

PLEASE SEND ABROAD TO YOUR RELATIVES AND FRIENDS

Repression of the Catholic Minority in Northern Ireland

BALLYKELLY

RUC SPECIAL BRANCH INTERROGATION CENTRE

In Ballykelly R.A.F.—Army Barracks there is an RUC Interrogation Centre. There young Catholic men and boys within the area west of the Bann (Armagh, Tyrone, Derry) are taken and interrogated for periods of 48 to 72 hours because they are suspected or disliked by the Security Forces. These youths were all arrested under Section II, (1) of the Special Powers Act. Reports allege that some of them have been illtreated. The following are samples of illtreatment in Ballykelly alleged by the detainees :—

- 1—Long hours of interrogation
- 2—Deprivation of sleep
- 3—Bullying and ignorant conduct
- 4—Foul and filthy language
- 5—Threats of UDA, internment, to life itself
- 6—Use of excessive heat in a black hole
- 7—Prisoners being struck and manhandled
- 8—Forced to do physical exercises for long periods
- 9—Forced to assume positions of discomfort
- 10—Use of a hood
- 11—Hair pulled out
- 12—Simulated executions by clicking guns
- 13—Being shown photographs of the mutilated bodies of brothers and relatives
- 14—Offered bribes to turn informer

Extracts from reports :—

P.B., Ballymcguigan, Co. Derry. Aged 17 years. August 15-16, 1972.—“I was shown photographs of the mutilated remains of my brother. A hood was put over my head and a revolver clicked beside my ear. I was encased in orange fibreglass wool from which a wire was brought to the electric light plug. I was threatened with the paratroopers.”

F. McC., Collegeland, Co. Armagh. Aged 25 years. 6-8 February, 1973—"I was interrogated by a gingerhaired man. He slapped me on the back of the head about twenty times. He rammed the table into my stomach. On Tuesday night I was deprived of sleep. I was threatened with a gun. They threatened to hand me over to the Boveragh and Limavady UDA. One of the Branch men put a red handkerchief over his face and pretended he was a UDA man. I was handed over to him by two others. He said—Are you coming with us or are you going to tell the truth?"

T.J.C., Dungannon. Aged 20 years. 6-8 February, 1973—"A gingerhaired man made me stand with my hands to my sides. He hit me with the side of the hand to the stomach. He pulled me over the table, put an anorak over my head, and hit me with his fist. He made me stand against the wall, caught me by the back of the head and pushed my head against the wall, and hit me on the thigh with his knee. He threw me on the ground and kicked me on the backside. He then said to another man—Pull up his clothes and see if he has any marks."

Armagh Youth. Aged 17 years. 21-22 February, 1973—"In Ballykelly a Branch man slapped me across the face with his open hand. He used foul language. He said he would smash my head into pulp against the wall. Next day another Branch man asked me to turn informer. He told me to get in touch with him at Armagh and Portadown. At the roundabout I was to walk into Portadown on the lefthand side, wear my usual clothes, go by bus around 7 p.m. He said he would come up behind me in a dark blue Hillman Avenger or light Blue 1100 and he would flash lights and pull up. He said he would provide me with money but it wouldn't be substantial. The man in charge said if I didn't help them out they would send me to the Crumlin for a long stretch."

J.A., Armagh. Aged 40 years. 21-22 February, 1973—"When I was in Ballykelly in my cell, whitish smoke with a heavy smell was poured into my cell for about ten minutes and then I was taken out for interrogation. The smoke seemed to come from underneath the radiator at the back of the cell. When I was brought out for interrogation, water was pouring out from my eyes, and my throat started to close up."

Armagh Youth. Aged 19 years. 21-22 February, 1973—"The bearded Branch man said if I gave him information I would get out. He said he would go and see his boss and see if he would bluff the army into letting me out again. He came back after dinner and started making arrangements for writing letters to him to

arrive in Army Police Barracks not later than Wednesday 28 February. He said if the letter wasn't there on Wednesday I would need to be on the run on Wednesday night."

T.T., Dungiven, Co. Derry. Aged 56 years. 1-3 March, 1973—"While I was in Ballykelly a young boy from Strabane, aged 17 years, in the next cubicle was taken out and given a very bad beating. When he came back I could hear him moaning and groaning and he told me about it. His name was B.D. I told Fr Faul about him immediately."

S. O'N., Kilrea, Co. Derry. Aged 22 years. 5-7 April, 1973—"On Thursday evening as soon as I arrived at the Barracks they grabbed me by the throat and called me a killer. A hood was put over my head and pulled tight until I could hardly breathe. I was put in a crucifix position against the wall and assaulted on the testicles. The next day I was put into a very small room, painted black, no windows, a few small holes for ventilation. It contained a large pipe and radiator. The temperature was 90 to 100 degrees Fahrenheit. I was forced to stand against the wall in this oppressive place for 12 hours. During interrogation I was struck and my hair was pulled out."

B. McG., Coalisland, Co. Tyrone. Aged 18 years. 10-12 May, 1973 — "On Thursday 10 May I was made to stand with my left arm upstretched and holding my right ankle while questions were fired at me for hours. After midnight I was made to mark time for several hours while being interrogated.

S.M., Derry City. Aged 20 years. Plummer. 18-19 May 1973—"I was put into a small dark room where the heat was up to 100 degrees Fahrenheit. There was a 4 inch pipe and a large 'church' radiator. I thought the room was specially prepared as a heat chamber. The RUC Special Branch referred to it as the 'Thinking Room.'"

B. McA., Clonoe, Co. Tyrone. Aged 22 years. 28-30 May 1973—"After my mother left at 2.30 p.m. a small detective beat me up with his fists for an hour while two others stood by to clout me if I resisted."

H. McK., Armagh. Aged 17 years. 4-5 June 1973—"They took me out and questioned me for 4 to 5 hours continuously. I was questioned by two Special Branch men, one after the other, the first for one and half hours. The first was fairhaired, brushed back, tall, well built, smartly dressed, scar on right eye. He

used filthy abusive language. He threatened me with Long Kesh a couple of times. The second Branch man was tall and stout, gingery beard and moustache, smelling of alcohol. He told me he would put me through the wall, that it would take a blow lamp and scraper to take me off it when he was finished with me. He used filthy language too about a boy who had been shot in Armagh. He also threatened me with Long Kesh. I got home to Armagh on Tuesday night at 11.30 from Ballykelly, and then Wednesday morning the same military officer arrived again with soldiers and a policeman at 4.45 a.m. They got us all up. They told me to get on me again. Then afterwards they told me to get back to my bed."

J.R., Armagh. Aged 17 years. 6 June 1973—"When I was in Ballykelly the Special Branch said I was to meet them in Mullinure Lane, Armagh, at 11 p.m. on the 1st Monday in July, otherwise they said I would get what an Armagh youth recently got who was shot by soldiers."

G.C., Clonoe. Aged 23 years. 11 June 1973—"After my mother and sister left I was beaten by two men. One held me while the other beat me. I was forced down on my hunkers and beaten and kicked and my hair was torn out. I had already been beaten in Omagh RUC and my head was sore."

We disapprove of the illtreatment of any person. The type of treatment alleged in these reports is forbidden by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 5) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) article 7, which repeat the prohibition of article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Article 10 (1) of the International Covenant further provides — "All persons deprived of their liberty should be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person. Further, in February 1972 heads of the prison services of Council of Europe countries announced "deprivation of liberty should be effected in material and moral conditions which ensure respect for human dignity." The White Paper on Northern Ireland Constitutional Proposals says in paragraph 91 that the "man in the street has the right to protection under the law, so that freedom is not taken away or diminished by violence, oppression or intimidation by others." Every other week half a dozen men and youths of 17 years from the Armagh area are arrested under the Special Powers Act at 4.30 in the morning and later brought to Ballykelly. This has been a systematic operation for six months. The Catholic people have a right to their personal dignity and legal protection. The actions alleged are assaults in law, constituting actual or grievous bodily harm. Stop them.

FR. DENIS FAUL, DUNGANNON
FR. RAYMOND MURRAY, ARMAGH