

H-BLOCK / ARMAGH BULLETIN

Issued weekly by the
BELFAST H BLOCK/
ARMAGH COMMITTEE

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IN SORROW AND ANGER

FRANCIS HUGHES DIED ON TUESDAY, one week after Bobby Sands. At the news of his death, the nationalist people of Belfast poured onto the streets in sorrow and anger, a reaction shared throughout Ireland and across the world.

Wednesday, people assembled at the Busy Bee from 9 o'clock in the morning to pay their last respects — expecting the body of Francis Hughes to be brought through West Belfast on the way to his home town of Bellaghy.

But in a ghoulish act of bigotry, designed to cause maximum pain to the Hughes family and maximum insult to the crowds who had waited patiently throughout the day — the RUC 'arrested' the body of Francis Hughes and told his family that unless they agreed to it being taken direct to Bellaghy they would not release the remains.

From 2.45 until 5.30 p.m. the family held out against this cruel edict of the RUC. Finally, emotionally worn down by their arrogance, they 'agreed' to going to Bellaghy, after, as they thought, getting agreement from the RUC that they could take over custody of their son's body at Toomebridge. But 10 minutes after leaving the hospital, the RUC escort blocked the hearse and mourning cars, dragged the driver from the hearse and assaulted Francis Hughes' father,

Owen Carron, Jimmy Drumm and other friends and family members. When allowed to proceed, the cortege was then

led by the RUC through a protestant housing estate where it was stoned by a loyalist mob — the RUC making no effort to intervene.

At Randalstown the RUC forced the mourning cars to take the Toome Road while the hearse was driven out the road to Portglenone. Owen Carron, who protested, was again physically and verbally assaulted. At 7.30 p.m. the hearse finally arrived at the family home.

On Friday in Bellaghy, a crowd estimated by some journalists at 70,000 to 80,000 finally were able to pay their last respects to Francis Hughes — whom the RUC and Brits feared more in death than in life. But even then, the bigotry and hatred of the RUC was not at an end.

They deliberately routed Belfast buses returning from the funeral through Portglenone where several buses were stoned by a gang of loyalists as the RUC stood by, making no attempt to apprehend those guilty of endangering life. But when H-Block supporters themselves tried to disperse the crowd, the RUC turned plastic bullet guns on them, and ordered them back on the buses. Three people, including an elderly woman, were taken to hospital.

RUC bigotry has once again been exposed to the world at large. But never over the last twelve years of struggle have the Irish people been more united in their determination to win through to the 5 demands of the prisoners — despite the worst that the RUC and the British Army can do.



56 DAYS OF HUNGER STRIKE

ATTACKS & RESISTANCE

SINCE FRANCIS HUGHES' death on Tuesday, the Brits and the RUC have stepped up the level of assaults on the nationalist people of Belfast. There have been many incidents of injuries — and a death — from rubber and plastic bullets, and other missiles the Brits are resorting to in their frustration at not breaking the people's resistance. Many of these have occurred in situations where local people have testified that no riots were going on — and many have resulted from situations where the Brits and RUC have gone into an area that was quiet and provoked a riot by their actions.

On Tuesday evening Julia Livingstone, a 14-year-old schoolgirl from Lenadoon, was hit by a plastic bullet while attempting to take cover from random shooting by the Brits and RUC, and died of her injuries.

On the same evening, Brits fired a lead pellet from an air pistol which hit a Turf Lodge youth just below the heart, while the next day their target was a 4-year-old, Donald Madden from Norglen Road, hit while playing on the street by a plastic bullet from a saracen. There was no riot going on, the saracen simply fired up the street as it drove past. Last Saturday a youth in Turf Lodge was hit in the throat by a plastic bullet and is still in hospital, and another one was hit in the neck.

REACTION TO CROWDS

On the Falls Road, when crowds gathered spontaneously on the streets after the news of Francis Hughes reached them, there were many incidents of indiscriminate firing into peaceful crowds.

In the Beechmount Iveagh area the local H-Block/Armagh Committee organised a peaceful demonstration and rosary recital, after issuing a bulletin calling on the youth for restraint. But the Brits seemed to be determined to make sure that no crowd, peaceful or otherwise, would gather, and constantly drove through the meeting, firing plastic bullets at random. Undeterred, the women of the area went on with the rosary — which seemed to have some effect on the Brits but not the RUC. They concentrated their efforts at Beechmount Avenue, firing plastic bullets from landrovers while the rosary was going on.

Not surprisingly, when the rosary was over, a full scale riot situation developed, and eventually the Brits and the RUC were forced out of the area — attacked by women with bin lids and whistles, and by youth and barricades.

In the Clonard area, RUC and Brits again fired plastic bullets indiscriminately at men, women and children. The local women's action group swung into action with bin lids and whistles and forced them out of the area. The Committee reported that 'local residents listening to the police messages heard the RUC state that the Clonard Women's Philharmonic Orchestra was on the streets again. The music of the binlids and whistles was sweet to the ears of Clonard people, but was deafening to the ears of those uniformed murderers. The people of other areas should copy the actions of the Clonard Action Group and keep the British and RUC out.'

Also on Tuesday evening, Mrs Paula Donnelly, who is four months pregnant, was hit on the back of the head by a plastic bullet fired by the RUC as she stood at her neighbour's door in Leeson Street, with a child in her arms. No riot was going on.

Outside the H-Block Centre on Linden Street, where crowds gathered for a rosary, the Brits and RUC tried the same tactics, firing at random. But the rosary went on, and later lines of people blocked the streets to their vehicles, and assembled again at 10.30, despite the fearful reports of army/RUC shootings coming in, for a brief meeting.

Last Saturday outside the same centre, a 16-year-old standing at the corner of Linden Street was hit at point-blank range with a plastic bullet at a time when no rioting was taking place. He was rushed by ambulance to the Roa RVH where his condition was reported very serious and he was put onto a life support machine.

Elsewhere on Tuesday evening, the RUC fired plastic bullets into a peaceful rosary being held in the Short Strand, while in the New Lodge, 1000 people attending a rosary at the New Lodge grotto were harassed by army vehicles driving round and round at speed in an attempt to provoke the crowd. They were driven away by women bashing bin lids — which, the Committee say — probably prevented several arrests and plastic bullet incidents.

NEW MISSILES

Turf Lodge residents have suffered several attacks, both by plastic bullets and by other improvised weapons used by the frustrated Brits. On Saturday night a 15-year-old youth was hit in the throat, and is still in hospital, while another boy was hit in the neck. On Wednesday afternoon, 4-year-old Donald Madden was hit by a passing saracen which fired a volley of plastic bullets from the bottom of the street. He was rushed to hospital and had stitches to the head. Again, there was no riot going on.

This week, the army seems to have resorted to firing lead pellets and darts from air guns. One prominent H-Block activist had her window broken by a lead pellet, while a youth was shot below the heart by a similar pellet, and a man returning home from work on Thursday night was narrowly missed by a dart fired from an air pistol by Brits in the Henry Taggart. The use of lead pellets has also been reported from the Clonard area, as well as the finding of a rubber bullet with razor blades embedded in the leading end. Fortunately no one was hit by this last vicious invention.

POLEGLASS ORGANISES

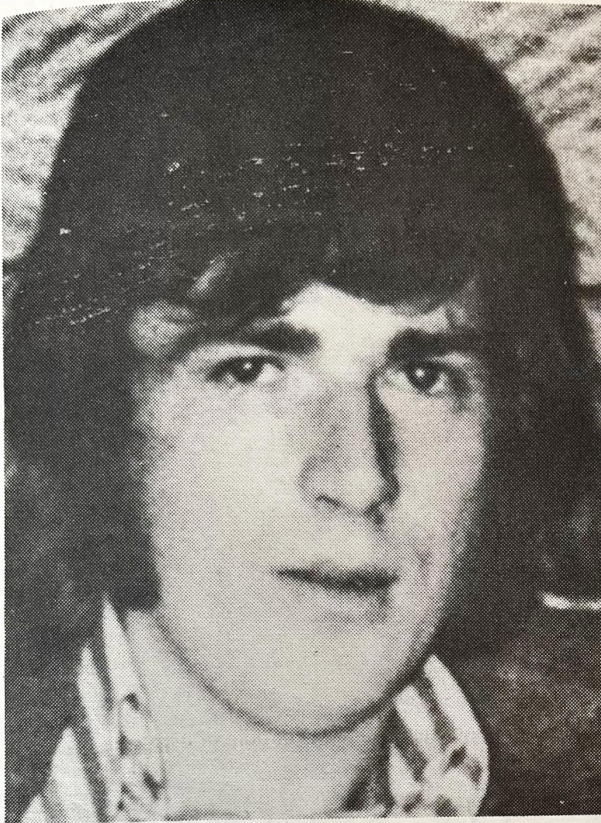
H-Block/Armagh activists in Poleglass have organised a committee, despite active discouragement from the 'Workers Party' — which has been organising a petition to have black flags removed from windows. The Brits immediately turned their attention on the activists, smashing two windows of the house where the local committee was to meet on the lie that they had seen 'two men running into the house.'

ACTIVISTS HARRASSED

Colin activists have been stopped, P-checked and held on the street by army foot patrols while going round the area loudhailing and leafletting. In one incident, local residents came out and chased the patrol away, while in another, a woman journalist observing the incident was herself P-checked and her notes on the event confiscated by the army!

In the Short Strand, a peaceful roadblocking on Wednesday afternoon resulted in the arrest of two leading H-Block Committee members. The response of the people of the area was to block the bridge again, 2 hours later, with double the numbers.

2 MORE JOIN HUNGER STRIKE



BRENDAN McLAUGHLIN, from Co. Derry, began his hunger strike on Thursday, and has now gone 3 days without food.

He, like Joe McDonnell, is in H-Block 5. He is a single man from Greysteel, near Eglinton in North Derry, and is 29 years old.

He was reared on a small farm, and his father died when he was aged 12. He left school at 15, worked in a petrol station for two years, and then on building sites.

After 1970 he joined the Civil Rights struggle, and after internment was introduced he joined the Republican movement.

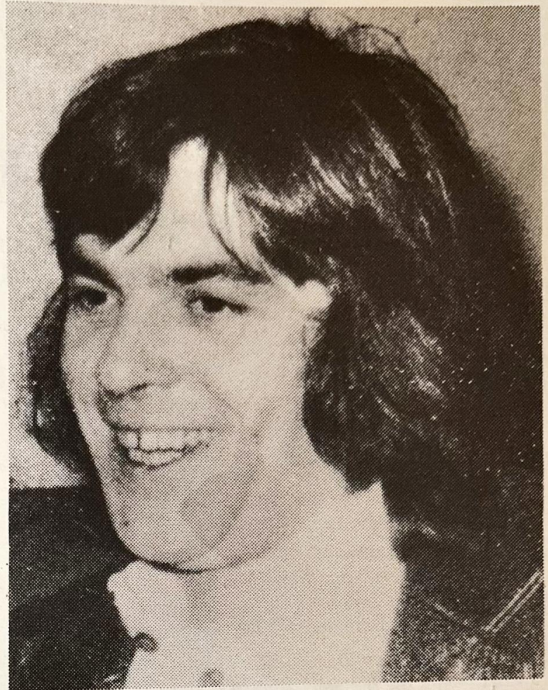
In September 1972 he was forced to go on the run and went to live in the Free State. His mother died on Christmas Eve, 1973.

In May 1974 he was arrested out of the house he was living in, charged with withholding information and sentenced to four months in Portlaoise Jail. In late 1974 he returned to Derry.

In May 1976, after a three-hour siege at his house in North Derry, he, his 31 year old Brother Michael, and Tom McFeeley (who was on the first hunger strike last year) were arrested.

When Brendan was being interrogated in Limavady RUC Barracks he refused to eat or drink, or cooperate in any way, and was badly beaten. His Brother was later acquitted.

On February 4th, 1977, Brendan was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment. On February 5th 1977 he went on the blanket and forfeited visits rather than wear the prison uniform.



JOE McDONNELL from Belfast joined the hunger strike last Saturday, and is now on his 8th day.

He is 30 years old, and was born in Belfast, one of a family of nine. He is married with two children, Bernadette 10 and Joseph, 9.

Joe McDonnell joined the Republican movement shortly after internment was introduced. He had been living with his in-laws in Horn Drive, but they were burned out by the UDA.

He was interned in '72 for a few months, first on the prison ship 'Maidstone' and then in the Kesh, and was re-interned from '73 to '74.

In October 1976 he was arrested after a commercial bombing attack on the Balmoral Furnishing Company in Upper Dunmurray Lane on the outskirts of Belfast. A gun battle ensued when the RUC arrived, and two volunteers, Seamus Martin and Gabriel Corbett were wounded. Joe was arrested with three others, the late Bobby Sands, M.P., Sean Lavery and Seamus Finucane in a car in which one hand gun was found. They were brought to Castlereagh and interrogated for six days during which time they were roughly treated.

All four were charged with the possession of the hand gun, and after 11 months on remand, Joe and his five comrades, having refused to recognise the court, were given 14 years each in September 1977.

Joe went on the blanket protest immediately and forfeited his precious monthly visit rather than wear the uniform for the duration of these visits. Consequently, his wife Gorette and his two children have not seen him since this date.

Joe's brother Frankie McDonnell is also on the blanket protest and is serving 5 years for IRA membership. He is due for release later this year.

Joe is in H-Block 5;

BELFAST REPORT

BECAUSE OF BRIT/RUC activities, and the deaths of Bobby Sands and Francis Hughes, it has proved very difficult over the past two weeks to hold full meetings of all Belfast delegates. On Sunday at 3 p.m. there will be an important meeting at the Centre for all delegates from all committees.

One subject for discussion will be the putting into practice of actively opposing all councillors and candidates for the council elections who do not support the prisoners 5 demands and clearly state their intention to stay off councils till the demands are met. It is the intention of the Belfast Committee to do this between now and the election next week., up to and including on polling day itself.

Another call from the Belfast Committee is for people to stop buying British papers — both as a method of hitting at the British economically, and because their coverage of the hunger strike has been constantly distorted and hostile, particularly the gutter press like the *Sun*, *Star* and *Mirror*, and right-wing Tory papers like the *Telegraph* and *Daily Mail*.

This action, together with not patronising British firms and where possible not buying British goods, is one that every individual who supports the prisoners can undertake.

Posters saying simply 'We Support the Hunger Strikers' are again available from the centre. Everyone who came out for Bobby Sands' and Francis Hughes funerals should, if they are sincere, have one of these in their windows.

Sunday's meeting will also discuss how we put into effect the call from the Belfast Committee after Francis Hughes' death for the people of the areas to come out and keep the Brits and the RUC out of the areas, through the use of bin lids, whistles, and human barricades.

Rapid Deterioration

A BULLETIN ISSUED FRIDAY NIGHT by the H-Block Information Centre tells of the rapidly deteriorating condition of Ray McCreesh and Patsy O'Hara.

'Ray McCreesh was visited today by his uncle and by a member of the H-Block Armagh Committee. Ray was in a very weakened condition. His eyesight is gone completely, and his hearing is low. He found it difficult to speak, and when he did speak he asked about his close personal friend Francis Hughes.'

'He appears to be very near the point of slipping into semi-unconsciousness.'

'Ray is resolute about continuing the hunger strike until the 5 just demands of the prisoners are won.'

'Patsy O'Hara has to keep his eyes closed. He is having trouble with his ears. He has lost hearing in one of his ears. Patsy has very bad stomach pains and very severe headaches.'

MORE OF THEIR VIOLENCE

Two men are now seriously ill in the Royal Victoria Hospital after being hit with plastic bullets on Friday night.

Damien McKenna, from the Beechmount area, was hit in the head in an incident which the RUC claims it 'cannot explain', while 15-year-old Paul Lavalle from Ardoyne, is also seriously ill, after being hit in the head.

Two other people also sustained injuries in the stoning incidents by Loyalists at Port Glenone. Monica Berry had to have 5 stitches and has a hairline fracture, while a girl sustained a broken nose.



Black Flag Memorial March for Bobby Sands last Saturday



Mourners at Milltown for Francis Hughes, Friday

BELFAST YOUTH RALLY

SUNDAY

2pm

DUNVILLE PARK