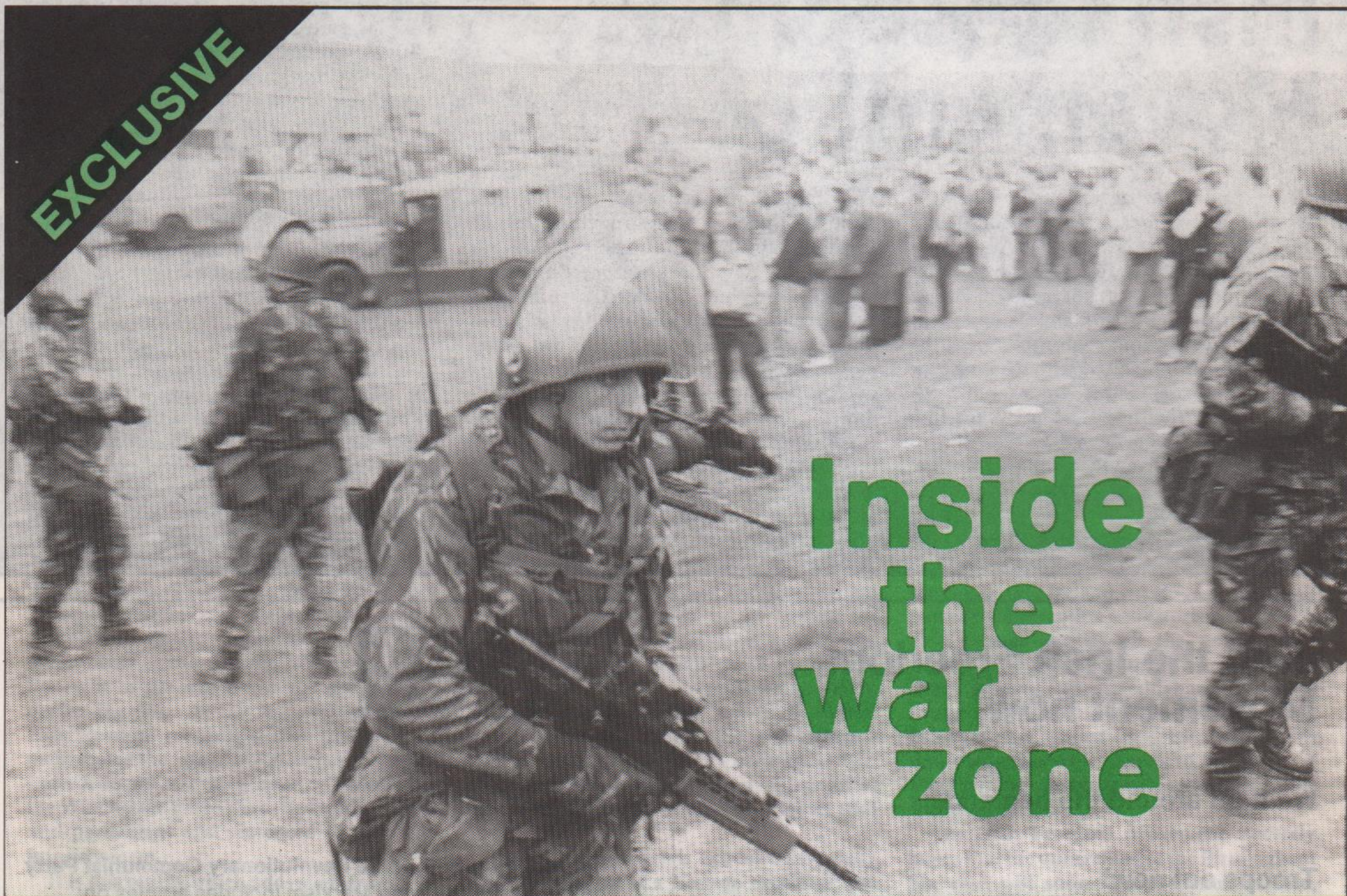


Irish Freedom

EXCLUSIVE



PHIL MURPHY

Inside the war zone

Interviews with republican activists from Newry, South Armagh: see pages 14-15

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**Join the annual anti-internment march
Saturday 11 August: see back page**

Join the struggle for Irish freedom

Build the Irish Freedom Movement!

We have now reached the time of the year when we begin preparations for our annual anti-internment demonstration in August (see the back page for details). As will be seen on pages 4 and 5, this does not mean that other activities stop until the march is passed. If anything, our programme for the rest of the year is even more packed with exciting new initiatives. In September, for example, we aim to repeat the success of last year's film festival at the Bloomsbury Theatre, but on a grander scale—this time by holding a week-long event. Watch this space for further details.

Since the last issue of *Irish Freedom* the

IFM has been very active throughout Britain building support for the struggle in Ireland. In addition to the staple weekly sales of our bulletin, the Saturday street meetings/stalls and sales, we have attended a number of events which are not mentioned elsewhere in this issue, for lack of space. Two prison pickets are of particular importance: the first outside Durham jail on international women's day saw a very large mobilisation with IFM supporters attending from different parts of the country. The second was the picket of Wakefield prison in February, which again attracted a large number of supporters. These prison pickets are important for they keep the

issue of Britain's internees alive throughout the year, not just to be remembered on special occasions like that of the anti-internment demonstration in August.

In the lead-up to the demonstration in August, we will be intensifying the level of our work. Already in London we have organised numerous public video showings in different boroughs. Our aim is to cover as many local areas between now and the march.

If you want information about our forthcoming events or about the IFM's approach to building a solidarity movement in this country that can get British troops out of Ireland, then get in touch. We have branches in:

Glasgow, Newcastle, Durham, Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield, Birmingham, Coventry, Nottingham, Leicester, Oxford, Leeds, Wakefield, Bristol, Cardiff, Brighton, Southampton, West London, North London, South London

There is no shortage of things you could do with us: from helping with mailing letters to flyposting and selling *Irish Freedom* in your own area. Get involved!

Write to IFM, BM IFM, London WC1N 3XX or phone (071) 375 1702.

Join the Irish Freedom Movement now!

We fight around the demands:

Troops out now!

Self-determination for the Irish people!

Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act!

To join us, and find out more about our activities, send £5.00 (£25.00 for organisations or trade union branches) to: Irish Freedom Movement, BM IFM, London WC1N 3XX. Phone (071) 375 1702.

- ☐ I want to join the IFM
- ☐ I want to find out more about the IFM
- ☐ I want to buy an enamel badge at £1.50 plus 30p p&p

NAME.....

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Make cheques/postal orders payable to IFM Association and send to IFM, BM IFM, London WC1N 3XX.

LIVING MARXISM

The monthly review of the Revolutionary Communist Party
The May issue of *Living Marxism* includes articles on:

Why ANC strategy is wrong • A British Marxist in Eastern Europe • When does life begin? • What's so marvellous about Manchester • Who says South Armagh is British?

Living Marxism costs £1.50 or £15 for a 12-month subscription to anywhere in Britain or Northern Ireland. Make cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd and send to Junius Publications Ltd, BCM JPLtd, London WC1N 3XX, or phone (071) 375 1485.

Win the propaganda war! The Irish War



Irish Freedom Movement
handbook £4.95 plus 85p p&p

'Attractively produced and well illustrated...provides a tidy synopsis of what the North of Ireland is all about...you won't get better.' *Irish Post*
Make cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd and send to Junius Publications Ltd, BCM JPLtd, London WC1N 3XX

The Birmingham Five and Six....

The British establishment can't fight for Irish freedom!

The release of the Winchester Three after their sentences were quashed on Friday 27 April was most welcome news. Although their immediate arrest under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and subsequent deportation dampened celebrations, the reversal of what was obviously another British frame-up of two innocent Irishmen and one woman represents a small blow for Irish freedom.

It is important to spell out why these developments only represent a small blow for Irish freedom. The question that needs to be asked is why were the Winchester Three convicted in the first place? According to Lord Justice Beldam when quashing the 25-year sentences Tom King, the then Northern Ireland secretary and alleged target of the Winchester Three, prejudiced the case by announcing changes to the rules concerning the right to silence in criminal proceedings during the trial. At the time, supporters of Irish freedom recognised that King's statement sealed the fate of the Winchester Three. Indeed, despite no evidence and no statements, the Winchester Three were tried by the media and parliament and sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment.

It is this reality which adds a sober note to celebrations. The fact that innocent Irishmen and women can be framed and convicted highlights the harsh enduring reality of Britain's dirty war against the Irish people. The Winchester Three are free. But the message which was established way back in 1974/75 by the Guildford and Birmingham cases remains as strong as ever: *if you're Irish, you're guilty*.

No doubt the release of the Winchester Three will strengthen the liberal conviction that British justice can be made to work. Pressurising the British establishment to do the right thing by releasing framed Irish prisoners has gained ground in recent months. The screening of Granada TV's docudrama *Who bombed Birmingham?* based upon *Error of Judgement* by Chris Mullin MP, has given a real boost to this approach. Let's look at this in some detail.

For Mullin and the rest the case of the Birmingham Six, like those of the Guildford Four, the Maguires and others, is a miscarriage of British justice. They are concerned with the plight of all these victims of injustice, but they are as concerned, if not more so, with the effect of these cases in discrediting British justice. They argue that these cases undermine the moral standing of British rule in Ireland.

They argue that these cases undermine the campaign to defeat the IRA, of which they fully approve.

Mullin's distinctive approach, however, is to go beyond proving the Birmingham Six not guilty to finding the real perpetrators of the bombings. The recent docudrama went a step further than his book. It named the allegedly guilty men, by revealing a British Special Branch report. This shows that the authorities knew the real identities of the bombers in 1975—when the six went on trial!

The consequences of naming four men (the name of the fifth was withheld for 'security reasons') are to widen still further the circle of guilt and suspicion around the Birmingham case. It sets these men up as targets for harassment or even assassination. It invites the Irish authorities—all those named are resident in the South—to pursue legal action against them. It invites the British authorities to seek their extradition. It guarantees them a trial in conditions even more prejudicial than those that customarily surround Irish political cases, or indeed, in which the original trial took place.

Granada's approach is extreme. Essentially what it attempts is a hostage exchange: the Birmingham Six for the Birmingham Five. There is nothing new in this approach. It represents a trend in the British solidarity movement which for years has refused to take sides in the Irish War. It is an approach which places more emphasis upon winning the liberal establishment to your side than standing with the Irish people against the British establishment.

The Birmingham Six case involves a cover-up from the bottom to the very top of the British legal system. The Birmingham Six were imprisoned because they were Irish and Britain is at war with the Irish people. Cases like that of the Birmingham Six make all Irish people criminal suspects. The British establishment makes no distinction between guilt or innocence. It will go to any lengths to preserve its rule at home and in Ireland.

The Winchester Three were as much victims of Britain's dirty war in Ireland as are the Birmingham Six. The difference is the role that these cases played for the British establishment. The framing of the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six criminalised the Irish people at a time when the Irish War was at its peak. That's why it took fifteen years to get the Guildford Four released. That's why the Birmingham Six are still in prison.

Ironically, the Winchester Three were 'lucky' that the criminalisation process was well established by the time of their arrest. And as stated above—their conviction in the first place stands as testimony to the enduring nature of British criminalisation of the Irish people. The question which Mullin and his ilk never ask themselves flows from the above: how do the authorities get away with such blatant injustices?

They get away with it because nobody challenges them on their right to rule in Ireland. The very opposite is the case. The political party to which Mullin belongs, the Labour Party, was the very party which sent the troops into Ireland in 1969. Later Labour passed the Prevention of Terrorism Act which gave the authorities all the powers they needed to criminalise the Irish people. In short, cases like the Birmingham Six served to consolidate a consensus behind the establishment and against the Irish people. It is that consensus which needs to be broken if there will not be more cases like that of the Birmingham Six.

The Irish Freedom Movement sincerely hopes that the unravelling of the Birmingham Six case will soon result in their release, though it appears as if the establishment is still going to try to bluff it out. Unlike Mullin, we hope that the exposure of the case does discredit the British legal system and that it weakens the consensus of support for British policy in Ireland. If so the release of the Birmingham Six will help the release of all those Irishmen and women now rotting in British jails. They will never get any help from Mullin, *World in Action*, Ludovic Kennedy or Cardinal Basil Hume—for the simple reason that they are guilty of the crime of fighting for Irish freedom.

Unlike Chris Mullin, we support all Irish prisoners—those who have admitted engaging in an armed struggle against Britain as well as those framed by the British establishment. We support the right of the Irish people to self-determination and that means defending their right to fight for that freedom. Our aim is to build a movement in Britain which sides with the Irish people against the British state. If you want more information about the Irish Freedom Movement, its politics and future activities write to IFM, BM IFM, London WC1N 3XX or phone (071) 375 1702.

The IFM in action

Since the last issue of *Irish Freedom*, the Irish Freedom Movement has been active campaigning throughout Britain for solidarity with the Irish struggle. The following pages report on some of the events we have organised or been involved in as well as some exciting forthcoming activities

JOE BOATMAN

The Nick Mullen Defence Campaign

No more frame-ups!

Supporters of the Irish Freedom Movement joined a lively and noisy picket outside Brixton prison on Saturday 24 February in support of Nick Mullen, held in the prison on remand awaiting trial. The picket was one activity in a number organised by the campaign to stop the frame-up of Nick Mullen.

Nick Mullen was arrested in Zimbabwe in February 1989 and arbitrarily deported to Britain. He is awaiting trial which was scheduled for 25 April on a charge of

conspiracy to cause explosions, which, according to the police, is connected with the discovery of arms and explosives in a south London flat.

Mullen has been in prison for 15 months. He has been subjected to frequent cell changes in a top security wing in Brixton prison and has been forced to endure up to four strip-searches a day. The Nick Mullen Defence Campaign was established with Mullen's support with the aim of preventing what will



IFM exclusive

Police nobble London marathon

The Irish Freedom Movement was poised to win the London marathon on Sunday 22 April until the forces of law and order stepped in to arrest our entrant. This stunt which earned us TV coverage is part of our commitment to ensure that the Irish issue is raised at every opportunity. The twentieth

anniversary of the Irish War has passed and so have many of the initiatives which attempted to mark it. The IFM will ensure that it will not be another 20 years before the Irish War becomes a point of media attention and debate.

be another showtrial—a 'Guildford Four' for the nineties.

This was the message of a public meeting attended by over 250 people at the Camden Irish Centre on Wednesday 7 March. The meeting was to be addressed by Paul Hill and Gerard Conlon of the Guildford Four, but, unfortunately, they were in the United States and could not attend. John Fitzpatrick, a leading member of the IFM and a solicitor, speaking from the platform was loudly applauded when he stated that 'the only guarantee that there would be no more British establishment conspiracies which result in Guildford Fours or Birmingham Sixes or Winchester Threes is to build the kind of movement which takes sides in the war and defends all Irish people whether they are guilty or innocent'.

This was the message IFM supporters took to a picket outside Downing Street the following week. Like the Nick Mullen Defence Campaign, we are committed to stopping the frame-up of Nick Mullen and will be campaigning in the coming weeks and months to build support for the campaign. If you want to get involved you can attend campaign meetings which take place fortnightly at the Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7, or telephone the IFM on (071) 375 1702.

Picket of Irish embassy

'Gun-runner? Who're you kidding!

Charlie Haughey does Britain's bidding!



DENNIS RYAN

This was the rallying call of an angry IFM picket outside the Irish embassy in London on Friday 20 April. The protest was aimed at Irish premier Charles Haughey who was in London visiting Margaret Thatcher. The picket aimed to highlight the fact that despite the recent failure of Britain to secure the extradition of Owen Carron, cooperation between the Irish Republic and Britain remains as strong as ever. The IFM organisers of the picket pledged to expose Dublin's subordination to Whitehall promising to be back whenever and if ever extraditions take place in the future.

Frank Sampson

preparing for power 1990

Debate and discuss the Irish question at **Preparing for Power 1990**. A week of discussion and debate.

Organised by the Revolutionary Communist Party. University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1. Friday 20 to Friday 27 July



For some years now the Irish Freedom Movement has organised a special five-session course on the Irish War during **Preparing for Power**, the Revolutionary Communist Party's annual summer school.

The Irish sessions will be held in the early afternoon, starting on Sunday 22 July. This year's course includes the following sessions: Why Britain stays in Ireland • Loyalism: myth and reality • The strange case of Southern Ireland • The IRA • Why we say Troops out now! There is also a variety of late afternoon and early evening workshops covering other aspects of Irish politics. If you want to win the arguments on Ireland, then **Preparing for Power 1990** is where you should be at the end of July.

Register now! Prices for the full week: **Waged** £35 on the door; £33 in advance; £30 before 1 June. **Unwaged** £25 on the door; £23 in advance; £21 before 1 June. **Special price for the Irish course only.** Five sessions from Sunday to Thursday: £10.

Make cheques/postal orders payable to IFM Association. Write to Irish Freedom Movement, BM IFM, London WC1N 3XX or phone (071) 375 1702.

Irish Freedom Movement

Delegation to Ireland

Britain has been fighting a colonial war in Ireland for 21 years. But most British people have little understanding of the realities of life in the war zone. Ignorance and prejudice have been fuelled by the lies and shock headlines pumped out by the media and establishment. And the official labour movement, which enthusiastically supports the struggle in South Africa, has remained silent on the question of Irish liberation.

The Irish Freedom Movement is organising a delegation to Ireland to give individuals and organisations the opportunity to see what life is really like under British occupation. The

delegation will leave for Ireland on Thursday 3 May 1990. It will be travelling to Dublin, Derry and South Armagh and will attend the Bobby Sands commemoration march in Belfast on Sunday 6 May. Delegates will return on Tuesday 8 May.

In the weeks running up to the delegation, delegates have been speaking at trade union and Labour Party meetings to get sponsorship for the trip. Where we have already been sponsored, we have also been invited to address meetings on our return to inform people of the experience of seeing Irish reality first hand.

If you would like further information about the delegation please contact us at the address below. We can arrange for a local speaker to attend your group to explain the motivation and itinerary of the delegation. Even if we cannot see you before the date of the trip, we would be quite happy to attend meetings to report on the trip which, hopefully, will initiate a much-needed debate on Ireland within the labour movement.

Finally, we would appreciate any donations towards the costs of the delegation. Although we have received substantial donations so far, the costs of such an exercise are huge. Please make cheques/postal orders out to IFM Association, and send to 'Delegation', IFM, BM IFM, London WC1N 3XX. Write to this address for more information or phone Denis Ryan on (071) 375 1702.

The price of diplomacy

ANC spokesman attacks IRA

The Irish republican movement, like countless other organisations around the world, wants to celebrate the release of Nelson Mandela and identify with the struggle against apartheid. To this end, Sinn Féin has just produced a poster, 'Freedom', featuring Mandela alongside IRA hunger-striker Bobby Sands. And Sinn Féin supporters joined a recent Anti-Apartheid Movement march in Dublin carrying a banner which, in the colours of the African National Congress, called for the release of 'all political prisoners in Ireland and South Africa'.

An ANC representative responded to these gestures in an interview with the *Irish News* (23 February). The feeling, it appears, is far from mutual. 'The ANC has nothing and never has had anything to do with the IRA', said Billy Mafethal, described as the ANC deputy spokesman in Britain. He dismissed attempts to link the two movements as 'wild, exaggerated claims' which the ANC was 'very concerned' about.

Britain's apartheid

So is the ANC against the use of force in Ireland? 'We are opposed to terrorism in all its forms', says Mafethal. And how does Mr Mafethal distinguish between the legitimate armed struggle of the ANC and the 'terrorism' of the IRA? Because the ANC's use of force, he explains, is purely defensive action taken in response to the violence of apartheid.

Are we to assume from this that the ANC believes the IRA's struggle to be an unprovoked act of aggression? Perhaps it is just that Mafethal does not know the history of Britain's own brand of apartheid—the system of sectarian discrimination against Catholics institutionalised in Northern Ireland. Let us give him a quick guide to the last 25 years.

In the sixties, South Africa's prime minister John Vorster said he would swap all the repressive legislation of the apartheid state for one catch-all clause of the Special Powers Act in Northern Ireland. In 1969, when Catholic nationalists tried to defend themselves against attack by Loyalist police and mobs, the British government sent an army of occupation into the ghettos of the nationalist 'townships'.

After nationalists subsequently reformed the IRA in response to state violence, the British parachute regiment staged its own version of the Sharpeville massacre on Bloody Sunday in Derry, 1972.

Ever since, the British authorities have militarised nationalist areas of Northern Ireland under a permanent state of emergency, creating the sort of culture of prison and cemetery with which black South Africans are familiar. And throughout these years, British governments have blamed the violence on 'tribal' conflicts between the local communities—an argument now echoed in the apartheid state's propaganda about 'black-on-black violence' in South Africa.

Despite all this, Mafethal seems certain that the IRA is guilty of 'terrorism', a practice to which the ANC is opposed 'in all its forms'. The facts suggest, however, that the only distinction between the use of force by the IRA and the ANC over the past 20 years is that the Irish guerrillas have been rather more regular in their successes against the oppressor army.

Same motives

Both the ANC and the IRA have taken up arms in response to violent oppression. Many commentators claim that, unlike the ANC, Irish republicans have the chance to contest democratic elections; therefore their use of force is illegitimate. But why should Irish people be content with sham elections inside Britain's sectarian state? That is like suggesting that black people should accept the polls of apartheid's stooge black councils as real democracy in South Africa. By standing in elections and winning thousands of votes, the Irish republican movement has demonstrated popular support for its armed struggle against Britain's division of Ireland; just as the ANC, by encouraging mass boycotts of the polls, has shown the level of support for its armed struggle against apartheid.

Their motives for using force are broadly the same, and there is plenty of evidence that each enjoys support.

Yet, then, as to why an ANC spokesman should denounce the IRA and accuse it of 'terrorism'. He surely cannot be referring to

the fact that civilians have been killed in IRA actions over the years; after all, ANC car-bombs have hardly been harmless. There are victims in every war.

Sinn Féin's decision to produce a poster featuring Mandela and Bobby Sands seems appropriate enough. As the republican banner on the Dublin march suggested, both were political prisoners, jailed as criminals by the authorities. And both demonstrated remarkable commitment to their cause. Mandela's 27-year stay in prison was undoubtedly lengthened by his persistent refusal to renounce the struggle. Similarly, Sands led a hunger-strike in 1981 against Britain's attempt to brand Irish republicans as criminals and in support of the demand for political status. On 5 May he became the first of 10 hunger-strikers to die in the H-Blocks. If he had bowed before the British authorities and accepted the criminal tag he would not only have been alive today; he would have been free.

Sands became a symbolic figure of Mandela-like proportions within the republican community. While he was on hunger-strike, he was elected as MP for Fermanagh-South Tyrone.

His funeral procession was 100 000-strong—making it, as a proportion of his community, bigger than the monster rallies which have followed Mandela's release.

The 'Freedom' poster features recent quotes from Mandela on the armed struggle and the determination to pursue the fight: 'Our resort to armed struggle was purely a defensive action....The factors which necessitated the armed struggle still exist today. We have no option but to continue....We have waited too long for freedom.' In his prison writings, Sands often expressed similar sentiments. He had, he said, decided to fight back because 'I had seen too many homes wrecked, fathers and sons arrested, friends murdered. Too many shootings and blood—most of it my own people's'.

'I was only a working class boy from a nationalist ghetto, but it is repression that creates the spirit of freedom. I shall not settle until I achieve the liberation of my country, until Ireland becomes a sovereign independent socialist republic.'

One is the son of an African chief and the other 'a working class boy from a nationalist ghetto'; but can you spot which one is the terrorist? We know a deputy chief spokesman who can.

Courting the West

Shift the focus from their actions to their ideas, and it is equally hard to make much sense of Mafethal's insistence that the ANC and the IRA are worlds apart. Their political programmes are remarkably similar. Both the ANC's Freedom Charter and Sinn Féin's Eire Nua programme include broad democratic demands alongside measures designed to protect the interests of small businessmen and farmers. Each of them has been accused of being Marxist; and each has, quite rightly, denied it.



'We do have links with organisations such as the PLO', Mafethal finally conceded in his *Irish News* interview, 'but we never had any cooperation with organisations such as the IRA, nor would we want to'. In terms of their politics and methods, 'organisations such as the PLO' are pretty indistinguishable from 'organisations such as the IRA'.

But there is one significant difference between them: their relationship to the Western powers.

These are the very powers with the ANC is today trying to court in its diplomatic offensive against the South African regime. And an unwillingness to offend seems to be the only explanation for Mafethal's outburst against the IRA.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation has for some time been sympathetically treated by European powers which do not share the USA's traditional hardline support for Israel. Recently, PLO leader Yasser Arafat has even begun to win favour with the British and American governments, as he has effectively recognised the state of Israel and accelerated the shift away from armed struggle towards international diplomacy. Thus an ANC

spokesman in London, Mafethal, can express support for the PLO without seriously damaging its attempts to lobby for support and sanctions among British politicians and institutions.

High price

The IRA is an entirely different matter in this respect. Its war of liberation is directed at the heart of the British state. As such it is the most vilified organisation in these islands, and other Western powers express solidarity with British imperialism by condemning, extraditing and imprisoning Irish republicans. Any association with the IRA would be the kiss of death for anybody seeking to curry official favour in Western capitals, particularly London.

In his hackneyed and hypocritical talk of IRA 'terrorism', Mafethal demonstrates that those who want to lobby British statesmen must learn to talk their language. This is the price to be paid for joining the game of international diplomacy. He says that the ANC is 'very concerned' about attempts to

link it with the IRA. Supporters of the anti-apartheid struggle should surely be more concerned about his attempts to deny the legitimacy of the liberation war in Ireland. If carried to its logical conclusion, such an approach must have serious implications for the conduct of the struggle in South Africa itself.

The Western powers, responsible for oppression around the world, are no friends of black South Africans. Mafethal would do far better expressing support for the Irish republican struggle, which is waged against apartheid's most important international prop, British imperialism.

The Mafethal episode provides a small warning of the dangers which lie ahead as the ANC seeks to bring more respectable diplomatic pressure to bear on Pretoria. And, with rumours of talks and ceasefires beginning to float around Ireland again, it might also provide a timely reminder to republicans of the high price which imperialism tries to demand for a seat at the negotiating table.

Eddie Veale

Criminalising the struggle for freedom

Why the Birmingham Six are inside

The Granada Television documentary *Who Bombed Birmingham?* has raised again the controversy over the Birmingham Six. Kenan Malik explains why the men are still in prison

On Thursday 21 November 1974 two bombs shattered the centre of Birmingham. Two pubs—the Mulberry Bush and the Tavern in the Town—were devastated. Twenty-one people were killed, and 167 injured.

Three hours later five Irishmen—Patrick Hill, John Walker, Richard McKelkeny, Gerry Hunter and Billy Power—were arrested as they stepped off the boat train in Heysham in Lancashire to board a ferry for Ireland. Another Irishman, Hugh Callaghan, was later arrested in Birmingham. The following Monday the six men were charged with the bombings. One year later, in November 1975, they were convicted and each sentenced to 21 terms of life imprisonment.

The Birmingham Six have always protested their innocence, claiming that they were beaten and tortured into making their 'confessions'. The forensic evidence on which their convictions were based has long since been discredited. Police witnesses have confirmed that the six were assaulted, threatened with guns and deprived of food and water before making their statements. Nobody who has studied the case can be in any doubt that the six had nothing to do with the bombings. So why, 15 years later, are the men still in prison?

The continued incarceration of the Birmingham Six can only be understood in the context of Britain's war against the Irish people.

The Birmingham pub bombings were a turning point in the establishment's propaganda war to win domestic support for its occupation of Ireland. They played a key role in allowing the British authorities to discredit the Irish struggle by smearing it as a criminal conspiracy. No single event has played a greater role in underpinning the British government's criminalisation strategy. To admit now that the Birmingham Six are innocent would be a

considerable blow to its war machine. For this reason the British authorities have obstructed every attempt by the six to obtain their freedom.

When the war broke out in 1969, Britain's propaganda machine was caught unawares. The early media coverage revealed the brutality of the British Army and the Loyalist death squads all too clearly. There was much sympathy within Britain for the struggle in Ireland. After the carnage of Bloody Sunday, for example, when British paratroops shot dead 14 unarmed civilians in Derry in 1972, 20 000 people marched on Downing Street and fought pitched battles with the police.

In the eighteen months that followed Bloody Sunday, sporadic protests against the war rocked areas with large Irish populations such as London and the Midlands. In the week before the pub bombings, Birmingham was hit by a row over plans for a march to commemorate the death of IRA volunteer James McDaid, killed during a bomb attack on Coventry telephone exchange. Labour home secretary Roy Jenkins banned the march and bused in 1300 police to contain the city's Irish community.

Support in Britain for the Irish struggle constrained the government's ability successfully to prosecute its campaign of terror. To undermine domestic support for the Irish struggle the authorities set out to criminalise the fight for freedom. They sought to portray the war as a law and order problem and the IRA as a bunch of psychopaths and murderers. The Birmingham bombings, and the reaction that followed, played a key role in winning widespread support for this viewpoint.

The pub bombings caused anger and shock among British workers. At the massive Longbridge car plant in Birmingham 1500 workers out of nearly 20 000 downed tools and walked out. Stewards at the British

Leyland tractor plant in Walshwood Heath called on the official trade union movement to call a 'day of mourning in the city' (quoted in *the next step*, March 1980).

But while there was widespread anger within the working class about the bombings, overt hostility towards the Irish community was initially kept in check. The Birmingham *Post* reported that 'a call by the NF organisation for a strike yesterday in protest at the Birmingham bombings went unheeded in the Midlands and there was no repetition of Friday's spontaneous walkout' (26 November 1974).

The press and the politicians, however, took advantage of the anger to whip up a climate of anti-Irish hysteria. The *Daily Mirror* demanded an immediate repressive response from the government. 'The measures had better be tough' demanded its banner headlines. They were. Within a week the Prevention of Terrorism Act, with its draconian powers of detention and expulsion, was on the statute book. Support for the act was so overwhelming it did not even require the formality of a vote in parliament. The official campaign helped transform the initial working class reaction of shock and horror into a witch-hunt against the Irish community.

The most important reason for the creation of a popular consensus for repressive measures against Irish people, however, was the capitulation of the left to the lynch-mob atmosphere generated by the authorities.

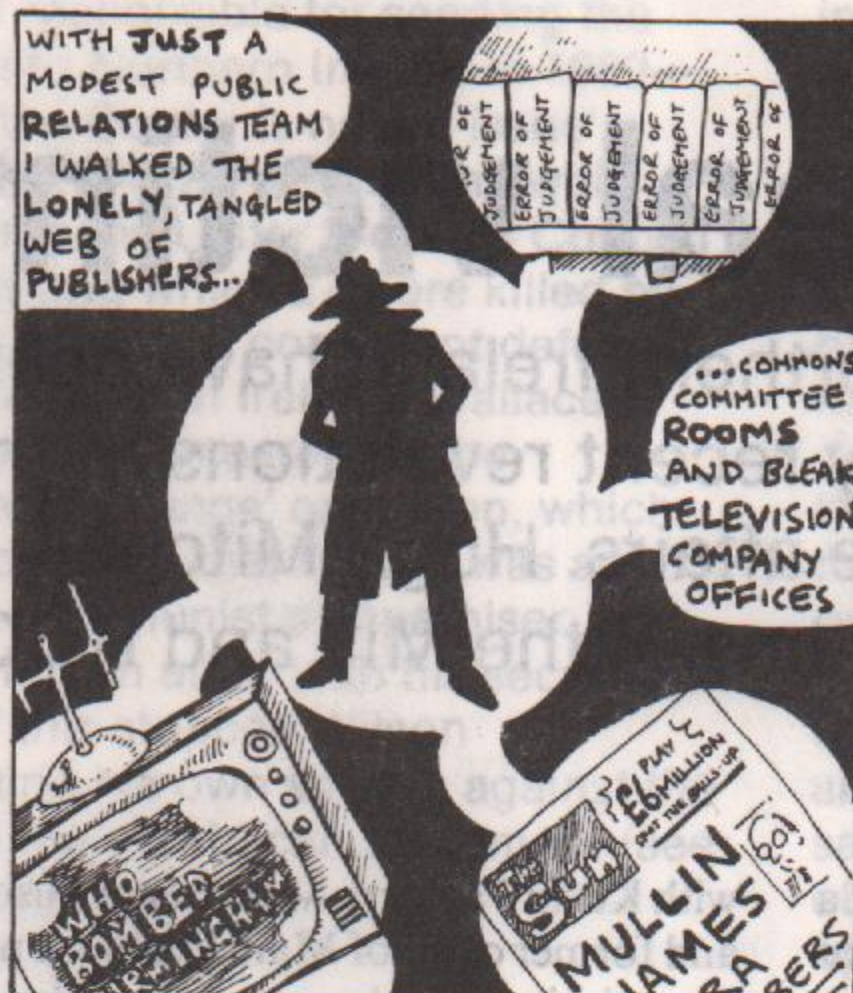
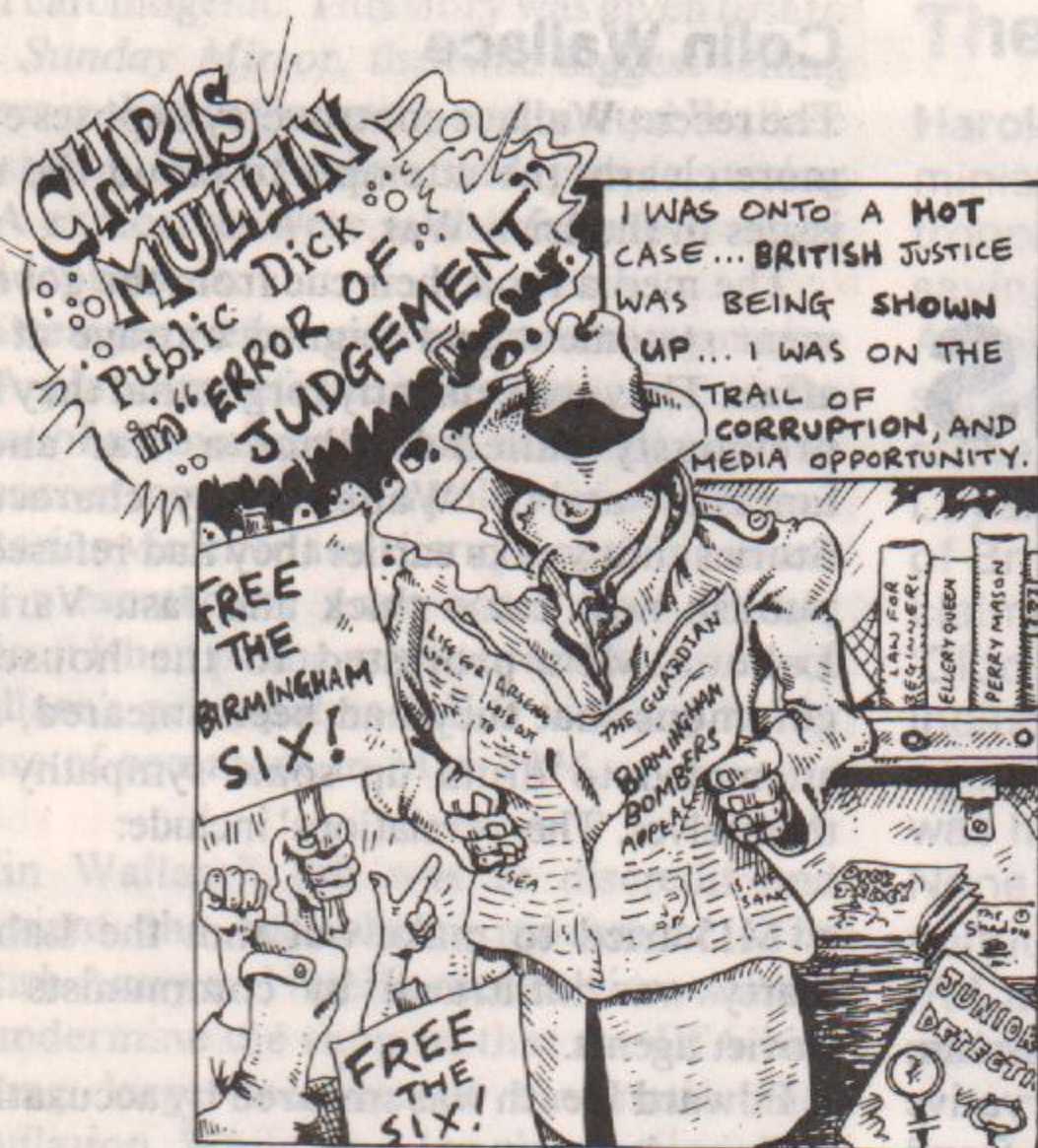
'We do not preach surrender to acts of violence', claimed *Tribune*, the voice of the Labour left. 'Those who are guilty of them must be punished.' (29 November 1974) The Communist Party paper, the *Morning Star*, claimed that 'whoever ordered this act to be done and whoever carried it out, it can only serve the cause of the sinister and reactionary forces in our society' (23 November 1974).

Even the far left joined the anti-Irish bandwagon. *Socialist Worker* attacked the bombings—'Socialists must condemn these senseless killings'—and then blamed the republican movement for the subsequent repression meted out by the British government:

'The bombings have hardened the determination of the government to continue its senseless violence in Northern Ireland. They have banned the IRA and extended police powers with a draconian bill which will wipe out political and trade union liberties fought for by our class for more than a century.' (30 November 1974)

The support the left gave to the idea that Irish freedom fighters were common criminals who carried out 'senseless killings' showed how successful the government had been in its criminalisation strategy. The authorities took full advantage of the popular mood after the bombings, pushing through the PTA and proscribing the IRA.

The PTA has been the cutting edge of the state's criminalisation strategy and the government's main weapon in its prosecution of the Irish War in Britain. It was not designed to convict IRA bombers—existing criminal law was more than sufficient for this task. Indeed,



the police initially objected to the PTA because the extraordinary powers of arrest, detention and deportation without trial were an embarrassment, making public already-existing police practice.

The main effect of the PTA was political, criminalising the republican movement and its supporters and preventing the emergence of an anti-imperialist movement in Britain.

Its role, as Roy Jenkins put it in introducing the bill to parliament, was to 'stem the infection from Ireland'. The PTA is an ideological weapon aimed at insulating British politics from the destabilising effects of the Irish War.

The PTA makes it an offence to raise support for 'terrorism'. The authorities have a free hand to determine what constitutes 'terrorism'. The act allows the home secretary to 'exclude' anyone whom he believes is involved with terrorism from Britain to Northern Ireland. Thus the threat of deportation hangs over every Irish person in Britain. Finally, the PTA empowers the police to arrest people without a warrant and to hold them without charges for up to 48 hours. Once that time is up, the police can apply to the home office to extend the period of detention for another five days, again without laying charges.

The PTA targets every Irish person as a potential criminal. Since 1974, half a million people, almost all of them Irish, have been stopped, searched and questioned under its provisions. Up till September 1989 6709 people had been arrested under the act; fewer than 600 had been charged. The effect of the PTA is to instil a climate of fear into the Irish community and to make any show of support for the Irish struggle a criminal offence. At

the same time it has helped win widespread acquiescence from the British public to the government's criminalisation strategy. Since 1974 there has not been a single demonstration in support of the Irish struggle in this country to match the one which followed Bloody Sunday.

The importance of the Birmingham pub bombings in helping the British establishment decisively to win the propaganda war explains the continued incarceration of the Birmingham Six. To admit now that the six have spent 15 years in jail simply because they happen to be Irish would be a tremendous blow to Britain's propaganda machine. Hence the authorities have obstructed every attempt by the men to win their freedom.

From top to bottom the British establishment is involved in a conspiracy to ensure the men remain in prison.

In 1976 the then lord chief justice Lord Widgery refused to give them leave to appeal. In 1980 the master of the rolls Lord Denning dismissed their civil case for assault against the police. In 1988 the appeal court again turned down an appeal for a retrial. As Lord Denning explained in dismissing the case in 1980, the release of the Birmingham Six would have implications which no British court would be willing to risk:

'If the six men win it will mean that the police are guilty of perjury and they are guilty of violence and threats and that the confessions were involuntary and were improperly admitted in evidence; and the convictions were erroneous. That would mean the home secretary would either have to recommend that they be pardoned or he would have to remit the case to the court of appeal. That is

such an appalling vista that every sensible person in the land would say "It cannot be right that these actions should go any further".'

Even more than with the Guildford Four, who were finally released last year 15 years after having been framed for the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings, the conviction of the Birmingham Six exposes the sordid reality of Britain's war against the Irish people. Their release would lift the lid on Britain's colonial war in Ireland. That is the 'appalling vista' that neither Denning nor any other member of the British establishment could contemplate. Hence the Birmingham Six remain under lock and key.

Those campaigners, like Labour MP Chris Mullin, who imagine that the Birmingham Six will be released because they now have irrefutable proof of their innocence are simply naive. The British establishment has known from the moment of their arrest that the six were not guilty of the bombings. But the propaganda importance of the six means they remain inside.

It remains to be seen whether as in the case of the Guildford Four the government is forced to release the six as a damage limitation exercise. But as long as Britain continues its occupation of Ireland, so Irish people will continue to be framed and imprisoned. The only way we can ensure that all Irish prisoners languishing in British jails are released is by ensuring a victory for the Irish people in their struggle for freedom.

Not the real victims

Security operations in Northern Ireland have been put under the spotlight by recent revelations in the Stalker and Colin Wallace affairs. Hugh Mitchell asks: who are the real victims of the MI5 and RUC cover-ups?

The '“Stalker Affair” left in its wake a number of casualties, and there is no point pretending that I was not one of them; but there are others. Personal reputations and police careers have suffered, probably irrecoverably' (Introduction to *Stalker*, by John Stalker). The former deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester police was writing about the controversy following his removal from an official investigation into shoot-to-kill allegations in the North of Ireland.

Colin Wallace too was held to be a casualty of the scandal that broke around him. Archie Hamilton, armed forces minister, admitted to the house of commons on 30 January that at least six government ministers, the secretary of state for defence, and Margaret Thatcher herself had consistently lied about British Army 'dirty tricks' in Ireland. The government announced a limited inquiry into whether Colin Wallace, a high-ranking army public relations officer who had disseminated MI5 and army disinformation and propaganda, had been unfairly dismissed.

In both cases public concern about the cover-ups was restricted to the injustices suffered by John Stalker and Colin Wallace themselves. Was Stalker's career ruined? Was Wallace unfairly dismissed and then framed for murder? Opinion divided between those on the right who thought Wallace and Stalker disloyal and more liberal people who thought them victims. So what really happened?

John Stalker

John Stalker was called into Northern Ireland after six nationalists had been shot dead by an undercover RUC hit squad in the space of five weeks. The RUC team was trained by the SAS, and directed by Special Branch.

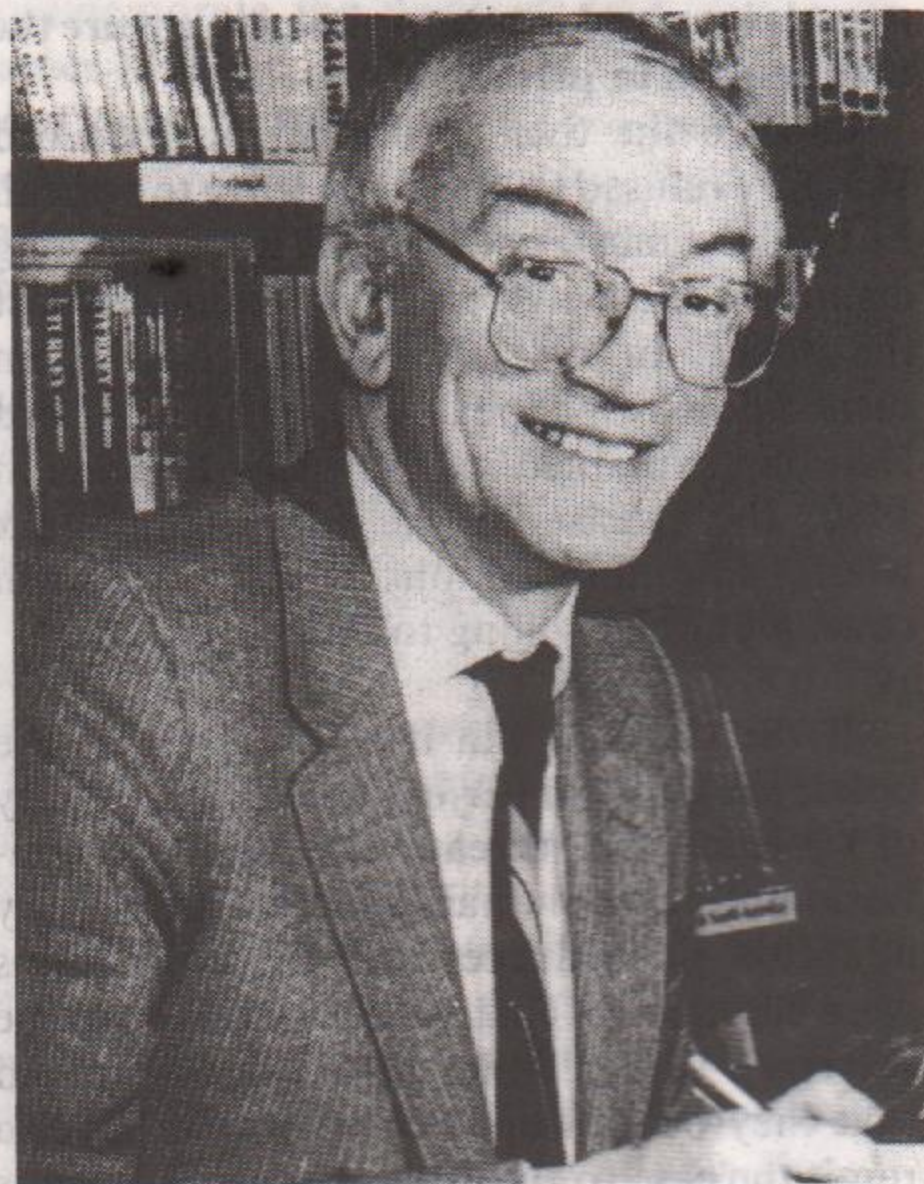
It was subsequently revealed that RUC officers had lied to both the police and court investigations into the deaths. Stalker's investigation into the killings was met with obstruction by the RUC, MI5 and civil servants at the highest level—it does not take Stalker's 19 years in the CID to deduce that this cover-up extended to the very highest levels of the British establishment.

Stalker was removed from the inquiry. Stalker himself was then made the subject of a second inquiry. He was alleged to have links with Manchester criminals. Stalker was linked

with Kevin Taylor, a Manchester businessman, and former chair of Manchester Conservative Association. Taylor was charged with fraud in an attempt to make the allegations against Stalker credible. The charges against both Stalker and Taylor collapsed.

Stalker has since left the police force. He has dabbled in politics as a member of the Liberal Party. He has been an adviser on Channel 4's *Brookside* and is currently advertising double glazing. John Stalker's career in the Manchester police was sacrificed to save the RUC's face. His life, he said at the time, was left in tatters. But the six victims of the shoot-to-kill policy would have been pleased to be as unfortunate as John Stalker. Stalker emerged from the affair a public figure, interviewed on television, author of a best-selling autobiography. No such career prospects await the victims of the RUC's undercover team. It was not Stalker that posed a threat to the authorities but the Irish people's resistance to British rule.

The Stalker affair shows that the Irish War will continue to destabilise British political life. But it also shows how the real issues of that war—Britain's campaign of terror against those who oppose its rule—are allowed to become obscured by the lack of domestic opposition to Britain's role in Ireland. Even Stalker's limited ambitions (he denies that there was a shoot-to-kill policy) to find out the truth were too much for the British state.



Colin Wallace

The recent Wallace controversy exposes even more clearly the attempts to cloud the real issues in the Irish War.

The media took their cue from the government statement and feigned outrage at the affair. They conveniently forgot that they had previously called Wallace a 'liar and a fantasist' and a 'Walter Mitty character'. Stories that weeks earlier they had refused to publish now came thick and fast. Various Labour MPs protested to the house of commons that they had been smeared, and attempted to drum up some sympathy for themselves. The 'revelations' include:

- MI5 tried to make out that the Labour Party was infiltrated by communists and Soviet agents.
- Edward Heath was smeared by accusations of being homosexual.
- Letters were forged thanking Merlyn Rees (then shadow minister for Northern Ireland) for his donations to American republican supporters.



All of this information is old hat, as was Wallace's claimed role in the 'Clockwork Orange' black propaganda exercise, his subsequent claim that he was framed for manslaughter since at least 1977, and in 1987 that *Panorama* refused to make a TV programme about his revelations.

Listening to the outrage at the Colin Wallace affair you might be forgiven for thinking that Wallace was engaged in a campaign to overthrow the British state. Indeed radical journalist Paul Foot who has done most to draw attention to the affair argues that Wallace was part of an inner cabal of the security forces conspiring to pervert the mother of parliaments. Labour MPs like Merlyn Rees and Tony Benn protested and called for the inevitable inquiry.

Irish democracy, not British, was the real target of Colin Wallace's campaign of disinformation. In particular he was engaged in black propaganda against the forces fighting for Ireland's right to self-determination. Some of the aspects of Wallace's work not extensively reported include:

- Stories were circulated to the press designed to disorient the IRA and frighten republican supporters. It was alleged, for instance, that chemicals used in IRA bombs were poisonous

and carcinogenic. This story was given first to the *Sunday Mirror*, then the biggest selling paper in the Six Counties, and quoted Wallace as saying that children and people storing IRA explosives were at risk from poisoning and leukaemia.

- Attempts were made to present a genuine IRA plan for defence and evacuation in the event of a Loyalist pogrom into a plan for an offensive 'scorched earth policy' of widespread sectarian violence and disruption. This smear was presented by none other than Harold Wilson (then prime minister and now one of Wallace's principal so-called victims) to the house of commons in May 1974.

Colin Wallace's job was to discredit and disorient the republican movement. The British Army and intelligence services wanted to undermine the support that the IRA had among large sections of the nationalist population. While working class nationalists were making large areas of the Six Counties 'no-go' areas for Crown forces, and the IRA openly patrolled areas of Belfast and Derry, Wallace was trying to present them as criminals, communists and incompetents with no regard for the safety of ordinary nationalists. Wallace's lies even went to the bizarre lengths of claiming that the nylon underwear of women volunteers was setting off concealed bombs prematurely, due to static electricity!

Both Stalker and Taylor claim their careers have been ruined, and their families made to suffer. Yet who hears of the suffering of those murdered by the British security forces, or their 'brothers in arms' the Loyalist paramilitary squads?

Wallace claims he has been unfairly sacked, and subsequently framed for manslaughter. He may well have been framed, and spent five years in the 'relaxed regime' in Lewes prison, less than an hour's journey from his home in Arundel. But a framed republican can expect at least 15 years for a similar offence in a maximum security prison which could be up to 15 hours away from their home and family. Where is the outcry over Nick Mullen, illegally extradited from Zimbabwe, and awaiting trial for a fitted-up conspiracy charge in Brixton prison, being strip-searched up to four times a day?

The experience of Wallace, Stalker, and Taylor shows how anyone, no matter how respectable, who questions British policy in Ireland can be smeared as a criminal, in order to keep them quiet and discourage anyone else from spilling the beans. But for those who dare to actually fight the British occupation of Ireland harsher penalties are enacted—criminalisation, torture, conveyor belt justice, and execution. The real targets of Britain's war machine are the republicans fighting for Irish freedom.

The Irish Freedom Movement aims to build a movement that will clearly reveal Britain's biggest 'dirty trick' in Ireland—its military occupation of its six northern counties. A movement that not only recognises who are really the smeared and the framed of Britain's war—but also a movement that ensures the ultimate victim of the Irish War is British imperialism.

The victims?

Harold Wilson: Wilson was the prime minister responsible for sending the troops into Northern Ireland in 1969—saying 'the Border is not an issue'. Allowed the Army to get away with supporting the Ulster Workers Council strike, during which 27 were killed by Loyalist bombs. A consistent defender of Britain's war in Ireland. Wallace claims he was smeared by the 'Clockwork Orange' operation, which included claims that Wilson was a KGB agent, a communist sympathiser, and was having an affair with his secretary. None of this stopped Wilson conducting his own smears against the IRA and the republican movement (see main story).



Merlyn Rees: Secretary of state for Northern Ireland 1974-76. During the 'Clockwork Orange' operation it was claimed that Rees wanted to pull the troops out. Wallace claims that Rees was plagued by a series of intelligence leaks designed to undermine his policy in Ireland. Nevertheless Rees successfully presided over Britain's policy of 'normalisation' and 'criminalisation'. The Army was pulled back to be replaced by a rearmed and better organised RUC in an attempt to present the war in Ireland as a 'normal law and order' issue. Along with this went a concerted effort to criminalise the struggle for Irish liberation. The IRA was presented as a bunch of hoods and psychopaths. This involved more than simply smears—Rees introduced a policy of conveyor belt justice: confessions extracted through torture, presented to no-jury courts presided over by a single Loyalist judge. It's clear whose side Rees is on in the Irish War.

The real victims

Michael Tighe: A 17-year old with no involvement with republican paramilitaries. Shot dead in a hayshed by an RUC murder squad in November 1982. Special Branch posthumously declared him an IRA sympathiser simply because he had been shot dead by this undercover squad. At the trial of his companion (seriously wounded during the shooting) the police claimed they opened fire on the youths after they saw rifles pointed at them. Three pre-war rifles were recovered from the hayshed, without any ammunition. Stalker's investigation into his death, and the killing of five others by the same undercover murder squad, was obstructed and subsequently covered up at the highest level.



Fourteen unarmed civilians: The victims of 'Bloody Sunday', 30 January 1972—the first battalion of the parachute regiment opened fire on a march against internment in Derry. Thirteen people died in the gunfire—several were shot at close range on the ground and more in the back. A fourteenth died later from wounds. The Army responded by attempting to depict the dead men as IRA terrorists and claimed they had been fired on first. At the official inquiry into Bloody Sunday, initiated by the government to provide a whitewash, Collin Wallace was specially appointed to the British Army legal team. His skills were required to make sure that the Army's story stood up. As a result the parachute regiment was fully exonerated and no disciplinary action was ever taken.

West Belfast

Not a British love story

West Belfast, Danny Morrison, Mercier Press, £5.95 pbk

West Belfast is a novel written by Danny Morrison, the director of publicity for Sinn Féin who is imprisoned in Crumlin Road jail awaiting trial on charges of attempted kidnapping. Morrison was born and reared in Belfast. His novel, which follows the fortunes of two West Belfast families, closely reflects the real experience of life in sectarian British-occupied Northern Ireland.

The book opens in an innocent setting of youthfulness. But, as the children mature,

they cannot but take note of the dangerous background which impinges upon them. For this is not London or Birmingham, but West Belfast at the start of the civil rights movement in the late sixties.

There are many parts of Morrison's novel which ordinary British people could relate to. It describes how young Catholics had little interest in anything apart from getting jobs and having enough money to enable them to get to their local dances at weekends. Early

loves and anxieties are another familiarity. But *West Belfast* is not another British love story: for in 1969 when British troops reoccupied the streets of Belfast and Derry, the age of youthful naivety and indulgence was swept aside.

It is this transformation of life in the Six Counties which Morrison captures so well. *West Belfast* graphically explains how ordinary people, with ordinary lives, were forced to become cold, hard professional soldiers engaged in an armed struggle against oppression. Many, like the characters in the book, joined the IRA. It altered their lives as well as those of their families forever.

Like the characters in the novel, some would die, some would end up in prison, others would continue undetected to inflict losses upon the enemy. And, like reality, *West Belfast* contains moments of tragedy and comedy.

West Belfast tells the story of working class people. It tells of their loves, their fears and their hopes. Although it is not a literary work, it is a book which British people should read. Because while it describes working class life in Belfast, it also gives a real insight into why life in war-torn Belfast is different to that in any other 'British' city.

Kevin Kelly

Any new film giving information on Ireland must be viewed in a positive way. *The Irish Question* is a new video which was made to counter the government's October 1988 broadcasting ban on Sinn Féin and other organisations. The video's producer, Norman Thomas, states that the aim of the video is 'to show people in Britain what the government is preventing them from seeing'. He claims further that 'the video is essential viewing for anyone interested in Ireland or in the freedom of the media'.

Unfortunately, the claims are more grandiose than the video which was shown at a preview organised by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom in the house of commons on 5 April. The bulk of the 30-minute video is comprised of excerpts from three already banned films—*Mother Ireland*, *16 Dead* and *Behind the Mask* (which was screened for the first time at the Irish Freedom Movement's film festival last year). The video explains quite adequately why these films never appeared on our TV screens. In addition politicians like Tony Benn and Ken Livingstone are interviewed.

There are some glaringly obvious problems with *The Irish Question*. Although the ban has had an obvious impact on information on the Irish War, the video fails to mention the self-censorship by broadcasting authorities that had been going on for years before the ban was introduced. It is interesting to note that in the year prior to the ban, all British TV channels together broadcast the grand total of 15 minutes of coverage of the organisations banned in 1988.

The discussion after the showing, which included Tony Benn, pointed to its central weakness: more time was spent discussing the effects of the ban on journalists than on the republican movement. And it is this

New video on censorship

The Irish Question, Norman Thomas (producer), TV Choice, 30mins, colour, £9.99 or £29.50 (trade unionists and political groups)



PANDORA ANDERSON

which the producers clearly had in mind when they produced *The Irish Question*. Why else produce it in the form that they have? As it is a video, which means they could show material which is forbidden by the ban, why did they simply reproduce clips from banned films and interviews with British politicians? There are no interviews with the organisations or people silenced by the ban.

The Irish Question adds little to the fight against censorship on Ireland. Like the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, the video treats the broadcasting ban as simply an attack on civil liberties in Britain. It is such an attack, but the struggle against it

cannot be separated from Britain's war in Ireland, for this is the context in which it was introduced. The Tory broadcasting ban is one more weapon in Britain's arsenal in Ireland.

The Irish Question unfortunately is the latest in a long line of material which seeks to oppose the broadcasting ban without taking sides in the war. Its release is to be welcomed as it helps to keep the issue alive. But it will shed little light on the reasons for the ban's introduction nor on how to fight it.

Andrea Morris

Four months in the Irish War

December 1989-March 1990

War diary

Tuesday 5 December: Paul Hill, of the Guildford Four, is detained by police at Heathrow Airport under the Prevention of Terrorism Act while on his way to Dublin to campaign on behalf of the Birmingham Six.

Wednesday 6 December: The government ban on broadcasting interviews with Sinn Fein is upheld in the court of appeal.

Thursday 7 December: An IRA bomb containing 500lb of explosives causes extensive damage to Lisburn town centre.

Monday 11 December: Officers from Scotland Yard's anti-terrorist squad question a man being held by Dutch police on suspicion of firearms offences.

Wednesday 13 December: Two British soldiers are killed and another seriously wounded in an IRA attack on a permanent vehicle checkpoint at Derryard, County Tyrone.

Friday 22 December: Two Irishmen are arrested in Pembrokeshire by armed police watching an alleged arms cache.

Tuesday 2 January: Harry Dickey, a member of the Ulster Defence Association, is killed when a bomb explodes underneath his car in East Belfast.

Wednesday 3 January: Scotland Yard urges landlords and hotel owners to contact them immediately if Irish people suddenly vacated premises around Christmas in an attempt to trace an alleged safe house in Luton.

Friday 5 January: Scotland Yard announces that anti-terrorist squad officers found 15lb of semtex in a lodging house during searches in Luton on 22 December. Four men detained for questioning were released the next day.

Monday 8 January: Danny Morrison, Sinn Fein director of publicity, is held for questioning by the RUC on suspicion of holding a man against his will in a house in Lenadoon, West Belfast. RUC detectives raid Sinn Fein headquarters in Andersonstown seizing tapes, documents and computer disks.

Wednesday 10 January: At Belfast crown court Danny Morrison is charged with kidnapping and conspiracy to murder.

Friday 12 January: An investigation conducted by the *Guardian* reveals that 11 of the 20 detectives involved in the interrogation of the Birmingham Six have since been involved in criminal or civil actions for assault or become the subject of complaints about the fabrication of evidence.

Saturday 13 January: Undercover British soldiers shoot dead three unarmed petty criminals as they emerge from a betting shop on the Falls Road in West Belfast.

Wednesday 17 January: Peter Brooke, Northern Ireland secretary, denies that there is a shoot-to-kill policy by security forces following the previous Saturday's shootings.



Thursday 18 January: Businessman Kevin Taylor, whose links with John Stalker resulted in Stalker's removal from a shoot-to-kill inquiry in Northern Ireland, is cleared of fraud when the prosecution withdraws its case.

Friday 26 January: Four suspected IRA men refuse to enter pleas in a Florida court on a charge of attempting to buy surface-to-air missiles from undercover FBI agents.

Sunday 28 January: An IRA bomb, intended for the security forces, kills a 17-year old youth attending a commemorative march for those who died on Bloody Sunday in 1972.

Tuesday 30 January: Archie Hamilton, armed forces minister, tells parliament of a cover-up of a dirty tricks campaign in Northern Ireland, which included the use of classified information to spread black propaganda.

Monday 5 February: Photocopies of RUC documents detailing the identities of seven alleged IRA members is flyposted on walls in North and West Belfast.

Friday 9 February: Tommy Lyttle, a prominent UDA member, appears in court charged with attempting to pervert the course of justice.

Saturday 17 February: General Peter Leng, commander of Army land forces from 1973 to 1975, acknowledges that he was asked by M15 officials attached to the Northern Ireland office to release material designed to discredit the republican movement.

Monday 19 February: The IRA announces that talks with the British government might not be dependent on British troops being recalled to barracks.

Wednesday 21 February: Police in South Armagh are forced to release three men they were attempting to arrest, after being cornered by an angry group of republican supporters. The IRA claims responsibility for a bomb attack on an army van in Leicester.

Friday 23 February: Robert Campbell, who escaped from Crumlin Road jail in June 1981, fails to turn up for his appeal against extradition at the special criminal court in Dublin.

Tuesday 27 February: The home office announces that an inquiry into the cases of the Maguire family, jailed on evidence from confessions by the Guildford Four, will begin on 13 March.

Thursday 1 March: The Irish supreme court rejects an attempt by two Ulster Unionists to have the Anglo-Irish agreement declared contrary to the Republic's constitution.

Sunday 4 March: An IRA unit launches a gun and mortar attack on a police station in Stewartstown, County Tyrone.

Tuesday 6 March: Belfast crown court is told that a senior prison officer was involved in plotting an escape in which top IRA men were to escape by helicopter.

Wednesday 7 March: Patrick Murray, Donagh O'Kane and Pauline Drumm are extradited from France to West Germany to be charged with assassination and arms violations.

Thursday 8 March: Police discover 30 montages of IRA suspects in a house in East Belfast.

Tuesday 13 March: The supreme court in Dublin decides by three votes to two not to extradite Dermot Finucane and James Pius Clarke to Northern Ireland, because of fears that they would be ill-treated by prison officers if they were returned to jail.

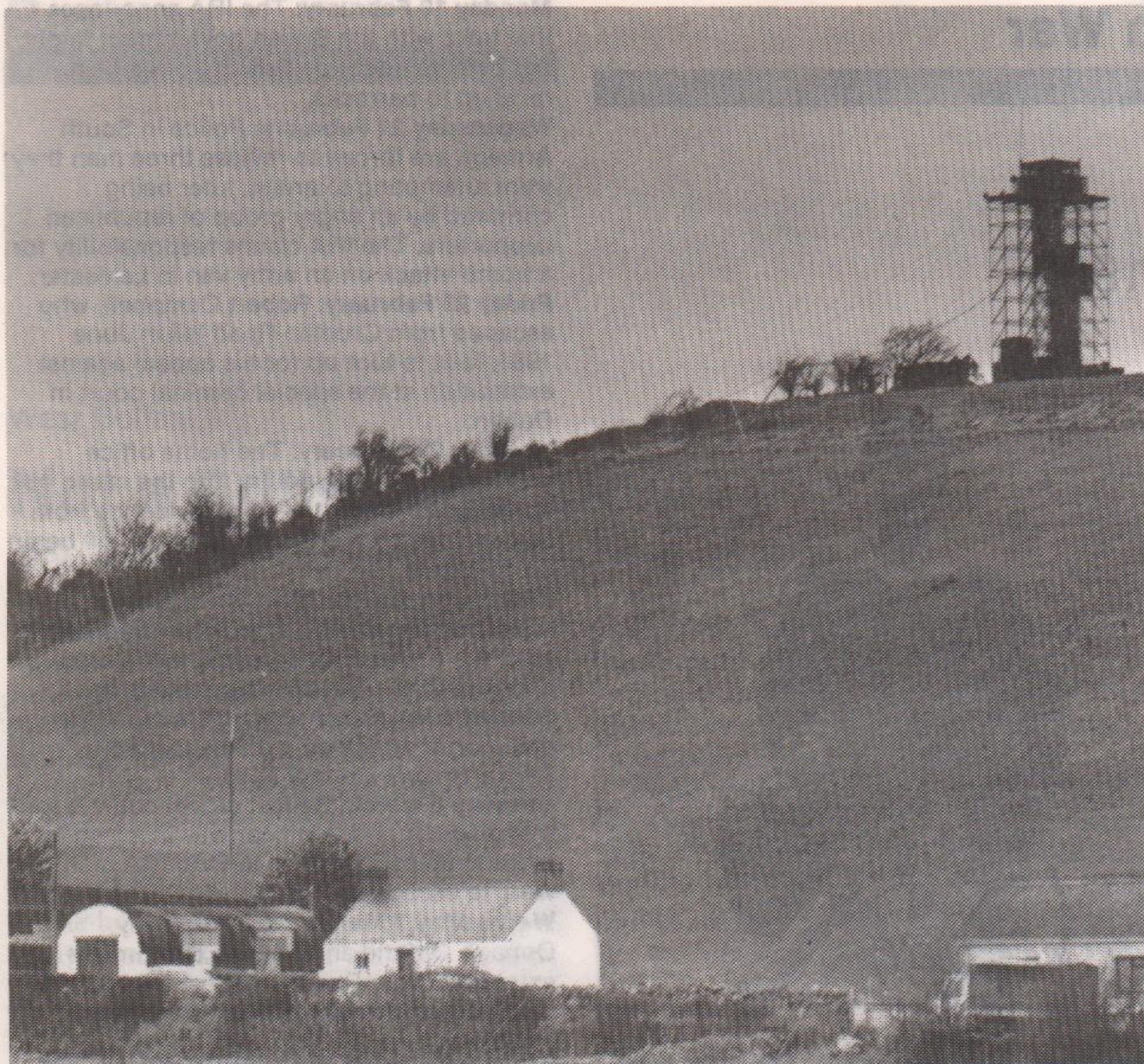
Wednesday 21 March: David Waddington, the home secretary, reopens the police inquiry into the case of the Birmingham Six. Devon and Cornwall police are to examine new evidence sent by defence solicitors to the home office in December 1989. A legal adviser to Lancashire police reveals that Philip Knight, the then chief constable of the West Midlands police, instructed lawyers to withhold evidence that might have incriminated police in the civil action for assault taken against them by the Birmingham Six.

Friday 23 March: William Quinn, an Irish American who joined the IRA in the early 1970s loses his appeal against a life sentence imposed on him for killing a policeman in 1975. It is revealed that Sam Silkin, the then attorney general, persuaded the home office to accept responsibility for the assaults on the Birmingham Six in Winson Green prison, thereby exonerating West Midlands police.

Tuesday 27 March: Eddie Gallagher, the former IRA man jailed for kidnapping Dutch industrialist Tiede Herrema in 1975, is freed after serving 14 years of a 20-year sentence.

Wednesday 28 March: The IRA claims responsibility for the killing of an off-duty RUC man in Armagh. The Granada Television programme *Who Bombed Birmingham?* reveals the names of four of the five men allegedly responsible for the 1974 pub bombings in Birmingham.

Colm Murphy



JOE WATSON

Irish Freedom exclusive

Behind the British propaganda wall

One of the stated aims of the five-year old Anglo-Irish agreement signed by Margaret Thatcher and the then Irish premier, Garret FitzGerald was to reduce the widespread feeling of alienation among Northern Ireland's nationalist community. The agreement pledged itself to fight anti-Catholic discrimination and improve living conditions.

Fiona Foster visited Newry in Armagh and found that far from allowing the people to 'hold their heads high', the agreement has served to isolate and marginalise republican activists and subject them to an intensified campaign of verbal and physical harassment. She spoke to Anne-Marie who runs Sinn Fein's advice centre in Newry, Brendan Curran the Sinn Fein councillor for Newry Town, and former Sinn Fein councillor Tommy Carroll and other local activists

Anne-Marie: We always try to avoid the big Border checkpoint because we'll be stopped and hassled there. Wherever we cross the Border we get photographed from these new spy-posts built since 1985. Big Brother has definitely arrived. Just a couple of weeks ago Tommy and I were stopped and physically taken to the checkpoint. They knew exactly who we were: they were saying 'Hello Tommy'. They then demanded our names and addresses and all our details. We were held from nine o'clock till after 11. At one stage an RUC officer put a gun to my head and said 'I'd love to stiff you, you bitch'. I've made an official complaint about that.

Padraig: Me and another fellow were selling *Republican News* around the pubs one night. We knew the RUC were following us, we were waiting in doorways till they'd driven past and then running to the next pub. Then they pulled in just in front of us. We tried to duck into this shop but the wee girl shut the door and said they were closed. So the RUC pulled us with the usual old routine: 'Take your coat off, stand there.' When I refused to take my jacket off they tried to drag it off me but I held my arms in such a way that they couldn't get it. So that was it. I was thrown into the back of the car. This big guy in the back told me to take my shoes off and when I wouldn't they pulled them off me.

That was about 9.30. They said they were taking me to the barracks, but they drove up the Belfast road and around the back streets. The big guy kept saying 'I'm glad you resisted because it'll account for the broken bones'. I was really getting scared. I could see I was in the wrong end of town. The pavements were red, white and blue, I could see Union Jacks. He said to me 'would you know your way home if I threw you out here'. I didn't answer. He said 'would it help if I rapped on a few of these doors and told them who you are?'. They drove me into this quarry place and he said I was going down a hole and not coming back. By this time there was sweat pouring off me. Then for some reason the car stopped and one of the RUC men got out. When he came back he looked at me and said: 'This is your lucky day.' They took me to the barracks and charged me with obstruction and disorderly behaviour. But that's only one incident. Get anyone in off the street and they'll tell you the same.'

Has the harassment got worse recently or is it always this intense in Newry?

Brendan Curran: Things have got worse. In Newry in early 1985 the IRA killed nine RUC men. One RUC unit that was in the town then is now back here on a revenge mission. Harassment has always been bad but in recent months it's been at an all time high. It used to be the case that verbal assaults were regular and physical assaults occasional. Now we're getting as much physical abuse as anything. When they stop you they make you put all your belongings out on the ground. One soldier told me to put my nine month-old baby lying on the wet ground. When you refuse anything you get done for obstruction. If they hit you they charge you with assault.

Then you get to court and there's this judge who does the Newry circuit—'Harvey-the-hanging-judge' who has never ever doubted the evidence of the RUC.

Tommy Carroll: It's a bit like putting the Ku Klux Klan into uniform in the Southern states of America. That's how bad they behave. I've got a book here where I note down every time I get stopped and harassed by the security forces: there's over 700 entries over the last five years.

Is it worth making official complaints to the RUC?

Brendan Curran: We all do because it's useful to have a record, but most people have no faith in the complaints procedure—the RUC investigating the RUC. Also making a complaint opens you to even more intimidation. I remember watching the RUC scraping my car with a nail. When I reported it they asked me how I knew they were RUC officers. I said because they were wearing RUC uniforms and driving RUC cars and carrying guns. But that was insufficient evidence for them. I was assaulted five times once in front of a crowd of about 50 witnesses, including an SDLP councillor, and they still charged me with assault. That was three years ago and I'm still waiting on that case to come up.

Padraig: They're probably waiting on the witnesses to die.

Brendan Curran: Another time my wife was coming home from work when the RUC stopped her. They kicked her tool kit all over the street, let down the spare tyre and emptied the petrol can. Nine months later when her complaint came to be investigated they told her there was no RUC patrol within 10 miles of the area.

Anne-Marie: She'd dreamt the whole thing. I remember one day a few minutes after Tommy left here, a friend phoned to say he'd seen Tommy being bundled in the back of an RUC van. So I phoned all the local barracks to find out where he was being held. None of them would admit they had him, so I phoned back Newry barracks and said I want to report a kidnapping. Three men wearing RUC uniforms, who've obviously hijacked an RUC car, have kidnapped Tommy Carroll. Within a few minutes they phoned me back to say they had him.

Are women treated as badly as men?

Brendan Curran: Yes, there's no gender barrier. My wife was kicked and assaulted while she was pregnant. Not long ago a young girl from Dungannon was travelling through Newry with her two small children on her way to Dublin for a day out. They were stopped and this RUC woman who's infamous for assaulting our women, battered the life out of this girl. She was anorexic and had other health problems but still she was held for three hours and then charged with various degrees of assault.

Anne-Marie: That's one thing I'd never accuse the RUC of, sex discrimination. Complete equality in their treatment of men and women. A lot of women here suffer from what normal people call kerb-crawling. But it's not just perverts, it's RUC perverts. They don't solicit trade as such but they drive along shouting 'are you still screwing so and so?'. Then they're always stopping you after you've done a bit of shopping. They say that under the Prevention of Terrorism Act they have the right to search your groceries. So you're left standing there with all your groceries strewn over the street and they drive off.

You talk a lot about the RUC. What about the British Army? Do you see much of them?

Tommy Carroll: Oh yes! You'd never walk down the main street without seeing them squatting in some corner or other. For every two or three RUC men you'll have a back-up Army patrol of about six or seven.

Anne-Marie: Each regiment stays about three months and when the new one arrives one senior soldier will stay behind to make sure the new ones know who everyone is. You have them coming to your home, peering through the windows or stopping you on the street to 'introduce' you.

Do you think the security forces have become more selective in their harassment over the last five years as a way of marginalising Sinn Féin activists?

Brendan Curran: Yes and no. To a certain extent everyone still gets hassle. They have road blocks out on the main road every day—during the rush hour in the morning and early evening. But having said that, if they see any of us coming they'll let everyone else go.

Tommy Carroll: It's very insidious. It amounts to a game of isolation. If you're with Tommy Carroll you're going to get hassle. So don't be with Tommy Carroll. I got charged one time with having a faulty exhaust. When I took the car into my garage and had it checked there was nothing wrong with it. When I asked the owner of the garage to write that down for me to use in court, he refused, saying he wouldn't dare, that they would ruin his business. That's the way it works. If you're a known republican they pick on your associates and teach them not to associate with republicans.

Brendan Curran: That's right. If you get a lift to work from a workmate they'll hassle him and start holding him for an hour every day. The thing is, no one's going to keep offering you a lift if it means being held every day.

Brendan, you're a councillor on Newry and Mourne Council. Do you raise this harassment there? And what do the SDLP councillors have to say?

Brendan Curran: Yes I do raise it all the time but the fact that the harassment has become more selective, targeted at known republicans, means that the SDLP largely ignores it.

Tommy Carroll: The SDLP is basically a stooge of the Brits. They're trying to reform British rule, to make it more acceptable, to pretend that there's just a few bad apples. But British rule cannot be reformed; it cannot be made more acceptable. Anyone who speaks out against injustice is labelled a terrorist, a crypto-Provo and from then on every time they go out their car will be stopped and searched and the people they're with will be stopped. You've got to be pretty thick-skinned to go on speaking out.



JOE BOATMAN

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**Irish
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Movement**

saturday 11 august

Join us and march with republican flute
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assemble 1pm at Islington
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