

FILM and SPEAKERS
'Prisoners of War'
Friday April 6
Admission 50p



Conway Hall
Red Lion Square
London WC1.



JIM MASTERS
MEMORIAL MEETING
Friday April 20 7.30.



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ONE YEAR IN SOLITARY

EDDIE Butler and Hugh Doherty are now both entering their twelfth month in solitary. Hugh is still in Durham and Eddie was moved from Strangeways, Manchester just one day after our picket on 9 December to Winson Green, Birmingham.

Both PoWs were moved from the security unit in Leicester jail on 28th February last year. The reason for this move was ostensibly that the unit in Leicester needed to be 'modernised' and both were told that they would be moved back to Leicester as soon as possible.

In Durham and Manchester both prisoners had severe restrictions placed on their visits. They were stripped before and after and their visit time was cut to half an hour despite the fact that their relatives had to make long journeys from Ireland and Scotland. Furthermore all visits were 'closed' or screened which means that they are not allowed to touch or shake hands with visitors.

As a result of these conditions both PoWs refused visits. Eddie made an exception when in July his sister and her son flew from New York to visit him. Despite the distance she had travelled she and Eddie's mother were allowed only two one-hour visits and that was considered to be a 'concession'.

On the visit Eddie was not allowed to shake hands or touch his mother, his sister or his nephew. He was placed behind a thick wire mesh and the visit was conducted with six screws listening in to every word. Since this experience he has refused all visits.

Strangeways and Durham are 'local' jails and therefore long term prisoners like Hugh and Eddie are refused all facilities for reasons of 'security'. In addition to the fact that both prisoners are held under catch-all Rule 43, 'Good Order and Discipline', and therefore spend 23½ hours each day locked up in a cell with only ½-hour solitary exercise, weather permitting, they are also refused all access to hobbies and educational facilities as well as work.

Hugh has been refused permission to have his books brought 'from Leicester as his stay in Durham is reckoned to be 'temporary' even though he has been there for a year. When Eddie was moved to Winson



Eddie Butler



Anthony Cunningham



Hugh Doherty

Green he applied to use the gym but was told that these facilities were not available for top security prisoners.

In addition both prisoners have suffered interference with their mail, especially newspapers. Both 'Republican News' and 'An Phoblacht' have been withheld in an effort to erode even further their knowledge of the outside world and the campaign on their behalf.

Eddie was told three months ago that he was to be taken out of solitary confinement and returned to the top security unit inside Leicester jail but to date he has heard nothing further.

In Albany Tony Cunningham, Pat Guilfoyle, Busty Cunningham and Liam Baker have been in solitary since last April. They originally went down on to the block in protest at conditions in Albany, including visiting conditions, strip-searches and refusal of educational and other facilities.

Four months ago they decided to go on the blanket and refuse to wear prison uniform in pursuit of their demand for repatriation to jails in Ireland and for political status.

Two other PoWs in Albany, Tony Madigan and Kevin Dunphy spent ten months in solitary in protest at prison conditions there and in both Albany and Wakefield PoWs spent Xmas in solitary in protest at the holding of fellow Republicans in solitary.

Those in solitary in Wakefield are held in the prison's notorious 'F'

wing in conditions of sensory deprivation which causes severe psychological disorientation.

At any given time anything between a quarter and a half of Irish PoWs in England are being held in solitary, more often than not under Rule 43 which means that the prison governor can place them in solitary for indefinite periods even though they have broken no prison rule.

Under this rule some prisoners, amongst them Brendan Dowd, Liam MacLarnon and Paul Hill have spent periods of between 12 and 24 months in solitary. Now besides the prisoners in Albany there are PoWs in solitary in every jail in England where Irish prisoners are being held.

Some like Ronnie MacCartney and John McCluskey are being held in solitary waiting for their 'trial' before the Boards of Visitors because of their participation in the Gartree riot which was a protest against the forcible drugging of prisoners in Gartree. They can expect to be awarded vicious sentences in solitary as well as loss of remission.

The serious psychological consequences of holding human beings in solitary have long been known. In the last century Fenian prisoners were subjected to a regime of silence and solitariness which caused madness and death.

The continued use of this form of torture reveals the purely retributive nature of the British prison system. To hold a prisoner cut off from all

human contact and to hamper his relations with his family and friends can have no other purpose than to break his spirit and turn him into a

Women PoWs in Durham

AN ACTRESS, Jackie Holborough, who spent over four months in Durham jail made a statement on her release about appalling conditions for women in the jail. She said many of them were only 'half alive' because of constant sedation and that they were subjected to a constant stream of obscenities from male prisoners who could see into their cells. She said that conditions were very oppressive because between 30 and 40 women prisoners were confined in one small wing. Amongst the five Irish political prisoners in the women's wing is Anne Maguire who has recently been refused permission to have an urgent operation on security grounds. Ann and Eileen Gillespie have been there for over four years now; their applications to be taken off Category A and to be paroled have been turned down regularly over the last couple of years.

....and Limerick

SIX women political prisoners in Limerick jail have woven a beautiful rug measuring 54"x36". The rug is wool and has a cream background with a central black phoenix motif and Easter lilies in each corner. The names of all the women who made the rug are written on the back. The women political prisoners who made the rug have donated the rug to the PAC so that it can be sold to raise money for the PoWs in England. The rug will be sold to the highest bidder and we will be closing offers on 30 April.

WE HAVE received the following message of support from the Ard Comhairle of Sinn Fein in Dublin:

'The Ard Comhairle of Sinn Fein wishes to congratulate the PAC on the work they have done for the prisoners during the past year.'

1978 LOOKING BACK OVER THE YEAR

THIS IS the first issue of PAC News in 1979 and a suitable moment to look back on the past year's work. 1978 saw a real upsurge in the Irish solidarity movement in general and in particular in the campaign on behalf of the prisoners.

This was achieved despite the machinations of various anti-Republican groupings. In January 1978 Sinn Fein (Britain) organised a Bloody Sunday commemoration march with support for the H block prisoners as its main theme. IMG-SWP-UTOM alliance organised a counter demonstration which attracted a few hundred but which was a clear indication of what they meant by 'support' for the Irish struggle. What we showed in the year which followed was that it was support that we could manage without.

A public meeting in the Conway Hall in March organised by UTOM-SWP-IMG and supported by PAC and Sinn Fein was sparsely attended by these left groupings and IMG seized the opportunity of the meeting to issue a leaflet attacking the Republican movement over the La Mon bombing although the meeting had been called in support of Republican PoWs. It was clear that with these 'supporters' we should get nowhere. The PAC therefore decided to take the initiative.

Pickets

In May we called a public meeting at which wide support was given from organisations and individuals to the demands for Prisoner of War status and amnesty for Irish political prisoners. On the basis of this support the PAC decided to call for a demonstration in London on 9 July around these two demands and this was announced at the May meeting.

However, it was clear by this time that the issue of the prisoners, especially the torture of the H Block prisoners who embarked on their 'no wash' protest in March, was necessarily going to become crucial and already there were moves being made to defuse the issue by turning it into a humanitarian 'instead of a clearly political one.

Organisations like the Communist Party-influenced NCCL and the 'Friends and Relatives of the Prisoners Committee' launched by Fr Faul were trying to present the case of the PoWs as though they were simply demanding better treatment. In addition other organisations which in the past had not hesitated to capitalise on the struggle for their own ends were noticeable by their backwardness in the issue of political status.

The PAC decided therefore on a policy of picketing those who did not give support to the demands for political status and amnesty and during the weeks leading up to the 9 July march we put pickets on the bookshops of the Socialist Workers Party, Amnesty International and the Communist Party of Great Britain. The response to these pickets was interesting.

T.U. Support

At the SWP bookshop a 'comrade' from inside came out to dance with rage behind our banners and to abuse those who were supporting us. On being challenged to show us in their paper Socialist Worker the coverage given to the prisoners she went back inside but failed to produce a single example of detailed coverage of the prisoner issue. It is noteworthy that it was another member of SWP who tried to wreck the PAC 9 July march by throwing police-horse shit in the House of Commons.

At the CP headquarters in King Street bribery was tried when a member of the CP who refused to give his name said we could have a stall at the CP's Alexandria Palace carnival if we would call off the picket. After the picket on Amnesty International many branches of Amnesty abroad contacted us to say that they too were concerned at Amnesty's failure to take up the cases of convicted Irish political prisoners in England and Ireland. However this attitude is only to be expected of an organisation which invited James Callaghan, the Prime Minister of torture, to address their Trafalgar Square rally where they celebrated the award of the Nobel 'peace' prize along with the 'peace' people.

As a build-up to the 9 July march PAC sent speakers to address meetings in England and Wales, a large number of these meetings were organised by the RCG. In addition for the first time we began to get a significant response from



Picket on Amnesty function



PAC demonstration November

trade unions in England and on the day of the demonstration seven trade union banners were carried.

The turnout of 5,000 people of 9 July marked a real turning point in the solidarity movement in England. It was the largest turnout on Ireland since Bloody Sunday 1972. But whereas 1972 had been an upsurge of revulsion at the murders of innocent civilians in pursuit of their civil rights, 9 July was a rally in support of purely political demands: Political status; amnesty and complete British withdrawal.

This was achieved by pursuing the principled position which the PAC had articulated at the May meeting; Support for the PoWs meant support for the Republican movement and for the war which the prisoners had fought and continued to fight inside the jails.

Stunts

In the jails of England Irish PoWs mounted their own protests in solidarity with the 9 July march. In Long Lartin, the Scrubs, Albany and Parkhurst prisoners went on hunger strike and went down onto the block in support of their demands for repatriation and political status. In Gartree Irish PoWs took to the roof in protest at their prison conditions and chanted slogans in solidarity with H Block prisoners and in demand of POW status on the roof. They ended their protest as the PAC march finished and other prisoners in Gartree insisted there should be no brutality or victimisation.

The tremendous success of 9 July was achieved despite the sabotage attempts which have bedevilled our work over the last year. In addition to the feeble shit-throwing stunt by SWP's Yana Mintoff we were treated to a blatant attempt to set up a bogus prisoner committee when on the same day a 'press conference' was called in the Commons (no less) and it was announced that a prisoner committee had been set up which had organised similar stunts in London that day.

No mention was made at this press conference of the PAC or the 9 July march although the wife of Ray MacLaughlin was lured there on the promise of one of the organisers that the PAC knew all about it. This attempt, like so many others, died quickly despite, or maybe because of, the support it received from the IMG/UTOM/SWP alliance — not to mention various fringe individuals who have been parasitical

on the Irish solidarity movement for some time.

The PAC is a small working committee of half a dozen individuals none of whom are full time and all of whom have other full time jobs and in our campaign over the last twelve months we have had to contend not only with the bias and censorship of the British government and the chauvinism of much of the British left and working class but with the deliberate sabotage attempts such as the ones outlined above which have been mounted by those professing a concern for the prisoners.

We have been successful because of our strongly principled, unwavering position. After July we went on to organise another march, this time on 26 November, anniversary of the execution of the Manchester Martyrs.

In November we succeeded, again without the co-operation of IMG/SWP/UTOM, in getting between six and seven thousand people on the streets. Glasgow Sinn Fein, who exposed an IMG attempt to counter-mobilise in Glasgow, was publicly attacked in the pages of *Socialist Challenge* and from a UTOM platform in Glasgow.

Support

In addition to the success of two major demonstrations the PAC can look back over a year in which we produced three issues of the 'PAC News' as a full scale newspaper; instigated over 40 public meetings on the prisoners in England, Scotland and Wales; sent speakers to more than a dozen trade union branches; produced with the Workers Revolutionary Party a twenty-minute film in colour on the campaign for political status; produced the third issue of our magazine 'The Irish Prisoner' with full length articles on the trials and prison treatment of Irish PoWs in England.

In addition to this PAC speakers went to rallies organised by RACs, WRP and to the Dublin torture inquiry in May as well as to numerous small meetings in colleges and universities. In the midst of all this activity we kept up the usual work we do for prisoners in England and their families including the issuing of scores of press statements, the sending in to the jails of over £100 worth of books and other things the prisoners asked for. We also helped families with visiting



Irish prisoners on roof of Gartree



Picket at Wakefield prison December 8th

arrangements wherever possible. In this period we printed and distributed over 200,000 leaflets.

We consider that we have achieved a great deal over the year on behalf of the prisoners and we have done it only by working at full stretch for the last six months at least. Even then we could not have done it without the support of the RCG who have given us consistent help in organising meetings, selling our paper and in every other way possible.

The WRP besides producing the film as a donation to our work also helped us in many practical ways especially in the production of our paper and in providing a truck and amplification for our marches. 'News Line' is the only paper in England which has given consistent coverage to the prisoners' struggle and to our work.

Sinn Fein has also given us support, in particular Jimmy Reilly who has spoken from our platforms whenever possible. Without their aid we should have found the word 'solidarity' a very cold word indeed for some of the other 'solidarity' we have been shown has been a very peculiar article.

Now we face a new year of campaigning and we hope to consolidate our work and to go forward to build up a real solidarity movement in England. We have formed a trade union committee for work in the British labour movement and working class and hope that will lead to a genuine trade union commitment and not the bogus ones we have so often seen in Irish politics. We will be using our film 'Prisoners of War' to build up support as well as our newspaper and we hope that soon we shall have a new issue of 'The Irish Prisoner' devoted entirely to the writings of the prisoners themselves.

Principles

When we take stock of last year's work what conclusions can we come to? Firstly, that our approach and method of working has been absolutely correct. We have organised two mass demonstrations on principled demands without any compromise of our position or kow-towing to the 'liberal/humanitarian' past and will not work in the future.

We have attacked and exposed all pro-imperialists who have, like the CPGB, adopted a position of being

apologists for the British government. We know that a strong solidarity movement is the only way to defend the prisoners who are at the mercy of screws and Home Office thuggery as well as the deliberately repressive edicts of the British government.

There is no other organisation which can point to a record remotely competing with ours on the prisoner issue over the last year. Yet we have been attacked and manoeuvred against. Why?

The question is easy to answer when we ask ourselves: 'Who would benefit from a weakening or undermining of the PAC?' The answer is clearly the British government would. It does not suit the Brits to have a strong, principled campaign in support of the PoWs in England who are held as hostages here for the 'good behaviour' of the Republican movement and whose appalling prison treatment is deliberately inflicted as a 'warning' about what happens to enemies of the British state. That is why four prisoners have been murdered in the last four years.

The people who attack us are acting consciously or unconsciously as agents of the British government and if their attacks succeed not only will the PoWs be jeopardised but the whole Irish solidarity movement in England will be threatened. By our success over the last year we have shown what can be achieved. It is to be expected that in the face of this success the British state will make even greater efforts to undermine our position and to weaken the resolve of the prisoners. We must make sure that does not happen.

We can look forward in 1979 to the possibility of building up the solidarity movement with the prisoners. This is what the PAC is resolved to do. We know we shall come under increasing attack from many quarters the more successful we are and we are prepared for this. We shall not hesitate to expose those attacks as we have done in the past.

We are confident that the correctness of our position as shown over the last year will ensure that with the help of the real solidarity we have come to rely on from sincere comrades in other organisations 1979 will prove an even more remarkable year for us than 1978.

PACKED AUDIENCE SEES PREMIERE OF PAC FILM



Coalsland to Dungannon march

ON THE EVENING OF December 18 a packed audience at the Conway Hall in London saw the premiere of the film 'Prisoners of War'.

Shot in Ireland at the time of the Coalsland to Dungannon march, the film was made by the Workers Revolutionary Party as a contribution to the work of the Prisoners Aid Committee.

The film was followed by a meeting at which speakers from Ireland and England gave news of the prisoners and stressed the need for developing a campaign in their support.

The film, in colour, follows the 20,000 strong march as it winds through the countryside to the accompaniment of a pipe band. The march is a background and a focus for the interviews which Jackie Kaye of the PAC carries out with relatives of the prisoners.

The film is a biting indictment of the brutality brought about by British occupation. The quick sequence of stark black-and-white prison drawings, showing men and women being beaten, which begins the film, brings home the similarity between this war and other which the British State has fought against native populations.

By using the march as a focus, the audience is continually reminded of the extensive support which exists for the prisoners and therefore the Republican movement. The impression is of a solid and united working class which is resisting British occupation.

The clearest statements come from the relatives of the prisoners, one of whom makes the point that 'H Block begins on the streets', so making it clear that the movement and the prisoners cannot be separated.

It is the relatives as well who clearly articulate the demand for an end to British occupation in Ireland in all its forms: 'We realise that the troops were not brought here to keep

the peace, they were brought here in the interests of the British government.'

'Prisoners of War' is not only a film with a humanitarian message but one which continually puts the political case for the prisoners and their demands. Again it is the relatives who see the importance of the struggle around the prisoners: 'To admit to prisoner of war status would be to admit that there is a war of liberation going on, the British are trying to say that it is anything but that.'

Against a continual barrage of propaganda from the British State and the Northern Ireland Office, 'Prisoners of War' will be a great asset to all those outside the six counties fighting to build a movement of solidarity with the prisoners.

Following the film, relatives of Republican prisoners in England and Ireland spoke on the conditions of prisoners in both countries. Mary MacLaughlin spoke of her husband's imprisonment in England: he had been moved frequently from prison to prison. At his first allocation, Winson Green, he was beaten by screws.

From Winson Green he was moved to Gartree where he went on the blanket. At his next prison, Hull, he took part in the roof-top demonstration where, despite assurances to the contrary, the prisoners were beaten and degraded when they came down.

For his part in the Hull demonstration, Ray MacLaughlin lost a year's remission. He is now in 'F' wing at Wakefield prison which as Mary MacLaughlin pointed out is not an ordinary wing but a series of special control units.

Kathleen Green, from Belfast and a member of the Relatives Action Committee began by saying that she did not want to speak only for her two sons who were both in H Block but on behalf of all the 364 prisoners now on the blanket. She detailed the regime, with its inhuman conditions and constant beatings, she spoke of

how the food reaches the prisoners cold and is thrown into the cells.

She ended by mentioning the younger prisoners in the Crumlin Road jail: 'The reason they have not been tried,' she said, 'and the reason they are on remand for such a long period is that the British Government is afraid to try them lest they immediately go on the blanket when they are convicted.'

The two relatives were followed by speakers from London Sinn Fein, Prisoners Aid Committee, Revolutionary Communist Group and the Workers Revolutionary Party.

For the PAC Jackie Kaye stressed that the struggle of the prisoners was central to the struggle of the Irish people: 'The British State's attack on the prisoners, is a continuous attack, aimed at breaking their will. If the prisoners are defeated it will be a great defeat for the Republican movement.'

The struggle on behalf of the prisoners was, she said, a struggle to inform people that there was still a war being fought: 'It has to be made clear that there is still a war going on and the movement should be determined, not just to achieve the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland but the complete withdrawal of British interests in whatever form, be it economic, political or military.'

All the speakers pointed to the similar nature of the treatment inflicted on Republican prisoners in England and Ireland, each speaker also made the point that the prisoners cannot be separated from their actions on the streets against the British army, their actions as Republicans.

The interdependence of support for the Republican movement and the prisoners was the main theme of Terry Marlowe, the speaker from the Revolutionary Communist Group. 'The struggle of the prisoners,' he said, 'is central to the struggle for liberation, you can only support the prisoners if you support their cause, they are in prison for the cause and

the cause has to be sustained.'

The night before the meeting, the Provisional IRA had exploded three bombs in the centre of London, in a new mainland offensive directly related to the treatment of prisoners of war in Long Kesh. The taciturn nature of the British left's support for the Republican movement in the face of its bombing campaign led a number of speakers to criticise sections of the left whose support for the Republican movement they said was incomplete and inconsistent.

John Spencer, speaking for the Workers Revolutionary Party, the organisation which made the film and which has given continuous support to PAC and the struggle for prisoner of war status, condemned the bombings which had taken place the night before. This provoked a noisy reaction from the packed hall and the audience were reluctant to let him finish his speech.

He went on to say that terrorism was not the answer and that the working class of England were not responsible for the conditions of the oppressed working class of Ireland.

Following John Spencer's speech the PAC disclaimed agreement with what he had said. In a discussion which followed the speeches, however, many of the matters raised by John Spencer were brought up and argued out.

The last speaker, Kevin Colfer from London Sinn Fein, began by sending salutations to the prisoners in H Block, praising them for their courage and resolve. 'They are not criminals,' he said, 'they are Irish revolutionaries who have taken up arms against imperialism.'

He drew parallels with British occupation in other countries and pointed to the lessons of these struggles. It was no good believing, he said, that the British would be driven from Ireland by anything but force.

He was critical of those parts of the British left who supported the Tribunal and who supported uncritically the 'Willie Gallagher is innocent' campaign; those who imagined

it was possible to get justice from the Diplock courts or from the British State.

'The real criminals are in Khaki,' he said, 'the real criminals are those who have plundered, raped and robbed the Irish nation. There will never be peace in Ireland until the British have left, Ireland must be completely free from imperialist domination.'

It was impossible to go away from the film and the meeting without the clear impression that the consistent and principled work that the PAC has done for the last six years with Irish prisoners is now beginning to show results.

The activities of the last year, culminating in the premiere of 'Prisoners of War', introduces a new period of united and principled support in England for the Republican struggle and Irish freedom.

NEXT SHOWING

There will be a showing of the film 'Prisoners of War' to commemorate the third anniversary of the ending of political status. The film will be shown at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 at 7.30 on Friday 6th April. Admission 50p

Have you heard the one about the methods of the British fascist State.....

THIS ITEM of news should be of interest not only to Republicans but also to all Irish people living in Britain. It may also interest the many British workers struggling for reasonable pay and conditions of employment from the present right wing Labour government.

Most workers Irish and British will recall the 40% pay increase awarded to the Police last year. The Prison Officers are expecting the same 40% pay increase this year. How then are these highly paid upholders of 'law and order' spending their (unproductive) working hours?

Last week, a group of prisoners, friendly to Irish PoWs were working near the front gate of the prison. They noticed a small group of prison officers taking with two uniformed police officers from the West London force. One of the policemen handed out what looked like a document of some sort to each of the 'screws'. As the screw read the 'document' there was great bouts of laughter and much merriment all round.

When this group of 'law and order' idlers parted to go their separate ways, one of them screwed up his piece of paper and threw it on the ground as he passed the working prisoners. Naturally, one prisoner picked up the paper curious to know what was so funny about it. He straightened out the 'document' and what did he find? Some classified police or prison notice? Not at all; he discovered a photostat copy of a well-typed list of anti-Irish 'jokes', you know the type of thing: 'Paddy is stupid, dirty, etc. etc.'

This 'document' had been typed on government notepaper, photostated, probably on a government machine and possibly all done by a highly paid police officer during working hours.

The question can be put: was it produced by some idle West London policeman to propagate their racist anti-Irish attitude or, was it ordered to be produced and passed around, by a higher police authority?

Interesting isn't it!

PRO Irish Republican prisoners of war England

BRITISH RULE IN

CONDITIONS IN THE H-BLOCKS

THE SITUATION of the men on the blanket continues to worsen, a fact highlighted by the increasing frequency of British government statements which try to minimize the torture used or blame the conditions on the men themselves or their wicked 'manipulators' on the outside.

Although there are about 3,000 prisoners in the occupied Six Counties. Of these there are approximately 1,700 men in Long Kesh, 600 of whom have 'Special Category Status', which as we know was taken away as from March 1976 for new prisoners. The blanket men number about 370.

These men are kept in the notorious H blocks, of which there are now eight. The blanket men had lost, in late January 1979, some 366 years remission, according to colonial Viceroys Mason. Mason's underling, Minister of State Don Concannon, had the effrontery to declare last December that the H blocks 'were among the best prison facilities in Europe'!

Savagery

He obviously meant the best for breaking a person's spirit. But no matter how good they are for this and how many times the Brits reiterate their refusal to grant political status, as Concannon did on this occasion, the men are not giving in.

The catalogue of savagery goes on. The men are now being forcibly washed and scrubbed as part of a desire to present a new 'clean' image of the Kesh. When they resist they are beaten up.

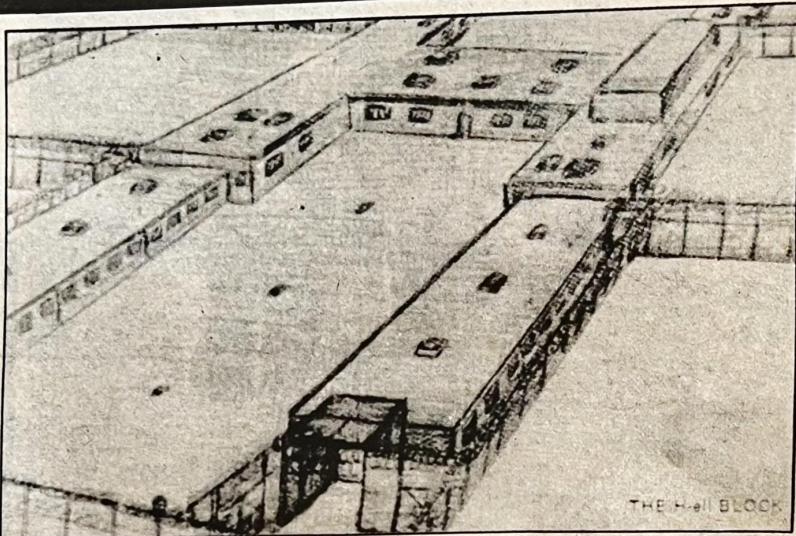
Five men were seriously injured on December 4. Kieran Nugent, who has now spent two and a half years on the blanket, was brutally assaulted by eight screws who were trying to shave his head. These are just a few cases.

In addition a major flu epidemic broke out in January. By January 10 twenty-four men were in the hospital block. But not all these men had caught flu. Sean Campbell, from the Belfast New lodge district, had been beaten unconscious following a protest against the screws' brutality, on January 8.

The last 'turn of the screw' or new Brit stratagem was that denounced by the Belfast Central Relatives' Action Committee on January 24. It told of the holding of a sixteen-year old lad, Ciaran McGillicuddy, in a specially filthy part of the H blocks in the Kesh, and accused the authorities of doing this to demoralize the new prisoners.

Propaganda

January was quite a month for the peculiar Brit mixture of savagery and farce, served up in a sauce of hypocrisy. It saw the visit to Long Kesh of three Westminster MPs, Kevin MacNamara (Labour), Michael Mates (Tory) who was a lieutenant colonel in the British army of occupation in the Six Counties, and finally Clement Freud (Liberal).



Prisoners drawing of H-Block

A likely crew, indeed. The PAC remembers Freud well. This friend of Jeremy 'Bunnies' Thorpe and animal food advertiser refused to even look at a PAC leaflet that we offered him when we caught him trying to slip through Hyde Park a couple of years back during an Irish demonstration.

These three were taken on January 18 to the Kesh in a British helicopter. They saw H block 3 and some politi-

declared, on the other hand, that the PoWs had all been convicted in an open court(?) using the due processes of the law!

The Tory Michael Mates actually stated that the blanket men could have any books or magazines they wanted provided they did not destroy them, thus showing his crass ignorance. Literature is deliberately denied to the men, in order to demoralize them. However, in view

move made subsequently by them. On January 30 the Northern Ireland Office published a four-page broadsheet on the conditions of the blanket men.

It contrasted these conditions with the cells of those people who are not on the protest, showing a small, bright room with a two-tier bunk. This is what a man gets if he accepts he is a 'common criminal' and generally behaves himself, by which we



Demonstration against H-Block

cal cages, not by any means the worst part of the camp. In fact they only saw freshly washed and scrubbed men, plus cells that had only been occupied for four days by the blanket protesters. They did not go to the worst block, H5, nor to remand block H6. The prisoners then realized why the screws had started to scrub and shave them forcibly last year.

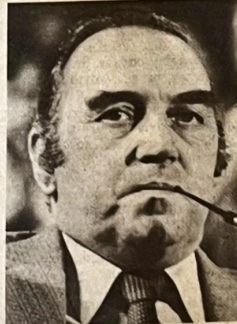
The MPs then gave a press conference, organized by the Northern Ireland Office. It was scheduled to last only twenty minutes but went on much longer. They avoided answering questions about the apparent immunity enjoyed by British soldiers to carry out massacres like that of Bloody Sunday and the killing of children like Michael Rowntree, Brian Stewart, Majella O'Hare, Leo Norney, and Danny McCooley. They

of Mates' blunder, a test case will be made.

Needless to say, the three selected hacks declared their support for British policy, which was the purpose of their visit. This situation was succinctly highlighted by the Independent MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone Frank Maguire who emphasized that the three MPs had not seen the real 'disgusting filthy conditions that the men had to endure'.

In an open letter to the MPs he asked: 'Please ask for another visit to Long Kesh and bring me with you I am not allowed in and I wonder why.' They had only seen H 3 and H 4, said Frank, and not any of the others, which were 'stinking and overcrowded'.

That the visit was part of a heightened propaganda campaign by the Brits was underlined by another



Mason

mean putting up with all the usual humiliations of British jails, the fullest and most primitive in Europe and policed by the most primitive screw, the National Front or Loyalist bigot-thug.

The thrust of this latest propaganda document is that the degrading conditions of the blanket men are of their own making. The protest is metamorphosed from a demand for POW status to a 'filth strike', thus trivializing and depoliticizing the whole issue. But let us look at the facts.

Political Status

The men are demanding the restoration of 'Special Category' status, conceded in 1972 but since taken away, as from March 1976. People convicted for political offences against the British state in Ireland

before March 1976 are treated as PoWs. They do not have to wear prison clothes or do prison work. They are under the command of their own officers and have no direct contact with the screws. They can have books, magazines, recreational facilities of various kinds, watch TV, listen to the radio, receive regular food parcels and fairly frequent visits.

But men convicted for exactly the same offences after March 1976 are treated as criminals. They refuse to be criminalized and accept the symbols of this criminalization. Therefore they refuse to work or wear prison uniform. Thus they have nothing but a blanket and are kept in solitary confinement (now, given the amount of protesters, this means two men per cell).

Fighting Back

The first escalation of this protest took place due to the frequent beatings by screws and the frequent removals to the punishment blocks plus interference with mail. A hunger strike was started by Thomas McFeeley and Sean Campbell and most of the other blanket men refused to wash, shower or clean out their cells. This was in March 1978. For this men were put on the punishment block. So another escalation took place.

On March 27 1978 the men refused to slop out (empty their chamber pots down outside lavatories) or leave their cells to get fresh water. They placed their dirty dishes outside the cells only to have them thrown back again by the screws, who also refused to empty the chamber pots or provide the prisoners with buckets for slopping out within the cells.

The Northern Ireland Office accuses the men of deliberately fouling their cells and smearing their excrement on the walls. But where is their excrement to go if the warders will not take it out? Why is it on the walls? Surely this is unjustifiable. Let us quote a prisoner's explanation.

'At the beginning we used a corner of the cell for a toilet but after the screws started to throw our blankets in it we smeared the cell walls with shit and threw the piss under the cell door.'

Every step in the protest has been taken as a response to an abuse by the screws. In most British prisons the screws are allowed to run amok when they like, as is shown by the recent Hull riot case, to cite just one example. But Irish PoWs do not allow this, just as the Irish nation as a whole has refused over eight centuries to capitulate to British imperial greed and rapine.

The Reality

The British authorities in their broadsheet on Long Kesh describe a £100,000 sports hall recently built for inmates. But the Irish cannot be bribed. They are not a 'nation of shopkeepers' like their oppressors. Accept you are criminals and you can play games, goes their imbecile logic.

Is jail meant as a means to degrade, then? So the Brits evidently think. This is the real explanation of the 'anal searches', disgusting and frequent. A prisoner says this:

'I was made to stretch my legs open and was searched twice before this visit. They'll do it twice more

THE 6 COUNTIES

before I get back into my cell.' Four probings of a person's anal passage for a short visit?

Lastly, let us clear up another source of confusion, started by Roy Mason and echoed by Jack Lynch. We refer to the idea that the prisoners 'were obviously being misled by reports from outside which bore no resemblance to the truth' and that certain people outside 'were responsible for dictating that the prisoners continue with their futile protest' (Roy Mason in a January briefing at Stormont).

Prisoners of War

The lie is scotched by the prisoners themselves, in a statement from H block in the same month:

'Lately we have heard a lot of statements attacking the Republican Movement for using the protest going on in the H-blocks for propaganda.

'We, the men involved in this protest would like once and for all to point out to those statement makers that we are not lonely little boys being used by a wicked father to gain benefits. We are the men (and women) who for ten years have been fighting on the streets of our country in an effort to remove the British occupation forces.

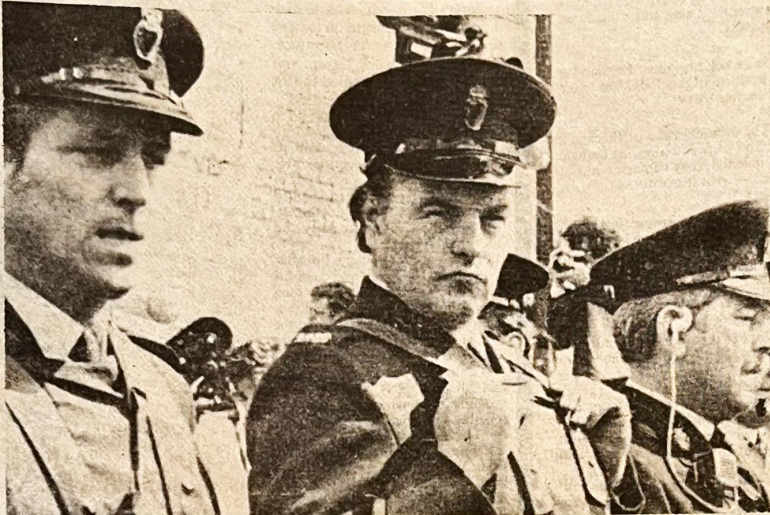
'We were, and are still, part of the Republican Movement, the same movement who are being criticised for making propaganda out of us. Every man in the protest is either a captured Irish Republican Army volunteer or a Republican forced to sign a statement after being tortured. We came to this protest of our own free will and can simply walk off it of that same free will.

'We chose not to. Instead, we carry on the fight from within gaol using the only weapon we have — our physical and mental health, our bodies, yes and even our lives, if necessary.

'Our immediate aim is to be treated for what we are, Prisoners of War. But if by what we are doing hastens by one day an end to British rule in Ireland then we are more than happy to carry on, because that was our intention from the outset.

To accuse the Republican Movement of using us is to accuse us of using ourselves and we do not deny it.

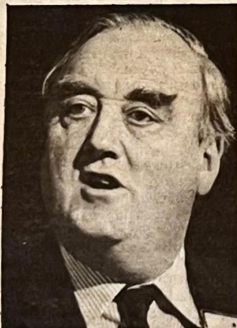
o/c Republican POWs
H Blocks 3,4,5
Long Kesh.



Royal Ulster Constabulary

Rather than, as the army had wanted, picking off particular activists, the internment order had begun a massive rounding up of the Nationalist population and their internment in prison camps (2,357 arrests were made in the first six months).

In 1972, Whitelaw introduced Special Category Status, a move which he publicly regretted in 1976:



Whitelaw

'I was utterly, wholly and entirely wrong in the creation of Special Category Status'. To give political status was, however, at that time, within the logic of the State's tactics; with internment the State inevitably conceded a state of war, a state in which law in its normal meaning was discontinued.

By 1973, the British State needed a 'return to normality', above all, a return to the civil and criminal legislative 'normality' of covert class struggle. Under an apparent 'normality', the State wished to win over the mass of the Nationalist population and separate them from the Republican activists who they were criminalising.

The 'Diplock courts' were the fulcrum of this return to 'normal' law. There were however, as Kitson had made clear, to be problems; it is not necessarily in the State's interest to

let the judiciary act independently in times of civil conflict:

'Anyone violating the law will be treated in the same way (equally), and the full legal procedure, complete with safeguards for the individual will operate on behalf of friend and foe alike.'

The law, the full class nature of which lies dormant in times of social peace, is brought to full effect in times of crisis, when it is needed to



Craig

act against a class rather than a selection of individuals.

At this point though it is rarely the same 'law'. The law which is brought into force in crisis or civil war, is a brute implement of ruling class ideology, its rules, again in Kitson's words, no more than 'just another weapon in the government's arsenal, a propaganda cover for the disposal of unwanted members of the public'.

Diplock

Diplock recommended for the North of Ireland all those things which senior police officers are intent on bringing into force on the mainland. The jury is the main source of embarrassment to the State, in conditions of crisis, or occupation, under martial law or emergency, or simply in the trial of overtly political cases, the jury cannot be trusted.

It is not possible in every case to rig or to penetrate class loyalties, something more permanent has to be found. The jury is replaced, as it was in India, in Malaya, in Singapore, in Kenya, under British rule, with an adjudicator or adjudicators who are determinedly sure of their class position. Diplock recommended one-judge courts. In 1977, those one-judge courts acquitted only 15% of the cases before them, in the jury



Neave

courts — which also exist for the trial of criminal cases — the acquittal rate was 50%.

Diplock also recommended that the onus of proof should be shifted in political cases from the prosecution to the defendant. Diplock made sure that in the one-judge courts, it was not evidence or proof which sentenced the suspect, but class loyalty, the prosecution could bring unnamed and unseen Special Branch witnesses to give evidence.

The Diplock recommendations, which had been brought into force with the 1973 Emergency Provisions Act and the Northern Ireland (Young Persons) Act 1974, were amended in the 1975 Emergency Provisions (Amendment) Act and finally all consolidated in a new Emergency Powers Act in 1978 — *The Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978*.

Though the Diplock recommendations ended internment in name, in effect, it continued in form under the guise of detention, with prisoners waiting long periods for 'trials' in the bogus courts.

The Emergency Powers Acts in 1973 and 1978 determined a new phase of the Republican working-class struggle against the British State. The Acts heralded the beginning of Ulsterisation and a new struggle for the Republican movement to keep alive the historical and political definition of the war in the face of an enforced return to 'normality'.

'Normalisation'

Since the enactment of the 1978 Act, it has been approved every six months in the Commons. The last debate in December, provided a clear and instructive overview of the State's position on the continued occupation of the North of Ireland.

There is a long history of summary draconian legislation being passed at speed, apparently for short periods, in the British parliament. It therefore fell to Mason to explain that he didn't wish to see the Emergency Powers retained for any longer than necessary; it was however important, he said, to show that the 'terrorists' cannot bring normal life to a standstill. (Actually there have been Emergency powers in the North of Ireland since 1922, when the Special Powers Act was passed, this was repealed with the 1973 Emergency Provisions Act).

The government, he said, was succeeding in showing that 'violence is irrelevant and pointless, that normal society and normal standards of decency and fair play will not be destroyed in Northern Ireland'.

Social Democrats, who try desperately to draw the attention of the people away from class struggle, speak interminably from an a-historical position. The debate posed two forced vying for supremacy in the North of Ireland, on the one hand, 'normality', 'decency', 'fair play', 'peaceful coexistence' and 'legality', on the other, 'the god-fathers', 'the criminal', 'the gangsters', 'the violent' and the 'terrorists'.

Any real or actual effect of the Emergency Powers was, not mentioned by Mason: 'As the House knows, I am committed to the principle of fair and effective enforcement of the law by bringing terrorists to justice through the courts.'

Mason mentioned neither the fact that the courts are emasculated 'star chambers' or the fact that increasingly the RUC and the Northern Ireland Office are operating a programme of 'Internment by remand' whereby selected suspects to not see a court for periods of up to the years.

What became clear in the debate was that the British State is now committed to the return of the troops to barracks. Hardly a member spoke for the Emergency Powers, from the government or the opposition, who did not speak hopefully of the withdrawal of British troops.

If withdrawal was one determined argument, it was paralleled in other parts of the debate with a call to build the RUC and to change the nature of the Ulster Defence Regiment, so making it something in the nature of

cont., page 6.

Emergency Powers

(cont.)

a para-military third force.

'I have no intention of doing the terrorists work for them by withdrawing Army support too early. But as the terrorists are increasingly obliged to concentrate their efforts in certain parts of the province — leaving other areas in relative peace — the army is able to concentrate its own efforts accordingly.' — MASON.

'It is the RUC with the help of the army which will take us to that point (allowing the Emergency legislation to lapse) and it is the RUC which will still have to maintain law and order when emergency legislation is no longer considered necessary in Northern Ireland.' — MASON.

'There is one weakness of the development of the police as the prime law and order force in Northern Ireland and that is the lack of adequate reserve power to deal with emergencies. *I am talking of the day — I hope it will soon arrive* — when we do not have to call upon the army as an aid to civil authority.' — WILLIAM CRAIG.

Reforming Nazis

The other continuing themes of the debate were the courts, the prisoners and the 'criminal' nature of the Republican forces. In relation to the prisoners, the opposition spokesman Airey Neave laid great stress upon the increased need for propaganda; an initiative which pre-empted by only a month the document issued by the Northern Ireland Office on H-Block, for distribution abroad.

'The photographs of the facilities available in the prison should be widely circulated. There are education and recreation facilities which the protesters are denying themselves by turning their cells into pigsties. A good deal more could be made of the photographs.'

Why, we could ask ourselves, did Neave not stay to make better use of the 'educational facilities' in Colditz where he was a prisoner until 1942? Things have certainly changed since the Second World War; prisoners of war don't seem as grateful as they used to be.

Many German prisoners of war held in England during the Second World War gladly used the 'educational facilities' of the 'prison camp university' at Wilton Park. Patrick Gordon Walker described in 1947 how the English were training German prisoners to become good citizens when they returned home:

'Wilton Park, a Georgian mansion near Beaconsfield, houses an interesting experiment. Selected prisoners of war and some German civilians live here and take part in study groups and discussions aimed at reawakening their interest in a democratic way of life. Underneath it all of course, is the quiet and unquestioning assurance that if the English way of doing things is allowed to appear quietly in practice, without any preaching, it will do the trick of re-education.'

Criminalisation

The difference between Long Kesh and Wilton Park is clear: those on the fringes of Nazism were easily groomed to take coveted places in the new ruling Social Democratic order that the allies were building in West Germany after the war. The opposition in H-Block is the opposition of a united Republican working class intent not upon a compromise with Labour Party Social Democrats but with victory over them and the forces of imperialism which are marshalled behind them.

It was frequently stated in the debate that the conditions suffered by the prisoners in Long Kesh, was a direct result of their own behaviour. This behaviour was in turn linked to the criminal activities of the prisoners prior to their incarceration.

'It is an integral part of our policy that terrorists convicted in the courts should serve their sentences in the same way as all convicted criminals, whatever their aims and affiliations.' — MASON.

'Some solution must be found to the problem of the *Godfathers* of terrorism.' — NEAVE.

'The criminal ruler of Chicago in the days of prohibition, Al Capone, was able to terrify witnesses into silence.' — PHILIP GOODHART.

'We shall never recognise criminal thugs as political prisoners and there will be no amnesty for the intimidators, the destroyers and the killers.' — J.D. CONCANNON, Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office.

Why, if the State is dealing with people who only commit crimes does it need military rule under Emergency Powers? Emergency Powers are not brought into force to deal with criminals, who can be contained with normal civil and criminal law, but to deal with an insurgent class.

A military presence and the continued use of military law in the form of Emergency Powers are indicative of a criminal rule of tyranny exercised by the British State over the Nationalist population of the North of Ireland.

SCOTTISH PoWs

AS WELL as the Irish political prisoners now rotting in British jails there are seven Scottish men jailed for the same cause, that of the liberation of their country from the stranglehold imposed on it by the upper class Brit establishment mafia and their minions. These prisoners are:

William Murray, Peterhead prison, Peterhead
Tony Tunilla
John Bryden Croall
Anthony James Currie
Bill MacPherson
Matt Lygate, Craiginches prison, Aberdeen
William Anderson

These prisoners at the time of their trials belonged to a variety of organisations: the Workers' Party of Scotland, the Army of Provisional Government and the Tartan Army. Their sentences were particularly savage. Matt Lygate received 24 years and Bill MacPherson 26 years plus 6 for an escape attempt.

A Scottish Political Prisoners Aid Committee exists. Contact Donald Anderson, 22 Southampton Drive, Glasgow, or ring 041-357 1151. These prisoners welcome letters of support, books and records, which can be sent to their jails.

Apology

Due to production difficulties December's issue of PAC News was not posted until January. We apologise to our readers for this delay. Anyone who did not receive December's issue should contact us.

Jim Masters committed suicide on 9 December last year. His death was not only a tremendous personal shock but also a great loss to the PAC for which he had been working for four years.

I first met Jim when he came to Essex University in 1972 as an undergraduate. He was a brilliant student and went on to get a first class degree in literature. Almost all his work throughout the three years he studied for his BA was of first class standard.

After he graduated he went on to get a MA degree from London University and at the time of his death he had accomplished a considerable part of his PhD which was a study of the relationship between United States writers in the twentieth century and the communist party and working class politics.

I really only got to know Jim after he graduated when he told us of his Irish background and of his own long history in British left wing politics. He told us he would like to help the PAC and we suggested that he might like to visit Noel Jenkinson.

We thought that as Noel and Jim had such similar political backgrounds they would get on well together and this proved to be the case. In fact what we did not know at the time was that Jim's family came from Westmeath where Noel had been born and this increased Jim's identification with Noel.

When Noel was found dead in his cell in Leicester in 1976 Jim was deeply affected by this. He wrote a moving tribute to Noel in the third issue of 'The Irish Prisoner' and only weeks before his own death he spoke at a memorial meeting for Noel at the Conway Hall in London.

After Jim's tragic death last year his sister found a note amongst his papers to the effect that if he died before Noel he wanted any money he had left to be used for buying cigarettes for Noel.

Jim came from a Republican family. His mother's sister Mary Leach was on hunger strike in Mountjoy jail where she was held prisoner after the Rising in 1916 and his mother's uncle Mick Smith was with De Valera in Bolands Mill.

Jim's own mother came to England in 1940 with his sister Deirdre. Jim never really knew his father who died soon after he was born and his mother struggled to bring him up in great poverty.

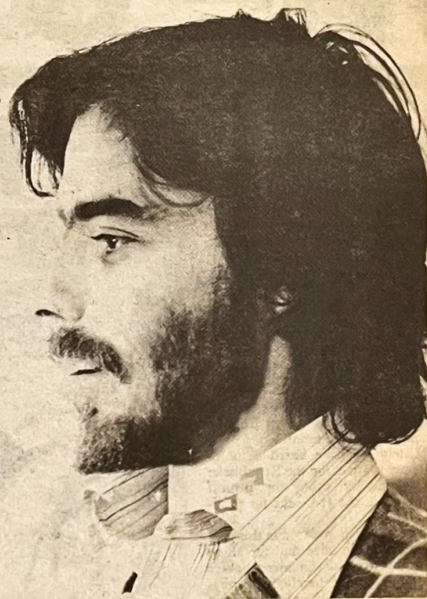
At one time she was forced to place him in the care of the St Vincent de Paul society and later when she brought him to live with her and his sister they all three lived in one room in London. The landlord increased the rent by £2.00 per week when Jim came to live there.

Although Jim had a good school record he left school when he was 15 and went to work so as to help out his mother. He went on to study at night school where he got his 'A' levels even though he was doing a full time job at the time. Not only was he working and studying but he was also politically active.

He was shop steward on nearly all the jobs he had and joined the Communist Party Youth League until he grew disgusted with their pusillanimous politics and joined the Socialist Labour League (predecessor of the WRP). He remained a Trotskyist for the rest of his life and was an intensely dedicated and political revolutionary.

When Jim decided to try for a university place he had to win a scholarship to finance his studies and this he did against very stiff competition despite his lack of formal full-time education. Jim put great store by his degree and the qualifications it represented. Teaching and studying

OBITUARY



were important to him and he hoped to be able to get a job teaching but despite numerous applications and his excellent qualifications he failed.

He understood perfectly well that in a capitalist society human life is cheap and that the so-called economic crisis was to blame for his failure to find employment. He knew he was only one of hundreds of thousands of young people who could not find work in 1978. Nevertheless his unemployment depressed him and affected him very deeply and it undoubtedly contributed to his death.

Last year Jim played a major part in the PAC's campaign on behalf of the prisoners. In the weeks leading up to our 9 July and 26 November demonstrations he spoke on our behalf at numerous meetings throughout England. It is clear that the plight of prisoners affected him deeply and that he identified closely with their struggle.

In a letter he wrote shortly before he killed himself he wrote: 'I have spent the last raging ghosts of my passion on fiery speeches for the IRA and the 'men (and women) behind the wire.''

He was also intensely depressed by the machinations of various left-wing groups on the Irish question. He had, for instance, been an enthusiastic supporter of 'Socialist Challenge' and had written for it but was disgusted when it was used to attack the PAC and Sinn Fein.

On a couple of occasions he intervened on our behalf with the 'Socialist Challenge'. We have printed a letter which was found amongst his papers after his death which is addressed to Tariq Ali and which makes plain his feelings on this point. The letter has not been published by 'Socialist Challenge'.

Undoubtedly over the last few years Jim had come to feel that the issue of Ireland was the most urgent issue confronting those who call themselves socialists. That so often they evaded or acted in an equivocal manner on Ireland depressed and upset him although he was well aware of the essentially unrevolutionary nature of so many self-styled revolutionaries in Britain.

He was also intensely aware of his own Irish background and knew

from the sufferings undergone by members of his own family for their Republican convictions that the struggle for Irish freedom was one that would be waged relentlessly by generations of Irish men and women to whom the cowardice and compromise which characterised so much of the British left was totally unknown.

We will never know exactly why Jim took his own life late one Saturday night. He had many personal problems which weighed on him but his friends and comrades will always wonder if they could have done more to help him. There is no doubt too that part of the cause of the depression was political and that the work he had done on behalf of the prisoners over the past year had taken a toll on his nerves.

I am sure that if Jim had lived in a socialist society he would still be alive today. He would not have been unemployed and he would have found comradeship support which is so hard to give and find in the bitchy competitiveness bred in all those unfortunate enough to have been formed in societies based on the oppression of man.

Jim's favourite poet was Ezra Pound whose intensely private and political vision has produced some of the greatest verse in English in this century. On a card in his room after his death I found a quotation from Pounds Canto 113:

The hells move in cycles
No man can see his own end.
Few of us will expect to have the horrifying and lonely end which Jim had nor shall we be able to forget the help and support he gave to us or replace the unique contribution he made to the struggle against capitalism and imperialism.

We can only hope that by dedicating ourselves to continue the struggle of which he was a part we may hasten the day when the system which he hated so much and which killed him in the end will be swept away and replaced with one fit for human beings. Then we shall be able to say that the tragic waste of such talent and human qualities is no more.

Jackie Kay
VENCEREMOS.

TERRORISING ACT

EIGHTEEN people were arrested in Paisley under the terrorising act on the 28th January. Four of those held are members of the East Belfast brigade of the UDA. The prisoners were allowed to have access to a solicitor.

TWENTY-THREE Irish working men and women have been taken from their homes by the Brit secret police in recent weeks. This terrorising started at 5 am on 18th January when armed special branchmen raided the homes of Irish people in the London area and a very large number of people were questioned by the police. Four men were detained. Arrests continued on subsequent days and the police concentrated upon the small Irish community of Braintree, Essex and 19 persons from this town have been held by the police under the terrorising act.

As a result of all this harassment seven men have been charged variously with offences connected with a stolen car and driving license and withholding information.

The special branch after all their wild talk about sleeper units, bomb factories and safe houses and after terrorising Irish people living in the South-East have finally managed to charge seven people with minor offences. The gutter press claims that sub-contracting firms were being used as 'fronts' has been proved to be a pack of lies.

NATIONAL Front member Alan Birtley was found guilty and jailed for two years for having two detonators when he appeared in court in Newcastle in December. One month

earlier NF member James Tierney got three years for possession of explosives. Birtley claimed at his trial that he had infiltrated the SWP on behalf of the National Front. He claimed that the devices found on him had been used by him to ingratiate himself with the SWP.

A FORMER 'security officer' for the National Front was cleared by a Newcastle court on 12 February of a charge of possessing explosives. During his trial John Urwin maintained that the timing device he had made from a pocket watch was made out of curiosity after a programme he saw on TV about the IRA. 'The National Front is not anti-police,' he said, 'just the opposite.'

IT WAS reported on 18 December last year that two soldiers in Edinburgh were being questioned about the killing of Catholics in Ireland in 1972 after a soldier had gone to a police station and made a statement there. Nothing further has been heard of this interesting case.

A YOUNG honeymoon couple and their cousin had an exciting experience in Brighouse Yorkshire in January when the local bobbies decided to blow up their car. The trio travelled from Dublin on holiday, their car broke down and they parked it and stole another. Local police who have missed out on the glamorous publicity of the metropolitan bomb-hunters seized this chance to practise their explosive techniques. All three holidaymakers appeared in court in Bradford on 19 January charged with taking away a car without permission.

Sticky Gallagher

THE latest convert to the Communist Party/sticky line on Ireland is Brendan Gallagher, father of famous Irish prisoner Willie. Brendan has recently carried out a series of meetings in England arranged in close liaison with the NCCL's Pat McCarthy. At these meetings which were aimed at trade unionists Gallagher was not asking for political status for the PoWs but for an 'independent inquiry' and for 'more humane treatment' for 'prisoners generally'.

Thus he neatly attempted to undercut the campaign of the PoWs themselves on a principled basis for political status and amnesty. Little wonder the more reformist and anti-Republican groups on the English left have so eagerly taken up a campaign which, if successful will leave the prisoners on the blanket exactly where they are today — the hell-holes of British imperialism. It should be a lesson to us all of the dangers of focussing on 'star' prisoners to the exclusion of the hundreds of men and women whose names have not reached such dizzy heights of publicity.

OPPORTUNISM

MR BRIAN Rose-Smith, Gerry Lawless' solicitor, has announced that he is going to cash in on the struggle of the Irish people for freedom by writing a book on the 'bombing campaign'. Much of the information for this tome will have come his way when he was acting as a 'defence' solicitor for many of the PoWs who are serving long sentences in England. It's an ill wind.....

Defending the Guilty

RUC announced on 1 February that they intended to press murder charges against two soldiers of the SAS assassination squad who had shot dead 16-year-old John Boyle in a Dunloy graveyard in July last year while supposedly 'lying in wait' for those who had hidden an arms cache in the cemetery. However the announcement has several unusual features.

Firstly no inquest has yet been held on John Boyle so far, so the RUC have presumed that the verdict will be 'murder' rather than the ubiquitous 'misadventure' verdict which has been used in the past to cover Brit army murders.

Secondly, the day before the RUC announcement Ian Paisley, in whose constituency the boy lived, raised the matter in the Commons when he asked the Attorney-General whether the DPP would take action. A post-mortem on the boy 'leaked' to the press by the RUC showed he had been shot from behind.

Thirdly, when the two were eventually flown to Belfast to appear in court not two but SEVEN SAS appeared and all rose as Alan Michael Bowen and Ronald Joseph Tempely were remanded. Neither police, army nor lawyers would say which were the two charged nor even if they were present in court. A very different procedure from that which applies to Republicans.

They seek it here They seek it there

THE so-called 'International Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland' has gone underground following revelations about acts of intimidation, theft and political chicanery and calls for it to be disbanded.

Originally the Tribunal had booked the Conway Hall in London for the last week in January, forcing those organising support meetings for Sinn Fein's Bloody Sunday march to go elsewhere to more out of the way and more expensive halls.

At the last minute however and with no public announcement the venue was suddenly switched to a 'private address' in Paris and various hangers-on were financed to a weekends junketing to which the 'public' and the press were forbidden entry.

A clear example of the cabalistic, elitist minds of the organisers who are so out of touch with the Irish political scene that it will probably take them six months or so to figure out whether Britain has a presence in Ireland.

OPEL MIRAGE

DET. CONST. Edward Morley claimed that he had been fired on from a white Opel Kadett car driven by 'IRA bombers' while he was on duty in Farnham Surrey shortly before Xmas. His claim launched one of those nationwide police 'hunts' which delight the heart of the gutter press. However in January it was discovered that the car identified by the eagle-eyed copper had been in Ireland since 24 November. He is now resting at home on sick leave and told reporters: 'I've been taking pills and I just want to be left in peace for a while.'

NEWS OF THE PRISONERS



TONY MADIGAN has come up off the block in Albany where he had been since April last year in protest at visiting conditions. Tony was told that he was now being taken off 'category A plus one' category although the Home Office had consistently denied that there was such a category. The left hand seems to have difficulty in knowing what the right is doing in Albany.

The Home Office recently told Tony Cunningham's MP that Irish PoWs in Albany had 'abused' the mass and therefore were not allowed to attend any longer. However, the chaplain Fr Parry wrote to Tony's wife: 'I would like to reassure you that none of these boys has ever misbehaved in mass'. They should get their lies a bit more worked out next time.

EDDIE BUTLER was told that the prison at Winslow Green had 'sold out' of Xmas cards so he was unable

to send any. A collection of family photos which his mother sent him never arrived — they got 'lost' in the post. His papers which were sent after subscriptions had been paid for by his mother have also got 'lost'. He has received only one in the last two months.

IRISH POWs are amongst those prisoners giving evidence in the trial of Hull screws and assistant governor at York where they are charged with assaulting prisoners following the Hull prison riot in August 1976. Amongst those who are giving evidence are Ray MacLaughlin, Gerry Cunningham, Joe Duffy and Johnnie Walker. When Ray MacLaughlin gave evidence by suggesting that Republican prisoners had 'terrorised' the jail. This hardly fits in with the fact that the prisoners on the roof in Hull flew the tricolour in a gesture of defiance and that English prisoners have testified their horror at the way Irish prisoners in Hull were treated.

ADRIAN VINCENT DONNELLY has become completely deaf in his right ear. Nevertheless prison authorities in Wakefield have refused to allow him to see a specialist. He has also been refused educational facilities and he has even been refused permission to know what they are! In addition he is not allowed to have exercise books in his cell and to have any hobbies in his cell. He and Martin Brady have been held for three months in 'F' wing; the control unit. Ray MacLaughlin has said that after being held in the unit

in 'F' wing it was two weeks before he could speak or orientate himself.

GIUSEPPE CONLON, who is seriously ill in the Scrubs, has been refused parole and repatriation despite the likelihood that he may not live to the end of his 12 year sentence.

BILLY ARMSTRONG has been refused parole to enable him to visit his father who is fatally ill in Belfast. Instead Wakefield prison authorities have ordered that he be put into a patches uniform for if he tries to escape.

JOHN MACCLUSKEY has been refused permission to see his solicitor in Wormwood Scrubs. So much for the usual 'legal safeguards'.

IRISH POWs charged following the Gartree riot have been refused legal advice and advisers to help them when they appear before the kangaroo courts of the Boards of Visitors although the High court in London recently ruled that these were 'legal' proceedings. It is also noteworthy that although many prisoners were involved in the riot, only Irish, anarchist and other political prisoners have been charged. Those awaiting trial have been held in solitary for four months so far.

PAUL HOLMES and MARTIN BRADY have both been given 86 days in solitary confinement by kangaroo Boards of Visitors courts following the Gartree riot. Since being moved to Wakefield Martin Brady has been held in notorious 'F' wing in a control unit in conditions of sensory deprivation.

RONNIE MACARTNEY is still in Winchester prison where he was moved after the Gartree riots. Prisoners moved to this prison have regularly complained of the dirty exercise yard which is small and claustrophobic and where rats have been seen.

Irish Political Prisoners Sentenced in England

Billy Armstrong, 16 yrs Wakefield
Paddy Armstrong, 16 yrs Wakefield
Jimmy Ahe, 12 yrs Wakefield
Liam Baker, 20 yrs Albany
James Bennett, 20 yrs Strangeways
Steve Blake, 15 yrs Wormwood Scrubs
Martin Brady, 16 yrs Wakefield
Eddie Butler, 14 yrs Winslow Green
Eddie Byrne, 14 yrs Walton, Liverpool
Hugh Callaghan, 16 yrs Albany
Sean Campbell, 10 yrs Long Lartin
Sean Canavan, 10 yrs Wakefield
Pat Clarke, 14 yrs Wakefield
Gerry Conlon, 16 yrs Wormwood Scrubs
Giuseppe Conlon, 12 yrs Wormwood Scrubs
Joe Coughlan, 7 yrs Long Lartin
Martin Coughlan, 14 yrs Parkhurst
Anthony Cunningham, 10 yrs Albany
Busty Cunningham, 20 yrs Albany
Gerry Cunningham, 20 yrs Wakefield
Hugh Doherty, 16 yrs Durham
Vincent Donnelly, 16 yrs Wakefield
Brendan Dowd, 16 yrs Parkhurst
Harry Duggan, 16 yrs Parkhurst
Kevin Dunphy, 12 yrs Albany
Hugh Feeney, 16 yrs Long Lartin
Fr Fell, 12 yrs Albany
Noel Gibson, 16 yrs Parkhurst
Ann Gillespie, 14 yrs Durham
Eileen Gillespie, 14 yrs Durham
Pat Gullyoyle, 14 yrs Albany

Pat Hackett, 20 yrs Wormwood Scrubs
Sean Hayes, 20 yrs Wakefield
John Higgins, 10 yrs Parkhurst
Paddy Hill, 16 yrs Long Lartin
Paul Hill, 16 yrs Winchester
Paul Holmes, 16 yrs Long Lartin
Gerry Hunter, 16 yrs Gartree
Gerry Kelly, 16 yrs Long Lartin
Sean Kinsella, 16 yrs Parkhurst
Tony Lynch, 7 yrs Wormwood Scrubs
Liam MacLarnon, 15 yrs Wormwood Scrubs
Bernard McCafferty, 16 yrs Parkhurst
Ronnie MacCartney, 16 yrs Winchester
Con MacFadden, 20 yrs Long Lartin
Richard McHenry, 16 yrs Hull
Ray MacLaughlin, 12 yrs Wakefield
Brian McLaughlin, 12 yrs Bristol
John MacCluskey, 10 yrs Wormwood Scrubs
Tony Madigan, 10 yrs Albany
Anne Maguire, 14 yrs Durham
Pat Maguire, 14 yrs Long Lartin
Pat Maguire Jr, 4 yrs Aylesbury
Vincent Maguire, 5 yrs Aylesbury
Gerry Mealey, 10 yrs Leicester
John Meale, 10 yrs Long Lartin
Joe Mooney (Duffy), 16 yrs Wakefield
Andy Mulryan, 20 yrs Hull
Paddy Mulryan, 20 yrs Wakefield
James Murphy, 10 yrs Long Lartin
Nick Murray, 12 yrs Wormwood Scrubs
Steve Nordonne, 16 yrs Wormwood Scrubs
Paul Normey, 16 yrs Wakefield
Shane O'Connell, 16 yrs Parkhurst
John O'Doherty, 16 yrs Wormwood Scrubs
Eddie O'Neill, 20 yrs Gartree
David Owen, 10 yrs Long Lartin
Billy Power, 16 yrs Wormwood Scrubs
Dolours Price, 16 yrs Armagh
Marian Price, 16 yrs Armagh
Michael Reilly, 10 yrs Wakefield
Carole Richardson, indefinite Durham
Michael Sheehan, 9 yrs Parkhurst
Phil Sheridan, 10 yrs Wormwood Scrubs
Peter Short, 10 yrs Canterbury
Gerry Small, 12 yrs Parkhurst
Sean Smyth, 12 yrs Albany
Peter Tait, 10 yrs Long Lartin
John Walker, 16 yrs Long Lartin
Roy Walsh, 16 yrs Parkhurst
Judith Ward, 16 yrs Durham
Gerry Young, 14 yrs Wormwood Scrubs

AN OPEN LETTER TO TARIQ ALI FROM JIM MASTERS

Dear Tariq Ali,

As a supporter of *Socialist Challenge*, I would like to protest at the hypocritical and dishonest attack on the Prisoners' Aid Committee and the Glasgow Cumman of Sinn Fein which appeared in the edition of 16 November 1978.

I believe that certain remarks that you made to me at a public meeting at the University of Essex a few weeks ago help to put this in perspective. You will recall that you spoke for 40 minutes on the subject 'Anti-imperialist Struggles throughout the World'.

I was taken aback by the fact that you failed to mention the one which is on our own doorstep, and asked why you omitted Ireland, whilst making it clear that this question was not a hostile criticism. You replied 'I must say that I get very irritated by the fact that wherever I speak someone mentions Ireland (!) You also informed me that 'There are other countries in the world you know'.

Thank you for that intelligence your honour. But if you care to look up your files you will find that I supplied information and evidence to Richard Carver concerning an attempted survey of Iranian students by SAVAK under the guise of an academic survey.

You mentioned the fact that 'SC' has published a large number of articles on the subject, but as you yourself argued in recent writings on Iran, real internationalism requires more than journalistic commitment.

Finally, and most significantly, you said that you might have mentioned Ireland but chose not to because this would have been 'mere tokenism'. Thus, I can only presume that Ireland can never be more than a 'token' issue for your organisation.

This may well explain the antics of certain IMG members with regard to the prisoners campaign and the distortions in your newspaper. Let us put the record straight. The sinister London-based Prisoner's Aid Committee which 'sabotaged' a demo in Glasgow is an Irish organisation.

The place of domicile of some of its members, like their sex, colour, or country of national origin, is an irrelevant diversion. It was set up to defend the

first Irish prisoners held in enemy jails here in England six years ago. It is accountable solely to the prisoners, and it draws its support for the Irish immigrant community here. (Most of its members come from that community, and some live outside London.)

I challenge you to produce evidence from any of the prisoners here in Britain that the PAC has failed to give the utmost support to them. By contrast, the British Left overall gave no substantial support to the PAC's work in the past period. Further, the British Left allow the task of Irish solidarity to run down to the point where such work was at its lowest ebb in January this year.

In these circumstances the job of mobilising mass demonstrations in support of the prisoners in the Six counties, as well as in England, fell to the PAC — by default. 'Your own organisation was so complacent about the war in Ireland and the state of solidarity work that it did not even debate the matter at its national conference.'

It was obvious that the British left intended to shelve the matter of Ireland and reduce any serious work to the question of the 'Tribunal' — a counter-productive adventure in the view of the PAC.

The PAC had to fight an uphill battle to get the support and co-operation of sections of the British Left for the July 9 demonstration. The result was the largest solidarity demo for years and proof that it was possible to fight on the Irish question without resort to cowardly liberal formulations, of amateur versions of the bourgeois cant of the 'human rights' industry, like the Tribunal.

Your own organisation proposed a follow up demonstration, and the PAC proposed a November 26 in order to give a clear four months preparation period. I spoke myself to Mr. O'Callaghan at your offices in order to dispel any legacy of distrust and to explore the details of the campaign structure. The PAC modified its original proposals to suit suggestions from Mr. O'Callaghan and the fight for the demo proceeded.

However, your members in Glasgow and their allies the SWP, operating through their pseudo-autonomous front

organisation the 'Irish Defence League' unilaterally called their own demo in Glasgow on the eve of the London march (subsequently moved to one week prior to the 26th.) This arrogant sectarian splitting manoeuvre was undoubtedly the produce of the chagrin of the IMG/SWP that the PAC and the prisoner campaign was one issue that they could not manipulate for their own ends.

Worse still the split was compounded by grave breaches of proletarian democracy on the part of your member Mr. M. O'Leary. He attempted to suppress discussion on the question of the London demo, subjected its supporters to a stream of sexist abuse, and attempted to assault one of them.

Let us be clear that there was no dispute about the desirability or otherwise of mobilisations outside London. The PAC was quite happy to approve an August demonstration by the IDL. It would have been happy to support any mobilisation which did not clash with the 26th.

The question of regional mobilisations would have been considered by the march mobilising committee — if such a proposal had been put forward in a democratic manner. It was not. You presented the PAC with the fait accompli.

The PAC cannot and does not give orders to Sinn Fein. It can only strive to work in anti-imperialist solidarity. If Glasgow Sinn Fein have seen through your tricks you have only the ineptitude of the tricksters to blame.

Finally I would like to make it clear that I raise these grubby issues publicly not out of a sense of antagonism to the comrades of the base of the IMG or the SWP. On the contrary I have been heartened by the response of these militants. It is precisely because I have respect for them that I believe that they deserve to know what is being done in their name.

If that irritates you, Tariq Ali, then consider the following 'sectarian' statement. 'All those English socialists who fail to hurry to the aid of the Irish revolution deserve to be branded with infamy if not with a bullet'. (Leon Trotsky)

With communist greetings
Jim Masters

noticeable that the march was larger than those organised in the past by left wing groups.

As in past years the march was attacked by fascists. It is only three years since an elderly member of the PAC was injured while selling PAC News on a Bloody Sunday march. This year between 200 and 300 fascists were organised to attack the marchers.

It was noticeable that the members of left wing groups which give support to the so-called Anti-Nazi League were conspicuous by their reluctance to defend the Irish.

At the end of the march a rally was held with speakers from Sinn Fein and PAC as well as other groups. Among the speakers was Jackie Kaye of PAC. However less than half way through this rally and well before the collection which was for the PoWs the bulk of the left had gone.

The IMG and SWP contingents left in a body about 20 minutes after the start of the rally leaving the rest of the marchers who were mainly Irish to be 'defended' by the police from the fascists. SWP and IMG are of course conspicuous in their calls for confronting the fascists on the streets.

The women's group 'Women and Ireland' asked for their speaker to 'jump the queue' and after she had spoken they also left. This despite the fact that the Chairman of the

meeting specifically asked all those who had supported the march to remain to the end so that we might all leave together.

One again the trendy lefties of the IMG/SWP/UTOM alliance showed exactly how much they really cared about defending the Irish when the chips were down. They left prominent and easily recognisable members of the Republican movement in Britain who spoke in full view from a public platform to make their own way home at the end of the meeting, defended only by other Irish comrades while the self-styled Nazi-fighters sneaked off home while it was still light.

Only comrades from the RCG of all the English groups stayed to the end. Of course Irish comrades remained in full force. Just as well we are not in the desperate situation of having to rely on the cowardly lefties for our 'protection'.

GAOL PICKETS

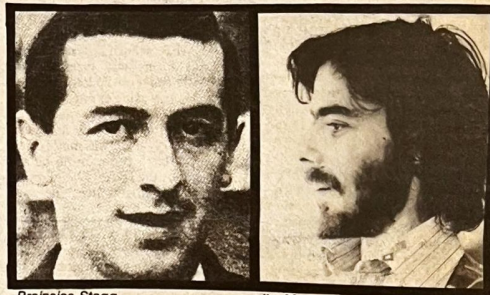
IN A co-ordinated national day of action pickets were placed on five prisons in England on December 9th. The picketing was called by PAC and supported nationally by RCG. Individual pickets were supported by Provisional Sinn Fein, IRSP, UTOM and RCT.

A picket of six people — from PAC

Proinsias Stagg

IN MEMORIAM Proinsias Stagg who was murdered in Wakefield jail on 12 February 1976.

'Let my memorial be peace with justice'



Proinsias Stagg

Jim Masters

Jim Masters memorial meeting

There will be a memorial meeting for the late Jim Masters at the Conway Hall on Friday 20 April at 7.30 pm

Cyfeillion Iwerddon.

Mae Cyfeillion Iwerddon yn cynnig eiddo cydmedeimidlad dwysaf i berthnasau a chyfeillion Jim Masters. Gwyddon ni a elwai o'i gymorth a'i gyfeillgarwch, y bydd ei farwolaeth anhymig yn golled fawr i'r Pwylgor Cymorth i'r Carcharorion, ond addawn ein cefnogaeth i'r PCC ac i'r ymdrech ar ran y carcharorion rhyfel yn Iwerddon y gweithiai Jim drostynt hyd ei farwolaeth.

Cyfeillion Iwerddon send their deepest sympathy to the relatives and friends of Jim Masters. We who had the benefits of his help and friendship, know that his untimely death will be a sad loss to the Prisoners Aid Committee. But we pledge our support to the PAC and to the struggle on behalf of Irish PoWs which Jim worked for right to the moment of his death.

Venceremos

The PAC offers sincere condolences to Dierdre Curley, the sister of Jim Masters, and to all his family and friends. We would also like to thank her for her very generous donation of Jim's books to the PAC to be given to Irish PoWs in jail in England.

BLOODY SUNDAY

Glasgow

ON SATURDAY 27 January Glasgow Provisional Sinn Fein organized a march to commemorate the Bloody Sunday murders. One thousand people attended this march, which started from the Blackhill estate and was followed by an open-air meeting with four speakers.

These were Henry Daly of Glasgow SF, Peter Turton of the PAC and one each of the Scottish Republican Socialist Clubs and UTOM. The PAC congratulates Glasgow Sinn Fein on the magnificent turnout which was enlivened by some fine playing of Republican music by the James Connolly and Kevin Barry flute bands.

Derry

A representative from the PAC attended the Bloody Sunday commemoration in Derry, on 28 January, at which ten thousand people turned out to march and hear orations from prominent Sinn Fein speakers.

London

Around 2,000 people took part in the Bloody Sunday demonstration organised in London by Sinn Fein on 28 January. The main theme of the march was support for PoWs. It was

and RCG — was placed on Albany prison, Isle of Wight. Although not many visitors were around, the prisoners' relatives were able to pass on the message that a picket was there and at four other prisons.

At Strangeways prison, Manchester, the ten-strong picket — six from RCG, three 'independents' and one from IMG/UTOM — distributed over a hundred leaflets and sold a good number of PAC News to passers-by and visitors. There was very little hostility from the general public. The general attitude ranged from sympathy to outright support for the PoWs. The picketers' placards called for 'PoW Status', 'Amnesty' and 'Hands Off Ireland'. The one thing that marred the action was the early departure of the IMG member who complained of the cold!

At Walton prison, Liverpool, six RCG supporters and two members of the Merseyside IRSP support group picketed for two hours. Once again the leafletting was very well received. A number of people expressed opposition to what was happening in the H-Blocks. Sales of PAC News were very good.

Wormwood Scrubs saw fifteen picketers — from PAC, Provisional Sinn Fein, RCG and RCT as well as two 'independents' — demanding 'PoW Status' 'Repatriation for Irish PoWs' and 'Amnesty'. In the bitter weather conditions there were very

few visitors or passers-by but here, as everywhere else, the leaflets were well received. The picket was also graced with a 'flying visit' from two Kilburn UTOM members who drove up, inspected the picket, chatted among themselves for a few minutes and then went home! Presumably the cold was too much for them as well!

The fifth jail picketed was Durham where thirty UTOM and RCG supporters carried out the picket. Although the Tyneside Irish Solidarity Committee are to be congratulated for providing a good-sized picket it has to be reported that the IMG member who had received the PAC leaflet 'forgot' to bring it to the picket. Yet, quite by chance, the TISC had its own leaflet which was not forgotten! However the picket did draw attention to the conditions in the prison.

Overall the day was very successful with a few minor upsets from our unreliable allies on the radical left. In most cases they simply stayed away. The day succeeded in drawing attention to the prisoners' struggle and in particular in getting ordinary British workers to read about the campaign and begin to see what's happening in the Irish struggle. Perhaps the most encouraging thing was the very widespread sympathy with the Irish PoWs among the English prisoners' relatives.