

TROOPS OUT

Vol. 3, No. 7, May 1980

Paper of the Troops Out Movement 10p

Hugh Maguire
Died February 10th
1980
Age 9 years



KILLED BY
BRITISH
SOLDIERS



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





Humphrey Atkins



ATKINS AND H-BLOCK

WHEN THE 50 YEAR FAÇADE OF DEMOCRACY IN A ONE PARTY ruled state was finally and irretrievably broken in 1968, numerous British imposed solutions for Government rule have been forced on the people of the six N. Eastern counties.

From the abolition of Stormont in '72, through the short-lived Assembly with power sharing executive (1974) brought down by a Loyalist strike, to the Constitutional Convention (1975) and continued direct rule, all 'initiatives' have failed to change the sectarian framework of N. Ireland. With such a track record the present 'Atkins Conference' didn't offer any prospect for change, so it wasn't much surprise that after sessions covering 21 days, the conference finally adjourned indefinitely with no area of agreement between the parties involved. To the nationalist working class bearing the brunt of 11 years' military occupation the talks were totally irrelevant. Other British strategies had failed to dismantle the repressive apparatus of the sectarian state and the fight was clearly one for self-determination.

Nevertheless, while the 4 year struggle of prisoners in the Long Kesh H-Blocks wasn't discussed at the conference, national and international opposition has forced Atkins to make apparent concessions. The prisoners 'on the blanket' in the fight for political status were offered exercise in sports kit, 2 visits per month and weekly letters. But in keeping with the policy of criminalisation, even prisoners sentenced for political offences committed before March 1st, 1976 will be denied the 'special category status' that up to now they have been getting.

In reply the 'blanket men' have unequivocally rejected the paltry concessions as a propaganda exercise and reiterated their demand: *"We are protesting for full political status. We recognise that we have a long way to go yet, but we shall not weaken."*

Neither must we in our support.

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!



VOICES FOR WITHDRAWAL

A forum on Northern Ireland

Saturday 14th June, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Registration 10am. Delegates £2, Observers £1.

Speakers include: Clive Foley MP, Ernie Roberts MP, Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, Phil Flynn.

SOCIAL 7.30 with alternative cabaret (Andy de la Tour, Jim Barclay + music) and Irish music from Zosimus.

Details from: Committee for Withdrawal from Ireland, c/o Youth Office, Nat. Liberal Club, 1, Whitehall Place, London SW1.

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.

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I would like to join / be sent information
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THE 'PEACEKEEPERS'

Past scenes of army peacekeeping



After finishing his last patrol in Turf Lodge, Private Gary Gibson of the First Kings Regiment got back to barracks and began drinking vodka with his mates. They had something to celebrate. Next day they were due to end their four month posting in Belfast. But the more he drank, the more depressed Gibson got. During his posting in Turf Lodge three soldiers had been killed including one of his best friends. He himself had come under fire. On one occasion he had been fined for falling asleep on duty, and he had lost a week's pay for throwing a stone at someone's dog while he was on patrol. On top of this he had got a letter from this girl friend telling him to get lost.

After several cups of vodka and lime a drunken row began about the posters over Gibson's bed. This was the last straw. He picked up his rifle, stole a loaded magazine and ran from Fort Monagh on to the Glen Road.

Minutes later, Brendan Flynn, a 23-year-old local man, was leaving the nearby Glenavon pub with a group of friends. They happened to be the first group of men that Private Gibson saw. He opened fire.

NO MOTIVE

The force of the bullet, fired from a very short distance, almost tore the inside out of Flynn's body. It destroyed one of his kidneys and his spleen, ripped his stomach wall and ripped through the nerves near the base of his spine. The gunfire also wounded one of his companions.

Gibson turned and fled. A military patrol found him in a nearby house. It took them two hours to persuade him to hand over the weapon and give himself up.

At his trial in March the judge decided to be lenient. It was, he said, a 'one-off' incident caused by the stress of the war situation. He told Gibson 'you had no motive and no axe to grind.' He gave Gibson a two-year suspended sentence.

CRIPPLED

Brendan Flynn narrowly survived the shooting. For several weeks he remained dangerously ill. His weight fell from 11 to 8 stone. The damage to his spine has left him in constant excruciating pain and he can only sit in his wheelchair for limited periods because of the pain. His left leg is paralysed and he will remain bed-ridden and on pain killers for the rest of his life.

In Northern Ireland today, British

soldiers can maim and kill and get off free. This incident was a horrifying one. What is more horrifying is that is was not, as the judge made out, an isolated incident. (See box) Despite their assiduously cultivated peace-keeping image Army terror in Northern Ireland goes on day by day.

TERROR DAY BY DAY

One recent victim was nine-year-old Hugh Maguire, run down by an Army Saracen armoured car near the new British Army Fort on the Whiterock Road in February. Since the fort was put up the local kids, who not unnaturally objected to the provocative British presence, took to stoning the armoured cars. In consequence the nearby roads became a regular race track for British Army drivers. A shop-keeper at the nearby Garage told the press: *'The Saracens regularly mount the footpath to chase the children when they are rioting. I'm surprised there hasn't been more children killed.'*

Hugh was not a rioter on the day he died. He and two friends were walking home when a wildly swerving British Saracen mounted the pavement. 9-year-old Michael McAlorum recalls, *'I seen the Saracen coming towards us. I shouted to Hugh to look out. I grabbed at the hood of his coat to pull him over the wall with me but the Saracen hit him. I and my friend jumped over the wall. Hugh*

went up in the air and when he hit the ground blood started pouring from his head.' The armoured car drove on, and Hugh lay prone and bleeding on the pathway before being rushed to hospital where he died two hours later. As his father said: 'As far as I and his mother are concerned they murdered my boy, they ran him over. I want them charged with murder.' But the authorities have not brought any charges.

CHILD SHOT IN HEAD

Just a couple of weeks later another nine year old, Hugh Hamill, was to be the next victim of the British Army. He had gone with his family on the H-Block protest march on March 2nd. As often happens on these marches, the Army and police stop them with barricades and the children start throwing stones, something which is irritating to the soldiers but poses little physical danger to them in their heavily armoured convoys. Nevertheless, they decided to break up the demonstration with rubber-bullets. They began firing over the heads of the stone-throwers. Hugh Hamill was standing among the demonstrators behind them. A rubber bullet smashed in his skull. He was rushed to hospital critically ill. The doctors saved him, but he has a metal plate inserted into his skull to remember the soldiers by.

These incidents generally go unreported in the British press. Their sheer number and frequency would make it difficult for the papers to represent them all as aberrations. *It might easily become apparent that the violence is implicit in the role of an occupying army, and that the British government is quite prepared to accept the killing and maiming of unarmed civilians as the price of its continued rule in Ireland.*

ARMY KILLINGS SO FAR THIS YEAR

- Doreen McGuinness (Age 15) shot dead by a British soldier when car in which she was a passenger drove through a checkpoint.
- Hugh Maguire (Age 9) run down by British in armoured car.
- Paul Moan (Age 15) shot dead at close range by soldiers in a car driven through checkpoint by joy-riders.
- Mrs. Mary Docherty (a retired nurse) shot dead at a checkpoint travelling back from a wedding as a passenger in a car. A soldier has been charged with *'unlawful killing.'*

'LEGAL' FRAME-UPS

In October and November 1974 a series of IRA bombs exploded in servicemen's pubs in Guildford and Woolwich. Seven people were killed and several injured. Three weeks later 21 people died in explosions in Birmingham. The Provisional IRA never claimed responsibility. Brendan McGill, national organiser of Sinn Fein in Britain, described the bombings as "disgraceful". Nevertheless, protests, demonstrations and outbursts of anti-Irish feeling ran very high and pressure on the police to catch the 'bloody murderers' and punish them severely was acute.

The media did much to underline this racial hysteria. It seemed to them that this 'slaughter of young innocents' was gleefully celebrated by the Irish.

"In some scruffy back parlours in the Ardoyne and Anderstown, Belfast, they have a new victory to celebrate these Irish Patriots who slew the innocent young. They will raise their glasses to the brave boys of the Provisional IRA." Daily Mail 22.11.'74.

They helped foster an atmosphere in which any Irish man or woman seen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time was potentially responsible. Indeed, this suspicion formed the basis upon which six men came to be arrested within 24 hours of the Birmingham pub bombings.

IF YOU'RE IRISH – WATCH OUT! . . .

Early that month James McDaid, member of the Provisional IRA, was killed when a bomb he was planting at a telephone exchange in Coventry exploded. Sinn Fein wanted to give him a hero's funeral, with a march through the city that hundreds of Irish men and women were expected to attend. There was much outrage in the press over the prospect of these 'bloody killers' draping their tricolour through the streets of Coventry. The march was banned. Needless to say the bombings were immediately linked with this event.

"IRA takes cruel revenge upon the city of Birmingham" Daily Mail 22.11.'74. A police spokesman was reported as saying:

"I think there are certain conclusions to be drawn from the timing of the bombs and the removal of the body of McDaid to Ireland."

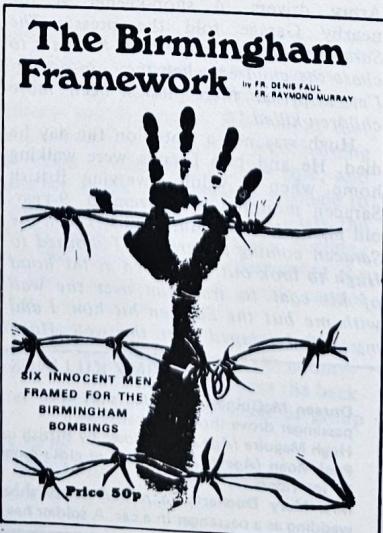
Six men were arrested on their way to attend McDaid's funeral in Belfast. They were later badly beaten up in Winson Green Prison in Birmingham. In the light of recent discoveries it seems this was a clear case of these Irishmen being in the wrong place at the wrong time. The evidence used to secure their conviction, and that of the Guildford and Woolwich Four, consisted of forensic tests (TLC) which identify various explosives. This

evidence has recently been thrown into doubt. Mr. John Yallop, who invented the test, has since found that identical results could have been produced with ordinary cigarette smoke!

"SMOKING CAN DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH!"

In *The Birmingham Framework*, a pamphlet protesting the innocence of the Birmingham Six, Father Dennis Faul and Father Murray say that Anglo-Irish history records a line of judicial decisions against the Irish on political charges, decisions that were "travesties of justice or serious mistakes". It seems this is yet another example of such judicial prejudice. A political timebomb too damaging for the British Government to ignite. At least twenty-five Irish prisoners in England serving sentences for explosives offences were convicted on the strength of Dr. Yallop's doubtful tests. Giuseppe Conlon, also arrested on the basis of these tests, was given a twelve year sentence for possessing explosives whilst lodging in what became known to the press as '*Annie's bomb factory*'. Anne Maguire's house was an object of press extravaganza, since it looked nothing like a factory and despite intensive searches no bombs were ever found there. On January 23 this year, Conlon died in hospital, having protested his innocence for every day of his five years in prison.

These innocent men and their families were victims of venom and reprisals brought to bear on them by the English. Many years of their lives have been sacrificed for political expediency, and injustices such as these will continue as long as the British remain in Northern Ireland.



Brits & Pieces

Britain's favourite Irishman and editor of the *Observer*, Censor Cruise O'Brit (alias Conor Cruise O'Brien), whose anti-republicanism borders on hysteria, is in the news again. In a recent BBC2 documentary Fianna Fail member Pádraig Flynn quoted the former South of Ireland Minister for Posts and Telecommunications as "wanting to rewrite Irish history and change the national anthem."

..... And someone who also seeks to rewrite history is the N.I. Official Unionist leader James Molyneaux. His recently aired solution to the present situation is "a United Ireland inside a British federation" — something akin to pre-independence days. Of course he does not envisage such a union within his own lifetime. Neither, I suspect, do the three million people in the Republic.

..... Meanwhile, as the Foreign Office admits that London based Russian journalists are denied access to the N. of Ireland, the Soviet newspaper *Izvestia* reports, "Northern Ireland has effectively been turned into occupied territory with English troops terrorising the population of Catholic areas. All this London is striving to hide from the world public."

..... At the same time Tory leader Margaret Thatcher spelt out the usual party tripe to the faithful at the first Airey Neave lecture. 'No democratic country can voluntarily abandon its responsibility in a part of its territory ... the endurance of the people of N. Ireland in the face of IRA violence has been heroic.'

..... Heroic it certainly has been in the face of State violence from the Police, Army and UDR. And as the Post Office commemorates with a new stamp the Ulster Defence Regiment's tenth anniversary since its formation under a Labour Government and 'Now' magazine extols its heroic struggle, the 98% Protestant membership has been under scrutiny in the 'New Statesman.'

"The ten year old Regiment has a long history of sectarian violence. The British Government is now regarded as having quite deliberately trained 20,000 people, almost all Protestant, in the use of sophisticated weaponry. Andy Tyre of the Loyalist paramilitary UDA said he had encouraged his members to join the Regiment to get weapon training."

..... While the NUPE hospital workers at Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital have gone on strike over the alarming antics of British soldiers in the hospital (shooting off their guns, as if there weren't enough casualties already), the Daily Telegraph brought its own refreshing insight to the situation. It explained how 'hospital staff who are part-time members of the security forces have been murdered in its grounds, wounded terrorists have been plucked from its beds and staff intimidated from their jobs by the Provisional IRA.' Seems like they are getting their terrorists muddled up again . . .

Lord Denning has discovered a fundamental principle of British law. Putting an end to further appeals by six Irishmen convicted of the Birmingham bombings, he invoked the legal principle of 'issue estoppel.' This practice it seems 'was brought over by the Normans who used the old French *estoupail* which meant a bung or cork by which you stopped something from coming out.'

BRITAIN LEADS THE WORLD IN TECHNOLOGICAL REPRESSION

Computer surveillance and techniques of military repression are being carried to more and more sophisticated heights in the testing ground of Northern Ireland. In this article, we look at some of the most recent developments.

In 1972 the Ministry of Defence devised new internal defence plans, to replace existing ones introduced in the 1920s. The Northern Ireland situation brought home the need to update the internal defence strategies in order to deal with a modern 'civil disturbance.' The tactics are laid out in the Army manual 'Land Operations Vol. III (Counter Revolutionary Operations)'.

The central principle of which is the total integration of civil, military and police powers to be formulated under a National Plan, and the appointment of a military director (a post which has consistently been held by the General Officer commanding Northern Ireland). The appointment of ex-national security co-ordinator Maurice Oldfield to intelligence supremo in N.I. goes a long way to seeing implementation of this plan in N. Ireland.

The key strategy advanced in the Army manual is what it calls the battle for the 'hearts and minds' of the population. This involves control and direction of the media and information, following the principles of 'psychological operations': 'Psychops' is defined as 'the planned use of propaganda, . . . in support of our military presence, designed to influence the opinions, emotions, attitude and behaviour of the enemy, neutral and friendly groups.' This is why the Army has decided to keep its most up to date and most fearsome armoured vehicles off the Northern Ireland streets. The old 'pig' and 'Saracen' armoured cars are thought to be much more in tune with the image of civil disturbances.

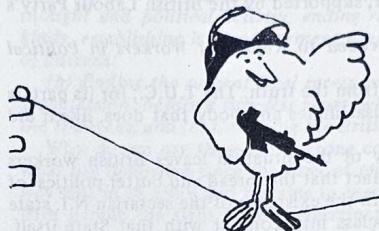
But it is in the media that the British Government concentrates its greatest efforts. Over 150 people are involved in handling public relations for the N.I. security forces. They have been known to plant misinformation, forge posters and literature, fake journalists' I.D. cards and steal confidential documents.

To ensure that only the official version of events is reported, a special booklet entitled 'The IRA and Northern Ireland - Aims, Policy and Tactics' is circulated by the overseas information department to all journalists and academics covering N.I. Since the start of the present conflict the government's expenditure on domestic propaganda has risen by 140%. In 1976 the Central Office of Information spent £86 million, most of it on TV propaganda.

Is it any wonder that after the Bloody Sunday cover-up BBC News was introduced by American broadcasters with a dry 'Here you have the latest lies from Britain.'

Government propaganda has been so effective that the majority of British people are unaware of exactly what is happening in N. Ireland. For the Nationalist people in Northern Ireland the reality is all too clear. British rule is enforced with the assistance of one of

the most sophisticated intelligence systems in the world. By a system of phone tapping, house searches, and arbitrary arrest and interrogation of civilians, the security forces are able to computerise personal portraits of up to half a million people, including details of religion, birthdate, occupation, even the colour of living room suites and brands of television.



The Army's role in N.I. since 1977 has been largely concerned with intelligence gathering. Their N.I. computer stores information in 4 sections. 'P' section is the people's bank, and contains information on between 500,000 and 750,000 individuals.

The second section is the house and street index, with descriptions of most of N.I.'s residents, with regular 4-monthly search census at each house marked 'Catholic.'

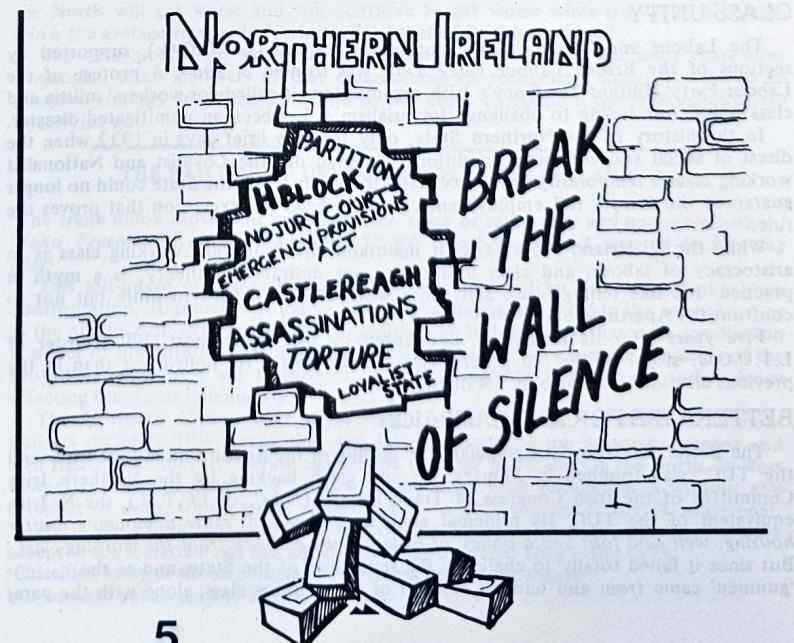
A third bank covers all vehicles - colour, make, number, ownership and owner's details. A fourth section records vehicle movements logged by military and police checkpoints.

All 4 sections are cross-referenced, and from information gathered plus a good deal of speculation, a process of 'screening' certain individuals follows (holding and questioning under the Emergency

Provisions Act). This usually means kicking down doors in the Catholic areas in the early hours of the morning, dragging the victims off for interrogation, where, if the brutality already attested to by the Bennett Report is successful, a forced confession is gained. Next the jury-less Diplock court, where the evidence of the RUC is held as holy writ; next - H-Block or Armagh.

Army occupation, repressive legislation, mass imprisonment and now high technology have not defeated the National Liberation Forces. By collecting detailed information on people who can have no connection with the armed struggle, the military and RUC are erecting a sophisticated apparatus of population control. What is practice in N.I. exists in blueprint form for the whole of the UK. Northern Ireland's intelligence is linked to those in Britain. The Army and RUC have access to the Police National Computer at Hendon which is 'more comprehensive than any other computerised intelligence service in the world' (Police Review).

How easily the masters of manipulation have confused us. They tell us one time that it's an 'Irish problem' and then another time it's 'a part of Britain.' One thing it never is is a British problem. But whatever they might pretend to the contrary, the war is coming back to Britain. Since the 1974 miners' strike, when as Lord Carver recently admitted at an Oxford Union debate, officers in the British Army were thinking about military intervention, both Army and government have been contemplating the use of these techniques in Britain. Today the ghettos of Derry and Belfast, tomorrow the ghettos of Southall and Bristol, and after that



MOVEMENT AND IRELAND

THE RECENT RECORD



onists, it died before it even got off the ground. It really attended by 200 people in Belfast and Bill summed up its abysmal performance in 1977: 'activists the BLFAC has ceased to exist.'

message still hasn't reached the C.P. or T.U.C. as they in the very few occasions when Ireland is discussed

the N. of Ireland is the clear expression of the oppressive State. Born from that conflict it fights social and economic ills, that is the existence of end. It is also the largest mass movement within the

desirable, but in practice impossible as 60 years of stant working class remain tied to the reactionary of up to 20,000 armed troops and the guarantees that partition will remain keeps the likelihood of y, and merely serves to strengthen working class within the N. Ireland sectarian framework. This fact, within certain sections of the Labour Party here, eleven years ago,

'the people of Ulster the words of a new song - a politics' - delegate from Cambridge Labour Party

ic attitude 11 years later..

'... have failed, and it is now clear that the aims of achieved until there is a commitment to end British als with the cause as well as the symptoms of the gion of the Labour Party, March '80.



WHAT IS THE BETTER LIFE FOR ALL CAMPAIGN?

As the current thinking of the Labour Movement and official TUC policy on Northern Ireland is very largely based on arguments put forward by the Communist Party of Great Britain in the Better Life for All Campaign, we will briefly examine these ideas.

They start - and pretty well end - with the Civil Rights movement of the late sixties. Rightly pointing out that basic civil rights demands could not be met without ending the whole sectarian basis of Northern Ireland, they - wrongly - conclude that the way forward is to continue on civil rights issues alone and maintain broad front unity.

So their policy is:

(a) *A Bill of Rights, to be enacted by Westminster, guaranteeing freedom of thought and political activity, ending repressive laws, outlawing discrimination of all kinds, establishing law enforcement agencies acceptable to the overwhelming majority of citizens:*

(b) *Ending the present legal set-up whereby convictions may be obtained solely on a confession, before a jury-less court, which usually leads to Armagh Women's Gaol or the H-Blocks; and (c) Confining the British Army to barracks.*

Why do we say these are a wrong conclusion? Because they ignore the history of what has happened since the days of civil rights. Principally the occupying army that was sent in in 1969 and remains to terrorise the nationalist population and deny the Irish people the right to self-determination. *The civil rights movement was met with State violence and the armed struggle developed from there.* Loyalist sectarianism got a big boost when it became apparent that the army was on their side.

The CP recognise that the army is not a peace-keeping force but then fight shy of what follows from this - that their presence is unjust and the sooner they go the better. Why 'withdrawal to barracks' (a Belfast citizen commented, what's the good of that when the barracks are at the bottom of your garden)? Because, say the CP, they may be needed to 'prevent sectarian violence.' In other words, they still hope that it will function in its 'true role' as peace-keeper. Confusion indeed!

Another area of confusion is the ending of Partition. The original division of the country is condemned, and so are the consequences of Loyalist supremacy which flow from that division. But as to how to *change* the situation, the CP are singularly unhelpful. When it comes to a direct challenge to British imperialism, they don't seem to want to know. Moreover, the question of how a Bill of Rights, passed by the *same* Parliament that has *always* had the final say over the government of Northern Ireland and enforced by the *same* army that is there now, is going to offer a solution to Unionism is not really tackled.

Finally, the CP also points out that the North suffers from British economic domination, but to revitalise the Northern economy they call for *more* British investment and hence *more* of a British hold over that economy. An article in the *Morning Star* trumpeted '50,000 JOBS WOULD DO MORE TO BRING PEACE TO NORTHERN IRELAND THAN 50,000 GUNS' - a truism if ever there was one! Quite apart from the point just mentioned, of economic domination, there is the question of practicalities: even in times of Western economic boom the North of Ireland has suffered acute poverty - so in the present crisis the conditions of people in the North will get worse and will continue to get worse while it remains a colony. (Now the average standard of living is 7/10 that of British workers.)

The CP's 'policy' on Northern Ireland has been unchanged for some years now. Hopefully, some members of that organisation are recognising that it has led to no effective strategy in all this time and so will come to question the false assumptions underlying it.

THE FAILURE OF UNIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

'The trade union movement represents the voice of rationality and non-sectarianism.' (John Freeman, Regional Secretary TGWU Northern Ireland, quoted in *Morning Star*)

This self-image of non-sectarianism has been achieved by omission, rather than confrontation. It presents sectarian violence as happening outside the workplace, or in the province of 'extremism' (the paramilitaries). It doesn't see that sectarian division is a fact of life within the workplace, as without, and that when the privileges of the Protestant workforce are threatened, it spills over into intimidation and violence affecting the whole community.

The Northern Unions have never fought sectarian employment or recruitment policies directly. This means that the inbuilt discrimination in work, housing and civil rights continues to operate against the Catholic population in the North. In West Belfast (a Catholic area), up to 60% of the adult male population is without any prospect of work, Union voice, or civil rights - a basic concern of any TU movement.

The Unions have restricted their activities to 'bread and butter' issues, and so have accepted the sectarian bias and left themselves powerless. They claim to be: 'Chiselling away at the structures of repression behind the scenes' but we have yet to see any effects.

LIFE IN TURF LODGE TODAY

In February, Lily Fitzsimmons came to London from Belfast to speak about political status. She has a son and two nephews in the H Blocks of Long Kesh and is active in the Relatives Action Committee — the massive support movement for political prisoners in Northern Ireland.

In this interview with *Troops Out*, Lily talks about life in her area, the Catholic Turf Lodge. We started by asking her about the new British Army fort there:

The new fort is actually on the perimeter of Turf Lodge. We already have Fort Monagh and Fort Pegasus. It's a massive big thing, and it's right beside a boys' secondary school — in fact part of the fort is on the playground.

The first we knew of the fort was when people were woken about 5 or 6 o'clock that morning with the noise of diggers. And whenever they got up and looked out there were hundreds of British soldiers with all this heavy building machinery.

And there was this small industrial estate just facing the flats — well they were knocking it down. Now even the owners of the industrial estate didn't know a thing about it, because they kicked up about it too. There was a small number of men employed in it, and it meant they had lost their jobs.

So we called an emergency meeting — the people of Turf Lodge — that Monday night and we decided to march up to the fort. There was about two or three hundred of us, and we marched up and stood outside the fort and had a small rally there.

Then the next day the Northern Ireland Office put out a statement saying that this fort was going to replace Fort Monagh and Fort Pegasus. But since then Fort Monagh and Fort Pegasus have been extended — they've actually made those two forts bigger! So in actual fact instead of having this one massive fort we're going to have three massive forts.

Not one politician has protested — just the people themselves. Now we even went to the headmaster of the boys' school and threatened to keep our children away

from school. Because it's a boys' secondary school and whenever they're coming or going from school it has been a great ploy of the British army for patrols to come out. Well it's like waving a red flag at a bull, because when the boys see the army they start throwing stones, and the next thing the plastic bullets start to go in. Well, after Brian Stewart was killed (October 1976 — Ed.) the mothers are naturally afraid for the children, because they are always in danger. The headmaster put out a statement saying they were concerned about this new army base being built so close to the school but they haven't done anything more about it, and the local clergy haven't done anything — you know, everything is just left up to the local people.

Q. Why do you think they wanted to put a fort there?

I don't know, to be quite honest, because it was the last thing we needed — we already have two forts and it's houses and jobs we need. Apparently it's going to be a permanent building, not one of those tin things. To us it means the army are just digging in more deeply.

Q. Could you say something about the financial burdens that people have?

I would say 90% of the people — not only in Turf Lodge but in nationalist areas — have all been hit by the effects of the Rent and Rates strike.

The Rent and Rates strike started over internment, it had very, very wide support at the time. In fact it was the SDLP who encouraged people to start, then the following year whenever they

started having these talks with the British Government, they just left the people holding the bag.

Myself personally, they installed an electric meter and I have to put £12 a week in it. As well as that I have an extra £3 to pay on my rent. If I don't put the money in the meter, the electric goes off. Even say for instance if I wasn't in the house for a week, I would still have to put that £12 in.

Now I know of people who have to put £15 to £20 a week into their meter, and there must be about 50% unemployment in the area. And where rent is concerned for the men that aren't working, it's taken out of their social security — that's under the Payment for Debts Act. In some cases women have lost the family allowance book.

People are suffering. I didn't even realise till I came over here this week the difference in the price of food which is much lower than what we have to pay back home. And yet even the men that are working, their wages are lower than the wages over here. My husband works at the Belfast docks, and his average wage is about £8 a week take-home, and there are six of us in the house and he's the only one working. And his work is really casual. There's weeks when he comes home with £33. And that's only an example of the overall financial situation — people are very very badly off.

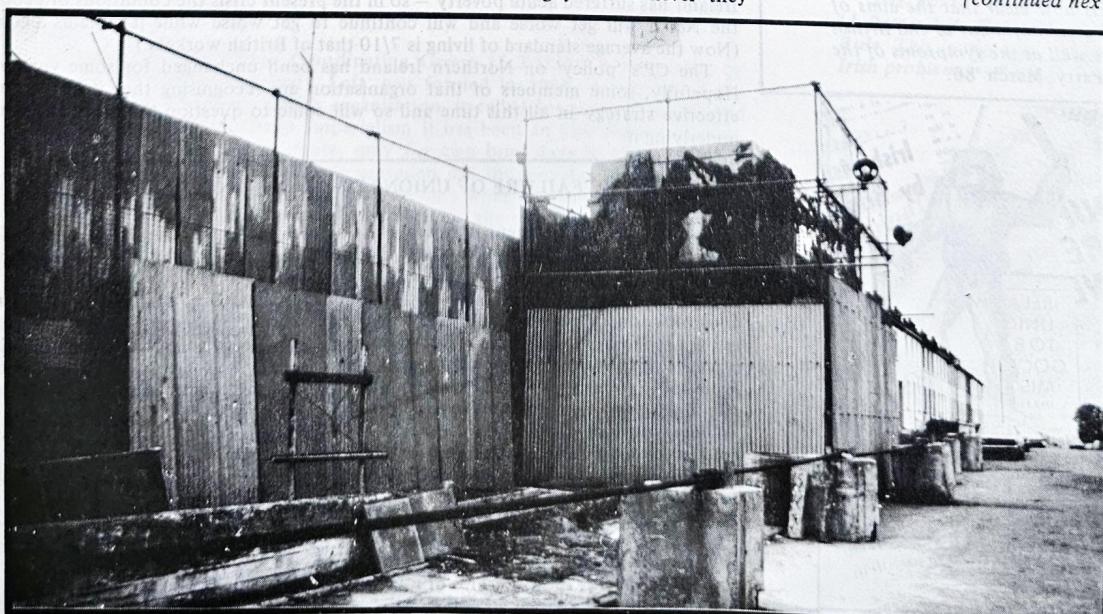
Q. So you'd see the kind of Ireland you want after the British go as being quite different?

Well it most definitely couldn't be any worse!

If we had our own socialist Ireland, we'd be able to work all these things out ourselves. Everything would be divided among the people. There's a terrible lot could be done for our country if we had our country back.

(continued next issue)

British fort — how would you like one of these at the bottom of your street?



AROUND THE BRANCHES

STIRLING

S. LONDON T.O.M.

Because of the ban on marches in Glasgow - probably enforced because the Glasgow police wanted to keep pro-Irish struggle marchers off the streets, rather than to prohibit NF and Orange marchers, Troops Out branches in Central Scotland organised a 'smash H-Block' march in Stirling on 12 March.

About 300 people marched from the Raploch Community Centre into the centre of Stirling for a rally. The difficulties of organising marches or support for the Irish struggle in Scotland were graphically illustrated by the crowd of Orange counter-marchers who came out in opposition. Complete with flags, missiles and nazi salutes, they accompanied the march with hate-filled chants. While the police prevented them actually physically attacking the march to any extent, they were allowed into the road ahead of the march, and onto the steps of the Albert Hall where the rally was to be held. Despite this, the march got through, and an enthusiastic crowd heard speakers from TOM, Sinn Fein, RCG, Tameside Trades Council and the Secretary of Edinburgh Trades Council (in a personal capacity).

Four Glasgow marching bands came on the march, and without their music to give the marchers spirit, they might not have made it through the continuous hail of eggs, tin cans and verbal abuse. As the police had decided to allow only one band, the four bands combined to play together - a unique event in Scottish marching history.

The secretary of the Tameside TC, which was recently disaffiliated by the TUC because it planned a conference on Ireland with a speaker from the IRSP, pledged that they would go ahead with the conference, and asked for support from all trade unionists for re-affiliation. The secretary of Edinburgh Trades Council, a NUPE hospital worker, stressed the importance of the strike against British Army presence in Belfast hospitals by NUPE workers, and the need to support it.

HARLOW

Harlow TOM began a 'summer series' of films on March 18th when the Patriot Game was shown in the Town Hall. Over 50 people paid 75p to see the film and a collection afterwards raised over £30 for the Green Cross Organisation (which helps Irish political prisoners and their families). Next to be shown: Home Soldier Home.

The branch will have a stall at the May Day festival in the Playhouse Theatre in the town on May 5th. There will be a display of photographs of the branch's activities over the past year.

On Wed. 19th March, S. London T.O.M. showed the film 'Curious Journey' in Clapham Library. This film made recently by Kenneth Griffith and banned by Harlech Television, is a series of interviews with Irish men and women still living who fought in the IRA against the British sixty years ago. Afterwards seventy people heard a speech by the National Organiser of Sinn Fein, Kevin Coffey, linking the struggle then with the present struggle in the North for self-determination. A collection was then taken in support of the prisoners in the H. Block struggle and sent to Belfast.

CAMDEN & ISLINGTON
T.O.M.

Camden and Islington have launched a new series of monthly social/political events on the last Saturday of every month. In the first two 'Nites out with Troops Out' both attended by about 70 people we have shown the new video films from the Belfast Anarchist Collective featuring interviews with released H-Block and Armagh prisoners and heard a speaker from Women Against Imperialism talk about the situation in Armagh. Both meetings contained also traditional and Irish music and song. Next month's event features the stand-up comic Andy de la Tour who has recently returned from a tour of the Belfast clubs with his anti-anti-Irish joke routines. Many people in the area are sympathetic to Troops Out and these events give these people a way of coming along, showing their support and keeping in touch with the news and the other activities of TOM without having to commit themselves to attending regular committee type branch meetings. It seems to be a successful formula.

MORE VICTIMS OF THE TERROR ACT

An Irish family living in Yorkshire have been shattered by the Terror Act. They have had to move back to Ireland, leaving a 20 year old Tommy O'Hagan to serve a seven month sentence in Armley Prison, Leeds.

Tommy had been living with his family in Keighley for three years when, last November, he and his 24 year old brother Patrick were arrested. They were held for a week and then deported under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). As with the vast majority of arrests under the PTA, however, no charges were made against them.

Most of their family decided to move back to Derry, from where they had moved three years previously to escape the troubles. Tommy's younger brother had already married in this country, and so will be remaining in Keighley. None of the family had been involved in political or military groups in any way.

Tommy had become engaged to a woman in Keighley and, in January, he came back to England to see her. This broke his exclusion order under the PTA, and at dawn on 8th January armed Special Branch men broke into his fiancee's house and arrested him.

He was held in Armley Goal and refused bail. At his trial in Bradford on 2nd April he was sentenced to seven months imprisonment for breaking the exclusion order. After his sentence, he will be deported straight back to N. Ireland.

It is sad and ironic that a family who left Ireland to get away from the effects of a war has been split up, harassed, and sent back again.

'The whole thing's wrong,' Tommy's father told Leeds Other Paper after his second arrest: 'This family has been all split up. The police can do what they like under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. I think it should definitely be abolished.'

HACKNEY DAY SCHOOL ON IRELAND

May 17th 9.30am - 6 pm
STOKE NEWINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL
Stoke Newington Church Street

Sponsored by:
Hackney Trades Council
Hackney North C.I.P.
Ernie Roberts M.P.
Ken Livingstone

Organised by E.L.T.O.M.





Dear "Troops Out",

The T.O.M. is committed to building a broad-based movement open to anyone, as long as they agree with two demands: "Troops Out Now; Self Determination for the Irish People as a Whole!" The newspaper should reflect this attitude.

That is why I was alarmed to find on page 3 of the April issue of "Troops Out" - in the middle of a generally good interview concerning media censorship - a photo with the caption: "The North Cork 'flying column' in 1919, one of the most successful I.R.A. units". This is surely not the way to produce a paper aiming to appeal to anyone (and hopefully everyone!) who agrees with the twin demands of the movement, rather than to people already committed to the Republican movement?

In a general sense, "Troops Out" should be produced bearing in mind that we are trying to expand the T.O.M. to people perhaps not even on the Left, and who can be attracted far more easily by articles with a more 'accessible' content - media censorship; daily army harassment in the North, and so on.

Incidentally, I would criticise the article on Connolly's Citizen Army (again in the April issue) for the same reasons; history articles relating Britain's repressive past to its repressive present are far more helpful.

Greetings,

L.W. (Kilburn T.O.M.)

WHY TAMESIDE?

Dear comrades,

Your article "TUC gags Trades Council" (April) rightly emphasises the importance of Tameside's struggle against the TUC ban on its Irish conference. However as you point out there have been many trades council conferences on Ireland, delegations to the Six Counties and other labour movement initiatives. But Tameside is the only trades council to be expelled from the TUC for its Irish solidarity activities.

The reason for this was the slogan on the conference leaflet. This was what the National Front, the *Daily Mail*, Margaret Thatcher, Tameside's Labour Council and the TUC all seized on as the focus of their attack on the trades council. 'Support the Irish people: bring the war to Britain' - this was the slogan put forward by the Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign in its work in helping to organise the Tameside conference.

The reaction of the Labour bureaucracy to the conference shows the importance of Ireland for British workers. 'Bring the war to Britain' means making the Irish war an issue in the British labour movement. It means winning working class opposition to the British state and its war in Ireland.

This slogan must be at the forefront of the fight against the proscription of Tameside by the TUC. It is not an abstract question of 'free speech' or 'democracy' in the labour movement. The Tameside battle must be fought on the issue that provoked it: Ireland. To do otherwise would be to let the bureaucrats who have loyally supported British imperialism for 10 years of war off the hook.

Mick Kennedy

Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign

Ireland: Divided Nation - Divided Class.
Edited by Austen Morgan and Bob Purdie, (Ink Links £3.50)
Ireland Socialist Review, No. 7. Spring 1980. Focus on Loyalism. 60p from I.S.R., 60 Loughborough Rd., London S.W.9.

The cover picture of the new issue of *Ireland Socialist Review* shows Protestant workers driving Catholic workers out of the shipyards and back down York Street during the pogrom of 1920. For the moment they are meeting resistance. The Catholics have rallied and have started to break up the cobbled roads and throw stones to cover their retreat: at the same time, the Protestants are gathering their own street ammunition in preparation for a further attack. By some quirk of publishing fate, the cover of *Divided Nation - Divided Class* shows the same scene from the same vantage point just a few minutes later. Only now the Protestants have assembled their strength and are launching a running, stone-throwing charge along the street. The Catholics, disappearing out of the picture, are in full retreat.

The overlap of subject matter in these two publications mirrors the similarity of their covers. Both consist of a debate among socialists about the causes and consequences of divisions within the Irish working class.

The book edited by Morgan and Purdie presents itself as a critical balance sheet by Irish Marxists, or the 'Irish left' as they call themselves here, of its own positions on these issues. From the evidence of this book it seems that the primary element of the balance sheet is intellectual confusion. Some want to reform the state - others say the state is irreformable. Some say that a resolution of the national question is a precondition

J. Bowyer Bell: *The Secret Army. The I.R.A., 1916-79.* (The Academy Press, £9.95, 481 pp.)

J. Bowyer Bell is an American academic specialising in the history of 'terrorist' movements. Apart from the IRA he has also written a major book on Palestinian guerrillas. This present book is an updated version of the book on the IRA he published ten years ago, and it is the most comprehensive and systematic account - less anecdotal than Tim Pat Coogan's *The IRA* - of the Irish Republican Army in print. Unfortunately the account of the last ten years does not come up to the standard of the earlier parts of the book and reads rather like an afterthought - a hectic whip through of recent events tacked on to what is till that point a fairly careful study.

Bowyer Bell does not write the sort of counter-insurgency handbook version of history that one might expect from the 'terrorism' specialist. Though he at times focusses almost with relish on the sordid infighting that has frequently characterised the history of the underground army, he is not wholly unsympathetic to his characters. In fact the book is a good place to go to find out something about the names that figure only as symbols in the Republican pantheon of songs and commemoration - names like Tom Williams, Sean South from Garryowen

for advance to socialism - others say that it is the main barrier. The editorial them is the search for some alternative position. As the editors put it: 'It is not obvious why the left should have placed all their chips on the green and orange numbers.' The British Army is on the streets and in the ghettos, and Irish Marxism cannot decide which side it is on.

For a number of the authors in this collection of essays, the preferred road seems to be to cry 'a plague on both your houses' and to look for some magic third way that is neither Orange nor Green. The sentiment of unity is admirable, but this sort of 'progressive alliance' cannot be plucked from the air just by wishing hard enough. The only realistic starting point is the historical and partial resistance to oppression that actually exists. Without relating to that ideals can achieve little. In the cover picture, the 'left' would be lying alone on the sidewalk with its head broken by a flying cobblestone.

The merit of the book and of *ISR No. 7* is, however, that they present the issues in this controversy in fairly short and, as far as possible, digestible essays. *ISR* is shorter and cheaper, and the essay by Geoff Bell in it is a good summary of the nature of loyalism, its relation to the Northern Ireland state, and the recent changes in it. The article by Bew, Gibbon and Patterson in the Morgan and Purdie book is a good condensation of this trio's arguments - its brevity helps to bring out the confusion of their ideas. These three have gained something of a reputation as a spearhead of 'revisionism' in Marxist analysis of Northern Ireland, and the review of their work by Richard Chesham in *ISR* indicates some of their underlying weaknesses.

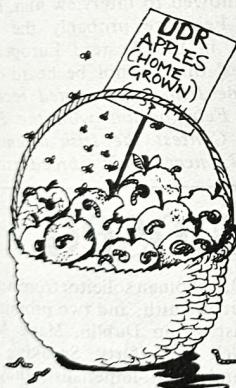
and Charlie Kerins 'The boy from Tralee.'

The Republican movement has lived much of its existence in clandestinity and isolation. It has often endured only by living off reserves of moral strength that it has drawn from 'the cause.' But its political and social significance cannot be confined to that tale of endurance. This is the main weakness of the book and the reason why its account of the least ten years is of far less value than the earlier part. While it is possible, if not entirely adequate, to describe the years of isolation of Republicans clinging to the 'physical-force' tradition through a tale of individuals and their conflicts, this method does not make it possible to understand the transformation of the Republican movement in the last ten years when it has converged with movements of mass social change, struggle and upheaval in the North. Militarism has been changed by its coming together with mass resistance: traditional nationalism has become intertwined with socialism as it has come to focus the aspirations of Catholics for a decent life. The elements of continuity are there too. Catholic traditionalism and the tradition of 'heroic acts of will' remain intermingled with these new themes. But the clue to understanding this cannot be found in the psyche of individuals and these more complex issues are not tackled in Bowyer Bell's vigorous and readable chronicle.

Diary of Events

March

18 Protestors heckle Benn (ex Labour Cabinet Minister) over the H-Blocks at Left/Labour debate in London.
 19 SDLP ask for N. Ireland conference to be adjourned because of Unionist refusal to consider power-sharing.
 20 Inquest into Giuseppe Conlon's death gives verdict of death due to natural causes. Not associated with untreated chest illness.
 21 St. Patrick's College, Maynooth clubs petition British Government to end "serious human rights violations" in H. Blocks.
 21 Yallop, who devised swab test for nitroglycerine which was used to convict Giuseppe Conlon and six others, says the test is not definitive and that the case against them did not "add up".
 22 British customs post in Newry burnt out by bomb explosion.
 23 James Molyneaux (Official Unionist Party) proposes a Federation of British Isles, including Eire, as a solution to N. Ireland problems.
 23 Frank Cluskey (Labour leader in 26 Counties) says the "removal of British presence without a genuine and sustainable agreement holds all the ingredients of a horrifying tragedy whose bounds we would be powerless to set". He accepts the right of Unionist population to veto constitutional changes, but declares Unionist politicians should not alone determine structures to be created in N. Ireland!
 23 Lenihan (Foreign Affairs minister) says the "British Government's guarantee to the Unionists" is the key to the whole problem of N. Ireland.
 24 N. Ireland conference ends without discovering any significant new areas of agreement. Atkins is to report to Thatcher within 10 days.
 24 British/Irish political group at Westminster to meet Haughey for government N. Ireland policy briefing.
 25 Bernard McKinn barricades himself with cousin and family in their Dundalk home. He had been sentenced to 10 years on explosives charges in his absence after jumping bail. Parents refuse to pressure him - (father) "They talk of Diplock courts in N. Ireland. We have far worse in the Free State".



25 Lenihan agrees to bring up H-Blocks with Atkins after questions in the Dail.
 26 McKinn surrenders on instructions of N. IRA command. Gardai accused of psychological methods to wear him down.
 26 Martin Meehan & 2 others get 36 yrs collectively for conspiring to kidnap teenager who was acting as British Army informer.
 26 Geoffrey Howe's budget increases defence spending.
 26 Atkins grants minor 'concessions' to blanketmen. They can now have 2 visits a month, 1 letter weekly, & exercise in P.T. kit. He withdraws political status for all offences committed before 1st March, 1976.
 27 Sinn Fein statement claim 4 women attacked in Armagh by 25 male prison officers on 26th.
 30 GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) unanimously condemns H-Block torture and call for British Army withdrawal from their club at Crossmaglen (at their annual congress).
 30 Oliver Napier (Alliance party) demands devolved administration based on real participation & partnership for N. Ireland - and rules out a united Ireland, in Party's 10th annual conference.
 30 Gerry MacLochlainn (Sinn Fein) detained in Pontypool under PTA.
 30 Garrett Fitzgerald (Fine Gael) urges Britain to admit its weariness with N. Ireland involvement. Says Britain's financial & strategic interests in province have diminished so drastically since '72 that are now almost negligible. (Ard Fheis)
 30 Sinn Fein state that H-Block/Armagh prisoners reject Atkins 'concessions' out of hand. National Smash H-Block Committee reiterate that 6 demands be seen together.

April

31 One schoolboy (age 15) shot dead, 2 badly injured when soldiers open fire on teenage joy-riders who fail to stop at a checkpoint in Andersonstown, Belfast.
 1 10th Anniversary of UDR commemorated with stamp.
 1 Edward Brophy, on trial for the La Mon bombings, has 36 offences dropped by Belfast Judge, Justice Kelly, on grounds that his confession statements appear to have been induced by "torture and degrading or inhuman treatment" & therefore inadmissible. Gets 5 years for IRA membership.
 1 NICTU (N.Irish Committee of Trade Unions) calls for protest against rising unemployment (11.5% in N. Ireland now).
 2 Belfast man shot dead by loyalist assassins in Springfield Rd. On bail after IRA membership charges.
 2 IRA van bomb ambush badly injures soldier in Crossmaglen.
 2 Cardinal O'Fiach & Bishop Daly meet Atkins for further talks on H-Blocks. No details released.
 2 Committee on Ireland (formed by Labour Party activists) says at Westminster press conference that the party has suppressed any discussion of British withdrawal and their aim is to get party leadership to commit itself to a withdrawal policy.

Labour Committee on Ireland, formed by a number of Constituency Labour Parties after the last Labour Party Conference, held a national meeting in London to decide future policy. It decided to campaign within the Labour Party for the reversal of existing Labour policy on Northern Ireland at the next Conference and its replacement with a commitment to British withdrawal. Considerable sympathy for the TOM position was expressed though the meeting finally decided to organise quite independently on their own demands.

2 DPP considers taking action against RUC officers concerned with Edward Brophy's 'confession statement'.
 2 Large arms cache found by Gardai in Drogheda (Co. Louth).
 2 Jim Reilly (Sinn Fein) detained in Luton under PTA.
 3 Gerry MacLochlainn transferred from Pontypool - Luton police station (with Jim Reilly).
 3 Atkins announces meeting in Dublin next week with Lenihan and that he recognizes that Britain cannot 'impose' a solution on North (unlike Thatcher's speech last Nov.).
 4 IRA spokesman tells *Der Spiegel* (W. German paper) that Dennis Healey & Peter Jay (former British ambassador to Washington) are targets for execution.
 4 RUC man wounded in car bomb attack in E. Belfast. INLA claim responsibility.
 RUC reserve shot dead in N. Belfast bringing week's casualties to 8.
 UDR to be increased by 350 men (if they can be recruited).
 DUP (Democratic Unionist Party) launch drive to win over Unionist party members & voters disillusioned by Official Unionists' absence at Stormont talks.
 6 Bomb explodes in Milltown Cemetery, Belfast, minutes before Sinn Fein Easter march of 3,000 arrives. IRA statement urges members "to become politically active & embrace small struggles going on in the community around them."
 7 Jim Reilly & Gerry MacLochlainn charged & remanded for conspiracy to cause explosions. 4 members of Hands Off Ireland arrested outside Luton police station while picketing against their detention.

The charges against Jim Reilly, a former national organiser of Provisional Sinn Fein, and Gerry MacLochlainn, seem to be an attempt by the police to link up Irish activists with the recent Welsh nationalist fire-bombings of holiday homes in North Wales. The Hands Off Ireland supporters who picketed the police station in protest, were arrested and held in the cells overnight.

9 4 RUC including policewoman, shot in W. Belfast. 1 killed instantly, others hospitalised. IRA claim responsibility.
 9 Gardai Representative Association calls for changes in criminal law to diminish rights of accused people.
 9 'Women against Imperialism' hold tribunal on prison conditions in Armagh jail, on the day that 11 of them due to appear on charges arising from demo outside the jail on Women's Day '79. They are fined £290 in their absence & say they're not paying it.
 9 Gardai find small arms cache near Carrickmacross (Monaghan).
 10 62 year old car-worker Willie Higgins held in Luton under PTA.
 10 Gardai searching for 'highly dangerous man' escaped from psychiatric hospital. Turns out to be ex Paratrooper with a history of violent assault.

MORE BRICKS IN THE WALL OF SILENCE

Since last November, when Panorama almost got prosecuted for treason for filming the IRA in action, Tory MPs have been throwing around charges of the BBC 'Broadcasting IRA propaganda.' In response, the BBC has tightened up its procedures and now programme makers are supposed to inform the BBC's Northern Ireland Controller Mr. James Hawthorn if they even plan to mention Northern Ireland. But Phillip Donellan's TV history of the Army *Gone for a Soldier* slipped through the net. The programme took an unashamedly critical look at the history of the British Army and its use of squaddies as cannon-fodder. And it dared by implication to criticise what the Army was up to in Ireland today. *The BBC have now caught on, however. The programme will not be repeated and sales of it abroad have been banned.*

On a recent South Bank Show, Richard Hoggart revealed that there had been only an average of 1½ hours per year of TV drama about Ireland on English TV over the last four years. Until March 1980 it had been almost a year since *I'm a dreamer Montreal*, a play set in the North, had been shown on TV. And that was not a play to upset the establishment – in fact it was awarded the Ewart Biggs Memorial Prize in memory of the former British ambassador to Ireland killed by the IRA. The head of BBC Drama has said that TV drama about Northern Ireland is 'an automatic switch-off.' One might ask just who has been switching the audience off. We shall soon see. On March 20th the BBC showed *Shadow of our skin* based on Jennifer Johnston's novel of contemporary Derry life, and in April Robert Holles' play *The Vanishing Army* will be shown after a scheduled showing had been cancelled last August in what the author call 'a crude and crass piece of censorship.' At the same time TV audiences will be able to see a season of Sean O'Casey's plays and a serialisation of James Plunkett's *Strumpet City* is due to appear in the near future. *The high viewing figures for these programmes should silence the 'turn-off' argument once and for all.*

Conor Cruise O'Brien, the Editor of the Observer, has a few ideas on how to tackle coverage of Northern Ireland. In November 1979 he sacked Mary Holland who had had a freelance contract with the Observer since 1964 for an article on Derry that she wrote in the colour supplement. O'Brien said that the article supported terrorists. A few weeks later he published another feature in the colour supplement under the heading: 'Defenders of the Ulster faith – at home with the UDA', featuring lots of folksy pics of UDA leaders in domestic poses.

But then O'Brien knows all about defining terrorists. When he was Minister for Posts and Telecommunications in the Irish Government in the 60s he was responsible for piloting through a total ban on coverage of Provisional Sinn Fein by Radio Telefis Eireann. That ban still operates despite the fact that Sinn Fein with its 30 county councillors is the largest political grouping in the 26 Counties after Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and the Labour Party. Sinn Fein's Frank Glynn is the Chairperson of Galway County Council, and on the night the Council was elected Radio reporters were not allowed to interview him. Provisional Sinn Fein are probably the only such group in the Western European 'democracies' that cannot be heard on the air. *As one Irish paper noted recently, if a Sinn Fein person won the Eurovision Song Contest the Irish listening public would hear only broadcast silence.*

Armagh Conditions Exposed

On Wednesday 9th April, the 11 women arrested outside Armagh Jail on International Women's Day 1979 finally came up for trial. But instead of attending their trial, they held a tribunal in Belfast to highlight the serious situation facing the republican women on protest for political status in Armagh Jail.

On February 7th this year, the women political prisoners suffered an attack by male warders in which several women were injured. Following this, they were moved from B to A Wing of the prison, confined to their cells 23 hours a day, and denied access to toilet facilities. This move of the authorities represents a deliberate worsening of the harassment they have always undergone.

The women had to dump their chamber pots through the spyholes and the windows of the cells. These were then blocked up by the warders, since when the women have had to smear excreta and empty urine in the cells themselves, or in the corridors during their one-hour exercise period. This, combined with continued individual attacks by male warders (now permanently kept in Armagh) led the women to go on a 'no-wash' protest similar to that of the men in the H-Blocks. The authorities are denying them any change of clothing. Indeed, all their clothing and personal

belongings have been sent out by the authorities to their relatives.

For well over two months now, some women have had no change of clothing, have not washed, and exist in filthy cells.

At the tribunal, doctors' statements were read out explaining what serious illnesses and diseases, resulting in sterility or even death, could result from these unhygienic conditions. The all-women tribunal were especially understanding of this aspect. The women are only allowed two sanitary towels a day, regardless of need, and several women with malnutrition problems or internal troubles have been denied special treatment, or adequate medical facilities.

The tribunal heard detailed statements from the women (smuggled out) and their relatives who had seen them since the protest began. It was very evident that their health is suffering. The mother of one prisoner was asked whether her daughter would come off the protest. 'Never', was the reply. The panel consisted of Vanessa Redgrave and Frances de la Tour, British actresses, Pauline Roe, from the Women's Committee of the National Union of Students, a representative of the Mouvement Liberation des Femmes (France), a newly released political prisoner from Holland (Else

Hartz), a woman solicitor from Amsterdam Pat Arrowsmith, and two prominent Irish feminists from Dublin, Marie McMahon and Nell McCafferty. Speaking as feminists, and as anti-imperialists, they issued a unanimous joint statement finding that the conditions of the women in Armagh were proved beyond doubt, and laying the blame squarely on the British government. The NIO is already seriously embarrassed by the situation in Armagh, so much so that they have taken to issuing statements to NI and Irish newspapers denying the conditions and the escalation of the protest.

NUS CONFERENCE

A motion to condemn Britain's treatment of the women political prisoners in Armagh was passed at NUS Conference despite the opposition of the Executive who alleged that anyone voting for the motion would be 'supporting the IRA'. £200 was collected to support the campaign of the Armagh women, but a Troops Out motion put to the Conference was defeated.