

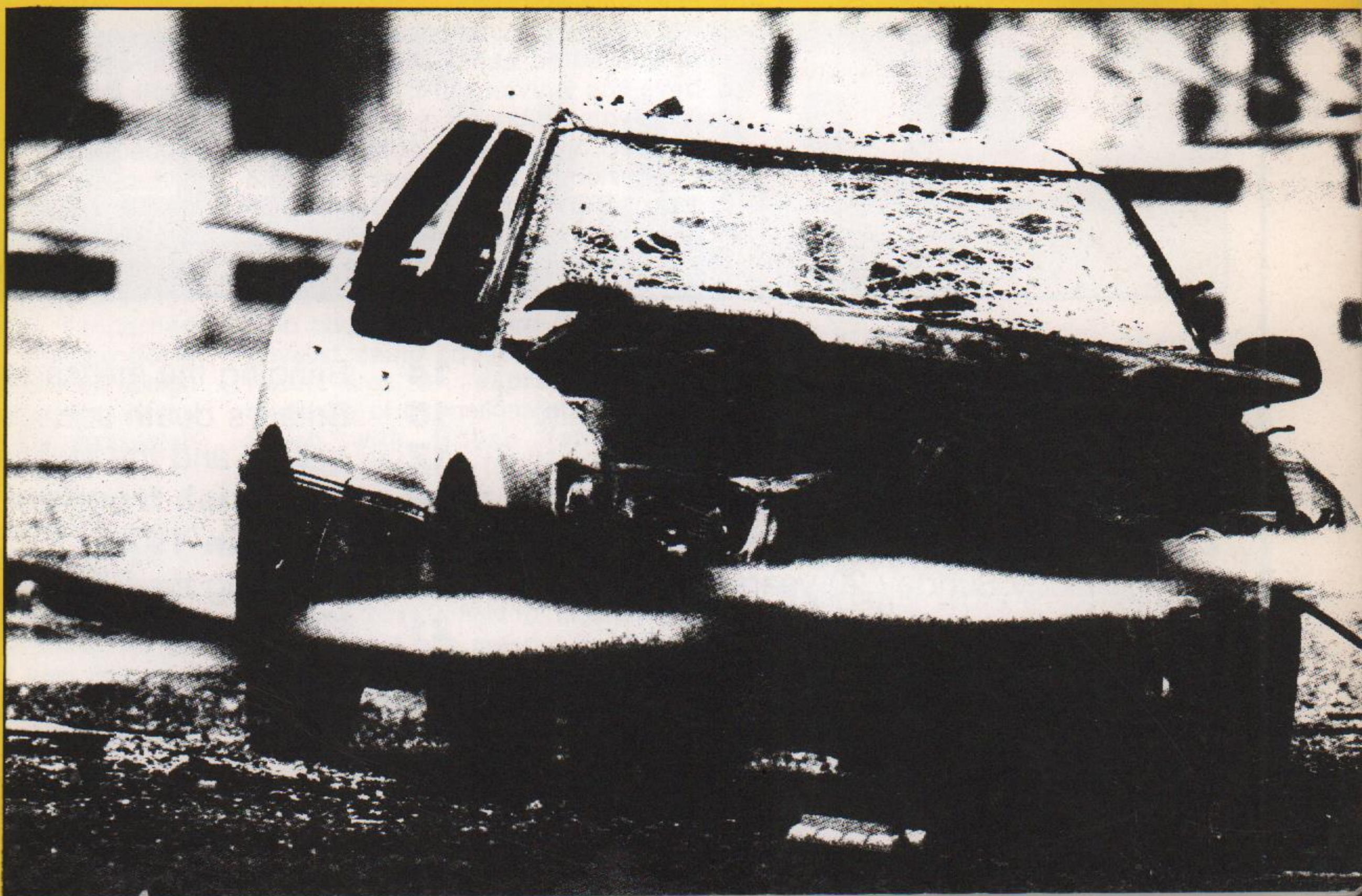
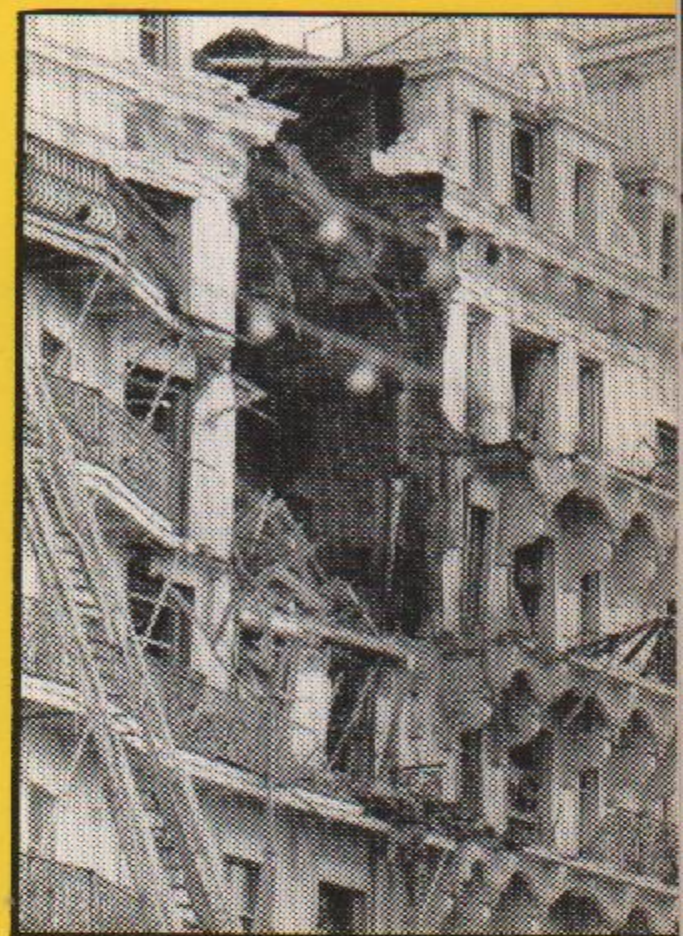
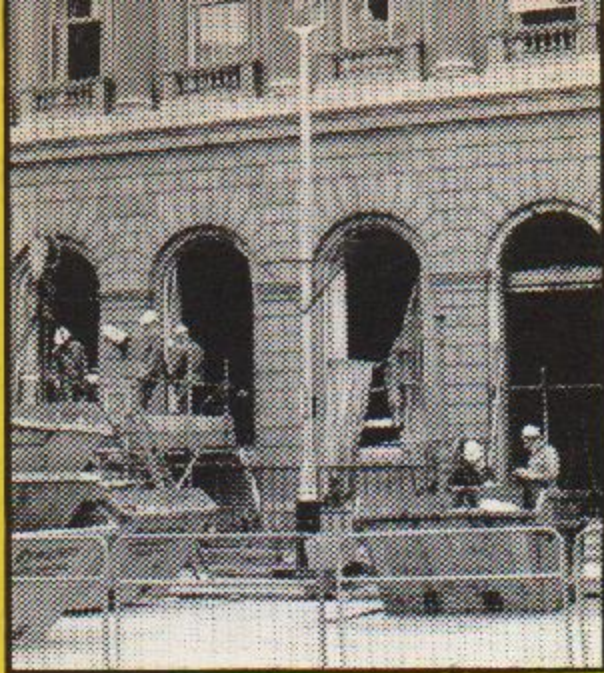
Irish Freedom

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Irish Freedom
Movement
Issue 17

Winter 1992

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The **War** that **won't** go **away**

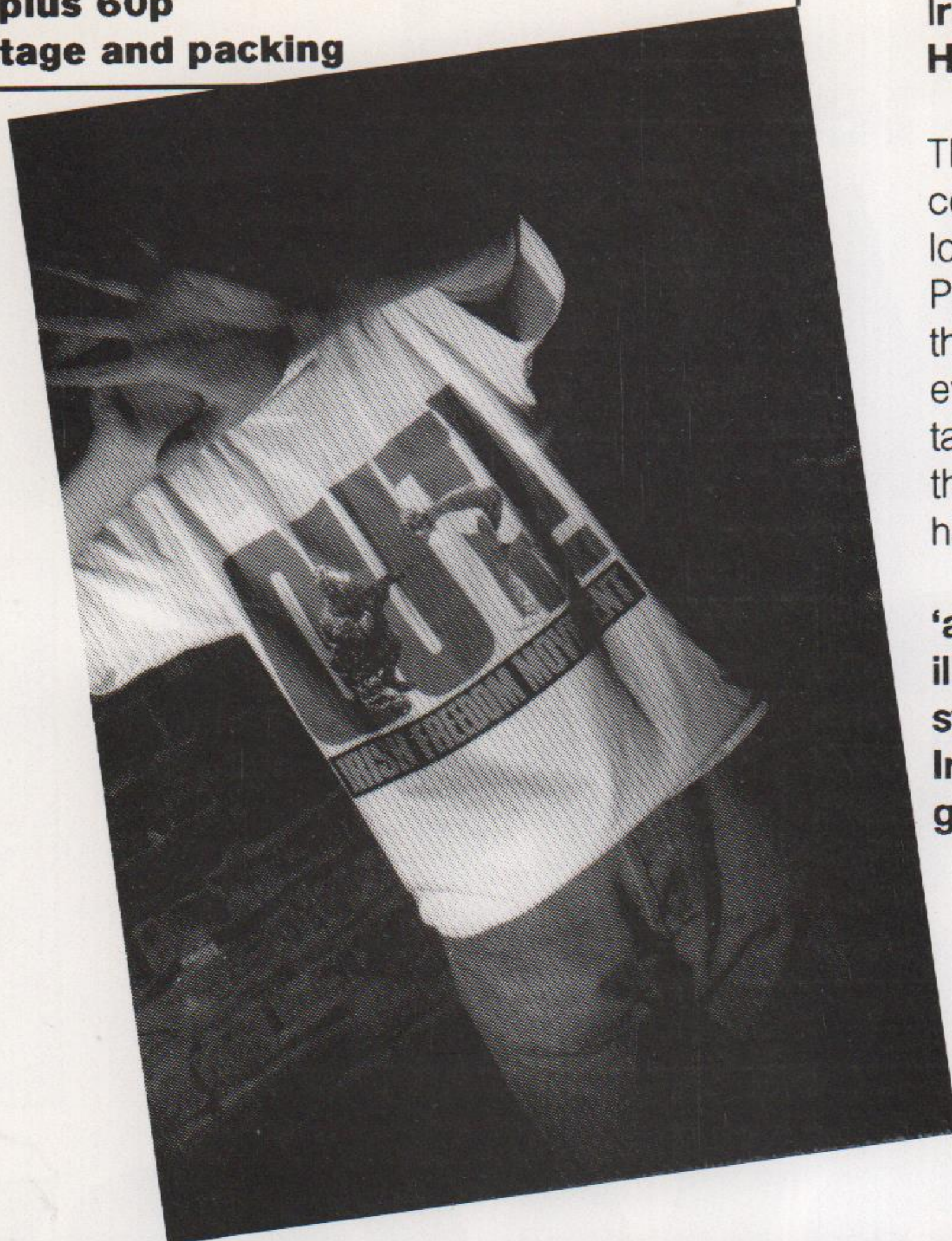


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Editorial

Winter 1992

The war that won't go away

The 1991 Christmas TV schedule was stuffed full of repeats. Speaking on *Thames Reports*, commander George Churchill-Coleman, head of Scotland Yard's anti-terrorist branch was no exception. In response to the IRA's campaign of firebombs, designed to disrupt Christmas shopping and raise the profile of the Irish War, he peddled the old lie that 'the IRA aims to cause the public the highest level of apprehension'.

The British establishment has long promoted the idea that the IRA is pursuing a campaign of indiscriminate terror and that every member of the British public is a target for the 'terrorists'. In the past this has proved a very effective way of creating a climate of fear and suspicion and of inculcating the idea that every Irish person is a potential terrorist.

This time round however matters were different. Despite the best efforts of Churchill-Coleman, and an insidious propaganda campaign in the media, the public did not respond to the anti-Irish witch-hunt in the familiar way. The IRA's firebombing campaign was met, not with fear, but with exasperation. Most people reacted to the disruption of the public transport system with the same degree of frustration that would greet 'delays due to staff shortages' or 'problems because of leaves on the tracks'. Businesses seemed more concerned with the economic slump than the IRA—most reacted to the firebomb campaign as simply something else adding to the woes of recession. The CBI calculated that another £40m had been lost to business.

The depoliticised response to one of the IRA's most extensive campaigns in Britain was, unfortunately, not a sign that the public was showing a healthy contempt for police propaganda. As we noted in the last issue of *Irish Freedom*, what has changed is that the Irish War is no longer a major issue in British politics.

The British authorities have managed to contain the effects of the war and ensure that it is not a destabilising force in British politics. Britain is so confident of having minimised the impact of the war at home that it is willing to be quite open about barbaric operations such as shoot-to-kill knowing that there is little likelihood of a backlash in Britain.

The Irish Freedom Movement aims to change this mood of indifference about Ireland and to raise the debate that the establishment most dreads. For us, the Christmas bombings and the explosion in Whitehall in January presented an opportunity to reopen the debate on Ireland and to pin the blame for the violence, both in Britain and in the Six Counties, on the Westminster government which denies the Irish people their right to self-determination and occupies a slice of their country by force of arms.

So long as Britain occupies Ireland, so there will be war. While the British authorities may be confident of having won the propaganda battle at home, they are far from having achieved a similar victory in Ireland. In a by-election in Magherafelt, Co Down, in December, Sinn Féin increased its proportion of the vote from 31 per cent to 48 per cent. It was the nationalists' third by-election victory of the year. Taking place as it did just two months after the murder of Sinn Féin councillor Bernard O'Hagan by a Loyalist death squad, the Magherafelt result was an expression of the resilience of the nationalist people when faced with British (and British-sponsored) terror. The tragic deaths of 18-year old Patricia Black and 25-year old Frankie Ryan, while on active service in St Albans in November, are evidence that young nationalists will continue to risk everything to fight for their rights.

The IFM has set out to bring this spirit of resistance into British politics. We aim to put the debate about the Irish War back onto the political agenda in

Britain. The coming general election will provide an ideal opportunity to do this.

Whatever else the main parties decide to turn into an election issue (from defence to taxation), we can be certain that there will be little disagreement on the issue of Ireland. Labours' stout defence of Northern Ireland secretary Peter Brooke after his political gaffe on the *Late Late Show* exemplifies the bi-partisan nature of British policy on Ireland.

The IFM's aim in the coming months is to launch a campaign of maximum publicity to challenge the current political consensus on Ireland. As the bombings on both sides of the Irish Sea reveal, the Irish War will not go away. We want to ensure Irish debate returns to British politics. If you would like to be involved in the IFM's general election campaign, get in touch.

Vicky Rowan

Irish Freedom is edited by Kevin Kelly, Fiona Foster and Vicky Rowan. It is written by supporters of the IFM, and is open to anyone genuinely interested in advancing solidarity work in Britain. If you would like to help, write to; *Irish Freedom*, BM IFM, London WC1N 3XX

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'Terrorising the nationalist community is British strategy'

In November defence secretary Tom King announced that 5-600 extra troops would be sent to the Six Counties. Their task, he said, would be to 'maintain order in the face of the recent upsurge in tit-for-tat killings'. British politicians like King love to pose as neutral arbiters in an irrational religious conflict. In reality, Britain is the source of sectarianism in Ireland. British rule in Ireland relies upon the denial of rights to Catholics and discrimination in favour of Protestants. As we show elsewhere in *Irish Freedom* (see p11) Britain encourages Loyalist terror gangs indiscriminately to terrorise and intimidate the nationalist community. Far from British troops solving the problem of sectarianism, only the expulsion of Britain from Ireland can bring sectarian violence to an end.

On that same night as King announced the extra security measures, the Irish Freedom Movement held a meeting in London to undermine the myth that the Irish War is a 'tit-for-tat' conflict. Here we print part of the speech made by Martin Finucane to the rally. Martin's brother Patrick, a nationalist solicitor, was murdered by the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) in 1989. Martin's experience buries the lie that the British government is keeping the peace and illustrates its direct responsibility for sectarian killings

Tonight I intend to show that such a thing as tit-for-tat killings does not exist. The term is consistently used to describe the murder of the nationalist or Catholic people by Loyalist death squads and equally to describe the IRA killings of British soldiers, RUC personnel, UDR men and other agents of the British state in Ireland. I hope to show that the terrorising of the nationalist community is part of the British government's strategy to defeat the IRA, by whittling away at the IRA's crucial base of support. I want to dispel the myth that an inter-communal war is raging in Ireland, a myth that has been deliberately propagated by the British government with the help of the media and other agencies.

'In the Six Counties sectarianism remains part and parcel of everyday life. In the past 22 years very little has changed on this front. There is still widespread discrimination against Catholics in the workplace, and people are being burnt out of their homes. As recently as two weeks ago a Catholic woman and her son died at the hands of Loyalist petrol bombers, solely because of their religion. The family had been continuously intimidated. Just before the fatal attack they had the outside walls of their house daubed with paint with such slogans as 'Fenian scum get out' and 'You're next'.

'This is only the tip of the iceberg. Many more attacks on Catholic homes are not reported in the media simply because they failed to injure or kill and are therefore not newsworthy enough. This is also true of the

numerous failed murder bids on Catholics. We generally only hear of the attacks that succeed. Recently, more and more of these attacks have resulted in deaths. This year already, 40 people have been murdered by Loyalists, and that is not counting nationalists who have been murdered by the so-called security forces.

One-sided sectarianism

'In order to really dispel the myth of tit for tat you only have to look at the killings themselves. On 28 September, Larry Murchan a Catholic newsagent was shot dead by Loyalists; on 29 September, Catholic student Kevin McGovern was murdered by the RUC; on 3 October, Pearse McKenna, a Catholic trade unionist, was shot and wounded by Loyalists; on 11 October Karl Hegney was murdered as he walked home; on 13 October, a young Catholic man was abducted by Loyalists and beaten with breeze-blocks; on 14 October, a Catholic taxi driver, Hugh Conlon, was shot dead. The same night Brian McCabe, a Catholic man, was found shot in the head. It was later learned that he had been interrogated by Loyalists for three days. Brian died later in hospital. Also that same night a Catholic working in a garage in Andersonstown escaped death when fired upon. On 15 October John McGuigan was shot dead by Loyalist gunmen where he worked, in a timber yard on the Ravenshill Road. John too was a Catholic.

'The facts speak for themselves. The sheer volume of attacks on nationalists compared to the nature of IRA operations show that this sectarian conflict is one-sided, and on its own is enough to dispel the myth that an inter-communal war is in progress.

Psychological warfare

'But what is the British government's role in all this? What do they have to gain from the slaughter of nationalists? Why do they want the two main religious communities at each others' throats?

'In a nutshell, the Brits want to defeat the IRA. They know that they cannot do this militarily. They refuse to try a political solution, in that they refuse to talk to Sinn Fein. Instead they have employed psychological warfare tactics to complement their military strategy. Their aim is to discredit and isolate the Irish resistance movement and to convince international public opinion that British 'peace-keeping' operations are justifiable. 'As most of you will know, my own family has had first-hand experience of this strategy, sanctioned and carried out by the British and their *agents provocateurs*. My brother Pat was shot dead on 12 February 1989 in front of his wife and three children

while sitting down for their evening meal. He was shot by the UFF.

'When the front door was smashed in Pat jumped up and saw a masked gunman coming towards the kitchen. He was instantly fired on and was shot twice in the stomach. His wife pressed an alarm button in the house but it failed to go off. The kids hid for cover under the kitchen table. Pat was lying helpless on the kitchen floor when one of the gunmen smashed into the kitchen, stood over Pat and fired slowly and deliberately into Pat's head and neck. He fired another twelve shots from a range of 15 inches and fled, leaving Pat dead on the floor. His wife was also shot in the ankle.

'Pat didn't think his life was in imminent danger, although he was concerned because of his high profile in the media and because of the statement made by Douglas Hogg in the house of commons. Hogg claimed that he thought 'some solicitors in Northern Ireland were unduly sympathetic to the IRA'. Pat was working on a number of controversial cases at the time of his murder. The 1982 killings of Toman, Burns, McKerr; the Hayshed killings; the two corporals case; and a case challenging censorship.

Too successful

'I firmly believe that Pat was set up by the RUC and the British government, at the highest level. A few years before Pat was killed RUC detectives in Castlereagh [interrogation centre] were making derogatory remarks about him to his clients. A year before his death these remarks became more serious. A number of clients had been told at Castlereagh by the RUC that Finucane would be killed. Several death threats were also made. These detectives even suggested to Loyalist suspects that they should murder Pat because he was a threat: too successful.

'Hogg's statement in the house of commons, a month before Pat was murdered, I believe must surely have been sanctioned at the highest level. There is no way he could have made such a statement without approval from someone in a position of authority.

Decision to kill

'The gun that killed Pat was stolen by a UDR sergeant from a UDR base and handed over to the UFF. Fourteen Loyalists were questioned about Pat's murder and the RUC stated that they believed the killers were among those people, only they had not sufficient evidence to make a charge. I would like to know if any of these Loyalists were the ones whom the RUC asked to murder Pat.

'It has also transpired that Brian Nelson, a Loyalist arrested during the Stevens investigation, was the chief intelligence

officer for the UDA. The UDA has close links with the UFF. Nelson was also a British intelligence agent for over 10 years. Furthermore, the Stevens team revealed that Nelson knew that Pat was to be shot and that he had been providing intelligence that led to Pat's death.

'Due to Nelson's position within the UDA and his role in British intelligence, it seems obvious to me that the British knew Pat was to be murdered. His success rate in the courts, and the nature of the cases he was currently working on, probably led to the decision to kill him.

Devastating blow

'Pat's death was a devastating blow to me and I don't think I will ever come to terms with it. When I first heard the news that he was dead I was at home watching TV. The phone rang and I was told that my brother Pat had been murdered. My eyes flooded with tears and it was extremely difficult to deal with. I then had the most difficult job of my whole life—to tell someone that their son had just been murdered.

'My mother was visiting neighbours at the time and the minute that I walked through the door she knew that one of her sons had been hurt. I had to bear-hug her for she had lost control of her emotions and we just held each other and cried. Our neighbours also knew Pat for we had all lived near to each other all of our lives. It was a house full of tears. I then had to inform my sister who lives outside Ireland, and my brother Dermot who was in Portlaoise jail facing extradition. He had already heard of Pat's death while alone in his cell—he had heard it on the radio. The Irish authorities refused Dermot compassionate bail to be with his family.

Deliberate strategy

'The suffering of my family is no different to the suffering of the other victims of sectarianism and collusion. Every time someone else is murdered it brings back painful memories of our own experience.

'I'd like to end by reminding you that the murder of Catholics in Ireland is part of a deliberate strategy employed by the British government, designed to defeat the IRA, keep nationalists in their place and deter them from demanding their civil and national rights. For 70 years we have lived with this terror and it has not succeeded in beating us. If the British government think that their well thought out strategies are working I've got news for them. The people of the Six Counties are experts at suffering, we've done it for long enough, and you have no hope of preventing us from continuing to strive for the reunification of our country and a real peace in Ireland. ●

What they said in 91

No number of tanks or bullets or armies can overcome the spirit of a people determined to resist.... The lesson of this century is that countries put together artificially will fall apart.

Margaret Thatcher not talking about Ireland

The great majority of the nations of the world at the United Nations have decided to make a stand in defence of this country, which has been so badly treated by a large neighbour. I hope we would do the same for any small country.

Tory MP Theresa Gorman being conservative with the truth

We should issue an ultimatum to Serbia to withdraw within days. If this is ignored we should then destroy the Serbian airforce from the air and any Serbian units operating outside Serbia.

Ken Livingstone in the Sun.

There will be an end to military operations when Saddam Hussein withdraws from Northern Ireland.

Former direct ruler Merlyn Rees gets mixed up in the house of commons.

End sectarian slaughter, say Loyalist killers.
Irish News headline.

IRA Scuds 40 feet from killing cabinet.

Today headline after mortar attack on cabinet meeting in February.

A deliberate attempt to kill the cabinet.
Shocked John Major gets it straight.

They've scored a bullseye....
Merlyn Rees again!

While the nationalist people of the Six Counties are forced to live under British rule then the British cabinet will be forced to meet in bunkers.

IRA statement on the attack on Downing Street.

If Saddam Hussein sticks military targets in civilian areas then he has to expect what he gets.

RAF officer on Sky News.

In fact, I cannot offhand think of a single barracks in any town or city in the Six Counties which the British have not deliberately built in the middle of or immediately beside housing estates.

IRA spokesman.

The English system isn't fit to judge an Irish dog show, never mind an Irish person.

Paddy Hill of the Birmingham Six.

The time is passed when you can keep a state together by shooting its citizens.

Douglas Hurd

Charles Haughey promised my brother a fair trial, and look what's happened now.

Martha Ellis after an English judge changed the charges against Dessie Ellis following his extradition from the Twenty-six Counties.

For a country that chose to wage war in the Middle East, it's a bit rich to suddenly hold up their hands in horror when someone strikes back.

Ken Loach, director of Hidden Agenda.

George Bush blasted Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait and my son blasted his way out of Brixton.

Patrick Quinlivan after his son Nesson escaped with Pearce McCauley from HM Prison Brixton.

You've Peter Brooke with the whole British Army under the table, and Ken Maginnis with the guns of the RUC and Loyalist death squads. Just who are you going to talk to, John?

Martha McLelland of Sinn Fein after the SDLP's John Hume insisted that no group

(ie Sinn Fein) should be party to the Brooke talks while holding 'guns under the table'.

Connolly House has just been refurbished and we have acquired a large conference table which may be suitable.

Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams offers an option for a venue for the talks.

Poaching in the Scottish Highlands is so bad that ex-SAS members protect the deer. They'd better not throw their paws [sic] in the air in an act of surrender.

Preview of Channel 4's Fragile Earth in Sunday World.

What nonsense! It's a war we're fighting.

Tory MP Terry Dicks backs up Britain's shoot-to-kill policy on Sky News.

That's what we think of your civil rights.

DUP councillor and Brooke talks negotiator Sammy Wilson explains his position to nationalists, while stamping on their banner (unfurled at a Belfast city council meeting) which demanded the right to march in the city centre.

The UDR has not sought to be sectarian, one-sided, or filled its ranks with Protestants, but that's just the way it turned out. That is certainly the perception.

Lt Gen Sir John Wilsey, General Officer Commanding Crown forces in the Six Counties.

The use of videotape could seriously jeopardise the interview process.

Peter Brooke answering Amnesty International's allegations of torture at Castlereagh detention centre.

'The Saddam Hussein of Ireland'.

Ian Paisley assesses Charles Haughey's leadership.

...where shop assistants were rescuing armfuls of soggy sweaters.

Guardian reporter describes the carnage after recent incendiary attacks in Manchester.

Compiled by Austin Cameron

The threat of internment

Dennis O'Dwyer examines the significance of the new debate about internment

The issue of internment is back on the political agenda. In the wake of the recent increase in deaths in the Six Counties and the apparent inability of the security forces to take control of the situation, many voices on both sides of the Irish Sea have demanded the immediate reintroduction of internment without trial. Others argue that to bring back internment would only aid the nationalist cause. The open discussion about the merits of internment is a deliberate attempt by Britain to try to intimidate republican activists. It also demonstrates the confidence of the British establishment in publicly debating a strategy which previously it felt compelled to keep quiet about.

The British authorities recognise that the last time they introduced internment without trial in Ireland, from 1971-75, the strategy proved to be an unmitigated disaster. The Army captured few active republicans because of the poor nature of its intelligence. However the strategy of rounding up any Catholic and incarcerating them in concentration camps further alienated the nationalist population and created widespread support for armed resistance to British rule.

Proponents of internment, such as Lt General John Wisley, the British Army's most senior officer in Northern Ireland, and the RUC chief constable, Hugh Annesley, argue that matters are different today. They claim that British intelligence has improved immeasurably since the early seventies. 'We could take out the top and middle management of the IRA in one swoop', claimed one Army spokesman recently.

The military and the RUC are predictably backed up by Unionist politicians and the familiar 'hang 'em and flog 'em' brigade on the Tory backbenches. Other sections of the British establishment, however, remain unconvinced about the benefits of internment. This mood of caution is well articulated by the Northern Ireland secretary, Peter Brooke, himself.

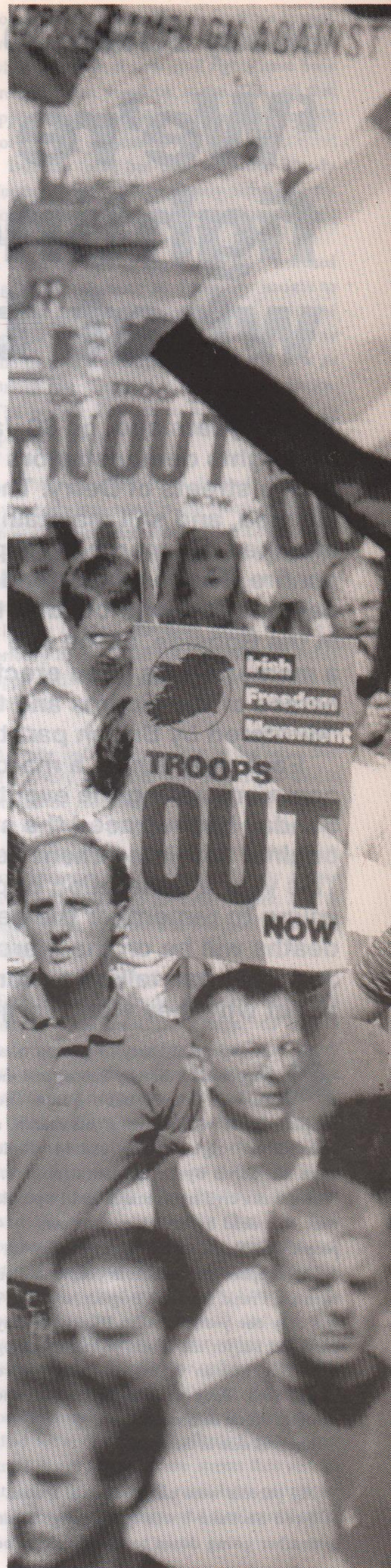
The main argument being peddled against

the reintroduction of internment is that such a move would play into the hands of the IRA. The last time Britain introduced internment, argued a recent editorial in the *Independent*, 'The IRA emerged stronger and more confident than ever. Internment was the best gift it could have hoped for' (17 November 1991). Such opponents of internment go so far as to argue that Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams is waiting with joyful anticipation for its return.

Opponents of internment argue too that such a measure would strain Anglo-Irish relations further and put the Anglo-Irish agreement into cold storage. There are also worries about the international impact of internment particularly at a time when the Western powers, Britain included, are making so much about 'human rights abuses' in the third world. Cases such as the Birmingham Six, the Guildford Four and the Tottenham Three have already raised questions about British 'justice'. The reintroduction of internment, argue its opponents, would be yet another own goal.

Whether or not the British authorities reintroduce internment remains to be seen. But the very fact that they are prepared to have an open discussion on the subject is in itself significant. For more than a decade after 1975 the British establishment squashed any public speculation on the issue. The fact that the debate has opened up again can only be a deliberate move on the part of Britain. Clearly Westminster hopes to use the *threat* of internment to try to intimidate republican activists and force them to keep their heads down.

At the same time, the fact that the establishment can debate so openly the pros and cons of a containment strategy that 20 years ago starkly exposed Britain's role as a colonial power demonstrates the new-found confidence of the British authorities in their ability to contain the nationalist threat. The new debate on internment is symbolic of the shifting balance of forces in the Irish War. ●



Bloody Sunday, 20 years on

'We're still fighting for what they died for'

Twenty years ago, on 30 January 1972, 14 civil rights demonstrators were shot dead on the streets of Derry. The British Army claimed, and still maintains, that it attacked the march in response to IRA gunfire. Those who attended that peaceful demonstration know that this is a lie. In the Bogside, at the site of the massacre, a memorial has been erected bearing the names of the victims and the inscription 'Murdered by British paratroopers'.

Each year since, a march commemorating the events of Bloody Sunday has retraced the steps of the original anti-internment demonstration. This year a generation of people too young to remember the dead or their deaths will be on the march.

Joe Boatman talked to some of them about why they won't forget



Ask anyone in Derry to sum up what happened on Bloody Sunday and the answer comes back quick and simple. 'There was a civil rights march, a peaceful civil rights march, and 14 people were murdered by British paratroopers.' 'There was a civil rights march and 14 people were shot dead by British paratroopers.' '14 people were shot dead on Bloody Sunday.'

These replies all came from people in their twenties; Frank, from the Bogside, told me 'I was only one-year old when Bloody Sunday happened but for me it was people marching for basic human rights and they were slaughtered. They were massacred off the streets to defeat democracy'.

Julie was nine at the time:

'My parents were on the march, I wasn't allowed because I was too young, I can remember going down to my aunt's to be

watched. At that time Army messages could be heard through the TV, I remember hearing the messages coming through the TV saying, "There's six dead now"; "There's seven dead now". At the last count there was 11 dead.

'I remember asking my aunt what was happening and she was just fraught with worry. She turned off the TV and said "Never mind". She just couldn't believe so many people were being killed.'

Terry, a 24-year old from Creggan explained, 'I was brought up knowing about it, I can't remember not knowing about it, I've seen the pictures of all the coffins lined up in the Creggan chapel. It was something in my family and with the people I know that is never forgotten'.

Some more liberal members of the British establishment have conceded that the Army's actions on Bloody Sunday were a 'mistake'—

a tragic exception to its normal peace-keeping activities in the North of Ireland. Few in Derry accept such arguments:

'Of course it could happen again. When you look at the amount of Irish people who have died since Bloody Sunday, and specifically Irish nationalists, when you look at the recent escalation in Loyalist violence, then you look at how nationalists are dying on a daily basis because of the British presence in our country.'

'Oh definitely. Sure didn't it happen at Milltown? It could happen anytime, it doesn't have to be a civil rights march, it could be outside a disco, anytime.'

'I think that we are going to see a lot more deaths, you know. I think it could happen again, another 14 dead, or another hundred

people could be shot dead and because of the way censorship is at the moment it probably won't even get the same coverage as Bloody Sunday.'

To hear it from the people who lived with the next 20 years of 'peace-keeping' is to understand why the British Army have not earned their trust. Julie remembers: 'My first experiences with the British Army happened when I was a child and since I've been about seven or eight our house has been raided constantly. My mother's house used to be raided at least four times a week. So that was my first hands-on experience of the British Army. We grew up with that. And then, I was



just sitting thinking one night, and I was thinking that since the age of 10 or 11 all I've taken from the British Army has been abuse and especially sexual abuse—harassment, and your ordinary everyday harassment. We've lived with this situation since 1969 and it still goes on. You still get hassle in the streets from the Brits.'

'I never wanted them here', says Terry, 'and any time I ever came across them it's always been harassment, nothing civilised anyway'.

'They haven't treated me with any respect', adds Frank. 'They just see me as another nationalist from the Bogside, as an enemy. I've had many personal experiences of harassment, such as getting stopped, manhandled, punched, kicked. They don't try to make friends. When you're stopped by a soldier on the street they don't ask how you're doing, it's usually "Where are you going?"; "What's your name?"; "I want to search you".

They're very abusive. They see it as a job for themselves but when they come here they're a foreign army. They're oppressors of the nationalist people.'

Julie's 25-year old sister, Matrice, described the British Army's attitude to her, "'A Fenian"; "Give us your address"; "Give us your name." You're automatically a Fenian bastard, putting it nicely. They have it in-bred into them that if you're a Catholic, you're a Fenian, you're a terrorist more or less. They like to show that they're the boss, they're in charge and they can intimidate you, no matter who you are or what you are. I pity them to be quite honest, I feel they're over here just doing a job, but you wouldn't support what they would do, put it that way like. They're creating the problem more than trying to uphold justice. I think it's their presence that's why Northern Ireland is in the state that it is.'

No change

One reason why nobody I spoke to saw any reason to forget, or forgive, the events of Bloody Sunday was that nobody I spoke to thought there had been any profound change in any aspect of British rule since Bloody Sunday.

'Things have been paid lip-service to but discrimination still exists', says Cathy. 'The murders still go on. No. Not a whole lot has changed. In a very, very small way, I think that the situation of jobs, of houses, aye, and votes and that, changed because there was so much world attention given to the campaigners. They had to concede in some way. But in terms of any major changes, or in terms of discrimination not existing, no.'

Frank agreed: 'We have got some of the things that people were marching for on Bloody Sunday. But basically human rights don't count, when a soldier stops you in the street, when a soldier shoots people, like when a soldier shot Stephen McConomy. Stephen McConomy was a friend of mine. I went to school with him. He was 10-years old when he was killed by a plastic bullet fired by a British soldier. He had no human rights. So in my eyes nothing has changed.'

Dying for rights

'If you're a Catholic, still, even in this time, you're discriminated against', said Matrice, 'whether it be jobs or no matter what you go for. Like if you fill in an application form they literally ask you, are you a Catholic or a Protestant? They're saying it's for the Fair Employment thing but it makes no difference at all'.

'No, I don't think anything has changed for the good', argued Julie, 'things have changed for the worse. The only benefits we got, by "we" I mean the nationalist people, was

housing, but we paid dearly for those houses, we paid with our lives for them houses. And when you look at how civil rights have been eroded, when you look at the PTA, all that applies also to people in Britain, we haven't got anything substantial'.

But one thing has changed since Bloody Sunday. An event like Bloody Sunday, Terry pointed out, 'changes the way a lot of people see things'.

The civil rights campaigners who marched against internment 20 years ago sought to change British policy through peaceful protest. The British Army blew them away and brought a generation up to know how its British rulers respond to Irish calls for justice. The people I spoke to had little faith in 'peaceful means':

'If the people had their civil rights, if everybody was equal in the North of Ireland, then it would work. But we don't have equal rights and there's still the class distinction between Catholics and Protestants where other people would say working class and upper class— though that does exist, it's not a priority here. I think the Catholics are being oppressed and you need somebody to stand up for you.'

As Julie put it, 'It's history in the sense that it's a very important part of our past and it should be recorded, but we are still fighting for what those people died for, our people are still dying on the streets. I'll go on the march to commemorate the deaths of those people who were fighting for civil rights, and to uphold that, to show that I support what they died for'.

'I see it as still being part of my life', said Terry, 'and something I wouldn't forget. It's history in the sense that it happened and it's been written about in books but I don't think it's ever been cleared up properly. The British still haven't taken responsibility for it even'.

Bloody Sunday, Matrice argued, is 'very much relevant, especially to people like myself who were only wains at the time. It has moulded our ideas of the British government and the police force and that. We feel oppressed, they can come into our town, our streets and shoot people just indiscriminately, which they did on Bloody Sunday. It's relevant to the way we think and the way we'll actually bring up our wains and we'll influence their ideas of the police and that. It's very much so relevant. It's part of us. I'll go on the march because I believe those people died for civil rights. The British government tried to put people off the streets then and it's to show them that 20 years later people are still wanting their rights and they're still out'.

Lies, damned lies and opinion polls

Fiona Foster takes issue with those who campaign by opinion poll

Rather appropriately I'll launch *Irish Freedom's* new Opinion column by talking about opinion polls. Much is made of them by campaigners for British withdrawal in this country. Quite right, you may say—after all they do consistently reflect a majority of Brits in favour of getting the British Army out of Ireland.

Well I don't like them and I think the way they are used can be counter-productive to our aim of building a withdrawal movement in this country. I'll tell you why. The latest MORI poll on Ireland was carried out for Channel 4's *Critical Eye* programme last November. It showed that 61 per cent of British people favoured withdrawal. From the excitement of the presenters you might have thought that it was the first time a poll had shown such a majority. Not so! In 1987, 61 per cent favoured withdrawal, and in 1975 it was 64 per cent. In fact in 16 polls carried out over Britain's 22-year occupation of Ireland, 15 have shown a majority in favour of withdrawal.

Embarrassing experience

So this leads me to two questions. First, why, if there is such a consistent majority in favour of withdrawal, has nothing ever been done about it? And second, if British withdrawal would be such a vote winner, why has every British political party ignored public opinion and committed itself to the continuation of Britain's occupation of Ireland? And herein lies the weakness of opinion polls.

On the first point I have to confess to an embarrassing experience recently. There was a crowd of us selling *Irish Freedom* on the high street in Tooting, South London. This young woman clocked the bulletin and asked me what it was all about. When I explained that it was about the need to get the troops out of Northern Ireland she enthusiastically grabbed for her purse. 'I totally agree with that, bloody right, get them out of there, here love I'll buy

one of them.'

So there I was smugly congratulating myself on an easy sale when she shouted back to me, 'And another thing love, hang them IRA bastards, eh, love'. The point of this story is that this woman's view represented one of the most common sentiments we *Irish Freedom* sellers meet on our regular sales.

A job for the boys

Having been out on the high streets of England virtually every Saturday for the past seven years, I credit myself with some expertise in the area of British public opinion, and I can confidently tell you that most of that 61 per cent of Brits who vote for withdrawal do so because they think we should let the Irish blow each other up, because for the life of them they cannot understand why 'our boys' are risking their lives to keep two sets of religious nutters apart.

Needless to say this sentiment is not easily converted into one that supports the Irish. In fact most of these people are British patriots who would feel more at home waving the Union Jack than demonstrating for Irish freedom. If the MORI polls contained questions about whether the British should defeat the IRA most of these people would say yes. It's interesting that the one time that the number of people voting for withdrawal dropped to a mere 40% was after the Enniskillen bombing which confirms to me that most British people want 'our boys' out until they're reminded that 'our boys' have a job to do—to smash the IRA.

But on my second point, those who get most excited about these poll results, the poll lovers, don't really care that these 61 per cent are not just sitting there waiting to be recruited to the cause of Irish freedom. Their argument is that these polls can be used to persuade the political parties, and in particular a future Labour government, that withdrawal from Ireland would be a vote winner. The

government should listen to the majority view of the British people and in good democratic style should make a commitment to hand Ireland back to the Irish.

There is a lot of wishful thinking in this scenario. Call me naive, but since when has the British state responded to the wishes of the people? Have we learned nothing from the historic experience of the Irish? In the last all-Ireland election a large majority voted for a united Ireland. How did Britain respond to that democratic desire? By dividing Ireland in two of course! Opinion polls in the Irish Republic have consistently shown a majority in favour of a united Ireland, free from British rule, but still British governments, Labour and Tory alike, preside over the division and occupation of that country.

Dangerous diversion

Sadly, opinion polls offer little succour to those of us engaged in the task of building a movement which will take sides with the Irish and which will give the British state no choice but to get out of Ireland. Once more they are a dangerous diversion from the task in hand. Putting favourable opinion polls at the centre of a campaign for withdrawal suggests that the British state is capable of taking a democratic and progressive stand on the Irish War, and encourages people to sit back passively and wait for that day to come.

Unbeknown to the poll lovers and the vast majority of the British public, the British state does not occupy Ireland to keep the warring sides apart or even to defeat the IRA. The British state occupies Ireland to enforce British rule in Ireland and that is something the state will continue to enforce even if 100 per cent of Brits can see no sense in it.

Our interest is in turning a section of that 61 per cent into an active campaign for Irish freedom, and part of that job is to debunk the myths of the poll lovers.

Anti-republicanism in the South

A symbolic ban

Banned from the airwaves, imprisoned, harassed by special branch, Sinn Fein activists are now being banned from using public buildings. Paul Penrose reports

You would hardly believe that Sinn Fein was a legal organisation in the Irish Republic. Censored from the airwaves and its councillors forced to sign an anti-violence oath before taking their seats, the party has now been banned from using Dublin's Mansion House for its annual Ard Fheis (conference).

The Mansion House has a symbolic importance for both Sinn Fein and the Irish establishment. It was there that the first Dail (parliament) met after Sinn Fein won a resounding victory in the last all-Ireland election in 1918.

It was also in the Mansion House that the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed in 1921, dividing Ireland into two and enabling Britain to continue directly ruling the six north-eastern counties. Ever since, the bunch of politicians that Britain allowed to rule over the remaining 26 counties of Ireland have looked to London to ensure their hold on power. While paying lip-service to the desire for a united Ireland, Southern politicians have long recognised that a victory for the anti-imperialist struggle in the North would mark the end of their reign.

As with the controversy last year about whether or not to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Easter Rising, the banning of Sinn Fein from the Mansion House is the latest attempt to de-legitimise the republican movement and challenge its claim to be the real upholders of the tradition established by the Irish independence movement.

In its editorial comment on Dublin council's decision, the *Irish Times* claimed to speak for the 'great majority of the capital's citizens' in celebrating the ban. The editorial clearly revealed that any measure serving to undermine the present phase of the struggle against British occupation would be welcome:

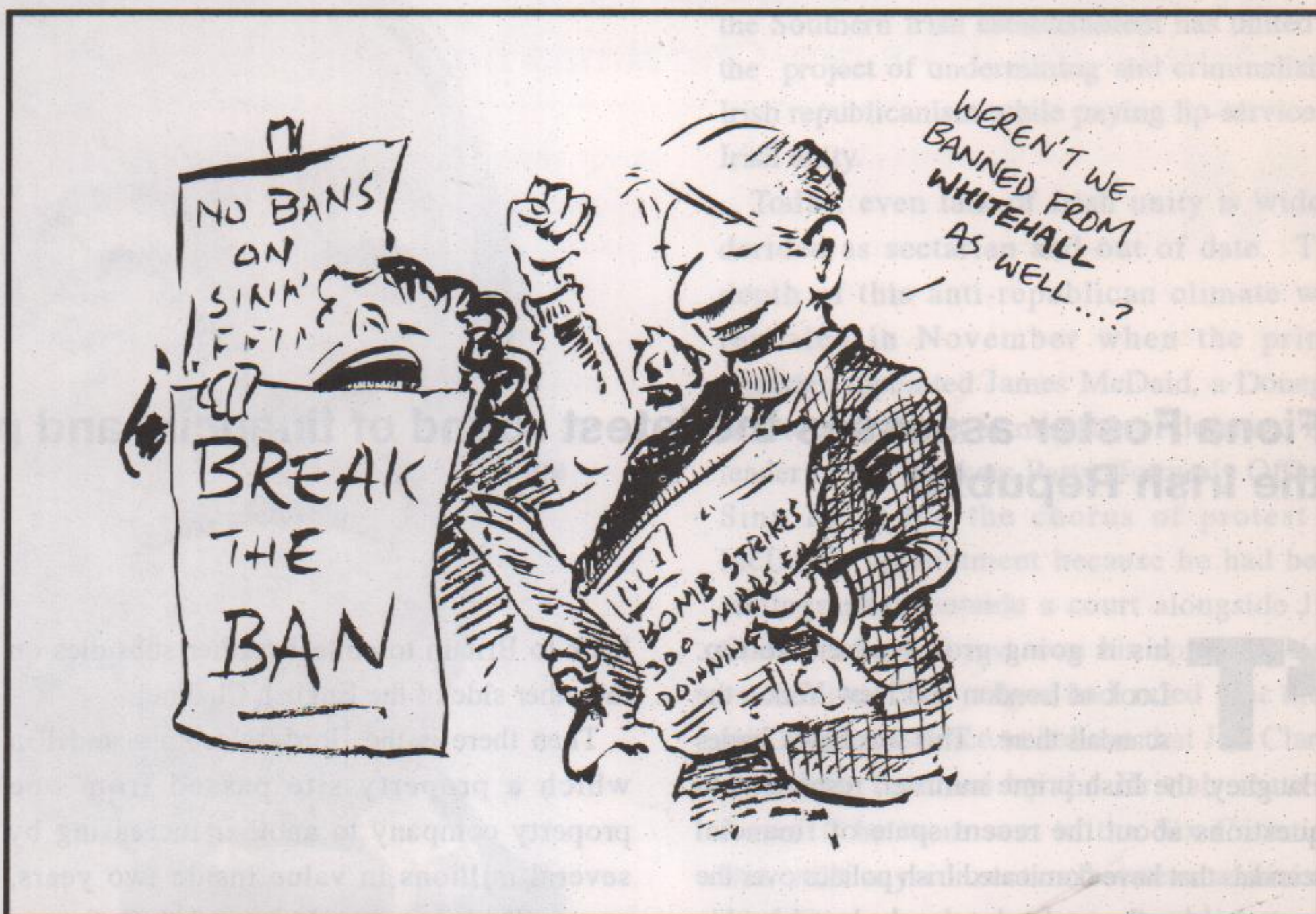
'To claim the Mansion House as a venue for a political gathering is to claim that continuity which links these events and the ideals of those who shaped them with today's affairs. Sinn Fein is conscious of the symbolism; so are the councillors who insisted that the party should not be allowed to make use of it.' (13 November 1991)

The strength of the anti-republican consensus in Irish politics was demonstrated by the council vote over the ban. Spearheaded by the Irish Labour Party, the move won the backing of councillors from Fianna Fail, Fianna Gael, the Workers Party and even the self-proclaimed radicals of the Green Party who justified their vote with denunciations of Irish patriotism as 'sexist, macho crap'.

Sinn Fein represents more than a third of Northern nationalists and has a number of councillors in local authorities South of the

Border. But to all sections of the Irish establishment, Sinn Fein and its support for the armed struggle against British occupation represents a dire threat to their ability to rule their unstable state.

According to the *Irish Times*, Irish people will support banning Sinn Fein from the Mansion House, 'not because they are in favour of censorship, but because they are opposed to the paramilitary violence which the party supports'. But, in relying on British-maintained partition for its survival, it is the Irish establishment which is complicit in the violence of the British state. While Irish politicians are quite happy to share rooms with British ministers who have ordered the imprisonment, torture and murder of Irish nationalists, they now refuse to share the Mansion House with the only force in Ireland attempting to achieve peace by ridding Ireland of British warmongers.



The scandal of Ireland's rulers

Fiona Foster assesses the latest round of financial and political scandals gripping the Irish Republic

'This is going grossly over the top. Look at London and New York - the scandals there.' This was how Charles Haughey, the Irish prime minister, responded to questions about the recent spate of financial scandals that have dominated Irish politics over the past six months and very nearly lost him his premiership.

Haughey hopes that by comparing Ireland's financial scandals with those of Britain and America he will boost the image of the Irish Republic as a modern independent European nation. A closer look at recent developments in Haughey's republic shows, however, that Ireland is run by a clique of corrupt and privileged businessmen and politicians which prevails over a country whose national debt, unemployment rates and poverty levels put it in a different league from its European allies.

Financial fiddling

New and damaging disclosures about financial scandals are now emerging daily in the Irish media. There is the Goodman scandal about fiddles in the beef trade, with tons of European Community beef being sent off to France, receiving EC subsidies on the way, being relabelled in Paris and then crossing

back to Britain to collect further subsidies on the other side of the English Channel.

Then there is the Bord Telecom scandal in which a property site passed from one property company to another increasing by several millions in value inside two years, eventually being bought by Telecom from a property firm in which Telecom's own chairman, millionaire Michael Smurfit, has an interest. And there is the Aer Rianta scandal in which a consultancy firm passed on confidential information about Aer Lingus's helicopter subsidiary to Celtic Helicopters, a rival helicopter company that just happened to be chaired by Haughey's son Ciaran.

Ireland goes begging

In a state well known for its support for traditional morality, corruption is surprisingly acceptable. As former finance minister Albert Reynolds noted, 'You cannot expect business people to behave like St Francis of Assisi'.

The current financial scandals take place in the context of an ever-deepening economic crisis. Industrialisation in the seventies and eighties took place on the basis of massive international loans which have left the country with the largest debt in the world relative to

Gross Domestic Product.

Haughey might want to compare Ireland to Britain and America to deflect criticism about the financial scandals, but when it comes to claiming money from the EC he is quite prepared to admit that Ireland is more like a third world state. Ireland's GDP is less than two thirds of the EC average. At December's Maastricht summit, while Britain vied with Germany to impose its will over Europe, Ireland went with a begging bowl, appealing for cash.

Dublin's dependence

As international recession has closed off the traditional safety valve of mass emigration, unemployment has hit record levels in the South. One in five of Ireland's 'working population' are now signing on. And while crooked chief executives get million-pound golden handshakes, 82 000 public sector workers are told over the radio that the country has not generated enough money to fund their long-awaited pay award.

In defence of Haughey and his party, *Irish Times* columnist Joe Carroll argued that at least they uphold the tradition of independence:

'If Fianna Fail lacks a distinguishing ideology it does have pride in the preponderant role it has played in the shaping of an independent Ireland.'

Yet it becomes harder by the day to hide the fact that the Dublin regime is no more politically independent than it is economically secure. The increasingly repressive, anti-republican climate in the South shows how

much the Dublin government relies on Partition to maintain stability in the Twenty-six Counties.

The extradition of republican Dessie Ellis last autumn showed that, when it comes to the nationalist struggle, Dublin has even less regard than London for the truth. When Ellis was flown to a British jail on a stretcher after a hunger-strike against his extradition, the Irish authorities assured his supporters that Britain had a cast iron case against him. The

evidence against Ellis was so transparently fabricated that within months even a British court had to acquit him.

Shortly afterwards, two more republicans, Tony Sloan and Michael McKee, won their case against extradition when the Irish supreme court ruled that possession of (as opposed to use of) arms amounted to a political offence. The court ruling was condemned by Irish and British politicians and the demands of all parties, including the Irish Labour Party and the Workers Party, were soon met with a government commitment to strengthen extradition laws to ensure that in future republicans would have no let-out clause.

No talk of unity

In the past Haughey's reputation as a republican fellow traveller was regarded as a definite vote-winner. Increasingly, however, the Southern Irish establishment has united in the project of undermining and criminalising Irish republicanism while paying lip-service to Irish unity.

Today, even talk of Irish unity is widely derided as sectarian and out of date. The depth of this anti-republican climate was revealed in November when the prime minister appointed James McDaid, a Donegal MP, to his cabinet as minister of defence. The leader of the Workers Party (formerly Official Sinn Fein) led the chorus of protest at McDaid's appointment because he had been photographed outside a court alongside Jim Clarke, who had just won his appeal against extradition. The judges had ruled that there was ample evidence to believe that Jim Clarke would be tortured by the British security forces if he were sent to the Six Counties. But, still, any connection between a minister of defence and a known republican was enough to force McDaid's resignation within hours of his appointment.

Brutal and clear

The recently published autobiography of the former prime minister and Fine Gael leader, Garret Fitzgerald, makes Dublin's dependence on a divided Ireland brutally clear. He recounts that after the failure of the Sunningdale power-sharing agreement in 1974, he refused a request from constitutional nationalists in the North to make contingency plans for a British withdrawal. Such a move he argued, 'would give the British the excuse they might want to get out of Northern Ireland and it was our clear policy to avoid this at all costs'. That is the biggest scandal of all. ●



The propaganda war

Bringing the message home

Stuart Sharp looks behind the muted public reaction to the IRA's pre-Christmas bombing campaign

Manchester shoppers showed an impressive commitment to Christmas consumerism yesterday, crowding carelessly past department stores fire-bombed by the IRA just 12 hours earlier'. The *Guardian's* report of Manchester shoppers' apparent indifference to the IRA's pre-Christmas bombing campaign revealed a marked change in public reaction to IRA bombing campaigns in Britain.

Five or ten years ago, IRA activity in Britain was guaranteed to provoke a strong and angry response from the British public. The IRA was perceived as a deadly terrorist organisation whose capacity to bring the Irish War to British streets represented a threat to the British way of life.

Indifference and cynicism

In 1991, however, a sustained and disruptive firebombing campaign in Britain's major cities was seen as a mild irritant by people who seemed to reserve most of their anger for the shopkeepers who allowed the firebombs to prevent normal shopping.

Unfortunately this shift in public opinion is not the product of an upsurge in support for the republican cause. The muted response to IRA activity is a sign of the depoliticised nature of the Irish question in British politics today, and the indifference and cynicism that characterises the current political climate.

At home the British government feels under little pressure on the Irish question. The war has virtually disappeared as a political issue on this side of the Irish Sea. In Ireland, the republican movement finds itself much more on the defensive. The British establishment has a freer hand to pursue its

carrot-and-stick strategy, wooing moderate nationalists while clamping down hard on active republicans.

The new political climate can be seen in the way the war is depicted in Britain. Over the past two decades British propagandists have gone to great lengths to stifle debate about the real nature of their war in Ireland, banning and censoring anything which didn't present the war as an historic religious feud in which Britain was forced to intervene to keep the peace and maintain law and order.

Today, however, we are dished up a seemingly endless series of plays, documentaries and even a new comedy series dealing directly with the political situation in Ireland. The change in the official attitude becomes very clear if you compare the controversy which surrounded 'Death on the Rock', the *World in Action* special about the Gibraltar killings in 1988, with the relaxed reaction of the authorities to a recent *Panorama* programme which openly argued that Britain operates a shoot-to-kill policy in Ireland.

A recent mini-poll commissioned by the IFM showed how the issue of Ireland is of little political interest to most people. Only four per cent of those questioned saw the Irish War as an important political issue. The other 96 per cent placed Ireland at the bottom of their list of priorities after unemployment, the NHS, defence, pay, race relations and equal opportunities.

Relevant and convincing

Many IFM activists yearn for the old days when selling *Irish Freedom* may have been perilous but was never dull. Abuse and threats

now seem a fair price for a level of public interest (or at least anger) which stands in contrast to the passivity and disinterest we face today.

But while the collapse of the official labour movement in this country may have made many people despondent about the prospects for change, it has also made it much easier to convince people that the Labour Party cannot be relied on to lead a British withdrawal from Ireland.

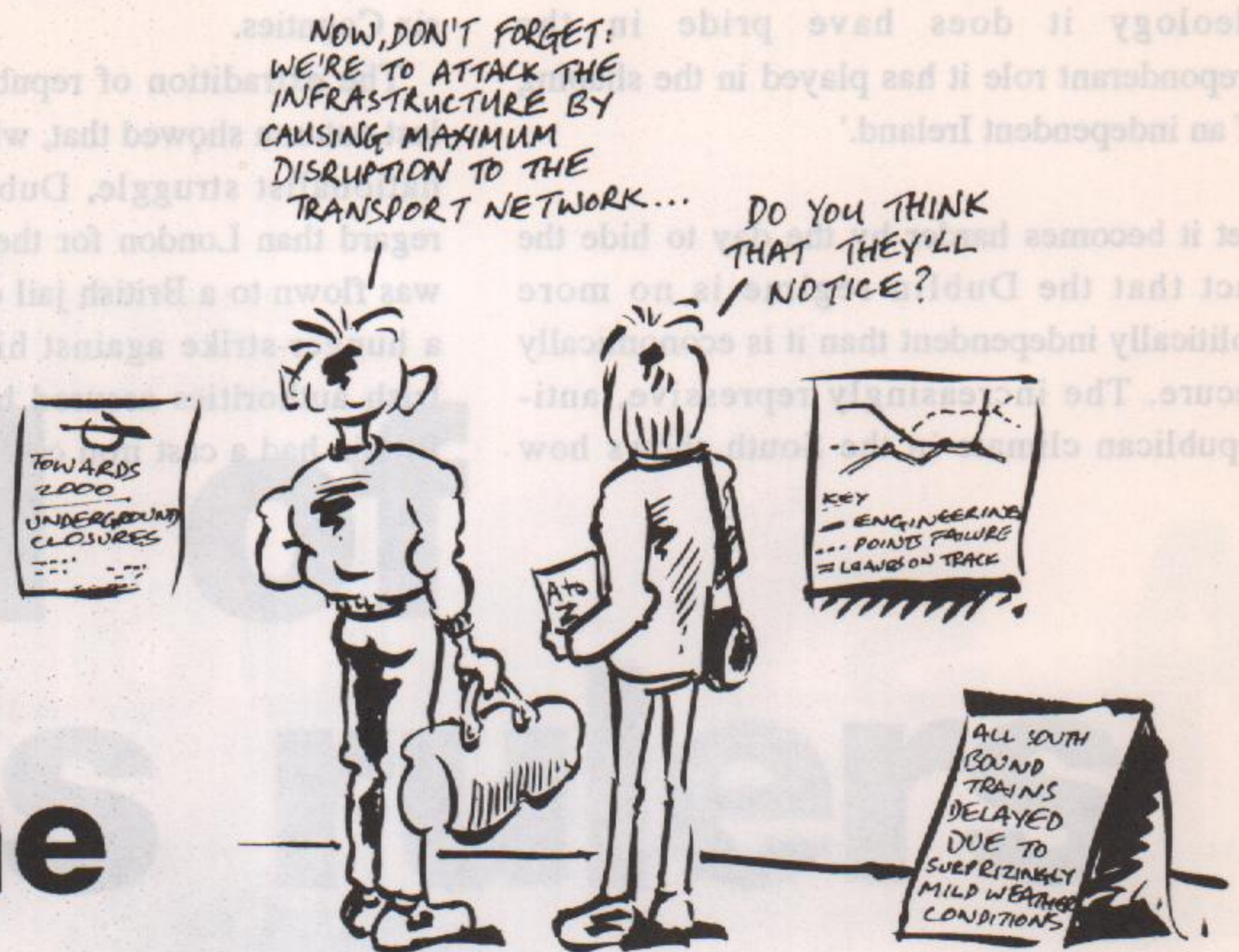
As the only campaign in this country that has consistently argued that no British political party will ever voluntarily leave Ireland, the IFM's message is now all the more relevant and convincing. There is now no substitute for getting out on to the streets and clarifying the real issues in the Irish War through political debate.

Blasting the high street

Our recent public meeting, 'The Myth of Tit for Tat', attracted well over 100 people. Many left the meeting questioning their long-held view that the Irish War was a religious conflict.

Through being imaginative, we can reach a lot of people with our basic message. The IFM, for example, has been taking a ghetto-blasters on sales of *Irish Freedom*, blaring out bomb blasts, gunshots and an array of other war noises. As shoppers stop in shock we quickly engage them in political debate about the Irish War.

The IFM is determined to shock people out of their complacency about the brutal war being carried out in their name. We intend to create the debate that the British establishment most dreads!



Loyalists

Part of the war machine

Loyalist gunmen are working to a British game-plan, argues Chris Sweeney

What we need is a policy of extermination, shoot-to-kill or whatever name is attached to the permanent removal of republican terrorists.' (Sammy Wilson of the Democratic Unionist Party in November 1991.)

The death toll of the Irish War in 1991 shows that the extermination of republicans that Sammy Wilson's called for is well in hand. Out of 40 Catholics murdered by Loyalist paramilitaries last year, 10 were republican activists, including the two Sinn Féin councillors, Eddie Fullerton and Bernard O'Hagan.

A sectarian feud ?

Many commentators have indulged in inconclusive speculation as to why Loyalist paramilitaries appear to have been increasingly effective in targeting known republicans as well as ordinary Catholics. But as ever media coverage of Loyalist activity has done much to reinforce the idea that Loyalist paramilitaries are an independent force carrying out a sectarian feud against their Catholic rivals.

There may well have been political or organisational changes in the Loyalist camp, but the role that the Loyalist paramilitaries play in the war remains unchanged after 22 years of conflict. Loyalist gunmen act as an essential part of Britain's war machine by attempting to terrorise and subdue the entire nationalist population.

New terror campaign

Loyalist death squads traditionally gain a new lease of life at times when politicians engage in high-profile negotiations about the future of Northern Ireland. The Anglo-Irish agreement

in 1985, with its talk of supposed concessions to nationalists, provoked a prolonged series of murderous attacks on Catholic civilians.

In 1991 Loyalist attacks escalated in response to the now-defunct Brooke talks.

Debate about the possibility of devolved government with power-sharing, and the high profile that the Irish government adopted in the talks were enough to unleash a new reign of terror on Northern Catholics. ►



So, what exactly has changed in the Loyalist camp? Early in 1991, the legal Ulster Defence Association, a group that has spawned a number of deadly front organisations like the Ulster Freedom Fighters and the Protestant Action Force, joined with the outlawed Ulster Volunteer Force to form the Combined Loyalist Military Command. This new cooperation within Loyalist ranks also reflected a change in the leadership of both organisations which had taken place over a period of time. A combination of feuds and the imprisonment of 15 Loyalist leaders after the Stevens inquiry have resulted in the emergence of a new, younger layer of leaders.

necessary to carry out their murderous attacks. The Stevens inquiry into collusion between the security forces and the Loyalist paramilitaries did little but put a temporary halt to the passing of files on republican suspects from the British Army to Loyalist killers.

The claims made by a security force informer, in a recent Channel 4 documentary, that the RUC rank and file are preparing to resist by force any moves to push Northern Ireland into a united Ireland show that the interests of the Loyalists and the security forces are one and the same. The arrest of two UDR members in December in connection

force ready to deal with all 'terrorists' even-handedly.

The strategy of allowing the Loyalist paramilitaries to terrorise the nationalist community and take out known republicans is nothing new. Back in the early seventies, British counter-insurgency expert Frank Kitson argued that 'these special forces can operate in a more unobtrusive way than regular troops and this could be an important factor if the insurgents were trying to exploit world opinion against their government'.

By sending more troops into Ireland to deal with the increase in 'sectarian attacks', the British are deliberately trying to obscure



The philosophy of this new layer of leaders is quite simple—to maintain the status quo and to continue their murderous campaign against civilian Catholics and active republicans. This approach undoubtedly commands the support of a large section of Northern Ireland's Loyalists. The failure of Unionist politicians to sustain a campaign against Britain following the Anglo-Irish agreement in 1985 proved that the Loyalist community is more enthusiastic about attacking its traditional enemy—the Catholic community—than the British state, which guarantees Protestants their privileged position in the Six Counties.

Shared interests

There is now an abundance of evidence to show that the British forces in Ireland not only turn a blind eye to the activities of Loyalist death squads but actively furnish them with the information, arms and even the personnel

with murders of Catholics made it clear that collusion is as strong as ever.

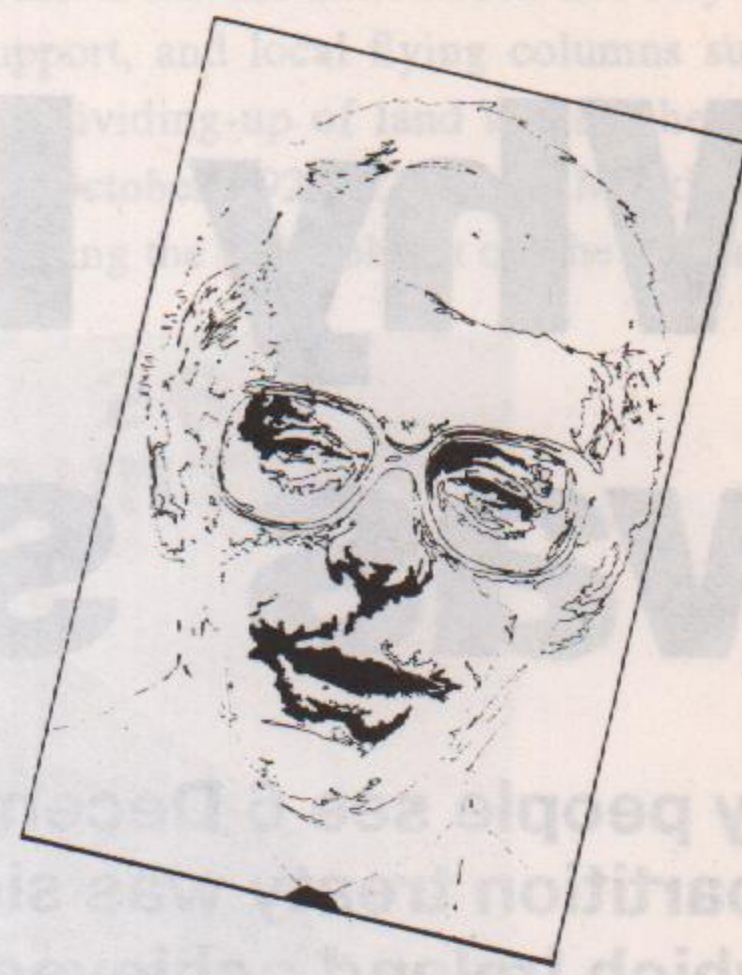
'Special forces'

As part of its long-term policy of undermining and isolating the republican movement, the British have stepped up the pressure on individual republicans. Introducing the anti-violence oath for the councillors in the North and imprisoning prominent Sinn Fein members has formed one part of this attempt to frighten and demoralise republican activists. Shooting Sinn Fein members is another part. Sometimes the security forces can do it themselves, like last January when they shot dead 21-year old Sinn Fein activist Fergal Carahar in South Armagh. But more often they do it by assisting Loyalist death squads. The British authorities can then point the finger of blame at Loyalist gunmen while posing themselves as a neutral peace-keeping

the relationship between British rule in Ireland and the terror campaign against Catholics. But there can be no doubting the fact that Loyalist gunmen are little more than British Army 'special forces'.

In spite of their best efforts, the British and their Loyalist allies have failed to draw the republican movement into a sectarian murder campaign. They have also singularly failed to frighten nationalists away from active support for the armed struggle for Irish freedom. The bravery and resistance of the nationalist community should be a source of inspiration for activists in this country whose job it is to clearly explain to British people that Loyalist death squads, British Army patrols and Westminster politicians are all part of the same war machine.

Labour and Tory



The same old story

As the main political parties in Britain add the finishing touches to their election manifestos, Janet Sugden wonders whether the Irish War will feature in them

Thirteen years of Tory rule has brought to Ireland, terror, repression and murder. With a general election in the offing, it is worth considering whether a Labour government would make any difference to the people of the Six Counties.

Labour's policy document *Towards a United Ireland* has led left-wing Labour Party members to claim that a Labour victory at the polls would bring new hope to the Irish people. Nothing could be further from the truth. Behind the fancy phrases about 'harmonising political, social and economic institutions throughout Ireland', is the continuing commitment to a policy of 'unity by consent'. Labour, like the Tories, uses the excuse of the Loyalist community in the Six Counties—whose support Britain has ensured through institutionalising discrimination against Catholics—to deny self-determination to the Irish people as a whole.

Labour praises Thatcher

When Labour's Harriet Harman was pitted against Tory Party chairman Chris Patten on BBC's *Question Time* last December, they seemed to disagree on almost every issue from Europe to homelessness. When the debate came round to Ireland, however, even the demands of electioneering could not persuade Harman to attack her Tory opponent. She accepted that the government was right to regard the key task as the defeat of the IRA.

Such is Labour's terror of appearing to be soft on Ireland that its spokesman on Ireland, Kevin McNamara, even saw fit to congratulate

Margaret Thatcher, before she was toppled from power, for her policies on Ireland. 'We recognise the importance of the present prime minister's brave effort in seeking to resolve some of the problems in Northern Ireland by signing over and upholding the Anglo-Irish agreement', he told her, 'and we believe that it is to her credit'.

But what is left of Labour's left continues to peddle the myth that Neil Kinnock's party will be the one to unite Ireland. Tony Benn thinks a Labour government would 'resolve' the issue of Irish unity by the year 2000. Kinnock himself claims that it will take at least 50 years.

Defending the state

In the meantime Labour has committed itself to replacing the Brooke talks with the McNamara talks. Will Labour include Sinn Fein in this process? Certainly not. Neil Kinnock is on record as saying he hopes never to come within a million miles of a Sinn Fein leader.

Labour's record on Ireland makes crystal clear that a Labour administration could never be a vehicle for change. In government Labour sent in the troops, introduced the Prevention of Terrorism Act, plastic bullets and Diplock courts, and withdrew political status from republican prisoners. In opposition it has wholeheartedly supported the Tories' policies on Ireland even to the extent of heaping praise on Thatcher.

As a loyal defender of the British state, Labour is as unlikely as the Tories to support a

struggle that is aimed at the very heart of that state. Herein lies the explanation for the strength of the bipartisan consensus on the issue of Ireland. For these politicians, giving up Northern Ireland would amount to giving up their right to run a part of Britain. In other words, for both Labour and Tory, withdrawal would amount to political suicide.

War not an issue

The importance of Ireland for the unity of Britain ensures that the major parties can rely on each other not to make a political football of the issue. As Northern Ireland secretary Peter Brooke noted, 'It's helpful that Ireland isn't a party political issue and that the two major parties can work in the confidence that the other, in broad terms will support their policy'.

In the run-up to the election, the two main parties are likely to engage in mud-slinging on every issue from the economy to Europe to the NHS. On every issue, that is, except the Irish War. On the question of Ireland the interests of the British state override any party political point scoring.

Supporters of Irish freedom and all ordinary people in Britain have nothing to gain by protecting the interests of our rulers. We have every interest in using the pre-election period to create a national debate about the Irish War, and to expose the fact that more than 70 years after the Irish people voted for a united Ireland, they are still denied the right to their own country. ●

Why Irish freedom was signed away

Many people see 6 December 1921—when the partition treaty was signed—as the date on which Ireland achieved independence. Alex Farrell and Iain Mackintosh expose the real aim of the Treaty

‘Will anyone be satisfied at the bargain? Will anyone? I tell you this—early this morning I signed my death warrant.’ So wrote Michael Collins in his room in Belgravia on 6 December 1921. Hours earlier, Collins had signed the partition treaty. David Lloyd George, the British prime minister, had a different view of the day’s proceedings. It was, he said, ‘the greatest day in the history of the British Empire’. They were both right. Within a year, Collins was dead, fulfilling his own prediction, shot in an ambush by anti-Treaty forces in the ensuing civil war.

Seventy years on, some see the Treaty as the result of an Irish victory in arms, which forced the British to the negotiating table. Others argue that the Treaty was a disastrous concession by inexperienced Irish men outmanoeuvred by the diplomatic trickery of British negotiators. Still others—and this is an increasingly popular view in the Twenty-six Counties—will tell you that Irish freedom was achieved in 1921, and therefore that Irish nationalism is as out of date as a Lee Enfield .303.

The partition treaty ended the War of Independence in 1921. But to understand how and why it ended, it is necessary first to understand why and how it began.

At the time of the Easter Rising in 1916, the moderate, constitutional Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) was overwhelmingly the dominant force in nationalist politics. Yet only two years later, in the last general election held on an all-Ireland basis, the IPP was obliterated and Sinn Fein won 73—more than 70 per cent—of the available seats, on a platform of abstention from Westminster and the demand for immediate home rule within the British Commonwealth. What had happened?

Sinn Fein’s electoral triumph had little to do with any distinctive political programme. Two factors propelled Sinn Fein to victory. First, every political alternative had been discredited (the IPP), had abstained from the national struggle (the Irish Labour Party) or had been liquidated by the British (James Connolly). Second, the two years following the Easter Rising saw a massive escalation of class conflict and anti-British sentiment, which combined into a majority for immediate independence.

‘Going Bolshevik’

By 1917, the working class in the cities and in the countryside, and the large class of small farmers, had every reason to wish the British off their backs. The British economy—and so the Irish economy—was in a slump. Inflation raged. Since the start of the First World War, food prices had risen by 80 per cent but wages by only 10 per cent. The traditional last resort of emigration had been banned by Westminster in the hope of maintaining a reserve supply of Irish cannon fodder for Britain’s imperialist war. To avert famine, agricultural workers, particularly in the west, began to seize estates and divide them up among themselves.

The small farmers were better off for food than were the urban workers and agricultural labourers. But they were required to pay annuities to Britain for the land distributed to them at the turn of the century, and were increasingly unable and unwilling to pay. The middle classes, promised and then denied home rule by Lloyd George on account of the world war, were eager to rule the roost on their own account. Over all hung the threat of conscription.

Support for the war as it dragged on was

increasingly confined to those who benefited from it: the large farmers, who sold grain; the ranchers, who sold meat; and the industrialists and merchants, who sold war material to the British.

Escalating working class militancy was reflected in trade union organisation, in the countryside as well as in the towns. The Irish Transport and General Workers Union, a mere 5000 strong in 1916, had 67 000 paid-up members by the end of 1918 and 100 000 in 1919. Opposition to the First World War was given a permanent focus by the threat of conscription into the British Army. That threat was finally seen off by a general strike in April 1918: a direct face-off with the British, and a real taste of power for the Irish working class. Less than a year after the Russian Revolution the British establishment, as well as the Catholic hierarchy, began to have nightmares of Ireland ‘going Bolshevik’.

Against this background, the Irish Parliamentary Party’s support for the British war effort consigned it to oblivion. The Irish Labour Party (in reality not a party but the leading officials of the trade unions under another name) decided to absent itself from the election to avoid taking a public position on independence for fear of arousing the wrath of its northern Loyalist members. Sinn Fein, despite its hostility to the working class and its stated opposition to the land seizure campaign, won the November 1918 general election by default. It had become the only party calling for immediate home rule.

Different aspirations

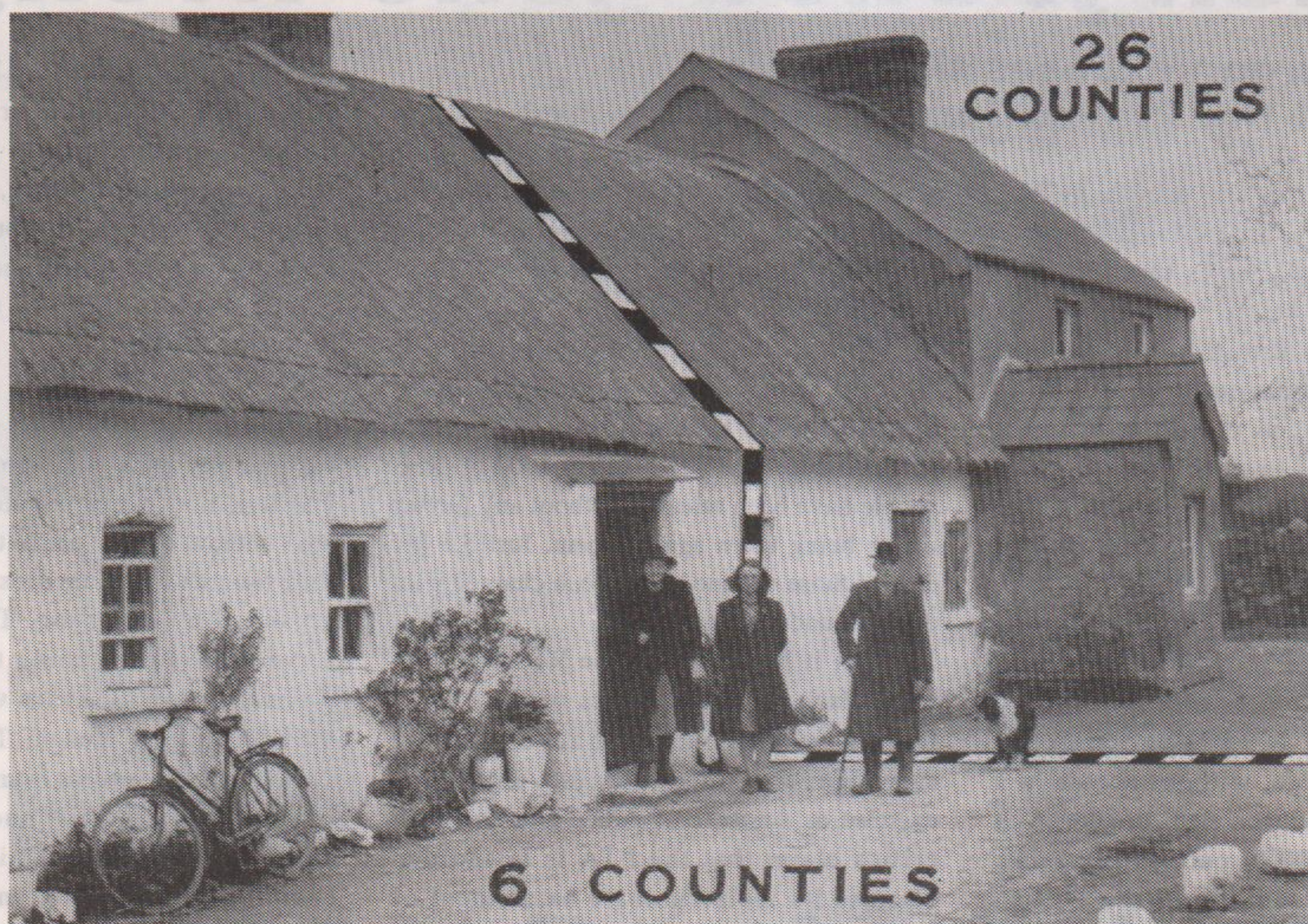
Sinn Fein’s crushing victory reflected a majority understanding that the precondition for progress was the expulsion of Britain from Ireland. However it concealed the fact that the different classes in Irish society had very different aspirations. This is the key to understanding the disastrous partition settlement and to answering the question: who signed the Treaty and why?

In January 1919, Sinn Fein’s 73 elected representatives established Dail Eireann as the

provisional government of the Irish republic. Britain's response to this direct challenge was the Tan War, a war characterised by the vicious brutality of the Crown forces and their notorious irregulars—the Black and Tans. It was also a war which, on the Irish side, was slow to escalate and uneven in its intensity.

over how to deal with its decline had led to a period of coalition politics which gave the IPP's 80-odd MPs a disproportionate influence in the making of Westminster governments. The partition treaty had the virtue of evicting Irish politics from Westminster while ensuring—in a new

Dail-established courts, backed by IRA units, returned seized land to its former landlords. In some areas the Dail could not rely on IRA support, and local flying columns supported the dividing-up of land among the landless. By October 1921, Countess Markievicz was warning the Dail cabinet of 'the imminence of



In the whole of 1919, only 18 members of the Royal Irish Constabulary were killed by republican forces. It was only in November and December 1920 that the republicans escalated their military action, and maintained the offensive until the truce in July 1921. Already in January 1921, republican leader Eamon De Valera was calling for the 'lightening' of attacks against the British. The Sinn Fein leadership did not recognise the IRA as the army of the Irish republic until March 1921—four months after they had begun secret talks with the British.

The entire death toll of the Tan War has been estimated at 700—compared to the 3-4000 killed in the Civil War. It cannot be said that either side had secured a military victory. So why did both sides sign the partition treaty?

The desire of the British side to reach a settlement is simply explained. The British establishment was never so under the cosh as during the 1919-21 period. The British working class has never since been so militant and anti-capitalist—nor so supportive of Irish freedom. Already losing its position as the world's number one imperialist power, and weakened by economic slump and the costs of the world war, the British ruling class needed a war in Ireland like a hole in the head.

The British establishment's confusion

form—continued British control over the whole of Ireland. At the same time it cleared the way for the Conservative and Unionist Party to defeat the Liberals and establish itself as the united party of the British ruling class.

But why did the leadership of Sinn Fein sign the treaty? The answer lies in the fear of the Irish middle class that it would be swept away by a resurgent working class.

Strikes and soviets

The rise in working class militancy in Ireland in the latter years of the First World War continued into the Tan War. In April 1919, 15 000 workers took over Limerick and declared a soviet. Similar, though smaller, actions followed in Cork and Leitrim. In 1920 another general strike secured the immediate release of 100 republican prisoners. In the countryside the campaign of land seizures became more and more widespread. While in some areas British state authority was replaced by the authority of the Dail, the general pattern increasingly became the complete absence of any state authority whatsoever. Into the vacuum came not only a struggle for national self-determination, but one for working class emancipation as well.

The growing militancy, and the collapse of state authority was not to the taste of either the Dail or the British. Where their writ ran,

social revolution'. By the end of 1921 the leadership of Sinn Fein and the British authorities had one thing at least in common—a fear of being swept aside by subversion.

What was the point, reasoned the middle class leadership of what was then Sinn Fein, of kicking out the British only to lose control of Ireland to the lower orders? At the same time, Sinn Fein leader Arthur Griffiths was well aware that he had neither the military capacity nor the mass support to re-establish centralised control of the territory. To regain control, it became necessary to utilise the power of the British, or else risk losing everything.

The partition treaty represents the surrender of the Irish middle class to British imperialism. The price was Irish national self-determination. It was at the command of the British and with their armaments that the fledgling Free State launched the Civil War against opponents of the Treaty. The Free State then, and the Free State now, is the creation of partition and is dependant on Britain to maintain it.

Those who seek real freedom for Ireland must look to those forces which terrified both British and Irish signatories at 2.10am on 6 December 1921—the working class of Ireland, and the working class of Britain. ●

The PTA

British justice gone wrong?

Andrea Morgan exposes the real aim of the Prevention of Terrorism Act

Guildford Four, Birmingham Six, Winchester Three, Maguire Seven. These are all names that for many people have come to represent the inadequacies of the British judicial system. The common thread that runs through each of their cases are accounts of beatings, torture, corruption, and lies. Another common factor that links them all is that they were all picked up and held in Britain under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).

The PTA, introduced by the Labour government in November 1974, allows the British state to imprison anybody they 'reasonably suspect' of terrorism for up to a week without charge, without access to a solicitor, and without the right to silence. It bans the IRA and INLA, outlaws any public support for them and allows the British authorities to exclude Irish people from Britain without having to press charges or give any explanation.

Indiscriminate harassment

The Repeal The PTA Campaign has shown that there have been over a million 'enquiries' made by the British state using the PTA. The term 'enquiry' covers anything from a special

branch computer search to gather information on suspects, to detaining someone and charging them with 'terrorism-related offenses'.

Figures from the PTA Research and Welfare Association show that up to September 1991 there had been 6932 people detained under the PTA. Nearly 6000 of these people have been released without any further action being taken against them. Just 3.1 per cent of those detained have been charged with offenses under the act.

Can it be then, that the PTA does not work? Is it, as liberal critics of the PTA in Britain such as radical Labour MPs or campaigns like 'Liberty' argue, a pointless exercise or a misuse of police powers? Such critics claim that the PTA is misguided because its indiscriminate harassment of ordinary Irish men and women can only turn an embittered community against Britain. They argue too that it is of little use in combating the IRA.

These critics have missed the point of the PTA entirely. Its aim was never to catch the IRA or to safeguard the British public; it is entirely aimed at harassing and terrorising ordinary Irish men and women in Britain.

To liberal critics of the British state, cases such as the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six are tragic miscarriages of justice. To any Irish person in Britain, however, they represent a warning—if you don't keep your head down, keep quiet, and stay away from politics then you might be the next Paul Hill or Johnny Walker.

A grim warning

Go into any Irish community in Britain and you will find many people who have been held without charge under the PTA. You will find friends and families who have been separated by exclusion. Their experiences serve as a grim warning to the rest of the community, and to anyone who might support the fight for Irish freedom. This is what makes the PTA such a success from the point of view of the British establishment. It is used to criminalise and intimidate the Irish community in Britain, and to silence any support here for the liberation struggle. By using the PTA, the British government hopes to confine the struggle firmly within the borders of the Six Counties of Northern Ireland.

This is the reason we should take up and expose the PTA for what it is: not British law gone wrong, but another weapon that Britain uses in carrying out its war against the Irish. ●



The IFM in action



How to stop Brooke babbling

Secretary of state for Northern Ireland Peter Brooke needs to get his security seen to. Police with sniffer dogs patrolled the main entrance to the London School of Economics where Brooke was guest of honour at a meeting about Northern Ireland called by the Conservative Students Society. Outside the meeting the IFM held a lively protest. Inside, we managed to burst into the meeting through an unguarded back entrance.

Brooke, who by this stage was in full flow, was stopped in his tracks as the supporters of Irish freedom heckled and charged him and his government of murder and torture in Ireland.

The Irish Freedom Movement has no desire to debate with those responsible for ordering the torture, imprisonment and murder of Irish republicans. But that doesn't mean we won't be seeing Brooke again soon. Whenever we get the chance we will be there reminding him and his cronies that it is not just the nationalist community in Northern Ireland that is disloyal to Britain.

There are plenty of us here, and no amount of police, sniffer dogs or Tory students will silence us from voicing our support for the Irish struggle for freedom. See you soon Peter!

Manchester Martyrs march

The Irish War has well and truly come to Manchester. Not only have Manchester shoppers had to deal with an IRA fire-bombing campaign, they have also had the traffic stopped on a busy shopping Saturday by the annual Manchester Martyrs commemoration march. And onlookers were left in no doubt as to which side the IFM contingent are on in the Irish War. With a host of slogans demanding a British withdrawal from Ireland, the IFM contingent let Manchester shoppers know that there is a strong and

noisy group of people in Manchester who take sides with the Irish.

The march is held every year to remember the three Irish men who were hanged for killing a policeman as they attempted to help Fenian prisoners in an escape bid. A hundred and twenty years after the incident, cases such as the Birmingham Six and Maguire Seven continue to remind us of the need to take sides with Irish people terrorised by the British state.

WAR DIARY

Friday 13 September Kevin Flood was shot dead by UVF gunmen outside his home in North Belfast as he worked on his car.

Monday 16 September Sinn Fein councillor and lecturer Bernard O'Hagan was shot dead by the UFF at Magherafelt College.

Tuesday 17 September An RUC man was killed and three soldiers injured when their landrover was blasted by an IRA mortar in Swatragh, Co Derry.

Thursday 19 September The IRA shot dead a director of a company that supplied timber to the security forces.

Monday 23 September A crowd of 60 Loyalists armed with sledgehammers, meatcleavers and knives attacked nationalist homes in North Belfast. In the Short Strand a Catholic pensioner's home was firebombed.

Wednesday 25 September Two RUC men were injured when their armoured jeep was hit by an impact grenade as it left Coalisland barracks in Co Tyrone.

Thursday 26 September A British Army patrol was fired on by the IRA while it was operating on a hillside outside Cappagh, Co Tyrone.

Saturday 28 September 63-year old shop-keeper Larry Murchan was shot dead by Loyalists for the crime of stocking *Republican News*.

Sunday 29 September Student Kevin McGovern was shot dead by three RUC in Cookstown, Co Tyrone. The RUC apologised for the murder claiming that they were preparing to ambush an IRA unit.

Monday 1 October Peter Brooke met with Gerry Collins in Dublin to discuss a possible resumption of negotiations about the future of Northern Ireland.

Wednesday 2 October The trial of Dessie Ellis began at the Old Bailey.

Friday 4 October Catholic trade union activist Pearse McKenna was shot and wounded by the UFF as he arrived for work at a bakery in South Belfast.

Monday 7 October Peter Brooke's official opening of Belfast's new inland revenue offices had to be cancelled when an IRA bomb was found in the building.

Republican prisoner Donna McGuire was extradited from Holland to Germany to face charges in connection with IRA bombings of British military bases and personnel in 1989.

Tuesday 8 October The UFF firebombed a Gaelic Athletic Association hall in Kircubbin, Co Down and issued a statement saying that the GAA is now a legitimate target. The UFF later announced that it would restrict its threat to republican supporters in the GAA.

Wednesday 9 October The RUC announced that it had set up a 30-strong unit in North Belfast to counter sectarian killings.

Thursday 10 October Another Catholic taxi driver was shot dead while driving his taxi in the Old Park area of Belfast.

The IPLO shot dead a man in a Shankill Road bar.

It emerged that the Army is to introduce a new plastic bullet gun in Northern Ireland because of the risks to the user (!) posed by the current weapon.

Friday 11 October Two RUC men were injured when a grenade was dropped on to their vehicle as it passed under a bridge in Carnlough, Co Antrim.

Saturday 12 October Two Catholic men had a lucky escape

when a Loyalist gunman's rifle jammed as he shot at them. Later, also in North Belfast, an 18-year old Catholic youth was shot in the back and injured.

Sunday 13 October 33-year old Karl Hegney was shot dead as he walked home from a bar in South Belfast.

The IRA fired 600 rounds at British troops in a gun battle at Derrollen, Co Fermanagh.

Monday 14 October Catholic taxi driver Hugh Conlon was lured to his death with a bogus taxi call. On his arrival at the address he was ambushed and killed.

Catholic Brian McCabe was found with gunshot wounds to the head in East Belfast. He died two days later.

Tuesday 15 October The UFF shot dead 24-year old Catholic John McGuiggan at the timber yard where he worked in East Belfast.

Monday 21 October A man was seriously injured by an IRA booby trap which exploded under his car. The IRA said the man was a close associate of the UVF commander who usually drove the car.

Wednesday 23 October A British Army observation post near Crossmaglen, South Armagh was blasted by an IRA mortar.

Friday 25 October Former republican prisoner Sean Anderson was shot dead in his car on a country lane near his home in Pomeroy, Co Tyrone.

A Dublin man visiting Belfast for the first time was beaten, shot and left for dead by Loyalists after he wandered into a bar on the Shankill Road.

Wednesday 30 October Dessie Ellis was freed, having been cleared of all charges of conspiracy by an Old Bailey jury. He was immediately rearrested

and served with an exclusion order. He was returned to the Irish Republic.

Saturday 2 November Two members of the British Army were killed and six officers injured when the IRA bombed the Army base at Musgrave hospital in South Belfast.

Sunday 3 November 17-year old Gerrard Maginn was shot dead and 15-year old John Brady was wounded when the car which they had stolen was fired on by the RUC. Witnesses said the car was stationary when the RUC opened fire though the RUC claimed it was speeding away.

Wednesday 6 November A UDR soldier was killed and four more were injured when the IRA blasted their jeep with a mortar in South Derry.

Saturday 9 November A 40-year old Catholic woman and her teenage son died when their home in Glengormley, North Belfast was firebombed in the early hours of the morning.

Tuesday 12 November The IRA opened fire on North Queen St barracks injuring one RUC man.

Wednesday 13 November The IRA carried out a series of attacks on people they said were known members of the UFF and UVF. Four were killed, one seriously injured, and a baby was also injured in the attack.

Thursday 14 November A Catholic taxi driver taking children to school was attacked by Loyalist gunmen. He was left for dead but survived the attack.

Friday 15 November Three men were killed by Loyalists as they left their factory in Lurgan. The UVF gunmen later apologised for one of the deaths—they had mistakenly shot a Protestant.

Two IRA volunteers, 18-year old Patricia Black and 28-year old

Frankie Ryan, were killed by their own bomb while on active service in St Albans, Hertfordshire.

Monday 18 November 600 more British troops were sent to Northern Ireland. It was announced that the RUC and UDR are also to be strengthened.

Sunday 24 November James McCaffery was shot dead by Loyalists in Belfast.

An IRA bomb exploded inside Crumlin Road prison. Two Loyalist prisoners were killed. The attack was in protest at the authorities' continued refusal to segregate Loyalist and republican remand prisoners

Tuesday 26 November The IRA killed an off-duty UDR soldier in Crossmaglen, South Armagh.

Sunday 1 December The IRA launched a firebombing campaign in Britain with bombs in the West End of London.

Sunday 8 December More IRA firebombs close down shops in Blackpool and Manchester.

Thursday 12 December A massive 2000lb bomb demolished the RUC barracks in Craigavon.

Saturday 14 December More firebombs closed down Brent Cross shopping centre on one of the busiest shopping days before Christmas. Retailers estimated that their losses would run into millions of pounds.

Compiled by Frank Hughes



**if you want
to see the
back of them...**

join the

IFM!

There is plenty of work to be done if we are to get the message of Irish freedom across in Britain. Join the Irish Freedom Movement and help us to campaign in your workplace, community and on the streets. We have branches in:

Glasgow • Edinburgh • Newcastle • Manchester • Liverpool •
Sheffield • Birmingham • Nottingham • Oxford • Leeds • Bristol •
Brighton • London

Don't delay - sign-up today! Annual membership costs £10 for individuals, £25 for organisations/union branches and includes a free subscription to *Irish Freedom*. Contact us at the address on page 2.