

IRISH FREEDOM

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TALKING
PEACE
MAKING
WAR

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Talking peace means making war

- This issue of *Irish Freedom* is devoted to showing that the current peace process is a sham. While we all want peace in Ireland, the Irish Freedom Movement opposes the sham peace process because it cannot deliver the peace with justice that Irish nationalists have struggled for over the past 25 years.
- Our feature on collusion shows that despite the expressions of outrage from British politicians after every Loyalist attack, the British security forces have actively cooperated with Loyalist death squads in their murderous attacks.
- Our eye-witness account of the military invasion of the small nationalist town of Crossmaglen shows that far from preparing to leave Ireland, the British are reinforcing their military strength and rebuilding the forts and barracks created to suppress the opponents of British rule in Ireland.
- Combined with the features reporting on new laws taking away our right to protest and the campaign by the authorities in Edinburgh to silence support for Irish freedom, this issue of *Irish Freedom* proves that the British government is talking peace while making war.

The Irish Freedom Movement's main role at this time is to work relentlessly to expose the real motives behind the so-called peace process. It is nothing more than Britain's latest attempt to win the Irish War by disarming its opponents through bogus talk of its commitment to peace. And it is about time more of us started to say so.

Irish Freedom is edited by *Fiona Foster*. It is written by supporters of the Irish Freedom Movement and we welcome the views and comments of our readers.

The 'peace process' is to blame

When Loyalist thugs opened fire on fans watching the coverage of the Ireland v Italy match in a bar at Loughinisland, County Down, the slaughter shocked people around the world. British prime minister John Major took advantage of this mood when he described the six killings as 'a vicious and depraved act of brutality'. He used the deaths to declare pompously: 'whether it is so-called Loyalists murdering Catholics or the IRA murdering Loyalists, it is equally indefensible by any measure.' But what right do British politicians have to lecture people in Ireland about sectarian killings?

These deaths are the inevitable outcome of the so-called peace process, for which these British politicians are primarily responsible. The ultimate blame for the Loughinisland killings rests with the godfathers in Westminster and Whitehall.

Unfortunately too few people in Britain, and in many parts of Ireland, recognise the role of the British authorities in promoting sectarian violence in the Six Counties. While many people here remain concerned and moved by the continuing carnage in the North of Ireland, the responsibility of successive British governments is rarely highlighted. On the contrary, people look on Britain's intervention as part of the solution rather than the problem.

The belief that Britain is keeping the peace in Northern Ireland has been reinforced recently by the way the authorities pursue their interests under the guise of a 'peace process'. The benevolent motives of British politicians are taken for granted when they mix their pious condemnations of 'senseless violence', with their professed hopes of being able to take the peace process forward.

Contrast the official British reaction to these recent killings with their reaction to earlier spates of Loyalist violence.

Loyalists have been responsible for almost a third of the deaths over the past 25 years in Ireland. Terrorising Irish nationalists in the North has served British interests well in the past. That is why there has been direct collusion between Loyalist paramilitaries and British soldiers, policemen and intelligence officers. And that is why British politicians in the past have excused Loyalist violence by saying that it is only a reaction to the IRA. Even when the British courts finally caught up with the 'Shankill Butcher' Lenny Murphy, who tortured as many as 30 Catholics to death, the most they were willing to charge him with was the possession of an offensive weapon. (Small wonder that Murphy's execution by the IRA was one of its most popular acts of rough justice.)

But today, Britain's domination of the situation in Ireland means that it can afford to offend its Loyalist assistants of old. Recently the government's statements on killings have been more even-handed, like John Major's statement on the Loughinisland massacre. This appearance of balance helps the government to sound more genuine, sincere and worthy of support in its supposedly peaceable efforts in Ireland.

Britain has now even floated the idea of letting the SAS loose against Loyalists for the first time (*Sun*, 21 June 1994). This can help to reassure people—especially in the North—who harbour doubts about the use of the shoot-to-kill ambush squads which were previously directed exclusively against republicans. It does not matter if the SAS never get round to attacking the Loyalists as the *Sun* promises—even the idea of the SAS blowing away today's Lenny Murphys looks better for Britain, than the IRA doing the business.

The high moral ground that the British have assumed with respect to recent violence in Ireland both reflects and accentuates the unfavourable balance of forces facing Northern nationalists today. The government's sanctimonious preaching reflects the strength of imperialism: Britain feels confident about going in for the kill, both ideologically and practically. The authorities feel confident about marginalising and containing the last spasms of nationalist resistance.

What is more, Britain's high moral tone accentuates its advantage. Anything that strengthens illusions that real peace may be on the cards has a debilitating effect on nationalists. If the government can engineer a positive identification with the 'peace process', then confusion and resignation among Northerners is bound to be compounded.

Anti-imperialists in Britain have the duty of exposing the peace process as a dangerous sham. The peace process is designed to stabilise imperialist interests in Ireland by pressurising the Irish people to give up entirely on the pursuit of freedom. The Irish peace process is on a par with, though at an earlier stage than, the tragedies unfolding alongside the 'peace processes' in South Africa and Palestine.

The current escalation of violence is one of the first products of the Irish peace process. The terms offered by the British are nowhere near, and can be nowhere near, real freedom. They leave the underlying injustice of British political oppression intact. But despite the formal nature of any likely political or constitutional changes, this process does destabilise the existing arrangements.

In particular, by trying to neutralise and even normalise the republican movement, the peace process undermines the current, superior position of Britain's traditional local agents, the Loyalists. What limited status they used to earn for carrying out some of Britain's dirty work—their privileges over Catholics—seems to them to be at risk in any settlement. The peace process was therefore bound to provoke a backlash from those with the greatest stake in the status quo. The increase in Loyalist violence was therefore entirely predictable and will get worse. The end result is that an arrangement which does nothing positive for nationalists is creating a backlash among Protestants.

Meanwhile among nationalists the illusions that some form of victory is in the air—illusions fostered by the republican leadership—can only reinforce popular demoralisation and disorientation in the longer run. Already it has a demobilising effect and blunts anti-British popular aspirations, robbing nationalists of their sense of purpose and direction. Not only does this demobilisation worsen the susceptibility of nationalists to Loyalist terror, but it also opens the possibility of retaliatory violence against Protestants.

The more that Britain seems to be a neutral arbiter in the conflict, the more that the Loyalists seem to be the main threat to the nationalists—as well as being the major barrier to their hopes for the future. So far the Northern nationalists have shown remarkable restraint, but the chance of some real sectarian violence on their part cannot be ruled out in today's uncertain and ambivalent political circumstances.

Our job, therefore, is to expose and challenge the peace process for what it is—an act of continued British rule. There can be no peace without freedom.

Ireland since the Downing Street declaration



The Joint Declaration issued by British prime minister John Major and Irish Taoiseach Albert Reynolds at Downing Street in December

1993 marks a new phase in the struggle between Britain and its oldest colony. The declaration brought to a close the first stage of the 'peace process' which began with the launch of Sinn Féin's document 'Towards a lasting peace' in February 1992 and continued with talks between Gerry Adams and SDLP leader John Hume.

So far the republican movement has been lukewarm in its response to the declaration. As it stands, the declaration is probably insufficient to secure a ceasefire from the IRA. Within the nationalist community as a whole, the mood is one of rejection and disappointment. However, the immediate response should not blind us to the scale of the change. Fundamental shifts have taken place which make a return to the old patterns of conflict impossible.

The central dynamic of the Irish 'peace process' is towards a restructuring of the conflict which has raged between

Britain and the Irish republican movement for nearly a quarter of a century. There is no question whatsoever of Britain withdrawing and leaving Ireland in peace. No doubt British ministers are sick of Ireland and would probably like to wash their hands of it, but there is no likelihood that the establishment is about to dismantle its own state because of the embarrassment and inconvenience caused by Ireland. Nor is there any question of the 'peace process' bringing the peace which everybody, the nationalist people in particular, so desperately wants. In fact, because of the way that it destabilises the very fragile political balance built up over 25 years and more, the 'peace process' can unleash a new and more ferocious violence, especially from the Loyalist community.

Finally, it is time we recognised that the 'peace process' will not bring about the freedom for which so many fought and gave their lives. What the IRA has failed to win on the field of battle, Sinn Féin has no chance of winning at the negotiating table. There is no avoiding the grim reality that the

'peace process' represents a historic defeat for the liberation movement.

Talking peace, making war

Despite the interminable wrangling over ceasefires and clarifications, the basic elements of a negotiated settlement between the British and the republican movement are already in place. The Irish 'peace process' has already acquired an air of inevitability and appears to be following the same pattern of similar agreements between FW De Klerk and Nelson Mandela in South Africa, and Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat in Palestine. That such agreements should be held up as a model for Ireland indicates the scale of the problem. In both South Africa and the Middle East, liberation movements have been integrated and tamed at a heavy cost in lives. Let's look at the bloody pattern of peace in a little more detail.

One of the key features of the Irish 'peace process' is the way that it tries to integrate the republican movement into the existing political structures. The Downing

John Major and the Irish Taoiseach Albert Reynolds agreeing to differ—with bloody consequences in Northern Ireland

SEAN GREEN EXPLAINS THE DANGERS BEHIND THE PEACE TALKS

Street declaration is the first political initiative by the British government in the past 25 years which is directly addressed to the republican movement. In return for an IRA ceasefire, the British and Irish governments are committed to giving Sinn Féin a place at the negotiating table—within three months according to informal assurances. This strategy of directly appealing to the republicans to give up the gun and join the political process contrasts with previous British initiatives in Ireland since 1969. Both the Sunningdale agreement in 1973 and the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 aimed to isolate republicanism and to strengthen the middle ground of constitutional nationalism.

There is a striking similarity between this shift in British strategy and the agreements struck between old adversaries elsewhere. In November 1990, the South African government reversed its 30-year policy of demonising the ANC, released Nelson Mandela from prison, and embarked on a negotiated settlement which culminated in the election of Mandela as South African president in May of this year.

Similarly, in September 1993, the Israeli government turned off its 30-year hate campaign against the PLO, and turned that organisation into a regional government. Those who argue that the British government and the IRA will never come to an agreement should reflect on these dramatic reversals.

The drift of the Irish 'peace process', like those in South Africa and the Middle East, is towards the integration of the opposition into the existing colonial structures. As such, it removes the old conflict, but not the cause. As a glance at South Africa or the Middle East reveals, such strategies of integration lead to more violence, not less.

The massacre of over 30 Palestinians at a mosque in Hebron by an Israeli settler in February shows the dangers of so-called peace deals which restructure conflicts without removing the underlying causes. While the talks between the Israeli government and the PLO have gained nothing by way of granting Palestinian national rights, they have inflamed the fears of the Jewish settlers who feel that their special position is under threat. For more

than 25 years the settlers on the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been on the front line of the war between Israel and the PLO. Their sense of betrayal is hardly surprising given that the old enemy is now being courted as a partner in peace. The parallels with Northern Ireland where well-armed Loyalists are also frightened and angry are both clear and ominous.

In South Africa, the period since Mandela's release has been one of the bloodiest in the country's history. Fifteen thousand blacks have been slaughtered as the government has succeeded in turning the liberation struggle into a black civil war. Mandela's presidential theme 'One nation, many cultures' sounds as much of a ratification of that civil war as an attempt to overcome it.

Loyalist violence in Northern Ireland has escalated because the 'peace process' suggests, falsely, that some major change to the status quo is in prospect. By the end of May, 19 people had been killed by Loyalist gangs in Ireland this year, including a doorman, who later turned out to be an IRA volunteer, killed ►

in Dublin following a bungled attempt to blow up a republican social event. Even by Loyalist standards, recent killings have been particularly indiscriminate and brutal. In March, a Protestant woman was beaten senseless and shot repeatedly in the face by Loyalists who mistook her for a Catholic after she wandered into a drinking club in East Belfast. The physical decay of old Protestant communities as a result of Northern Ireland's long and uninterrupted recession seems to be combining with a renewed fear of betrayal to produce a deadly cocktail. The Catholic death-toll at the hands of the Loyalist gangs for 1994 is matching that for 1993, which was itself the highest since 1975—the last time before this year that the IRA called a truce.

There is a direct link between the 'peace process' and the violence which accompanies it. Because of the way it destabilises the existing political balance, it unleashes a cycle of killing which will not abate until imperialist rule is stabilised. That is quite apart from the secret war which the British Army wages against the nationalist people through its extensive links with the Loyalist gangs. The security forces will maintain their already high level of physical intimidation in order to demoralise the nationalist people as a whole. However, the reaction to the killing only makes matters worse.

The universal and immediate response to a particular atrocity is to declare the 'peace process' dead, killed by the 'extremists' on both sides. In the aftermath of the Shankill bombing by the IRA in November, which was a response to months of killing by the Loyalist gangs, virtually every commentator declared that the 'peace process' had no hope of success. The universal second response is to call for the speeding up of the 'peace process' on the grounds that abandoning it would be giving in to terrorism. Given that it is the 'peace process' which is inflaming the situation in the first place, speeding it up is like using petrol to put out a fire.

Even if the Loyalist backlash abates, what could 'peace' mean. Britain has no intention of leaving Ireland; the British Army is digging in for good, with plans to rehouse the families of 7000 troops across the region, while intensifying its presence on the ground. In Crossmaglen, there are now reputed to be three soldiers to every civilian. Permanent 'sangars' have been built on all roads leading into the town. As for the soldiers who search and intimidate the people of the area, they seem unaware of any new spirit of peace, let alone withdrawal.



As on previous occasions when Britain and the IRA have engaged in talks, the government is talking peace and even withdrawal, while making war. In secret talks with republican leaders since 1990, British representatives have insisted that they have no interest in staying in Ireland and that only Unionist intransigence is holding up the 'peace process'. In one exchange in talks near Derry in March 1993, a British representative asserted that 'Unionists will have to change; this island will be as one' ('Setting the record straight—Sinn Féin's record of the communications between Sinn Féin and the British government', October 1990—November 1993, p28).

The Labour government gave similar assurances during the 1975 ceasefire. Such assurances are part of a policy intended to confuse the republicans, draw them into a dialogue and destroy any resistance to British rule, either through force of arms, or by winning a permanent end to resistance. In 1975, the republican movement was stronger and more confident of victory than it is today. Yet the duplicity of the Labour government came close to destroying the liberation struggle. In circumstances where the balance of forces is much more unfavourable to the republican movement than it was in 1975, and the movement appears willing to

make compromises which it would never have contemplated in the past, the effect of such duplicity could be devastating. In that sense the 'peace process' is no more than war by other means. It offers Britain the chance of victory through negotiation where a military victory has so far eluded them.

PC war

One of the features of the 'peace process' which has caused immense confusion but elicited little comment is the language in which both government and Sinn Féin frame their statements. The Downing Street declaration is written in the language of the social worker, with its talk of respecting the diverse traditions, promoting reconciliation and suggesting that it is up to the Irish people to exercise their right to self-determination 'fully and freely given'. It would seem that the Irish people can now do whatever they like, so long as they respect each other's traditions and identities.

The call to respect different cultures and traditions is a dangerous deceit. In effect it is a call to accept what exists, and to repudiate any attempt at change. The way in which a political conflict between Britain and Ireland has been reinterpreted as a cultural conflict between two intolerant identities is a major victory in Britain's propaganda war. For years the British tried to make out that the conflict was an irrational one which they had the onerous duty to police. That argument never entirely worked because it was too transparently apologetic and anti-Irish. But the same argument can be won now because it is expressed not in the language of superiority, but in the trendy argot of cultural identity.

Ireland, so the argument goes, consists of two rich and diverse cultures, Unionist and nationalist, both of which should be respected and nourished. The value of this argument is that sectarian division can be presented as cultural diversity, and any attempt to overcome that division by removing its cause—Britain—can be presented as disrespect for other cultures and traditions.

It is the height of good taste in our politically correct times to be respectful of other identities. Britain no longer upholds its commitment to the Union and the rights of the so-called majority. Instead, British domination is presented in the language of multiculturalism. According to the Downing Street declaration, Britain has no 'selfish, strategic or economic interest' in Northern Ireland. Its only interest now is to promote reconciliation between the two identities and contribute to a resolution of

the conflict. By resorting to the language of cultural identity, 30 000 troops and paramilitary police can begin to look like social workers, 'empowering' the people of the region and promoting mutual understanding. Today, Britain wages its war on the Irish people in the language of political correctness and cultural identity.

Sinn Fein too indulges the prejudices of cultural identity. In fact it is a measure of the political collapse of republicanism that it has adopted the ideas and language of its enemies. The Hume/Adams talks involved much discussion of accommodating difference, respecting diversity and winning the allegiance of the two traditions. Whatever its weaknesses in the past, the republican movement had a clear understanding that the sectarian divisions which afflict Ireland were not caused by some indigenous tribalism, but were caused by the British occupation. As such, republicans appreciated that Unionism was an artificial distortion, caused by partition rather than causing it.

The accommodation to Unionism by Sinn Fein in the course of the 'peace process' is a historic retreat for republicanism. Recognising the legitimacy of Unionist aspirations inevitably leads to the acceptance of the divisions which Britain has fostered in Ireland. It is a short step from there to accepting the political structure of British domination itself. The call for an 'inclusive dialogue' and the demand for recognition of Sinn Fein as a representative of the Northern Catholic community is one example of the adaptation to the ideas of cultural identity. At the level of local politics, the cancer has eaten much deeper. In March this year, Sinn Fein proposed a motion at Belfast City Council calling for 'parity of esteem' for nationalists within the council. Sinn Fein councillor Alex Maskey in an article in the April issue of *Fortnight* magazine complained of the preponderance of Unionist memorabilia and unequal representation of the 'two traditions' on council committees. As well as the council representing the 'imperial British-Unionist tradition' he argued, it should also honour the republican-nationalist one.

Was it for 'parity of esteem' within the Northern state that so many gave their lives, and so many more suffered? What sort of esteem is possible for a political culture which is defined by its hatred of Catholics and its opposition to freedom and democracy for the Irish people? By declaring its respect for the political allegiances and culture of the Unionists, the republican movement has, in effect, abandoned the cause of Irish freedom.



Downing St doldrums

And what of the British, is it all good news for them? The 'peace process', though a terrible defeat for the liberation movement, is by no means an unqualified victory for Britain. An opportunity has appeared for the British government to exploit the weakness of its opponent in Ireland in order to gain short-term popularity at home. That may well bring rich dividends for John Major—set against his record of failure so far, being known as the man who brought peace to Ireland might give him an honoured place in the history books. But it could just as easily backfire.

Although the government has largely succeeded in keeping the republican movement on the defensive since the Downing Street declaration, the very act of trying to do a deal with an enemy of such long standing poses many problems. For nearly 25 years the establishment has branded the IRA as an organisation of terrorists and psychopaths. Overnight that message has been quashed as the government tries to turn its oldest enemy into a partner which could help stabilise the Six Counties along the lines of the De Klerk/Mandela deal or that between Israel and the PLO.

In doing this, the government has made itself a hostage to fortune.

A declaration addressed to the republican movement must await a response from the republican movement. Having implicitly recognised the political legitimacy of the republican cause, the government can no longer resort to its traditional forms of propaganda. As a result, the government has looked on helplessly while Gerry Adams made statesman-like appearances in New York and elsewhere. By appealing to the IRA to join the 'peace process' which republicans initiated in the first place, the government is stuck with a policy which leaves it prey to forces beyond its control.

Even more seriously, the Downing Street declaration compromises the Union with the claim that Britain has 'no selfish, strategic or economic interest' in Northern Ireland. For the sake of short-term popularity, the government has feigned indifference as to the future shape and unity of the state over which it governs. Such assertions reinforce the prejudices of cultural identity, but they also devalue the most precious institution of the British establishment. If the government is so indifferent as to the unity and integrity of the state, then what sort of loyalty to the state does it hope to inspire in the rest of us.

The 'peace process' will not bring peace to Ireland. Indeed, by disrupting the patterns which gave rise to the bloody stalemate of the past quarter century, the 'peace process' has unleashed a new instability which could lead to even greater carnage and mayhem. At times like this, supporters of Irish freedom must face reality and not present defeat as some kind of victory or diplomatic breakthrough. Such self-deception can only compound the unfavourable balance of forces against the Irish people. At the same time, the new situation in Ireland presents us with a challenge to develop answers and solutions which can relaunch the project of Irish freedom, both in Britain and in Ireland. The end of this phase of the struggle for Irish freedom also creates new opportunities.

The Irish Freedom Movement endorses the analysis put forward by Mark Ryan in his new book *War and Peace in Ireland* (see page 23). This book was written as a response to both the 'peace process' and the Downing Street declaration, and is intended to begin the work of clarification and understanding. If we can make sense of what is new in both Britain and in Ireland, then we can help to lay the basis for a new movement which can finally put an end to Britain's bloody occupation. ●

SIOBHAN DYER REPORTS FROM A TOWN UNDER OCCUPATION ■

An open prison



Picture this. A small sleepy town in the British countryside is invaded by 1000 gunmen; they surround the town and set up roadblocks on

every access route so that the locals cannot go anywhere without being stopped by armed men; the roadblocks are ominous looking, consisting of mushroom-shaped concrete huts on one side, of the road and concrete bollards on the other side, just beyond the huts; they are manned by the invaders who wield machine guns and stop every pedestrian and driver.

A scene from a horror movie? No, the scene today in Crossmaglen, South Armagh, Northern Ireland. A town claimed by Britain, a town whose population has committed the crime of insisting that it is Irish. Oliver Kearney, long-time civil rights campaigner, has described the recent invasion of Crossmaglen as a 'large-scale community punishment'. The fact that there are now three British soldiers to every civilian living in Crossmaglen bears out this theory. So what exactly have the people of Crossmaglen done to deserve such attention?

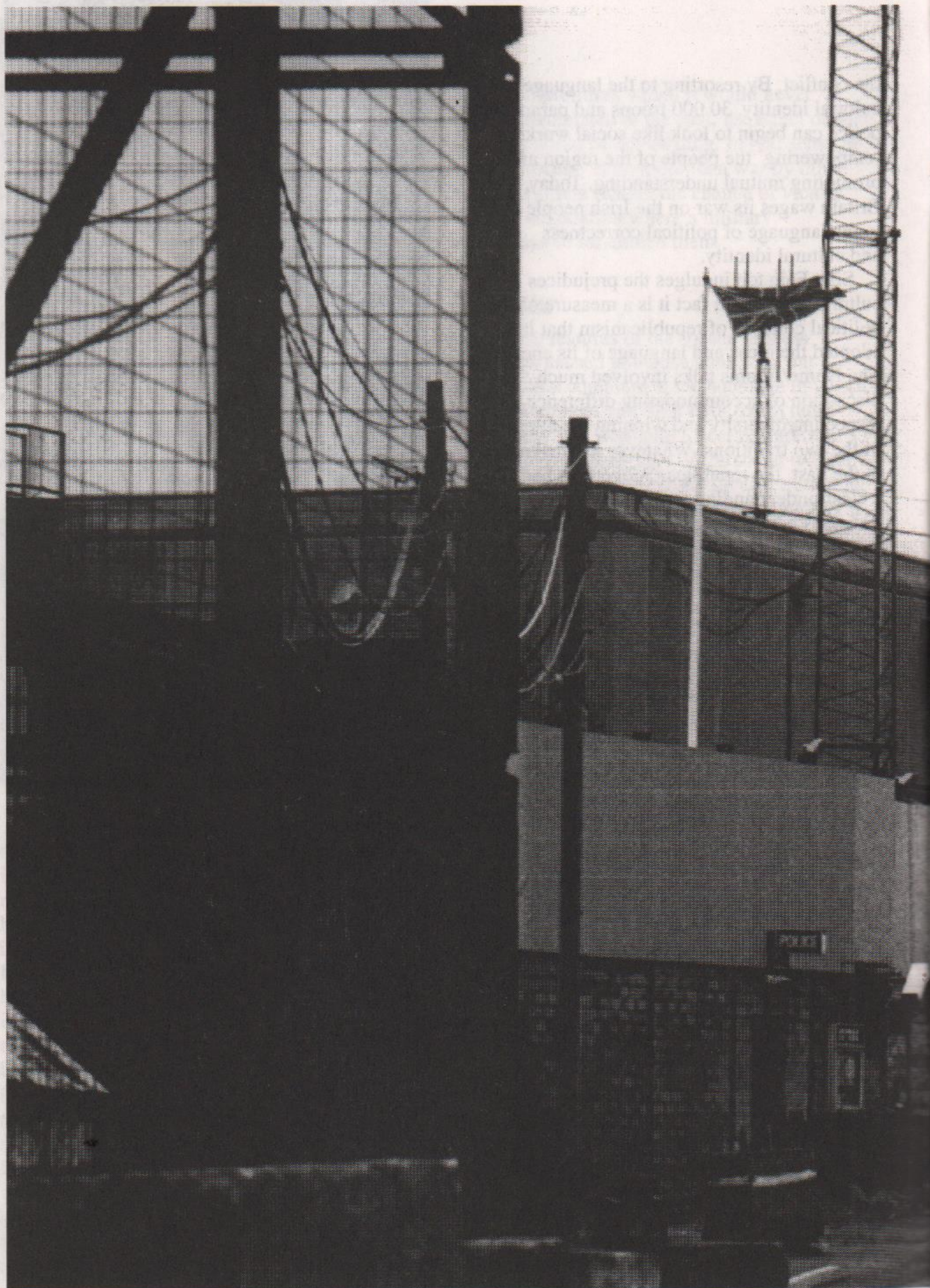
In many ways Crossmaglen and surrounding areas are among the more peaceful areas of the occupied Six Counties. Catholics and Protestants live next door to each other without fear in this farming community and there have been no Loyalist attacks in the area for many years.

Yet despite the fact that the people of Crossmaglen live together happily and peacefully, their town has been occupied by the British Army for the past 25 years—not to keep the peace, but to enforce British rule in this part of Ireland.

The problem for the British has been that hardly anyone in South Armagh is willing to accept that they are ruled by Britain. While Irish republicans operate openly in the community, British forces lie underground in fear of their lives. They suffered so many casualties travelling by road during the 1970s, that now their only means of travel is by Chinook military helicopters.

The IRA's military successes in the South Armagh area are a direct result of the wide popular support it enjoys for its attempts to drive the occupying forces out of the area. Unable to patrol the streets for fear of attack, the British Army and RUC attempt to control this hostile community by means of constant surveillance. Four massive fortified RUC/Army barracks have been built on high ground on the four corners of South Armagh. Connecting them are a series of spy-posts, smaller barracks fitted with all the high-tech surveillance equipment needed to watch every movement of this community.

Yet all the paraphernalia of spying has not protected the British forces from attack.

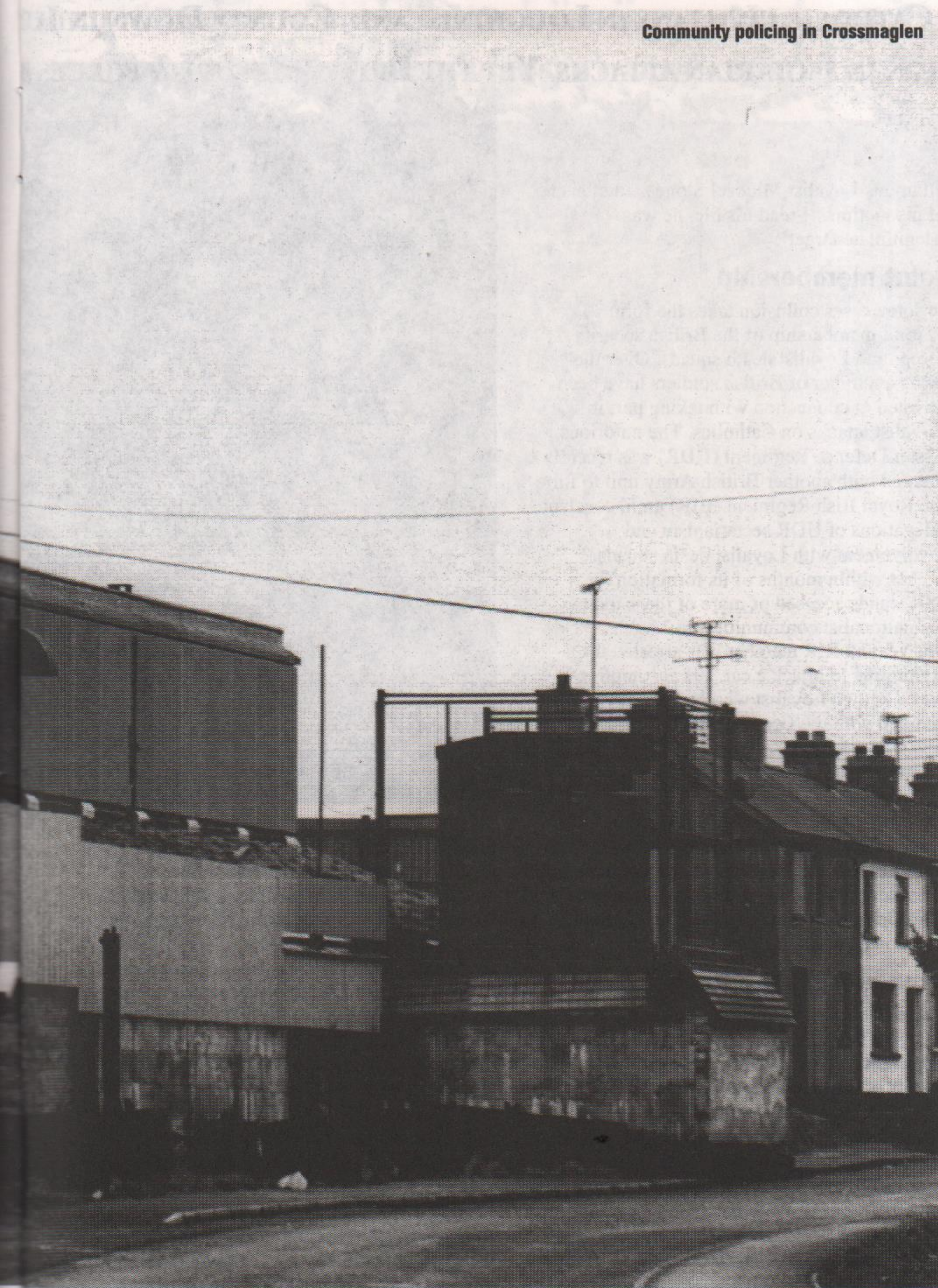


The official reason given for the recent invasion of a further 1000 troops into Crossmaglen is the need to rebuild the British Army and RUC base in the town which has been badly damaged after suffering 16 IRA attacks in just three years—the latest one took place after the arrival of the reinforcements.

The heavily fortified barracks sits right in the middle of the town and the community

is under constant surveillance from cameras and soldiers who menacingly train their guns on locals. Yet the total lack of support for them within the community means that the security forces are powerless to stop these constant attacks. A year ago the British press reported on a dramatic incident near Crossmaglen when soldiers in helicopters pursued an IRA active service unit which had just been forced to

Community policing in Crossmaglen



abandon an operation. However, the security forces had to back off when an angry group of local women banded together to protect the IRA men.

Local people believe it is stories like this one which have angered the British establishment into targeting the nationalists of Crossmaglen for some special harassment. Over the past few years Unionist politicians have gone on record

to protest that the IRA is operating with impunity in South Armagh while the security forces are forced into a humiliating retreat. They have called for extra troops to be sent in to teach local people a lesson. It seems the British have decided to heed their call.

Selected local businesses were the only Crossmaglen residents to get advance warning about the arrival of a convoy of 1000 troops and

the blocking off of every road into the town in April this year. They received a letter telling them to blame the 'terrorists' for the inconvenience caused. Yet in Crossmaglen the only people terrorising the community are the British security forces. They have deliberately built two of their new checkpoints within yards of local schools, outraging parents who accuse them of using their children as human shields. In spite of its own propaganda, the Army is well aware that the IRA will not risk the lives of children. The other checkpoints are all within a short distance of people's homes.

The local gaelic football club, which lost some of its ground 20 years ago when the main barracks was built on top of it, has now lost more of its land as soldiers rebuild the fortress that young football players have grown to hate. Margie Callaghan, one local mother who is involved in the new campaign to reclaim Crossmaglen, told *Irish Freedom*: 'Not only do we not have the right to walk our own streets, but really we have no rights to our own home or our own land. They have been walking onto people's land and just taking it over'.

Local campaigners are warning that as levels of harassment increase the town is at boiling point. They fear a repeat of events in 1992 in Coalisland when soldiers went on the rampage hospitalising local youths and wrecking shops and bars. Already two people have been injured in incidents at the newly erected checkpoints. One 14-year old boy was confined to a wheelchair with the injuries he suffered after soldiers at a checkpoint activated a mechanism which brings a spiked chain across the road in seconds. The boy claims he'd been threatened by the soldiers while crossing the checkpoint a few days earlier.

Despite angry protests and a series of press conferences, the invasion of Crossmaglen has received virtually no publicity in the British press. Yet local people believe that the massive attack on civil rights in their town gives the lie to the British government's professed commitment to bring peace to Ireland. According to Margie Callaghan, 'A lot of people here were really hopeful that peace might be on the way, that the British might be prepared to go. Now we see them digging in and we just don't see that peace is on the agenda'.

For local people in Crossmaglen it is sickening to hear British politicians talking peace while making war. One local man compares his daily life to living in a prison, 'they talk about introducing internment if Sinn Fein don't accept their declaration of peace, but we are already interned in Crossmaglen. We are totally surrounded, we're living in an open prison'.

Doing Britain's

THE HORRIFIC MASSACRE OF SIX CATHOLIC CIVILIANS IN LOUGHINISLAND, COUNTY DOWN IN JUNE 1994. THE RUC'S ROLE IN THE ESCALATION IN SECTARIAN ATTACKS. YET THE BRITISH SECURITY FORCES T

SIOBHAN DYER REPORTS



In the first six months of 1994, 29 Catholics were murdered by Loyalist paramilitaries and hundreds of others narrowly avoided death after Loyalist murder bids. The staple response of every British politician to these attacks is to rail against the murderous extremists on both sides and reassure the public that the British security forces will do everything in their power to catch the perpetrators and deal with them.

Yet for large numbers of nationalists in Northern Ireland such statements are a sick joke. Indeed many nationalists believe that at best the British security forces turn a blind eye to Loyalist attacks, at worst, that they actively help Loyalist paramilitaries to carry out their murderous missions.

Though it has gone almost entirely unreported in the British media, after nearly every Loyalist attack local people and relatives of the victims go on record to allege collusion between the security forces and the Loyalist death squads. The same concerns are repeated time and time again: that Loyalists managed to carry out their attacks in the full view of British Army surveillance cameras; that Loyalists appear to be confident that they can drive into areas which are often saturated with police and soldiers without coming across any; that soldiers and RUC men had passed on death threats to victims days before they were killed.

Information passed

It is widely acknowledged that members of the security forces routinely pass on information about nationalists to Loyalist paramilitaries. While a handful of security force members have been charged with this, RUC officers continue to visit nationalists on a regular basis to inform them that security files on them have gone missing and are believed to be in the hands of Loyalist death squads.

It may seem shocking to us that such files are kept on ordinary citizens, but this is assumed in the militarised state of Northern Ireland. These files include photographs taken at Army roadblocks and detailed outlines of the layout of the individual's home and garden, collected during raids or routine harassment of nationalist families.

In recent interviews published in British papers, Loyalist paramilitaries have claimed that they continue to receive a steady flow of information from the security forces. When charged with the murder of three Catholics, the

infamous Loyalist Michael Stone said of each of his victims, 'I read his file, he was a legitimate target'.

Joint membership

In some cases collusion takes the form of joint membership of the British security forces and Loyalist death squads. Over the years a number of British soldiers have been arrested in connection with taking part in Loyalist attacks on Catholics. The notorious Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) was recently merged with another British Army unit to form the Royal Irish Regiment (RIR) amid constant allegations of UDR sectarianism and involvement with Loyalist death squads.

Yet within months of its formation the RIR stands accused of more of the same by the nationalist communities. In March of this year an RIR member was arrested for attempting to hijack a car. His accomplice was a known Loyalist who had already been charged with the Greysteel bombing in which seven people were killed. Later that month four men were arrested at a UVF swearing-in-ceremony—one was a serving officer of the RIR. And in the wake of the Loughinisland slaughter, two more soldiers of the Royal Irish Regiment were charged with terrorist offences, one for a killing that had been claimed by the Ulster Volunteer Force in March.

Amnesty investigates

The evidence of collusion has become so overwhelming that Amnesty International agreed to launch its own investigation, the results of which were published in February this year. Amnesty investigators found that the particular killings which they looked into had all the hallmarks of security force involvement: 'For this to occur, it would mean that the RUC would have prior knowledge of such attacks to enable them to clear the area of a police presence at a critical moment; or that paramilitary gunmen had intimate knowledge of planned police movements as well as the timing of operational measures.'

On the passing of information from the security forces to Loyalist killers, Amnesty International was left in no doubt: 'It was clear that the Army and the RUC were aware of the flow of their own intelligence reports to the UDA and their use in targeting suspects for killings.'

The Amnesty International report concluded

that there is enough evidence to prove a very high level of cooperation between the RUC/British Army and Loyalist gangs. At a time when British propaganda about the Irish relies totally on the idea of the British as the neutral arbiter between two warring tribes, the revelation that the British security forces are colluding with one side should have been an explosive one. But in these uncritical times this story elicited a few paragraphs in the British press, with most journalists preferring to lead on Amnesty's criticism of alleged human rights abuses by republican and Loyalist paramilitaries published in the same report.

Brian Nelson

While nationalist communities live with the reality of collusion on the ground, it is more difficult to expose the extent to which collusion is an essential part of the British counter-insurgency policy. It is clear that the British government is extremely sensitive to allegations of collusion. When Chief Inspector Stalker attempted to go beyond a superficial investigation of collusion in the RUC his career came to a sudden end. And when Channel 4 broadcast a *Dispatches* on the subject, the station was condemned by politicians and one researcher on the programme was arrested and



dirty work

THEY LED TO CALLS FOR MORE TROOPS TO BE SENT TO NORTHERN IRELAND TO SAFEGUARD THEMSELVES CURRENTLY STAND ACCUSED OF COLLUDING WITH LOYALIST DEATH SQUADS.



The RUC, frog-marching nationalists into Derry, personify sectarianism

charged under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The nearest we have come to getting a glimpse into the way Loyalist death squads are used by the British military was in the trial of Brian Nelson in 1990. Brian Nelson was a serving member of the British Army who was directed to work within the Ulster Defence Association.

Nelson worked his way up to become a senior intelligence officer in this paramilitary group. Far from acting to prevent the deaths of Catholics, Nelson assisted the UDA to carry out a number of killings while keeping his Army handlers fully informed. Nelson has clearly stated what the Army instructed him to do: 'I was to build an efficient intelligence network to enable the association to properly target known republicans for possible execution.'

Calls for inquiry

Amnesty International has called on the British government to become more accountable and set up an independent inquiry into allegations of collusion. Yet this assumes, on the one hand, that the British government is not in control of its own security forces and, on the other, that it has the political will to stamp out collusion. All the evidence suggests that neither is the case.

The British government is not prepared to tackle collusion because the Loyalist murder campaign is a useful complement to Britain's current strategy to defeat opposition to British rule in Ireland. Firstly, by terrorising the nationalist community, the Loyalist murder campaign has the effect of increasing war weariness and lowering the horizons of those people who have been at the sharp end of resisting British rule for the past 25 years. Secondly, and crucially for the success of the current 'peace process', the daily diet of Loyalist violence appearing on our TV screens allows the British government to transfer any blame for the conflict on to religious extremists on both sides of the community.

While during the 1980s the British government proved itself willing to murder its opponents with its shoot-to-kill policy against republicans, in the 1990s leaving the killing to Loyalists allows the government to present the British security forces as benign, neutral peacekeepers.

In the past British ministers have outraged liberals by appearing to have more sympathy with Loyalist killers than republican ones. Statements emphasised that Loyalist violence was regarded as an understandable reaction to the IRA, and the British government

consistently rejected calls to ban the paramilitary Ulster Defence Association (UDA).

In the past few years, however, the British have changed their approach preferring now to refer constantly to Loyalist violence and republican violence as two sides of the same coin. This change was reflected in the banning of the UDA in 1990.

The myth of tribalism

In a world where we are supposed to believe that the major threat to world peace comes from tribal conflicts re-emerging everywhere from Eastern Europe to Africa, it suits Britain to represent the Irish War as yet another tribal conflict. Not only does this allow Britain to avoid any responsibility for this conflict, it also strengthens the prevailing belief that a British withdrawal would result in wholesale sectarian slaughter.

While British politicians cry mock tears at the news of every fresh Loyalist atrocity, their security forces continue to make war against Irish nationalists by whatever means they can. The reality of collusion between the British forces and Loyalist killers gives the lie to Britain's bogus attempts to pose as an even-handed peace-maker in Ireland.

FIONA FOSTER



TIT FOR TAT

I make no apology for revisiting the topic of 'tit-for-tat' killings. After all, every attack that takes place in Northern Ireland these days is presented as the latest Protestant paramilitary response to the latest Catholic paramilitary response to the previous Protestant paramilitary response to and so it goes on in what is described as a spiralling cycle of sectarian killings.

The statements of the British media and politicians on the massacre of six Catholics in Loughinisland brought this tit-for-tat mania to new heights. Every daily paper ran lead articles expressing despair at the mentality which creates gunmen who can put a bullet into a body purely because that body goes to a different kind of church, or in this case, cheers for a different football team.

The *Sun* said, 'The madmen of the IRA and the UVF continue to murder innocent people whose only crime is being Protestant or Catholic', and went on to argue for the death sentence for 'terrorists', claiming that even if that produces martyrs, 'better a dead martyr than a live terrorist'.

This kind of response to violence in Northern Ireland is irritating for two reasons. Firstly it's inaccurate. The vast majority of attacks by republican paramilitaries continue to be targeted at members of the security forces or Loyalist paramilitaries. Secondly, and more worryingly is the way the tit-for-tat presentation of the Irish conflict has allowed the British government to pose so easily as the civilised peacemaker in relation to ending the conflict in Ireland.

It has done so by robbing republicans—and Loyalists for that matter—of any rationale for their behaviour. Ten or 15 years ago the British would never have got away with that. Around the world people were engaged in armed struggles for national liberation. No amount of propaganda could blind people to the fact that in Palestine, parts of Africa and in Ireland people were fighting against colonisation and repression.

Nobody could quite believe that the 10 men who starved themselves to death to gain political status in 1981 did not have some kind of cause or that the 100 000 mourners who marched behind the coffin of their leader Bobby Sands were bidding farewell to some young criminal.

Shoot-to-kill policies and regular breaches of the European convention on human rights were proof for all that this conflict was of a different order to law-and-order problems at home. British people opposed the IRA because there was a war between Britain and Ireland and the IRA became an enemy of the state, a threat to the British way of life.

Today things are very different. Post-Cold War, all the freedom fighters have made their peace with their old oppressors and we are told that 'causes' have given way to squalid tribal feuds among violent and uncivilised peoples in Bosnia, Rwanda, Somalia, and parts of Russia.

These developments have provided the British with a welcome opportunity to wash their hands of any responsibility for the tragedy of Northern Ireland. In line with Western intervention in Bosnia and Somalia, the British occupation is now presented as a necessary evil to prevent the worst excesses of religious extremists. It is claimed that the success of the peace process depends on extremists on both sides acknowledging that the real divisions are in the mind and that violence will lead nowhere.

Far from having its roots in the struggle for civil rights started in 1968, the conflict is now seen as a sectarian feud rooted in hundreds of years of religious hatred and bigotry.

In this scenario there is no longer a conflict between Britain and Ireland, only one between Catholic and Protestant extremists. Indeed all the editorials after the Loughinisland massacre were at pains to contrast the awful events in the North with the background of two friendly nations celebrating Ireland's World Cup win in a civilised fashion.

According to the *Independent*: 'The adoption of Jack Charlton by the Irish combined with the support his team enjoys throughout Britain, shows how deep rifts between the two islands can be gradually healed.'

The real tragedy of all this is that everyone, even the republican movement itself, now looks to the country that caused the divisions in Ireland to come in and heal those divisions as a prelude to peace. The conflict in Ireland takes the form of religion because Britain gives it that form by granting privileges to Protestants in return for their loyalty to Britain.

Loyalists kill Catholics because Britain created the mentality in which nationalist aspirations represent a threat to Protestant privilege. Irish nationalists continue to demand their own country because they are faced with 32 000 British troops on their streets, because British policies mean they continue to face discrimination in every walk of life and because British forces collude with Loyalist gunmen to terrorise their communities.

There is nothing irrational about this conflict apart from those who look to the cause of the problem to sort it out. Britain, not tit-for-tat killings, is the barrier to peace and justice in Ireland, and it is about time more of us started saying so. ●

THE ELECTION OF NELSON MANDELA HAS BEEN CELEBRATED WORLDWIDE. IT IS ALSO CITED BY LEADING REPUBLICANS AS PROOF THAT THE PEACE PROCESS CAN SUCCEED. HERE JANET SUGDEN ASKS WHETHER THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA WILL BRING FREEDOM AND JUSTICE TO THE PEOPLE WHO MADE IT HAPPEN—THE BLACK MASSES

No peace without freedom



To understand what has happened in South Africa it is not enough to look at political developments within that country. The collapse of the so-called communist regimes in the late 1980s served to put liberation struggles on the defensive and boost the confidence of the Western powers. In the Middle East, El Salvador and South Africa, freedom fighters admitted that victory was now out of their reach, laid down their arms and agreed to talk to their old adversaries.

In South Africa, the ANC's new willingness to do business with the apartheid regime coincided with a crisis within that regime. The world slump together with domestic instability caused by black resistance has had a devastating effect on the South African economy, making some sort of deal imperative.

Transforming the ANC

Bringing the ANC into the corridors of power seemed to be the only way of removing the threat of the black masses and stabilising the economy. While removing the outward symbols of apartheid, the South African government went about securing a deal which would bring the ANC into constitutional politics without relinquishing the power of the white capitalist class.

This process of integration was evident in the run up to the elections when the ANC appeared to transform itself from an enemy of the state into its defender. At a memorial marking the anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre, Mandela praised the South African police as 'decent men and women who we need'. While further evidence emerged that the South African police had sponsored Inkatha attacks on ANC

members as a way of stirring up tribal conflict, Mandela called on these same police officers to impose a state of emergency in Natal.

A *Panorama* documentary shown on the eve of the ANC election victory featured wealthy white neighbours of the Mandelas who had been personally assured that their wealth would be safe in ANC hands. It also showed Mandela appealing to an angry crowd to forgive the past crimes of a black mayor of the apartheid regime who stood accused of torturing and murdering ANC militants. Claiming that, like FW De Klerk, people change their colours, Mandela announced that the mayor would stay in post in the new South Africa.

The black masses have high expectations of their new government. Yet already there are signs that ANC rule will not bring the freedom and justice for which the masses have struggled. Despite the ANC's huge electoral majority, the deal struck before the election means that two out of three major metropolitan areas in the country (Durban and Cape Town) remain under National Party and Inkatha control.

Radical ANC MP Moses Mayekiso has already pointed out that the government housing plans are out of line with even the modest promises made in the new reconstruction and development plan.

Strikes have broken out all over the country and the new minister for finance, Derek Keys (who did the same job in the De Klerk regime) is faced with the problem that one journalist describes as, 'how to deal with unrealistic expectations of a newly liberated electorate, promises to the IMF, Gatt pressure and election pledges' (G Steyn, *Daily Dispatch*, 17 June 1994).

The ANC's response to these conflicting pressures is unlikely to benefit black workers. The 120 black workers who recently occupied their Mercedes Benz plant to get back the jobs they lost in 1990 were promptly evicted and arrested on direct instructions from ANC cabinet member Steve Tshwete.

Ireland unfree...

Derry republican leader Martin McGuinness has said the British government should 'learn from South Africa and Israel' and that John Major should 'be radical' like FW De Klerk. Given that Gerry Adams has himself emphasised the need for a political compromise, Sinn Fein's endorsement of the new South Africa comes as no surprise.

The problem for Sinn Fein, however, is not that John Major lacks the vision of De Klerk, but that Britain is not under the kind of pressure from the nationalist struggle that was provided by the black masses in South Africa. While quite prepared to make paper declarations to draw republicans into the peace process, the Downing Street declaration shows that the British are not prepared to concede anything real.

As ANC politicians move into the highly paid jobs and luxury homes once monopolised by a few rich whites, they have started coming up with the excuses as to why the black masses will have to wait some time longer for an improvement in their daily lives. The masses who voted Mandela into power are still highly politicised and are unlikely to be too patient with their new leaders. In South Africa as in Ireland there will be no peace without freedom. ●

Kill the



It is hard to believe that public concern about the framing of Irish people could end with a fresh attack on civil rights—this time the civil rights of all of us. Some of the many repressive measures in the new Criminal Justice Bill emerged from a commission set up on the day the Birmingham Six were released. Announcing the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice, the then Home Secretary, Kenneth Baker, assured us that the main aim was to prevent a similar ‘miscarriage of justice’ from happening again.

When the commission delivered its report two years later, however, it came out in support of strengthening the hand of the authorities when dealing with suspects. It proposed eroding the right to trial by jury and

although it opposed the abolition of the right to silence, it did not do so unequivocally. Six months later in December 1993 Home Secretary Michael Howard introduced his Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, which includes many new proposals of his own.

Updating the PTA

The Criminal Justice Bill strengthens the already draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Since it was introduced by the Labour Party in 1974, the PTA has been used to intimidate, criminalise and frame Irish people in Britain as a way of ensuring that opposition to British rule in Ireland would be contained within the occupied Six Counties. The new offenses specified in the Criminal Justice Bill and the strengthening of police

powers will give the authorities a freer hand in cracking down on Irish people in this country.

Part VI of the bill adds two new offenses to the PTA. The new Section 16A will say that a person is guilty of an offence ‘if he has any article in his possession in circumstances giving rise to a reasonable suspicion that the article in his possession is for a purpose connected with the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism’. In other words, possessing everyday household items could be an offence if the police ‘reasonably suspect’ that those items are intended for ‘terrorist purposes’.

In Northern Ireland, where this legislation is already in place, people are regularly stopped and searched on their way to work. If their work happens to involve the use of gloves,

bill

THIS SUMMER THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC ORDER BILL LOOKS SET TO BECOME LAW. WITH ITS PROPOSALS TO ABOLISH THE RIGHT TO SILENCE AND RESTRICT THE RIGHT TO PROTEST, THE BILL REPRESENTS THE GOVERNMENT'S MOST COMPREHENSIVE ATTACK ON OUR CIVIL LIBERTIES TO DATE. BRENDAN O'NEILL REPORTS

wires or even just a black bin liner they can be arrested. Before long this could be the case in Britain too.

Under the new Section 16B it will be an offence to 'collect or record any information which is of such a nature as is likely to be useful to terrorists'. Again this is already an offence in Northern Ireland. For Irish people in Britain the catch-all nature of these two new offenses can only mean more harassment, criminalisation, and more frame-ups.

The most significant thing about these two new offenses is that the burden of proof lies on the defendant. So whether you are arrested for being in possession of a pair of gloves, or for having compiled a list of politicians' names, it's up to you to prove that the gloves are not for handling weapons and that the list of names is not a hit list. The jury will have to choose between the word of the police or the young man from West Belfast standing in the dock accused of terrorist offenses.

This change to the burden of proof marks a significant shift in the relationship between ordinary people and the authorities. For hundreds of years the British establishment has boasted of a judicial system that centres on the principle of innocent until proven guilty. Now the Criminal Justice Bill potentially makes every one of us guilty until proved innocent.

Martial law

The Criminal Justice Bill will give sweeping new stop-and-search powers to the police. Kevin Hayes of the PTA Welfare and Research Association says the bill virtually gives the police the power to declare areas of martial law.

Part VI of the bill allows police to 'stop and search vehicles and persons...at any place within a specified locality...for a specified period not exceeding 28 days', if they believe it is necessary 'in order to prevent acts of terrorism'. In plain English this means the police can cordon off a whole area for a month and within that area stop and search anyone they like. They do not need a search warrant and they do not even need to have grounds for suspicion. You can be stopped in the street, frisked and asked what you are up to. Refusing to stop and let the police search you is an offence and can land you in jail for up to six months. This is particularly bad news for all the Force's favourite targets—whether it's the more traditional black and Irish people, or the new ones, ravers and hunt-saboteurs.

Once again this crackdown is being presented as a necessary measure to prevent 'terrorism'. Just as the terrorist bogey was used to justify armed roadblocks and surveillance cameras, now it is being used to justify further increases in police powers.

The right to silence

What little debate there has been around the Criminal Justice Bill has tended to focus on the proposal to abolish the right to silence. But the government has rejected calls to scrap this part of the bill.

Anyone who has judged British justice on its record of dealing with Irish people could be forgiven for thinking that the right to silence is not worth defending. The police caution 'You do not have to say anything unless you wish to' certainly did not mean much to the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four who were beaten into making confessions. Undoubtedly police brutality has long undermined any formal right to silence in many other cases.

The right to silence was abolished in Northern Ireland in 1988 under the Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order. In Britain, too, the PTA contains a duty of 'voluntary disclosure' where it is an offence not to disclose information which might prove useful in catching 'terrorists'. Kate Magee is still awaiting trial for failing to disclose information about her brother's whereabouts, and more recently the entire McNulty family in Newcastle have had the charge of 'failure to disclose information' brought against them. So much for their right to remain silent.

Yet the right to remain silent is an important democratic right which we are set to lose. Its abolition moves us towards a new principle: that we are all guilty until proven innocent.

The removal of the right to silence does not mean the authorities can force us to speak (although there is no doubt that this good old police tradition will be upheld). It does, however, mean that the prosecution and even the judge can invite a jury to infer guilt from a defendant's silence. After all, the argument goes, if he was innocent why would he need to remain silent?

Specific groups targeted

The Criminal Justice Bill takes away the few rights that let us enjoy a measure of independence from the state. Apart from the fundamental erosion of our rights described

above, the bill includes legislation targeted at specific groups which will in effect remove people's right to protest and even their right to party. The bill will make raves illegal and allow police to use violence to evict squatters. 'New Age' travellers could land a three-month prison sentence for refusing to move on when asked and gypsies will no longer have any right to set up camp on public land.

All of this surely adds up to the most disturbing piece of legislation in recent memory. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was always used to warn us of the dangers of totalitarianism. Yet if we add the Criminal Justice Bill to the roadblocks, the arming of the police and the constant surveillance in every town centre it begins to look as if Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was a warning of Major's 1994.

Us and them

Previous issues of *Irish Freedom* have warned how failure to challenge British repression in Ireland would make it easier for the authorities to crackdown here in Britain. Now those warnings are borne out. This summer repressive legislation which has long been the norm in Northern Ireland will be used against people whom the authorities do not like over here. The widespread acceptance by British liberals that civil rights should be secondary to the fight against 'Irish terrorism' has left them incapable of challenging the attack on civil rights that is being justified by the newly defined enemies of the state—ravers, travellers and road protesters.

No opposition

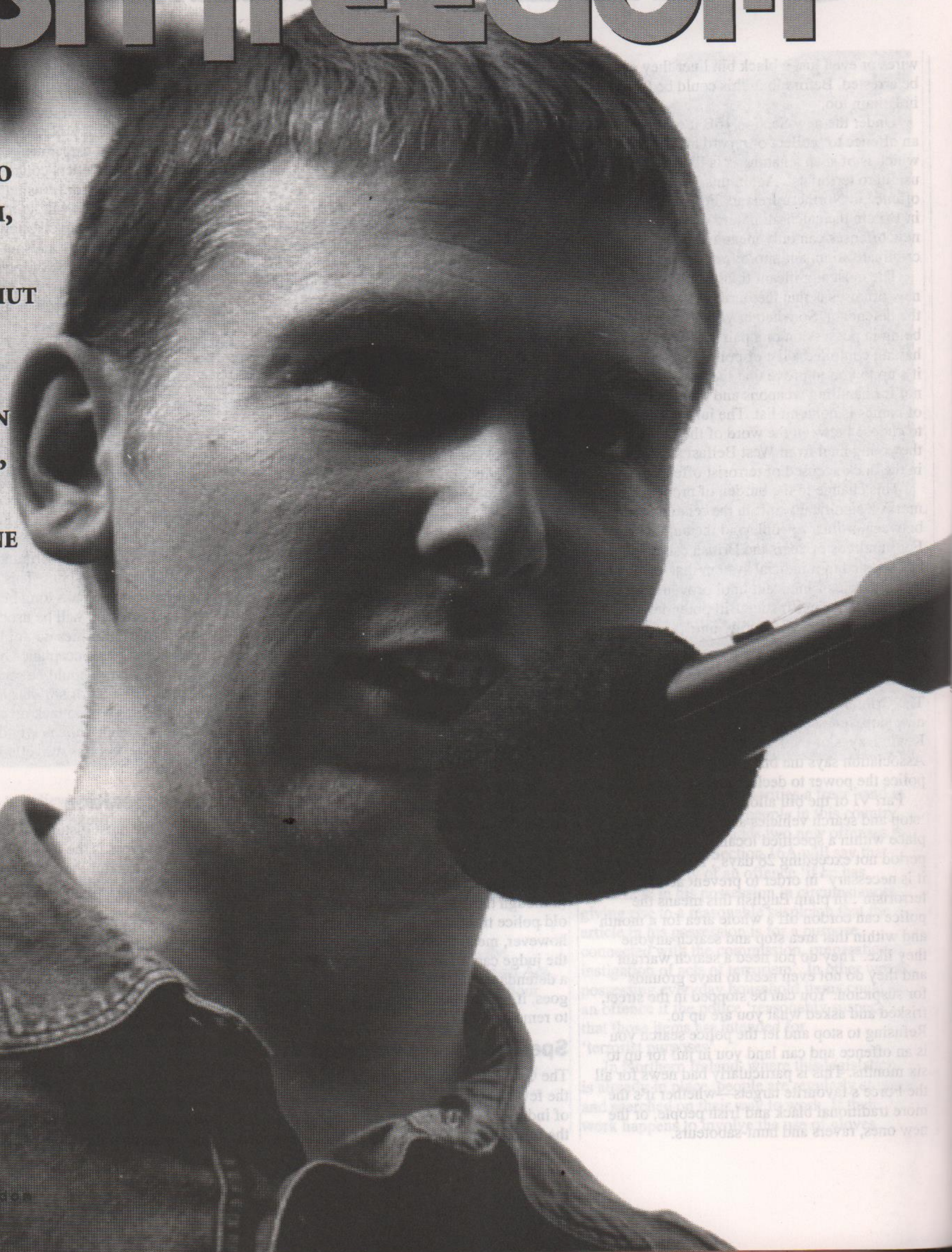
One of the most disturbing things about the bill's progress is the lack of opposition it has met. The Labour Party has refused to fight it and has even called for more repressive measures.

The Criminal Justice Bill tells us that ravers and travellers are our enemies and that the Big Brother state is our friend. We should learn from the nationalist people of the Six Counties who have for many years viewed the police, the courts and the security measures as the real enemy in the battle for justice. It's about time we exercised a bit of the self-respect shown by them and told the government where to stick their bill and any other future designs they might have on our democratic rights. Kill the bill!

State repression

No bans on Irish freedom

**DESPITE
VARIOUS
ATTEMPTS TO
SILENCE HIM,
JIM SLAVEN
WILL NOT SHUT
UP ABOUT
BRITAIN'S
OCCUPATION
OF IRELAND,
REPORTS
ANGUS KANE**





Jim Slaven is half-way through a six-month deferred [suspended] sentence. He has been banned, arrested, harassed, assaulted, tried and convicted—all because he belongs to the James Connolly Society in Edinburgh, and dares to speak out against the British occupation of Northern Ireland.

The James Connolly Society is named after the Edinburgh-born socialist and Irish republican who led the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin. In 1986, the seventieth year after the Rising, the James Connolly Society marched through Edinburgh in support of the Irish liberation struggle. The society planned to march every year after that. In 1991 a Sinn Féin councillor attended the march for the first time. In the Grassmarket area of Edinburgh it was attacked by Loyalists, aided and abetted by the police. 'The police obviously allowed them in', recalled Slaven, 'it was only the stewards that managed to stop them from breaking the bands up'.

In 1992 the march was banned at short notice by Lothian regional council. At the local miners' gala that year, Slaven was thrown off the procession by police, and kept under close surveillance for the rest of the day.

In 1993 Slaven applied again to the transportation committee—the council body which deals with applications for marches and parades. He knew the police report on the 1991 march would work against his application.

Edinburgh police reported that the 1991 march was 'provocative and inflammatory': marchers wore paramilitary uniforms, sang IRA songs and flaunted too many Irish tricolours; the presence of the Sinn Féin councillor was provocative because he had already been denied permission to speak. The police advised the council that the proposed march would be 'accompanied by public disorder, disruption to the life of the city and nuisance to the public'.

'Disrespectful'

This was tantamount to a police ban, but it was left to the council to put it into effect. 'It works both ways', Slaven explained, 'the council blame the police and the police blame the council'.

The transportation committee heard a submission from the sister of Lawrence Dickson, a British soldier recently killed in South Armagh. The minutes of the meeting record that she 'urged the committee to prohibit the march as any such event would be disrespectful to the memory of her brother who was born and brought up in Edinburgh'.

Slaven holds that every death in the Irish War is the responsibility of the British government. He asked for permission to put his case. But the committee chairman refused, on the grounds that the feelings of the bereaved must be protected.

Lothian council rejected the Connolly Society's application, claiming that the society is a sectarian organisation in contravention of the council's policy of 'non-sectarianism'. This is hard to swallow, given that the ruling Labour group includes Orangeman Sam Campbell, who, according to Slaven, 'has openly made speeches at Orange marches

saying that Catholics should be incinerated and Catholic schools should be shut down'.

The next meeting of the 'non-sectarian' transportation committee gave permission for 11 Orange marches. It seems the councillors' sensibilities do not extend to families bereaved by Loyalist murder gangs.

The James Connolly Society refused to abide by the ban and organised a protest for Saturday 5 June 1993. Connolly supporters travelled up by coach from London and Manchester. They anticipated harassment from the police so they transferred to a train at Falkirk. But the police were waiting when they arrived at Edinburgh's Waverley station. The would-be demonstrators were immediately apprehended and held under section two of the Public Order Act. The police were so well-informed that they called out the names of some protesters as they arrested them. Slaven puts this down to phone-tapping: 'certainly during that period and with the march being banned most of our phones would have been tapped.'

Snatch squads

About 200 demonstrators managed to reach the assembly point in Broughton Street. Slaven described how 'the police arrived in five minutes in massive numbers. We just stood on the road with the flute band playing. Then the police surrounded everybody and the horses came down the road. The police line opened up and the horses just trampled in right over everybody including the young laddies in the flute band. Everybody scattered and there were 28 arrests at this point'. Snatch squads homed in on the organisers. Once again, the police knew who they were looking for.

A total of 60 people were arrested and charged that day. But Slaven was singled out for special treatment. He was held in custody from Saturday until Monday evening, when he was finally granted bail. His charge-sheet included 'organising an illegal march, taking part in an illegal march [under the 1982 Civic Government of Scotland Act], inciting attacks on the police, inciting people to free me from custody, assault on police and resisting arrest. I was the only one charged with things like that. The rest were mainly breach of the peace'.

There was more to come. On 1 August 1993 Slaven was arrested in an Edinburgh bar on the grounds that he had been in Princes Street shouting and gesticulating at police officers. 'I got dragged out of the pub. Obviously I hadn't been in Princes Street at all. I was in the pub.'

Speaking out

Slaven was taken to St Leonard's police station, where he was 'slapped about a bit'. He was moved to cells at Livingstone outside Edinburgh, where he spent the bank holiday weekend locked-up.

Charged with breach of the peace and breaking bail, Slaven was brought before the sheriff. Although he had no previous convictions, the procurator fiscal called for him to be remanded in custody for 110 days. This was denied, but only after Slaven's solicitor had argued for half an hour that bail should be granted. Slaven refused to be intimidated. The

following Saturday (8 August 1993) he spoke at an open-air rally held in London by the Irish Freedom Movement.

At his next court appearance, the prosecution accused Slaven of being in a gang along with six men from Peebles whom he had never seen before. A dozen police officers gave evidence in support of the arresting officer Sergeant Rose, to the effect that Slaven was gesticulating and had clearly no regard for the police. Under cross-examination, however, it emerged that the other officers only put their names to statements which were in fact written by Rose. The sheriff threw out the charges.

'Unpalatable'

Slaven still had to face charges arising out of the 5 June protest. Among the prosecution witnesses were police officers, council officials and a Labour councillor. Regardless of what was written on the charge-sheet, Slaven was really being tried for organising an 'unpalatable' demonstration—unpalatable because it challenged the authority of the British state and its occupation of Ireland. He was duly convicted and sentenced.

Since his trial, Slaven has been repeatedly picked up by police. Nowadays he never goes out alone; he only leaves home if there are people with him who could act as witnesses if he were to be falsely accused and brought to court. Other members of the Connolly Society have also been harassed by local police.

Slaven was not sent down. But a deferred sentence means that he is out on good behaviour and could go to jail for six months on the say-so of the police. The definition of good behaviour does not extend to involvement in 'an organised Irish republican solidarity group', and it certainly does not stretch to organising the 1994 Connolly Society march.

No licence

When in March this year the Connolly Society joined forces with the Campaign Against Militarism to hold a public meeting in defence of the right to organise protests against the occupation of Ireland, the police went straight into action. Police officers hounded publicans who agreed to provide a room for the meeting, forcing the organisers to change the venue three times. Publicans were warned that their premises would be smashed up by Loyalists and that their licences may not be renewed. Luckily one publican refused to be bullied and let the meeting go ahead.

Jim Slaven and the Connolly Society refuse to allow this harassment to silence their opposition to British rule in Ireland and state repression in Edinburgh. In the May council elections Slaven stood in the Holyrood/St Giles ward where James Connolly had stood 100 years before and campaigned around a demand for no bans on Irish freedom. Two days after polling day another member of the society was picked up by the police who made it clear that with the election out of the way it was business as usual.

The authorities are out to immobilise Slaven. In their attempt to stifle protests against Britain's domination of Ireland, the police, Labour council and judiciary have formed a ring of repression around him.



**FIONA
FOSTER
LOOKS AT
SOME RECENT
NEWS STORIES
FROM THE
IRISH
REPUBLIC
WHICH
EXPOSE THE
TENSIONS
INHERENT IN
THE MOVE TO
A NEW
IRELAND**

Ireland's faces: old and new



The *Sunday Observer* recently dedicated a page to the story of Ireland's latest moving statue. It reported that hundreds of Irish Catholics have been flocking to the village of Grangecon in County Wicklow to see a two-foot statue of the Virgin Mary weeping.

Some years ago this would have been treated as more evidence of Ireland's backward, Catholic nature. Today the story is treated in the British and Irish media as charming and humorous. Indeed there can be no greater illustration of the changing nature of Ireland than the dramatic decline in reverence for the Catholic church among large sections of the population, especially the young. While church-going is still high in rural areas and among the middle classes, it has dropped to as little as five per cent in some working class areas. Many of those who go to church admit that they no longer observe Catholic rules.

Peter Kirby, author of several books on the Catholic church in Ireland is not alone in expressing concern about the consequences of this decline in support for such an important institution in Irish life:

'Unlike our European neighbours, Irish society has known no strong humanist or socialist tradition that could offer an alternative for moral and spiritual ideals.'

Kirby's fears are well placed. The Catholic church has been a major source of cohesion in Irish society since the formation of the state in 1922. The socially conservative influence of the Catholic church was seized on by Ireland's new leaders to create social stability in their weak and artificial state. Along with Irish nationalism, Catholicism served Ireland's early leaders well, ensuring stability and support for the state for the next 70-odd years.

Modern nation

But in the Ireland of the 1990s the institutionalised influence of the Catholic church has become an embarrassment for a nation where domestic pressure for change combines with a desire to present Ireland externally as a modern European nation. The Catholic church's own sense of survival, and some embarrassing revelations about the sex lives of its clergy, have persuaded it to adopt a lower profile on social and political issues.

However, when it comes to giving up its powerful, institutional role in the education system and the health service the church is less flexible. Ireland's leaders must now decide whether to confront the church and remove its power. Yet this leaves them with the dilemma posed by Peter Kirby—what institution can command as much loyalty as the Catholic church did in the past?

Unfortunately for Ireland's leaders the answer to this question is certainly not to be found in the realm of politics. The results of the recent European elections and a number of by-elections which took place on the same day represented a major rejection of the coalition partners in government, Fianna Fail and the Labour Party.

The dramatic decline in the Labour vote proved that the unexpected surge of support for that party in the general election had in fact been a protest vote rather than a vote for Labour. This time the Greens were the beneficiary of this unsatisfied desire for change. As for the improved performance of the main opposition party, Fine Gael, *Irish Times* columnist John Waters argues that they had two things going for them, 'Firstly they are not Fianna Fail and secondly they are not Labour'.

New identity

While the Irish authorities have faced virtually no opposition to ditching nationalism and Catholicism as the defining identity of the 26-county state, it is clear that they have singularly failed to replace these forces with a new vision or identity that can command the enthusiastic support of the Irish people. The other startling feature of the Euro-elections was the low turnout. In a country that has for some years tried to submerge the national question by presenting the Irish republic as part of a broader union of European nations, only 44 per cent of people even bothered to vote to decide who should represent them in that union.

Ireland's attempts to present itself as an equal partner in Europe have failed after a series of humiliating public rows with European officials over the Irish economy and a £1 billion shortfall in the EU structural fund granted to Ireland. The rows exposed the relationship between Ireland and Europe as that between a beggar and his rich master—hardly a vision to inspire a nation!

Ireland's participation in the World Cup prompted many commentaries celebrating a new Irish identity free from the old associations with violence. An *Independent* editorial waxed lyrical about the new-found, 'self-confidence and competence of Irish culture....The image is of a team and fans both famed for good humour, a nationalism stripped of its long-standing associations with violence'.

But basing a new identity on the success of the Irish football team or the Irish relish for the 'crack' is a risky business. Ireland is a country of mass emigration, mass unemployment and massive levels of poverty. The peace process means that Britain increasingly dominates political developments in Ireland and as yet there is no sign of the Irish electorate endorsing their political leaders. Despite their enthusiasm to be rid of Catholicism and nationalism, Ireland's leaders may well start looking to the past with more than a little nostalgia. ●

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