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1. LONG HARD WAR AHEAD

The I.R.A.'s pre-Christmas declaration of continuous struggle and rejection of any further ceasefires was the first signs of a serious reversal of a year of British counter-insurgency which was based on a "normalisation" policy. This declaration was immediately followed by widespread commercial bombings throughout the six-county statelet, the execution of the H-Blocks' commandant Albert Miles, attacks on British soldiers and Crown police and the re-opening of the war front on the English mainland.

From the viewpoint of those involved in the war of national liberation in Ireland 1978 has been a highly successful year from a military point of view. The I.R.A. faces the new year reorganised, confident but with no delusion regarding a swift victory, though British withdrawal is inevitable. It will be a long hard war before Britain is persuaded by the only means she understands to leave Ireland and give the Irish people the freedom to solve their own problems in their own way, a long fight is inevitable before Ireland is rid of the shackles of all foreign imperialism both British and European.

Blowing his trumpet over the Christmas the British GOC in Ireland, Gen. Sir Timothy Creasy, in statement to his men, declared 1978 "a year of steady progress in restoring the rule of

law". Such "progress" had been marked by an average of S.A.S. murders of one per month, atrocities that included even the murder of innocent children. This is what Creasy means by the "rule of law".

Whether the General likes it or not, international attention is being focused on the British occupation of Ireland against the will of the overwhelming majority of the Irish people. Whether he likes it or not, the I.R.A. has the power and ability to fight on indefinitely. The guerrilla forces of the I.R.A. have entered 1979 with a new feeling of prestige and future success, as can be gleaned from the diary which follows here of the details of the struggle since the last issue of our bulletin.

Belfast - December 12th

A letter bomb exploded in the home of a prison warden in the north of the city. In Lisburn, outside Belfast, two parcel bombs exploded at the houses of prison warders who work in Long Kesh prison camp.

Belfast - December 14th

One of the prison warders wounded in a gun attack on December 11th at Carlisle Circus died in hospital.

Dungannon - Dec. 14th

IRA bombs badly damaged the Dungannon, Co. Tyrone Golf Club. This was the third time these premises have been bombed.

Cookstown - December 14th

A bomb exploded in the Tavern Bar, in Cookstown, Co. Tyrone.

Omagh - December 15th

A high-jacked earthmover containing a bomb closed the main Cookstown Road for several hours, outside Omagh, Co. Tyrone.

Newry - December 16th

A bomb exploded in a local contractors yard causing widespread damage in the County Down town.

Britain - December 17th

In co-ordinated attacks in five major English I.R.A. Active Service Units planted bombs which exploded causing extensive damage to business premises in Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol, Coventry and Southampton. All bombs had been timed to explode in the early hours of the morning and thereby avoided civilian casualties.

Britain - December 18th

Car bombs exploded in Central

London at 1 a.m. in the morning. Two bombs exploded in the car park of the YMCA Hotel at Great Russell Street. The blasts started a major fire and hundreds of guests had to be evacuated from the hotel. Another bomb exploded at the junction of High Holburn and Drury Lane causing considerable damage to the Oasis Swimming Pool Complex.

Coalisland - December 18th

A member of the Ulster Defence Regiment was fired on but narrowly escaped on the Coalisland-Stewartstown Road, County Tyrone.

Belfast - December 19th

Five RUC men were injured one critically, when a booby trap car bomb exploded as the RUC men approached it. The car was placed alongside a factory wall in Forfar Street off the Springfield Road.

In the north of city city a British soldier was shot dead and another injured when a sniper opened fire in Baltic Avenue. In the planned attack the British Army patrol was lured into the area by a telephone "tip off" about arms in a house. The dead soldier was named as Corporal James Burnley a member of the Kings Own Scottish Borderers.

Bessbrook - December 19th

Derramore House was badly damaged when three bombs exploded in the County Armagh village. The house is Government property and it was here that the "Act of Union" was enforced by Britain upon Ireland in 1801.

Portadown - December 20th

Part of the Seagoe Hotel, Portadown was extensively damaged after two bombs exploded in the foyer.

Omagh - December 20th

A number of bombs exploded in the Knock-Na-Moe Castle Hotel, Omagh, Co. Armagh reducing the building to rubble.

Newry - December 20th

Four bombs were planted by armed and masked men in the Ardmore Hotel, Newry, Co. Down.

Dungannon - December 20th

The Inn-on-the-Park Hotel was destroyed by fire following two explosions.

A bomb exploded starting another fire in the Altmore House Hotel.

Several bombs were planted in Corrs Hotel on the shores of Lough Neagh. Explosions and fire caused

considerable damage.

Crossmaglen – December 21st

Three British soldiers were shot dead in a daring attack by the I.R.A. on of the County Armagh village. The four man foot patrol were fired on by an IRA unit when the back doors of the van opened revealing an M.60 machine gun. The I.R.A. unit escaped in the van under fire. The dead soldiers were all members of the Grenadier Guards and were named as Glenn Ling, Kevin Johnson and Graham Duggan.

Derry – December 22nd

An RUC man was injured when caught in a double bomb blast at Deery's Rugby Club. The building was extensively damaged when the bombs exploded.

Belfast – December 23rd

An IRA sniper opened fire on a British Army Patrol as it entered the Henry Taggart Barracks on the Upper Springfield Road.

Lurgan – December 24th

Lurgan County Armagh railway station which had been destroyed in a bomb attack a few years ago and rebuilt completely, was once again destroyed by fire following the planting of a number of bombs.

Derry – December 26th

Two business premises were extensively damaged by bomb attacks at a shopping complex in the Waterside area.

Belfast – December 31st

Fire bombs planted at Ulster Television Headquarters on the Ormeau exploded causing much blast damage.

Another five bombs were planted at Gallagher's Tobacco factory in York Street. The SKF ballbearing factory on the Newtownards Road, suffered blast damage when a bomb exploded.

Derry – January 1st 1979

Four bombs exploded at the Foyle Road Shopping Complex causing extensive damage to several business premises.

Cookstown – January 1st 1979

Two minutes before the New Year a massive 300lb car bomb exploded in Molesworth Street in the town centre. The blast devastated the Bank of Ireland building and caused widespread damage to shops within a one hundred yard radius.

This was the third car bomb in Cookstown main shopping area within the last three months.

Omagh – January 1st

Two bombs exploded in Moore and Smith furniture store on the Camalough Road. The building was completely destroyed.

Stewartstown – January 1st

A bomb exploded at the town's Ulster Bank causing considerable damage to the building.

Dungannon – January 1st

A bomb and a hoax bomb were planted at the Government's Housing Executive Offices.

Belfast – January 5th

Two volunteers of the I.R.A. died after a premature explosion at a car in the Ardoyne area of the city. The dead men were Laurence Montgomery (24), married with two children of Velsheda Park, Ardoyne, and 24-year-old Francis Donnelly, married from Etna Drive, Ardoyne.

The I.R.A. said that both men were in active service when they died.

2. GERMAN BOMBS CLAIMED

In the course of a statement to the English people claiming responsibility for bombs in central London recently, the I.R.A. pointed out that:

"Last August we bombed B.A.O.R. bases in West Germany to establish our ability to strike at British imperialism anywhere, at any time. That was a success, regrettably it did nothing to shake your complacency about Ireland, though it gave us the confidence we needed to carry out expeditionary attacks".

Last August eight bombs exploded in co-ordinated I.R.A. attacks on British Rhine Army bases in West Germany. The targets were Brit barracks, repair workshops and officers' clubs.

At just after 11 p.m. on Friday 18th August six bombs went off within six minutes of each other at barracks in Moenchengladbach and in nearby Dusseldorf.

An hour later two more bombs exploded at repair workshops in Minden and inside Moss Bank Barracks, Bielefeld, some 120 miles to the north-east of the first targets.

The surprised Brits were left scratching their heads, examining what they admitted to be "extensive damage" and wondering how their super-efficient "security" systems had been breached.

But then, there are plenty of I.R.A. targets in West Germany: There are 55,000 Brits stationed there.

3. H-BLOCKS CONDITIONS CONDEMNED BY LITERARY PEOPLE

In a statement on the conditions obtaining in H-Blocks, Long Kesh prison camp outside Belfast, Britain's infamous concentration camp, a number of well-known personalities in Ireland have expressed their anxiety at "the continuing and deteriorating conditions within the camp". The statement was signed by the following:

Michael Mullen, General Secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (the largest union in Ireland); Ulick O'Connor, Francis Stuart, Benedict Kiely and Liam de Paor, writers; and actress Siobhan Mc

Kenna. The statement continues:

"Mindful of the recent visit and concern expressed by Archbishop Tomas O Fiaich and of recent statements by Amnesty International and Senator Edward Kennedy on this issue, we feel we should speak out on the lack of initiative which has been shown by the parties involved to resolve the issue.

"Being aware that:

(a) An exceptional political situation exists in the North and that the majority of those in prison at present would not be there but for this.

(b) The prisoners in H Blocks have been tried under exceptional circumstances, without a jury, which in effect places them in a special category; and it should not be difficult, therefore, to find a solution, by which they would be given a different status to other prisoners.

(c) British Governments have granted a special category status in the past and therefore there is a precedent in this matter.

(d) Numerous groups have advocated penal reforms which could allow a way out of this impasse . . . we would therefore appeal to the Irish Government to use all the influence at their disposal both here and abroad, to bring about a speedy resolution to this unfortunate situation.

Another reputable writer, Donal Mac Amhlaigh writing from England states:

It is good to see that some of our literary people feel strongly enough about Roy Mason's strong-arm tactics in Long Kesh to protest loud and clear – as did Margaretta Darcy when she scrawled slogans on a wall of the Ulster Museum ('Irish Press' Nov. 24).

The demand for political status is entirely reasonable since political considerations are what motivated those enduring the stench and horror of H-Blocks today.

At least that applies to those of them who are in fact guilty of what they were charged with. But, since a lot of the convictions were obtained in no-jury courts where the confessions extracted by brutal means were the only evidence on offer, it is equally reasonable to believe that a lot of innocent men are among the sufferers.

What a different view the British take of their own wrongdoing: will anybody ever be brought to book for the murders committed by the British army – Joe McCann, Paddy McElhone, Kevin Heatley Majella O'Hare, young Boyle and many many more? Not bloody likely!"

4. BRITISH TORTURE COPIED FROM KOREAN CONFLICT

Mental and physical tortures, believed to have been copied from prisoner of war camps during the Korean conflict, are being used in Northern Ireland on political prisoners, who "will never again be the same", a noted American psychologist said in an interview recently.

"The men, women and children in

Northern Ireland prisons have been physically and psychologically damaged beyond repair", Rona Fields said after returning from Northern Ireland.

Ms Fields, visiting The Boston Globe enroute to Washington, said that more than 20,000 men, women and children have been arrested by British police in Northern Ireland since 1971. They have developed such symptoms as gastrointestinal disorders, loss of memory and defects in motor control, and there have been early deaths, she said. She charged that Irish prisoners in institutions outside Belfast have undergone stress-induced trauma that makes many of them "unable to ever perform the trades in which they were trained".

Ms Fields, who has been giving psychological tests to Northern Ireland political prisoners since 1971, said that the treatment has permanently damaged more than 20,000 people.

She said that prisoners in Castle Reagh and H-Block in Long Kesh both institutions outside Belfast, are beaten, starved, forced to go without sleep, and tortured with electric shocks to genitals and other parts of the body.

Rona Fields, who taught at Clark University in Worcester and has written several books on the effects of stress trauma, said that many people arrested in Northern Ireland in the past 10 years have become sexually impotent.

"The damage to these people is irreparable", she said. "Every man, woman or child affected by the arrest and torture affects 10 other people - friends, relatives, wives, children."

She said she had documented proof that prisoners are being hooded with burlap bags for days at a time, and, while hooded, beaten physically and subjected to noise, threats and loss of sleep and food.

"In time, the entire population will have deteriorated physically and psychologically," she said.

Rona Fields said she has visited Northern Ireland two or three times a year since 1971.

5. ENGLISH PRISON REPORT

The following report on the conditions under which Irish Republican prisoners of war are being held in prisons on the British mainland is by courtesy of the P.O.W. Bulletin, An Cumann Cabhrach (Prisoners' Committee), Birmingham.

Wormwood Scrubs

Gerry Mealey who has been in solitary confinement in Wormwood Scrubs since his move from Gartree following the October riots, caught his guards off-balance at the beginning of December. When in possession of an iron bar after gaining entry to one of the prison offices he completely demolished everything possible within reach before voluntarily handing the iron bar back

to his guards. Gerry informed his guards that his action (demolition job) was his way of demonstrating his 'solidarity' with those picketing outside on behalf of all Irish POW's.

Liverpool

Eddie Byrne who was moved out of Wormwood Scrubs almost four months ago to Liverpool remains in solitary confinement, he has his arm in a sling as a result of being assaulted. Eddie has been refusing visits because of conditions there and threats against him and his wife by screws.

Winchester

Ronnie McCartney incarcerated in Winchester prison continues his protest of non-cooperation with the British authorities and is still refusing visits because of restrictions place on both him and his visitors. As a result of his continuing actions Ronnie remains in his special cell, known as 'the Strongbox'. The latest vicious act against Ronnie was the refusal to permit him to purchase from his own private cash, Christmas cards for his family circle.

Manchester

James Bennett (Belfast) has now been moved to Manchester prison from Wormwood Scrubs where he had commenced his 'blanket' protest with Michael Murray (Dublin), James will be joining Eddie Butler (Limerick) who has now been in solitary confinement since February when moved from Leicester security unit.

Albany

With James Bennett (Belfast) the other five POW's continue 'on the blanket', the four in Albany prison, Isle of Wight are Patrick Guilfoyle (Tipperary), Robert Cunningham (Tyrone), Anthony Cunningham (Belfast) and Liam Baker (Belfast), together with Michael Murray (Dublin) in Wormwood Scrubs. Their barbaric treatment has not abated. Screws are still hosing out the cells, the POW's and their bedding with hot water, depriving them of their chamber-pots, and causing undue delays in permitting toilet usage. The POW's personal possessions are still denied them, their mail restricted and delayed. They are locked in their cells 23 hours out of every 24 and are rarely given a newspaper. Mass is still refused them in the main chapel.

Other POW's in Albany are also continuing their protest of non-cooperation, which started last April when visiting and other conditions seriously worsened.

All the POW's retain their strength and determination in this struggle for their just demands and BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS.

Another year has now ended for Irish POW's in England's 'Hellholes', with their lot still generally deteriorating as in previous years.

6. NEITHER STERLING NOR DEUTSCHMARK

The following statement was issued recently by Sinn Fein, the political wing of the Republican Movement.

"Sinn Fein has always maintained that the 26 County State was financially and economically subservient to England. The link with Sterling has always meant that we import English inflation and that our interest rates move in sympathy with Bank of England rates, irrespective of the major differences in economic needs of the two countries. We have always advocated that a free Ireland should break the Sterling link, establish a National monetary System and control the import and export of money.

Fianna Fail is now seeking to act a Republican role by supposedly breaking the link with Sterling. What is proposed, however is a change of masters. Within the European Monetary System we would still be dominated by foreign interests, this time a group dominated by West Germany. The new system is just one more step on the road to economic and political integration in an E.E.C. dominated by the ex-colonial powers of Western Europe - a new and more sinister kind of colonialism.

Just as James Connolly and the Irish Citizen Army accepted neither King nor Kaiser, Sinn Fein accepts neither Sterling nor Deutschmark. We assert the right of our nation to freedom; the right of our workers to democratic control of the means of production, distribution and exchange; and our right to an independent and non-aligned policy in foreign affairs. The basic tenets of Irish Republicanism are still valid and no one should be misled by Jack Lynch's pseudo Republicanism.

SINN FEIN FOREIGN AFFAIRS BUREAU

7 NAMIBIA - S.W.A.P.O. FIGHTS ON

"Prospects for free, fair and democratic elections are increasingly doubtful, if not untenable," said Sam Nujoma, leader of SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organisation) recently as he insisted that South Africa confine its 10,000 occupation troops to their bases before a truce could be possible.

South Africa has ruled Namibia, a huge desert country but one of the richest parts of Africa with diamonds, copper, and the world's largest uranium mine, since 1920. In 1975, under international pressure, South Africa agreed to work towards independence while at the same time giving support to a white-led coalition of black and white parties called the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance. The leader, a rich white

farmer, is a former member of South Africa's ruling National Party. By pouring money into this Alliance, the South African racists hope to ensure a puppet regime will come to power after elections they are organising, in a future 'independent' Namibia.

Hardly surprisingly SWAPO, the radical liberation movement, rejects the creation of such a Namibian 'free state,' and even the South African appointed administrator general, Justice Steyn, has had to admit that his whitewashing token reforms have fooled nobody. "The more I have been doing, the more the SWAPO line has hardened," he said.

Meanwhile the quality of SWAPO training and equipment has improved — formerly armed only with rifles and grenades, they now have rockets, mortars and heavy machine-guns. Recently three South African army officers were killed in a rocket attack on their car, and a vital water pipeline was blown up in northern Namibia. Although "the struggle will be intensified on all levels" SWAPO state that they seek coexistence with Namibia's white population, as long as they are not in a privileged position in an independent state. SWAPO draws much support from the Ovambo people of northern Namibia, but also has a large following among young urban blacks, its National Executive includes members from a number of tribal groups, and it maintains that the establishment is trying to use tribalism in order to 'divide and rule.' At the constitutional conference, which SWAPO boycotted delegations can represent only tribes — not political groupings. (Irish people are only too aware of the attempts made by imperialist powers to put community against community in order to hold the land they occupy, and Namibia is no exception).

SWAPO support throughout Namibia has been described as 'massive' by an independent survey carried out by Stellenbosch University. They have refused to participate in any elections organised by the South African government, and when they boycotted the elections in the Ovamboland area only 2.6% of the electorate turned out to vote. It is widely admitted that without SWAPO's participation the independence talks cannot reach a widely acceptable solution, and there will be a serious intensification of the armed struggle.

Interestingly enough, after years of condemning SWAPO as communist, even a pro-South African government newspaper has recently suggested that "SWAPO is only one quarter communist and three quarters Christian." During 1976 and 1977 SWAPO presented its political programme — clearly socialist and showing rejection of capitalism, but in no way doctrinaire. It is distinctively Namibian but with similarities to Tanzanian and FRELIMO (Mozambique) programmes — and also of interest to Irish Republicans because of some parallels with Sin Fein's 'Eire Nua.'

The principles of SWAPO's economic programme can be summarised as follows:

(1) Four types of ownership — state-owned, partially state-owned, co-operative, privately-owned.

(2) Natural resources and the principal means of transportation, communications, mass-media, will be owned by the state or by people's organisations or societies.

(3) Private ownership of property and the means of production will only be allowed if it serves the interests of the people, and is useful to the economic development of Namibia.

(4) There will be land reform. People who acquired land during the colonial era will be required to enter into new agreements.

(5) There will be a central bank and 'people's owned' commercial, agricultural and co-operative banks, but no private or foreign owned banks. Those currently existing will enter into a new agreement with the government.

At the same time, the war of liberation continues with an estimated 4,000 guerrilla freedom fighters under SWAPO's military wing — the People's Liberation Army of Namibia, which began a campaign in 1966 when the World Court of Justice decided not to pronounce upon the illegality of South Africa's occupation of Namibia. SWAPO replied: "We have no alternative but to rise in arms and bring about our own liberation."

8 INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY REPORTS

The preliminary hearing of the International Tribunal on Britain's presence in Ireland will take place in Conway Hall, London, on 24th, 25th, 26th January.

A panel of international judges will examine oral and documentary evidence on several aspects of Britain's activities in Ireland and will decide if the British government has a prima-facie case to answer.

Given the horrendous reports coming out of the H-Blocks the preliminary hearing will devote much of its enquiries to this issue.

Two documents are currently available from the Tribunal. One outlines the aims and brief of the enquiry, and the other, from the tribunal's women's sub-committee, contains an initial investigation into the particular effects on Irish women of Britain's presence in Ireland.

These documents and further information are available from Tribunal, c/o 182 Upper Street, London N1, or by contacting A. Logan 0483-64766 (day-time) or P. Prendiville 01-328-1545 (after 6 p.m.).

PRISONERS SUPPORTED

A picket was held in solidarity with the Irish POW's and their struggle for political status, on November 15th.

The picket was organised by the 'Ireland Komitee, Nederland' in front of

the 'Paleis Van Justice'; it was timed to coincide with the trial of seven people who occupied the Amsterdam British Airways office in July. (For which they were found guilty and fined.)

The slogans of the picket were: 'British Troops Out,' 'Political Status for Political Prisoners,' 'End British Torture in Ireland,' and 'There Will Be No Peace In An Occupied Ireland.'

The following report came from the Irish Committee in Paris:

We are pleased to send you some news of the activities of the Comité Irlandais in Paris.

On 21st October we held an Irish Festival in a youth club in Alfortville. About fifty people came to the film, debate and the music session.

On 16th, 17th and 18th November, we organised with the youth club of Ermont-Eaubonne (30 km from Paris) three Irish days, and the activities of the club got around to the question of the struggle in Ireland and how the people live there.

About 250 Irish stews were served in the restaurant decorated with flags and posters. At the entrance of the restaurant, was a large room with an exhibition of photos about the struggle and the social life in Ireland.

Also we held three meetings with the film "Ireland, England's Vietnam" and there were very interesting debates with the audience.

Finally, these three days ended with a session of Irish and Celtic music where fifty pounds have been collected for the prisoners fund.

We send you our best "amities."

Students of the Paisley College of Technology, Paisley, Renfrewshire, Scotland, have reported on their first public meeting held at the college in solidarity with the Irish cause. It was agreed that a major part of their solidarity work should be around the question of status for the men 'on the blanket' in H-Blocks, Long Kesh.

"We intend to use our resources to publicise the treatment meted out in the hell blocks, and to fight the propaganda churned out by the Brit war machine," said the report.

PLEASE WRITE!

We ask our overseas readers to write and let us know how long this weekly bulletin takes to arrive at its destination, if the news is sufficiently interesting and of practical use and any suggestions that might help to improve the service.

The last issue you should have received was on December 14th 1978. We will continue the weekly editions as from now.

Irish Republican
Information Service

Kevin Barry House,
44 Parnell Square,
Dublin 1, Ireland