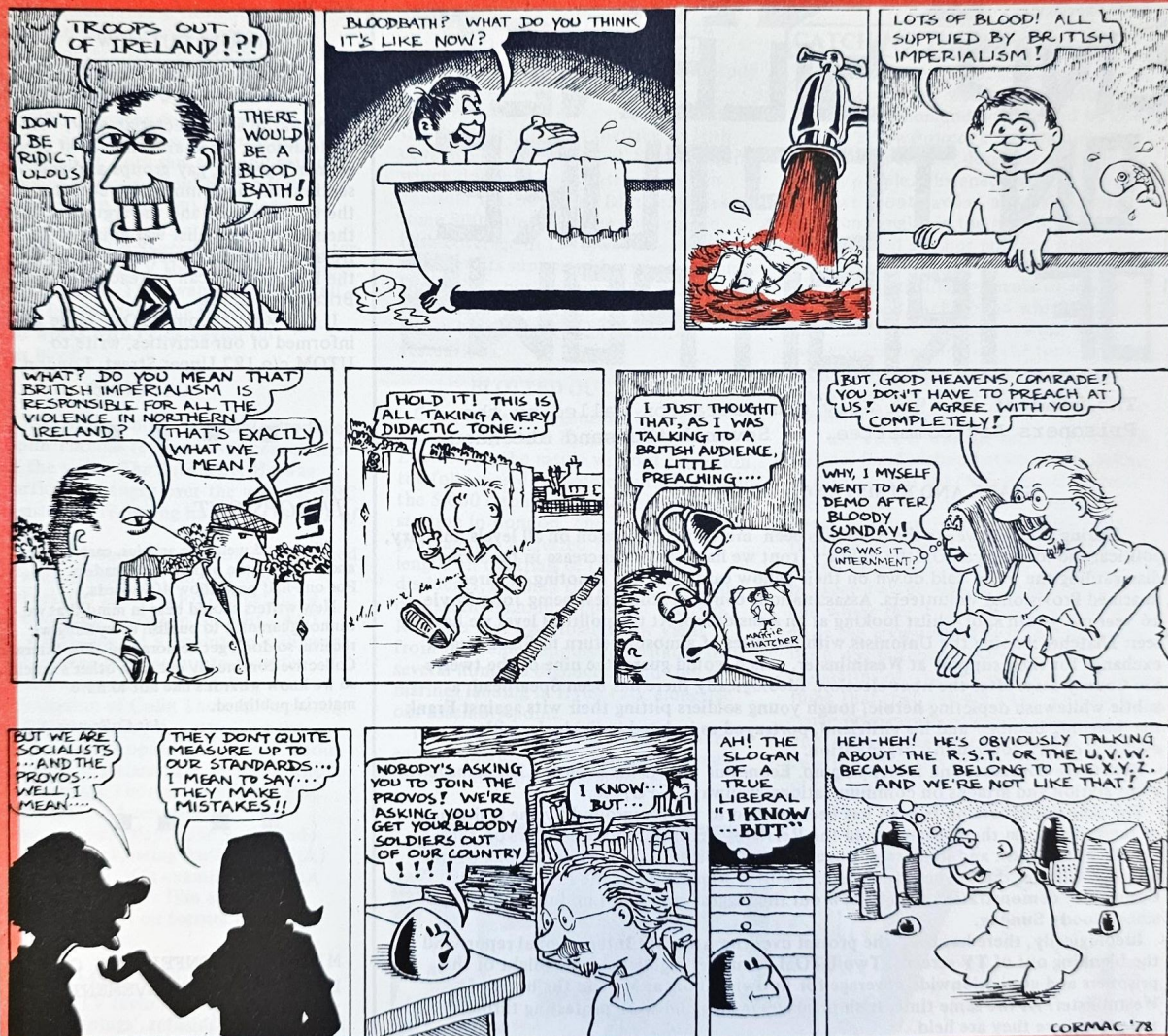


# TROOPS OUT

Paper of the United Troops Out Movement

10p

Vol 1 no 10 Aug/Sept 1978



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



The head of the 9th July demonstration called by the Prisoners Aid Committee. Several thousand attended.

#### STATE AND RESISTANCE

During the past weeks the State has been increasing repression on all levels, military, political and ideological. On the military front we have seen an increase in the Army disregarding the 'rules' laid down on their yellow cards, and the shooting of three unarmed Provisional Volunteers. Assassinations continue, the latest being John Boyle, 16 year old youth shot whilst looking at an arms dump. At the political level we have seen Thatcher wooing the Unionists with promises of almost a return to Stormont in exchange for their support at Westminster, which would guarantee nine of the twelve Six County seats after the next election. Ideologically there has been Spearhead, a subtle whitewash depicting heroic, tough young soldiers pitting their wits against Frank the 'bleeding bomber' and his girlfriend, portrayed as isolated individuals, with no evidence of any community organisation.

Resistance continues and is stepping up. Economic targets hit include £3m damage to a bus station and attacks on communications, railways, GPO, etc.

The political debate on Ireland has been pushed to the foreground by the resistance of the prisoners in the H Blocks, and the Relatives Action Committee tours on their behalf in the South and in Britain. Local blanket protests have been informing people on the streets, at the Gaelic Games, etc., about H Block, and of the Prisoners Aid Committee demonstration which drew out the biggest crowd in London over Ireland since Bloody Sunday.

Ideologically, there has been the protest over the Amnesty International report and the blanking out of TV screens. Two UTOM comrades highlighted the plight of the prisoners and got nationwide coverage for throwing dung at MP's in the heart of Westminster. At the same time, Irish prisoners in England were protesting throughout the jails where they are held.

The pressure must be kept up. The Sinn Fein demonstration on August 13th to mark the anniversary of internment should call out even wider forces than came out for the July 9th demonstration. And local activities by UTOM branches will keep the focus on the army throughout the summer.

#### SINN FEIN DEMONSTRATION

#### SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY OF INTERNMENT

Speakers Corner, Hyde Park

2pm

Sunday August 13

## UNITED TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT

The United Troops Out Movement is a national movement based on a network of branches campaigning around the two demands

#### TROOPS OUT NOW

#### SELF DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE AS A WHOLE

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

If you want to join UTOM, or be kept informed of our activities, write to UTOM c/o 182 Upper Street, London N1

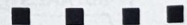


#### TROOPS OUT

We would welcome articles, cartoons and ideas for the paper, from readers. For one-half page allow 400 words.

New writers should bear in mind that we cannot guarantee to publish everything we receive, so don't get demoralised. The Literature Collective continually cut each other's articles, so we know what it's like not to have material published.

*Lit Collective*



#### MIDLANDS CONFERENCE ON BRITAIN'S INVOLVEMENT IN IRELAND.

To be held in November.  
NEXT PLANNING MEETING  
Friday 4th August. 7.30pm.  
Digbeth Civic Hall,  
BIRMINGHAM.

Further info from: Robin Wilson, 65 Woodville Rd., B'HAM 14. Or phone Mary Pearson 021-773-8683.

# TRUTH-THE FIRST CASUALTY

'The first casualty when war comes is truth,' said Senator Hiram Johnson in 1917. The truth about the British presence in the north of Ireland died when soldiers reappeared on the streets in 1969, as Eamonn McCann demonstrated in his pamphlet *The British Press and Northern Ireland*.

In recent months the war for the public mind has been raging virulently. There have been unprecedented protests by media workers over censorship. And the media have come back with a pro-state offensive, not only blacking all news of the political status demonstrations, but putting out the new series *Spearhead*.

The end of April saw a second round of major raids on *Republican News*—an attempt to black out Irish news at source.

A month later Special Branch men interviewed Thames TV Head of Programmes Jeremy Isaacs. They wanted to know all about Ian Stuttard, the film director who works with Peter Taylor on *This Week*.

## RESIGNED

Also at the end of May BBC Producer Colin Thomas resigned over censorship of the series *The Irish Way*. He was particularly angry over the way the BBC insisted on recutting his film *A Bridge of Sorts*.

Thomas' courageous resignation sparked off widespread anger among media workers. On June 7 a joint meeting of the two main unions in the BBC, ACTT and ABAS, passed a resolution calling for a committee to be set up to monitor possible censorship, demanding no victimisation of Colin Thomas, deploring the BBC's actions 'in controlling the transmission of open information' about the north of Ireland, and called on the NEC to black Thomas' film if the BBC went ahead and censored it.

The very next day, June 9, the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) followed the BBC's example. The IBA banned *This Week's* film about the Amnesty Report on torture by the insecurity forces.

## PULLED PLUGS

Thames TV technicians promptly 'pulled the plugs', refusing to transmit an alternative programme and leaving TV screens blank for half-an-hour. This was the first ever anti-censorship strike action by TV technicians.

In a defiant gesture, Thames Controller Jeremy Isaacs handed the torture film over to the BBC's *Nationwide*.

These events led to an 80-strong mass meeting of TV programme makers a fortnight later. They demanded that the real reasons for bannings, postponements and forced cuts be made public.

Among those at the meeting was Alan Sapper, General Secretary of the ACTT

Sapper is a member of the Connolly Association, but had up to now refused to speak publicly against censorship of Irish coverage - because of the Unionist sympathies of the ACTT's Northern Ireland membership.

At the meeting he congratulated the Thames technicians for pulling the plugs, and recommended that ACTT members take the same action 'immediately and absolutely' if censorship occurred again.

On 8th July London Weekend TV's programme *Look Here* showed film of the meeting. Among the people interviewed about Irish coverage were David Elstein, producer of *This Week*, and Philip Schlesinger, author of *Putting 'Reality' Together*, a highly critical study of BBC TV News.

However, *Look Here* ended up with the presenter blaming the lack of Irish coverage on the audience! A conclusion which does not hold water when you consider that Jonathan Dimpleby received some 800 letters after he condemned Irish coverage in 1976, and over 90% of these letters supported his stand. Again, Dimpleby's position won the audience on the *You the Jury* radio programme in March by 69 votes to 21, with 10 abstentions.

## BLOTTED OUT

Completely disregarding the many protests expressed by broadcasters on *Look Here*, the media without exception the following day blotted out all news of the 5,000 strong political status demonstration in London. The TV news programmes preferred to dwell at length on the trials of two Russian dissidents, and had the gall to show film of a small demo in support of the two Russians that assembled a few yards from the demo supporting Britain's own several hundred dissidents, and film of marines landing in Hyde Park alongside our assembly point.

The establishment backlash began in earnest on July 18 with the transmission of the first in the *Spearhead* series.

The UTOM picketed the IBA to mark *Spearhead's* first night, and the *Irish Times* gave front-page coverage to the picket. But the British media ignored it...

David Elstein, *This Week* Producer, was interviewed in the *Evening Standard* of July 20. The one thing he regretted on leaving the programme after 4 years was, he said, that the British public had been systematically misled by the news coverage of Northern Ireland.

## CATCHING THEM YOUNG

Arriving home from school at 5pm on Wednesday a few weeks ago, I switched on the television and was greeted by *John Craven's Newsround*, a programme similar to *News at Ten*, designed specially for young people. I listened half-attentively to news about pandas, and fishing, and then amazingly, in the middle of all this, was included a major political item: the Arab/Israeli conflict, served up for its young listeners totally devoid of any of the historical background which would have made the struggle between these two groups meaningful: the tone of the presentation being one of concerned sincerity rather in the manner of Reginald Bosanquet!

Last week it was the turn of Northern Ireland. Sandwiched between bike-riding in Holland and the 'Newshound's Letter' was a classic distortion and outright lying, significantly more extreme than the usual garbage. From the opening words which talked about a 'conflict between two groups of Christians' to the end where the 'Peace People' are presented as the saviours of the Irish people, the truth was butchered. Obviously the mandarins of current affairs presentation think that they can get away with such crude propaganda attempts when its directed at young people who are particularly vulnerable to the 'official version of the truth'.

NUT and UTOM member



UTOM Spearhead picket (Newsline)

# PUTTING THE SCREWS ON



In September 1976 Sean Campbell was badly injured in a riot in Albany jail, Isle of Wight. Campbell had been held in various top security prisons after being sentenced to 10 years in prison in November 1973. He had been charged along with two other members of Luton Sinn Fein, Gerry Mealy and Phil Sheridan, with 'conspiracy to rob persons unknown at a time and place unknown'. His case is notorious because of the use by British Special Branch of an agent, Kenneth Lennon, who later made a full confession before being found shot dead in Surrey in April 1974. Lennon's role has been given some publicity in a book by Geoff Robertson and a TV programme based on it. None of it has secured the release of the three framed Republicans.

In September 1976 Brendan Dowd was moved to Albany from Bristol. He was entering his second year in solitary since his arrest in Liverpool in May 1975 when he had sustained severe injuries in police custody: broken jaw, teeth missing, massive bruising and several days loss of consciousness. When Dowd arrived in Albany he was put into solitary and no reason was given. Fellow Republicans, six in all, asked to see the Governor about Dowd. He refused. They then barricaded themselves in a corner of a wing and said they would not move until they saw him. The Governor then sent in a squad of 30 heavily armed screws who systematically set about the prisoners and beat them into submission. Afterwards the Home Office (HO) claimed that 19 screws had been injured, though later they admitted that only one had been. They also were to claim that the prisoners were armed with a variety of weapons some of which are impossible to get hold of in jail, eg bottles. At the height of their hysteria, the HO put out a story that bomb-making equipment had been found in Albany, although no prisoner had ever been charged with this serious criminal offence.

## INJURED

What we know for certain is that all six prisoners were badly injured and that Sean Campbell was worst injured of all. The HO admits that he had a broken leg and broken finger; they dispute or deny that his ribs were cracked. They also admit that with his broken leg Campbell had to walk firstly from the wing to the segregation unit and from there to the prison hospital. Following vicious internal

disciplinary proceedings which Campbell was too ill to attend, he decided to seek legal advice and medical attention from outside the prison. His letters on these matters were blocked by the HO who said he had to go through a system of internal inquiry, even though this had already been done. He decided, along with the other injured prisoners, to take his case before the European Commission for Human Rights (ECHR), alleging breach of his rights under various articles, but particularly Article 3 – the right to freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment and torture.

His submission was made in the summer of 1977 and earlier this year ECHR rejected his claim under Article 3, while admitting his case on the grounds of the stopping of his letters to his lawyer and refusal of access to outside medical advice. By rejecting his Article 3 submission, the ECHR have said that they do not regard the breaking of Campbell's legs and fingers as amounting to inhuman and degrading treatment or that they regard it as justifiable.

## 40 CASES

Campbell's submission, now only one of 40 cases brought by Irish political prisoners in England, may still result in a condemnation of the British government on the issue of access to legal and medical advice. If the Brits won't back down it can go to the European Court by which time Campbell will be nearing the end of a sentence he should not have been serving anyway. Campbell's case, like all the others, is useful because its documentation sets out just how Irish political prisoners in England are being

treated. It will not change that treatment; indeed Campbell's rejection under Article 3 could be seen as giving the go-ahead to the brutalisation of troublesome prisoners.

## POW STATUS

Irish POWs, like other prisoners of Her Majesty's government, cannot be defended by legalistic methods – it was after all the law which put them inside in the first place. Only a sustained political campaign on the outside can defend them from this most secretive of British ruling class weapons of repression. The only way to defend Sean Campbell and his comrades including those in H-Block, Long Kesh, is to support their demand that they be treated as Prisoners of War along the lines laid down by the International Red Cross in prison camps open to international inspection and to demand their right to amnesty as the prisoners of British imperialism which is in unlawful and unjustifiable occupation of their country.



## JULY PROTEST

Irish POWs demonstrated in every top security jail in England 5-9th July (except Wakefield from where they were all shanghaied two days before to prevent this). They were drawing attention to their conditions and those imposed on their visitors and calling for political status subsequent to their being transferred to jails in Ireland to serve their sentences with their comrades. Loyalist prisoners joined their protest in two jails and in Gartree other prisoners refused to go back to their cells until they were sure that when the protestors came down from the roof they would not be assaulted by screws. Those protests were undertaken at considerable personal risk and have resulted in long periods of solitary and loss of remission. The least we can do on the outside is to give them determined and principled sustained support to try to ensure that what happened in Albany in September 1976 will never happen again.

Jackie Kaye

# ROLE OF THE ARMY (LAST PART)

THE NEWSPAPERS TELL YOU  
WE'RE WINNING AGAIN  
AND OUR CORPSES FLY OUT  
ON THE ALDERGROVE PLANE

SO IT GOES

Like Mr Whitelaw before him, Merlyn Rees, Ulster Secretary since 1974, was conceding the impossibility of victory when he decided to open talks with IRA representatives in 1975. That year also saw the ending of internment without trial after four years, a decision which angered the commander of British forces in Ulster, General Sir Frank Kings: *'The army was making such rapid progress until the ending of internment that the IRA would have had to give up within two to three months'*.

## CRIMINALISATION

Throughout the 1970s empty claims like these were as common in the upper echelons of the army as double-barrelled surnames. That they were regularly trotted out by senior officers at least every six months may show that the British command was at the dangerous stage where it was beginning to believe its own press statements.

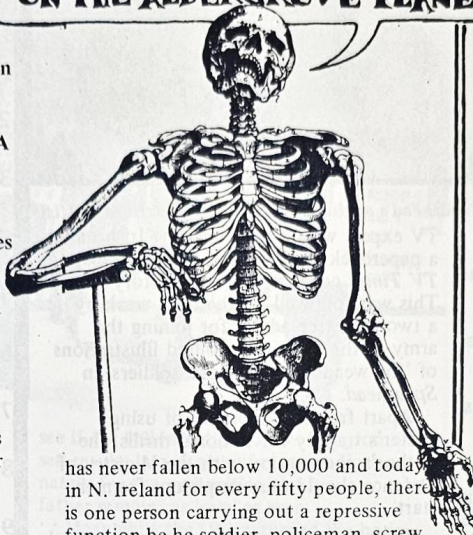
Be that as it may, Rees made major concessions to the generals. In 1975 jury trials were abolished for all suspected of armed insurgency. Next year, Rees withdrew political status from prisoners in Long Kesh, a status which they had had since 1972. His aim was to 'criminalise' these prisoners in the minds of people outside the prison as well as in their own minds. Towards the end, he also began to compare Republican organisations with the Mafia, talking of the 'godfathers of violence' and getting press hacks like Chris Ryder of the *Sunday Times* to invent stories about 'gigantic protection rackets involving the IRA'.

## UDR RACKET

Three years on, none of this black propaganda has been substantiated. However, the number of RUC and UDR men sentenced for criminal offences ranging from civil murder to petty pilfering mounts weekly. And given the amount of crime the guardians of the law have been able to get away with, the reader can rest assured that the number of court cases are only the tip of the iceberg: the revelations in *Hibernia* of 29 June about a vast criminal racket in South Derry centred around the UDR ought to make this clear.

## ULSTERISATION

To 'criminalise' the conflict was a central objective for Rees and later Mason. Another central policy objective was the 'ulsterisation' of the war. This process involves replacing the 15,000 strong British Army in the long run with 5,000 RUC, 4,800 police reservists and 7,000 members of the UDR. In 1978, three years after its conception, this goal still appears far off. Army strength



has never fallen below 10,000 and today in N. Ireland for every fifty people, there is one person carrying out a repressive function be he soldier, policeman, screw or searcher: this is a higher ratio than anywhere else in the western world.

## SUBTLER METHODS

Occasionally the British government has used subtler methods than the mailed fist. The winter of 1976-77, when the Peace People were briefly in the ascendancy, was one such period; in retrospect one can see that what the 'peace' leaders Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan were really pushing was peace through surrender. However, this was not immediately clear at the time, and the Brits won some propaganda successes by having the media portray Betty and Mairead as true representatives of the nationalist ghettos.

## ARMY CAN'T WIN

Despite the best methods of Fleet Street, this image quickly evaporated when the Peace People deliberately joined in the campaign to brand republicans as criminals. With the H-block struggle gaining great popular support over the past two years, this effort at 'criminalisation' has failed.

In its turn, this has spurred the Brits to even more repressive measures. The latest military commander, General Sir Timothy Creasey DSO, now spells out his number one task as stamping out all political activity in nationalist areas. It is in this context that *Republican News* has been attacked and members of Provisional Sinn Féin harassed and arrested.

But these measures do not look like ending republican resistance to alien rule. John Wale, *Sunday Times* 25 June, wrote about the British Army: *'The point is simply that they cannot defeat the Provisionals and their commanders have known it for three years. Prove intelligence, morale, equipment and strength', says a senior officer, 'are all OK from their point of view. They are pacing the war'.*

Down at Lough Erne, Co. Fermanagh, last Bank Holiday, Roy Mason thought he would boost his image by being photographed in the company of a large freshly-caught salmon. Next day with that large smirk over his broad pasty face, Little Napoleon smiled forth from several British newspapers with the unfortunate fishy dangling from his left hand.

Troubleshooting politician able to hold his own in the gentler pursuits, was the image his public relations toadies were attempting to foist on an unsuspecting public. Unfortunately the trick backfired when some deep throat in the Fermanagh countryside revealed that the fish had been placed in Mason's lap, seconds before the photo was taken. The N.I. Tourist Board subsequently corroborated this claim.

This may seem a harmless little story. But just pause to think for a minute. If Mason is prepared to tell barefaced lie to the world press about a fish, is he going to draw the line when it comes to protecting the activities of the SAS and Special Branch torturers?

Take Derry: In May the publicity machines was revved up for the removal of the city centre checkpoints. Normality had returned after 8 years, thanks to the Brit Army's presence was the Mason message. But only a short time before an army unit had shown what the true nature of their presence was about, and how phoney Mason's gesture was.

The army had called at the offices of the Irish Republican Socialist Party and proceeded to systematically wreck the place. And I do mean wreck! Floorboards were ripped up, electrical fittings ripped from walls, windows kicked in, books and files destroyed, and the whole lot then thrown into the street below in full view of locals.

The IRSP offices are near the centre of Derry ..... When the checkpoints were taken down a few weeks later, nobody was fooled except perhaps the cohorts of British press wheeled on to grace the occasion.

One member of the British Press, Martin Walker of the *Guardian*, has just written a novel, *The Infiltrators* which deals in part with the SAS in Ireland. The *Irish Press* wrote of it: *'A few of the pages are set in N. Ireland where the fictional SAS man took part in the assassination of Catholics to foster sectarian hatred.'*

Martin Walker stated: *'I have a few SAS contacts who knew I was doing the book and what it was about, and I let an army captain I know read it. He agreed that it was pretty accurate. The SAS contacts just grinned widely when I mentioned it.'*

Not a word of this has appeared in Walker's paper. It is a telling reflection on the morals of Fleet Street that such damning admissions can only appear in a novel.

# SPEARHEAD



*Spearhead's soldiers on fictitious operations in Ulster*

The television channel that banned Amnesty's report on Northern Ireland is now presenting the British Army's apologia for being over there. On Tuesday evenings susceptible TV audiences are being treated to 'Our Boys doing a Crown Man's Job', as Dermot Purgavie puts it in the *Daily Mail*, in what's supposed to be as immediate as today's news. For the first time in 10 years the war in Ireland comes as a peak time adventure series, a kind of Z Cars thriller.

Any lingering hopes that the series might expose the army's real role in the 6 Counties was dispelled by the first programme. While it did not - and could not - glamourise and make inviting a squaddie's life in the North, it did fulfill part of Airey Neave's prescription when he called for British TV to stop showing Starsky and Hutch overcoming American gangsters and instead make a programme showing British regiments' heroic feats against Irish thugs and terrorists.

## THE 'BLEEDING BOMBER'

Our boys are shown driven near to desperation (although of course stopping short of physical violence) by the inhuman, unexplained behaviour of Frank and his intransigent, fanatical unnamed 'girlfriend'.

## ARMY PRODUCTION

*Spearhead* was masterminded by an ex-Major who is now a Southern ITV executive. The Ministry of Defence gave every assistance even loaning the Royal Anglians. It had all the advance trimmings: scripted by a

TV expert with a real-sounding Irish name; a paperback tie-in already in the shops; a *TV Times* cover plus a 3-page story preview. This was followed up the next week by a two-page free advert for joining the army in the form of coloured illustrations of 'the weapons behind the soldiers' in *Spearhead*.

Apart from the morality of using Ulster's tragedy for fictional thrills, the author's cooperation with the Ministry of Defence should raise suspicions from the start.

*'They saw all the scripts, popped up with the occasional idea, and only twice said "Don't do this". We said we were going to do it anyway; they said "Come and talk about it", and we eventually accepted their objections.'*

Such methods of self-censorship are all too familiar when the British media pretends to tackle Ireland, and not surprisingly, for all the guff about 'smelling right', and 'Somebody's done his homework', it remains a cosmetic exercise.

The author himself admits the real position: *'That is not to say that things happen that are not deplorable but we do not dwell on them in the series because they are not part of what we are trying to portray. We do not show people being put up against walls and being gratuitously beaten about.'*

Of course he wouldn't have landed a £500 £500,000 TV series if he had.

## VICTIMS OF ARMY ASS.A.S.INS

The conveyor belt which starts with torture to obtain confessions, goes on through the no-jury Diplock Courts and ends in the H-blocks and Armagh jail, has failed to crush the Republican resistance.

So Northern Ireland Secretary Roy Mason has given the green light for the Army to go a step further: soldiers may now assassinate Republicans.

'Shoot-to-kill' is the order, regardless of whether the victim is unarmed, and regardless of the Army's 'Yellow Card' which says that troops must give a warning before firing.

These are the most recent victims of army assassinations:

**COLM McNUTT, 18 years**, IRSP member. Murdered by plain-clothes soldiers in Derry, 12 December 1977. Unarmed.

**PAUL DUFFY, 21**. IRA member. Murdered by SAS in Killygonland, East

Tyrone, 26 February 1978. Unarmed. **JOHN COLLINS**. Murdered by soldiers in Belfast, 8 May 1978. Passenger in a car which failed to stop at checkpoint. Unarmed.

**DENIS MICHAEL HEANEY, 22**. IRA volunteer. Murdered in Derry by plain-clothes soldiers, 10 June 1978. Unarmed.

**WILLIAM JOHN MAILEY, 28; DENIS BROWN, 28; JAMES MULVENNA, 28**. All 3 were IRA volunteers, murdered by SAS in Belfast on 21 June 1978. Carrying bombs but no guns.

**WILLIAM HANNA, 27**. Protestant passer-by murdered by soldiers in the same incident on 21 June.

**JOHN BOYLE, 16**. Murdered by SAS near Dunloy, Co. Antrim on Tuesday 11 July. Unarmed.

## SPECIAL UTOPIA HOLIDAY QUIZ ON THE EEC

1. From which EEC country have over 8 million people emigrated in the last 130 years?
2. Which EEC country has the highest rate of inflation?
3. Which EEC country has the highest unemployment?
4. In which EEC locality is unemployment 40%?
5. Which rural EEC area has been named as the most impoverished?
6. Which EEC country has the highest birthrate?
7. Which EEC area has the highest infant mortality rate?
8. Which EEC country has the lowest lowest per capita consumption?
9. Which EEC country has the highest rate of hospitalised mental illness in the world?
10. In which EEC country can foreign investors operate tax free for the first 20 years?
11. Which EEC country has the highest ratio of interest payments on public debt to GNP?
12. In which EEC country is the percentage of GNP used for social welfare the lowest?
13. In which EEC area did the value of tourism decline by £13.2m between 1968-12?
14. Which EEC country took up arms against Britain in 1601, 1641, 1690, 1798, 1803, 1848, 1867, 1916, 1919 and 1969?
15. Who won the first eight times and forced a compromise the ninth time?
16. Who will win this time?

*All answers on a red banner, please.*

## EX-INTERNEES HELD

*As we went to press, the Special Branch were still holding four ex-internees from West Belfast, picked up at Heathrow on their way to Holland.*

'IRA GANG SEIZED' screamed the Evening News—the quotes being attributed to no one. According to the men's families, and to Paddy Devlin, the politician the families contacted, the men, unable to get work in the North by virtue of being not only Catholic, but victims of internment, were on their way to construction jobs in the Netherlands.



## IN THE SIX COUNTIES

It's been an awkward time for the forces of law and order, and informers have received some rough justice.

Repercussions continue over Amnesty's investigations. Two members of the Northern Ireland Police Authority have withdrawn in protest against 'political interference' by Chief Constable Newman and Secretary of State Mason. One said: 'The more I stayed on it the more I realised it wasn't independent. I'll go back to the Authority when they become democratic.' The other members confirm that they are 'concerned' about the Newman/Mason handling of the Amnesty Report.

Mason's private set-up for dealing with the Report has now been condemned as a 'charade' by the SDLP, who say they won't attend to give the inquiry an undeserved credibility. A group of Catholic solicitors who represent more than half the cases before the Diplock courts have also called for a boycott and they accuse Mason and Newman of merely pretending to deal with brutality allegations.

SAS murder methods backfired badly in a Co. Antrim graveyard when they mistakenly shot dead the 16-year old boy whose information had led them to the hidden arms dump there. The police were furious that their tip-off had been bungled and were quick to contradict the first of the Army's explanations. We should soon have a third Army version of what happened in the cemetery since the post-mortem shows that the boy was shot in the back of the head, hardly possible if he was facing the soldiers and pointing a rifle at them as is claimed. The SDLP, camp-followers of public opinion in the nationalist sector, have demanded Roy Mason's immediate resignation. Mason had announced a police inquiry. It will be interesting to

see if the full investigation we are promised results in a charge of murder. Fortunately for the authorities, the boy's father remains as loyal as ever.

Meanwhile the IRA returned the body of an RUC constable shot in an ambush three weeks before, after appeals from his widow. The police made the most of fearing the corpse was booby-trapped although the IRA had promised truthfully that it was not.

Some months ago the Bishop of Derry saw for himself the H-blocks of Long Kesh and admitted afterwards that his visit was amongst the worst experiences of his life, ranking with Bloody Sunday. Since then the authorities have refused permission to others to enter the prison proper. On July 13th, the Northern Ireland Office, through its spokesman in Parliament, Don Concannon, told a proposed all-party group of British MPs that they too would not be able to inspect conditions there or talk to prisoners or staff. The fable of Parliament's supremacy wears very thin these days where Mason's power runs. In best Mason fashion, Concannon viciously insulted the integrity of prisoners and MPs alike, but he obviously fears that such a visit would rip aside the facade of what he still calls 'one of the best prisons in Europe'.

Former SDLP Health Minister, Paddy Devlin, reviewed a new book on the out of date Peace People and concluded that history will not ask why didn't they succeed in stopping the violence, but what did they do with the money.

Two MPs have discovered their IRA-spotting hobby is getting riskier. Unionist Bradford is being sued for claiming, even under Parliamentary privilege, that Belfast hospital workers were subversives, and Tory Jill Knight is no longer so keen on providing 'evidence' about Belfast Housing Executive funds going to the IRA. Declining to attend a public inquiry,

she explained: 'If I had a very large amount of money that I could call on in the event of my being sued for libel because of giving evidence, I would come, but I have no such fund ..... I would be indeed very foolish.'



## IN SHORT . . .

### IBA PICKET

The offices of the Independent Broadcasting Authority were picketed on June 18 just before transmission of the first episode of *Spearhead*. 'No Sweeney's on the Falls Road' was the theme of several speakers at the picket, who pointed out how far the dirty job done by British soldiers in the Six Counties was from the TV picture.

### HOME SOLDIER HOME

A well-attended meeting in a committee room of the House of Commons on 19 June saw the film *Home, Soldier Home* and heard speakers including a fireman, teachers and members of Trades Councils argue that troops should come out. Tom Litterick, MP, who sponsored the meeting, stated unequivocally that the British should get out of Ireland.

Only one other MP bothered to attend. Perhaps the smell of Long Kesh was still too fresh in their nostrils.

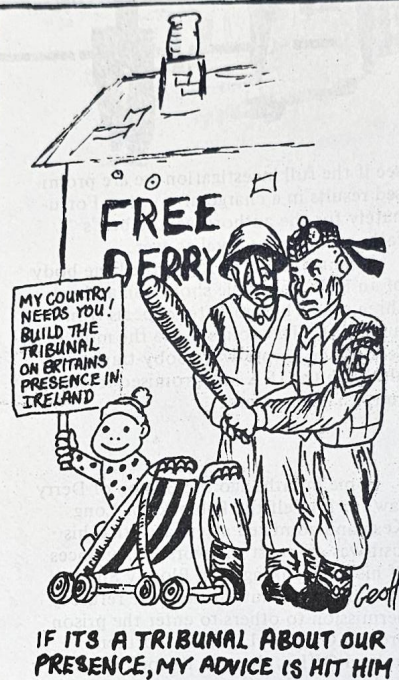
### ROYAL TOURNAMENT

40 people from BWNIC and UTOM picketed the Royal Tournament at Earls Court on June 15. Leaflets were given out to most people attending the show.

By far the most enthusiastic response came from several young squaddies, who were very interested in the paper *Troops Out* and the new pamphlet *British Soldiers Speak Out on Ireland*. They were unanimous in not wanting to go to Ireland. They also said they wouldn't be surprised if the Army was used over here. One serviceman, on buying a copy of *Troops Out* had his bag searched by the police.

# BRITAIN IN THE DOCK

October is now set as the date when it is expected that the opening hearing of the International Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland will take place. An International Week of Action is planned to coincide with the opening of the Tribunal, whose sponsorship list is already wider than that of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation's tribunal on West Germany.



In Britain it is supported by trade union branches and trades councils not normally associated with any solidarity work on the Irish question, has impressive backing from the student movement, and has begun to gain support within the women's movement. Where the student movement is concerned, the campaign begun by the Student Movement Campaign on Ireland has been taken up by both the Socialist Students Alliance and the National Organisation of International Socialist Societies (the two largest Far Left currents in the NUS) and is now backed by the NUS Executive (with a mandate from its last conference) which will launch a nationwide campaign around the Tribunal in October.

## HOW UTOM RELATES

Clearly the Tribunal is now an established fact. But how should supporters of the demand 'Troops Out Now' relate to it? The UTOM voted at both its national conferences to make the Tribunal a priority national initiative, and at the Sheffield conference last December outlined in broad strokes how gains can be made for the movement from the Tribunal. By building the Tribunal

itself through united front initiatives to supporters of the 'Bill of Rights' on the one hand, and by producing *independent* propaganda to explain why the British State needs to rely on repression for its 'solution' it was said that we could take our arguments deeper into the labour and allied movements.

## INROADS

Has this proved the case? The last NUS Conference showed it to be true for students at least. At the initiative of Canterbury Troops Out Society, which is affiliated to both the SMCI and the UTOM, Kent University's Student Union arranged a fringe meeting on the Tribunal to which they invited an RAC speaker. Taking up the initiative the SSA invited Mick Montgomery — one of the Strasbourg 'hooded men' — to the same meeting.

It was argued on the floor of the conference that the speakers to the fringe meeting should also be received as guest speakers. Unable to deny victims of British repression a hearing, the NUS Executive, which supports the 'Better Life for All' Campaign, agreed.

## SUPPORT WON

Neither speaker turned up to the fringe meeting, which was nevertheless packed. Pete Ashby of NUS Executive, in justifying the stand against repression, raised the 'Jobs, Peace and Progress' Campaign — the student version of the 'Better Life' — in order to distance himself from the troops out supporters whom everyone knew to have initiated the meeting. UTOM supporters replied, stressing that while they would be ruthless in their criticisms of Ashby's programme, and while advancing their own demands, they also demanded simultaneous united action against repression, which both campaigns claimed to oppose. The effect of this even within the fringe meeting was that although the *Militant* tendency, for example, spent most of its time attacking the Provisionals, they were forced by independents to say they would support the Tribunal.

## DEFENCE

The *Militant's* position was clearly a contradictory one, but to whose advantage this contradiction worked was clearly shown in the conference the next morning. It then became clear that the reason the speakers had not turned up was that the British State had arrested Montgomery in Derry and the RAC speaker in Manchester. It was also revealed that the RAC speaker was Jim Gibney, the central RAC Secretary and a prominent member of Provisional Sinn Féin.

The SMCI, SSA and NOISS immediately launched a defence campaign in the conference. Despite Gibney's affiliations being known, and indeed those of Montgomery (IRSP), NUS Executive, the conference, and more than 70 delegations sent telegrams demanding their immediate release. Following the conference NUS Executive was forced to sponsor a major tour with Mick Montgomery as the major speaker. The situation now is that through the offensive on the Tribunal the supporters of 'Jobs, Peace and Progress' are on the defensive inside the student movement.

## REPRESSION CENTRAL

The Tribunal has been able to have this impact within the student movement simply because the repression being carried out in the 6 Counties today is at the very heart of imperialism's strategy. The cacophany of calls for a public inquiry, and Mason's refusal to allow one will make the Tribunal an attractive idea for wider forces yet.

The ability of the UTOM to use this fact to build the inquiry and to explain that the only guarantee of an end to repression is getting the troops out will determine how far it can be used to build a movement in Britain. Or, put another way, we will grow by as much as we can put the perspectives of our last conference into effect.

Lind White

# BEHIND CLOSED DOORS : —

## I.R.S.P. and The 'Great' Train Robbery FRAME-UP

The longest trial in Irish legal history ended after 65 days in Dublin, at the beginning of July, when one of the judges (O'Connor) died. His death followed sworn affidavits that he had been sleeping during the trial and was unfit to judge the case. The case is the trial of 4 men, charged with a £200 thousand robbery of the Kildare mail train. At first sight it might look like an Irish re-run of Ronnie Biggs and the Great Train Robbers. It is not. On the contrary, this trial is the centre-piece of an unprecedented frame-up of a left-wing political organisation, the Irish Republican Socialist Party.

The facts of the case already deeply implicate the Irish police and politicians, as far up as Justice Minister Cooney, in a web of torture, repression and lies. A retrial will now take place in October and the signs are that it will be a farce, a madhatter's tea party. But its result will either be a massive setback to the organisation of socialists in Ireland, or if the judges can't twist their way out of trouble or continue to drop dead at convenient moments, could pave the way for something like an Irish Watergate.

### REPRESSION

The background to this situation is complex but of great importance. The IRSP was formed in December 1974 as a breakaway from the Official IRA as that organisation degenerated rapidly towards the most abject reformism. The new organisation represented a trend of militant socialist republicanism that had been continually stifled within the Officials. From the outset, the whole spectrum of politics recognised the potential impact of these ideas. The Official IRA responded with a campaign of murder and intimidation against the IRSP that left 3 murdered and over 30 wounded in Belfast alone in the first 7 months of their existence, and the bourgeois press gloating over this 'gangsterism'. The British Army paid special attention to harassing the new organisation. And the Dublin government — in what was to prove an ominous

precedent — seized 10 leading members and tried to frame them on a charge of attempting to blow up a train: they might have succeeded had not the loyalist UVF gang responsible blown themselves up in a similar attack some months later leaving fingerprint evidence that conclusively proved their responsibility for the first attempt.

What all this amounted to was a sustained attempt to smash the IRSP in the bud. In part it succeeded, the IRSP has existed in the shadow of death throughout its life. It has never been allowed to organise effectively. In the last year we have witnessed the assassination of its leading figure Seamus Costello — probably by the SAS: the Special Branch entrapment of IRSP National Organiser Peter Grimes in England: and a series of 'sectarian' murders of prominent IRSP militants like Colm McNutt and Thomas Trainor in the North. (*All of these have been reported fully in earlier issues of TROOPS OUT*)



Osgur Breatnach sent to hospital by the High Court, released, re-arrested and charged.

### FRAME UP

But the Train Robbery frame-up looms behind all this as the main initiative to destroy party root and branch. Full information is not yet available. What follows is based solely on material already public before the trial and which can be fully documented.

1. Two days after the robbery, the editor of the party paper and two prominent members were arrested, questioned and released.
2. The case was then placed in the hands of the Central Detective Unit (CDU) and five days later some 40 IRSP members were seized in a wave of arrests. They were then beaten and tortured. The evidence of this maltreatment was so explicit that when they appeared in Court for remand, the *High Court* itself ordered the immediate release of the worst tortured men. The *Irish Times* expressed grave disquiet at the police behaviour. In face of this, the police, whose only evidence was 'confessions' that they had got from 4 men implicating others, backed down and dropped the charges.
3. Against a considerable swell of public outrage, the IRSP called for a public inquiry into the frame up and launched a private prosecution of the police.

Faced with this situation the police decided they had no alternative but to pursue the frame up to the bitter end to cover their tracks.

4. Four men were re-arrested, one from the hospital bed where he had been put by police torture. In court they showed the wounds they had received from the beatings and demanded medical attention. The judge refused their plea and told them to complain to 'whoever had them in custody'.

5. Having got the 4 inside, the police had to fabricate their case. This proved more difficult than they thought, especially since revelations of brutality and infringements of rights was mounting daily and appearing in public. It was hard to keep the lid on the scandal. The police resorted to time wasting delays. By December 1976, 8 months after the arrests, they failed to present evidence amounting to even a *prima facie* case against the defendants. To the spontaneous applause of a packed courtroom, the defendants were discharged by the Court.

6. But this was not to be the end. The IRSP announced that they still intended

to prosecute the police. Once again the police faced enormous political damage and a possible crippling blow to their practice of interrogation by torture. Within weeks the 4 were re-re-arrested and re-charged. Now the case has finally come to court.

The police and the Irish Government are as much on trial as the IRSP in this case. But they have one simple advantage. They own the judges who will produce both verdict and sentence in the no-jury court. The result of the trial will be the result of the State's political calculations. The whole story shows once again that it is the socialist forces, both North and South, that are picked out for the most brutal selective repression.

Details of the torture can be found in: 'A State Conspiracy', published by the IRSP. Donations to the KILDARE 6 DEFENCE FUND, 34 Upper Gardiner Street, Dublin 1, Ireland.



# REVIEWS .....

## IRELAND SOCIALIST REVIEW No. 2

The second issue of this journal continues with the high standard of discussion and information of the first. This time, however, instead of the rather cumbersome duplicated format of the original we have a well-produced printed bulletin of 24 pages that is easier to read and handle, and less likely to fall apart over time.

And that is just as well since the articles in it are something that militants will want to keep for reference, as well as read now for information and political debate. In particular there is a long article by Peter Chalk on the historical development and role of the Irish trade unions that contains much that is hard to find elsewhere on a subject on which there is often much confusion. Far from being a force for unity among the working class of the North, he shows that the trade unions which represent 70% of protestant workers and 30% of catholics, have always refused to take up the political issues arising from partition. In consequence they have accepted the sectarian state as a starting point of all their activity, and any effective struggle against discrimination and sectarianism has always had to go outside the trade unions. The nationalist community has looked instead to the Republican movement.

Also in this issue is an article by Chris Davies on British regional policy in relation to Ireland over the last decade. It reveals the laughable inadequacy of so many Civil Service suggestions to reform away the poverty and deprivation of the North. Colin Kennedy, who contributed the article on the history of the Republican press in *Troops Out* July issue brings out further important historical material by looking at the history of the British labour movement's campaigns on Ireland in the early 1920's, and placing the current International Tribunal in that context. Many of the pitfalls which need to be avoided today are quite strikingly similar to those of the 1920's.

*Ireland Socialist Review* is a valuable publication. *Troops Out* readers who may find it difficult to obtain would be well advised to take out a subscription. This costs £1 for 3 issues from: Ireland Socialist Review, 60 Loughborough Road, London SW9. Single copies are 30p+15p P&P from the same address.

## BRITISH SOLDIERS SPEAK OUT ON IRELAND

In the wake of a new upsurge in Irish solidarity work comes a corresponding rise in the consciousness of individual soldiers about the true nature of their brutality. *British Soldiers Speak Out on Ireland* is a collection of confessions, and the total effect is a condemnation of raw British imperialism, in Ireland and around the world.

The pamphlet, which sells for 30p, is valuable primarily as an organising tool to sell to new people coming into contact with UOM. It has an attractive style, and the gut graphics pull the reader into the main bodies of text.

Many people overlook the true nature of the army. The image of the army as a defender of democracy and national pride is deeply ingrained. In fact, the prime

motivation given for setting up the Regular Army by Cromwell in the seventeenth century was the defense of the protestant religion and the suppression of the Irish. Under such banners the army has carried out the military policy of the British empire, which has been to terrorise, subjugate, undermine, torture and kill any and all human obstacles in the path of British domination.

A summary of recent British campaigns around the world, concentrating on Aden in the sixties, shows that their intentions in Ireland are identical in form and content. But the fact that the British have no business in Asia or Africa, and that the army is only protecting privilege, prove to be the contradictions that eventually brought the soldiers who speak out in this pamphlet to stop fighting. In these summaries of colonial oppression, first and last comes Ireland. Ireland is now the Brits' last stand, and perhaps all the more vicious because of it.

Included in the reports is a short historical account of the army, especially its role in Ireland from as early as 1169. Each subsequent story or recollection adds another facet of life in the army, of the way generals think, of the degradation and dehumanising of each soldier, and of the way some can rise above it. In the process we get an expanding picture of atrocity in the name of the Crown.

Many soldiers, unaware of their rights to be classified as conscientious objectors, are deserting because they do not want to be in Ireland. This pamphlet should help those already in the army to recognise their real role, and should discourage others from ever joining up.

Order from: Information on Ireland, 1 North End Road, London W14, or from the Lit Collective, 2a St Pauls Rd, London N1. Individual copies are 30p+

## The Singing Flame

There is not space in this issue for an adequate review of this important book, the second volume of memoirs by Ernie O'Malley, who organised, commanded and fought in both the War of Independence, and with the Republicans in the Civil War.

The second volume covers the Civil War period, and goes into detail about the plans, the emotions and the attitudes of those on the Republican side.

Soldiers don't often write well, but this book is good literature, as well as a historical memoir and a moving personal testimony. The sections which stick in the mind are those dealing with the author's and others' long periods in prison under the Free State government.

The bravery of men under threat of execution, O'Malley's own reactions and reflections on prison life, the horrors of betrayal by men who had formerly been comrades in the fight against the British, and above all the clear vision of what kind of Ireland Ernie O'Malley was fighting for shine through these pages.

The memoirs were discovered, prepared and edited and annotated by Frances Mary Blake. She has made an invaluable book available.

Available in Britain the end of July.  
£3.50. Paperback. Anvil.

## WHO, EXACTLY, IS FLYING BLIND?

(Flying Blind, by Bill Morrison, Royal Court)

The title, as I understand it, refers to the misguided people of Northern Ireland rushing violently headlong towards the destruction of civilisation as we know it. Or rather, as we knew it, or rather as the author's characters knew it, in their nice middle class Belfast suburb, before the war arrived to complicate their lives, deprive them of 'normality' and the bittersweet delight of agonising their way through the 'crisis of the middle classes' so sophisticatedly enjoyed by their counterparts in Britain, unhindered by senseless violence.

These are the people who are flying blind. Blind to the violence and repression on which their sacred 'normality' is based. And blind in their (and the author's) inability to analyse the situation through from the demands of the Civil Rights movement to the current situation without getting so bogged down in the paranoia of losing their privileges that they lose the thread somewhere about S Sunningdale, if not sooner.

The author himself is further flying blind if he thinks he can con an audience with a half-baked metaphor which parallels sexual impotence and political impotence. The political impasse in which they find themselves has rendered all his male subjects sexually impotent.

Now whilst it is true that sexual responses may well be influenced by a person's psychological state, if you suggest a metaphorical parallel between the sexual and political spheres of existence, you must at least follow the metaphor through. In this case the author exposes himself as a blatantly opportunistic exploiter of sex on stage. His sexy romp resolves itself happily among much nudity, wife-swapping and cheerful copulation all round, whilst the other half of the metaphor, the political half, disintegrates in confusion. Never has the West End been more perniciously courted.

Not that the premise on which the parallel was based had any real validity in any case, for when the author equates 'violence' with 'impotence', he intends impotence to mean 'inarticulacy'. This may well apply in the case of right wing sectarian thugs, but in the case of the oppressed minority the equation should read impotence as a function of society's persistent refusal to recognise or hear one's however reasonable case (the play itself is an example of this very response).

But all this is wasting time and space on a dangerous piece of non-analytical middle-class propaganda. Don't see it. Picket the theatre. Insist that audience and players alike understand that whilst the real issues remain untackled, such plays are totally meaningless except for the damaging effect they have of drawing audiences away from discussing the real issues.

RL

## ERNIE O'MALLEY THE SINGING FLAME





Another in the series of contributions by UTOM members, arguing one of the central reasons for supporting the Irish struggle.

'A nation that enslaves another cannot itself be free' wrote James Connolly, which follows a theme also espoused by Marx, Engels and Lenin. What is the reasoning behind their statements, and their insistence that the Irish struggle for self-determination is crucial also to the future of the common people of Britain?

National pride or chauvinism never fails to put the working class off the scent of their real oppressors. For centuries, the British ruling class have given licence to 'put the boot in' to the Irish nation. It was not without conviction that Cardinal Hume recently said that the English 'had inflicted terrible wounds on Ireland'. But what is lost sight of is that the rulers of the oppressor nation also increase their domination over their own working class.

In 1914, James Connolly was horrified at the disintegration of the European socialist movement. Incredibly, the common people of Europe were duped to flock to the 'colours' and slaughter each other by the millions. This same chauvinism renders the British workers incapable of seeing that the denial of the Irish people's self-determination by British imperialism is at the same time weakening their position in their own country.

This position becomes more critical today when the world economy is in decline. Some leading economists say that the era of growth is finished. It is a chilling thought that many people will not even have their labour power to sell in a situation of high technology and over-production. To preserve an archaic economic system, Britain is moving towards a 'strong' or police state. The most effective trump card the ruling class hold to bring this situation about is the Irish struggle. Already, under the guise of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, civil rights are being whittled away and the state forces are increasing their techniques and sophisticated weaponry for civil control.

The professional British Army is fighting its last colonial war in Ireland. It is creating a bastion of reaction which will rebound onto the working class of this country. There is a strong link here too, between the loyalist organisations and the British National Front. The British ruling class is determined to put down the Irish republican struggle, and

## DIARY OF EVENTS

- Jun 21 SAS ambush of bomb carrying Provisionals. 3 IRA men and one passerby shot dead. IRA men carried no guns.
- 22 4 RUC men injured in bombing.
- 23 New investment: car assembly plant at Dunmurry, Belfast (near Catholic West Belfast). Funded by N.I.Develop. Agency and US car components co. £30m, 2000 jobs. Other contender was Ferenka site in the South.
- 24 Report: Extra cost to British state of operations in North, not counting economic help, is about £100m p.a. on security and £50m on compensation.
- Former Brit soldier and informer killed. 3 Brits injured. UDR man shot.
- 25 Paddy Devlin involved in formation of new party for the North in September. To be called United Labour Party. Programme includes bill of rights, a strengthened RUC and a call for a constitution that could only be changed by majority and if it increased security.
- 27 New peace group formed in South: "Co-op North".
- EEC proposes £45m development of infrastructure straddling border: Co's Donegal and Derry and Tyrone. Plan to include roads, bridge, port facilities, post & telecommunications. Report points out Donegal has worst housing in Ireland; Derry loses 1500 migrants per year, and has wage levels 80% of those in Britain
- 29 Announcement of internal investigation into police brutality at Monaghan, following a series of private summonses against police arising from police action at SF rally.
- Jul 1 N.I. Unemployment figures: 11.4% overall. Newry and Strabane 20%; Ballymurphy 32%; Catholic W. Belfast 42%; Protestant E. Belfast 8%.
- 3 Two members of N.I. police authority resign over torture issue handling. Claim authority not independent. Tory Party talk of making Provisional Sinn Fein illegal.
- 4 S. Ireland: health service roughly on par with UK to be introduced next year.
- 5 Beginning of protests by Irish prisoners in British jails.
- 6 Shit thrown at MP's in effort to call attention to Prisoners in H Blocks. Hits mace, 'symbol of British sovereignty'. More prisoners protests. Demonstrations at Buckingham Palace and in Oxford Street in support of prisoners in British jails. Hunger strikes at Parkhurst, Long Lartin, 9 on roof at Gartree, since day before.
- 7 Prisoners on roof at Gartree for 52 hours.
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions votes no debate on the situation in the Six Counties.
- 9 London demonstration in support of Prisoner of War Status. Around 5000.
- 10 Provisional IRA release RUC man's body.
- ICTU conference for free contraception.
- EEC currency reform: Ireland may break from sterling.
- 11 John Boyle killed by SAS investigating arms dump reported by boy's father.
- Mason's private inquiry into torture: will not investigate any 'allegations', purpose will be to consider "what improvements can be made to protect police from unjustified allegations as well as suspects from maltreatment". SDLP to boycott.
- 12 Orange marches include Donegal (first time for 9 years), and Keady, S. Armagh (first for 15 years).
- Soldier killed in S. Armagh.
- 13 All-party group of MP's barred from proposed visit to Long Kesh H Blocks.
- 16 7 bombs central Belfast. Comme
- Commemoration at grave of Frank Stagg.
- 17 Irish Times publishes criticisms of Curragh prison in South by Prison Visiting Committee: absence of work and training facilities; use of solitary for men with psychiatric problems, etc. Annual reports, the article says, should legally be published yearly, but are not.
- These reports have made the same criticisms of the Curragh since 1972.
- 19 British soldier killed.

once again manoeuvre a political defeat, as it did so expertly in the 1920s by partition and the instigation of the Irish civil war of 1922-23.

In such an event the British state would be so strengthened that in a period of continuing economic decline, it would become increasingly harder to fight back against the imposition of declining living standards and repressive laws.

The British working class is politically one of the weakest in Europe. We live in a fragmented society that is wide open to state repression. Unless the working class wake up to the political reality of the Irish struggle, they will be heading for a massive setback.

John Devereaux

### NEW BADGES

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Both badges from: Committee for a Free Ireland, 1 North End Rd, London W14. Or they can be ordered from the Literature Collective, Box 10, 2a St Pauls Rd, N1.

**BEHIND****THE****SUNDAY****TIMES**

Last month the *Sunday Times* proudly presented its momentous 4th major article of the decade on the problem of Northern Ireland. Clapping themselves on the back for producing articles at the rate of one every 30 months on what they call a 'tragic' situation, they presented their readers with two 4-page hunks of print to wade through.

They seemed to take a delight in making the whole thing almost unbearably complicated. The reader was rushed through secret talks, nods and whispers at such a rate of knots that the effect was something like the verbal equivalent of white noise. The question mark loomed large everywhere — 'Did the negotiations take place? Did the government hoodwink the Provos? Possibly one, possible the other, but both are hard to believe.' And then after gems of analysis like that, we flit on to yet another round of secret talks, reports of gossip, what someone was supposed to have said to somebody else, etc.

It's a fine bit of journalistic slight of hand. Reading it once over an informed reader might think the facts worth checking; if s/he did so it would prove hard to find any facts, true or false.

There is, however, a certain amount of information in the articles which most British readers are not aware of. In 1975, the British government actually negotiated a truce with the Provo leaders as part of which they agreed to withdraw over a period of years — though they 'could not say so publicly'. However they had reckoned without the 'restive Protestants' ..... 'On the part of the military there was a conscious effort to observe the truce, but on the part of the police there was a conscious effort to wreck it. The RUC Chief Constable, so far from making his men less visible..... pulled them in from all over Northern Ireland to send them into Catholic West Belfast.' At any rate, the government has since tried to play down this embarrassing secret agreement with the 'men of violence', even claiming that the Provos had misunderstood the whole episode, or had been deliberately hoodwinked by the Brits. Incidentally, it is not the first time that the British government has treated its opponents alternately as 'terrorists' and as neo-colonial overseers. Having fought the Republicans until 1921, they then invited them to London and forced them to accept a divided Ireland. They have done the same with Kenyatta, Nkomo and other African liberation struggle leaders.

### DISTORTION

In the articles the British government is described as trying to extricate itself from a costly and embarrassing situation in the North, and increasingly terrified of Provo bombs in England. They attempted, says the *Sunday Times*, to bring together Catholic and Protestant 'moderates' to replace them. The theme of the article seems to be that 'Britain has imperceptibly lost the will and the ability to impose a solution'. Wilson, they say, openly contemplated a united Ireland and Merlyn Rees is reported as saying: 'Frankly we have not the slightest desire to stay in Ireland and the quicker we are out the better'. The impression the *Sunday Times* is trying to give is that Rees and Co. are actually



in the North with no interests of their own to defend, and out of some sense of moral obligation to look after the Irish.

### REAL MOTIVES

But is this really so? They may have contemplated withdrawal at a certain point, but this would not be the result of some sudden conversion. In 1921 it was in the interests of the British Empire to retain direct control over

Ulster, the only industrially developed and lucrative part of Ireland. It might now be that it is in the interests of British capitalism to get out. After all, the Republic now has become thoroughly integrated and dominated as part of European/American capitalism, and a united but subservient 32 counties could be still more profitable for the multi-nationals. There need be only one transport and communications network and one headquarters instead of two in Belfast and Dublin. On the other hand there are advantages to be had from other tactics too. Repression is currently favoured, but since the 6 county situation seems too complex to be easily solved (the loyalists openly supported by Mrs Thatcher in her recent visit, for example), the idea of an 'independent' 6 county state is also being kicked around. But whatever 'solution' the British government comes up with, it will only be acting in the interests of British capital.

### THE ABSENT COMMUNITY

The articles tell you nothing about the Catholic and Loyalist movements as a whole, and nothing about the brutality of day-to-day existence there, or how the people in the communities are involved in the struggle. The people exist, in the *Sunday Times*, as a shadowy, amorphous mass manipulated by their leaders. There's the standard sexist view of women — a picture caption reads: 'The women can do no more than stand apprehensive and afraid', and all the photos of women show them weeping and praying. The IRA are designated a Mafia of criminals surveying through corruption and extortion within the Catholic areas. They are the 'hard men' intimidating the passive community ..... 'hollow-eyed, chain-smoking David O'Connell'. The *Sunday Times* ignores the fact that the IRA clearly could not survive without the active support of the community among whom it exists.

### LONG KESH IGNORED

The story of how those now imprisoned for the Birmingham bombings were arrested sounds as if it were taken down verbatim from an official police spokesman, with a pat on the back for 'alert' police officer — no reference to the fact that even by the standards of bourgeois journalism, there is some doubt about their supposed guilt, and no mention of Father Faul's documentation of the frame-up\*: an example of how events surrounded by doubt gain the weight of absolute truth by being laid down in such pompous tones in a 'respectable' newspaper. Meanwhile events going on today are ignored by the paper. In-depth coverage of the situation in Long Kesh for instance would be unthinkable. Perhaps that's because facts are easier to shuffle around when they are further back in the past.

\* Father Denis Faul and Father Raymond Murray — 'The Birmingham Framework', available through the Republican Centre, 170a Falls Road, Belfast, 50p.