

LIVING MARXISM

August 1989 No10 £1.50

Ireland August '69 - August '89



Inside the IRA:
two men tell why
they're at war

Battle of the Bogside:
the view from
the barricades

Women in Ireland,
the Irish in Britain
and much more

Plus: A revolutionary view
of the future

Girl pop groups:
demeaning or meaningful?

Why Kate Adie's not my hero



OUT!

THE FACE
SWEET SUBVERSION



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theme

Ireland: August '69–August '89

In August 1969 British troops were deployed in Northern Ireland. Twenty years later there is still no end in sight to the longest war which the British Army has fought this century. We devote most of this month's *Living Marxism* to the most important—and most misunderstood—conflict in these islands.

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COVER PHOTOS: Jim Collins/Derry Camerawork (TOP LEFT), Joe Boatman (BOTTOM RIGHT)

**LIVING
MARXISM**

Monthly review of the Revolutionary Communist Party ● Telephone: (01) 375 1702
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Subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £15 ● Europe (airmail) £20 ● Outside Europe (airmail) £27.50 ● Overseas (surface mail) £16 ● (Institutions add £7.50)
Make cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd and send to Junius Publications Ltd, BCM JPLtd, London WC1N 3XX; Fax: (01) 377 0346 ● Distributed by Comag
Magazine Marketing, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7QE. Phone: West Drayton (0895) 444055; Fax: (0895) 445255; Telex: 8813787 ● Typeset by
Junius Publications (TU) c copyright Revolutionary Communist Party ● Printed by Russell Press (TU), Nottingham ● ISSN 0955-2448 August 1989
Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome, but can only be returned if an SAE is enclosed

The masked IRA man in the smaller picture on our front page is English. Charles English, from the Bogside in Derry, where British troops appeared 20 years ago this month, when he was six.

I can tell you this because he is dead, killed during an attack on a Royal Ulster Constabulary armoured car in 1985. Four years earlier his 19-year old elder brother Gary was killed by a British Army landrover which knocked him down and then reversed over him. The courts gave the soldiers involved a mild reprimand for 'careless driving', and Charles English joined the IRA to deliver what he considered a more appropriate form of justice.



Charles English's father is a softly-spoken, educated man. He is proud of his son, and has a picture of Charles in IRA dress uniform on his living room wall. The Derry people applauding in our front page photo are obviously also proud of and pleased to see the man with the machine gun on their streets.

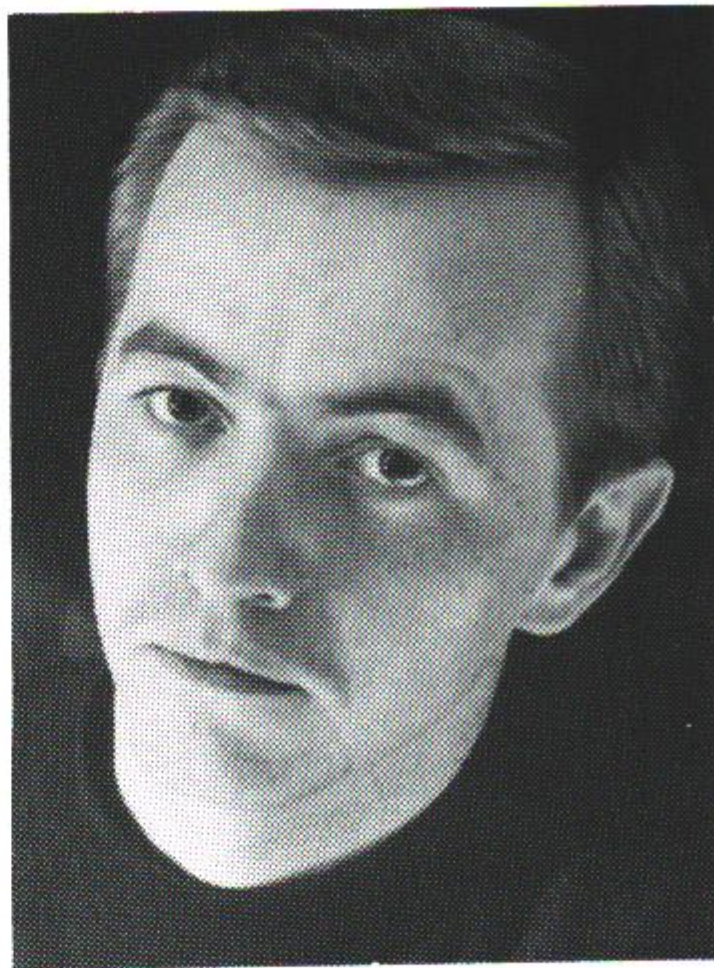
If you view events in Northern Ireland through the prism provided by the British media and politicians, none of this can make sense. Surely Gary English must have been a petrol-bomber, not a lad out playing football, when the Army landrover had its little accident with his body?



Surely Charles English must have been lured into the IRA by a combination of Catholic fanaticism and Libyan gold, not because he had had enough of British civilisation?

Surely the father, Michael English, must be a Mafia-style Godfather of violence, not a man who quotes Plato and did a college course in Peace Studies?

And as for the applauding crowd on the street, surely they must have been stooges terrorised into submission by IRA thugs, not normal people spontaneously cheering an armed man?



MICK HUME: EDITOR

THE PEOPLE WHO APPLAUD THE IRA

Anybody in Britain attempting to understand the conflict in Ireland has to scrape off 20 years' worth of such prejudice before they can get a clear look at reality. There is no better place to look at than the Bogside in Derry.

After all, the people there were the ones who fought the RUC to a standstill in August 1969 and precipitated the intervention of British troops. They were in it from the start. Perhaps they can provide the answer as to how it could be brought to an end.

There are many families like the English one in the Bogside. They support the Irish Republican Army. Yet they have no horns, no tails, no blood-lust. They are not so different from working class people in Britain.

They read the *Irish News*, they don't drink bitter, and many of them go to church

on Sundays. But a lot of them also do the *Sun* bingo, they watch *EastEnders*, and they are as fanatical about their city's football team as any Liverpoolian or Glaswegian.

Bogsiders are ordinary people. Those who support the IRA do so because they live in an extraordinary situation. They have many of the personal and economic problems facing people over here—some of which, like unemployment, they have far more of. But they also have a distinct set of problems of their own. And it is to resolve these that they turn to the IRA.

Bogsiders don't just have a problem getting up in the morning, for example; they also have to contend with the authorities' modern, military version of the old 'knocker-up' system. The RUC and the British Army arrive at your house at about 6am, kick in

the door and serve you brutality in bed. The English family's home was once raided nine times in a single day. British troops took both parents away, leaving seven young children to fend for themselves, then dumped their mother four miles away and made her walk home in her nightdress.

In the Bogside it is not gentrifying yuppies who have reshaped the inner city to the detriment of local people. The British Army has had the entire area rebuilt to meet its requirements. Many of the houses and whole streets featured in the films and photographs of 1969 have long since been knocked down—not to clear slums, but to clear the way for the security forces to move in hard and fast against the locals.

Where else does a dual carriageway run through the heart of a deprived urban

district that is not on any major commercial or tourist route? The authorities which have proved so reluctant to invest in badly-needed roads over here had no hesitation in building this unnecessary one, solely to facilitate the speedy entry of armoured cars into the Bogside. The picture on pages 12 and 13 shows the only sort of serious traffic jam there has ever been on the Bogside flyover—when dozens of RUC vehicles, bristling with guns, arrived to harass an IRA volunteer's funeral cortège.

People in the Bogside have other problems: getting to the end of their own street without being stopped and searched by an armed patrol; getting to sleep while military helicopters are clattering above the roof and turning night into day with powerful searchlights; getting any privacy under the ever-watchful eye of the video cameras that scan the Bogside and feed computers every detail of their lives; getting a job in a society where Protestant employers don't want workers who went to the wrong school and the British authorities favour those who are loyal to the Crown when allocating grants and funds.

● Most Bogsiders blame these problems on the fact that they live under British occupation. They are Roman Catholics by birth, but Irish nationalists and often republicans by conviction. They have been turned into an oppressed minority in their own nation, cut off from their countrymen and women to the South by a nonsensical border, drawn by Whitehall bureaucrats, that runs through people's villages, farms and front rooms just a few miles from Derry.

They are trapped in the artificial statelet of Northern Ireland, where British rule is

synonymous with Protestant privilege and repression. The Bogside may no longer be the marshland from which it took its name when Catholic peasants were first herded together outside the Derry city walls. But the British authorities still regard it as a political and economic slum, and the ancient cannon which point down into the Bogside from those walls have only been replaced by

for achieving such a basic right is the removal of the British presence. And they have learnt the hardest way of all that military resistance is a necessary part of opposing the might of the British state.

The Bogsiders are people like ourselves who have declared war on our government. We should surely support them. Their struggle is for freedom. And

who have withstood all that the British authorities and Loyalists have thrown at them since 1969 are not about to give in now or next year. Charles English and many of his friends, neighbours and comrades are dead. But there truly are plenty more where they came from.

The British state cannot win the Irish War. Yet neither can the Bogsiders and

Bogsiders are ordinary people. Those who support the IRA do so because they live in an extraordinary situation

the automatic weapons of the Army and the RUC.

So what are people to do to solve these problems? How about peaceful protests for reform? They have tried it. In October 1968 the RUC batoned a civil rights march off the streets of Derry, and seriously dented people's belief in the possibility of evolutionary progress. In January 1972 another demonstration on the edge of the Bogside was blasted away by the guns of the British parachute regiment, which left 14 Derry men dead and left thousands more with no illusions in the ability of the British government to improve their lot.

● The IRA is the armed expression of the fact that nationalists from places like the Bogside want to live in a united Ireland free from foreign interference. They know that the precondition

it is waged against the same authorities which are now militarising British society, threatening to ban everything from warehouse parties to rail strikes, and introducing the methods of the police state which they have perfected in Ireland over the past 20 years.

● Until somebody can convince me that I have more in common with Margaret Thatcher than with Michael English, I shall be wholeheartedly behind the nationalists of the Bogside and the rest of Northern Ireland in their struggle to get the British state out and to usher in an era of genuine democracy.

Anybody who has met the republican people of the Bogside should know that there will be no end to the violence and suffering so long as they are denied the right to self-determination. Those

their fellow Northern nationalists while they fight alone. The working class of Southern Ireland is one body with the power to break the stalemate. The working class of Britain is another.

All the British governments since 1969 have demonstrated that they will not free Ireland voluntarily. Those of us in Britain who believe in democratic rights are thus left with no option but to try to force them to do so. We can begin by popularising the call for the immediate withdrawal of all British forces.

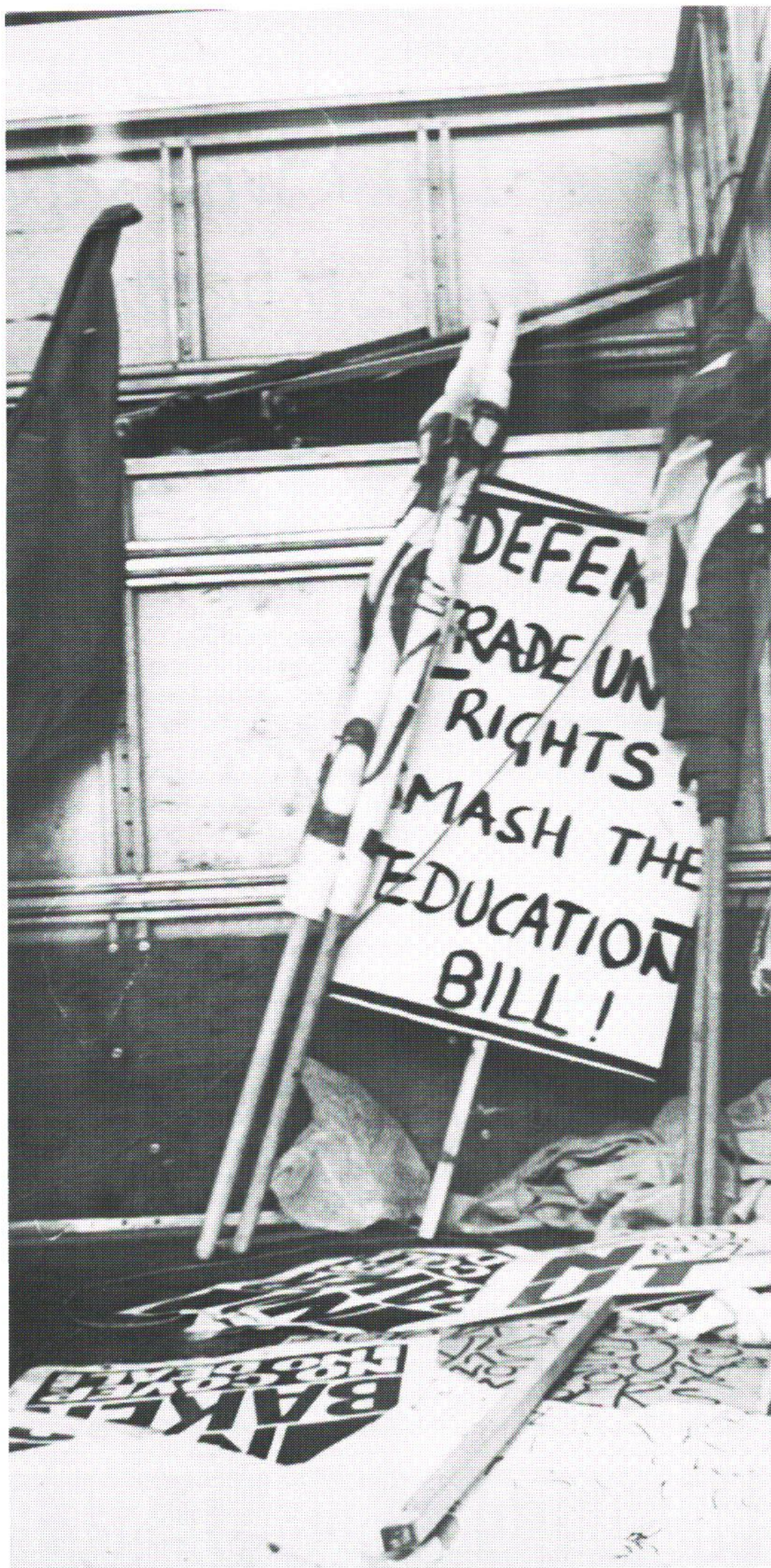
On the twentieth anniversary of the start of the Irish War, we devote this month's *Living Marxism* to bringing the message of the Bogside to British people, and throwing back at Thatcher an infamous phrase she once used in relation to Ireland: out, out, out.

MARCH FOR TROOPS OUT ON 5 AUGUST—SEE PAGE 47

After the Euro-elections

The politics of protest

Pat Roberts examines what's behind the protest vote for parties like the Greens—and doesn't like all that he sees



Protests in the polling booth, silence on the streets

The recent elections to the European parliament were marked by the advance of the far right and the Greens. The gains made by these smaller parties have been widely hailed as the advent of a new politics of protest. Unfortunately, the analysis presented by political commentators does not make clear just what this protest signifies. Does the emergence of these parties represent a passing episode, or a more long-term trend in European politics?

The most interesting aspect of the politics of protest is its diffuseness and volatility. In recent British by-elections, the Scottish Nationalists, the Welsh Nationalists and the Greens have all gained apparently significant support at one time or another. In Germany and France, both the racist right and the Greens have won votes from those disaffected with the existing state of parliamentary politics. It is clear that a protest vote has consolidated; but the political objectives around which it has done so are far less certain. In addition to those who voted for the new small parties of protest, there is a growing number of people who don't bother to vote at all. Under these circumstances it is hard to be sure about what the term political protest means today.

Paper protests

It could be argued that the defining feature of the politics of protest is a passive rejection of the status quo. This seems particularly to be the case in Britain. What was the intent of the 15 per cent of the British electorate who voted for the Greens? A coherent protest movement usually has some day-to-day manifestation. Electoral success tends to follow public mobilisation or acts of defiance against the government. In Britain such gestures were conspicuous by their absence from the Greens' advance. What we have is electoral success, but without a social movement. The mere act of filling in a ballot paper is more or less what contemporary protest constitutes in Europe.

The absence of a movement means that the term 'protest' can only be used with serious qualification. It

We are not witnessing the forging of new loyalties, but the erosion of traditional allegiances

represents protest without struggle, mobilisation or organisation. This form of protest is a unique feature of the late eighties. Take as an example the Greens. The period prior to the emergence of the Greens in West Germany in the late seventies was one of large-scale grassroots protest. An active movement with an extra-parliamentary focus preceded electoral success. There is a striking contrast between this experience and that of the electoral advance of the Greens in Britain and France during the June European elections.

Where were they?

Until June the activities of the British Greens consisted of minor local campaigns with an emphasis on lobbying and pressure-group politics. There were no significant mobilisations or militant protests. Most people first came across the Greens through the elections. The marked absence of any radical impetus within British Green politics is particularly striking for an organisation that claims to be a movement of protest. Peter Kelly has noted that the programme of the British Greens 'has a good mixture of "left" and "conservative" issues' (*Observer Magazine*, 2 July). Although the emphasis must be on the conservative, Kelly's remark is very much to the point.

The diffuse objectives and the deep-seated passivity which characterise the British Greens are only more dramatic expressions of a Europe-wide phenomenon. It seems to indicate not so much new convictions, as a lack of faith in conventional solutions. We are not witnessing the forging of new loyalties, but the erosion of traditional allegiances. Rather than a fresh burst of activism, it is the consummation of a process of depoliticisation that has dominated Europe for much of the eighties.

Lost left

The new phenomenon of protest without movement and of a general depoliticisation in Europe coincides with the disintegration of the traditional left-right divide.

In the eighties the centre has moved rightward and the left has converged on the middle ground. For the first time since the French Revolution the terms right and left have had little practical meaning in European politics. It is often observed that the left has lost ground in the eighties. It would be more accurate to say that Europe has lost its left. Almost every principle that has characterised European social democratic and Communist parties has now been abandoned or at least put on the table for negotiation.

The left's change of attitude is most striking in the crucial sphere of

economic affairs. Nationalisation, the traditional centre-piece of left-wing economic strategy, is dead. The market, previously an object of radical hostility, is in fashion. Achille Occhetto, leader of the Italian Communist Party, has noted that the question of the capitalist market is no longer an issue. He told his party congress in March that the party was 'changing the terms of the problem by saying that there has to be a better state and a better market'.

Me too

Occhetto's attitude sums up the general orientation of European Communist and Socialist parties. It amounts to total acceptance of the fundamentals of capitalist politics. Political debate is no longer about principles but about who can best be trusted to defend the system and values in which all believe. Thus Occhetto promises that the Italian Communist Party will improve the functioning of the capitalist market—the same promise made by the parties of the right.

The absence of differences of principle calls into question the meaning of left and right. There are no longer alternative visions of society. Instead there is an incoherent debate about which party is best suited to the job of implementing policies for the realisation of a commonly desired end.

The disintegration of the distinction between left and right goes beyond the level of ideas. It extends to everyday political realities. The most advanced expression of this process is the new coalition government between the left and the conservatives in Greece. Forty years ago Greek communists and conservatives fought a bloody civil war against each other. Today the old enemies feel more comfortable in each other's company. The marriage of convenience between the Greek equivalents of Tony Benn and Margaret Thatcher indicates that the old assumptions about political alignments in Europe now mean little.

One-sided affair

The end of the old left-right divide suggests that traditional calculations about European politics must be handled with care. The trend is not simply an interesting issue for political scientists. It also represents a major problem for those concerned with radical politics.

Current developments mean that there is no longer any practical political alternative to the status quo. Across Europe, the traditional parties of the left eschew political struggle for the safe confines of respectability. In Britain, for

example, strikers have discovered that they can expect little or no support from the Labour Party.

The industrial action by railway workers is a case in point. The employers, led by the Tory government, launched a wide-ranging offensive against the railway workers. In a transparent attempt to manipulate public opinion, the Tories then tried to brand trade unionists as a lethal threat to British society which requires stringent legal repression. This campaign, designed to isolate railway workers, became a sordidly one-sided affair. From the first, leading Labour politicians were determined to be fiercely non-partisan. At best they asked the government to stop using the strike for its own ends. But they could not bring themselves to line up with strikers and plead their cause. Even the liberal *Guardian* was more forceful on the issue, lecturing the Labour leadership that it had nothing to fear about supporting the strike.

Deprived of drive

The political isolation of striking workers underlines the general problem facing those who are drawn towards struggle and protest. The decomposition of the traditional left-wing identity means that the focus through which past protest was expressed no longer exists. Without some kind of political alternative, any protest necessarily lacks coherence and direction. In this context, struggling and fighting rarely gain general currency.

The decline of the left and the absence of a political focus for struggle does not in itself neutralise the desire to protest and fight back. But it does deprive protest of confidence and a sense of drive and direction. This is why protest politics in Europe seem to lack an active edge today. However, activism and passivity do not just reflect different mental attitudes. Just as activism provides the means through which attitudes are radicalised, so passivity leads to a sense of low expectations. Without confidence in a viable alternative, political objectives are reinterpreted and gradually scaled down. And passivity infects the very act of protest with hesitation and holding back. As a result, the politics of protest in contemporary Europe are empty of radical content.

One more important development needs to be considered to complete the picture. The crisis of the left is the most striking manifestation of a more profound malaise that affects European politics in general. Indeed the crisis of the left is mirrored on the right, where there is now an underlying sense of having reached a political impasse.

Today, the European capitalist

When a government is forced to make the privatisation of water the centre-piece of its legislative programme, it is evidently in trouble

class is less than optimistic about the future and the political solutions it needs to preserve its system. As a result, in many parts of Europe, the right is deeply divided and in serious disarray. France, Spain, Italy and West Germany illustrate this trend. Superficially, Britain appears the exception to the rule. The Tories are, by European standards, the most successful of the capitalist parties. They monopolise the right-wing electorate and retain an edge over their opponents. Nonetheless the Tories are not immune to the general malaise of the European right. The Thatcher government has lost its sense of purpose and is desperately in search of plausible policies.

Too much nothing

Many political observers have argued that the Tory government is in trouble because it is trying to change too much too fast—in the NHS, education, the legal profession, the water and electricity industries, etc. This misses the point. The various Tory initiatives represent an attempt to find a substitute for a coherent policy.

The policies of the early years of the Thatcher regime made a lot of sense for the capitalist class. Smashing the unions, raising unemployment, shaking out industry and championing monetarism were

essential to stabilise British capitalism. However, with the implementation of these policies, the Tories have become politically exhausted. There are no more obvious policies available for boosting British capitalism. In the absence of such solutions, the Tories have been forced to pursue policies which give the impression of decisiveness and a sense of mission, but mean little.

When a government is forced to make the privatisation of water the centre-piece of its legislative programme, it is evidently in trouble. Reforming the legal profession is unlikely to do very much for the competitive position of the British economy. Nor are student loans likely to boost British export trade. These policies do not add up to change. They signify a calculated attempt to create the impression of change by going through the motions.

The growing alienation of a section of the middle class from the Tory government shows that even this constituency cannot be inspired by a monotonous diet of privatisation and reorganisation. This disenchantment with the Tory government has led to the crystallisation of the Green protest vote.

In Britain they vote for the

Greens. In West Germany they prefer the fascist right. The evident disenchantment of part of the middle class electorate in Britain exists in a more pronounced form in Germany and France. This is a mini-revolt of sections of the European right against its traditional parties. The revolt is significant only in so far as it exposes the weakness of the European ruling class.

Just a phase

This weakness of the right complements the crisis of the left in creating a political situation that is potentially open to realignment. The first products of the crisis are the faceless parties of protest. As products of the crisis they suffer all of its defects. They share the general pessimism and are marked by a conservative distaste for change—or if they do want change, then, like the Greens, they are demanding a return to the past. They represent a phase of transition to the re-emergence of a new left and a new right. Their ultimate failure has already been staked out by the downward path of the SDP/Liberal project.



Confrontation 5

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Can Europe be one?—a Marxist perspective
on 1992**

CONFRONTATION is the theoretical journal of the Revolutionary Communist Party. The new issue, out this month, carries the proceedings of a recent conference on Stalinism, covering everything from the relationship between Leninism and Stalinism to the consequences of glasnost for Western Marxists.

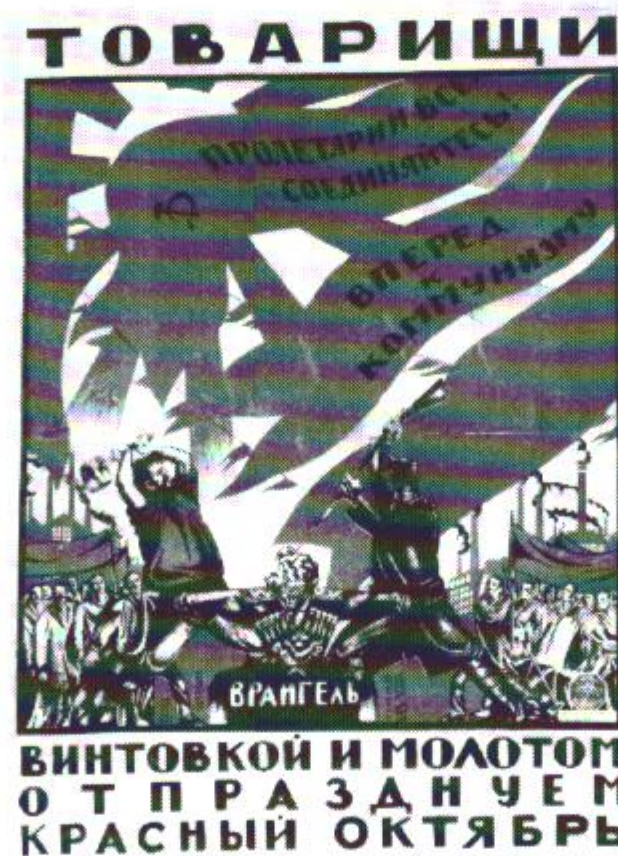
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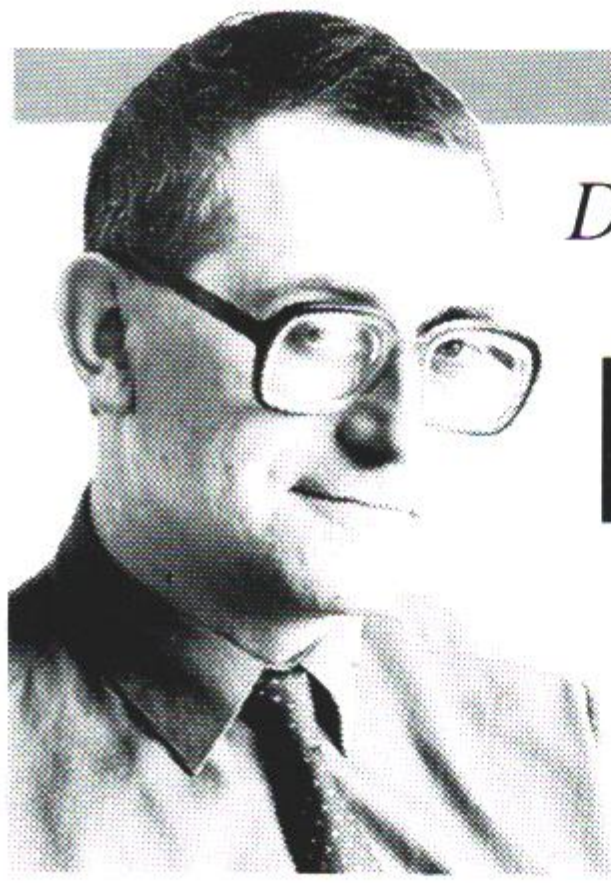
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Don Milligan

KATE ADIE: SYMBOL OF CIVILISATION?

When the food runs out, a mudslide swallows a country town, a tidal wave sweeps away a million acres of rice and bamboo shacks, or a bomb wrecks a tenement block; there, in the tangled wreckage, you will find a camera crew complete with soundman and reporter. A government collapses, jets roar overhead, thousands besiege Red Cross feeding stations as smoke hangs over the broken city during a lull in the fighting. Through it all, on the hotel roof or even in the lobby, the reporters struggle to bring us the news. They recount their conversations with local taxi drivers, and show us pictures of junior army officers who refuse to say anything at all. They show us corpses littering the streets and from time to time we can almost hear the bullets hiss past their intrepid heads.

You lucky people

In recent years, and particularly over the past few months, I have been struck how the 'story', and the compulsion to 'tell the world' of momentous events, appear to come before life and limb. Considerations of personal safety are secondary for those whose task it is to tell the British people about trouble-spots around the world. Why do they do it? Fame? Fortune? There must be easier ways. But the innocent gung-ho glamour of the foreign newsdesk does seem to be hard to beat. With a portable word processor and a lensman you can be a hero without being involved. You are stretcher-bearer, army chaplain and movie star rolled into one. You can be the 'conscience of the world' and one of the lads in the hotel bar.

The reporters' main motive appears to be the compulsion to tell the public at home: 'Just thank God you're not here.' The Western media are the appointed representatives of civilisation in a world stricken with barbarism. 'However much you hate Basingstoke or Bradford', they are telling us in confident tones, 'you're lucky you're not in Beirut, Bangladesh, or Beijing'. Surbiton is not being raked by machine-gun fire. There are no earthquakes in Edinburgh or military coups in Whitehall. We can afford to shake our heads sadly about those less fortunate than ourselves. We are favoured by nature, temperate politics, and a quiet sense of what is really important. Every day the foreign

reporter draws that stark contrast between looting Argentinians and our orderly queue, between millions, hysterical at the death of an ayatollah, and our quiet, well-organised dignity.

Keeping her hair on

The journalist who has come to symbolise this Western fortitude is Kate Adie. Nothing can compare with our Kate, not even the plucky Brian Barron, or Sandy Gall who kept the flag flying in Kabul when the embassy staff fled. Kate Adie's earrings are firmly in place, her lipstick just right, her voice calm as she notes that the demonstrator

drop 2000lb bombs. On this occasion it was noted that she looked a real mess. Her hair looked awful. Six months later Norman Tebbit, at that time chairman of the Conservative Party, took the opportunity to attack Adie's coverage of the blitz. It was 'a mix of news, views, speculation, error and uncritical coverage of Libyan propaganda'. Adie stood by every word, but the BBC management thought it would be wise to get her out of Norman's way; they sent her to Washington for the duration of the British general election campaign.

Since Kate's stint in Beijing in June all that unpleasantness is now behind

appeal to the liberal sensibility of journalists who want to see all struggle against tyranny as an act of self-sacrifice.

Such journalists insist on finding defeat bitterly poignant. They remember with awe Jan Palach, who burnt himself to death in protest at the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 on the steps of the national museum. In similar vein the Western media have immortalised Wang Weilin who stopped a column of 20 tanks in its tracks on the Avenue of Heavenly Peace by riding his bicycle and waving his jacket. Wang is now dead; executed by the Chinese dictatorship. He was undoubtedly a brave man. However, the fact that other, equally brave, Chinese students and workers rather more sensibly dragged out counter-revolutionary soldiers and beat them to death or hanged them from the trees did not get quite so much coverage. This emphasis suits the Western authorities. They wouldn't mind if we all took our lead from Wang Weilin and got on our bikes—so long as they could keep the tanks.

Frontline fraud

I have to admit, the foreign press corps does give me a sense of well-being. After reading the paper or watching the news I am very pleased that I do not have to cope with typhoons, 500 per cent inflation or negotiate roadblocks manned by teenaged militiamen. I am impressed by people like Kate Adie and her cucumber-cool colleagues as they eye-witness massacres. But, at the same time, I know their lack of involvement in the mayhem all around them; their calm detachment is an elaborate and subtle fraud. I don't doubt that they are often taken in by their own integrity, as the good guys expressing revulsion and upholding decency. But while they're trumpeting liberal virtues in the newspapers and on the TV, and bemoaning the barbarism of the third world, the unseen and unreported Western investors plunder country after country to the point of collapse, while Western governments provide the guns and the political backing for the tyrants pulling the triggers.

For our foreign reporters, heroes are unarmed, non-violent, and more prepared to kill themselves than the tyrants who oppress them

standing next to her has just been shot dead. Her sheer professionalism under fire from Belfast to the Lebanon is now legendary. We learn how cool Kate under a hail of bullets pulled a woman from the street into the safety of Beirut's Commodore Hotel. We are told how, when she covered the Armenian earthquake, Kate had not a hair out of place.

But this adulation was not always so. On 16 April 1986, while the *Sun* carried the headline 'Thrilled to blitz' and Geoffrey Howe and Margaret Thatcher went into the commons to justify the US/British bombing of Libya, Adie brought pictures and commentary direct from the bombed city of Tripoli. Adie reported the death and the maiming of men, women and children in the raid. Even more awkwardly she pointed out that the casualties were not restricted to Libyans; Italians, Greeks and Yugoslavians were also grievously injured.

Kate Adie was on the tenth floor of her hotel when the F1-11s started to

us. So long as the journalists working in foreign trouble-spots convey the impression that their newspapers, their broadcasting organisations, and the British government are the bearers of uniquely civilised values they will earn the status of heroes and heroines.

In their image

The reporters-as-heroes tend to depict other people's heroism in their own image; heroes are audacious, even foolhardy souls, who absolutely must tell the truth. The hero is always the person who confronts serried ranks of fixed bayonets and calmly places flowers in the barrels of the guns while urging the troops to be reasonable. The journalists and camera crews are bewitched by this sort of incident. It is the act of a solitary individual who has cast caution to the wind. Media heroes are unarmed, non-violent, and more prepared to kill themselves than the tyrants that oppress them. They

Why

Mike Freeman
introduces our
Irish War
anniversary
issue



August '69–August '89

Ireland matters

PHOTO: Joe Boatman

How it all began

1967

January: Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association set up to campaign against anti-Catholic discrimination.

1968

March: Derry Housing Action Committee formed by young radicals to demand decent homes for Catholics.

24 August: First civil rights march, from Coalisland to Dungannon.

5 October: Derry civil rights march attacked by Royal Ulster Constabulary before the TV cameras of the world.

1969

1-4 January: Civil rights march from Belfast to Derry attacked by Loyalists at Burntollet Bridge. RUC invades Bogside in Derry.

19 April: RUC attacks Bogside, beating up Sammy Devenney who dies on 17 July.

12 July: Orange marches in Belfast provoke fierce fighting. Catholics riot in Dungannon and Dungiven.

13 July: RUC attacks Catholics in Dungiven. Francis McColskey dies from injuries next day.

Late July: Republicans set up Derry Citizens Defence Association.

2 August: More fighting in Belfast around Catholic Unity flats. RUC beats Patrick Corry to death.

12 August: Loyalist Apprentice Boys march in Derry. RUC leads Loyalist attack on Bogside. Battle of the Bogside begins.

14 August: Troops deployed in Derry—Battle of Bogside ends.

15 August: Troops deployed in Belfast.

December 1969/January 1970: IRA and Sinn Fein both split. Provisional IRA formed.

1970

1 April: British Army invades Catholic Ballymurphy estate in Belfast—first serious clash with Catholics.

27 June: Belfast Provisional IRA takes first action, defending St Matthew's Church against Loyalist mob in Short Strand.

July: British Army enforces Falls Road curfew; kills five Catholics.

1971

6 February: First Provisional IRA volunteer and first British soldier killed.

9 August: British authorities introduce internment without trial. Northern Ireland in a state of open war.

'It might be asked in what sense Ireland can or should still be a question for British politics, when British politics has so little to gain and so much to lose in Ireland. British withdrawal from Northern Ireland, while it is spoken of and indeed approved of by large sections of British public opinion, would pose problems for Britain, the humiliation of the British government, the creation of a world "trouble-spot" dangerously near to the mainland. It is less damaging for Britain to keep her Irish question, at least for the foreseeable future.' (DG Boyce, *The Irish Question in British Politics 1868-1986*, 1988, p129)

Most people in Britain agree that Northern Ireland is a mess and that the British involvement is not making things any better. There is a widespread view that Britain should simply pull out of Ireland, though the rationale for this course of action varies greatly according to the prejudices of the person recommending it. Some regard British withdrawal as a constructive measure to allow the Irish to achieve their own peaceful solution. Others call for disengagement as a gesture of contemptuous despair and encouragement to the Irish people to drown in their own bloodbath.

Yet despite the popularity of calls for British withdrawal from Ireland there is not the slightest sign of support for this policy option within the British establishment. Indeed, over the 20 years since British troops went on to the streets of Belfast and Derry in August 1969, the tendency has been for British involvement in Ireland to increase rather than decrease. The abolition of Stormont, the Northern Ireland parliament, in 1972 led to direct rule from Westminster and there are still around 30 000 armed forces of the British Crown (in various uniforms) on active service in Northern Ireland. The 1985 Anglo-Irish agreement emphasised the tightening rather than the relaxation of the bonds that tie Ireland, North and South, to the British state.

Ireland obviously matters to the British establishment. But why? Ireland contains no oil or uranium or other vital minerals or raw materials. It has long provided Britain with agricultural produce and supplies of cheap labour, but so has Jamaica without remaining under military occupation. In the era of intercontinental ballistic missiles, the territorial occupation of Ireland is no longer necessary for Britain's military security as it was in the days of sailing ships, when Protestant England feared that Catholic Ireland might provide a base for hostile Continental powers.

Ireland matters to Britain, not because it serves any economic or strategic purpose, but for the crucial political reason that the unity and freedom of Ireland would mean dismantling the 'United Kingdom'. This would be such a devastating blow to the stability and authority of the British state that it is not surprising that no British government has ever seriously contemplated it.

Enemy within

In the past, the only way Britain could contain demands for national independence from its oldest and closest colony was by directly incorporating Ireland into the British state, through the 1801 Act of Union. The fusion of Ireland into the 'United Kingdom' allowed the British authorities to crush rebellion by treating it as internal subversion rather than nationalist revolt. Throughout the nineteenth century this policy, backed up by ruthless coercion and greatly helped by famine and mass emigration, consolidated British rule over Ireland. However, when the movement for independence gathered momentum around the turn of the century, the unique constitutional status of Ireland meant that Irish nationalist demands threatened the break-up of the British state itself. At a time of mounting rivalries among the major world powers and growing restiveness in the colonies, Ireland became the central issue of British politics and a key test of the authority of the British state at home and abroad.

This is how one historian sums up the impact of the home rule controversy in Britain:

'Ireland's politics, like Ireland's history, could not but have serious consequences for the British future; for where would Britain stand in a world of great states, if she were to forsake the course of her history, that history that had made Britain into a united nation, and seek instead "the disintegration of the United Kingdom into separate cantons"?' (Boyce, p8, quoting from the *Spectator*, 17 March 1894)

The resolution of this particular Irish question took nearly 30 years, culminating in the partition of the country between six Northern and 26 Southern counties in 1921. Partition followed the mobilisation of vast political and military movements in Ireland, for and against continuing the Union with Britain; the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin and its suppression and the Tan War between Irish republicans and British forces from 1919 to 1921. The

partition of Ireland also brought to an end a decade of permanent constitutional crisis in Britain.

Lloyd George, the British prime minister who was largely responsible for negotiating the partition of Ireland, celebrated his achievement as 'the greatest day in the history of the British empire' (quoted in G Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England*, 1966). He was right. Partition is often misunderstood as a setback for Britain through which it was forced to concede independence to most of Ireland, while clinging on to a small fragment in the north. In fact it was, as Lloyd George recognised, an historic victory for Britain, enabling it to strengthen its grip over the whole of Ireland, through the device of allowing a measure of devolved government to Dublin and Belfast.

Most importantly, the partition of Ireland consolidated religious divisions in the working class and split the nationalist movement. The partition settlement was finally enforced through Loyalist pogroms in the North and civil war between the new Dublin regime and intransigent republicans in the South. Both the Northern Loyalists and the Dublin government were armed and backed by the British authorities who could now step back and let their local stooges run affairs in Ireland.

Not Kenya

For half a century Lloyd George's solution held. It was particularly successful in the South, as London and Dublin colluded in promoting the myth of an independent state. In the North the artificially created Catholic minority could only be contained through a comprehensive network of discrimination and repression affecting all areas of life. While Dublin proclaimed itself the 'Republic of Ireland', Belfast insisted on its allegiance to the 'United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland'.

Britain was happy so long as Ireland remained quiet and remote from the concerns of Westminster. However, when in the late sixties Catholic demands for civil rights in the North provoked Loyalist reaction, the British state was forced to intervene directly to maintain order in an area it had long insisted was as British as Kent or Cheshire. The subsequent nationalist revolt was therefore a direct threat to the British state. The renewed demand for Irish unity and independence was a mortal challenge to the legitimacy of the entire United Kingdom.

Those who argue that because Britain could withdraw from its other colonies around the world, it could also withdraw from Ireland,

Ireland matters to all who confront the class power of the British state, because for the past 20 years it has been the gravest threat to that power

underestimate just how much Ireland matters to the British establishment. Britain could pull out of Asia and Africa, though not without considerable difficulty in many cases, but at least the survival of the state was not at issue. The fact that Ireland could only be contained by incorporating it within the British state means that the British ruling class itself is in the direct line of fire of the Irish republican movement. The fact that the British authorities have never treated Ireland as just another colony reveals that they have a better understanding of the consequences of the unique relationship between Ireland and Britain than many of their radical critics.

The British ruling class cannot afford to lose in Ireland. This simple fact explains the total commitment of the British state to staying in control over Ireland from the 1801 Act of Union to the 1985 Anglo-Irish agreement. Governments may come and go, but the state has shown a consistent determination to ruling Ireland. Indeed, at times when governments have appeared to waver in their commitment to the Union, the wider forces of the establishment and state have asserted their power.

Stronger things

When the Liberal government went too far with its home rule proposals in 1912, the Conservative Party leader Andrew Bonar Law told a rally of 250 000 people that there were 'things stronger than parliamentary majorities'. In 1914 British officers stationed at the Curragh near Dublin declared that they would not enforce the government's home rule proposals in Ireland. In 1974 the British Army colluded with Loyalist paramilitaries in the Ulster Workers Council strike which effectively scuppered British government plans to introduce token 'power-sharing' between Unionist and moderate Catholic politicians in Northern Ireland. The British ruling class has shown its readiness to endorse military defiance of the elected government, even to the extent of planning a coup, rather than concede a degree of independence to Ireland.

The British state will go to any lengths to crush the threat to its authority in Ireland because once it is seen to lose its grip over one part of its declared national territory, its collapse will be accelerated everywhere. We should recall that it was for a similar reason that the British government sent the task force to the South Atlantic in 1982 to seize the Falkland Islands back from Argentina. Britain regards the Falkland Islands as British territory, and if another country can simply walk in and take over British territory, where will it stop?

PHOTO: Joe Boatman



It is striking that many people who regard Britain's persistence in occupying Ireland as irrational also considered the Falklands War as a bizarre or atavistic gesture. The common theme in these attitudes is an underestimation of how important the sovereignty and prestige of the state are to the ruling class of a major capitalist country. The scale of resources devoted to containing the war in Ireland and to re-occupying the Falklands reveals that the British establishment understands very well that it is fighting for the highest of stakes in these conflicts.

Nothing is more important to the capitalist state than for its authority to be respected in the territories over which it claims jurisdiction. If the state cannot command respect then

the ruling class cannot rule. If the state cannot prevent foreign invasion or internal subversion within its defined borders, then it cannot maintain the conditions for the operation of market forces on behalf of the class whose fundamental interests it represents.

We can see, then, why Ireland matters to the British establishment. But why should it matter to the rest of us? For three major reasons.

First, because democracy is the central issue in the conflict in Ireland. One of the most basic democratic rights is the right of a nation to choose its own form of government. This right has been systematically denied to the Irish through Britain's domination, division and military occupation of their country.



45 armoured cars to control one IRA funeral in Derry: a sign of the lengths to which the state will go to control Ireland

That the majority of the Irish people aspire to national independence and unity cannot be in doubt. Ever since the rebellion of the United Irishmen in 1798, movements for national liberation have won a popular following among successive generations of the Irish people. British rule has only been secured in Ireland through creating and exploiting sectarian strife and through diverse forms of terror. While political manoeuvre played a part, in the end it was the force of British arms that ensured the partition of Ireland—three years after the first all-Ireland election returned an overwhelming mandate for Sinn Fein and national independence.

The current round of 'troubles' began 20 years ago when Catholics

in Northern Ireland demanded basic democratic rights such as equal access to voting, housing and jobs. The brutal response of the local agents of the British state confirmed that as long as the Irish people as a whole cannot determine their own future, the Catholics in the North will remain second class citizens in their own country.

People in Britain are enthusiastic supporters of democracy in China and Eastern Europe, in South Africa and central America. But what about the people fighting for democratic rights in Ireland? If democracy is worth defending abroad, then it is surely worth fighting for at home.

Second, the fight for democratic rights in Ireland matters even more to people in Britain than similar struggles elsewhere because it is

directed against the British state. The British state is not a neutral force in Ireland, but is concerned to safeguard the interests of the British ruling class. Nor is the state a neutral force in Britain. Today anybody who takes industrial action to defend pay and conditions faces attack by the judges. When black youth respond to fascist provocations in Dewsbury or Bradford or London, they are immediately attacked and rounded up by paramilitary police. Backed by the new public order legislation and tooled up with the latest riot gear, the police are ready to crush any resistance to the established order, whether from strikers, demonstrators, football supporters or even travellers on the way to the midsummer solstice.

The British state—from the generals, the politicians and the top civil servants to the judges, the police and the dole snoopers—is not a benign administrative machine. It is an apparatus which maintains the existing order of society on behalf of the capitalist class. As every group of workers from the miners through to the dockers knows only too well, the British state stands with the employers against the unions. As black activists, those fighting for equal treatment for lesbians and gay men and anybody who sticks up for their rights knows, the British state stands on the side of the oppressors against those demanding equality and justice.

Our ally

Ireland matters to all those who confront the class power of the British state because for the past 20 years it has been the gravest threat to that power. The national liberation struggle in Ireland is a key potential ally of all those who are fighting back against the British state and fighting for a better kind of society beyond the tyranny of capitalist class rule.

Third, Ireland matters to us because the only force that is capable of standing up to the British state, and providing decisive assistance to the Irish people, is the British working class. The working class can play this unique role because, not only are workers the victims of state repression, but thanks to their pivotal position in capitalist production, they also have the potential to organise collectively to overthrow the capitalist state and install a new form of society. The cause of Irish liberation thus converges with the struggle against capitalism in Britain.

The scandal of the past 20 years, however, has been that the Irish people have been forced to fight in isolation.



British myths of Irish history

Why the troops went in

**Phil Murphy
clears up
some serious
misconceptions**

The redeployment of British troops on the streets of Belfast and Derry in August 1969 has become one of the most misunderstood moments of contemporary history. British media coverage of the twentieth anniversary this month will doubtless rework the standard version of events. But this version is a lie, based on some powerfully promoted myths.

Challenging the British myths about the start of the Irish War is more than a matter of historical accuracy. These views play an important role today. They underpin the idea that British governments and soldiers have spent the last 20 years on a peace-keeping mission in Northern Ireland, protecting the people against a handful of terrorists who, in August 1969, saw fit to revive an ancient tribal/religious feud. Exposing these myths is the starting point for establishing that, in 1969 and 1989, the British state is ultimately to blame for the conflict and suffering across the Irish Sea.

MYTH 1

'The IRA started it all.'

If this was true it would have been a remarkable achievement, since the IRA barely existed in 1969. In 1968 the Dublin leadership got rid of most of the IRA's remaining guns, allegedly selling them to the tiny Free Wales Army. In the aftermath of the IRA's unsuccessful Border campaign from 1956-62 the republican movement had begun to evolve in a reformist direction. Under the influence of Stalinists like Roy Johnson from the Connolly Association the IRA moved away from the armed struggle, downplayed the national question and sought to democratise, rather than destroy, the Northern Ireland state.

As Northern Ireland sank into turmoil with the civil rights protests of the late sixties, the few score IRA volunteers in the North were ordered not to engage in military action. In the face of Loyalist pogroms and military occupation, anti-republican graffiti appeared in the nationalist Falls Road area of Belfast in August 1969. The slogan 'IRA—I Ran Away' summed up the widespread cynicism

about the absence of the nationalist community's traditional armed defenders.

The modern IRA only emerged *after* British soldiers moved in. The row over the republican movement's orientation and its abject unpreparedness for the crisis caused a split in late 1969. The new Provisional IRA emerged to fulfil the role which sustains its support today—defending nationalist areas against the forces of the British state and their Loyalist allies.

The first armed resistance by the IRA came in June 1970—10 months after the British Army arrived, so we are told, to crush republican 'terrorism'. A handful of IRA volunteers fought an all-night gun battle with Loyalists in the isolated Catholic ghetto of Short Strand, East Belfast. They successfully defended St Matthew's Church and the local community. Meanwhile, armed volunteers began defending the Ardoyne in North Belfast.

The earlier irrelevance of the IRA meant that, when nationalist opposition to discrimination began in the sixties, it took the form of a peaceful civil rights campaign rather than an armed struggle against the state. A new generation of middle class Catholics had benefited from post-war welfare and educational reforms, but still found themselves branded as second class citizens. They provided much of the leadership for the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association set up in 1967.

Their demands were modest enough: one man, one vote in local elections, a fairer allocation of housing, repeal of the catch-all Special Powers Act, and disbandment of the Royal Ulster Constabulary's paramilitary reserve, the viciously Loyalist 'B' Specials. However, in the special context of Northern Ireland these simple demands proved too extreme for the authorities.

Britain created Northern Ireland through partition in 1920-21, as a sectarian state with an institutionalised system of anti-Catholic discrimination. It is an entirely artificial entity, carved out of Ireland, its boundaries fixed to ensure a permanent majority of



PHOTO: Imperial War Museum

Some nationalists gave the



PHOTO: Imperial War Museum

Protestants. To maintain Protestant loyalty to the Crown, Britain guaranteed them economic and political privileges over their Catholic neighbours. This means that discrimination cannot be reformed away without undermining the very basis of Northern Ireland. To demand social equality for Catholics is to demand the destruction of the British state in Ireland.

This was why the peaceful civil rights protests of 1968 and 1969 were met with violent repression. The Provisional IRA, far from plotting to

start the troubles, was spontaneously created as a defensive response to this violence.

MYTH 2

'Loyalist yobbos—in or out of the 'B' Specials—were responsible for the attacks on the civil rights movement.'

In fact before the troops went in the Royal Ulster Constabulary was the main force for anti-Catholic violence. Although Loyalist paramilitaries have a well-earned reputation for thuggery, the leading role was played by the British government's *official* body of armed men, the RUC. Before August 1969 anti-Catholic repression was predominantly the work of Crown agents maintaining 'law and order' in an undemocratic society.

Of course Loyalist gangs played a role in the unfolding crisis—certainly a bigger part than the IRA. Loyalist extremists from the Ulster Volunteer Force carried out what is usually recognised as the first killing of the current phase of conflict, when they shot dead a Catholic barman in a sectarian attack in Belfast in 1966. Loyalists set off the first bombs in March and April 1969—and tried to blame them on the IRA. Even the first policeman to die in the 'troubles'—Constable Victor Arbuckle—was shot by Belfast Loyalists in October 1969.

These outbursts of Loyalist violence were all responses to reforms or gestures of reconciliation made by the Belfast or British authorities. This has added to the illusion that the Loyalist mobs were the major force for reaction. But the reforms meant little. For example, Constable Arbuckle was killed in Loyalist riots against plans to abolish the 'B' Specials. Yet that force was quickly replaced by the more professional, but equally sectarian, Ulster Defence Regiment. Token government reforms were just empty gestures to buy time as the crisis escalated. Meanwhile, the RUC dealt severely with any Catholics who refused to settle for such crumbs.

The real landmarks in the run-up to August 1969 were clashes between civil rights demonstrators and the RUC. The crisis was caused, not simply because token reforms incensed Loyalist extremists, but because the impossibility of meaningful reform in Northern Ireland forced the authorities to crack down on those demanding democratic rights. The cycle of RUC repression and nationalist resistance provided the central dynamic which led to open war and the redeployment of British troops.

The RUC stopped the first civil rights demonstration from reaching its destination in Dungannon Market Square in August 1968. The RUC brutally attacked the 5 October civil

rights march in Derry and brought Northern Ireland on to the world's TV screens as it battered and bloodied peaceful protesters. The RUC 'escort' on the Belfast to Derry Peoples Democracy march in January 1969 colluded with the Loyalist mob which attacked the marchers at Burntollet Bridge. On-duty police officers rioted through and ransacked the Bogside in Derry on the night of 4 January. The RUC again invaded the Bogside in April. One of their victims was Sammy Devenney, who died from his injuries three months later. During the Orange marches in July 1969, the police baton-charged a nationalist crowd in Dungiven in South Derry. Among the injured was a 70-year old farmer. He died of his wounds the next day, the first civilian killing by state forces.

So throughout 1968-69, the Loyalists meting out the most serious repression to Catholic protesters were full-time policemen. Even the notorious 'B' Specials were not mobilised for riot duty until four weeks before British soldiers were deployed. The key battles were between the Catholic working class and the RUC, local agents of the British state. It was when those battles started going the wrong way for Britain that Whitehall sent in its strongest force, the Army, to back up the RUC.

MYTH 3

'British troops went in to keep the peace and to protect the besieged Catholic community.'

This is the favourite myth among British establishment spokesmen. It allows them to pose as the injured parties, who went in to protect the Catholics and then had their charity flung back in their faces. The truth is that British troops soon took up where the RUC left off, and carried out its repressive role with greater ruthlessness and firepower.

The invasion by British troops represented one section of the state's armed apparatus taking over from another which had failed to maintain order. In his memoirs, Labour home secretary James Callaghan makes this explicit. 'Their immediate orders were to relieve the exhausted police and to prevent riots breaking out in the centre of Londonderry.' (*House Divided*, 1973, p42) And what were the police doing that had so 'exhausted' them? They had been launching assault after assault against nationalists in the Bogside district of Derry.

The appearance that the British government sent its troops in as neutral peace-keepers was reinforced by the convention of not discussing Northern Ireland affairs at Westminster. If the British



troops tea; the British were soon giving them CS gas in return (below)



Callaghan
sent in the
Army to
uphold the
same
sectarian
system of 'law
and order' as
the RUC

government was oblivious to what was happening there, how can it be held responsible for keeping the Catholics down? In fact this convention was one of the virtues of the partition settlement for Britain. Whitehall remained in charge of its colony without taking direct responsibility for the repression this involved. The Unionist regime at Stormont Castle looked after Britain's interests, ensuring that Catholic anger focused on Orange sectarianism rather than British imperialism.

Until October 1968 Northern Ireland affairs were looked after by the same home office department which administered such matters as British Summer Time and London taxis. But once instability resurfaced with the growing momentum behind the civil rights movement, top-level and top-secret committees were rapidly set up in Downing Street to deal with what was immediately recognised as a serious threat to the state.

Built in Britain

Whatever the level of direct Whitehall intervention in Northern Ireland from 1920 to 1969, the fact remained that Britain had set up the Six Counties on a sectarian basis—and was prepared to do whatever was necessary to keep them within the 'United Kingdom'. As early as 1966 Labour prime minister Harold Wilson, meeting with Callaghan and Northern Ireland premier Terence O'Neill, considered sending in troops to help the RUC quell disorder. Around 2500 troops were already on permanent standby in the garrison there. The ministers discussed the legal procedure for mobilising troops to 'aid the civil power'. But they also recognised that sending in troops would be a far-reaching political decision to be sanctioned by the cabinet—or at least its secret Northern Ireland committee (*Sunday Times* Insight Team, *Ulster*, 1972, p82).

When the clashes between nationalists and the police became more frequent and serious during 1969, it was obvious that the RUC could not cope. For the Wilson government it was now a matter of when, not whether, the troops should be ordered on to the streets. In April 1969 soldiers from the local garrison were mobilised to guard public utilities.

Final plans

In early July Lieutenant General Ian Freeland took over as General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland. He was an experienced 'counter-insurgency' commander, who had bloodied his hands in Cyprus, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. With the RUC's exhaustion evident, upcoming

Labour politician Roy Hattersley was appointed the new war minister and told to make final arrangements for the deployment of troops. At the start of August troops were sent to RUC headquarters in East Belfast, but were later withdrawn to barracks. The army log of this manoeuvre records: 'No question of committing troops until all methods exhausted by the police.' (*Ulster*, p109) Two weeks later the RUC collapsed, with a quarter of its officers injured in street fighting.

43 000 bottles

Things boiled over for good in Derry on 12 August during the traditional Loyalist Apprentice Boys march. It was an annual ritual of provocation aimed at Derry Catholics; but in 1969 the provocation sparked off a full-scale war. Fearing the type of Loyalist attack which Belfast nationalists had suffered days earlier, Derry nationalists had made ready protective barricades around the Bogside the night before. After some stone throwing during the march the RUC moved to invade the Bogside once more. This time the locals were ready. The local dairy lost 43 000 milk bottles as the youth prepared for the inevitable attack.

Wave after wave of police tried to break the barricades with batons and tear gas. Every time they were repulsed. The Battle of the Bogside lasted three days. More than 200 were wounded on the first day but the Bogside would not surrender. 'Free Derry' was declared a 'no-go' area for the forces of repression. After two days the RUC could take no more. The Queen's writ no longer ran in Derry; the state was on the verge of collapse. An Army officer on the spot in civvies reported that the RUC could not contain the Bogside for more than 36 hours. Troops marched into Derry on 14 August. Callaghan explained why:

'The government of Northern Ireland has informed the United Kingdom government that as a result of the severe and prolonged rioting in Londonderry it has no alternative but to ask for the assistance of troops at present stationed in Northern Ireland to prevent a breakdown of law and order.' (*Irish Times*, 15 August 1969)

The law and order which Callaghan was concerned to see upheld by the Army was the same sectarian system of legalised repression which the RUC had defended so brutally since 1921.

Long weekend

In Belfast, Loyalist mobs burnt Catholic homes. The RUC backed up the arsonists, as armoured cars mounted with Browning machine guns sprayed the Catholic Divis flats

with gunfire killing two people. But here, too, the exhausted police had to be relieved and a day after Derry, British troops were on the streets of West Belfast. A Whitehall spokesman said they would be back in barracks by the weekend. That was 20 years ago.

The troops' arrival brought a temporary halt to the fighting, leading many Catholics to give the Army a cautious welcome. To the undying gratitude of the British propaganda machine, some even gave the troops tea. Yet even in this period of relief, nationalists did not place full faith in the British Army. In the absence of the IRA, community-based Citizens Defence Committees were organised in Derry and Belfast. Local people armed with sticks patrolled their areas at night.

Shot on sight

The lack of confidence in British soldiers was well founded. By September the first signs of tension were evident when the Army cajoled Belfast people into taking down their barricades. In the summer of 1969 Freeland had frequently complained to Whitehall that he had too few men to do the job. When reinforcements arrived the British government turned from stopgap stabilisation to longer-term consolidation.

After riots on the nationalist Ballymurphy estate in Belfast in April 1970, Freeland warned that petrol-bombers would be shot on sight. Three months later his troops occupied the Falls Road, confining people to their homes on penalty of being shot and killing five. By the end of 1970 soldiers were told not to wait to see what was being thrown at them but to shoot first.

Centre stage

In August 1971 the authorities introduced internment without trial, in January 1972 British paratroops shot dead 14 unarmed marchers on Bloody Sunday in Derry, in March 1972 Edward Heath's Tory government suspended the local parliament at Stormont and introduced direct rule from Whitehall. The North was now in a state of open war, and nationalists queued to join the IRA.

Each of the myths of 1969 has been constructed to disguise one fact: that the essential source of all the conflicts in Ireland is the contradiction between Irish nationalism and British imperialism. In 1969, through all the Catholic protests and Loyalist pogroms, that contradiction took centre stage once more, as the soldiers of the Crown moved back on to the streets of Britain's most troublesome colony.

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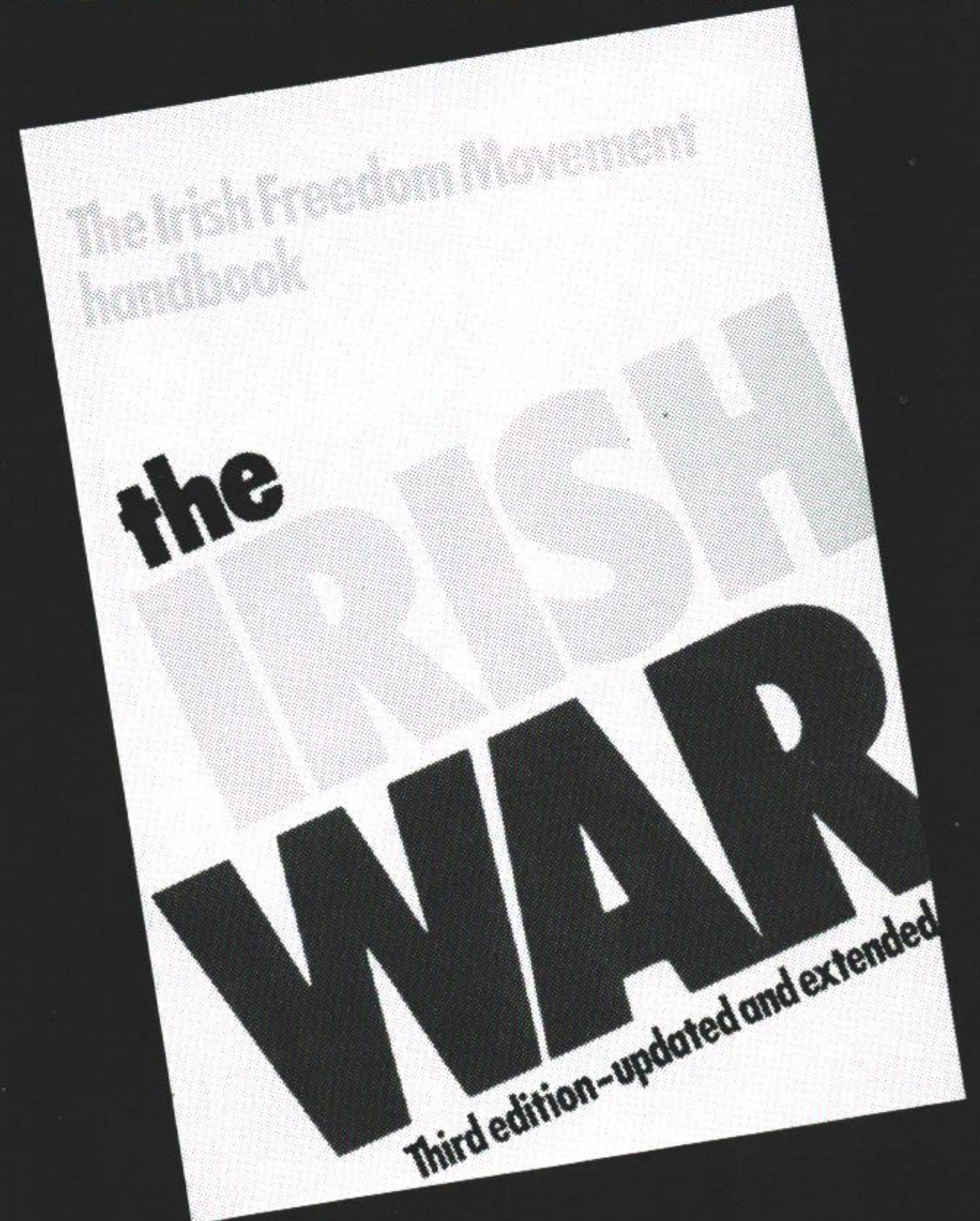
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Battle of the Bogside

The view from the barricades

'After the second night of the battle, at about five o'clock in the morning, there was only about a hundred people left on the street. Most people were resting after two days solid fighting. There were fires still burning and it was sort of quiet. Then we saw the peelers gathering down at the bottom of Rossville Street. They'd realised there wasn't many people out and they were lining up for a charge.

In August 1969 in Derry, the Battle of the Bogside prompted the intervention of British troops and marked the start of the Irish War. Phil Murphy talked to some people who fought in it

Before the storm

Johnnie White: In the sixties in working class areas like the Creggan and Bogside people were directly affected by job discrimination and housing discrimination. We went to one flat and we had to climb over three beds before we could get into the room they classified as the sitting room. And we were working for wages way below what workers accepted in Britain. Women were working in shirt factories in conditions that wouldn't have been accepted in nineteenth-century Britain. When the civil rights struggle emerged the demands may have been 'One man, one vote', 'One man, one job', but behind it was a submerged resentment at the conditions people were subjected to for years.

chauvinistic, gobshite, gombeen politicians, claimed to represent the mass of the people. They did not. Catholic working class interests were not represented at all.

The people started talking about living and working like this and began to move towards a more radical position than the old Nationalist Party. They started to look towards Eamonn McCann from the Labour Party and ourselves in the Republican Clubs. The middle class leadership of the Nationalist Party saw that as a threat to their class position. They economically benefited from the old system which included discrimination, gerrymandering and all the rest. The Nationalist Party did nothing to mobilise people against that system, they lived off it. And they accepted the crumbs off the Unionist table. Those Nationalist politicians—

From about 1968, people saw that small groups were resisting and they started to think something could be done. Prior to that people were led to believe, mainly by the old leadership of the Nationalist Party, that you just did not stand up to the authority of the RUC or the Unionist monopoly in Stormont. You accepted everything. But now here, all of a sudden, was a group of young people getting up and saying: 'Well fuck you, we've had enough. You're not going to evict anyone from that house. If there's houses available there and none available here then we're going to squat them.' So there were mass squats. The Derry Guildhall was taken over. They said: 'If the Derry Corporation won't give us a house then we'll move into the corporation.' Even at that stage you hadn't got mass support on the streets but this resistance reflected in people's attitudes. They started talking: 'Jesus, you're right. Something should be done and something can be done.'

'Vinnie Coyle raced up to the Creggan in the ice-cream van and drove around sounding the horn and shouting that the cops were about to raid the Bog. Back here we were starting to get panicky because if they'd made a charge they could have got in. Then, out of the blue, we heard the ice-cream horn. We turned around, and coming from the bottom of Westland Street we saw Vinnie and the ice-cream van and about 5000 people who'd followed him from Creggan. The cops saw this huge crowd, shrugged their shoulders, said: "Fuck this" and turned back.'

(Tommy McCourt)

The civil rights march in Derry on 5 October 1968 was organised by working class people like ourselves. The march was opposed by the Communist Party, opposed by the Nationalist Party, opposed by Eddie

Bernadette McAliskey (née Devlin) was a founder member of Peoples Democracy in October 1968. She was elected to Westminster as Independent MP for Mid-Ulster in 1969. After the Bogside fighting, she was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for incitement to riot and disorderly behaviour.

She remains a prominent figure in radical Irish politics.

Johnnie White was a leading republican in Derry when the civil rights protests began. He helped set up the Derry Housing Action Committee and the Derry Citizens Defence Association. He has been unable to live in Northern Ireland since the early seventies, and is now a Sinn Fein organiser in County Donegal.

Tommy McCourt and **Seamus O'Kane** were members of the Derry Labour Party Young Socialists* during 1969. They later joined the Official republican movement. Today they are unaligned.

Dermie McClenaghan was a prominent member of Derry Labour Party in the late sixties and a founding member of the Housing Action Committee.

(*Derry Labour Party was formally part of the partitionist Northern Ireland Labour Party, but acted autonomously.)

McAteer. But the people involved on the ground said: 'We're going ahead on it', and the march went ahead. The result was history. Demonstrators were beat down on the streets. Afterwards, people who didn't attend the march and people who were listening to the Nationalist Party said: 'That settles it. We're going to have to do something.'

Tommy McCourt: The level of politics in the town was very low at the time. For most people it was only watching the TV pictures of the police batoning the marchers that dramatically transformed attitudes. Once they saw the physical brutality, views changed. The cry for 'One man, one vote' didn't change in words but it began to mean something different: 'Smash the cops.'

I'd had to leave Derry after the march and missed the later riots. I arrived back at about two in the morning and was trying to drive up Rossville Street. It was covered with glass so I parked the car and walked past the Rossville flats. There wasn't a being on the street. Then about 10 policemen stepped out, dressed in big, heavy gabardine coats. Every one of them had big batons. One put his baton under my chin and they asked: 'Where are you coming from?'

The day the tables turned

Where are you going to? Show us your hands.' I had to play it all innocent: 'It's terrible. What's happened here?' I talked my way out of it. I didn't want to tell them I was on my way to the Bogside so I said I was going into the flats, in the hope of getting away from them. I got in through the door and discovered even more police lined all the way up the steps. The lifts weren't working so I had to walk up every single step, past the police. I could hear the rustle of their raincoats and they stood smacking their batons against their hands and staring at me. Every frigging policeman I passed, I was waiting for the crack on the back of my head. It was frightening.

Seamus O'Kane: The Derry Citizens Action Committee was set up in the wake of the 5 October demonstration. The committee was, as McCann described them, 'middle class, middle-aged and middle-of-the-road'. They tried to stem and control the tide of protest that was evoked by the events on the 5 October. Two people who tried to control nationalist protest later were John Hume and Ivan Cooper who were elected as Independent MPs in February 1969. Unfortunately Ivan Cooper got knocked out by a stone.

It was a pity the double wasn't done that day with Hume.

Tommy McCourt: During this period there was some members of the Labour Party with a strong social conscience, prepared to cooperate with others outside the Labour Party and push for more radical positions. At the time there weren't many formal political discussions. A lot of it was just informal contact, and about trying to get advice on how to do things. We tended to look towards republicans for guidance but a lot of us quickly found that ordinary common sense was a better guide.

At that stage the people involved were quite young. Some of us had joined the Young Socialists on the basis of supporting the underdog, but there wasn't a clear political position in joining the group. Many of us had very little understanding of the nature of the republican movement and where it was going. We didn't even really think about it. In a very general way we just saw ourselves as socialist activists. We were more interested in doing things than sitting down to discuss what the strategy was.



PHOTO: Popperfoto



The Battle of the Bogside

Tommy McCourt: You'd had the 5 October civil rights march, you'd had the invasion of the Wells on 4 January 1969 in the aftermath of the Burntollet march, you'd had the RUC beating up and killing Sammy Devenney in April. So there was the awareness of the dangers of this particular 12 August Apprentice

Boys march. The Loyalists were going to build a much bigger, more aggressive march than normal. It was going to be a flag-waving thing to say: 'Fenians, you've got to lie down.' And the Fenians in our areas were saying: 'We're going to get back at them.'

Johnnie White: The 12 August march would have been no different from any other year if you had not had the background of Catholic working class resistance to evictions, strikes in the shirt factories and so on. It was because of this resistance that you had the backlash from the British authorities and from the Orange state

'When the troops moved in, their guns were still pointing this way'

in the North. The average Protestant would have been prepared to walk along the walls and forget about it. But we knew the Unionist leadership weren't prepared to forget. That's why the 'B' Specials were deployed in 1969—though they had never been present at any other 12 August march.

We knew there was going to be an attack on the Bogside by people who participated in the Orange march. We realised that the 'B' Specials were going to mobilise, to put manners into the people of the Bogside and Creggan and bring them down a peg. Then the Unionist leadership could say: 'That's the end of it. You've got away with squatting, you've got away with rising up against evictions, you've got away with strikes and everything else but that's the end of it now. This is where the authority lies.' We knew the threat. That's why we saw the need to set up the Citizens Defence Association. So we organised different areas of the Bogside. There were plans made for the situation if gangs moved in: upturned cars and lorries would be dragged across the street for defence. We distributed petrol bombs, the only weapons available at the time—there were no firearms. There were milk bottles with cloths in them and that was it.

Tommy McCourt: On 12 August during the Apprentice Boys march we were putting up the aerial on the Rossville flats for Radio Free Derry. I climbed up the big television aerial to tie on the radio aerial. The Orangemen were up on the wall shouting and of course, us being non-sectarian, we were shouting back 'You bastards'. Then we got word from somebody with a walkie-talkie in William Street that the cops were coming. We started broadcasting, shouting through the radio: 'Build the barricades! Build the barricades! The police are attacking!' We looked out of the flats and there were people down there with a transistor radio, and they were obviously listening to everything I was saying. We could see the fellows looking around so we shouted into the microphone: 'Don't be looking around. Build the barricades!'

The first barricades were being set up when the cops made a big charge up Rossville Street followed by the Paisleyites. Whole flats just emptied as stuff used as missiles rained on the peelers—cups, saucers, a china cabinet, even a TV. We thought the cops might get in but they stopped as they came to the barricade and ran back. That gave everybody the initial boost, that we'd stopped them.

Johnnie White: On the first night everybody came out. Man, woman and child on the barricades throwing petrol bombs and stones. There was

not one house in the area that was not directly involved in opposition to the 'B' Specials, Orangemen and the RUC. First-aid centres were set up. It seemed to grow out of nothing. That was nothing to do with the organisational brilliance of the Citizens Defence Committee. It was a spontaneous thing. People saw what was happening and said: 'We're going to do it now.'

Dermie McClenaghan: During the Bogside siege, the Citizens Defence Committee was based at Paddy Doherty's house. There was up to 53 people on it. I only found out recently I was a member of it. Paddy Doherty told me this five months ago and I said: 'Thanks very much Paddy, it's a bit late now.' There was also a whole lot of wee segments making decisions. Five or six people could come out of a pub and say: 'We'll build a barricade here.' The Citizens Defence Committee was making the more administrative decisions like bringing food up from Galway.

Tommy McCourt: The decisions about the defence of the area were made by people on the barricades on the frontline. You had three, four, five hundred in Rossville Street, you had the same in William Street. You had a few thousand standing behind either cheering or replacing people at the front. The decisions were dictated by the RUC. If they made a charge, people fought back. If the RUC moved to another street people moved there as well.

At the beginning it was a free-for-all. As the rioting went on a form of organisation developed but it was very spontaneous. If the guys at the front were running out of petrol bombs somebody would run back and ask for more, and others would start making them up. I remember at one point we'd run out of petrol. Someone went out to the garage for more but came back saying 'They won't give it to us without the money'. Jesus, you're talking about almost the whole town being on fire. So we said: 'Go back and charge the petrol to the Citizens Defence Association.' He went out again, came back and said that they wouldn't accept that. So 10 or 12 of us jumped on a lorry. Someone produced a shotgun—it was the first time I'd seen a gun in Derry. We went out to the garage and the guy who worked there came running out and spotted this gang looking for petrol. He went to run back into the station but your man put the gun over the side and shouted: 'Halt!' He looked around and saw the gun, put his hands up in the air and shouted: 'I'm a Catholic! I'm a Catholic!' Your man said: 'I don't care what you are. Fill 'er up.' Then the other asked 'What grade do you want?'

Johnnie White: At the start of it the people's main goal was defence. You had complete isolation from the British establishment and you had the idea coming on you that you had to break away from the whole thing. It was more emotional than anything. The people who organised the defence of the Bogside were not astute politicians. They were just people off the street like myself. We weren't theoretical. That was our failing because we couldn't take advantage of the situation that emerged when the barricades were up and the Free Derry area had emerged.

After, Communist Party theoreticians and Labour Party lecturers from Trinity College Dublin came up to examine the situation. They could not believe or accept that, for the first time, people under the control of British imperialism had set up an area that the forces of 'law and order' could not enter. The Citizens Defence Committee was by now broken into two groups. You had a left, arguing that you must organise politically in the area. And you had a stronger Catholic middle class voice emerging: Paddy Doherty and this crawling clerical element, who were saying that you must, at all costs, keep the thing on a lawful perspective.

Enter the troops

Johnnie White: I was in Waterloo Place and I saw the troops moving in for the first time. But the significant thing was that they had the guns pointing towards us; they hadn't got them pointing towards the B-men or the RUC or the Orangemen. There was still B-men and Orangemen lobbing missiles at us over the heads of the British Army. But the guns were still pointed this way. They turned in an hour and the RUC and the B-men just disappeared. It was like a rehearsed thing on a stage.

Bernadette McAliskey: People initially felt that the 'B' Specials and the police were being driven back; the army came forward and put barbed wire between us and them, and John Hume and Eddie McAteer said that Stormont was about to collapse and we were witnessing the end of the state of Northern Ireland. People by and large believed it. Those of us on the left, the republicans, and people who weren't prepared to fall for that

yarn, were in the minority and we weren't in control of anything so we were very quickly bundled off to the side.

Dermie McClenaghan: There were two thoughts going through people's minds depending how politically sophisticated they were. Either 'It's grand because people won't get killed', or 'It's good because it represents a new dimension'. It would redefine the conflict as an imperialist one.

Tommy McCourt: The barricades stayed up after the battle. The Brits were in but we didn't want them in *here* because we still weren't sure what their intentions were. Until we got some clarification we were going to keep the barricades up, at least for a week or two. But elements like John Hume wanted to restore control. Word was spread that the communists or socialists were holding

he tried vainly to explain to me that he had some authority to be there. But he very quickly got the message. And yet there were people at the same time making them tea.

People on the ground differed about what to do. They were tired and glad it was over. The main motivation for people fighting was fear of the police coming in. The revolutionary potential of what they were doing had not dawned on them. So there was confusion inside the Bogside when the Army moved in as to whether we'd won or not. When the Army came, the question was 'What the hell are we going to do with *these* boys? Do we throw stones at them?'. When I was up on the platform next to the Rossville flats, one of the lads who'd been on the roof all the time shouted to me 'What'll we do Bernie, do we fight on with them?'. Before I was allowed to answer, John Hume and his cohort pushed me bodily off the platform,

but if you stop making tea for your neighbours you can quit. So the tea wasn't that big a gesture anyway, except when the media made a lot of it. Callaghan got tea as I remember. Big, fat, slobbering Jim Callaghan hanging out of a window in the Bogside.

Johnnie White: The British Army strategy was to send invitations to us to have meetings at a hotel. There was Colonel Dyball and a couple of majors. I was on three deputations from the Citizens Defence Committee to the hotel and their attitude was completely sickening—to put it mildly. We knew politically what was happening: that their overall objective was to subdue the potential upsurge of working class resistance. And the way they were doing it was to be so patronising as to say: 'Keep your barricades up.' What Dyball and the British establishment was saying to us was: 'The British government are having negotiations with the Free State authorities and things will be sorted out, the civil rights will be sorted out.' Unfortunately, at that time the Catholic middle class' control over the population of the area meant that people accepted this.

Seamus O'Kane: The middle class Catholics began to try and manipulate the Citizens Defence Association. They didn't want 'crazy' republicans running riot. These middle class elements were starting to move in, the Brits had come in, negotiations had taken place between John Hume and Jim Callaghan, the British home secretary. The Catholic middle classes wanted to cool the situation. There were some radical elements like Bernadette McAliskey who stood up and explained why the troops were there, but by and large it was lost on deaf ears because people were so relieved after three days of fighting. They were just tired and drained and didn't want to listen to political speeches.

Johnnie White: In that period there was a pathetic love relationship between people of the Bogside and the Army. But it should be mentioned as well that here were a number of British soldiers who identified with the struggle of the people. They saw themselves living and coming from areas like the Bogside themselves and identified with us. That's why regiments changed as often as possible because they didn't want the soldiers to identify with us. You would have had 90 per cent desertion from the British Army when the troubles started if they'd kept a regiment in Derry for six months because you had so close identification between their backgrounds and ours.



Preparing a bottle party for the RUC on top of the Rossville flats

the city to ransom. Some people, like the old republicans, saw the troops as imperialists because they knew what it was all about in historical terms. But the general opinion was that this was a change, we'd beaten the RUC, we'd achieved something. Most saw it as a success. Some welcomed them so much they even went out to make them tea. Others welcomed them in the sense that they'd got the cops out, but were asking: 'What's next?'

Bernadette McAliskey: There was absolute ambiguity about things. A few days after the troops arrived there was a knock upon Dermie McClenaghan's mother's door. I opened it and there was a British Army officer whom I, with all the authority of my short skirt and long hair, ordered out like a school marm. 'Go away you terrible little man. Out to your own side of the fence.' And

because they were terrified that I'd say: 'Yes.' There might have been the odd kid that threw stones at them. But basically the barbed wire went up: they stayed that side, we stayed this side and the media made much of the tea-making which didn't last long.

Johnnie White: People on the Bogside welcomed the troops then, that can't be denied. People actually brought the British soldiers in there for cups of tea.

Bernadette McAliskey: The tea-making for soldiers wasn't that widespread and it also has to be seen in the context of this society. We give tea to everybody. When I used to stand for elections, whoever brought tea to the polling stations gave tea to their own people and tea to the opposition. Shoot whoever you like

'My regret is 20 years ago, the left could have taken the leadership'

Bernadette McAliskey: In Derry the people were not *hostile* to the troops in the beginning. Derry was a garrison town with a history of soldiers. Derry knew Yankee soldiers in the war, it was a town of Redmondites and volunteers. There was no history of republicanism in the cities. It belonged to us in the peasantry. For us there was an instinctive response to the troops, it wasn't intellectual or an understanding of the role of imperialism. When I looked down the Rossville flats and saw the British Army coming, it was years of rural, republican upbringing that said 'Jesus, out of the frying pan and into the bloody fire'. And that is the truth.

People who were born and reared in the city of Derry did not share this instinctive response. There was never any tea made in the rural areas for soldiers. They were hated from the day they came. When the soldiers arrived in Tyrone in late '69, early '70, they came around and rapped on doors asking for the names of the occupants. They asked one old boy how long he'd been there and he said to them: 'We were driven here 200 years ago and I suppose you're back to drive us on.' The soldier didn't know what day of the week it was. It was the more socially conservative rural people who instinctively rejected the British Army from the day they arrived. The city people had to go through their own experience. The tea-making lasted for a very short period because the soldiers had to do the same job as the police.

The honeymoon is over

Tommy McCourt: People's attitudes changed when subconsciously we began to understand the role of the troops. Alright, they've stopped the cops. But if I want to go to the centre of town I have to go through these boys. They would stop you and say: 'Where are you going and why are you going?' And maybe they'd search you. You began to feel this kind of resentment that began to build. The mentality was there that we weren't being protected but being jailed. That feeling began after one or two weeks. John Hume had got the barricades down and replaced them with white lines which the troops weren't meant to cross. I remember somebody saying: 'What are they going to do? Sprinkle holy water on the line so that if the troops cross it they'll burn up?' First the officers would come in to look at something, then a patrol would be allowed in to check something out. Then the patrols became more frequent, gradually more came in, and the resentment built up.

Johnnie White: The resentment of the troops started when British policy changed. I'm sure the British Army had given it a certain period of time, the sweet and nice attitude. Then the order came out: 'That's changed', so the policy on the ground changed. The going in for tea all stopped and the slap on the back of the head started, and people obviously swung

against them then.

My regret is 20 years ago, the left could have taken the leadership. We could have won over a majority of the Catholic working class to a more radical position. But because of our naivety and fumbling of the situation at the time the right wing and the Catholic Church won it. There's no question about it. Political organisation was needed. A situation came about which the left in Derry were not capable of handling. If it'd happened now and we were all here then by Jesus, a different story. The people's committees, the organisation in the area would be a different thing. Now, we could stand up on a platform and confidently say what should be done.

Seamus O'Kane: The three demands put forward on 5 October 1968 civil rights march: 'One man, one vote', 'One family, one house', 'One man, one job' weren't reformist demands. They were revolutionary demands because the Northern Ireland statelet couldn't grant those demands without disintegrating. But we didn't understand that at the time. We didn't understand that because of the way the system was organised, reformist demands became inherently revolutionary. I'm just sorry I didn't know that 20 years ago.

Up on the roof

The roof of the Rossville flats became the strategic centre of the Bogside resistance, as petrol-bombing youths kept the police and Loyalists at bay. **Eddie Harrigan** remembers the scene.

'There was no plan to use the flats before the Battle of the Bogside began—their use was something that just happened. Height is obviously an advantage. Quite a few people claim to have been the first up there. I think it would have been on the first evening of rioting. People were tired and the RUC tried to move in to contain us so the Unionist supporters who had come behind them would have the space to do a bit of wrecking in the Catholic area. The idea of the roofs went about and somebody got up there to get a bit of a crack going. All of a sudden it developed into a great vantage point. It was really from there that the control of the Battle of the Bogside was centred.

You could get up there through the lift system. From the lifts there was a ladder up to the roof for the workmen so we made use of it. There was quite a few people up there, but if you take everybody that tells you they've been on the roof of the flats during the battle it would have been three quarters of Derry there. There was between 70 to 100 people on there regularly. I went up a few times but I've a fear of

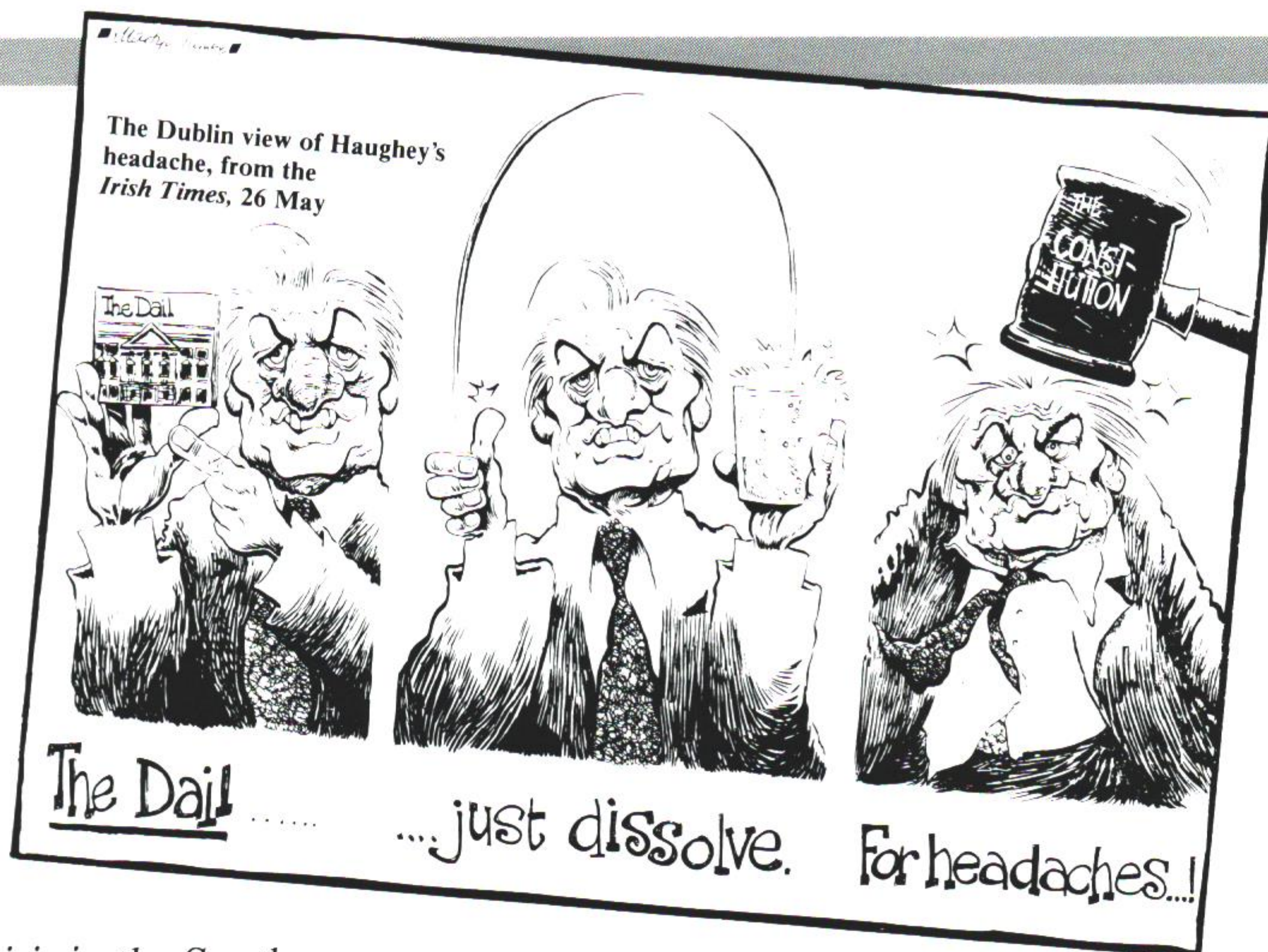
heights—it got to me after a time.

People made the petrol bombs on the flats and sometimes in the garages of the flats. They were brought up in milk crates. The average age of people on the roof was 16 to 25, but even younger people played a role in bringing the petrol bombs up. This organisation developed spontaneously but it worked. Everybody was behind what was going on.

The police tried to fire tear gas on to the roof but the breeze usually worked to our advantage. People had different theories about how to protect themselves from the gas. Some people used vinegar and handkerchiefs. It seemed to work but it could have been just psychological. Others put their heads in basins of water. People were still choking and had sore eyes.

The RUC were scared of the flats. It's a fear that continued after the troops came in. Later an Army spy-post was set up on top of the flats to try to quell the people in them.

I wouldn't like to think that there's any hero worship of the people on the roofs. We were protecting the area and protecting ourselves. The people who were up there played a very big part in the defence, but so did the people on the ground. For my generation the flats remain a good memory. But for younger people who grew up when the troops came in, Free Derry Corner replaced them as a symbol of resistance.'



Crisis in the South

AL CAPONE FOR PREMIER

Sean Thomas locates the source of Dublin's political instability on this side of the Irish Sea

Six months ago Fianna Fail leader and prime minister Charles Haughey was feted as the 'miracle man' of Irish politics. 'Despite the most savage government spending cuts ever initiated by an Irish government, despite a quarter of a million unemployed and growing unease over extradition', noted one British newspaper, 'as far as the Irish voters are concerned, there is no alternative to Charles Haughey' (*Guardian*, 24 October 1988).

But the June election proved different. Haughey called the snap election in an effort to turn his 50 per cent opinion poll rating into a majority government. He ended up with four seats less and not even a minority government. There may be 'no alternative', but Irish voters aren't keen on Haughey either.

No party in the Republic has a mandate for government. Amid the constitutional row which followed the inconclusive election result, establishment opinion in both London and Dublin came down in favour of some form of coalition government along the lines of other West European countries.

However, Ireland is not like other European nations. The image presented by Dublin's parliamentary institutions disguises the fact that, in many respects, the Twenty-six Counties have more in common with third world states. The post-election constitutional crisis goes deeper than the sort of governmental instability

we are used to seeing in a country like Italy. It reveals the fragility of the unfree state created artificially through Britain's partition of Ireland nearly 70 years ago.

The Southern Irish economy is entirely dominated by foreign capitalists. Getting on for half of manufacturing employment is in foreign-owned industries, and American-owned Coca-Cola concentrate is the largest export. The Republic owes the big foreign bankers \$33.2 billion. Per head of population, that is easily the largest debt in Europe, and ranks with the highest in Latin America. It means that Dublin has to kowtow to foreign financiers in the way that third world states have to.

Still supervised

But Southern Ireland is not only dominated economically. As explained elsewhere in this issue, the partition of Ireland in 1921 did not grant real independence to the 26 counties which became the Irish Free State. Instead, partition laid the foundations for a new form of British domination, allowing Whitehall to retain an indirect supervisory role over Southern affairs as well as direct control of the North.

Despite the decline of Britain's economic influence in the Republic, it still holds the political whip hand there. The key factor is the historical weakness of the Irish capitalist class. The Dublin establishment can only

keep a measure of control over the South because of the divisions in the working class and the nationalist movement created by Britain's occupation of the North. Partition and the British presence are thus equally vital to capitalist stability on either side of the Border.

The weakness of the Irish ruling class, and the economic and political domination of the Twenty-six Counties, explain the structural instability of Dublin politics—an instability which has been growing worse in the eighties. After the previous general election in 1987, one study pointed out that support for Fianna Fail had fallen to its lowest since 1961, Fine Gael had recorded its lowest vote since 1957, and the Labour Party had suffered its worst result since 1933. 'There are', warned one of the authors, 'too many signs of a drift towards ungovernability' (B Farrell, in P Mair et al, *How Ireland Voted: The Irish General Election 1987*, 1987, p152). That drift has been accelerated by the latest election debacle.

The dependency on the movement of foreign capital, and the subordination to Britain's political interests, mean that the class relations typical of a West European state are not fully developed in the South of Ireland. This has created the characteristic classless, stodgy middle ground of Irish politics, where indecisive, indistinct petit-bourgeois parties and politicians wheel and deal. With no

differences of principle between the major parties, the labels left and right have never really been applicable.

Irish parliamentary politics consist of a series of deals and compromises with the disparate forces at work in Irish society—British imperialism, the Irish working class, the farmers, the new urban middle classes, the Catholic Church. The attempt to put together compromises between them in such a precarious political set-up has Dublin politicians stumbling from one crisis to the next.

A common feature of Irish politics is the corruption and graft which the petit-bourgeois parties employ to hold together their shaky coalitions of interest groups. In 1987, 27 per cent of the deputies elected to the Dail had close family ties with sitting or former deputies. Haughey married the daughter of ex-premier Sean Lemass to set his career rolling. Labour Party chief Dick Spring inherited his seat from his father.

Boss politics

Haughey is the past master of wheeler-dealing and palm-greasing in Irish politics. One of his most notorious deals was done in 1982, when he bought the single vote he needed to become premier from independent deputy Tony Gregory. Haughey promised Gregory: £14m to provide 400 jobs in his Dublin Central constituency; another 3746 jobs over the next three years; a new 27-acre port and docks development; over 2000 new houses; free medical cards for pensioners and various other government grants. 'As Al Capone once said', Haughey is reported to have told Gregory, 'it is a pleasure to do business with you' (quoted in J Joyce and P Murtagh, *The Boss*, 1983, p62).

There are many other political practices characteristic of a banana republic. Political patronage, bribery, electoral personation and even top judges harbouring fugitives have been exposed in the day-to-day affairs of Irish government. The charade which passes for parliamentary politics exposes the illusory character of the South's status as a fully-fledged European democracy. It confirms that the Republic of Ireland remains a poor relation of the capitalist powers.

The major responsibility for this mess lies with the British authorities. British domination continues to stifle political and economic progress throughout Ireland. While the Border and British troops remain in Ireland, the South will suffer under the increasingly unstable and corrupt gombeen politics personified by Charles J Haughey. Change can come about when working class dissatisfaction, currently reflected in high abstention rates at election time, is turned into a political movement opposed both to British imperialism and its sidekicks in Dublin.

Two men tell why they're at war with Britain

Inside the IRA

Interview 1: 'This is going to be a long, long war'

Living Marxism has been supplied with two interviews with volunteers in the Irish Republican Army. Here we publish edited extracts. The opinions expressed or implied by the anonymous interviewees are not necessarily those of this magazine

Question: When did you first join the IRA?

Volunteer: I joined Fianna Eireann [the republican youth organisation] in 1966. There were very few members. It was more like a boy scouts' organisation than part of the republican movement. But it did lay the basis on which I would join the Irish Republican Army. My family has always been republican. So when I was approached to join the Fianna I had no hesitation.

Question: Would it have been a natural process to move from the Fianna to the IRA?

Volunteer: Probably. But the events of 1969 determined that without thought going into it.

Question: How were you approached to join the IRA?

Volunteer: I made the approach. During the defence of nationalist areas in 1969, I made approaches as to how to join the IRA, going to a republican I knew who was in the IRA and asking him. You had to be sworn in, give an oath to the IRA. You went through recruiting lectures before you gave this oath.

Question: Would there have been any training involved?

Volunteer: Not at that time, no.

Question: Was that because it was too difficult in the circumstances?

Volunteer: Yes, probably that, and also it wasn't practical, there were very few weapons. In actual fact my first action didn't come about until 1971, and by that stage I had been given training in both weapons and explosives.

Question: What were your feelings going on your first operation?

Volunteer: At that time it was probably more of an adventure than anything else. Obviously I was quite frightened, but once the operation was completed I felt quite excited about it. The first operation was a bombing, a commercial target. That was the initial type of operation that

most new volunteers were given. I think it was more to get them used to being active.

My first operation with the Crown forces came about in late 1971, when there was a gun battle with the British Army in a nationalist area, I'd prefer not to name the area. A British Army foot patrol entered the area on both sides of the main street and four



volunteers, myself included, took up positions and opened fire on them. They returned fire and at one stage our retreat was cut off. But, as was always normal in those days, when there was a lull in the shooting local people came out on to the streets and gave cover, and we were able to get back to base. I was obviously nervous. I was inexperienced with tackling the Crown forces face-to-face, but everyone has to start at that.

Question: How did you assess the calibre of your comrades in the early seventies?

Volunteer: There was very little political motivation, it was just a gut hatred for the RUC and British Army. A lot of volunteers at that time would have seen it as an adventure, and that would have been the case up until the mid-seventies.

Question: How was the IRA organised structurally at that time?

Volunteer: It was organised initially from company level. Companies covered local areas. From the local areas they formed a battalion, with an average of about seven companies. In the early seventies, this involved very big numbers of volunteers.

Question: How was it possible for the IRA to maintain such a structure of organisation and yet remain invisible from the local population and the Crown forces?

Volunteer: In the early seventies most of the volunteers were known to the local people, and to the Crown forces. Now it's completely different. It's got to the stage now where the IRA are turning away more volunteers than they're bringing in, for the simple reason that they have to remain anonymous.

Recruits are dissuaded from joining the movement. They're given all the reasons why they shouldn't join, such as the possibility of jail, the possibility of getting killed in action.

After that, if the commitment is still there to join the IRA, he would be put on a type of probation, when he would be observed by the IRA security department—who he associates with, what sort of ties he has, what sort of drinking habits he has. This could last up to nine months. And after nine months, if the security people are satisfied that this person can involve himself in the IRA without standing out like a sore thumb, then he will go through the actual recruitment stage, which is the Green Book.

Question: What does it mean to an IRA volunteer when they have to take life, to kill a member of the Crown forces?

Volunteer: Volunteers realise that this is a war, and in every war there are casualties. No one likes the taking of life. But there are cases when it is necessary. This is one of the cases. A volunteer does not glorify death. If a life is lost, a volunteer feels no joy in it. He would probably at one stage or another think of the dependants of the person whose life was taken.

The thing that a volunteer must remember is that it's not the individual that is being executed or killed in actions against the British Army. It's the uniform, it's what he represents. The easy way out for him is not to come here, to refuse to come here, to leave the British Army. Once they take that decision to come here, they are coming into a war situation. They know the risks. The IRA volunteers know the risks. They regret having to do this, but it is a necessity, and will continue until Britain decides to withdraw. That is the only way it's going to stop. But the IRA does not have a monopoly on suffering.

Question: Having said that, though, would you say that the violence has brutalised yourself and your comrades?

Volunteer: To some extent it does, but we try our best not to allow that to happen. Again there are occasions when you stand and you think 'It is a war, people's lives are going to be lost and there's not a hell of a lot we can do about that'. This is armed resistance and the IRA is no different from the resistance movements during the Second World War. They threw up armed resistance against German occupation. The IRA is doing exactly the same against an occupying country, which is Britain.

Question: It must also be a temptation for volunteers, especially if they're involved over a long period of time, to look back and say 'Well, look what I could have done with my life'.



PHOTO: Joe Boatman

'The IRA do not fear the SAS'

Volunteer: Oh of course, this is where the commitment comes into it. The volunteers do give up a terrible lot. If married, although they try not to let it interfere with their married life it does interfere with it. They could be out earning good money, they don't have that opportunity. But by the time a volunteer comes into the IRA, he knows these are the sacrifices he's going to have to make. And if the commitment is strong enough he'll learn to live with it, until this present campaign has reached its end.

Question: You and many of your comrades have been involved now for nearly 20 years. Has it been worth it?

Volunteer: Oh yes. I mean, it will be worth it when there's a conclusion reached. That can't be reached if the struggle doesn't continue. So every day that it continues, it brings us nearer to the day when we'll reach our goal. So yes it has been worth it, and it will be worth it.

Question: But many people would argue that the goals of the IRA are unrealisable, certainly in your lifetime.

Volunteer: No I don't accept that. I would say that there's light at the end of the tunnel now.

Question: But the British Army and RUC have made so many technological and military advances, how is it possible for the IRA to go on the offensive today?

Volunteer: It's possible because as the IRA goes on it becomes more experienced, more sophisticated. We are learning all the time. We are obviously learning by our mistakes. We're not infallible but I think that the British Army also recognise that we are a force to be reckoned with.

Question: Why have you not launched an all-out offensive to try to bring a speedy end to the conflict? How can the IRA expect its own people and the nationalist community in general to endure this long war?

Volunteer: During the early 1970s everyone had this belief that freedom would come the following year. It's now been accepted by the IRA, particularly by ordinary volunteers, that this is going to be a long, long war. We're not prepared to set a time on it. At the same time we're not prepared to take an all-out offensive in such a way that it would jeopardise our chances of chipping away at the British Army and therefore the British government. We're not naive enough to believe that we can defeat the British Army militarily. We are a guerrilla force.

PHOTO: Joe Boatman



We will attack the enemy as and when the opportunity presents itself.

We believe that the tactics we have adopted, in carrying out the type of attacks we have been doing, are having an effect on the British government. We believe that this strategy will, as it has done twice before, albeit on one occasion with possibly disastrous results, it has brought the British government to the negotiating table. We believe that it will happen again.

Question: How can you expect the British government to care about the odd farmer who happens to be in the UDR?

Volunteer: The fact that the IRA are engaging the British Army, the RUC, the UDR, presents itself as a war situation. The British government for various reasons don't want this to happen. They want a way out. It can be argued that for geographical reasons the British government would like to hold on to the North of Ireland. I don't think it would be for economic reasons. But there is a conflict there. Even the British public themselves have been saying, in referendums organised by

newspapers, that they want Britain out of Ireland. It is because of IRA actions that these people are saying this.

We believe some day pressure will be put on the British government, where they're going to have to sit down, look at it realistically and declare their intention to withdraw, both economically and militarily, from the North of Ireland and give the people of Ireland the right to self-determination. Now we don't believe that this can be achieved solely through political means. We believe that the IRA is the cutting edge, that the IRA can advance the decision to withdraw.

Question: After the SAS ambush at Loughgall in 1987, in which eight volunteers were killed, it would seem to outsiders that the SAS can destroy IRA units at will. Can you comment on that?

Volunteer: Loughgall did not have a demoralising effect on volunteers. It stunned volunteers but it was not a problem that could not be overcome, and I think the statistics would show that the volunteers have overcome the Loughgall disaster.



IRA men fire a salute over the coffin of a volunteer killed in the 1987 Loughgall ambush

This is a case that happened only once. It was a case that the IRA should have been able to see into, and hopefully will be able to see into it the next time. Now as I say the IRA learns by their mistakes and we hope that would never happen again. Regarding the SAS, up until Loughgall on every occasion that I can think of when volunteers engaged the SAS, alright volunteers have been killed, but they also inflicted casualties against the SAS. So the SAS are not to be feared by the IRA volunteers, and are not feared by the IRA volunteers.

Question: How can the IRA counteract a highly sophisticated force like the SAS, or indeed the MI5, MI6, with all the back-up they have—technology, money, cover, etc?

Volunteer: By being very, very security conscious. Hence the reason for the IRA turning away more potential recruits than it brings in. British intelligence feeds off the community. Our aim is that the less the community know about volunteers of Oglagh na hEireann, then the less British intelligence can gather. It puts us on a good footing against them. The SAS may be the elite of the British Army but they're certainly not the elite to the IRA. They are soldiers who have had more training than the ordinary squaddie, but when it comes down to a point where the IRA are engaging the British Army they do not turn around and say to themselves 'This is the SAS, we'll not engage them'. The IRA do not fear the SAS, they will engage them as and when the opportunity presents itself.

Question: Do you feel in retrospect that the economic bombing campaign of the seventies was counter-productive because of the toll of human destruction?

Volunteer: Yes, but I would point out that a lot of this was totally out of the control of the IRA. Crown forces made deliberate decisions that when the IRA gave adequate warnings, that they did not relay the warnings, therefore casualties were caused and the blame was put on the IRA. The IRA had not got a lot of control over that. So it was thought best to halt, even if only temporarily, the commercial bombing campaign within the city centres. The IRA deeply regret civilian casualties. But once they put the bombs down, once they gave the warning, then it was entirely in the hands of the Crown forces.

Question: Do you consider the bombing of the Tory conference in Brighton in 1984 to have been a failure, in that it produced no

weakening of the British government's or Margaret Thatcher's resolve?

Volunteer: No. It was anything but a failure. It proved that the IRA can strike at will. As the statement said at the time, Margaret Thatcher and her government were lucky they escaped. The IRA has only to be lucky once. I think that operation threw the British government, and Margaret Thatcher in particular, into confusion, and they're still reeling from the shock, because the security they've mounted around themselves is unbelievable. Those people don't want to be living like that. There's one way that they can stop living like that, and that is to declare their intent to withdraw from Ireland. They will always have it in the back of their minds that the IRA can and will strike. What they have to worry about is when.

Question: Can you comment on the notion that one bomb in Britain is worth a dozen in Ireland?

Volunteer: A lot of people take that view. Most of them are not active in the IRA. The IRA adopt a strategy that if they think it's feasible, if they think it's opportune that they should plant bombs in Britain, more hopefully at military targets which has been the case over the recent campaigns, then they will do so. But only if they feel that it is the correct strategy.

The people of nationalist areas who are not connected with the IRA probably do feel that a bombing campaign in Britain would be more productive than the campaign being mounted in Ireland. But again, these are civilians, people who are not looking at the strategy that the IRA has adopted, are not in a position to be aware of the difficulties of mounting a campaign like this. I would re-emphasise, if the IRA feel that it is the correct strategy, then they will mount a campaign in Britain, but only when they feel the time is right.

Question: What is the IRA view of Loyalist organisations such as the UDA, UVF?

Volunteer: The IRA is not a sectarian organisation, that has to be emphasised. The IRA do not wish to be engaged in attacks on Loyalist paramilitaries. But having said that, the IRA reserve the right to execute those known to be responsible for the killing of nationalists or republicans, or for organising the killing of nationalists and republicans.

Question: When has the IRA ever been able to confront the enemy and make a successful attack on an enemy barracks?

Volunteer: Well of recent times when the IRA has been using mortars, most times they're successful in so far as they can penetrate their security. There was one incident in 1986 when volunteers on active service in County Tyrone engaged an RUC barracks. They executed the RUC man who was on guard, planted a bomb, retreated, then opened fire into the barracks until the bomb exploded. The three remaining RUC officers inside the barracks made an escape out the rear. The IRA volunteers then proceeded to go into the barracks and take weapons that the RUC personnel had left behind in their rush to escape. Now that is the type of operation that we would like to have all the time. Unfortunately most times it doesn't present itself to be as easily worked as that. But these are the type of operations that the IRA volunteers have in mind all the time.

Interview 2: 'We are not warmongers'

Question: How does the IRA function? Have things changed?

Volunteer: The IRA functions with the help and support of the people from the nationalist communities in which the IRA live. At the start of this present struggle local people operated in their own local areas, in a company, battalion and brigade structure. With the progression of the war the IRA felt it necessary to change its structure into active service units where people would specialise more: there would be intelligence units, support units, operational units and units to take and drive away cars for use in operations, units involved in raising finance, etc. It was felt that a cell system would curtail the impact that British intelligence could have in infiltrating the movement.

Question: Is there any ritual involved in joining the IRA, would people be signing themselves away for life?

Volunteer: No. The IRA is a volunteer army where anybody can leave the IRA if they so wish. At any time it is a totally volunteer army. Throughout the history of the struggle very few active people have left the movement, but periodically roles are assessed and sometimes there is a shift of personnel.

The fact is that we're not fighting this war out of a love for war. This war is forced on us by the British government. We have no other means of achieving national liberation in Ireland and it is as a last resort that we are fighting this here

'The IRA volunteer is at all times made aware of the political nature of the struggle; the squaddie in the British Army is discouraged from even discussing it'

war. If there was any other way of removing the British government from Ireland then we would be glad to use these methods. But history tells us, and especially Irish history, that there is no other means. A recruit is made fully aware of the political nature and of the *long* nature of this struggle, that he or she is going to come in for tremendous pressure from the British forces and that they would have to be able to withstand this pressure.

Question: Could you refer to some of the training that a volunteer would undergo?

Volunteer: Here in Belfast a volunteer would undergo various stages of what we term 'dry' training, in that a volunteer would be made aware of weapons and equipment, of their capabilities, how to strip weapons, how to assemble them, the firing rate, etc. They would also be made aware of how to make up different types of explosive devices. We do have facilities where volunteers can spend a couple of days living together, where they would physically train in the use of rifles, submachine guns, pistols or whatever. During those couple of days there would also be a lot of political debate among the volunteers. If a volunteer shows that he is a good sniper or whatever he then would be taken for further advanced training in that particular field.

Question: Would there be a period of involvement where a volunteer could remain anonymous, and when that has been shattered by the security forces, what action could he take?

Volunteer: There are a tremendous amount of volunteers in the IRA who the British forces are totally unaware of. There's a lot of volunteers who their own personal friends, their families are unaware of. These people would be used by the army in various stages of operation and if their cover is ever blown then they would be forced to go on the run. This means that they would have to leave their home, to leave their wife and their children and to move about day to day, to sleep at different houses, different billets, depending on friends and sympathisers for their food and clothes and money for basic needs. Being on the run means that there is very little contact with your family, that your wife or your children would only see you for a couple of minutes every other week or whatever.

Question: What about pressure of surveillance on the ground?

Volunteer: Surveillance is a two-edged sword. Certainly British

surveillance does affect our operations periodically, but the British troops must realise that every time they leave a barracks or a fort that a terrible lot of men, women and children in nationalist areas are watching their every move. That they know exactly where they're going, that they're waiting for them to make the slightest mistake to exploit it, that these people pass this information on to us.

Question: Given the tremendous pressures that exist how would a volunteer cope with things like demoralisation?

Volunteer: Demoralisation isn't a problem in the IRA. Comrades, whenever they're brought into the army, are made aware of the long nature of the struggle and they adjust themselves to that there. It's totally different to the British Army where demoralisation is a severe problem, not only for the British Army but for the RUC as well, who have had to set up special stress units to cope with suicides within the RUC and the British Army.

Question: Would you say then that there's a great difference in calibre between the ordinary volunteer and the British soldier?

Volunteer: There's a totally different calibre of volunteer within the IRA to the British Army. The volunteer in the IRA is a very dedicated political soldier who at all times is made aware of the political nature of the struggle, whereas the squaddie in the British Army is discouraged from even discussing the political nature of the struggle. They are just treated as cannon fodder, sent over to try and implement the whims of their political masters. The IRA volunteer is dedicated and committed, whereas the soldier in the British Army can only think of one thing—getting back to Britain alive.

Question: How would an operation be organised?

Volunteer: First a volunteer or a member of the local community spot something that they pass on to the IRA who would then do a surveillance operation on the target. For example, if a British Army foot patrol continually takes the same path, this would be noticed and passed on. That intelligence work would be done and then the authority would come from higher up the command to carry out the operation. Operations are put together at all times with a view that they should be carried out in the interests of the local civilians and that there should be no casualties among them whatsoever.

Question: Can you comment on the relevance of third world liberation struggles to the war in Ireland?

Volunteer: As an oppressed people we express solidarity with all oppressed peoples throughout the world. As soldiers we draw comfort and succour from the fact that the PLO, Swapo, the ANC in South Africa, the freedom fighters in El Salvador, are all struggling for national liberation. We salute the people of Zimbabwe and Nicaragua who in their recent past have elected governments made up of freedom fighters.

Question: What would the movement's view have been on struggles (if you call them that) in Western Europe, for example RAF, the Red Brigades, Action Directe and groups like that?

Volunteer: The IRA have no connection with nor indeed any sympathy for the RAF, the Red Brigades or Action Directe.

Question: Would there be any particular reasons why the IRA has survived for most of the twentieth century?

Volunteer: The one main reason why the IRA has survived for so long is because of the determination not only of the volunteers of the IRA but of Irish nationalists throughout Ireland during the twentieth century. No matter what the British government have done they have never beaten the determination of the Irish people, and no matter what they do in the future they never will beat the determination of the Irish people. The IRA will still come back at them and they will still struggle until there is national self-determination within Ireland.

Question: Are the IRA hopeful that success may be achieved within the next few years?

Volunteer: There is no doubt whatsoever about it that the IRA will be successful in this struggle. I can't put a time-limit on it but no matter how long it is the struggle will still be waged. Again, not because we are warmongers or like fighting but because this struggle is forced upon us by the British government and we will wage this struggle until there are national, political and civil liberties within Ireland. And that can only come about when the British government stops meddling in Irish affairs.

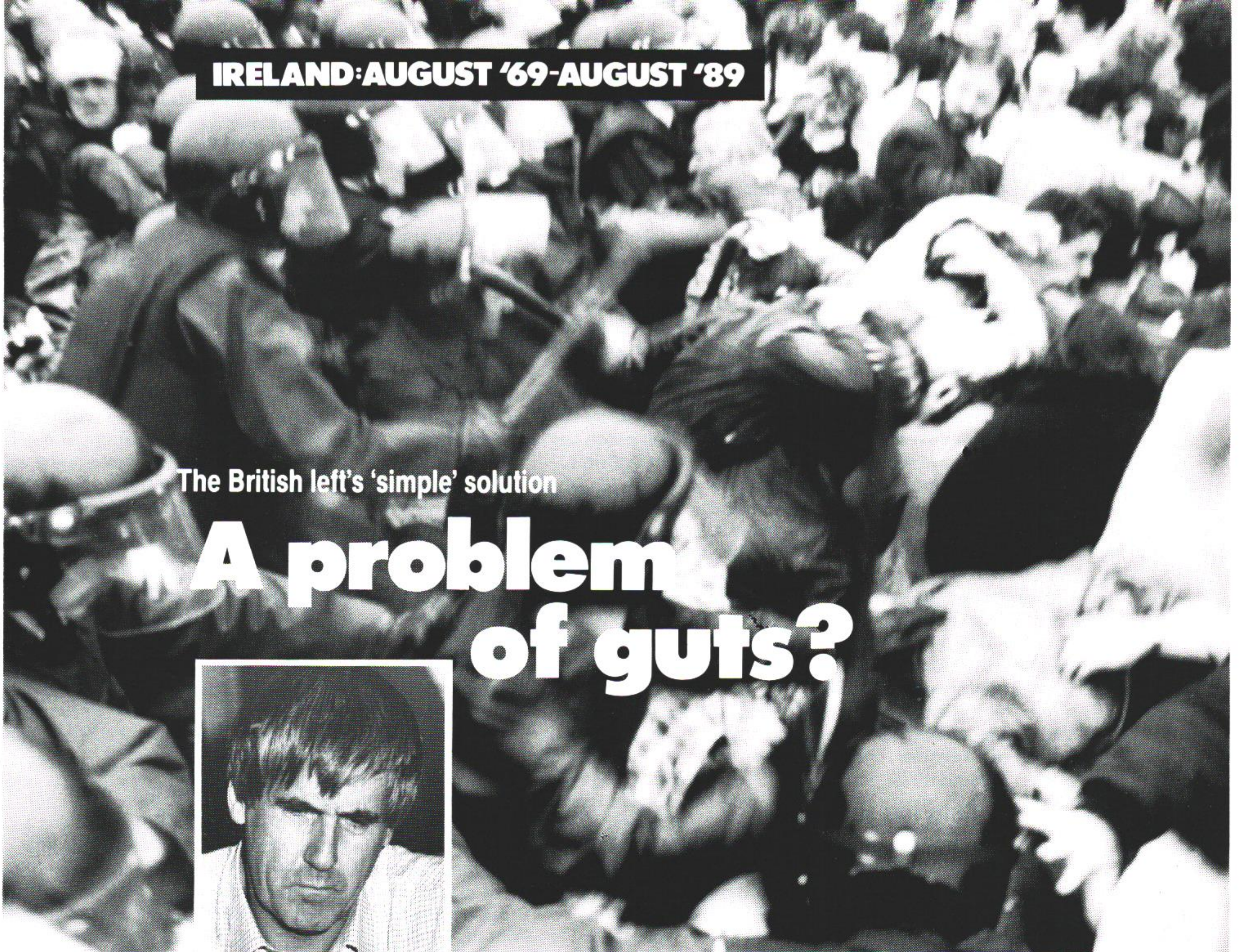


PHOTO: Joe Boatman
INSET: Pandora Anderson

The British left's 'simple' solution

A problem of guts?

Denis Ryan casts a critical eye over Paul Foot's new pamphlet, *Ireland: Why Britain Must Get Out*

Mirror journalist Paul Foot articulates the British left's solution to the Irish War. It is 'very simple':

'The British government should declare that it intends to withdraw its troops from Ireland forever; and that it will no longer sustain a separate state in the North of Ireland. It should set an irrevocable date for that withdrawal, and at once convene a constitutional conference at international level to determine how best that withdrawal can be accomplished, and what contribution Britain should make to a new, united Ireland.' (p56)

Foot argues that 'the best way...to defeat terrorism is to root out the cause of it', which he identifies as the persecution of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland: 'As long as that persecution—and that state—remain, terrorism, and the sectarianism which breeds it, are certain to continue.' (p69)

If it is all so simple why has Foot's solution never occurred to the British authorities? Why have the best brains of the establishment been waiting 20 years for him to provide such a straightforward solution to their most troublesome problem? Foot has an equally simple answer to that question. It is all due to a lack

of that essential product of a British public school education—guts. The 'ugliness, sectarianism and violence' of Northern Ireland has all been 'quite unnecessary':

'All of it has come about because British governments since 1922 have not had the guts to admit that the partition of Ireland and the creation of the Orange state was a monstrous and cynical mistake, which must be put right.' (p55)

Foot blames the British state for partition and its consequences—then looks to the same state to solve the problem.

Partition was a monstrous and cynical crime against the Irish people, but it was not a *mistake*. It was a painstakingly constructed solution to the British establishment's Irish problem. Moreover, it was highly successful in containing the Irish threat to the stability of the Empire and in ensuring quiescence in Ireland for half a century. When events erupted out of the control of the framework imposed by partition in the late sixties and early seventies, the consequences of British occupation and direct rule were certainly 'ugliness, sectarianism and violence'. But from Whitehall's point of view,

these consequences were *quite necessary* to safeguard British rule and to protect the integrity of the 'United Kingdom'. It is worth looking closely at Foot's analysis of partition, as this provides the key to much of his misassessment of the past 20 years.

Poor student

Foot fills the bulk of a short pamphlet with a schoolchild's introduction to modern Irish history which patronises the reader and exposes his own scant knowledge. He thinks that Bonar Law addressed a crowd at Blenheim palace in 1913 (it was 1912); that the Curragh mutiny took place in 1913 (it was 1914); he comments that 'no more was heard of home rule for 25 years' after the 1886 Home Rule Bill, apparently ignorant of Gladstone's Second Home Rule Bill of 1893. The Government of Ireland Act imposing partition was passed in February 1920 and the parliament of the Orange state was inaugurated in June 1921 (not 1922). Foot even gets contemporary facts wrong, asserting that Northern Ireland elects one Euro-MP (it elects three). He fails in geography too: he thinks there are 36 counties in Ireland (there are 32).

But Foot's analysis of partition has bigger flaws than wrong dates.

ABOVE: Paul Foot thinks this kind of repression is all due to a mistake; but for the British authorities it is entirely deliberate and necessary

Foot regards the British government as an essentially benign, if misguided, force in Ireland

He exaggerates the independent influence of the Irish Unionists. As a result he depicts the British government being pushed into making the 'mistake' of partition. The truth is that the British state played the dominant role in imposing partition, and forcing unwilling Unionists to accept it, as the best of all the available options from its own point of view.

Foot's mistake is summed up by his account of the role of the Unionist leader Edward Carson. He sees Carson seizing on the idea of partition as early as 1912 as a device that 'would deliver a death blow' to the home rule movement (p9). Foot contends that 'men like Carson led the campaign for a divided Ireland' because of their fears that Ulster's industrial predominance would be lost in an independent united Ireland. But Carson, a quintessentially 'southern' Unionist, was committed to the Union of *all* of Ireland and Britain, not to Ulster. Lyons' authoritative account quotes his declaration that the Union was 'the guiding star' of his political life (FSL Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*, 1978, p300).

Calling the shots

Carson consistently argued that 'the aim of Ulster resistance should not be to secure some special status for the north, rather to make home rule impossible for any part of Ireland' (Lyons, p300). Carson never led any campaign for a divided Ireland. Even if they failed to maintain the status quo, the Unionists' first fallback option was to accept devolution within a partitioned Ireland along the lines of Scotland's relationship with England—some local administration, but no local elected representation which might weaken the integrity of the United Kingdom. In fact, the last thing they wanted was an 'Orange state'—a partitioned country *and* a partitioned parliament. The Unionist MPs at Westminster even refused to vote for the 1920 Government of Ireland Act which set up the 'Ulster' parliament. But they were finally forced to accept these arrangements, because the British state called the shots.

Foot's simplistic view of partition as the legislative outcome of intrigues among Unionist, Irish nationalist and British politicians obscures the essential dynamic in Anglo-Irish relations in the modern period (see *The Irish War: The Irish Freedom Movement Handbook*, 1987, chapter 1, for a fuller discussion). From the late eighteenth century onwards national revolt simmered and periodically erupted in Britain's oldest and closest colony, reaching its peak in the Tan War of 1919-21. But Britain could not concede Irish independence. Ireland's

incorporation into the United Kingdom under the 1801 Act of Union meant that independence would have undermined the legitimacy of the British state at home and across the Empire. Partition—the division of Ireland into a 26-county area with a degree of autonomy and a six-county area fully integrated into Britain—appeared to be the best answer. It met Irish demands for national freedom by granting token independence to an 'Irish Free State' in the South. And it recognised the wishes of the Loyalist community in the north-east to retain the Union with Britain.

Divide and rule

In fact partition was no fair and equitable solution. It was the mechanism through which Britain could continue to dominate the whole island. Partition divided the nationalist movement and split the working class. The defeat of the anti-imperialist movement enormously strengthened Britain's hand against the Irish people. Having foisted the partition treaty on to Ireland, the British government was able to end the Tan War and to reinforce Whitehall's control over its most important colony.

With his narrowly subjective analysis of the forces that led to partition—'the Protestants were greedy' (p11)—Foot misses the historic significance of partition. The triumph was entirely Britain's. As what appeared to be a democratic compromise with both Unionists and nationalists, it had lasting propaganda value, allowing the British authorities to present themselves as honest brokers trying to bring peace and harmony to Ireland's sectarian communities. Foot fails to penetrate the mystifications wrought by partition; as a result, his perspective on Britain's current role in Ireland remains captive to these mystifications.

Benign Britain?

Foot's account of the past 20 years emphasises the British government's lack of guts. Hence, instead of boldly implementing Foot's withdrawal programme, it has settled for either feeble attempts at reform or outright repression. The formulation 'instead of' (withdrawal), they sent in the troops, set up inquiries, tried power-sharing, etc, recurs on almost every page. Foot regards the British government as an essentially benign, if misguided, force: 'certainly some effort has been made by the government agencies to roll back the tide of discrimination' (p46); 'the British government's intention had been to change the Northern Ireland state by rooting out discrimination, gerrymandering and corruption'

(p44). But British good intentions have been frustrated by 'the power of the Protestant ascendancy' (p42), or even by 'a flick of the Orange wrist' (p43). For Foot, the British authorities' chronic lack of guts has led its forces to be trapped inadvertently into the role of oppressor rather than that of liberator. Let's take Foot's confusions in turn.

The notion that the Loyalist community has the whip hand over British policy in Northern Ireland follows from Foot's view that the Unionist tail wagged the British dog in the run-up to partition. Today it means blaming the Protestants, who have always been simply an instrument of British policy, for the barbarities that follow from British rule in Northern Ireland. Just as the Crown once planted Protestant settlers in Ireland to secure British rule, the British government now uses its artificially created Protestant majority in the Six Counties to legitimise partition. Loyalist intransigence is simply a product of the intransigence of the British state over Ireland.

All or nothing

The view of the British state as a force for progress grappling with atavistic forces of darkness is another familiar theme. But why is it that British initiatives ostensibly designed to 'root out discrimination, gerrymandering and corruption' have conspicuously failed to alleviate the persecution of Catholics in Northern Ireland? The answer is simple, but escapes Foot. Discrimination, gerrymandering and corruption are all aspects of the *national oppression* that is enforced through the partition of Ireland and the structures of the Northern state. The British state can maintain the Six Counties only through cultivating the loyalty of the Protestant community by offering privileges in jobs, housing, political rights. Given the backwardness of the Irish economy, privileges for some mean disadvantages for others—the nationalist minority in the North.

The right to national independence is an all-or-nothing right: it cannot be conceded piecemeal or in instalments—26 counties now, six later. Either Ireland is free or it is under British domination. For as long as it is under British domination, then those who identify with the national cause will suffer the consequences. British gestures towards extending the rights of nationalists can only be token gestures. They may impress British liberals like Foot, but they are rightly treated with contempt in Ireland. At the same time nationalist demands for wider democratic rights threaten the very basis of the Northern Ireland state. This is why,

from 1969 to today, Britain's attempts to put on a reforming face in Northern Ireland must give way to the more familiar images of military repression.

Finally, what the British establishment would need to adopt Foot's solution is not guts so much as an instinct to commit suicide. To withdraw from Ireland now would mean dismantling part of the British state itself—a setback which would have profound repercussions for the whole of the state machine (this point, too, is dealt with fully in *The Irish War*, chapter one). The British ruling class could never countenance such a step. What is at stake for the British establishment in Ireland is not merely its continued domination of another nation, but the maintenance of the entire state apparatus on which its power rests. This is why successive British governments have displayed a consistent commitment to military occupation of Northern Ireland.

Their funeral

The further Foot pursues his solution the more its absurdity becomes apparent. After proposing that the British state begin to dismantle itself, destabilising Northern Ireland and, inevitably, the Irish Republic and Britain too, he envisages a constructive role for the

British government in the transition. Foot's faith in the progressive potential of the capitalist state enables him to reassure his readers that the British government could helpfully disarm the RUC and UDR, 'remove the sanctuary of the Protestant laager' (by banning alcohol?) and 'encourage the more positive, optimistic and confident of the Protestant people to forge unity across the religious divide' (p67). Foot expects the British establishment not only to commit suicide, but to make its own (ecumenical) funeral arrangements and convene a wake.

Foot's pamphlet is one of a series which, say its publishers, offer 'fresh ideas' and 'challenge the dominant values of our time'. Foot's pamphlet simply recycles the British left's sloppy and superficial approach to Ireland, and regurgitates the 'dominant values' of mainstream British politics. He uses uncritically terms like 'terrorism' and 'sectarianism' which have played a crucial propaganda role in justifying the repressive policies of the British state.

Foot's pamphlet reveals one of the secrets behind the success of the British government in at least containing the war in Northern Ireland since 1969. It has integrated its most radical critics into a

consensus that upholds Britain's right to interfere in Ireland. Foot calls for withdrawal, but he does not question the British government's right to set the date or to supervise the reorganisation of Anglo-Irish relations. The fact that Foot looks to the state which partitioned Ireland and still oppresses the Irish nation to take the lead in freeing the Irish people is a measure of how far the British left has been ideologically enslaved by the establishment.

The real deficiency of guts on the Irish question is not to be found in the British ruling class, but on the left. The British establishment has consistently pursued its class interests in Ireland. Unfortunately, the left has yet to recognise its common interest with the Irish national liberation struggle in the overthrow of the British state. On the twentieth anniversary of the British occupation we should leave Foot to his pathetic pleading with the British establishment and spread the word that it will take the combined forces of British and Irish labour to drive the British troops out of Ireland.

Paul Foot, *Ireland: Why Britain Must Get Out*, Chatto Counterblasts No 2, 1989, £2.99



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The new Irish in Britain

Out of the frying pan...

Fiona Foster talked to young Irish emigrants who have come to Britain in search of a new life and found old problems of poverty, homelessness and prejudice

When my Dad landed in Manchester from Ireland in the fifties his first stop was the dole office. The man behind the counter refused to understand his Dublin brogue. 'I've got a Paddy here with shamrock growing out of his ears', he announced. My Dad stormed out swearing about English ignorance, but had to swallow his pride and return next morning for more of the same.

He wasn't the only one. Three in every five Irish people left home to look for work when the Republic's economy was devastated in the late fifties and early sixties. The thousands who came to Britain faced poor housing, low-paid jobs that British workers wouldn't do, and abuse: 'No blacks, no Irish, no dogs'. Today a new generation of young Irish emigrants is beating the well-worn path to Britain, and many thousands more are expected to arrive over the next decade. If past experience is anything to go by, they have little to look forward to.

Emigration from Ireland has always been intimately linked with the history of British colonialism, as Irish people have sought to escape the grim conditions inflicted on their country. In the last century, when all of Ireland was ruled from Westminster, Britain wiped out Irish industry and turned its oldest colony into a huge farm feeding Britain's booming industrial cities. The Irish were left to subsist on a diet of potatoes. Successive potato crop failures led to the so-called Great Famine of 1846-47, when a million died and another one and a half million were forced to emigrate. In fact there was plenty of wheat and meat in Ireland, but the authorities shipped it to Britain and left the Irish to starve. The many thousands who emigrated to Britain found themselves living and working in conditions that were little better than the hell they had left behind.

Even after the South of Ireland gained formal independence in 1921, the legacy of economic ruin under British rule and the continuation of effective British domination led to large-scale emigration. In the fifties, when the weak Irish economy all but collapsed under the strain of trying to



PHOTO: Simon Norfolk

RIGHT: More bad news from home for the young men who queue for building work

escape from Britain's shadow, British employers went to Ireland to recruit more cheap labour to do the jobs that British workers didn't want.

While the population of every major European nation has increased many times over in the last 150 years, Ireland's has shrunk. Today there are just 3.5m people in the Republic, massively outnumbered by the Irish people and those of Irish descent who live abroad. Now, as the backward Irish economy suffers another long-term slump, many more are leaving.

An estimated 108 000 people have left Ireland in the last three years, around two thirds arriving in Britain. Most come in search of work. The Republic has the youngest population in Europe and unemployment among the under-25s has more than trebled since 1980, leaving one in four without a job. A recent survey found that two thirds of those aged 15 to 24 plan to leave Ireland to find work. Once again the Irish papers are full of adverts for jobs in England, on the buildings, in catering, in domestic service and nursing.

'Irish emigration today, as in previous waves of emigration, leaves devastation and demoralisation in its wake and sets up the vicious cycle where those "left behind" long to leave and those away live an existence tainted with a yearning to return.' (Action Group for Irish Youth, 'Irish emigration—a programme for action')

Robby, from Ardee, County Louth, has been here for 10 months. He lives in Conway House, a temporary hostel for about 200 young Irish men in Kilburn. 'We never made any decisions of our own, we had to leave Ireland because there were no jobs, or what jobs there were gave you no money. You hear the money's great over here so you come and see and then you find everything's different.'

A recent survey showed that a third of young Irish people arrive in Britain with less than £30. Finding a decent, cheap place to live in London is impossible. The same survey suggests that two thirds of Irish people in the Kilburn area either live in poor temporary accommodation, or live nowhere at all. Most Irish lads I spoke to had slept rough at some stage. Declan and his mate from Roscrea spent their first 11 days in London sleeping in Kennington Park and begging for eating money. 'We decided it was time to leave the park when the warden told us there had been a rape and a murder while we were there and we would be prime suspects.'

Changes in the social security laws have made it even harder to get secure housing. 'We'd heard you could get up to 600 quid deposit and

rent in advance', says Gordon from Dublin, 'but when we got here the rules had changed. We couldn't get any money for two weeks. Eight of us squatted this one-bedroom flat. Jesus it was cramped, we had to sleep in shifts for five and a half months'. Kevin from Donegal got a job cleaning trains at night. 'I was working from nine till 5.30 but I couldn't go home then because my two brothers and their mate were sleeping in the one room, so I had to wander round King's Cross until eight. A few times I crept in and slept in the bath.'

Things are worst for the rising number of Irish families coming to Britain. Those local authorities which accept the families as 'homeless' provide them with cramped and unhealthy bed and breakfast accommodation. One woman described the conditions in her hotel: 'We had one room. There was no bathroom. The walls were all dingy, the paint ran. You had to put up clothes just to cover the holes in the walls.'

And these are the lucky ones! The 1985 Housing Act allows local authorities to refuse housing to families deemed to be 'intentionally homeless'. Seeking work is not considered a valid reason for leaving home, so most Irish families are vulnerable. The controversy about Camden council giving a ticket back to Ireland to a homeless mother and child last year concealed the fact that this is now the policy of most London boroughs.

'My Da always told me how lucky I was not to have to go to London and queue up begging for work on the buildings. The first day I did it I kept thinking how he'd turn in his grave if he could see me.' Christy from Nenagh, County Tipperary, gets up at 6am to stand in a line of Irish labourers on Cricklewood Broadway and hope to be picked for work by an Irish subcontractor. Robbey remembered his first day there: 'Jesus I was green, got myself all spruced up and the subbies were picking the dirtiest blokes, the boys who look like they can really work. They look at your hands, the rougher the better.'

The going rate for labouring is £25 a day. Many sign on as well to make ends meet. 'A lot of these jobs only last a few days and then you mightn't get a job for days after that so we have to sign on.' Most had a story about being conned by a subby. It had just happened to Tommy from Limerick. 'He seemed decent enough all week then on the Friday he stops the van and sends me in for a can of coke and some fags, and I gets out of the shop and the bastard's away, and he owed me 125 quid. I wanted revenge but what can you do, go back and fill in the holes, for what?'

There are two deaths a week on building sites in Britain. Irish lads who work and claim the dole can get no compensation for injuries. The bodies of several Irish labourers who were working under false names lie unidentified in London's morgues. The labourers have to accept the safety risks along with the job. 'The subbies are just in it for the money, most of them are Irish, but they've some big company forcing them to get the job done quick and cheap. Every so often I'll have a go but what's the point when you can be replaced in less than half an hour?'

It is a little known fact that more women than men emigrate from Ireland; little known because they are a less visible and more disparate group than the young Irishmen who roam Kilburn and Holloway. The pattern of women's emigration has changed little since the fifties, with the Irish taking jobs as nurses, teachers, chambermaids, waitresses—low pay for anti-social hours. Most Irish women I spoke to felt lonely and isolated.

War victims

Eleanor from County Meath lives in a hostel in Victoria. She has more positive reasons for leaving Ireland than many of the lads. 'I left quite a good job to come here, I didn't want to stay in Ireland all my life. Anyway there's no one left in Meath, the only jobs for girls are in the factories—unless your Daddy is someone important. I wanted a change.'

Many young Irish women are relieved to escape from what they regard as a stifling society governed by the morals of the Catholic Church, although Caroline from Galway points out that emigration strengthens this climate. 'If all the young people went back and there was another divorce referendum we'd win it. Anyone with progressive ideas has to get out of Ireland. The Irish government must be thanking God for emigration, as long as we're away things stay the same.'

Ruth from Dublin is pretty unhappy here. She works seven nights a week in McDonald's for £3 an hour. She gave up her first job as a chambermaid in a Marble Arch hotel because it was 'back-breaking, and for £80 a week. And English people, Jesus they're so ignorant; one girl says to me it must be awful living in Dublin with all the bombs and snipers—I saw more guns in Heathrow airport than I've seen in Dublin in my life'.

The prejudices built up around Britain's war in Northern Ireland lie behind many of the problems facing Irish people here. Bernadette from Dublin believes that all expressions of anti-Irish feeling spring from the standard British interpretation of events in the North: 'Britain always



'They made it clear I was Irish, therefore I deserved a kicking'

comes across as the civilising force in Ireland. The British have to believe that the Irish are stupid and dangerous which makes everything they do to us OK, from the thick Paddy jokes to military occupation.'

Anti-Irish racism is not just a matter of personal ignorance. It is sponsored by the British authorities from the top down. It was formally institutionalised in 1974, when the Labour government passed the Prevention of Terrorism Act, under which people can be detained for up to seven days without charge. More than 6500 have now been held under the PTA, the vast majority Irish. Yet just two per cent have been charged with an offence under the act. The law clearly has little to do with pursuing the IRA. Its function is to create a framework for labelling all Irish people as potential terrorists, and to terrorise them into keeping silent about the war in Ireland.

Most Irish immigrants I spoke to knew somebody who had been touched by the PTA. Sean from Limerick was arrested for putting up 'Troops out now!' posters and held for 24 hours. 'It was a few days after the Ballygawley bombing, they had this *Sun* front page with a picture of the burned-out bus, they kept slamming it down and asking if I agreed with it. What scared me was them talking about excluding me

from Britain. They made me sign a form saying I'd been served with an exclusion order. I thought my number was up, and just for a bit of flyposting.'

Sean wasn't excluded but he was scared—and not without reason. Under the exclusion provisions of the PTA, well over 300 Irish people have been thrown out of Britain and banned from re-entering it since 1974. The authorities give them neither an explanation nor leave to appeal.

Those allowed to remain in Britain can still fall foul of the anti-Irish legal system. Such infamous injustices as the framing of the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four in the seventies serve as a warning to the Irish community that the same could happen to any of them. Mick, from Buncrana in Donegal, thinks that nothing has changed. He was sporting a Derry City FC cap—and a black eye given to him by four Englishmen in McDonald's. 'They made it clear that I was Irish, therefore I was anti-British, therefore I deserved a kicking. It's the same with the cops, whenever any of us gets lifted they always go on about what's happening in the North and call us mad Paddy bombers and the rest of it.'

There are countless stories of how the police pick on young Irishmen in London. 'Having a drink and a laugh

and a song are being drunk and disorderly in this city' says Paul. 'I had to get out of Galway because a couple of cops were forever hassling me. Then I landed in Kilburn and was arrested twice in three weeks for doing nothing except having a good time. We don't even drink in the Kilburn pubs now, the cops are waiting on you at closing time. We sit in the park and have a drink and a good talk.'

'I can't go back to Ireland because there's no work, I can't get to Australia or the States because I've got a criminal record, as far as I can see I'm stuck in this hell-hole for life.' There will be many more such statements of despair so long as young Irish people are forced to leave their divided, unfree and impoverished country.

Many young Irishmen point out the role of Irish labour in rebuilding Britain. 'There's not a road nor a development in this country that Irish people didn't have a hand in building. Sure if the Irish pulled out of this country it'd fall apart.' Maybe; but, as another lad retorted, 'if the bloody Brits pulled out of Ireland we wouldn't have to be here building their country, we'd be back home building a decent future for ourselves'.

Police riot in Roundwood

On the first Sunday in July, 100 000 people went to Roundwood park for the annual London Irish Festival. It was not a political event. Aer Lingus gave out free hankies and the Allied Irish Bank hustled for custom where the campaign to free the Birmingham Six, among others, had been refused permission for a stall. Alcohol was banned; the only beer on sale was Barbican.

In spite of the conservative influence of the organisers, the lack of beer, the constant patrol of mounted police and the obvious undercover cops dressed in Celtic shirts, everybody enjoyed the sun and the music until about 6.30pm when riot police charged the crowd. I had left half an hour earlier with the party in full swing. When I got home the TV news announced that there had been a riot by drunken Irish hooligans. I met Sean, Jim and Brian the next day. Sean told me what had happened.

'The police had congregated on one side of the stage and that provoked a lot of people. All we saw was a scuffle then the police laying

into people. Crowds ran towards us, trying to get away from them and get their kids out of the park. Others saw the police getting heavy-handed and turned on them; it was a chance to let them know how we felt about them being there.'

Brian was chased by police running through the crowd, losing half of his shirt in the escape. 'This chubby cop couldn't catch me after I got loose, he was going berserk, roaring as if he were in a Tarzan movie "We'll teach you Irish bastards" and hitting anyone he could reach. They thought they could shout "Croppies lie down" and we'd all take a hiding but they got more than they bargained for. But look at the vanloads of them waiting to pick us up outside of the Irish pubs in Kilburn and Willesden tonight. It won't be safe for anyone with an Irish accent, someone will catch it for the surprise they got at Roundwood. As far as they are concerned, anyone Irish will do.'

Jim couldn't believe how quickly it happened. 'Within minutes there were 30 or 40 riot police on horseback, I couldn't count the ones

running about with batons, and then vanloads and vanloads arrived. They charged the crowd out of the park and then the horses charged again, down the street outside the park. The police behind the horses ran into the houses along the street and pulled people off their front doorsteps. I thought, this is what they get away with in the North, but I'm from Carlow and I'd never seen anything like it.'

Police arrested 54 people, injured many more and wrecked the festival. Chief superintendent Mike Briggs, in charge of policing the event, said it was 'regrettable' that 'there seems to be a small caucus at most public events these days hell-bent on making sure the event ends in trouble'. Sean, Brian and Jim agree, having discovered the hard way that the Metropolitan 'caucus' now attends Irish festivals in the same fun-loving spirit that it has shown at the Notting Hill carnival over the years.

Bernadette Walsh

The amnesty campaign of 1869

WHEN KARL MARX MARCHED FOR IRISH FREEDOM

Charles Longford looks back at an event with a lesson for the future

'If the affair was meant to be a Fenian demonstration, nothing could have been less successful. If it was intended to serve "the captives"—as yesterday's placards styled the Fenian convicts—it was equally a failure....It interrupted for an hour or two the traffic...and for a portion of the day put some thousands of rougns in possession of Trafalgar Square and Hyde Park.' (*Times*, 25 October 1869)

The 'failure' which the *Times* sneered at was a 100 000-strong demonstration in Hyde Park, demanding an amnesty for Irish Fenian prisoners. Karl Marx was one of the 'thousands of rougns', and rejoiced at this evidence that 'at least a part of the English working class had lost their prejudice against the Irish'. He wrote to Engels of how he had 'sought in every way to provoke this manifestation of the English workers in support of Fenianism'. The march remains one of the most significant examples of English solidarity with the Irish struggle.

The Fenians, or Irish Republican Brotherhood, were the forerunners of today's IRA. They attempted an insurrection in Ireland, mounted bold attacks on British interests as far afield as Canada and the USA, and launched a series of operations in Britain itself. In the resulting wave of repression, many Fenians were sentenced to long spells in English jails. In the 1860s and 1870s an amnesty movement mobilised mass meetings and demonstrations demanding the release of the Irish prisoners.

Today there are more than 40 Irish political prisoners in jails in Britain. Yet there is no mass movement in their support. The experience of 120 years ago holds a lesson here.

Many would argue that the strength of anti-Irish sentiment is now a major barrier to winning support for the Irish prisoners. But anti-Irish prejudice is less intense now than in nineteenth-century Britain. The Victorian establishment was poisonously anti-Irish. The old Queen revealed her feelings in a letter to Sir Stafford Northcote: 'These Irish are really shocking, abominable people—not like any other civilised nation... these Fenians should be lynch-lawed and on the spot.' (Y Kapp, *Eleanor Marx: Family Life 1855-83*, Vol 1, 1979, p84).

These sentiments were echoed among some British workers. The campaign for the release of three

Irishmen, convicted of killing a police sergeant during a Fenian jailbreak in Manchester in 1867, coincided with widespread anti-Irish riots in the Midlands and the north. Orange demagogue William Murphy whipped up a pogrom mentality among English workers who saw Irish immigrants as a threat to their living standards. The Murphy riots spread through Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Manchester and many other towns in 1867-68. They destroyed Irish homes, burnt down Catholic churches and killed several people (see P Quinlivan and P Rose, *The Fenians in England: 1865-72*, 1982). Meanwhile, the three convicted Irishmen (who became known as the Manchester Martyrs) were hanged. But if anti-Irish prejudice was more virulent and violent than it is today, so a large section of left-wing opinion was more willing to stand against it.

Another modern argument is that the IRA's bombing campaign in

respect no laws, human or divine.... We must crush that at any cost.' (16 December 1867) Irish people in Britain were indiscriminately arrested and intimidated as the authorities enlisted 166 000 special constables, a figure never exceeded in two world wars. One Irishman turned himself in 'as the only means...of saving[himself] from being arrested wherever [he went] as a Fenian'. (*Fenians in England*, p52.)

Yet in the face of this backlash, the Irish solidarity movement in Britain not only continued, but grew. The massive London amnesty protest in Hyde Park took place less than two years after the Clerkenwell bombing. The key to this success was the left's refusal to compromise with anti-Irish sentiments, and willingness to wage a political struggle against moderate trade unionists who were ready to make concessions to the right.

The speeches delivered in Hyde Park illustrated the political differ-

'The London proletarians declare every day more openly for the Fenians...for, firstly, a violent and secondly, an anti-English movement.'
Frederick Engels



Britain alienates the public and makes it impossible to win support for the Irish. But, like anti-Irish prejudice, there is little new about republican violence in Britain. The first republican bombing in Britain was in December 1867, weeks after the Manchester jailbreak. Fenians trying to free two comrades from Clerkenwell jail blew up the prison wall and wrecked numerous houses nearby. The explosion, heard up to 40 miles away, killed four civilians and injured a hundred more.

The Clerkenwell explosion was followed by a wave of hysteria and repression every bit as ferocious as the response to the Birmingham or Harrods bombings a century later. The *Times*, anticipating today's gutter press, ran a column entitled 'Fenian outrage': 'We are confronted by a gang of reckless criminals, who

ences within the amnesty movement. The chairman of the moderate English Amnesty Committee, a Mr Merriman, wanted to persuade the Queen that releasing the Fenians would be in the Crown's interests: it would 'awaken a strong sense of gratitude towards your Majesty's Crown and person among all classes and creeds in Ireland, and would greatly tend to facilitate the task of government in that country, and to strengthen its attachment to Great Britain'. (*Times*, 25 October 1869). In another part of the park it was not advice for the establishment which won loud acclaim, but the assertion of Ireland's right to self-determination. An unidentified speaker argued that 'if the great majority of the Irish people wished for a Republic tomorrow, what right or wish would Englishmen have to interfere?'. He

called for English and Irish unity 'to see the whole of the aristocracy swept off the face of the earth'.

Against the moderates and reformers who expressed humanitarian sympathy for Fenian aims but rejected their violent tactics, Marx and Engels and their colleagues in the First International (who helped to organise the Hyde Park demonstration) insisted on unequivocal support for the Fenians.

Marx identified anti-Irish sentiment as a major barrier to progress in Britain. So long as British workers sided with their rulers and exploiters against Ireland, they could never break free from capitalist domination. 'The sole means of hastening it [the social revolution in England]', Marx wrote to Siegfried Meyer and August Vogt in 1870, 'is to make Ireland independent. Hence it is the task of the International everywhere to put the conflict between England and Ireland in the foreground, and everywhere to side openly with Ireland. And it is the special task of the central council in London to awaken the consciousness in the English workers that for them the national emancipation of Ireland is no question of abstract justice or humanitarian sentiment, but the first condition of their own social emancipation' (Marx and Engels, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, 1978 edition, p408).

Full Marx

This understanding of the importance of Ireland, and consequent refusal to compromise on the issue, provided the solid political foundation for the amnesty movement. Engels noted the impact such a movement could have on the conservatism of the British working class, writing of how 'the London proletarians declare every day more openly for the Fenians and, hence—an unheard of thing here—for, firstly, a violent and secondly, an anti-English movement'.

Support for the Fenians in Britain forced the authorities to release some of the prisoners. The campaign's most celebrated success was the release of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa in 1871. Six years later the Disraeli government, under mounting pressure, cut the sentence of Fenian prisoner Michael Davitt.

Too often over the past 20 years, those campaigning on Ireland in Britain have followed nineteenth-century liberals and moderates, not the firm, uncompromising attitudes of Marx and Engels. Instead of challenging public prejudice, they have equivocated and looked for excuses. And they have never come close to filling Hyde Park. The lesson of the amnesty campaign of the 1860s and 1870s is that unequivocal support for the liberation struggle provides the most practical basis for effective solidarity. It worked then, and could do so again.

Countering the culture of despair

Revolution is the future

In an age of backward-looking reaction, Frank Richards puts the case for progress

Revolutions don't happen very often. However when they do occur they tend to have far-reaching, historic consequences.

It is no exaggeration to say that much of Western politics was a product of and a reaction to the French Revolution of 1789. The French Revolution defined the politics of nineteenth-century Europe. It raised the possibility of social change and the elimination of private power and privilege. In response, the European ruling and middle classes sought to create political systems that could provide an alternative to this terrifying prospect. Repression and reaction as practised in early nineteenth-century Britain was one alternative. The other was nationalism, which had the virtue of a capacity to mobilise the masses without endangering property and wealth.

If the French Revolution defined the politics of the nineteenth century, then the Russian Revolution did the same for the twentieth—but in a more striking form.

Most directly the Russian Revolution gave rise to the international communist movement. By its existence, the Soviet Union represented a threat to the capitalist status quo. And naturally it provoked a reaction. European rulers conceded reforms to prevent revolution gaining momentum elsewhere. In many parts of Europe social democratic parties were invited to run governments to neutralise popular discontent. For example, this is how Herr Reichert, secretary of the Association of German Iron and Steel Industrialists, persuaded employers to support the 1918 social democratic government:

'How can we spare capitalism from the threatening socialisation? Unfortunately, the bourgeoisie as it is in Germany could not be relied upon in things economic-political. We concluded that in the midst of general insecurity, in view of the tottering of the power of the state and the government, there were strong allies of industry among the working class and the allies were the trade unions.' (Quoted in R Black, *Fascism in Germany*, Vol I, 1975, p253)

RIGHT: Totalitarian images of future societies provide powerful arguments for the status quo



Those who
rule can never
feel secure; so
they can
never stop
reminding
us that
revolution is
unnatural

In the inter-war years, the European establishment was preoccupied with avoiding a re-run of October 1917. Reichert, and others of his class, realised that they could not avoid mass upheaval if they ruled on their own. They needed social democrats and reformist union leaders to mediate between themselves and the working class. From this period European politics became a series of cycles within which conservative and labourist-type parties alternate in government.

The need for a body of mediators, able to reconcile the working class to the rule of capital, was recognised even by a hardened reactionary like Winston Churchill. In February 1919, Churchill stated that trade unionism was critical for containing working class unrest; 'it was the only organisation with which the government could deal' (quoted in K Middlemas, *Politics in Industrial Society*, 1979, p50).

The elevation of social democracy into government was one important response to the Russian Revolution. The other was fascism. Today, fascism is presented mystically as the product of irrational forces. Back in the thirties, however, capitalists the world over understood that fascism posed a potential solution to their problems. This explains their ambiguity towards the Nazis and why they were so reluctant to fight Hitler.

After the experience of the Holocaust, fascism stands discredited. But in the thirties much of the British establishment saw it as a respectable ally against the scourge of communism. The *Daily Mail* celebrated Hitler's rise to power in 1933:

'Our "parlour Bolsheviks" and "cultured communists" have started a campaign of denunciation against Nazi "atrocities", which, as anyone who visits Germany quickly discovers for himself, consists merely of a few isolated acts of violence such as are inevitable among a nation half as big again as ours....In the last few days of the pre-Hitler regime there were 20 times as many Jewish government officials in Germany as had existed before the war. Israelites of international attachments were insinuating themselves into key positions....It is from such abuses that Hitler has freed Germany.' (10 July 1933)

Not every 'democratic' admirer of the Nazis was as anti-Semitic as the *Mail*. But many establishment figures on both sides of the Atlantic wanted peace with Germany, so that the fascists could dispose of 'communism' once and for all. Thus we see the US ambassador, John Cudaly, in Warsaw in December 1938 writing to president Roosevelt of the need to help Germany, where 'a proud,

capable, ambitious and warlike people...are denied a full and happy life while...the Russians, crude and uncouth, 300 years behind present-day civilisation, are in possession of the wealth of an empire' (quoted in AE Offner, *American Appeasement*, 1969, p173).

At almost the same time Hugh Wilson, US ambassador in Berlin, noted in his diary that the Nazis 'have got something' in their Strength through Joy programme 'which is going to be beneficial to the world at large'. What that 'something' was became evident three months after the outbreak of the Second World War, when Wilson declared that he would 'enthusiastically applaud' the end of hostilities in Western Europe so that Germany would be free to 'take care of the Russian encroachment' (Offner, p216).

No guarantees

The history of revolution in the twentieth century cannot be reduced to a single act in Russia. For 50 years after 1917, every significant development in world politics can be seen as an attempt to neutralise the danger of further revolutions. It began with the sudden emergence of social democracy in the twenties. It continued with the growth of fascism during the next two decades. And it required the post-1945 Cold War to put the international capitalist class at ease.

The cumulative effect of these developments was first to contain and second to discredit the idea of revolution. Yet those who rule can never feel entirely secure. That's why they can never stop reminding the world that a revolution is unnatural. Publications denouncing communism and revolution are thriving today, because history never provides the defenders of the status quo with certificates of guarantee against social change.

Ironically, all of the strategies adopted by capitalism to destroy the threat of revolution were not sufficient. Despite fascism, a bloody world war, the histrionics of anti-communist propaganda and the careful manoeuvring of social democracy, nobody could feel confident that the world was cured of the revolutionary disease. Momentous changes in China in 1949 unleashed a chain reaction which culminated in the defeat of the USA in Vietnam. Revolutionary upsurge in Latin America created difficulties for imperialism first in Cuba and then in Nicaragua. Even in Western Europe, it took until the late sixties for capitalists to feel confident that their enemy was defeated.

The triumph of reaction was ultimately made possible by the experience of revolution as a negative model. The defeat of the revolutionary forces in the Soviet

Union and the emergence of Stalinism provided the missing ingredient. Until the fifties, revolutionary change was equated with Stalinist rule in the Soviet Union. Stalin, who was in fact the gravedigger of revolution, appeared as the personification of radical change. When the grim reality of Soviet society became public knowledge it provoked a bitter reaction among many who had previously looked to it as a source of inspiration.

The revulsion against Stalinism strengthened enormously the anti-revolution propaganda of capitalism. In the popular consciousness, Stalinism and communism were synonymous. This reaction was shaped by Western propaganda which never tired of portraying the Soviet Union as the realisation of communism. In reality the Soviet Union of today is the product of the defeat of revolution and of the principle of communism. One consequence of the experience of Stalinism over recent decades is to hide the magnitude of this past defeat and to create the impression that the gulag is just a stone's throw beyond any revolution.

Mutual need

The aspiration for radical change is the precondition for a revolution. But if radical change is experienced in negative terms, then the aspiration itself is lost or becomes muted. The existence of Stalinist societies seems to provide a practical argument against revolution. It is an argument that has done more to damage the cause of progress than anything which the capitalists could invent. The longer Stalinism survives the greater the damage. So long as the only perceived alternative to capitalism is Stalinism, the cause of human liberation must remain marginalised.

Just as capitalism required Stalinism to win its arguments so the Soviet Union needed the West to survive. The development of this relationship explains the contemporary cycle of reaction.

In its origin Stalinism is more the product of imperialist pressure than of indigenous causes in the Soviet Union. Post-revolutionary Russia faced a military invasion by imperialist armies. These armies and their local allies could not defeat the revolution—but they could go a long way towards destroying economic and social life. The economic havoc that followed the wars of intervention ensured that the revolutionary regime was more concerned with sheer survival than with social change. Military intervention was followed by economic war—the Soviet Union was isolated in a hostile capitalist world. The pressure from imperialism established the conditions where

revolutionary forces were put on the defensive and Stalinism could thrive.

There is a strong ambivalence in the relationship between the West and the Soviet Union. Most of the time Western leaders are busy denouncing Soviet terror. Yet, on crucial occasions, imperialism has been prepared to help the Soviet Union to survive. At various times Western technology and military assistance have made the difference for the Soviet Union.

It would be wrong to suggest that imperialism and Stalinism have somehow consciously worked out a silent partnership. To this day many capitalists are intensely hostile to the Soviet Union and genuinely believe in the myth of communist expansionism. Nevertheless, whatever their subjective intent, the two sides have developed a relationship that is crucial for the survival of both systems. They may have different motives, but each is committed to the preservation of the world as it is.

The reaction of the West to the recent wave of repression in China is instructive. What really worries the West is not repression but the threat of instability in China. The response of president Bush to the execution of Chinese students and workers was

Science fiction reflects popular fears of a dehumanised tomorrow



diplomatic to say the least, as he reminded a White House press conference that 'if you look at the world and you understand the dynamics of the Pacific area, good relations with China are in the national interest of the United States'.

Similarly, the West is not too enthusiastic about the changes in Eastern Europe. Despite the frequent calls for more democracy it is desperately concerned about the possible consequences of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and its sphere of influence. Anti-communism is ideal for public relations. But in the world of international relations a cool-headed cynicism prevails. In the end, both sets of rulers recognise that global stability rests on the existing division of the world.

Suspicious minds

The present organisation of the world order is well suited to preserving the status quo and to discrediting revolution. In comparison to previous historical experience, the world system is relatively stable; so long, that is, as you forget about the third world. Stability in the West provides the foundation for conservatism and for scepticism about radical solutions.

Stability as a way of life is reinforced by the living embodiment of a negative model of revolution—the Soviet Union. The perception of a crisis-ridden Soviet Union serves to legitimise capitalism. In so far as the yearning for change survives it is directed away from the Soviet model and, by implication, away from the project of revolution.

Reaction and stability exact a high price from humanity. They can never eliminate the historic tendencies towards change—only counter the effects. Reaction is just that—a reaction to a specific experience. Because of its fear of revolutionary change it becomes suspicious of any form of change and hence regards the future with trepidation.

If the prospect of change no longer inspires then society's view of the future becomes a mixture of fear and suspicion. Human beings are still alienated by capitalist society, but without a positive view of future alternatives they put little hope in progress. Stability and suppression of the tendencies towards change breed a culture of despair. Historians of the future may record the twentieth century as an era of backward-looking irrationalism. The price humanity pays for the discrediting of revolution is loss of faith in the very notion of progress.

What happened to the confident industrial capitalist of the nineteenth century? What happened to the conviction that with the advance of

science the forward march of humanity was unstoppable? The fear of change has become the dominant theme of this century, establishing a culture of despair in Western societies.

The main advocates of the culture of despair are the ruling classes. A class desperately clinging on to sacred and traditional principles is inherently suspicious about new ideas that challenge the norm. Since this class influences society as a whole, its insecurity about the future shapes public opinion.

Too strong a belief in progress is discouraged since it logically leads to the question of how it is to be achieved. Such questions have an uncomfortable habit of leading to the conclusion that revolution and progress are inextricably linked. At best capitalist society is prepared to pay lip-service to progress. In practice considerations of the future are advanced with a strong dose of cynicism if not fear.

In the past it wasn't only Marxists who looked to the future for progressive solutions. All strands of the Enlightenment believed that history represents progress and that gradually the human potential will be realised. Belief in science and in the capacity of humanity to create more progressive social organisations underlines all strands of enlightened thinking. It is only when the capitalist class actively fears revolution and sets about immunising society to change that an intellectual climate of hope is displaced by one of despair.

Of course from time to time the long cycles of despair are punctuated by short bursts of enthusiasm about progress. The late sixties was a period of experimentation and optimism. And the USA has always been a special case—until the mid-sixties its prosperity ensured that it felt relatively comfortable about the future. But in general the dominant political and intellectual culture in the West is one of anti-progress.

Sci-fi future

Science fiction and similar forms of popular culture illustrate the dominant conceptions about what tomorrow will bring. The images are of greater dehumanisation, of people imprisoned by science and technology, of greater standardisation at the expense of individuality and of the destruction of all passion and feeling.

Science fiction is interesting, not because of what it says about the future but because it is symptomatic of what people believe about their own world. It projects into the future the fears and anxieties experienced today. In one sense it is one of the most honest forms of expression, since capitalist culture is happy to allow an open portrayal of human

History shows that nothing was ever gained without a fight

fears so long as it is written in the future tense. Not all science fiction is backward looking. But the dominant fears of this literary form express the sentiment of anti-progress. Compared to the totalitarian nightmare of 1984, Thatcher's Britain looks positively good.

Change for the worse

The discrediting of revolution is one reason why humanity has become disenchanted with progress. The other compelling argument against progress is that the changes which take place under capitalism are hardly a cause for celebration. Capitalism deploys all knowledge and science and wealth primarily to maximise private profit. In this scenario 'change' means nuclear arms, inner-city decay, polluted countryside and wars.

The capitalist class is the first to admit it has failed—not in words but in deeds. Those who rule Britain and the West do not project a life centred around urban congestion, fast-food restaurants and modern tower blocks. Whenever possible they escape from the cities they have created. Their ideal is the eighteenth-century squire—a mansion in the midst of rural tranquility. Or they try to recreate a bit of rural environment in the cities, in self-contained leafy neighbourhoods at a safe distance from ordinary people. They despise their own products. Surrounded by

antique furniture or its imitation, the capitalist class ostentatiously displays its love of opera and classical music. Today's mass culture is not for the wealthy few.

For the majority of society, retreating into the landed estate is not a credible option. They have to make do with what capitalism offers. Nevertheless they too are influenced by the sentiments of the ruling class. Without a belief in progress, most people look backwards. Even the Western left has fallen prey to this outlook. Words like 'community' and 'decentralisation' immediately strike a positive chord. There is a profound suspicion of the effects of technology and of changing patterns of life. The left even romanticises the old working class communities and writes off the revolutionary role of the white-collar wage earners of today.

Left behind

For the first time since the French Revolution, the European left no longer believes in progress. This means that the left as it is traditionally known no longer exists.

The pessimism of the European left is to a considerable extent influenced by the mood of public opinion and the culture of despair fostered by the ruling class. It is also a predictable transformation of the Soviet experience from a source of inspiration into a negative model.

The process of global stabilisation has drawn the left itself into the culture of despair. And with the domestication of the left, stability becomes more comprehensive and complete.

Tired of waiting

Fortunately history does not for long endure those who want to stop progress. Nor can capitalist stability remain immune to the forces of change. This is why revolution remains the only practical conclusion.

Those who argue against revolution suggest that change will occur in any case without the unnecessary upheaval of a 1789 or an October 1917. Moreover, it is stated that revolutions devour their children and invariably go astray, so we should let change take its own natural, evolutionary course. It is difficult to sustain these points on the basis of historical experience. History shows that most of the time most people are prepared to wait patiently for improvements to their life. At a certain point, however, it becomes clear that waiting does not bring any reward. It is at this point that people, even of patient disposition, begin to get angry and some even try to act.

History also shows that nothing has ever been gained without fighting for it. Every right and every reform has been won through struggle. Will change come naturally in South Africa, China or Britain? Certainly not if it is left up to those who rule.

Third time

Finally, a simple proposition. If revolutions that go astray like that of October 1917 can have such a far-reaching impact, what would happen when one maintains the right direction? In October 1917, the working class had a go. Ultimately that attempt did not succeed. But the potential was there for us to see. A failed revolution in an essentially rural society became the point of reference for Western politics during the next 60 or 70 years. No wonder that the right is petrified lest one day workers decide to have another go and this time succeed.

Today we live in an era of despair. But despair itself contains an explosive mixture. At a certain stage the despair that is focused on the future becomes redirected to the here and now. When people find that there is no refuge for them in the past they will have to solve the problems of the present. After 1789 and 1917 comes the third attempt to remove the obstacles to human liberation. The rehabilitation of an elementary belief in progress is the intellectual precursor of revolution.



Since 1789, the right
has insisted that
revolutions devour
their children and
lead to tyranny

living

Republicans, feminists and ambassadors' wives

WOMEN AT WAR

Two books by women on women involved in the Irish War: Bernadette Walsh talked to Nell McCafferty about Peggy Deery and women's problems in Ireland, and warns against Elizabeth Shannon's scurrilous interpretation of the women she met there

14 KIDS AND AN ARMY TO SUPPORT

Nell McCafferty, Peggy Deery: A Derry Family At War, Virago, £4.95

Peggy Deery was a 38-year old widow with 14 children when she went on the Bloody Sunday march in Derry in 1972. Near the end she told her niece she was off 'to take a wee cake up to your granny'. Then a British Army bullet hit her left leg and left her with a permanent limp. Six months later her eldest son, 16-year old Paddy, was on his way to buy a sports jacket when he stopped at a demonstration against the British Army. A rubber bullet removed his left eye. Times had always been hard for the Deery family; this was only the start of still harder times. Peggy Deery was to visit her republican children in jail and bury two sons before she died at 54, 'of exhaustion and a broken heart'.

Dublin-based journalist and playwright Nell McCafferty, herself born in the Bogside, has written the story of Peggy Deery and her children. 'I really wrote the book for myself, but I hope people will accept that what I've written is the truth. I've tried to humanise the war.' *Peggy Deery* is a moving but unsentimental account of the devastating effect of poverty and war on people's lives.

McCafferty does not spare us the domestic strain and squalor. Valium is one of the most prominent characters in the book, and she observes closely the constant struggle to scrape together a few coins to shove into the gaming machines. 'The men die and go to jail much more, but it's the women who have to keep the whole thing going', she told me. 'They're finally left with the burden, they have to run the home, bear the children, get the money to go and visit the prisons to keep the men's morale up. The women could end the war in the morning. They know who's who in the organisation, they see the daily movements among the IRA.'

In 1976 women were behind the peace movement. Did McCafferty think this was set up by the British? 'No. It was a spontaneous outpouring of sadness, and rage and worry, and that lasted about a week. Meantime their media guru Ciaran McKeown joined them, changed the name from peace women to peace people and made them take sides, mainly against the IRA. It's easier to attack your own. They gave themselves over to exploitation. The Nobel prize blew them out of the water because they got money. They were very naive to take tea with the Queen, but if you live in a slum in the North and the Queen asks you to tea, I can see why you go. It wasn't a British invention, it was manipulated by them.'

The other women's movement in Northern Ireland in the late seventies, the feminist women's movement, also disintegrated. McCafferty sounds ambivalent. 'All feminist movements in the North split according to what side you take in the war. I think that feminists do have to say we are not going to discuss the war. But then one could say that's pretty ineffectual, meantime my children are dying or I'm being harassed—then you find women splitting into different kinds of feminist groups.'

So what about women in the South? 'First of all they're better off because nobody shoots them. They don't go to jail, their children don't go to jail. I've been in the South for 20 years, and I've tasted freedom and it's



Peggy Deery (left) at a family wedding

lovely. Even with a conservative government it's a grand thing to have a say in your own future which you didn't have in the North as a nationalist or a Catholic. It's also much better because there's been feminism in the South. It's a paradox, because you have what are called British civil liberties in the North. But there's no abortion in the North, and women don't avail themselves of things like contraception and divorce because of the grip of the Catholic and Protestant churches. Although that grip is breaking because all social structures have broken down under the war.'

This seems a very rosy view of the South. McCafferty's own freedom has been extensively curtailed there. She is the only person not in a proscribed organisation to be banned from the airwaves under Section 31, for saying on the radio that she supported the IRA. 'If it hadn't been for Enniskillen the next day the ban might not have been so severe. I was shunned, I was leprous at first. After a while people told me privately they were glad someone had told the truth. They keep blaming the IRA, and people know that's not good enough as an explanation.'



PHOTO: Joe Botman

NO PLACE FOR DIPLOMATS

Elizabeth Shannon, *I am of Ireland: Women of the North Speak Out*, Little, Brown & Company, £10.95

'My puzzlement turned to irritation. The problems in the North really aren't that big. There is no third world misery....No one is starving....Aids has scarcely touched the country.... The climate is moderate....It would seem that a minimum of good sense, charity on both sides, and a deflated sense of the importance of their quarrel would solve their problems.'

You would go a long way to find a display of complacency, prejudice and imperialist arrogance to match Elizabeth Shannon talking about Northern Ireland. The wife of the American ambassador to Ireland (1977-83) crossed the Border five times between 1986 and 1987 to interview a broad cross-section of women in the Six Counties. She should have stayed in Dublin.

No doubt her connections helped her get access to subjects as diverse as Lucy Faulkner (wife of Unionist premier Brian), Iris Robinson (wife of Ian Paisley's deputy Peter) and IRA volunteer Mairead Farrell. They have some interesting things to say, but Shannon filters it all through the prose and perspectives of the *Readers Digest*.

She pours approval on the British, the respectable Unionists (she laments the current lack of Unionists of the 'calibre' of Faulkner, who presided over internment and Bloody Sunday), the SDLP and the Workers Party; she has understanding for the Loyalists and (if they're victims) nationalists; but only anger and contempt for the republican women. Lucy Faulkner is 'sensible, compassionate and realistic'; talking to Sile and Pauline, two ex-Armagh prisoners and republican activists, is 'a chilling experience'. Catholic youth on Belfast street corners are 'idle, resentful' with 'a sense of inferiority'; the neighbouring Protestant Shankill Road is 'clean and inviting...pleasant, cheerful' (cheerful? The *Shankill*?).

When she visits nationalist houses you can almost see her running her finger along the furniture for dust, longing to be back in Castle Upton with Lady Kinahan (wife of the Lord Lieutenant, the Queen's man in the North) discussing petit point and playing with the dogs (two schnauzers, 'named after exiled Austrians of royal birth'). 'Lady Kinahan is, by my standards, a feminist.' Her political standards are equally exacting.

Mairead Farrell was more than a match for her hostile questioner, explaining to deaf ears how 'life is sacred' and how the IRA try 'to the best of our ability...to ensure that innocent people don't get killed'. As Farrell leaves, Shannon spits a jibe at the republican: 'Small, determined, angry, ready to sacrifice her life or anybody else's to her cause.' Then she lectures Father Raymond Murray on how 'sad and pointless' it is that Farrell has rejoined the IRA after her dirty protest and hunger-strike in Armagh jail. 'You don't understand these women's lives' replied Murray, obviously drawing on all the patience of his calling, 'You can't understand how they feel, always being second class citizens in their own country'. Shannon cuts through this nonsense and despatches the priest with a flourish. 'I understand perfectly. It's something like being a woman in the Catholic Church, a second class citizen in one's own religion.'

When Mairead Farrell calls somebody 'brilliant', Shannon the snooty pedant warns us that 'brilliant in Northern Ireland is not used in the way we would use the word; it means wonderful rather than intellectually gifted'. Five pages on, Shannon calls Lucy Faulkner 'a brilliant horse-woman'. Whether this means only intellectually gifted people can ride to hounds, or just that Lucy Faulkner is better at staying on horses than her late husband, she doesn't say.

The nastiest and most dishonest aspect of the book is the attempt to depict the 'troubles' as male violence and the women as dupes. She sneers at their 'illusion' that they are involved in the struggle. 'You find that their "big role" was banging garbage lids to signal the arrival of British troops, or making sandwiches and tea for the lads.' It is as if she had never spoken to Mairead Farrell, Sile and Pauline, Dodie McGuinness (a Sinn Fein councillor), Lily McCafferty (Nell's mother) and many other republican women.

Shannon has gone home to Massachusetts. From here she concludes that the 'Northern Irish...make themselves prisoners of their past.... Every country has its scorched and painful eras; a test of greatness is whether a country can transcend its history'. She is sure that if only Northern Ireland could kick its 'addiction to revenge' it could make major 'cultural and intellectual contributions to the civilised world'.

The part of the civilised world to which Elizabeth Shannon belongs bombs children in Libya and arms death squads in Latin America. For millions around the world the Stars and Stripes stand for fear, misery, degradation and death. They are living in a scorched and painful era alright, as I'm sure they would be eager to explain to an American ambassador's wife with the brass neck to pontificate on the shortcomings of the oppressed.



McCafferty: 'women keep it going'

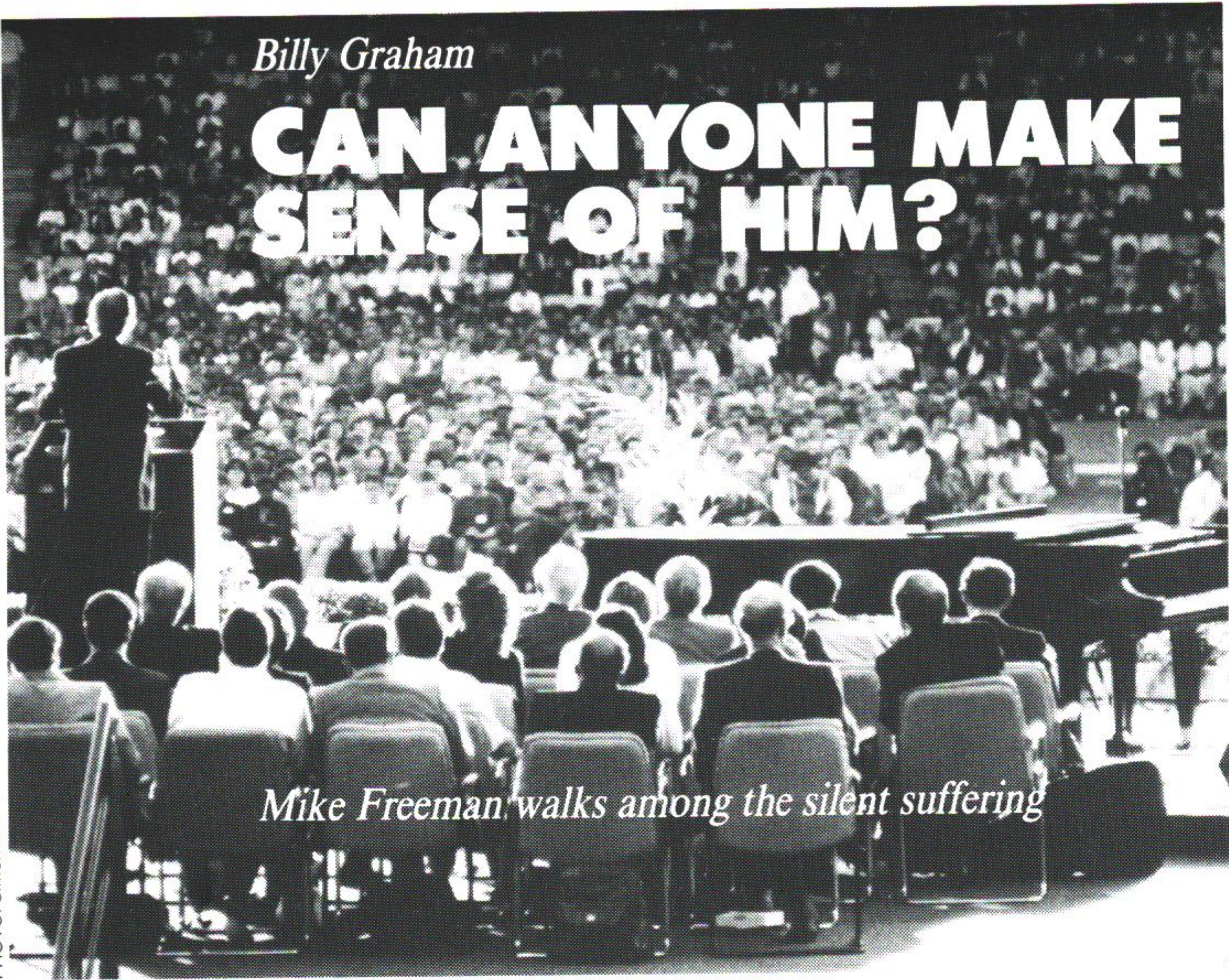
McCafferty does not defend Enniskillen—'You can't blame Britain for that, it was sectarian, they ought to know Protestants are not the enemy, it was our fault'—but she has no time for the 'critical support' tradition of much of the left. 'You sit in the pub and you hear a soldier was shot and you laugh and cheer. Good old boys, you say, although we wouldn't join them because they're not politically correct for various reasons. Then a Protestant gets mangled and everybody shies away and the IRA are left holding the shite. I say no, once I give them a gun I take responsibility for every single action they take. It's expecting the IRA to be model soldiers, with a deadly aim. Unfortunately not everybody is as skilled as John Wayne. Life's not like that. Wars are ugly.'

Billy Graham

CAN ANYONE MAKE SENSE OF HIM?

Mike Freeman walks among the silent suffering

PHOTO: Simon Norfolk



‘Why do good people suffer?’ Looking around me, this seemed to be the question from the publicity leaflet which 20 000 people had come to Upton Park to hear Billy Graham answer.

They certainly looked like good people. Rarely can such a crowd have assembled at the home of West Ham United without a single voice raised in anger. As proceedings started a reverential hush descended, recreating the atmosphere of a small church service in the unlikely surroundings of a football stadium. Everybody was soberly dressed, the young people already looking middle aged and not a trendy haircut in sight.

Droning WASP

Anybody who, like me, was expecting the razzmatazz of the American Bible-belt tele-evangelists, or even the exuberance of a black gospel choir, was in for a big disappointment. This was a low-key, emotionally restrained, White Anglo-Saxon Protestant occasion. We listened to 80-year old soloist George Beverly Shea (who has sung to more people than Frank Sinatra), and the congregation sang along with the hymns in the same desultory fashion as at every church service I have ever attended. Then, without any formal introduction, Billy Graham was at the lectern and briskly into his sermon.

Graham presents a simple Christian message in a direct and sentimental style. He took the parable of the prodigal son as his text. His homely presentation of the tale in the context

of a mid-Western farm seemed strangely inappropriate in the heart of London’s East End, and his sermon never approached the emotional force of St Luke’s powerful punchline: ‘It was meet that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.’

Graham gave his answer to the questions about LIFE that drew the crowd to Upton Park. He told them that they suffered, they experienced

loneliness, ‘cosmic loneliness’, because they were separated from God by sin. But it was not too late to turn to God, to repent and achieve fulfilment through renewing fellowship with Him. Like the convict who was met on his return home with a yellow ribbon tied around the old oak tree bearing the legend ‘Welcome home Daddy’, there was a ‘Welcome home’ sign in heaven for everybody in Upton Park that night.

‘Come up and stand by the platform’—

Graham’s famous appeal formed the climax of his oration. And up came a couple of thousand. But there was none of the catharsis of mass conversion. They were the already converted, mobilised from all the little churches in every suburb, small town and village in middle England. They shuffled up in a display of muted enthusiasm and stood, embarrassed, under the floodlights until Graham finished his sermon and his army of ‘counsellors’ carrying their follow-up packs could move in.

Sigh of oppressed

Graham has been criticised for the backward-looking fundamentalist doctrines of his First Baptist Church of Dallas, for promoting the individualistic values of American capitalism and for endorsing conservative politicians from Nixon to Reagan. Yet he has avoided the sex and corruption scandals that brought down other mass evangelists and has kept his distance from the more extreme right-wing politicians around Jerry Falwell’s now defunct Moral Majority. Graham is a reactionary, but what is significant about him is not so much his doctrinally-levelled, homogenised, biblical Christianity, but the fact that his answers to the problems of LIFE have undoubted appeal to the hundreds of thousands who attended his 1989 mission to Britain.

‘Religion’, wrote Marx, ‘is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the feeling of a heartless world and the soul of soulless circumstances’. While capitalism continues to bring oppression, heartlessness and soullessness to the lives of the majority of people, preachers like Billy Graham will find a ready response for their illusory solutions to the problems of LIFE.

The Russia House

POST-GLASNOST LE CARRÉ

Gemma Forest reviews John le Carré’s *The Russia House*, Hodder & Stoughton, £12.95

Billed as his first post-glasnost spy novel, John le Carré’s latest is a great yarn. Don’t, whatever you do, read the dust-jacket blurb: that takes much of the fun away, even though the pleasures of *The Russia House* go much further than its topical plot. You could just revel in the accuracy of le Carré’s observations about the British establishment and its burgeoning race of ‘espioncrats’. This is airport-thriller-

meets-bourgeois-materialism at its best.

The musty files of MI5’s dingy London offices, such a feature of the author’s Smiley/Karla trilogy (*Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy; The Honourable Schoolboy; Smiley’s People*) are gone. Now the Service is hi-tech: every interrogation is video-taped, and the cypher codes relayed from Moscow station come up on banks of screens.

The characters are just as scary and credible. Gone, thankfully, are the cardboard Zionist heroes of *The Little Drummer Girl*, and the tedious Englishness of Pym in the writer’s overheated last work, *A Perfect Spy*. Le Carré does not know the Russians as well as he does the Germans in *A Small Town in Germany*; in my view he tends to be too sentimental about them. Likewise, a patrician hostility to most Americans continues unabated

from his previous novels. However, in his waspish portraits of our own educated secret police, le Carré is little short of hilarious.

Yakov, a brilliant Soviet military scientist, sees in Barley, a humane if whiskey-sodden English publisher in Moscow, a chance to end the Cold War once and for all. He sends Barley some key secrets but they wind up instead at the foreign office—'more and more', in le Carré's view, 'a cover organisation for the Friends' disgraceful activities'. The Friends are the anti-Soviet intelligence apparatus run from a stubby brick out-station in Victoria known as the Russia House.

Barley, confronted by Ned and Clive from the Russia House plus Bob from the CIA, protests: 'So where are we off to? Nicaragua? Chile? Salvador? Iran? If you want a third world leader assassinated, I'm your man.' Clive simply drawls back: 'Don't rant.... We're as bad as Bob's lot and we do the same things. We also have an Official Secrets Act, which they don't, and we expect you to sign it.'

Holding a copy of the act is Palfrey, the first person in which the novel is written, and a solicitor who knows his job is to bend, or just break, the law (it takes him 60 seconds to legalise the tapping of a dozen phone lines). Like Barley, who reluctantly joins the Service fold, he feels that 'a day could come when there was nothing left to

serve'. Barley eventually acts on this premise, whereas Palfrey just toys with it. 'If there is to be hope', Barley tells Yakov, 'we must all betray our countries'. Strong stuff, this.

As always with le Carré, the dialogue moves swimmingly but the heroes' introspections stop you in your tracks. When, at the Russia House, they play back the tapes of Barley's conversations with Yakov's ex-lover and intermediary, Katya, they hear their newfound agent's

heart beating through the body mikes. Le Carré's prose has a similar quality. It speaks to you from inside your head. In doing so it derives much veracity and power.

But there are other, more visual, gems. The chief of CIA anti-Soviet operations has had it with the 'mullahs' in the Pentagon who believe 'that every fucking sardine fisherman three miles out of port is a Soviet nuclear submarine in drag'. Perestroika, he writes, 'is not a visual

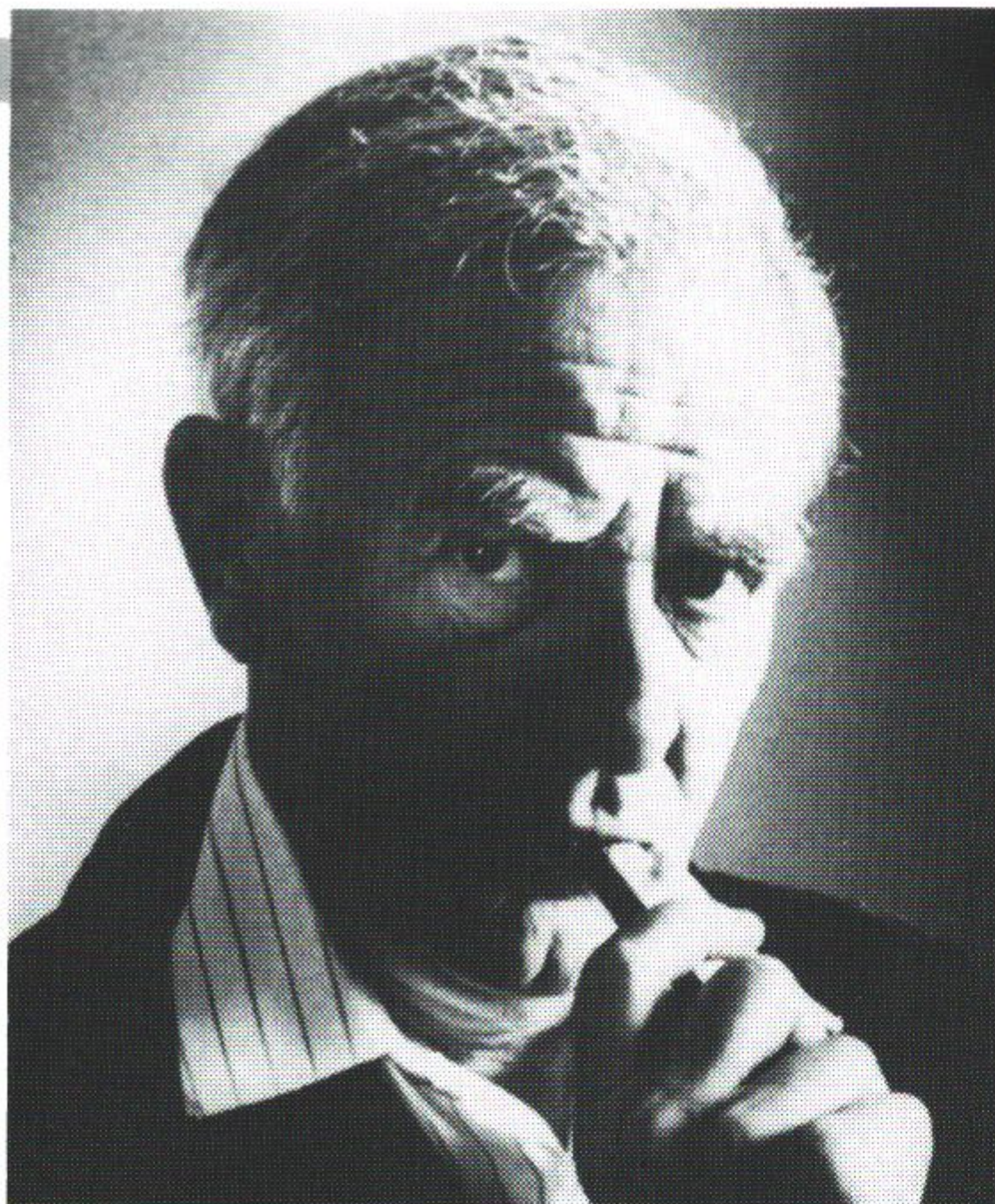
medium' but rather 'strictly in the audio stage'; anyway, as a Russian asks of his country's economy, 'How do you restructure a corpse?'

'Infinite mistrust'

Naturally, le Carré sees the solution to East-West conflict in individual terms: on his penultimate page, he upholds, through Barley's preference for Katya over Clive, 'the dangerous path of love' as against 'the safe bastion of infinite mistrust'. His fondness for the Russian intelligentsia means that he, like Yakov, believes that the revolution in the USSR 'must be imposed from above. By intellectuals. By artists. By administrators. By scientists'. Predictable enough stuff, and as mistaken as his theories about the cause of the arms race. But then, who reads le Carré for his social analysis?

The book is prefaced with a quote from Dwight D Eisenhower and, less expectedly, one from May Sarton, an obscure—to me at least—writer whose 'One must think like a hero to behave like a decent human being' is a wonderful aphorism. And, in Barley, we have at least one individual who does think like a hero. 'His last ties to the imperial fantasy were dead. The chauvinist drumbeat revolted him. He would rather be trampled by it than march with it.'

PHOTO: Franta Provaznik

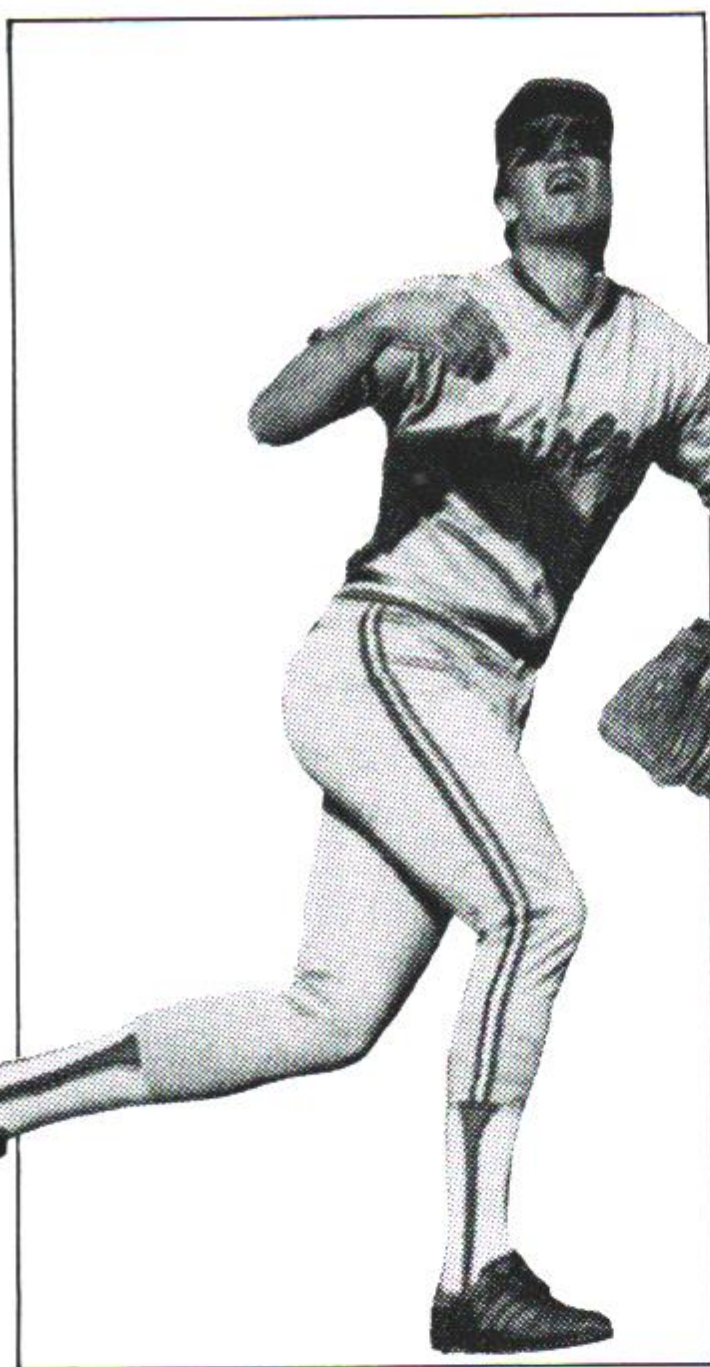


The master spy writer: getting inside the system, and inside your head



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THE AMERICAN DREAM OF BASEBALL



What is baseball all about? As American as Sumo is Japanese, with an insularity summed up by the fact that its championship matches between US city teams are called 'the World Series', baseball has so far proved too indecipherably American to repeat the cult success of gridiron football in Britain.

John Sayles' new film *Eight Men Out*, which has just opened over here, deals with an incident that seems to sum up the centrality of baseball to American culture: the so-called Black Sox scandal, when Chicago White Sox players (motivated by a mixture of personal and anti-employer reasons) bet against their own team and 'threw' the 1919 World Series. The scandal has since been seen as a heavy blow to all that the nation holds dear; 'if they can fix the World Series, they can fix anything'.

Charlie Hustle

While Sayles revives painful memories, baseball is being rocked by a new scandal as Cincinnati Reds manager and youth hero Pete Rose (aka Charlie Hustle) stands accused of betting on his team. For daring to drag the great game down, Rose has been branded a national villain—accused, says one US columnist, of being 'everything except a serial murderer, a child molester and a plucker of old ladies' purses'.

Baseball's status and influence are particularly important because its fans are more working class than American football crowds, as indicated by their preference for drinking Budweiser—the antithesis of yuppishness in the USA. We asked Eric Patterson, who lectures on 'Baseball and American Culture' at Hobart College in New York, to explain the baseball experience.

James Malone

The last time I was asked to explain the mysteries of baseball to a European was on a dusty bus ride through Nicaragua. A Maryknoll nun from Buffalo and I tried to convey the game's finer points to a Belgian TV reporter. Our discussion was occasioned by the fact that baseball is Nicaragua's national game as well, a minor but revealing indication of the depth to which US influence has penetrated there. Those who accept Reagan's characterisation of Sandinista Nicaragua as a 'totalitarian dungeon' might be surprised that even *Barricada*, official organ of the FSLN, publishes the daily box scores of the US major leagues.

Confirming the prejudices of nativist Yankees, my Maryknoll friend and I left the Belgian even more puzzled than before about the game's rules. I won't repeat our mistake here. To suggest why baseball is seen as quintessentially American, we need to look beyond what happens inside a diamond for nine innings.

Back to the land

Baseball in its present form first developed among wealthy amateurs and so tended to be disliked as a rich man's amusement. During the long period of sustained industrial/urban expansion following the Civil War, however, the sport was taken up by working people. By the 1860s and 1870s many North-Eastern and Midwestern cities had professional teams with substantial followings, and organised inter-city competition developed.

Since many urban migrants had played baseball as boys, and baseball was still played in open fields in summer months, fans often found the game to be a source of nostalgic appeal. Indeed, baseball still has a strong association with the countryside, drawing many of its best players from 'farm teams' in small towns or from rural colleges. Sports writers still call it 'the summer game' and depict it in pastoral terms.

This aspect of baseball places it clearly within an ongoing tradition in American culture of 'sentimental pastoral nostalgia', which is evident in such diverse artefacts as suburban house design, Western fiction and movies, Currier and Ives' prints of farm life, the poetry of Whittier and Longfellow, and, in more sophisticated forms, Winslow Homer's paintings of rural life and Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn.

Popular pastoral narratives depict protagonists who are independent and mobile, both geographically and socially (consider the Western heroes described by Owen Wister, Zane Grey, Louis L'Amour, or played by Gary Cooper, John Wayne and Clint Eastwood). For men in an urban world increasingly dominated by large corporations, popular depictions of the self-made man provided a reassuring fantasy of mobility through individual effort.

Baseball, which is structured to stress both team play and to give each man his moment of individual *agon* at the plate, includes the individualistic quality found elsewhere in the popular pastoral tradition. Since the 1870s sports writers have stressed the success of certain star players in raising themselves from humble origins through their own efforts, and fans have singled out such players for particular favour.

Babe Ruth was one larger than life player. The New York Yankees star of the twenties and thirties was arguably the most discussed public figure of his day, the 'Sultan of Swat', celebrated for his action on the field, and for his antics off it. The public obsession with Ruth reflected the general shift toward consumerism with the transformation of the American economy. Ruth's appetites for food, drink and consumer goods—as well as for women—were legendary.

All-American game

Industrialisation in the USA was made possible not only through indigenous rural/urban migration, but, unlike in Europe, through vast migrations from abroad. The new institutions of mass culture were important for all newcomers to the city (loyalty to a baseball team, for example, could provide a sense of identity), but particularly so for immigrants from abroad. Baseball was promoted to immigrants as symbolic of the values required by America. Contemporary sports reporting stressed that the game's fast, efficient teamwork was typically American, and an instructive model. Many immigrant memoirs record how knowledge of baseball was a means of demonstrating assimilation, proving that an immigrant was no longer a 'greenhorn'.

The significance of the game as a badge of Americanisation is reflected in the popularity of players from immigrant ethnic groups. A great

player like Joe DiMaggio (one of Marilyn Monroe's husbands) was presented as proof that Italian-Americans could rise through their own efforts in accordance with received American beliefs. The 1942 movie *Pride of the Yankees*, about the legendary career of Lou Gehrig, stresses his humble immigrant origin, his efforts at self-improvement, his parents' suspicion of US society in general and of baseball in particular, and their reconciliation with their successful son, whose most avid fans they become. After the Second World War, popular depictions of black stars like Jackie Robinson reflect the same idealised vision of the USA as a meritocratic, fluid society in which any hard-working individual can achieve material success.

Pitching for profit

While baseball has evolved in response to popular aspirations, it has done so within a framework defined by the needs of private ownership. Private interests took control of the game early, defeating an alternative mode of cooperative ownership by the players (the National Brotherhood of Professional Players). The owners consolidated their hold by running a campaign against corruption after the 1919 Black Sox scandal. In 1922 the Supreme Court officially defined the game as an 'exhibition' and not as a business. This protected the team owners of the two major leagues from challenges by rival investors or players under anti-monopoly laws. So powerful have the owners been that the rigid contract system was only altered to permit players more control over their careers in the seventies, after a long series of court cases.

Two major post-war changes in the game, the admission of black players and the shifting of Eastern franchises to new Western locales, were management decisions to maximise profit. These moves had a deep impact—one thrilling civil rights movement supporters by allowing the emergence of great black players, the other breaking the hearts of devoted fans, like those of the Dodgers and Giants who lost their teams to the growing metropolises of California—but players and fans had little control over them. Owners of major league teams saw black players as an untapped source of lucrative talent, and Los Angeles and San Francisco offered them more fans and more profits.

Baseball is an unusually beautiful game, demanding skill and timing as well as power, the players' grace unhidden by the protective armour of American football or hockey. But baseball has been corrupted to meet the demands of capitalism. In this paradox, as in much else, it is characteristically American.

Girls who just wanna have hit records

WILL YOU STILL LOVE ME TOMORROW?

Sara Hardy talked to Charlotte Greig, author of a new book on girl pop groups



In 1984 Charlotte Greig (a book editor in her thirties) became MC Lotti G and started rapping—a very basic hardline feminist rap—with Female Force and Bite. Her new love affair with hip hop, and her old one with dance music in her teens (when she wanted to ‘get tarded up and go out and have a good time’) led her to write *Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?* It is a comprehensive and fascinating survey of girl pop groups since the fifties, investigating the reasons for what Greig sees as the denigration of women’s contribution to music.

The conventional feminist view of the girl groups—from the Chantels and the Ronettes to the Three Degrees—has been critical of their sweet, passive, cute, unthreatening femininity, including the tendency to call themselves the ‘-ettes’ and the ‘-elles’. Greig doesn’t agree. ‘If you look at the songs they’re not passive at all. There are very few songs which actually talk about wanting to be somebody’s wife in the sense of detailing the activities of being a wife, such as washing somebody’s socks.’

Far from just simpering and flattering male egos, Greig believes fifties and sixties girl groups conveyed a more challenging portrayal of their experience. They lived in societies where marriage was a step up the social ladder, a way of leaving home and being seen as an adult, and they wanted the best deal they could get. The lyrics often present the dilemmas of young women facing their first romantic and sexual encounters; to kiss-or-not-to-kiss songs conceal a quite hardheaded approach to the problems of having sex for the first time. The Shirelles’ ‘Will you still love me tomorrow’ is a forceful example:

‘Tonight with words unspoken
you tell me I’m the only one
But will my heart be broken
when the night meets the
morning sun?’

For Greig, ‘women were actually talking to other women about who they fancied, what they were going to do, how big their engagement ring was going to be, not at all being these passive people that people expected them to be’. She thinks that the songs subtly subverted the norms and values of fifties and sixties society, which promoted the idea that women should settle down and get married, by encouraging them to take a more active role, by discussing the sort of man they wanted and by going out actively to get him.

Greig sees the lyrics changing with the times: ‘Fifties lyrics are full of intense sexual frustration, full of things like I wish I could kiss you goodnight again but I’d better not. That moves on in the sixties to a more seductive kind of mode, which is slightly more independent sexually, like with the Ronettes’ ‘Be my baby’. In the seventies, she says, women’s expectations rose another notch. Contemporary pop lyrics represent this as a desire for more independence, through songs like Honey Cone’s 1971 hit ‘Want ads’, about a woman who, fed up with her errant husband, resolves to advertise for a better model.

Although men who weren’t interested in women’s liberation wrote many of the songs, they knew what women were interested in and wrote to that formula. Eddie Holland, who co-produced Honey Cone, told Greig he wrote for his audience: ‘I knew I was able to write in a way that appealed to women. I spend a lot of time listening to women talking about their views, their problems.’ Women were buying the records, says Greig, and women ‘weren’t going to buy any old rubbish about wearing his ring in 1973’.

The criticism of girl pop groups for not being more progressive continues today. Recently Salt ‘n’ Pepa’s ‘I’ll take your man’ (‘Salt and Pepa’s back we came to outrap you/so get out my face before I smack you/don’t you

know, can’t you understand/if you mess with me I’ll take your man’) so outraged black New York feminists that some DJs stopped playing it. Greig thinks people were expecting something from women rappers they couldn’t always deliver—the battle of the sexes over the microphone—and dismisses the idea that sisterhood should automatically enter pop: ‘Why should women have to be nice to each other? Why should they have to be ladylike and not slag each other off in the same way that the men do?’ She also points out that Salt ‘n’ Pepa wrote ‘Tramps’:

‘What would you do if a stranger said “Hi”
would you diss him or would you reply?
If you answer there is a chance that he will think you want what’s in his pants.
Am I right fellas? Tell the truth or else I’m a have to show you proof
you are what you are, I am what I am
it just so happens most men are tramps.’

Greig thinks that it’s hard to put politics into pop well, and she’s irritated by attacks on commercial women artists from ‘intellectual’ singers like Suzanne Vega or Tanita Tikaram, who say pop should have an ideologically correct line. ‘I don’t really enjoy pop music that gives us “Let’s hold hands across the world and all be nice to each other”, it drives me nuts.’

She believes women’s contribution to pop music isn’t particularly revolutionary, but is something created by women for women, which has a more radical impulse than is generally thought. ‘Perhaps what was being done was not very honest, or at least not done for any good reason other than to have lots of girls wiggling their bottoms on stage, but

what came out was very good, and women did it well, and did it with a kind of integrity because that was all they could do, that was the only thing that was open to them.’

Would she defend women like Madonna or Tina Turner who are taken up by feminists for presenting a stereotyped image of women’s sexuality, of being sex objects? She would:

‘Standing on stage in your underwear and suspenders doesn’t mean one thing. People in the seventies assumed that you were saying: “Here I am, a passive object for men.” People now realise it also has a threatening side. It’s a very fine line. Madonna does it well because she slightly goes over the line. You know she’s not going to prance about like Sinitta or Sabrina do, that something’s going to come up that’s going to upset some people. If it’s done without any of that panache or bravery, I do think it is sexist and those women do pander to reactionary mores and make it difficult for other women to get by. Having said that, there hasn’t been a tremendous amount of interest in a woman who doesn’t pander—after all, Madonna is very pretty. We’re still waiting for something a bit more outrageous than that.’

So how does Greig see today’s girl pop groups fitting into her model of pop as a reflection of women’s changing experiences? She hesitates to say that women’s position has changed for the better, but she does see bigger aspirations in today’s pop songs. ‘In Mel and Kim you get a sense of wanting to earn your own money “Fun, love and money”, “Get fresh at the weekend”; I want to have a job and I want to have this boyfriend, but I want to have my own money and go out by myself.’

Who does she listen to herself? She reeled off a long list, including many rappers, especially single women, but saved her greatest praise for Madonna: ‘If you took two big people in pop it would be Madonna and Prince, the two big ones. For the first time she’s brought women into an absolutely vital position.’ She also ‘likes a good singer’, such as Whitney Houston, and indie artists like Mary Margaret O’Hara.

She is anxious to stress a final point. ‘One thing I was trying to do in the book was challenge feminism as a white middle class politics—that was its dominant form for a long time. Because of that it certainly fell into the trap of liking high culture, of preferring what they thought of as serious culture to trash culture. It is very important to recognise the contribution that commercial pop has made.’

Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?—Girl Groups from the Fifties On, is published by Virago on 24 August, £9.99

Letters

We welcome readers' views and criticisms of *Living Marxism*. Please keep your letters as short as possible and send them to The Editor, *Living Marxism*, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX.

NEW WOMEN AND OLD MEN

Anne Burton provides a comprehensive and depressing analysis of the position of women ('The New Woman—an old wives' tale?', July). It is the more depressing, therefore, that she should trot out such glib solutions.

She identifies the family as a millstone around women's necks but offers no viable alternative beyond escape from the domestic trap via abortion and childcare facilities. Of course we need abortions to dispose of unwanted children, and 24-hour nurseries to dispose of the wanted ones when we need to. But just because this will enable women to go out to work, that pile of washing is not going to disappear and the question of whose job is most important will still rear its head when a child is sick. Women will still be washing nappies while men watch television, cooking dinner while men are in the pub. Things are the way they are not only because the family is necessary for the reproduction of capitalist society but because men like it that way.

The sexual division of labour has become unbalanced. Women, striving to escape from their prescribed roles, have moved over to allow men access to their sphere. However, an equivalent arrangement has not been made by men either by allowing women free access to their world, or throwing aside their aversion to domestic matters. As a result of these reactionary male attitudes women lose out in both areas. They are neither mistresses of their own domain, nor are they allowed any status in the world outside, in spite of the existence of the post-feminist woman, who, as Burton points out, is a freak.

Attempts by feminists to celebrate childbirth and motherhood can be seen as an attempt to give women back some territory to barter with. There is nothing wrong with being a woman and enjoying a nurturing role. What *is* wrong is making it the sole aim of life. Forget about Thatcherite attitudes because this problem will still exist long after the

end of capitalism. It is counter-productive to denigrate motherhood since it will be part of most women's lives. For child-free women to join men in this activity, as we did in the early seventies, can only undermine women's self-esteem and thus prevent them from being fit candidates for a return to the workforce.

It is well-documented that women who live and bring up children communally do not suffer from post-natal and other forms of depression unlike women who live alone with men in nuclear families. It is also well-known that men are at their happiest in nuclear families and women their most miserable. These facts are at the root of male fears about women gaining economic parity. Until men, particularly those in positions of power, are persuaded to take their share of the responsibilities, and especially to take time off without prejudice when their children need them, equality in the workplace will be denied. So wise up Anne and stop ironing those shirts.

Margaret Rundell
Canterbury

UNITED STATES OF ANTI-ABORTIONISTS

The worsening position of women described in last month's *Living Marxism* is not just a British problem. Right across the 'free world', women are finding their limited freedoms further curtailed. The US Supreme Court decision restricting access to abortions is a telling example.

The ruling means that each state now has the right to legislate its own policy on abortion. Restricted abortion rights are likely to be maintained in only nine states. The other 41 will either further curtail access to abortions, or ban them altogether. In the country that boasts about its democratic constitution and conventions more than any other, attitudes towards women's democratic rights are increasingly being moulded to match the morals of the Deep South.

The British government is set to attack access to abortion in the name of embryo rights, the American courts are doing the same in the name of individual states' rights. There has never been a more important time to make clear that the central issue at stake is women's right to equality.

Nancy Morton
London

ANSWERING THE NATIONAL QUESTION

John Miller (letters, July) says that our 'first concern' with the Soviet nationalities should be how we establish communism in the republics, and that the struggle for independence from Russia should be their 'first step'; my opposition to breaking up the Soviet Union is 'an accommodation to the Stalinist bureaucracy'.

I do see Western imperialism as the greatest long-term threat to the Soviet working class. That is why I favour Soviet unity and oppose separatism as a solution to the national question—just as I would back the integrity of a third world nation against Western attempts at Balkanisation. Furthermore, as it strives to preserve its bankrupt system, the Kremlin itself is pursuing policies which fragment the Soviet Union. By calling for the break-up of the Soviet Union Miller is mixing in dangerous circles.

On the Soviet national question, my priority is not the independence, communist or otherwise, of the national republics. It is how to unite the Soviet working class against both Western intervention and Kremlin oppression. National solutions in the Soviet republics pose a dire threat to such unity.

Hatred of the Kremlin is driving minority workers into the nationalists' arms. Miller lightly asserts the need for an anti-nationalist movement to counter this. But how is it possible to create such a movement? It is only by convincing Russian workers to fight for political, cultural and religious autonomy for the national minorities that they can be broken from Great Russian chauvinism. This political struggle would demonstrate to workers in the national republics that their best bet lies with Russian workers rather than with the middle classes and intelligentsia of their own nations. To campaign against the Kremlin's oppression of national minorities on this basis strengthens the union of Soviet workers, while preserving the integrity of the Soviet Union against the machinations of the West.

Contrary to Miller's fear that class divisions will be blurred, the call for political, cultural and

religious autonomy is the best means of drawing out the distinctive role of the working class among the national movements of the Soviet Union. It is Miller's call for 'nationally independent proletarian states' that leads to the blurring of distinctive interests among the minorities. Because he puts national independence before working class unity, his left-wing rhetoric only adds a radical edge to the hidden agenda of the mainstream nationalists.

Finally, Miller accuses me of telling the national republics to put off their revolutions until Russian workers 'are ready for theirs'. Where the Soviet revolution begins is a matter of indifference to me. The unity of the Soviet working class is not. But Miller's accusation assumes what he has yet to prove—that national priorities override working class interests. Ironically, none of the mass national movements in the Soviet Union are even calling for independence from Moscow at the moment.

Andy Clarkson
London

BELLOS SHOULD GO

Linda Bellos says we've got to be 'realistic' (July). What does this mean? If you're a Labour councillor in Lambeth council, you swallow hard, sharpen up your 'realism' rhetoric, then stick the knife into the working class. Or do you?

Bellos says she couldn't resign to avoid imposing cuts, 'because I'd be saying I wasn't going to get my hands dirty'. But it is the willingness of Labour councillors to grub around in the muck and make cuts that has done so much to discredit the left among local people.

Today local councils are nothing more than channels for central government cuts—and the Tories' campaign against the 'loony left' has helped to ensure that the left gets the blame for the loss of jobs and services in places like Lambeth. In those circumstances, left-wing councillors should resign, and try to organise the council workforce and local residents to resist Tory attacks outside the council chamber. Bellos' unwillingness to abandon her seat means that Labour councillors like her are the ones carrying out cuts and imposing the poll tax. They might boast that they are getting their hands dirty, but the people of Lambeth are getting dirty streets and estates and socialism is getting a dirty name.

As for Bellos' 'you're not doing it' swipe at the Revolutionary Communist Party, so far as I know it's true: the RCP has never implemented cuts or the poll tax.

Sharon Clarke
London

Irish Freedom Movement

MARCH

TROOPS OUT NOW

**Saturday
5 August**

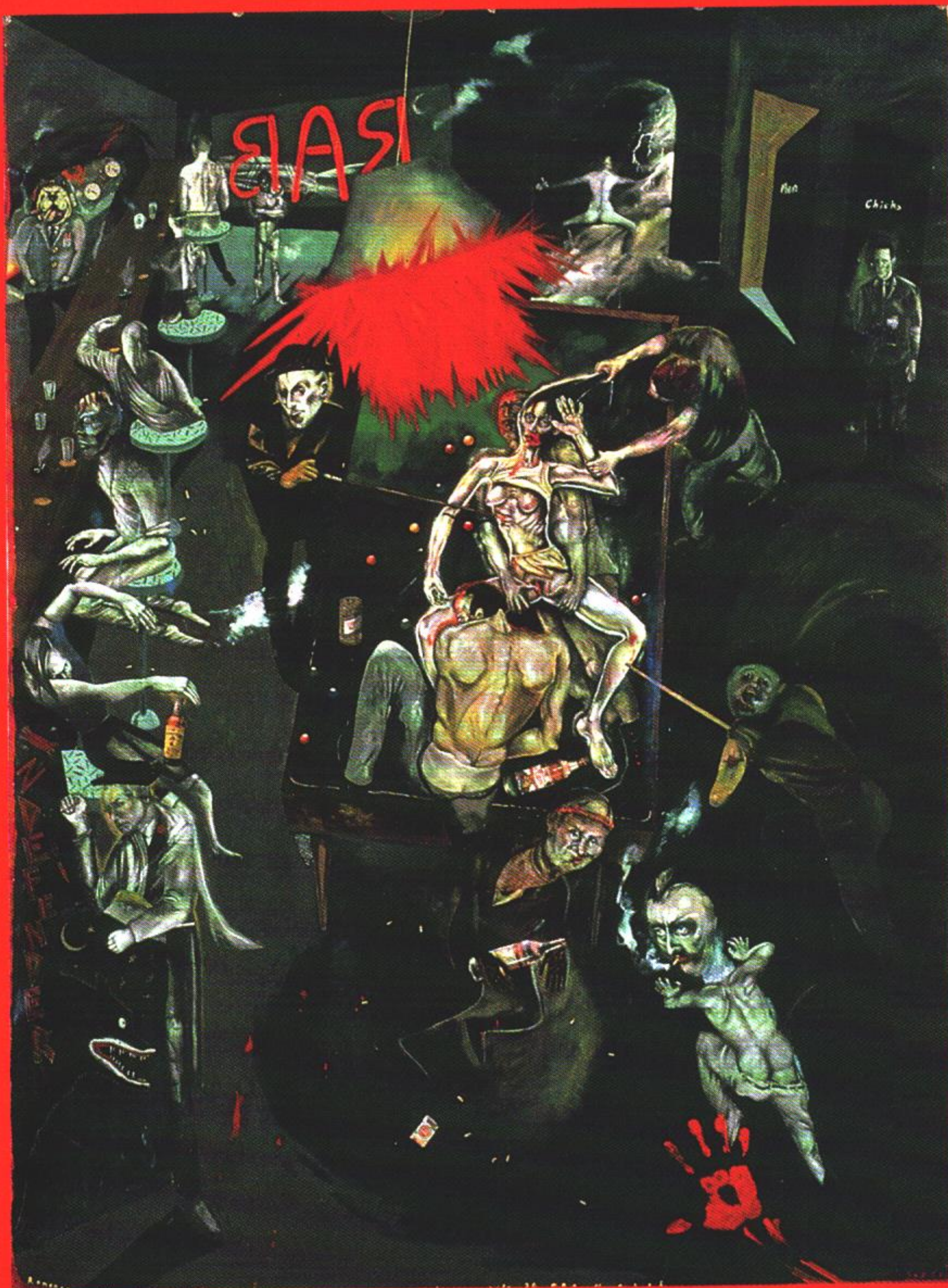


**Assemble 1pm
Islington town hall
Upper Street
London N1**

August 1989 is the twentieth anniversary of the reappearance of British troops on the streets of Northern Ireland. This year the annual anti-internment march will broaden its focus to take in this other important anniversary. It will be demanding 'Troops out of Ireland! Prisoners out of jail!'

Join the march.

sue coe



Exhibition organised by Marilyn Zeitlin at the Anderson Gallery, Richmond, Virginia, in conjunction with Sally Baker, agent for Sue Coe, NY, and the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford

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