

TROOPS OUT

Paper of the United Troops Out Movement

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THE LONG MARCH TO DERRY

Twas on the first day of the year in 1969,

We gathered at the city hall, the weather being fine.

McCann in front to lead us, Michael Farrell in the van,

Off on the long march to Derry.

Chorus

Hurrah, Hurrah, we gaily marched along

Hurrah, Hurrah, we sang the marching song

The battle cry of liberty was ringing loud and clear

All on the long march to Derry.

As we marched up to Antrim town the bridge we found was blocked.

There stood a certain major, a feather in his cap.

No Fenian boots will e'er pollute this stiff red crown we hold

we'll soon stop your long march to Derry.

Chorus

Toombridge Town was good, we found, the people stood and cheered
and everyone supported us whenever we appeared.

We passed the bridge where McColey died, our banners flying high
all on the long march to Derry.

Chorus

They ambushed us at Irish Street and at Burntollet too,
the air was thick with stones and bricks, the missiles fairly flew,
but we got up and struggled on, though battered black and blue
all on the long march to Derry.

Chorus

Well now the march is over, we can lay our banners down.
The world has seen what Ulster's like while loyal to the crown,
and generations will recount the boys and girls who went
all on the long march to Derry.

Chorus

Well now it's ten years later and we're gathered in this hall.
We saw the Specials pass away, the Stormont regime fall.
The British army homeward bound we soon will see them all.
all on the long march to Derry.



Burntollet 1979.

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



December 10 UTOM Blanket Picket just outside Trafalgar

Photo: Gutter Press

The end of 1978 once more saw bombs going off in British cities as a result of Britain's continuing war in Ireland. These bombing campaigns have happened before and will no doubt occur again from time to time and with more or less severity for as long as the war continues. Bombings are one of the weapons in the hands of the Provisional IRA, just as they were in the hands of the Algerian FLN in their battle for national liberation from France in the 50s and early 60s, and as they are today in the hands of the SWAPO guerrillas in Namibia.

Socialists and anti-imperialists will no doubt disagree about the merits of this particular tactic and the pros and cons of its political implications. Inside the United Troops Out Movement there are a wide range of attitudes to such campaigns. Such debate is important and valid in so far as it comes from among the ranks of those people who are actively struggling for the cause of the Irish people and against British military imperialism in Ireland. But there are two fundamental points which such discussion must not be allowed to obscure. *Firstly, it is up to the Irish people and their organisations alone to decide how they are to conduct their war against British imperialism. Secondly, socialists should never be led into equating the violence of the oppressor with that of the oppressed, of those who fight for freedom with that of those who uphold exploitation.*

Bearing these points in mind, what conclusions can we draw about the new campaign. Firstly, the IRA have clearly demonstrated a military capability in Britain well beyond that anticipated by the British security services. In carrying out the attacks they outmanoeuvred the police, and, despite the hysterical overkill of Operation Santa which had policemen almost outnumbering Xmas shoppers on some West End streets, and their use of the situation to practise their war-games with armed soldiers and tanks at Heathrow airport, the "anti-terrorist" operation could report no more success than running round and round in circles chasing a phantom white Opel Kadet car. Moreover the attacks were carried out causing substantial damage to property but avoiding – quite deliberately – any more than slight injury to a few civilians.

These facts have clearly exposed once more Mason's boasts that he has dealt with the IRA. He cannot even defend British cities. But such campaigns also

always carry a danger of provoking a backlash from the British working class. The people of Ireland are understandably cynical after so long of the willingness or capability of British workers to build a mass movement to defend their rights against British imperialism. Nevertheless, it is an essential part of the struggle for national liberation that that movement be built. That is the task to which UTOM addresses itself.

The left, in the past, have often failed to explain the real causes of the bombings and what they represent, and to confront media distortions of the situation. This has made it possible for those who do not want to confront the reality of Britain's presence in Ireland to do nothing and make excuses about opposing "violence on both sides". That smokescreen has worn thin recently, particularly with the upsurge of a sustained popular mass movement on the streets in Northern Ireland in the last year or so. The recent bombings have not undermined this development.

The existence of a mass struggle in the North and the campaign around the H-Blocks which is at last attracting some publicity has made it far more difficult for the government to portray the bombs as the work of isolated individual terrorists. The fact that the bombings were clearly skilfully carried out to avoid casualties has also made reactions in Britain less hysterical than in the past. It is clearer to more people today that these bombs are a part of the whole situation in Ireland today, one of war and brutality. The old formula of "mad bombers" is becoming less able to explain away what now appears to be a festering political situation for the British government. This year UTOM will be making a wider audience than ever before aware of the real root causes of all violence and bombings: British oppression.

Editorial Collective.

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

TROOPS OUT NOW

SELF DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE AS A WHOLE

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

If you want to join UTOM, or want more information about what we stand for, write to the new national address: Box UT, c/o 2a St. Paul's Road, London N1. We will pass your query on to a branch in your area, if one exists.

UTOM has branches already operating or presently being set up in many parts of the country.

Barnsley	Norwich	Scotland:
Basingstoke	Oxford	
Birmingham	Sheffield	Aberdeen
Bradford	Swindon	Dundee
Brighton	Wolverhampton	Edinburgh
Bristol		Glasgow
Canterbury		Paisley
Cleveland	Wales.	Stirling
Colchester	Cardiff	
Coventry	Newport	
Harlow	Swansea	
Hemel Hempstead	London area:	
Leamington	Camden & Islington	
Leeds	East London & Hackney	
Leicester	Haringey	
Liverpool	Kilburn	
Manchester	South London	
Manchester Poly	Southeast London	

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

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



Today, about 750 Irish prisoners are involved in a campaign for restoration of Prisoner of War status to Republican prisoners. There are over 350 men "on the blanket" in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh, about 30 women in Armagh gaol, and about 350 remand prisoners in the H-Blocks or Crumlin Road. This article is an attempt to make a little clearer an issue which the British state, the media, and the major political parties have consistently attempted to distort.

SELF INFILCTED

Although news about the terrible conditions in the H-Blocks is becoming known to more and more people, there is still some confusion over the issue. After all, people say, they are inflicting these conditions upon themselves. However, to understand the situation properly, it is necessary to know about the development of the H-Block struggle.

Prisoner of War status for Irish prisoners has been recognised in the past. Political, or "Special Category" Status was introduced by the British Government in 1972. Special Category prisoners can wear their own clothes, receive food parcels, and organise their own activities — similar to British POWs in the last war. However, as a part of the attempt by the British Government to deny that there is a war going on in Northern Ireland, all those convicted of political offences committed after March 1972 were denied Special Category status. Although these people are convicted under emergency legislation, in emergency "no-jury" courts, the British Government still tries to say that they are not political prisoners, but ordinary criminals.

IMPOSED BY AUTHORITIES

Kieran Nugent was the first republican to be convicted under the new legislation. He reactivated the long historical struggle for POW status by refusing to wear the prison uniform, or participate in prison work. He was left naked, and confined to his cell with only a blanket to cover him. As they were convicted, many republican prisoners joined Kieran in the protest. These prisoners maintained that they were prisoners of war, and refused to wear prison uniform, or to participate in prison work because this would mean

accepting their criminalization.

The prisoners were not permitted newspapers, books, radio, TV, exercise, tobacco, recreation, or association with other prisoners. They were also punished by three days "cellular confinement" out of every fortnight, when the cell furniture was removed, and prisoners had to sleep and eat on the floor. This is a denial of basic human rights imposed by the prison authorities, not a removal of privileges.

The prisoners in the H Blocks of Long Kesh are following in a long and powerful tradition of prison struggle. Starting with the Fenians over 100 years ago, hunger strikes and other forms of non-cooperation have been used to fight for recognition as political prisoners. And from O'Donovan Rossa in 1865 to the present, the British, and the Irish Free State in the 1920s have reacted to these protests with peculiar savagery.

In an attempt to force the prisoners to abandon their struggle, the British authorities introduced very harsh measures. The authorities chose not to permit the prisoners to wear their own clothes. They chose to leave the prisoners naked and confined to their cells almost 24 hours a day.

All this time prisoners were only allowed one visit and one letter a month. Food was continually tampered with and always cold and inedible. *These conditions were not chosen by the prisoners. They were imposed by the authorities, counter to International Law.*

REACTION TO CONDITIONS

As a result of the conditions, prisoners lost weight drastically and developed various skin diseases. The glare of artificial light on white walls damaged their eyesight. Prisoners complained of headaches, rheumatism, frequent nose-bleeds and many suffered from severe clinical depression.

Prisoners were humiliated at every opportunity. Early in 1978, the

authorities started refusing to allow prisoners a towel to cover themselves when they went to the washroom. They were paraded naked around the prison to be mocked at by staff and other prisoners. The men on blankets responded, in March 1978 by refusing to go to the washroom. They also refused to clean their cells, or to slop out. This was a desperate attempt to highlight their terrible situation. Prison orderlies refused to clean the cells, which soon became filthy. All cell furniture was removed permanently and prisoners were left with only a blanket and a mattress.

INCREASING BRUTALITY

The authorities are becoming increasingly brutal in their attempts to smash the H-Block struggle. Prisoners are frequently beaten up by groups of warders, and constantly humiliated by continual body searches which include the painful searching of the back passage by forces. The cells and prisoners are hosed down with high pressure hoses, and the mattress and blanket left soaking. Fumes from the strong chemicals used badly affect the prisoners' breathing and general health. The heating is turned full on in summer and left off in winter. The few visits and letters allowed are often stopped for petty reasons. The British authorities do not attempt to deny that the conditions in H block are terrible, but they do refuse to do anything about it.

RIGHTS NOT PRIVILEGES

Once again this kind of suffering is not chosen by the prisoners, it is inflicted by the authorities in an attempt to force Republicans to accept British criminalization policies.

The British State is contravening the Geneva Convention both in its treatment of prisoners and in its denial of POW status to Republicans. The convention states that "all persons involved in both international and internal conflicts, including those convicted as rebels . . . have basic rights, including the right not to be subjected to outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment." A recently added protocol states that forces acting under responsible control to carry out sustained and concerted operations have the right to POW status.

The confrontation is sought by the British Government, not by the prisoners. The prisoners are not seeking privileges, as is made out by the state and by the media, but their rights as POWs, and they protest against the denial of their rights in the only way possible.

It is the response of the British authorities to their protest which has led to the terrible, inhuman conditions in H-Block.

Leamington Spa UTOM.



CONVEYOR BELT JUSTICE

The British Government denies the existence of political prisoners in Northern Ireland. The Provisionals and members of the IRSP currently 'on the blanket' in the H-Blocks are, they say, 'ODCs' – Ordinary Decent Criminals, just like every other prisoner in British prisons. The law has run its normal course here as in all the other cases that come before the courts day in and day out.

This article will demonstrate that this claim is a lie. It is in fact a very big lie. For, from the moment the men and women destined to end up in Long Kesh or Armagh are hauled off the streets by the Army to the moment the prison doors slam closed on the next 10 to 30 years of their lives, they are treated as special cases under special laws that apply only to them. They are arrested under special laws: they are interrogated under special laws: they are tried without juries under special laws: they are held on remand under special laws: they are sentenced under special laws. Only when the cell doors are closed do they suddenly become 'ordinary' prisoners.

In the North, this system is popularly known as the "conveyor belt". It does not exist in Britain itself, but is confined to Northern Ireland. At its centre lies the 1973 Emergency Provisions Act.

POLITICAL CRIME

Not all defendants in Northern Ireland Courts are tried under this statute. In fact only one category are. In the words of the Act itself, it applies only to those offences deemed by the Attorney General for Northern Ireland "to have political

ends". The Government, it seems, want it both ways. These people have to be tried under special laws because their offences are political: but once they are convicted they become 'ordinary criminals'.

By following a typical political prisoner/ordinary criminal along the conveyor belt we can get some idea of just how "specially" the government treats these people.

A TYPICAL CASE

An 18 year old boy is arrested by the RUC in the Ardooye on his way home from work. (*Under Section 11 of Part 2 of the EPA, he is now held for 72 hours without being charged. Under 'ordinary criminal law' he has to be released or charged at once.*)

He is forcibly fingerprinted and photographed without his consent. (*Again under Section 11: ODCs can normally refuse fingerprinting etc.*)

He is denied access to a solicitor: his parents are not told he is there (*Once more a "special provision" of the EPA.*)

He is beaten up and forced to sign a confession (*For a change this isn't actually legal under any set of British laws: but it doesn't seem to make the boy any happier.*)

He is charged with membership of Fianna na hEireann, the youth wing of the IRA (*Illegal in Northern Ireland under the EPA, but not a proscribed organisation in Britain under the PTA*), and with conspiracy to cause explosions.

He spends the next 2 years on remand before coming to trial (*This is popularly known in the North as internment by remand. Few "special/ordinary" offences come to court in less than a year. One defendant has currently been on remand for 2 years and 3 months.*)

The court has no jury (*by an amendment to the EPA*).

He is assumed to be guilty until proved innocent (*Contrary to all the principles of 'British justice', but this is what happens under Section 9 of Part 1 of the EPA.*)

The evidence against him is slim. But when picked up he was found to be in possession of a document of Fianna na hEireann. That is enough to convict him (*Under Section 21 of Part 3, "possession by a person of a document shall be evidence of that person belonging to the organisation at the time when he had the document in his possession". Journalists watch out!*).

He is sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment.

CRIMINALISATION

Tried and convicted under special laws in special courts, he is carried off to Long Kesh. And now he becomes an Ordinary Criminal for the first time. The prison screw hands him a prison uniform, and tells him to put it on like all the other convicts. "Nail it to my back" he replies. Another man has joined the blanket protest in Long Kesh.

EUROPEAN GROUPS IN SOLIDARITY

The work of exposing the British Government's role in the north of Ireland and in gaining solidarity for the anti-imperialist struggle is being carried on in a number of European countries by various Irish Solidarity Committees.

In France, Holland, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, Switzerland and West Germany pickets, displays, meetings, conferences, and articles in papers help to bring the true facts home - and to embarrass the British.

'Irlande Libre', an excellent quarterly newspaper, has been going for two years in France, while the Comite Irlande, in existence since 1975, has a national structure with a strong central branch in Paris, branches in Brest, Amiens and Rouen, and sympathizer groups in many other cities. They publish 'Irlande en Lutte' quarterly, and in 1978 organised a national tour of Republican representatives who spoke in 9 major cities. They plan to repeat these tours yearly.

From 19-21 January, in Frankfurt, an important solidarity conference for European groups is taking place. Representatives from the North are in attendance, the film Home, Soldier Home is being shown, and discussions will concentrate on the implications of the capitalist integration of Europe on the Irish struggle. The conference has been organised by the West German Solidarity Group (WISK).



NORWAY: Troops Out pickets the Peace People.

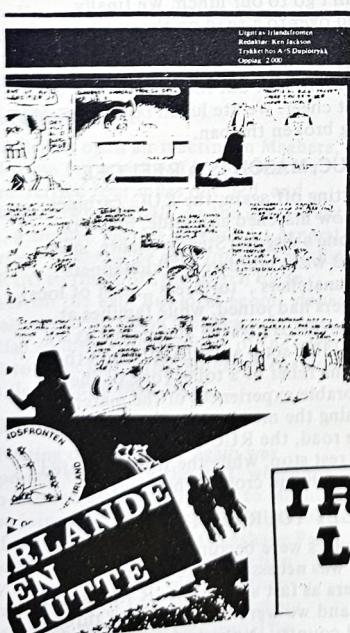
The Ireland Committee in Holland organised coordinated H Block pickets on December 24 in many European countries. In Belgium, a British army base was picketed, while in Holland pickets stood vigil outside the British embassy. This Committee publishes a large quarterly report, 'Ierland Bulletin'.

The Belgian group, based in Flemish Belgium, is planning a major exhibition on Ireland in April and would welcome material from Troops Out branches in this country - copies of leaflets, publications and the like.

The Flemish section of Amnesty International brought out the Amnesty report on torture in Castlereagh in November, and this received wide press, radio and TV coverage.

The Norwegian Ireland Committee complains that most press coverage is filtered through the British press agencies, and it was only after the Amnesty report was published that they were able to get material on the H Blocks into Oslo papers. They are organising a tour of Sinn Fein representatives through Norway in 1979, and hope to include the whole Scandinavian peninsula. A new committee is being formed in Denmark. 'Ierland rapport', is a new, glossy quarterly published by another Norwegian committee, Islandsfronten and contained as its back cover a translation into Norwegian of the Cormac 'Bloodbath' cartoon which appeared as a 'Troops Out' front cover.

If Troops Out members are going to Europe this summer, the committees would appreciate contacts. And also copies of any propaganda material produced.



Belgium: Ierland Informatie Groep, Info-Centrum/11G, Dhr. Flor Cools, Steenweg op Boom 32 B-2260, Willebroek, Flanders,

France: Comite Irlande, 14 Rue de Nanteuil, Paris 15e. Irlande Libre, c/o Camo, 2 Place de l'Abbaye, 94000 Creteil.

Holland: Ierland komitee Nederland, postbus 11.618, Amsterdam

Norway: Islandskomiteen i Norge, Postboks 121, Blindern, Oslo 3. Islandsfronten, boks 7061 Homansbyen, Oslo 3

Switzerland: Ireland-komitee Switzerland, ALTMOSSTR. 17, 8157 Diereldorf

West Germany: Westdeutsches Ierland Solidaritätskomitee, 637 Oberursel 5, Postfach 35

THE LONG MARCH TO BURN

Ten years ago on Burntollet Bridge, a small group of civil rights marchers led by Peoples Democracy was ambushed by a force of B Specials and Loyalists. That ambush showed the sectarian nature of the police, and reactions to it helped to set the North afire, and change demands from reform of the state to the long struggle for its destruction.

SUPPORT FROM BRITAIN

Ten years later, UTOM members from London and Birmingham went over to join in the three-day 10th anniversary commemoration march over a shorter route of about 45 miles. The demands of the march were political status, an end to repression, and British withdrawal. It was organised by a joint committee of Relatives Action Committees (RACs), socialist and republican and women's groups.

CRISIS

Mason gave over a large part of his New Year's Message to denouncing the march, while ominously appealing to Loyalists to 'leave it to the RUC' to deal with it. The RUC had already banned the march from three towns along the route. Snow, burst water pipes and the petrol shortage contributed to a crisis atmosphere Thursday night, with the telly predicting the end of western civilization as we know it — the march being regarded as a contributing factor. With football matches and racing off, the joke was that bookies were taking bets on how far we'd get.

THE FIRST DAY

Friday morning about 150 people started off to march the whole way, with more on the streets of Toome to see us off. A man in a blanket led the march. The UTOM banner brought up the rear. Fears were divided between the danger of freezing to death and being attacked by the RUC. Two helicopters droned overhead, photographing and picking up conversations with directional mikes. Armoured RUC landrovers formed up before and behind — about 15 in all, with more visible far ahead.

OUTWITTING THE RUC

Five miles out we hit the first road-block. A local unionist councillor, Bob Overend, didn't want the march passing his house, so it had been banned from Bellaghy, our scheduled lunch break. The march broke through a field around the RUC block and onto a side road leading into Bellaghy. RUC movements were impeded by their vehicles, and by all the gear they wore, and there was no way they could get ahead of us. After a moment to catch breath and give ourselves a cheer, we set off for lunch. A mile or two along the side road, the RUC came in from a different direction and set up another block.



Bellaghy: Waiting for lunch (Photo East London U)

OVER THE FIELDS

We took to the fields in earnest, with local farmers directing traffic over hedges, through streams, past herds of startled cows. The man in the blanket had, with foresight, pinned himself in tightly. Older people, children, and girls in wedge heels managed to keep up. Everybody helped everyone else.

'IT'S BLACK BOB, HE'S GOT A RIFLE'

As we passed a big farm a shot rang out. The RUC were now in the field, and were surrounding a man. This was 'Black Bob' Overend, the councillor. It seemed he had first aimed a rifle at the marchers — a gun he 'kept for dealing with vermin'. When the RUC took that off him, he pulled a pistol and fired directly at us. If an RUC man hadn't deflected his arm at the last, someone might have been dead. He was led back to his house, but was not arrested for attempted murder.

BATONS OUT

Several headed in anger for the RUC, who were now hitting whoever they could reach. Michael Farrell, a PD organiser, went up to some RUC men to try and cool things down and was pushed into a ditch and kicked in the ribs for his trouble.

THE SIT DOWN

Megaphones got people together despite the helicopters hovering about 15 feet off the ground, drowning out instructions. We sat down surrounded by

RUC while organisers parleyed with the Assistant Commissioner who came strolling down the field. No way. We couldn't go to our lunch. We finally moved over to a road on the outskirts of town and just as we prepared to move off, cold and tired to the next town the RAC women brought out food, to be met with a great cheer. We ate lunch *inside* Bellaghy having broken the ban.

'SS RUC, MASON IS A REFUGEE'

Setting off again, the RUC, carbines out, now marched alongside, much to everyone's disgust. Steady chants, interspersed with 'murderers', 'kidnappers', 'priestsnatchers', 'torturers'. A lot of local teenagers had joined, while families at every crossroad waved and smiled as we passed. Hot soup at Gulladuff, and the welcome relief of a toilet (one of the memorable experiences of the march was watching the men move off to one side of the road, the RUC to the other at every rest stop, while the women gritted their teeth and crossed their legs).

FORGET YOUR FEET

Blisters were becoming very painful, but it was necessary to press on to Maghera as fast as possible. It was getting dark, and we were now marching through mixed country. Nobody felt reassured by our escort. We kept up a good pace until stopped 500 yards from our destination by the second RUC ban, set up so we wouldn't defile the local Orange Hall by marching past. We were too tired to try outrunning the RUC in the dark. After a

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UTOM)

sitdown protest we wearily marched 3 miles out of town and back by another route. The welcome lights of Maghera receding as we marched away brought hatred for the RUC to a new pitch. People now stumbled along like automata.

WATCHED OVER

After an open air meeting in Maghera, and some hot whiskey for sore feet we were ferried four miles out, fed, and bedded down in a hall. As the lights went out, a woman near us expressed a general worry – it would be easy for the Loyalists or RUC to finish off the march by an attack on the hall. But local people stayed up all night patrolling the area, and when British soldiers paid a middle of the night visit to 'check out' the marchers, the door was slammed in their faces.

THE SECOND DAY

Putting our boots on again was desperate. Cheers for the RAC women who had fed us and then back to Maghera to be joined by more people. We started off for the high, deserted Glenshane Pass. No one wanted the RUC 'protection', but they stayed in greater numbers than before. A mile or two out of Maghera their real purpose became clear. The march tried to take a short cut and the RUC laid in to it. A 50 year old man come to join the march was hit in the face with a rifle butt. Blood streaming down he was taken off to Magherafelt hospital.

'NOTHING'S CHANGED BUT THE UNIFORM'

We came off the shortcut and took the long way up to the pass. The country was wild, frozen and beautiful. Only the RUC, now crowding us and occasionally taunting us, spoiled the walk. We had been going for a few miles, spread out over the carriageway, when suddenly, without warning, the RUC dived in, supposedly to move people over so traffic could pass. They bottled off the end of the march and got stuck in. One teenager was set upon, kicked, batoned and thrown into a jeep. As he tried to get away an RUC man shouted, 'Get that fucking bastard, he's a Fenian cunt, get him'. Four people were arrested there, and beaten in a landrover. 'You'll never get your freedom. You'll have to fight us first', a man from Maghera was told. Most reporters were prevented from seeing the incident, but the *Irish Independent* reporter spilled the beans the next day in a long account which witnessed two RUC men holding a marcher down while an inspector kicked him, and punched him in the face. So much for the reformed RUC.

PIPED INTO DUNGIVEN

That was the last incident. After lunch in a layby we were met outside Dungiven by a pipe band, and entered the town in triumph. The RUC suddenly disappeared. All the marchers were given beds, baths and food in people's homes, and after a public meeting in the square, there was a music session in the GAA hall.

'I'LL WEAR NO PRISON UNIFORM NOR MEKKLY SERVE MY TIME'

A new song about H Block had to be sung twice, and 'The Long March to Derry' had the whole hall on its feet, fists waving and bottles thumping. Tired but joyful, we went off to bed about 1.30

ANIMAL TAMERS

600 strong we left Dungiven next morning. RUC men still flanked the march but with a difference. Carbines were under cover, and senior officers guarded the men, giving an impression of

wild animals being held in check by their tamers. Newman, the Police Commissioner, rode behind the march. They wanted no more exposure of the real RUC.

WHAT DO WE WANT? POLITICAL STATUS!

From Dungiven to Claudy busloads and carloads of supporters joined in the whole way. The sun came out. Five helicopters now circled. Chanting and singing we came down towards Claudy and the final roadblock. The UDA was supposedly massed in Claudy to stop us entering. 'Them and who else' was the response to this news. But there was no chance of getting into Claudy. 'The most massive security operation ever mounted in the province' blocked the road. As one paper put it, 'not even a Sherman tank could have got through'. It cost the British state, we were happy to learn later, well over £10,000.

WHEN DO WE WANT IT? NOW!

Burntollet at last. Kids on the march set about demolishing the paving stones lining the bridge parapet, which had been painted red, white and blue by Loyalists the night before, and tossing them in the river. A complete block around all roads leading to the bridge prevented many more from attending the final meeting, but about 2000 people made it. The fields were black with RUC, while down side roads lorries full of soldiers waited. Loyalists on the hill set fire to their own fields, amid cries of 'No surrender!', and were invited by the crowd to come closer.

ANYTHING ELSE? BRITS OUT!

A letter to the march from the men in the H Blocks was read out. Despite extreme physical suffering, they pledged to fight on, till death if necessary, and urged unity and solidarity outside. The brief meeting which followed was almost an anticlimax. The march itself was the message, and one which those of us who came over from Britain will never forget. The unreformed RUC was unable to stop the march showing the overwhelming support in the countryside for political status and troops out.



The march starts off from Toomebridge (E London UTOM)

Exposing Britain's crimes

THE INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL

The International Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland is an exceedingly important project, which should be vigorously supported by all those campaigning for self determination for Ireland and the withdrawal of British troops.

FOLLOWING STRASBOURG

It is, in effect, a follow on from the Strasbourg findings about British conduct in Ireland and the inquiry carried out by Amnesty International. The scheme is sponsored by an enormous number of important organisations and individuals, including Herbert Marcuse, Noam Chomsky, Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Father Faul, British MPs, numerous Irish and British trade union organisations, including the Irish TGWU.

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

In addition, there are support groups in numerous countries. All these groups and sponsors abroad have been sent a petition to circulate in their countries (and we hope UTOM groups also will use it). It calls on the British government to make public all information in its possession, in order that a full, independent and open inquiry can be held into

the effects of its presence in the north of Ireland, and to see that a representative of the British Government is present at the Tribunal — which will be held next June (the preliminary hearings will be in January).

LABOUR MOVEMENT JURY

Supporters abroad have been sent a letter asking them to hand the petition in at British embassies, get observers to attend the Tribunal and undertake any appropriate support actions in their own countries. The judges will be eminent human rights activists; the jury, delegates from the British labour movement. The latter is important as it means getting the matter of what Britain is up to in Ireland raised in trade unions, etc. all over the country, which forces people to consider whether the troops should be there at all. For although the Tribunal does not (and by its nature cannot) call for troops out yet, by exposing the atrocities being perpetrated by the British in the north of Ireland, it may lead more and more people and organisations to the realisation that the troops must be withdrawn.

EXPOSURE

By being international, it can help expose what Britain is doing to people all over the world, hence bringing pressure

from abroad to bear on the British Government. There is considerable trade union and student backing for the Tribunal in this country — frequent requests for speakers at trade unions, etc. *Spare Rib* supports the Tribunal, and the Tribunal Women's Subcommittee has recently sent delegates over to Derry and Belfast; as a result they are very soon going to publish a dossier on British atrocities against women in the 6 counties. *The Case for a Tribunal* — the project's most important publication to date — has just been printed and should, together with the petition, be widely circulated by UTOM members and others. All these documents can be obtained from The International Tribunal, 182 Upper St, N1.

A MAJOR ROLE

This project, if sufficiently vigorously supported by activists both at home and abroad could be extremely significant and play a major part in the campaign to get the Brits out of Ireland now. Despite recent administrative complications, changes in subcommittee convenors, etc., the Tribunal is going ahead.

Pat Arrowsmith, Convenor of International Subcommittee, Tribunal sponsor and delegate from TGWU/ACTSS
01/0524

before the eyes of the world

'The Case For the Tribunal', International Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland, c/o 182 Upper St., London N. 20p.

This pamphlet gives the arguments for holding a tribunal. It suggests that whilst much information has been gathered on British brutality in Ireland 'little of this information is available for the evaluation of the British people, and there is little opportunity for it to reach the world media ... the tribunal proposes to draw together all the available evidence for the information of the British people and all those concerned with Human Rights in Ireland.'

The pamphlet contains a section on the way in which the PTA and EPA are used daily to harass the Irish community in

England and Ireland. It points out the fact that though the army has admitted shooting unarmed people dead (Leo Norney, John Boyle and others) not one soldier has been sentenced to imprisonment. It contains a section dealing with the sexual abuse of women by the 'security forces' and the effect of the occupation on women as mothers, a section of the community always ignored in past 'inquiries'. A further section shows how TV and press are strictly censored to add to Government propaganda.

The pamphlet aims to justify the setting up of a preliminary hearing to establish whether a 'prima facie' case of British brutality exists, but the evidence it produces should be enough to convince most people of overt and consistent British brutality.

The planning committee welcome evidence pointing to British army brutality to be sent to its address above. Leicester UTOM have produced an excellent document of evidence, which is recommended, and can be ordered from the branch.

'The Land For The People'

A few days before Christmas 1877 Michael Davitt was freed from Dartmoor on parole. At 9 he'd started work in a factory; at 11 he lost his right arm to a machine. Three other Fenians (militant Irish Republicans) were freed at the same time. The four received a tumultuous welcome in Dublin early in the new year. In the welcoming party was Charles Stewart Parnell, rising young leader of the extremists among the Irish MPs at Westminster.

So began the collaboration between the son of an evicted tenant farmer and the patriot upper-class landowner. Their work together led to the land war of 1879-81—the most formidable mass movement to arise in Ireland since the O'Connell-led popular agitation of the 1820's for Catholic Emancipation. The Land struggle made Parnell the leader of the Irish nation. Yet what Davitt, the radical, really desired was national ownership of the land. Essentially the new policy was an informal alliance between constitutionalism and revolutionary Fenianism of the rank and file.

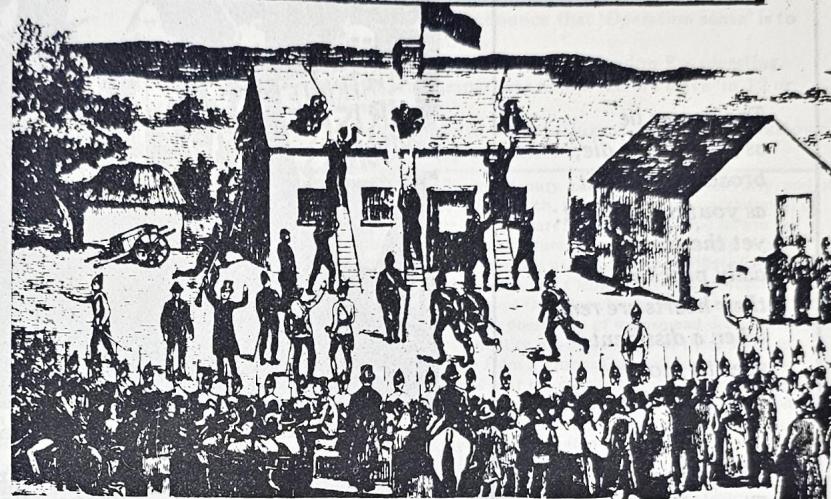
On Sunday, April 19, 1879, Davitt organised a meeting in Co. Mayo; about 7000 persons attended. Cries of 'Down with Landlordism!' 'The land for the people!' resounded through the town. The Land League was born. Two months later a second great meeting was held at Westport. Parnell spoke. Though the Archbishop condemned the gathering, Parnell told the tenants: 'You must help yourselves, and the public opinion of the world will stand by you and support you in your struggle to defend your home-homesteads.'

The people supported the Land League. The Irish in America sent money. The young priests followed their flocks and in many districts emerged as the leaders of the agitation. Soon the demand for the lowering of rents was coupled with the more revolutionary call for the abolition of landlordism. Large gatherings of local people mobilised support. Evicted families received shelter, while land-grabbers were socially excommunicated.

WOMEN IN THE FOREFRONT

The sharp point of resistance was opposition to evictions, and women spearheaded the resistance to the 'crowbar brigade'. The *New York Herald* reported scenes in a Galway village where local police plus 50 extra constables sought to serve eviction notices: 'Women surrounded the door and, as Fenton advanced to effect service, they clutched the process and tore it to shreds. The police then charged all round with their sword bayonets, wounding several severely. The women were bayoneted right and left... The women again surrounded the door.'

The struggle of the Irish people against British exploitation is no new phenomenon. The current fight in the north of Ireland must be seen as one of the chapters in that long history. Future issues of 'Troops Out' will look at other notable economic battles in the past. Here, FRANCES BLAKE described the Land League War that commenced 100 years ago this year.



Opposition to eviction in Galway.

Davitt returned to Dublin and was arrested. Scotland Yard dectives took him back to an English prison. There was uproar in the House of Commons, Parnell was suspended and the entire Irish party expelled. Trade unionists in England and Scotland held public meetings protesting against the government's punitive measures, and Parnell appealed to the 'working-men and agricultural labourers of Britain who surely have no interest in the misgovernment and persecution of Ireland.'

Parnell's sister, Anna, organised the Ladies Land League for all women, and when the men went to jail the women took their place. (The Archbishop of Dublin thought this immodest.) Land League courts put those who collaborated with landlordism on trial locally. The punishment might be a warning or a boycott. Violence increased. More than 800 Land League suspects were in jail without trial, and hundreds of others were sentenced for 'nocturnal attacks'. British law in Ireland had broken down. *'The condition of affairs is little short of civil war'*, reported an English newspaper.

Soon Gladstone could triumphantly announce to a cheering banquet audience at the London Guildhall that the arch-conspirator Parnell had been arrested and was held in Dublin's Kilmainham jail, but Parnell sent out a manifesto from his cell, telling the people to pay no rents, which began: 'Fellow Countrymen... they can no more evict a whole nation than they can imprison them.'

The Land League was declared an illegal organisation and suppressed. The Ladies Land League took its place and

helped victims with American money; set up new local leaders; distributed the No-Rent Manifesto; built up resistance to evictions and intensified the boycott as a weapon.

THAT IMPERISHABLE FORCE'

The Land War effectively ended in Spring 1882 when Parnell was released after agreeing with the British government to slow down agitation and work the British Act of 1881 as a practical settlement. This Act reduced rents by 20% and established rights of tenure and sale. To the radicals of the Land League it was a betrayal. Anna Parnell called it a surrender.

Both Parnell and Davitt were released. Davitt, still radical, supported Parnell though he thought him transformed from a 'revolutionary reformer' into an 'opportunist statesman'. Accordingly Parnell discarded the militant Ladies Land League and followed a strictly constitutional line. However, after his 86 Home Rulers had failed to win more than politicians' promises from Tories or Liberals, and after he was himself disowned by most of his Irish party following the divorce scandal in which he figured, at last Parnell went back to the Irish people.

Shortly before his death in 1891 he warned: 'If Ireland cannot win... within the Constitution, ... England will be face to face with that imperishable force, without which we are broken reeds.'

Frances Blake

Prison Struggle

WHAT WOULD WE DO

WITHOUT

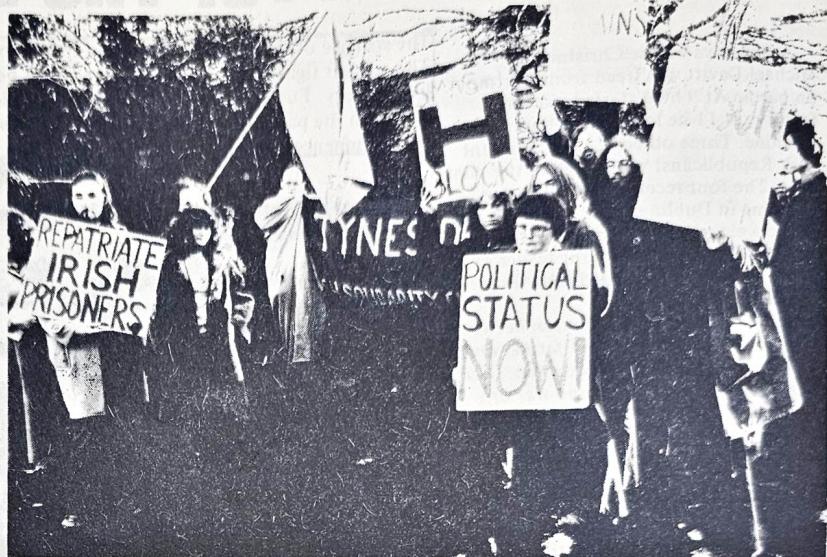
A FREE PRESS?

*The papers lie
as young men die;
broadcasters omit
as youths lie in shit;
yet these same
daily proclaim
their hearts are rent
when a dissident
goes to gaol—
then how they rail!*

*They sicken me:
Times, BBC,
Mail, Express;
their cheap distress
surely nauseates
within the gates
where daily rule
is vile and cruel;
Sun and Mirror
concur:
on the Maze
not a phrase.*

*Guardian sniffs,
uncomfortably shifts,
ITV
doesn't disagree
with BBC;
to the Telegraph
it's a belly laugh.*

Niall Ward



Tyneside Irish Solidarity Campaign Picket of Durham Jail

to demand Repatriation for Irish P.O.W.s.

Photo. North East Photo Co-op.

BRIT

FLYING TERRORISTS

(From the *Telegraph*, November 78) A report on a conference called "Television and conflict", attended by such worthies as Sir Robert Thompson, complains that anti-terrorist measures taken by the "forces of law and order" get too much coverage on TV, and that this arouses too much sympathy for the terrorists they are pursuing... and why? Because "the terrorist moves too quickly for the television camera to match him in the act"!!! It is always soldiers and police who are shown doing the nasty things in Ulster, Vietnam, Chile and Watergate, complains the report, and there is inadequate coverage of "the deaths and destruction caused by gunmen". Indeed sometimes, horror of horrors, "perhaps because lives were at stake, representatives of terrorist organisations have appeared on serious programmes". Well, we always knew that the media was biased about Northern Ireland.

BITS

IRISH HISTORY EXPLAINED

John Pardoe was on "Tonight" BBC1 on January 3rd, to defend his contention that the British government should withdraw the troops from Northern Ireland: "... if you put two Irishmen in a room, they will get on perfectly well. But if you introduce an Englishman, they will all be at each others' throats. It's always been like this... It's not their fault, and it's not ours." A novel explanation of Irish history!

BLOODY SUNDAY COMMEMORATION
called by Sinn Fein
JAN 28 Speakers Corner 2.30

DIARY OF EVENTS

DEC

- 1 Paisley meets with Mason. Calls for new 'security initiative'.
- 2 SDLP launches 'new Ireland campaign' to lobby British govt [and Irish and US govt] for withdrawal of British and a solution 'within an Irish context'.
- 3 'Contraceptives Unlimited' selling contraceptives to all comers in contravention of law in the South finished its first week of business. Contraceptive Action Programme march in Dublin in support of free legal contraception.
- 5 *Irish Independent* alleges campaign by British govt and Cardinal Hume to lobby Vatican against elevation of Archbishop O'Fiaich to Cardinal, because of his statements in support of H Block prisoners.
- 6 Army deserter Michael Parkinson leaves Doncaster court 'with a smile on his face' after collecting a prison sentence which will ensure dishonourable discharge from army, thus avoiding returning for a 4th tour of duty in the North.
- 8 Powell, speaking in Co. Down Orange Hall, says if Prince Charlie were to marry a catholic it 'would signal the beginning of the end of the British monarchy'. Mason announces that financial aid to North through the Northern Ireland Economic Commission is to be doubled in 1979 from £50m to £100m.
- 9 Twelve incendiary devices go off in Armagh City 24 hours after erection of security barriers.
- 11 Two RUC men arrested on suspicion of murder and kidnapping. Labour Party draft election manifesto supports direct rule in North of Ireland as 'the only viable alternative' and rejects troop withdrawal. One 'blanket man' from Long Kesh admitted to hospital, a second sent for X rays after incident in which the PoWs were forcibly bathed, shaved and had their heads shaved. N.I. Office admits to 'bruising', nothing more.
- 12 Letter bombs sent to prison officers homes. Some injuries to wives and postmen.
- 14 Sacked Harland & Wolff Director given £200,000 payoff. Irish Health Minister Haughey issues Family Planning Bill which would make contraceptives available through doctors only and only to 'bona fide' married couples.
- 15 Heavy sentences on 5 South Armagh men convicted of killing of undercover British soldier Nairac. Two more RUC men questioned about serious crimes. Ireland cuts its links with Sterling and joins the European Monetary System.

8 RUC men, including 3 sergeants, were remanded in custody on charges of murdering Catholics, attempted murder, kidnapping of a priest and a series of other charges connected with sectarian assassinations. At the same time RUC detectives flew to Edinburgh to question members of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders about the brutal murder of two Catholic farm labourers in County Fermanagh in 1972. To add to the discomfort of the Army, a few days later ten British soldiers were charged with a series of thefts from Belfast postal workers. These proceedings are only the tip of an iceberg of crime and murder going on under the umbrella of Army occupation. The incidents reported have proved impossible to suppress. Now the British hope that, as in the case of Sir Robert Mark's supposed "clean up" of the Metropolitan Police, they can present the case as a "purge" of a few "bad apples" and divert attention from the incidents which go on almost daily.

- 17 Early morning bombs by IRA in shopping centres in Bristol, Southampton, Manchester, Liverpool, Coventry. No serious injuries.
- 18 Two bombs in early morning in Central London, one other de-activated. Slight injury to one man.
- 3 RUC men charged with murder of catholic shopkeeper and kidnapping of priest. Soldiers from a Scottish regiment questioned about grisly murder of two catholics in Co. Fermanagh in 1972.
- 19 Irish govt promises 'full cooperation in bringing to justice those responsible for English bombings'. 2000 uniformed policemen—many of them armed—and who knows how many plainclothes and branchmen flood London's West End in 'Operation Santa', while Scorpion tanks and soldiers patrol Heathrow.

- 20 Simultaneous bombs in hotels in 6 different N.I. towns. No injuries. Police chase around Surrey and Hampshire in pursuit of Opel Kadett which allegedly opened fire on policeman [although local residents heard no exchange of gunfire].
- 21 Hunt for elusive Opel called off in Surrey. Three British soldiers shot dead while on foot patrol in middle of Crossmaglen. [Out of 14 soldiers killed this year 7 have been killed in Crossmaglen.]
- 23 Opel Kadett reported spotted in Scotland.
- 26 Two bombs in Waterside shopping centre, Derry. Police in London announce that 'Operation Santa' is to continue indefinitely.
- 29 Liberal MP Cyril Smith says on London Broadcasting phone-in programme that troops should leave 'in 12 or 18 months'.
- 31 Late night bombs in Belfast. Huge car bomb in Cookstown demolished shopping centre.

The statements of John Pardoe, deputy leader of the Liberal Party, and of the prominent Liberal MP Cyril Smith, that they favour a withdrawal of troops from Ireland in the next 2 years and that they hope to win the Party to that position in the near future, have provoked angry clashes within the Party. The Young Liberals nationally have affiliated to UTOM, but David Steel, the Liberal leader, and Clement Freud have reacted angrily against support for Troops Out. But clearly something is stirring among the Liberals. Perhaps the possibility of widespread defections from Labour among the Irish community has made some of them sense an electoral advantage to be had from a Troops Out position for a Party which is having a hard time of it at the moment. But whatever the cause it is an important development. It underlines the fact that the situation in Ireland is becoming an issue in British politics for the first time in many years, producing a more favourable situation for arguing the case for Troops Out.

JAN

- 1 Bombs in Omagh, Stewartstown, Dungannon, Derry.
- 2 Short Bros. and Harland & Wolff win £4m contract with British Aerospace Corporation
- 3 N.I. Equal Opportunities Commissioner calls for investigation of the Commission because of its lack of performance in ensuring equal rights for women.
- 4 Liberal MP John Pardoe on 'Nationwide' calls for troop withdrawal within two years. Irish Medical Association recommends doctors not to prescribe condoms.
- 5 Burtollet Commemoration March shot at by UUUP Councillor.

HULL PRISON RIOT

The Hull Prison riot of August/September 1976, principally led by Irish POWs, shocked the prison authorities and gave the screws a severe set-back. They retaliated after the riot by systematically stripping, beating and abusing the prisoners, with such brutality that an enquiry could not be suppressed. The Home Office was predictably able to mute the press coverage. But an Assistant Governor and 12 screws have been committed for trial. The riot has led to the reintroduction by stealth of the hated sensory deprivation control techniques used first in Wakefield prison as "control units", which were closed after a public campaign in 1974. Every attempt should now be made to see that this inhumane procedure is discontinued.

- 7 Irish PM statement says British govt. responsible for political stagnation in North.
- 8 50 killed in oil tanker explosion at Gulf Oil terminal in Bantry Bay. Gulf Oil runs the terminal unsupervised and safety procedures seem to have been inadequate.
- 11 State of Emergency declared in North because of oil tanker drivers' strike. Official Unionists welcome declaration and use of troops to move oil. Liberal Party official delegation to North assures Unionist officials that Pardoe and Smith's 'troops out' demands will not become official Liberal Party policy.
- 14 State of emergency in North called off after tanker drivers vote to go back. Extra troops return to England.

Can This Be Justice?

Irish Republican Socialist Party
Train Frame Up

An estimated £221,000 was stolen in the great train robbery when the Cork-Dublin train was stopped near Sallins, Co Kildare on March 30th 1976.

As a result of this robbery 100 IRSP members were picked up for questioning, nine were severely tortured and six charged with the robbery. All the defendants, at that time, and five IRSP men are taking proceedings against the gardai (police) and state for false imprisonment and assault.

The first trial of the "Kildare Six" was thrown out of court in December '76 because the state could not produce any evidence but a few weeks later four of the original six were arrested and re-charged with the robbery. The four were Mick Plunkett, Nicky Kelly, Brian McNally and Osgur Bretnach.

The second trial as with the first, was held in the Special Criminal Court, Dublin, where three judges sit, there are no juries. The three judges were McMahon, Garvin O'Connor. Throughout this second trial one of the judges kept falling asleep, judge O'Connor; but then this was expected as he had a history of sleeping while a case was being heard, in fact he got a big pay rise, £700, for sleeping on the job. On about the 59th day of the second train trial judge O'Connor died and a re-trial was called.

The new trial started Nov. '78 and in the first hearing Mick Plunkett was found not guilty and released, leaving Osgur Bretnach, Brian McNally and Nick Kelly in the dock.



Despite the fact that a chief police witness, Ms O'Toole, claimed that a statement she had signed was not her evidence but was in fact presented to her for signature by Detective Michael Canavan the court ruled that statements beaten out of the defendants by the gardai 'Heavy Gang' were admissible.

The 'Heavy Gang' are policemen with a clear cut political ideology bordering on fascism. They have since been disbanded but can be brought together at any time again, if need be. The IRSP three were found guilty of the train robbery they never did. Osgur Bretnach was sent to jail for 12 years. He is married with one child and his wife is expecting a second. Brian McNally was sent to jail for 9 years he is married and has four children. Nicky Kelly was not in court to be sent to prison.

It must be accepted that this case was political and that the prosecution had no evidence. It was a saga of torture and



Judge O'Connor.

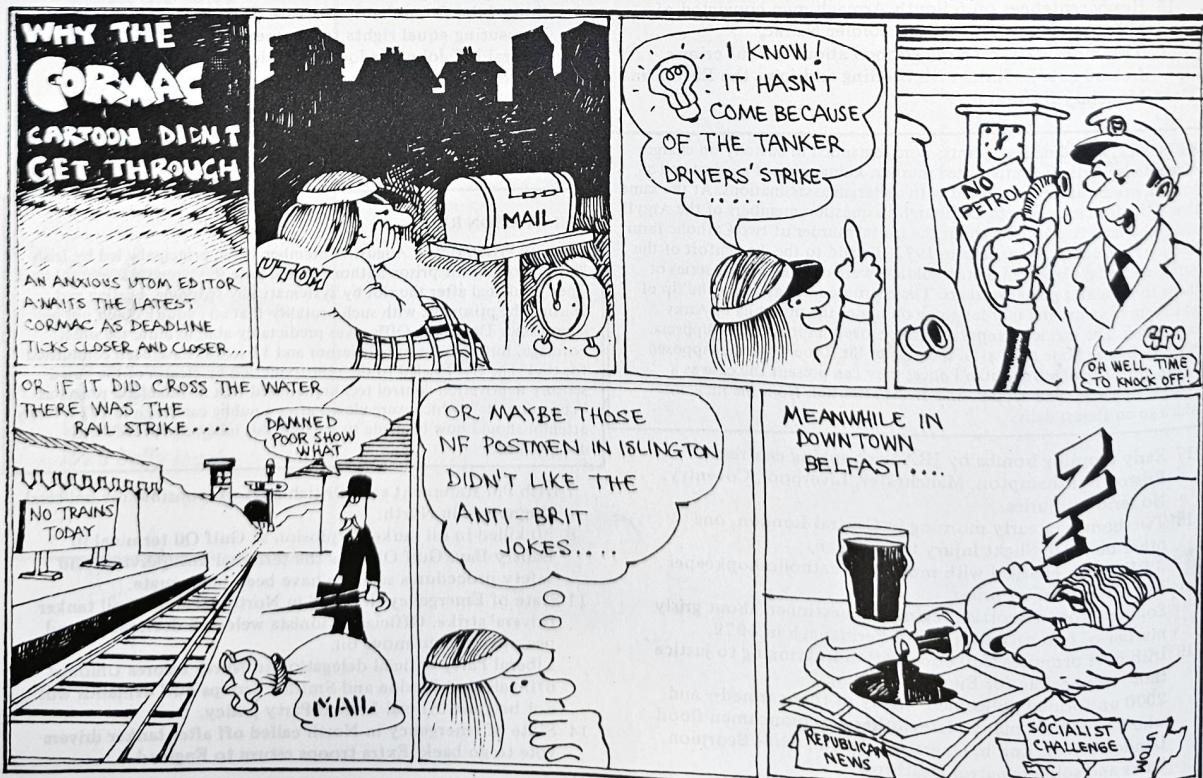
The 'late' sleeper

perjury. It was wrong for the Irish people, despite their long tradition of political repression, not to expect and demand civil rights. May I further say that this trial has nothing to do with a train robbery but with police brutality.

The Irish Republican Socialist Party would like to thank our Comrades from UTOM, RCT, RCG, IMG, SWP and supporters who attended the pickets for the Kildare four at the Irish Embassy, London.

Further info: from IRSP, 34 Upper Gardiner St, Dublin 1.

James O'Brien,
IRSP London.



(Apologies to Cormac, it's in the mail. Ed.)