

TROOPS OUT

Vol. 3 No. 4 Feb. '80

Paper of the Troops Out Movement 10p

TERRORISING
THE IRISH
IN
BRITAIN

SEE PAGES 6 AND 7



Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1974

(CHAPTER 56)

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

PART I

PROSCRIBED ORGANISATIONS

Section

1. Proscribed organisation
2. Display of support in public for a proscribed organisation.

PART II

EXCLUSION ORDERS

3. Orders to prevent terrorism.
4. Right to make representations to Secretary of State.

Arrested under the PTA:	4,345
Charged under the PTA:	46
Held more than 48 hours:	481
Excluded from Great Britain:	205

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



New Years Day H-Block picket outside Downing Street (TOM photo)

THE SEMI-ANNUAL CONFERENCE of the Troops Out Movement was held in London on December 8 and 9. First Conference business was to change the name from United Troops Out Movement back to Troops Out Movement, not because we are no longer united, but in recognition that there is now one national broad front movement.

The growing strength of TOM, as shown by the number of branches in attendance, means that the national initiatives adopted have a good chance of success. These include coordinated work on gaining support for the political status demand of Irish prisoners, several national demonstrations outside London, a labour weekend school to discuss and initiate work in the labour movement — seen by the conference as a major focus — and commitment to an ongoing programme of general propaganda and work with other forces advocating withdrawal. However, the Conference emphasised that while working with other forces, we should make it a priority to raise our two demands wherever possible.

Speakers from the Relatives Action Committee, and from An Cumman Cabhrach (the Sinn Féin welfare organisation for Irish political prisoners in Britain) focussed attention on the conditions of prisoners, and the urgency of their demands.

Open conferences of the whole membership were reaffirmed as the general decision-making body of the TOM, interspersed with National Liaison Committee meetings open to representatives from each Branch.

A new eight-person national steering committee, based in London, was elected to coordinate national work.



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

We have been working as an organisation for immediate British withdrawal since the early 1970's. We now have over 40 branches around the country. These branches, working locally in whatever ways circumstances allow, are the backbone of the TOM. Membership, or affiliation, is open to any individual or group supporting the demands

TROOPS OUT NOW

SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE AS A WHOLE

If you want to see peace come to a free, united Ireland, Join Us!

Typeset by Community Typesetters, 2 St. Paul's Rd., London N1.

STOP PRESS

Patrick Conlon, the Irish prisoner from Belfast whom we reported as very ill in Hammersmith Hospital (see page 5) died on the night of January 22. Already ill when he began serving a 12 year sentence for an offence under the PTA of which he always claimed innocence, he was repeatedly refused a transfer to N. Ireland. At his death, he only weighed 5 stone. Medical neglect, and the usual callous treatment meted out to Irish prisoners almost certainly contributed to his death.

TROOPS OUT is produced by an editorial collective drawn from TOM branches in the London area. We meet on Wednesday evenings. Write if you'd like to work on the paper. Contributions are welcome (although we can't guarantee to publish everything that comes in).

Subs: £2 for 10 issues yearly. Make cheques and POs payable to Troops Out (Literature Committee). Send subs to Box 10, 2a St Pauls Rd, London N1.

If you want to join one of the TOM branches, listed below, or if you don't live near a branch and want to join as an individual, fill in the coupon below. Individual membership is £3, which includes a subscription to Troops Out. Membership of a branch is £2, payable through the branch.

England	Leeds
Barnsley	Luton
Basingstoke	Manchester
Birmingham	Merseyside
Brighton	Norwich
Bristol	Nottingham
Burnley	Oxford
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To Box TO, 2a St Pauls Rd., London N1
I would like to join / be sent information
about the Troops Out Movement

Name

Address

OUTRAGES AND REPRISALS: A History Lesson



BLOODY SUNDAY, 1972, echoes centuries of British atrocities aimed at terrorising the civilian population of Ireland in periods when they were fighting to be rid of British rule.

In particular, another Bloody Sunday, in Dublin, comes to mind. Like the massacre in Derry, this was another case of British armed forces shooting on a defenceless crowd.

The Dublin Bloody Sunday occurred near the end of the second year of the Irish War of Independence which led to separation from Britain for 26 of Ireland's 32 counties.

POLICE WAR

But then, as now, the British government refused to recognise that a state of war existed. Instead, while employing what troops were available, and declaring martial law in certain areas, they preferred to pretend the whole thing was a police operation, or a 'police war', as Lloyd George once called it.

In the forefront of this undeclared war was the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC). A garrison police force located throughout Ireland, they were the chief source of British intelligence and local repression.

But by the end of 1919, the RIC were demoralised and understaffed. There had been mass resignations from the force, and under increasing attack from the IRA and the contempt and hatred of the local population, they had abandoned the smaller garrisons to concentrate in the bigger towns. They were demanding (as the RUC does now), that the army take over their more dangerous duties.

Nor were they able to come up with information which would allow the British to weed out proscribed Sinn Féin members, or members of the IRA. The sympathies of the people were very clearly with the republicans. Martial law, imposing curfews, prohibiting local markets, and providing for search and seizure at will, had not, as the British calculated, turned the people against the IRA and Sinn Féin, but against the British. 'On the whole, the police are receiving no support from the people', said a police report from Galway in September.

THE BLACK AND TANS

At the end of 1919, the government decided to strengthen the RIC by recruiting English ex-servicemen. Many of these men had prison sentences commuted if they joined, and preference was given to a type of man very like present-day English mercenaries — with a taste for adventure and bloodshed.

There were two forces of mercenaries: ex-soldiers, and ex-officers. The first detachment of ex-soldiers landed in Ireland in March 1920, with instructions to 'make Ireland hell for the rebels'.

This they proceeded to do. Throughout the remainder of 1920 they carried out a campaign of 'unofficial' reprisals for IRA attacks which included rape, murder of civilians, priests and nuns, torture, mutilation of the dead, burning, looting, the destruction of homes, factories, shops and creameries.

The incident which earned them their name came when the garrison in Limerick broke out of barracks in May 1919, assaulting civilians and smashing up shops. From then on, they were known as the 'Black and Tans'; the name of a famous local pack of hunting hounds, and because of their mixed uniform of army khaki and green-black RIC uniforms. The Auxiliaries (as the ex-officer recruits were known) behaved no better. The war became known as the 'Tan War'.

IT DIDN'T HAPPEN

When news of their outrages became known through the reporting in the British press — which was much more accurate and unbiased than Irish reporting now — the government's response was to say it didn't happen, or accounts were exaggerated, or that it was only exceptional incidents. But Lloyd George boasted openly of the effect he thought the reprisals were having, and in language familiar from Callaghan and Thatcher, attempted to twist public sympathy towards the butchers.

'Unless I am mistaken, by the steps we have taken, we have murder by the throat. I ask the British public not to be ready to credit slanders on the brave men who, at the peril of their lives, are tracking murder in the dark. . . . Irish men have no real sympathy with these murders: not a bit!', he said at a Guildhall dinner in November 1920.

CRESCENDO

This official terrorism reached a crescendo in November 1920. In In Balbriggan (near Dublin), in Tralee, Galway, Cork and Clare multiple murders took place, while scores of other places were held in their grip of terror. And on Sunday, November 21, 1920 occurred the largest single massacre.

OUTRAGE AND REPRISAL

In the early morning of that Sunday, members of IRA leader Michael Collins' special squad entrusted with eliminating British special branch agents before they eliminated them carried out a carefully coordinated attack. A number of agents were killed in their beds. The British government always tried to portray this as the culmination of IRA outrages, implying that the victims were ordinary civilians or military. But Dublin Castle, the centre of special branch activities, admitted openly that their intelligence-gathering had been virtually paralyzed by the killings.

BLOODY SUNDAY

That afternoon, a detachment of Auxiliaries broke into the grounds of Croke Park in Dublin, where a Gaelic football match was in progress, and fired on the crowd of 15,000, killing 10 and wounding over 60. Their justification was that shots had been fired at them — shots which no eyewitnesses heard.

DISGUSTED

Unlike the commander of the paratroop regiment in Derry in January 1972, who accepted an OBE in recognition of that massacre, the Auxiliaries commander Maj. Gen Crozier, later resigned in disgust. A military man, used to normal warfare, he could not come to terms with the uses to which the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries were put. His attempts to restore military discipline by dismissing and punishing those he thought responsible for the outrages were continually thwarted as they were reinstated from above.

OFFICIAL ENCOURAGEMENT

The behaviour of the mercenaries was, at all times, part of British government policy. Like the 'B' Specials under Stormont, and the RUC and UDR to a lesser extent now, they were only behaving in the way they were officially encouraged to.

Lloyd George calculated that to call the struggle a war would be tantamount to admitting that the forces of Britain were an army of occupation.

'The Irish job is a police job', he said. 'If it becomes an army job, we have lost'. Today, in the north of Ireland, the government is similarly attempting to push the Royal Ulster Constabulary into the front line in order to convince the world that the war is only a 'police operation'. Meanwhile the army, undercover squads and police interrogators are encouraged to terrorise the civilian population. But it didn't work in the Tan War, and it won't work now.

The resignation of Jack Lynch and the election of Charles Haughey as Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland was determined, ultimately, by differences of opinion within the ruling Fianna Fail party over Irish self-determination and the role of British troops in the North.

While Lynch was making deals with Thatcher on border 'security', Haughey commemorated the birth of Padraig Pearse, a leader of the 1916 Easter Rising, saying that "Pearse sought freedom by arms because there was no other way open to him". Haughey's record in government shows that, in fact, he has no intention of serving the struggle for the self-determination of the Irish people. But his election to premier demonstrates that the national question remains a crucial issue in the Republic.

Dissent within Fianna Fail over Lynch's willingness to collaborate with the British government on security was first voiced openly in September by Síle de Valera, grand-daughter of Eamon de Valera, who founded the party in 1927 on the principle of resistance to partition. In a speech condemning Lynch's attitude, she stressed that the only solution for Ireland was self-government for the whole country, adding that "any transitory steps that do not include this principle betray the beliefs and hopes of all those patriots who have died for the cause". After this, inner-party criticism increased, with Haughey, whom de Valera supported in his bid for premier, being most outspoken.

LYNCH'S AIRSPACE DEAL

The crunch finally came for Lynch when it was discovered that he had done a secret deal with Thatcher to allow British helicopters to fly into Southern airspace to 'track terrorists'. He was in America at the time, and let slip about details of this deal to a Washington audience. On his return to Ireland, the party's ground was already disintegrating under his feet; Bill Loughlane had accused him of being a liar and Colley, Lynch's protegee, had failed in an attempt to discipline Loughlane. Lynch resigned.

It was in this mood of discontent that Charles Haughey was able to win the post of Prime Minister. Since being accused (and acquitted) of giving £50,000 to the IRA for guns in 1970 and consequently sacked from his post as Finance Minister by Lynch, he had been careful to nurture his republican image; there were no condemnations of the IRA from Haughey in the 1970s.

No doubt sensing grass-roots desire to stop Fianna Fail's rapid drift away from even lip-service support for Irish self-determination, the parliamentary members of the party narrowly elected Haughey. Significantly, he got in almost exclusively on back-bench support, with only two votes from government members. The rest of the cabinet backed George Colley to the hilt. As Colley was Lynch's hand-picked successor, Haughey's election points to a shift of emphasis within Fianna Fail.

ANYONE FOR HAUGHEY?



"THE PEOPLE'S FRIEND"?

Despite Haughey's republican image, however, the part played by him as 'Justice' Minister in the early 1960s and his record to date as Prime Minister show that he is very far from ready to serve the cause of a united Ireland. In 1960 and 1961 he interned IRA suspects and later reintroduced military tribunals to try and sentence republicans. When he became Prime Minister in 1979, he took the first opportunity available to make a speech condemning the IRA. Also, the air corridor for British aircraft over the Republic stays and co-operation with the Tory government will no doubt remain close.

On 'social' issues, Haughey is not even a lesser evil. Recently, as Minister of Health, he introduced a bill on birth control which made contraception illegal to all but married women. An important offshoot of this is that there is a severe clampdown on the 'ad hoc' birth control centres. These centres, where all women could go for contraception and advice, were tolerated before the new law was passed, despite being illegal. Now they are not even tolerated.

As far as labour movement rights are concerned, the working class as a whole has no stakes in Haughey being elected either. Fabulously rich himself, he has expressed the wish to curb trade union rights; Gene Fitzgerald, Lynch's Minister of Labour, stays where he is, preparing anti-union legislation.

In fact, none of Haughey's cabinet reshuffle points to any significant changes. Collins remaining Minister of Justice shows that the government's

treatment of 'IRA suspects' will still be as unjust as ever and Faulkner's transfer to Defence is another change that will change nothing. The only hint of a hard-line approach in the reshuffle came with Jim Gibbons being thrown out of the cabinet. But the Prime Minister could hardly have the chief prosecution witness in the Arms Trial working in his government. . . .

CHANGE OF MOOD IN FIANNA FAIL

While having no illusions about Haughey's much-disproved claims to be an active, practical supporter of the struggle for Irish self-determination, we must see his gaining premiership on a republican ticket as an indicator that republicanism in the South is not only alive, but kicking healthily as well. In a recent report published by the Economic and Social Research Institute, it is shown that 70.8% of the population of southern Ireland support British troop withdrawal from the North, regardless of 'majority' (Northern) opinion; only 10% "strongly reject" the IRA's motives, while 25% are "neutral" on this point. It is this depth of feeling that Fianna Fail cannot ignore, with an election in eighteen months' time. So to conclude, let us quote *The Times* — not noted for its solid support of Troops Out — when it said in its 'review of the decade':

"Political thinkers will never dominate the gut feeling for an Irish Ireland . . . in that context, there can be no prospect that the revolutionary torch will be extinguished in the 1980s." What more can we add?

IRISH PRISONERS IN ENGLISH JAILS



The increasingly harsh conditions in English jails for Irish people imprisoned because of their political beliefs or actions springing from those beliefs are spotlighted in a new publication called 'Irish Voices from English Jails'.*

This book is published by the Prisoners Aid Committee and contains writings by various prisoners from the forties to the present day. Some of the writers are able to call upon reminiscences of earlier struggles from the period of the Irish war for independence. The result is a deeply moving book and one that clearly points out similarities in treatment over forty years of Irish political prisoners.

One of the most horrific accounts concerns Sean O'Connail, who died in Moorgreen Hospital on October 1 1977. It is more poignant perhaps, because after his death most of his notebooks and personal papers disappeared. The short account transcribed by his solicitor is one of the very few papers left:

CREAM TO RUB ON HIS CHEST

'Started feeling ill in March 1976 in Hull. Pains across my stomach. I reported sick. I was given some heartburn tablets. They were getting more prolonged. I got the pains at weekends after running. Used to run about 3 miles. I did go back to the doctor in Hull. I was then moved to Gartree. I was still getting the pains. Saw a doctor there after a month. Given cream to rub into my chest. No improvement. I reported sick again. I rubbed some more cream in. I reported loss of breath. I saw Dr. Smith. I eased off the running for a month. I didn't go back to the doctor until I had started running again about a month later. He thought it was cramp in the chest. Gave me an X-ray. This would be about six weeks before I left Gartree. I was not given any treatment as a result of the X-Ray.

[He was then moved to Albany, given more cream for his chest, and told to rest]

'Food was very bad. I was sick for three weeks and then they called in a specialist to see me. He examined me

This was an outside specialist. He told me to take it easy and stay in the cell. After that I went to see a medic. He sent for me. He said they would send me to Parkhurst into the hospital. Two specialists saw me there after about two weeks. They then said I would stay at Parkhurst. X-Rayed me again.

'A specialist then came to see me and asked if I would like to know what was wrong with me and I said I would. He then said that I had cancer and had roughly 3½ to 4 weeks to live. No question of an operation. I had been in Parkhurst about 6 weeks when they told me. I weighed about 150 lbs when I came to the prison in April 1974. I now weigh about 124 lbs. I noticed my weight started dropping whilst I was in Hull. I did not complain very much because I am not one to complain.'



A 'SPECIAL' KIND OF STATUS

The book clearly describes the way in which all Republican prisoners have either been accorded special status by the authorities or have immediately begun a protest to try and achieve it. The first account by Conor MacNessa, who spent 10 years in British prison for IRA activities from 1939-40 tells of a successful hunger strike for prisoner-of-war status:

'There was a change of governors. To the assembled men he said, "You men claim to be soldiers. Well that is all right by me. I am a soldier too, but a soldier has to obey orders and I am the governor here."

This was followed by the granting of certain rights, such as separate living quarters, and the right to assemble and march to and from work.

Today, no Irish prisoners are recognised as captured soldiers. They are all classified as Category A prisoners, and for years many have claimed that within this top-security category there is a special section for them. The Prisoners Aid Committee, in the latest issue of 'The Irish Prisoner' publishes part of a letter from the Governor of Hull Prison, referring to Ronnie MacCarthy as 'IRA Category A', which seems to confirm the claim.

In the Wormwood Scrubs incident in 1979 when a 'flying squad' of warders armed with clubs attacked prisoners who had been on a peaceful protest about their conditions, it was noticeable that Irish prisoners received 'special attention'.

The hypocrisy of British policy, in denying political status to the prisoners is shown up by the histories related in this book, while the nature of the 'special category' which the government does put them in is attested to by the fact that in the last 11 years four Republican prisoners have died in English jails.

While special attention in terms of harsh imprisonment conditions is meted out to Republicans, political recognition is denied them. For political recognition would mean that the government would have to admit that there is a war going on and that these prisoners are POWs. This would immediately raise the question of the right of the troops to be in Ireland.

There are 60 Irish political prisoners being held in English jails. All are moved around frequently. To find out where someone is currently held, and for names of prisoners, write to **An Cumann Cabhrach, 2 Leabon Grove, Harbourne, Birmingham B17 0LE**. This is the prisoners welfare organisation, and it tries to keep up-to-date lists. Currently they are appealing for paperbacks (in good condition) and Irish and folk records. Prisoners are currently held in jails in the following towns:

DURHAM
EVESHAM (Long Lartin)
LEICESTER
LONDON (Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubs)
MANCHESTER
MARKET HARBOROUGH (Gartree)
NEWPORT, I.O.W. (Albany and Parkhurst)
WAKEFIELD
WINCHESTER

On Saturday 12th January a picket, called by Sinn Fein, was held outside Wormwood Scrubs in support of Guiseppe (Patrick) Conlon, an Irish prisoner held there until he was removed to Hammersmith Hospital on New Years Eve with a serious lung condition. He already had a history of lung trouble prior to his arrest, but the poor conditions in prison and the poor medical treatment has not helped. Along with other political prisoners he is demanding to be transferred to a northern Irish prison. The latest news we have is that he is a little better, but if the worst had happened, he would have brought the death toll to five.

*Irish voices from English jails. £1.45 + 25p p&p. From Prisoners Aid Committee, Box 9, 2a St Pauls Rd., London N1.

HELD UNDER THE TERR

Shortly before Christmas, the people of Britain learned that they had been saved from possible death thanks to the actions of the Anti-Terrorist Squad in arresting nearly 30 people under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. But A-TS Chief Duffy's boasts soon slipped from the front pages, as the promised 'IRA Chief' disappeared into thin air, leaving only 'lieutenants' who somehow failed to have in their possession the necessary explosives for blasting us all to hell. But we could now sleep peacefully in our beds, and enjoy a worry-free Christmas. All, of course, except those arrested, their families and friends, the latest victims of police terrorism.

Nine of those held in the pre-dawn swoops by armed police have been charged, the others released. Of those still held, four are charged with possession of arms and ammunition, others with conspiracy to cause explosions, and some with withholding information. Two are out on bail, the other seven, including three women are on remand in Brixton Prison.

Until the cases come to trial, it is difficult to comment on the quality of the police evidence. But their use of conspiracy charges when they have no evidence is notorious, while 'withholding evidence' is a catch-22 charge which it is difficult for the victim to disprove. Added to that, known police methods of interrogation must make any possible statements, verbal or otherwise, suspect. Below is the experience of one of the women arrested and later released, and the views of a solicitor who handles PTA cases regularly.

'THEY WEREN'T REALLY INTERESTED IN ME'

[Val Green, a nurse working in East London, and a supporter of Hands Off Ireland, was arrested along with a friend from Northern Ireland who was staying with her while visiting her husband in prison.]

'About four in the morning there was a knock at the door. They said they were the police, that they wanted to ask me some questions and could they come in. I had the chain on the door. I said I wanted to see their warrant, so they waved a piece of paper in front of my nose. When I said I wanted to read it, they started battering the door and kicked it in.

'They came straight into the bedroom — about eight of them. My friend had taken a sleeping tablet earlier. She woke up very very drowsy and found all these people surrounding her in the bed. The uniformed senior officer began to yell at her "Get your hands up! Get up! Get out of bed!" The two policewomen started lifting the mattress while she was still in it, tipping her out of the bed. I started yelling at this point, what were they doing? They said they were arresting us. When my friend finally got out of the bed her knees were giving, so I caught her and put her back on the bed, but they moved her into the living room. They had a dog, and began pulling the flat apart. All they would say was "we're arresting you under the PTA"

[They were taken to Arbour Square police station.]

'We were put in separate cells. There were two other women there, a girl of 21 and her mother, 61. By talking to them we found out that this was part of a wider swoop.

'They never charged me, and never suggested they were going to charge me, apart from suggesting that I could be charged with withholding information. They told me they weren't really interested in me, they just wanted information about my friend. When I said that I wasn't answering any questions, and that I wanted to see a solicitor, I wasn't questioned any more, apart from one or two questions. I just said "no comment". They accepted the fact that I wasn't going to answer any questions. The problem then was what to do with me.

'Our clothes were taken away the first day. For over 24 hours we had no clothes at all. We had to use the blankets that we'd slept in. Two dirty grey blankets. On Thursday they gave me some clothes, not my own.

'I WAS DELIBERATELY REFUSED WATER'

'It was very very hot in the cells, and very stuffy. We were locked up all the time unless they wanted us for something. The lights were kept on 24 hours a day. We were not allowed any reading or writing material. For the first couple of days we weren't allowed to wash at all *[the reason given being that they wanted to take finger swabs]*. We didn't get enough to drink. I became quite dehydrated and was always asking for water. I was told I was being refused water, deliberately. The other women weren't getting water either.

'I was conscious of how it affects you physically in a situation like that, if you become dehydrated, or if you don't

eat, so I was making a point of eating, making a point of kicking up a fuss and demanding water, so I was reasonably okay. But the other women weren't eating. And I'm pretty sure they were getting less water than I was.

'The older woman, the mother of the 21 year old girl, was vomiting all through Wednesday and Wednesday night. The police surgeon visited her, and told her she had high blood pressure and should see her own doctor. I asked her about this, but she was more worried about her daughter. After her daughter was released on Friday night she told me more about herself, and said she felt weak. She hadn't been eating.

'In a situation like that you're inclined to go off your food. And you're glad if people just don't bother you. You don't want to make a fuss about getting water in case this escalates the situation for you. When this woman was finally released on Saturday, she collapsed in the police station, while waiting for her relatives to pick her up.

[Val refused, on principle, any co-operation with the police.]

'They had come along a couple of times and said they wanted to take prints, and when I refused they said they'd wait till I had clothes back, and do it then. On Thursday morning they said they really wanted to let me go, and that the only reason I was there was because I had given my friend food and shelter. But they still wanted fingerprints. In the afternoon, I had clothes, so they took me off to a room and pushed me into a chair. I was struggling to get up, and they were trying to keep me there. One of the special branch had hold of me around the neck and was pulling my head up by the hair so that they could take a photograph. I screwed up my face, so that the photograph they got was useless to them.

'Then they said would I co-operate in having my fingerprints taken. I said no, and that I wanted to make a statement about the PTA and how it was used to coerce and intimidate the Irish community and to prevent them from showing any kind of political solidarity with the struggle in Northern Ireland. And that if they attempted to take my fingerprints by force I would treat it as an assault, and I would try to defend myself against it.

'So once I said that they brought four men and a woman into the room, and three of them began to grab hold of me. They finally got me up flat on one of the tables. One guy was pushing my head down flat on the table. My right arm was twisted behind my back. My feet were held. My other arm was stretched out. In this way they got what resembled fingerprints.

[She was dragged back to a cell (although she would have walked) and was later allowed to see her own doctor, who noted bruises, scratches and grazes. A second set of prints was later taken, again forcibly.]

'On Friday I was interviewed again. I said it was a waste of time keeping me, as I wasn't going to answer any questions, PTA. And that I wanted to see a solicitor. The guy from Scotland Yard said "Fair enough". He agreed there wasn't any

TERROR ACT



The seven day period of detention without access which the police have under the PTA has led people to believe that habeas corpus is not relevant to this Act. Habeas corpus allows any person to challenge the validity of their detention. But when Alastair Logan tried for a habeas corpus in the case of three of those people detained in December, the Judge, Seabag-Shaw, adjourned the case until nearly the end of the seven day period of detention, on the grounds that the police had not been given enough notice. They had been notified beforehand, but they simply didn't turn up in court. The Judge also said that Commander Duffy could read and vet any written instructions which those detained sent out for conducting the application for habeas corpus (the solicitors weren't allowed to see their clients). In effect, this means the court handed over to the police the decision as to what material the court could consider in a habeas corpus case. Alastair Logan feels that so far as protecting the liberty of the subject is concerned, with this decision habeas corpus has become a thing of the past, a remedy without any meaning. This is a measure of the success of the police and government in raising the spectre of terrorism to erode civil liberties.

point keeping me there. He said he'd contact his superiors to see if I could have a solicitor. But this was refused.

'On Friday night the RCG found out where I was, through a process of phoning round police stations, and organised a demonstration, which we could hear very clearly inside. That night one of the police said that they had put an armed guard on the door "in case any of your lot try to get in". My friend was moved out that night to Rochester Row.

'On Saturday there was another demonstration. After that I was asked again if I was prepared to answer questions and said no. And about half past four on Saturday afternoon I finally got out.

'I'm considering bringing charges against the police. We've given the information to a solicitor. Charges like breaking and entering, damage to property, theft, kicking in my door for a start. When I got back on Saturday evening everything was turned upside down, and pulled out. They had even uprooted the potplants. The heating hadn't been off the whole time. They had stayed in the flat for a couple of days at least. When people rang up for me or my friend, they answered the phone and without saying who they were, questioned them. A friend came up to borrow the television and they started questioning him. He asked if he could feed my cats, and they said they'd feed them, but of course they didn't. When I came back the cats were starving.

'We'll probably try to charge them with assault as well. Under the terms of the PTA they can take fingerprints; we would have to prove they used undue force. I think I can prove that.'

If you want to help in the case Val is bringing against the police, write to 49, Railton Road, Brixton, London SW2.

'A FRIGHTENING PIECE OF LEGISLATION'

Solicitor Alastair Logan spoke to *Troops Out*:

'In the early days of the PTA, there was a fair amount of brutality in interrogation. But the fact that people became alerted to this and were onto PTA arrests fairly quickly, organising pickets and giving publicity to arrests, means that the police have a problem. So what they do now is more sophisticated.

'Take a person out of circulation. Put him (I'm saying 'him' because it is usually men who are picked up) into a police station. Deprive him of all contact. Tell him he is a terrorist. Threaten to convict him of all sorts of offences. Leave him absolutely distracted about what could happen to his relatives and friends. Threaten to arrest his wife. Threaten to pass on to the RUC the names of friends and relatives and their addresses (people from the North know how serious this threat is, given the close connections between the RUC and UDR and protestant paramilitary groups). You don't need to brutalise.

'Then keep him in a cell for long periods of time, with virtually no exercise. Give him cold food, probably irregularly. Wake him every half hour by kicking on the cell door. Interrogate him for long periods of time, generally when he is tired because of not having eaten or slept. Ask for details of friends and relatives. Keep him for the full seven days without access to legal advisors or independent advice. In many cases, add actual humiliation by depriving him of clothes. Offer him second-hand or dirty clothes which he refuses to wear. Put him into a filthy cell, with filthy blankets, sometimes blood and vomit stained. Keep the lights on all night.

'Deprived of sleep, hope, humanity, called a terrorist - at the end of the seven days they have probably gotten a lot of information. How much of that is accurate? One man, who was later released without charge, was heard by others screaming "I done Mountbatten, I done Mountbatten!". Another had to receive in-patient psychiatric treatment after his release.

HOW THE PTA EVADES CIVIL LIBERTIES

'The great majority of the over 4100 people arrested under the PTA were never charged with any offence at all. Of the cases of deportation I have worked on, the Gardai and the RUC have never charged those deported with any offence when they returned to Ireland. My conclusion is that it is an intelligence-gathering facility, and has been used as a racist anti-Irish piece of legislation. It has certainly had the consequence of controlling political activities of Irish people in this country. It serves as a form of immigration control between parts of what is supposed to be a united country. It is an intimidatory weapon, in its use. It is a frightening piece of legislation. We're right back to the statement of the Chief of Police about how "If you don't want trouble with the SPG keep off the streets".

'The PTA has produced one benefit; the definition of terrorism. 'The use of violence for political ends', or 'acts which put a section of the public in fear'. Most people would now accept that the use of the PTA does put a section of the public in fear. And if 'violence' can be extended to mean the deprivation of fundamental human rights, then we have a bunch of terrorists on our hands.'





Wakefield Prison Picket on 5 January (Photo: Leeds TOM)

AROUND THE BRANCHES

LEEDS

LEEDS TOM members were among a number of groups supporting the picket of Wakefield Prison on 5th January. The picket was called by the Northern England Irish Prisoners Committee. The Bradford Asian Youth Movement, Todmorden Trades Council, Sinn Féin, TOM, RCG, RCT and others attended up and kept up a steady barrage of chants for two hours (watched by the prison security cameras). This picket by the newly formed committee follows two others, of Durham and Wakefield Prisons in December, and other pickets are planned. The Committee's platform is

Political Status for all Irish POWs
Repatriation of Irish POWs in England
An Amnesty for Irish POWs
Smash the PTA; End immigration controls
Support for the Provisional Republican Movement.

The next picket is of Strangeways, Southall Street, Manchester 3, on Saturday, 16th February at 1pm.

SOUTH LONDON

SOUTH LONDON TOM is represented on a new Irish Committee set up by Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council after a conference on Ireland on 8th December.

At its next meeting, the Trades Council passed a resolution calling for an immediate end to repression in the north of Ireland, the right of the Irish to self-determination, political status for prisoners, and the withdrawal of British troops. An amendment was added, and passed, to support the Troops Out Movement.

The new Irish Committee intends to campaign for a South East region TUC conference on Ireland, and will stimulate and coordinate local labour movement activity.

HARLOW

HARLOW TOM BRANCH raised £200 for Irish political prisoners on the blanket in the H-Blocks in a pre-Christmas 'Irish Night' featuring a number of traditional musicians and singers.

Most of the money has been sent to the Green Cross Organisation in Belfast, who will use the money to aid the dependants of prisoners. A small amount was retained to help the Branch get out further propaganda on prisoners and the need to get the troops out.

MANCHESTER

MANCHESTER TOM are producing and distributing the Internal Bulletin for the next six months. Copy dates for the next three issues are: 16th February, 19th April and 24th June. All members and branches of TOM are invited to contribute. Articles on stencils should be sent to Manchester TOM, c/o 178 Waterloo Pl., Oxford Rd., Manchester 13.

ALL-LONDON

LONDON TOM branches organised a picket of Downing Street on New Year's Day to coincide with the H-Block March being held in Belfast, and to start the year off with an action drawing attention to the prisoners. About 60 people attended, including contingents from Hemel Hempstead TOM as well as London branches, and from RCT, RCG, WSL, Workers Power and IMG. We weren't allowed by the police to use the megaphone, but voices got the message across. Maggie wasn't there, but a lot of sightseers had come to see where she lived, and many took leaflets, photos and held discussions with the picket. (See picture, p.2)

Brits & Pieces

Some issues just won't lie down and die, and Royal Ulster Constabulary interrogation techniques is one of them. A survey of 350 'Diplock' cases (non-jury courts) by an independent group of academics, published in the Belfast magazine *Fortnight* concluded that the rules under which suspects are interrogated should be tightened up. In 70% of the cases studied the confession was the only real evidence against the suspect, and 85% of those who confessed did so within 24 hours of being picked up, although they can be held for up to 7 days without charge.

Issues like this no doubt inspired Chilean journalist Jose Cayuela in his book 'Inhuman Rights in Great Britain' to describe N. Ireland as 'Britain's piece of Third World ... a Vietnam which Britons have no desire to know about and which concentrates all the worst extremes of British society'. But at least Labour Foreign Secretary at the time, and champion of world human rights David Owen, would have something pertinent to add. When interviewed by Cayuela, he said, 'It's a very difficult issue for me. I am not trying to avoid it. I just don't know enough about it'. Well don't rush yourself trying to find out. It's only been going on for 800 years.

Recently Ian Jack reiterated Owen's sentiments when writing in the *Sunday Times Magazine*: 'Poverty is the most obvious and distressing aspect of travel in India. ... Many richer Indians deal with it rather as the mainland British deal with N. Ireland, i.e. they ignore it'. Still on how the British regard the Irish, a book of cartoons has just been published. Nothing unusual in that except that they are all by members of the Army who have served in the North since '69. Examples in the *Daily Express* show that the racist caricatures have not changed through centuries of British imperialism in Ireland.

Meanwhile, at the Atkins Conference, Britain's latest, already doomed attempt to show that something is being done, over £20,000 has been spent to adapt rooms at Stormont and give each of the thirty delegates £17.40 per diem tax-free attendance allowance. This can be spent in either of the two bars, one of which is non-alcoholic for the Paisley delegation.

But in the end we all go back to Charles Darwin. Some Unionist councillors in Ballymena, Co. Antrim have lodged a forceful objection with the local education board regarding Darwin's Theory of Evolution being taught in schools. Democratic Unionist Cllr. James Alexander says that the theory is being propounded by Communists in a bid to discredit the Christian doctrine. 'If children are taught that they come from apes, it's little wonder some of them behave like animals'.

the Origins of the Provos

Nº3

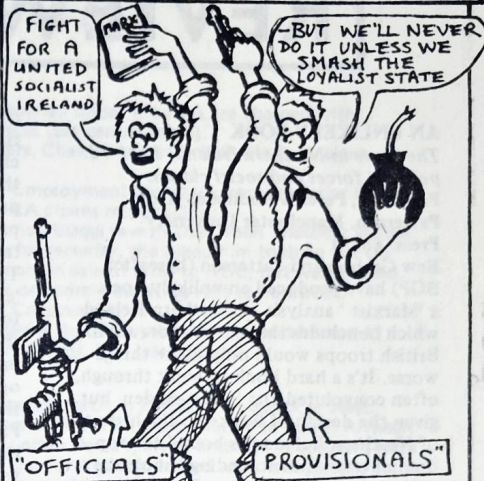
GUARANTEED PURE FACT x IHC

THE STREET BURNINGS OF AUGUST 1969 CAUSED A CRISIS IN THE REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT



NONVIOLENT AGITATION FOR CIVIL RIGHTS HAD LEFT THE I.R.A. UNARMED & UNTRAINED, UNABLE TO PROTECT THE GHETTOS FROM PROTESTANT POLICE & MOBS

DURING THE WINTER THE MOVEMENT SPLIT



SHORTLY AFTER, THE OFFICIALS LAID DOWN THEIR GUNS, BUT.....

KNOWING WHOSE SIDE THE BRITS WOULD END UP ON, THE PROVOS PREPARED FOR AN ALL OUT WAR...

JUNE 2nd, 1970 ATTEMPTS BY ARMY TO DIVERT AN ORANGE PARADE END IN PROTESTANT RIOTS

JUNE 23rd ARMY REFUSES TO INTERVENE WHEN LOYALIST MOB ATTACKS SHORT STRAND...



...HOW RIGHT THEY WERE!

THE ARMY IS HERE TO KEEP THE PEACE!



ARMY TOLD TO "LAY OFF" PROTESTANT EVENTS & AREAS



...PROVO DEFENCE SQUAD FIGHT IT OUT WITH ARMED LOYALISTS ...5 DIE IN GUNFIGHT, BUT RIOT CEASES & NO HOUSES ARE BURNED

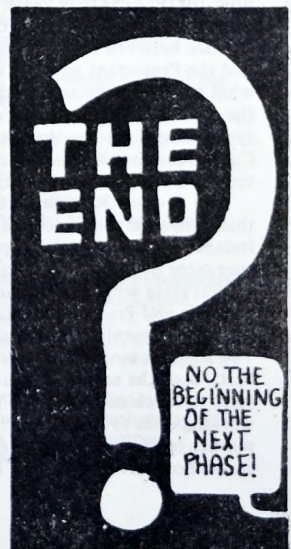
JULY 3rd ARMY INVADERS & SEALS OFF CATHOLIC FALLS ROAD FOR 36 HOURS, SMASHING UP HOUSES DURING ARMS SEARCHES 5 DEAD, 60 INJURED....



THE BRITISH TROOPS ARE JUST DOING THE DIRTY WORK OF THE PROTESTANT STATE! WE ARE AT WAR WITH THEM!!



...AND THEY STILL ARE!!



REVIEWS

AN UNLIKELY BOOK

The State in Northern Ireland, 1921-72: political forces and social classes.

Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon and Henry Patterson. Manchester University Press. £8.50

Bew Gibbon and Patterson (hereafter BGP) have produced an unlikely book — a 'Marxist' analysis of Northern Ireland which concludes that the withdrawal of British troops would only make things worse. It's a hard book to work through, often convoluted and jargon-ridden, but given the dearth of books on the history of Northern Ireland it's bound to crop up on every student reading list on the subject for years to come. For a more detailed analysis of the argument of the book, readers will have to look to the pages of *Ireland Socialist Review* and similar journals. Here there is only space to comment on a couple of the most confusing aspects of the book.

First of all, though I have read the book carefully twice, I still cannot work out how the authors think that they have advanced a case against the withdrawal of troops. There is a disconcerting gap between the political and theoretical arguments of the book and the historical material that the authors present. Whatever the authors might say to the contrary, most of the precise points they make about the history of Northern Ireland powerfully vindicate some of the key propositions of the *Troops Out* case.

DIVIDING THE WORKING CLASS

Firstly, they describe clearly how the British Government and the Unionist bourgeoisie converged around the establishment of a sectarian paramilitary state in Northern Ireland in 1921 as the best way of defending their interests against Irish nationalism and of dividing the working class. Secondly they show how, for the next fifty years, the existence of this state cemented a reactionary class alliance between the Unionist ruling class and the Protestant working class based on what BGP describe as sectarian populism, the subsidising of Protestant employment, systematic discrimination against Catholics in houses and education, and violent anti-Catholic policing.

The *Troops Out* case that follows from this analysis is that since the Northern Ireland State is both the expression and guarantee of this alliance, the destruction of that state will equalise the status of Catholic and Protestant and so accelerate the development of progressive unity. The account by BGP of how the Unionist Party used the sectarian structure of the state to block moves by the Protestant working class towards a form of class politics in the slump of the early 60's shows how, even before the emergence

of Catholic demands for democratic rights, these structures still retained their effectiveness. Yet despite all the evidence they present BGP still pin their hopes for political advance on the emergence of progressive secular politics among Protestant workers within the Northern state. The Catholic upsurge has, however, 'completely submerged' these progressive tendencies. The implicit conclusion therefore is that if only the Catholic minority would lie down and suffer their oppression quietly then sooner or later the latent progressive tendencies of Protestants workers, with a bit of a helping hand from new-style Irish Marxism, will come to the fore and reform away sectarianism.

MARGINAL IMPORTANCE?

And what of Britain? For *Troops Out* supporters Britain is the ultimate guarantor of the sectarian state since 1921, and for the last ten years its troops have been there to militarily sustain it. BGP, however, argue that though this was true at first, since 1940 Northern Ireland has been of very marginal importance to Britain, and they go on to argue that Britain's consistent aim, even in the last ten years, has been to minimise her involvement in Ireland.

There is some truth in this. The British Government is not interested in holding down colonies by direct military domination. Many British politicians — including Wilson, Callaghan, Heath and Whitelaw — have stated at various times that in the long term Ireland must be united. But that is not the same as saying that Britain is some sort of unwilling and passive participant in Irish affairs, as BGP imply.

A HIGHLY UNSTABLE PROCESS

The crucial point is that while uniting Ireland is an option the British Government consider, they will only allow it on *their own* terms. And in the present situation that is not on. They might dream of a stable client state — but first they have to get rid of the mass Catholic militancy of the ghettos and secondly they have to consider the unpredictable consequences of the dismantling of the structures of Unionism that have provided a breeding ground for the most reactionary forms of politics within the Protestant working class in the last sixty years: the dismantling of extreme reactionary regimes is a highly unstable political process.

This is not a book for those who like to read the introduction and the conclusion and then skip through the daunting detail in between. The important part of the book is the detail in the middle. The political polemic that surrounds it does not accurately reflect the content of the history they present.

ST, Camden & Islington TOM

PROPAGANDA MATERIALS

A group of London TOM members have, over the last couple of years, produced a number of extremely useful pamphlets, as well as badges and posters. For a list of the materials they have, including the *Soldiers Speak Out on Ireland* pamphlet, the pamphlet on the British Media, and a new poster-pamphlet on the H-Blocks, write to *Information on Ireland*, 1 North End Rd., London W14.

BRITS OUT, the latest LP by The People of No Property, costs £3.75 incl. postage for single copies, £3.00 each for orders of 5 or more. Part of the proceeds from sales go to the TOM. Available from *The Troops Out Literature Committee*, 2a St Pauls Rd., London N1.

THE PATRIOT GAME, the best film yet made on the war in the north of Ireland, is available for hire now as a video tape, as well as for projecting. Write to the *Literature Committee*, or phone 01-624 5684 (evenings).

The black on green '*Troops Out Now*' badge has been reprinted and is available from the Literature Committee. 15p for single badges plus 8p p&p. Bulk orders (over 10) 10p each (postage included).

Camerawork's photodisplay on the north of Ireland is now available for bookings. You'll need a large space in which to show it, but it's well worth it. For bookings write to *Half Moon Photography Workshop*, 119 Roman Rd., London E2.

HOME SOLDIER HOME, a film examination of what a soldier's life is really like, behind the glossy recruitment ads, and how the troops behave in Ireland can be booked by writing to *Information on Ireland*.

'DON'T MARK HIS FACE', the story of the Hull Prison Riot told by the prisoners themselves. PROP, 120 pp. 60p.

Accounts of the riot and its aftermath by over 20 prisoners. Available from good left wing bookshops, or by post from PROP, 104a Brackenbury Rd, London W6. (Add 25p for postage and packing).

IRELAND SOCIALIST REVIEW

NOW OUT, the new issue of ISR contains articles on the Multinationals and the Irish Economy, and a full transcript of the debate on Northern Ireland at the Labour Party Conference, with an analysis of the significance of these developments in the Labour Party. Also, reviews of recent publications on Northern Ireland.

50p (inc. postage) per copy, or subscribe at £2 for 4 copies yearly. From 60 Loughborough Rd., London SW9.

Diary of Events

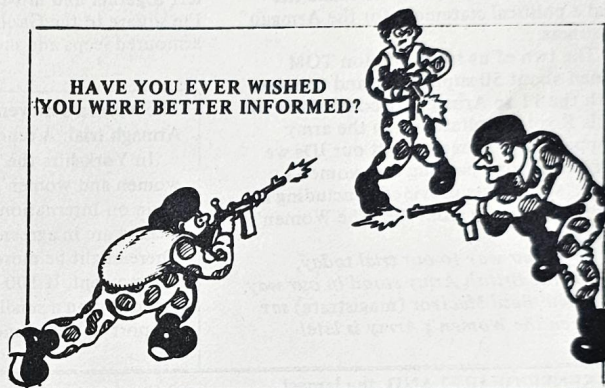
- Nov**
- 29 Atkins announces postponement of talks with political parties in the North.
Desmond O'Hare gaoled in Dublin for 9 years for possession of an Armalite rifle and 54 bullets.
- 30 7 people in N.I. awarded total of £9400 damages in compensation for criminal assault by a Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) patrol in 1976.
- Dec**
- 1 One-fourth of South Down bus fleet destroyed by bomb in depot.
- 2 Two members of the protestant paramilitary group the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) charged in the Republic with conspiring to kill Francis McGill, the N.I. man acquitted of involvement in Mountbatten killing.
- 3 Second in command warder officer at Crumlin Rd. Jail where republican prisoners are held on remand shot dead by Provisional IRA.
- 9 EEC countries sign 'pact on terrorism'.
- 5 Jack Lynch resigns as Premier (Taoiseach) of the Irish Republic (and leader of Fianna Fail Party). Thatcher reported 'very sad'.
- 6 Several million pounds bomb damage to shops in Lisburn, in Provisional IRA economic bombing.
- 7 Cardinal O'Fiaich makes submission to Northern Ireland Office opposing liberalisation of homosexuality laws.
- 8 Charles Haughey elected leader of Fianna Fail (see p.4). Amnesty International asks British Government for facilities to visit the H-Blocks.
Director of the N.I. Assoc. for the Care & Resettlement of Offenders says withdrawal by British Government of special status was 'misguided', and calls for a compromise on the H-Blocks, which he compares to 'medieval dungeons'. Enoch Powell (Official Unionist MP) describes Unionist politician Craig a 'Government stool-pigeon' for supporting Atkins' talks.
- 10 Two N.I. students on their way to the National Union of Students Conference in Blackpool held under the PTA at Liverpool. NUS Conference passes emergency resolution condemning the PTA, calling for a demonstration and picket of the Home Office early in new year.
Another 'map reading error' as 8 British soldiers are found hiding in a farm shed across the border in the Republic. They are escorted back across the border by the Gardai. Farmer says they had made themselves a special billet in the shed and had been there for two days.
Report from group of N.I. lawyers shows 1100 complaints concerning Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) interrogations in 1978; 97% rejected by the Director of Public Prosecutions.
- 11 Haughey elected Taoiseach, and forms cabinet.
N.I. woman awarded £25,000 damages for death of her husband shot by soldiers firing at 'terrorist' in Feb. 73.
- 12 24 people held in different parts of Britain under the PTA. NIO announces that RUC strength of 6,400 is to be increased by 1,000 in 1980.
- 13 More PTA arrests. Scotland Yard names one of men held in London as someone high on their wanted list.
Haughey pledges Irish Government's concern to 'maintain border security'.
- 15 Five soldiers killed by Provisional IRA in two explosions. Total of 38 British soldiers killed in 1979.
SDLP decides to participate in Atkins' talks. Paisley threatens walkout unless he gets guarantee there will be no discussion of unity or power-sharing.
- 16 Atkins promises SDLP leader Hume that discussion of 'Irish dimension' possible at N.I. talks.
400 attend Dublin Conference in support of political status and to set up a Southern-based 'Smash H-Block Committee'.
- 17 Prison officer shot dead by Provisional IRA.
Marplan opinion poll for Panorama (34% Catholic 64% Protestant respondents) finds 84% in favour of four-party talks with British Government; 70% in favour of remaining in UK.
Bill Mather, Chairperson of the Institute of Directors, sent letter bomb.

- 19 9 of those detained under the PTA are charged with various offences (see centre pages).
- 20 Charles Villiers, Chairperson of British Steel, receives letter bomb.
- 21 James Prior, Employment Secretary, receives letter bomb. Provisional IRA claims responsibility.
- 24 US Congressman Biaggi reveals that when Thatcher visited President Carter recently, she asked him to drop the US State Dept. ban on sale of arms to RUC, but was refused. PM Thatcher on morale-boosting visit to Paratroop Regiment in Crossmaglen.
- 31 Loyalist assassins shoot 63 year-old man and his son at their home in Belfast. Son later dies.

Jan

- 1 Several thousand march in Belfast in H-Block protest. Two members of the 2nd Para Battalion in South Armagh shot dead by other Paras lying in ambush. It couldn't have happened if the Paras had followed what is supposed to be army orders to challenge before opening fire.

HAVE YOU EVER WISHED
YOU WERE BETTER INFORMED?



'Harsh as it may sound, the ambush was extremely professional and successful. It had achieved what it had been set up to do. It was not a question of people running around the place shooting at each other, it was a controlled action and the only thing that was wrong was in the question of mistaken identity' (Para Commander Lt. Col. Colin Thomson).

- Two teenagers from West Belfast, 'joyriding' in a stolen car, shot at by British soldiers. Girl (16) later dies in
- 2 Former UDR man shot dead in South Armagh.
1979 statistics published: deaths include 38 soldiers, 14 RUC, 10 UDR, 10 prison officers, 15 Catholics killed by Protestant paramilitaries.
N.I. to have 17 seats in Parliament instead of present 12 (agreed by the Labour Party when it was courting Unionist votes in the last Parliament).
Dr Cahal Daly, Bishop of Derry, and a noted critic of the Provisional IRA, urges the British Government to compromise over the H-Blocks.
- 3 Official Unionist Party calls for return to pre-1972 Stormont government. Official Unionist MP Enoch Powell implies that British Foreign Office 'that next of vipers, that nursery of traitors' is behind Atkins' talks.
- 4 Catholic man from Ardoyne beaten to death by Loyalist assassins.
- 6 3 UDR men killed by land mine in Co. Down.
- 7 Lt. Gen. Sir Timothy Creasey leaves as Army Commander in N.I. to take over as C-in-C of Land Forces in Britain. (Who said Ireland wasn't a training ground?)
Atkins' devolution conference opens, and almost closes, as row breaks out between DUP and SDLP over discussion of the 'Irish dimension'.
- 8 Conference breakdown again narrowly avoided.
- 9 Atkins' conference adjourned for 12 days. Perhaps anticipating failure, Atkins announces a 2nd conference.
- 10 Paisley threatens not to attend second conference.

BRITISH WOMEN IN ARMAGH

The Armagh 11 are all from Women Against Imperialism, and were arrested after picketing Armagh Gaol, last International Women's Day, to highlight the conditions of women prisoners who have been on 23-hour lock-up, lost privileges, and have been degraded as women, since their protests in support of the H-Block struggle for political status.

The 11 faced charges of assaulting the police, and obstruction – and decided not to pay any fines collected, i.e. to face being sent down.

Their trial had been adjourned until January 2nd/3rd. This period was used to create publicity – to raise money for caring for the children some of the women have, and to get public support for the trial. They wanted to make the trial a political statement for the Armagh prisoners.

The two of us from London TOM joined about 50 supporters, and travelled with the 11 to Armagh by coach from the Falls Road in Belfast. When the army stopped us and checked out our IDs we passed the time bawling out women's songs (songsheets provided), including an impromptu verse from the 'The Women's Army'...

We're on our way to our trial today,

But the British Army stood in our way,
What will Basil MacIvor (magistrate) say

When the Women's Army is late!

After the Special Branch cameras, the RUC frisk, we were all treated to a showpiece gesture – cups of tea in the courthouse!

The public gallery in the courtroom was full; others had arrived from Derry and Dublin. The 11 all wore Smash H-Block T-shirts. The prosecution went for an adjournment, due to the sickness of their chief lawyer. The women's line was to demand immediate trial or dismissal of the charges. When the magistrate nevertheless adjourned the trial until April 9th, the women announced they wouldn't be coming back, and dismissed their lawyers. MacIvor shot out of the courtroom as the 11 started up 'The Women's Army', which we took up and continued until the RUC moved in. We left together and moved directly across the square to the Gaol, flanked by armoured jeeps and more cameras. We

continued singing, shouted names and slogans opposite the Gaol. Women inside came to the windows – the response back was magic. They yelled H-Block slogans, and "Shoot, shoot, shoot the bastards!!" – for the benefit of the RUC surrounding us. We kept up the dialogue for 15 minutes, telling them all the towns in England that women had come from (Barnsley, Bradford, Leeds, Sheffield, Hull, York, London and Glasgow). We shouted "We'll be back!" Then a voice replied "When?" and it was decided – next Women's Day.

The mood was elated now; it's clear how much communication with the outside means to prisoners. Back in the coach Downtown Radio was broadcasting our exploits. Returning to Belfast, some of the women pointed out H-Block, lying low and away from the road, with high floodlights; the Kesh really does also look like a concentration camp.

The women's movement in Yorkshire collected funds to send six delegates to the Armagh trial. A report from a member of Sheffield TOM:

In Yorkshire the women's movement is going ahead with organising groups of women and women's delegations from students' unions, etc. to go back to Armagh again on International Women's Day. The Women Against Imperialism Group in Ireland are in agreement with this call and a picket of the Gaol is definitely on. There might be more problems with an actual march, but this is being supported at the moment. If 100-200 women went over it would make quite an impact, especially on a small Northern Irish town like Armagh, and would give valuable support to the women prisoners and the Women Against Imperialism.

A SENSE OF IRELAND, the largest festival of Irish arts ever presented in Britain, starts on 1 February at venues all around London.

ITs purpose: 'to demonstrate in England the depth and strength of Ireland's heritage and contemporary culture; to make an important contribution to improving understanding and relations between the people of these islands'

Deciphering the PR statements (put out – would you believe it – by Cromwell Associates) it's pretty clear that the Irish Government wants to make amends for the killing of Mountbatten, and to show that the Irish aren't all 'murdering bastards'. And also, of course, to boost sagging tourist figures.

The festival's already run into some opposition from media types asking its sponsors whether they imagine that the British people would even want to know about Irish culture, given recent events. On this level, the festival needs to be defended. If British people turn up their noses at some of the marvellous music

and theatrical and cinema events promised, it won't be so much because of Mountbatten, but because the notion of Irish culture doesn't fit very well with the traditional British 'thick Paddy' image.

But there's a whole sense missing from the festival. Aside from the 'official fringe' events organised by Action Space, and some careful academic seminars on Irish Nationalism and Beyond, you wouldn't know there's a war going on. The voices of the men in the H-Blocks and the women in Armagh Gaol won't be heard. Ten years of suffering under British Army rule will feature only as 'one aspect' of 'what it's really like' in the North. But then, the Irish government wouldn't be shelling out £200,000 to acknowledge the embarrassing struggle of their fellow Irish in Northern Ireland.

If you're going to any of the events, TOM has a leaflet giving our version of how relations between the two peoples could be improved – by getting our troops out of their country. Write to the Literature Committee for copies if you want to distribute it.

SOME FRINGE EVENTS: OFFICIAL AND OTHERWISE

'The Patriot Game', Saturday Feb. 16.

'Ireland Behind the Wire', Feb. 23.

'Home Soldier Home', March 1.

Camerawork Exhibit – throughout the festival.

'1980's: Spit and Polish Girlie Show' (a satire on the British Army) Feb 23.

All at Action Space, 16 Chenies St., WCL.

'Irish Immigrant Event'

An afternoon and evening organised by Irish people living in Britain, mainly for the Irish immigrant community, to bring out another dimension missing from the festival: their experience as immigrants. Christie Moore and others singing and playing, drama, a speaker from the Relatives Action Committee. For details of time and venue, write to 'Irish Immigrant Event', c/o West London Media Workshop, St Thomas' Church Hall, East Row, London W10. Saturday March 1.

MARCH AND RALLY

MARCH AND RALLY FOR PRISONERS along Fleet Street in London, to hand in letters from H-Block prisoners at each national newspaper. Meet 6pm Law Courts.

RALLY: Conway Hall, 7.30pm. Speakers invited from Relatives Action Committee; Sinn Féin; IRSP; An Cumann Cabhrach; Women & Ireland; and Pat Arrowsmith, Des Warren, Paul Foot, Tariq Ali, Alan Thornett. British premiere of 'The H-Block Play'.

Wednesday 27th February

Organised by the Troops Out Movement