

Sinn Féin

WEST BELFAST BULLETIN

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INDEPENDENT INQUIRY DEMANDED

West Belfast MP Gerry Adams has invited Amnesty International to investigate the killing of three men in West Belfast by a British army undercover squad.

The three men were shot and killed on January 13th as they attempted to rob a betting shop on the Falls Road in Belfast. Eye-witnesses described how the plain clothed British soldiers first shot the driver sitting in the getaway car and then, as two other members of the gang emerged from the shop, opened fire on them. As the two men lay injured on the ground, the British army squad continued to fire into their bodies, in effect, finishing them off.

The British version of events, as explained by the RUC and subsequent British government statements, was that "two soldiers happened upon an armed robbery and acted to prevent a threat to life posed by what they believed were armed and dangerous men". Several hours after the incident, the RUC produced imitation

firearms and hoods in justification for the shooting.

These explanations were belied by eye-witness accounts and further contradicted by the facts which emerged from an investigation personally conducted by Gerry Adams. Namely, four robbers had taken part — the fourth managed to run back into the shop as the shooting started, mingle with customers and escape in the ensuing confusion. He and his three accomplices were part of a gang which had earlier purchased two guns stolen from an unmarked British army car. Since then they and their families had felt they were under surveillance. On the morning of the raid, one of the gang said he thought a British army helicopter was following them.

The British government has so far refused demands for an independent inquiry which have been made by Sinn Féin, the SDLP and even Bishop Cahal Daly. Instead, the British argued that an RUC investigation would be sufficient and pointed out that British forces were acting under difficult



● Gerry Adams MP addressing a shoot-to-kill protest rally, Whiterock Road, on January 21st circumstances in areas like West Belfast — an area which was labelled by Peter Brooke, the present British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, as a "terrorist community".

On January 21st, a rally was called on the initiative of local campaigner Father Des Wilson to protest against the killings and object to Peter Brooke's jaundiced view of West Belfast. The rally took place at the spot where the three were killed. West Belfast MP Gerry Adams told a crowd of several hundreds that:

"Regardless of their activities, no terrorist of a foreign army or of a foreign government has a right to kill, wound or imprison any Irish citizen."

COUNCIL BIGOTRY

In a blatantly sectarian start to the new decade, Belfast City Council ratified its decision to deny funding to the Falls Women's Centre in nationalist West Belfast when a casting vote by Unionist Lord Mayor, Reg Empey, ended a 21-21 stalemate. A £2,000 council grant was to be axed on the grounds that the centre had met with a delegation

of women from the British-based Troops Out Movement last year.

At a full council meeting on January 2nd, an attempt to reverse the Community Services Committee's decision was narrowly defeated by Workers' Party Councillor Seamus Lynch whose abstention ensured a Unionist victory.

Last year, the centre dealt with 5,000 cases, ranging from housing and welfare to rape, incest and violence against women.

The sectarian stance of the council was exposed when funding for the Shankill Women's Centre, in loyalist West Belfast, whose activities are broadly parallel to that of the Falls Centre, was endorsed without opposition.

In the same council chamber, a series of vicious cut-backs were

announced against advice workers and leisure centres on January 5th in North and West Belfast. Community workers are preparing contingency plans to counteract what Unionist Councillor Fred Cobain described as "good house-keeping by the Unionist family". Block grants to hard-hit community councils will be cut by 20% whilst plans have been endorsed to begin work on a £20-million concert hall/conference centre.

EAGARFHOCAL

BRITISH MURDER WITH IMPUNITY

Recent events in Ireland have focussed attention once again on what is now widely called the 'shoot-to-kill' tactics — if not policy — of the British forces:

■ Three young men gunned down in Belfast by a British undercover squad when they could have been arrested.

■ The resurfacing of the 'Stalker affair', the English policeman who was suspended from his job because of what he had found out in the course of leading an inquiry into killings by the RUC.

■ The questions asked by the widow of a Loyalist shot dead last year by another British undercover squad after he had killed an innocent Catholic.

■ The ongoing struggle of Mrs McKerr from Armagh to have the RUC brought to justice for killing her husband in 1982.

In January, the 18th Bloody Sunday commemoration took place in Derry. On January 30th, 1972, a regiment of British paratroopers opened fire on Civil Rights demonstrators, killing fourteen and injuring nine.

The circumstances surrounding Bloody Sunday and the incidents mentioned above, together with many, many others, such as the shooting dead of three unarmed Irish Republicans in Gibraltar in March 1988, point to one inescapable truth — that these killings were deliberate, planned actions and not spontaneous or panic reactions.

While the British have always produced the same explanation, couched in the same terms, that their soldiers or police acted because they thought their lives or the lives of the public were being threatened, such explanations convince fewer and fewer people, least of all when passers-by actually witness the shooting. Internationally, also, the excuses are wearing thin.

The real purpose behind these killings seems to be either

the intimidation of political protesters, as on Bloody Sunday and in the case of killings by plastic bullets at demonstrations, or quite simply the execution of individuals who are considered 'suspect' by the British.

Between 1969 and 1985, the British crown forces in uniform shot over 183 civilians in the Six Counties. This would be equivalent to the shooting of seven thousand people in Britain.

The British government is very image conscious and spends millions of pounds annually to convince the international community that what it is doing in the North of Ireland is keeping the peace between gangs of criminals and terrorists, and that Britain does so while respecting democratic principles and abiding by the rule of law.

There have been countless calls for investigations, inquests, public inquiries and tribunals — and some have taken place. However, only one member of the British forces has ever been convicted of carrying out a murder while on duty — Private Ian Thain who killed Thomas 'Kidso' Reilly in Belfast in August 1984. Thain only served eighteen months of a life sentence and then rejoined his regiment.

The killings listed above are not considered by the British government to be mistakes or crimes committed by errant members of their armed forces. They are acts of war against the nationalist population of the Six Counties.

The reason why people protest on the streets against these killings, the reason why relatives of the victims subject themselves to years of legal proceedings, is not in order to win some kind of legal argument with the British government. It is because of a yearning for justice and for peace — the justice and the peace which spring from the freedom of a people to determine their own future, free from interference.

Stevens inquiry - a burning issue

Last Autumn, John Stevens from Cambridgeshire police was appointed to head an inquiry into the leak of RUC and UDR intelligence files to loyalist paramilitaries, some of which later resulted in assassinations and assassination attempts.

So far only three members of the crown forces have been charged in relation to the leaks. Last October the Stevens Inquiry had requested the arrest of approximately 100 members of the UDR but, after the UDR Commander raised objections with the RUC, the number was reduced to 25.

The extent of RUC collusion with loyalists is so deep that in Derry the RUC members involved in an investigation into the finding of a loyalist cache of intelligence documents had to be removed from the case.

On January 10th a 'mysterious' fire broke out in the offices of the Steven's inquiry team destroying computer equipment, files and records. No plausible explanation for the fire has been given.

WEST BELFAST RALLY

KATE FINUCANE, mother of extraditee Dermot, and Rosaleen Russell, sister of Robert who was extradited in 1988 were given a rousing reception when they addressed a rally of several hundred people in Lenadoon in West Belfast on January 14th.

The crowd gathered at a local shopping centre and made its way throughout the Lenadoon estate, passing the home of the Finucane family. The organisers were very pleased with the turnout and pledged at the rally to continue the campaign against extradition.



● DERMOT FINUCANE

Addressing the rally, Sinn Féin Councillor Mairtin O Muilleoir said: "The ruthless shootings on Saturday highlight the nature of the system into which the Dublin government is handing Irish citizens."

Kate Finucane said: "It is ridiculous that the Dublin government complains about the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six while continuing to extradite Irish people into the same system of so-called justice."

New fair employment legislation ineffective

On the first of January this year new British government legislation on fair employment came into effect. It is generally accepted that this legislation came about as the British government's response to the highly successful MacBride Principles Campaign being conducted in the United States.

It is also generally accepted that the legislation is a cosmetic exercise designed to undermine the MacBride Campaign and the concern of human rights activists on the issue rather than a genuine attempt to tackle the problem. Commenting on the new legislation, Gerry Adams said:

"The refusal by the British

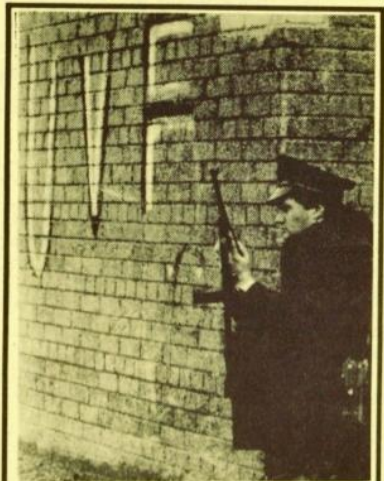
government to adopt the modest proposal of its own Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights of reducing the unemployment ratio of two-and-a-half to one between Catholic and Protestant males to one-and-a-half to one over a five year period is a declaration of intent that no significant positive effect on discrimination

is expected from the new legislation.

"The legislation is in effect a purely political response to the MacBride Campaign which will leave the consequences of structural discrimination intact for generations to come.

"Political pressure must be maintained on the British government, which has never shown good faith on the issue, until discrimination is eradicated and equality of opportunity in employment is realised.

"That situation would be clearly visible in a workforce which by and large reflects the denominational ratios in the community as a whole."



A fair cop?

The trial of former UDR man Samuel McCoubrey, accused of the mass manufacture of machine-guns provides an interesting insight into the level of involvement of British forces in loyalist paramilitary organisations. Apart from the fact that while illegally manufacturing these weapons McCoubrey was a member of the UDR, his statements also revealed the participation of a West Belfast based RUC man in the movement of the illegal weapons and of a unionist councillor in arranging the production of the machine-guns.

In statements McCoubrey said that an RUC man he knew came to his factory to collect two boxes containing home-made sub-machine-guns. McCoubrey had known the RUC man for some time and said that: "He was stationed in West Belfast where he worked mainly with the [British] army".

A telling example of the type of 'impartial policemen' who are roaming the streets of West Belfast.

Britain indicted in Oslo

The influential Norwegian Helsinki Committee (NHC) — one of a number of bodies set up to monitor human rights abuses after the Helsinki Conference in the '70s — has produced an 80-page report on human rights abuses in the Six Counties. The report, *Human Rights in Northern Ireland — Irish Terrorism or British Colonialism*, was launched in Oslo on January 11th. Belfast Human Rights campaigner Fr Des Wilson attended the launch and welcomed the increased international attention given to repression in Ireland.

General secretary of the NHC and co-author of the report, Bjorn Cato Funnemark said:

"At a time when democracy in Europe has never been stronger, Northern Ireland remains an isolated issue, pushed onto the fringe of Western Europe."

He dismissed the concept of Britain as a peace-keeping force or the problem as "one of mindless terrorism" and described the situation as "a long ignored" political and economic problem. He welcomed the MacBride Principles and called on Fred Olsen Ltd, the Norwegian-based owners of Belfast shipbuilders Harland and Wolff, to implement the Principles.

Reuiff Steen, former President of the Norwegian Parliament, welcomed the report and also backed the Principles.

BISHOP DALY CHALLENGED



● BISHOP CAHAL DALY

Catholic Bishop Cahal Daly has been criticised for attacking the MacBride Principles and upholding the British government line during a visit to the United States last November. Bishop Daly claims that he was misrepresented in the US press. However, the Bishop was further criticised when he refused to answer letters from or to meet with the four pro-MacBride bodies in the North.

A spokesperson for the Fair Employment Trust, The Upper Springfield Resource Centre, Concerned Community Organisations and Springhill Community House said:

"It is utterly deplorable that Bishop Daly, who repeatedly professes the non-political nature of his role, should continue to ignore all communications from members of his own flock on issues of job discrimination."

Sinn Féin, Eastern Europe and democracy

In a New Year statement analysing the dramatic events in Romania and in general in Eastern Europe, Sinn Féin stated that the central issue involved in those countries, as in Ireland, is the right of peoples to national self-determination.

In a considered statement, Sinn Féin drew comparisons with developments in Eastern European countries in the sense that their freedom has come about largely as a result of the non-interference by the USSR and its acceptance of the inevitability of self-determination. In Ireland, however, the situation is vastly different. People power, which proved an important strategy in the European countries, was used between 1968-72, during the Civil Rights demonstrations in the North of Ireland.

The peaceful protesters who sought moderate reforms to the sectarian Northern state of the Six Counties, which discriminated against the nationalist community, were viciously beaten off the streets by the state forces. State violence culminated with the Bloody Sunday massacre in January 1972 when British paratroopers shot dead 14 unarmed Civil Rights protesters in Derry City.

Twenty years on, the British government refuses to begin the process of decolonisation and, unlike the situation in Eastern Europe, has demonstrated its preparedness, time and again, to use excessive military force and terror to maintain partition for its own political, economic and strategic interests in Ireland.

Sinn Féin's statement came in response to various misleading calls by Irish 'constitutional' politicians for the IRA to follow the example of peaceful protests and to abandon its armed struggle against British rule. Martin McGuinness responded:

"If these politicians were genuinely concerned in bringing about the conditions for peace in Ireland they would use their influence and commit themselves to beginning a mass people power struggle against the British presence in Ireland. They would not find Republicans unwilling to support that campaign."

He went on to dismiss a spurious attack by SDLP leader John Hume to the effect that the IRA were the equivalent to the Romanian Securitate and are the "only people in Europe today who need guns... apart from the dictators". McGuinness stated:

"Attempting to couple the IRA with the



● MARTIN MCGUINNESS

Securitate is the latest example of Mr Hume's inability to come to terms with the reality of politics in Ireland. It is an absurd comparison and he knows that. If he really wants to find an Irish equivalent of Ceausescu's Secret Police then he need look no further than the RUC: an organisation that has been condemned by various human rights organisations; that operates a policy of murder, oppression and torture; that deals in stealth and intrigue; that has close links with loyalist death squads; that ransacks homes; that terrorises all those who disagree with it; and is distrusted by a considerable section of the nationalist community.

"That, however, is a comparison that Mr Hume is unable and unlikely to make, given his current dependence on the British government."

WHO SAID WHAT...

There is no solution other than that the British Government must go. And they must take their killers with them.

— Father Des Wilson speaking after the killing of three men by British undercover soldiers.

The authorities gunned down that 'confidence' [in the crown forces] along with the Irish men and women they have gunned down since they decided that the taking of prisoners was to become a thing of the past. The term 'British Justice' has, for the majority of nationalists, become a contradiction in terms the very mention of which is more likely to provoke gales of ironic laughter than the hushed, respectful reverence to which its perpetrators seem to think it is due. We know that no matter what sort of official inquiry is held — internal or external — the outcome is going to be the same. No-one is going to spend a day in jail for the Whiterock deaths.

— Andersonstown News Editorial.

If you come up with a way of overcoming police evidence in an Irish case you should patent it.

— Comment of English barrister in BBC drama series, *Blind Justice*.

It came across clearly to me that the determination of the people hasn't changed. The past 20 years seem to have strengthened their resolve to pursue the struggle to a successful conclusion.

— West Belfast Republican Jimmy Burns describing his first parole after 13 years in Gaol.

Sinn Féin's demands

● Sinn Féin's ultimate objective is to create the political conditions necessary to secure a true and lasting peace in Ireland. This can only be achieved by:

- The ending of partition arising from British rule in six of Ireland's 32 counties;
- British disengagement from Ireland and the restoration to the Irish people of the right to exercise self-sovereignty, independence and national self-determination;
- The setting of a definite date within the lifetime of a British government for the completion of this withdrawal;
- The disarming and disbandment of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Ulster Defence Regiment as part of the military withdrawal;
- The calling of a Constitutional Conference to which all political parties would be invited. This conference to be responsible for determining the nature and composition of an emergent national police service and the judiciary. If Britain was sincere about disengaging and was committed to an orderly transference of power, this could be achieved with a minimum of disorder; and
- The unconditional release of all political prisoners.