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1 — U.S. ARMS AGAINST IRISH

The Royal Ulster Constabulary have officially received weapons in the past from the United States of America. This has been known for some time on the streets throughout British occupied Ireland.

Now the U.S. is sending 3,000 Magnum pistols and 500 automatic rifles to the R.U.C. The supplier is Sturm Ruger Corporation, Connecticut, and the State Department has licensed the shipment. Writing from New York Sean Cronin reports (*Irish Times*) that he was given this information recently and he adds that the use of .357 Magnum pistols is banned in certain American states, because the projectile have the same effect as dum-dum bullets.

The munitions control division of the State Department denied the report, said Mr Cronin, who was given the name of its chief, Mr Semenelli.

Mr. Semenelli had this to say:

"We do not license anything directly for the Ulster police and anyway, I know nothing about this shipment".

He said the British Army was responsible for security in Northern Ireland. "But the Army doesn't use Magnums". He wanted to know where the report had originated. I said I couldn't tell that, but since the State Department was involved and Northern Ireland is something of an international issue, the report should be confirmed or denied. Mr Semenelli denied it. Sean Cronin adds that the transaction has since been confirmed by Matthew Nimetz, who is in charge of Northern Ireland affairs at the State Department. "It was a commercial

sale to a uniformed police force", Nimetz told Jimmy Breslin, the *Daily News* columnist. "It was done with approval. Our people thought it was alright. There is a government of Northern Ireland. This is for the police force of Northern Ireland."

Arms' sale Confirmed

The U.S. House of Representatives Speaker, Thomas (Tip) O'Neill, has criticised U.S. sales of weapons to the RUC, saying that it would be viewed as "support for a particular faction in Northern Ireland".

In a statement, Mr O'Neill said that he had confirmed that the State Department had authorised the sale of 3,000 Magnum .357 pistols and 500 .223 rifles to the RUC.

It has been common knowledge for a considerable time now that the American State Department has been licensing shipments (particularly M1 carbines) to the RUC, as in the past they supplied anti-riot guns and gas grenades.

These weapons have invariably been used to kill or suppress Irish people — RUC men joined in the slaughter of three unarmed IRA Volunteers and a passing civilian at Ballysillan a year ago, and recently women protestors outside Armagh jail were beaten with the butts of RUC American-supplied carbines.

However, it is over the licensing of three thousand .357 Magnum pistols and five hundred automatic rifles, supplied by Sturm Ruger Corporation in Connecticut, that O'Neill has kicked up a storm. He said that to supply the RUC was to supply a faction involved in the 'dispute' in Ireland, and that this might provoke Irish Americans to send more weapons to the IRA!

It is of course inconsistent for Tip O'Neill, who is Speaker of the House of Representatives, to condemn arms shipments just to the loyalist RUC while American armaments prop up the most reactionary and oppressive regimes elsewhere in the world.

Congressmen Daniel Moynihan, Edward Kennedy Tip O'Neill and other Irish American politicians are out to undercut the basis of freedom-struggles everywhere and each of them in turn has condemned the Irish Republican Movement and its cause.

British Resentment

Perhaps it is because of this fact that Mr O'Neill's remarks concerning the arms' shipments gives cause to the British for so much resentment. The British Secretary of State to occupied Ireland, Mr. Atkins, in a speech to a meeting of the

Police Federation in Newcastle, Co. Down, this week, said the British government will introduce "new measures to control the R.U.C. in line with the Bennett Report.

The Bennet Report following an inquiry into police brutality made a number of recommendations.

The Bennett Report made a number of recommendations amending techniques of interrogation — from surveillance of interrogators by members of the uniformed branch, and by closed circuit television, to a stringent code of conduct containing, among other things, an admonition not to sexually assault suspects under interrogation.

At the time of publication, both Mr. Roy Mason, then Secretary of State, and Sir Kenneth Newman, the RUC Chief Constable, refused to accept that ill-treatment had taken place.

The announcement of "new Measures" followed a speech by the federation's chairman, Mr. Alan Wright, which had rejected the ideas in the report and called for wider police powers, similar to those in the South.

In the speech that followed, Mr. Atkins said that he had in mind the reputation and the standing of the RUC, and also "the smears made by people overseas".

In a specific reference to remarks made by Tip O'Neill, he said: "I know full well the sensitivity which history places on the RUC, and I do not underestimate that.

"I must say frankly, however, that I regret the statements which suggest that the RUC is a faction in Northern Ireland. Your force is a legally constituted police service."

Eyes and Ears

Legally" constituted, the R.U.C. may be. The fact is that they are part of the British war machine in Ireland. Essentially they form the eyes and the ears and the jackboot of the British forces in the North. Added to that is the ample evidence of inhumanity and human torture revealed by courageous police doctors and an honest few on the police Authority.

After the recent disclosures by Dr. Robert Irwin there can be no-one left in doubt about torture in the interrogation centres of N. Ireland — except of course Roy Mason of whom one might say "He doth protest too much". The hideous smear campaign which followed, directed at Dr. Irwin's wife is nothing new. Throughout history the British have done this with so many Irishmen who stood up to oppose their wicked ways in Ireland.

The argument that torture is only carried out by a few rogue individuals in the RUC sounds very hollow after the resignation of Dr. Denis Elliot from the Gough Barracks in Armagh, who stated that he found it impossible to carry out his work according to the International Terms of Agreement. All that, coupled with statements from another courageous man: Mr Jack Hassard, ex-'B' Special and member of the RUC Police Authority. He went through the right channels of complaint, filled in the relevant documents, processed them through the proper channels, pulled the right levers. But the machinery did not work. He said: "It convinced me that they weren't serious. I was wasting my time. The gangsterism in some detention centres, officially approved so as to keep up conviction rates, is to continue.

Mr. Hassard said:

"Three times now senior police doctors have privately gone to Newman (chief constable) and told him they'll refuse to examine prisoners if the torture doesn't stop but it goes on."

"The files of investigations into brutality cases are being rigged before being sent to the Director of Prosecutions. I have definite proof of that."

"The day of the black eye and the boot in the ribs is over. These fellows are the elite, now, they know the modern techniques."

Arguments coming from such source cannot be labelled I.R.A. propaganda. But add to the torture and inhumanity of this loyalist "police force" the murders, even of innocent people, U.S. support wether moral or by the shipment of arms for their use is detestable and must be condemned by all right thinking peoples.

2 — A BRITISH TRADITION

In the year 1814 a widely published and popular cartoon showed the Vatican vice-prefect carrying a basket of Irish mitres to the Pope while the British monarch, George III, grabbed at them as symbols of his patronage. The car was occasioned by a vatican directive ordering the Catholics of Britain and Ireland to yield to royal approval of episcopal nominations. It was a directive defied by the Irish laity and rejected by the Irish hierarchy. It marked the beginning of an era of diplomatic intrigue and pressure by British Government at the Vatican. The pressure grew with Catholic Emancipation and the intrigue intensified down through the century, most notoriously so in the years of the Land War and the Parnellite Movement.

It had, of course, nothing to do with matters of doctrinal religion. It had everything to do with British rule and domination in Ireland. It was the purpose of the British Government to have appointed as leaders of the Catholic Church in Ireland those whom they knew to be, or believed to be, out of sympathy with Irish popular movements. Through such leaders and their moral authority, it

was hoped to subdue resistance and gain the loyalty of the people. It was a "Rome Rule" that British politicians actively sought and encouraged with intent to exploit.

"There is not one vacancy in the Irish Church that the British do not have a person for", one Pontiff remarked during that era. To advance such appointments the British Government sent special envoys to Rome, dangling the carrot of full diplomatic recognition in return for papal favour — "Keeping the Vatican in humour" as one such emissary, George Errington, wrote back to Lord Granville in a letter which was intercepted and published in the United Ireland Journal.

They had their successes. It was sweet music to the English officials to hear a Catholic Archbishop of Dublin denounce Michael Devitt and the co-founders of the Land League as "godless nobodies who must be kept in their place"; to hear denunciations of Parnellism and note the loudest denouncer rewarded with a Cardinal's hat; to hear letters from Rome read in all the churches directing the people to pay their rack-rents, stop their agitation and cease their subscriptions to the National Campaign.

They had many failures. Distrust of the Anglo-Vatican rapprochement split the Irish episcopate, many of its members standing by their people and their people's campaign. As for the people, with their customary insight and understanding, they continued to send their pence to Peter and to Parnell.

The conspiracy of English politicians and press, and their go-betweens of English Catholics, ecclesiastic and lay, continued to a climax of confrontation. The result of that was the episcopal appointment of a man nominated by the Irish clergy as against the favour of the British Government. Contemporary Irish historians record the extraordinary outburst of enthusiasm which greeted that appointment, not just because of its popular choice, nor because of the personality and character of the man chosen, but "that he had had to combat and win out, over British intrigue."

That was towards the end of the last century. It sounds so familiar — it might have been last year. It might indeed. An article published in October of last year in the Irish language paper *Inniu*, bluntly stated — "The British are working hard to prevent Archbishop Tomás Ó Fiaich being raised to the rank of Cardinal according to an authoritative official source at the vatican... an equally reliable source at the vatican referred to the numerous copies of an edition of *The Tablet* (an English Catholic paper) containing a most disparaging article on Archbishop Ó Fiaich which were being distributed from the British Foreign office to officials at the Vatican... as to why the British Government, is so intent on blocking Archbishop Ó Fiaich, the answer is fairly clear: it is because of his steadfast and independent attitude on the re-unification of Ireland and the rights of the Irish people — and most particularly

because of his fearless stand on behalf of the prisoners of Long Kesh."

It did not need confirmation from any Vatican source to be made aware of the antipathy of British politicians and press to Tomás Ó Fiaich, nor, in Ireland's circumstances, the reason for it. In August 1977 the *Sunday Times* of London published a "profile" on the then Archbishop elect of Armagh, complete with picture of Monsignor Ó Fiaich at a céilidhe, "dancing to a strictly Irish tune". He should of course, have been dancing to a strictly English tune. The article was as ill-humoured, spiteful and vicious as any ever published by the *Times* of London on matters Irish — and that's giving it plenty of leeway.

One week ago, in announcing the appointments of Archbishop Ó Fiaich as Cardinal elect, the BBC referred to his appointment to the See of Armagh as "one that had angered British and Unionist Politicians" and recalled that St. John Stevas declared "war if such an appointment were to be made". As for the Cardinal elect himself, he was aware of the speculations and suspicions which history would arouse in the minds of Irish people. But as to British intrigue in his case, generously he stated in a radio interview — "I would be surprised if there was such."

"And I," said Irish History Professor McCartney, in the same-day interview, "would be surprised if there wasn't".

3 — BRITISH WITHDRAWAL PRESSURE

Union Policy

Pressure must be kept up relentlessly on the British Government to state its intention to make a phased withdrawal from Ireland, Mr. Michael Mullen, general secretary, Irish Transport and General Workers' Union told delegates to the Union's annual conference in Galway this week.

Mr Mullen said that trade unionists should never forget their moral and political obligations to the North.

He proposed that there should be a positive consensus on British disengagement that would present a united front to Westminster. Each party should spell out the kind of united Ireland they envisaged.

"Indeed, the labour movement should be to the fore in advocating this stance," Mr. Mullen continued, "because it should be the most prominent in upholding democracy, opposing ascendancy rule and seeking the unity of the Irish working class."

"We can appeal to the rank and file worker in the North to join us in the search for liberty and justice, while at the same time opposing the divisive and sectarian politics of the unionist elite — and the guarantee of survival which such politics effectively receive from the British government, through the maintenance of partition," Mr. Mullen said.

No Contradiction

"There is no contradiction in pursuing these two ends and those who say there is, have abandoned the struggle to win our Protestant brothers and sisters away from colonial reaction and in favour of the workers' republic, of which Connolly dreamed. So long as Britain awards to the likes of West, Craig and Paisley — landlord, industrialist and demagogue — a veto on Irish unity, so long will they remain intransigent, foster fear and delusion among the Protestant working class and oppress Catholics within their partitionist enclave.

"It is the bounden duty of all democrats and labour supporters in this part of Ireland to help counteract the politics of division and discrimination in the North, through protesting at the lack of democracy there, and at the refusal of Britain to indicate its willingness to leave Ireland and encourage Irish unity. Our country is Ireland and our responsibility is Ireland.

Mr. Mullen said one encouraging sign was that there was a growing recognition that Britain must cease to support, either actively or passively, the politics of reactionary unionism, and eventually leave this island.

He went on to criticise the Dublin Government for its "timid economic policy" which provided little attraction for workers in Belfast and Derry. This policy consisted of wishful thinking that multi-national companies and native private enterprise would bring us full employment.

Mr Mullen said that if there was a prospect of progressive and radical policies to tackle unemployment that call for unity would be given added strength and meaning.

H Blocks

A motion condemning as inhumane the treatment of prisoners in H Blocks, Long Kesh prison camp was overwhelmingly carried. Proposing the motion, Mr Patrick Brennan, Dundalk, said that H Blocks concentration camp was one of the greatest obstacles to peace.

Mr. Brian McCann (Belfast) said these people were not criminals but were involved in the history of Ireland, and the union should support their campaign for better status.

Concluding, Mr. Mullen said there were two types of prisoners in H Block, those who were locked away after their peers had judged them guilty, and "those incarcerated at the behest of an anti-democratic establishment".

4 — THE CAUSE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS

History of Struggle

Why do these young Irish prisoners endure such terrible conditions? Why do they effectively double their "draconian" sentences by refusing to accept the status of a common criminal? Why on earth did

they end up in this hell hole in the first place? To understand why, one has to relive the 800 year long struggle for independence for the Irish Nation. Anyone resisting the invader in that struggle was termed "savage", "mad Irish" or "criminal" by the occupying British Government. One hundred years ago, after the abortive Fenian uprising, several hundred Irish prisoners protested for political status. Their treatment is perhaps best described by one of the PoWs, O'Donovan Rossa:

"I have already told you about the hypocrisy of these English masters who, after placing me in a position which forced me to get down on my knees and elbows to eat, are now depriving me of food and light and giving me chains and a bible. I am not complaining of the penalties which my master inflict on me — it is my job to suffer — but I insist and I have the right to inform the world of the treatment to which I am being subjected and that it is illegal to hold back my letters, describing this treatment. The minute precautions taken by the Prison Authorities to prevent me from writing are as disgusting as they are absurd. The most insulting method was to strip me once a day for several months and then examine my arms, legs and all other parts of my body . . .

"One day I caught sight of my friend, Edward Duffy. He was extremely pale. A little later I heard that Duffy was saeriously ill and that he had expressed the wish to see me. I begged the governor to give me permission to visit him. He refused point blank. This was around Christmas 1867 — a few weeks later a prisoner whispered to me through the bars of my cell: 'Duffy is dead'. How movingly this would have been described by the British if it had happened in Russia . . ."

The similarity between the above and the situation in H-Block today is quite amazing; the only concession to the twentieth century being the removal of the chains.

A Noble Gown

Karl Marx took up the cause of the prisoners in England and, with the help of the British public, they were released, but not before 20 of them had died or gone insane. When the prisoners returned home, they all wore their prison caps and the saying ran: "A felon's cap is the noblest hat an Irish head can wear". Today this has been rephrased to read: "A prison blanket is the noblest gown an Irish man can wear".

In September 1917, in the aftermath of the 1916 uprising, the Republican prisoners in Mountjoy Jail, Dublin, met the Deputy Governor and put forward a list of demands entitling the prisoners to political status. Predictably, these were refused by the British Authorities and a hunger strike was undertaken. Consequently Thomas Ashe, after being deprived of his bed, bedding and boots and having been forced to undergo the horrors of a force-feeding, died in the Mater Hospital, Dublin. Massive support for the Republican prisoners ensued and the

British Government was forced to concede political status.

In 1972, shortly after the start of the present struggle, the issue of political status once again came to the fore. A lengthy protest, involving withdrawal of cooperation, was embarked upon. After some time on this type of protest, the Republican prisoners began a hunger strike which brought several men very close to death. Again the people came to the prisoners' aid. Eventually the British were forced to admit defeat or face the consequences of massive violent demonstrations. Rather than openly introduce political status, they implemented what was termed 'Special Category Status'. Political prisoners from that time on, were allowed to wear their own clothes; they did not have to do prison work and were segregated from ordinary prisoners. They had all day association, a fairly substantial food parcel once a week, unlimited ingoing and outgoing mail, and one half-hour visit per week. This, then, was the political status won by the prisoners in 1972.

Nothing New

So, protests for political status are nothing new for Irish political prisoners, and the lads in H-Block today simply see themselves as continuing this struggle. A brief look at the story of 20 year old Kieran Nugeant, the first man "on the blanket", reveals why there are political prisoners in Ireland.

Kieran Nugent, who has recently completed his sentence and is now "continuing the protest", as he puts it himself, by carrying on the fight for the men inside, was ten years old when the present phase of the freedom campaign began in Ireland.

As far back as he can remember, he has lived through riots, curfews, CS gas, rubber bullets, internment and mass arrests. When he was fifteen, his friend was murdered and he was saeriously wounded by an assassination squad. Like hundreds of other young men, he joined the Republican Movement. Having been cornered on the fifth floor of a block of flats by a British Army raiding party, he was forced to jump on to the concrete path below, breaking both his legs in several places. Afraid to cry for help, he dragged himself into a corner and lay there for several hours, until the British called off their search. A few months later, he was arrested, charged and convicted on an Arms charge.

Confessions

The arrested, charged and convicted routine may sound normal, but what actually happens is as follows: after arrest the suspect is taken to Castlereagh Interrogation Centre, where he is denied doctor, solicitor or any visitor for seven days. (A recent investigation by Amnesty International revealed cases of beatings and torture in Castlereagh.) A "confession" is extracted and this alone can be used to convict a prisoner in the juryless Diplock courts. Indeed a recent survey by the Law Department of Queens

University, Belfast, showed that over 80% of convictions in the Special Courts were based on "confessions" unsupported by any other evidence.

Dr. O'Fiaich recognised this when he said: "From talking to them it is evident that they intend to continue their protest indefinitely and it seems they prefer death rather than submit to being classed as criminals. Anyone with the least knowledge of Irish history knows how deeply rooted this attitude is in our country's past. . . The Authorities refuse to admit that these prisoners are in a different category from the ordinary, yet they are different. They were sentenced by Special Courts without juries. The vast majority were convicted on allegedly voluntary confessions obtained in circumstances which are now placed under grave suspicion by the recent report of Amnesty International."

When it became known that political status was to be denied to prisoners, a group of their relatives and friends formed a committee, called the Relatives Action Committee, to defend political status. They have organised many demonstrations and protests, including a 20,000 strong march on the Tenth Anniversary of the first Civil Rights March.

The R.A.C. in a statement point out: "The introduction of Britain's criminalization and subsequent Ulsterization was a clear attempt to defuse, and in turn defeat the revolutionary working class, and as such, it met with the resistance now synonymous with the Irish struggle for National liberation and socialism." The statement goes on to say that many relatives were initially concerned only with the appalling conditions in H-Block, but soon realised that the question of political status was directly a result of British occupation of Ireland.

Derry County Board of the Gaelic Athletic Association, a sporting and cultural body which represents many thousands of Irish people, recognised the reasons for the prisoners' suffering: ". . . if we are non-political, the same cannot be said for the reasons which have placed hundreds of our members in Long Kesh Prison, where many of them are living in sub-human conditions which cry out for redress. . . Britain should know at this late stage that repression in Ireland only sows the seeds of terrible harvests."

5 — BLOWS TO BRITISH POLICY

War News

All the operations referred to below were claimed in supplied statements by the Irish Republican Army.

On Tuesday evening Alan Wright the leader of the RUC's Northern Ireland Police Federation demanded of British Secretary of State, Humphrey Atkins: "If we are not to lose what small gains we may have made then the army must play a more active role in the security field."

Alan Wright was speaking at the annual dinner of the Federation at which Atkins was a guest. He was bemoaning

recent IRA successes particularly in the border areas, especially recent Republican successes in killing and injuring members of the RUC.

This latest crack in RUC morale is a further blow to the British policy of 'Ulsterisation' which involves sending the RUC to the front line. The RUC are now pushing back.

The sparks which ignited to show up this crack in RUC morale was provided by the IRA in South Armagh last Sunday when an RUC Superintendent and a Constable were blown up and instantly killed by a 200 lb land-mine. The Superintendent is the most senior RUC man to be killed this decade.

Wednesday 30th May Co. Armagh:

A fierce gun battle took place between several heavily armed IRA Volunteers and Brits and RUC men. The battle waged for several minutes as the IRA besieged the heavily fortified Brits/RUC barracks in the village of Forkhill in South Armagh.

About a mile away from the main battle another Brit patrol came under concentrated fire. This attack was carried out by the IRA near Tullydonnell. No hits were claimed by the IRA units involved, which themselves returned safely to base.

Belfast:

A joint Brit/RUC mobile patrol was fired on as it passed the roundabout at the junction of Donegal Road and the M1 motorway.

Thursday 31st May Belfast:

Shortly after eleven o'clock the IRA set up an ambush for a plain clothes Brit who was driving an unmarked mini car in the area of Whiterock/Falls Road junction.

The IRA team occupied a dentist's premises overlooking the junction and awaited the arrival of the Brit. When his car came within their sights they opened fire. One of the bullets shattered the car's windscreen, narrowly missing the Brit, who sustained injuries from broken glass. The IRA's Belfast Brigade in their statement claiming responsibility said that the plainclothes Brit was on an intelligence-gathering operation spying on the nationalist people.

Within an hour of the sniper attack an IRA bombing team planted three bombs in a government building on Belfast's Malone Road.

The bombs started a huge fire which caused extensive damage to the building.

In a further attack, the Belfast Brigade bombed a paint shop on North Belfast's Cliftonville Road. The building was extensively damaged.

IRA Warning

In a supplied statement to the media claiming responsibility for the day's bombing operations the IRA warned that civilians in receipt of bomb warnings should treat them with deadly seriousness and pass them on as fast as possible to

safeguard lives.

Sunday 3rd June Co. Armagh:

Two RUC men, one a Superintendent, the other a constable, were killed instantly when a 200lb landmine they were virtually standing on was detonated. The remote control booby-trap bomb was planted in a ditch in a narrow laneway at Clonalig, two miles south of Crossmaglen.

The two RUC men were part of a joint Brit/RUC team who were engaged in carrying out a search for explosives in the area. The search had been going on for most of the day and had just ended. The two RUC men were about to leave when the bomb was detonated. The explosion took place at half past nine. Boulders were scattered over a two hundred yard radius by the explosion.

The search had apparently been carried out in response to information the RUC had been given that explosives were secreted in the area. The RUC appear to have made yet another costly blunder. Their eagerness in following up information supplied to them will undoubtedly be dampened by these latest fatalities, which bring to nine the number of RUC men killed this year.

The loss of the RUC men, particularly a Superintendent will be a considerable blow to the RUC's morale in South Armagh, especially coming so quickly after the IRA's successful operation near Bessbrook when a 500lb van bomb was detonated killing four RUC men instantly. The Superintendent is the most senior RUC man to be killed this decade.

He was named as Superintendent Stanley Hanna, a divisional Superintendent in overall charge of the RUC in South Armagh. He had spent twenty-eight years in the RUC and was stationed at Bessbrook barracks.

The IRA in a statement emphasised that their successful operation should help hammer home to Direct-Ruler Atkins, the British government and the British people "the suicidal aspect of their effort in trying to maintain a British presence in the North against the will of the nationalist population."

Tuesday 5th June Belfast:

A double-bomb attack extensively damaged commercial premises in an office block in Upper Donegal Street in the centre of Belfast.

The bombs were planted by an active service unit just after four o'clock. A fire blazed for an hour, extensively damaging the four-storey building and wrecking offices belonging to a dozen firms.

There was widespread traffic disruption as rush-hour traffic was diverted away from the scene of the attack.

"The RUC offers rapid promotion within the ranks."

'Belfast Telegraph' headline on 'careers and opportunities' article two days after the IRA had killed an RUC Superintendent.