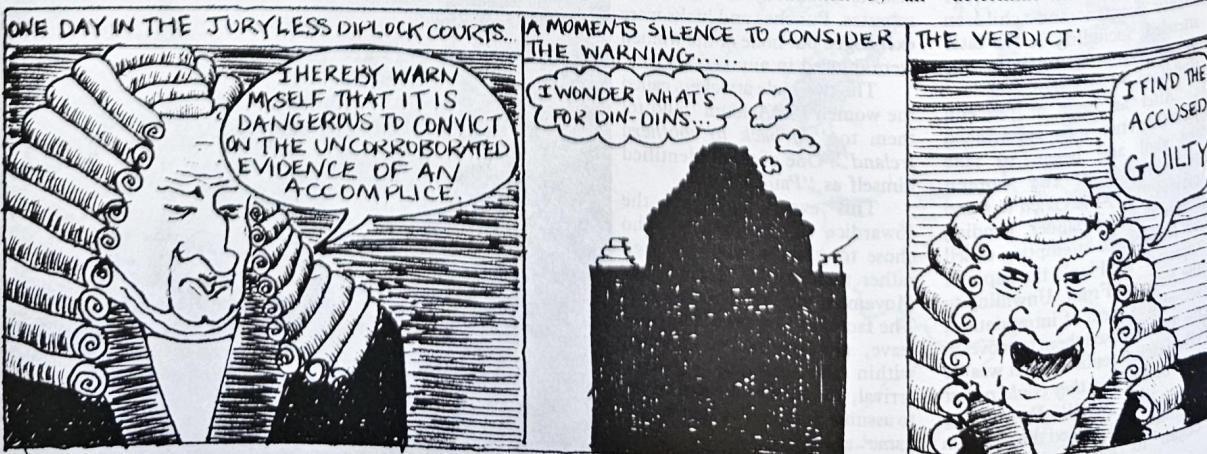
However in 1973 the Emergency Powers Act was drawn up and passed in Westminster, to have effect only in the north of Ireland. There is the kind of similarity between the two acts as there is between Windscale and Sellafield. Some of the most blatant excesses of the SPA were done away with, but the process of repression was refined to meet new circumstances. The power to



intern without trial was retained and the system of Jury-less 'Diplock' courts was instituted. Changes were made to allow for extended periods of detention of suspects and confessions could be accepted in court even if they had been obtained with the use of, or threat of, force. Once in court a person is tried and sentenced by a single judge, sitting without a jury. The process of arrest, detention and trial under the EPA became known as the 'Conveyor Belt'. Allegations of torture in the specially built interrogation centre were confirmed by Amnesty International and then by an

official government report, commissioned after police doctors publicly acknowledged mistreatment.

Emergency legislation is supposed to be short-lived. For both the South African and Northern Ireland states it is permanent because each state was established to secure the position of one community over another. In the north of Ireland this position is maintained by British legislation and the Army. It will come to an end only when Britain leaves Ireland and allows the Irish people as a whole to determine their future.



Letters

Dear Troops Out

We are writing to show our concern at the decision taken at the Labour Ctee on Ireland Annual General Meeting to ratify the decision of the L.C.I. National Ctee not to support the Bloody Sunday commemoration.

The decision, highly controversial within the L.C.I., marks a serious increase of sectarianism within the withdrawal movement. The leadership of the L.C.I. justified their sectarianism by claims which included statements that the Bloody Sunday demonstration was "merely a Republican parade" and that this years demonstration was "the smallest in recent years". Any honest person who

was present on January 27th knows the truth behind such malicious lies.

We believe that it is vital for all groups within the withdrawal movement to work together in action and avoid the trap of petty sectarianism. The leadership of the L.C.I. should break from their sectarian course and join together with other progressive groups to build the Bloody Sunday commemoration as what it was, is and should be: a broad based demonstration for British withdrawal from Ireland.

Comradely,
NORTH WEST LONDON L.C.I.

camden & islington TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT

BENEFIT

with THE JACKET POTATOES Irish traditional session



SATURDAY 7th APRIL 8.00pm 'TIL LATE

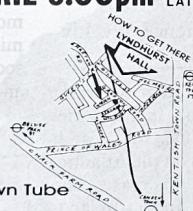
AT

CAMDEN WORKERS
SOCIAL CLUB
LYNDHURST HALL

WARDEN ROAD,
LONDON NW5. — Kentish Town Tube

Cheap bar, food, stalls, raffle

Entrance: £3.50, £2.00 concessions



London T.O.M. Educationals

A programme of educational discussions organised by London Branches of the Troops Out Movement was launched on the 14th March with a meeting on 'Nationalism and Internationalism: Arguments for Self-Determination'. The introductory talk emphasised the affinity between an internationalist outlook and the nationalist aspirations of oppressed countries in their common opposition to unequal and dominating relations between nations, in favour of national self-determination.

Attention was given to the responsibilities of people in Britain and in particular the importance of recognising the right of the Irish people to self-

determination including the right to determine their own methods of struggle.

In the wide ranging and open discussion which followed several speakers addressed the roles of the British and Irish working classes in the struggle to end British domination. Others compared the struggles for self-determination in Ireland and South Africa and highlighted the role of media censorship and distortion.

Future meetings will be on the second Wednesday of each month at 7.30 pm in Conway Hall, Red Lion Square. April's discussion will be on Prison Struggles'. Further details are available from the TOM office.

□

Belfast Comment

If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution" I've always loved that quote from Emma Goldman. I would also apply it to singing. In any revolutionary struggle, songs written by the 'ordinary' people involved in that struggle can play a vitally important role. They are a means of enabling people to tell their own stories of oppression and struggle.

You can imagine so, that I was delighted the other day to pick up an interesting songbook called 'Belfast City of Song'. The book was put together by Maurice Leyden. It has an accompanying tape on which a number of the songs in the book are performed. Both the book and the tape are well produced, pleasant both on the eye and the ear, and contain an interesting selection of songs about Belfast and its people.

The book however does not contain songs about Belfast of the 1990's. It deals with the Belfast of yesteryear, from about the beginning of the last century when people flooded into the small town on the River Lagan and transformed it into an industrial city. It contains songs dealing with the growth of the cotton and linen industries, the shipbuilding industry and the port. Songs about how the expanding city tackled the transport problems through the introduction of trams and songs about how Belfast became illuminated (should I say enlightened!?) with the introduction of gas lights onto the hitherto darkened streets.

Maurice Leyden provides an interesting and informative background to the songs and describes the world from which they sprang.

In more recent times Maurice has been collaborating with singer and songwriter Jane Cassidy in writing and presenting some excellent thematic musical shows combining songs, music, poetry, and local historical material. Among the most memorable of these was a review of the life of Mary Anne McCracken, a dynamic 18th century Belfast radical and reformer and sister of the executed leader Henry Joy McCracken. The review skillfully used music from the

Bunting collection of Irish music collected in Belfast at the last harpers festival in 1794. Given that Mary Anne was herself involved in helping Bunting get the collection together, the choice of this music made a particularly appropriate backdrop to a presentation of her life.

As I read and hummed my way through the book it struck me that 'Belfast City of Song'. Is a very appropriate description of Belfast. It might not be one that strangers to the city would think of applying to it. Its not the image that I would assume first jumps to the mind of the average 'non-Belfast' when Belfast is mentioned. But any night of the week in almost any part of the town you can hear musicians and singers plying their trade with energy and skill. Of course this might equally apply to many other cities. But in most other cities, I would hazard a bet, that the percentage of music being played which is indigenous to the local area, which is written or composed by local people and which records and commemorates local events, many of them quite recent events, would be much much smaller.

In this part of the world that basic essence of what folk music is about is still very much alive. 'Ordinary' people still use the medium of music and song to express their grievances to make a point, to carry a message. Not unnaturally, the struggle in the north of Ireland has resulted in the production of a plethora of songs, some of them of very high standard, and very many of them written by 'ordinary' folk whose names are unknown outside of their own immediate circle. In future song books they will be the songs attributed to 'anon'.

Unfortunately I suspect that it will probably be in a fairly distant future that that song book will be written. For so long as the songs that the people sing still have a relevance and a political potency, they will find it very difficult to find their way into print.

Maurice Leyden has produced a fine piece of work with his 'Belfast City of Song'. But I feel that there is another Belfast City of Song still to be put into print.

Ireland - Neutrality or

The struggles in Eastern Europe seem likely to permanently reset the political agenda for the whole of Europe. With the European Community (EC) promising 'full integration' of all member states by 1992 there are clearly implications for the status of the Six Counties. In this article David Moss, an independent researcher examines some of the issues and scenarios that might develop.

The political ferment in Eastern Europe and the apparent impending disintegration of the Warsaw Pact has called into question the *raison d'être* of NATO. It has also placed discussions about an European Community agreement on security in a different perspective. Last December the EC parliament called for the development of a "common foreign and security policy" on the "institutional basis" formed by the Single European Act. Patrick Cooney (MEP, Leinster) stated that: "He felt the time was ripe for Ireland to re-assess its own attitude and play a full part in European security." He even went so far as to suggest that Ireland use its presidency of the EC to initiate a debate on this matter. (*Euro Parliament News*, 11-15 Dec 1989) Garrett FitzGerald has also described Irish neutrality as "irrelevant" in the light of changing East-West relations and also expressed a belief that closer economic and monetary union after 1992 must lead to closer defence cooperation in the EC. (*Irish Times* 15 Jan 1990). Clearly there is a growing desire amongst members of the Irish political establishment to ditch what remains of the country's neutrality.

Some member states of the EC envisage a European defence treaty as possibly being a counterbalance to the United States domination in NATO, allowing for accommodation with Eastern European countries and even for the participation of a united Germany. However NATO still remains and, despite proposed troop reductions, the US is still the dominant power, and will remain so for the foreseeable future. Consequently an EC defence agreement would just be NATO under another name.

Evolution

In 1984 *NATO Review* included an article, "Irish Neutrality - a Policy in Course of Evolution?" which examined the attitude of successive Irish governments to NATO and concluded that Ireland's involvement in the EC provided the pressure to draw the country into the orbit of the alliance. Referring to rumours of some deal involving a "trade off" of Irish neutrality for a British surrender of the Six Counties the author added, "NATO might yet gain an extra member - that however is for the future"

"The Irish army is largely orientated towards the internal security role, but while the Republic could offer valuable base facilities as its contribution to either a NATO or an EEC based alliance, it would require extensive external assistance to equip these to a useful level."

Janes Defence Weekly

NATO's interest in Ireland arises from the island's strategic importance in facing the Western approaches to Europe. Radar and communications installations on the Atlantic coast would substantially increase the protection of Europe's flank. In fact Ireland is already integrated into the microwave communications link which can route intelligence messages from the RAF base at Bishopton in County Down to Holyhead via Dublin. (Frank Doherty, 'NATO requirements in Ireland' in 'War and Order' C.Bledowska (ed) Junction Books 1983)

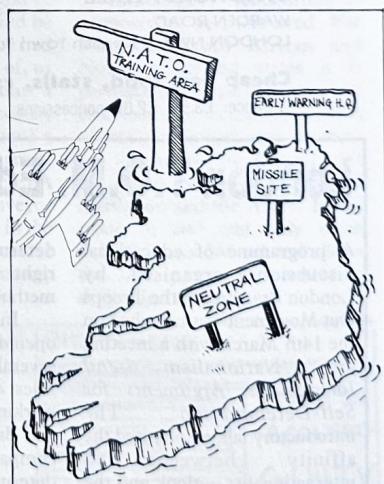
Because of its vital position on the Atlantic "Airbridge" between the US and Europe, Ireland could also play an important role in the logistics of a NATO campaign in Europe. Indeed the US already includes Shannon airport in its Rapid Reinforcement Plan in the event of war when it would be used to bring in troops and equipment and also act as a refuelling base. An indication of the importance of Shannon to the Pentagon strategists was given when the US complained that Aeroflot flights over the Atlantic, made possible by the facilities granted at Shannon, were being used for spying purposes (New Statesman 9 Sep 1983). Probably the most graphic portrayal of NATO designs on Ireland is given by General Sir John Hackett in his John Le Carre style scenario. "The Third World War - the untold story", "As to Eire, it was ideally placed to command the Western approaches to the Channel and to strengthen the defence of shipping in the

Eastern Atlantic... advantage could be taken... to make operational use of Shannon immediately war broke out. Plans were made, also to include the whole of Ireland and its territorial waters in the 'extended air-sea defence zone...'"

Internal security

These strategic considerations would be as relevant to any EC military strategy to which Ireland was party, with the Irish armed forces being expected to play a more active role. Speculating about possible Irish entry into NATO, *Janes Defence Weekly* (8 Nov 1986), a journal well informed on thinking in NATO and armament industry circles, described the Irish army as being, "largely orientated towards the internal security role," and concluded that,

"It is apparent that while the Republic could offer valuable base facilities and a limited number of well-trained and experienced military personnel, as its contribution to either NATO or an EEC-based alliance, it would require extensive external assistance to equip these to a useful level." In other words a lot of EC or US money would be poured in to increase the militarisation of the Irish economy and society. (See also "Troops Out", Jun. 1984 and Oct. 86 and Feb. 87)



Some future UK government might find that increased European integration gives it an excuse to disentangle itself from Ireland.

Nato



Despite the Intermediate Nuclear Force (INF) treaty and proposals to cut conventional forces, the armies of NATO and the Warsaw Pact still possess the power to destroy Europe several times over. The political crisis of the Eastern bloc reveals the supreme fallacy of the NATO strategists, which deceived the people of Europe into believing that the red hordes were poised to over-run the continent. Although the Warsaw Pact never had the will or the capacity to launch a war of aggression, its supposed superiority in weapons and manpower has been used to justify the production of ever new and more terrible weapons. Although it is now talking of reducing its troop levels in Europe, the US is also considering updating its nuclear arsenal including short-range surface-to-surface and air-to-surface nuclear missiles which are still to be based in Europe. Even with the proposed 2.6% defence cuts, the US military budget for 1991 will be over \$292 billion. The Pentagon is still set on

increasing the US first-strike capability under its "Star Wars" (SDI) shield. This does not indicate a commitment to make the world a safer place!

Neutrality

In this context the abandonment of Irish neutrality would mean not a contribution to peace and European security but the loss of an immense opportunity for a small, neutral, non aligned nation to help shape the future of a demilitarized Europe. In the debate in the EC parliament Neil Blaney, (MEP Connaught/Ulster) pointed the way forward. *"military cooperation was incompatible with Irish neutrality and he rejected the arguments that changes in the East should be a catalyst for increasing the Community's role in defence. Europe should aim at disarmament and be free from military confrontation."* Clearly however, any talk about Irish neutrality is meaningless as long as British

troops remain on what is, constitutionally, Irish soil. The problem which has historically prevented Ireland from joining NATO also remains as an obstacle to a European agreement. How can a country enter into a military alliance involving a foreign power which is in occupation of part of its territory? Some would argue that the Anglo-Irish Agreement already gives tacit recognition to British sovereignty in the Six Counties. Full recognition under the terms of some EC agreement would provide a convenient and logical solution. Conversely it is also possible that some future UK government might find that increased European integration gives it an excuse to disentangle itself from Ireland in the name of European, if not of Irish, unity, possibly with the backing of EC money and even a European security force. Either way, the the British occupation of the Six Counties could become an important bargaining counter in moves towards closer European integration.

Irish women and national

On International Women's Day Women in The Troops Out Movement spoke with Bairbre De Brun from the cultural department of Sinn Fein.



Q. Could you tell us something about how women in the six counties have taken the initiative over the last 20 years?

A. The whole civil rights movement actually came out of women's demands for the right to proper housing and proper opportunities. It all actually started in a squat where a young pregnant woman who'd come back from England decided to apply for a council home. Because of the electoral laws and the gerrymandering prior to the 1970's, unionist controlled councils didn't give homes to anyone who wasn't going to vote unionist. It was women who challenged that, although obviously the men came in behind those demands.

Some of the most active women will tell you that they started out being involved in community groups fighting over housing, over playgrounds, very basic rights. In all of the six counties, when women started taking initiatives over these basic demands they began to see they had other demands. They began to see themselves as organisers with the ability to go out and fight around the whole question of British Rule in Ireland and the whole way women are treated in society. Women started with issues that most affected them personally and from there moved on both politically and in terms of their own self confidence.

That brought about in many ways a revolution in attitudes and the initiative where people are no longer just demanding very basic rights, they have a very clear view of the way they want to run their own society.



Q. We often come across women who say that the struggle in the six counties is a men's war which doesn't involve women. How would you respond to this argument?

A. I think that given that the struggle in the six counties grew out of people's demands for freedom and dignity that belies the whole point. I think that many of the organisations that you had, traditionally reflected male attitudes in the wider society. I think it would be wrong for people to see the struggle as a men's war for two reasons: If women are ever going to get change in Irish society then it needs a very radical change, and the motor for that change is the struggle for Irish

liberation and therefore that struggle is a women's struggle as well as a man's struggle.

The second reason is, if the partition of Ireland is to continue, partition as Connolly predicted has created a 'carnival of reaction' in both states. The very maintenance of any conservative states demands the repression of any groups that demand radical change because those conservative states need to keep things as they are. Therefore those states must repress women because women, to take their place in society demand radical change. Piecemeal change is not enough and women's demands are some of the demands that will automatically go to the wall if partition continues. While there is no absolute guarantee for women that if they play their part in the liberation struggle that will automatically lead to the liberation of women; what is an absolute guarantee is if the present struggle is defeated then it will leave practically no room in terms of morale and in terms of political movement for any kind of radical change. Women cannot possibly gain from that situation. So the struggle for British Withdrawal is the motive for radical change in which women can make those demands. Lastly I would say that it is an Irish liberation struggle. 50% of the Irish population are women and therefore it cannot be a man's war. Irish women cannot be asked to separate that part of them that is Irish from that part of them that is a woman any more than black women in England can take on a women's issue that doesn't take on board the fact that they are black. You can't ask people to work to somebody else's agenda so I think it would be terribly, terribly unfair to criticise women who take part in that struggle or to suggest that they are not fighting for women's liberation.

Q. In the context of the national struggle are there issues specific to women? How can these or are these being addressed?

A. All aspects of the struggle have a particular relevance to women. The whole struggle in the cultural arena to win back control of Irish culture and history, control of your language, control of your whole means and methods of expression. While you're winning back the history of Ireland you're not just winning back the male history of Ireland.

You often see an image of Irish history of resistance to British rule as a male resistance which it wasn't and if it had been it wouldn't have survived.

Women have been a part of the struggle on every single level. The women in those communities in which the struggle is based must be supportive, must be active and must be involved otherwise the struggle wouldn't

liberation



have lasted this amount of time. The same is true throughout Irish history. We have to take control of the images, the vision of our history and ensure that women are in there.

There are aspects of the abuses of human rights in Ireland that specifically effect women, ie sexual harrassment by the RUC and British army; sexual harrassment of women in interrogation centres and now more frequently during raids in their homes and in the streets. The issue of strip searching is not only a way of breaking the spirit of Republican prisoners, but also of intimidating women as a threat and a warning to them not to become involved in any aspect of resistance to British rule.

Also indirectly the issues that effect women, the way in which women see the whole of their society being threatened, their whole safety and chances of survival within that society, ie the whole question of the shoot to kill policy the use of plastic bullets, the intense surveillance, the fact of what happens to people in areas like West Belfast, South Armagh etc. People in those areas do not count, they have no right to expect the basic human decencies that people in other areas have the right to expect. That particularly affects women in a very personal way. Then there's the whole question of prisoners, I think very often that while people understand the plight of women republican prisoners the forgotten women are the relatives of long term Republican prisoners particularly the families who have to travel to England.

Very specifically I see the mothers of Republican prisoners who are already

struggling to make ends meet in a community where there's less and less money having to try to find money to provide them with some of the basic necessities like clothing and footwear.

You've got women trying to cope with that while watching their families and their neighbours being denigrated (for example a British soldier who's convicted of murder being released after 2½ years and being allowed to serve in the British army again).

I think that the ability of women to keep their spirits up and retain their humanity and dignity is enormous and its something that shouldn't be forgotten. In a society that's been robbed of any kind of economic or social power the bargaining counters are very few. One of the only ways for women to put forward demands is to take to the streets and make themselves visible.

Q. In Britain the state uses male images in order to portray the Irish struggle as isolated from the community - do you see videos like *Mother Ireland* and books like *Women in the War Zone* as important in countering that?

A. I think its very important and certainly one of the things we have campaigned on is the whole question of posters, songs and murals. You had the quite famous wall mural in Belfast which ended up on many cards and posters, which linked women's struggle in Ireland with women's struggle in other countries. It is important that people don't

forget the impact of these visual images. People in Ireland know the reality of the situation they can see it, they know whose involved. We tend to forget how important it is that other people see it. I think the whole presentation of what's happening in Ireland is very important and that includes the presentation of what's happening to British people whose government is responsible for the present situation. It is very important for me to break through the image that it is only one group of men fighting another group of men out of some sense of machismo, or that it is a small isolated group of 'terrorists', or that it is in any way a group that is separate from the community.

One of the early posters I thought was brilliant was the one of two women, one elderly and one middle aged and they're posed giving out to this heavily armed British soldier. They're just ordinary people saying "You have no place here, this is my street, this is my community, this is my country." And for that reason things like the *Mother Ireland* video and the book *Women in the War Zone* are very important.

The other thing of course is for young Irish women growing up. Its extremely important for them to see images of themselves taking on responsibilities and organising not only in the areas where resistance is at its highest and they know that women are involved, but also in other areas. Women have been written out of history before. I think its extremely important that we ensure that this does not happen to this phase of the struggle.

In a free state - Irish Lesbians

KIERAN ROSE, Co-Chair of the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network, writes here in a personal capacity about the situation of lesbians and gay men in Ireland.

Irish lesbians and gay men are now entering a critical period. On October 26 1988 the European Court of Human rights decided that our anti-gay laws contravened the European Convention on human rights. This decision was generally welcomed here but the Government has still not introduced legislation to amend or abolish the Victorian laws.

Our law reform demands are clear and simple. We want no distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality in the criminal law; we want single age of consent. We also demand anti-discrimination legislation to cover sexuality, race, ethnicity, age, gender, dis/ability.

To assess our chance of success we need to look at the political, social and economic conditions in Ireland today. Ursula Barry summarizes our situation thus; 'Ireland is a divided nation, not just on lines of sex and class, but we are also politically divided as a result of the partition of the country in 1922. One part of this island is under British Rule. Partition is the central fact of life in this country. It cannot be ignored, it cannot be avoided. No part of the social movement, including the Women's Movement, has been able (despite many attempts) to break free of the effects of partition' (Feminism in Ireland).

Partition has continuously provoked a war situation in this country. The result is that the two states are too fragile to stand the strain of significant social reform. In the Republic, the Catholic Church and State are bound together in a marriage of convenience to maintain a State that has never felt secure. In legislation relating to sexuality, the politicians bow to the teachings of the Catholic Church even if the results are ludicrous and contradictory.

Under the 1985 Family Planning Amendment Act, a person under 18 needs a prescription to get a condom. As a result, the Irish Family Planning Association and Virgin Megastore were recently prosecuted for selling condoms. The charge was dismissed on a technicality. Meanwhile, the Department of Health is urging people to use condoms to prevent the spread of HIV.

In the Republic, the gains made by women in the 1970s in terms of contraception, employment equality, legal status and public attitudes, resulted in a counter-attack from the Right. In 1983 the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) managed to secure an amendment to the Constitution, via a referendum, guaranteeing 'the right to life of the unborn'. SPUC and others of the New Right, the Catholic Church and Fianna Fail (the largest political party) all campaigned for the 'yes' vote.

Abortion information is now illegal but the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) and

others continued to provide such information and were taken to the High Court by SPUC. The case was referred to the European Court of Justice. In the 1986 referendum a proposal to allow divorce was defeated by a similar coalition of right-wing forces. There is a distinction between the Catholic Church with all its paternalism and the more militant New Right as exemplified by SPUC and other groups such as the Responsible Society which have their origins in Britain and the United States. It is likely that these New Right groups will play a leading role in the forthcoming law reform campaign.

Partition was imposed and sustained by unconstitutional force so neither part of Ireland can develop a sound basis of civil liberties. The Irish courts in the 1960s and later, influenced by the United States Supreme Court, did begin to activate the civil liberties inherent in the constitution of the Republic. Faced with the continuing revolt in the north, the threat of destabilisation in the south and the continued progressive demands, the judiciary capitulated. Extradition for politically related offences is now acceptable. Freedom of expression does not include Republicans. Sexual privacy does not include gay men.

Civil liberties in Britain have also been undermined. You now have the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein including Gerry Adams MP and the numerous miscarriages of justice.

Colonial economy

Partition is closely tied into the underdevelopment which characterises our crisis-ridden economy. Real figures of unemployment are over 20 per cent. Forty thousand, or one fifth of all manufacturing workers in the south will emigrate this year. More than 50 per cent of Gay Switchboard volunteers emigrated last year. A third of the

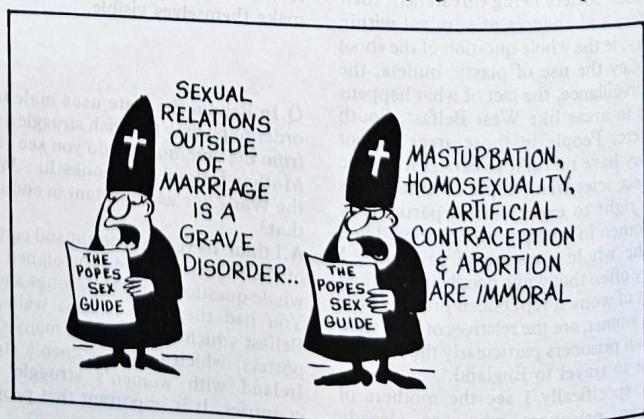
people are living in poverty. A quarter (£5 billion) of the wealth we produce flows out and allow the export of profits. The working class is now facing even more unemployment, poverty and emigration and decimated health and education services to get the country's finances 'in order'. Instead of leading the policies, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in 1987 signed a pact with the Government and business interests. In the June General Election, the combined Left vote did not exceed 16 per cent.

But the struggle continues. Ordinary nationalist people in the six counties for 20 years and more have been in revolt and are still undefeated, despite every imperialist and counter-insurgency effort dreamt of by Kitson. The nationalist people have withstood pogroms, internment, death squads, supergrasses, the Diplock Court, poverty and unemployment, 'psychological operations', the SAS, the Catholic Church, 'the Irish' Government - and still they have not succumbed. The Guildford Four now free after 15 years in jail are determined to campaign for other victims of miscarriages of justice.

Contradictions and support

This then, is the situation within which the lesbian and gay movement must operate. It is a situation very different to that in advanced capitalist countries such as Germany or Britain. There are similarities with the position of lesbian and gay men in Latin American countries but there are marked differences as well, because we are a European country. In any case, for the past 15 years, the lesbian and gay movement has achieved substantial progress.

In 1987 the Irish Congress of Trade Unions launched a radical policy on Lesbian and Gay rights in the Workplace. As a result,



and Gay men organise



the unions concluded an agreement with the Government that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation will not be tolerated' in the Civil Service. This is the same Government that refuses to change the anti-gay laws -another reminder of the contradictions in Irish society. In fact in the south the anti-gay laws are not enforced and police harassment is low. This is in contrast to the north where, despite the 1967-style law reform, harassment, entrapment and convictions of gay men seem to be more frequent.

In November, the Irish Council for Civil Liberties launched a major report entitled 'Equality Now for Lesbians and Gay Men'. It included demands for anti-discrimination legislation and a Human

Rights Commission. Strong support has also come from the Union of Students in Ireland. The semi-official Council for the Status of Women, the statutory Employment Equality Agency, Sinn Fein, the Labour Party, the Workers' Party, the Green Party and others have all made supportive statements.

Off the three centre/centre right parties which dominate the Oireachtas (Parliament), the Progressive Democrats (junior coalition partners) have made encouraging statements, Fine Gael (largest opposition party) have been more coy and Fianna Fail (senior coalition partner) has said nothing. The Government-appointed Law Reform Commission recently made a provisional recommendation that there should be a common age of consent of 17.

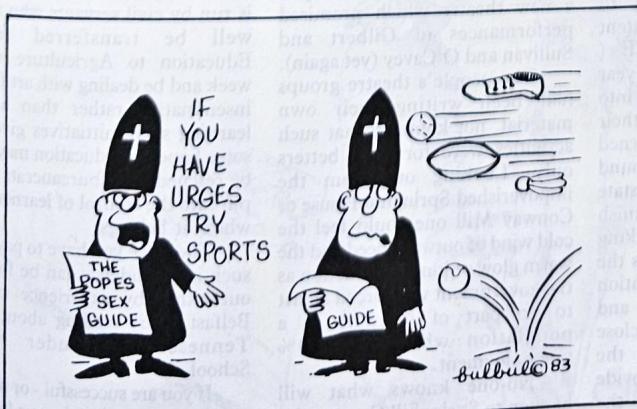
So there are contradictions we can exploit and a great deal of latent support which we could mobilise. To co-ordinate and lead the law reform campaign from a lesbian and gay viewpoint, we have set up the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network, GLEN, now a member of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA). In July we were represented at ILGA's very successful Vienna conference which agreed to take on our law reform campaign as an action and lobbying has already begun.

There have always been close and positive links between the people in Ireland and Britain. During the miners' Strike, support groups throughout the country were set up and tapped into a fund of goodwill. Many unions, such as the TGWU, MSF and the NUJ, organise in both countries. The large Irish community in Britain has many women, gay men and political activists who had to get out of Ireland at different times for different reasons. The Irish community in Britain now has a self-confidence rooted in emigration, imprisonment and repression and has much more to contribute to the community in Ireland. And it was Yorkshire Television, not our self-censoring RTE, which pursued the Guilford Four miscarriage of justice.

But these positive links are tainted by the refusal of the British Government to allow self-determination for the Irish people in Ireland. The British colonial presence can only continue to corrupt both countries and deform relationships between them.

So we are asking you to:

- Work towards a common platform and maximum unity for British withdrawal.
- Oppose the Prevention of Terrorism Act, strip-searching and the use of plastic bullets.
- Support the miscarriages of justice campaign.
- Support our law reform campaign by setting up support groups, lobby the Labour Party, trades unions, Irish organisations or by writing to Ray Burk TD, Minister for Justice, Department of Justice, 72 Stephen's Green, Dublin 2. (Contact GLEN for further information.)
- Continue the dialogue.



Community politics

Des Wilson describes how local people in W. Belfast have sought to improve their quality of life by independent action.

In 1972 a few people rented a house from Belfast City Council and opened it as a community house. There was little on offer in it except small spaces where people could meet and talk.

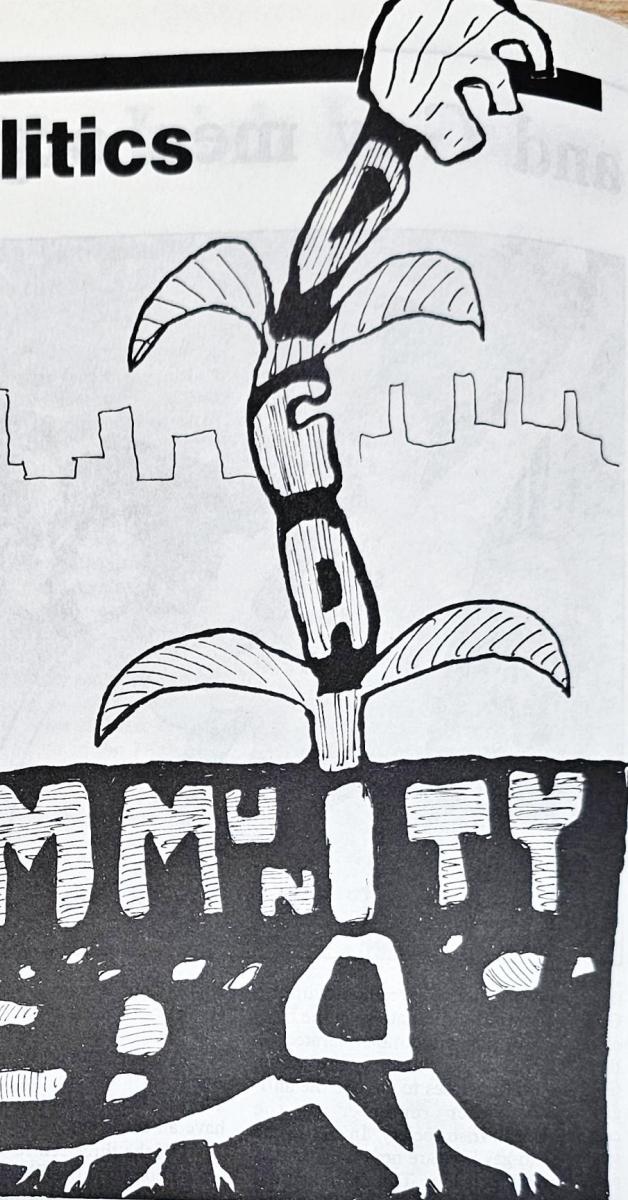
By 1989 the project had, along with the house, four thousand sq. ft. of space in a disused linen mill, fifteen part-time teachers and about 400 students. In an area where government provided neither adequate jobs nor adequate adult education the local people succeeded in providing both.

Four theatre groups, a programme of informal education, courses leading to university entrance; it was a formidable achievement by any standards for people in a poor area like West Belfast. But in Belfast where education and jobs are tightly controlled and parcelled out between state, church, favoured politicians and business people, the project was derided, condemned and attacked.

Ordinary people, it seemed, had no right to do such things.

In ways it was like the experience of the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee (a grim story which should be read by anyone who takes independent learning by non-property owners seriously). Like the Highlander, Springhill in Belfast was verbally attacked by the newspapers, treated like a pariah by the religious, threatened by the troops and in some instances physically attacked by the very people who should have been delighted at it being there at all.

Springhill Community House Ltd. is a registered charity. It attracted the anger of the mighty when it dared say that adult education should be available in people's own houses if that's the way they want it and that it should be free and under the people's own control. When the project joined forces with Conway Mill, an independent job creation project, to create the only site in town in which work, leisure and cultural events could be had together and cheaply, the fat was in the fire. One would have thought that a plague had struck the area instead of just a good idea.



The Department of Economic Development refused money for development and even refused to give the project advice. The Department of Education refused money and probably had no advice to give. Some officials of the Department of Economic Development allowed zeal to overpower them to such an extent that they forbade all ACE (government subsidised one year job scheme) workers to go into the premises even during their time off. If Dickens had returned to life he would have found business as usual as church, state and money contrived to banish 'foolish' notions from working people's heads. However, as the Conway Springhill combination grew, and as government and religious pressure failed to close either of the two projects, the authorities were forced to provide their own version of what the projects were doing. New

workplaces were hastily created with money provided by the state and funnelled through the church. A new College of Further Education was miraculously provided (by money which everyone said was not there) and the church even managed to open a new theatre which promised performances of Gilbert and Sullivan and O'Cavey (yet again).

The people's theatre groups had been writing their own material, not knowing that such activities were for their betters only. Looking out from the impoverished Springhill House or Conway Mill one could feel the cold wind of outward need and the warm glow of inner satisfaction as the government was forced at last to do part of its duty to a population which had 80% unemployment.

No-one knows what will happen to Springhill Community House now, but it is likely that it

will remain in West Belfast for a long time to come. What is certain is that it will make more and more contacts with similar projects elsewhere as people with like ideas of independence reach out to share each other's experiences. In many communities in which education is run by civil servants who may well be transferred from Education to Agriculture next week and be dealing with artificial insemination rather than adult learning such initiatives give us some hope that education may yet be rescued from bureaucrats and put into the control of learners to whom it belongs.

The price you have to pay for such independence can be found out either by experience as in Belfast or by reading about the Tennessee Highlander Folk School.

If you are successful - or likely to be - you may just have a bomb through your window.

co-operating in murder

On Wednesday 7th March a leading republican activist, Sam Marshall, was murdered minutes after leaving an RUC barracks where he had to sign an twice weekly as a condition on bail. The killing happened within 100 yards of the back entrance of Lurgan RUC barracks. Information had almost certainly been passed on by members of the RUC. It is one of the most blatant examples yet of collusion between the 'security forces' and loyalist death squads.

The previous Friday a message had been left at Sam Marshall's home asking him to come to the RUC barracks. There he was told that his name was on a loyalist death list. The RUC said that a leading republican was due to be killed over that weekend. Such threats are normally made to intimidate activists, but this instance shows, more clearly than ever, that the 'security forces' can turn these threats into reality.

Sam Marshall and two others had to sign at the barracks every Wednesday at 7.30pm and every Saturday. Sam was shot at 7.45pm. All three men were subject to intense surveillance and harassment by the RUC. Yet the police would have us believe that they could not impede the assassination in any way.

On the Wednesday of the killing, the men were subject to particular surveillance. They were watched or followed by at least two cars, and noticed that a usually empty police box outside the barracks, this time contained two men in plain clothes. The

three men soon became very worried, but before they could do anything, two men in dark clothing and balaclavas, carrying rifles, jumped from a car which had been following them earlier. The three men ran in different directions, and though the other two escaped, Sam Marshall was shot in the head.

After the killing, members of the RUC displayed outstanding bigotry by trying to disperse the crowd that had gathered by beating people with batons and threatening them with plastic bullet guns.

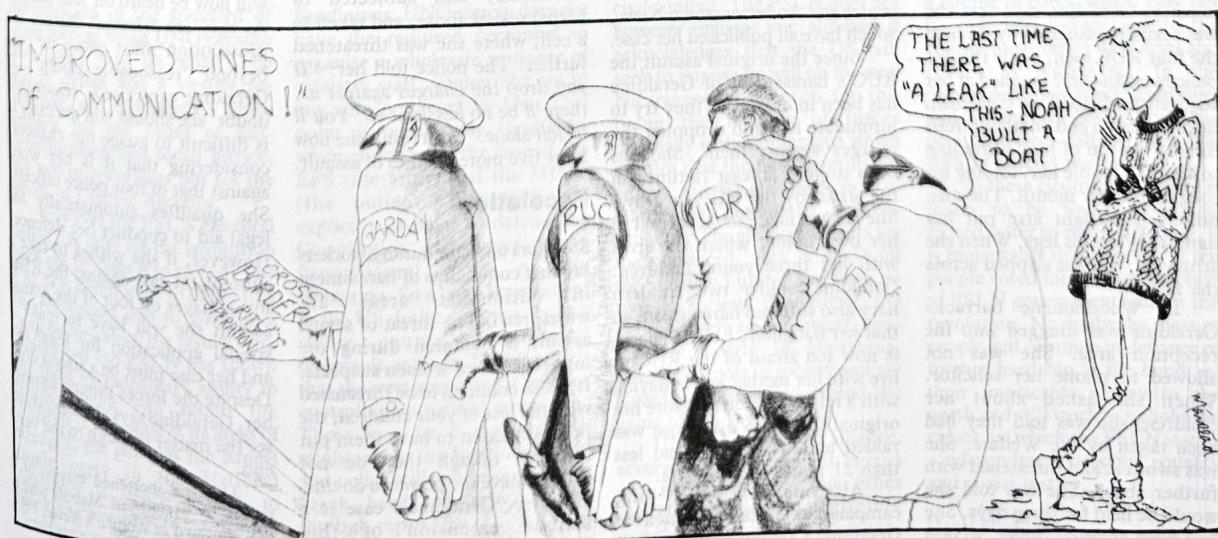
The RUC have tried to cover up their fairly obvious part in the killing. Although they admitted receiving a phone-call giving details of an intended killing by loyalists, they have denied telling Marshall about it, thus trying to show that they do not use such information to threaten nationalists. They also claimed that Sam's movements on Wednesday were 'public knowledge', whereas details were



known only to the three men and the RUC.

The use of unofficial death squads has long been official policy for the British, as for other repressive regimes. They were recommended by British Army theorist Frank Kitson, who pointed out that they are much safer to use than official assassination squads, such as the SAS, since if anything goes wrong

an unofficial squad can easily be disowned. This does not make their use any less deliberate or officially sanctioned. It is therefore particularly important to point out the collusion of the 'security forces' in the murder by loyalists of nationalists and republicans. Potentially deadly information is routinely passed on and dual membership of the RUC/UDR and loyalist groups is extensive.



Sexual assault by RUC

Last summer a nationalist women from Belfast, Geraldine Skillen, was arrested and sexually assaulted by the RUC. Since the assault, she and her family have suffered continuing police harassment. It is a disturbing example of the way in which the security forces are prepared to combine sexual violence with other forms of intimidation of nationalist women. The following article is centred on interviews by Maighread Medbh with Geraldine Skillen in October and November 1989.

Geraldine Skillen lives in Turf Lodge, Belfast. On Friday 9th June 1989 two friends who normally babysit for Geraldine called to arrange babysitting for the following night. She asked them to wait a few minutes with her children while she went to the local shop to buy milk and nappies. She was also to ring a taxi for the couple, who were going into town. They said they would wait. Geraldine should have returned in ten minutes. Instead, she did not arrive home for about three hours.

Coming back from the shop, Geraldine was stopped by several RUC men. They asked her for her name, address and date of birth. When Geraldine answered, they told her that she was giving the wrong information. Two of the policemen then grabbed her arms and forced her into the back of a waiting RUC jeep.

Geraldine was taken to Woodbourne Barracks, the local RUC station, in the back of the jeep. The journey, which takes fifteen minutes by car, seemed "ages" to Geraldine. During the journey, Geraldine says that she was sexually assaulted by three of the four RUC men, while the one policewoman there laughed at her requests for help. Two policemen held her down and another forced himself on top of her, beginning to kiss and fondle her, forcing his tongue into her mouth. The man holding her right arm put her hand between his legs. When she struggled, she was slapped across the face.

In Woodbourne barracks Geraldine was dragged into the reception area. She was not allowed to phone her solicitor. When she asked about her children, she was told they had been taken by the Welfare. She was sworn at and threatened with further abuse. She was told she would be held for three days. She had been arrested under Section

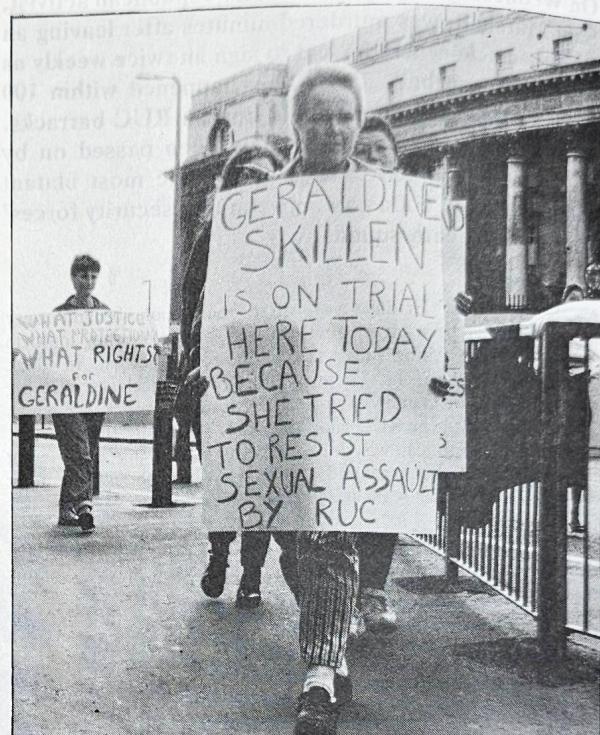
2 of the Criminal Law Act and, therefore, could legally have been held without charge for 48 hours, but she did not know this. After a period of between two and three hours, she was released and informed that there was a taxi outside. When she went out, there was a white car with two men (not RUC as far as she could tell) who shouted at her before driving off. She then had to make her own way home.

Geraldine Charged

Before leaving the barracks, Geraldine was charged with disorderly behaviour and three assaults, that is, assaults on each of three RUC officers. Geraldine explained: *'I had no chance to protect myself from them ones, you know, and when there's two fellows holding me down and one sexually abusing me, what are you supposed to do? I was struggling. And when I struggled, they said I hit them. So that's what they can charge me with.'* When she got home, friends contacted the Falls Women's Centre, Sinn Fein centre and Andersonstown News, which have all publicised her case.

Since the original assault the RUC's harassment of Geraldine has been intensive, as they try to intimidate her into dropping the charges against them. She has been stopped at least 18 times on the street by the RUC or army. She is even made to feel afraid in her own home, where she lives with her three young children. Geraldine's older two children have also suffered harassment, so that her daughter, Lee-Anne (5), is now too afraid of the RUC to live with her mother and is staying with a relative. Shortly before her original trial date the house was raided and damaged by no less than 21 police and soldiers.

All this follows a long campaign of police harassment of Geraldine's family. Her brother,



Martin, was killed by the RUC 13 years ago, and her mother and other brother have been persecuted with taunts about Martin and now about Geraldine's case.

On 31st January Geraldine was assaulted again by the RUC and soldiers. She was threatened with death, 'arrested' and thrown into a jeep, where she was kicked continually and subjected to verbal sexual abuse, and taken to a cell, where she was threatened further. The police told her: *'If you drop the charges against us, there'll be no hassle at all. You'll be left alone.'* As a result she now faces five more charges of assault.

Escalation

Solicitors and community workers say that complaints of harassment in nationalist areas are widespread. The threat of sexual assault is common during the interrogation of women suspects. It is also common to be threatened with the loss of your children; the police threaten to have them put in care, though they do not actually have the power to do this. However, Geraldine's case is a serious extension of this harassment.

Geraldine has made a complaint about her treatment. This will follow a two stage procedure, going first to the Director of Prosecutions and then, if rejected, to the police Complaints Commission. One solicitor I spoke with never saw a successful complaint, among hundreds sent in.

The charges against Geraldine will now be heard on 30th March. As they are criminal charges the prosecution must prove its case beyond 'reasonable doubt'. If Geraldine can raise a 'reasonable doubt' she should win the case. It is difficult to gauge her chances, considering that it is her word against that of four police officers. She qualifies automatically for legal aid to conduct her defence. However, if she wishes to take a subsequent case against the RUC for damages on foot of the sexual assault she will have to make a special application for legal aid and her case must be a strong one. Despite the forces ranged against her, Geraldine says she intends to see the matter through to the very end.

This is a shortened version of a report by Maighread Medbh which first appeared in *Women's News*, February/March 1990.

Nicaragua - election aftermath

On this page Troops Out offers space to Anti-racist/Anti-imperialist campaigns to publicise their views and activities. Campaigns wishing to use this facility should contact Troops Out at the address on page 2. This month the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign looks at the prospects for the Sandinistas.

February, in a speech of great dignity and strength, President Ortega ceded defeat in the second set of fair and free elections ever to be held in Nicaragua. Empowered by a democratisation process set in motion by the Frente Sandinista Liberacion Nacional (FSLN), following the overthrow of the US backed dictator Somoza in 1979, the people of Nicaragua chose to vote a party out of power who had brought them literacy, health, land and indeed elections.

The defeat of the FSLN took everybody by surprise; the press, pollsters and the participant parties alike. Even the US administration was unprepared for the victory of the United National Opposition (UNO), the 13 party coalition that it funded. US military, economic and political interventions in Nicaragua had failed to remove the FSLN from power, but the unrelenting pace of these attacks succeeded in eroding the achievements of the revolution and destroying Nicaragua's economy. The bribe extended by the US through UNO to end the contra war and the economic crisis was accepted by people desperate for peace and a little more rice and beans. After 30,000 deaths and a deterioration in the standard of living, people voted UNO because they could take no more. The FSLN defeat was a victory for violence, and represents a grave setback for the cause of self-determination and social justice, not just in Nicaragua but for the whole of Central America.

However the FSLN electoral defeat has only set the revolution back not brought it to an end. The FSLN is committed to defending the revolution and to governing from below. Since the results were announced the FSLN has shown the most extraordinary ability to bounce back and retain the initiative. Conscious of its areas of strength, the party as the largest single party in the National Assembly is strong enough to block any attempts to reform the Constitution. This is crucial as the



gains of the revolution: land reform, the health and education systems, the nationalisation of the banks, the right to organise and strike are enshrined within the Constitution, and the courts are bound to rule against any attempts by UNO to roll these back.

It is also true that UNO will be dependent on the present structures of government, and will be unable to govern without the professionalism of encumbent Sandinistas. UNO simply does not have the required personnel to organise a wholesale turnover of ministry staff, whose jobs are in any case protected by law. This point is particularly significant when considering the case of the EPS (the army) and the MINT (the police). The EPS are explicitly ordered to defend the Constitution and therefore the fundamental gains of the revolution. So a large impediment to the US desire to bring about a stable, counter-revolutionary bourgeois state in Nicaragua, is that the new government will not control any organs of repression. There may be a new defence minister, but the Sandinista army and police will not be on hand to break heads or retain order through repression.

Nicaragua has never been

closer to peace, nor closer to civil war - its fate is likely to be decided by the US. In a worst case scenario the US may plunge Nicaragua into chaos, seeking to install a client government and to implement a programme of terror and exploitation. According to this perspective, the UNO government will oversee political repression, death squads and economic subjugation, that will result in a protracted and violent civil conflict. The FSLN does not however envisage war, although it acknowledges that the US will seek to impose its will on the new Nicaragua. The reason for this being the balance of forces internally within Nicaragua which require that the new government adopts a gradualist approach to contain a potentially volatile situation. The election winners are inexperienced, lack a sense of direction and unity, and have no roots in society. By contrast, the election losers are the largest, best-organised party in Nicaragua, have deep roots in society and are already organising to defend the gains of the revolution.

UNO is an untested alliance, several of its constituent parties are recent splits from other parties, with negligible membership and structure,

essentially serving as vehicles for individual politicians, held together by anti-Sandinista opportunism and the prospect of US dollars. The latter may have helped forestall fragmentation before the elections: but the balance of power will be tested as UNO builds its political programme. Irrespective of ideological affiliations, other divisions are apparent in the UNO leadership. First, there is the new president, whom few would accuse of having a sense of resolute or purposeful leadership. Although the president is vested with considerable power, much depends on the character of the incumbent. Around her are gathered a small group of apparently pragmatic advisers. With her vice-president, Vigilio Godoy, tensions have long been evident. He represents the most ideologically implacable and revengeful tendency within the leadership. A third group appears to cluster around members of the private sector business organisation COSEP, whose model for economic restructuring looks to El Salvador or Guatemala.

UNO's problems are exacerbated further by its relationship with the contra. So far they remain unresponsive to calls from Violeta Chamorro, the President elect to demobilise. Their aspirations to political power and its material trappings are unlikely to be met with anything but the offer of land and a couple of cows, which may not be sufficient inducement to the contras to lay down their arms and return to Nicaragua. In the meantime contra attacks continue, and threaten the possibility of the president-elect calling upon the EPS to defend the country.

In these circumstances there is much to be fought for, and indeed, after so much suffering, it is remarkable that four out of ten people voted for another six years of FSLN government and for the revolution. No doubt the mass of people will continue in defiance of further hardship at the hands of their implacable enemy to the north and will work to uphold the values for which the FSLN stands - independence, freedom, equality and social justice.

Hazel Plunkett

A WOUNDED CHURCH

Religion, Politics and Justice in Ireland.

Fr. Joseph Mc Veigh:

The Mercier Press, £5.40 Stg.
(Dublin 8 Cork)

Fr. Joseph Mc Veigh, has over the years, documented many incidents of harassment by the Crown Forces and written articles and pamphlets about injustice and violations of human rights in the North of Ireland. This, his latest work was launched in Derry in early August. It presents a highly critical and radical analysis of the Catholic Church in Ireland over the last two centuries, and has much to add on the contemporary situation.

The first part of the book (Chapters 1-3) examines the historical context. The second part (Chapters 4-6) examines the historical relationship of Church and State and the present conflict between the theology of liberation and the proestablishment theology of obedience to the temporal powers. The third part of the work (Chapters 7-9) deals with the urgent question now facing all Catholics in Ireland - posing such questions as 'What kind of Church do Catholics want - a church of the rich and powerful which supports the status quo by refusing to confront the British government's continued interference in Irish affairs - or a church of the Poor and Oppressed which condemns British injustice in Ireland? He poses the question, might not such a church (one which opposed the status quo)

collectively pursuing social justice on behalf of oppressed nationalists, make the peoples' perceived need for the use of armed force irrelevant?

The author argues that the Church has a political role in society, because it is a social organisation. It can either be a supporter of the political and economic status quo which favours the rich and powerful or a challenge to it "which it its unique prophetic role", which it has often lost sight of. Its support for the monarchical form of government, unjust colonial regimes, the emergence of the Irish Free State and even the rise of the fascist Franco are all linked to an emphasis on the Church as solely an institution. Such a viewpoint actually placed the Church on the side of the men of property, and its mission of upholding human rights and assisting the oppressed was abandoned.

Fr. McVeigh's analysis of 'the historical context' throws much light on how traditional theology was instrumental in making the Irish hierarchy agents of social control for British colonial interests at home and abroad.

Such conservatism to-day makes it difficult to believe that the Catholic Church in Ireland was once officially banned under the Penal Laws. These were enacted between 1695 and 1727 and were intended to marginalise Catholics politically, socially and economically.

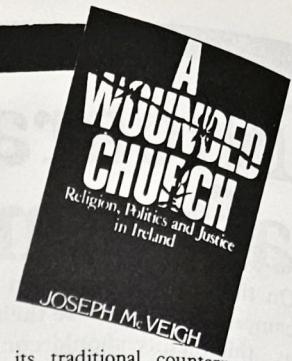
The Penal Laws were part of the British colonial strategy of dividing the Irish nation along religious lines, yet the whole history of the Church's

'respectability', in the eyes of the colonial power, is firmly hinged to 'The Maynooth Factor'. The author takes us along an historic path, filled with pragmatism, which reveals how a once oppressed religion was to become a willing ally in promoting British policies, and repression generally.

Every revolutionary movement which wished to establish self-determination in Ireland, and its leaders met with a slavish opposition from Catholic clerics, who in the main, openly aided the British Crown no matter how intense the oppression mounted against their own flocks. There were a few honourable exceptions, but this minority were often banished to remote regions of the country, sent abroad or suspended or silenced. Those who joined the rebel forces, as in 1798, were slandered in a most foul fashion following their arrest, or capture on the field of battle as shown in Appendix 1 of this book.

This work is long overdue and it will not only demystify what is termed 'liberation theology', which has obtained a bad church press in Ireland, but will also be an intellectual tool in the work of destabilising traditional, conservative theology which has for generations formed part of the chains that enslave the Irish nation. It is a highly readable work, which is as much concerned about our present and future, as with the past, and does not forget to mention the long-suffering peoples of South Africa and Latin America, which gives the book a truly international dimension.

The intellectual superiority of liberation theology contrasts sharply with the barren weeds of



JOSEPH Mc VEIGH

its traditional counterpart. Its tender roots in Ireland will require careful tending if it is to bloom and find populist acclaim. Such an eventuality holds out some hope for the future, as both the new theology, and the people it is intended to serve, struggle for their place in the sun. "A Wounded Church" is a welcome moisture that will aid growth and fuller development in this infant plant. The soil in which it grows however is still cluttered by ancient debris, which can only be removed by mobilising sufficient discerning assistants to tackle the tasks ahead. The obstacles are clearly visible, and the way forward is illuminated by the author:

"The Church authorities fail to accept, or even acknowledge, the direct correlation between justice and reconciliation; that without the former, the latter is impossible. Just as an end to the apartheid system is a prerequisite for peace and reconciliation in the South African situation, so too and end to British interference is an essential prerequisite for peace and reconciliation in Ireland. Reforms, however welcome, cannot achieve this objective if they fall short of eliminating injustice."

Fionnbarra O'Dochartaigh

STILL WAR

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE NORTH OF IRELAND

-MIKE ABRAHAMS & LAURIE SPARHAM

With an introduction by Bernadette McAliskey, edited by Trisha Ziff

BELLEW PUBLISHING, LONDON £13.50 net

Year after year the north of Ireland is invaded by a foreign press, usually on an anniversary, to catch the story and then depart. "Fleeting like butterflies from one trouble spot to another". This coverage, simply cataloguing "the endless stream of mayhem", rarely leads to any greater understanding. Approach anyone in an English bus queue and ask for an opinion on the 'Troubles' and wait for the all too predictable view that "they should be left to get on with it". The coverage in the Press events in the north of Ireland passes on very little in the way of insight. The catalogue continues, leaving you none the wiser but safe in the knowledge that it is continuing, to be continued...

The isolated still news photograph can do little more than provide us with a glimpse into what is happening. Documentary photographs, with their complementary images, should at the very least work towards giving the viewer a greater degree of insight. Often this medium "can seduce us into false emotional and intellectual reactions to complex situations". This last remark is made by Colin Jacobson of 'The Independent', in his forward to this book.

Any freelance or assigned photographer soon finds out how difficult it is to take photographs in somewhere such as Belfast. Unless of course you choose to remain in the

press "pack", or as one West German freelance did last year, bring a suitable selection of "props" in your car boot. Many pictures are left untaken, either through risk to the photographer, or the wish not to compromise or jeopardise the community who remain long after the image maker is gone.

'Still War' addresses this head on, the photographs are the result of many months spent in the communities of Belfast, Derry and Crossmaglen. On consideration, many of the images are stunning simply because we are left to wonder how they were taken at all. Mike Abrahams and Lauri Sparham's work, over a hundred images in all, is laid out with the words from the communities in which they worked.

We are taken from interiors out onto the street, to prison, church, past walls and children to images of guerilla days, out into the night, death, and finally the border. Much of the research was undertaken by Trisha Ziff who worked with Derry Camerawork. She reminds the reader that many of the scenes in the photographs would not be out of place in Manchester, Liverpool or Bradford. "The difference being that these streets are occupied with soldiers and the paraphernalia of war".

'Still War' is comprehensive photojournalism at its best, as good a starting point as any. Save your film and get the book.

Chris Kerridge

one day at a time....

February

12th
Harold McCusker, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) MP for Upper Bann, dies of cancer.

14th
Solicitor Paddy McGrory wins a libel case against Today, the Daily Star and Sunday Express. He had represented the families of the Gibraltar Three at the inquest; the newspapers had implicated him with the IRA.

15th
Official unemployment figures in January for N.Ireland are 100,413 (14.2% of the workforce), an increase from the previous month.

17th
The RUC run riot with plastic bullets against nationalists at a football match between Donegal Celtic and Linfield at the latter's pitch in Belfast.

18th
At a commemoration meeting in Dunloy, Co Antrim, Sinn Fein spokesperson Martin McGuinness asks what the British government's position would be if the IRA ended its armed struggle. The response later in the week: no talks with Sinn Fein "as long as Sinn Fein endorses violence".

19th
N.Ireland Secretary Peter Brooke meets the two unionist leaders, Ian Paisley and James Molyneaux, who lay down their conditions for further talks: a declaration by the two governments that they would consider an alternative to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and a statement of what changes they would be prepared to see; and a suspension of the Anglo-Irish Conference and the secretariat at Mayfield.

Shock horror Panorama programme on BBC TV reveals the sectarian nature of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR). It also shows that the British authorities never seriously considered honouring their promise in the Anglo-Irish Agreement to have UDR patrols accompanied by the RUC.

In the House of Commons the Wallace affair simmers gently, with calls for a full investigation. The Attorney General says no.

New education legislation comes into force in N.Ireland, which includes financial incentives for integrated (mixed Catholic and Protestant) schools.

20th
Peter Brooke meets John Hume, leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), who seeks talks without preconditions and berates the unionist leaders for "playing games".

In Leicester an IRA bomb wrecks an army vehicle and injures two sergeants near the Army Recruitment Office.

21st
Brooke has a meeting with the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Gerry Collins, says that it's early days and there's no easy solution.

A huge surveillance operation by the British Army in S.Armagh involving the squadrons of helicopters and saturation

levels of troops leads to crowd confrontations and arbitrary arrests. All are released without charge.

In London a petition is handed in to the Home Secretary seeking a public inquiry into the disbanded West Midlands serious Crime Squad and the release of the Birmingham Six (who were framed by the squad in 1974).

Meanwhile in Downing Street, Ian Paisley hands in a petition supporting the UDR, in response to the Panorama programme. He also meets the deputy head of the BBC.

22nd

Lord Hunt - who in 1969 had been responsible for setting up the UDR to replace the RUC B Specials - says that the UDR is now discredited, that "the position had reverted to that which obtained in 1969" and that the regiment should be disbanded.

Following an EC Foreign Ministers meeting in Dublin on the 21st at which Britain broke ranks to end sanctions against South Africa, the British government criticises the government of the Irish Republic, claiming they had unilaterally ended sanctions against Argentina at the time of the Falklands War in 1982. Gerry Collins replies that the sanctions were agreed only for four weeks and Ireland ended them after that when there was no consensus in the EC.

23rd

A proposal of the Birmingham Six: the Court of Appeal in London frees Hassan Khan, who was convicted in 1988 on evidence fabricated by the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad.

26th

The British-Irish Interparliamentary Body meets for the first time, in London. It consists of 50 Irish and British politicians from various parties and was conceived at summit meetings in 1980 and 1981 and the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985. It is boycotted by the unionists. Over three days the Body discusses who best represents N.Ireland at EC level; the Border and the EC; and, in closed session, the Birmingham Six, and extradition.

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An Army Recruitment Office in Halifax, Yorks, is damaged by an IRA bomb. British soldiers shot and seriously injure a joyrider in W.Belfast. The car was stopped at a checkpoint and he was running away when shot.

28th

In the House of Commons, Labour MP Tam Dalyell introduces a Bill to prevent any more army or M15 dirty tricks campaigns (as exposed by Colin Wallace). It passes the first reading unopposed.



7th

A civilian, Sam Marshall, is shot dead by the loyalist Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) in Lurgan, Co.Armagh. He was a republican, and was leaving the RUC station where he had to sign on regularly as a bail condition when he was killed. A week before, he had been warned by the PUC that he was on a loyalist death list; it is suspected that the UVF had been leaked information from the RUC or UDR.

Two of the Birmingham Six are interviewed on BBC radio from Long Lartin prison. They say they will not accept parole if offered. "We want to go out as innocent men, which is what we are."

A court in Paris agrees to the extradition of three alleged IRA suspects to W.Germany on charges of bombings and shootings against the British Army there. The decision has to be ratified by the French government; and the ruling specifies that they cannot be re-extradited from Germany to Britain without consultation with the French authorities.

8th

The House of Lords upholds an appeal by the Attorney General whereby coroners in N.Ireland inquests will not be able to compell witnesses to give evidence. The ruling is the last of a series developing from long-delayed and disputed inquests on shoot-to-kill victims.

A member of the UDR (part-time) is shot dead by the IRA near Donaghmore, Co.Tyrone. He also worked for a construction firm which undertook contracts for the RUC/Army.

International Women's Day. A picket in London commemorating Mairead Farrell is attacked by fascists. In Ireland, students from the North bring to the Republic their publications which provide abortion information - illegalised there after court cases brought by SPUC.

9th

In the USA, resolutions calling on the British government to re-open the case of the Birmingham Six are brought to the Senate and Congress.

During a bail hearing in Belfast High Court for a loyalist accused of possessing information, a barrister names three RUC stations - in Derry and Limavady - as sources of leaks to loyalists about alleged republicans.

11th

A civilian, Eamonn Quinn, is shot dead outside his home in W.Belfast by the loyalist Ulster Freedom Fighters (code name of Ulster Defence Association).

12th

In the House of Commons, the Draft Appropriation (N.Ireland) Order reveals the cost of occupying the North for the current financial year: £5.8 billion. £1.5 billion is for "security", the rest for agriculture, the environment, education, health, social services and infrastructure.

13th

The Supreme Court in Dublin rules against the extradition of two republican prisoners to N.Ireland, and frees them. Dermot Finucane and James Clarke had escaped from Long Kesh in 1983 and were recaptured in the Republic. The Court rules that they could be targets for ill-treatment by prison warders if returned to Long Kesh.

March

1st

The Supreme Court in Dublin rejects a case that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is illegal under the Irish Constitution. The case was brought by two unionists, Michael and Christopher McGimpsey.

And at the Dublin High Court a settlement is reached in a libel case against the Daily Mirror brought by the brothers of republican prisoner Gilbert McNamee. The paper had implicated them with the IRA in its report of Gilbert's trial in October 1987.

2nd

There is a contentious meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference between Brooke and Collins, with disagreements about the unionists' preconditions and about the UDR.

The ard theis (annual conference) of the Republic's largest opposition party, Fine Gael, decides to go for social justice. On N.Ireland, it opposes all violence and urges both governments to secure agreement for an "acceptable" devolved administration.

A former member of the UDR is convicted in Belfast Crown Court of manufacturing sub-machine gun parts for a loyalist organisation.

3rd/4th

The International Fund for Ireland (set up under the Anglo-Irish Agreement) announces a budget of IR £44 million for 1990, making a total of IR £140 million since it was set up. Two-thirds goes to projects in N.Ireland, the rest to the Republic and cross-border projects.

Irish and Scottish CND hand in letters of protest to US and British navy bases objecting to nuclear submarine activities in the Irish Sea.

6th

In London there is a vigil in Whitehall commemorating the Gibraltar Three, victims of an SAS shoot-to-kill operation in 1988.

DELEGATION

BELFAST 1990

Ireland. It's never out of the news for long. But most of what we're allowed to see or hear is severely censored. That's why the Troops Out Movement (TOM) has organised a visit to Belfast every year since 1978. It's a chance to cut through the censorship and find out what the British presence really means to those who are directly affected. This year there are 120 places on the delegation which runs from August 10 to August 13.

The delegation itself is hosted by Sinn Fein. They are jointly responsible, with TOM, for your welfare throughout the weekend. You will stay with local families in West Belfast. In the past many people have found this the most memorable aspect of their visit.

During the daytime you will take part in a very full programme of events organised at Conway Mill, a community art and education centre. You will have the opportunity to join informal workshops and learn about the struggle in the prisons, the situation of women in struggle, Irish culture, the campaigns against plastic bullets and strip-searching etc. There are organised visits to advice centres, the Falls Road Women's Centre and the Divis Flats where tenants have organised themselves and challenged the worst housing complex in Western Europe. There is also the chance for a few delegates to visit prisoners inside Long Kesh. On the Sunday the TOM delegation takes part in the annual march and rally to commemorate the introduction of internment without trial in 1971.

We have much to learn from Ireland about the techniques of repression: plastic bullets, stripsearching, censorship. But we can also learn from the resistance that has grown out of that repression. For many delegates their lasting impression of Belfast is not one of social control and the power of the British Army. Rather it is of the strength and optimism of the people of the North of Ireland, their spirit and their defiance. The annual TOM delegation is not just an education—it's an inspiration.

If you would like more information please return the form below.

We are happy to answer any queries you may have.

We can also send a speaker to any organisation's meeting to explain more about the delegation.

NAME.....
ADDRESS.....

ORGANISATION (if any).....

I cannot attend myself but enclose a donation of.....towards a subsidised place.

DELEGATION ORGANISING COMMITTEE, BOX 90, 52 CALL LANE, LEEDS LS1 6DT