

TROOPS OUT

Paper of the United Troops Out Movement

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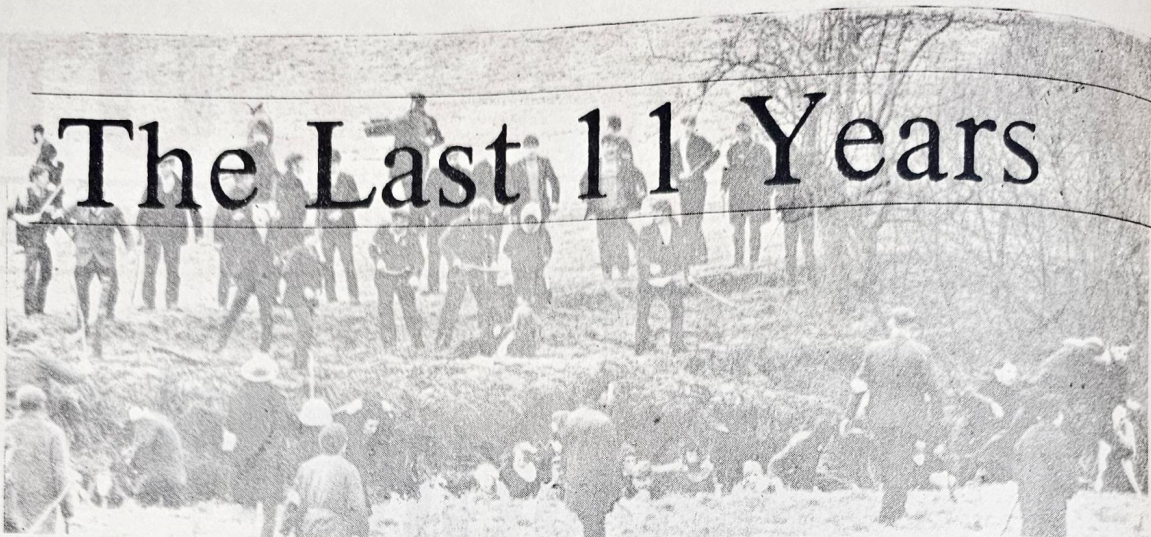
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ENOUGH!



Special issue:

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



The Last 11 Years

People's Democracy civil rights march ambushed by Loyalists at Burntollet Bridge, January, 1969.

1968: The North explodes, as peaceful Catholic civil rights marchers are attacked by police, B Special reserves and Loyalist mobs. By the end of year N.I. Prime Minister O'Neill has been pushed into vague promises of reforms.

1969: British troops sent in in August, after 7 months of escalating violence beginning with the ambush of the People's Democracy Belfast to Derry march in January. Troops are sent first to the Bogside, where the inhabitants have withstood sustained attacks by the RUC and the B Specials. Self defence and IRA re-armament mark the year. The Army is welcomed at first. The Official Unionist Party (OUP) has begun to crack at the seams as Loyalist opposition to reforms hardens, and PM O'Neill is forced to resign. Minority Stormont MP's form Social Democratic and Labour Party and begin boycotting Stormont.

1970: Army concentrates most of its activity on raiding and harrasing the Catholic ghetto areas, and is seen to be protecting Orange Order marches. Harsh new 'law and order' measures aimed at

rioters are rushed through Stormont. Unionists split. Sinn Fein (and the IRA) split over priority to be given to armed struggle and the border. At first 'Officials' sound more 'left-wing', but the 'Provisionals' have greater support in most ghetto areas.

1971: Internment is reintroduced in August, and hundreds of Catholics are dragged from their homes and thrown into prison without trial. Early in the year, the first soldiers die as IRA begins attacks on Army. Nationalists respond to internment with massive protest marches, no-go areas, a bombing campaign and a rent and rates strike. A second N.I. Prime Minister is toppled (Chichester-Clark) and Faulkner takes over. Unionist splits widen.

1972: Stormont is dissolved in March, and replaced by direct rule from Westminster. In January, the paratroopers kill 13 unarmed men during an anti-internment march in Derry (Bloody Sunday). Under pressure from Unionist politicians, the Army invades and occupies the nationalist no-go areas (Operation Motorman). A

Loyalist terror campaign against Catholics begun in the spring continues and grows throughout the year (with inevitable reprisal killings).

1973: Britain's first attempt at a political solution: a new Assembly, which is to have a power-sharing Executive is set up, and plans are made by the end of the year for a Council of Ireland to give some recognition to the 'Irish Dimension'. But after Assembly elections, only the Official Unionists and the SDLP are committed to power-sharing, with the majority of Unionists against it and the nationalist communities supporting Republican demands for an end to the N.I. State. December talks on a Council of Ireland (Sunningdale) anger Loyalists. The Special Powers Act is reactivated, providing for 'terrorists' to be tried in no-jury courts (although most are still interned). Loyalist murder campaign continues.

1974: The new power-sharing executive takes office in January, and lasts only until the strike in May called by the Ulster Workers Council, which paralyses Northern Ireland. Power-sharing ends



Long Kesh prison, burned down by internees. 1974.



West Belfast women break Army curfew to bring food to people of the Lower Falls area, Belfast. 1970.



Turf Lodge women: against Army occupation; for political status. Belfast. 1976.

with the resignation of the Official Unionist group from the Executive. In the October Westminster elections, the coalition United Ulster Unionist Council gain bigger majority of Unionist votes. The Prevention of Terrorism Act is passed at the end of the year, after a Provisional IRA bombing campaign in Britain.

1975: Two IRA cease fires during the year, in return for minor concessions. The end of internment is announced, and batches of internees are released. At the same time, the N.I. Office announces that from March of the next year, anyone convicted of offences connected with 'terrorism' will no longer have political status. (This special category — as the government persisted in calling it — was won after hunger strikes of republican prisoners in 1972.) Second attempted political solution by Britain — a Constitutional Convention) elects a new potential N.I. government, with hard-line Unionists winning an absolute majority. The Convention meets and recommends a return to majority rule.

1976: The Convention is dissolved, and direct rule continues. Roy Mason, the new Labour N.I. Secretary announces the third try at a solution: eliminate the IRA. Processing of republican suspects through the no-jury 'Diplock' courts picks up. In September the first sentenced republican prisoner to be denied political status starts the 'blanket protest' by refusing to accept criminalisation, by wearing prison clothes and doing

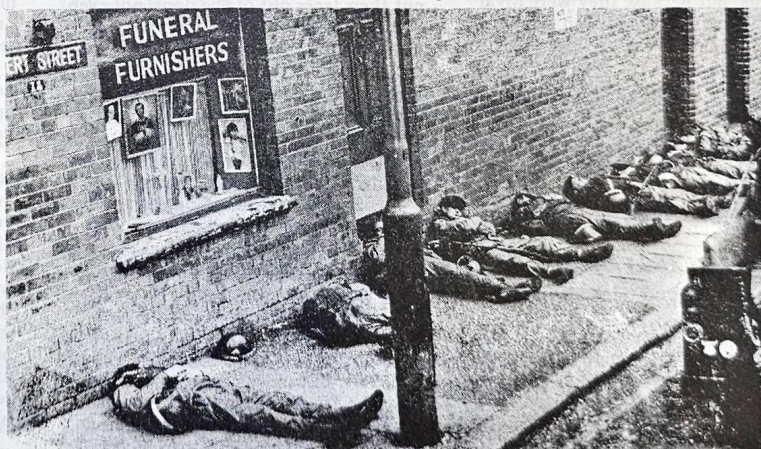
prison work. Britain is found guilty at Strasbourg Human Rights Court of 'inhuman and degrading treatment' of internees who were tortured during interrogation. Deaths of 2 children when hit by a car driven by an IRA man who has just been shot dead by soldiers leads to formation of the Peace People, immediately promoted by media as the 'real voice' of Ulster. Women in Belfast start the Relatives Action Committee, to fight for a return of political status.

1977: Mason boasts increased conviction rate for 'terrorist' offences — coinciding with increased incidence of beatings and torture of suspects in RUC interrogation centres. Second Loyalist strike, in May, is

less successful than the one in 1974, but as price of calling it off, Mason promises strikers more arms and numbers for RUC and UDR, more use of SAS. Loyalists split during strike; some supporting UDI, some the link with Britain. The Relatives Action Committee grow; support for Peace People declines as they denounce IRA — but not Army or security forces — violence.

1978: Despite constant claims by Mason that the IRA is near defeat, their campaign of economic bombing escalates. Amnesty Report finds evidence of RUC 'mistreatment' of suspects. 'H Block' marches are a prominent feature of the year, and by the end of the year Britain is getting a very bad press as the conditions — and the protests — of the 'blanket men' and the women prisoners in Armagh get international attention.

1979: Tory spokesperson on N.I. Airey Neave is blown up leaving the House of Commons by an INLA planted car bomb. In the new Tory Government elected in May Humphrey Atkins takes over as N.I. Secretary — pledges to 'destroy the men of violence' (who according to a secret army document are as undestroyed as ever). Britain refuses to concede political status, but the first 'blanket men' survive the horrors of H Block and are released, to massive welcome. In first EEC elections in the North, Paisley comes out as by far most popular Unionist figure, virtually wiping out the Official Unionists. The 'blanket protests' go on, IRA military activity is at a high level, and there is no British solution of any kind in sight.



Soldiers at rest. Belfast. 1970.



Greetings to the new Northern Ireland Secretary. Falls Road, Belfast. 1979. (IFL)

We ask Maura McCrory and Mary Enwright from West Belfast to look back over the last 11 years and some of the most important events. Both women are involved in the Relatives Action Committees, and have been since they began in 1976, and in struggles before the H Block protests.

T.O. What was it like at the time of the 1968/69 civil rights marches?

Mary Enwright: It seemed more a student thing at first. Everybody from the nationalist community agreed with the demands, but initially everybody couldn't get involved - people with young children - it was sort of a new thing.

I remember watching the whole Burntollet thing on the television, and when the treatment of the marchers came on I thought 'that's it, the bastards have started again'. You were not entitled to march for anything, and when you did they had just made a conscious decision that they were going to beat you off the streets. The minority were just not going to have a say. They were not going to get simple things like good housing, or fair whatever.

T.O. Were you surprised at the Protestant reaction?

Maura McCrory: No. This is built in with the Protestants, by the British government. They didn't keep the Protestants above us because they were Protestants, but because they were loyal to them. So we felt like second class citizens, the same as the blacks would feel in England.

T.O. Did you think their demands would be won?

M.E. I didn't honestly think they would get anywhere, but you felt a sense of pride that people were again getting off their knees. You said to yourself, 'This is great!'

'THE ARMY MEANS TROUBLE'

T.O. What did you think when the army came in?

M.E. I'd have to say there was a sense of relief, but you knew that wasn't going to be the end of it. I remember saying to my daddy, as we were going down the road past the soldiers, 'What do you think?', and he says to me, 'I've seen them here before. The army means trouble'.

M.M. It was just like a war. Everywhere was burning, the roads black with burnt out cars. Most of the people in those areas where the streets were burnt out by Loyalists did feel relieved, because they thought the army were there to help them; that they were going to stop the Protestants.

M.E. You had the Labour government in then, and Merlyn Rees was sounding very sympathetic. . . . I heard them with my own ears on the television saying 'we can't have this discrimination going on'. The Labour government was beginning to listen to what was going on. And you were taken in because you weren't politicised.

Off Our Knees and Fighting Back — R.A.C. Women from Belfast



Maura McCrory, Chairperson of Belfast Central Relatives Action Committee (IFL)

And then it did hit you. You saw the change from the so-called peacekeeping role till they were just in our areas to keep us down.

T.O. When did people's views change?

M.M. Curfew came along [in July 1970]. People were actually imprisoned in their houses. They weren't allowed to put their faces out of the door, not even allowed to go to the window.

M.E. There was a boy shot dead during the curfew . . . if you just put your face outside the door . . .

M.M. But while they had the people imprisoned in their homes what the army was doing was raiding pubs and shops, looting and raiding to their hearts' content. We all organised ourselves into a big march down the Falls Road and we went right through, into the curfew area. Everywhere we went, to give the people a bit of bread, or a bit of milk where they had kids told you what the army was doing. They were just living in fear and terror. The army had completely changed their role. But older people said this was what the army was always like. It just took them that length of time to show their own true face. And then they lost all credibility.

'THERE WAS NOBODY THAT WASN'T TOUCHED BY INTERNMENT'

M.M. And then the next year internment came in. The people all set up no go areas and you weren't allowed through unless they knew who you were. The women got themselves together and started crash courses of first aid. We made teas, did anything we could to help.

M.E. There was nobody that wasn't touched by internment. If it wasn't your husband it was your brother, your cousin, your nephew.

M.M. It wasn't just men they interned. There's young people now in H Block that have been interned from 15 years of

age, and have been let out, and picked up after a couple of months, and brought in to Castlereagh with trumped up charges against them, and they're back in now, and on the blanket.

T.O. What had the most effect in ending internment?

M.E. Basically, what brought internment to an end was the pressure that was on the streets aligned with the military really large. . . . Marches everywhere.

M.M. When the Kesh was burned down [in 1974] you couldn't have got moving on the Falls Road - from the bottom to the top, everybody was out.

M.E. Of course, internationally it was very bad for the Brits to have internment because you're held without trial. And being the hypocrites that they are, they didn't like the name they were getting. So they thought up something different, which was legalised internment: Lift them and hold them on remand for a long time. And next you had the Diplock no-jury courts - supposedly because the juries were all being intimidated, but really because they wanted internment, but they didn't want it on the books.

'THE WOMEN UNDERSTOOD'

T.O. Up until the Relatives Action Committees got going, how were the women organised? And what did they do?

M.M. During internment and the no go areas, as I've said, we did anything we could to help.

M.E. The men were on the barricades, four hours on, four hours off, and they went to different houses, and you made sure there was plenty of food and all that. But it was always a supportive type of role that we played then.

M.M. Well, the first aid role was more or less an independent role for the women. They could go out if there was trouble and be along with the men and look after anybody that was hurt. It was

the first feeling of independence that the women really got, and it was from there that they kept on going.

M.E. It wasn't just the fact that it was first aid. For the women, they were leaving their houses and going out to meetings, and discussing things. It was the breaking up of staying in the houses.

There were always women who went on the marches — a lot of women, and they took their families and all with them. And there were always women involved in Sinn Féin, and in the military campaign. But women weren't really organised.

The Relatives Action Committees was the first thing that was women actually getting together, and getting organised, and deciding politically what they wanted to do. That's not to say that the RAC is all women — it isn't. But initially, when it got off the ground it was all women. It was women who had done Green Cross [prisoners welfare], and who had always been involved.

And when the political status issue came along, they just felt that it was time.

There wasn't really anything being done then, because nobody knew where the first prisoner who wouldn't have special status would get sentenced. Everybody was waiting.

And the women understood that it was a terribly important thing, and that the criminalisation policy had to be broken. We knew that we would have to get organised for when the first prisoner got sentenced.

'IT WAS A THING THEY COULD WORK ON'

M.M. All the organisations were campaigning on a broader base; 'Brits out', and what have you, and we wanted to work on a single issue, because we thought that this would be the easiest thing won, and the quickest thing won. And that once it was won, it would show to the world that there is a war going on here.

Then we could work on troops out. This is why, I think, the women became involved — because it was a one-issue thing that they could work on. And it was so close to their whole way of life that they felt they had to become involved. Not to become involved was to let their children down.

M.E. But while the Relatives Action Committees were a single issue campaign on political status, we couldn't ignore repression and harassment; and the Diplock Courts. Part of our constitution is that we take in all of these things, because they relate to the H Blocks. You can't just say 'H Block' and 'Political Status', you have to explain why they are entitled to it.

'GET THE TROOPS OUT'

T.O. Over the 11 years, do you see any difference between Labour and Tory policy?

M.E. No. One appears not so blatant as the other, but there really isn't any difference in the way they look at Ireland. Neither of them will take any sort of stand that is going to give us what we

want, which is basically self determination for the Irish people, and get the troops out.

T.O. A lot of people in England still believe there'd be more trouble if the troops left.

M.E. If those people would just come and look around, even for a day, they'll realise that the troops aren't here to do peacekeeping, they're here to keep us down. 'Keep the Paddies down', 'keep them on their knees'. But they're off their knees, and there's no way you can turn back the clock.

M.M. If the British totally withdrew, there wouldn't be any problems that we couldn't solve as Irish people. This blood-bath thing that is supposed to be hanging over our heads — that's British propaganda. The Irish people know that they can handle what problems come, and they'll not be as bad as what they try to make out.

M.E. We have people dying now. We have innocent people being murdered. People are dying in the jails — that's just a slow death. I don't see that the position would be worse at all. There's no way that if the Brits withdraw we're all going to be out murdering each other.

It would be an awful big help to us if the troops were withdrawn tomorrow. You see, if the troops weren't there, what would the Loyalists do? Although they have the RUC and the UDR, still they want the British troops to back them up. So if you take them out, they're going to have to come to some arrangement. I'm not sure what that is, but it is up to the Irish people to do it.

'YOU GET MORE POLITICAL'

T.O. Looking back over the whole period, what do you see has changed?

M.E. You got more political. Before this thing started I never was interested in politics. You were just a second class citizen and you just went along with it.

First of all, you realised that just living's political — especially in the situation that we're forced to live in. Then you said to yourself, okay, how do we go about it, we'll go out on the streets and we'll march — like the civil rights people did, and they got on the streets and marched and they were beat off the streets.

Young people who were at school when the civil rights movement started saw what happened, and they realised that all the marches in the world wasn't going to get us anything. That while you do need people in the streets, without the armed struggle you'd just have been second class citizens all over again.

M.M. If the government had given in and implemented reforms early on there probably wouldn't have been a lot of trouble, because people would have taken whatever crumbs they were prepared to throw out. But they didn't. They just put the boot down every time. And the people, once they had risen, felt it very difficult to go back again, so a lot of the people just armed themselves and got into the IRA. Because it was the only

way. And to this day things haven't changed.

I think the civil rights movement failed because they were trying to dissociate themselves from the people who were carrying on the armed struggle. But what it did do was to leave the people feeling that they could do something as a mass, and that feeling never left the people.

The Republican movement got that feeling back when they worked with people. And they got full support, and they still have it today. When the Relatives Action Committees came about the people still had the feeling in them that they could do something. But it does take both things. It does take mass action, but you must always have the military struggle.

'IT'S ALL LEARNING'

T.O. What other kinds of organising have gone?

M.M. People have formed themselves into associations — like the peoples co-op, and the taxi associations.

M.E. You have a couple of co-ops in West Belfast. People will blame them for not doing one thing, or another, but they are trying, by trial and error, to do something for the people. You have people getting involved in community things. It is the people themselves organising these things that wouldn't have been done before. When people get that wee bit of power they begin to realise that the ordinary people could run the country much better than Labour or Conservatives. But it's all learning.

In ten years we've all learned a lot. And what mightn't we learn in 20 years? Because it's going to go on a long time. People would like it to be over tomorrow, but there's no way it's going to be over tomorrow. The start of it is to get the troops out, but that's only the start.

..... Ad

Ireland: the issues at stake. Revolutionary Communist Tendency Dayschool. Saturday 1 September, 10 a.m. — 5 p.m. Speakers: Frank Richards, Phil Murphy. 7 p.m. 'Patriot Game' film. For further details ring 01 274 3951.

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FRIDAY 14th SEPTEMBER
CONWAY HALL 8.00pm onwards
8.00pm - come early

10 Questions about Northern Ireland

WHAT'S GOING ON IN NORTHERN IRELAND?

A war. The latest (and hopefully the last) in a series of wars Irish people have fought against British occupation since Strongbow first invaded Ireland in 1169 (with a mandate from an English Pope). If this war was going on in any other British colony it would be recognised as a war of national liberation. But as it's going on in Northern Ireland, which is supposed to be part of the United Kingdom, it is an 'insoluble problem'.

ISN'T IT REALLY ABOUT RELIGION?

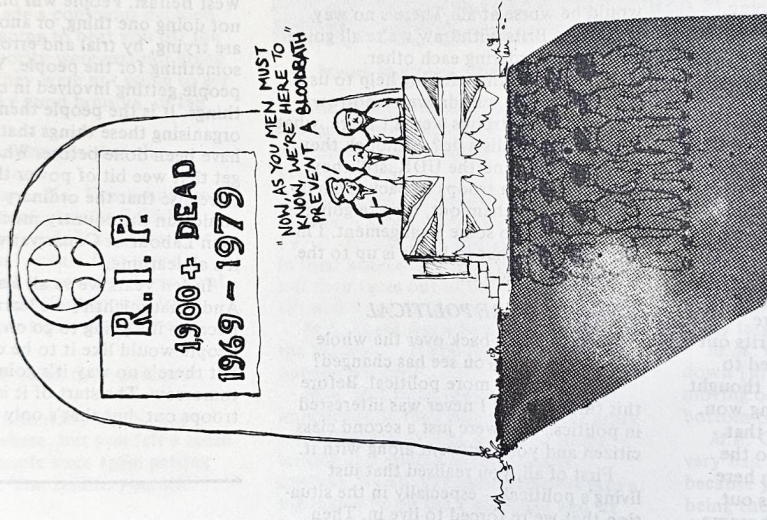
No. In the 1600's much of northeast Ireland was given to Protestant settlers who because of their religion could be relied on to remain 'loyal' to the English crown, while the native Catholic Irish were dispossessed. Ever since the Protestant — or Loyalist enclaves have had a siege mentality: 'what we have we hold', and have seen the attempts by the majority of the Irish to gain freedom from Britain as attacks on both their religion and their position of economic dominance. This has been very useful to Britain, and to the Protestant bosses, who have been able to use religion to divide off the Protestant work force from their natural allies, the Catholic work force. In Loyalist folklore, the nationalist minority in Northern Ireland occupy the role of 'natives'. If only the natives had had the foresight to be born black it would all be a lot clearer.

SHOULDN'T WE RESPECT THE WISHES OF THE MAJORITY TO REMAIN BRITISH?

Which majority are you talking about? The Protestant/Loyalist/Unionist majority in the North was created by Britain in 1921 with the partition of Ireland against the wishes of the majority of *all* the Irish people. For 50 years the Loyalist majority had a state of their own where they were able to indulge their wishes by oppressing the minority. During most of that period there has been no outcry from British trade unionists or the labour movement against the denial of civil rights to Catholics. But when the minority got off their knees and began demanding their rights, the army was sent in to

thousands rotting in prison, and the sacrifice of unemployed British youths used as cannon fodder. How many deaths make a bloodbath? The people in the republican ghettos who are supposed to be the main victims in any future bloodbath, want the troops out right now.

Whereas Unionists like Paisley want more troops brought in to protect 'Ulster' against the Pope, the taigues, and the godless red hordes who threaten it.



AREN'T YOU ASKING US TO SUPPORT TERRORISTS?

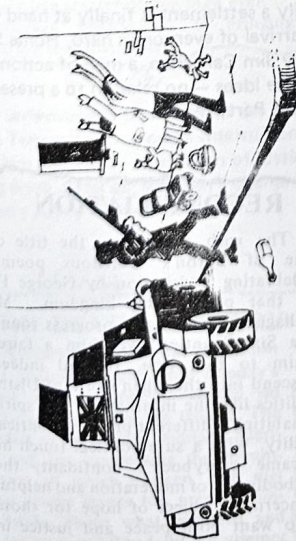
We're asking you to stop supporting terrorists. It is the British army and the 'security forces' who are making war on civilians. The army knows that the IRA aren't 'isolated terrorists', although it suits their purposes to call them that. A recently leaked secret Army document gives their real 'assessment of the IRA: well trained, well equipped, well organised, and supported by the working class nationalist community. The army also knows that Protestant civilians are not the targets of the IRA.

WHY DON'T THE CATHOLIC WORKERS TRY TO UNITE WITH THE PROTESTANT WORKERS?

That suggestion is usually made by people who should know better, but who can't cope with the reality that the Border divides not only Ireland, but the working class in the North. The civil rights movement, the republicans and socialists have tried appealing to Protestant workers. But many of them are still fervent supporters of bigots like Ian Paisley. It is the working class in the Catholic ghettos who suffer the most from economic and political oppression. What are they supposed to do? Wait another 50 years till Protestant workers see where their real interests lie? Telling them to forget their nationalist aspirations in the name of class unity is like telling black South Africans to forget



demanding their rights, the army was sent in to preserve the state. Since then, successive British governments have solemnly pledged to 'Keep Ulster British' in line with majority wishes. The Loyalist majority is Britain's justification for keeping Ireland divided.



COULDN'T BRITAIN JUST GIVE THE CATHOLICS THEIR CIVIL RIGHTS?

If the N. I. government had granted Catholic demands for civil rights in 1968 or 1969, that might have been a temporary solution. But these peaceful demands were met with clubs and bullets and mob attacks. The nationalist minority aren't asking any more for their civil rights within Northern Ireland. They don't believe the state can or should be reformed. They are demanding a united Ireland where they can be free of domination, economic and political. Since the British government seems determined to hold on to Northern Ireland, it's nonsense to talk about them giving the minority what they want. Anyway, you can't 'give' people their freedom — you can only stop oppressing them.

JOIN THE UNITED TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT!

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

I would like to join/be sent information about the United Troops Out Movement

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DIDN'T THE ARMY GO IN TO KEEP THE PEACE?

Yes... but whose peace? The army was called in by the Unionist government to 'maintain civil order' at a time when the people in the Catholic ghettos of Derry and Belfast had organised themselves to beat back armed invasion by those other peacekeepers — the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the B Specials. In order to prevent a state of open war the army intervened between the police and the barricades of the ghettos. At first many Catholics did welcome the army. It gave them a brief rest. But within a few months they found themselves being attacked by the RUC and the army. This was hardly surprising, as the army was there to support the Loyalist government. Faced with this double attack, the Irish Republican Army and other groups re-armed to defend the ghettos, and later went on the offensive. Murder, torture, beatings and raids might sound like peacekeeping to some people, but no to those who suffer these attentions from the British army.

WOULDN'T THERE BE A BLOODBATH IF THEY LEFT?

The 'bloodbath' prediction has been used to justify British imperialism the world over. Do you really believe Britain has a duty to 'civilise the natives'? The army isn't there to prevent a bloodbath, it's there to hold on to Northern Ireland, even at the cost of nearly 2000 dead, 20,000 seriously injured, other



WHAT CAN WE DO?

If you are satisfied with the 'explanations' the media have been churning out for the last 10 years, there's nothing you can do but bury your head in the sand. But if you really want to see an end to the violence, you'll need to accept some of our arguments. We want troops out because we believe that only when the army stops propping up Loyalist illusions will the Loyalists begin to re-think their position, and to come to some sort of accommodation with the desire of the majority of the Irish for a united country. We can't promise that troop withdrawal would end the violence, but we believe it would be the beginning of an end. And when we say 'troops out' we also mean the dismantling of the armed security forces who are being groomed to take their place if the army's presence becomes too embarrassing to the British government. You can play a positive role by joining us in the call for Troops Out Now.

BUT YOU WANT THEM TO LEAVE RIGHT NOW! THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE. THERE WOULD BE CHAOS!

The only further chaos immediate troop withdrawal would cause is in trying to cram all 20,000 of them on one ferry. If you accept the right of the Irish people to self determination, and if you agree that British troops are prolonging, not stopping the violence, then it makes sense to call for their immediate withdrawal.

CHANGING WITH



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When in print, the *Times* newspaper, like all the British press, trusted wholeheartedly in the machinery of bourgeois democracy, especially its most sacrosanct aspects — Parliament and the legal system. More than any other daily it mirrored establishment thinking and the traditional British values such as justice being 'seen to be done', rather than it actually taking place.

However, through ten years struggle in the North of Ireland these 'magnanimous traditions' gave support to a corrupt status quo and papers like the *Times* only reluctantly criticised the worst of Stormont excesses and abuses when these were clearly exposed by the early Civil Rights Movement.

The following editorials show how the establishment propagandists portrayed the situation, justifying the state's every excess yet realising its limitations, only to come to a state gen years later when each repressive measure had been surpassed and what one day was described as 'unthinkable' the next day became 'justifiable'.

After fifty years the broken facade of democracy in the North forced a reluctant British establishment to admit to some long standing Nationalist grievances.

QUESTIONS FOR ULSTER

The Londonderry demonstrations were held in defiance of a ban on them. But such bans on demonstrations are quite usual in Ulster, and this demonstration was planned to protest against jerry-mandering of electoral boundaries which few deny is widespread in Ulster and amounts to a scandal in Londonderry itself. 7/10/68

But hopefully some reforms from Stormont would stop any disorder and preclude the building of a mass movement.

A WAY FORWARD FOR ULSTER

The organizers of the civil rights campaign in Northern Ireland should ease up for a bit, even on a calculation of the interests of the cause they espouse. Useful concessions have already been won from the Stormont Government.

The minority still has grievances. Who has not?

So far, at the price of some temporary loss of civil control, the police have prevented a serious clash. But if the leaders of the civil rights movement persevere in their mass tactics the pace will get hotter, with a serious risk of disorder. 7/12/68

Still with trust in the reformability of Stormont and the system, the election is seen to offer a chance for moderation through Terrance O'Neill, county squire and member of the Orange Lodge.

A COUPON FOR ULSTER?

The Unionist Party has been in political control ever since the foundation of the Northern Ireland Parliament nearly fifty years ago. It began as, and has remained, a sectarian party of the majority. It would be quite wrong to say that the governments it has provided have governed solely in the interests of that majority. There have been indications of solid popular approval for the reforming moderation of Captain O'Neill's Government and for the abatement of communal distrust which is its objective. 5/2/69

Could this be a genuine change of heart from the Unionist ascendancy after fifty years of one party rule, controlling the courts, police, civil, service, housing and all the major N. Irish institutions?

ULSTER SHOWS THE WAY

The new government at Stormont is firmly committed to the introduction of a universal adult franchise for the next local elections. . . .

It is a long time since the rest of the United Kingdom has been able to look to Northern Ireland for a lead in constitutional improvement. The lead has now been given, and it ought to be followed. 16/5/69

Well, these reforms take time and Stormont is trying, but what's this about the troops going in? That is not a good idea.

MOB VIOLENCE IN ULSTER

That leaves the possibility of either bringing in the British police or of using troops for crowd control. Neither idea is likely to be regarded with favour in London, where there is a sensible determination to leave the preservation of order in Northern Ireland to Northern Irishmen. Even a limited intervention would be a move that could have grave consequences both for Ulster and the rest of the United Kingdom. 4/8/69

On the other hand, given the present situation

ARMS OVER ULSTER

Mob rule has parts of Ulster in its grip, and both the Northern Irish and the United Kingdom authorities have rightly recognized the necessity of calling on the army to assist in the work of pacification.

Th. troops are instructed to be strictly impartial between the two main contending sides; their presence will be justified if it allows the search for civil peace and civil progress to be resumed. . . . But when British troops are needed to keep order in the six counties, nearly fifty years after partition, then the possibility must be faced that the Irish settlement has proved a failure. 16/8/69

WHAT THE TROOPS MEAN

The two principal cities of Northern Ireland are now patrolled by British troops, who alone can prevent Protestant and Catholic Irish from killing one another, and who alone can preserve the rudiments of public order in the six counties. 15/8/69

NEXT STEPS IN ULSTER

The calm that returned yesterday to the streets of Northern Ireland was not enforced by the troops now patrolling them. It came because troops are acceptable to both communities as disciplined and impartial instruments of order. It will last only so long as they remain acceptable. There is very little risk that they will lose that good opinion through any ill-discipline, partiality or bungled leadership on their part.

If the peace of Ulster hinged only on the conduct of the soldiery one could count the trouble as over. 18/8/69

Surely a settlement is finally at hand with the arrival of everyone's hero, Home Secretary Jim Callaghan, a man of action and positive ideas — no relation to a present Labour Party leader.

RECONCILIATION

The Irish Avatar was the title of one of Byron's scurrilous poems, celebrating a visitation by George IV to that part of his kingdom. . . Mr Callaghan's remarkable progress round the Six Counties gives him a fairer claim to that title. He did indeed descend into the fallen world of Ulster politics like the incarnation of a spirit inhabiting a different plane of political reality. With a sure political touch he became everybody's confidant, the embodiment of moderation and helpful concern, an object of hope for those who want both peace and justice in the province. . . .

Looking further ahead, one may offer two suggestions. The liberal prescription is for the two types of Ulstermen to get to like or at least tolerate each other, and to stop harping on the things that differentiate them.

20/8/69

But contrary to establishment optimism matters yet again go from bad to worse and another state excess is shown to be justified given the present situation. . . .

A SAD NECESSITY

Indefinite detention without trial is always repugnant. It breaches the most fundamental of civil liberties and the first principle of the rule of law. It is justified only when the safety of the state is at risk, or when the security of persons and property can no longer be defended without it. Those extreme conditions now exist in the province of Northern Ireland, and have existed there for some time past. There is an organized and armed attempt to overthrow the political order by violence. It has not been eradicated, and is not being contained, by due process of law. The situation is one which fully justifies the use of emergency powers.

10/8/71

Forget, now, any justification. The important question is, will it work?

INTERMENT IN ULSTER-AND AFTER

Resort to internment was had for that purpose. It is too soon to say that the gamble has not come off, but not too soon to say that it does not look as if it is coming off. The kick-back was sharper than expected. The arrests and the army's more active, and more lethal, operations that followed have consolidated and estranged the Roman Catholic community to a greater degree than ever. . . . Republican propaganda is bringing the army into disrepute.

20/8/71

More unfavourable publicity for the army, but a Tribunal will appease international criticism and create an illusion of justice being done. After all, you can't charge the Queen's Army with murder.

2/2/72

THE DEATHS IN DERRY

The Government's prompt institution of a judicial inquiry into Sunday's events in Londonderry should do something to relieve the tension. The conflict of testimony, military, clerical and lay, concerning the circumstances in which thirteen men met their deaths leaves too great an uncertainty about what occurred and where responsibility falls. An attempt must be made to establish the facts.

Now foreign propaganda is showing the army as a colonial oppressor!

WHY THE ARMY IS THERE

Foreign governments should be extremely cautious of proceeding on any other assumption, and particularly on the crude distortion that the role of the British Government and Army in Northern Ireland is that of a colonial oppressor. The Irish themselves will not be served by that misconception. There is real danger of civil war which would spread throughout the island. It is held back by the presence and operations of the British Army.

3/2/72

Well even Stormont, although completely irreformable, was not totally bad.

THE FALL OF STORMONT

The Stormont Parliament met for the last time yesterday before its prorogation and the suspension of its powers.

To cast the Stormont system or the men who operated it as villains of the piece, as the factor principally responsible for the ruin of policy in Northern Ireland, is mere prejudice. It is one element among many that has proved inadequate for the pacification of Ireland. Stormont falls because it is more vulnerable, not greatly more culpable, than the Dail or Westminster.

29/3/72

A call for even more repression.

THE BOMBS COME TO LONDON

It is tragic and shocking that so many people should have been wounded in Central London yesterday in outrages that cannot even serve their intended purpose. . . .

..It is less important that the IRA should be proscribed, than that there should be powers of arrest and search without warrant, and of brief detention, in suspected emergency; and that there should be powers of expulsion of Irish nationals more effective than those now available.

9/3/73

Five years on and British troops are still playing the role of peacekeepers, maintaining law and order.

Why Army fears talk of withdrawal from Ulster

Many soldiers, and especially their wives would rejoice at the opportunity to bid farewell to this northern tip of the Emerald Isle for ever, and all of them greet the end of a tour of duty there with total relief. But the Army as a body recognized that it cannot just pack up and come home. . . .

..So one is left with this security stalemate. The situation is prevented from getting very much worse by the vigilance and dedication of the Army and the police. 7/5/74

With ten years gone, and past hopes and prognostications in ruins, the security forces are getting a lot more bad publicity than before. Well, the Times is still not convinced by any of these allegations. The police and Army are still there to maintain law and order. . . .

A DISPASSIONATE JUDGMENT

"Torture" never was the right word for the treatment inflicted on fourteen IRA suspects by the security forces in Northern Ireland in one week in the autumn of 1971, treatment which has been condemned first by the European Commission on Human Rights and now by the Court as an infraction of the European Convention. "Torture" is an ultimate word. . . .

..That is not the purpose of the techniques of sensory deprivation, which formed the main subject of complaint by the Irish Government against the British Government, nor must it be the result. The purpose is to induce a state of temporary disorientation and distraction of the will in which the victim may be more easily led by his interrogator.

19/1/73

AMNESTY AND ULSTER

Amnesty International is very confident of its conclusions about allegations of ill-treatment of suspects under police interrogation in Northern Ireland. Yet one needs to bear in mind the limitations of its inquiry. . . .

..Both the extraction of a confession by physical abuse and the fabrication of evidence to look like that are antecedently plausible explanations. And the stakes are high on both sides.

14/6/73

And so the Times progressed from acquiescing to some paltry initial reforms in '68 to condoning torture in '78. As the Times is no longer with us, perhaps we can look to the Guardian for a new lead?

It seems to me, therefore, that we cannot and ought not to envisage another decade of British powerlessness and failure and ought to be prepared at least to admit to the world that she can see no answer to the problem. Help is needed.

25/7/79

May we proffer a solution:

TROOPS OUT NOW. SELF DETERMINATION FOR ALL THE IRISH PEOPLE.

WHAT I DID IN THE IRISH WAR.

—
BY A
SOLDIER

(Camera work)



Philip Jones Griffiths/Magnum

Off duty soldiers in 'Silver City' outpost, Andersonstown, Belfast

More and more soldiers are becoming ready to come out and explain from the inside what the role of the British Army in Ireland really is, and what life's like in the 'other ranks'. Below we print excerpts from an interview with 'Billy Johnstone', an ex-soldier who was born a Catholic in Glasgow. Extracts from the same interview have also appeared in *Socialist Worker*.

'JOIN THE FORCES OR GO TO BORSTAL'

'It was 1962. I was 15 and doing my apprenticeship, and I got in trouble with the police a few times. Sheriff James Langmuir sat in the Magistrates Court in Glasgow at this time and he was infamous. If you went in front of him and you had more than a few convictions, he'd tell you to go to join the forces or he'd send you to borstal. I got arrested a couple more times and then I got the alternative — I had to report back at 2 o'clock that day with evidence that I was going to join up. So I went to the Careers Office. They gave me an aptitude test and an hour later I was sworn in and I got my bible and my shilling. I swore on the Queen's head that I'd defend the Queen and all her lands and all that cobblers and then you're supposed to keep the shilling forever. So I reported back to the Sheriff at 2 o'clock and he congratulated me for being a clever boy.

'WHY SHOULD WE STAY ON?'

'From there it was the humdrum life of the Army. And I thought, what the hell is this? Is there nothing else? So I went up to see the Regimental Paymaster and I told him, I was so naive, "I want to buy myself out". "Oh you can't do that", he says. "Why not", I said. "I was told in my training £20 within 28 days and £250 after that. I've got the money. What's stopping me?". He says, "Firstly you have to do your three years". I says: "Nobody told me that in my training." [After that] . . . I was so down, so pissed off, I says to myself "I'm in a rut, what can I do with myself?" So I joined in with the worst dozen men in the British Army. They disobeyed orders. If they didn't want to parade, they didn't parade. If they wanted to piss they went to piss. They just sort of shunned the British Army. But we were in and out of nick [military prison], in and out of nick.

'Anyway, I used to talk to these guys: "Why should we stay in?" and one Saturday, we were all sitting there drunk and I brought up the idea of if we could save money to afford a farewell party for one of the guys, why couldn't we save up

enough money for one of us to get out? And get it paid back. Because when you eventually get your discharge you get all your credits and back pay and all the rest of the money they owe you, so you usually get handed about £150 or £200. Then if you got given this money all you had to do was post it back to one of us. That way the money out of the kitty would only be gone for 2 or 3 days at most. And then we could save up another lot of it and get another guy out.

'People were a bit reluctant at first, but after we spent about 6 weeks talking about it, we got it down to about 6 of us and the first guy that went was a guy called Les. We got him out, and, true to his word he sent the money back about a month later and then it was back in the kitty. We got another guy out as well. But by this time we weren't actually sticking to our word, we were dipping into the money. It wasn't like everybody was doing it one hundred per cent. My heart was in it, but some weeks guys wouldn't pay up and you had to go hounding them. Anyway, one night I was in bed and the military police came. They went through my locker and I got 56 days nick.

'YOU'VE GOT TO GO PADDY BASHING'

'It came to '69. We'd heard that the British Army was being sent as a peacekeeping force to Ulster. A couple of months after that, there was this guy came round to our regiment from the Royal Greenjackets which is one of the crack infantry regiments, and he asked for volunteers to go to Ireland. They couldn't get enough volunteers from the Greenjackets to make up the strength.

'I was in the nick at the time and they came into the nick and asked if we'd like to get out. I says "of course we want to get out of nick, what have we got to do?". And he says: "You've got to go Paddy bashing, you've got to go to Ireland and go Paddy bashing". I says: "What do you mean, we've got to go Paddy bashing?". And he says: "The 4th battalion of the Royal Greenjackets is short by 40 men, and they want 40 men to go with them to Ireland to do a four months tour. 40 volunteers."

'This was before the British Army started sending in regiments. What they did initially, was they called for volunteers, and probably went into the nicks just the same as they did in our regiment, and called for volunteers from gusy that were bored, fed up and disgusted and, as they thought, all the reprobates in the British Army. So they asked us if we wanted to go and I says: "Yeah, I'll go".

'Anyway, there were eleven volunteers from our regiment. And we were going to fight — as they called it — urban warfare. And we had absolutely no training in urban warfare. I didn't even know what urban warfare meant. I couldn't spell it, never mind know what urban meant.

WHAT THE FUCK AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WITH THESE GUNS?

'So off we went to Londonderry. They took us to a car park on the top of the Diamond where they had some nissen huts. And I'd never did a patrol in my life and we were supposed to go out in the street. They used to send us out in the day, faces blacked up, six man patrols, where we were to sneak along the road, and in and out of doorways and where there were people walking by you . . . and little kiddies . . . and you were lying on the pavement, covering each other with guns.

'We used to man this sort of turnstile on the walls of the Bogside [a Catholic area in Derry]. When people went back into the Bogside they weren't searched, it was only coming out of the Bogside. There was this hut by it with a submachine gun in it. When I was in that hut I says to myself, that we'd been told before we went that if there was any shooting, you'd a card which you read out. "Halt, who goes there?" — all this shit. And this takes about ten minutes and if somebody had a weapon, you'd be dead nine minutes ago. But in the hut I wondered: "What the fuck am I supposed to do with these guns?". I mean, if somebody comes through here shouting and howling and digging into their bags, what am I supposed to do? Shout, "Halt, hold on, open your bag and let me see what's in it"? Or am I supposed to open fire and blast away? So I says to this corporal, "What am I supposed to do if somebody starts throwing bottles at me?" He says, "If they've got petrol bombs, shoot them. If you're sure they've got a gun, shoot them. If in doubt, shoot. Just shoot, and that lets us get our ammunition together and get down".



'IT WAS THE CATHOLIC POPULATION YOU WERE FIGHTING'

'Before my second tour we did this intensive training in a place built up like a miniature Isle of Dogs or a miniature Hackney. We'd to practice patrolling a hostile area. So you went up this street and it was all quiet. You had a specific route to go. And they had shops and shop windows, and imaginary goods laid out and cardboard copies of people getting served. And we came around about the third turning and it was deadly quiet. And all of a sudden you would hear music starting up, like "Sean South of Garryowen" and of course that was supposed to put you on the alert. And all of a sudden this window would open, and this cardboard figure would lean out with a cardboard rifle, and this tape recording would go 'phht, phht'. And everybody had to go 'boom, boom' and blast it to fucking bits.

'And of course you'd have fired off about 300 rounds of ammunition by the time you got round the first street. And there'd be the 'Soldiers Song' playing, and shamrocks hanging out of imaginary window boxes, and streets painted green, white and gold. . . . Seriously, it was a bit one-sided, like. It was the Catholic population you were fighting. It was the Republican movement you were fighting. You weren't fighting nobody else. And you'd get doors opening, and you'd get a figure coming out with a pram, and you'd get the idiots going 'boom, boom', shooting it.

'IT WAS SO ONE-SIDED'

'When we went back to Londonderry that second time, the Army was 100% against the Provos — or the Catholic population as a whole, but then all Catholics were Provos. I was on patrol in this Protestant street. At one end of the street was a wall with a big horse and King Billy on it and even the lamp-posts were painted red, white and blue. This lady came out and asked us if we wanted to go in for tea. And I went into this house and I was astonished because the mantelpiece had three rubber bullets on one side, three at the other and rounds of ammunition, all different sizes, and they were all live! Don't tell me there wasn't an NCO above the rank of me had been there for a cup of tea. There must have been because they were so friendly like. And this old guy was sitting there and talking about the B Specials, and then he reached into this drawer and showed me this great revolver — and it was loaded. So that was enough for me. I went back outside and I called up. I told them we had an incident. They asked me what had happened and I told them briefly that I'd seen some ammunition on the mantelpiece. So anyway out they come, 40 or 50 of them and the officer of the evening. And I told him: "The mantelpiece is full of live ammunition, rubber bullets, SLR bullets, 9 millimetre bullets. Half of them Army issue. So where did they get them? Plus the old guy has a gun in his drawer".

'So the next thing this officer went in and everybody was delegated back to camp and we were told to get on with the patrol. And that was the last of it. No one was arrested. So what did happen? Did they just go in and tell him to take them off the mantelpiece and put them back in the drawer? I think this is what did happen, because nobody was arrested.

'It was so one-sided. It was alright for people in the correct area to have guns and ammunition, but if it happened to be the Bogside, they weren't allowed.



'NO MORE WAS THE ARMY AT ALL A PEACEKEEPING FORCE'

'In Ireland you had six hours on duty, six hours off, six on, six off and the next six off you were on standby. This went on for 6 days when you got 12 hours off. In the six hours off you have to sleep, eat and shower and do your kit for going back on the street. You can imagine after 4 days what sort of a state you are in. If you are on standby you are on two minute alert. You get 50 men who are half asleep and who are shattered after seven six hour shifts on and off. They don't know their arse from their elbow. And they go in there and if it's a case of shooting guns, they don't know where they're shooting or who they are shooting, because it's all within two or three minutes, they are on the site and boom they are in action.

'The first time I went to Ireland in 1969-70 they arrested people but tried to talk to them. On the second occasion, in 1972 they were so much more ferocious — it was a case of in there, thump, wallop, bang. Arrest as many as you could. The RUC had so much less to do the second time I was there. It was all military. I was only in Belfast a couple of weeks. There was a place called Divis Flats and there was some trouble there and there was one place we kept raiding. It was silly. I used to say to the guys, "what's on patrol tonight?". "Oh, we're going to the Divis. We're going to spend a couple of hours in there harrassing people". The Divis Flats is a favourite toy with the troops in Belfast.

'That's one of the things I really saw. No more was the Army at all a peacekeeping force, but it was there to keep the people in the Republican areas absolutely oppressed.'

NOTES for a CARTOON HISTORY of IRELAND

