

Irish Freedom

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Thatcher's gone but... **The Irish War goes on**

CONTENTS

Editorial	3	War diary	14
PTA pick-ups in Kilburn	4-5	News from the war zone	15
Paul Hill on the PTA	6-7	Sectarianism and republicanism	16-17
The extradition of Dessie Ellis	8-9	Reviews: Lord Denning; Michael Collins; politics and art	18-21
Presidential elections in the South	10	The Gulf War and British propaganda	22
Britain's war strategy and Peter Brooke's 'peace' moves	11-13	Remember Bloody Sunday!	23
		What we fight for	24

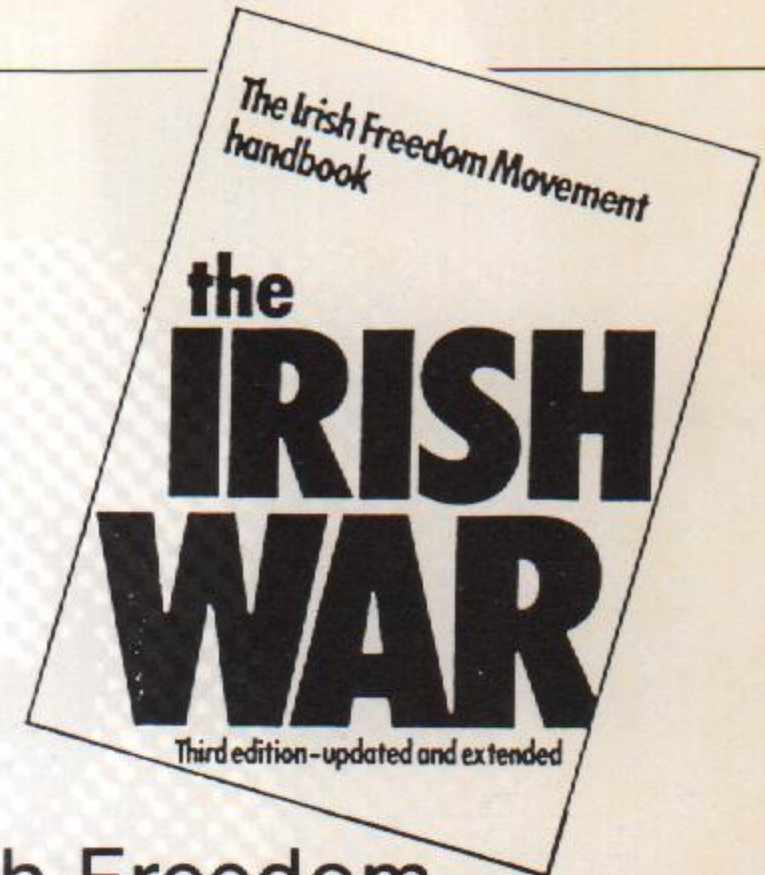
EXCLUSIVE

Paul Hill on the sixteenth anniversary
of the Prevention of Terrorism Act—see pages 6 and 7

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Fergal Caraher

It is with regret that we report the murder by Royal Marine Commandos of Fergal Caraher on Sunday 30 December 1990.

British media reports stated that he and his brother Michael were shot when they crashed through an Army checkpoint injuring two soldiers. Eyewitnesses, however, report that Fergal and Michael were surrounded by the marines as they drove slowly out of a pub car-park and were gunned down without warning or reason.

The IFM first met Fergal at last year's Sinn Fein Ard Fheis. He enthusiastically volunteered to act as our guide around South Armagh for a profile we were writing on a community at war. At 20 years of age, Fergal knew nothing but British occupation and proved to be a seasoned commentator on the many memorials and murals that tell the story of Irish resistance in South Armagh.

Fergal joined Sinn Fein when he was 18 years old. He was an extremely popular figure among the youth of his community, who attended his funeral in their hundreds, displaying their anger at the loss of a friend and comrade. Fergal's close friend and local Sinn Fein councillor for the area, Jim McAllister, speaking at his graveside spoke of a numb and angry community who would not forget nor forgive these murders.

The IFM will remember Fergal Caraher as a friend and comrade whose determination to rid Ireland of British occupation was exemplary. We extend our deepest sympathy to his wife, family and friends.

EDITORIAL

FEBRUARY/MARCH 1991

Business as usual in 1991

The old year ended in dramatic fashion in British politics. The humiliation of Margaret Thatcher at the hands of her own party and the spectacle of the Tories publicly tearing themselves apart during the leadership crisis must have brought joy to millions—not least to the countless Irish men and women who have suffered grievously as a result of the British government's barbarous policies in Ireland. But if there is one thing certain after Thatcher's spectacular fall and the installation of John Major in No 10, it is that the Irish War will continue along very much the same lines as before. 1991 will mark the twenty-second year of the Irish War and the twentieth anniversary of the introduction of internment without trial. A change in personnel in Downing Street will have no effect on Britain's strategy and methods in Ireland.

This point might appear to be so obvious that making it may seem condescending. Yet it is a point which has not been fully understood by the solidarity movement over the years. British policy in Ireland has never been determined by anything as mundane as the personality traits of a particular prime minister. As we reiterate in this issue's feature article on Northern Ireland secretary Peter Brooke's statement about peace in Ireland (see pages 11-13), the Irish War is about the survival of the British state itself. In 1991, as in the past, the British state will do whatever is necessary to secure its interests in Ireland.

Indeed, the way in which 1990 ended gives some indication as to what lies in store for the future. At the same time as Major and Co were giving Thatcher the push, Special Branch was organising a series of high-profile raids on the Irish community in Britain under the auspices of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (see pages 4 and 5 for a detailed report). These arrests and exclusions illustrate that despite the political changes in the Tory Party—and despite welcome developments such as the release of the Guildford Four, the Winchester Three and, hopefully, the Birmingham Six in the very near future—the British authorities have no intention of altering their attitude towards the Irish struggle.

For more than 16 years the PTA has been the cutting edge of the Irish War in Britain. Up to June last year, nearly 7000 people had been arrested, detained and questioned under the PTA. More than 1000 people had been held for longer than 48 hours. Another 50 000 Irish people are stopped at British ports every year and questioned for up to an hour. Yet throughout the 16 years the act has been in force, just 210 people have been charged with offences under the PTA. These figures, which are often forgotten, show that the PTA was never meant to convict IRA bombers. Its sole aim was to silence the Irish community in this country. The PTA's draconian powers of arrest, detention and exclusion, and the showtrials of the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six and others like them, have sent out a clear message: every Irish person is a potential victim of the PTA.

'Stemming the infection'

The well-publicised arrests of a number of Irish men and women in Kilburn at the end of November show how the act continues to be used to terrorise the Irish community (see pages 4 and 5). The case of the Winchester Three, the most recent high-profile victims of the PTA, demonstrates this even more clearly. Finbar Cullen, Martina Shanahan and John McCann were arrested under the PTA near the Winchester home of former Northern Ireland secretary Tom King. They were later charged with, and convicted of, conspiracy to murder King. Even when their convictions were quashed and the three were released from prison, they were not free from the clutches of the PTA. They were re-arrested, held in the notorious Paddington Green detention centre and then served with an exclusion order forcing them back to Ireland and banning them from returning to Britain.

The continued use of the PTA highlights the enduring nature of the Irish War in the nineties. The Irish Freedom Movement has always campaigned to smash the PTA. We recognise that it is the British arm of the Irish War and that its sole purpose is to terrorise

Irish people in this country. Just remember the justification used when the act was first introduced by the Labour government in 1974. The then home secretary Roy Jenkins claimed that the aim of the PTA was to 'stem the infection from Ireland'. What he meant was that the British authorities were determined to prevent the Irish War from spilling over into British politics. To ensure that this did not happen, successive governments have set out to harass and intimidate the entire Irish community in Britain.

The British authorities want to ensure that the struggle for Irish freedom remains within the borders of Northern Ireland. By organising a campaign of terror against Irish people in Britain, the government hopes to silence any opposition to its dirty war in Ireland. The way 1990 ended indicates that it will be business as usual in 1991.

It will be business as usual for the IFM too in 1991. Just as we did last year, and in the years before, we aim to speak out for Irish freedom and build a movement in this country that takes sides with the Irish people against Britain. We will protest outside Paddington Green every time there is an arrest under the PTA. We aim to make this year's anti-internment demonstration in August the biggest yet. Our commitment for 1991 is to redouble our efforts to build a solidarity movement which can get British troops out of Ireland. Join us!

- This first 1991 edition of *Irish Freedom* contains some important articles for discussion. We welcome any comments and criticisms. Write to *Irish Freedom*, BM IFM, London WC1N 3XX. If you are interested in finding out more about the IFM, read the back cover and write to the above address or phone (071) 375 1702.

- *Irish Freedom* is written by supporters of the IFM. It is edited by Charles Longford and Kevin Kelly. Readers' contributions are welcome.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act

Guilty of being Irish

Hugh Mitchell reveals how the British authorities continue to use the Prevention of Terrorism Act to intimidate the Irish community

On Monday 12 November 1990, following a series of weekend raids by the Special Branch around the country, the press claimed that 'dogged police work' had led to a 'crucial' find of 'IRA terrorist equipment'. The media presented the raids as a major blow against an IRA active service unit operating in Britain. Commentators made links between

the weekend operations and the arrest of two men at Stonehenge a month before, and with a series of raids on houses in Sudbury, near Wembley, two weeks previously.

The greatest amount of media coverage was reserved for a high-profile raid on flats in Sidmouth Court at Willesden Green in north London. During the raid more than 2000

local people were evacuated from their homes after having been given 'five minutes to get out'. It was reported that about six people were held under the PTA following the operation. It was also reported that two cars parked outside the flats had contained all the paraphernalia of an active service unit. According to *Today* a red Lada and a white

SIMON NORFOLK



Cavalier parked in the area contained Semtex explosives, Kalashnikov rifles and submachine guns. The *Daily Mail* claimed that the police found 70-100lbs of Semtex explosive, detonators, and other bomb-making equipment in the cars. The *Sun* did a two-page splash reporting the dramatic evacuation of local residents and carried a photograph with large arrows pointing at the Lada and the Cavalier apparently used by an 'IRA cell'. The finds were portrayed as 'very significant' and 'part of a jigsaw puzzle' built up by the police about the IRA's campaign in Britain, which has involved more than 20 incidents since August 1988.

Keeping bad company

The Irish Freedom Movement greeted the news of the arrests by joining an immediate picket of Paddington Green police station, where those arrested were being held. Afterwards it was agreed to establish a defence campaign to support those arrested. When the real series of events leading up to the raids is pieced together not only do we get a very different picture of what the authorities were up to that weekend, but also why, despite the euphoria about the release of the Guildford Four and other framed Irish men and women, such defence campaigns remain necessary.

So, what really happened that weekend? On the night of Saturday 10 November, a group of friends, mainly from Strabane, Northern Ireland, gathered in the Black Lion pub in Kilburn for a drink and a night out. For many of them it turned out to be a night they will not forget. At about midnight, they

In the eyes of the British state all Irish people who support self-determination, or associate with people that do, are 'bad company'

John Simmance
(husband of Janet Simmance)
of the Kilburn Defence Campaign,
protests outside Paddington
Green police station

decided to go to the Kilburn National Ballroom, hoping to get into the dance. Instead of going dancing they ended up in Paddington Green police station held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. As they approached the National they were suddenly surrounded by police, pushed up against the wall and manhandled. At least six people were arrested.

Janet Simmance and her sister Kathleen were among those arrested. On the way to Paddington Green Janet was hit in the mouth. Both she and Kathleen were told by the police that they were not terrorist suspects. Why, then, were they arrested? According to the police it was because they 'kept bad company'. Apparently the company was so bad that the police felt it necessary to strip-search Janet and tell her that her children would be taken into care if she didn't cooperate. The two women were held for 39 hours at Paddington Green and not released until late Monday afternoon.

Exclusion and detention

In fact, Janet and Kathleen had got off relatively lightly. While they were being incarcerated at Paddington Green, the police made a series of raids, both on the homes of those arrested and elsewhere. Tommy Brennan, whose brother Michael had already been arrested when the police swooped on the National Ballroom, was picked up when police burst into Janet's home. Two other sisters and their children were held prisoners in their own Dollis Hill home while the police waited for the return of Danny Breslin and Martin Docherty. Upon their return (both carrying crates of lager, rather than Armalites) they too were arrested. On Sunday the police also made their spectacular 'find' at Sidmouth Court, Willesden Green.

The Sidmouth Court raid, and the publicity surrounding it, were used to justify the arrest of more than 10 people, and their subsequent criminalisation. Michael and Tommy Brennan along with Danny Breslin were all excluded under the PTA—that is, they were deported across the Irish Sea, with no evidence presented and having had no right of legal appeal. Martin Docherty and Siobhan and William McKane have all been charged, but not even under the PTA. Instead they face charges of conspiracy—a nineteenth-century law so open to definition that little or no evidence is required, and where the burden of proof is placed on the defendant.

Even the Sidmouth Court raid was not all that it was hyped up to be by the media. No one was arrested in the operation despite the presence of two cars supposedly packed with explosives. A member of the Kilburn Defence Campaign, who visited Sidmouth Court over a fortnight later, reported that the white Cavalier is still parked outside. He spoke to one of the owners of the car who said that he had the biggest shock of his life when he opened the papers on that Monday morning.

The driver of the red Lada, which was reported to have 'pulled up at 1am', has never been arrested, nor even identified. According to locals the red Lada had been parked outside Sidmouth Court for up to a month, apparently abandoned, with its windows open,

and doors unlocked. How the car got there remains a mystery. What's not a mystery is the fact that the police have never displayed to the press or the public the supposed contents of the cars.

The media used the raid to run a propaganda campaign warning of 'IRA bomb factories' and 'Christmas offensives'. In fact the only offensive that took place was the one organised by the police and the media against the Irish community in Kilburn. Supporters of *Irish Freedom* should use the events of 10-11 November too. What really happened that weekend exposes the real nature of the PTA and the way the authorities use it to criminalise and intimidate the Irish community in Britain while whipping up support for Britain's war in Ireland.

Janet and Kathleen Simmance were told that they were being held for 'keeping bad company'. In the eyes of the British state all Irish people who support self-determination, or associate with people that do, are 'bad company'. The PTA is the legal instrument used by the British state to try to frighten Irish people and their supporters from speaking out for Irish freedom and to prevent protest against Britain's occupation of the North of Ireland. The three who were excluded are three less Irish nationalists for the British state to worry about. The high-profile arrest of six people outside Kilburn's most popular Saturday nightspot, the National Ballroom, was a warning from the police to all Irish people out in Kilburn that night: 'Keep your head down—or you may be next.' The conspiracy trial of Siobhan, William and Martin will serve as a grim, long drawn-out reminder of that warning to all Irish people in Britain.

Smash the PTA

The response of the IFM showed how we can challenge this offensive against the Irish community. We helped to organise pickets of Paddington Green detention centre and to set up a defence campaign. We went back to Kilburn the following Saturday night and held a protest outside the National. Our aim was to remind people in Kilburn of the events of the previous weekend and to show that such events were not going to go unnoticed or be accepted in silence. Hundreds of Saturday night revellers joined us and managed to stop the police from moving us on. It highlighted the fact that people in Kilburn were not only aware of what had happened but were angry. It is this anger and concern we aim to forge into a movement which can challenge the British state and its criminalisation strategy.

The PTA is the British face of the Irish War. The 10 or 12 people arrested that November weekend were not simply innocent bystanders caught up in an over-zealous police operation. They were victims of Britain's war in Ireland. If we want to campaign against Britain's occupation of Ireland, and get ordinary British people to support Irish self-determination, one of the first barriers we face is the PTA—the principal device used to criminalise support for Irish freedom. That is why the struggle against the PTA must remain at the centre of our campaign against Britain's war in Ireland.

Paul Hill speaks out

Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act!

SIMON NORFOLK



Paul Hill addresses the IFM rally while Letitia Ellis (sister of Dessie Ellis) looks on before speaking to the meeting

'I've just returned from America where I attempted to explain the Prevention of Terrorism Act to an American audience, who had profound difficulties in coming to terms with the fact that there is a mechanism, a racist mechanism, that only applies to Irish people. I asked the audiences in America: could they possibly believe that there could be a piece of legislation passed by the United States senate that only applied to Jewish people, or that only applied to Italian people? Because the PTA in the early days basically only applied to Irish people. And I tried to explain to these people that it allowed you to be arrested and taken to the police station and held for seven days incommunicado and brutalised in a police station, where evidence can be falsified and doctored against you and, because of that, you can spend the rest of your life in prison. Or at least 15 years of your life in prison. Or, as in the case of the Birmingham Six, at this moment 17 years in prison.

'American audiences had grave difficulties in grasping this. And the way I could put it across was if you take the PTA to its logical conclusion you can be arrested, held for seven days and released, and re-arrested outside that police station and held for another seven days—so you could spend the rest of your life in a police station without being charged with anything.

miscarriage of justice, but justice being aborted. Justice being aborted for a political reason, for the reason of terrorising the communities that are resisting.

'Two of the people who were excluded last week [see pages 4 and 5], I know them personally. I know they were involved in nothing. I know they were unemployed in this country. Let me assure you that the IRA do not send unemployed people to live in the Irish community in this country.

'The IRA are the most sophisticated guerrilla organisation in the world today. Every single British minister, every single British commander will tell you that. They know that the IRA don't send people to live in squats in Kilburn. They are well financed. Two of these people who were excluded last week I used to lend money to. They sat in bars and used to scrounge money to sit in bars. I'm not casting aspersions. I'm telling you that those people were involved in absolutely nothing. But those people were opposed to British rule in Ireland and that's the reason they were excluded. And all their friends knew they were involved in nothing and that's the psychological oppression of all their friends.

'Tomorrow I'm going to see the Birmingham Six and I'm going to say to them that they are going to come home and I'm going to ensure that they come home, and Gerry Conlon

In November 1990, the IFM marked the sixteenth anniversary of the introduction of the Prevention of Terrorism Act with a big rally in the Camden Irish Centre. In the week after more than 10 people had been detained under the PTA in a high-profile police operation in Kilburn, west London, the 150 people who came to our rally heard Paul Hill, one of the Guildford Four, remind us that the act that put him behind bars for 15 years still exists and can and will be used against anyone who opposes British rule in Ireland. Here we reproduce the full text of Hill's speech to our rally

'People say: "Why are innocent people arrested, why are innocent people suddenly picked up off the street? It's not in the state's best interest to arrest innocent people, because their families will campaign, their communities will campaign." But the philosophy of arresting innocent people is the philosophy of militarism. If any of you here would care to go to a library and read a book by a Brigadier Kitson, a commander in Northern Ireland in the early seventies, he actually propagates the taking of innocent people from communities in order that you terrorise that community. And I correlate that with why fully armed British soldiers in Northern Ireland can suddenly drive along a street and fire a plastic bullet gun at a young girl and kill her in the street. It's the exact same philosophy.

'What they're engaged in in Northern Ireland was exactly what they were engaged in here in the seventies and what they're still engaged in now and it's a psychological oppression of a whole community of people because the message they're giving to that community is if people are not in your midst who are resisting the British presence in Ireland then these things will not be inflicted upon you.

'That's what you have to grasp. Don't speak about miscarriages of justice. What happened in my case, the Birmingham case, Judith Ward, Patrick McLoughlin, perhaps Danny MacNamee, perhaps Dessie Ellis, is not a

is going to ensure that they're going to come home, and all of you people will ensure that they will come home. You have to bring those people home. You have to bring them home for Dessie Ellis and for the sake of all Irish people who can fall foul of the PTA and who can also go to prison for 15 years.

'The mechanism that put us in prison is still in operation. If anything is to be learned from the release of the Guildford Four it is that what put us in prison is still there. It can happen to anyone in this room tonight—believe me. You can be arrested and go to prison for absolutely nothing.

'Do the British state and the director of public prosecutions expect us to believe that only three junior police officers were involved in the framing of the Guildford Four? I know they weren't. I know that one of those people is now the commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Peter Imbert. He is now the commander of the metropolis of eight million people. That's how deep it goes. That's what you face.

'And I continuously say this to the British left: as soon as you gel and unite then we can all go together and ensure that it doesn't happen to anyone—and we can ensure that the British presence is removed from Ireland and we'll all live in freedom. Thank you.'



The extradition of Dessie Ellis

Fighting on both sides of the Irish Sea

Fiona Foster spoke to Letitia and Sam Ellis, the brother and sister of Dessie Ellis, the latest Irishman to be extradited from Ireland to Britain. Dessie had gone on hunger-strike in an attempt to prevent this latest act of collaboration between Dublin and Whitehall

Letitia and Sam Ellis are ordinary Irish people. They are married and have children. Letitia, like an average of 50 000 young Irish people a year, has been forced to emigrate to find the work and the quality of life that her own country could not provide. She now lives in Australia.

The past few months, however, have been far from ordinary for Letitia, Sam and the rest of the Ellis family. Their brother Dessie's hunger-strike protest against his forced extradition to face 'terrorist' charges in Britain has thrown every member of the Ellis family into the forefront of the anti-extradition campaign. They have toured Ireland, North and South, addressing rallies, pickets and marches in support of Dessie's protest. They have hassled politicians, stood on white-line

pickets (in the middle of main roads) and changed from ordinary people into leading political activists, intent on tapping the potential they see all around them for building a movement against extradition.

Dessie Ellis's 38-day hunger-strike ended when his final appeal in the Irish courts failed and he was flown to London, wheelchair and all. Letitia had already started up an anti-extradition campaign back in Australia. She has campaigned throughout Ireland and in November she turned her attention to a British audience when she addressed the IFM's 'Smash the PTA' rally along with Paul Hill of the Guildford Four.

I interviewed Letitia and Sam in my living room. They had just returned from visiting Dessie who is now on remand in Brixton

prison. As we spoke, Letitia ironed Dessie's clothes, taking them out of a polythene bag marked 'Her Majesty's Prison'.

'You'd hardly believe it', she said, ironing furiously. 'They don't even have washing facilities in Brixton. Poor Dessie has to wait for us to come over from Ireland to get his clothes cleaned.'

Despite appeals to the Irish embassy, Letitia and Sam were refused open visits with their brother. Instead they had to sit on the other side of an iron cage and shout to him through a small vent within close earshot of three prison officers. 'We could see that he was looking better', said Sam. 'His face has filled out a bit now. He's putting the weight back on.'

Letitia and Sam were restricted to a 15-

minute visit each day. Unlike 'non-terrorist' prisoners, Dessie is not allowed to accumulate his visiting time to allow for longer visits when his family makes it over. Letitia explained that the regular nightmare for the relatives of republican prisoners in British jails was one reason for Dessie's hunger-strike. 'We've all read about Lily Hill, Paul's mother, travelling all that way countless times to see Paul only to be told that he'd been moved to another prison on the other side of the country.'

Conveyor belt

Dessie, they believe, feels that his hunger-strike has made extradition a bigger issue in Ireland. 'You see, the Irish government intends Dessie to be the first on a conveyor belt of republicans to be sent to face trial in Britain', explains Sam. 'At least Dessie has halted that; well not quite halted, let's say his protest has put a bolt in it. It won't run as smoothly as they want.'

The Ellis family, though they live in Dublin, are no strangers to the war in the North of their country. Both their grandfathers fought against Britain in the Easter Rising of 1916 and in the wars of the early twenties. Both were imprisoned and one staged his own hunger-strike in Mountjoy jail in Dublin.

In that tradition Dessie Ellis joined the republican movement. He served an eight-year sentence in Portlaoise prison for his involvement. In April 1989, 24 hours before he was due to be released, he was served with two warrants seeking his extradition to Britain. The charges were possession of explosives in Britain between 1981 and 1983 and conspiracy to cause explosions 'to persons unknown in places unknown' between the same dates.

Letitia explained that the British have never produced any evidence to back up these charges. In fact, she claims, it was all but admitted in the Irish courts that Dessie could not possibly have been in Britain during the time he is alleged to have been in this country. In the 34-month period the warrants refer to, Dessie was in jail for 24 months, signing a bail book three times a week for another seven months—and under constant police and Special Branch surveillance for the other three.

Dessie Ellis fought his extradition to Britain on the grounds that he would not get a fair trial here. The now notorious cases of the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six and more recently the Winchester Three all show that in the eyes of British justice, to be Irish is to be guilty. 'An Irish republican on a conspiracy charge in Britain hasn't got a hope and everyone knows it', said Sam. When the Irish high court told Dessie that he had a good chance of a fair trial in a British court his reaction was to go on hunger-strike. 'He didn't take the decision lightly', says Letitia. 'He discussed it with all his comrades in Portlaoise. Apart from the fact that Dessie is an especially strong and principled person, he is also the first to be extradited under the new laws, and he's a Southerner, so everything pointed to him making a stand.'

The 1987 Extradition Act in the South prevents republicans from fighting their extradition on the grounds that their actions

were politically motivated—the defence used successfully by countless republicans in the past.

'The new laws effectively criminalise republicans', said Sam, 'but Dessie knows, and so does everyone in this country, that republicans are political activists who would never have seen the inside of a jail if it weren't for the war in our country. Dessie's hunger-strike was his way of saying he is no criminal'.

Dessie's hunger-strike did force the question of extradition into the minds of thousands of Irish people. 'No thanks to the politicians or the media', said Letitia bitterly. 'They did everything possible to ignore Dessie's hunger-strike.' But the activities of the anti-extradition campaign which toured the country staging protests and rallies ensured that Dessie's case became widely known despite the establishment's wall of silence.

'At the big march on 10 November, 15 000 of us brought central Dublin to a standstill for three hours for Dessie', said Letitia. 'Even the police there were quoting 12-14 000 but RTE television said only 4000.' Most of the papers completely ignored the event, but no amount of censorship could deny the impact of that march on the tens of thousands of ordinary people in Dublin on that day.

Coming as it did in the middle of Ireland's presidential campaign, supporters of Dessie Ellis attempted to make his hunger-strike an election issue. 'Everywhere they went we were there', Sam laughed as he remembered the barracking and heckling and constant questioning they gave the candidates wherever they went. Letitia's chance meeting with Mary Robinson, the eventual winner, was far from friendly. 'She was doing a walkround in Tralee where I'd just been doing a talk about Dessie. I grabbed her hand and kept hold of it till she listened to me. Her exact words were, "Extradition is a complex issue". She was going to let Dessie die, they all were, there's no doubt about that.'

Hunger-strike

Some way into Dessie's hunger-strike the Taoiseach (prime minister) Charles Haughey sent a courier to fetch Dessie's parents and bring them to the Dail (the Irish government building). After asking them to persuade Dessie to abandon his hunger-strike, Haughey assured them that British justice had changed and that Dessie would now get a fair trial. Finally he tried to distance his government from the decision to implement the new law by claiming that Dessie's case was purely a matter for the courts. 'And all this', Letitia said, 'within months of his own party's Ard Fheis [conference] where members voted unanimously against extradition of Irish republicans to Britain'.

'I suppose I did know in my heart that Dessie would be extradited', said Letitia. 'The main aim of all the politicians and the press is to defeat the republican movement. But I honestly think a lot of Irish people didn't believe Haughey would do it. I've travelled all over Ireland. Yes, they are worried about jobs, being forced to emigrate, but I can tell you they do want a solution for the North, they want peace.'

Sam claimed that Dessie's hunger-strike made the Irish War a live issue again for at least a section of Southern Irish people. 'Dessie knew that being from the South would mean something. People couldn't say, "Oh, that's just another Northern republican".' The irony of a so-called Free State run by a so-called republican party handing over its own citizens to a hostile government for the crime of fighting for Irish unity, a goal which the government claims to hold so highly, is one that the anti-extradition campaign has sought to communicate to Irish people. The British state which demanded Dessie Ellis's extradition from Ireland is one of the many European countries which themselves refuse to extradite their own citizens on political charges.

Dessie Ellis will now stay in Brixton prison on remand for some time. Letitia will have to return to Australia after Christmas. She does not hold out much hope that her brother will be freed at his trial. 'Conspiracy charges are virtually impossible to fight. We don't have any such thing in Ireland. As usual Dessie has already been found guilty by the British press.' In 1989 when the warrants were served on Dessie the British papers were full of those all-too familiar headlines: 'Bomber to return to Britain.' The day before his court hearing in Dublin the Irish *Daily Mirror* ran a front-page spread with a picture of Dessie, which said 'Send the bomber back'. Unfortunately this is a taste of the kind of media treatment Dessie can expect in Britain.

'Change minds'

As Letitia folded Dessie's clothes carefully into the prison bag, Sammy got his flight tickets ready. They thanked the IFM for giving them the chance to speak in London: 'Now we can see that there is a movement here towards the reunification of Ireland, and Dessie and all the family support this', said Sam. Letitia commented on how young the rally audience seemed. 'That's a good thing', she said. 'They're not narrow-minded and you can influence a whole new generation about what British justice is really all about.'

Letitia Ellis has never exactly been shy but up to now she had never entered into big political debates and never felt confident that she could persuade people that her personal views were right. Dessie's protest has changed all that. 'If you'd told me a few years ago that I'd be doing all this, speaking on platforms all over Ireland and in England, arguing with politicians, well, I'd have said you were mad. I've astounded myself. I've learnt a lot and I'm still learning. But more importantly I can tell other people the truth, I can change their minds.'

Letitia is now set to return to Australia. She is determined to use her experiences to build a strong anti-extradition campaign there. Sam remembered Dessie's best friend, who now lives in Vancouver, Canada, and who wrote to say that a motion he raised in his work resulted in 70 000 workers downing tools for an hour in protest at Dessie's extradition. Eyes sparkling, Letitia laughed. 'There you go Fiona, that just shows what can be done!'

The Irish presidential election

Neither a new nor a free Ireland

George Nash examines the significance of Mary Robinson's triumph in the Irish presidential elections

The tricolour was flying from all state buildings the day Ireland's seventh president, Mary Robinson, was sworn in. Brian Lenihan, Fianna Fail's man, had suffered a surprising election defeat. The Fine Gael candidate Austin Currie, a former member of the pro-British Social Democratic and Labour Party and once a Stormont MP, trailed in third. And so, despite all expectations, it was the Labour Party's nominee who took up official residence in Aras an Uachtarain—the one-time vice-regal lodge of the British lord lieutenants of Ireland.

Many commentators have seen Robinson's victory as evidence of a break in the Twenty-six Counties' political tradition. Conor Cruise O'Brien predicts that the dominant party, Fianna Fail, 'will never be the same again'. Workers Party boss Proinsias de Rossa heard the 'death knell for civil war politics'. The new president herself claims to represent a popular desire for 'a new Ireland: a modern, tolerant, pluralist Ireland'. So, has Mary Robinson really broken the hold of Ireland's traditional political parties and their politics and set the stage for a new Ireland?

Robinson certainly appears to be a different sort of president. From Eamon de Valera—the first president who created the post for himself in his 1937 constitution—to Robinson's immediate predecessor, Dr Patrick Hillery, the incumbents have been ageing, male, conservative politicians performing a symbolic and largely ceremonial role. Robinson comes across as a time-warped sixties flower child, promising 'peace and love'. She is relatively young and has a reputation for promoting liberal issues such as the legalisation of divorce. She is also an ally of the Six Counties Unionists, such as Ken Maginnis who attended Robinson's inauguration ceremony. In fact it is her support for the Loyalists which has really earned Robinson a distinct place in Irish politics: she left the Labour Party claiming that its support for the Anglo-Irish agreement cut the Loyalist parties out of the policy-making process.

The distance between Robinson, the friend of the Loyalists, and de Valera—founder of Fianna Fail and a leading opponent of partition—appears enormous. So how significant is Robinson's election?

The first point to make is that elections, particularly in Ireland, tend to be a bit of a lottery. Irish elections are marked by volatility and high abstentionism. Presidential elections, where tradition demands that candidates 'rise above' parliamentary politics in order to represent the spirit of the nation, traditionally have little real political significance.

Secondly, a recent opinion poll indicated that 53 per cent of the population still supports the Fianna Fail government. While Lenihan may have lost the election, he nevertheless notched up the largest proportion of first preference votes—44 per cent. However he was scuppered by the fact that Currie's supporters transferred their votes overwhelmingly to Robinson—by a five to one margin.

A closer examination of the voting pattern confirms that Robinson picked up support from supporters of the minor parties—Peoples Democracy, Workers Party and Labour Party voters. More importantly, she picked up crucial Fine Gael votes. Fianna Fail's vote was roughly the same as it achieved in the 1989 general election, albeit dropping slightly in urban areas. It was Fine Gael that collapsed—down 10 per cent of the vote in Dublin. Fine Gael even lost votes to Robinson in rural areas where she had no electoral machine.

It is important to place these trends in a longer-term context. Support for Fianna Fail has declined over a long period. In 1987 Fianna Fail obtained its lowest vote for more than 25 years. Following another election two years later it was forced into a coalition with the Progressive Democrats to cling on to power. The 1987 election also produced low votes for Fine Gael (its worst result since

1957) and the Labour Party whose support slumped to a 50-year low. Four years ago the talk was not about a new Ireland, but that the Twenty-six Counties was drifting towards ungovernability. The presidential elections maintained this trend of a steady erosion of support for all the establishment parties in Ireland.

The most important feature of the presidential election was the response of the urban middle class. Robinson obtained her best results in middle class suburban areas, especially around Dublin. While Fianna Fail largely held on to its base in farming areas, Robinson won the urban middle class vote. Significantly, it is this constituency, with its anti-republican sentiments and its desire for Ireland to join the rest of Europe as a secular and modern country unrestrained by what it regards as outdated traditions, which is now making the running in Irish politics. This, however, does not represent a shift to the left as Robinson's supporters claim. Robinson's backing for Ulster Loyalism and her anti-republicanism make her a solid member of Ireland's ruling elite. Indeed, she has always been seen as being 'on side' as far as the Irish establishment is concerned.

What Robinson's election confirms is that anti-republicanism is now a major element of



Mary Robinson
—another
Loyalist sympathiser
living in the
vice-regal lodge

Twenty-six County nationalism. It also confirms the fact that the Irish working class has no political voice in Irish politics. This is why there was an absence of the 'green card' being played throughout the election campaign. During the election an Irish republican, Dessie Ellis, was on hunger-strike protesting against his threatened extradition to Britain to stand trial on conspiracy charges (see pages 8 and 9). In the past such an issue would have at least provoked a debate about the loss of Irish sovereignty to Britain. The question of British justice towards Irish men and women would have inevitably been raised. This time, however, Ellis's extradition barely became an issue in the election. Sinn Féin's belated call for an abstention resulted in just 9500 spoilt papers.

The 'green card' has always been an assertion of Twenty-six County sovereignty and legitimacy as an independent 'Free State'. In the past this took the form of policies such as neutrality, the claim to the Six Counties and hostility to the extradition of republicans to Britain. Its classic exponent was de Valera who always played the green card to mask Ireland's real subservience to British imperialism and thereby gave the newly emerging and fragile Twenty-six County state some legitimacy in the eyes of the Irish masses.

The absence of the 'green card' is a reflection of social and political changes in Irish society. There has been a gradual evolution of a broader stratum of people with a stake in the Twenty-six County state: a new middle class of state functionaries and business professionals who see more future for themselves as part of a united Europe than as part of a united Ireland. Furthermore, they see the struggle of the republican movement in the North as a threat to their aspiration.

At the same time there has been the parallel growth of the working class as a social force—but also its marginalisation from mainstream politics. Demoralised by the establishment parties, and with no other alternatives on offer, the working class has been reduced to the sidelines. In this climate the need for green rhetoric is irrelevant. Yet it still remains an issue close to the surface of Irish political life. Prime minister Charles Haughey summoned the Ellis family to see him before polling day. Although Haughey's purpose was to tell them he would not budge on Dessie Ellis's extradition, the fact that he even went through this encounter at all shows that, despite appearances, the national question still remains relevant in Southern Irish politics.

The election of Mary Robinson is not so much a decisive break with the past as the maturation of trends which supporters of Irish freedom in Britain should take note of. Despite all the talk, Ireland remains under the domination of British imperialism. The 'new Ireland' Mary Robinson promises still only has 26 out of 32 counties. It still extradites Irish men and women to Britain because they do not accept the charade of Irish independence. Our message should be quite straightforward: what's new about another Loyalist sympathiser living in the vice-regal lodge? How about the novelty of a free Ireland? Now that would be something new to get excited about!

British strategy and the Brooke initiative

Why Britain cannot leave Ireland

A speech by Northern Ireland secretary Peter Brooke in November seemed to suggest that Britain would be willing to withdraw from Ireland. Nigel Lewis examines Brooke's comments and argues that there has been no change in British strategy

Peter Brooke, nicknamed 'babbling Brooke' by his detractors due to his propensity for talks about talks about talks with various parties in the Six Counties, made his comments on 10 November in a speech to an audience of canned food merchants in London (not known, it has to be said, for their high-profile role in Northern Ireland over the years). There were two main themes to his argument. First, Brooke claimed that Britain was not opposed in principle to a united Ireland. Rather, he said, it was the republican movement's 'undemocratic' and 'violent' promotion of a united Ireland that was the principal obstacle to a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

According to Brooke, British troops were in Ireland simply to put an end to the 'illegitimate' expression of Irish nationalism. If the republicans put down their arms, then a quite rewarding vista would apparently open up before them: 'Just imagine what developments of positive benefit to all sections of the community and both parts of the island of Ireland would be bound to follow a permanent end to the violence.'

Negotiations

There is in fact nothing new in this argument. In a well-publicised statement he made during interviews to mark his first 100 days in office in October 1989 Brooke stated, much to the surprise of leading commentators, that he was willing to negotiate with Sinn Féin if the IRA abandoned the armed struggle. This provoked widespread speculation about an imminent ceasefire with the IRA.

The second theme of Brooke's speech was the assertion that Britain's only role in Ireland was to facilitate a peaceful solution to the conflict. Brooke claimed that 'the British government has no selfish, strategic or economic interests in Northern Ireland'. Its role was to 'help, enable and encourage' peace. Britain's purpose, he emphasised, was 'not to occupy, oppress or exploit, but to ensure democratic debate and free democratic choice'. According to Brooke, this was the 'British way' in Ireland.

All this may come as a bit of a surprise to those Irish people who have experienced the 'British way' in Ireland for the past 21 years—mostly at the end of a gun-barrel. However, Brooke's statement cannot simply be ignored as the ill-considered outburst of a babbling minister. It contains some of the key points

which have become accepted truths in Britain since the current war began in 1969.

The British government and media have gone to great lengths to blame the violence in Ireland on those fighting against British 'help, enablement and encouragement'. The press constantly denounces the IRA as 'gangsters', 'psychopaths', 'religious fanatics', or simply as 'murdering bastards'. Brooke's comments are only the latest example of this 'British way'. The reality is quite different, however. Britain itself created Northern Ireland through partition in 1921. By dividing Ireland and giving the appearance of independence in the South the British authorities split the working class movement and the republican struggle. Enforced partition allowed Britain to dominate the whole of Ireland while giving the impression of compromise. This has been and remains the essence of the 'British way' in Ireland.

Alien regime

Partition created the sectarian Six County state in the North where Catholics face systematic discrimination. Britain ensured loyalty to the Crown from the majority Protestant population by guaranteeing it privileges while keeping the Catholics down through repression. It was this reality which erupted into open conflict at the end of the sixties. British troops were redeployed on the streets of Belfast and Derry in August 1969 to restore order. At this time, it should be pointed out to Brooke and his cohorts, there was no armed resistance to Britain. It was only after the brutal repression that the British Army and its local auxiliaries inflicted upon the Catholic ghettos that the IRA re-emerged to defend the nationalist community.

Occasionally the British establishment lets the mask slip. Maverick judge James Pickles recently admitted that 'Catholics in the North—about a third of the population—feel governed by an alien regime they did not choose and cannot change by lawful means' (*Sunday Correspondent*, 28 October 1990). Brooke's assertions stand logic on its head. To suggest that the IRA is responsible for the British occupation of Ireland is like accusing a rape victim of inviting rape.

But what about Brooke's other claims? On the surface it appears that Brooke's claims that Britain gains no economic or strategic advantage from its occupation of Ireland

have some validity. The time when Ireland was a strategic pawn in the struggles between England, Spain and France is long gone. The argument that Ireland is crucial to Nato in protecting the Western approaches—an argument that held little weight even when East-West tensions were at their height—has today been undermined by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. Ireland seems to hold few strategic advantages for Britain.

Neither does Britain seem to gain economically from occupying a part of Ireland. Rather, Britain channels millions of pounds into the Six Counties in security costs, subsidies, investment programmes, social security and housing. This fact is often cited by left-wing critics of government policy in Northern Ireland as an argument for British withdrawal. A recent comment by ex-squaddie James Burns expresses this point very clearly:

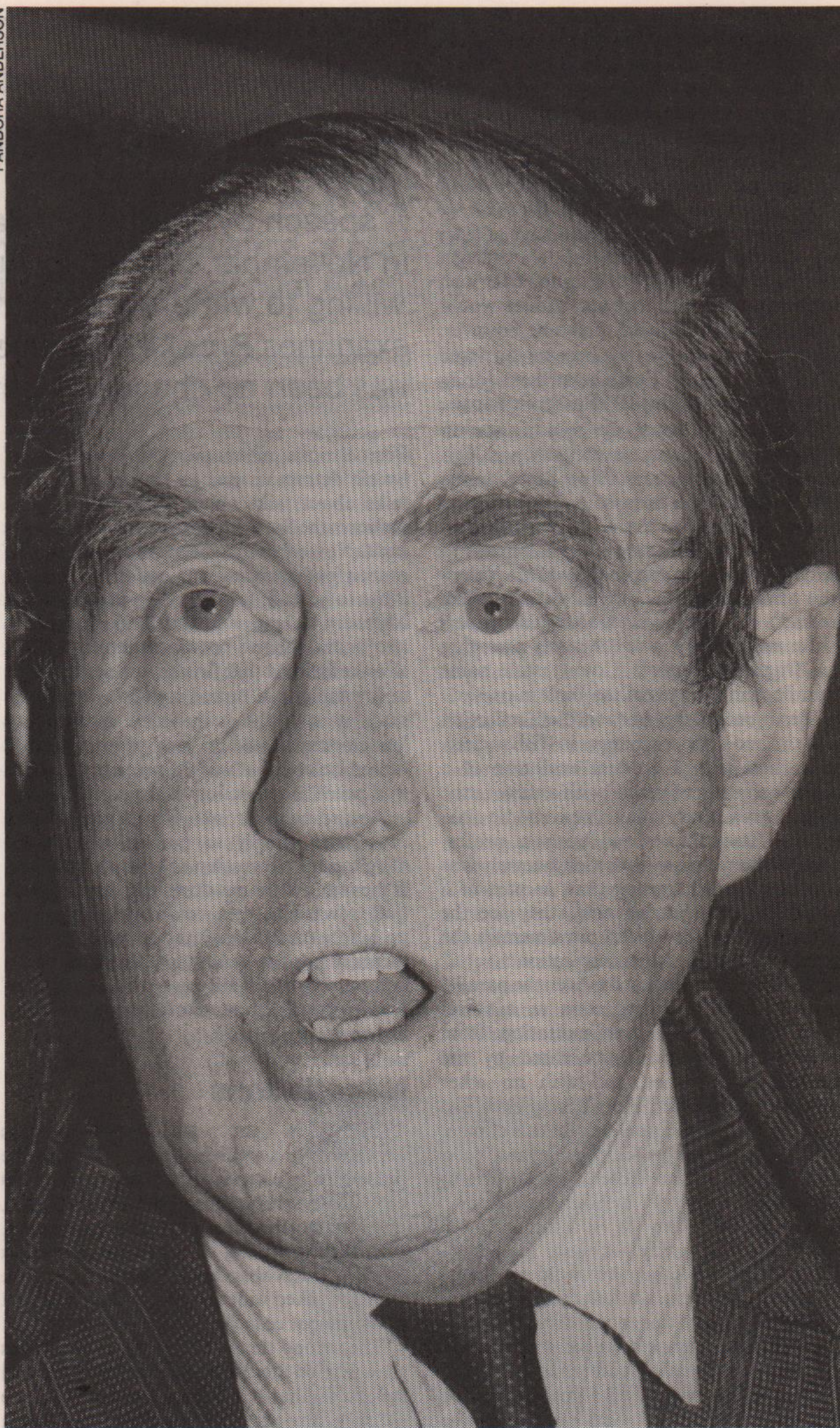
'Having served six years with the Royal Highland Fusiliers, including three tours of duty in Northern Ireland, I find myself in agreement that the only solution to the continuing tragedy in Northern Ireland is for Britain to announce a future date for withdrawal. This is not to surrender to the IRA—it just makes simple common sense. Leaving aside that even military commanders admit the IRA cannot be defeated, it is economic nonsense to pour millions down the partition drain.' (*Manchester Evening News*, 25 November 1990, quoted in *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, 6 December 1990)

Yet, despite the seeming strategic insignificance of Ireland and the apparent 'economic nonsense' of partition, the British establishment remains steadfast in its refusal to withdraw from the Six Counties. Why?

The British state at war

Ireland matters to the British establishment because the Six Counties is part of the political entity called the United Kingdom. A forced withdrawal from Ireland would mean the break-up of the British state as it is currently constituted. The institutions through which the establishment controls British society as a whole would lose their credibility and their authority. The struggle in Ireland is not like any other colonial struggle the British establishment has faced: the guns of the republican movement are aimed at the very heart of the British ruling class and its system. This is really what is at stake in the Irish War.

Indeed, it is for this reason that the tendency in the Irish War has been for Britain to increase rather than decrease its commitment to stay. Over the past 20 years, Britain has bolstered its occupation in both more direct and more sophisticated ways. The abolition of Stormont, the Northern Ireland parliament, in 1972 led to direct rule from Westminster which remains intact to this very day. The recent deployment of a further 500 troops in the Six Counties to supplement the estimated 30 000 armed personnel already there highlights Britain's continuing presence. At the same time initiatives like the Anglo-Irish agreement of 1985, which sought to isolate



PANDORA ANDERSON

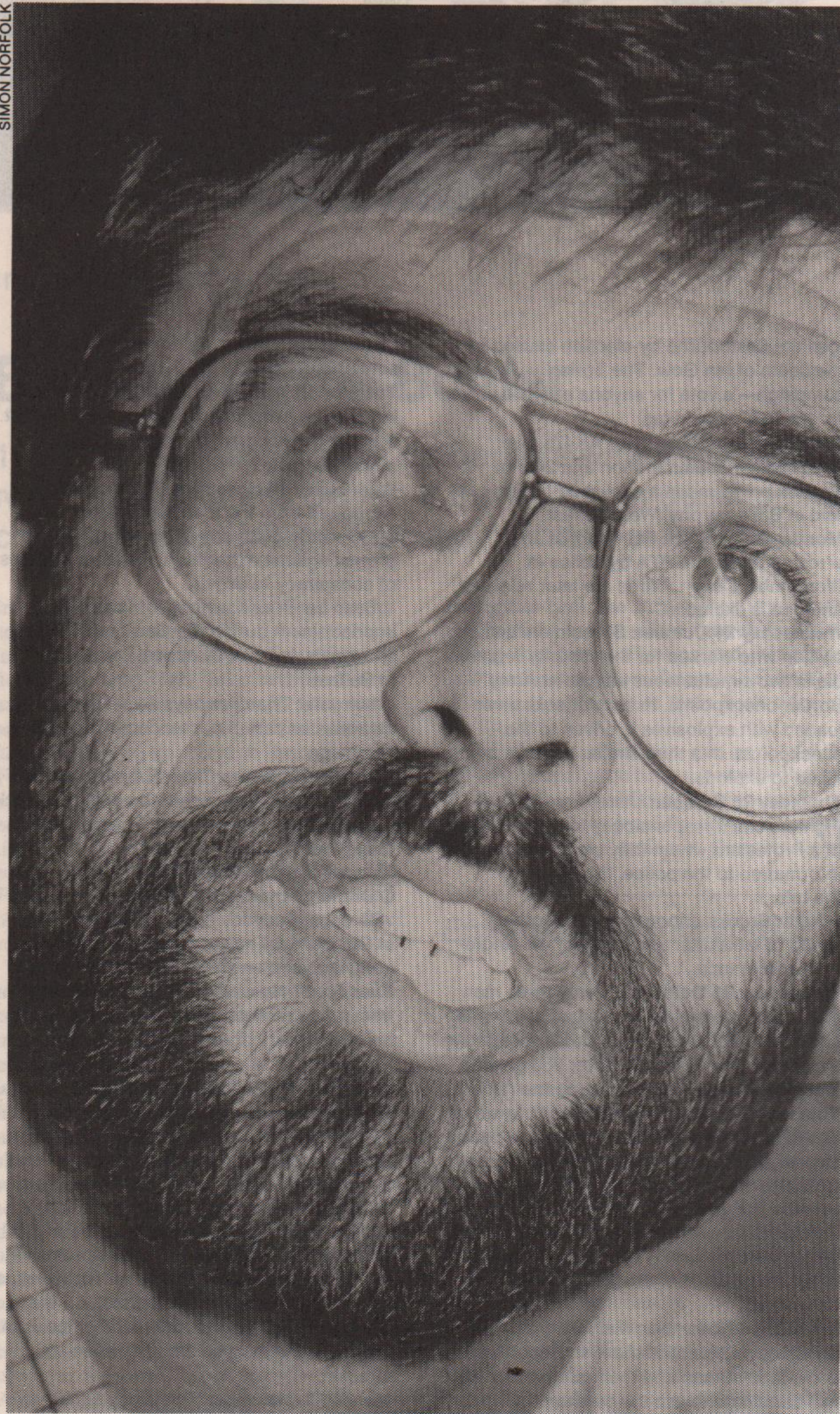
Babbling Brooke's attempts to confuse and divide the republican movement

Sinn Féin politically and to draw Dublin further into the anti-republican struggle, demonstrate Britain's commitment to occupation in a more sophisticated fashion. Even as Brooke was making his speech about British 'neutrality' in the Irish War, the Emergency Powers Act was on its way through parliament. The act, which includes provision for such neutral actions as internment without trial, will further consolidate British powers to enforce partition and the sectarian state.

Withdrawal has never been an option for British imperialism. In the past Britain sought

to contain demands for national independence by incorporating a part of Ireland into the British state itself. The attempt to subjugate Ireland by constitutional settlements had far-reaching consequences: the struggle for Irish freedom was brought into the very heart of British politics—a place it still occupies today. It was possible to withdraw from a colony like India despite the blow this represented to British prestige abroad. But where can the British ruling class go when it is already at home?

The spectre of the break-up of the Soviet



have failed to shift Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams

Union must be sending shivers down the spines of the British ruling class. Here is an example of what can happen once a state admits that it is no longer able to maintain its borders or prevent internal opponents from challenging its authority. More than a hundred years ago, when a debate of this nature concerning Ireland arose in Britain, the British establishment was quick to recognise the implications of a forced withdrawal:

'Ireland's politics, like Ireland's history, could not but have serious consequences for

the British future; for where would Britain stand in a world of great states if she were to forsake the course of her history, that history that had made Britain into a united nation, and seek instead "the disintegration of the United Kingdom into separate cantons?"' (*Spectator*, 17 March 1894)

If this was true in the 1890s, when Britain was at the peak of its imperial power, then it is an even more profound problem today when the enfeebled British establishment finds it difficult to assert its influence over even the

diminutive figure of Jacques Delors of the European Commission. To admit defeat in Ireland would spell mortal danger for the integrity, authority and stability of the whole political and military apparatus of the British state.

Brooke's speech had little to do with the creation of a united Ireland. Rather, as we have argued in previous issues of *Irish Freedom*, Brooke's various 'peace initiatives' are designed to sow division and confusion in the republican movement, to draw into discussion those sections who believe negotiations with Britain might bear fruit and to isolate more militant republicans who refuse to compromise with Britain. This is not the first time such a ploy has surfaced. In 1974-75 the then Labour government resorted to a similar strategy. As reported in previous articles in this magazine, this was the time the British state came closest to defeating the republican movement.

One response to Brooke's speech which was not widely reported in Britain but which serves as a timely and cogent warning was that of Father Des Wilson, a long-time campaigner for civil rights in Northern Ireland. Writing in *Andersonstown News*, Wilson recalled the consequences of being taken in by British duplicity:

'"The British government has no strategic or economic interest in staying in Ireland." Do you know where I heard that before? I heard it in January 1972 from officials of the British ministry of defence and other Whitehallians who told us that this was so. Some of us, simple as we were, believed them. And do you know what day that was? It was Bloody Sunday.'

Des Wilson's words expose the lies behind British explanations for its presence in Ireland. The truth, as he and thousands of nationalists discovered on Bloody Sunday, was that Britain is no neutral arbiter in the conflict, but the source of barbarism and terror. Taking Brooke at his word would be tantamount to committing suicide. Britain can never provide the conditions for negotiations because the only negotiating it is interested in is the terms of nationalist oppression.

As far as the Irish Freedom Movement is concerned, our orientation is not determined by the latest cheap manoeuvre or statement made by a bumbling member of Britain's war cabinet. We recognise that the 'British way' in Ireland can only mean terror and repression. We also recognise that Britain will never voluntarily leave Ireland. The only way to ensure 'democratic debate and free democratic choice' is by forcing Britain to end its occupation of Ireland and by allowing the Irish people to decide on their own future.

This is why the IFM has always emphasised the need to build a solidarity movement in this country based upon the common interest that exists between ordinary Irish and British people—their opposition to the British state. Solidarity with the struggle in Ireland means actively fighting for Irish freedom. It means, in the first instance, not simply wanting to see Britain out of Ireland but Britain *defeated* in Ireland.

WAR DIARY

THREE MONTHS IN THE IRISH WAR

Sunday 29 September: Two joy riders, 17 and 18, are shot dead by soldiers in the parachute regiment as they drive through Army checkpoint in West Belfast.

Tuesday 2 October: Five people arrested under the PTA at Stonehenge, Wiltshire. Two men and a woman are later released. Police claim the remaining two are being questioned in connection with the killing of Tory MP Ian Gow.

A special meeting of the terrorism sub-committee of the association of chief police officers discusses the IRA's current campaign in Britain.

Friday 5 October: Northern Ireland secretary Peter Brooke meets Unionist politicians in an attempt to restart his stalled talks.

More than 65 homes and businesses, from Sinn Fein headquarters to taxi firms, are raided by 800 police and soldiers in a coordinated campaign codenamed 'Operation Whiplash'. The stated aim of the raids is to disrupt financing of the republican movement.

Monday 8 October: The Tory Party conference starts in Bournemouth, surrounded by a seven-foot high steel fence and protected by a £2m security operation. Over 1500 police are on duty.

Tuesday 9 October: Desmond Grew and Martin McCaughey are both shot dead in an undercover SAS operation at a farm near Loughgall, Co Armagh. Three other people are arrested in the incident and the RUC claims to have recovered three AK47 rifles.

Wednesday 10 October: Five leading members of the Ulster Defence Association, charged with handling security force documents by the Stevens inquiry, walk free from a Belfast court after the charges are dropped.

Thursday 11 October: The funerals of Desmond Grew, in Armagh, and Michael McCaughey in Galbally, Co Tyrone, take place amid a heavy RUC presence. They had been shot by an undercover SAS squad the previous week.

Saturday 13 October: The IRA shoots two RUC dog handlers in Belfast city centre; one later dies.

Tuesday 16 October: Peter Brooke, in a speech to East Belfast businessmen, attacks the IRA as a 'parasitic organisation' running a Mafia-like empire.

Three IRA volunteers escape capture by the RUC in Derry. They are warned by a priest, sent to them by the RUC, that the police are closing in.

Thursday 18 October: The Conservatives

lose the Eastbourne by-election caused by the death of Ian Gow. The Tories' campaign—'a vote for anyone else is a vote for the IRA'—backfires.

Saturday 20 October: Four AK47s, over 2600 rounds of ammunition and 24lb of Semtex are found in a coal shed during a raid in Ballymurphy, West Belfast.

Monday 22 October: Four people are arrested under the PTA by police in Ilfracombe, Devon. Three are later released, and one is excluded.

Wednesday 24 October: Six soldiers and a civilian who worked for the security forces die in two simultaneous attacks at Army Border checkpoints. In both attacks a van loaded with explosives is driven to the checkpoints. In a third similar attack a bomb failed to explode.

Thursday 25 October: Ulster Freedom Fighters claim responsibility for the murder of a Protestant whom they claim had passed information to the police, the IRA and the Inla.

Peter Brooke announces yet another round of talks after a meeting of the Anglo-Irish conference.

Wednesday 31 October: Twenty three men are arrested by police in Leeds, East Anglia and London during police raids investigating a claimed £2m IRA fraud. Over 200 gaming machines are also seized during the raids.

Thursday 1 November: Detectives claim that two flats in north-west London raided by the anti-terrorist squad were used by a 'Home Counties' IRA cell. This follows over a week of raids and intensive police activity in the Sudbury area, near Wembley.

Friday 2 November: A UDR soldier is killed as a van explodes at the garage where he worked.

Thursday 8 November: Mary Robinson becomes president of the Irish Republic. She is the first woman and the first non-Fianna Fail candidate to win the presidential election since the office was created in 1937.

Saturday 10 November: At least six people are arrested under the PTA outside the Kilburn National Ballroom, London.

Two policemen, a former UDR soldier and a civilian are shot by the IRA at Lough Neagh, Co Armagh.

Sunday 11 November: Police raid a block of flats in Willesden Green, London, evacuating more than 2000 residents. They later claim to have found weapons, ammunition, documents and over 50lb of Semtex.

Monday 12 November: Alec Patterson, Inla volunteer, is shot dead by undercover SAS

squad as he attacks the home of a UDR soldier in Tyrone.

Tuesday 13 November: Another joy rider is killed at an Army checkpoint in West Belfast. The car he was driving crashed into a military vehicle.

Wednesday 14 November: Desmond Ellis is extradited from the Irish Republic to Britain on the thirty-sixth day of his hunger-strike protest against extradition. He faces charges of conspiracy in Britain.

Sean Lennon, convicted of false imprisonment during the Casement Park showtrials, is freed by appeal court in Belfast.

Margaret Thatcher pays a visit to the Six Counties as part of her leadership election campaign.

Friday 23 November: The IRA attempts to attack an Army checkpoint by driving a truck loaded with explosives at it. The bomb fails to explode.

Monday 26 November: Trial of Liam O'Dhuibhir and Damien McComb, charged with conspiracy to cause explosions, starts at Old Bailey. They are subsequently found guilty and sentenced to 30 years each.

Tuesday 27 November: Peter Brooke and Irish prime minister Charles Haughey both make optimistic forecasts about future 'Brooke talks'.

Thursday 29 November: RUC, aided by Northern Ireland security ministers, warns people to be 'on full alert' for an expected upsurge in the IRA's military campaign and an increase in RUC activities to counter it.

Friday 30 November: An extra battalion of 600 troops is flown into Northern Ireland in anticipation of an IRA 'Christmas offensive'.

Two policemen are injured in North Belfast as the IRA mounts a rocket attack on the home of a high court judge, Mr Justice Eoin Higgins—the third time he has been attacked.

Monday 3 December: The Army admits to having to close four Border checkpoints during the hours of darkness, because it is unable to defend them against IRA attacks.

Wednesday 5 December: Armed police raid a house in Antwerp, Belgium, and arrest three men, claiming that they are IRA suspects and that weapons and ammunition had been found.

A Loyalist fraud, which has cost the Army at least £25m, is revealed by police. Maintenance and grass-cutting contracts were fixed by Loyalist paramilitaries.

Hugh Mitchell

NEWS

FROM THE WAR ZONE

Inside the war zone

Barricading the Border

1992 is supposed to open up borders within the European Community. But not, reports Christina O'Dwyer, if the border in question happens to be the one created by the British-imposed partition of Ireland

In its efforts to maintain the artificial Border across Ireland, the British government is implementing a new policy of uprooting and destroying vital road links between North and South. All along the Border area roads are blocked and barricaded while bridges have been blown up. Between the counties of Fermanagh and Leitrim not a single road is open. Elsewhere roads that do remain open bear a heavy military presence. More recently time limits have been set for entry along main routes. For example, the Boa Island Road in Fermanagh is closed after a certain time and there are plans to extend this curfew to other routes between Fermanagh and Monaghan.

Britain's controlled-entry policy is designed to reinforce military occupation and to divide communities further by restricting their movements. The violation of entry rights has obvious effects on trade and tourism. But what is less well-recognised is the fact that the lives of ordinary people are being drastically affected. People who find themselves just a short distance away from their villages, workplaces, families and friends often have to resort to lengthy detours to reach their destination. The alternative is being stranded and penned in, leaving yourself open to harassment—lengthy delays, abuse, threats, assault and arrest at the hands of the British forces. In 1972 Tobias Molloy was murdered by a plastic bullet when approaching a security check at Strabane. More recently, in 1988, Aidan McAnespie became the victim of so-called 'security measures'.

Local communities from both North and South have refused to accept these violations without protest and resistance. They have established working associations to repair the destruction, reopen roads and rebuild bridges. The response of the British state has been brutal. The authorities have used emergency provisions legislation to seize land and uproot Border crossings. Anti-terrorist legislation enables them to clamp down on the increasing demands of local communities. Workers are surrounded and threatened, machinery confiscated and protesters arrested. The Irish

authorities back the British measures. Both governments have a vested interest in maintaining the current situation and using it to facilitate the steady flow of security information on those that commute from both sides of the Border.

The Border violations are part of the military campaign on both sides of the Border to crush the republican movement. It is admirable that the local Border associations have managed to maintain their struggles

faced as they are by the full might of the British war machine. Local people in North Monaghan and Tyrone have managed to reopen Lackey Bridge despite fierce resistance from the security forces. The Border campaign merely exposes British lies and Southern collaboration. The lengths to which the British state goes to maintain its occupation reveals not only that it is fighting a war against ordinary Irish communities, but that it is a war that Britain cannot win.

Emergency Provisions Bill

Tooling up for the nineties

Almost unnoticed in the Queen's Speech to parliament in November was the announcement of the government's intention to introduce the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, replacing similar acts dating from 1973, 1978 and 1987. The new bill is no ordinary piece of legislation. A closer examination of the powers contained in it shows that it is a lethal weapon set to terrorise further the nationalist community.

The bill intends to re-enact the previous repressive acts which established the no-jury Diplock courts, allowed the proscription of 'terrorist' organisations, and gave the police and Army powers of entry, search and seizure. Like its counterpart in Britain, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, these clauses have been used mainly to intimidate, torture and terrorise nationalists in Ireland. In 1980 it was revealed, for example, that of the 3868 people detained under these provisions, only 8.6 per cent had been charged with any offence.

What is significant about the latest legislation is the new powers it contains which indicate how the British state intends to intensify its campaign of terror in Ireland. The new bill will give the police and Army greater powers of arrest, particularly through what has been

termed the 'going equipped' criterion. *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, the republican newspaper, pointed out that this could in reality mean that 'on the word of the RUC, it will be an imprisonable offence to possess ordinary household items likely to be found in any home'.

Peter Brooke, the Northern Ireland secretary, let the cat out of the bag and exposed the new bill for what it is when he told reporters that he rejected Lord Colville's recommendations that internment without trial should be removed from the bill. The man who has claimed that Britain's role in Ireland was to 'enable and encourage', told the *Guardian* that 'abandoning the power to intern would send the wrong signal to terrorist organisations about the government's resolve to bring terrorism to an end' (9 November 1990).

The proposed Emergency Provisions Bill indicates how the British state is tooling up for the nineties. It highlights the point made on previous occasions in *Irish Freedom*, that as far as the British state is concerned, the law is merely another weapon in its armoury against the Irish people.

Floyd King

Violence and the Irish War

Who are the real sectarians?

Kevin Kelly reports on the rise of sectarian attacks in Ireland in 1990

'Ten members of two nationalist families, from Kildress, County Tyrone, had a miraculous escape when members of a Loyalist death squad, believed locally to be Ulster Defence Regiment, fired dozens of rounds of automatic gunfire into their homes on Wednesday 19 September 1990.'

So ran an all too familiar article in *AP/RN*, the newspaper of the republican movement in Ireland. Several weeks later Tommy Casey, a Sinn Féin member and father of one of the families concerned, lay dead outside an isolated farmhouse, beside the gate he had come to mend for a friend. At the second attempt the Loyalist gang succeeded in getting their victim.

'Rogue members of the security forces may have passed on information that led to the

murder of a nationalist man and father of four, Malachy McIvor, from east Tyrone.'

This was the headline in the Belfast morning newspaper the *Irish News* on 9 November 1990. And on the other side of the front page another report tells of the murder of 21-year old Gary Cambell from the nationalist New Lodge area of North Belfast. Gary was sitting on a sofa watching a football match on TV when Loyalist gunmen burst through the open door and shot him four times in the neck and chest. He died an hour later in hospital. Gary Cambell became yet another victim of Britain's war in Ireland.



Milltown cemetery during the burial of the Gibraltar Three: Loyalist gunman Michael Stone exercises his 'rights' as a British citizen in Northern Ireland

PHIL MURPHY

'You are sitting in your own house and you think you are safe and don't believe people will come kicking in your door and shoot you', said Gary's father. In the last few months of 1990 this type of sectarian attack has become an almost daily occurrence. Many nationalists have had lucky escapes, indeed some miraculous, but unfortunately many have lost their lives.

Tit-for-tat?

What are people here in Britain to make of these killings? Undoubtedly most see them as part of the complicated historic spiral of murder connected with Northern Ireland. Many throw their hands up and ask: when will Protestants and Catholics stop killing each other? Every day people in Britain are fed a ration of British censorship and misinformation on the war in Ireland. The British authorities present the conflict as a seemingly endless round of sectarian tit-for-tat killings. However, there are crucial differences between the military actions of the IRA against the British occupation forces and the murders of Catholics by Loyalist death squads. It is these differences which need to be highlighted if we are to understand what is happening in Ireland today.

On 29 September 1990 a 15-year old nationalist youth, James Harvey, was critically injured after suffering massive blast injuries when a booby-trap device detonated on the family tractor he was driving. The incident took place on their farm at Aghyaran in north-west Tyrone only yards from the border with Donegal. Despite the circumstances, and the fact that a nationalist family had been the target of the attack, a local news broadcast claimed there was no motive for the bomb attack. In fact there had been two previous bomb attacks against nationalist families that week in the same area. The media chose to ignore all the evidence which pointed to a concerted attempt by Loyalists to murder members of the nationalist community in north-west Tyrone.

Legitimate targets

Yet when the IRA's military actions result in death or injury, this same media is quick to brand these actions as a campaign of genocide against the Protestant people of Ulster. A closer examination of the reality of the war in Ireland reveals this to be nothing more than cheap propaganda.

It is true that many of the people whom the IRA has killed since the war began in 1969 have been Protestants. But they were killed, not because they attended a particular church, but because they were members of the security forces responsible for enforcing the partition of Ireland and the oppression of the nationalist people. Engaged in a war of colonial oppression, members of the security forces have made themselves legitimate targets for the IRA.

There is, however, an even more important and basic point which needs to be made here concerning the branding of the IRA's actions as 'sectarian'. The republican movement is fighting a war to unite Ireland. To do so it is fighting against the force that has institu-

tionalised sectarianism in Ireland, namely the British state itself. It is Britain's partition of Ireland and its protection of the sectarian Six County state that is responsible for fostering and sustaining sectarianism. Republicanism is in fact the only force in Irish politics which is anti-sectarian by definition.

The republican movement has always rejected the policy of sectarian attacks. The IRA does not target Protestant civilians. Loyalist death squads, on the other hand, kill Catholics simply because they happen to be Catholic. Loyalist paramilitaries merely draw to a logical conclusion what British rule in Ireland means: to be Catholic is by definition to be disloyal to the British Crown.

The recent spate of sectarian attacks is the latest in a sustained campaign by pro-British death squads aimed at terrorising nationalists and, on occasion, at eliminating Sinn Féin activists and supporters. Contrary to claims in British newspapers, these killings are a fully integrated part of the British strategy of intimidation and terror. They have helped to create an atmosphere where republicans, and Sinn Féin activists in particular, are vilified, censored, isolated and set up as fair game for Loyalist killers.

If anyone doubts that there is a connection between British strategy and Loyalist murder gangs, one only has to look at the example of Douglas Hogg, a junior Northern Ireland minister. In 1989 Hogg publicly attacked the allegedly pro-republican sympathies of certain Northern Ireland solicitors. Shortly afterwards Pat Finucane, a Catholic lawyer from Belfast who had been specifically named by Hogg, was shot dead by Loyalist gunmen.

Loyalist death squads

For others, one display of anti-British sentiment can mean the signing of their death warrant. In March last year Malachy McIvor from Moneymare, County Tyrone, attended a charity social function. A chance remark that the band should not play the British national anthem cost him his life. The following day his employer, a Protestant, sacked him after allegedly receiving a Loyalist death threat. A few days later McIvor's name appeared in graffiti in the town with the words 'You're dead' written underneath. On 8 November 1990, Malachy McIvor was shot dead on a lonely country road in County Tyrone by a Loyalist death squad.

Imagine, if you can, the reaction if a British national was shot dead in Iraq because he objected to the playing of the Iraqi national anthem. The international outcry would be deafening. However, it was the silence from the media and the British establishment about the death of Malachy McIvor which was deafening.

The relatively small nationalist community of North Belfast has suffered particularly badly from Loyalist murder gangs with over 20 murder attempts by Loyalists in 1990. To date, three people have been killed and many more have suffered very serious injury.

The latest killing came on 29 November 1990 when Raymond Robinson, a Catholic man, was shot dead outside his work. The Ulster Volunteer Force, a Loyalist

murder gang, admitted responsibility. His murder came only weeks after the murder of his friend, Dermott McGuinness, by the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), the cover name for the Ulster Defence Association, a legal paramilitary group responsible for many sectarian murders. This latest attack has fuelled local community fears of further sectarian assassinations in the area. 'People are afraid for their lives, and the lives of their families', said one resident. 'Living here you're constantly looking over your shoulder. You don't know who is going to be attacked next.'

In the past 20 years Loyalists have murdered more than 700 people and seriously injured hundreds more in attacks on nationalist communities in the Six Counties. In more than 60 per cent of fatal attacks there was collusion between Loyalists and Crown forces.

Sometimes the mask slips and the truth comes out. In the summer of 1989 the UFF justified the killing of Rathfriland man Laughlin Maginn by releasing a security forces document on the dead man. The UFF revealed how the British security forces document had marked Maginn as an 'IRA suspect'. What was clear was not simply that ordinary Catholics were being branded as 'IRA suspects', but that sources in the security forces were passing this information on to Loyalist death squads.

United Ireland

Faced with these facts the British state was forced to institute a face-saving, damage-limitation exercise, the Stevens inquiry. Its aim was to cover up the extent of collusion between the official and unofficial arms of the British war machine in Ireland. Stevens did his job. According to his report the passing of information to Loyalists 'was neither widespread nor institutionalised'. Not one member of the British security forces has been charged with handing material on to the murder squads. This is despite the fact that Loyalists released to the press more than 600 security files on republican suspects. The Stevens inquiry itself recovered more than 2600 documents from Loyalist paramilitary groups.

The Stevens inquiry reluctantly confirmed innumerable examples of collusion between Loyalists and Crown forces. It argued however that such instances were the work of isolated rogue members of the security forces. This was the real reason for the inquiry: to attempt to stifle any suspicions or allegations of a concerted campaign of collusion between the British authorities and the Loyalists, and put it all down to a few bad apples.

However much the British authorities may try to cover up the facts, the nationalist people know who the real sectarians are: the British forces and their local allies. Sectarian killings are the product of British rule in Ireland. Britain created the sectarian Six County statelet by enforcing the partition of Ireland and by institutionalising discrimination against Catholics in the North. It maintains its occupation of Ireland through a systematic reign of terror against the nationalist people. The only way to fight against sectarianism is to fight for a united Ireland free from British interference.

REVIEWS

BY ALEX FARRELL, EVE ANDERSON AND NAT EDWARDS

An appalling vista

Edmund Heward, *Lord Denning: A Biography*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, £15 hbk

Lord Denning was the longest-serving judge in British legal history. His 38 years on the bench were abruptly brought to an end with the publication on 20 May 1982 of his seventh book, *What Next in the Law*. Much to his surprise, what turned out to be 'next' was his headlong fall off the aforementioned bench, announced only eight days later.

What Next in the Law suggested that 'coloured people' are unsuitable to serve as jurors. Commenting on the trial of 12 black people accused of riot in St Pauls, Bristol, Denning was enraged that eight had been acquitted. (The prosecution was subsequently forced to drop the charges against the other four.) Denning's wrath was particularly reserved for the four black members of the jury. 'Black, coloured and brown people', said the lord, do not have the same standards of conduct as do whites. The defence, through its challenges to 36 prospective jurors, had sought to pack the jury with as many 'coloured people' as possible, who had then failed to convict the defendants (who were of course guilty) because they were 'their own'.

Two days later Denning discovered that two of these 'coloured' jurors had declared their intention to sue him for libel. On 24 May Lord Denning, master of the rolls, informed Lord Hailsham, the lord chancellor (and Denning's only superior in the legal system) of his decision to retire.

But what does Edmund Heward have to say about all this? On page 199 of this biography, in a tearful chapter entitled 'Disaster', Heward's considered conclusion is that 'Denning...had no colour prejudice'. It is an assessment in keeping with the rest of the book. Heward's biography is a 243-page long hymn of praise for 'a great judge...held in respect and affection by his brother judges, the Bar and the public' (and no doubt by the angels above). Certainly the book is profoundly boring. But worse, it is entirely dishonest, avoiding whole areas of Denning's views and actions—many well-known to supporters of Irish freedom—which Heward seems to find it convenient to ignore. For his benefit, let us throw some light on some of the darker areas of Denning's life and thoughts.



Denning on juries

(From an interview in the *Spectator*, 18 August 1990)

AN Wilson: 'And is it advisable to allow anybody to serve on a jury?'

Denning: 'That's one of the other drawbacks of recent times. In my young days, juries were all middle-aged, middle class, middle-minded, to use Devlin's phrase. The present system of random juries may lead to random justice...'

Wilson: 'Are you saying that the jury system is in fact inimical to justice?'

Denning: 'No, I've still got a firm belief in trial by jury, but I'd have them selected differently....In other words, I'd have a list of respectable, responsible citizens. I wouldn't have every Tom, Dick or Harry as they do now.'

Wilson: 'But do you still believe in trial by jury?'

Denning: 'Oh yes. Trial by jury is one of the rights of Englishmen (sic).'

In other words, Denning is a fervent advocate of the jury system....so long as the jurors are English, white, male, middle-aged, middle class, middle-minded, and hand-picked by Lord Denning and the Special Branch.

Denning on the Jewish question

(From an interview in the *Spectator*, 18 August 1990; Denning is complaining that the sovereignty of the British legal system is being usurped by European Community institutions)

AN Wilson: 'There are, of course, English Eurocrats, Englishmen who play a part in the European...'

Denning (interrupting): 'Leon Brittan...he's no good....Now he's whatever it is in Europe. A German Jew, isn't he?'

Wilson: 'What's that got to do with it?'

Denning: 'Look him up. I think you'll find he's a German Jew, telling us what to do with our English law.'

As it happens, Leon Brittan is not German. Certainly he is Jewish. And that is the only thing about Brittan which is not objectionable.

Denning on the Birmingham Six

In January 1980 Denning, together with his appeal court colleagues, refused the attempt by the Birmingham Six to pursue a civil action against the police officers who beat and terrorised them after their arrest in 1974—despite the home office having admitted liability. In delivering the appeal court judgement, Denning made the statement on which he will choke when the six are finally released:

'Just consider the course of events if this action is allowed to proceed to trial. If the six men fail, it will mean that much time and money will have been expended by many people for no good purpose. If the six men win, it will mean that the police were guilty of perjury, that they were guilty of violence and threats, that the confessions were involuntary and were improperly admitted in evidence and that the convictions were erroneous.'

'That would mean the home secretary would either have to recommend they be pardoned or he would have to remit the case to the court of appeal. This is such an appalling vista that every sensible person in the land would say: it cannot be right these actions should go any further....It is high time it stopped. It is really an attempt to set aside the convictions on a side wind. It is a scandal that should not be allowed to continue.'

Denning on British justice for Irish people
(From an interview in the *Spectator*, 18 August 1990)

AN Wilson: 'Were you glad to see the death penalty abolished?'

Denning: 'Not really. It ought to be retained for murder most foul. We shouldn't have all these campaigns to get the Birmingham Six released if they'd been hanged. They'd have been forgotten, and the whole community would be satisfied.'

Wilson: 'But would justice have been satisfied if the wrong men had been hanged?'

Denning (chuckles): 'No. There is always that danger.'

Wilson: 'If they had hanged the Guildford Four, they would have hanged the wrong men (sic), wouldn't they?'

Denning: 'No. They'd probably have hanged the right men (sic). Not proved against them, that's all.'

Denning greeted the news of the release of the Guildford Four with the comment that 'British justice is in ruins'.

Denning on the Winchester Three

In October 1988 the Winchester Three were on trial for conspiracy to murder Tom King and 'persons unknown'. On 19 October the three announced their intention to use their right to silence and not to take the witness stand. The following day in the house of commons the supposed prospective victim, Tom King, declared that the government planned to abolish the 300-year old right to silence. Denning told the press that 'too many people have been acquitted when they were guilty and that's because our rules favoured the guilty person far too much....It's only the guilty person who says, "Oh, I claim my right to silence, I'm not going to say anything"....The right to silence is a help to the guilty, but the innocent man would want to give his explanation and be cleared.'

A nod's as good as a wink to a blind man, and the three were duly found guilty. However on 27 April 1990 the appeal court acknowledged the blatant 'guidance' offered to the Winchester jury by King and Denning, because of their remarks, found the convictions unsafe and freed the prisoners.

Denning, of course, blew several of his ancient gaskets. While quite willing to see innocent men and women hanged—even finding the idea quite amusing—he could not abide being ticked off by the appeal court. 'The judges of the court of appeal have condemned me without hearing my defence', he claimed in a letter to the *Times*—an experience presumably suitable only for Irish defendants. He later told the press that 'the Irish people, with the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four, have had a campaign

against British justice. It is part of an IRA campaign' (quoted in the *Guardian*, 30 April 1990). Of this whole satisfying tale, Denning's faithful biographer naturally only mentions, and mentions in full, Denning's self-defence.

Denning's outspoken, from-the-hip approach to the law lacks the cunning and sophistication of many of his judicial colleagues, and so is more honest, in its way, and more revealing of the prejudices and raw power underlying the judicial machine of the British establishment. Throughout his career Denning promoted the role of senior judges as lawmakers and politicians, rather than as simple interpreters and upholders of the law, as they are theoretically supposed to be. He attempted to update legal practice to respond to the needs of the moment, and was always conscious of the importance of maintaining public support for the legal system. This brought him into conflict with others in the establishment who took the view that overt lawmaking by judges, if carried too far, would tend to undermine the fiction that the law is democratically made by act of parliament, and by legal precedents established through the unbroken centuries-long tradition of English jurisprudence.

There is an instructive book to be written about the career of Alfred Thompson Denning, Baron of Whitchurch in the county of Hampshire. Edmund Heward's scissors and paste snow-job isn't it.

Alex Farrell

Hero or demon?

Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins: A Biography*, Hutchinson, £18.99 hbk

On 19 September 1919, Michael Collins formed the 'Squad', an elite group of assassins also commonly known as the 'Twelve Apostles'. Their job was to deal with the British detectives and spies that were swarming the streets of Dublin in order to put down the nationalist upsurge. To facilitate this task, Collins had recruited several of the British agents to his side. They were to prove of invaluable assistance. One detective, Eamonn Broy, worked as the confidential clerk at the headquarters of the 'G' division at Great Brunswick Street police station. This meant that Broy was able to read every single report filed on the nationalist movement and tip off Collins accordingly. One night Broy was able to smuggle Collins himself into the 'G' division headquarters. Collins sat there reading and taking notes all night:

'Collins had the whole *modus operandi* of the RIC's intelligence system laid out before him. He saw both what he was up against and how to combat his enemy, the first Irish revolutionary to do so.' (p107)

Collins' methods were so ingenious that for many years after the War of Independence, the British were still not sure which detectives Collins had bought and which were loyal. Coogan recounts meeting David Neligan who was still screwing the British for all he could get several decades later:

'One of the most remarkable figures of the period, he was drawing five pensions when I first met him in the sixties...an old IRA pension, one from the RIC, the Irish police force, the Irish civil service—and the British secret service.' (p76)

Shortly before Collins set up the 'Squad' he was elected president of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), the militant nationalist clandestine organisation that stood for an independent Irish republic through 'physical force' methods. In 1916 the IRB, along with James Connolly and the Irish Citizen Army, had initiated the Easter Rising. They also infiltrated Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteers (later to become the IRA). They rejected

parliamentarianism and moderation in dealing with Britain.

However, there was a contradiction in their politics: although they were anti-imperialist they were not anti-capitalist. It was this dichotomy which ultimately led both the IRB and Collins to disaster. Collins remained president of the IRB until his death in an ambush on 22 August 1922. While head of the IRB he was also a member of the Dail Eireann (the illegal Irish parliament) and the minister of finance in the fledgling Irish government. He also subsequently became the commander-in-chief of the Free State Army. Besides this, Collins had many other duties and responsibilities. Collins' stamina, courage and energy are well recounted in this sympathetic biography.

Coogan also sympathetically portrays Collins' role in the Treaty negotiations with Lloyd George and Churchill. Along with Arthur Griffith (the founder of Sinn Féin) Collins was one of the leading Irish delegates who penned his signature to the Treaty which cut Ireland in two. Coogan attempts to

exonerate Collins from the embarrassment of this deed, which the modern-day republican movement regards as a betrayal of the cause of Irish freedom:

'He did not like the Treaty he signed with England, but he...regarded it as a stepping stone to full independence and a united Ireland, and the best he could do for the moment. His death ensured that the moment would be a long one and this generation lives with its consequences....If we wish to understand today's tragedies and perhaps avert others like them, it is essential to know and learn from the story of Michael Collins.' (pxiii)

So what 'essentials' does Coogan want us to 'learn from the story of Michael Collins'? Coogan's thesis is that it was Eamon de Valera who paved the way for the compromise with British imperialism and that Collins was set up as a scapegoat. The honest soldier was cuckolded by the scheming politician. According to Coogan, it was Collins' intention to throw out the Treaty as soon as he was able to build up an army.

'Bolshevik character'

Coogan's argument seems plausible. It would also explain the constitution that Collins wrote as part of the Treaty agreement, which Churchill rejected as being of a 'Bolshevik character'. Likewise, Lloyd George described it as a 'complete evasion and complete negation of the Treaty' (p326). Collins' vain attempt to unite both sides of the Treaty debate by drawing up a constitution that could accommodate everyone, came to nothing when the British unceremoniously rejected it. Even more convincing is where Coogan reveals how Collins sponsored the Northern IRA's campaign against the Six Counties government, or 'Carsonia' as it was called, even supplying it with arms the British had sent him to put down the anti-Treaty forces.

Where Collins plays the hero, de Valera plays the demon. Coogan accurately shows how de Valera had no great differences of principle with Collins or the pro-Treatyites. The greatest difference was his skill at manoeuvring out of tight corners. Coogan argues that it was the acceptance of talks with the British on the enemy's terms that laid the basis for the compromise, and it was de Valera as much as anyone else who accepted these terms:

'After his lengthy tete-a-tetes with Lloyd George, Eamon de Valera knew better than any man alive how slim was the prospect of a republic and what sort of settlement he and his colleagues were likely to get.' (p223)

In addition, de Valera's alternative treaty, Document No2, is described by Coogan as 'a compromise similar to the one on offer' (p300). But de Valera was able to avoid being tainted with the accusation of traitor, because he was not present at the Treaty talks and sent others to go in his place.

There is a lot of truth in Coogan's analysis, but there are also major omissions to the story of Michael Collins and the creation of

modern Ireland. No doubt de Valera was a snake and Collins was a scapegoat. But the problem Coogan skates over is that once the truce was agreed and the Treaty negotiations had begun, no matter what Collins secretly hoped for, he was no longer in control. The momentum that had built up through the years of the Tan War was lost and diffused. The hardships and suffering that the people had endured seemed to be over and a wave of war-weariness swept over the country. Even more damaging from Collins' point of view was the fact that with the truce the IRA's *modus operandi* was exposed to full view.

The real hero?

The damage had been done. There could be no going back for Collins. Once a compromise had been agreed with Britain, it was British imperialism which called the tune. The tragic reality missed by Collins and Coogan alike is the fact that Britain now engineered events to ensure that the so-called Free State would act in accordance with the interests of the British establishment. The first hoop it set up for Collins to jump through was the destruction of those who stood in the way of the Treaty. Collins had all the help he needed from the British to accomplish this task. Coogan documents the close cooperation between Collins and Churchill over the

bombardment of the Four Courts, the opening shot in the Irish Civil War.

The other major omission from Coogan's reading of the Irish revolution is the social force which potentially had the power to conclude the messy business—the working class. Of course, Coogan's work is a biography of one man, Michael Collins. But without analysing the balance of class forces and in particular the role of the working class, the choices which Sinn Féin and Collins made seem more than a little mysterious. If the 'Squad' was so efficient, why worry about the threat of all-out war? If the 'Squad' was just one honourable part of the War of Independence, who was playing the other part?

In fact it was the revolt of the Irish working class against its political and economic slavery that provided much of the impetus behind the success of the Tan War. Britain's fear of working class unrest spreading and deepening pushed it towards the truce and the negotiating table. The fear of Sinn Féin and Michael Collins of the anti-capitalist potential of their own working class pushed them to compromise at that very same table. Michael Collins may have stolen the limelight (and it is easy to see why) but the real heroes and victims of the unfinished Irish revolution are the Irish working class.

Eve Anderson

Irish art and British imperialism

Brian McAvera, *Art, Politics and Ireland*, Open Air

Art, Politics and Ireland claims to be the first book to discuss the relationship between politics and fine art in Ireland. As such it is a welcome attempt to introduce a political perspective into a sphere that has been traditionally dominated by the most conservative 'landscape and still-life' academic and administrative schools of thought in Europe.

Through interviews with artists, critics and art administrators, McAvera maps out the question of how art is affected by, and how it should intervene in, the politics of Ireland. He then follows this with a survey of artists working in the North, the South and in Britain. Throughout the question is raised as to why Irish art has always been limited and never achieved the dynamism of Irish literature or of the art of other European countries (McAvera is especially fascinated by the art of the Weimar expressionists).

The book has some useful information and quotes that show the traditional domination of art in the North by the Northern Ireland Arts Council and in the South by the Royal Hibernian Academy. This historical picture is of an art scene subservient to the diktat of British imperialism.

The British leverage exerted on art up to partition can still be seen in its most blatant form in the refusal of the Northern Ireland Arts Council and its academic and critical entourage to have any truck with art of a 'socio-political' nature. Even art not specifically political, but simply of an experimental nature, is discouraged or ignored.

In the South the overriding influence is of Twenty-six County nationalism and the rewriting of history that followed the Irish Civil War. The official handbook of the Free State, *Saorstát Éireann*, published in 1932, was illustrated by artists such as Paul Henry, who depicted a quiet pastoral idyll drawn from the romance of the Gaelic revival. The fragile Southern establishment had no wish to show the reality of a desperately impoverished rural Ireland, or the intense exploitation of the emergent urban proletariat.

McAvera illustrates this historical perspective with some clarity. It is by far the most illuminating part of the book. However, the closer we come to the present day, the more obscure and unclear he becomes. Thus, while the relationship between art and imperialism is clear in the nineteenth century, the picture

we get of contemporary society has little to do with imperialism. Instead local factors, not British imperialism, gain more and more weight as the commentary goes on. McAvera simply argues that art liberated itself in the sixties with the student movement and the development of new, even 'socialist' ideals in Ireland. In fact all that happened in the late sixties was that a war broke out and it is very difficult to maintain a tradition of quiet rural landscape paintings and warmly lit still-lives in a war-zone. Well, at least with any credibility.

The 'political' art which McAvera selects and which he welcomes is best summed up by Paddy Gillan, an artist, editor and chair of the Workers Party cultural committee when he argues that 'the Provisional IRA would be today's equivalent of the whiteboys and the Ribbon Man. Thus the received wisdom is neatly packaged: the Provo objectives are OK; it's just that their methods are wrong. But I think that recent history demands that their objectives, such as a united Ireland, should be seriously questioned'.

Gillan, like his promoter McAvera, attempts to avoid the reality of Irish society and its continued domination by Britain. Ireland's radical artists have simply become apologists for British imperialism and are today attempting to rewrite Irish history with discussions of national identity and cultural diversity. It is no wonder then that McAvera will never see an Irish 'Weimar expressionism'. Unlike McAvera's contemporary Irish artists who are not very good and who vigorously defend the status quo, the artists of Weimar Germany were the staunchest critics of everything around them. George Grosz and his contemporaries were inspired by and took part in the struggle for social change. They were given confidence to advance their art because they took sides in a class war.

Instead, McAvera argues in his conclusion that the 'hidden political agenda' of Irish art should 'now be considered legitimate'. It is hard to see how it could be otherwise when he has shown his champions to be little more than the radical wing of the 'landscape and

still-life' brigade. McAvera cannot answer his initial question about the limited nature of Irish art because he does not recognise that, while Britain controls Ireland, it controls the media, funding and education. He fails to recognise that Britain has developed the most backward culture in Ireland through the agencies of Maynooth, Leinster House and Stormont Castle. Finally, what McAvera cannot grasp is the fact that the Irish people have been unable to develop a progressive artistic tradition due to the denial of any control over their own lives by Britain.

McAvera's hope that he and his cronies might introduce a 'hidden political agenda' is both arrogant and comic. When the Irish people can take stock of their culture in a country free of the constraints of British imperialism, when the new ideas that accompany liberation are unleashed and demand to be questioned, maybe then an Irish art may surface. Until then the Irish people will be too busy surviving and fighting a war.

Nat Edwards

JOE BOATMAN



The art of murals—an expression of a people at war not a people looking to express themselves



From Belfast to Baghdad

Myths, lies and British propaganda

The British establishment knows exactly how to fight a propaganda war when it is involved in or is preparing for a shooting war. Lies, misinformation, censorship and media control are just some of the mechanisms through which its war aims are legitimised and opposition silenced. Tessa Myer tests the claims made by British propagandists against Saddam Hussein in the light of 21 years of war against the Irish people

The idea that Britain and the USA have sent troops to the Gulf to defend Kuwaiti self-determination is only one of the more ludicrous claims being trotted out by their respective propaganda machines. The Irish people know that self-determination in Ireland has been forcibly prevented by the very establishment which today portrays itself as the upholder of democracy, fair play and non-aggression. But this is just the most obvious lie. Let's look at some of the others:

'The enemy leader is mad'

Saddam Hussein, like the IRA and Libya's Muammar Gaddafi, has been dismissed as 'mad' and 'evil'. Saddam Hussein, we've been told, has an inferiority complex which dates back to when he was turned down for military service. But in reality, the reason why Saddam and the 'psychos' in the IRA are branded as 'mad' is because of their opposition to imperialism. For the West, anyone who has the temerity to oppose its right to rule must be insane. In fact, nothing could be saner than a rejection of the crippling effects of Western domination in the Middle East. And, as we all know, there's nothing as mad as wanting self-determination.

'Western forces are deployed purely for defensive reasons'

This is about as convincing as the claim made by every British government since 1969, that British troops are in Northern Ireland to 'keep the peace'. Labelling British aggression as 'defensive' has been useful in legitimising Britain's imperialist wars and remains a vital part of the West's strategy of putting down any opposition to its rule. For 21 years,

'keeping the peace' has meant keeping Northern Ireland British and denying Irish self-determination.

'The enemy is uncivilised'

According to Margaret Thatcher, Saddam Hussein's actions 'go back to the law of the jungle. Every norm of civilised behaviour has been offended'. In Ireland, however, Britain's 'civilised behaviour' has included torture (found guilty by the European Court), no-jury courts, shoot-to-kill, internment without trial and censorship.

'Saddam is engaged in terrorism'

Supporters of Irish freedom will be only too familiar with this charge. The republican movement has always been branded as 'terrorist' simply because it has challenged by force of arms the legitimacy of the British state. Douglas Hurd says Iraq is using the 'tactic of the outlaw'. Yet how else has Britain maintained its rule in Ireland this century? From the use of the Black and Tans in the twenties to the 'B' Specials in the sixties, the UDR in the seventies and the SAS in the eighties, Britain has systematically used terrorism to keep the Irish people down. And what about the use of the Prevention of Terrorism Act? This act has been used to terrorise ordinary Irish people living in Britain to ensure they accept British law and order.

'The enemy uses chemical weapons'

Apart from the obvious and embarrassing question as to where Saddam got these weapons from in the first place, Western hypocrisy on this is breathtaking. While Saddam was its ally against Iran during the

Gulf War, the West turned a blind eye to the use of these weapons by Saddam. Britain has been using chemical weapons since the 1920s when the RAF bombed Iraqi insurgents with phosphorus gas. The Irish people have been at the sharp end of chemical weapons too—in the form of tear gas and CS gas.

These are only some of the more ludicrous claims being used to justify the biggest military build-up since the end of the Second World War. It becomes clear that every claim made by the West is nothing more than a smokescreen for its naked aggression against the people of the Middle East—and anyone else who dares to challenge the status quo.

The Irish Freedom Movement supports all the people in the Middle East in their fight against Western imperialism. We take sides with the Arab people against all Western intervention. Ireland stands as the clearest example of what it really means when an imperialist power intervenes to determine 'civilised norms of behaviour'. Our aim is to support every and any action by other anti-imperialist groups opposed to the West's intervention in the Gulf. The IFM will make it its business to expose the lies and hypocrisy of the British establishment.

As we go to press it looks like war could break out early in the New Year. The IFM will be participating in the day of action called by the Hands Off the Middle East Committee scheduled for 15 January. We will also join the picket of the US embassy on the day any hostilities break out. For more information contact the Hands Off the Middle East Committee on (071) 375 2697.

Remember Bloody Sunday!

'My son had been brought down, he was hit in the back, and he lay wounded on the ground. One man saw Jim move and realised that he was only injured. So he made an attempt to get out to Jim, and as he approached the Army opened fire. Jim's body was lying there as a trap, and anybody that went to save him was going to be shot.'

This is one man's account of what has become known as Bloody Sunday. On that day, 30 January 1972, British paratroopers opened fire on an anti-internment demonstration in Derry City. When the firing stopped 13 Irish nationalists lay dead and 70 were injured, one of whom later died.

The Army insisted that it had been fired upon first, although every independent witness rejected this version of events. The Derry coroner described the killings as 'sheer unadulterated murder'. However Lord Widgery, appointed by the government to head a commission of inquiry, absolved the Army of any blame. And just to drive home the point, the Queen awarded Colonel Derek Wilford, the commander on that day, the Order of the British Empire.

Bloody Sunday was the most brutal lesson Irish nationalists were to learn in their struggle against British rule. But rather than cower in submission, they fought back with greater defiance. The ruthless premeditation of the Bloody Sunday killings revealed that it will stop at nothing to crush resistance to its rule in Ireland. But the resistance of the nationalist people in the 19 years since Bloody Sunday shows that even sheer unadulterated murder cannot crush their desire for freedom.

It is in this spirit that the Irish Freedom Movement remembers Bloody Sunday. On such occasions we should remember the Irish nationalists who were murdered in cold blood. But more importantly, we should remember the increased vigour and impetus Bloody Sunday gave to the Irish people to take on the might of the British war machine. This resistance against such odds should be an inspiration to us here in Britain for it shows what possibilities there are for taking on the British state.

The commemoration of Bloody Sunday should be an occasion where we renew our pledge to build a movement in this country which can get British troops out of Ireland. This is what the IFM will be doing in the rallies it is organising to mark this occasion.

Andrea Morgan



The road to Bloody Sunday

BEGAN in the late sixties when Catholics in Northern Ireland started a peaceful civil rights movement to protest against Britain's sectarian system that gave Protestants privileged access to jobs, houses and political power in the 'province'. Their marches were met with ferocious repression from Loyalists and the sectarian Royal Ulster Constabulary.

CONTINUED in 1969 when Loyalists launched an anti-Catholic pogrom, with the RUC leading mobs in attacks on the Bogside district of Derry, and the British government sending in troops to keep its Northern Ireland colony under control.

REACHED the last mile in August 1971 when the Unionist regime and Edward Heath's Tory government imposed internment without trial, rounding up hundreds of nationalists in concentration camps. The nationalists launched a series of anti-internment marches in defiance of government bans.

ENDED on 30 January 1972 when, after top-level consultations between government and Army chiefs, the Parachute regiment attacked a huge civil rights march in Derry. Bloody Sunday led to the virtual collapse of the Northern Ireland state and the imposition of direct rule from Westminster. On the nationalist side it caused strikes across Ireland, riots in Dublin and Downing Street, and had people queuing to join the IRA to fight for Irish freedom.

Bloody Sunday Commemoration Rally

Speakers include the relative of a Bloody Sunday victim
Thursday 31 January 7.30pm
Irish Centre, Murray Street, London NW1
(Camden Town tube)

Tickets £4/£2 unwaged With food, bar and music
Phone (071) 375 1702 for details



What we fight for

The Irish Freedom Movement is the most active solidarity organisation in Britain. We organise the annual anti-internment commemoration in August which has become a national event. Throughout the year, we hold meetings, dayschools, protests and pickets, and produce *Irish Freedom*, leaflets, posters and stickers in support of the three demands around which we organise:

Troops out now!

The British state is the force for oppression and violence in Ireland. It must bear the blame for all the bloodshed of the 'troubles'. Britain has no progressive role to play in any part of Ireland. The only hope of a just peace lies in forcing the immediate withdrawal of all occupation forces.

Self-determination for the Irish people!

National self-determination is a basic democratic right. The Irish people are denied it by the existence of the British-imposed Border. While any part of Irish soil is occupied by foreign forces, the Irish must have the right to fight for a 32-county republic.

Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act!

The PTA is the British face of the Irish War. Since it was introduced by the last Labour government in 1974, the PTA's powers of arrest, detention without charge and expulsion from Britain have been used to terrorise the Irish community in Britain and to endorse the idea that all Irish people are potential 'terrorists'. Campaigning against this draconian act is a vital part of building support for Irish freedom in Britain.

Join the IFM

There is plenty of work to be done if we are to get the message of Irish freedom across to British people. You can play an important part, by joining the Irish Freedom Movement and campaigning for the cause in the labour movement, in your communities and on the streets.

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 • Manchester • Liverpool
Sheffield • Birmingham • Coventry • Nottingham
Leicester • Oxford • Leeds • Bristol • Cardiff • Brighton
West London • North London • South London
East London

The Irish War has already gone on for over 20 years too long. We cannot afford to waste another moment. So don't delay—sign up today! Annual membership costs £10 for individuals, £25 for union branches/other organisations and includes a free subscription to *Irish Freedom*.

Special offer!

Start selling *Irish Freedom*

If you are new to the IFM and want to get involved but live in a part of the country where we don't have a branch, write to us and we'll send you all the materials you need. As a special offer we will send you 10 copies for £7.50 post free

Fill in the form below:

☐ I/We would like to join the IFM and enclose a cheque or postal order for £

☐ I/We would like to start selling *Irish Freedom* and enclose a cheque/postal order for £ for copies.

Name

Address

Postcode

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Make cheques payable to IFM Association and send to IFM, BM IFM, London WC1N 3XX or phone (071) 375 1702.