

TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND

TROOPS OUT
NOW

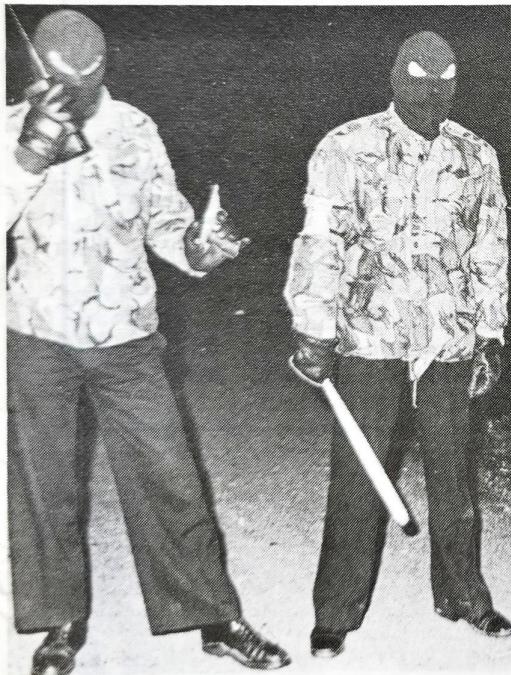


SELF
DETERMINATION
FOR THE
IRISH PEOPLE
AS A WHOLE

Paper of the Troops Out Movement 30p

Vol. 9, No 5, March 1986

**3.000
march
for
withdrawal**



(Photo AP/RN)



Photo: Joanne O'Brien/Format

**Loyalist terror
threat**
► **Republic counts
cost of unity**

**Máire O'Shea
acquittal victory**

Kincora scandal

**Midlands ban plastic
bullets**

Terror Act renewed



(Photo AP/RN)

Máire O'Shea & Pete Jordan Victims of the war

Editorial

Two members of the Troops Out Movement were among the five defendants at the Manchester Crown Court conspiracy trial in January and February this year. Both have given years of commitment to TOM, to the cause of Irish self-determination, and to many other progressive causes.

Maire O'Shea, a member of the Birmingham branch of TOM, denied conspiracy and failing to disclose information. She was acquitted by the only remnant of justice in the British legal system — a jury.

The movement as a whole congratulates Maire not only on her victory, but on the principled political campaign she and her supporters have conducted since her home was raided under the Prevention of Terrorism Act on New Year's Eve 1984 (while she was on holiday in Ireland).

Pete Jordan, a member of Bristol TOM, pleaded Guilty to the conspiracy charge. But despite the Guilty plea, despite his poor health, and despite the fact that he is 62 this month, Pete Jordan was given the vicious sentence of 14 years.

He had been interrogated for 10 days in Liverpool's main Bridewell over Christmas 1984/New Year 1985, and further interrogations followed at Risley Remand Centre. People plead Guilty for many different reasons — it does not mean that you have done everything the police and prosecution say that you have.

TOM comrades know Pete Jordan not as the 'ruthless plotter' or the 'grandfather of hate' he has been called in the media. We know and respect him for his lifelong commitment to socialism, his determination to end the nightmare forced on the North of Ireland by the British state, and his belief in the right of the Irish people as a whole to self-determination.

We know and respect Pete Jordan for his meticulous research which has been of value to many investigative journalists, to authors, and to the *Troops Out* paper.

The Troops Out Movement is an open organisation that does not engage in illegal or violent acts. We do not have a policy of explicit support for any particular organisation in Ireland, or of any particular tactic in the Irish people's struggle.

We recognise, however, that armed conflict is inevitable as long as Britain occupies part of Ireland.

The state allege that there was an operation being planned to blow up a senior SAS officer in Herefordshire. Pete Jordan's alleged role was as intelligence officer.

If there was any such plan, we do not find it altogether surprising that people in Ireland would regard an SAS officer as a 'legitimate target', considering what the SAS have inflicted on the Irish people.

BBC TV news referred to the 'bungling bombers', but it is hard to take the police version of events at face value. There are far too many unanswered questions about the alleged conspiracy and the police operation.

- If Dubliner Danny Ryan was the 'mastermind' why has Britain not asked for his extradition or even for the Gardai to interview him?
- Why were the police so determined to prosecute Máire O'Shea and Peadar Brazil when the evidence against them was embarrassingly weak, and when others apparently involved were not charged?
- Why was Peter Lynch kept in custody for 13 months on a conspiracy charge if the prosecution were content to drop that when he pleaded guilty to the minor charge of failing to disclose information?

No doubt it will take many years for the full story to emerge. But already 3 lessons shine out like a beacon:

1. Máire O'Shea has won a victory which will help all of us campaigning for a united Ireland;
2. Whatever their involvement in the alleged plan to blow up an SAS officer, Pete Jordan and Billy Grimes are political prisoners because their imprisonment is the result of a political trial into alleged political offences;
3. There will be no bombings in Britain or Ireland, and no Irish political prisoners, when the root cause of the war in the Six Counties — the British presence — is removed.

Peter Jordan is at present in H.M. Prison Armley, Leeds 12. His birthday is on 21st March — please send him cards and messages of support.

The Troops Out Movement



The Troops Out Movement is a movement in England, Scotland and Wales made up of people who believe that the cause of the 'troubles' in the north of Ireland is the continuing British presence there, both military and political. We believe that British troops are in Ireland not as a 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 15 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 1970s. We have a number of branches in England, Scotland and Wales. 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

TROOPS OUT

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

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

COPY SHOULD REACH US BY 19th MARCH FOR APRIL'S ISSUE.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Make sure you get your *Troops Out* regularly by taking out a subscription.

RATES:

Britain & Ireland: £5 yearly (10 issues).

Europe: £7 yearly.

USA, Australia & New Zealand: £12.

Libraries/institutions: £12.

Make cheques payable to Troops Out (Literature Committee).

Send to Box 10, 2a St Pauls Road, London N1.

Victory for Defence Campaign Máire O'Shea Acquitted

The numerous Special Branch officers in and around Manchester's top security Minshull Street Crown Court could not conceal their disappointment last month when Dr. Máire O'Shea was cleared of any involvement in a planned bombing operation. When Dublin seaman Peadar Brazil was also acquitted shortly afterwards, they must have regretted charging either of them in the first place.

Although the morale of the Special Branch (and their masters) must have been lifted by the heavy jail terms imposed on Pete Jordan and Billy Grimes the following day, the fact cannot be denied that the result of the trial is a tremendous victory for everyone who defends the right of the Irish people to engage in political activity in England, Scotland and Wales.

The charges against Máire O'Shea may have been conspiracy and failing to disclose information – but in reality she was in the dock because of her political views.

POLITICAL DEFENCE

Facing a political prosecution, Máire O'Shea and her lawyers played the state at its own game and waged a political defence. And despite the jury having been vetted by the Special Branch (without their knowledge), 12 good women and men from Manchester believed Máire and her friends and colleagues and political comrades rather than the succession of police officers who gave evidence for the prosecution.

Máire herself spent almost nine hours in the witness box, talking about her life-long commitment to achieving a united Ireland and to other progressive causes such as ending the medical abuse of prisoners. The jury heard about the policies and activities of the Irish in Britain Representation Group and the Troops Out Movement.

She told the jury about TOM: "Its principle aim is to put pressure on the British Government to withdraw the entire British state machine from Ireland. It is a small organisation, but most people in the labour movement would

agree that it has an influence out of proportion to its size."

Máire even managed to get a plug for the *Troops Out* paper, which she described as 'very good'!

The jury heard a graphic account from Máire of the August 1984 Internment March in Belfast, when John Downes was murdered by a plastic bullet. Máire was on the march, and she said it was the first time she had seen plastic bullets used at first hand. She spoke of other plastic bullet victims and of the British forces shoot-to-kill operations.

Máire also gave the jury a run-down of the Prevention of Terrorism Act figures. She said the Act is used 'to intimidate and silence the Irish community so they won't protest at what the British Government is doing in Ireland. It's been very successful in frightening the Irish community off the streets.'

A total of 16 defence witnesses appeared in court for Máire, and a further 22 statements were read to the court. The court heard of her pioneering and hard-working approach to psychiatry, of her generosity with her home and her car, and of her open campaigning activities.

SURVEILLANCE OF POLITICS

A TOM member from Birmingham told how Máire frequently sold *Troops Out* around the churches and pubs of the Sparkhill area of Birmingham, where she lived. People active on Ireland in perfectly legal and open organisations know they are likely to be subjected to state surveillance, she said. 'Regularly my post has been opened. On one occasion three

Continued next page

CONSPIRACY TRIAL COSTS

Following her acquittal on all charges, Dr Maire O'Shea applied for her legal costs to be awarded out of central funds. Unlike the other defendants, she had been refused Legal Aid.

The Judge, Mr Justice Mann, at first refused. He said he didn't think it appropriate.

Maire's barrister Mike Mansfield re-applied, and after some lengthy argument the Judge awarded costs out of central funds.

But there was a sting in the tail – any monies already collected by the Maire O'Shea Defence Fund would have to be paid into the court.

The main thing is that Maire will not herself have to pay the £40,000-plus it cost to win her freedom. But it means that all the people who have donated hard-earned money to her Fund will have made an involuntary donation to the very state which tried to put her in prison!

Future Defence Funds may have to consider collecting pledges of money rather than the money itself, to get around this vindictive ruling.

On the question of money, ratepayers in the Greater Manchester area might like to ask their new Police Authority how much 'Rambo' Anderton's overkill security operation cost.

Media estimates have varied wildly between £50,000 and £1 million. Whatever the cost, if it convinced the public that Irish people are dangerous no doubt the state will consider it money well spent.

This picket was one of hundreds of actions in support of Maire O'Shea.

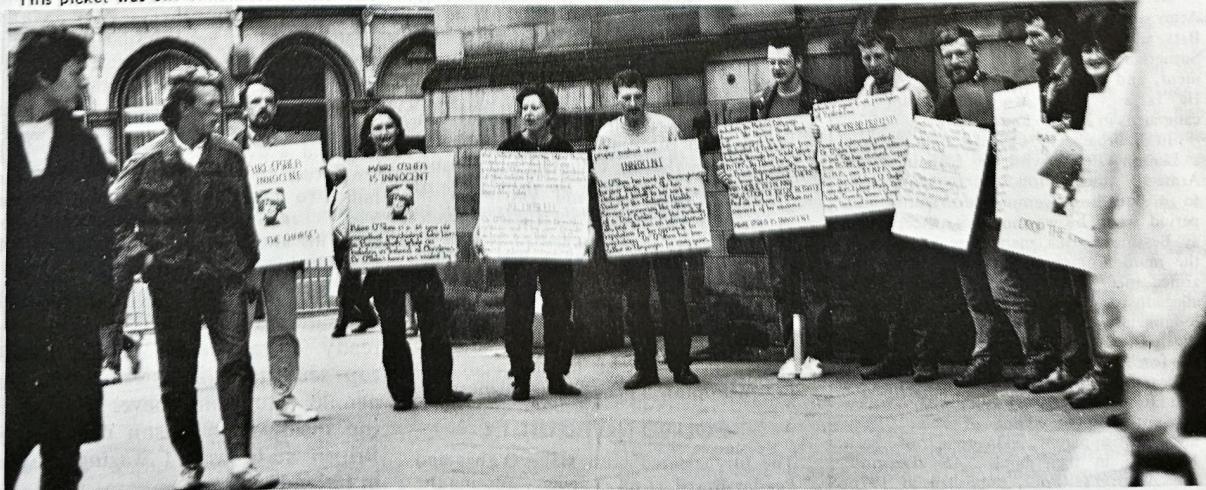


Photo: Sheffield TOM.

Continued from previous page

separate parcels all "fell apart" and were returned in the same sack.'

'During the hunger strike I was pulled from a protest by police officers, and they told me everything I'd done from the Friday night until that Saturday, including the number of bags I carried out of my local shop.' On another occasion, the jury heard, 'My house was raided and searched for explosives. But they only searched my papers, books and photographs!'

It makes you quite nervous and uncomfortable, because you're never sure if you are being watched.'

Nick Davies, the Home Affairs correspondent of *The Observer* who has researched the security services, told the court that surveillance goes on more than most people realise but a bit less than most people who assume they are targets think. Targets for state surveillance, he went on, include MPs, trades unionists, and peace groups.

Liz Curtis, author of 'Ireland the Propaganda War' and 'Nothing But The Same Old Story', said that she and others involved only in legal activity may write letters in 'veiled' terms because they assume they are under surveillance.

Shown a letter from Dubliner Danny Ryan (which the prosecution alleged implied that Ryan had joined the INLA), Liz Curtis said the phrase 'I have left the Sticks and joined a different wing' could mean joining any one of at least four organisations, Sinn Fein, IRA, IRSP, or INLA. 'It's completely up in the air,' she said.

ASSUMPTIONS

The prosecution case against Dr O'Shea boiled down to this:

- Because of her political knowledge she must have known that an occasional correspondent with her, Danny Ryan, was involved in paramilitary activity;

The Target?

The target of the bomb plot was said to have been 52 year old Lt. Col. Brian Baty of Kings Pyon, Herefordshire.

Before his retirement from the British Army at the end of October 1984, Lt. Col. Baty served 33 years with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, the Parachute Regiment, and the Special Air Services (SAS). He is a veteran of counter-insurgency campaigns in Borneo and Aden.

In February 1976 Brian Baty became a Liaison Officer with the SAS in South Armagh, quickly followed by promotion to a Squadron Commander. During the period when he was an SAS officer based at Bessbrook, his men were accused of the murder of civilians, and a number of armed incursions into the Republic which allegedly included kidnapping suspected republicans and taking them back over the border to be arrested by regular security forces. Civil rights activists (and fierce critics of the IRA) Fathers Denis Paul and Raymond Murray published detailed accounts of the killing of Peter Cleary and the apparent kidnapping of Sean McKenna in their book *SAS Terrorism, the Assassin's Glove*, published in 1976.

TOM Press Release

On the day the trial ended, the Troops Out Movement condemned the political nature of the prosecution. The trial represented an attempt to illegalise political opposition to Government policy. TOM's press release stated:

During the trial in Manchester, it was pointed out that two of the defendants were members of the Troops Out Movement. This is an open democratic organisation which since 1973 has campaigned around two demands: Troops Out Now and Self-Determination for the Irish people as a whole. That this kind of fact can be used as evidence of guilt is one of the ways that the concept of innocent until proved guilty is turned on its head . . .

We welcome the acquittal of Máire O'Shea and congratulate her defence campaign on the work they have done which has helped toward securing her release today.

Along with Diplock courts and supergrasses, conspiracy trials and the Prevention of Terrorism Act are part and parcel of a repressive system which has no part to play in any solution to the war in Ireland. The only lasting solution, based on a just initiatives but British withdrawal, which is why we campaign as we do for Troops Out Now and Self-Determination for the whole Irish people.

- Because of her political knowledge she must have known that any visiting Irish person who passes through the county of Herefordshire is planning to bomb the SAS;
- Because of her 'fanatical Irish nationalism' she couldn't refuse a request for safe houses and accommodation to help what she must know to be a bombing operation.

But Máire O'Shea said, under cross-examination, that she does not even agree with republican military activity in Britain. She said: *'I've always felt these sort of operations held back the progress of the open legitimate forces to get the support of the British people for British withdrawal from Ireland.'*

Whilst understanding and not condemning republican military activity in the Six Counties - where self-defence is legitimate as in South Africa or Nazi-occupied Europe - Máire said she didn't think bombings in Britain helped to end the war in the Six Counties.

In any case, she went on, it would be 'suicidal' for someone so openly involved in Irish politics as she is to get involved in such activities. For one thing, she assumes she is under state surveillance, and for another thing it could destroy the credibility she had built up within the various groups she is committed to.

Prosecutor Rhys Davis QC suggested she may have been asked to 'stand up and be counted' by people planning a bombing. She replied: *'I stood up to be counted many years ago and I have done so over many years.'*

In an eloquent closing speech, defence barrister Mike Mansfield said that Máire had found herself in the dock because she had spoken the truth that there is a war going on in the Six Counties and because *'she has dared to take up the mantle of a certain freedom that is essential to democracy.'*

Peadar Brazil's defence was shorter. He had brought explosives to Britain, yes, but he hadn't known it. He was doing someone a favour by delivering a Christmas present, and he didn't know the contents. He said he has no republican or other political beliefs or allegiances.

FOUND NOT GUILTY

The jury cleared both Máire O'Shea and Peadar Brazil of all charges - forcing the

assembled media hacks to rush off and change their 'background' articles that had been pre-written on the assumption of Guilty verdicts! (Some weren't quick enough though, judging by the Liverpool Echo's biography of Brazil on 5th February, under the libellous heading 'The Plotters'.)

Outside the court, Máire lambasted the crowd of reporters for being absent from court during her defence case. She said she was relieved at the verdict but 'very angry about the amount of pain, suffering and inconvenience' she had experienced over the previous 13 months.

Now that the 'nightmare' was over, she said she will be more free to talk about her experiences during the five days in Liverpool's main Bridewell, her five weeks as a Category A prisoner in Risley Remand Centre, and the harassment from the Special Branch while she was out on bail.

Máire said she will continue to campaign for a united Ireland and against the 'scandalous harassment' of Irish people under the PTA.

Shortly afterwards Peadar Brazil emerged from the fortress-like court. He said his 13 months in custody had been 'hell' and he set off to take the next ferry home to Dublin to see his children.

SENTENCED

The next day, February 7th, saw the sentencing of the three men who had pleaded guilty. Pete Jordan was sent down for 14 years for conspiring to cause an explosion. Billy Grimes received 10 years on the same charge and a concurrent 10 years for possessing gelignite and a detonator. Peter Lynch was sentenced to 400 days in prison for failing to disclose information under the PTA - and as he had been in custody since his arrest on New Years Eve 1984 he walked free from court.

Two more political prisoners were therefore added to those already incarcerated in Britain's top security prisons - two more people who would never have seen the inside of a prison cell if the British state wasn't waging a war in Ireland.

Sectarian assassinations

Signs are emerging that loyalist paramilitaries are preparing to step up their activities to coincide with an escalation of Unionist industrial action. Loyalist murder gangs have already struck three times this year.

The first victim was Leo Scullion, a 55 year old watchman, who was found shot from behind in the Ligoniel Working Men's club on January 14th. He had been gagged and had his hands tied behind his back. Seventeen days later Martin Quinn from Bawnmore was shot in his bed after a masked man had broken into his home and terrified his 70 year old mother.

In the Short Strand area of East Belfast on February 5th, 2 men, apparently armed, pushed their way into a home occupied by a mother and her four children. They assaulted the woman and after searching the house for her husband ran off, when neighbours came to investigate.

Following the killing of Quinn, local Sinn Fein councillor, Bobby Lavery said, "Given that loyalist rhetoric is becoming even more threatening and their behaviour in the councils more violent, the likelihood of more sectarian attacks is very high. Nationalists must increase their vigilance."



A loyalist paramilitary demonstration.

Photo AP/RN

Cold blooded murder

Shoot to kill is a policy which the British state can turn off and on as circumstances demand. In last month's editorial we stated that although no one had been killed by the Army or RUC (police) in the previous 12 months, this could change in the interests of 'greater security' and to calm down the rebellious Unionists. Two incidents in the past month give an indication that a shoot to kill policy has been switched on again.

The end of January saw two men narrowly escape death at the hands of an Ulster Defence Regiment patrol in Co. Tyrone. The patrol fired 4 shots into a car containing 4 men as it left the Kildress Inn. Two of the occupants were wounded, one seriously.

The latest incident occurred on February 18th when Francis Patrick Bradley was shot dead by an undercover British army patrol operating

near the village of Toomebridge.

An RUC statement that Bradley, together with two other men, refused to stop when challenged has been totally rejected. Bradley was shot once in the back of the head, apparently as he lay on the ground. The other two were not with him — Colum Walls was taken from his home while Barney McLarnon was arrested in his car some 20 yards away.

Danny Morrison the local Sinn Fein representative, said, "I don't know why Francis Bradley was murdered, perhaps it was because he had often been vocal in his rejection of the sectarian UDR and RUC or maybe it was 'on suspicion of belonging to the IRA'!"

What is blatantly obvious is that he was not armed, he was not a volunteer in the IRA and no other armed men were arrested at the scene."

Locked away by a supergrass

The use of uncorroborated supergrass evidence in the North's no-jury courts is one of the top agenda items of the new Intergovernmental Conference between Britain and the Republic.

It could be that the system will be discontinued. But what of those people who have already been tried, convicted and sentenced on a supergrass' word? What sort of 'trial' was it?

Recently the campaigning group Relatives For Justice held meetings in London and Birmingham at which Maria Connolly spoke. Her husband Peter was convicted on the word of Harry Kirkpatrick.

Mrs Connolly described the arrest and indictment of her husband:

'He was one of the lucky ones that got bail. The only reason my husband got bail was that Harry Kirkpatrick didn't know his name. The only way he knew my husband was by the initials P.C. So the reason he got bail that day was because the judge said he couldn't keep a man in on just the initials P.C. and no name.'

The so-called 'evidence' at the trial was quite simply Harry's say-so. Corroboration was token.

'So the trial went on and Kirkpatrick was mentioning

my husband, he says it was P.C. which I now believe to be Peter Connolly'. Harry had said my husband was at a military funeral where they had fired three shots. The only witness brought in to support Harry's evidence against my husband was an RUC man who came in and swore 'Yes, your Honour, there were three shots fired at that time on that day. I was six streets away and I heard the three shots.' My husband got eight years for that and another five too (for membership of the Irish National Liberation Army).

'My husband doesn't know Harry Kirkpatrick. My husband had never seen Harry Kirkpatrick until the first day he

was brought into that court. It's not only the men he has done — he has wrecked their families too. I am a mother of three children. I had a baby two days before my husband was put in jail. He's a year and three months now and he doesn't even know who his father is.'

'The only thing I can say is that this system is another form of internment. Those men are trailed into the court and it's just a mockery. It's a mockery to find a legal way to get them and keep them inside.'

(From a speech made at a TOM public meeting in Birmingham on 30th January)

Kincora - another cover-up

The report of the third inquiry into the 'Kincora affair', dealing solely with aspects concerning the welfare of boys resident in Kincora, was released in early February. BBC Radio One News reported the conclusions of the inquiry as "Army cleared of blackmailing Unionist politicians and senior RUC officers."

In fact no mention of extortion (least of all by the army) was made in the inquiry's report. As any reporter dealing with Northern Ireland well knew, this third inquiry was yet another cover-up and an attempt to try and sweep the whole affair under the carpet. Radio One - despite or because of its usual glib treatment of facts - inadvertently highlighted the very issue the report was trying to hide.

Kincora, a boys' home in Belfast run by the DHSS, first came to public attention in 1980 when a house warden, William McGrath, and two other workers at the home were charged with and later convicted of sexual offences against some of Kincora's residents. But it was some of the facts concerning British Intelligence involvement in the case which resulted in the subsequent three inquiries/cover-ups.

PROSTITUTION RING

McGrath was leader of a small but influential loyalist paramilitary group, Tara. Soon after he became a house warden at Kincora in 1972, McGrath is alleged to have used his position to build up a prostitution ring using boys referred to the home. The clients were Unionist politicians, businessmen, senior RUC personnel and British civil servants seconded to Northern Ireland. Army Intelligence soon became aware of his activities and built up a profile of people McGrath came in contact with.

Male homosexuality in Northern Ireland was completely illegal until 1982 (not least because of Unionist opposition to British laws on homosexuality) and the vulnerability of gay politicians was seen as a possible method of exerting control on the Unionist camp by the Intelligence services.

From 1973 various complaints of McGrath's activities were made by social workers to their superiors. In 1973 RUC

personnel discovered the activities of McGrath but despite a detailed report to HQ, nothing came of it. Intelligence saw it as too valuable a source of information and blocked any attempts to have McGrath brought to court.

In 1975 - a year after the Loyalist workers' strike - Colin Wallace, head of the army's so-called 'black' propaganda unit, released to the *Irish Times* the names of four Tara members who were also prominent Unionists. The information was never used because it was clearly false propaganda (for instance Tara was painted as a communist organisation).

THREE INQUIRIES

The army continued to use McGrath and Tara to gather information until a story in the *Irish Independent* in 1980 exposed some of McGrath's activities. There was an outcry after the trial of McGrath and three others, due to the evidence that came out in court and the associated newspaper reports in Ireland. The government was forced to set up an inquiry, but this one was such an obvious cover-up another had to be set up almost immediately after the first had finished.

The second was not much better and continuing disquiet forced the government to set up a third inquiry. Ironically this disquiet was fed by revelations from Colin Wallace, former head of the army propaganda unit. Convicted of killing his wife's lover, Wallace was using his knowledge of British Intelligence activities in Ireland to try to win his release from jail.

When the inquiry team visited Wallace in Lewes prison recently they refused to take any information not relating to the welfare of the boys in Kincora. The inquiry team could then 'truthfully' report that the only army officer interviewed who had knowledge of Kincora refused to speak to them. Wallace had



Kincora Boys' Home (photo: Pacemaker).

told them he would talk about the whole background to Kincora or nothing at all. And so the murky facts of army

Intelligence using a prostitution ring to try and pressure Unionist politicians remains in Lewes prison.

Printers' Solidarity

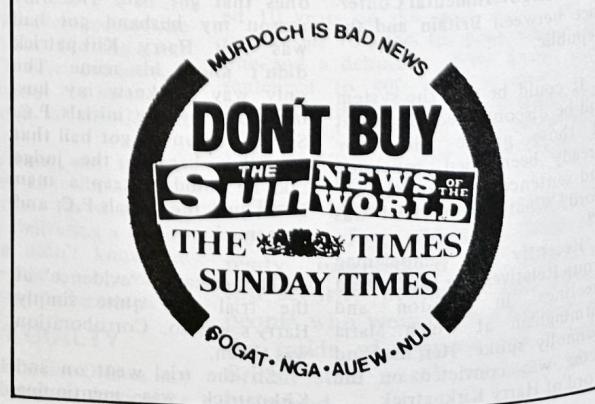
Irish print unions have refused to come to the aid of Rupert Murdoch.

His News International Group approached the *Irish Press* to see if they would print the Irish edition of the *News of the World* (the highest selling British Sunday newspaper in Ireland). The *Irish* management was agreeable, but only if the print unions cooperated.

The Dublin Printing Trades

Group of Unions was not prepared to cooperate. "The group of unions are not in the business of strike-breaking or handling diverted work," their spokesperson commented.

Dublin NUJ members are also calling for trade unions in Ireland to refuse to handle or distribute imported News International papers. And Sinn Fein has called for a consumer boycott of the papers.



Unionists in a quandary

An aspect of last November's Anglo-Irish Agreement welcomed by the Troops Out Movement is its possible undermining of Unionist supremacy. That supremacy has caused injustice and discrimination in the North of Ireland, and is the British rationale for the separation of the North from the rest of Ireland. Below we survey how this aspect has been operating over the past two months.

When the Agreement was signed, the Unionist Parties quickly announced their strategy to destroy it: they would resign their fifteen Westminster seats and fight by-elections (which took place in January); they would also boycott Westminster and all the apparatus of government such as local councils and statutory boards. This was to lead to the next stage — total non-cooperation with the British administration combined with civil disobedience to make the North "ungovernable". A final stage — violence and armed insurrection — was hinted at, unmistakeably.

The boycott of Westminster started after the by-elections, although Enoch Powell broke ranks and took his seat.

The 18 Unionist-controlled Councils also suspended their meetings. In some instances they were suspended months before the Agreement, as a protest against Sinn Fein councillors. Councils in the North have very few powers, and suspension of their business does not make the North "ungovernable".

DELAYING TACTICS

But in February a crunch point was reached with the deadline to strike a rate on the 14th. Belfast City Council was taken to court — to strike a rate, to resume business and to remove a banner from City Hall which reads 'Belfast Says No'. There was a stormy meeting of Belfast Council on 11th February; councillors breathed fire and announced their preparedness to go to prison rather than accept 'Dublin interference'.

But first of all they lodged an appeal. It was heard before the top three judges in the North, Lord Lowry, Gibson and O'Donnell. They upheld the original ruling but granted a stay of execution until 26th February.

In the Northern Ireland

Assembly there is also some vacillation. The Assembly is at present occupied by only 49 out of the total 78 representatives. Its only power is to 'scrutinise' the work of the Northern Ireland Office.

When the Agreement was signed, the Assembly voted to suspend all the scrutinising committees and set up a 'Grand Committee' to investigate the Agreement. The results of this Committee are two reports to the N. Ireland Secretary Tom King, who received them graciously, sat on them, and ordered the Assembly to resume its scrutinising committees.

Again a back-down: the committees were set up, but only to scrutinise various aspects of the Agreement. Again a polite but solid stone-wall from Tom King: in a letter on 6th February he refused to allow civil servants to appear before the committees. The letter said, "Matters relating to the Agreement are of a political character such that it would be inappropriate for them to be the subject of evidence by Department officials." The letter ended with a threat: "In the event that the committees do not return in the near future to the proper discharge of their statutory duties, the position of these officials [civil servants seconded to the Assembly] will have to be a matter for urgent consideration and decision."

WHO HOLDS THE TRUMPS

In this intense poker game, it is the aim of the British Government to concede nothing to the Unionists and to build up the new London-Dublin axis. But at the same time it wants to keep the initiative in the hands of the politicians — the alternative being street violence and possible industrial action — hence the delaying tactics. The



Photo: AP/RN

Loyalist banner hanging outside Belfast City Hall.

British Government has also offered the Unionist leadership a series of talks which started on 25th February.

The Unionist hand has less trumps than at first appeared. It would be a mistake to underestimate the forces of destruction they have at their disposal, but they too don't want to surrender the stage to the paramilitaries.

At present they are looking for a way out. In January and February two remarkable feel-

ers were put out by Unionist MPs Harold McCusker and Peter Robinson. They offered a new option of tri-partite talks between the Republic, Britain and the Unionists. The feelers were heavily qualified by a demand to scrap the Agreement and scrap any notion of power-sharing in the North with the nationalists. Nonetheless it fits the pattern of the past that whenever the Unionists are up against the wall, their monolith starts to crumble.

IRELAND'S OPINION OF THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT

An Opinion Poll published in the *Irish Times* on 12th February shows growing support for the Agreement in the Republic but continued opposition from the Unionist population in the North.

REPUBLIC

	November	February
For the Agreement	59%	69%
Against	29%	20%

THE NORTH

	Total	Protestants	Catholics
For the Agreement	33%	8%	72%
Against	54%	81%	12%

PREFERRED OPTIONS OF THOSE AGAINST THE AGREEMENT

	For	Against
Power sharing devolution	38%	56%
Return to Stormont (majority rule)	69%	20%
Direct rule from Britain	67%	25%
Independent North (UDI)	18%	74%
United Ireland	5%	92%

In addition, in the North 37% felt that the Agreement brought a United Ireland closer. In the Republic, 28% felt that.

Can the Irish Republic afford...

The Republic of Ireland — the 'twenty-six counties' or 'the South' — often seems to people in Britain to be saying contradictory things about the national question and its attitude to the North. The opinion polls show that 66% of people in the Republic favour a unitary state. And the overwhelming majority are opposed to removing Articles 2 and 3, which lay claim to the north, from the constitution.

At the same time, however, the Republic has arrested almost as many people under its emergency law, the Offences Against the State Act, as have been arrested under N.Ireland's Emergency Provisions Act and Prevention of Terrorism Act.

OPPOSING POSITIONS

86% of people in the Republic are in favour of a constitutional conference between the Republic, Britain and the North and most indicate that they would be happy to accept any settlement which satisfied Northern Catholics. The three main political parties in the Republic are committed to the ideal of a united Ireland. Prominent politicians like Foreign Minister Peter Barry, occasionally speak out against aspects of repression in the North. Furthermore the economic costs to the Republic of the border and the current conflict are a burden to the Republic's economy.

Despite their commitment to the ideal of a united Ireland, the three major parties refuse to deal with Sinn Fein. Laws such as Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act operate censorship and keep people unaware of how bad repression is in the North. Although the proportion of people arrested under emergency legislation in the Republic is lower than in the North, the population of the Republic being about twice that of the North, the figures for arrests in the Republic are higher in recent years. Furthermore, there was little outcry in the Republic when Dominic McGlinchey and Seamus Shannon were extradited to stand trial in the North on such flimsy evidence that they were both eventually released by Diplock courts.

Underlying these apparent contradictions, the Republic of Ireland faces a

number of severe problems which sometimes drive it towards the goal of unity and at the very same time, quite often, stand in the way of it. It is important to understand the scale of the problems facing the Irish state in order to make any inference about what people want, what people have any hope of getting and what people there are prepared to fight for.

The various problems are intertwined. Things which push towards a united Ireland also give rise to caution about political initiatives. The growing cost of the war drives the Republic towards intervention, but the financial costs of taking on the north, even in a peaceful state, are prohibitive. (The British exchequer currently subsidises the N.Ireland economy to the tune of one-and-a-half billion pounds per annum). In short, immobility is no longer possible and any movement is fraught with dangers.

ECONOMIC PRESSURES

The Republic of Ireland, it is often forgotten, is itself an ex-colony. Like many other ex-colonies, it is almost a semi-colony in that it has been dominated since its independence by the colonising power, Britain, particularly in relation to its economy. The problems which the Republic faces are not too different in essence from those facing the developing countries of Africa and South America.

The Republic of Ireland is currently in a deep economic crisis. In addition to its IR£10 billion internal debt, it has the highest foreign debt per head of population in the world (double that of Brazil or Mexico). Foreign debt in 1984 was IR£2,450 per head. The total national debt was IR£5,000 per head or, because of Ireland's young population and high unemployment, IR£18,000 per taxpayer in 1984. Meanwhile 40% of foreign debt

is in dollars and every 1% rise in the dollar exchange rate against the Irish Punt adds IR£3.5m to the debt. In 1983/84, IR£1 billion was added in this way.

Yet the Republic remains one of the top rated countries for credit. And there by hangs a problem.

The Irish state is seen as creditworthy because of (a) its extreme political stability, and (b) its ability, thus far, to go on paying without apparent difficulty. To risk political upheaval by greater involvement in the North could bring the debt problem crashing. To pay the interest on the debt involves high taxation on those who earn. In 1984, the interest payable on the foreign debt was IR£2 billion. That amounted to more than the total amount raised from income tax in 1984. 85% of income tax was raised from pay-as-you-earn (PAYE) workers.

All money therefore for social expenditure and to run the country has to be raised from other types of taxation. But because the Rep. of Ireland has needed to attract foreign capital by giving new foreign industry tax-free holidays, the base of its taxation is very small and it doesn't raise much from company and capital gains taxes. Manufacturing industry is taxed at only 10%, services and construction at 50%. Enormous amounts of profit are taken out of the country by foreign (usually multi-national) companies so further reducing the amount of capital available within the economy. In the first half of 1985, these repatriated profits amounted to IR£658 million.

Meanwhile a single person's tax free allowance is IR£1,900.

- the next IR£4,500 is taxed at 35%.
- the IR£2,800 after that, at 48%.

On top of this there is:

- a Youth Employment Levy of 1%;
- a Temporary Employment Levy of 1%;
- pay related Social Insurance of 8%;
- A couple taking a gross wage of IR£18,000 will net only IR£10,102.

WHAT ABOUT THE WELFARE STATE

There is little room to expand the welfare state as taxation is already extremely high. To tax industry is to risk capital movement out of the country. In the context of an average unemployment rate of 17%, the risk is very great and particularly as inner city unemployment is as high as 45%. In St Teresa's Gardens in Dublin, of recent anti-drug vigilante fame, the rate is 60%.

Take into account the fact that in the Republic:

- local authority housing comprises only 12% of the total;
- private rented is 10%;
- and owner-occupation is 76% — the highest in Western Europe;

most people have little option but to take on a mortgage despite the tax rates. So middle class as well as working class people are being squeezed hard by the government.



Border Security cost the Republic IR£200m in 1984.

a United Ireland ?

There is no shortage of areas requiring social expenditure, should the money be available. A survey by a charity showed recently that one-half of those elderly who live alone had no bath or shower and no kitchen sink or toilet and three-fifths of them no water. There are 13,500 travelling people, 50% of whom are children, all of whom need considerable financial resources to bring their standard of living into line with their settled neighbours.

25% of the population is in full-time education, but the top 14% of income earners have 50% of all 3rd level places while the 40% who are working class have 13% of places.

OPTIONS ON UNITY

The financial costs of the border to the already overburdened economy of the Republic force it to seek an end to the war. The condition of the nationalists in Northern Ireland remains the sand in the oyster. But without a real change, the war will go on.

The people are in favour of change, but the costs of a move on the constitutional question could be even higher. Even if a united Ireland met with no political or military opposition, the cost of keeping N.Ireland at its present economic level would have to be borne by the Republic. The present net transfer to Northern Ireland from the British exchequer is one-and-a-half billion pounds sterling annually.

The fact that there is unionist opposition to a united Ireland is a major problem. There is absolutely no political will in the Republic to use a military solution and even if there was, the cost of upgrading the Republic's army which is smaller than the combined UDR and RUC and less well equipped would be prohibitive.

So the options for the Republic are limited. It can wage a political campaign, but even this is fraught with difficulties. For example, while trying to prevent the underlying sympathies of people in the Republic from turning into active support for groups like Sinn Fein and at the same time, to win the confidence of Northern Ireland nationalists, politicians like Peter Barry have to be seen to speak out against their oppression and against the UDR. This of course, has the effect of allowing people in the Republic to glimpse the reality of the North, and to some extent, negates the censorship.

At the same time, the border has cost the Republic of Ireland IR£1.1 billion between 1969 and 1983. This cost rises annually. Border security in 1984 cost the Republic IR£200m. The cost of 'subversive' ie political, prisoners has increased from IR£0.5 million in 1974 to IR£7.5 million in 1982. The average cost per prisoner has gone from IR£5,370 per annum to IR£48,700 and the Gardai costs associated with looking after the prisons is IR£2.47m.



A dole queue outside a Labour Exchange typifies the high unemployment in the inner cities.

Photo: AP/RN

THREAT TO SOVEREIGNTY

If lack of finance is troublesome, the problems raised by accepting outside aid, like those of foreign debt and economic dependence, limit Ireland's political sovereignty, its independence and room for manoeuvre.

About 90% of the people of the Republic wish to maintain Ireland's political/military neutrality, yet already the USA is saying that money offered to the Northern economy in relation to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, is being made contingent on Ireland breaking off relations with Libya. Libya is a major receiver of Irish exports. It is one of the new trading partners which has allowed the Republic to lessen its economic dependence on Britain as an outlet for its agricultural exports. Other such trading partners are Iran and Saudi Arabia, this latter likely to suffer from oil price drop.

Countries such as Ireland remain dependent on volatile markets like these because of their dependence and that same dependence makes Ireland a political pawn in the game of the major powers.

SOCIALISM AND UNITY

The gaining of an independent united Ireland may yet involve steps which seem unorthodox to the British left. The problems of assessing what way forces in the Republic are likely to line up in the coming years is difficult.

One thing does seem clear at this stage and that is that socialism in Ireland may be a long time in the making. It is not necessarily the case that it will follow immediately upon a British withdrawal.

If this is so, we should be careful about making British withdrawal conditional upon there being a socialist state-in-waiting in Ireland. British withdrawal of itself would still constitute a revolutionary departure in Ireland, even if it doesn't lead to socialism. As in every revolutionary situation, there will be a lining up of forces and a battle for power.

In this context it is interesting to note that in the past year three leading Sinn Fein figures — Adams, Morrison and

McGuinness — have said that the IRA has no military mission in the 26 counties and that they will accept the political verdict of the majority in a united Ireland. This seems to reflect a sensitivity to the fact that people in the 26 counties will not countenance military struggle south of the border.

Furthermore there is an increasing recognition that, even at peace, the six north-eastern counties are not the thriving economic paradise which they seemed to be in 1918. The economy there, aside from the costs of the army, is subsidised by the British exchequer. The cost of equalising the social welfare benefits in the republic with those of the north was estimated, in 1983/84 as requiring a doubling of the taxes in the 26 counties.

There is a delicate balancing act aimed at not losing national sovereignty of the whole of Ireland by being indebted to the US etc, and at the same time regaining sovereignty over the whole of the national territory.

It does seem to this writer that a united Ireland, far from being a left wing paradise, might actually, like many south American and African states, end up having to fight very hard just to maintain a democratic state and keep the far right at bay. After all, a middle class which finds itself being taxed out of existence has always been prey to fascistic ideas.

This does not make the cause of Irish unity any less urgent, but it does indicate that we, in Britain, who expect to see a British withdrawal in the near future should begin to discuss the reality of that withdrawal in more practical terms in order that we and our nearest neighbours can get the best that is to be got out of such a withdrawal.

by Dolores O'Reilly

Sources of information:

Who Owns Ireland, Who Owns You? Attic Press 1985 (available from the TOM, £3.95)
Agenda, Irish Information Partnership.
A Singular Stance — Irish Neutrality in the 1980s, by P. Keatinge, IPA 1984.

NEWS AROUND BRITAIN

1986 Bloody Sunday

CALL FOR BRITISH WITHDRAWAL



Photo: Paul Mattsson

Ban on Trafalgar Square

Last November, the Co-ordinating Committee for British Withdrawal from Ireland wrote to the Department of the Environment requesting the use of Trafalgar Square for the Bloody Sunday rally.

On 23rd January – 10 days before the rally – the Department of the Environment got round to answering.

“As you know,” they wrote, “Permission has not been granted since 1972 for meetings in Trafalgar Square concerned with the problem in Northern Ireland. It has been felt that to allow demonstrations on this issue would be both inflammatory and offensive to public opinion.”

“I have to tell you that your application has been carefully considered in the light of current circumstances and it has been decided that it must be refused in view of the continuing campaign of violence in Northern Ireland and of the risk of creating disorder in the Square.”

According to this letter, we are led to believe that no rallies about the North of Ireland have been held in Trafalgar Square since 1972. In fact, on 17th November 1984, Ian Paisley addressed a rally of loyalist

Apprentice Boys there. This was two months after a withdrawal rally had been refused permission. And previously the pro-British ‘Peace People’ (now totally discredited) also held a rally there. So it is not really the North of Ireland that is taboo – only the call for Britain to get out of it.

According to this letter, demonstrations about the little ‘problem’ of the North “would be both inflammatory and offensive to public opinion”. Yet every public opinion poll in recent years has shown a clear majority in favour of Britain withdrawing from Ireland.

“In view of the continuing campaign of violence” – is this an attempt to implicate a London withdrawal march with that violence? Why else should it be mentioned? Recent users of Trafalgar Square include: solidarity with Tamil Eelam, and the Anti Apartheid Movement (referring to troubled countries not lacking their share of a campaign of violence), and CND (against the State’s preparations for a campaign of violence).

“The risk of creating disorder in the Square”: there has been at least one demonstration per year

since 1972 calling for withdrawal or concerned with some aspect of British rule in Ireland. Only two of these – one immediately following Bloody Sunday in 1972 and one in 1981 which defied a ban on demonstrations during the hunger strike – involved any degree of disorder.

The factual inaccuracies and inconsistencies from the Department of the Environment would do justice to TV’s ‘Yes Prime Minister’. Either they think, or they want others to think, that Irish politics and the politics of withdrawal are inherently violent, subversive, unpopular, fringe and undemocratic.

Ten Labour MPs – including front bench spokesperson Peter Archer – Labour barrister Tony Gifford, Labour MEP Richard Balf and Plaid Cymru MP Dafydd Elis Thomas all disagree with the Department of the Environment. They wrote opposing “this policy to censor debate on an issue of crucial importance to the people of both Britain and Ireland”.

Tony Benn and Joan Maynard are following up the matter with the Secretary for the Environment Kenneth Baker.

A large crowd of at least 3,000 people gathered in London on Sunday 2nd February to commemorate the 14th anniversary of Bloody Sunday. Many organisations which included Brent and Tower Hamlets Trades Council, Handsworth People’s Defence Committee, Troops Out Movement all assembled in Hyde Park before taking to the streets to show their support for the Irish people’s struggle for freedom.

The march, organised by the Coordinating Committee for British Withdrawal from Ireland, set off for Kilburn Square led by the Sons of Ireland Pipe Band from Glasgow, under a banner demanding withdrawal of British troops from Ireland.

Nearby, a small group of National Front supporters, surrounded by police, shouted ‘Hang the IRA’ and slogans against the Pope. A few broke through the police cordon to throw eggs at the marchers, but were soon hauled away. 15 National Front supporters were later arrested and various weapons were confiscated.

By 3.30pm the march had reached Kilburn for the rally which was chaired by Tony Gifford, who had recently visited the hunger strikers convicted by the supergrass system. He brought messages of solidarity and resistance from those who, “would give their lives to end the supergrass system in the 6 counties.”

The first speaker was Caitlin Wright from the Irish In Britain Representation Group, who spoke on anti-Irish racism and the problems faced by Irish communities as a result of this carefully manufactured bigotry.

Next came Francie Molloy of Sinn Fein who received a warm welcome from the crowd. He began by condemning the act that had brought everyone together, “those 14 who were murdered by the British army in 1972. That was murder, and in Mrs Thatcher’s words, ‘murder is murder’. The UDR recently attempted to intimidate the people of Cookstown. The people of Cookstown were not intimidated. The Irish people will not be intimidated.”

Speaking on the Anglo-Irish Agreement, “Dublin has claimed the Anglo-Irish Agreement as a success for constitutional nationalism. They would not even be ►

March

talking but for the success of the IRA. The last 14 years have taught us a lesson. We cannot simply go out and ask for civil rights. It is clear that the only means of securing freedom is through the continued two-pronged campaign of Sinn Fein and the IRA. *Tiocfaidh Ar La!*

The next speaker, Jack Collins from Kent NUM, drew the link between the Irish working class and the British working class on the basis that, "while there is still one worker left in jail, we are all imprisoned." He urged everyone to support all those who, like the sacked printers and miners, have been "jailed for fighting for basic rights."

Unmesh Desai of the Newham Seven expressed the solidarity felt with the Irish in their fight against British imperialism. "800 years of slavery and exploitation has shown that the only way to fight the British is through the use of weapons."

The speaker from the Irish Republican Socialist Party began by reminding us that little has changed in the 14 years since Bloody Sunday excepting, "Britain can never again carry out the mass acts of barbarism that she has in the past, well not in public anyway."

The last speaker, Miriam James of the Coordinating Committee which organised the march repeated the demand for withdrawal saying, "As long as the British government is in Ireland there will be no peace or progress in that country." She spoke about the repression that has been going on in Northern Ireland and the reverberations that are now being felt in Britain. "The rehearsing for that was done in the six county state of Northern Ireland. Let us demand the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. Let us work together for it."

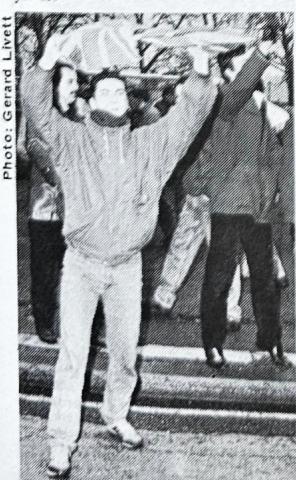


Photo: Gerard Livett
National Front opposition unsure of its politics beyond putting the boot in.

Prevention of Terrorism Act renewed

The independent annual review of the Prevention of Terrorism Act drawn up by Sir Cyril Philips was presented to the Home Secretary on 27th January. This was in good time for MPs to study it before the Act came up for renewal late in February.

However, MPs complained that the Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, did not draw their attention to the Report, but merely lodged it in the House of Commons Library.

The Report recommended that the powers of exclusion be phased out and allowed to lapse. Philips argued that exclusions infringe civil liberties; that they are becoming "less important as an effective means of preventing terrorism" because police action is now more 'coordinated'; that the new Police and Criminal Evidence Act makes the power superfluous; and that "exclusions which may have seemed necessary in earlier years when the police were less well equipped and informed have become more doubtful with the passage of time".

Douglas Hurd gave himself two days to give the proposal "very careful consideration" before rejecting it.

Late at night on 19th February the Prevention of

Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 — which has been temporary since 1974 — was renewed in its entirety.

There was stronger opposition than in previous years: the vote was 169 for, 109 against. Gerald Kaufman led the Labour opposition, backed by Martin Flannery and Clive Soley. They argued both on civil liberties grounds and on the grounds that the Act does not 'prevent terrorism', and on the grounds that the North of Ireland needs a political solution, not just legislation.

"There is no doubt that the synthetic division of Ireland forced upon an unwilling people is at the root of it all, and until we handle that politically the problems will continue. The Act deepens and exacerbates the situation, it is and will continue to be the cause of a great deal of the killing."

(Martin Flannery)

The Conservatives claimed that the Act was effective in 'preventing terrorism', an assertion disputed by the opposition. One Tory MP claimed that the Indian community

in Britain had expressed to him their gratitude for the Act: this was a reference to the police round-up of many Sikhs and Kashmiris during the state visit of Indian premier Rajiv Gandhi. Sir Cyril Philips also referred to this incident as a possible example of illegal preventative detention, a possibility he dismissed (likewise with the use of the Act against South African activists).

"The Government argue that they need the Act to get information on people whom they can later convict as a result of the Act. In other words, they recognise what many of us have recognised for years — that this Act should really be called the Collection of Information Act."

(Clive Soley)

The Liberal-SDP Alliance, inasmuch as they contributed to the debate, supported the Prevention of Terrorism Act (Alex Carlile). This is in line with the Donaldson Report both parties adopted last year, which states that "we believe that the Prevention of Terrorism Act is essential to the defeat of terrorism" although it would prefer joint British-Irish legislation to make it look less 'anti-Irish'.

A temporary suspension of civil liberties

The Prevention of Terrorism Act has been renewed for a further year. The Act introduced in 1974 by the then Labour Party Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, has with slight amendments remained in force ever since.

The Act which gives police far reaching powers of arrest and detention can be divided into three main parts:

- The banning of organisations 'which appear to be concerned in terrorism'. Terrorism being defined as 'the use of violence for political ends'.
- The exclusion of people from one part of the UK, usually meaning exclusion from Britain but can include from N. Ireland. Irish citizens can also be excluded from the whole of the UK.
- Police can arrest without war-

rant 'a person reasonably suspected of an offence under the Act'. The person can be held for 2 days and, on the Home Secretary's approval, a further 5 days without being charged or going before a court. And, if the police think fit, without seeing a solicitor. Extra powers exist at ports and airports. A person can be detained for questioning even where there is no suspicion at all that s/he is connected with any illegal activity. Some of the powers extend to International affairs.

Specific offences include the withholding of information concerned with 'acts of terrorism'. Supporting one of the banned (proscribed) organisations or displaying or wearing articles in a public place supporting these organ-

isations. It is also an offence to fail to answer questions when stopped at a port.

Statistics show that this Act is widely abused by the police, it being used as a vehicle for Intelligence gathering and a threat to all who speak out against Britain's occupation of Ireland.

6,098 people have been arrested under the Act (excluding 117 further arrests under the 'international' provisions), only 122 have ever been convicted of an offence under the Act. A further 237 have been convicted of other offences.

Last year 193 people were arrested in Britain under the Act compared to 159 in 1984 and 191 in 1983. Of those detained in 1985, 25% were held for longer than 48 hrs compared to an average of 14% the previous 2 years.

NEWS AROUND BRITAIN



Emma Groves and Brenda Downes in front of Patsy Mullan's painting of the death of John Downes (photo: Birmingham TOM).

Home truths about plastic bullets

By a happy coincidence — or political far sightedness on the part of Birmingham TOM — a Midlands speaking tour about plastic bullets took place at the same time as public consultative meetings on that very subject.

The consultative meetings were called to discuss the West Midlands Police request to use plastic bullets following the Handsworth riots.

The speaking tour was planned as part of the build-up to this year's Bloody Sunday demonstration: plastic bullets are part of the same repressive strategy as the firing of live rounds into the civil rights march in 1972. TOM invited to the Midlands Emma Groves, blinded by a plastic bullet, and Brenda Downes whose husband John was shot dead at the internment march of 1984 in Belfast.

Christine Crawley MEP arranged for the Plastic Bullets Campaign Exhibition to be in Birmingham for the tour. The tour was also supported by MP Clare Short, Birmingham and Nottingham Trades Council, West Midlands County Council's Women's Committee, the Handsworth Defence Campaign and the Indian Workers Association.

Emma and Brenda opened the exhibition and spoke at various public meetings in Birmingham, Coventry and Leicester. But most import-

ant were the police consultative meetings in Birmingham.

Emma Groves attended the meeting covering the Sparkhill inner city area. 'Consultative' was a euphemism, as it was more like trying to get into a secret Fenian meeting. It took half an hour just to find the room!

The police had had their say and seemed to be winning the argument. But Mrs Groves strongly countered their argument that plastic bullets would only be used as a last resort and under strict guidelines. She pointed out that guidelines also existed in the North of Ireland, yet many people had been killed or injured in non-riot situations. She added, "And what guidelines was the soldier who shot me following? He shot at point blank range through my living room window."

Following this, the meeting voted against the use of plastic bullets.

The consultative meeting which Brenda Downes attended had a higher public profile as it was in Handsworth. Her statement was reported in all the local press. The meeting was shocked to silence when Brenda threw a plastic bullet onto the floor to emphasise its force. She said, "This weapon made me a widow at the age of 20, it has killed 15 people. It is used to

suppress human rights and protest in N. Ireland and it will be used against black people and others in England unless it is banned now."

WEST MIDLANDS BAN PLASTIC BULLETS

The outcome of the consultative meetings was that the West Midlands Police Committee decided *not* to permit the police to have plastic bullets.

A clear victory, based on people here beginning to listen to the Irish experience at last.

Unfortunately it will be a short-lived victory, because the West Midlands County Council is to be disbanded on 1st April. The battle will then have to be resumed with the Tory-dominated replacement.

IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE



The London Irish Women's Centre opened on 1st February. The group exists to counter the discrimination Irish women face as a result of their nationality and sex. It campaigns for a number of issues like abortion and contraception facilities, and on behalf of Irish lesbians. The Centre at 59 Church Street, Stoke Newington, London, is open office hours and some evenings, and provides many facilities such as a creche, a library and language, history and literature classes. For more details ring: 01 249 7318.

Photo: Joanne O'Brien/Format

After the meeting Brenda Downes said, "I felt privileged to be at that meeting with all those black people who are suffering what we have suffered for years under 'British law and order'. I felt so close to them."

Throughout the tour Emma Groves and Brenda Downes did press interviews and got peak coverage on BRMB (local Birmingham radio), Radio Trent and Radio Nottingham.

The finale of the tour (apart from the social!) was a live debate on policing for Central TV. Both women put their case strongly. Geoffrey Dear, Chief Constable of the West Midlands, was very principled in his counter-argument — "Of course you have to remember that these people were invited here as guests of the Troops Out Movement..."

(Brenda Downes & Emma Groves are members of the United Campaign Against Plastic Bullets.)

Action on Brixton strip searching

In every prison in Britain, the governor has the discretion to strip search prisoners in the interests of 'security' and to 'protect staff'.

Governor Joy Kingsley of Brixton Prison chooses to exercise her discretion against the two remand prisoners Ella O'Dwyer and Martina Anderson in the following ways:

- An average of 21 strip searches per month for Ella O'Dwyer.
- An average of 25 strip searches per month for Martina Anderson.
- Throughout the 8 months they have been held, no less than 15 strip searches per month; sometimes as many as 47.

In addition,

- 115 body searches (intensive frisking) on average per month.
- Disturbing their sleep every 15 minutes during the night.
- Frequent cell searches, during which their legal notes – supposedly confidential – could be read.
- Solitary confinement for at least 18 hours a day.
- Two cameras on the landing by their cells.

At a press conference on 17th February, MP Clare Short compared the situation to Armagh,

where 700 prisoners have been tortured this way since 1982. Clare Short has introduced an Early Day Motion in the House of Commons calling on the Home Affairs Committee "to undertake an urgent inquiry into these procedures". The motion declares "that this constant mental and physical harassment is undermining their physical and mental health and their ability to prepare their defence".

For this reason, their solicitor Mike Fisher is now to take the case to the High Court on the grounds that the prison governor's discretion is being illegally abused and that the frequency and manner of the strip searching constitutes an assault.

They are remand prisoners – innocent in the eyes of the law – yet they are daily being punished "as if they've been condemned already", as Mike Fisher stated.

The strip search torture also shows how afraid the State is of these Irish prisoners. Like the defendants in the Manchester trial, they were arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and charged under the conspiracy laws. The State will try them in the light of its policy regarding Ireland: the strip searching has to be seen, therefore, not just as an attempt to destroy them as people but also to destroy what they represent.

For details of the pickets of Brixton Prison, organised by Irish Prisoners Appeal, see back page.

SCREAMING GIRLS ROCK COMMONS

(*Daily Mirror* headline, 20th February)

While the Prevention of Terrorism Act was being ritually renewed in Parliament, MPs had their slumbers disturbed by a shower of leaflets from the public gallery.

The protest was a bold move to draw attention to the daily degradation of the strip searching in Brixton and Armagh Prisons.

PRISONERS' BIRTHDAYS

Please send cards and letters to these prisoners on their birthdays. Many of them spend long periods in solitary confinement. Don't forget the number.

PATRICK MULRYAN 461575
HM Prison Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcs WR11 5TZ.

March 23rd

ROBERT CUNNINGHAM 131877
HM Prison Long Lartin, as above

March 24th

EDDIE BUTLER 338637
HM Prison Parkurst, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 5NX.

17th April

And these two remand prisoners, whose trial is due in May:

ELLA O'DWYER D25135

March 3rd

MARTINA ANDERSON D25134

April 16th

Both in HM Prison Brixton, PO Box 369, Jebb Avenue, London SW2 5XF.

The following two prisoners are at present in Solitary Confinement, so letters and messages of support would be more than welcome.

PAUL NORNEY 863532
HM Prison Strangeways, Manchester

NOEL GIBSON 879295
HM Prison Winchester.

Your Letters

We welcome contributions and feedback from readers. Please send your letters to this address:

Troops Out, c/o Box 10, 2a St Paul's Road, London N1.

REFERENDUM

Dear Troops Out,

In your coverage of the January by-elections in Northern Ireland, you stated that the Unionist vote as a percentage of the electorate, 43.9%, 'fell short of the required amount, as per previous referenda held on the devolution of Scotland and Wales.' (*Troops Out*, Feb.) But in fact, those referenda were on the basis of 40% of the electorate being the pass mark – so by that referendum criterion, the Unionists won. It would also be more exact to have added Sinn Fein's vote – 4% of the electorate – to the Unionists' because the Sinn Fein candidates also stood on the basis of opposing the Agreement.

That is just a factual point. I do, however, agree with your point that the by-elections were a 'game' with each side playing by different rules. What follows from that? Surely that 'Northern Ireland' was set up undemocratically, was ruled by Stormont undemocratically and is now ruled by Westminster undemocratically. The fact that the present British Government tends to operate that way anyway – witness the attacks on local councils and on trade unions – could ironically turn out to be a progressive move as regards Ireland.

The Government is going to ignore the by-election 'refer-

endum' result as part of its facing down and excluding of the Unionists. It has weakened their power and has embarked on negotiations with Dublin about the North. This might not be 'troops out now' the way you would like to see it – but it might be a first step towards withdrawal and a negotiated united Ireland. Yours sincerely, Joanne Millhouse, London.

PRISONER'S BIRTHDAY

Dear Troops Out,

We have always appreciated how *Troops Out* lists the birthdays of Irish POWs. But in the last issue you put that Ronnie McCartney – in Gartree – has his birthday on 25th February.

We happen to know this is wrong. John McComb has his birthday on that day; he is in Long Lartin Prison. Ronnie's birthday is in September.

It is a great shame to get your facts wrong on this matter, as prisoners are in a helpless situation and depend for so much on people on the outside. Please take more care.

Yours sincerely,
Mr and Mrs McDermott,
London.

Editors: we will. Apologies to our readers, to Mr McComb and to Mr McCartney.

BRIT BITS

"If we in Ulster allow Roman Catholics to work on our farms, we are traitors to Ulster."

Sir Basil Brooke (Lord Brookeborough) Prime Minister of Northern Ireland 1943-63.

"Go unto the length and breadth of the world; ransack the literature of all countries; find if you can a single voice, a single book, find I would almost say as much as a single newspaper article – unless the product of the day – in which the conduct of England towards Ireland is anywhere treated except with profound and bitter condemnation."

William Gladstone, 19th century Liberal Prime Minister.

"If Britain should once again find herself at war – and particularly with the Soviet Union – she could not accept a militant leftwing government in Eire with the prospect of military facilities not only denied to Britain, but made available to her enemy."

Vice-Admiral Sir Ian McGough, formerly Royal Navy Commander for NATO's North Atlantic area.

THE WATER'S EDGE AND OTHER STORIES

Moy McCrory, Sheba £3.50

A striking fact about the English which is reinforced daily for Irish emigrants, is the extent of British ignorance of all things Irish. This persists despite almost continuous immigration from Ireland and the existence of very large settlements of Irish in Britain, whose lives are lived in a manner not very different, in many respects, from the Irish in the parts of Ireland from which they hail.

In recent years, we have been made aware, by the work of people like Liz Curtis of *Information of Ireland*, of the ways in which the media operates to allow only images of the Irish which suit British policy, to emerge. Part of understanding what the Irish are not, is the replacement of stereotypes with real people and a filling of the vacuum which exists between

denying the stereotypes and acknowledging that Irish people in Britain are not 'ordinary British people'.

Literature can contribute to such an understanding. Images of ourselves which reflect our actual reality teach us to know who we are. Neither the consciousness of those who live in Ireland nor that of the British fit the reality of our lives in Britain. In this context, the development of a literature of the Irish in Britain is of great importance to us.

The Water's Edge is a great breakthrough in terms of an Irish in Britain literature. Written by Moy McCrory, born into an Irish family in Liverpool, this book of short stories is wonderful to read. The complexity of life is not denied - life's problems and joys are multi-sourced - and in such a context, the burden of anti-Irish racism can be appreciated for the oppressive and unnecessary phenomenon that it is.

ON THE EDGE

by Eileen Eason, Child Poverty Action Group (NI).

The North of Ireland ranks second only to Calabria as the poorest region in the EEC. That this fact is little known is perhaps one of the reasons for the publication of this pamphlet. By use of official statistics and a survey carried out on their own behalf in Derry, Eason illustrates the human suffering that is the result of this poverty.

It is relatively well known that the North of Ireland has the highest unemployment of any region in the UK. It currently stands at around 25%, in many nationalist areas it rises above 50%. This naturally produces a very high dependence on the social security system. The system is nominally the same as in Britain, but there are some crucial differences that penalise the Irish.

One key area is the different laws relating to debt. Going into debt is a common refuge, and often a necessity, for those living below the poverty line. For example, in the London Borough of Haringey the average rent arrears of council tenants are £231. In Ireland, however, there is the Payment of Debt Act which was first introduced to counter the rent strike called by the nationalist people in protest against internment. It allows the deduction of rent and other debts direct from social security payments. Consequently, despite the greater poverty, the average debt of public housing tenants in the North of Ireland is only £89.

The impoverishment is then further exacerbated by other local problems, notably fuel poverty. Due mainly to a greater dependence on coal and oil the average cost of heating per household is about 38% higher than in Britain. Eason shows that heating is a very large

item of expenditure for poor households and that therefore this increased heating bill is another disproportionate burden.

The survey of unemployed people in Derry personalises the hardship represented by the statistics. The daily routine of some of the respondents are given, illustrating the tedium imposed by unemployment. As the author points out, voluntary work or political activity often require a degree of self-confidence that is not encouraged by long-term unemployment.

Two different samples were used for this survey: one from the nationalist and one from the loyalist community. Comparisons are interesting, often because of a surprising similarity of response. For example, over 70% from both communities blame their unemployment on present Government policies. Both sides avoided blaming the community divide or the 'troubles'. The major divergence of response was in the self-perception of the unemployed. More than twice as many loyalists as nationalists reported a loss of confidence as a result of being out of work, and many more loyalists were scared of being labelled scroungers.

The difference probably arises because mass unemployment is a newer phenomenon within the loyalist community. But as Eason points out, "the difficulties expressed by the Catholic families are so pronounced that if this represents the extent to which families can adjust, it cannot be seen as acceptable."

And this is the message of the pamphlet. The official statistics and reasonable argument describe a situation that should never be tolerated. Even if you are under the impression that you know about poverty in the North of Ireland, this pamphlet will still surprise you.

Ned Mallin

The author's eye for fine detail and gift of expression are evident throughout the book. The stories span a wealth of themes one of which is anti-Irish racism. In *Touring Holiday*, the English neighbours touring Ireland are blinded by prejudice to the richness of what they are seeing. To the child, the places are brought to life by their history and social significance. Yet the power imbalance is such that she is bullied about her 'little drop of Irish blood' into saying that she is 'English'.

In another story *The Prizewinning* the same girl one imagines, now a little older, turns the full vent of self-hatred on to her parents whom British society

inevitably teach her to despise and pity. McCrory has the ability to capture things very neatly. *Specimens* will, I hope, make a few people in the solidarity movement blush. *The Vision* will explain more about the recent moving statues' business than all the yards of newsprint you saw at the time and you'll laugh yourself silly at *A Quick Sale*. I think my favourite story is *The Coat* because I've never seen that self-denigrating aspect of poverty so well portrayed before, but don't forgo the chance to read the book yourself. Congratulations to the publishers, Sheba, for making the effort to bring the book within reasonable price range.

Dolores O'Reilly

DIG THIS - A TRIBUTE TO THE GREAT STRIKE

Record, by various artists

This record has been produced by members of Lambeth Miners Support Group to recall the miners' struggle and to draw attention to the continuing plight of those miners victimised by the NCB.

Side One was recorded at a benefit concert held recently in London. Featured are two tracks each from Poison Girls, The Mekons, and The Men They

Couldn't Hang, whose version of the classic theme song Rawhide is so brilliant it should be framed. Side Two features studio recordings by little known acts, of which Akimbo and Leningrad Sandwich stand out.

640 miners remain victimised as a result of the strike. All proceeds from this record go to the NUM Solidarity Fund.

Records available from Forward Sounds International Ltd, 76 Lulworth House, Dorset Road, London SW8.

TERENCE MAC SWÍNEY MEMORIAL LECTURES

CFS Conference Centre

22-25 Portman Close
London W1A 4BE
(Nearest Tube: Marble Arch)

22 January - 5 March 1986

22nd January, 7.30

• IRISH EMIGRATION by Donall Mac Amhláigh

29th January, 7.30

• ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS by Fr. Des Wilson

5th February, 7.30

• INSURRECTION IN IRISH HISTORY by C. Desmond Greaves

12th February, 7.30

• WOMEN IN IRISH HISTORY by Margaret Ward

19th February, 7.30

• GAELIC IRELAND by Nollaig Ó Gadhra

26th February, 8.00

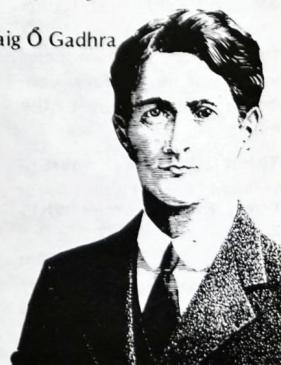
• IRELAND IN BRITISH POLITICS by Seán MacBride

5th March, 7.30

• IRELAND AND ENGLAND - A TURNING POINT?

by Prof.

Liam de Paor



Tráthach Mac Suibhne



JANUARY

20th
Peter Archer, British Labour spokesperson on Ireland, attends the appeal hearing of those convicted on the word of informer Christopher Black. He says that if the Anglo-Irish Agreement leads to no more than the end of the supergrass system, it would have made a valuable contribution.

21st
Two UDR members are injured in an IRA mortar bomb attack on a UDR base near Dungannon, Co. Tyrone.

A journalist from the *Financial Times* is thrown from her chair and kicked to the ground at a Unionist election meeting — she had not joined the standing ovation for Rev Paisley.

22nd
A one day strike prevents the broadcasting of many programmes on RTE (Irish TV). The strike is in protest at the renewal of Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act, which bans interviews or tapes of members of specified organisations, principally Sinn Fein.

23rd
In by-elections in the North, Unionists regain 14 of the 15 seats they resigned in protest at the Anglo-Irish Agreement. But Newry and South Armagh is won by Seamus Mallon SDLP.

An ecumenical service in Coleraine is disrupted by members of Rev Paisley's Free Presbyterian Church, who pronounce the service 'the work of the devil'.

25th
Owen Carron, former MP for Fermanagh and S Tyrone fails to return to prison remand. He had been released on bail to fight the by-election for Sinn Fein.

26th
Police in the Republic arrest five men and seize guns and ammunition allegedly destined for the IRA, in raids in Sligo and Roscommon. Curiously, one of the men — charged with possession of 30 Kalashnikovs — is later released on bail.

Several houses and a garage are badly damaged in two separate IRA bomb attacks in Co Tyrone over the weekend.

At the annual Bloody Sunday commemoration march in Derry, Ken Livingstone tells the crowd that most British people want withdrawal from Ireland.

27th
Sinn Fein councillor Seamus Cassidy has a charge of possessing an explosive substance against him dropped. An old UDR flare had been found in his house!

Two men are injured, one seriously, when a UDR patrol opens fire on a car as it leaves a pub in Omagh, Co Tyrone. Outrage is expressed by many nationalist politicians, but the UDR involved are not suspended.

The extradition case against Robert Russell opens in Dublin. Sean MacBride is defending Russell, who is wanted by the Northern authorities as one of the escapees from Long Kesh in 1982.

28th
Sinn Fein workers are set upon by a gang of UDA men outside Lisburn Council Chamber.

29th
Republican POWs in the North



Sunday, calling for British withdrawal from Ireland.

A UDR man is injured in an IRA ambush in Co Tyrone.

30th

Harold McCusker of the Official Unionists proposes talks between the British Government and politicians from both north and south Ireland, but only if the Anglo-Irish Agreement is first scrapped. This position is seconded by Peter Robinson of the Democratic Unionists two days later.

The Republic's Government announces that a referendum on legalising divorce is now unlikely. The coalition Labour Party, however, will introduce their own Bill on divorce.

31st

Martin Quinn, a Catholic from Bawnmore estate, Newtownabbey, is killed by a loyalist assassin.

IRA bomb an RUC station at Coalisland, Co Tyrone.

FEBRUARY

1st

Unionist councillors agree not to strike a rate, but some feel betrayed by the MPs who have returned to Westminster and are collecting their salaries.

RUC Chief Inspector Hermon issues a directive forbidding the RUC Police Federation from talking to the press. It follows an article by the Federation which criticised the front-line role of the RUC in border areas.

2nd

3,000 people march in London on the commemoration of Bloody

The Department of the Environment admits that money designated for the needy and handicapped in Belfast has been used to build extra-wide roads and walls separating nationalist and loyalist areas.

8th

The Stalker Report into RUC shoot-to-kill activities is handed over to the RUC Complaints and Disciplinary Branch. On 15th the Report goes to the DPP, and it is rumoured that 3 senior RUC officers face prosecution.

10th

A big increase in national police spending is announced in Britain. The Metropolitan force says that it is considering buying the armoured 'Hotspur' landrovers used by the RUC.

11th

Two men, one an RUC detective, are killed by the IRA in a bar in Maguiresbridge, Co Tyrone. The IRA admit the killing of the civilian was a mistake.

13th

The legal sub-committee of the Intergovernmental Conference meets in London. Present are the Republic's Justice Minister and Attorney General and Britain's Attorney General and Tom King; it is thought that they discussed the Diplock Courts, supergrasses and extradition. And — also under the Anglo-Irish Agreement — the two police chiefs in Ireland meet on 15th to discuss 'security cooperation'.

14th

New York city survey of 24 US firms operating in the North shows that half of them do not operate an anti-discrimination code.

17th

Republic signs the new EEC agreement amending the Treaty of Rome towards greater political cooperation — including foreign policy and security, which would appear to infringe the Republic's neutrality.

Irish politicians of every party protest against Britain's Sellafield nuclear plant following a spate of sea and air radioactive leaks which imperil Ireland. Fine Gael MEPs call for an EEC debate, a ban on further discharges into the Irish Sea and EEC inspections of the plant.

Trial opens of 5 UDR soldiers charged with the murder of Adrian Carroll in Armagh in 1983.

As far as emission standards from Sellafield are concerned we've had nothing but glowing reports.



A viewpoint from the Irish Times

COMING EVENTS & RESOURCES

BIRMINGHAM

**IRISH NEWS – BRITISH STORIES:
A SERIES OF VIDEO SHOWS**
'Strip Searches' & 'Same As It Ever
Was' (about the supergrass system)
on March 3rd

7.30pm, Trade Union Resource Centre,
7 Frederick St, Hockley (Bus, 96)

and March 4th

1.00pm, Unemployed Centre, 448 Stratford
Rd, Sparkhill, (Buses, 24, 31, 32, 90, 92)

'Green Flutes' (about Glasgow flute
band) & 'Irish News: British Stories'
(media treatment of the war)

on April 7th

7.30pm, Trade Union Resource Centre
and April 8th

1.00pm, Unemployed Centre.
Organised by Birmingham TOM

**THE NEW PHONE NUMBER OF
THE TOM NATIONAL OFFICE:
01-609 1743**

JOIN THE TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT

Below is a list of towns and districts in England, Scotland and Wales where we have TOM branches or contacts. If you want to join through a branch or as an individual, please fill in the coupon provided, and send it to PO Box 353, London NW5 4NH.

ENGLAND

Birmingham

Brighton

Bristol

Cambridge

Colchester

Coventry

Leeds

Leicester

Manchester

Merseyside

Northampton

Norwich

Nottingham

Oxford

St. Albans

Sheffield

Tyneside

York

LONDON AREA

Camden

East London

Haringey

Islington

Lambeth

West London

SCOTLAND

Aberdeen

Edinburgh

Glasgow

WALES

Cardiff

Swansea

LONDON TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT
52 NEWCASTLE HIGH ST
LONDON NW5 4NH

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

Name

Address

Membership of a branch costs £6 (£2
unemployed) payable through the branch.
Individual membership is £10 (£6 unem-
ployed) which includes a subscription to
Troops Out.

LEEDS

Thurs March 6th
The Yorkshire Premiere of the film
ANNE DEVLIN
by Pat Murphy
8pm at the
Hyde Park Picture House,
Brudenell Road, Leeds 6
Presented by Leeds Animation Workshop.

LONDON

BRIXTON PICKETS

The Irish Prisoners' Appeal, the support group for Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer, is calling weekly pickets of Brixton Prison to highlight the degrading and debilitating practice of strip searching.

The prisoners in Brixton will be able to hear the pickets: we want to let them know you are supporting them. So bring your friends, tell your trade union, Labour Party branch, women's group, community group etc. ALL WELCOME – bring banners and placards which protest about the strip searching.

All pickets assemble at the corner of Jebb Avenue and Brixton Hill, London SW9 (tube, Brixton). There will be stewards – please respect their instructions.

SATURDAY 1st MARCH
11.30am-1.30pm



FRI. 7th-SAT. 8th MARCH
8.00pm Fri-8.00pm Sat.

This is a women only picket for International Women's Day, and is a 24-hour vigil. Bring sleeping bags and song books. Women only. (Organised by Women in Troops Out and Irish Prisoners' Appeal.)

SATURDAY 15th MARCH
11.30am-1.30pm

SATURDAY 22nd MARCH
11.30am-1.30pm

For more information contact 274 7700,
ext. 36; or TOM 609 1743.

Máire O'Shea Defence Fund

The Máire O'Shea Defence Fund is now closed.
The organisers of the fund wish to thank
everyone who contributed. The response from
both individuals and organisations has been
overwhelming.

FEILE na nGAEIL

A feast of Irish culture throughout March funded by the GLC.
The Festival includes an *Irish Film Season* at Brixton's Ritzy Cinema, including the new film 'Pigs' opening on 20th March.

The Waltham Forest Irish Festival 23rd Feb-27th March includes the films 'Maeve', 'Ireland Behind the Wire' and 'Acceptable Levels'; Irish theatre, Gaelic football, music and readings by Moy McCrory from her book 'The Water's Edge'. Contact 01-558 4577 for full details.

ST PATRICK'S NIGHT SOCIAL

East London Troops Out Movement
Irish music from the 'Anglo-Irish
Dischords'
Late bar, food, bookstall
£2.50, £1.50 unemployed

SATURDAY 15th MARCH

at Hackney Trades Club, 96 Dalston Lane, E8

BOOK LIST & MAIL ORDER

The bookshop News From Nowhere in Liverpool produces a comprehensive list of Irish books and pamphlets, with a mail order service.

It covers present day Ireland; history and politics; women in Ireland; the Irish abroad; biography; Irish life and lore; culture, literature and the arts; fiction; poetry; plays; Celtic connections; children's books; magazines and newspapers; and Irish language publications.

Available from: News From Nowhere,
100 Whitechapel,
Liverpool 1.
tel: 051-708 7270

