

● Irish Tricolour is hoisted on Rossville Flats and Free Derry is born. The barricades remained until Operation Motorman in 1972.



oured to invade nationalist ghettos, as in April and August 1969, with the battles of the Bogside, and Falls Road in Belfast. The nationalist communities took on a defensive role, and after the police force was driven back in a state of extreme physical and mental exhaustion, the British Government sent in its troops "to aid the civilian authority", viz; the police and the Stormont junta. Jim Callaghan's book *A HOUSE DIVIDED* reveals that the six-county administration feared that after the defeat of their police force on the streets of Derry, the nationalist people would come out of their ghettos and take over the city. This was how he endeavoured to 'justify' sending in the troops.

INTERNMENT

SPORADIC RIOTING continued, but by the early summer of 1971, the British were content at the 'progress' being made. The R.U.C. were once again patrolling almost all areas on foot, and the army was little in evidence. By the beginning of July however a number of incidents had changed the local political scene very dramatically. The youth were now again on the streets resisting the powers-that-be, and a formerly quiescent I.R.A. were now in open armed conflict, and steadily growing numerically and in political influence. The prime reason for this new upsurge of militance within the nationalist community was the unwarranted murders of Seamus Cussack and Desmond Beattie

on July 8th in Derry by the forces of occupation. Such was the abhorrence of the working-class communities at large that even the tame collaborators within the middle class Social Democratic and Labour Party (S.D.L.P.) were forced by massive popular opinion to withdraw from the sham that was Stormont. If they had remained at this juncture, while still being able to attract Catholic middle-class support, their political demise would have been certain as grass root support in the working class areas would have vanished. Total rejection of the party would have been the verdict of the risen communities, which would have realised that their slavish clinging to power was for purely fiscal considerations. By August 1971 the Stormont junta yet again reverted to its age-old arsenal with the view to introducing its most repressive of weapons, so often used in the past with varying degrees of 'success', i.e. internment without charge or trial. It had been used in the Twenties, in the Thirties, in the Forties, in the Fifties, and was once again to be used in the Seventies, rather, as in the past than concede the basic demands of the nationalist community. Unlike other more subtle regimes, Stormont had not learnt that old methods used in former days do not always have the same result, in new and changing situations. That a previously proven deterrent can in a different situation become a political catalyst for opponents, which can in turn produce a cataclysm, (thereby having a boomerang effect.)

“NO RENT HERE”

On the morning of August 9th, 1971, at approximately 4.30 a.m., young men from all over British-occupied Ireland were kidnapped from their beds by armed men, taken away and held as hostages, without a charge or trial. The then Prime Minister of this artificial statelet, Brian Faulkner (now deceased) declared a ban on all public demonstrations for



Internees inside Long Kesh.



Anti-internment rent strike notice in window.



a period of 12 months, in the hope that mass agitation could be successfully curtailed. The introduction of internment had a unifying effect on the nationalist community, and serious disorders marked the occasion, with his ban on marches being defied even in the middle of the night-time hours. The first few weeks after August 9th showed that, rather than end political violence, it actually exacerbated the situation, with 35 people having died as a result. A widespread rent and rates strike followed, which had the support of 40,000 households. Placards to this effect appeared in windows all over the occupied area – as well as the more contemptuously militant slogan — Rent Spent. By October the effectiveness of the strike became apparent. In Newry 95% solidarity, with its Urban Council losing £150,000 in ten weeks. In Lurgan 4,000 were refusing to pay £10,000 a week was held back. In Derry, the Creggan with 15,000 people had 98% strike success; the Bogside and Brandywell had 90%. Coalisland 95%. Anderstontown Belfast had 80% refusing to pay. Soon gas and electricity bills, car tax, ground rent, TV licences and fines to courts were added. Local Government virtually ground to a halt.

THE NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL RIGHTS ASSOCIATION (N.I.C.R.A.) however refused to take to the streets. Their logic was simple – you couldn't march because it was illegal and they might put you in jail if you did! Other bodies like the Civil Resistance Committees, and the Northern Resistance Movement began to grow out of the resentment and frustration which grew. Finally in December, with the full support of the internees in Long Kesh, a group of trade unionists in Tyrone, in co-operation with Belfast and Armagh militants including Peoples' Democracy, called a march for Christmas Day. It assembled at Beechmount in Belfast, and despite atrocious weather moved off in the snow for the concentration camp some ten miles away, a total of 4,000 participating. The British Army's attempts to stop it failed. The march was a great success. The law had been flouted and the floodgates were opened. NICRA shamefacedly had to call their own march – straight up the Falls to the heart of the ghetto. But the marching season was on. Marches at Magilligan concentration camp, protests at Long Kesh concentration camp, and finally the march in Derry on 'Bloody Sunday'.

CENSORSHIP FAILS

Within days of the internment swoops, stories began to come out of the concentration camps indicating that severe tortures had been used against numerous internees. As time progressed the full extent of such was fully realised and confirmed. By mid-October the British papers, particularly THE SUNDAY TIMES, had taken up the story and reported of "third degree tortures and interrogation". The majority of the British media ignored the allegations, and like an ostrich when being pursued, buried its head in the sand. THE SUNDAY TIMES had however, only published something which had been known in Ireland for two months previously. In fact the Association for Legal Justice had collected and distributed statements to the press as far back as August 20. In the first week of September the British press was circulated with a ten page dossier compiled by the London-based Anti-internment League, but the British public only got a glimpse of what was happening some five weeks later. This was due to a number of factors, but in the main journalists



● 1st Paras on the beach outside Magilligan Camp 6 January '72. Protesters beaten and kicked while lying injured on the beach. Rubber bullets also fired from close range.

adopted a policy of self-censorship. What they did not believe, they did not write about. The most outstanding journalists of this period were: The staff of PRIVATE EYE: Jonathan Dimbleby of the BBC's 'World at One' programme who declared "**It's got to the stage where we're being repressed.**" Roy Bull of THE SCOTSMAN who framed a declaration for the FREE COMMUNICATIONS GROUP which read: "**We deplore the intensification of censorship on TV, radio and the press coverage of events in N. Ireland and pledge ourselves to oppose it**"; and Keith Kyle who attacked those who claimed censorship was "**in the national interest**" by retorting, **There is no higher national interest than avoiding self-deception on Northern Ireland.**

This was the background to the protests which occurred between August 9th, 1971 and January 30th 1972. The reasons for the marches etc., were not merely to protest against internment, but to expose to the world the terrible and foul tortures endured by the helpless internees. The attitude of the British media was a factor that made many thinking people within the expanding protest movements realise that the facts associated with internment could only be conveyed to the world via mass street agitation. In this way it was hoped to not only smash internment but to make censorship itself prove worthless. In this way, the world beyond our shores slowly began to realise what was happening in this, John Bull's backyard.

It is indeed fitting, that now on the 6th Anniversary of Bloody Sunday, we should refresh our memories on the reason why so many Irish men, women and young people took to the streets. The following is one case of torture, which is by no means exceptional, as others taken in the first round-ups suffered similarly. The case appeared as a report in the publication, SOCIALIST VOICE, being written by Londoners Sean Hallahan and Chris Dolan. Under the heading, "STRASBOURG HORROR TALE OF ARMY TERROR IN ULSTER", it begins: "**The case of the Hooded Men of Strasbourg is not some rediscovered manuscript by Arthur Conan Doyle or the title of a new film by Hammer. There is plenty of horror in the story but it is all too real, owing nothing to the special effects department of any film company. The hooded men are a group of Irishmen who were lifted by the British Army on August 9th, 1971 and subjected to systematic torture by the forces of 'law and order'. Their cases are currently being discussed at the European Court in Strasbourg and it is the British Government that is on trial.**