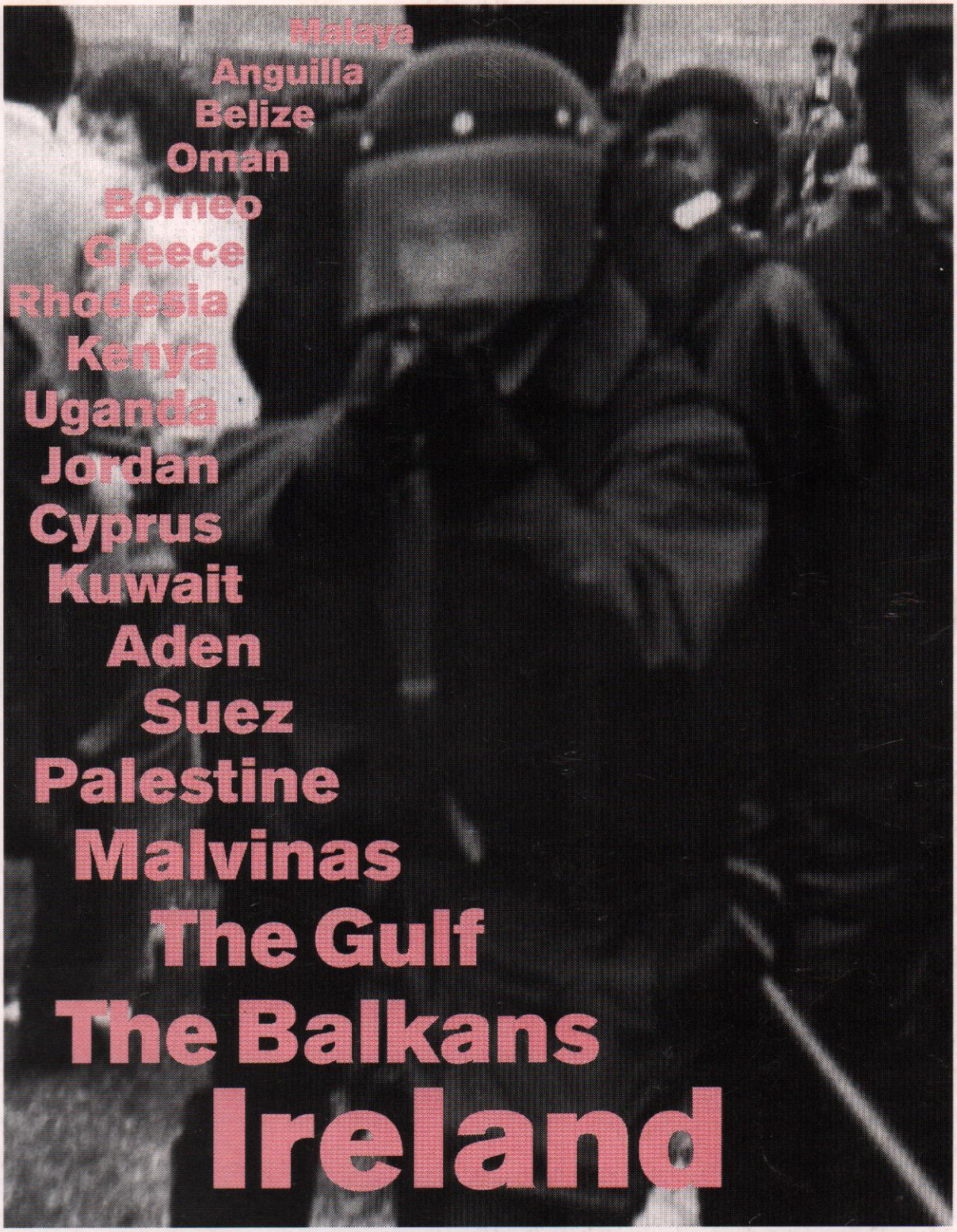
IRISH FREEDOM

Bulletin of the Irish Freedom Movement/Issue 20/Autumn 1992



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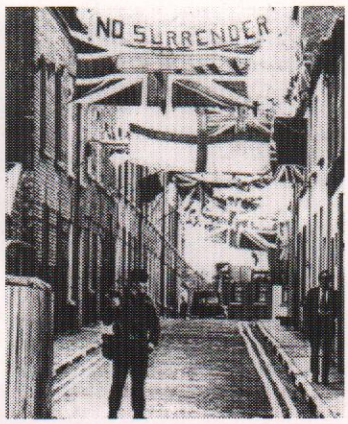
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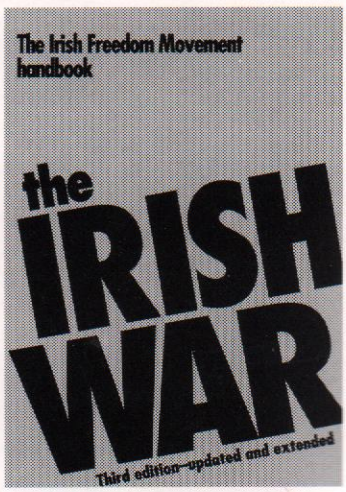




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Editorial



THE NEW PROPAGANDA OFFENSIVE

'Ethnic cleansing.' 'Concentration camps'. 'A new Holocaust'. The description of the war in Yugoslavia gets more hysterical by the day. Two years after its hatchet job on the Iraqis, the Western media is working overtime on a new propaganda offensive, this time against the Serbs.

The similarities between the two media campaigns are striking. Remember the story about Iraqi soldiers snatching Kuwaiti babies from incubators and leaving them on the floor to die? It turned out that the entire episode was fabricated, the work of a PR agency employed by the Kuwaiti royal family. Now the newspapers are full of similar stories about Serbian killings. And, surprise, surprise, once again there is a Washington PR firm – this time employed by the Croatian government – whose every fax about Serbian 'atrocities' is treated as hard news. The suffering of ordinary Serbs, Croats and Muslims caught up in the conflict is being cynically manipulated by Western journalists and politicians intent on waging a propaganda war. Remember what happened to Iraq, once Saddam Hussein had been well and truly demonised by the press? A quarter of a million Iraqis were slaughtered in the name of democracy. Western military intervention in the Balkans could turn out to be even more bloody.

Supporters of Irish freedom are all too familiar with the kind of propaganda war being waged against the Serbs. Many of the British politicians who are playing a prominent role in demonising the Serbs cut their political teeth in the Irish war, criminalising Irish republicans.

Take, for example, the pathetic sight of British minister Douglas Hogg travelling through Sarajevo in a United Nations armoured personnel carrier, wearing a bullet-proof vest, and holding press conferences left, right, and centre, in order to crucify the Serbs for their treatment of Croatian and Muslim prisoners. This is the same Douglas Hogg who not so long ago stood up in the house of commons and accused certain Belfast solicitors of being 'unduly sympathetic to the IRA'. One month later, the well-known Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane was shot dead, a murder organised by British army agent and UDA man Brian Nelson. As Pat's brother Martin told the Irish Freedom Movement, 'I firmly believe that Pat was set up by the RUC and the British government at the highest level.'

In response to the propaganda offensive against the Serbs, we need to launch one of our own. When they tell us about 'ethnic cleansing', we need to challenge them to explain why the expulsion of tens of thousands of Catholics in the Six Counties, burnt out of their homes by Loyalists backed by the RUC, was never described in the same terms. When they throw up their arms in horror at the sight of civilians detained behind barbed wire in appalling conditions, we need to point to the treatment of nationalists held in Long Kesh and Maghaberry and the Crumlin Road jail. When it comes to torture, we should be telling people that Castlereagh interrogation centre in Belfast is pretty hard to top.

In Yugoslavia as in Ireland, politicians, the media and many liberals have promoted the lie that the conflict is the product of 'warring tribes'. We need to show that the key problem in both cases is imperialism. In Yugoslavia as in Ireland, there are widespread calls for military intervention to 'stop the bloodshed'. We need to challenge more strongly than ever the idea that British troops are in Ireland to keep the peace – or that Western troops could bring peace to the Balkans.

We live in an age when imperialism has won a new moral authority. Most liberation struggles have collapsed or made peace with their enemies. In the post-Cold War era the Western powers can do much as they like in the Third World. Few people – even on the left – question the right of Western governments to walk into other people's countries. At such a time it is important for the IFM to adopt a broader anti-imperialist outlook and oppose imperialist intervention throughout the world.
In Britain we have to get the message across that campaigning to rid Ireland of British troops is key to opposing British militarism in any part of the globe.

Though the Irish war has slipped down the agenda in British politics, and though the British government has been successful in containing the republican struggle for the time being, we should realise that the Irish struggle has assumed a new importance. This is because of the new international climate since the end of the Cold War. In a period of imperialist triumphalism the Irish struggle remains undefeated. Tens of thousands of nationalists continue to support the IRA and resist Britain's occupation.

At a time when Western intervention across the world faces little opposition, the fight for Irish freedom should serve as an inspiration to anti-imperialists. It demonstrates that it is still possible to mount a challenge against the new imperialism. Building this challenge – that is the task of the Irish Freedom Movement in the months ahead.

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

Campaigning to rid Ireland of British troops is key to opposing British militarism in any part of the globe

MARCH FOR IRISH FREEDOM

Three thousand people took part in the IFM's annual TROOPS OUT march in August. Janet Sugden explains its importance





Marches and demonstrations are not a common sight these days in the streets of London. In the seventies and eighties coaches would bring tens of thousands of people into London to march against nuclear weapons, or apartheid, or on a whole range of national and international issues. Today that tradition of political protest and of collective action has all but died.

This is what makes the IFM's annual freedom march that much more important as a way of bringing awareness of British imperialism to a new audience. This was particularly so this year, given broader political developments – the emergence of the New World Order, the collapse of anti-imperialist opposition both in the West and in the Third World, and the intensification of Western intervention in Yugoslavia. We were determined to make this year's march not simply a protest against the British occupation of Ireland but also against Western intervention in the Balkans and elsewhere.

In the run-up to the march we used a whole host of activities – from motorcades to public meetings – to make the link between the issue of Irish freedom and broader anti-imperialist concerns. On the march itself there was a contingent and a banner from the Hands off the Balkans Committee. The presence of a large number of Turkish and Kurdish demonstrators, and messages of support condemning Western interference around the world, reflected the new relevance and importance of the annual Troops Out march.

Chairing the rally at the end of march, the IFM's Fiona Foster called on the demonstrators to use their understanding of British imperialism in Ireland to challenge the consensus behind British military intervention in the Balkans and the Middle East: 'We do not have the luxury of going home today and doing nothing because we are the only people in this country who can explain to British people that British military intervention means misery, tragedy and the denial of democratic rights'.



Leading the march: the Bridgeton Republican flute band

BARRY McELDUFF
SINN FEIN

'On behalf of the republican movement, and of Sinn Fein specifically, I'd like to thank you all for coming here today, and I'd like to congratulate the organisers. I'm going to comment first and foremost on Douglas Hurd's invitation to the Red Cross to go in and inspect the concentration camps in Bosnia. I would ask Douglas Hurd and the British government and the Red Cross and the EC and the UN and anybody else to inspect the conditions in Crumlin Road jail in Belfast. The place is Victorian, it's 140 years old. It's completely unhygienic, it's cockroach-infested. We all know about the torture centres of Castlereagh and Gough barracks, about special courts where there's a single judge and no jury...all of these are manifestations of a very ugly state which must be smashed.

'I'm going to comment also on the Stormont talks and I would ask you not to confuse them with peace talks. Sinn Fein's attitude to talks is this: we want open-ended, inclusive dialogue. But we are not going to bend over backwards to get to the table. We are going to continue campaigning ▶

OLIVER KEARNEY
EQUALITY

'Now what brought into being this cruel conflict? Was it because there suddenly sprang out of the ground a mysterious group of people called the men of violence? The reason is that when Barry McElduff was an infant, people like me were taking to the streets and roads of our own country to join in a non-violent peaceful campaign for rights and social justice.

We asked for the right to vote, for decent housing, for the right to jobs.

And what did we get? We got war. We got combat troops. We got internment, torture, massacre of civilians in the street. That's what we got when we asked for civil rights and social justice and equality.

What kind of a state does that to its citizens? What kind of state inflicts upon them two and a half decades of continuous terror and bloodshed?

A corrupt, evil, degraded, imperialist state. Many of you are here because instead of the right to work you were offered enforced emigration.

I want this war in my country ended.'

ALEX FARRELL
IFM

'I want to dedicate what I say to Nigel Lewis, who died on 15 July. This time last year Nigel was standing in Whittington Park. He was the organiser of this march in 1991. We miss him.

'At the end of May, just over two months ago, Nigel led a number of people to the cells in Bow St police station. I have to say, that's not where they were aiming to finish up. No, they were going to church, to disrupt a grotesque celebration of mass murder. And so they did.

'The Queen Mother, no less, was at the RAF church in the Strand to honour a great British hero. Supported by various establishment bigwigs, she unveiled a statue to Sir Arthur 'Bomber' Harris. His original nickname, before they cleaned it up, was 'Butcher' Harris. Butcher Harris organised the deliberate, systematic murder of over 600 000 German civilians by bombing in the Second World War.

That wasn't his first attempt. He was no amateur. In the 1920s, with the other pilot Johnnies of the RAF, he pioneered the saturation bombing of civilians with high explosives and with chemicals. That was against the Kurds. The British had just divided their country by force. Ring a bell?

'This is the British establishment, mind, that claims the right to intervene anywhere in the world in the name of civilisation – from Ireland to the Malvinas, from the Gulf to the Balkans. A state which celebrates bare-faced the slaughter of 600 000 civilians. This is not a peace-making state. This is not a civilised state. This is a terrorist state. And yet these butchers have the pure nerve to label Irish nationalists "terrorists".

'This is the British establishment that is currently churning out denunciations of Serbian concentration camps to soften up public opinion for a rerun of the Gulf War. Another "turkey shoot", but this time in Eastern Europe. The same PR agencies that brought you the Kuwaiti babies turfed out of their incubators to die by Iraqi looters, the same spin doctors that gave us the drug-dealing protection racket-running terrorist godfathers of the IRA, today are feeding us their filth about concentration camps.

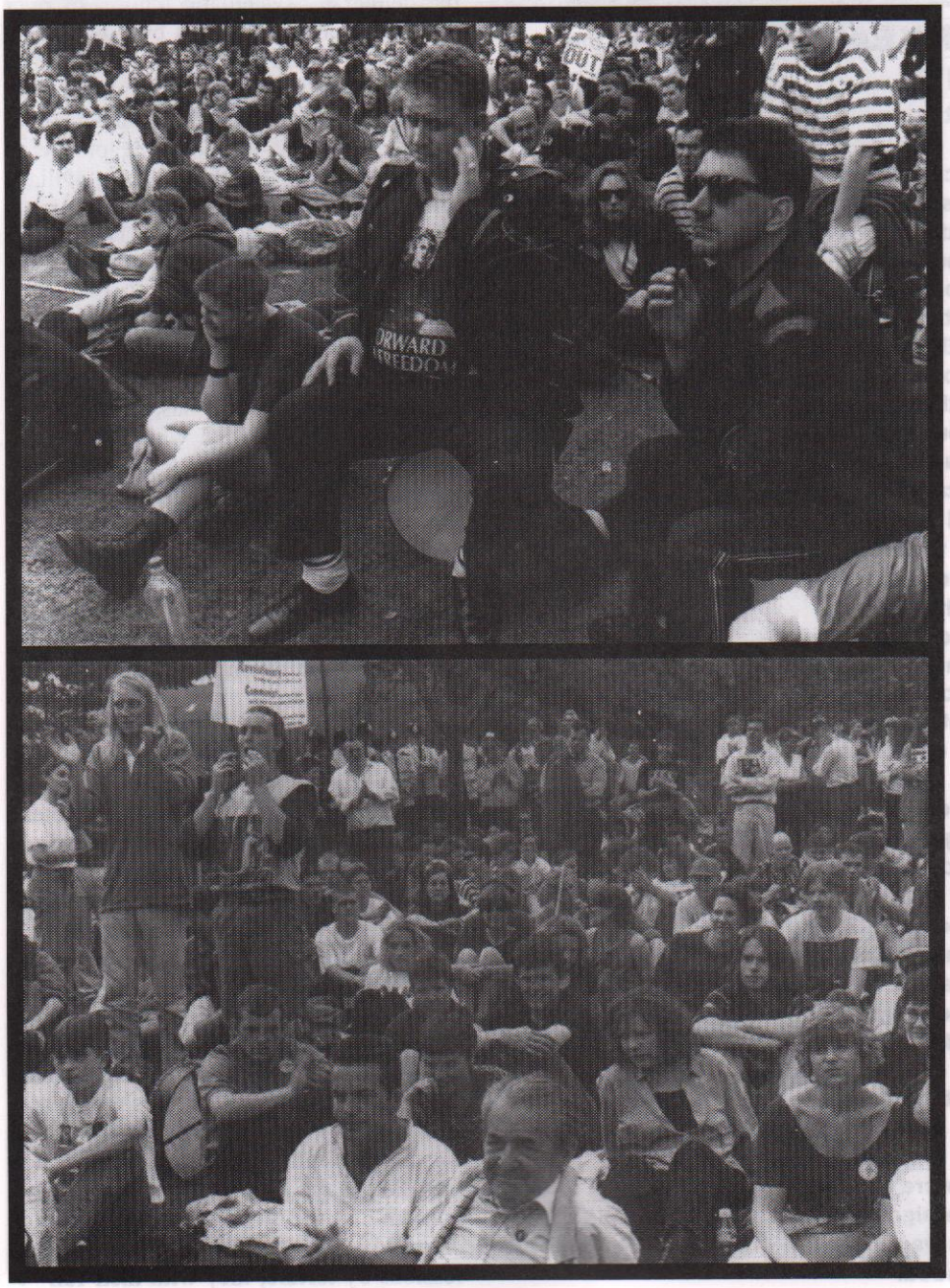
'Well, they should know, shouldn't they? Who was it who invented the concentration camp? It was the daddies of the Butcher Harrises and the gin-soaked Queen Mums – the British in South Africa, a hundred or so years back. And it is they – now – who maintain the prison camps of Long Kesh and Maghaberry and the Crum; it is they that intern their enemies by remand, untried; it is they who try their enemies in no-jury courts, they who extract false confessions by torture, they with their full- ▶

◄ the way we know best. 'Violence wasn't introduced by us. It was introduced by the British. We are saying, if you won't accept the force of argument, you will have to accept the argument of force. For real peace in Ireland there needs to be democracy and national self-determination. We want peace – which isn't just the absence of gunfire or bombs. Peace is the absence of conditions which make war necessary. If you remove partition, if you remove the conditions for the existence of the IRA, then the IRA will only be too pleased to put themselves out of existence. We will have victory. Keep up your support.'

◄ time/part-time death squads that murder nationalists; it is they who paid Brian Nelson £200 a week and a mortgage to kill Catholics; and it is they who criticise apartheid in South Africa but run apartheid in the Six Counties.

'Aye, these are the fine civilised democrats who invite us to line up with them against the Irish ... and the Arabs and the Serbs, and whoever else is nominated onto their growing hit-list. We, of all people, should know that when British governments start talking about peacekeeping, they mean they're about to send their army into someone else's country – and start killing them. This is the system that has the shameless gall to preach to the Irish about violence. A system, as Paddy Hill said, that isn't fit to judge an Irish dog show, never mind an Irish person.

'But let's not kid ourselves. We've got a big problem here. It may be us and them. But nowadays, too many of those who should be with us are lining up with them.



Where is the political opposition? We know where it is in Ireland. Where is it in Britain? It's here in this park. Face it. It's you.

'Since the election the chattering classes have been lining up to moan that we're living in a one-party state. They're completely missing the point. Whoever had won the election, we'd still be living in a one-party state. Tory. Labour. Liberal Democrat. You can't slip a fag-paper in between them. There's not a British war this century that hasn't seen them shoulder to shoulder, wrapped in the butcher's apron. And it's in a war, above all, that you find out whose side people are really on. Tory. Labour. Liberal Democrat. Not so much blue, red and yellow as red, white and blue.

'When it came to the general election, the biggest constitutional issue in British politics – Britain's claim that part of Ireland is a part of Britain – was a no-go area. No debate. By mutual agreement. This'll give you the flavour of it. A journalist asked Labour's Irish spokesman Kevin McNamara whether Labour would proscribe the UDA. 'I can't say', said Kevin. 'I would just have to listen to the advice of the intelligence services'. You want to check up on Labour's Irish policy? Now you know who to ring.

'So we had the election result. The Tories' second eleven were blown away. That's what happens to crawlers. You don't get sympathy. You get contempt.

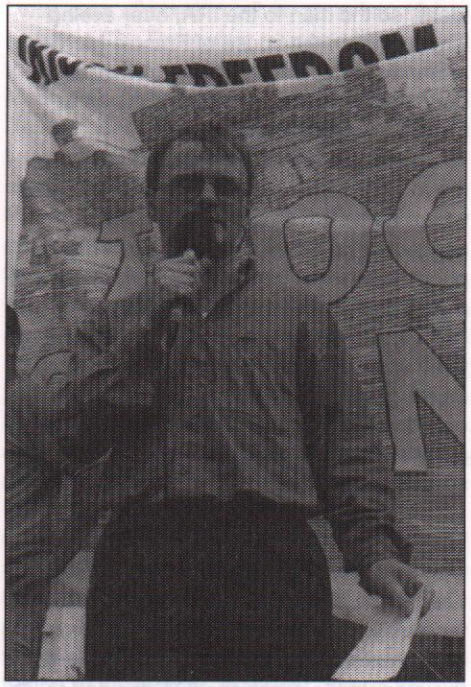
'Now they are planning to knock hell out of the Serbs. They who promoted the break-up of Yugoslavia in the first place. Where's the "political opposition"? Gung-ho for armed intervention. Who was it, at the turn of the year, who called on Britain to bomb the Serbian airforce and any armed Serbians operating outside Serbia – wherever the UN decides that is? Who was it? It was Ken Livingstone in his weekly column in the *Sun*. There goes your suburban anti-imperialist.

'No, the politicians are on the same side. The wrong side. Building a real opposition starts here. And it's you and me and our kind who are going to have to do it.

'Where else will we find new support for Irish freedom but among those with the guts, the independence and the intelligence to stand against the patriotic bullshit of the new world order slaughterhouse? Who else is better placed to expose the bogus claims of the British establishment to civilisation and democracy than those who know the score about Britain's war against Irish freedom? What better place is there to build a serious, active and aggressive opposition to imperialism than in the birthplace of imperialism itself? What greater inspiration could we have than the still defiant, still undefeated nationalist population of the Six Counties?

So let's get on and build the movement that they deserve and of which they can be proud.'

'OUR SACRIFICES WON'T BE IN VAIN'



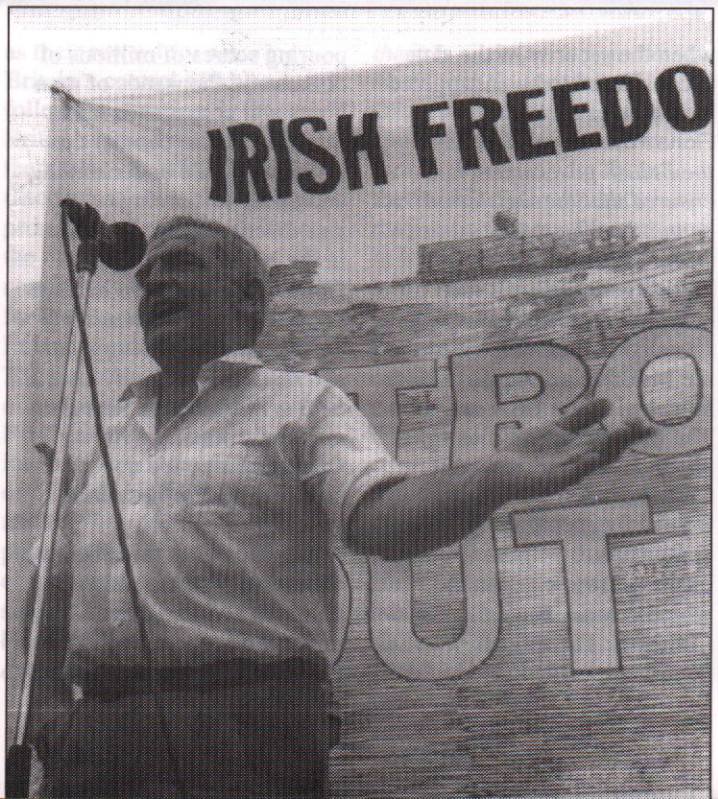
Barry McElduff was Sinn Fein's candidate in the mid-Ulster area in the 1992 general election. In August he addressed the IFM's Troops Out march. Fiona Foster talked to him about morale in the nationalist community after 23 years of war, and about his own recent imprisonment in Crumlin Road jail

Fiona Foster: Has war-weariness had the effect of making nationalists in Tyrone invest some hope in the talks about the future of Northern Ireland?
Barry McElduff: No. Well, certainly not among the people I speak to. They are entirely cynical of a process being run by Britain and which excludes our representatives. Secrecy, a British agenda and exclusion are not part of the necessary formula to deliver real lasting peace. Instead, talks should be open-ended and unconditional, and must involve all protagonists in the conflict, if we are to entertain any real hope of delivering peace with justice.

From time to time the republican struggle has its ups and downs, its troughs and its highpoints. At the moment the pressure is being exerted on us in every conceivable way – from assassination to imprisonment, censorship to political vetting – and there is a massive effort being made to marginalise us. But it's up to us to fight back and make sure we're relevant to our own communities. Even after 23 years, there is a tremendous resolve among republicans and a determination to ensure that our sacrifices have not been in vain.

Fiona Foster: Are there people who think that the IRA should lay down their arms as a means of getting Sinn Fein into the current talks?
Barry McElduff: I'm sure there are some, but not within the republican community. We have had to reassure some people that Sinn Fein's calls for peace don't just mean the absence of guns, they mean peace with justice, the peace of achieving our demands. IRA volunteers are sworn to fight until Britain declares her intent to withdraw from Ireland – on that ▶

'APARTHEID IN ALL BUT NAME'



Fiona Foster spoke to Oliver Kearney, chairman of Equality, the campaign for economic equality in Northern Ireland, about official discrimination against Catholics

Fiona Foster *The impression we get from the British media is that anti-Catholic discrimination is now so insignificant that it can no longer be used as justification for the struggle against the Northern Irish state. Is there any truth in this?*
Oliver Kearney No. All academic research carried out in the last 10 years, including that by the British government, demonstrates that the scale of Catholic inequality is possibly greater today than at any time in the life of this state. Catholics in Northern Ireland continue to be two to two and a half times more likely to be unemployed than our Protestant fellow countrymen and women.

The disparities are particularly gross in areas of very high Catholic population like Strabane, Dungannon, Derry and West Belfast, but they apply with remarkable symmetry throughout every district council area in Northern Ireland, and they ▶



After being declared the candidate for Mid-Ulster, I was arrested and locked up for nine months on trumped-up charges. What other political party in a so-called democracy would have to contend with all that?

◀ level nothing has changed.

If you look at a tiny village like Cappagh in East Tyrone, you can see the positive and negative aspects. In Cappagh every young male is a target for harassment from the security forces. About eight have been killed in the past few years, and there are currently five of them on remand in Crumlin Road jail on completely spurious charges with no evidence against them. Can you imagine the kind of impact that can have on such a small community? It has exacted a heavy personal price, but still our national objectives aren't yet met, and so we must go on.

Fiona Foster: Sinn Fein's vote in Mid-Ulster dropped in the general election – how do you explain that?

Barry McElduff: There are a number of factors. The SDLP increased their vote at our expense. Their approach was a blatant sectarian appeal to the Catholic community to vote for the Catholic candidate with the best chance of beating the unionist. So while we were talking about the nature of imperialism and unemployment and forced emigration, the SDLP ignored politics and asked people to vote on religious grounds. Unfortunately, at the end of the day, it worked for them.

In addition the SDLP, with the help of Britain, have been using the International Fund for Ireland as an instrument to further marginalise Sinn Fein. They have used the money to buy votes by supposedly investing money in community regeneration projects, while vetting local groups so as to ensure Sinn Fein's exclusion from them, if they wish to receive grant aid.

But we have to deal with all the forces ranged against us. Sinn Fein activists are harassed, shot, censored. In my case, after being declared the candidate for Mid-Ulster, I was arrested and locked up for nine months on trumped-up charges. What other political party in a so-called democracy would have to contend with all that? But no-one ever said it was going to be easy, and getting 10 000 votes despite all of this was a pretty remarkable achievement.

Fiona Foster: Can you explain the story behind your arrest?

Barry McElduff: Yes. I had been selected by Sinn Fein to contest the Westminster seat in Mid-Ulster, and I was in the process of building up my profile in the area, like any parliamentary candidate would. I was contacted by a Protestant man from Coagh, who said he had been identified by the IRA as a Loyalist paramilitary, and issued with a death threat if he didn't leave Ireland. In due course I discovered that local people had identified the man to the IRA, after seeing him spying on the house of Francie McNally, a Sinn Fein councillor whose brother had been shot dead earlier by Loyalists on a mission to shoot Francie.

The Protestant man contacted me to ask me to listen to his explanation of why he was where he was. It was the RUC who had suggested he contact me and given him my phone number. A parish priest, who was well aware that leaving this in the hands of the RUC would be no good, gave me the use of the Parochial House in Ardboe for my first meeting with this man. I undertook to convene a meeting between this man and people who I felt might be closer to the source of the threat than I was.

The meeting took place with the full knowledge of the RUC, and the man came with his parents and explained his behaviour. I had made clear that my role was a facilitating one, and I had sought all kinds of guarantees that no harm would come to this man. In the event, the IRA decided to lift the death threat and the man and his family thanked me for my role in the affair. A week later the RUC came to my house at six in the morning and arrested me for false imprisonment. I had to spend nine months



The scale of Catholic inequality is possibly greater today than at any time in the life of this state....That is an extraordinary indictment of any society

◀ apply to Catholics regardless of age, sex and level of academic or professional qualifications. That is an extraordinary indictment of any society.

Fiona Foster *Has the existence of British government fair employment legislation narrowed the gap between Catholic and Protestant?*

Oliver Kearney No. We have had 18 years of this legislation and there's been no improvement. The legislation has been trumpeted by the British government throughout the international community as being the complete answer to discrimination and it was argued that the last item on the civil rights agenda had now been dealt with and the civil rights agenda was effectively dead.

In fact the legislation actually provides for discrimination on a political basis. There are two sections within the Fair Employment Act 1976 which protect an employer from prosecution for discrimination when the employer reasonably suspects the employee of holding views which may be in support of or in sympathy with political violence. Another section of the 1976 Act permits the secretary of state to issue a certificate denying the Fair Employment Commission the right to conduct an investigation when the security of the state is considered to be endangered by the investigation.

Fiona Foster *So you're saying the British government has ensured that the legislation cannot be effective?*

Oliver Kearney I think the British government's real attitude to discrimination was revealed in their response to the McBride principles launched in the USA in 1984. The McBride principles were an attempt to redress anti-Catholic discrimination in Ireland by encouraging US companies to withdraw their business from companies which discriminated against Catholics. The British government responded by pouring scores of millions of dollars and thousands of man hours and propaganda effort into the USA to combat the initiative, while underfunding and under-resourcing anti-discrimination bodies in the North.

Fiona Foster *Can you explain the British government's resistance to removing discrimination? Surely it would help to marginalise Sinn Fein and boost the SDLP?*

Oliver Kearney It's not so simple. The Northern Irish state was specifically constructed with the objective of securing in perpetuity the political, economic and military domination of the Protestant Loyalist community,

in the hell hole of Crumlin Road jail before I was even allowed to tell my story in a trial situation. The Protestant man and his family took the stand to thank me for saving his life. Meanwhile I had lost nine months of my life and been off the streets for the time I should have been building Sinn Fein's election campaign.

Fiona Foster: Can you describe conditions in Crumlin Road?

Barry McElduff: Conditions were nothing short of revolting. Both republican and loyalist prisoners were locked up for 23 hours a day. Food is handed into you on paper plates by prison officers dressed in boiler suits for 'hygienic' reasons. The cells are infested with cockroaches, and there is perspex over the bars to prevent the free movement of air in and out of the cell. They refuse to open the door, even to let you sweep the dust out of your cell. To go to the toilet you have to ring a bell, and if a few people are ringing it, you have to go on a toilet list which often means you have to wait hours, or sometimes overnight, before you get out. If you can't wait, you just have to keep your human waste in a paper bag under the bed.

Fiona Foster: Is prisoner morale very bad?

Barry McElduff: Surprisingly, no. Once the prisoners do get together out in the yard even for an hour, they assemble in groups and make plans about ways to resist these conditions and advance the campaign for segregation and better conditions. The prisoners have each other and the comradeship is excellent, if anything getting better as conditions worsen.

Fiona Foster: Why do you think conditions are so much better for republicans in the H-Blocks than in Crumlin Road?

Barry McElduff: Well, my view is that the ten men who died on hunger-strike did achieve political status in all but name for republican prisoners in the H-Blocks. You have to remember that everyone in Crumlin Road is on remand, and the authorities are desperate to break their spirit. It's undoubtedly the case that young men have pleaded guilty to things they never did, just to get out of Crumlin Road.

Douglas Hurd is in no position to lecture about concentration camps. He should go on a tour of inspection of Crumlin Road

Fiona Foster: At the IFM rally you challenged the hypocrisy of the British for condemning Serbian 'concentration camps'. What did you mean?

Barry McElduff: Douglas Hurd has got a cheek to talk about conditions in concentration camps in Bosnia. I don't know how he can set himself up as some sort of moral authority, when his own government runs a hell-hole like Crumlin Road, where people are dumped for up to two years before being found guilty of any crime. The British government has breached more human rights legislation than any other state in Europe. He's in no position to lecture about concentration camps. He should go on a tour of inspection of Crumlin Road if he wants to see bad conditions.

Fiona Foster: Finally, Barry, what did you think of the IFM's Troops Out march that you came over to address?

Barry McElduff: I was very encouraged by the turn-out at the march. I spoke with lots of people who feel passionately about the need to get Britain out of Ireland and who refuse to let censorship and disinterest put them off talking about the Irish war. I would urge those people to keep on talking about Ireland and defying the so-called authorities, to keep it on the agenda.

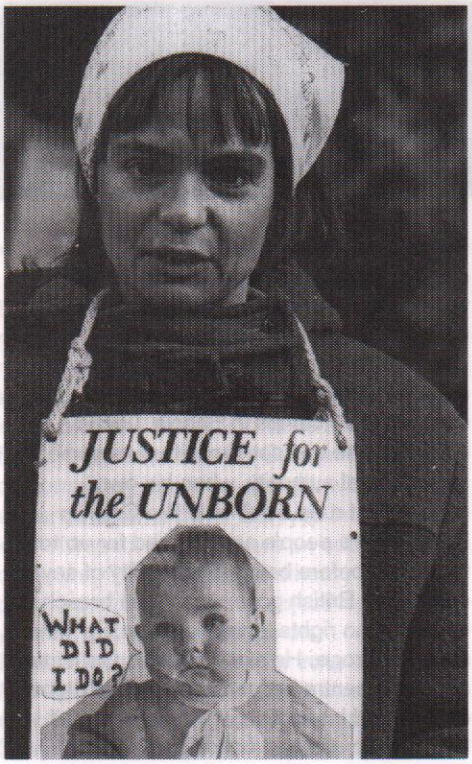
as their reward for securing Britain's control of Ireland following partition. If the British were to commit themselves to effective anti-discrimination, which would promote full equality between the two sections of the community, the raison d'être for the existence of Northern Ireland would no longer exist. The maintenance of a state of economic apartheid in Northern Ireland has been an integral part of the protection of the state since its formation and this has been declared publicly by the political leaders of unionism on many occasions since partition.

Fiona Foster *You use the term apartheid – do you really think there is a comparison to be made with South Africa?*

Oliver Kearney Yes. I recognise apartheid is a very emotive term and people who listen to the British claiming that discrimination is outlawed in Ireland would reject the term. However the term apartheid has been used as far back as the 1960s by very moderate, middle class campaigners. Every 12 years through the lifetime of the state, pogroms have been instituted against the working class Catholic community, driving them from the housing areas into which they began to merge or the workplaces they shared with Protestant workers. Each time Catholics began to emerge from the ghetto, the reactionary forces within unionism have been called into play to drive them back.

If the British were to commit themselves to effective anti-discrimination, the raison d'être for the existence of Northern Ireland would no longer exist

There is no single sector of the Northern Ireland economy in which the Catholic nationalist population is proportionately represented according to its strength within the population. Today Catholics make up 42 per cent of the population and 52 per cent of the student population, yet in Queens University, the premier academic institution of the state, only 16 per cent of the jobs are held by Catholics. This pattern applies throughout every section of the economy. I would call that apartheid in all but name.



THE POLITICS

Paul Pendergast assesses the prospect of another referendum on abortion in the South of Ireland

'From the denial of travel rights to a distressed teenager to the censoring of one of the world's finest international newspapers there appears to be no limits to the infringement of civil liberties which this state will countenance.' The editorial in the *Irish Times* spoke for the liberal middle class of Ireland in expressing outrage at a set of laws which resulted in the banning of a 14 year-old rape victim from travelling to London to get an abortion and in the seizure by police of an edition of the *Guardian* which carried an advert for family planning services in Britain.

The case of the 14 year-old, now known as the X case, absorbed all sections of society in a debate about the scope of Ireland's ban on abortion, written into the country's constitution after a referendum in 1988, and the protocol to the Maastricht treaty designed to protect Ireland's unique abortion laws. Far from polarising Irish society into the familiar camps of the liberal middle class versus the church-backed anti-abortion lobby, the debate revealed a strong consensus for the right to travel to get an abortion. Many, even within the church, recognised that in banning 'X', the courts had gone too far and there was a widespread sigh of relief when the Irish Supreme Court ruled that the travel ban should be lifted. But the fact remains that a similar injunction could be issued to any woman at any time.

The ban on information on abortion which led to the closure of well-women services in Ireland and resulted in the seizure of the *Guardian*, came in the aftermath of the abortion referendum. Ireland's powerful anti-abortion lobby, including groups like SPUC, used the logic of the constitutional ban to win a number of legal battles against individuals and groups providing information and counselling about abortion. As recently as August this year, SPUC won another victory when the Irish High Court imposed massive fines on students from the three Dublin colleges who had defied earlier legal rulings by handing out telephone numbers of abortion clinics in London.

A desire to prevent another controversy like the X case, and a series of opinion polls showing a majority in favour of the right to travel and information on abortion, convinced Albert Reynold's Fianna Fail/Progressive Democrat government to promise a referendum on these two issues in November this year. The promise was welcomed by many sections of Irish society but, at the time of writing, the government had not set a date for the referendum nor announced the wording of the question on the ballot paper. Worried commentators have begun to question the government's commitment to yet another national debate on the abortion issue.

Reynolds and his team face a serious dilemma in deciding whether or not to hold

Confronting the Catholic church and its supporters means breaking with the combined forces which have stabilised Irish society since its formation in 1921



OF ABORTION

this referendum. On one level, an all-absorbing debate on abortion is an attractive means of diverting public attention from the economic malaise facing Ireland. With one in five people unemployed, the South has reached the highest unemployment levels since the formation of the state. One in two young people are forced to emigrate to find work, and 1 348 000 people – nearly half the population – only survive with the help of welfare benefits. The recent Supreme Court ruling that leading politicians do not have to appear before a number of inquiries set up to investigate large-scale corruption between politicians and businessmen has done nothing to restore confidence in Ireland's rulers. A recent opinion poll shows that only 22 per cent of Irish people have any confidence in their political leaders.

A referendum on abortion may be a tempting distraction from this sorry state of affairs but it presents the Irish establishment with another set of problems. The right to travel and information on abortion would be passionately opposed by the influential anti-abortion lobby, the Catholic middle class and the Catholic church. Many liberals feel that this is a good time to take on these reactionary forces in Irish society, but the Irish government is showing signs of reluctance.

The marginalisation of anti-imperialist and republican politics in the Twenty-Six Counties has strengthened the hand of the ruling elite and given it the confidence to ditch nationalist rhetoric in exchange for a vision of Ireland as a modern European republic. This vision has the enthusiastic support of the urban middle classes who have long since balked at the embarrassment of Ireland's backward social laws and the anti-imperialist war raging in the north of their country. But confronting the Catholic church and its supporters means breaking with the combined forces which have stabilised Irish society since its formation in 1921.

The marginalisation of anti-imperialist politics has given the Southern regime the option of distancing itself from the Catholic church and supporting a liberal agenda. But the chronic economic and social problems engulfing Irish society have left Ireland's political leaders grappling to hold society together and lacking the confidence to confront the reactionary forces which have done that job up until now. When the health minister came under fire from the liberals in the Dail for refusing to reduce the legal age for buying condoms from 17 to 16, he shouted angrily: 'I am not legislating here for Dublin 4 or Dublin 6. There is a whole way of life in rural Ireland that is very different from Dublin.'

It is important to realise that in practical terms a referendum on the right to travel and information on abortion would make little difference. Stickers giving out the numbers of abortion clinics in England can be found in every public toilet in Ireland and official statistics show that thousands of Irish women continue to travel for abortions every year. On the other hand even a 'yes' vote in the proposed referendum would keep abortion illegal in Ireland. That the Irish government is even reluctant to proceed with such a superficial social change is an indication of the depth of the problems facing the Irish ruling class today.



THE IRISH WAR IN THE

At the recent Towards 2000 conference, leading members of the Irish Freedom Movement took part in a round-table discussion, exploring the impact of the New World Order on developments in Ireland. The discussion focussed on three areas: Here we reprint summaries of the main speeches

EVE ANDERSON

ANTI-REPUBLICANISM IN THE SOUTH

How a nation views its past tells you a lot about its ambitions in the here and now. I want to compare the celebrations of the 1916 Easter Rising in 1966 and in 1991, the fiftieth and the seventy-fifth anniversaries respectively. The contrast between the two reveals the vast change in southern Irish politics. In particular, it reveals the new anti-republican climate in the South and the confidence of the Irish ruling class in promoting that mood.

The Easter Rising was a pivotal point in Irish history. It has traditionally been interpreted as the spark that lit the flames of the Irish Revolution, leading to the formation of the Free State. In 1966 massive demonstrations took place to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary. Ringing tributes were made to the heroes of the rebellion. Hospitals and roads were named after the martyrs of the revolution. All this had official government sponsorship.

In 1991 there was a complete reversal. The anniversary was played down. The official government commemoration took all of twelve minutes. The government feared that remembering 1916 would give legitimacy to the IRA, the inheritors of the tradition of physical-force republicanism.

Fintan O'Toole from the *Irish Times* suggested that 'the men and women of 1916 were fighting for a seat at the European table'. In fact 1916 was about fighting for Irish freedom against British domination. Now it is being reinterpreted as a piece of sordid diplomacy by would-be Brussels bureaucrats. The audacity and the courage that was the spirit of 1916 has gone, reduced to a squabble for a slice of the EC pie. It is clear that anti-1916 ideas have won the day.

Why does the Irish government feel so confident about rubbishing the republican tradition? There are two factors we need to consider. First of all, after 23 years of bloody war in the North, the republican movement has failed to defeat Britain, or win any substantial concessions to relieve the plight of the nationalist people. This has led to some growing disenchantment and war-weariness.

Secondly, the end of the Cold War has strengthened imperialism and weakened the idea that it is possible to create any alternative to the existing power structures that have been set in place by Britain's partition of Ireland. The first trend has been apparent for a number of years. But the end of the Cold War has given the Irish government a new boost of confidence in its efforts to isolate and marginalise the republican movement.

The Maastricht referendum in the summer provided the Irish ruling class with an opportunity to downgrade a purely nationalist identity and play up to a cosmopolitan European image. For this reason all the major political parties campaigned for a 'yes' vote. Opponents of the Treaty, especially Sinn Fein, argued that Maastricht would draw Ireland into the Western European Union (WEU). Participation in the WEU, the military wing of the EC, would compromise Ireland's traditional policy of neutrality. It was the South's neutrality during World War Two and its unaligned position between the superpowers during the Cold War that gave substance to the illusion of Irish independence.

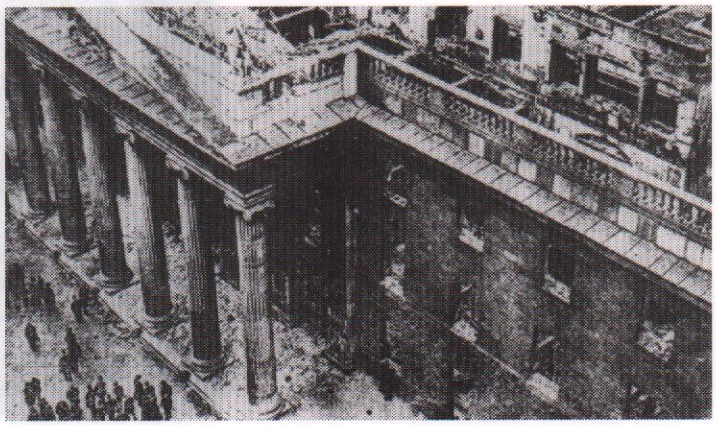
Neutrality was always a fig-leaf to hide Ireland's subordinate position to Britain. But it is significant that the Irish ruling class feels so confident today in dealing with the nationalists that it is willing to renounce neutrality.

Articles 2 and 3 of the republic's Constitution, which embody the South's constitutional claim to the North, are also up for sale. In the past, the Articles have played a crucial role in providing nationalist credentials for the Irish government. Now every major political party is happy to see them go. Fianna Fail, the traditional republican party, may still be hedging its bets. But privately the party leadership is hoping to repeal the Articles through a referendum, if the public mood is going its way. So far the opinion polls indicate there has been a shift away from supporting the Articles.

As for the talks that are taking place between Britain, the North and Dublin, it is clear that Britain has the Southern government firmly in its pocket. Dublin is openly siding with Britain and not even disputing partition. What is so astonishing is the way that Dublin not only accepts Britain's domination but seems openly to embrace it, without embarrassment.

Despite the confidence of the Irish establishment in attacking republicanism and even downgrading Irish nationalism, we should recognise the inherent limitations of this project. The unemployment crisis and the corruption scandals reveal the true nature of the Twenty-Six Counties. As a partitioned state, Ireland has not been allowed to develop into a fully-fledged capitalist nation. Ireland's subordination to Britain is still enforced via partition to this day.

Ireland is a Third World country. The chances of escaping the poverty of Irish society are slim. The new pro-Europeanism of the Irish ruling class cannot just magic away its real subordinate status within the world.



The Dublin GPO 1916 – the official government commemoration in 1992 took all of twelve minutes

NEW WORLD ORDER

ALEX FARRELL

THE SIX COUNTIES

In the last few years there have been major changes in the balance of forces in the Irish war. What are they? What lies behind them? How do they relate to changes in the wider world?

On the Loyalist side, there have been three main factors. First, the complete failure of their campaign to smash the Anglo-Irish deal of November 1985. Second, the preparedness of Dublin to dump its strictly symbolic claim to sovereignty over the Six Counties. And third, Britain's success in tightening the screws on the nationalist community, isolating Sinn Fein, and co-ordinating a murderous campaign of sectarian assassination.

Despite unprecedented scenes of Loyalists doing battle with their RUC colleagues on the streets, their failure to bury Hillsborough only served to emphasise their subordination to Britain, and led to the marginalisation of the Loyalist politicians. The so-called Loyalist veto was again exposed as a fiction. Popular support grew for the murder gangs and their sectarian killings.

The fact that the outcome of the Anglo-Irish deal was not reforms for nationalists but increased cross-border security collaboration alongside increased targeting of hardcore nationalist communities has reconciled many Loyalists to the Hillsborough agreement. Britain's targeting of republican activists, alongside the purely sectarian murder campaign, is seen by many Loyalists as a British concession to their demands for a more vigorous military campaign.

As for the Loyalist politicians, they are determined to be seen to be playing a major role in any talks on the future of 'Ulster', and to put behind them the shame they felt at their previous exclusion. With Articles 2 and 3 put up for sale by Dublin, the politicians have in their sights an historic prize with which to appease their disgruntled hardcore support. It's to achieve that goal that they're piling on the pressure.

On the nationalist side, the most important consequence of the Anglo-Irish deal was to squeeze Sinn Fein and promote the constitutional nationalists of the SDLP in its place. British strategy against the republican movement has had a number of prongs. Resources have been denied to groups regarded as subversive and channelled instead to the SDLP. Access to the media was cut off, depriving Sinn Fein of a significant voice in the Six Counties.

By targeting hardcore nationalist areas for repression, and easing off elsewhere, Britain began to drive a wedge beween different sections of the nationalist people. With the halt of Sinn Fein's forward dynamic, an element of war-weariness has become a significant factor.

The misnamed 'all party' talks have always been about excluding Sinn Fein, while promoting the idea that progress is only possible through political means and that political dialogue is only permissible on the basis of the IRA abandoning the military struggle. Sinn Fein argues in response that its own participation in the talks is the essential precondition for peace. Yet peace is in no sense the goal of the talks process. These are dangerous waters. It is 100% legitimate to expose the talks' anti-democratic character, summed up in the exclusion of the republican people's elected representatives. But even if Sinn Fein were invited to participate, it would be folly to expect a favourable outcome. The balance of forces is more in Britain's favour today than at any time in the last decade. And negotiations are always ultimately determined, not by right, but by might.

No British government would or could negotiate its own removal from part of what it claims to be its homeland, in the absence of massive and aggressive opposition to Britain's occupation not just in the Six Counties, but in the Twenty-Six Counties and in Britain itself. Regrettably the British state faces no such threat today.

Sinn Fein's approach to the talks is a symptom not only of their weaker position but of the change in the global balance of forces since the end of the Cold War. The republican movement is one of the few national liberation forces in the world still fighting. Elsewhere liberation movements have been climbing out of their fatigues and into business suits to negotiate away their independence and their stated goals.

In Namibia, SWAPO under combined pressure from the Soviet Union and the USA abandoned their armed struggle and accepted a fixed election which effectively left power in South African hands. In South Africa itself, the ANC is being used by de Klerk to hold back an all-out onslaught on the white regime by the black majority, and to redirect their anger to an acceptance of the capitalist system. In the Middle East, the PLO is sitting down at US-run talks with Israel, at which the most that could be achieved would be the formal partition of their country. These developments represent defeats-in-progress and can in no sense be celebrated or taken as a desirable model.

Britain's weakening position as an imperialist power makes it more dangerous and more determined to hold onto what it still has, yet at the same time more vulnerable. It is our responsibility in a difficult situation to build an opposition in this country that can take advantage of that vulnerability.



A rare sight in the New World Order – a liberation movement, still fighting

PHIL MURPHY

THE CHANGED SIGNIFICANCE OF THE IRISH WAR

The sea-change that has occurred over the last few years in the impact of the Irish war in British politics is well illustrated by an incident earlier this year at a British jail in Ireland – and by the response in Britain to that incident.

The event in Ireland took place in March in Maghaberry women's prison. The strip-searching of republican women prisoners has been a common British practice of assault since the early 1980s. What happened at Maghaberry represented a particularly brutal attack of this kind. All 21 republican prisoners were confined to their cells and over the course of ten hours each of them – in earshot of the others – were grabbed by groups of male and female prison warders in riot gear, forcibly held down and strip-searched. At least one of the prisoners was sexually assaulted as she was held down on the floor. Adding insult to injury, all 21 women prisoners were then charged with assaulting the prison warders.

Reaction in Britain to this violent incident was just about nil. The British authorities felt under so little pressure that, when almost three months later, Labour's Northern Ireland spokesman Kevin McNamara asked a question about strip-searching, he was just ignored.

The Maghaberry incident illustrates the renewed aggressiveness Britain has adopted in prosecuting its war against republicans. It shows too how the muted response in Britain to the war allows the British authorities a free hand to operate in such a manner. Ireland has virtually disappeared as a political issue on this side of the Irish sea. The British government today faces no domestic pressure over what it gets up to over there. Its attitude is now much more brazen and far less concerned about the public relations side of the war.

The British establishment now seems to believe that it can go beyond containment and having to put up with an 'acceptable level of violence' in Northern Ireland. It thinks that, with an appropriate mix of military repression and political initiatives, it can get a decisive result in Ireland and bring the war to an end on Britain's terms.

As a result we have seen the British authorities taking more initiatives in both the military and the political spheres. Militarily, they are upping the pressure on republicans with an extra 2000 troops on the ground. MI5 has been given formal authority to operate against the IRA throughout Ireland, Britain and Europe. At the political level Westminster is putting great effort into keeping the talks process alive. The authorities feel that they have gone a long way in marginalising the republican movement, and that excluding Sinn Fein from the talks will help them to take this further.

Why has Ireland all but disappeared as a political issue in Britain? And why has Britain adopted such an aggressive posture towards the republican movement? The changes cannot be fully explained by looking at developments internal to Ireland. They are more to do with the new world situation after the end of the Cold War. These global political developments have provided a catalyst for changing the terms of Irish politics.

The key international factor is the way that the collapse of the Soviet Union has given the imperialist powers a new lease of life in their dealings with the rest of the world. Without the Soviet Union acting as an alternative model and counterweight to the West, the imperialists have immeasurably more freedom to manoeuvre in pursuit of their interests. As a result anti-imperialist struggles have either ended or been put on the defensive, to the advantage of imperialism.

This has produced a new situation in Irish politics, North and South. Alongside the international agenda are the cumulative effects of trends that have been apparent for some time. They are the result of the changed balance of forces in the Irish war, in particular the perceived weakening of the challenge posed by the republican movement. It is the interaction of the new international balance favouring imperialism and the related political agenda in Ireland which has made the British authorities more confident in the war.

For all these reasons the Irish struggle today occupies a different place in British politics than during the first two decades of war. The British state may not face any immediate threat. Yet the Irish struggle retains its position as a challenge to British interests with respect to the fundamental issues of British national identity and the legitimacy of the British state. But with imperialism in its strengthened position at present, this represents more of a potential than an actual problem.

However on a broader canvas the Irish struggle has an enhanced importance. Imperialist domination and anti-imperialist resistance to it are not anachronisms as they are often portrayed. Rather we shall be seeing more bloody imperialist adventures in the New World Order. Consequently the forces of anti-imperialism will have to be built up anew.

Ireland has won a new relevance because it represents one of the few active anti-imperialist struggles in the world. Britain may be less constrained about unleashing the dogs of war in Northern Ireland, but the women prisoners in Maghaberry, and other hardcore republicans, declare themselves as having gone through too much to pack up now. They continue to resist. They remain an international focus for opposing all forms of Western imperialism around the world.



'Peacekeepers' on the runway, Gulf war 1991 – and there's more to come...



Stan Woods reports on the US election campaign

SICK BUSH AND SLICK WILLIE

The middle cadres of the Republican party were pretty relaxed as they opened up the floor discussion on the position of the Jews in the CIS. The Houston spectacle was flowing smoothly with only one potential flashpoint. This was a possible floor fight over the proposed draconian anti-abortion plank. But it was squashed before the opening gavel pounded.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the situation of Russian Jews was not of great interest. But then up popped one Rich Stoffel, an Alaskan delegate, who launched a tirade against the platform. Crude anti-Semitism? No. It was the phrase 'humanitarian aid' which incurred his wrath, on the grounds that it reflected 'secular humanism' and was therefore 'ungodly'! Stoffel fought hard, but saner reactionary heads finally prevailed.

But overall the God Squad and the likes of Stoffel dominated Houston. They were the motivating force behind the anti-abortion plank, the homophobic ravings of Pat Buchanan, the incessant babble about 'family values' and the downright ridiculous attacks on Hillary Clinton.

Hillary is in many ways an unlikely target for the right. A high-powered corporate lawyer, she opposed the Vietnam war, but like her husband has supported every imperialist adventure since. She was all for jettisoning any remnants of New Deal liberalism that still clung to life, if they threatened the Democrats' chances. But she is for a woman's right to choose, and she does look and talk like she belongs in the latter part of the twentieth century, unlike Marilyn Quayle, whom you could picture shreaking 'burn, burn, burn' in Salem a few centuries ago. So the attacks continue.

Stylistically the Democrats' Manhattan event was quite different. Far more blacks, Latinos and Jews. No exhortations to resurrect the Holy Inquisition. Openly gay politicians addressed the throng from the podium.

But behind the facade, there were far more similarities than differences. The homeless were swept off the streets around Madison Square Garden, so their dishevelled presence would not disturb the inner tranquillity of the delegates. Approximately a quarter of the New York police department cordoned off the entire convention area, to keep the thousands of trade union, abortion rights, gay rights and anti-war demonstrators at bay. And the day-to-day convention activities were every bit as antiseptically choreographed as Houston. Though admittedly with a secular bent.

Apart from the Democrats' rhetoric on women and gay rights, the platforms were equally reactionary on militarism, law and order and social policy. Many on the left dismiss the planks of the Clinton campaign as irrelevant details. But are they?

Bill Clinton first came to national attention when he was praised by Bush for his enthusiastic support of the terrorism of the Nicaraguan contras. Key officials of his Arkansas administration were involved in Colonel Ollie North's cocaine-for-guns network, with the almost certain knowledge of Slick Willie himself. After some minor doubts about Desert Shield, he threw himself fully behind the Storm. And since the temporary cessation of that slaughter, he has attacked Bush for not going 'all the way' in dismantling Iraq.

Clinton has also fired across Bush's right flank by denouncing any US attempts to interfere with the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. And he has put on board his campaign leading supporters of Israel's right-wing Likud party.

He has been governor of an anti-union state, and has consistently opposed even the most minimal labour gains. During the Democratic primaries, the Arkansas AFL-CIO issued a dossier detailing Clinton's openly pro-corporate record. Of course that has not stopped the national leadership of the AFL-CIO from dutifully climbing aboard the Clinton bandwagon.

> All their angst has never produced even one unambiguous verbal denunciation of British state terrorism

He is also for the death penalty, for shooting alleged looters in LA and has chided Bush for his 'timidity' in not diving into the Yugoslav conflict. Even on the abortion rights issue, he is seriously compromised by the bill he successfully pushed through the Arkansas state legislature, banning state funds for abortions.

He has made faint noises to suggest that he is opposed to the extradition of Joe Doherty back to Britain. But Democratic party politicians have often moved their lips like this before. New York City mayor David Dinkins and other Democrat politicians were 'troubled' by Joe Doherty's case. But they took no concrete steps to bring about his release during his nine long years of jail, let alone use their considerable political clout to prevent his extradition.

Ted Kennedy and many others were likewise 'disturbed' during the 1981 hunger strike, but all their angst has never produced even one unambiguous verbal denunciation of British state terrorism. Their moral outrage is reserved for the IRA and INLA, never Her Majesty's 'peacekeepers'. Words are cheap and that is about all supporters of Irish freedom can expect from the Democratic party.

As for Clinton, the only honourable thing he has done in his whole life is to write the now famous letter while a Rhodes scholar at Oxford. In it he denounced the Vietnam war, the draft and racism. But Clinton has made it perfectly clear that these progressive sentiments are now ancient history.

The temptation to hold your nose and vote for Clinton may be strong in the absence of any left-wing alternative. But if we are truly interested in social justice, be it in LA, Belfast or Baghdad, neither Sick Bush or Slick Willie can deliver it.

PEACEKEEPERS AND WARMONGERS

THE TRUTH ABOUT

Stuart Sharp examines the myths and realities of the Yugoslav war and argues that it is Great Power rivalries that are fuelling the conflict

According to Norman Tebbit, 'We've had British servicemen in Northern Ireland for 24 years trying to resolve a tribal conflict, and the tribal conflict in Yugoslavia is of a rather more difficult nature' (*Independent on Sunday*, 9 August 1992). Supporters of Irish freedom should be familiar with the inventiveness of the British propaganda machine when it comes to explaining away the nature of the conflict in Ireland. Now the Serbs are learning what it is like to be a victim of the same propaganda machine.

The propaganda war against the Serbs has revolved around three ideas: that the conflict is tribal, that it is rooted in ancient history and that the West can provide some sort of solution to the war. In fact, the tribalism argument is bogus, the conflict is entirely modern and the West is the problem, not the solution.

According to the *Daily Star*, 'Serb savages...forced mothers to drink the blood of their murdered children.' (4 August 1992) This is black propaganda of the worst kind. There is a long tradition of accusing one's enemies of cannibalism, in order to dehumanise them. All the newspapers have in recent weeks been full of graphic details of Serbian atrocities against their Croat and Muslim victims:

'I saw ten young men laid out in a row. They had their throats slit, their noses cut off and their genitals plucked out.' (*Guardian*, 5 August 1992)

And if that wasn't enough to make your toes curl, more frightening images were to come: 'the Serbian leadership – the last communist dictatorship left in Europe...[is] pressing ahead with an assault on the rights of man and minimal decencies of human society of a kind not seen in Europe since Hitler died in his bunker and Stalin died in his bed.' (*Independent*, 12 August 1992)

So, it seems that the Serbs are some sort of fascist tribe of bloodthirsty communists who would have invented concentration camps if the British hadn't beaten them to it, and who are out to purify Yugoslavia, using the 'ethnic cleansing' method. Not since Saddam Hussein dared to invade Kuwait have the Western powers been so hysterical in their condemnation of an antagonist.

We should put the propaganda war aside and ask ourselves what the war in Yugoslavia is really all about. Why have the Serbs been singled out for the bogeyman treatment? What should be the response of supporters of Irish freedom?

It is possible to go back over the history books and find examples from 750 years ago of religious battles between Serbs and Croats. During the Second World War, hundreds of thousands of Serbs were murdered by the fascist Croatian Ustasha regime. It is not difficult to imagine that some resentment lives on, if not from pre-modern times, then at least from the 1940s, between some Serbs and some Croats. But ancient religious rivalries are not to blame for the war in Yugoslavia any more than they are to blame for the war in Ireland.

The division between Protestants and Catholics in the Six Counties can be traced back to a period in history when religious identity was important in national and international affairs. But that division would not be sustained today were it not for the discrimination against the Catholic community which is maintained by the British occupation of Ireland at the end of the twentieth century. Resentment between the warring factions in the Balkans is not fuelled by memories of ancient feuds but by the new political situation existing today.

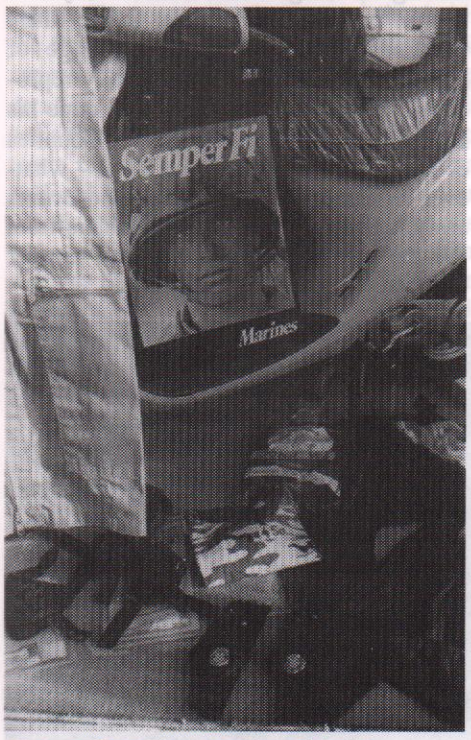
The Yugoslav federation was formed after the First World War, but Serbs and Croats have shared a common language and culture since the Vienna agreement of 1850. Under Marshal Tito, a Croatian Stalinist, Yugoslavia was one of the more stable of the Eastern European states. The richer republics in the north, Croatia and Slovenia, have for many years had close connections with German and Austrian industry. Market forces were able to infiltrate the Stalinist command economy long before the Berlin Wall came down. As the northern republics developed links with Western Europe, the republics in the south remained economically weak, landlocked and increasingly dependent on subsidies from Croatia and Slovenia. This led to a level of resentment on both sides. The unleashing of market forces across Yugoslavia since the collapse of Stalinism has accelerated the uneven development in the different republics.

Stalinist officials in Croatia and Slovenia have been promoting nationalist sentiment since the 1970s, as their system began to crumble, in an attempt to curry popular support for their regimes and secure their own regional power bases. But it is the interference of the major imperialist powers that lies at the heart of the current conflict. German recognition of Croatia's claim to national sovereignty transformed the conflict from a low-level local affair into an all-out bloody civil war. Likewise, America's recognition of Bosnia's declaration of independence in April this year has refocussed the war into that region. Croats, Serbs and Muslims, who have lived together peacefully in Bosnia for over 45 years, are now engaged in a bitter struggle.

The response of the different Western powers to the war in Yugoslavia can only be understood by looking at the state of international relations more generally in the post-Cold War era. The end of the Cold War has on the one hand undermined any opposition to imperialism and made it possible for the West to intervene around the world without having to face the slightest criticism. On the other hand, it has called into question America's authority on the world stage. There is no single power

YUGOSLAVIA





Above: Croatian combat chic in a Zagreb shop window, with signs of impending Western intervention. Top: the road to nowhere

capable of calling the shots as the USA could during the Cold War years. The lack of a clear pecking order among the imperialist powers has led to increasing rivalries and each has tried to seize on the Yugoslav conflict to enhance its international position.

None of the Western powers wanted Yugoslavia to fall apart; they were well aware that the conflict could escalate and spill over into other areas. But once Germany took the decisive leap to assert its political power and came out in support of Croatian independence, then the dynamic was towards disintegration. All the tensions between the different Western powers, that have surfaced since the end of the Cold War, gathered a new momentum as each one scrambled for influence and prestige against the others.

Germany, the emergent world power, was the first to seize on the Yugoslav conflict to enhance its authority in the New World Order. By unilaterally recognising Croatian and Slovenian sovereignty, Bonn asserted its right to a foreign and diplomatic policy independent of the USA. America, which had been caught cold by Germany's pro-Croatia moves, and which indeed had been slow to recognise Croatia and Slovenia so as not to enhance Bonn's authority, tried to win back some lost ground by taking the lead in demonising Serbia when the fighting shifted to Bosnia. France, which has lost its place in the old world order without finding a role in the new, has played a high-profile role in Yugoslavia, fearful as it is of being squeezed between the two major powers of Germany and the USA. Britain, the weakest of the major powers, has been reduced to hosting peace conferences (now chaired by David 'Bomb the Serbs' Owen) which have acted as a platform to isolate further Serbia. Every intervention by an imperialist power has served to escalate the conflict and to spread the fighting.

The media perception of this scramble for power is somewhat different. 'Public shock and outrage was forcing a reluctant Bush administration down the road towards...military intervention', claimed the *Guardian* (5 August 1992). This simply covers up the real driving force behind Western intervention in the Balkans: the intensifying struggle for world leadership between the imperialist powers.

As far as the Irish Freedom Movement is concerned, challenging imperialism in all its forms is part and parcel of building an effective opposition to British terror in Ireland. Western intervention cannot solve the problems facing people in the Balkans, in the Middle East, in Africa or in Ireland. In fact, the West's power games are to blame for the suffering of hundreds of millions of people across the globe. The urgent task that faces opponents of Britain's imperialist rule in Ireland is to challenge the right of the West to go 'peacekeeping' in other people's countries.



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Chris Ryder, The Ulster Defence Regiment: an instrument for peace? Mandarin, London, pbk £4.99 pp276

When the British government banned the UDA recently, many liberals – British and Irish – cynically pointed out that the sectarian murder gang would simply change its name to avoid prosecution. Unfortunately the same people aren't quite so sussed when it comes to name changes in the British military machine.

Over the years the name of the British militia set up for Northern Ireland Protestants to wreak terror on their Catholic neighbours has been changed many times. Originally, in 1913, it was called the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). After the First World War it became the Ulster Special Constabulary (commonly known as the B Specials). From 1970 it was known as the Ulster Defence Regiment, and now it has become the Royal Irish Regiment (after its merger with the Royal Irish Rangers).

The name changes have generally been in response to disquiet about the role of the force in terrorising Catholics. Each time the name changes, liberals swallow the government line that there will be no more atrocities since the 'new' organisation will be 'more closely integrated into the British military'. In the meantime the atrocities continue. These are initially put down to 'a few bad apples'. Some radical in London or Dublin then proposes that the militia is disbanded. Eventually London suggests that the body is further integrated into the British army and uses that as an excuse to change its name again. And so it goes on.

Chris Ryder, the author of *The Ulster Defence Regiment: an instrument for peace?,* is the Northern Ireland correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph.* Working closely with the intelligence services, Ryder has always been the first to 'scoop' the black propaganda stories about IRA godfathers issued by the security services. But his book is a fairly balanced assessment of the UDR's achievements and crimes since 1970. The preface reveals that 'regrettably, the UDR decided not to cooperate with me.' (page xiv) This is hardly surprising since Ryder has set up the UDR to carry the can for all death squad activities in Northern Ireland.

The aim of Ryder's book is to divert the blame for the death squads away from successive British governments and onto shadowy Loyalist paramilitaries who, says Ryder, have 'infiltrated' the UDR. During the scandal over 'collusion' between UDR members and Loyalists that ran throughout the summer of 1989, British ministers and journalists targeted these infiltrators as the prime threat to republicans. Crown forces collusion with Loyalist paramilitaries was investigated by John Stevens, the deputy chief constable of Cambridgeshire, who – unlike John Stalker – managed to cover up the role of the real controllers of the death squads, based as they are in Whitehall.

The Brian Nelson affair demonstrates that the real ringmasters are not Loyalist paramilitaries but British military intelligence

The Brian Nelson affair, publicised by the BBC's *Panorama* programme, demonstrated, however, that the real ringmasters are not Loyalist paramilitaries but British military intelligence. British intelligence sent Nelson into the UDA to take charge of its targeting of known republicans, using army information to carry out the assassinations. Another example of the real relationship between the establishment and the UDR is the notorious Armagh Four case. This concerned four UDR members set up by the RUC and the Northern Ireland judiciary to take the rap for the 'shoot to kill' assassination of republican Adrian Carroll in South Armagh in 1983 and sentenced to life imprisonment. The government evidently felt it safe to release three of the accused last month, now that it has also 'abolished' the UDR.

The main recommendation of the Stevens report published in May 1990 was to tighten up the UDR's recruiting procedures – supposedly to prevent further Loyalist infiltration. But Dublin wanted the UDR to be disbanded and refused to be fobbed off with this attempt to reform it. However, since the Southern authorities accepted Stevens' major premise – that collusion was caused by Loyalist infiltration of the UDR – they could not oppose London's next proposal (leaked in July 1991) to merge the UDR with the Royal Irish Rangers into a new British regiment.

Loyalist paramilitaries are only too happy to take the credit for encouraging members of the British army to kill Catholics. And the British government is eager to shift the blame as a means of reinforcing the image of the British army as a neutral peace-keeping force. In the finest traditions of British media coverage of Ireland, Chris Ryder's book loyally reproduces this myth. Ryder may well dupe his British readers but within the Six Counties everyone will know that the UDR – whatever its name – is an anti-Catholic British army regiment which receives orders from Westminster to harass, beat and murder Irish nationalists. *Andy Clarkson*



Top: the B Specials receive a Bogside welcome 1969.
Above: UDR killers on manoeuvres in the Border country 1991

Fiona Foster



Over a year ago I interviewed Tommy Brennan about his and detention under the PTA in London. I got to thinking about him the other day when I read with relief that the five Irish people lifted in August had been released without charge after seven days.

There were some similarities between the two stories. Like Tommy – arrested with his brother Michael, his sister Siobhan and her husband William – the latest PTA victims were grabbed amid a series of hysterical headlines announcing the seizure of arms and the capture of members of an IRA active service unit.

In Tommy's case, 10 people were arrested after the discovery of two cars packed with explosives on a Kilburn estate. The connection between the explosives find and the arrests was entirely a media creation. 'Anti-terrorist squad has seized London IRA bomb team' ran one headline in a national newspaper, failing to mention that most of the 10 were picked up on a Saturday night as they entered a well-known nightclub. Not one was found with explosives.

The media coverage of the August arrests followed a similar pattern. The story made the front pages of most of the tabloids. Headlines announced the seizure of 12 tons of bombs and the capture of an IRA gang. The *Daily Mail's* headline was typical: 'IRA horror plot foiled – five held as police seize 300lb bomb designed to cause carnage in West End'.

None of the 15 Irish people arrested in these two PTA pick-ups was ever convicted of any crime, but none of the media reports of their releases ever quite managed to exonerate them. The *Sun's* story of the five's release in August argued: 'The five were freed because of a foul-up between Britain's anti-terrorist squad and special branch, it was claimed last night.'

Tommy and his brother Michael were released without charge after seven days only to be rearrested and served with exclusion orders. Both were flown back to Northern Ireland handcuffed to anti-terrorist police officers. Tommy's sister Siobhan was not so lucky. She was charged with conspiracy to cause explosions and locked up on remand as an IRA terrorist suspect in Brixton prison. Four months later she was released, all charges against her dropped. Her release never made the press!

Siobhan's husband William was more unlucky still. Also charged with conspiracy, he was held in Brixton for over a year before a High Court jury declared him not guilty. What amazed Tommy Brennan about his own detention under the PTA was that the police never questioned him about any terrorist activity.

I'm telling you Tommy Brennan's story for two reasons. Firstly, to remind you that behind every PTA arrest statistic is a human story, an Irish person branded a 'terrorist suspect' and thrown back into a hostile society without apologies or retractions. Secondly, to emphasise an often misunderstood point – that the PTA, is not and never has been designed to prevent terror by catching so-called 'terrorists'.

The Paddington Green police do not release IRA suspects because they got the 'wrong people', or, as the *Sun* suggests, because they cocked up the evidence. The victims of the PTA are not IRA suspects at all. They are ordinary Irish people, pulled in under the PTA as a fundamental part of the British state's war against the Irish people. That the vast majority of people held are entirely 'innocent' is not an accident or a sign of incompetence on the part of the security forces. It is the aim of the PTA, its raison d'être.

Sadly, this point is missed by most commentators. Even many of those campaigning against the PTA do so on the basis that it is catching the wrong people and that it's in the interests of politicians to repeal the Act because the arrest of 'innocent' Irish people may alienate law-abiding sections of the Irish community.

This approach is fundamentally misguided and will never smash the PTA. As the former Labour home secretary Roy Jenkins pointed out, he introduced the PTA to 'stem the infection from Ireland'. The 'infection' was not just the IRA. After all, in 1974 there was (and still is) ample criminal law to arrest, charge and put away any IRA member for a very long time. No, the 'infection' targeted by the PTA was the disloyalty of the Irish people.

When in 1969 the Catholic working class exploded onto the streets of Northern Ireland in the civil rights movement, the British state realised they could not subdue this hostile community forever. They now have 32 000 armed men, special powers, torture centres and prison camps to suppress them, reflecting the state's terror of a people living within the borders of the United Kingdom who openly reject British authority, who give their votes to Sinn Fein, and who support the military defeat of the British state by the IRA.

While the British have marginalised the republican movement and gained the upper hand militarily over the IRA, they still live in fear of the potential threat from the significant anti-British community in the Six Counties.

The PTA is Britain's method of containing that threat within the Six Counties and of ensuring that Irish people in Britain never feel free to display the anti-British sentiment so evident in parts of Northern Ireland.

The PTA – and the arrests, detentions, frame-ups and exclusion orders associated with it – is a clear message to Irish people in Britain: 'keep your heads down, keep quiet about the war in Ireland, or pay the price.'

When the Guildford 4, Birmingham 6, and Maguire 7 and were released, all originally arrested under the PTA, critics attacked the establishment for jailing the wrong people. But, for the authorities, these were the right people: Irish people, well known in their communities, seen in Irish pubs and known to travel back and forth to Ireland. Absolutely typical of many of the Irish in Britain. The message was clear then, and it is now, that Irish people are foreigners in this country, that they should expect to be held in suspicion by everyone around them and act accordingly.

This message is reinforced after every IRA action in Britain when the police call on British people to be vigilant, to listen out for Irish accents and report the comings and goings of Irish neighbours.

Sadly, the PTA has been a highly effective weapon in silencing opposition to Britain's Irish war. Irish people who come to IFM meetings often admit they never talk about the war at work or with English friends. Tommy Brennan told me how he warned another brother still living in London to keep his head down and not show his anger at the treatment of four members of his family. Ironically, as Tommy knows, keeping your head down is no guarantee of safety from Britain's anti-Irish laws.

At a time when the British state is facing less opposition than ever at home and abroad, the active use of the PTA against the Irish community in Britain is a telling sign of its own weakness and fear that the disrespect for British authority shown by the Irish nationalists could 'infect' the British working class.

Campaigning against the PTA, not because it targets the wrong people, but because it is designed to criminalise all Irish people and drive a wedge between them and the British working class, is a vital part of the campaign for Irish Freedom.

THE BEECHMOUNT FIVE

The story of the Beechmount Five reveals the real face of British rule in Ireland, writes Phil Connor

Showing that the stick is still an indispensable part of its policy in the Six Counties, the British state is soon to put on trial five youths from the Beechmount area of Belfast. The teenagers have already spent eighteen months in Crumlin Road prison on remand and now face potential life sentences on frame-up charges. The five are charged with acting as look-outs during an IRA operation in the Beechmount area of Belfast in May 1991 in which a Sergeant Gillespie of the DMSU (the RUC's version of the SAS) was killed.

Four of the five, and in addition Damien Austin, son of a well-known Sinn Fein councillor, were arrested under the PTA shortly after the attack and held for periods of three to seven days. The fifth youth currently being charged was arrested in June – the RUC waited until he had turned 17, so it could hold him without his parents being present. All were subjected to beatings and threats against them and members of their families. One, a diabetic, was denied insulin.

Damien Austin lost nearly a stone in weight during his ordeal, in which he was repeatedly beaten and had a cigarette lighter flame placed under his genitals. He refused to sign a statement and eventually had to be released, although he was again picked up by the RUC in August and subjected to similar ill-treatment. By this stage Amnesty International had taken up his case and issued an Urgent Action Order on his behalf.

In the face of this sort of treatment, the other five signed statements concocted by the RUC. These statements are the sole basis of the 'evidence' against the five. None of the young men have any connections with organised republicanism or were anywhere near the scene of the attack. Each of the five can prove they were at work, college or home.

RUC officers made no attempt to check the alibis, since they knew perfectly well the youths were innocent and have even said so to republican activists in Belfast. The RUC has decided that someone will pay for the killing of Sgt Gillespie and has picked these five lads as scapegoats. Moreover the arrest, ill-treatment and framing of these five is designed to send a clear message to the nationalist community from which they come – 'the British state is in control and we can do what we like to you'. Of course the fact that the IRA was able in broad daylight to carry out the gun and mortar attack which killed the RUC officer, and continues to mount attacks in the very heart of Belfast, despite the massive numbers of British forces and the huge levels of surveillance technology, shows that the British state is far from fully in control.

Criticism by Amnesty International, the Committee for the Administration of Justice (the North's civil liberties council), and other human rights organisations, of the process of detention under the PTA and prolonged ill-treatment and threats which led to the five signing the RUC statements, has had little effect on the British government. Over the past eighteen months the British state's actions in the North have probably come under more scrutiny and criticism by human rights organisations than at any previous time – there have been two damning reports by Amnesty International, one by Helsinki Watch and criticism from the UN subcommittee on human rights.

The British government would certainly prefer not to have these criticisms, but it is not unduly concerned because it knows that such criticisms, by themselves, have no consequences. If there was a real opposition in Britain, one which did not accept Britain's right to be in Ireland, then such criticisms could help back the British government into a corner. However, the muted reaction in Britain to the revelations of frame-ups of Irish people, like the Guildford 4 and Birmingham 6, has given the Tories the confidence to ignore further allegations of maltreatment of Irish people and proceed with more frame-ups like the Beechmount Five.

While the British government puts on a great show of playing the honest broker, organising bogus peace talks in a country where it has no business to be in the first place, these cases are the real face of the British presence in the north of Ireland. If you are young and working class and live in a Catholic area, the British state sees you as a threat and someone to be dealt with at the earliest possible stage, in case you turn into an active rebel. This is what the Beechmount Five case is about.

At a time when the old opposition within British society has virtually disappeared, the nationalist people in the north of Ireland represent the only serious challenge to the British state. The refusal of people like Damien Austin and his friends to accept the authority of the British government provides an inspiration for all those opposing Tory rule in Britain.



Above: four RUC men wait for four republican lads to turn seventeen...

BUSINESS AS USUAL

The UDA seems to be undaunted by the ban announced by the British government in August. So why have the British media and Irish politicians welcomed the announcement as a historic break with the past? Chris Sweeney investigates

On 11 August Sir Patrick Mayhew, Britain's Northern Ireland secretary, banned the Ulster Defence Association, saying, 'I have taken this action because I am satisfied that the UDA is actively and primarily engaged in the commission of criminal, terrorist acts and so merits proscription.' Apparently Mayhew has had the UDA 'under review' since he came to office in May and has made the shock discovery that the group kills Catholics.

Far from being unaware of the UDA's 21-year campaign of terror against Catholics, successive British governments have authorised close collaboration between the British security forces and Loyalist paramilitaries. The government's ban on the UDA is a cynical gesture designed to reinforce the idea that the British state is an even-handed, neutral arbiter between two religious factions in the Irish conflict. The 'Business as Usual' notice in the window of the UDA's Belfast headquarters reflects their confidence that their allies in the security forces will do little to enforce this meaningless ban. After all, killing Catholics has never been legal in Northern Ireland but Loyalist gunmen have been getting away with it with the help of the British army for years.

The British media has dutifully echoed government statements that the ban was a reaction to the recent upsurge in Loyalist paramilitary killings, organised by a younger, more ruthless leadership and has assisted the government in its quest to present itself as non-partisan. 'The immediate effect of the ban', argued the *Guardian,* 'is largely political and designed to demonstrate that the government is as intent on dealing with Loyalist violence as with any other violence'. But we have only to look at the Brian Nelson case to see the close collaboration between Crown forces and the Loyalist death squads. Nelson's trial in January revealed that he was both a paid British army agent and a chief intelligence officer for the UDA. British military intelligence recruited Nelson to target and organise the murders of at least 17 nationalists between 1987 and 1990. And Brian Nelson is by no means unique.

The British security forces have been directing the activities of the UDA at different levels ever since its formation in September 1971. Dave Fogel, a founder and leading member of the UDA, worked as a British army agent for two years in the early 1970s when murders of nationalists reached their peak. During the same period British agent Albert Baker and his 'Romper Room' gang carried out some of the UDA's most horrific murders. Baker's victims were beaten, tortured, then mutilated before being shot. Baker described these murders as 'designed to fit into the British intelligence plan to terrorise the nationalist community and push off support for the IRA'.

In this fashion a consistent division of labour was established between the official and unofficial wings of British terrorism in Ireland. There is plenty of evidence of joint membership of the security forces and of the UDA. Former Ulster Defence Regiment commandant Brigadier David Millar once said that if he sacked soldiers just because they belonged to a Loyalist paramilitary group then he would have no regiment left.

Ordinary Loyalists have looked to the UDA to defend their community's privileged access to jobs, housing, and political influence, against the 'disloyal' Catholic community. Loyalists saw any change in the status quo as a threat to their position which could potentially benefit Catholics.

In the early 1970s the emergence of the national liberation struggle made the UDA a mass popular organisation claiming 30 000 members within its own community. In May 1974, during the Ulster Workers Council strike which brought down 'power-sharing', it was the UDA which provided the muscle for the Loyalist shop stewards movement. But even then the UDA's success was dependent on support from the British army. 'The army chose quite deliberately to give the UDA tacit support' observed one British commander. 'The UDA virtually ran East and North Belfast...the army decided that it was right and that it knew best and the politicians had better toe the line'. Today, with the nationalist movement on the defensive the British authorities feel confident enough publicly to distance themselves from Loyalism.

Banning the UDA has a number of advantages for the British government at this time. It will assist in the campaign to marginalise Sinn Fein by appearing to concede to a long-time demand of the SDLP and the Dublin government. It will also be a useful bargaining tool to win concessions from Dublin in the current talks convened by Britain about the future of the North.

Mayhew's uncharacteristic acknowledgement that Sinn Fein is a political group with electoral support is designed to tempt sections of the republican movement into distancing themselves from the armed struggle as a means of gaining a hearing from Britain. This aspect was welcomed in an *Irish Times* editorial on the UDA ban: 'A time may now come when members of Sinn Fein and the UDA may choose to go down the political road and finally see the sense of abandoning support for violence and joining in the rebuilding of Northern Ireland'.

But by far the most significant aspect of the ban on the UDA is the 'neutral arbiter' status with which it endows the British state. In reality Britain created and sustains Loyalism as a means of securing British rule in a foreign country whose population has consistently sought independence. Britain has always relied on and aided the murderous activities of the Loyalist gangs as one arm of the British military machine; banning the UDA will not change this.

That the cynical gesture of a ban on the UDA has been widely welcomed as a signal of the end of the shady connections between the British and Loyalist killers is testament to the strength of British propaganda. To undermine Britain's propaganda machine, we need to explain the fundamental relationship between Loyalism and the British presence in Ireland and to ask people the question: what right does Britain have to decide which groups are allowed to exist in a foreign country?



Loyalist marchers unimpressed by the ban on the UDA

WAR DIARY

COMPILED BY AUSTIN CAMERON

JUNE

■ **Friday 12 June** IRA volunteers fire 15 rounds at a British army patrol as it leaves New Barnsley barracks, Belfast.

■ **Saturday 13 June**
A hoax bomb alert from the IRA closes all London's mainline rail stations for two hours.
IRA volunteers phone hoax warnings to four pubs and clubs in Belfast city centre. As Crown forces respond, volunteers attack Springfield Road RUC barracks in West Belfast, lobbing a blast bomb into the rear of the building.
In England, police evacuate 35 000 shoppers from Gateshead Metrocentre – Europe's largest indoor shopping precinct – in order to search stores for incendiaries.

■ **Sunday 14 June** A UVF gang abandons a mid-morning attack on a house in the nationalist enclave of Newington, North Belfast, after being attacked by two dogs. Residents pelt their getaway car with milk bottles.
A 2lb IRA bomb damages the Belfast-Dublin railway line.

■ **Monday 15 June**
In London, an IRA bomb explodes in a hijacked mini-cab damaging nearby buildings.

■ **Tuesday 16 June**
An incendiary device explodes in Belfast's North Street, followed by an anti-personnel device at a nearby bank. The second explosion catches a passing RUC/ Army patrol, injuring four UDR and one RUC member.

■ **Wednesday 17 June**
Several hoax alerts in Belfast close city centre railway stations and disrupt Crown forces who have to deal with hoax devices outside a number of army/RUC bases across the city.

■ **Thursday 18 June** South Fermanagh Brigade IRA fire over 100 rounds at an army foot patrol at Lackey.

■ **Friday 19 June**
A proposed Orange Order march around the nationalist New Lodge area of North Belfast is diverted due to an IRA hoax bomb alert.
In the early hours of the next morning however, a young woman is attacked by Loyalists with iron bars outside her house in the same area.

■ **Saturday 20 June**
The IRA's Tyrone Brigade fire a number of shots at the home of a serving British army captain near Pomeroy.

■ **Sunday 21 June**
At 4am Tyrone volunteers fire 40 rounds at Dungannon RUC barracks; no fire is returned.
An RUC man escapes injury while on patrol in Benburb, County Tyrone, when an improvised grenade lands at his feet but fails to detonate.

■ **Tuesday 23 June**
An IRA bomb in Arthur Street, Belfast city centre, injures 10 RUC personnel, some seriously.
A Loyalist gang attacks a nationalist home in Ladbroke Drive in Ardoyne, North Belfast, firing around 30 shots into the house. The shooting take place in full view of an army observation tower at the Oldpark Road RUC barracks, notorious for 'losing' security montages of suspected republicans. The RUC takes more than three hours to attend the scene.

■ **Wednesday 24 June**
Hoax devices in commandeered vehicles are left on several major roads across Belfast, causing severe disruption.
IRA volunteers fire over 50 shots at a British army observation post on top of Templar House high rise block in New Lodge, Belfast.

■ **Thursday 25 June**
For the fifteenth time in six months, the IRA detonate a bomb in the City of London, this time under a car in Coleman Street between the Bank of England and the Guildhall, close to the Chase Manhattan Bank.

■ **Friday 26 June** A 10lb bomb placed near Belfast law courts fails to detonate.
Two mortars fail to detonate when fired on an RUC armoured car in Lisnaskea, South Fermanagh.

■ **Saturday 27 June**
A limpet mine placed on the roof of an RUC armoured car at a security barrier in Belfast's High Street seriously injures the two occupants.

■ **Monday 29 June**
A Belfast active service unit opens fire on a British army foot patrol as it moves through the Twinbrook/Poleglass area.

■ **Tuesday 30 June**
The Ulster Defence Regiment merges with the Royal Irish Rangers to become the Royal Irish Regiment.

JULY

■ **Wednesday 1 July**
A 1lb bomb destroys a junction box at Belfast's main rail station, disrupting trains for three days.
The IRA execute three informers – Gregory Burns, Aiden Starrs and John Dignam – who had admitted working as British intelligence agents over a long period; they had murdered Burns' girlfriend whom they feared was about to expose them to the IRA.
Tyrone volunteers place a small bomb on top of a flagpole in Stewartstown, as RUC members cut down Irish flags in preparation for an Orange Order parade; the device fails to detonate.

■ **Sunday 5 July** Loyalists beat Catholic Kieran Abram to death on the Falls Road, in full view of security cameras and British soldiers at the main gate of North Howard Street barracks.
A Loyalist gang fires at a group of elderly men outside the Chinese take-away on the Lower Ormeau Road in Belfast.

■ **Tuesday 7 July**
Fifty-one year-old teacher Cyril Murray is shot and killed by the UDA at his sister's East Belfast home off the Newtownards Road.
Belfast volunteers throw two hand grenades at security forces investigating a commandeered van outside Henry Taggart army barracks.

■ **Saturday 11 July**
IRA volunteers fire 40 rounds at an army checkpoint on the edge of Ardoyne.
Tyrone volunteers fire a directional mortar at a three-man armoured RUC patrol car but the firing mechanism fails.

■ **Sunday 12 July**
IRA volunteers fire twenty-five rounds at a British army cordon in Ardoyne.
In West Belfast's Iveagh area another cordon is attacked with 20 rounds.
IRA volunteers place a 1lb bomb under the car of two top UVF members in North Belfast.

The IRA's Belfast Brigade ask parents to keep their children away from Crown forces in the area after having to abandon a small anti-personnel mine which they were ready to detonate but for the presence of children whenever security forces members were within its range.

■ **Monday 13 July** An army sniffer dog dies when it triggers the last of three bombs left on the Belfast railway line; its handler needs hospital treatment.

■ **Wednesday 15 July** Three incendiary devices explode in the Balmoral golf club, used by Crown forces members, causing extensive damage.

■ **Thursday 16 July** An anti-personnel mine explodes outside the Drumkeen Hotel, which is frequently used by members of the security forces, as soldiers investigate a hoax bomb.

■ **Tuesday 21 July** Incendiaries explode in the Yorkgate shopping complex in Belfast.

An army/RUC foot patrol escapes injury when an improvised grenade fails to detonate in Grosvenor Court, Belfast.

■ **Friday 24 July** Traffic on the Dublin-Belfast line is disrupted after a 1lb bomb explodes.

■ **Monday 27 July** IRA volunteers fire 50 rounds at a Royal Irish Regiment vehicle checkpoint beside Belfast's law courts.

■ **Tuesday 28 July** Volunteers drop two blast bombs onto the roof of an army observation post at Fort Whiterock in Belfast.

Nationalist Gerard McKenna and his family escape unhurt after the UDA attacks their home in Springfield Park.

■ **Thursday 30 July** Eight incendiaries are placed in a shopping centre in Milton Keynes, two of which explode.

■ **Friday 31 July** A Loyalist gang attacks two nationalist houses in West Belfast's Distillery Walk, firing 13 shots and throwing a hand grenade, which fails to detonate, through a bedroom window.

AUGUST

■ **Monday 3 August** Two huge car bombs in Belfast's Bedford Street injure five civilians, 14 RUC members and four soldiers.

A British soldier dies in an IRA ambush of a mobile patrol as it enters Girdwood barracks in New Lodge Road, North Belfast.

■ **Tuesday 4 August** Belfast volunteers fire 60 rounds at a mobile patrol entering Henry Taggart barracks in Springfield Road.

■ **Thursday 6 August** South Down IRA volunteers attack a new British army post at Cloghogue in Newry with five mortars, two of which fail to detonate.

■ **Sunday 9 August** A man in Newry, County Down suffers a broken collar bone and a severe chest wound after being hit by a plastic bullet fired by a British army patrol

■ **Monday 10 August** The IRA's Belfast Brigade detonates a bomb on the Dublin-Belfast railway line, damaging the line and a passing goods train.

The British government bans the UDA.

■ **Tuesday 11 August** An IRA blast bomb aimed at a mobile patrol in Ardoyne, North Belfast fails to explode.

■ **Wednesday 12 August** The IRA's West Tyrone Brigade engages two army foot patrols in Strabane's Bridge Street and escapes unhurt despite being followed by two low-flying army helicopters which fire at them with heavy machine guns.

Hundreds of Crown forces descend on Strabane, raiding more than 700 houses, mainly on the Ballycolman estate.

In Belfast, an active service unit fires 32 rounds at a British armoured personnel carrier as it enters Henry Taggart barracks.

■ **Friday 14 August** Loyalist bandsmen attack Catholic homes and shops and desecrate graves during and after an Orange Order march in Maghera, County Derry.

■ **Saturday 16 August** Several British soldiers are injured after a blast grenade explodes at the back of a British armoured personnel carrier in Belfast.

■ **Monday 18 August** Jimmy Brown, leading member of the Irish People's Liberation Organisation is shot dead in his car, during a visit to Belfast from Dublin, by an IPLO splinter group.

■ **Wednesday 20 August** A blast incendiary at Belfast's Finaghy North railway station causes extensive damage; hoax calls to other stations caused further disruption.

An army technical officer is injured trying to defuse a booby-trapped grenade near the Grosvenor Road roundabout close to Belfast city centre.

Volunteers detonate an anti-personnel mine as an army foot patrol passes by on the Lower Ormeau Road, Belfast; official reports of two paras being slightly injured are contradicted by witnesses who say that at least one soldier was either killed or critically injured.

An IRA bomb fails to detonate outside the Northern Bank in Cookstown, County Tyrone.

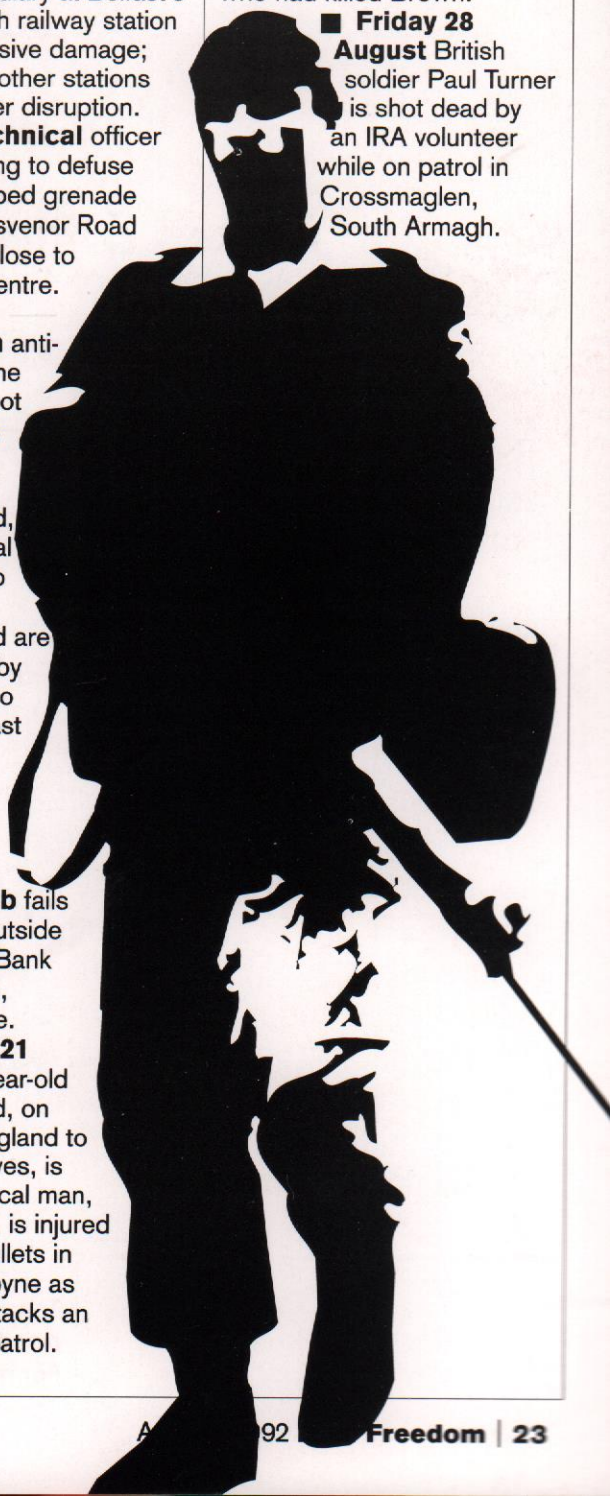
■ **Thursday 21 August** 41 year-old Isobel Leyland, on a trip from England to visit her relatives, is killed and a local man, Jimmy Clarke, is injured by sniper's bullets in Belfast's Ardoyne as an IRA unit attacks an army mobile patrol.

■ **Monday 24 August** IRA volunteers lob a blast grenade at an army mobile patrol in the Twinbrook estate, Belfast, injuring at least one soldier.

■ **Tuesday 25 August** A number of IRA incendiaries cause extensive damage to commercial premises in Shrewsbury, England and to the Shropshire Regiment's military museum and archive in Shrewsbury Castle.

■ **Thursday 27 August** Hugh McKibben, who had been a pall-bearer at the funeral of IPLO leader Jimmy Brown, is shot dead on a Gaelic football supporters' bus by the same IPLO faction who had killed Brown.

■ **Friday 28 August** British soldier Paul Turner is shot dead by an IRA volunteer while on patrol in Crossmaglen, South Armagh.



The Irish Freedom Movement presents

A short course in fighting for freedom in a changing world

Thursday 22 October 1992 7.30pm
BRITISH WARS & BRITISH PROPAGANDA
How **they** get **us** to support **their** wars
Speaker: Mick Hume editor *Living Marxism*

The British establishment presents itself as a bastion of civilisation and democracy. Yet Britain's armed forces have been in combat abroad every year bar one in the last 50 years. Today their 'peacekeeping' adventures multiply, but they face little domestic opposition. Why is this? What can be done about it?

Thursday 29 October 1992 7.30pm
NATIONAL RIGHTS & NATIONAL MOVEMENTS
Mad, bad and dangerous to know?
Speaker: Alex Farrell national organiser IFM

The Cold War is over – but where is the 'Peace Dividend' they promised? Where is the fading-away of national rivalries? Instead we see the proliferation of conflict and wars, and the emergence of one national movement after another. What should we support and what should we oppose, and why?

Thursday 5 November 1992 7.30pm
BRITISH IMPERIALISM & HOW TO FIGHT IT
Senile & dangerous in a dog-eat-dog world
Speaker: Fiona Foster editor *Irish Freedom*

As the British economy goes down the tubes, the British establishment uses its military strength to compensate for its decline. How has foreign military intervention been so dramatically rehabilitated? Where is the opposition? How do we build one?

Where
Caxton House
St Johns Way
Archway
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How much
£5 for all three meetings
£2 for each meeting

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