

BORDERLINE

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WE SAY...

THE Vocational Education Committee (VEC) must reverse its decision to extend the probationary period of the St Patrick's High School teacher at the centre of the current dispute between the teachers' union (TUI) and management.

From parents, pupils and teachers the message is the same - that a good teacher is being unfairly victimised. Apart altogether from the implications this has for the teacher concerned and her colleagues, the education of pupils is certain to suffer also.

The VEC should be big enough to recognise its mistake and do all in its power to resolve the trouble at St Patrick's.



THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH of the Clones Development Association at a well-attended public meeting in August is a timely and a welcome indication that our community has not lost the will to survive. At a time when the difficulties forced on us by the continued injustice of partition are worsened by British attempts to close yet more cross-border roads, and at a time when the politics of cutbacks is reaping its reward of emigration, unemployment and infrastructural decline, it is heartening to see that the people of Clones haven't given up.

While we can never lose sight of the difficulties which face our community, it would be tragic if we simply wallowed in those difficulties. Clones Development Association, although conceived in the desperation of our situation, is a vehicle which has the potential to make positive changes for the future.

Whether this exciting development in community co-operation succeeds, or not, depends on the degree to which each and every one of us becomes actively involved. It is vitally important that the needs and the wishes of all our community are reflected in the policy direction of the association. The alternative would be to confine active involvement to a small group of people and thereby leave the association open to the charge that it represented only sectional interests.

There is understandable scepticism amongst some who have watched similar developments come and go down through the years. However, given a genuinely democratic basis and freed from the scourge of political point-scoring, we believe that Clones Development Association can and will succeed in improving the social and economic environment we live in.

In congratulating those who have initiated and supported this development, we would encourage those not yet involved to play their part!

GARDA COMPLICITY

No action has been taken against McCoy to date, an indication that his claims of senior garda complicity are true and that there are those who have reason to be afraid that he would name names in court.

But McCoy was not alone. In every community there are those who are paid to spy on their neighbours and to gather information not just about local republicans but about trade unionists, journalists and community activists generally. They will attempt to build up a network of informants who, often innocently, pass on information which is graded and stored for future use.

Whether you call them the Special Branch or simply spies, they amount to just one thing - bad news.

COUNCIL OPPOSES EXTRADITION

CLONES Urban District Council (UDC) has voted to oppose extradition. At the end of a lengthy debate at the council's monthly meeting on Monday, September 28th, members voted 4 to 3 (with one abstention) in support of a motion "that this council calls on the Fianna Fail government not to implement the Extradition Act 1987 which was introduced by the last government."

There was cross-party support for the motion, with one representative from both Fianna Fail and Fine Gael voting alongside the two Sinn Fein members. An amendment "that the issue be left for the government to decide" was proposed by Fianna Fail chairperson Pat McKenna but this was defeated.

Proposing the motion, Councillor MacPhillips warned:

"Make no mistake about it, if this measure becomes law it will accomplish something that the British have attempted to achieve for centuries - the criminalisation of the historic Irish struggle for freedom.

"And let us be clear what this means. The Dublin government would be legitimising not only Bobby Sands and his comrades, but Patrick Pearse, Wolfe Tone, Owen Roe O'Neill and every individual and generation that has dared to oppose the injustice of British rule in Ireland by force of arms; all of these would face the prospect of extradition under the terms of this scandalous piece of legislation."

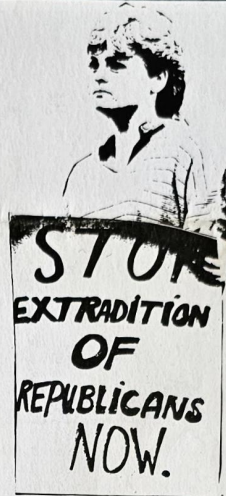
Outlining the case against extradition, Councillor MacPhillips said that there were several elements of the new law which "should be of particular concern given the proven injustice of the British legal system in dealing with the Irish." He continued:

"First is the fact that under this legislation no evidence must be produced in extradition cases, a warrant is all that is needed. Second is the fact that charges not included on the extradition warrant can be introduced by the British once they have their victim. Thirdly is the fact that the RUC will be allowed to interrogate those who have been extradited, thus allowing them to build a case on the basis of their proven torture techniques.

"Taken together these and the other

provisions of this Act will make Irish citizens the most easily extradited citizens in the world."

Those for the motion proposed by Councillor MacPhillips included Councillor McAleer (SF), Nicholl (FF) and Donahue (FG). Those opposed to the motion were Councillors McKenna (FF), Gunn (FF) and Mulligan (FG). Councillor Mealiff abstained.



UNITY IS STRENGTH

TUNNEY'S DISPUTE SETTLED

TUNNEY MEAT PACKERS returned to production on Wednesday, September 23rd, after the workforce voted overwhelmingly in favour of settlement terms negotiated between union representatives and management in the Labour Court the previous Monday.

The settlement follows a three-week strike by more than 80 workers at the factory who maintained a constant round-the-clock picket throughout the dispute.

Strikers grievances centred on

what they saw as management attempts to railroad through new work practices which would have meant a reduction in weekly take-home pay of between £40 and £70 for many workers.

Following the massive endorsement of strike action a rota of strikers placed pickets on the factory night and day, through good weather and bad, receiving virtually total support from suppliers to the factory who refused to pass the pickets.

PACKED MEETING

And the resolve of the strikers was still clear when they packed a

room in St Joseph's Hall on Friday, September 18th, to hear ATGWU Branch Secretary Mick O'Reilly remind them that the dispute could have been avoided had management been prepared to enter realistic negotiations several weeks earlier.

Settlement talks would begin in the Labour Court on Monday, he told his audience, after outlining the details. To facilitate negotiations the strikers then decided that they would lift their picket on the factory from 7am on Monday.

After protracted negotiations in the Labour Court between 2.30pm and 9pm on Monday a settlement acceptable to union shop stewards was agreed to by management. Next morning the workers endorsed the recommendation of their representatives that the deal be accepted.

Paying tribute to the strikers ATGWU shop steward Peter McAleer said that it was their "unity and determination" which had ensured "a negotiated settlement in line with the reasonable demands the union had been making from the outset".

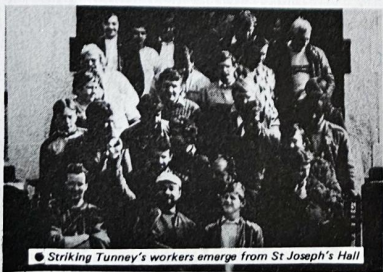
And he sharply criticised the Northern Standard newspaper which had, he claims, "pointedly ignored this dispute and failed in its duty to inform the public of the issues involved".

Bugging Churches

CLONES featured in the national news recently when it was revealed that the British 'intelligence' service MI5 had once discussed a plan to bug the confession boxes in the local Sacred Heart Catholic Church in an attempt to glean information about republican activities in the area.

While the humorous side of such a scenario is ably depicted in the above cartoon, news of the plan (which was apparently abandoned for technical reasons) raises, yet again, the serious issue of state surveillance North and South of the border and indeed the danger of 'Loose talk'.

The exposure of the plan to bug the Clones church is only the latest in a long line of revelations by former crown forces operatives Wallace and Holroyd, whose earlier claims about the role of The Badger (a Monaghan-based garda detective) in passing information to the British, were confirmed with an admission by Detective John McCoy that he was The Badger and that his activities were sanctioned at an even more senior level within the gardai.



Striking Tunney's workers emerge from St Joseph's Hall

MAGHERAVEELY AND DERRYVOLLEN ROADS REOPENED

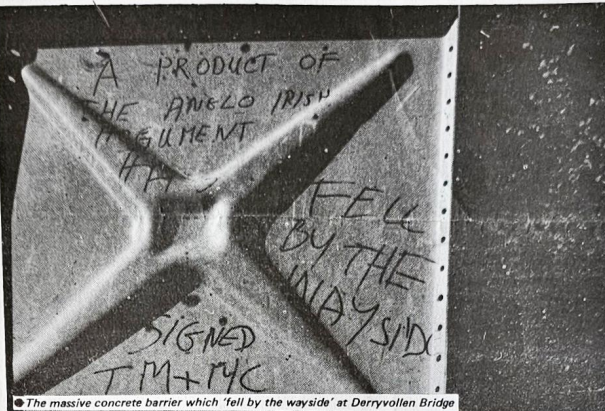
A People's Victory

THE REOPENING of the Clones to Magheraveely road, less than a fortnight after it was sealed off by British forces, was welcomed as "a people's victory" by Sinn Fein County Councillor Pat Treanor.

Both the Magheraveely and Derryvollen Bridge roads were closed on Tuesday, July 28th, in a move described by Clones trader's spokesperson Donald McDonald as "a calculated act of provocation". Hours before the closure, (which had been expected for several weeks beforehand), the Fianna Fail chairperson of Clones UDC, had refused to allow a discussion on the issue.

And attempts by Fianna Fail's Foreign Minister Brian Lenihan to distance his government from collusion in the road closures were dismissed as "a face-saving exercise" by Councillor Treanor. He pointed to the presence of armed gardai and soldiers stopping and searching vehicles which approached the roads being closed as proof that the government in Dublin knew what was happening in advance. Councillor Treanor said:

"Two government departments, justice and defence, provided back-up for the British forces on this occasion and it is hardly likely that such a co-ordinated and politic-



● The massive concrete barrier which 'fell by the wayside' at Derryvollen Bridge

ally sensitive operation could have happened without the knowledge of the government ministers responsible for those departments."

Using a mechanical digger, the people

of Derryvollen and neighbouring townlands reopened the road only five days after it had been blocked. The huge concrete barrier on Derryvollen Bridge was shoved

off the road in an operation which took just 20 minutes.

INGENUITY

At Magheraveely, where the barrier is positioned a half mile into County Fermanagh and only a few hundred yards from a 'permanent' British army checkpoint, the use of heavy machinery was ruled out. Instead, locals used their own physical resources and ingenuity to construct an alternative roadway around the massive concrete obstructions.

Acknowledging the reopening of the Derryvollen and Magheraveely roads as "a people's victory" Councillor Treanor said that the entire episode "exposed the spurious argument that roads were closed because of IRA activity" and he added that he would be calling on Monaghan County Council for resources to be provided to border communities wishing to reopen other blocked and cratered roads. He concluded:

"It is long past time that the authorities in this state stopped merely voicing concern about road closures and put their money where their mouth is, not in providing assistance to the British but in helping those whose social and economic lives are adversely affected by such closures."

The burning of Roslea

SHORTLY after the formation of the RUC's Special Constabulary an attempt was made to re-assert the authority of the Crown in Roslea which the RIC had evacuated during the Tan War. One of these Specials, a man named Lester, was warned to stop interrogating Catholic children in the area. He ignored the warning and was attacked and wounded by the IRA.

In an act of sectarian revenge the 'Specials' entered Roslea in force and burned eight Catholic homes, wounding two of the occupants. The Monaghan Brigade of the IRA struck back and burned the houses of fourteen Specials, shooting four officers, two fatally.

This song written at the time describes what happened.

On a fine Monday morning about eight o'clock,
The B's of Roslea sure they got a great shock.
When Lester was popped boys they made no delay,
But sent out dispatches, ri-tor-al-aye-ay.

From Cooneen to Balleggh, and from that down
to Crom,
From Inver and Shanro, and the robbers from Drum,
They all marched in sections to the town of Roslea,
To put a full stop to ri-tor-al-aye-ay.

The Clough boys assembled outside the church gate,
They seemed in a hurry for fear of being late,
But the head of these B-men said, 'What shall we say,
If we meet with the rebels ri-tor-al-aye-ay?'

At the centre of town sure the work did begin,
To see them burning houses, you'd think it a sin,
But most of their bullets they all went astray,
For they hadn't the tips of ri-tor-al-aye-ay.

They roamed through the town like a pack of wild
boars,
They broke all the windows and hammered the
doors,
They pillaged and looted and carried away,
The stuff of poor Catholics, ri-tor-al-aye-ay.

On that very night month and just in the same year,
The Volunteers met boys, without the least fear,
Three houses they burned for each one in Roslea,
All done to the tune of ri-tor-al-aye-ay.

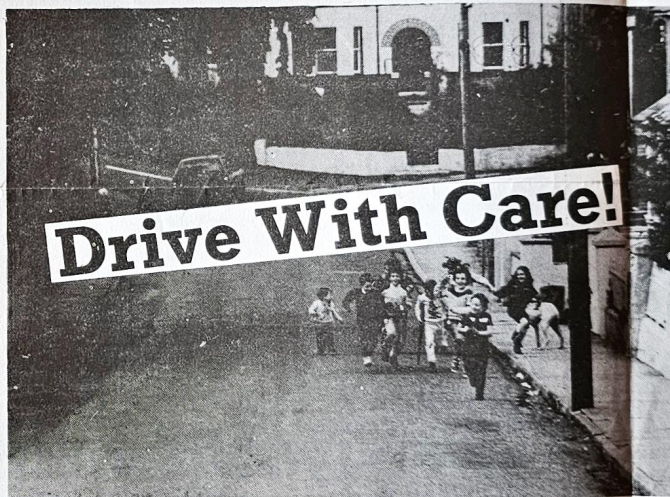
Some of the boys on the run had to go,
They travelled the mountains through frost and in
snow,
But now they're at home and at home they will stay,
And they never stop singing ri-tor-al-aye-ay.

RECKLESS MOTORISTS are putting the lives of children in the Millbrook/Cherry Park area at risk. That's the grim verdict of local Councillor Peter MacAleer who warned the Urban District Council that children will be injured or killed unless steps are taken to slow down cars which speed through the area.

And welcoming the council's promise to erect 'children at play' signs, Councillor MacAleer has called on motorists to heed the signs and to adopt a responsible attitude when driving through the area. He said:

"Until there are safe play facilities for the growing number of children, who are left no option but to play on our footpaths and roads, then motorists have a duty to take special care when driving."

Calling for the 'children at play' signs to be erected as a matter of the utmost urgency, Councillor MacAleer added that if these failed in their objective then the UDC would have to seriously consider the option of placing ramps at strategic points in the area.



A sketch of Clones in 1741 as seen from Ferguson's Hill, behind the Custom's depot. The original is in the National Library, Kildare Street, Dublin.

THE 'SPECIALS' - a legacy of partition

The blasting of border roads to seal off the Six Counties is not a new policy. While most Clones people remember the cratering at Aghafin in the early '70s, and the 'spiking' of roads during the Border Campaign of the 1950s, the first attempt to close the roads in this area had its birth with partition, 60 years ago.

Clones was the centre of major activity during the Black and Tan War and throughout 1921 and 1922 it was a focal point of republican attacks on the North and, also, of reprisals by the British-financed local militia, the 'Special Constabulary'.

Indeed, the second Special "killed in action" died in Clones on January 23rd 1921. He, with 14 other "A" Specials, had left Newtownbutler in the early hours of that morning in a Crossley tender (armoured car). When they reached Clones, they drove into Fermanagh Street and began breaking into a public house. The owner, alarmed by the noise, fled out the back and ran to the RIC barracks on the Diamond where he reported that he was being burgled. The RIC then marched to the scene. Approaching the "burglars" in the semi-darkness, and thinking they were "IRA or civilians", they opened fire.

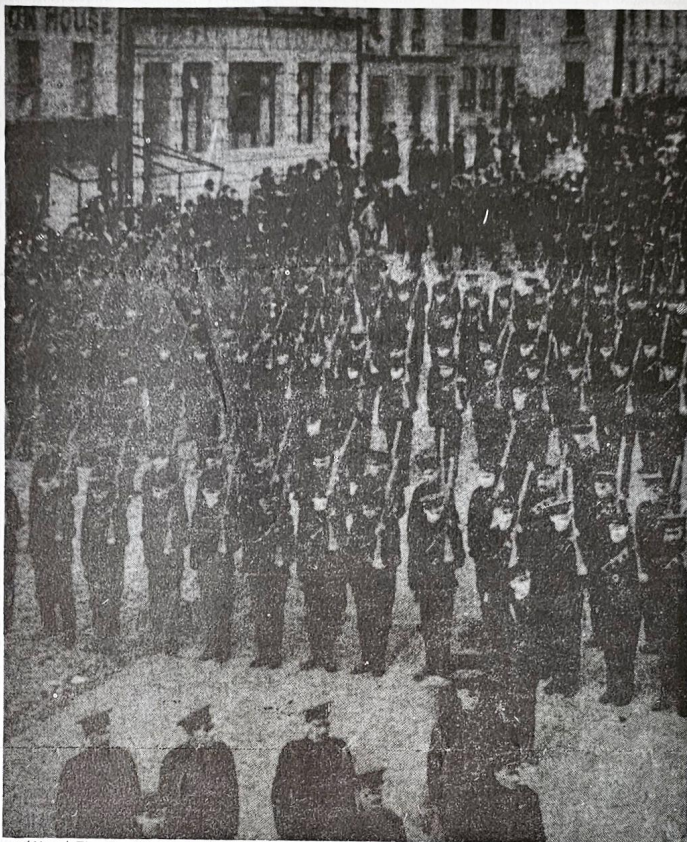
STOLEN WHISKEY

The Specials began shouting that they were police, but not before one of them was killed. The RIC stopped firing and arrested the 14 survivors, disarmed them and then escorted them back to Newtownbutler. A search of the Crossley tender revealed that Sir Basil Brooke's (later Lord Brookeborough's) heroes, had loaded it with whiskey stolen from the pub. None of the Specials were charged, needless to say.

A year later the roads around Clones were blasted to deter "raiding parties" of IRA Volunteers. This followed the abduction of more than 40 prominent loyalists in Counties Fermanagh and Tyrone by IRA Flying Columns, on February 8th, 1922.



The Specials suffered other embarrassing defeats in the Clones locality. At Roslea, on March 21st, 1921, the IRA surrounded homes of the local "B" Specials, in a major operation. Special Sergeant Samuel Nixon was shot dead and Special Constable William Gordon seriously wounded. The houses of local "B" men were burnt to the ground and a large



(Above) The 'Special Constabulary' after its formation (Below) The 'B' Specials at the Battle of the Bogside in Derry shortly before they were renamed the UDR



supply of weapons seized. The IRA lost two Volunteers in the raids.

Five days before the famous battle at Clones Railway Station, February 1922, the Specials suffered another reverse when, in the course of an IRA ambush near to Newtownbutler, they lost two Crossley tenders and all their weapons.

Even as the British were attempting to prevent such incidents, by cratering roads, the IRA struck again, this time at Wattlebridge on April 6th, 1922. Five Specials were wounded in the attack and the entire patrol disarmed.

CONTINUED ATTACKS

With heavy sniping along the border, and the Northern state

on the brink of collapse, the Special Powers Act was introduced and nationalists rounded up for internment. Despite this, attacks continued until the outbreak of the Civil War in the South.

More than 60 years later little has changed, the maze of roads which criss-cross the border still causes problems for soldiers who have problems with 'map-reading errors'. A detachment of Free State troops found themselves in Newtownbutler on September 25th, 1922, not as the vanguard of an invasion by the Dublin administration, but as early victims of a ridiculous boundary. They were arrested by the Specials and escorted back to Clones.

This escort party might have used bicycles that day because it was about that time that the astute "B" Specials in Fermanagh had "cracked" the IRA's strategy and reckoned that they moved by bicycle. So the local "B" men then decided to "commandeer" all bicycles owned by Catholics. Thereafter, not a true-blue loyalist in the area had to walk to work.

An interesting account of this and other local incidents of the Tan War can be found in the book *Voices and the Sound of Drums*, the personal recollections of Patrick Shea whose RIC father was based in Clones Barracks throughout this period. This book is available in the County Library.



HIGH DRAMA

THERE will be high drama in Clones in early October when the town is host to two of the most interesting plays in the County Monaghan Arts Festival.

Worm in the Heart by journalist Nell McCafferty features Ruth McCabe in a powerful and thought-provoking feminist monologue on several of the major social issues which have affected Irish women in recent years. Ruth, who is Clones born and bred, has recently given birth to her third child and is recovering from a broken ankle. We wish her luck (since she appears to have taken the customary theatrical, 'break a leg', a little too literally).

By the way *Worm in the Heart* doesn't pull any punches and there are opinions and several sick 'jokes' which will offend many. So be warned!

The second play *The Pub Bombers* arrives in Clones fresh from its huge success at the recent Edinburgh Theatre Festival. As its title suggests, this is the story of the Birmingham Six who have been imprisoned in British jails since 1974 after being framed on involvement in the Birmingham pub bombings of that year.

With the current controversy surrounding this case and the cases of the Maguire's, the Guildford Four and Judith Ward, it will be interesting to see how an English theatre company handles this sort of issue - which Irish theatre groups have, on the whole, ignored.

■ *Worm in the Heart* is on Sunday October 4th.

■ *The Pub Bombers* is on Thursday October 8th.

Venue: Cinema, 8.30pm
Other offerings from the Arts Festival which will interest people from this area are *Border Walk* a photographic exhibition by journalist Tony O'Shea and *A walk along the Irish Border* by Colm Toibin. For details of these and other events contact Fiona O'Connor at Monaghan (047)81021.

CITIZENS ADVICE CENTRE

FERMANAGH STREET

CLONES

(047) 51680

Mondays - 7pm - 9pm
Wednesdays - 1pm - 3pm
Saturdays - 2pm - 6pm

IN THIS article Fermanagh prisoner Kevin Lynch (H-Blocks) outlines the 'hearts and minds' struggle within the jails and warns that a major crisis may be brewing despite the relative calm of recent years.

New Move In Jails Battle

BRENDAN MAILEY has just completed 14 years in prison. He was arrested in 1973, aged 16. Several months later he was sentenced to indefinite detention at the 'Secretary of State's Pleasure' (SOSP). A few months ago his case went before the Life Sentence Review Board for 'review' (the procedure by which prisoners serving life sentences are supposedly considered for release). He has since been informed of the outcome — his case "will be reviewed" again in two years time. By then, he will have entered his 17th year of imprisonment.

Brendan is by no means unique, of course. There are almost 200 republican prisoners currently serving life sentences in both Irish and British jails. Their continued imprisonment owes little to the number of years already spent in prison and absolutely nothing to the deliberations of the Life Sentence Review Board. Like all republican prisoners, the fate of those serving life sentences is sealed the minute they are arrested.

Republican prisoners are political hostages. Only within this context can the situation here in the H-Blocks or in any other of the prisons currently holding republicans, be properly understood.

Just as Long Kesh is synonymous with internment, the H-Blocks are synonymous with hunger strikes. If it is an irony that criminalisation, as a central plank in British strategy, founded on the platform on which it was built (i.e., the prison/POW issue), then it is indeed a cruel one. That particular phase of the prison struggle fought out in the H-Blocks and Armagh Prison from 1976-81 cost us dearly; the catalogue of brutality meted out to republican POWs in the five years of prison protest; the slow agonising death of ten of our comrades on hunger-strike in 1981; the immeasurable suffering of families, relatives and friends throughout.

SUFFERING

Republicans have no monopoly on suffering and hardship, of course. The history of the H-Blocks and Armagh Prison, however, is cited not as witness to the suffering and endurance of republicans but as a statement on both the intensity and the significance of the prison struggle.

By 1976, it was clear enough that the prisons would figure largely in British attempts to push through their criminalisation policy. Criminalisation itself had already emerged as an integral part of the British government's broader strategy of normalisation/Ulsterisation. The media element in all of this was by then well set in motion. "Mafia, godfather, gangland" and other such crime-related terminology were now the norm in media descriptions of the IRA and their actions. The prison element was then initiated. Special category status, IRA command structures within the prisons, concentration camp-style accommodations for the prisoners, even the name *Long Kesh* itself were all incompatible with the criminalisation policy. Political status was, therefore, withdrawn, the H-Blocks were built and Long Kesh was renamed *The Maze*.

Criminalisation, however, went way beyond the manipulation of the media in an attempt to portray the armed struggle as "organised crime". Equally,

the "depoliticisation" of the POWs involved much more than the changing of the public perception of the republican prisoners. Criminalisation was directed at the "hearts and minds" of not just the public but of the prisoners themselves. The republican prisoner, after all, with his/her commitment to the struggle intact would one day re-emerge from the prison and resume the role of political activist. From the British perspective, therefore, criminalisation, if it was to hold any hope of long-term advantage or success, would have to undermine the morale of the prisoners and smash their commitment to future struggle. The Blanket protest could have been resolved at any time by affording the prisoners the right to wear their own clothes and to refrain from prison work.

If NIO/jail administration narrowmindedness was a factor in preventing such a resolution, then it was surely a secondary one. The principle factor was quite simply that the British were not interested in such a resolution. They had set their sights on breaking the prison struggle. Hence, the protracted protests, the brutality inflicted on the prisoners, and the hunger-strike and the death of our ten comrades.

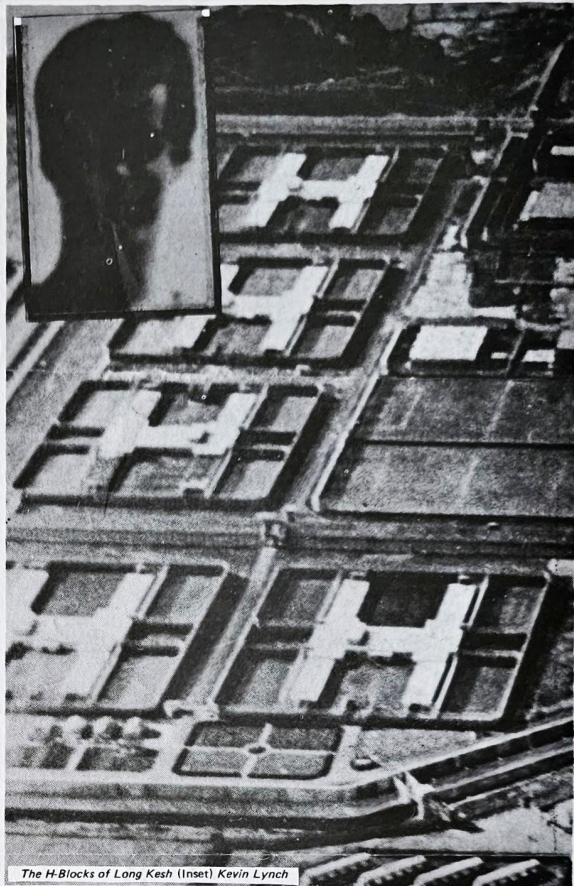
NEW APPROACH

The 1981 hunger-strike had a traumatising effect on all republicans. In terms of the loss of comrades and friends, it most certainly cost us dearly. In political terms, the fallout from the hunger strike was immense. Britain's criminalisation policy had been dealt a major blow and their international reputation had been severely dented; with world attention on the H-Blocks, their normalisation strategy had suffered a significant setback.

Within the jails the termination of the hunger strike marked not the end of the prison struggle but simply the closing of one chapter and the opening of another. The limited concessions introduced by the British in October 1981 offered no more than a temporary respite in the struggle here, an opportunity for the British to review and revise their approach to prison issues. As if to underline this, the NIO began almost immediately to claw back on their concessions. The extension in association facilities, for example, was withdrawn within months of being introduced. But the real evidence of things to come emerged not here in the H-Blocks but in the other prisons. Efforts to undermine prisoners' morale and to erode their commitment to struggle, it was clear, would continue as an essential part of Britain's prison strategy.

UNEASY CALM

On September 25th, 1983, 38 republican prisoners staged a mass escape from the H-Blocks. Nineteen of them were recaptured either immediately or within the next few days. Those recaptured, and many more within the prison, were severely brutalised by prison staff in the aftermath of the escape. This apart, there has been no major eruption in the situation here over the last five years. Harassment of prisoners and their relatives on a range of issues from compassionate parole to visits, etc, has continued on a daily basis, of course. Despite this, compared to either the pre-1981 period here or the current situation in both Magilligan and Crumlin Road prisons, something of an uneasy calm prevails here.



The H-Blocks of Long Kesh (Inset) Kevin Lynch

The apparent contrasting situations in the different prisons is no accident. Clearly the NIO does not relish the prospect of a repeat of the "jails crisis" on the scale of 1976-81. Yet, we remind ourselves, their prisons policy remains geared towards the same objective as before — the depoliticisation of the republican prisoner, the breaking of his/her commitment to the struggle.

PRISON STRATEGY

Today they have adopted a somewhat different course than before. Their approach is now a gradualist one concentrating their attention initially on the smaller pockets of republican prisoners in the other prisons. While the H-Blocks remain calm, albeit uneasily so, the strip-searching of women prisoners continues in Maghaberry and English prisons. Brutality is stepped up in Crumlin Road; republican prisoners are forcibly integrated with loyalists in Magilligan, and isolation units are used as a weapon against our comrades in English jails.

In withdrawing political status in 1976, the NIO chose to do battle with all republican prisoners at once. Today they are attempting to reduce the prison struggle to a series of small battles in different prison situations. Towards this end, they have varied not just their tactics but also the particular "issue" from prison to prison. In this way they hope to fragment the solidarity and unity of the POWs. The H-Blocks have so far figured only in a limited sense in the redefinition of British prison strategy which followed the '81 hunger strike. This has been no oversight on their behalf. The NIO have quite simply been biding their time.

About 155 of the approximately 200 republicans serving life imprisonment in Irish and English jails are in Long Kesh. The majority of all lifers

have now spent more than ten years in prison. Indeterminate sentences allow for the playing of the political hostage game to the full. Prisoners serving life, and their relatives are being used as a weapon against the struggle inside and outside the prison. By relating the prospect of release to the termination of the armed struggle, the British hope to generate pressure on the IRA from prisoners and their families for an end to the struggle. Likewise, the prisoners and their families will be asked for a renunciation of their political ideology and aspirations: something akin to the political hostage scenario which was attempted in the latter period of internment will now begin to emerge, only on a much magnified scale. With the majority of republican lifers in the H-Blocks we need ponder no more on the uneasy calm here. The NIO, no doubt, see it as a calm before the storm. When the political hostage scenario emerges from the shadows all the pieces in the British prison strategy will then be in place.

RESISTANCE

It need hardly be said that republicans will resist each and every attempt to depoliticise us. We can ill afford to be complacent, however. We must continually reassess the problems confronting us and our efforts to combat them. In the past we have relied heavily on and drawn strength from our families, relatives, friends and comrades on the outside. We will continue to do so in the days ahead. Our immediate concern is to ensure that those we rely on have a full understanding of our situation. Hopefully, the above few lines will go some way towards that end.

The above article is printed here by kind permission of the Community for Justice group who include it in the current issue of their publication *The Irish People's Bulletin*.