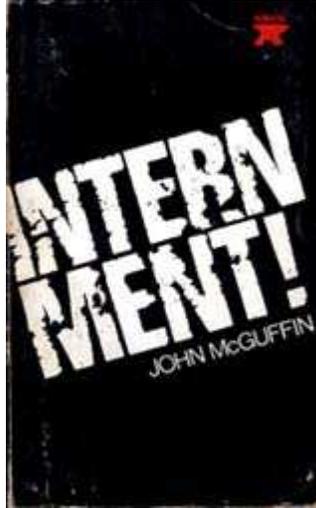


Internment

by John McGuffin (1973)



Anvil Books Ltd., 1973. Paperback, 228 pp. Out of Print.

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From the back cover: Internment: the story of 50 years repression of the Irish

A knock on the door! In the early hours of the morning. A splintered lock and armed men break into your home. They are military and police. You are dragged from your bed. Jail or internment camp? No charge. No trial. This has been the pattern in Ireland, North and South, for more than 50 years.

It is the story of internment; of the thousands of men and women who have been subjected to it; of the conditions, the brutality the escapes and the politics of it all. From Frongoch to long Kesh, Mountjoy to the Curragh. From the hulk of the *Argenta* to HMS *Maidstone*.

Did internment work in the past? Why did it fail in 1972? Why did Britain contravene the European Convention of Human Rights? What really did happen in Palace barracks? What was it like in the camps? How do the Special Courts work, North and south?

The man who laughs has not been told the news — Bertold Brecht.

Acknowledgements

I would particularly like to thank those internees, past and present, without whose assistance this book could not have been written. Many of them wish to remain anonymous and I must respect their wishes, but my special thanks go to Eddie and Mary Keenan, Frank and Rebecca McGlade, Jimmy Drumm, Paddy Joe McClean, Pat Shivers, Willie John McCorry, Geordie Shannon, Art McMullen, Patsy Quinn, Tony Cosgrove, Billy O'Neill, Joe Parker, Gerry Maguire, 'Tex' Dougan, Eamonn Kerr, Hugh Corrigan, Harry McKeown, Phil McCullough, Paddy Murphy, Chris Canavan and John Hunter. Nor can any acknowledgement be complete without mention of Nora McAteer, Jimmy McKeown, Liam Begley, Paddy Brown, Dermot Kelly, R. W. Grimshaw, Michael Walsh, Dicky Glenholmes, Gerry and Rita O'Hare, Robin, Jackie Crawford and Archie 'Jim' Auld.

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It should be stressed that none of the above are in any way responsible for the opinions expressed in the book, which are my own views. I am, finally, greatly indebted to Dan Nolan for the benefit of his wide experience in publishing.

JOHN McGUFFIN
Belfast, March 1973

Preface

INTERNMENT – Indefinite detention without charge or trial – is not confined to Ireland. Virtually all countries, from the most overtly totalitarian to the most 'liberal' social democracies have on their statute books repressive laws to be used in any 'emergency' – that is when the ruling regime is threatened from below. In Ireland, however, that 'emergency' has been going on for over 50 years.

This book is only concerned with internment in Ireland, North and south, from 1916 to the present day. The author shows how internment has been used as a political weapon, how it has succeeded in the past and how in the long run it has been a major factor in the downfall of Stormont, the parliament of Northern Ireland.

But most of all this is the story of the internees, working-class men and women who have suffered and, in some cases, died for their beliefs. They are neither heroes nor villains, although many have shown great bravery and heroism and some have been guilty of cowardice. In this book they tell for the first time what it is really like to be interned. They are not well-known public figures, politicians or publicists. They are ordinary men and women who have suffered for their ideals and who remind the readers that the 'knock on the door' could be heard by them too. For those peace-loving citizens who unreservedly support the forces of 'law and order' this book reminds them of the old caveat: *Quis custodes custodiet?* Who will guard the guards?

Parts of this book, particularly those dealing with torture and brutality, do not make pleasant reading. But then we do not live in pleasant times.

The Knock on the Door

In many a time, in many a land,
With many a gun in many a hand,
They came by the night, they came by the day,
They came with their guns to take us away,
With their knock on the door, knock on the door,
Here they come to take one more.

Look over the oceans, look over the lands,
Look over the leaders with blood on their hands,
And open your eyes and see what they do,
When they knock over their friend, they're knocking for you,
With their knock on the door, knock on the door,
Here they come to take one more.

Words and Music by Phil Ochs and Appleseed Music ASCAP

'They can jail the revolutionary
but not the revolution'
— CHE GUEVARA.

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Chapter 1 IT HAPPENED HERE

IN the early hours of Monday 9 August 1971, I was kidnapped from my bed by armed men, taken away and held as a hostage for five and a half weeks. I was not in Uruguay, Brazil, Greece or Russia. I was in the United Kingdom, an hour's flight from London. I was in Belfast.

A crashing on the door awoke me. It was 4.45 o'clock. I went down stairs in my pyjamas to answer. As I opened the door I was forced back against the wall by two soldiers who screamed at me "Do you live here?" Overwhelmed by their perspicacity I admitted that this was so, whereupon they ordered me to get dressed. I foolishly asked why. "Under the Special Powers Act we don't have to give a reason for anything," an officer said. "You have two minutes to get dressed." Through the window I could see in the dawn light half a dozen armed men skulking in our tiny front garden.

I was given exactly two minutes to get dressed while a young soldier boosted his ego by sticking an SLR up my nose. My wife, not surprisingly, was almost in tears as I was dragged down the stairs and into the street. She ran after me to give me my jacket and was roughly ordered back into the house. Our quiet residential bourgeois neighbourhood hadn't seen such excitement in years as I was frogmarched and escorted at the double down the avenue by eight soldiers. As we sped down we were joined by a dozen more who had been hiding in nearby gardens, wreaking havoc on the horticultural efforts of various OAPs. People who looked out into the early morning mist must have imagined that a Vietcong patrol had been sighted in the locale.

"Tie him up and gag the fecker" [*sic*] an educated English accent ordered. "That's hardly necessary," I said, as I was frisked for the second time up against a lorry, or 'pig' as they called it. This was accepted, albeit reluctantly in the case of a corporal who was positively twitching with desire to practise his boyscout knots upon me. My shoes were taken off me and I was put none too gently into the back of the 'pig'. Two men with stenguns covered me. "Nice morning," I ventured. "Shut your fecking Fenian mouth."

I sat there and watched the army manoeuvres. Back up the avenue they scurried, to a friend's house, I thought. Obviously, however, they were out of luck. But, never men to return empty-handed, they came back with another friend, Liam, who lived at my house. He was barefoot and, it subsequently transpired, had been arrested in error for someone else. The two other houses they raided in the area were empty and so, after casually wrecking the two flats they hastened back, each man covering the other. There wasn't a soul about and their antics began to assume a somewhat surreal aspect. Any amusement to be derived from the situation soon evaporated, however.

Sitting shivering in the back of the 'pig' I began to try to work out what was happening. I had known, as of course had anyone involved in Irish politics, that internment was on the cards, but I had never expected to be involved. For three years I had been a member of the People's Democracy, a libertarian socialist group, and had attended meetings, marches and pickets, all perfectly legal. I had contributed articles to their weekly paper

The Free Citizen, again perfectly legal. My wife and I had received compensation from the government for being beaten. up at Burntollet by B Specials. But the public had been told over and over by the Prime Minister, Brian Faulkner, that only IRA and UVF men could be interned. What, therefore, were Liam and I doing freezing in a lorry with stenguns covering us at this ungodly hour? Could the discredited Faulkner have panicked to the extent that in order to prop up his Orange State he had resorted to arresting unarmed socialists? It appeared so.

We were driven to Annadale TA camp and forced to stand, legs apart, against the nissen huts. Then back to the 'pig' where we were joined by another PD member, Michael Farrell, and an unknown man whom I later discovered was Harry McKeown. They, too, were barefoot and when ten soldiers joined us in the back of the 'pig' we were very cramped. We sped through the deserted early-morning streets, with no idea where we were being taken. Each time we passed a police station I mentally crossed it off the possible list of destinations. Up through Carlisle Circus and past Crumlin jail. "Christ, it must be Rathlin Island," McKeown said. No one spoke, and the 'pig' made a sudden sharp right turn through to the Antrim Road. Then up a side street and into what we were later to learn was Girdwood barracks.

Four lorries were in front of us and slowly disembarking were other men, mostly in pyjamas. A helicopter, engine revving, stood on the turf outside the TA hail. Another half an hour was spent shivering in the back of the lorry until we were told to jump down, without our shoes, into the mud and make our way, guns in our backs, into the hall. Soldiers, RUC and Special Branch men thronged the corridor and entrance hall. As we were 'processed', polaroid flash pictures were taken and affixed to a card. A further search. Watches, rings, belts were taken and we were pushed into the gym hail where about 150 other people were squatting on the floor. Many were in pyjamas or shirtless. Heavily armed soldiers walked up and down, risking apoplexy or a coronary by incessantly bellowing, "No talking, you scum."

Every five minutes or so groups of six of us were called out. The first three groups didn't return. The fourth did. They were dishevelled and several were bleeding, including a young man I knew, called Murphy. Was this the treatment we could all expect? I tried to comfort myself by thinking "Westminster must have sanctioned this internment; they'll have to behave themselves." Then I remembered Cyprus and Aden and Hola Camp in Kenya. My optimism flagged. The familiar lines of R. W. Grimshaw came back to me: "what can you expect from a pig but a grunt?" I braced myself and looked around. Very few faces I recognised. Mostly old men and very young boys. A man was led in by the police. Good Christ! He was blind! What sort of people were these, at whose mercy we were?

[The army also detained three winos, picked up drunk at Dunville Park bus shelter, and a dog. All were released after 24 hours. It is not reported what the dog was suspected of – people will find this hard to credit, but it is absolutely true.]

My name was called. Apprehensively I shuffled forward. I was taken by two young SB officers who identified themselves – the only ones to do so during my four interrogations – into a room and desultorily questioned. They obviously knew very little about me and cared even less. Name, address, occupation (lecturer) and a few general comments such as "Well, it's at least five years for you." What interested me more was the view past them through the window. On the lawn outside, the helicopter stood, engines still revving and blades rotating. A dozen or so barefoot men were being forced

to run the gauntlet between two rows of military policemen who were clubbing them with sten-gun butts and batons. Those who fell were badly kicked. When they reached the helicopter they were grabbed in and then thrown out again almost immediately. The noise of the helicopter drowned any screams.

The interrogators noted my concern. "That's nothing to do with us," one said. "That's just the army letting off a bit of steam."

"I'd like to see my lawyer," I said, feeling foolish. They laughed. "I'm entitled to see a lawyer and to know what I'm being charged with," I tried again. They stopped laughing. "Listen, you smarty bastard, under the Special Powers Act we can keep you here as long as we like. You can't see anyone. No one will know where you are and we don't have to charge you with anything. If one of those soldiers happens to shoot you, there'll be no inquest either, you bastard." Having read the SP Acts I knew this to be unfortunately all too true. They lost interest and led me out again, this time upstairs to a crowded room where about 220 people were crammed on the floor. A faded sign on the door, under a regimental motto, said 'Merry Xmas'. Beside that a portrait of Her Serene Highness Elizabeth R. gazed serenely down.

People were still being brought in and I saw another two PD members, John Murphy and Oliver Cosgrove, president of St. Joseph's Students' Council. I sprawled down beside Liam, who was looking very pale. I glanced down and saw congealed blood on his leg. "What happened?" I whispered. "Helicopter run," he grunted. It was only later I learned that he and others had been taken about four feet up in the air and pushed out backwards, believing that they were much higher off the ground, having been told so by the soldiers.

The door opened and a young lad, his arm covered in blood, was thrust onto the floor. A policeman completed the task by going over and kicking him in the ribs. I later discovered that the lad's name was Patrick McGeogh and that he'd had to run the gauntlet three times.

Military police patrolled us, preventing anyone from dozing off or talking, but with over 200 sprawled on the floor whispered conversation was possible at times. The young man in front of me was obviously in pain. He was Eamonn Kerr. Then I saw the pus oozing out of the sores on the back of his neck. Soldiers under command of Major Lloyd had stubbed out four cigarette butts on his neck in the 'pig'. William Burroughs has said "a paranoid is someone who has some small idea of what is really going on." I began to see his point.

New military police wandered in and out making jocular remarks about getting the Fenians to sing 'the Queen'. No one stirred. At about 11 a.m. we were ordered to the door in groups of six, to get a cup of warm swill. An English gentleman put his head around the door and announced that he was a priest. Did anyone want to see him? His accent seemed to put off many. Only four queued up, shamefacedly. "You'll all be needing the last rites soon enough," the military policeman beside me smirked. Slowly they began to call out names. These were taken away in groups of six, apparently the mystic number, and disappeared from sight. By lunchtime our numbers had been reduced to 87. We were then taken downstairs again for 'lunch'.

Again we sat in ranks on the floor. No talking, no dozing, no sprawling. As different NCOs came on duty the 'rules' changed. We were shuffled in order and made to walk in circles. Throughout the afternoon we were called out for further questioning. The boredom and uncertainty dragged on. We had little idea of time, of what was happening

outside, of where our friends were, of what was going to happen to us. Most of the 87 were old men or youths. The blind man, Peter Farran, was still there. By now they had given him a table to sit at.

The sergeant began to play a very real role in our lives. It was apparently his job to invent as many petty regulations as possible to make our lives uncomfortable. To go to the toilet necessitated queuing in a corner, looking straight ahead and putting one's hands on the shoulders of the man in front. Failure to comply exactly with this occasioned anything from a rebuke to a sten-gun butt in the kidneys, depending upon which NCO was guarding this vital installation. Time dragged on. 'Tea' was as unappetising as 'lunch'. Watery 'stew' "and you're fecking lucky to get anything." "Eat it, it may be your last." More reassurance. RUC men sat around the room, but it was clear that they were mere message boys; the army was in control. Some requests for a doctor were scornfully refused.

Uncertainty was the worst enemy. A man, later identified as Geordie Shannon, was taken off to hospital. He suffered from ulcers and had been forced to squat, head between knees, for an hour. It was four days before he was brought over to the jail. The night shift came on to guard us. They, of course, had new sets of rules for us to obey. A new 'game' was introduced. It consisted of going down the line pointing at men and saying "tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, fecking nailbomber!" Whereupon the fifth man would be set upon and beaten. Exhaustion had set in but people were still being called out and interrogated. At about 11 p.m. we were ordered to erect camp beds and given two blankets each. "Those Irish bastards smell; give them showers," the sergeant said. That we smelt was true, but hardly surprising, since men, still in their pyjamas in many cases, had been dragged through the mud. Everyone's feet, with or without socks, were encrusted with filth.

The showers proved another opportunity for jocular fun. Several youths were forced into showers that were boiling hot, the next lot into freezing ones. We were issued with army socks and toothbrushes. "Compliments of her majesty," I was told. At midnight lights were dimmed and we piled into the rows of camp beds. I fell asleep but was soon awakened by a soldier shining his torch into my face. "O'Hara?" he asked. "No," I mumbled. He moved down the line. I dozed off again. Suddenly there was a thunderous sound. Batons hammered on the walls. "Get up you bastards." We fell out of bed. It was 3 a.m. 'Rollcall'. A Branch man came round and solemnly took everyone's name yet again. "What are you doing standing there, get to bed!" We dropped off once more only to be aroused at 5.30 am for 'breakfast'. Half a bowl of stale cornflakes. The beds were dismantled and we resumed squatting on the floor. People were still called out singly for further interrogation. Police walked in grinning and held up the morning newspapers to show us headlines "13 shot dead". "Ardoyne burnt to the ground" (an exaggeration). The sergeant, refreshed from his sleep, was also forthcoming. "That's 13 less of you Irish pigs; none of ours was got." Word filtered back from those who'd been interrogated again. The death toll had risen to 18, including four women and a priest.

I got talking in whispers with my neighbour, George O'Hara. After doing the 'helicopter run' he, too, had been dragged into it, but, unlike the others, he had been taken up some 200 feet into the air. Two military policemen had then told him to "talk or we'll shove you out." Shades of Vietnam!

My further three interrogations were tragi-comic. At no time was I questioned about the IRA, UVF or bombs. All questions which could be termed in any way relevant were

concerned with what was socialism. Bizarre jokes were thrown in, such as "did I know that Farrell was getting Moscow gold?" So help me! Moscow gold! I explained that libertarian socialism as advocated by the PD and Farrell in particular was directly opposed to state capitalism as carried out by totalitarian regimes like the USSR. "That's just the KGB's cleverness," I was told. They clearly didn't believe it for a minute, but any smear in a storm. Next I was asked about Jerry Rubin. Was it not all a part of the international conspiracy, the trouble here? The next questioners were the most bizarre. A lugubrious gentleman gave me a lecture on the evils of atheism (I am an agnostic, but this theological distinction passed my Presbyterian inquisitor by). Did I believe in hellfire? Did I know that I would burn in all eternity? He didn't quite spell it out but the clear implication was that if I confessed to some crime or other – unspecified – he would be able to get on some kind of supernatural shortwave and put in a good word for me. Next I was asked what I was doing in the same room with a band of child murderers, rapists and mad bombers. All of them? All of them! "Even the blind man?" I explained that I had been dragged there by armed men, knew virtually none of the men and boys in the room, and rather doubted the allegations so wildly hurled about them. A view backed up by the Special Branch themselves when they released over 80 of them that day. They didn't seem very interested in me after these exchanges and contented themselves with telling me that I'd get "at least five years." For what? For speaking at civil rights meetings (perfectly legal meetings, in fact) which had led to "all this trouble." Their tactics with me may have been innocuous enough, but what others suffered was not. Quite a few were badly beaten – a fact obvious to all who saw them emerge from the interrogation room; many were told that the streets where their families lived had been "burnt down by the Orangemen," that their relatives had been shot, sons arrested, their friends had "squealed and told all about them," that everyone believed that they had squealed and that only the SB could smuggle them out of the country, that they had lost their jobs (about the only true statement made) and finally, that if they didn't talk "we'll rip out your teeth with pliers" – which were brandished by a well-known Branch man named Harry Taylor.

By lunchtime on the second day discipline had relaxed slightly. The sergeant graciously permitted one cigarette per man before and after the 'meal'. Then we had a period; of exercise – five minutes walk outside. Soldiers gathered to make humorous remarks about 'the animals'. A playful corporal kept slipping the leash of his Alsatian as we passed him until the bewildered beast turned and tried to bite him., We were hastily rushed back inside lest we should laugh.

Rumours began to spread that they couldn't keep us more than 48 hours without officially charging or interning us. This was incorrect. They can do anything they like. under the Special Powers Act, and most of the men we met in Crumlin Road jail who were from out of Belfast were kept six days without being issued detention notices, let alone internment notices.

We continued to squat on the floor. Many were afraid to go to the toilet because of the blows some received there. Everyone was stiff and very tired, but still we were told nothing. Eventually, at 9.30 p.m., we were ordered to collect the bags containing our 'personal effects' and to put on our shoes. Suddenly there was a bustle of activity. About 25 military policemen and a dozen RUC men entered and surrounded us. Guns were cocked. Special Branch men entered and a senior officer appeared with a list. As he read from it, those called were to stand up and move over towards the door. The list was

obviously incompetently compiled. Many of those called weren't in the hall or had been released earlier. The dates of birth of several people were incorrect but the Branch refused to recognize this and so sons were still mistaken for their fathers and vice versa. Eventually, 17 men were marched out. Were they being interned? Or released? We had no idea. My friend Liam, who had been arrested in error for someone else, was last to go.

Then it became really frightening. The SB withdrew, leaving the soldiers. They began to drill us, shouting what presumably to them were merry quips. "You're the feckin' bomber then, are you?" (This to a 77-year-old dignified man who never for a minute deigned to complain). "Haven't got your Thompson now, have you? You'll have to be fitter than that to join the British army" (this to a 70-year-old asthmatic who had had seven hours sleep, and that interrupted, in the last 65 hours, and who was quite unable to keep up with the exercises). Some of us were given 'fatigues' to do, which ranged from cleaning out toilet bowls with our bare hands to dishwashing. I was more fortunate and was given the task of sweeping the floor under the tutelage of a pimply teenager, eager to impress his superiors with his wit. My efforts were dearly regarded as inadequate and he let me know by constantly prodding me with the butt of his sten-gun. "Keep awake, you dozy sods," they continually yelled. It was now 2 a.m. My mind started to drift off. Things took what I felt was a very surrealistic turn. In front of me was the company notice board, upon which were pinned three notices – all of them blank! During the day one had been taken down and replaced with a blue notice, but it, too, was blank. (On looking back, I thought that I must have imagined this, but others who were standing in the front row with me have confirmed it). I kept trying to work out some kind of secret message from the board. Was it in the colour of the drawing pins? In the different shapes of the blank paper? Invisible ink? I felt myself falling asleep and a kind soldier awakened me with his baton across my back. "Feckin' bastard." I began to wish that if they must swear so repetitiously, they would at least say 'fuck' instead of using this emasculated surrogate.

A quarter to four. Surely they must let us go. After all, the blind man was still in our group along with most of the very old men, and the only two other people in the hall whom I knew were not only not terrorists, but clearly couldn't be mistaken for terrorists. I wasn't even a Republican, a political belief quite legal in any democratic society. But then William Craig had banned Republican clubs, hadn't he, and the House of Lords had upheld the ban. I began to think of getting home and getting some sleep; surely it was just all a bad dream? About 3.50 a.m. the military police massed in strength again, this time even more threateningly. Most of us had had only a disturbed seven-hours sleep out of the last 67 hours. Was it to be a mass beating? Mentally I tried to resign myself to it. But no. Out came the lists again.

Of the 60 still remaining, 48 of us were called up in groups of six. As I stood waiting to be taken out an SB man began to talk to me. "It's Crumlin for all you lads," he said, "and they've brought back the B men."

"Not even Faulkner's that stupid."

"Just joking, lads." Some joke!

"Are you interning the blind man?"

"Yes, at night he can see better than all of you put together."

We were taken out into the entrance hall and photographed again with a RUG man holding us by the collar. We had been 46 hours in Girdwood barracks. At no time since

our arrest had we seen a doctor, although later Brigadier Marston Tickell was to claim: "Those arrested were given a medical inspection both on arrival at the 'police station' and again on moving into the place of detention." (Army press briefing, Belfast, 20 August). "These medical tests are available for inspection," he went on to say. This, in fact, was totally untrue. No one was inspected. About ten men saw someone who, it was alleged, was a medical orderly. His only action was to order Edward Campbell to have his head completely shaven because he had 'venereal scabies'. (No such disease exists). Pressmen who asked to see the mythical medical records were refused.

"Draw pistols," came the order. The group of six of us who had been called out of the hall together were forced down a corridor to our right, a RUC man holding each of us by the scruff of the neck and a redcap with a pistol at our heads, beside each of us. I could hardly stand for fatigue. "If there's any sniping out there we can afford to lose two of you bastards on the way over," a corporal said.

Then we were out of the building and onto the path; We were rushed over the by now infamous 'obstacle course – broken glass, barbed wire, sharp stones. We were more fortunate than people like Michael Farrell who had had to traverse it in daylight – with bare feet. We at least had our shoes on, but one slip meant a cruel beating. Then we were rushed through a hole in a wall and found ourselves in the grounds of Crumlin Road jail. A rapid dash over the football pitch, with soldier snipers all around it. A final dash down a grassy slope and inside the walls of the prison itself. We were out of the hands of the soldiers. The screws couldn't be as bad? They weren't. Most seemed very subdued. There was no violence shown towards us.

Two to a cell. Initially, we found the usual plethora of petty and nonsensical regulations. All the conditions the old internees had fought for, over the last 50 years, had to be fought for again, but, within two days, a prisoners committee had been elected and began to demand changes from the Governor, Major Albert Mullin. Because the treatment accorded in Crumlin was tolerable, Mullin was addressed as 'governor', unlike 'commandant' Kerr of the Long Kesh camp.

We retained our civilian clothes, although most of these were torn and filthy; it took time to get fresh clothes sent in. We could get food and books sent in, and for the first time got to see newspapers. Free copies were sent in by the *Irish News*, *Newsletter* and *Belfast Telegraph* as well as a few *Independents*. The day after we arrived we were joined by those who had been sent over from Girdwood a day before us. They had been put up in D wing and had, by and large, received worse treatment than we had – more beatings, attacked by the guard dogs, put over the 'obstacle course' in bare feet. Most of them bore the marks of rough treatment and some were still confined to hospital, but the medical authorities didn't want to know about any allegations of maltreatment. From the papers we learned that about 110 men, mainly from rural areas, had been detained on the HMS *Maidstone*, a hulk moored at the coal wharf. They were getting only four hours on deck out of 24 and were apparently much more cramped than we were. At first we also had been limited to four hours but strenuous protests had forced the prison authorities to extend this, after the first week, to letting us out of the cells from 7.30 a.m. to 8 p.m. (4 p.m. on Sundays) and this was later extended to 9 p.m. After the first week we were able to eat together in the small recreation hall, although this necessitated some men having to eat with the toilets only a few yards away. Still, for most it was better than being forced to eat in our cells every day. Lights went out at 10 p.m.

Most of the time, if the weather was dry, we spent in the small prison yard. The yard was overlooked by both C wing and D wing where the convicted prisoners were, and the first day when we entered it we were greeted by an incredible spontaneous outburst. From every cell window cigarettes, food, books, papers and encouragement showered down. That these men, whose conditions were worse than ours (though as some of them pointed out, "At least we've got a release date on our cell doors"), were so generous was, to me at least, a morale booster.

Helicopters flew over every day, landing in Girdwood, a sordid reminder for most of us, exacerbated when they swooped low and gesticulated and mocked us.

We were not allowed to contact lawyers for several weeks and our initial postcards out were held up for four days, presumably while SB men perused them. Later, "as a favour" we were permitted two postcards a week and eventually a 20-minute visit from relatives, with a warder sitting between us. It had been harder on relatives and wives. In most cases they had been trying without success to find out where we were being held. Some, like Mrs. Shivers of Toome, were only told where their husbands were after nine days. All had been fobbed off with bland lies by the Ministry for Home Affairs and shuttled from one authority to another. One army official evidently believed that it was a good joke to give the number of Paisley's 'Dial-a-Prayer' to relatives requesting a phone number to get permission to apply for a visit.

On 14 September 12 of us were released. The next day the other detainees were moved to Long Kesh.

Chapter 2

SPECIAL POWERS

The purpose of this book is to provide an introduction to the as yet unwritten history of internment in Ireland. But it should not be assumed that because the book deals only with Ireland that internment is a specifically Irish problem. Virtually every country in the world has repressive legislation on its statute books, and the jails of many lands are filled with prisoners who are not charged with any crime other than opposition to the regime in power and who are never likely to come to trial. Even while this book was being written, 14,000 men and boys were interned in Ceylon, and the Philippines and Zambia both introduced indefinite detention without charge or trial. In contrast, America at long last revoked the infamous McCarran Act. That Act was passed in 1950, and section 104 (a) provided that "in time of emergency the Attorney General or his representation is authorised to issue a warrant for the apprehension of each person as to whom there is reasonable ground to believe that such person will probably engage in, or probably will conspire with others to engage in, acts of espionage or sabotage." Why America felt that this piece of legislation was necessary is unclear unless it was part of the McCarthy hysteria of the period, since the US had already interned 110,000 Americans during World War Two, whose only 'crime' was that their parents or grandparents were Japanese.^[1]

Nor is torture, brutality or plain old-fashioned 'ill-treatment' the sole prerogative of the British army. The record of the French in Algeria, the Russians in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the Americans in Vietnam, Santo Domingo, and South America in

general, to name only some of the major powers, cannot be said to be unblemished. Systemised torture is today carried on in many countries, from Spain to Greece, to Brazil to South Africa. The torturers at Palace barracks had no monopoly. The only thing different today is that torture of Irish prisoners, sanctioned by the British Cabinet, was carried out on a wide scale totally unheard of during the internment periods 1922-1924, 1938-1945, and 1956-1961, and that the mass media focused on it.

But this book is concerned in particular with the Northern Ireland Special Powers Acts of 1922, 1933 and 1943 as well as the Offences Against the State Act so beloved by governments in the Twenty-six Counties. When the State of Northern Ireland was forcibly set up, repressive legislation already existed. In the summer of 1920, Sir Hamar Greenwood, Chief Secretary for Ireland, had persuaded the Westminster parliament to pass the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act, which give the military and police virtually *carte blanche* powers to 'control' a situation which had got completely out of hand: four-fifths of the population had even been disloyal enough to vote against Ireland remaining a British colony. Ordinary laws were suspended and the military and police were permitted to intern on suspicion, impose curfews, hold secret courts-martial, enter, search and confiscate (i.e. loot) without warrant, suppress inquests and gun down anyone 'acting suspiciously'.

But Sir James Craig (later Viscount Craigavon) and Sir Edward (later Lord) Carson did not relish military rule or martial law since either measure would have meant that control was vested in Westminster. "Sooner than consent to martial law I would much prefer to take the most drastic action under this Bill and enrol every citizen as a Special Constable to deal with the situation," Craig, first Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, said in 1922. Accordingly, the Special Powers Acts were introduced. There were nine sections in the original Bill and 30 regulations. Under these the Minister for Home Affairs could arrest without charge or warrant, intern without trial, prohibit the holding of coroners' inquests, flog, execute, use depositions of witnesses as 'evidence' without requiring them to be present for cross-examination or rebuttal, destroy buildings, requisition land or property, ban any organisation, be it political, social or trade; prohibit meetings, publications or even gramophone records. Worse still, it permitted the Minister for Home Affairs to make or alter any regulation he "thinks necessary for the maintenance of order" even without consulting the rubber stamp of Stormont. Moreover, such powers could be, and were, delegated (section 8) "to anyone he chooses" – such as the B-Specials.

Even some Unionists opposed the Bill. George Boyle Hanna (U. Antrim) did so on the grounds that it gave the civil authorities even more powers than the military would have under martial law. "There need not have been so many sections," he said. "One would have been sufficient: 'the Home Secretary shall have the power to do whatever he likes or let someone else do it for him.' That is the whole Bill." Small wonder that the late Dr. Verwoerd of South Africa often enviously remarked that he would scrap 811 his repressive legislation for just one regulation of the Special Powers Acts.

Among the extra draconian measures that made the Special Powers Acts more fearsome than martial law was the 'right' to flog. One Unionist MP was so pleased with this provision that he gloated "... and I may say that if an artist [*sic*] is employed in flogging these criminals there will not be much of them left to go to prison." This power is one of the few sections to have been repealed – in 1968! But as late as 1944 men like Frank Morris were brutally flogged in the Crumlin Road jail.

The Act, which received royal assent on 7 April 1922, was supposed to last only one year. Robert Lynn (U. West Belfast) admitted that it "would be an outrage to have an Act like this that might be resurrected by any policeman in the country." Next year, however, it was renewed. And the next. And the next. In 1928 it was renewed for five years "to save legislative bother,"^[2] and in 1933 it was made permanent.^[3] This outrage has been with us ever since. Indeed, in 1943, the penalties were even stiffened and less serious offences could be tried by a single magistrate on his own. As if the Special Powers Act were not enough, successive Unionist governments introduced legislation such as The Flags and Emblems Act, The Public Order (Amendment) Act (1970), and the Criminal Justice (Temporary Provisions) Act (1970).^[4]

The Acts have always been used exclusively against 'disloyal elements', i.e., Catholics. Indeed, Nicholas Massergh^[5] has asserted that a guarantee was given to the Orange Order that their members would be immune from prosecution under the Acts. The only exceptions to this were the handful of over-enthusiastic 'Loyalists' briefly interned in the 1922-1924 period and during the 1933 Outdoor Relief Riots when for a time it looked as if Catholic and Protestant working class would be united.^[6] As long ago as 1936 the National Council for Civil Liberties declared that the Acts were outrageously repressive measures designed to maintain a corrupt oligarchy in power.

In the Twenty-six Counties legislation has been just as repressive. Article 28, Section 3 (3) of the Constitution of the Irish Republic gave power to the Oireachtas (Parliament) to make laws which were "expressed to be" for the purpose of securing public safety in time of war or armed rebellion "notwithstanding anything to the contrary" in that Constitution. This was amended by the first Amendment of the Constitution Act, 1939, in that the phrase "in time of war" was to be deemed to include an armed conflict to which the State was not a party but which both Houses of the Oireachtas resolved would "lead to a national emergency affecting the vital interests of the State."

Accordingly, the Emergency Powers Act (1939) became law on 3 September but it did not authorize the detention without trial of "natural-born Irish citizens", presumably because the State felt that this was already covered under Section 55 of the Offences Against the State Act which had been passed earlier in 1939. This, however, was challenged. Many Republicans had been interned already and it was decided to take a test case. In the case (*Burke versus The State*) it was held that the power of detention given to Ministers to intern was unconstitutional. The internees had to be released, and, in order to restore the power of the State, the Offences Against the State (Amendment) Act was rushed through both Houses of the Oireachtas in 1940. This restored to the State the power to intern on suspicion, without evidence, charge or trial, and it is a power which has not been relinquished.

The Offences Against the State Act is brought into effect by Government proclamation, thus effectively suspending rights supposedly guaranteed by the Constitution. Many of its provisions offend against the basic common law rule of *nulla poena sine lege* (no punishment without due process of law). For example, Section 7 (part two) carries a penalty of seven years jail for anyone who "obstructs the carrying on of Government". Remarkable vistas are conjured up by Section 9 (part two) which makes it a crime "to encourage any person in Government service to be negligent". Free speech and the right of publication are rigorously proscribed if the Government so wishes, using Sections 10 to 14. The basic precept of people being innocent until proven guilty is swept aside in Section 15, which baldly states "in any prosecution in this section the burden of proof

that any act was authorized under this section shall lie with the person prosecuted". Section 19 goes even further and states that the charge itself implies a presumption of guilt.

Part three of the OASA empowers the Government to "ban any organization which in *its opinion* is illegal." Any member of such an organization is liable to two years in jail and all the property of the organization can be confiscated under Sections 21 and 22. Section 18 has been utilized so frequently that many Republicans can quote it verbatim. It covers membership of, advocacy of, or promotion of any illegal organization or of promoting any illegal activity. Section 26 (part four) allows hearsay evidence. Section 27 allows a garda superintendent to ban any meeting he believes might "encourage illegality". Section 29 violates the common law by permitting any garda to arrest without warrant.

The independence of the judiciary is made nonsense of by part five which permits the Government to set up special military courts and special criminal courts whose judges are appointed by the Government and who are removable at will – such as when they acquit people whom the Government want found guilty. In fact, until 1972 all members of the court were high-ranking military officers with very little legal training and no tradition of opposing the Government on a point of principle. Special criminal courts are supposedly necessary because of "intimidation of judges and juries". Yet, if a judge does not carry out his function "without *fear or favour*" he is in breach of his oath of office and should be removed from the bench. Moreover, the last juror to be shot in the Twenty-six Counties was in 1931, over forty years ago, and there have been *NO* recorded cases of intimidation of witnesses or jurors since. There is no appeal against a verdict of a special court without that court's permission, and to challenge its right of jurisdiction is to be automatically guilty of contempt and liable to a prison sentence, in military custody if the court desires. Section 52 concludes by making it an offence not to answer questions put by the gardai. (The Offences Against the State Act was further amended in November 1972 to give even more power to the gardai and the courts. [See Chapter 16](#)).

As can be seen, these powers are just as comprehensive and repressive as the Special Powers Acts in the North. One would have imagined that the Fianna Fail Government would have been content with them. Not so. In 1971 they introduced the Forcible Entries Bill which gave the gardai even more powers to protect large property-holders from squatters and to curb the press. Truly, it can be said that absolute power corrupts absolutely. For 50 years Ireland, both North and South, has been governed under virtual martial law. The rights of the individual citizen have been constantly trampled under foot, in the sacred name of 'expediency' and 'emergency'. If the plethora of laws as detailed are necessary to preserve the State, then that State is not worth preserving. It is nonsense of the North to talk of "preserving the traditional British way of life" if its permanent laws flout every cardinal tenet of British law. The State cannot exist to ensure a better life for its citizens if it terrorizes them by maintaining corrupting and degrading laws. To do so is to emulate the American major in South Vietnam who said of the village of Ben Tre, "in order to save the village, we had to destroy it". The Special Powers Acts, and in particular internment without trial, have helped to destroy the Stormont parliament. It is not inconceivable that the Offences Against the State Act may do the same for the Dail.

Footnotes Chapter 2:

1. See *America's Concentration Camps* by Allan [sic] R. Bosworth, New York (W.W. Norton & Co. Inc.), 1967, for the full story of the abominable treatment of Japanese Americans. Paperback by Bantam, London, 1968.
2. In fact, by 1928 the Six Counties had been peaceful for several years, as even the authorities admitted when, on three occasions, they presented judges with white gloves, symbolic of the fact that there were no cases of crime before the courts.
3. This was done by deleting section 12 of the original Act and substituting the following: "The Act of 1922 shall continue in force until Parliament otherwise determines." Incredibly, the very tranquillity of the State was advanced as an argument for making the Act permanent. Thus did the Unionist regime admit the inherent instability of the artificially-created State.
4. The Flags and Emblems Act gives the police the power to seize any flag other than the Union Jack, such as the Tricolour, the seizure of which during the Westminster elections in 1964 led to the Divis Street riots and helped the rise to prominence of Rev. Ian Paisley. On one occasion it was even used to seize a Vietcong flag during a protest against the Vietnam war. The Public Order (Amendment) Act was passed in 1970, ostensibly to prevent counter-demonstrations such as the infamous Burntoltet ambush of the People's Democracy marchers by B Specials. In fact, it was never used for this purpose. Instead it was used to diminish the means of peaceful protest, such as sit-downs, and peaceful occupations of public buildings by anti-Unionists, as well as spontaneous marches. The Criminal Justice (Temporary Provisions) Act of the same year imposed mandatory six-month sentences for such hitherto minor offences as shouting "Up the IRA", calling a British soldier "Joe Ninety", or painting "No tea here" on a wall. The Act was amended when it became clear that it was unworkable.
5. The Government of Ireland Act 1936.
6. In addition to its use during the 1933 riots, the Act was used against the working class on a number of occasions, as in 1925 when a march of the unemployed workers was banned on the very day that Stormont was officially opened. One example of its use that is not so well known occurred, on 12 October 1932, when a large body of armed police forced their way into houses in Quinn Street, Belfast, and compelled all the males, irrespective of age, to engage in forced labour, replacing paving stones ('Belfast confetti') which had been wed in battles between strikers and the police. In October 1933, shortly before the local elections, 50 men were arrested. No charges were laid against them, but after they had been detained for several days the Government passed regulation 22b (the ancestor of regulation 7) which made it an offence not to answer questions put to one by a Resident Magistrate in private. The 50 men were then charged – and convicted – of not answering questions previously put to them. So much for the common law principle that a person may refuse to incriminate himself.
In 1933 Tom Mann, founder of the Socialist party in Britain, was arrested and detained under the Special Powers Act when he arrived to attend the funeral of a workman shot by the RUC, during a demonstration in West Belfast. He was informed that he must leave unless he was prepared to agree to stay within one mile

of Clogher – some 70 miles from Belfast! Two years later Sean Murray, from Cushendall, was expelled from Northern Ireland, also under the Special Powers Act, for seven years, for "being a communist".

It was only in 1952 that the Minister for Home Affairs successfully banned a coat-trailing Orange march along the Longstone Road near Kilkeel, County Down. The ban was defied by the Orange-men, one of whose leaders was none other than Brian Faulkner. It should be noted that the Apprentice Boys' marches were banned in 1971 and 1972 under the Special Powers Act rather than under the Public Order Act which would have resulted in mandatory six-month sentences on any Orange transgressor – if prosecuted. Britain, too, has its Emergency Powers Act 1920 (amended 1964).

Britain has some safeguards against abuse of its Emergency Powers Act by the Executive. For example, the Sovereign can only declare a state of emergency for one month and then parliament must sit to reject or ratify it. In fact, the Northern Ireland Emergency Powers Act is a clear-cut example of 'overkill'. Under the Act the Stormont Minister of Home Affairs had the power of life and death over every citizen of the State.

Legal Sources

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Chapter 3

ENGLISH INTERNMENT 1916-1945

INTERNMENT as a weapon was not new to the British. The nineteenth century alone had seen some 105 Coercion Bills, whose ruthless provisions often included virtual internment of the Irish. In 1881-1882 more than a thousand Irishmen were put in prison without warrant, charge or trial as 'suspects'. Habeas corpus was suspended and the Land League proclaimed. But internment camps were a new thing.

The Boer War gave the name 'concentration camp' to the world and brought shame and

ignominy to Britain, accustomed for so long to have her imperialist way without question. Some 20,000 Boers, mainly women and children, died in the camps from disease and neglect.

In 1914, with the outbreak of World War One, enemy aliens were rounded up and interned, mainly at Frongoch camp in North Wales. Few Irish were amongst the assorted group of foreigners. Indeed, many Irishmen were in the British army fighting that "small nations might be free"! 1916 changed that. As a military uprising it was as impractical as all those before it: in Dublin 1,500 men marching in Easter Week to occupy the General Post Office, Bolands Bakery, South Dublin Union, and several minor public buildings and solemnly proclaiming Ireland's freedom. Most Dublin people gawked in amazement or jeered the volunteers. At 3.45 p.m. on Saturday 29 April 1916, Padraic Pearse issued his note of unconditional surrender. Connolly and MacDonagh followed suit. The fighting was over, but the war was only just beginning.

With the crassness born of indolent arrogance the British turned the rebels into martyrs. The signatories of Proclamation of the Republic and others, with four notable exceptions, were shot in the stone breakers' yard on the north-west corner of Kilmainham jail, commandeered by the British in 1914 to accommodate extra troops. The exceptions were Tom Ceannt, shot in Cork; Eamon de Valera and Countess Markievicz who were reprieved, and Sir Roger Casement who was hanged in London. The last to be shot were Connolly and McDermott, the one severely wounded, the other a polio victim. Poets and song writers rushed for their pens. The English had done it again.

After the rising the number of prisoners in British custody was 3,430 men and 79 women.^[1] Almost immediately 1,424 men and 73 women were released. Of those remaining, 159 men and one woman, Countess Markievicz, were court-martialled. Eleven were acquitted. Ninety were sentenced to death but only fifteen were executed. The rest got penal servitude, ranging from two years to life.

1,836 men and five women^[2] were interned without being sentenced and were shipped to the Frongoch camps in North Wales.^[3] Another bad mistake.

German prisoners were moved out to make room for the Irish who soon settled in and organized themselves. Frongoch was divided into two parts; the south camp which consisted mainly of an old distillery, and the north camp which was full of huts. In order to lessen sympathy for the Irish prisoners, the British put it about that they were the recipients of 'The Kaiser's Gold', but as a propaganda exercise this backfired. The average Tommy was hardly well paid and was only too willing to treat the prisoners well, run messages for them and smuggle messages in and out in the hope of getting some of this magical (and non-existent) gold in return.

Another mistake made by the authorities was to try to conscript a number of the internees, not all of whom had been involved in the Easter rising; indeed, many were political innocents scooped up by mistake, but actions like this created solidarity. Conscription of prisoners was strongly and successfully resisted.

But the worst mistake made by the authorities was to have internment, in the first place. The camps became hotbeds of 'sedition', political education centres and training grounds for resistance fighters, the foremost of all being Michael Collins. In each of the camps, prisoners elected their own commandants (a practice always followed in the future) and established a chain of command with group and hut leaders. Morale was kept up by cultural activities, sports (1916 was a good summer) and lectures. The

organizational abilities of men like Collins and MacCurtain were given full rein. Future action was planned and the lines of communication laid. The internees felt that they were much better off in the countryside of Wales than the sentenced prisoners in Stafford, Usk, Lincoln, Lewes or Dartmoor jails. Comradeship grew and with it a feeling of exhilaration.

All this might well have died had internment lasted for a long time, but in December 1916 Lloyd George pushed Asquith out of office as British Premier and took over. By Christmas the last 600 internees had been released and sent back to Ireland – to drill, train and build up an organization to drive the British out. The process was given even more impetus in June 1917 when all the sentenced prisoners, including de Valera, were released. First, martyrs had been made, then the survivors were turned loose to an admiring audience.

Irish aspirations for independence had been aroused yet again. Activity intensified. Almost immediately a spate of arrests followed. By the truce of 11 July 1921 there were 7,000 Irish political prisoners in the jails of England and Ireland. Most had been arrested on ludicrous charges. By 1920 people were getting up to two years for "whistling derisively at a policeman", having a single copy of the banned Irish Volunteer paper, *An t-Oglach*, singing 'The Felons of Our Land' – written 50 years previously – or carrying a hurley. But most of the important arrests were carried out under DORA – the Defence of the Realm Act. Introduced originally at the onset of the war, special 'Irish Clauses' were periodically added to the Act. By 1917 anyone "whose behaviour is of such a nature as to give reasonable grounds for suspecting that he has acted, or is acting, or about to act in a manner prejudicial to the public safety or the defence of the Realm" could be arrested. On 24 April 1918, quietly and without notice, the Defence of the Realm Act was altered to allow the authorities to take Irish prisoners to be interned in England. The constitutionality of such an action was about to be challenged in the courts while internees were in Frongoch, but the challenge was dropped upon their release at Christmas 1916. Now the law was altered to permit deportation to England. The way was being paved for the 'German Plot'.

Germany had, in fact, very little interest in Ireland. More German guns had been sold to the 'Loyalist' Orangemen in the North than to the Nationalist Republicans in the South. The fiasco of Sir Roger Casement's attempt to form an Irish Brigade from captured POW's in Germany had convinced the Germans that little was to be gained from Ireland. The only other Irish 'agent' of the Germans to set foot in Ireland was Lance Corporal Joe Dowling who was arrested as soon as a U-boat had put him ashore on the Clare coast on 12 April 1918. He was sentenced to penal servitude for life^[4] and served six years.

Casualties in the World War were mounting, however, and plans were afoot to introduce conscription to Ireland, hitherto exempt. This was another tactical blunder, for nothing was more likely to unite the Irish than attempts to compel them to fight for England. De Valera drafted the anti-conscription declaration issued unanimously by the Mansion House Conference of 18 April 1918 which included the words "the passing of the Conscription Bill by the British House of Commons must be regarded as a declaration of war on the Irish Nation". The conference was attended by Sinn Fein, the Irish Parliamentary Party, Trade Union representatives and others. The Catholic hierarchy also were opposed to conscription. Five days after the conference the Trade Unions held the first ever one-day general strike-against conscription. Lloyd George and his Government had been warned what to expect and so they cooked up the 'German Plot'.

Quietly the Dublin Castle Executive was purged of any 'pro-Irish' elements such as Henry Duke, the Chief Secretary. Lord Wimbourne, the Lord Lieutenant, was replaced by Field Marshal Sir John French, fresh from his recent disasters and blunders in Flanders. General Sir Bryan Mahon was succeeded in the military command by General Shaw. French outlined his simple-minded tactics to Lord Riddel:

Conscription will be enforced. If they leave me alone I can do what is necessary. I shall notify a date before which recruits must offer themselves in the different districts. If they do not come we will fetch them.

On 8 May Sir Edward Carson, not a Cabinet Minister, issued a statement to the effect that the Government "had the closest evidence in their possession that the Sinn Fein organization is, and has been in alliance with Germany". On 17-18 May the Government swooped. Seventy-three people were arrested. They included Arthur Griffith, de Valera, Count Plunkett, Countess Markievicz, Mrs. Tom Clarke, Maud Gonne MacBride, W. T. Cosgrave and Joe McGrath. Sean McEntee and Denis McCullough were arrested in Belfast. By the evening of 18 May they were all aboard a man-of-war at Dun Laoghaire. It was then they were informed that under the Defence of the Realm Act they were being deported and interned. After a week in a disused army camp near Holyhead they were split up and sent to Usk and Gloucester jails. A little later some of the Gloucester prisoners, including de Valera, were transferred to Lincoln jail. Meanwhile the furore about the 'German Plot' continued. In the House of Lords on 20 June 1918 the recently-sacked Lord Lieutenant, Lord Wimborne, told members that there was no plot. The Government shifted its ground. Edward Shortt, the Chief Secretary, told the Commons on 4 August;

They (the Irish prisoners) are there under suspicion. Supposing they were found innocent of that (i.e. conspiring with Dowling) do you imagine that that would let them out? Of course it would not. They may not be *the* individuals, but they may be equally dangerous to the State.

Dangerous they might well have been, but in most cases constitutionally so, for those arrested included most of the public speakers and election agents for Sinn Fein, who were soon to win the next general election. Despite the exposure of the 'plot', however, a further 20 men were arrested and deported.

The fight to be treated as political prisoners began upon their arrival at British jails. The internees, many already veterans of the English and Irish jails, were adamant. At Usk, Governor Young was out of his depth, and he soon gave in: the right of association, of writing and receiving letters and parcels were all granted; so was the prisoners' right to wear their own clothes instead of the broad arrow of the convict. In Usk and Lincoln they did not have to resort to the 'Lewes tactic' – i.e. smashing up the jail. During the summer, conditions were not too bad, but winter brought the cold and the influenza epidemic which savaged all Europe. Most of the internees were affected, but only two died.^[5] Statistically at least they fared better than the rest of the population.

Escape was in all their minds, however, and on 21 January 1919 four men, McGrath, Shouldice, Mellows and Geraghty, went over the wall of Usk jail with a rope ladder. It had been intended that 20 would go on a mass break-out, but the influenza epidemic had laid many low – indeed, Mellows, who did get away successfully, could hardly stand.^[6]

This escape and the resultant hue-and-cry in England came at a bad time for de Valera. He and two of his comrades, Sean McGarry and Sean Milroy; were co-operating in the process of having their own escape from Lincoln jail engineered. So important was it that de Valera should escape that Michael Collins and Harry Boland went over to England themselves to supervise it. The well-organized escape involved three cakes, three keys, a number of key blanks, files, key-cutting tools, a rope-ladder and a fleet of cars. It says little for the security of the jail that so much was smuggled in and that messages could pass in and out so easily.

In January 1919 the first Dail assembled in the Mansion House in Dublin and one of its first decisions was to appoint three envoys to the peace conference at Versailles, to claim Ireland's freedom. The men chosen were then internees in English jails: de Valera, Griffith and Plunkett. Hence de Valera's particular desire to escape, and escape he did, in the company of Milroy and McGarry, on 3 February 1919, just eleven days after the Usk escape. They walked through a door in the jail wall, using a skeleton key, and were smuggled away to hideouts in Manchester and Liverpool. On 20 February, disguised as a priest, de Valera was back in Dublin.^[2] Never had there been such a hue-and-cry for an escaped prisoner; rarely had there been such a propaganda coup for the Irish.

Internment was not to last. Embarrassed first by the escapes and then by the death, on 6 March, of Pierce McCann, a Tipperary TD interned at Gloucester (where the Usk prisoners had been moved following the escape), the Government gave in. McCann died of influenza and public opinion in Ireland erupted on hearing the news. Two days later it was announced that the internees were to be released. On 9 March the first batch arrived back in Dublin, led by Arthur Griffith and bearing the remains of McCann. The internment of the 'German plotters' was over – for the time being.

Some had not been so fortunate in their treatment, however. Padraic Fleming had been arrested in connection with the supposed 'German Plot', but unlike the majority, he was not transported to England. Instead, he was housed in Maryborough (now Portlaoise) jail. He had been there the year before, after being framed (it is alleged) on an arms charge. He had been refused political treatment, had gone on hunger strike and had been promised political treatment if he would wear prison garb. He refused and went on a naked hunger strike for a further fortnight. Public opinion having been enraged at the death of Torn Ashe from forcible feeding while on hunger strike in Mountjoy in September 1917, the British decided to exercise a new tactic *vis-à-vis* hunger strikers. This was the so-called 'cat-and-mouse' act. Under it a prisoner would be released while on hunger strike and rearrested when he regained his health. And so, on 20 November 1917, Fleming was let out. Next May, as a 'German plotter', he was back again in Maryborough. There began his one-man crusade for political treatment. It was typical of the determination exerted by internees and sentenced political prisoners to secure 'political treatment'. They did not regard themselves as 'criminals', nor did they intend to allow themselves to be treated as such. That their fight was unsuccessful is attested to by the fact that the same fight was fought in the same jail 25 years later, culminating in the death of Sean McCaughey after 31 days hunger and 12 days thirst strike. He had been naked in his solitary for almost five years.

Padraic Fleming did not die, but his single-minded fanaticism could easily have led to his death, given "the cold blooded formalised cruelty of officialdom in power", in the words of Piaras Béaslai. Fleming refused to wear prison garb. His own clothes had been taken from him and he was left with only bedclothes, and these were removed each day

from 6.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. Fleming was 23 and over six feet tall. It took eight warders to forcibly dress him. He tore the clothes off as soon as they were on and he was alone. The warders put him in iron manacles, with a body-belt which kept his manacled wrists and upper arms tight against his body.^[8] With his hands thus strapped warders had to feed him – a few spoons of soup and half a pint of coffee a day. He broke out of the manacles. The warders put him in 'muffs', which practically paralyse the body. He broke out of these. He was then strapped so tightly across the stomach that his digestive system was disrupted. Again he went on hunger strike. After eight days the prison doctor said he was dying. Word came from outside that hunger strikes were to be called off; he recovered, but still refused to wear prison garb. The jail authorities tried to have him certified insane, but no doctor would sign. The strait-jacket restraint continued. The authorities built him a special cell supposedly warm enough for a naked man in winter. Despite the jacket he succeeded in tearing up the blankets. He smashed the gas fittings by kicking the rubber chamber pot up at them. He got out of the strait-jacket by repeatedly jumping at the gas jet until the jacket went on fire. He took the radiator apart with the hand-cuffs on his wrists, broke the glass of the window with the rubber chamber pot and with glass fragments between his teeth, he cut the jacket. He was dragged, head first, hands still manacled behind his back, down four flights of iron stairs, to be further punished. Finally, after seven months, in exasperation the authorities gave in. Fleming was granted the 'status' of a political prisoner and taken to Mountjoy. From there he escaped with 19 others on 29 March 1919.

The thousands who filled the jails of England and Ireland until the truce of 11 July 1921 would call themselves, in many cases, internees. Under DORA there was no need to formally 'intern', when a man could be charged with 'possession of documents' or 'whistling derisively' and receive a lengthy sentence. On 9 August 1920 DORA was extended with the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act which, as Dorothy MacArdle wrote in *The Irish Republic*, "relieved the military forces in Ireland of almost all the restraints of law". Military authorities were empowered to jail any Irish man or woman without charge or trial under section 3 (6); could have secret courtmartial under section 3 (1-5). Only if the death penalty was involved could a lawyer be present, and he was appointed by the Crown agents. Four-fifths of the population who had given their allegiance to Dail Eireann were offenders against the Act, 14(1&2). Because 33 coroners inquests had indicted military or police for murder, inquests were banned.

The jails of Mountjoy, Kilmainham (finally abandoned as a jail in 1924), Kilkenny, Derry, Cork (Spike Island), Belfast, Dundalk and Sligo, and military camps at the Curragh, Kilworth, Boyle and Ballykinlar were full, and prisoners escaped from all but a few of them.

The Rath camp at the Curragh was still the official internment camp, however. Some 1,300 were interned there in 60 wooden army huts in a ten-acre area. The huts were arranged in four symmetrical rows, referred to as 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D'. The prisoners' compound was rectangular and surrounded by two large barbed-wire fences, ten feet high and four feet wide. Between the two fences was a 20-foot wide corridor which was patrolled day and night. Machine-gun towers with powerful searchlights were situated at each corner and played on the huts. It was regarded as escape-proof. Attempted escapes in laundry vans and refuse carts had failed ignominiously. The guards had orders to shoot anyone approaching the wire and no one doubted that they were quite prepared to shoot – in January 1921 James Sloan and James Tormey, both from

Westmeath, were shot down in Ballykinlar camp for "getting too close to the wire"! Tunnelling was obviously the best chance for an escape, but the authorities at the Curragh were very vigilant and the situation was complicated by the presence of spies and *agents provocateur*. With as many as 1,300 internees in the camp it was impossible for everyone to be known, and in each hut there were people whom nobody knew. Most of these men were genuine internees but some were undoubtedly stool-pigeons and plants. (To this day it is common practice for the police to plant someone amongst internees. In August 1971 in Crumlin, however, a plant was such an incompetent liar that he was easily unmasked. He was then moved very rapidly for 'his own safety' and released the next day.)

In April 1921 a tunnel at the Curragh was betrayed. Men of the Kings Own Scottish Borderers made straight for it. As a result, 'privileges' were withdrawn. All tunnelling was suspended. On 11 July the truce became operative, but there was still no release for the internees. Thirty-seven who were TD's were released so that the Dail could consider the British peace terms. In August Sean MacEoin, under sentence of death in Mountjoy, and the only TD still held, was released after the Irish had threatened to break off negotiations unless he was freed. While MacEoin was in Mountjoy, a most ambitious attempt to rescue him almost succeeded. It involved the capture of a British army whippet armoured car which was driven straight into the jail by the IRA. When, in spite of the truce, there were no general releases the Curragh internees began tunnelling again. Two tunnels were started. The 'professional' and ambitious 'Dublin Brigade Tunnel', and the 'amateur' 'Rabbit Burrow'. In the event it was the amateurs who got there first. In the space of only 18 days they reached the outside wire, and, on the night of the 8 September 1921, in a dense fog, 50 men got away. They wandered around in the fog and some even blundered back to the wire, but all eventually escaped. Section Leader Brabazon, who stayed behind, commented, "If we'd waited four more days until a larger tunnel was finished we could have got a thousand out."^[9] Many of the remaining internees were transferred to Kilkenny, where, benefiting from the tactics learnt at the Rath camp, 43 men tunnelled their way out on 23 November (including Michael Burke of Glengoole, who had survived a 90-day hunger strike in Cork jail).

Just a fortnight later it was over. The Treaty was signed on 6 December. On 8 December all internees were released.

The English can claim that this was their last venture of peace-time internment – but in 1923 over 100 Irish men and women, mostly members of the Irish Self Determination League, were deported from England under Clause 14B of the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act and interned upon their arrival in Ireland. This was subsequently shown to be an infringement of British law and those deported were eventually returned to England and received some compensation.^[10]

Camps were subsequently established in Aden, Cyprus, Malaya,^[10A] and, most infamous of all, Kenya. But liberal British public opinion has always been less squeamish when the rights of black people were infringed. In Kenya men were killed in Aguthe detention camp and the most horrendous climax came on 24 February 1959 when 11 Africans were beaten to death in Hola camp. Leading Conservative Ministers Julian Amery and Alan Lennox-Boyd saw no need for an inquiry after all, over 80,000 men and women had been rounded up with no charges brought against them and 700 men were kept without trial for over seven years (a "certain amount of indiscriminate violence is inevitable"). Even with the news of the horror and murder that came out of Kenya internment camps

and the reports of Chief Officer Captain Ernest Law, who resigned in protest, the British Government still looked after its own. The Acting Assistant Commissioner of Prisons, J.B.T. Cowan, was made a MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List of June 1959.^[11] With true family solidarity Lennox-Boyd's sister spoke out. "I'm sick hearing about consciences," she said. "What we want is a real Conservative who doesn't keep seeing good in the other side." Lady Huggins, vice-chairman of the Conservative Commonwealth Council, was equally firm. "Too much fuss is being made of the deaths of Mau Mau detainees at Hola camp," she told students at Nottingham University. "These men were certainly beaten to death but they were, in fact, the worst type of criminals themselves and they would not have been accepted back in their home districts."^[12]

It is, of course, totally unfair to blame Britain for any atrocities committed in foreign lands under the control of the British army – "the finest body of fighting men" etc. It is well known that the British Judicial system is the finest in the world and the envy of all: the rights handed down in the bosom of every guardian of the law, from the police and army to the MPs who ably represent us at Westminster. But, though it is not generally well known, in 1939, before the war broke out, Britain again introduced internment; the recipients were, yet again, to be the Irish.

On Monday 16 January 1939 the farcical IRA bombing campaign in England was begun, after a solemn 'declaration of war', under the command of Sean Russell. Using Jim O'Donovan's 'S' plan the campaign was a short-lived disaster which nonetheless cost the lives of seven innocent English civilians, wounded over 100 and resulted in the execution of Barnes and McCormack (Richards) on 7 February 1940, to say nothing of lengthy jail sentences, up to 20 years, for over 100 Irish prisoners (23 men and women got 20 years penal servitude, 34 got 10-20 years, 25 got 5-10, and 14 received less than 5 years).

Even before the tragic accident in Coventry, on 25 August 1939, the British Government had acted. Generally it is a lengthy process getting legislation passed through Westminster. A series of 'Checks and Balances' ensure that legislation is usually a time-consuming business. On 28 July, however, something of a record was set up when the Prevention of Violence Bill took five minutes to get through the first and second reading in the Lords. The third stage was waived and so by the next day it had passed into law. Its provisions allowed deportation for Irishmen and, that old standby, internment, as well as the registration of all Irishmen living in Britain. By 5 August 48 expulsion orders and five prohibition orders had been issued. Many hundreds of Irishmen did not wait for the midnight raids but took the Holyhead boat home – only to discover the Free State Government had just banned prisoners' dependants meetings and had put into force the Offences Against the State Act.

The declaration of war saved the British the embarrassment of 'peacetime' internment. Those men they wanted were lifted for the duration of the war and kept with other 'aliens' and 'suspected persons' in camps – the best-known one being on the Isle of Man. In 1940 there were 1,400 interned. Only 50 were still interned when, in May 1945, Herbert Morrison announced that the order had been revoked. The Government had considered interning communists but desisted, fearing unrest in the Clyde.^[13] Most of those interned were German nationals. One of the most unfortunate was the gentleman who found a pocketbook containing £9 and took it to a local police station in Middlesex. He was thanked, asked his name and address and then interned. Three thousand aliens

had been rounded up in May 1940 due to panic created by newspapers such as the *Express* and *Herald*. The conditions of internment varied from 'inconvenient' to 'atrocious'. Successive British Governments have denounced internment as 'a despicable weapon' – and used it. Ex-internees Makarios, Banda, Nehru, Gandhi and de Valera would presumably agree. But they all became respectable statesmen. Britain would do well to remember that in the Long Kesh Class of 1972 may languish a man of similar stature.

Footnotes Chapter 3:

1. BERESFORD ELLIS, in *History of the Irish Working Class*, London (Victor Gollancz), 1972, gives the figure of 3,149 men and 72 women.
2. DESMOND GREAVES in *The Life and Times of James Connolly*, London (Laurence & Wishart), 1961, gives the figure as 1,877. Beresford Ellis says 1,862 men and six women; Jacqueline Van Voris agrees, in *Countess de Markievicz*, Massachusetts (University of Massachusetts Press), 1967, p.219.
3. There was a two-month interim period when they were jailed in Wakefield, Glasgow, Stafford, Knutsford, Reading, and Wandsworth.
4. He was eventually released in February 1924.
5. Dick Coleman in Usk in December and Pierce McCann in Gloucester in March.
6. See *Sworn to be Free*, Tralee (Anvil Books), 1971, pp. 25-34, for an account of the escape, written by Frank Shouldice and George Geraghty.
7. See Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic*, London (Victor Gollancz), 1937.
8. The full story is told by Lochlinn MacGlynn in *Sworn to be Free*, pp. 53-63.
9. See *The Freeman's Journal*, Dublin, 12 September 1921.
10. DOROTHY MACARDLE, *The Irish Republic*, p.769.
- 10A. Technically, no war existed in Malaya during the 'Emergency' as it was called from 1948-60, but under Regulation 17D, 29,828 people were interned, 600,000 forcibly 'resettled' in camps surrounded by barbed wire and over 20,000 deported. Coincidentally, the chief of police there was Arthur (later Sir Arthur) Young, future police supremo in Northern Ireland.
11. See *New Statesman*, London, 20 June 1959; and *Gangrene* by various writers, London (Calderbooks), 1959. In October 1972, nine months after his men had shot 13 civilians in Derry on 'Bloody Sunday', Colonel Derek Wilford was awarded the OBE.
12. Notts' *Guardian Journal*, Nottingham.
13. British Cabinet Committee (1941) on Communist Activities.

Chapter 4

INTERNMENT IN THE TWENTY-SIX COUNTIES 1922-1973

WHEN discussing internment in the Twenty-six Counties it is often difficult to know where to draw the lines. The Civil War, from mid 1922 to mid 1923 (the 'dump arms' order, signed by Frank Aiken, came on 24 May 1923) was a period of intense bitterness. It left a legacy of hatred that resulted in friend shooting friend and old comrade interning old comrade. The new Provisional Government (Free State from 6 December 1922) in Dublin repressed Republicans with savage ferocity. Intent on negotiation with the predominant economic interests in the South – the Protestant ascendancy – the Government had to convince them of its 'respectability'. Consequently there was a desire to 'out English the English' when it came to 'law and order'.

On 17 June 1920, during the Anglo-Irish War, Colonel G. B. Smyth, Divisional RIC Commissioner for Munster, had made a soon-to-be-notorious speech to members of the force, in the presence of General H. H. Tudor, head of the RIC, in Listowel, County Kerry;

You may make mistakes occasionally and innocent people may be shot but that can not be helped and you're bound to get the right parties sometimes. The more you shoot, the better I will like you, and I assure you no policeman will get in trouble for shooting any man. Hunger strikers will be allowed to die in jail, the more the merrier. Some of them have died already^[1] and a damn bad job they were not all allowed to die. As a matter of fact some of them have been dealt with in a manner their friends will never hear about.

Coming on top of murders and other atrocities by the RIC and their latest colleagues, the Black-and-Tans (the first of whom had arrived in the country at the end of March 1920), this was too much for the vast majority of the Irish people,^[2] including many members of the RIC who resigned. Yet within three years the Free State Government was putting Smyth's words into practice.

The Treaty had been ratified, 64-57, by the Dail on 7 January 1922. Arthur Griffith, already near to death, led the first administration, but the constitutional opponents of the Treaty, who included such leading figures as de Valera, Cathal Brugha, Erskine Childers, Austin Stack and Robert Barton (who had signed the Treaty) had left the Dail in protest. By February there was virtually a state of Civil War, with the IRA following Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellows and Liam Lynch. Revolution, albeit confused, was in the air. Bank raids for money to buy arms (a raid on the Bank of Ireland in 1922 got £50,000) became of frequent occurrence. Rural soviets were set up, tenants expropriated big landlords and burnt out many of the big country mansions. The left wing of the Republican movement had to be crushed if Griffiths and his successor, Cosgrave, were to get the support of big business and the Church. Moreover, the people were war weary. Draconian measures were easy to enforce.

The war 'officially' started with the seizure of the Four Courts in Dublin on 15 April 1922. On 28 June, with artillery borrowed from the British, the Provisional Government bombarded the Four Courts. The bombardment lasted from Wednesday morning until Friday. IRA volunteers and most of the Four Courts executive were forced to surrender. Elsewhere in Dublin one man who wouldn't surrender was Cathal Brugha. Pistols blazing, he emerged on his own, from the Hammam Hotel ruins, and was shot down. He died two days later. Within the next year about 700 people died in the Civil War, which, in financial terms, has been reckoned to have cost some £20m.^[3]

The Government executed 82 men^[4] before the war was over. These included Erskine Childers, judicially murdered on 24 November 1923 for possessing a small pistol given him by Michael Collins. "Even in England," Dorothy MacArdle was to write, "jurists held this to be a judicial murder." But the Government had already made its position clear. As early as July 1922 Judge Crowley made an order for the release of George Oliver Plunkett from Mountjoy, holding that his arrest, after the storming of the Four Courts, was illegal. Crowley also ordered the arrest of Colin O'Murchadha, the prison governor, and Richard Mulcahy, Minister of Defence. The Provisional Government then abolished the Supreme Court and its judges. Next month Judge Crowley was arrested and jailed, despite the resignation of George Gavan Duffy, Minister of Home Affairs and a signatory of the Treaty.

In September 1922 the new President of the Executive Council, William Cosgrave (Griffith had died on 12 August, ten days before Collins had fallen at Beal na Blath, Co. Cork) told Gavan Duffy that "belligerent rights will not be accorded to the anti-Treaty IRA. We are not going to treat rebels as POW's." On 3 October 1922 military courts were set up, a decision backed up by the RC Church hierarchy, who also in October, in a joint Pastoral described the Republicans as being guilty of "A system of murder and assassination of the National Forces." Military courts were effective, from the Government's point of view, and executions became common – the most notorious being the reprisals in which Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellows, Joe McKelvey and Dick Barrett, all captured in the Four Courts at the end of June, were taken out of their cells in Mountjoy and shot on 8 December 1922. These brutal murders of men who had been prisoners for more than five months and who could have had nothing to do with the shooting to death of Deputy Sean Hales and the wounding of Deputy Pádraic O'Malley on 7 December – both of whom had voted for 'the Murder Bill'^[5] – were later boasted about by ministers O'Higgins and Mulcahy who said in the Dail that "the pride we have is deep in our hearts, pride that we are shouldering responsibilities that are very heavy and great."

By the time of the cease fire there were about 12,000 Republican prisoners. The jails were grossly over-crowded.^[6] The Curragh camp was bursting at its seams, with many prisoners in very bad health. Since a state of Civil War had existed, the Government had not bothered too much about the legality of internment. Republicans were just rounded up. By 1 July 1923, as many as 11,316 were behind bars or barbed wire. Most of them were not charged, but were lodged in local jails – the more prominent in Mountjoy. Soon this 'irregularity' was to be rectified. In the North the Special Powers Act had become law on 7 April, in time to see the introduction of internment on 23 May 1922. But in the Twenty-six Counties, people were not officially interned, though for all the difference it made to them they might as well have been. Consequently, there were repeated attempts to get habeas corpus writs served. During June 1923 these applications were turned down on the rather spurious grounds that "the IRA did not state that a state of war had ceased to exist." On 26 July the Dail rushed through the Public Safety Act, granting the Government comprehensive emergency powers, including internment which came into effect on 1 August, timely from a Government point of view. (On 31 July the Court of Appeals had ordered the release of Mrs. Connolly O'Brien). Internment was now a 'legalized' fact.

Internment under the aegis of Irishmen was no improvement upon internment under the English. New camps were established at the Curragh, Co. Kildare: 'Tintown No.1'

which was built to accommodate 600 men, and 'Tintown 2' which held almost 2,000 men. The military governor of the camp was Commandant Billy Byrne. Most of the men in Tintown 1 were from Mayo, Limerick, Kerry and Dublin. Peadar O'Donnell was made O/C by the prisoners. Accommodation was better than what most of them had been accustomed to in Mountjoy or Spike Island, but still bad.

The men lived in huts with serrated concrete floors. They eventually were allowed to cook their own food and organize themselves in a variety of activities. Education classes, inevitably, were amongst the first of the activities. The only legitimate way out of the camp was to sign a declaration forswearing republicanism forever, and a few did this to join the new civic guards. Anyone who signed out, for whatever reason, was automatically barred from the IRA and dismissed with ignominy if already a member. Nonetheless, despite the conditions, very few did sign out. Life in the camps was monotonous, at times brutal, and always unpleasant. Sanitation was, at best, primitive. What was especially galling to most men was that in many cases their former comrades were now their jailers. All activity in the camp centred around escapes. Under the British the old Rath camp at the Curragh, which housed 1,300 men, had been described as "positively escape-proof". That myth had been exploded on 8 September 1921 when about 50 men tunnelled their way out, to the chagrin of the British GHQ.^[7]

Commandant Byrne was determined that there would be no repetition. The outer perimeter fences were strengthened. More powerful searchlights were used and there were regular inspections for tunnels. Peadar O'Donnell was not discouraged. In his memoir *The Gates Flew Open*^[8] he recounts how he first attempted to get a tunnel started under the hospital hut. This 'was thwarted by the moral scruples of Dr. Ferran, a prisoner who felt that it would be unethical to have part of the hospital used as an escape tunnel. O'Donnell himself had declared he would be quite prepared to see it started under the altar in the prison chapel.

The tunnel was sunk in the floor of O'Donnell's hut eventually, and this meant that 116 men were in on the 'secret'. They went through nine inches of concrete, just beside the door, and fashioned a trapdoor for the opening out of concrete chips and soap. To prevent the trap-door from being walked upon they generally just left a tin mug or a stool on it. The 'works committee' were fanatical about physical fitness and every morning prisoners were up out of bed early for PT, a hazard for those who had been up all night tunnelling. The tunnel had to be driven without supports, and so was low and arched, with electric light run off the hut by concealed wiring. Frequent inspections failed to discover it, even after a cave-in which had O'Donnell trapped briefly.

O'Donnell was not to see the eventual escape as he had been transferred to Mountjoy and then to Finner camp where he was kept as a hostage in case of reprisals for the shooting in Donegal of Enright, Larkin, Daly and O'Sullivan by the Government.

Subsequently, 73 men escaped through the tunnel, the all-time record for the Curragh. In Mountjoy, conditions for internees were appalling, but resistance was fierce. Internees frequently knocked holes in the walls so that they could pass right along a tier, from cell to cell, without going out on the landing. Barricades were often erected to prevent warders entering and searching – a necessary precaution since guns were, on occasion, smuggled in and used in escape attempts. D wing, where many of the internees were, faced the North Circular Road where crowds would gather nightly to wave flags, sing songs of encouragement and shout messages. The internees responded by quarrying out the window frames so that they could lean right out of the windows

and shout back.

The Governor, Diarmuid O'Hegarty, later Secretary of the Executive Council of the Irish Free State, demanded that these goings-on should cease. The internees refused.

O'Hegarty threatened that the troops would open fire on anyone leaning out of the windows. This news was relayed to the crowds which then swelled in numbers. When the internees refused, the soldiers opened fire on the windows at 3 p.m. on 14 July 1922, and George Plunket and a volunteer called Kane were wounded. Then a volley was poured into the cells and more prisoners were hit by ricochets.

Amazingly, no one died. Peadar O'Donnell, who was there, blandly remarks: "One often marvels at the ways of bullets and how they can avoid doing serious injury."^[9]

The non-co-operative internees of D wing were moved to C wing further away from the perimeter wall. There they decided that in order to ensure 'association' amongst themselves, the doors of the cells should be sprung. This was an old trick of the political prisoners, and was accomplished by jamming a book – generally the cell Bible – between the door and the case, close to the hinge, and then slamming the door. The resultant damage meant that the door could not be locked unless new hinges were fitted, a time-consuming task for the authorities, who contented themselves with placing sentries at the end of the wing, with orders to shoot anyone who appeared on the landing after 11 p.m. Numerous shots were fired but no hits were recorded.

The four wings of the prison were filled and the internees established their own central administration, situated in C wing. Communication with the other wings was established when the internees manufactured a key to the large padlocks on the trap-doors which led to the roof space. This overhead route proved safe and lasted the duration. In addition, a few walls were knocked down where necessary. In this way the entire jail was organized. Classes and games were organized with deadly seriousness. A prison journal, *The Book of Cells*, appeared, written by Liam Mellows. Communication with the outside world was easy. Messages were smuggled in and out by tried-and-true methods, many of which are still in use in the Crumlin Road today. In addition to the 'legitimate' content of food parcels, alcohol was quite common. Moreover, the administrative chaos was such that the prison authorities did not know quite how many prisoners they actually had. For several months two men were hidden from the daily count, which was designed to facilitate future escape attempts.

For, despite Deputy Governor Paudeen O'Keefe's boast that "Nothing escapes here but the gas" (which was frequently cut off as a punitive measure, anyway), escape bids were of regular occurrence. The A wing tunnel was the most promising. There was a shorter distance to go, there was plenty of storage space for the earth under the floor, and digging was easy. But rigorous searches unearthed it after a few months, and the C wing tunnel of Rory O'Connor and Tom MacMahon (both experienced engineers) which went from the floor of a ground-floor cell, was also soon discovered. An attempted tunnel into the jail from 28 Innisfallen Parade was discovered also.

There were other ways of getting out, however. Tom Barry, dressed in a stolen Free State Army uniform and armed with a forged pass, slipped through the wire during a football game and got to the outside gate. Unfortunately for him, he went to the wrong gate, was recognized, caught and later transferred to the internment camp at Gormanston.^[10]

However, on his arrival there, Barry walked through the front gate, headed right across the camp and through the wire before the startled sentries could do a thing. He got away safely.

Another attempted escape ended more tragically. It was an ambitious plan. Guns and uniforms were smuggled in and a home-made mine was constructed by Tom MacMahon to blow up the front gates if the guards refused to open them. Everything was set for 10 October 1923. Dick Barrett, shot with Mellows, McKelvey and O'Connor on 8 December, was the leader. But the soldiers spotted the attempt and opened fire. Peadar Breslin was killed and another man was wounded.

Andy Cooney accepted responsibility for the escape bid, but surprisingly at the time, no reprisals were undertaken.

Arbour Hill was, perhaps, the worst billet for internees. There, brutality was commonplace. Many prisoners had to endure semi-hangings and mock crucifixions by being tied up by the hands, their toes just touching the floor until they fainted, whereupon water was thrown over them and they were strung up again. Hosings were a frequent punishment.

Arbour Hill is a military detention barracks in Dublin, and, in addition to the internees, it then housed soldiers found guilty of indiscipline and infractions of army rules. It was feared and hated by most internees and was regarded as much worse than 'the Joy' or the Curragh. Most prisoners were there for some additional punishment, and many were in solitary confinement. The collective spirit of resistance which prevailed elsewhere was generally absent.

Other internees were lodged in Kilmainham (now a public museum) in Dublin, Maryborough (Portlaoise) and camps at Newbridge, Gormanston, Finner, Harepark (Curragh), and in jails in Dundalk, Cork, Kilkenny and the North Dublin Union (women).

On the outside, the campaign to get the prisoners released was led by the indefatigable Maud Gonne McBride. Pickets, Parades, meetings, protests, fund-raising activities took all her time and that of her numerous helpers.

The Church had acted despicably from a Republican point of view, with the October Pastoral, and not much was expected from it. Within the camps the clergy, with a few honourable exceptions, were regarded by the men as mere tools of the commandants. Anti-clericalism outside even saw an occupation of the Archbishop's palace in Dublin by protesting Republicans in December 1923.

In conjunction with the protests outside and a rising groundswell of resentment at Cumann an Gaedheal's intransigence over the prisoners, hunger strikes started.^[11] On 12 August 1923 Oglagh na h-Eireann GHQ had sent in word to all IRA prisoners that decisions about hunger strikes were to be left up to the elected O/Cs in the jails and camps. This instruction came from Frank Aiken, who was none too enthusiastic about hunger strike as a tactic. But feelings were running high amongst the internees. In October, Mountjoy voted to go on strike, 425 men, including ten TDs, being involved. Kilmainham followed suit and then the Curragh and Newbridge joined in. By 23 October the *Republican Bulletin* was claiming 8,000 men on strike. This was far too many. Mass hunger strikes, as history has shown, can rarely be as effective as a few dedicated individuals on strike. Within three weeks there were massive defections as men, many of whom had entered into the strikes too lightly, caved in.

Peadar O'Donnell^[12] has written a moving account of this particular strike, which lasted 41 days. The hard core of strikers, who by late November numbered about 200, were moved, on stretchers, from jail to jail, camp to camp, to break up their solidarity.^[13] Following the horrifying death of Tom Ashe from forcible feeding by the British on 25

September 1917, this tactic hadn't been repeated, but the Government, despite mounting public agitation, was prepared to let men die. On 18 November even Cardinal Logue expressed the hope that internees would be released before Christmas. Two days later came the first death. Commandant Denis Barry died in Newbridge camp. On 22 November Captain Andrew Sullivan died in Mountjoy. Next day the strike was called off, after Tom Derrig, Frank Gallagher and the leader, Michael Kilroy, had checked with the other jails and camps.

One positive result of the strike was that the women political prisoners (in March 1923 there had been 300) were released, but otherwise the aftermath was sullen bitterness, and the Government stepped in, hoping to spread further dissension among the ranks by releasing Volunteers who would sign a form accepting the Free State.^[14] When most refused, the rule was changed to make it easier, and during the winter of 1923-1924 most of the camps were emptied. But by 2 April 1924 there were still 1,600 internees. By 21 May the total had fallen to 616. Escapes continued. Peadar O'Donnell, in March 1924, two days before the abortive army mutiny, literally walked out of Harepark camp on the Curragh, in disguise.

Republicans then threatened to disrupt the forthcoming Tailteann Games, and a further 407 were released.^[15] On 16 July de Valera was let out. By then all the leaders of the IRA had either escaped, been released or had died. Some, like Austin Stack, who had undergone a 41-day hunger strike, emerged completely broken in health (Stack died in 1929). The remaining 209 were let out in small batches in 1924.

With the army mutiny crushed and the IRA disorganized, the Government was feeling fairly confident, but legislation to permit internment remained on the Statute Book. Indeed, more repressive laws had been added. O'Higgins' Public Safety Bill of 1923 allowed flogging for arson or armed robbery, whether political or not. "If flogging is retrograde, the offence is retrograde," he said.^[16] On 16 January 1924 the Public Safety Act was re-enacted until 31 January 1925, giving the Government the power to suspend habeas corpus. This Act was replaced the next year by a Treasonable Offences Act (known to the public generally as 'the Murder Bill') which gave the death penalty for "Levying war against the State". It passed through the Dail only because of the abstention of the Sinn Fein TDs.

Vengeance dies hard in Ireland. On 10 July 1927 Kevin O'Higgins, Minister for Justice and External Affairs, was shot while walking to Mass near his home in Blackrock, Dublin. No one was ever arrested for the murder, but the motive was not hard to find. To 11,000 internees and their dependants he typified the repression they had undergone. While it is true to say that some of his colleagues had tended to use him as a scapegoat for the more repugnant decisions they felt they had been forced to take (certainly, Mulcahy and Blythe were equally responsible), it is quite true to say that few mourned his death, despite Terence de Vere White's apologia on him.^[17] Few could forget his cruel words on the murdered Childers, nor that he justified in the Dail the murder of Rory O'Connor, his best man and the man due to be the godfather of his child.

The Government reacted swiftly to the shooting of O'Higgins. In addition to arresting 12 known IRA men – who had no connection with the murder^[18] – they rushed three bills through the Dail on 20 July 1927. The Public Safety Bill became law on 11 August. It was a clear infringement on the civil rights of the individual and of the right of trial by jury, but the Government was even more concerned with the other bills which were designed

to get de Valera's new Fianna Fail TDs into the Dail, by declaring that any election candidate on nomination must swear to take the oath.

Sure enough, after jesuitical quibbles, de Valera and his party entered the Dail, only to lose the September 1927 General Election.^[19]

Despite the continuing sporadic IRA campaign, internment was not re-introduced. The authorities resorted to what was known as the cat-and-mouse tactic. Suspects were picked up by the gardai, held for up to a week and then released, only to be picked up the next month – or even at the garda station door in some cases. This 'mini internment' was successfully challenged in the circuit court in March 1930, however, when Patrick McKee, Charles O'Neill, John Sugrue and Donal O'Donoghue succeeded in getting damages ranging from £40 to £100. Further suits were successful, and the Government increasingly resorted to trumped-up minor charges to detain opponents. These, however, were felt by the gardai authorities to be not draconian enough. Moreover, convictions in front of a jury were becoming increasingly difficult to obtain, due not only to sympathy for the accused but, in many cases, because of intimidation by the IRA. The new Chief of Police (Garda Siochana), Eoin O'Duffy, was constantly pressing for additional powers and he got them. On 14 October, the day the Dail reassembled from its summer recess, Article 2A (a Public Safety Bill) was inserted into the Constitution; three days later it became law. Twelve Republican groups, from the IRA to the Irish Working Farmers' Committee, to the Workers Research Board were proscribed; only Sinn Fein escaped. *An Phoblacht* and *Workers Voice* were banned. The number of men in prison began to rise. In November, military tribunals began to sit. Sentences were harsh. George Gilmore got five years for 'possession of arms' – a wooden pistol whittled in prison and used in an unsuccessful attempt to bluff his way out. Most prisoners ended up in Arbour Hill where they campaigned to get political treatment. When a military tribunal could sentence one to jail for speaking or writing against the Government, who needed internment? Lulled into a false sense of security, Cumann na nGaedheal called an election. They were too complacent. They lost, 72-57. De Valera was in power. In 1931 de Valera had described Cosgrave's Public Safety Act as "the most abominable piece of legislation this House was ever asked to pass". By 1934 he had introduced a similar Act himself. When challenged by the Labour Leader, William Norton, his reply was feeble. "Such extreme powers could not be entrusted to the previous regime who would misuse them," he said.

Yet his new Government started in the right way as far as Republicans were concerned. Frank Aiken was the new Minister of Defence. His first act was to go to Arbour Hill military prison where those sentenced by military tribunal were held. There he conversed with his old comrade George Gilmore. Next day 20 prisoners sentenced by the hated military tribunals were released. Within weeks the remaining 77 were out.^[20]

By 18 March the Fianna Fail Government had suspended the operation of Article 2A; military tribunals were dissolved, special powers and detention suspended, the ban on twelve groups was lifted. Enquiries even found against the gardai on a few occasions in those heady months. In April the CID was reduced in strength and the unpopular Col. Neligan was "sent on compulsory leave of absence". True, the take-over of power had been a testing moment. Many TDs had come to the Dail armed, fearing a coup.^[21] Ernest Blythe recounts seeing a 'venerable old gentleman' attempting to assemble a sub-machine gun in a telephone kiosk in the Dail itself. But despite this, for the first few years things seemed in de Valera's control.

It was not to last. Out of office after ten years, Cumann na nGaedheal moved even further to the right. Ex-Police Chief General O'Duffy^[22] appeared as the head of the Fascist Blueshirts, which had arisen out of the Army Comrades Association, a Cumann na nGaedheal front. De Valera had started the 'Economic War' with England on 1 July 1932 and, with Cosgrave's party in disarray, he felt he had a chance for an increased majority. The election was called for 24 January 1933, and he got what he wanted; a gain of five seats, while Cumann na nGaedheal lost nine. Yet, with 77 seats out of 153, he was still virtually dependent upon getting support from some Independent and Labour TDs. The IRA had reluctantly agreed to work for Fianna Fail "against the Cosgrave gang"; not, be it noted, specifically pro-Fianna Fail.

At Navan on 10 January de Valera had said: "No section of the community will be allowed to arm. All arms shall be completely at the disposal of the majority of the elected representatives of the people." Like many ex-revolutionaries turned respectable politician, de Valera was to be sorely embarrassed by his former friends.

The violence between the Blue Shirts and IRA continued, and prosecutions rose. On 8 September 1933 Cumann na nGaedheal united with the Centre Party to become Fine Gael: increasingly, the Blue Shirts were their strong-arm men.^[23] Red scares were actively encouraged by the Church. It was a time of feverish activity and increasing violence. Rumours of an attempted coup by the Blueshirts and some of the army were rife, but their bluff was called in August 1933 when the Government banned O'Duffy's 'Grand Parade' through Dublin. To do this they re-enacted Article 2A. O'Duffy had lost face, and although violence between Blueshirts and the IRA continued for several years, the Blueshirts were already, did they but know it, consigned to the dustbin of history. At first the military tribunals dealt more heavily with the Blueshirts than with the IRA. In 1934, 102 IRA men were convicted as compared with 349 Blueshirts, but soon the balance was to change. 1935, 112 IRA men to 74 Blue-shirts; 1936, 129-0; 1937, 12-0. The Blueshirts were finished then. All that remained was their Spanish Civil War fiasco.^[24] The IRA itself was in disarray with a split between left and right. The Republican Congress group, led by O'Donnell and Gilmore, had left or been expelled. On 3 March 1935, in a Lenten Pastoral the Church again forbade the faithful to belong to the IRA. De Valera had now more backing. The IRA's involvement in industrial trades disputes he regarded as the last straw.

The Government had used soldiers to scab on the Dublin tram and bus workers strike. The IRA supported the Strikers. On 26 March, following the wounding of two gardai in Grafton Street by two phantom cyclists, the Government swooped. 43 IRA and Republican Congress men were rounded up. The military tribunal handed out more sentences. By 20 April 104 were in jail.

The difference between being sentenced by military tribunal and being interned was a narrow one. There was no appeal, no jury, and no real chance to defend oneself before the tribunal. True, a specific charge was levelled, but generally it was "belonging to an illegal organization" – which had been perfectly legal the month before^[25] or "refusing to answer questions" – which carried a mandatory six months. An alternative charge was "possession of documents", always an easy touch for at least six months. Arbour Hill was the prison most commonly used. From 1932 to 1935 conditions were not too bad.

Regulars such as Gilmore, O'Donnell, Twomey and Killeen tended almost to regard it as an old familiar hotel. But by 1936 all that had been changed. Solitary confinement and the 'Quiet System', whereby prisoners were not allowed to communicate with each

other, were the order of the day, although a Cabinet Committee was set up on 15 December 1936 to make 'recommendations' concerning the release of prisoners sentenced by military tribunals. But specific internment was soon to raise its head again. The futile 'English campaign' got off to a bang on Monday 16 January 1939 with seven major explosions – two in London, three in Manchester and one each in Birmingham and Alnwick. This followed the 'Declaration of War' upon England signed by Russell, Hayes, O'Flaherty, Grogan, Plunkett and Fleming. An ultimatum which had been greeted by derision.

Internment had been introduced in Northern Ireland on 22 December 1938, following "discovery of a conspiracy, etc" and 34 men had been interned in Crumlin. Russell and his colleagues rather naïvely believed that if the bombing campaign were confined to England, nothing would be done by the Fianna Fail Government. Their illusions were soon to be shattered. On 14 June the new Offences Against the State Act set up military tribunals.^[26] On 22 August the composition of the Special Military Court was announced: Colonels Bennett and McKenna, and Majors Joyce, Whelan and Tuite. On 8 September 1939 Gerry Boland became Minister of Justice. Boland had a Republican family background. His brother Harry had been in Dartmoor and Lewes jails and was an IRA commandant and a Dail deputy. He was shot by Free Staters early in the Civil War. Gerry himself had also been interned in Frongoch after the 1916 rising. He did not let any of this influence him: he had more Republicans shot! He was to prove every bit as flexible as Kevin O'Higgins.

It was obvious to all that internment was on the cards and that those sentenced by military tribunals would be interned upon completion of their sentences. Strenuous attempts were made to prevent this. On 23 October a gelignite bomb went off at the outer wall of Mountjoy, in an effort to rescue Paddy McGrath, Willie McGuinness, Laurence Grogan and Peadar O'Flaherty. It failed. Action was taken in the courts also, with more success. On 1 December MacBride got Justice Gavan Duffy to agree that Seamus Burke of Mayo was held illegally in Arbour Hill. Duffy ruled that point 6 of the Offences Against the State Act was invalid. As a result, 53 men were released next day. The Government, and particularly Boland, were not amused. On 5 January the Emergency Powers (Amendment) Act 1940 was' rushed through the Dail and passed 82-9. The Offences Against the State Act had allowed for review of sentences. The new Bill did not. Constitutionally, it was decided that it could not be challenged since it was "passed pursuant to the resolution relating to the Second World War" (although the Twenty-six Counties were neutral and remained neutral). This legal manoeuvring aroused qualms among many, including the President of the Republic, Douglas Hyde who, for the first time since the new constitution came into force, convened a meeting of the Council of State. The Bill was referred to the Supreme Court but was declared valid on 9 February.

This was a period of great hunger strikes. De Valera and his Ministers were in a particularly vulnerable position. They had seen their old comrades, MacSwiney and Ashe, die on hunger strike and had denounced the 'murderous British' for permitting it. Many of them had been on hunger strike themselves. In Ireland it was a powerful and emotive weapon. One IRA internee, Charles McCarthy from Cork had won his release with a hunger strike from 16 September to 12 October 1939. Con Lehane had gone on hunger and thirst strike the same day and been released. On 31 October the Government claimed that "As arrest and detention in accordance with the powers conferred by

Parliament are the only means available for the maintenance of Public Order and Security, they cannot permit the State authorities to be deprived of these means through the policy of hunger strike. The prisoners on hunger strike will, accordingly, not be released."^[27] This was mere bluff, however, and Daly, McCarthy and Lynch, whose hunger strike provoked the action, were released almost at once. Patrick McGrath was also released and a *nolle prosequi* entered in his case on 7 December. Things looked bad for the Government. When questioned in the Dail as to whether people on hunger strike could be held, Boland replied: "I certainly hope so." On being pushed to give a 'yes' or 'no' answer, he conceded: "As regards the question of vacillation and letting out the hunger strikers, I do not want to run away from that either. I admit that, on the surface, it looks bad. It looks like weakness and it may be very hard to justify making a statement and going back on it."^[28]

Conditions in Arbour Hill, "the coldest prison in Europe", and Mountjoy were by now appalling – as was the food. Political treatment was denied the men and in an attempt to wring some concessions from authorities the six-man prisoners' committee went on hunger strike: McNeela, D'Arcy, MacCurtain, Traynor, T. Grogan and J. Plunkett. When the warders tried to separate them and take McNeela and D'Arcy away, a riot broke out which the warders put down with savage ferocity. Many prisoners were badly beaten. Although the press was heavily censored and the public knew little of what was happening to internees in the jails, news did leak out and public concern grew. But Boland, by now, did not intend to give in. To back down would be to admit defeat. And so, on 16 April, after a hunger strike of 50 days, Tony D'Arcy died in St. Bricin's Hospital to which he had been moved on 27 March. John McNeela lasted a further three days before he, too, died. D'Arcy had been serving three months for "refusing to answer questions," and knew he would be interned upon release. McNeela had been sentenced to two years for having a pirate radio transmitter. As they died, the Government announced that IRA men would receive political treatment. The strike was called off for the survivors. In order to obtain decent treatment two men had had to die. The fight was by no means won yet. Traynor and Plunkett were interned, but Grogan got 14 years for involvement in the Magazine Fort raid,^[29] while MacCurtain, son of the Lord Mayor of Cork who was murdered by the RIC at the instigation of the British on 20 March 1920, was sentenced to death, only to be reprieved at the last minute. On 16 August 1940 the Emergency Powers (Amendment) Act was further altered, and the right to appeal from findings of the military tribunal was deleted. Within a month two men, Harte and McGrath, had been convicted and summarily executed.

De Valera defended internment several times during the war. "Conditions were good," he claimed. Press censorship forbade any contradiction. Small wonder that many people fell into the trap of believing that the Curragh was a glorified holiday camp. "The internees were deprived of nothing but their liberty." As Sean Edmonds retorts, "You might as well say a man who had been held up and stripped in mid-winter had been deprived of nothing but his clothes." In fact, huts were damp, cold and draughty. The men had no privacy and were crammed 60 to a hut. Dysentery was common, lice endemic. The total number interned varied, but in all about 800 men were resident in the 'Curragh Holiday Camp'.^[30] Constant herding and harassment led to friction and faction. The Curragh, during the war, was perhaps the unhappiest internment camp in Irish history. Schisms and splits were of frequent occurrence. The Hayes affair exacerbated these and the bitterness grew. Eddie Keenan, then a young man of 22,

recalls being very disillusioned by all the bickering and faction fighting. Neil Gould Verschoyle, who had studied in Moscow and married a Russian girl, was the leader of the communist faction, and was blamed by many for factionalism, but it is only fair to say that the Grogan 'faction', the Tadgh Lynch 'faction' and the Pearse Kelly 'faction' were all equally sectarian. This disillusioned many, who signed out. The war was going on, there was no real agitation for their release, and dependants were financially very hard hit.

Activities did go on, however. Gould, before he was transferred on the insistence of Cardinal MacRory who believed he was subverting the "good Catholic youth" (he was, in some cases), held Russian classes. The late Mairtin O'Cadhain taught Irish, and Jim O'Donovan held German classes. There was the inevitable camp paper. This one was called *Barbed Wire*.

The worst incident occurred on 14 December 1940. Grogan, the new O/C, decided upon a protest over the reduction of the butter ration, already miniscule. As a result, a hut was burnt down by the internees. Unfortunately, the fire spread to another hut from which an escape tunnel was being dug.^[31] Consequently it was discovered. All prisoners were locked up by the armed guards, without food, from Saturday evening until Monday morning. Suspected ring leaders like Grogan were made to run the gauntlet to the Glasshouse and were savagely beaten before being put in solitary confinement for ten weeks. On the Monday morning the prisoners were let out – and marched up to the hut for breakfast as usual. The guards seemed to panic and, as the prisoners drew near, opened fire. Barney Casey, a noted Irish dancer, was shot in the back and died two hours later. Martin Staunton, Bob Flanagan, Art Moynihan and Walter Mitchell were wounded. At the inquest on Casey, Sean MacBride, on behalf of the dead man's family, was allowed to ask only one question: "Why was Barney Casey shot in the back?" Whereupon the inquest was adjourned. This kind of tampering with the law came naturally to Boland, as the George Plant case was to prove ([See Chapter 14 – On political prisoners](#)).

Considering the abominable conditions – heating, for example, was provided by small turf stoves, and the walls and window frames of the huts were so poor that water seeped in constantly – it is remarkable that so many have 'happy memories' of the Curragh. Eddie Keenan of Belfast, amongst others, felt that "it was a privilege to be there in the company of such men as Brendan Behan – who on one occasion rolled nude in the snow at Christmas time for a bet." "I learnt a lot," Keenan says, "and became more tolerant. Before being in the Curragh I thought communists had horns on their heads." Nonetheless, he recollects that at times things were so bad that the men scabbled for bones.

This was in strict contrast to the conditions meted to the aliens and 'spies' interned during the war. Republicans were particularly bitter that whereas their guards had orders to shoot to kill any would-be escapers, the guards of the German prisoners were told to fire only warning shots over their heads. Moreover; German prisoners had it easy compared to Irish Republicans. The ten spies – probably the most incompetent spies in the history of German espionage –^[32] were housed first in Mountjoy and then in Athlone and Sligo. They didn't have to live in cells, could move freely about the building, received good food, were allowed money and alcohol and were able to obtain extra provisions, even though a war was in progress.

In all, about 200 German military personnel, of whom 164 were naval ratings, were

interned in a special camp – the Curragh. All were shipped back to Germany in July and August of 1945. The Irish could hear German songs coming from the camp next door and knew that the Germans were allowed alcohol.

The spies were released in September 1945 and most of them elected to stay in Ireland. Eight were briefly re-arrested on 12 April 1947 and taken to Mountjoy; one, Dr. Goertz, committed suicide. Guenther Schuetz was the only spy who managed to escape during internment. He got away on 28 February 1942, but was recaptured at Caitlin Brugha's house on 30 April of the same year.

From the point of view of the Governments, both north and south of the border, internment was a success during World War Two. There was virtually no campaign to release the prisoners. It was not until December 1945 that a Republican Prisoners Release Association was formed in Dublin. In April 1946 it issued a constitution claiming that it "had no connection with any political party and its appeal is directed to all freedom-loving men and women who believe in the right of Ireland to be free from foreign aggression in any form." Prominent IRA men and ex-IRA men like Twomey and Killeen were on the committee, but its main task was to agitate for the release of political prisoners in Portlaoise, where, unbeknownst to the public, men had gone naked for four and a half years in solitary, fighting to get political treatment. For by then the internees in the Curragh had been released, some in late 1943, but the majority in November 1944. The last men were let out in June 1945. It is important to stress that internment had 'worked'! The IRA were exhausted financially. Art McMillen estimated that it cost some £150,000 to keep the dependants' fund going during internment in the South, which stretched the movement's resources to the utmost. Most ex-internees spoken to, estimate that between 80% and 90% of internees dropped out of the movement upon release. Only principle kept many from signing out. The men from the North were also particularly bitter about being interned in the South, which they instinctively had felt was 'safe'. What is remarkable is that so many did indeed stick by their principles. But four years without visits is a long time. Willie John McCorry, who was interned from 1940-1945, was to have been married the week he was arrested. (To him, a Northerner, it was particularly galling that the tricolour was flying over the camp). He was one of the luckier men whose fiancées had waited for them, and he is now married with five children, still a Republican, and back in Long Kesh. But many saw their girl friends and, in some cases, their wives leave them. After the initial euphoria on release, many became sullen and disillusioned. It took nearly ten years for the movement to reorganize itself.

In 1939 the IRA, under Sean Russell, felt that if their bombing campaign was confined to England they could work with impunity in the South of Ireland. The hundreds of internees experienced the error of this view, but few seemed to have learned the lesson. The 1956-1962 border campaign was planned well in advance. Raids at Felstead (Essex OTC school) in July 1953, Gough barracks, Armagh, in June 1954, and Arborfield on 11 August 1954, had gained guns and kudos, as well as life sentences for Donal Murphy, James Murphy and Joe Doyle,^[33] and eight years for Cathal Goulding, Sean MacStiophan and Manus Canning. By December 1955 the IRA felt it could act. In many ways they were more sophisticated than before, but the old naïveté persisted. In a directive from Oglaiigh na h-Eireann to all O/Cs, dated 12 December, GHQ stated;

In view of recent pronouncements by the leader of the Twenty-six County Government and his reminder to the press of the fact that certain Acts, passed by the Leinster House regime in 1939, are still in force, it is not reasonable [*sic*] to assume that coercive measures against the army are under consideration by the Twenty-six County authorities.^[34]

The campaign got under way on 11 December 1956 with a series of explosions. Eleven days later internment was introduced in the North and 30 men were lifted; the figures rose to 256 (about 400 were detained at first). After signings-out, 167 remained in for the duration. On 1 January 1957, in the abortive Brookeborough barracks raid, Sean South and Fergal O'Hanlon were killed, only to become immortalized in the Republican songbook. All 12 survivors of the raid who got back over the border got six months under the Offences Against the State Act for refusing to answer questions, but massive turnouts at the funerals of South and O'Hanlon convinced many Republicans in the South that the Taoiseach, Costello, would not move against them. Nonetheless, on 8 and 12 January swoops netted virtually the entire IRA council and GHQ staff, including MacCurtain, Magan, Grogan and Russell, who all ended up in the Bridewell and later in Mountjoy with three six month sentences. The number of prisoners rose to 53, but MacBride and his party, Clan na Poblachta, forced Costello to call an election. Fianna Fail won with 78 seats. Republicans were jubilant. De Valera and Fianna Fail had condemned the arrest of the Republican prisoners, and surely they would release them as they had done in 1932.

Sinn Fein polled 65,640 votes and had O'Bradaigh, J.J. Rice, J.J. McGirl (in Mountjoy at the time) and Fergal O'Hanlon's brother elected. Now they could even claim some sort of mandate from the people.

The elation was to be short lived. Some prisoners were released. But on 4 July 1957 an RUC man, Cecil Gregg, was killed at Forkhill. Colonel W.W.B. Topping the North's Minister of Home Affairs, demanded internment in the Twenty-six Counties. The Dail had adjourned for its summer recess that day, but within the next two days 63 Republicans were arrested. Most had made no attempt to go underground, believing that quiescence in the Twenty-six Counties would guarantee immunity. They had no concept of the economic and diplomatic pressures which could be put upon the Southern Government and, despite their abhorrence for politicians and party politics, they had failed to realise how easily TD's or MP's can shelve their principles.

On 8 July the Government of the South announced that Part 2 of the Offences Against the State Act was in operation. Internment was on again. Those Fianna Fail TD's (especially in North Tipperary) who had publicly supported resolutions calling on Costello to release all Republican prisoners had to keep quiet or resign. There were no resignations. Moreover, 36 Republicans still in Mountjoy were trapped. On their release, they would go straight to the Curragh camp. On 20 July, 24 tried to escape with a large scaling ladder, but were spotted. All were soon in the Curragh camp.

Conditions this time were better, but certainly not as pleasant as T.P. Coogan paints them in *The IRA*. The Irish Red Cross, headed by Mrs. Tom Barry, inspected the camp and found it 'excellent'. She, however, did not have to live there. Numbers were fewer – four huts with 40 men in each hut,^[35] but the huts were still damp and dirty and the timbers were rotting. The camp authorities claimed that red tape was responsible for delays in obtaining new planks, and it was a year before the rotting timbers were replaced. The camp was surrounded by five sets of barbed-wire fencing and there was a trench, six feet deep and eight feet wide, which was booby-trapped with flares. Watch

towers were manned by armed guards who also patrolled the perimeter and were equipped with ammonia grenades. Despite these precautions there were escapes. Three prisoners, Conlon, O'Toole, Kelly, climbed through the showers' window, an obvious weak spot in the defence, and made off but were recaptured a few days later. This provoked intense speculation in the camp. Official IRA policy was 'no escapes, it's too risky', but many internees were unwilling to accept the rule. On 27 September 1958, Rory O'Bradaigh and Dave O'Connell (then 18 and now a leading Provisional), escaped through the wire during a football match and, after hiding under a camouflage grass blanket, made their escape. This was an 'official' escape, made with the blessing of the O/C MacCurtain. But to the men in the Charlie Murphy group, brooding in their hut, which was known as 'Little Rock', it was not ambitious enough. Accordingly, after hearing from Sean MacBride that the International Court at Strasbourg would be unlikely to find against the Government, Murphy decided to go ahead with a mass break attempt. The military guards were accustomed to frequent alarm drills often caused by sheep springing the trip wires. They were, therefore, somewhat lethargic. On the face of it, the attempt was madness, but, on 2 December, 26 men armed with wire cutters rushed the wire in broad daylight. The guards were so astonished that the men were through the first fence before warning shots were fired. The men ignored them and ran on past the guards. Brian Boylan was shot and wounded, but the rest cleared the second and third fences. At the ditch ammonia grenades were hurled at them, flares went off and prisoners reeled about in a haze of gas while bullets flew. The guards did, however, fire high – the only man who did not was disarmed by a prison officer. Despite the wire and gas 16 men got through and only two were recaptured. A week-long police and army hunt was in vain because the local people hid most of the escapees.

Surprisingly, there were no reprisals in the camp and life continued as boring as ever for most of the prisoners, the oldest of whom, Pádraig O'Ceallaigh of Mayo, was 68; the youngest, 17-year-old Michael Kelly of Galway.

The huts were open at 7.00 a.m., and recreation included football and darts as well as handicrafts; the usual plethora of crosses and handkerchiefs was produced. Frank McGlade, who had experienced internment in Derry, Crumlin, and on the *Al Rawdah*, was in the Curragh during 1958-1959 (he had been on the run since 1956) and described it as his 'favourite'. He liked the open countryside, but found it ironic that the tricolour flew and the huts were named after men like Pearse, McDonagh and Brugha.

This time the campaign to release the internees was more active. It was costing the Prisoners Dependants Fund £400 a month to keep up the payments, inadequate though they were, and money was scarce. The imaginative suggestion of internee Frank Driver that a wife of an internee with ten children should take them to the palace of the late Most Reverend Dr. John C. McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin, and deposit them there for safekeeping until her husband was released, was not put into operation. Nor was his scheme for a band of women relatives to march on the camp armed with wire cutters and cut their way in. More practical steps were taken. Sean MacBride took up the case of Gerry Lawless. Lawless and eight others had been interned in July 1957 but were given a separate hut to themselves because they were ostracized by the rest of the camp. Eight were released upon signing an undertaking, but Lawless, who was not in the IRA, having sided with Joe Christle in the split, refused to do so. After the appeal to the High Court failed, MacBride took the case to the Human Rights Commission at Strasbourg, where it was entered in November 1957 and ruled admissible on 30 August 1958.^[36] On advice of

his lawyers, Lawless signed out on 10 December 1958. It was not until 1 July 1961 that the verdict was eventually given, long after the last internee was released. It went against Lawless (as Unionists such as Brian McRoberts were to gleefully point out whenever internment was challenged) but mainly on technicalities. It did establish that the 'undertaking' given by internees who sign out has no legal status since it was not included in the Offences Against the State Act. Even more importantly, the court ruled that it was for them to judge whether a state of emergency existed in the country in question and that in future they need not merely accept the assurances of whatever government chose to opt out of the provisions against detention without charge or trial – as Greece was to discover in 1970.

The IRA border campaign of 1956-1962 was an almost unmitigated disaster. The IRA could claim that about 200 militants had taken on 5,000 TA men, 3,000 RUC men, 12,000 B men, 1,500 specially trained commandos plus a large number of security guards – close on 30,000 men. There had been, in the five-year campaign, 300 major incidents. And several hundred minor ones. Six members of the RUC had been killed, 19 wounded. Eleven B specials and two soldiers had been wounded also. Several million pounds of damage had been caused – the overtime bill for the police alone was £10m. But in the last analysis the campaign was an abysmal failure. Two IRA men had been killed in action by the police and five had accidentally blown themselves up. The people had not rallied, as anticipated, behind the IRA. The Six Counties had not been 'won back'. The Unionist Government had, indeed, been strengthened. "If the IRA had not existed, they would have been invented," as many a Unionist politician said to his friends. And so the campaign petered out. By 15 March 1959 the last internee in the South had been released. The North was not to follow suit until April 1961. A forthcoming visit of the Irish President, Sean T. O'Kelly, to the USA probably had something to do with the Southern Government's decision, but by then it was clear that the campaign was sputtering out. Moreover, there were always the military courts to sentence recalcitrants. Accordingly the Curragh was closed.

Political commentators until recently assured the Southern Irish people that they had seen the last of internment. Their hopes were a little too sanguine. On 5 December 1970 the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, announced to the nation in a speech remarkably similar to the Unionist Government's of December 1938;

The Garda authorities have informed me that reliable information has come into their possession to the effect that a secret armed conspiracy exists in the country to kidnap one or more prominent persons. Connected with this conspiracy are plans to carry out armed bank robberies which the police believe may well involve murders or attempted murders. The Government view with deep gravity *[sic]* the situation arising from this information which has been carefully checked. They have given the fullest consideration to the problems that this gives rise to and they have decided that, unless they become satisfied that this threat is removed, they will bring into operation, without further notice, Part 2 of the Offences Against the State Act (1940) which provides for internment. The Government have given instruction that places of detention be prepared immediately and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe is now being informed of the Government's proposals as those proposals will involve derogation from certain provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Political commentators saw this as an obvious kite being flown, and few, if any, believed in the mysterious information about kidnappings. The Association of Irish Jurists on the next day, Human Rights Day, as it happened, strongly condemned the Taoiseach's

statement and declared that internment was totally foreign to the rule of law. But in Beffast the PM, Chichester Clark, welcomed the statement as justifying internment in the North. Well-known Unionist right wingers such as William Craig, the Orange Rev. Martyn Smith and the Rev. Ian Paisley jumped on the bandwagon and acclaimed internment.^[37]

In 1971 there was speculation that Faulkner and Lynch had agreed that if the former would intern extreme 'Loyalists' as well as Republicans and Socialists the latter would reciprocate with internment in the South. In the event nothing came of the move and Lynch hypocritically issued a statement to the effect that "the introduction of internment without trial in the North is deplorable evidence of the political poverty of the policies which have been pursued there for some time." Since then Lynch has followed the iniquitous Forcible Entry Bill with the Prisons Bill, Special Courts, the expansion of the Special Branch, the Amendment of the Offences Against the State Act and the sacking of the RTE Authority. Clearly Brian Faulkner has no monopoly in bankruptcy. ([See Chapter 16](#)).

It was a time of trouble-executions,
Death, searches, nightly firing, balked escapes –
And I sat silent while my cellmate figured
Ruy Lopez' Gambit from the 'Praxis'. Silence
Best fitted our mood: we seldom spoke.
'I have a thought,' he said, tilting his stool.
'We prisoners are so many pieces taken,
Swept from the chessboard, only used again
When a new game is started.' 'There's that hope,'
I said, 'the hope of being used again.
Some day of strength, when ploughs are out in March,
The dogs of Fionn will slip their iron chains
And, heedless of torn wounds and failing wind,
Will run the old grey wolf to death at last'.
He smiled, 'I like your image. My fat kings,
And painted Queens, and purple-cassocked Bishops
Are tame, indeed, beside your angry dogs!'

– Written by Joseph Campbell, interned in the Curragh, 1923-24.

Footnotes Chapter 4:

1. Tomas Ashe and Terence MacSwiney.
2. Smyth was shot dead by IRA men about a month later, 18 July 1920, in the Cork County Club.
3. TIM PAT COOGAN, *The IRA*, London (Praeger), 1970.
4. The figure was usually given as 77, which was to achieve a mystical symbolism when Fianna Fail won 77 seats in the general election of January 1933. In fact, 82 Republicans were executed by the Free Staters during the Civil War, the last two in Ennis on 2 May 1923. See *Eamon de Valera* by the Earl of Longford and Thomas P. O'Neill, Dublin (Gill&Macmillan), 1970.

5. The entire Hales family signed a letter bitterly denouncing the reprisal.
6. There was even an attempt to 'borrow' St. Helena or the Seychelles from the British in the autumn of 1922. See *The Secret Army* by J. Bowyer Bell, London (Anthony Blond), 1970, p.40.
7. *Sworn to be Free*, several writers, Tralee (Anvil Books), 1971, p. 160. Also the fastest-made tunnel ever: 19 days.
8. PEADAR O'DONNELL, *The Gates Flew Open*, London (Jonathan Cape), 1932; paperback, Cork (The Mercier Press), 1965.
9. In addition to those wounded by guards, some internees were killed; for instance, P at Mulrennan, shot in Athlone military barracks on 6 October 1922.
10. There were over 500 internees in Gormanston. On 2 September 500 arrived there, having first been ferried from Limerick to Dublin on board the SS *Arvonnia*.
11. The policy of wrecking a jail - by such dedicated jail-wreckers as Padraic Fleming in Portlaoise, 1918-1919 (see chapter on political prisoners)- had been discontinued.
12. PEADAR O'DONNELL, *The Gates Flew Open*, pp.86-101.
13. A policy they regretted when hungerstrikers Mickey Price, Sean MacBride, and Daithi O'Donoghue escaped from the ambulance taking them from Mountjoy to Kilmainham in October 1923.
14. One of the most amusing stories about 'signing out' concerned Christy Ferguson. As a good-Republican he refused to sign out, but was ordered to do so by the IRA who wanted him as an Intelligence Officer. He then signed and arrived home, to the horror of his mother. She wouldn't speak to him. For four days she served him his meals without saying a word. At last, an IRA officer took pity on her and whispered that he had signed out under orders. She was deliriously happy and ran out to tell the neighbours: "It's all right, he's an Intelligence Officer!" Two weeks later he was interned again.
15. Figures quoted by J. Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army*, London (Anthony Blond), 1970, p.47.
16. Dail Reports, Vol.3, 1966.
17. TERENCE DE VERE WHITE, *Kevin O'Higgins*, London (Methuen), 1948; paperback, Tralee (Anvil Books), 1966.
18. The IRA denied responsibility and it is generally accepted that the assassination was the work of a few individuals acting on their own.
19. Cumann na nGaedheal 62, Fianna Fail 57.
20. MAURICE MANNING, *The Blueshirts*, Dublin (Gill & Macmillan), 1970. Bowyer Bell is inaccurate here. Aiken was Minister for Defence. The unpopular James Geoghegan was temporary Minister for Justice. Also, only 20 were released next day, including George and Charles Gilmore, Frank Ryan and Sean Hogan.
21. See T. D. Williams, in *The Years of the Great Test*, ed. Frank McManus, Cork (The Mercier Press), 1967, p.30.
22. O'Duffy was dismissed as Commissioner of the Garda Siochana on 22 February 1933. No reason was given.
23. Maurice Manning in *The Blueshirts* fails to convince one of Fine Gael's innocence in

this matter.

24. 700 went to Spain for six months. Six were killed and four died of disease. They killed more of their allies than of their enemy. After six months 654 voted to go home, nine to remain (82 returned the next week). By 22 June 1937 they were all back home.
25. Under Article 2A the IRA was declared illegal (18 June 1936).
26. It also censored the press. It became illegal to use the letters IRA even in a news item unless referred to as the 'Old IRA'. P.J. Rutledge was Minister for Justice. A news report in *The Irish Press*, Dublin, told of someone shouting "The ... (an illegal organisation) are outside" (a Catholic hall in Armagh)!
27. Quoted by Tim Pat Coogan in *The IRA*, p. 184.
28. *ibid*, p.186.
29. On 23 December 1939, 1,084,000 rounds of ammunition, the bulk of the Irish army's reserve supply, was stolen in a raid on the Magazine Fort in Phoenix Park, Dublin, and taken away in 13 lorries. It was a brilliant raid but insufficient dumps had been prepared for such a huge haul, and nine-tenths of the ammunition was recovered within a week.
30. Figures vary enormously. ENNO STEPHAN in *Spies in Ireland*, London (Macdonald), 1963, quotes the IRA as claiming 2,500 interned. Tim Pat Coogan in *The IRA* says 500. The best estimate seems to be 800, given by SEAN EDMONDS in *The Gun, The Law and The Irish People*, Tralee (Anvil), 1971 - and taken from the personal recollections of internees.
31. In all, six huts and a lot of bedding were destroyed. The tunnel was also finished. Six men got ten years each for burning the huts.
32. See *Spies in Ireland* by Enno Stephan.
33. In fact, Seamus Murphy escaped in 1959; Donal Murphy was released in 1962, and Joe Doyle in 1963.
34. Quoted by J. Bowyer Bell in *The Secret Army*, p.287.
35. 131 was the final number. 210 were at one time or another interned during the period.
36. See Registry of the Court Council of Europe, 'Lawless Case'. Publications of the European Council of Human Rights.
37. Paisley subsequently did a *volte face* when it became clear that some of his men might be subject to internment. Also he had come under the influence of astute lawyer-politician, Desmond Boal.

Chapter 5

INTERNMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND 1922-1961

1922-1924

THE state of Northern Ireland was officially set up in June 1921. The Government of Ireland Act came into force on 3 May 1920 after the British Government had quailed before the threat of armed revolt by the Protestants in the North. Prior to this there had been internment in the North under the British, at Ballykinlar, County Down.

Ballykinlar camp was then divided into two sections, each holding about 1,000 men. There was no communication between the two sections which were separated by barbed-wire fences and manned sentry boxes. All the internees were Republicans and they insisted upon organizing their own parades and exercise classes. Military-style drill, using brush handles as rifles, was carried out daily, but only inside the huts and out of sight of the guards. The Commandant of camp 1 was Leo Henderson, who had been with Sean Tracy ("the greatest fighter in Ireland" – Joe McGrath) when he was shot down by British troops and plain-clothes men in Talbot Street, Dublin, on 14 October 1920. Henderson was succeeded by Fionan Lynch. Camp 2's commandant was Joe McGrath, later founder of the Irish Hospital Sweepstakes.

Life was grim for the internees, who were not allowed any visits at all. Food parcels could be sent in but were often ransacked by the British soldiers who guarded the camp and felt their own food was inadequate. The internees had their own cook-house and organized their own cooks. One old veteran, when interviewed, said that the food had been 'pretty fair', but then anything was better than what they were to get on the *Argenta*. Letters out and in were permitted. Education classes were, as usual, held within the camp. The internees demanded total freedom. They even issued their own currency – large circular 'coins' made of linen-paper and printed with Irish characters in green, orange and black. The denominations went right up to a pound.^[1]

Raids by parties of British soldiers were frequent, as were searches. The soldiers, for some reason, took exception to rings the internees made from coins and often 'confiscated' them. Complaints were met with a rifle butt. There was not too much brutality though, but one man, Tadhg Barry of Cork, was shot for "going too close to the wire". Seven men did try an escape tunnel, but sandy soil foiled them. Internment lasted until the signing of the Treaty on 6 December 1921, after which the vast majority of the internees were released unconditionally. The others soon followed.

The freedom of many was to be short lived. The pogroms of 1920-1922 in Belfast, Lisburn and Banbridge^[2] resulted in the deaths of 455 people, 60% of them Catholics, although Catholics comprised only 30% of the population. Thousands were injured. There was a massive discrimination and intimidation campaign stirred up by sectarian utterances such as those by Carson on 'the twelfth' and by Unionist MP's like William Coate who demanded "more vigorous action" of a vast crowd of 'Loyalists' in Newtownards (this was shortly after 5,000 Catholic workers were forced to leave the shipyards by Protestants in August 1920). Thousands of Catholics fled south.

The press of the day could not be accused of not stating its position. The *Belfast Newsletter* reported "A general exodus of RC's (Sinn Feiners) [*sic*], some of those it may be assumed went South to join their fellow gunmen". On 25 May it added that all who had gone South obviously had "guilty consciences". The *Belfast Irish News* (the Catholic paper) every day carried more atrocity stories of Catholics being murdered, intimidated and beaten. The *Daily Mail*, not noted for its pro-Irish sentiments, was even moved to comment that the decision to form "the looters and murderers of the UVF into the Special Constabulary is the most outrageous thing they have ever done in Ireland." The *Manchester Guardian* was also forthright. "Whilst envenomed politicians in the Ulster

Parliament are voting themselves power to use torture and capital punishment against citizens whom they forbid to defend themselves while they scarcely attempt to protect them from massacre, some of their own partisans in Belfast carry wholesale murder to refinements of barbarity hardly surpassed in the Turkish atrocities in Armenia and Constantinople."^[3]

On 7 April 1922 the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act received the Royal Assent. It was to be known as 'the Flogging Bill'. It was also to be the first of the by now infamous Special Powers Acts.

As the violence increased, the IRA began to take reprisals. On 23 May the *Belfast Newsletter* reported:

Yesterday Councillor W.J. Twaddell (Unionist MP for West Belfast) was shot down in Lower Garfield Street at 10.30 a.m. Of the appalling crimes which have shocked the people of Belfast during recent months, none have sent a greater thrill of horror through the community. Councillor Twaddell had carried on an extensive outfitting business in North Street for many years and his commercial ability and sound commonsense had gained for him the confidence of his business friends.

As an epitaph it may be less than adulatory, but it was enough. The paper next day carried a statement from the Prime Minister, Sir James Craig, Bart:

The so called IRA, IRB, Irish Volunteers, Cumann na mBan and Fianna na hEireann have been proclaimed.
General Solly-Flood is now in command over the new RUC, 'A' Specials, 'B' Specials and 'C' Specials. Suspected Sinn Feiners have been arrested and detained.

It was internment all over again.

This time 300 men were lifted initially, and the numbers soon rose to over 500. The *Irish News* reported the event with remarkable calm, even sardonically.^[4] "Exciting early morning drives" was the heading to their story, subtitled "Familiar Coercion":

Alarm was created in many internees when night visits were made to the rural districts of the six county area, remembering the previous outcome of many of these unusual calls. This was the serious feature of the wholesale arrests during Tuesday night. When it was understood that nothing more than arrest was contemplated, the proceedings occasioned no great moment.

The paper went on to list the names of most of those interned. Sixty-three from Tyrone, 42 from Derry, 30 from Fermanagh, 46 from Armagh and the rest mainly from Belfast. The rest of the North was held under curfew (Belfast had been for some time held to an 11.00 p.m.-5.00 a.m. curfew).

At first the internees were kept in Crumlin jail, Larne workhouse and a camp near Newtownards, but in June their destination became known: the *Argenta*. Built in 1919 at a cost of £110,000, this boat had a displacement of 4,000 tons, a length of 300 feet, breadth of 50 feet. She was equipped with electric lighting – but, for the prisoners, no tables or chairs. She was moored off Carrickfergus, and visitors had to be rowed out to her. Later, internees were taken in handcuffed pairs to Larne to see relatives or solicitors in the RUC barracks.

The interior of the boat was divided into eight metal cages. "The deck is divided into eight compartments by means of steel wire netting, so that light may shine and air

circulate," was how the *Newsletter* euphemistically put it.^[51] "The ventilation system is perfect" – that is, draughty. "The internees have three hours exercise a day on the upper deck which is enclosed in wire netting; there they may amuse themselves [*sic*] as their fancy dictates." Readers were assured by the Minister for Home Affairs, Dawson Bates, who visited the hulk, that "the diet is on a liberal scale." Those internees to whom I've spoken have a different recollection: 'atrocious' was the general consensus.

Breakfast consisted of porridge, a slice of bread, and tea. Dinner was watery soup, 6 ozs. of 'fresh' meat or bacon (fish on Fridays). Supper was tea, bread and margarine, with an occasional scrap of cheese.

For the 500 men cooped up on board, the boredom was killing.^[61] They were divided into 'pro-Treaty' and 'anti-Treaty' groups by the authorities. (The guards were civilian prison warders and not soldiers). Tempers frequently became frayed and there were few educational or recreational facilities. Punishment was draconian. For example, five men – Seamus Nolan, John Boyle, Charles Burns, Robert Boyle and George Hamill – were taken off the boat and put in solitary confinement in Derry jail for 'incivility'.

This was the only occasion on which Unionists were interned. Cahir Healy, who was elected to parliament for Fermanagh and South Tyrone while interned on the *Argenta*, recalls^[72] that "a few dozen Orange gunmen" were rounded up also, "to show impartiality". They did not remain long in captivity. Feeling, with some justice, that they had been sold out, they threatened to open up a few Unionist cupboards and expose the skeletons in them – and name the 'respectable businessmen' behind the gunmen. They were rapidly released from Crumlin Road jail where they were kept apart from the 'rebels', and given enough money to emigrate to Canada or Australia.

Dicky Glenholmes, who was interned under the alias of Armour from March 1922 until July 1924, had bad memories of the *Argenta*. Some of the guards were B Specials and frequently beat up internees whom they regarded as 'troublemakers'. Today, 50 years later, he could still remember the names of the worst offenders. The official reason given for the lack of tables and chairs for internees was that they might "be used as weapons" and so food was taken off the ground. The only alcohol was a peculiarly foul mixture of potato skins and meths, the latter procured from an alcoholic medical orderly. There was, as has been mentioned, no outcry about internment and no campaign to obtain releases. The Green Cross could only provide 10/- a week for dependents and times were very bad for many. Nonetheless, some at least seem to have been stoical about it all. The father of one internee, Murphy by name, was observed astern one day in a row boat. He had braved the high seas to shout up a message to his son to the effect that "business has never been so good since you went inside."

At one stage the *Argenta* broke loose from its moorings and drifted over towards the Larne side of the Lough. Most of the internees were taken off and lodged in Larne workhouse which they regarded as a distinct improvement since the hated B men were no longer guards there. The *Argenta*'s only escape bid was foiled when Chuck Brown succeeded in boring a hole through the side only to discover that it was below water. As punishment for his foolishness – and perhaps out of a desire for self-preservation – his shipmates made him stand there with his body blocking the flow of water until help could be summoned from the screws.

Some internees 'signed out' by promising to leave the country for at least two years. They were driven to the border by the RUC. Many of these men, who numbered about 100, were to join the Garda Síochána. But for most of the internees it was to be a long

two years. On 14 September 1922, 36 men were removed to Derry jail because of 'troublemaking', and congestion aboard the *Argenta* was further eased when, just before Christmas, 200 men who had gone on hunger strike in sympathy with a strike going on in Southern jails, were also moved to Derry. The transfers were effected by night and were accompanied by a fair degree of violence from the newly-formed B specials. Internees went down the gang plank handcuffed in pairs and had to run a gauntlet of boots and fists. Some were very badly beaten up.

Health in general suffered. Two young men, Gillespie from Sion Mills and William Hyndman from Belfast, were discharged in a bad condition and died soon afterwards. Henry Carey of Toome, Terry Mackle of the Moy, Michael Keating and Billy O'Hara of Belfast were discharged due to illness. J. O'Donnell of Down and Jeremiah Tipping of Lurgan were taken to the Mater Hospital. Tipping was subsequently taken to Derry jail and kept there for five months before being released.

Derry jail was even worse than the *Argenta*. On 3 December 1921 a jail break by IRA men resulted in the accidental death of a warder (he was gagged and drugged) and the mood was still ugly when the first of the 1922 internees arrived. Food included potato skins and porridge served in dirty unwashed dishes!

The Civil War in the South ended with the 'cease fire' and 'dump arms' order of 24 May 1923, but it was to be another year until the die-hard Republicans were able to hobble off the *Argenta* and out of Derry jail. They came out to defeat and unemployment.

In 1938, when internment was reintroduced, only one survivor of the *Argenta* was arrested initially.

1924-1938

It was to be 14 years before internment was officially re-introduced. This should not be taken to imply that there was peace, however. The twenties and thirties were turbulent times. Sectarianism was still rife and memories of the early twenties died hard. Many people emigrated. Most of those who had been interned dropped out or moved away, often down South. The remnants of the IRA still drilled, and B men continued to swagger about. Although people were not interned there were plenty of police charges of a very vague nature – such as 'promoting sedition' – which could be, and were, used.

The charge of 'promoting sedition' was worth six months. Still, by 1930 the sectarianism was, temporarily, on the wane, and, despite attempts by some bigots to exacerbate it in 1931 in several provincial towns (Armagh, Lisburn and Portadown were worst affected), 1932 saw Catholic and Protestant marching together in a huge protest march at the cutting of the outdoor relief. The massive unemployment led to a working-class alliance (25% of all insured persons unemployed) but it was not to last. In 1932, following the banning of a hunger march for the unemployed, the police baton charged the Falls Road; Protestants on the Shankill Road rioted in support of their Catholic fellow unemployed. But it was not in the interests of the big manufacturers to see a united working class. The Orange Order stirred up again. In 1934, for example, Craigavon, the PM, said "I have always said I am an Orangeman first and a politician and MP afterwards ... all I boast is that we are a Protestant Parliament and a Protestant state."^[1] The future PM, Brookeborough, was then advising employers not to have a Catholic

employed.^[2]

Provocation was offered by bigots on both sides, culminating in the sectarian clashes of July 1935 when the 12th parade was fired on and two men killed. By the end of the month eleven were dead, 574 injured and much property destroyed. Any hopes of a working-class alliance – there had even been contingents from the Shankill Road to Wolfe Tone's grave at Bodenstown – were dashed. The IRA resorted to raiding for arms – Campbell College, Belfast's Protestant 'Public School', was the scene of a violent gun-battle as raiders were discovered at the armoury following a tip-off.

Nor were the police idle. On 25 April 1936, 12 leading Republicans were arrested at No.10 Crown Entry. Still rather embarrassed by the National Council for Civil Liberties' hostile report of the previous year on the Special Powers Acts, the Government did not intern them – instead, they resurrected the Treason Felony Act of 1848, last used against Tom Clarke, the old Fenian, in the 1880's (see [Chapter 14 – on political prisoners](#)).

1938-1961

On 22 December 1938 the Northern Ireland Government resorted to internment again. It announced that a dastardly Republican plot had been discovered^[1] to destroy property and possibly life over Christmas and the New Year. Thirty-four men were lifted at 4.00 a.m.; 33 in Belfast and one in Ballymena, and the numbers were soon to swell. Many more were picked up in twos and threes all during World War Two and all the IRA men already serving sentences – including the 'Treason and Felony' prisoners – were interned upon completion of their sentences.

It was a most dispiriting period of internment. The internees knew that their chances of getting out before the war finished were nil. Men like Frank McGlade, who was taken in the first swoop, were to spend seven years inside. Conditions were poor. Three places of detention were used: Derry jail, Crumlin Road jail, and a hulk, the *Al Rawdah*. The hulk, which was used only for five months, was moored off Killyleagh in Strangford Lough. Exercise conditions were terrible and there was so much barbed wire that there "was no use wearing any decent clothes", as Frank McGlade put it. Visitors had to come out in boats after braving the hostility of the local people who resented having the *Al Rawdah* anywhere near their village. Food was described as 'abominable' by survivors. McGlade still remembers braised gosling and dry biscuits being given as a special treat. Even the sea-gulls would not eat it! Conditions got so cramped that the prisoners were eventually moved to either Derry or Crumlin. Before leaving, they literally stripped the boat to make souvenirs. The 'skipper', in a farewell speech, told them that it was well that they were leaving, since another month and he would not have any boat left, Jimmie Drumm recalled.

There was one abortive escape attempt from the hulk. Five internees managed to get onto the water-ship but were spotted by a guard who at first mistook them for Germans. Forced to retreat, they knocked out one guard and four of the five returned undetected to their cells. The one who was caught was released on orders of the captain when the internees threatened to set fire to the hulk. No one was sorry when the *Al Rawdah* experiment was ended. One internee, Jack Gaffney, died while on the boat.

Not that conditions in Derry were much better. It was an old jail (now in the process of being demolished). Grey, dirty and decaying – the sandstone window-sills frequently fell into the yard. The cells were tiny and choking with dust. The first action of the internees was to smash the bottle-glass windows to let in some air. Since the war was on, the food was even worse than usual, but food sent in from friends outside was pooled amongst all the prisoners, although money was short and many dependants could not afford to travel to Derry. One man even got his budgie sent in, and the temptation to cook it was successfully resisted. Indeed, the internees, if they had any money, could get the screws to go out and do messages for them. For several years the jail almost became a miniature Gaeltacht where only Irish was spoken, even by some of the screws. A regular handball league continued for five years. Before Christmas 1939 the internees had agitated and got their own cookhouse and some of the old hands began to utilize the boiler-house to make poteen out of the old potatoes. Pat Scullion was the chief distiller, but one of his accomplices, Paddy Morrison, a devout Catholic, had a fit of conscience and confessed to the prison chaplain. To his horror, he was told that poteen-making was a 'reserved sin' and that he would have to go before the bishop – a somewhat difficult task. He had to sit out the war before his conscience could be eased, to the general hilarity of the more irreverent internees.

But the happy memories, by and large, were few and far between. There was a fair bit of brutality from the warders, most of whom were B men. This led on Christmas Day 1940 to the famous Derry mutiny. The internees had prepared for the mutiny and stored up food in advance. On Christmas Day 120 of them took over an entire wing, blocked the doors with nails and built barricades. The warders were locked into cells with their own keys, but no violence was used against them. In an attempt to draw attention to their protest the internees hung up a mattress at one of the top-floor windows and set fire to it. Although this succeeded in bringing crowds out into Bishop Street, it proved to be a bad mistake. The fire brigade was called and hosed out the small fire. Then they lent their hoses to the RUC men, B men, warders and a couple of military officers who also used an acetylene burner to effect on an iron door. All the prisoners retreated into a double cell and, jammed in there, were no match for the guards who smashed in the door and turned on the hoses. On and off, this lasted for almost half an hour and the men were very badly buffeted by the powerful jets and almost drowned. They were then dragged out individually and forced to run the gauntlet between two rows of B men who batoned them on the head, the O/C, McArdle, getting a particularly severe hammering. No medical treatment was given for almost a week. Jimmie Drumm recalls ruefully that immediately after this, while the men were lying about with bleeding heads, the chaplain appeared and spoke to them. "How dare you behave this way to my friend the captain (governor)," he said. Attendances at his services dropped noticeably for a time!

The Derry internment was most famous, however, for 'the Great Escape'. The number of internees had risen: Enno Stephan claims that as many as 300 were in the jail, but the figure, in fact, was nearer 200. During March 1943 the warders were treated to an almost continual 'concert'. Everything from mouth organs to bagpipes was used every day in a bid to cover the noise of tunnellers intent on escape. Earth was secreted in pillow-cases and pockets and spread around in the jail. Soon the toilets were blocked by too much dirt flushed down them, but repeated visits by the plumbers did not alert the warders.

At breakfast time on Saturday 21 March, the Logue family of Harding Street, which

abutted the jail, were startled to see 21 men clamber out from a hole which appeared in their tiny back garden, dash through the house, out into the street and into a parked furniture van in Abercorn Place. The driver was Jimmy Steele, himself on the run after his escape from Crumlin.

The tunnel extended from the floor of Liam Graham's cell on the ground floor and had taken five months to dig. Twenty-one escaped, the last being Brendan O'Boyle. More should have got out. Jimmie Drumm, the next man in line to go out, was halfway towards freedom when he heard someone shouting that the tunnel had been discovered outside. He crawled back only to find that it was a false alarm, but by then it was too late for him to get out.

Although of tremendous propaganda value, the escape had little practical use. Steele and Harry White had mobilized 25 men on both sides of the border and the majority of the escapers passed over into the Donegal side without trouble. There they felt they would be safe, but it was not to be. Within 24 hours 18 had been re-captured and interned in the Curragh. It was a bitter blow, only slightly mitigated by the fact that in the Twenty-six Counties internment ended two years before it did in the North.

Jimmie Drumm was particularly bitter. "I'd reckoned that Dev would do something like that and so I was to go to Belfast with Jimmy Steele," he confided. He was to sit out the rest of the war in Crumlin. Liam Mulholland was more shocked about the escapers being interned in the South, but claimed that the escape was "great for the morale anyway. We were all caught trying to escape after that. Everyone was at it."

The internees needed something to raise their morale. There was no campaign going on for their release during the war.^[2] Their dependents had a particularly rough time – the relief organization, the Green Cross, paid only 12/6 a week, and there was no dole.

Those with girlfriends were conscious that the period of the internment was going to be a long time to expect anyone to wait, and in Derry, in particular, the presence of American soldiers, loaded with money (in local terms, that is) and anxious to have female company to help them spend it, meant that many internees were tortured with rumours about their girlfriends and wives – mainly untrue – but that did not help matters. Those with young children were particularly affected, and as time wore on increasing numbers agreed to 'sign out'. (It is interesting to note that in all the periods of lengthy internment I have only been able to discover one single incidence of homosexuality – in the Curragh).

Lifelong Republicans like Billy O'Neill claimed that those who stayed true to what they considered to be essential principles did not hold any grudge against those, especially family men, who signed out; O'Neill himself did not, but certainly, even 30 years afterwards, rancour still existed for some. Of those internees who signed out in the forties that I spoke to, only one was prepared to have his name mentioned. Their reasons for signing out, in the vast majority of cases, were readily understandable: a death or sickness in the family usually, or, in some cases, a break-down of an internee's own health. Nonetheless, a stigma did exist, and the bitterness lingered on after release. Crumlin Road jail was used for a longer period than Derry. Conditions there, too, were harsh, to begin with. All the gains of the past, in terms of being accorded 'political status', were disallowed and had to be fought for again. The food was really bad. "They once gave us a rasher of bacon and two men fainted from shock," claims an old man. Silence was at first enforced on the prisoners: 123 men had to shuffle round the small exercise yard in C wing, three paces apart, without talking. Conditions did improve as

time wore on, but the improvement was achieved only by hunger strikes and 'non co-operation': some prisoners remained in their cells 14 weeks at a stretch without communicating in any way with the authorities. Today, food can be augmented by parcels sent in, but during the war prisoners' dependents had not the money even to feed themselves adequately. Occasionally, a little alcohol was smuggled in, generally in tins of 'fruit juice', and there were attempts to make alcohol by fermenting prune juice – the ubiquitous breakfast. Jars of this juice were stored under the beds in the cells and regularly exploded, often in the middle of the night.

Entertainment was scarce. Frank McGlade recalls with amusement 'stag ceilis'. Half the men wore armbands and danced the womens' part. The usual education classes did something to break the monotony, but many men could not take the boredom and futility. Dissension led to frequent changes in leadership. People would brood for a few days and suddenly the cry of 'election' would go up and someone would be deposed. Some tried to escape, but Crumlin was tougher than Derry. A tunnel was started under the dining hall, and to drown the noise of tunnelling, regular sing-songs were held around the manhole that led to it, but it was soon discovered. This time there were no reprisals.

Some men did succeed in escaping. Eddie Keenan, then a youth of twenty, was interned in February 1941. He did not like it, and was determined to leave. With four others – Gerry Doherty ('The Bird', who later escaped from the Curragh and Donegal jails and survived a 50-day hunger strike), Liam Burke (who was to figure with Jimmy Steele in the Derry escape), Phil McTaggart and Billy Watson – he went over the wall on 6 May 1941. They had attempted a similar escape the week before. At 4.00 p.m., while the guards were changing, they had pulled aside some corrugated fencing, sprinted across the yard and thrown a rope with a wooden hook on the end, over the wall. The hook had broken and they had had to run back when spotted. Despite this setback, exactly the same plan was used the week after, this time at noon and using a metal hook made from a table support. This hook held and, while two guards were held back by two 'ordinary' prisoners who happened to be passing, the five got over the wall and through the grounds of St. Malachy's School. By sheer coincidence, as they ran out onto the Antrim Road a car stopped and the driver turned out to be a friend of one of the men. Three of them were driven off, while Keenan and Doherty separated and ran in different directions. Keenan was soon in a safe house, but Doherty, a Derryman, lost his way. Eventually, he ran into the "first house in the Queen Street area that I saw with a Sacred Heart lamp in the window."

"Do you know any Republicans, missus?" he asked a woman inside.

"Aye, there's one working on the roof now," she told him. Within two days, like the others, he was safely across the border.^[3]

The most famous escape from Crumlin Road at that time, however, was not by an internee but by Jimmy Steele, Hugh McAteer, Paddy Donnelly and Edward Maguire, all sentenced IRA men, who got over the wall on 15 January 1943. This, too, was turned to propaganda value, and Steele and McAteer, before their recapture, were to appear at the Broadway Cinema in Belfast on Holy Saturday. IRA men held up the staff and held an Easter commemoration for 'the Dead who died for Ireland', to the cheers of the cinema-goers.

This was certainly good for the internees' morale, but seven years was a long time. Jimmie Drumm called it "a terror sentence". Seven years' internment is equivalent to a

ten-year sentence. With internment there is no remission. Murderers get out after eight years. "I'm a political prisoner who has served nine years without ever being charged with anything," said Drumm, who has no criminal record and completed his tenth year of internment, this time in Long Kesh. He was released in June 1972.

The lengthy internment had a very bad effect on the health of many. Some relatively young men died shortly after release. Four contracted TB. P. Graham of Belfast, who had to be released because of ill-health, died within a few months of getting out. John McGinley, Dickie Dunn and Mickey McErlean were others who died very soon after release. At least six men ended up in lunatic asylums.^[4]

Bad health was not the only problem to affect men. The fact that they had been interned was noted on their papers at the Labour Exchange. Internees lost their pension rights, and could not get even the lowliest jobs. Patsy Quinn recalls how the RUC frequently called and exhorted released internees to emigrate: "If you don't, we'll see you don't keep a job here." Small wonder that over 80% of the Republicans who had been interned dropped out of the movement in 1945. They came out – the last release of internees was on 30 July 1945 – to a movement that had failed and was in financial and organizational ruin. It is true to say, as Lord Brookeborough did, that internment had been partially responsible for this. In 1945 many Unionists believed that they would not need to use this 'distasteful weapon' (Brian Faulkner) again.

The Special Powers Acts remained on the Statute Books, however. In 1951, for example, they were used to 'detain' 13 men for a week on the occasion of a royal visit. This became a regular occurrence. Art McMillen recalls wryly that he used to keep looking at the calendar of royal events to see when he had to pack his suitcase. Men, generally not more than a dozen, were arrested, often at work, kept for a week and then released when the royal personage had departed. The fact that these men were neither criminals nor had any record of threatening the royal family made no difference.

Internment was next brought in on 21 December 1956. The doomed 'machismo' border campaign of the IRA had begun ten days previously, and in the early hours of the morning of the 22nd, 30 men were taken from their homes. This was but the beginning. Before long, 400 had been detained and they awaited 'processing'. This was supposed to take 28 days at the most and, indeed, many were given internment orders after three weeks; but some, like Gerry Maguire, were detained nine weeks before being officially interned. One Roslea man was kept detained for nine months and then released. 256 were eventually formally interned^[5] and of these 89 availed themselves of the chance to sign out. The remaining 167 who had refused to compromise their consciences were in Crumlin for the duration.

There were the old problems. What had been regarded as 'rights' to decent treatment, last won by hunger strikes and attitudes of non co-operation, from 1938-1945, were not automatically accorded. They had to be fought for yet again. Internment was the same mixture of frustration and boredom, laced with hardship for the dependents. Art McMillen was a typical example. A furnace operator, he was married with three children, the youngest being six months. He and his wife were buying a house. He was interned in January 1957 and wasn't released until March 1960. During that time his wife received only £4 a week from the National Assistance,^[6] and had to rely on help from relatives as well as taking a part-time job.

As usual, escape was the predominant thought in many minds. Gerry Maguire,^[7] then a

married man of 25 with two young children, described an attempt at tunnelling, in which he was an active participant:

It (the tunnel) went from D1, dead opposite the room where the PO, Johnny Smith, was. We tunnelled for 12 months without him knowing a thing. Three shifts a day. Regular as clockwork. It began as a hole in the wall into the ventilation shaft and then down and along. We had gone 90 feet and were just over half way when the tunnel was accidentally discovered. A screw happened to knock against the mirror on the wall which concealed the hole and the game was up. Four men were discovered in the tunnel and locked in a cell to await a beating; we discovered this and broke down the cell door with a crowbar one of the men had concealed in his mattress (most of the tools had been obtained from workmen doing repairs in the prison) and rescued them. Then we all returned to our calls with hostages. After a parley we released the hostages unharmed on the understanding that there would be no reprisals, and no loss of privileges. Next day, however, 15 March 1958, a force of commandoes (special riot police) led by Hood came, six into every cell, and beat up everyone. We didn't have a chance. One Lurgan man in C wing got a broken leg and broken ribs. Frank Cards and Billy O'Neill of D wing got beaten very badly too.^[8] The commandoes also broke up the jail furniture and photographed it, claiming the bits were 'weapons'. Private property, like gramophone records, was also smashed. Four or five men were hospitalized, but there was no medical treatment given the other injured until three days later. 'Privileges' were withdrawn. Jimmy Steele led the men in protest strikes and eventually conditions returned to 'normal'.

This was the only example of brutality during the 1956-1961 internment. Many of the men interned then and who were lifted again on 9 August 1971 maintain that the behaviour of the arresting troops in 1971 was much worse than they had ever experienced.

The memories of the 1956-1961 men weren't all grim. Some recall the 'Ghost of D wing' in Crumlin with pleasure. An Armagh man had been tunnelling and emerged covered in dirt. Next day the papers reported a warder swearing that he had seen an apparition. For a period, gambling became all the rage: the prison's bookies were all cleaned out on Grand National Day, but the gambling got too heavy and had to be stopped. This time there were better organized seminars on Irish history. At length the men were granted their own cookhouse. Some, like Art McMillen and Ciaran O'Kane, began to study history. O'Kane got a degree. There was one successful escape, as well, which cheered them up.

Internment had ended in the South on 15 March 1959 when it became clear that the border campaign had failed and was fizzling out. In the North, however, the Unionists didn't feel like taking any chances. Not until 26 January 1960 did they let anyone out – Ciaran O'Kane. Others followed, but by Boxing Day 1960 there were still 11 men left inside. There was a sleet storm raging outside and most of the men were drunk on smuggled liquor, but two decided to go over the wall. Using a hook at the end of a line, Donnelly got over and safely away. John Kelly, however, fell and was recaptured. The last of the internees were released on 25 April 1961.

Once again they came out to failure. The Republican movement had not succeeded in its aims, the people had not responded and many IRA men became disillusioned and drifted away. Not as many as the 80%-90 % after the war, it is true, but a substantial number. One consequence, however, was to have tragic repercussions. This was the myth which led to the Unionist belief that internment was responsible for the defeat of the border campaign. Brian Faulkner was to claim this, and, ten years later, reintroduce internment. In fact, the IRA campaign failed because the Catholic people in the border

areas did not support it The IRA were forced to admit this formally on 26 February 1962 when its 'Statement to the Irish People' concluded:

Foremost amongst the factors motivating this course of action (the abandonment of the campaign) has been the attitude of the general public whose minds have been deliberately distracted from the supreme issue facing the Irish people – the Unity and Freedom of Ireland.^[9]

The announcement was a very belated recognition of reality. Most members had recognised the truth years ago. In fact, internment played a relatively small part in the defeat of the campaign which was an essentially rural one. Most internees were urban men and Belfast, because of the vulnerability of the Catholic ghettos to Orange mobs, had been left out of the action altogether.

Footnotes Chapter 5: 1922-1924

1. A set of these 'coins' can be seen in the National Museum, Dublin.
2. The entire Roman Catholic population of Lisburn and Banbridge was forcibly 'evacuated' by 'Loyalists'.
3. DOROTHY MACARDLE, *The Irish Republic*, London (Victor Gollancz), 1937, p.620.
4. *The Northern Whig*, Belfast, was more excited: "Rounding up the Rebels." "Sensational Coup by Northern Government." "Several Actually attempted to escape and were wounded."
5. *Newsletter*, Belfast 21 June 1922.
6. The Catholic minority in the North seems to have been so inured to Coercion Bills that internment provoked neither surprise nor great indignation. 'Wee Joe' Devlin, Nationalist MP, expressed far more indignation in Westminster about Cardinal Logue's car being halted at a roadblock than about 500 men being rounded up and interned.
7. *Sunday Independent*, Dublin, 1 July 1956.

1924-1938

1. Northern Ireland Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 16, Cols. 1091-1095 (24 April 1934)
2. *Fermanagh Times*, Enniskillen, 13 July 1933; and *Londonderry Sentinel* Derry, 20 March 1934.

1938-1961

1. "The fact having come to the knowledge of the police that plans had been prepared by the IRA for attacks upon persons occupying prominent positions and upon Government and other property during the Christmas and the New Year period, the

Government decided that in order to prevent the perpetration of such outrages and serious breaches of the peace which would result therefrom, there was no alternative other than to arrest and intern well-known leaders and prominent members of this illegal organisation" - Ministry for Home Affairs statement, 23 December 1938. According to Stormont figures 827 people were detained between 1938 and 1945 - not all of them were held for the duration of the war.

2. On the day after it was reintroduced there was hardly a mention of it in the local press. The *Belfast Newsletter* didn't even have one line about it, concentrating on Happy Christmas greetings from various clerics, aldermen and the PM.
3. Both Keenan and Doherty were later interned in the Curragh camp.
4. Someone who didn't, but who obviously underwent some 'surrealist experiences' was Charlie McDowell. Realizing that tunnelling was impractical (no tunnel escape has succeeded from Crumlin) and "having a fear of heights" he decided to escape by creating a space ship, using old tins. "He almost had the ship finished but was having problems with the fuel," said a bewildered friend who claimed that McDowell was so convincing that some men actually believed him. McDowell also claimed to have invented a miracle paste which when smeared on the bars would dissolve them. There was even an attempt to get out using this!
5. BERESFORD ELLIS, in *History of the Irish Working Class*, London (Victor Gollancz), 1971, says 187, but this is incorrect. The official Stormont figures, quoted by BARRITT and CARTER in *The Northern Ireland Problem*, Oxford (University Press), 1962, give 613 men detained between 1957 and 1960. The actual words of the oath which internees had to take in order to sign out were either: "I ... solemnly declare that although I was a member of ... from ... to ... I have now severed all connection with it and I do not intend to have anything further to do with that organisation, or assist them in any way in the future." OR: "I ... hereby declare that I have never been, am not now, and never intend to become a member of the IRA or any other illegal organization, or to assist any such organization in the future, and I am prepared to go before a court, if necessary, and swear that this is the truth."
6. If David Bleakley, the Labour MP and future Minister for Community Relations, had had his way she wouldn't have got even that. Bleakley, who was to resign in 1971 (five days before his term of office expired) "over the use of internment", in 1957 advocated that no payments be made to internees' dependants on the National Assistance, "since", he claimed, "the IRA would look after them." In fact, the Prisoners' Defence Fund run by Republicans could give only 50/- a week to families.
7. Maguire, who served four years, was subsequently arrested on 9 August 1971 and, after two days at Girdwood barracks, was taken to Crumlin Road. There he found himself "after ten years back in the very same fucking cell on C3".
8. In fact, Cards and O'Neill took an unsuccessful court case against the prison.
9. *United Irishman*, Dublin, March 1962.

Chapter 6

WOMEN INTERNEES 1916-1973

COUNTESS MARKIEVICZ was sentenced to death on 9 May 1916 for her part in the rising. In Kilmainham, in solitary, each morning she was to hear the crack of rifle fire as her comrades of the rising were shot. She refused to change out of uniform. Her sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life because the English wished to capitalize on their 'leniency' – the Germans had just executed Edith Cavell. The Countess was moved to Mountjoy and transferred to Aylesbury in June 1916.

Aylesbury was "an antiquated rambling building, damp and gloomy, surrounded by a thick high wall."^[1] The food was inadequate. Solitary confinement was initially enforced. "All it did was to teach you how to steal," said the Countess. Silence was obligatory. But the Countess was at first not an internee, though later she became one. The distinction of being the first women internees in the twentieth century went to five ladies in 1916. By and large, their imprisonment was brief. Marie Perolz and Brigid Foley were the first to be released. They had left Aylesbury before the other three arrived: Winifred Carney, Connolly's faithful secretary who had been with him in the GPO; Nell Ryan and Helena Moloney, held in Aylesbury also, but, as unsentenced prisoners, were held in a separate wing along with suspected spies. These three could only wave to the Countess or exchange notes during Chapel. Consequently, they made an unprecedented request, formally, to the Home Office. They wanted to give up their internee status with its 'privileges' of letters, visits and food parcels, to live as convicted prisoners with 'Madame' – The Countess.

Their request was refused.^[2] Nell Ryan was released in September 1916. Winifred Carney and Helena Moloney were released on Christmas Eve 1916. The Countess was released on 18 June 1917. (The men sentenced after the rising had been released two days previously). She had served 13 months.^[3]

But her freedom was to be short lived. Because of the 'German Plot' leading Sinn Feiners were interned in various English jails in May 1918, and three women, Countess Markievicz; Madame Maud Gonne MacBride and Mrs. Tom Clarke, found themselves interned in Holloway. The case of Mrs. Clarke was particularly disgraceful. The British had shot her husband and her brother and now separated her from her five children without producing any charges whatsoever. The women were, after a time, allowed to associate and have food, clothes, books, newspapers and painting supplies sent in. Some of the Countess's water colours done in Holloway are now in the National Museum. For one day in August 1918 women internees were joined by Mrs. Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, who was arrested under the Defence of the Realm Act and held for 24 hours. During the summer they were even able to do a little gardening. But conditions enfeebled their health. In October, Madame MacBride was released to a nursing home in London. It was not until February 1919 that Mrs. Clarke, who was in even poorer health, was released, and Countess Markievicz had to wait until 10 March 1919 for her freedom.

In the meantime the Countess had become the first woman to be elected to Parliament in a UK election, with a crushing victory as the Sinn Fein candidate in St. Patrick's Division of Dublin. It was over a week before the news was conveyed to her in her lonely cell. When her name was called at the inaugural meeting of the first Dail Eireann it was greeted with cries of "*Fe ghlás ag Gallaibh*" (Imprisoned by the foreign enemy). Thirty-five other TD's were interned also at the time.

The British were not to officially intern women again, but many were arrested under the draconian anti-Irish laws of the period. Countess Markievicz herself was to serve four months in Cork jail for 'a seditious speech', and was also sentenced to two years hard labour for her work with the Fianna scouts, ten months of which she served – in Mountjoy.

By the date of the Truce, 11 July 1921, 26 women were still imprisoned and 15 were being held without charge or trial. The charges, in many cases, were ludicrous, often merely 'suspicion'. One of the worst cases was that of three young girls from Cork, two Cotter sisters and their cousin. They were weeding turnips in a field when a lorry load of Black-and-Tans was blown up on a nearby road. The survivors saw only the three young girls and they arrested them. The girls were sentenced to penal servitude for life. They were released at the Truce. The old were not immune either. Two sisters from Athlone, one aged 70 and the other 80, were arrested as well.^[4] Mary Bowles, aged 14, from Co. Cork, got five years for "endeavouring to save a machinegun from capture". Linda Kearns MacWhinney, a nurse, got ten years – and escaped from Mountjoy jail.^[5]

The Civil War was to see just over 250 women interned and some 50 of them joined the men on hunger strike. The women were held in the North Dublin Union from June 1923 until Christmas Eve that year. The Union had been used as a poorhouse and then as a barracks for Black-and-Tans. There were no cells, just large draughty dormitories "haunted by the ghosts of the broken-hearted paupers," according to Constance Markievicz.

During December, 3,481 political prisoners were released, including all the women, following the hunger strike.

The South was not to intern women again.

IN the North, no women were interned during the 1920's, but during the Second World War 18 were interned in the old wing of Armagh jail. Only one, Mrs. McDowell, was married. Most of the others were young girls in the 16-18-year-old category. All were lifted in small groups during 1942 and it was not until July 1945 that the last eight were released. The majority, 12, were from Belfast, with three from Derry and three from Tyrone. At first they were held for 28 days; then the internment orders were signed. Conditions were poor. The food was described to me as 'abominable', 'shocking' and 'disgusting' by those internees whom I interviewed. Mary Keenan (née McDonald) says, "I can still remember the endless prunes and beans." Only one visit a month was permitted and boredom hung heavy for the three years. Knitting, embroidery, drawing, singing, an old gramophone and Nancy Ward's violin were the only forms of diversion. They had no radios, because of the scarcity during the war and the financial plight of their families (Nora McAteer, née McKearney, had three brothers interned). Food parcels were rare. At first the women were treated as ordinary prisoners and even denied internee status, though this was eventually changed. Nonetheless, they had not even a recreation room.

To these young girls, whose only 'crime' was their militant Republican family background, association with 'common criminals' – shoplifters, prostitutes and wine victims – was a new and horrifying experience. Some, however, felt that it had made them more tolerant. Mary Keenan reminisced about some of the characters she met in the prison yard, or saw and heard from the windows. Thirty years later they were still fresh in her mind. "I began to be less intolerant," she said. "I saw them more and more

as victims of society. I began to learn about human psychology at first hand."

But morale was low. Outside, apart from their families, no one wanted to know about them. Very little was sent in to them, and the cells in B1 were bitterly cold. They were locked up, one to a cell, for 20 hours a day, and sat there, huddled up in old blankets. A hunger strike was ignored by the authorities, though Teresa Donnelly, who had a weak heart, was so bad that she had to be anointed. The strike lasted 22 days and achieved very little, although some time later the strikers were allowed to share two to a cell. In the meantime, though, their paltry 'privileges' had been stopped.

The worst incident was in September 1943; Relations between the internees were not good and factions grew up. After an internal row the warders appeared and, after threats, hosed the girls with high-power jets of water. All received a severe buffeting. Because of the war-time censorship, however, there was no public outcry.

After this hostility grew. The internees and the ordinary prisoners screamed incessantly at the warders and wardresses for months on end. Added to this were the moans and cries of those prisoners who needed psychiatric help but who, instead, were merely locked up in the padded cells where they screamed all night. Even today the bitterness felt amongst the internees is still in evidence. Some will not talk about the faction fighting while others who were interviewed requested that the details be not given. Because of family pressures some signed out – although here the authorities played cat-and-mouse with them. One woman had to go to the Board three times before she was released. The main reason for signing out was family hardship. The money from the Green Cross was pitifully little and the cost of visiting Armagh prohibitive. Nora McKearney's brother, interned in Crumlin, contracted Th and had to sign out. She had to follow suit to support him and their parents who were old age pensioners. At last, in July 1945, the last eight^[6] were released. They had no prior notification. Within a quarter of an hour they found themselves in Gaol Square, Armagh, clutching the paraphernalia they had accumulated over the last three years, in battered paper bags.

Nearly all had lost their jobs, but their suffering, however great, was nothing compared to that of their families. This is a sordid truth of internment: it is the family who suffer even more than the internees. The psychological damage to the children is great, in some cases too great, and the bitterness engendered is too longlasting to ever heal.

The Unionists did not try to intern women again – with one exception. During the abortive 1956-1961 campaign, Bridie O'Neill from Belfast was interned, on her own, for seven months in Armagh jail. This action, ridiculous though it was, aroused no public outcry whatsoever. It is a sign of how times have changed when, even in view of the fact that women were to play a far more active role in the IRA and Republican activities during 1971 and 1972, including being involved with active service units on bombing raids and taking part in ambushes as well as acting as couriers and messengers, no attempt was made to intern them^[7] (despite fairly persistent rumours in January and February 1972 that a wing in Armagh jail had been set aside for women internees). It is true to say, however, that the Unionist courts' flagrant misuse of the law did succeed in jailing leading Republican women like Maura Drumm (12 months for 'inflammatory speeches'), Mary McGuigan and Rita O'Hare (among others – six months for a protest picket outside Chichester Street courthouse) and that this meant that while women were not interned they were very much in evidence amongst the ranks of political prisoners in the North, just as they had been in the South from 1916-1923.

ON 1 January 1973 – a great way to start the new year – Elizabeth McKee (19) of Belfast became the first woman to be detained under the Detention of Terrorists (Northern Ireland) Act No charge. No trial. Teresa Holland, Margaret Shannon and Anne Walsh were soon to join Elizabeth.

Footnotes Chapter 6:

1. JAQUELINE VAN VORIS, *Countess de Markievicz*, Massachusetts (University of Massachusetts Press), 1967, p.219.
2. HELENA MOLONEY, in *An Phoblacht*, Dublin, November 1930.
3. For her account of English jails see *The Freeman's Journal*, Dublin, 19 June 1917. Also see *New Ireland*, Dublin, 8 and 15 April 1922. More information in *The Voice of Labour*, Dublin, 1 May 1919.
4. See *The Jangle of the Keys* by MARGARET BUCKLEY, Dublin (James Duffy), 1938.
5. See *Sworn to be Free*, Tralee (Anvil Books), 1971, pp. 171-179. More information on women internees in Van Voris, *Countess de Markievicz*, pp. 316-317.
6. Una McDowell, Alice Ashton, Mary Keenan, Teresa Donnelly, Cassie O'Hara, Rosaleen McCotter and the two Ward sisters.
7. There was almost an exception to this. On 28 August 1972, 18-year-old Anne Walsh from the Falls Road was arrested and detained - illegally. After 48 hours, persistent inquiries had failed to elicit any news of her other than that she was "helping police with their inquiries" in Castlereagh RUC barracks, which had taken over from Palace barracks as the interrogation centre. After four days an application for habeas corpus was made on the grounds that she was illegally detained. The hearing was announced for the High Court the next day. That morning the RUC, who had been accusing Miss Walsh of murder, bombing and everything short of genocide, announced that she was being charged - with being a member of Cumann na mBan! Three hours later, just before the High Court was to sit' even this charge was withdrawn and she was released.

Chapter 7 THE POLITICS OF INTERNMENT 1971

IN the mid-1960's people might have been forgiven for thinking that internment was a thing of the past. (True, the obnoxious Special Powers Acts were still on the Statute Book, but they were in abeyance). Such thinking was not to be right, however. The monolithic structure of Unionism proved incapable of reforming itself under the onslaught of the civil rights campaign. Terence O'Neill might have been able to save the Unionists with his pragmatic approach and his appreciation of the need for change, but their diehard 'not an inch' backwoodsmen would have none of it. And so the week of 12

– 16 August 1969 saw the old familiar pattern: a police force unable, and, in many cases unwilling,^[1] to prevent the sectarian attack upon the Falls Road periphery, led in some cases by the B specials. That month was to see house burning, intimidation and murder – ten civilians dead, including a 9-year-old boy asleep in his bed, shot by a high-velocity Browning machine-gun used with murderous recklessness by the police in their Shorland armoured cars; 145 injured, hundreds of families burnt out of their homes, 90% of them Catholic. Free Derry was born that week. The barricades went up in Belfast. The first steps towards the irrevocable demise of Stormont were taken. And, predictably, men were detained, without charge or trial.

At 6.45 a.m. on 14 August, 28 Republicans were arrested and taken from their homes. As usual, no 'Loyalist' extremists or gunmen were arrested.

When the English Special Branch men arrived next month to sort out the RUC they asked for the files on all the 'terrorists'. They were handed the records, mostly out-of-date, on the IRA. "What about the UVF," they asked. "It doesn't exist," was the reply. "We have no records on Loyalists."

But this time it was not to be internment. The British army had had to be called in. Callaghan and Wilson had summoned Chichester Clark to Downing Street. The B men were 'phased out'. The Scarman Tribunal was set up. The Labour Government was tired of the old-fashioned traditional Unionist methods. Moreover, from behind the barricades a campaign was being mounted. Illegal radios proliferated. Street newspapers were born. The detainees were released after 17 to 20 days. The message should have been clear; internment should have no place in the 1970's.

But the Unionist hierarchy learn nothing from history. The gangling figure of Chichester Clark, the stand-in PM, shambled off into obscurity as 1970 and 1971 saw an escalation of the violence by the Provisional IRA, themselves a reaction to the attempted 'Loyalist' pogrom of 1969.

On 23 March 1971 Brian Arthur Deane Faulkner achieved his lifelong ambition and became PM. The English press warned that he was the 'last man in'. If he couldn't control the situation, direct rule was a certainty. But despite the obvious immensity of the task, Faulkner was confident.

This was the moment for which he had schemed, intrigued and betrayed, for so long. With a staggering record of disloyalty to previous PMs, he could hardly expect to be trusted or liked, but surely all could agree on his shrewdness and ability.

In fact, Faulkner's intelligence was always greatly over-rated by the media. And his biggest mistake was soon to come. The *Sunday Times* 'Insight' team claim^[2] that "when he took over the issue was not whether internment was to come, but *when* and on what scale. By then Faulkner had been an advocate of internment inside Chichester Clark's Joint Security Committee, for six months." Whether this is true or not, and on balance it seems a reasonable statement, it is certain that Faulkner had completely failed to learn the lesson of how and when internment 'worked'. He had been Minister for Home Affairs in 1959 under Brookeborough, and, with the help of his trusty aide, the civil servant William Stout, he had been responsible for the implementation of internment, which he apparently felt to be responsible for the defeat of the IRA border campaign. As is made clear already, this just was not so. The campaign failed, for lack of popular support, and, most important, the internees could languish in Crumlin because there was no campaign to get them released.

Nevertheless, one of Faulkner's first actions upon becoming Northern Ireland's last PM

was to order the RUC Special Branch to work with the Director of Military Intelligence at Lisburn in drawing up a list of those Catholics who should be interned. The army were unhappy. General Tuzo, the GOC in Northern Ireland since February 1971, consistently opposed internment, believing, rightly, as it turned out, that they could not get the right people. But as the violence escalated, Faulkner became more and more insistent. On 9 July he telephoned Heath. "I must be able to intern now" he demanded. Accordingly, with some reluctance, a 'dry run' was agreed upon. At dawn on 23 July, 1,800 troops and RUC raided Republican houses throughout the province, searching for documents. They got enough to encourage them. The decision to intern was only a matter of time then, despite army objections.

The position was complicated by the mistrust and, in some cases, downright hostility between the army and the RUC. As the *Sunday Times* team put it: "The army believed the police list was politically motivated, and the police believed that the army's list showed inadequate local knowledge." Both were correct. Some sections of the army had favoured a small internment in the spring of 1971, with only 50 or 60 men being lifted. They had been overruled. Now the task was to be much greater.

The list had more than 500 names on it. Of these only 120 or 130 were gunmen or officers in the IRA. The vast majority were regarded either as 'Fellow-travelling sympathisers' or troublesome political activists – like PD socialists. The police contribution was the names and addresses of former internees. But Faulkner was determined. At the Joint Security Committee meeting at Stormont, Shillington, the Chief Constable, agreed with Tuzo that internment would not work. That made no difference. Faulkner secretly flew to London that afternoon. There he convinced the Cabinet. Tuzo could offer no alternative. Maudling was his usual indolent self. Whitelaw said nothing. Internment without trial was acquiesced to. The date was set for 10 August. On Sunday 7 August, however, Harry Thornton, an innocent building worker, was driving his car past Springfield Road barracks when it backfired. Soldiers opened up and killed him. His friend Murphy was dragged from the car, covered with Thornton's blood, and savagely beaten by police and army. Within minutes the people of Clonard went wild. The fighting went on all night but had died down the next day. But the army were taking no chances. At midnight on Sunday the order went out: operation internment was brought forward 24 hours. Brian Faulkner had unwittingly signed himself his own political death warrant – and that of Stormont, too.

Footnotes Chapter 7:

1. *The Sunday Times*, London, and the Scarman Report reveal that, on the night of 14-15 August, the RUC "used firearms with such freedom as to disqualify it from being called a police force".
2. *Ulster and The Sunday Times 'Insight'* team, p. 260. London (Penguin), 1972.

Chapter 8

INTERNMENT 1971: THOSE DETAINED

THE initial internment sweep on 9 August 1971 was, militarily, a complete failure. The IRA had known of it for some time and as a result virtually every senior IRA man was billeted away from home. Of the 342 men arrested (the British army tried for 450), 116 were released within 48 hours. 226 men were detained: 86 from Belfast, 60 from Co. Derry, 20 from the Newry area, 20 from Armagh and 40 from Fermanagh and Tyrone. Initially, 124 men were held in C wing of Crumlin (the number was to rise to 160 within five weeks) while the remainder were held on the *Maidstone*.

Within days Unionist Ministers were claiming a fantastic success – a lie which subsequently caused them great embarrassment. Faulkner claimed 80 IRA officers arrested; the British GOC claimed 70% of terrorists on the wanted list. The claims could not have been much further from the truth. Of the 160 men in Crumlin, no more than 80 had anything to do with the IRA, and of these only four were senior officers (none of them the top men). The rest of the internees were political opponents of the Unionists – like the PD and NICRA members, old retired IRA ex-internees, militant trade unionists, public speakers, and, in some cases, people held on mistaken identity.

But the arrests continued and after three months even the Unionists had to admit that the numbers did not reflect the 'resounding success' that Albert Anderson, MP claimed. In the first three months 882 people were arrested. Of these, 416 were released within 48 hours after suffering various forms of maltreatment, 50 were detained and then released, ten were released on the recommendation of the Brown Advisory Committee, 278 were interned and 128 detained. In other words, 54% of all those arrested were released.

The six-month mark showed even more startling figures: 2,357 arrested under the Special Powers Act, 598 interned, 159 detained, and 1,600 completely innocent men (by even the Government's standard) released after 'interrogation' – nearly 67%.

Persistently, Faulkner was to claim that every man arrested was "a terrorist or a member of the IRA." At times he gave various breakdowns of the figures as to how many belonged to each wing of the IRA, how many were officers, etc. Yet when Whitelaw took over and released 47 internees and 26 detainees, with 27 more internees released within a fortnight, the ex-PM and Minister of Home Affairs was strangely quiet about the release of so many dangerous 'terrorists'. When this was put to him he angrily replied that the men released by Whitelaw, who had only arrived, had been on his release list – a clear admission that these men were held by him as political hostages.

And so on 7 April, while the doors did not exactly fly open, a start was at least made to free admittedly innocent men. It is interesting to note that of the 13 men listed in the *Sunday Times* 'Insight' query into whether all men were, as Faulkner put it, "still an active member of the Official or Provisional wing of the IRA or has been closely implicated in its campaign," six – Seamus O'Tuathail, Charles Fleming, John McGuffin, Oliver Kelly, William McBurney and Charles Brady – were released by Faulkner himself, and Liam Mullholland (77) and Gerry Dunlop were released within a fortnight of Whitelaw's arrival.

Some of the internees underwent very strange experiences while inside. Twenty-two of them were ex-service men and one – Joe Parker, an ex-sergeant in the Loyal Regt N. Lancs – had the terrible experience of being paroled to attend the funeral of his son, who, while unarmed, was gunned down by troops in a drinking club in Ardoyne. The

army claimed this was an accident. Parker, who was subsequently released, had to report to his old regiment, then stationed in Ardoyne, every six hours during his parole. John Curry, Billy O'Neill and Sean Keenan were paroled during internment, due to the tragic deaths of their children who fought the British army while their fathers were incarcerated (O'Neill, who was released in April, also had his house blown up).

Harry McKeown saw his wife and child arrested and grilled overnight. The son, Henry Joy, was reluctant to talk, though his age, 11 months, may have had something to do with this. McKeown was released in April. So was Ronnie Bunting, son of the buffoonish Burntollet ambusher, Major Bunting. Ronnie junior, a CRA worker, was beaten by the Special Branch for "having disgraced his father." Billy McBurney was released and re-arrested four weeks later. The second time he was taken back to Long Kesh but kept for only two minutes, the shortest ever internment. Nonetheless, the army or the police leaked to the press the story that they had captured the Official IRA's finance officer – a bad mistake, as McBurney, buying a copy of the *Belfast Telegraph* on 23 March 1972 and regarding this as a serious libel, made straight for his lawyer.

Oliver Kelly was one of the three successful candidates in the Law Society of Northern Ireland's final examinations, qualifying him as a solicitor. The Ministry of Home Affairs refused him permission to attend the high court to receive his certificate.

Des. O'Hagan, a lecturer at Stranmillis College, was, while interned, charged and convicted of non-payment of rates. Describing this as a sick joke, O'Hagan said that he would not pay the £44.91 even if he could, since he was interned without trial. He had previously been taken from Long Kesh to be fined £25 for possessing 'illegal documents'. Another internee was threatened with punishment because he failed to turn up for jury service! Worst of all, one internee was taken out and given three months because he had a copy of *Republican News* in his pocket when interned – yet *An Phoblacht*, the *United Irishman* and *Republican News* were freely allowed into Long Kesh by the commandant.

Councillor James O'Kane was recommended for release by the Brown Advisory Board, but as principle demanded that he refuse to sign what he regarded as the repugnant oath, he was expelled from the Belfast Council for 'non attendance'. In a gesture of solidarity, Councillor Hubert Cranston (Unionist) said, "He's a good friend of mine – if he was being hanged I'd buy a rope."¹⁴ Councillor O'Kane subsequently had his house blown up by 'Loyalists', and an elderly neighbour who was visiting was killed.

Paddy McGuigan was interned for three months, apparently for the crime of writing 'The Men Behind the Wire', which, with 'The Boys of the Old Brigade' became the internees 'anthem'. Gerald Brady, an American citizen on a visit home, was also unfortunate enough to be interned. The US consul remained silent.

One of the most embarrassed internees was 'Doc' Boyd. A former B man he was indeed a member of the Republican movement. He was lifted from a house on the Grosvenor Road in October and held for nine months until being released by Whitelaw. However, in the routine of the release procedure internees had to formally answer to their name and give their address. Having only stayed in the house from which he had been arrested for one night, and that nine months previously, Boyd was unable to recall the exact address. Eventually, an embarrassed screw had to whisper the address to him before he could be set free.

LONG KESH

LONG KESH was, according to Harold Wilson who visited it (unlike Edward Heath), "a grim place." It was worse than that! The airfield, two miles south of Lisburn, had been built during the Second World War and after 1945 it became the Army's Command Vehicle Park until 1969 when, in August, British troops moved in and turned it into a vast tented encampment.

The Newsletter^[1] gave the official Government view of the camp;

This airfield was built by an Ulster at War; today, 30 years later, Ulster is at war again with an enemy even more sinister than the last one – and once again the airfield is in use. Once mighty Short Stirling Bombers were built here and thundered off these runways to join the offensive against Germany. But now the concrete is blocked by the 15-foot fences and watch-towers of a camp built to hold men who are considered a danger to Northern Ireland. The camp's brand new buildings are clearly visible, inside a compound which is in turn within the main compound. High watch-towers stand in each corner and there is also one in the centre, and spotlights burn permanently.

There are 12 main buildings inside the top security compound. Inside are two tiered bunks and lockers for personal effects. The internees are divided into groups and each group has its own TV and radio sets. There are separate toilet blocks with hot showers, washbasins and lavatories. All the buildings are centrally heated [*sic!*] and in the adjoining rooms the internees are given four meals daily. Quarters are set aside for visits by relatives or legal advisers. There is also a sick bay.

Apart from the purple prose, this account is grotesque for its distortions. But these were typical of an embittered and vindictive system. When Tory MP, ex-Lt. Col. Colin Mitchell ('Mad Mitch' of Aden infamy) could blandly report that "conditions in Long Kesh are better than when I was a soldier, and probably better than some of these fellows have at home," who could blame *The Newsletter* for its talk of holiday camps? (Mitchell also told internees that he would "intern all socialists").^[2]

In fact 'Billy Faulkner's little holiday camp' was squalid, nasty and brutish as even the nine-man all-party group of Westminster MP's found, and the International Red Cross and Amnesty International were even more condemnatory.^[3]

Overcrowding was, perhaps, the worst feature. Each cage (and by May 1972 there were ten cages) measured 70 yards by 30, and was surrounded by a 12-foot-high wire fence with coils of meshed barbed-wire on top. Each cage had four nissen huts and one washroom. Three huts acted as sleeping quarters, the fourth as a canteen. Each hut was 120 feet by 24 feet and had to house 40 men. There was not an inch of space between the bunk beds, the roofs leaked, the wind whistled in and everyone spent the nights huddled in heavy pullovers beneath the two thin blankets. The 'central heating' was a small electric heater, fixed high up on the wall. Those fortunate enough to be within two yards of it got some heat. Everyone else froze. Rats appeared.

The separate 'wash hut' contained ten wash-hand basins, eight toilets, and eight showers. It had to serve 120 men, and because of the length of the queues many just gave up shaving. Besides, traditionally, 'revolutionaries' are bearded. The other hut served as canteen, workshop, 'library' (without books), recreation room (one table tennis table), writing room, class room, place of worship and music room. For all 120 men.

No association was allowed between the cages. The initial attempt to divide the men into

Officials and Provisionals failed dismally and from then on the authorities contented themselves with random distribution, which meant that fathers, sons and brothers were often separated by the barbed-wire.^[4] The conditions led to serious health problems. There was an outbreak of scabies; men had mental breakdowns and had to be transferred to Hollywell Mental Hospital; several dozen men had to be transferred to hospital because the camp 'hospital' was hopelessly inadequate.

The Civil Service bureaucracy meant that weeks had elapsed before any complaints could be dealt with, and the attitude of 'Commandant' Kerr and 'Vice-Commandant' Truesdale was regarded by the internees as unhelpful, to say the least. A wall of silence greeted even the most reasonable requests and then the buck was passed to a Mr. Buchanan at the Home Office.

Frustration was increased by the bland utterances of MP's like St. John Stevas who spoke of "study rooms" and "improvements in the library facilities" when he knew that there wasn't even a library let alone an improved one.

Very few of the 'distinguished' visitors to the camp even got to see the internees. On 4 December 1971 Paisley got to within 70 yards of the cages and stopped.^[5] Nonetheless, despite the usual attempts to clean up the place before such visits, the Red Cross eventually reported unfavourably on the camp. They commented on the overcrowding and lack of educational and recreational facilities. Six months later, a football field was provided but no other progress was made towards ameliorating conditions. On 4 December 1971 the Internees Camp Council listed the grievances that they had attempted to take up with Truesdale, now camp 'Commandant' (1) Religious services – no Sunday services for all the men; (2) Visiting conditions; (3) Lack of free association; (4) Lack of physical education or the promised gym; (5) No educational facilities; (6) Lack of entertainment – outside groups not allowed in to give concerts; (7) Men's welfare; (8) Still no library; (9) No liaison with the Ministry's inspectors.

As usual, nothing was done.

During the winter when it rained the men were confined indoors. The rain made pools outside as there was no drainage, and while the warders plodded round in Wellington boots the internees were not permitted them "for security reasons."

At night the glare of the searchlights reflected off the roofs was blinding. The dogs howled. The soldiers banged their batons monotonously on the walls of the huts to prevent sleep. Small wonder some men cracked up. The ex-service-men internees claimed that the camp was much worse than those in Kenya, Cyprus and Aden where they had been stationed. Old internees said that eight months in Long Kesh were much worse than four years in Crumlin.

The usual hunger strikes proved ineffective. They were of short duration and of no threat to the authorities. The most serious incident was the mutiny on 25 October. As often happened in the past, the 'disturbance' started over poor food. A delegation from 119 men in Compound 2 asked the 'commandant' to come and inspect it. He refused. Out of frustration one of the internees set fire to the hut. The soldiers who patrolled the outside wire acted quickly. CS gas was poured in for 15 minutes until the internees and warders were lying overpowered. Then up to 350 soldiers arrived, armed with axe handles with metal strappings on their ends. Random beatings were rigorously carried out on heads, faces, shoulders, arms. Thirty-one men were so badly injured that they required hospitalization – five of them in Musgrave Park Hospital. Billy Denvir had both arms broken; two others had their jaws broken, one his nose, another his shoulder.

Lawrence McCoy needed 14 stitches. Even Liam Mulholland, aged 77, was beaten and injured. When the 'riot' had been quelled the men were lined up and searched. Some were picked out, taken to the back of the huts and beaten again by the soldiers. Meanwhile, the sleeping quarters were ransacked by the soldiers who destroyed food in the lockers, any new clothes, all musical instruments. Photographs, prayer books and all reading matter were ripped up. Money, watches and cigarettes were stolen.^[6] Some of the warders had tried to protect the internees from the soldiers, but to no avail. All complaints, protests and demands for an inquiry were met with stony silence from 'Commandant' Truesdale and the Ministry for Home Affairs. The only official statement claimed that "five men had been injured, none seriously."^[7]

Visiting Long Kesh was a harrowing experience for relatives. One visit of half an hour per week was permitted. Initially, visitors had run the gauntlet of 'Loyalist' elements outside the camp but after a month the entrance arrangements were changed. Armed with a permit (for which one could wait up to four weeks) one travelled down to the camp, generally in one of the minibuses provided by the CDC or local relief committee. A wait in the car park, permit verified, and then another wait in the temporary shelter erected there. One could wait for over an hour for one's name to be called. The only concession to civilization was the tea hut, manned by volunteer Quakers – the only religious organization to do anything for visitors.^[8] At length a screw entered and called one's name. Out into another minibus and then a short drive inside the camp. A thorough search by men and women police officers, and then another wait in a crowded and smelly hut. At last, another screw, a walk through the wire and into one of the 16 visiting booths – with the internee on one side of the desk and his visitors on the other. Screws patrolling up and down outside in the corridor, 30 minutes strained conversation, and then the internee led away, searched and sent back to his cage. His visitors shuffled out.

Medical facilities in the camp were totally inadequate. Upon arrival internees were assured that a doctor was available daily and that the emergency bell in each hut could summon medical aid if necessary. The internees accepted this and the bell was used only in real emergencies. Despite this it was found that the bell was ignored by the warders and no doctor ever appeared at night. For example, on 3 February, William Skelly of hut 61 suffered a severe asthmatic attack with bronchial complications. It took 95 minutes of bell-ringing to get him medical attention. More serious cases, such as Michael Moan of hut 60, whose right hand, the medical authorities acknowledged, was withering away, were told that there were no facilities to treat them in Long Kesh – but they were not transferred elsewhere.

One of the few bright points was that, by and large, the internees got on well with the screws – the local ones, that is. When recruitment for prison guards was down, English and Scottish warders were transferred to the Six Counties and given substantial bounties. To the internees and the local warders they were mere hired mercenaries; many of them left after a very short stay. But all the warders were preferable to the soldiers who patrolled the perimeter. They were fairly friendly, found their job distasteful and could often be bribed to procure alcohol – after the camp still had been discovered.^[9]

Study in Long Kesh was virtually impossible for the eight youths doing A levels and the four students doing degrees. John Hunter, a law student at Queens University, Belfast, commented: "The private room claimed by the camp authorities is, in fact, a

partitioned-off space in the corner of a doctor's draft-ridden hut from which the noise from the rest of the hut is in no way excluded. The heater is useless beyond a range of 18". Books are stolen or torn up by the regular search parties. Our eyes suffer and we get headaches from the continual glare of the blinding lights."

An additional hazard was the attitude of the camp administrators towards those teachers who voluntarily gave up their spare time to travel to Long Kesh and give classes to those internees studying for GCE examinations. For example, on 7 December 1972 fifteen teachers, hitherto regular visitors, were refused admittance because they put down their nationality as Irish rather than British on the entrance forms.

Sinn Fein Cumainn, both Provisional and Official, were formed in most of the compounds, language and history classes were conducted though nothing as exotic as the "guerilla classes on tactics, weaponry and ideology" claimed by Labour MP Patrick Duffy at Westminster. Press statements flowed out to *The Irish News*. One internee, Des O'Hagan, even became a weekly correspondent for *The Irish Times*. But uncertainty as to their future remained the worst enemy of most internees (consultations of the ouija board in two compounds proved unreliable), and it was not until the fall of Stormont and the imposition of direct rule that any optimism became manifest. But the steadily increased rate of releases from the beginning of April was not to herald the closure of Long Kesh. As internees were moved out, short-term prisoners were moved into the vacated cages. Long Kesh is still with us. Only now they call it the Maze prison.

THE Maidstone

THE Maidstone was a bad blunder on the part of the security forces. The original Special Branch lists of those to be interned were such that all who were picked up could be confined in Crumlin Road jail, but by the time Brian Faulkner and his aide, William Stout, had added the names of their political opponents plus those of old-time Republican internees from as far back as the 1940's, a further holding centre was needed. And so the 120 men who were arrested in places other than Belfast were brought first 'to Ballykinlar, there to undergo Compton's 'positions of discomfort', plus fear, hunger, exhaustion and the interrogation techniques of the British military police and RUC Special Branch. After two days they were transferred by helicopter to Belfast, in batches of six, handcuffed together. None knew where they were being taken. The army guards mentioned a "special new camp on the Orkneys," "the Isle of Wight" and other outlandish places. Many of the men were too tired and shaken-up to think rationally; many were close to hysteria. As they put down at the docks, fears of being transported to England increased. But it was not to be. There, skulking in the mud, was HMS *Maidstone*, the successor to the *Argenta* and the *Al Rawdah*.

The *Maidstone* was totally unsuitable. Built in 1937, she had been used as an emergency billet for troops in 1969. Now she had been hastily converted into a prison ship (as an added irony, Joe Heaney from Armagh, who was detained on her in 1971, had served on her when in the Royal Navy in 1961). Physically, the ship was cramped, stuffy and overcrowded. The prison itself was at the stern and consisted of two bunkhouses, one up, one down, and two messrooms. Above these were the rooms of the governor, Jimmy Moore, and his staff, and above them the deck, used twice a day for exercise and

surrounded by 10-foot-high barbed-wire. Forward were the army quarters, separated from the prisoners by a high mesh fence and a solid gate. The ship was moored at the jetty, 20 feet from the land, entry to the jetty being guarded by sand-bagged army emplacement. Short Brothers' airfield overlooked the ship on the pier side, and on the starboard lay a 300-yard stretch of water leading to a huge coalyard. One of the particular inconveniences about the berth of the ship was that she was moored at the only wharf in Belfast equipped for unloading liquid tar and pitch. When she was first being used as an army billet the tar importer asked for his facilities to be moved elsewhere at a cost of £60,000. But to save money the Ministry for Defence permitted holes to be cut in the ship's sides for heated pipes to run through, at a cost of £5,000. The continual arrival of tankers was at first a grave security risk.^[1]

The prisoners settled down quickly although many of them were badly shaken. One of their first tasks was to establish links with the outside world and tell of the treatment meted out to them at Ballykinlar. Moreover, 11 men had disappeared. This was the group which included P.J. McLean, Pat Shivers, Brian Turley, John McKenna and Gerry McKerr. They were to turn up nine days later in Crumlin Road, having had to undergo days of torture (or 'physical ill-treatment' as Sir Edmund Compton was to describe it) on the direct orders of Faulkner, then Prime Minister.

It was a week before those on the ship could receive any visits, and arrangements for visitors were virtually nonexistent. Permits, without which no one could visit, often arrived after the date fixed for the visit. All the relatives of the men had to travel considerable distances from Derry, Newry, Enniskillen and Armagh, for example. Taking time off work and making arrangements for someone to look after the children often involved expense beyond the means of many of the families, especially with the breadwinner interned. Moreover, visitors were initially subjected to degrading strip searches. Mrs. Mary Cassin of Armagh whose two sons, Eugene and Denis, were both detained on the *Maidstone* (Eugene was released after five weeks; Denis was later moved to Long Kesh) told how she had been searched and otherwise humiliated and eventually allowed to speak for twenty minutes to one son, through two wire grilles, twelve feet apart. Mrs. Cassin reported that it was her first and last visit to the ship. Stories of what had happened at Ballykinlar were hurriedly whispered to relatives, but Paddy Smith from Newry, who had little time for this strategy, roared out the facts to his wife before being physically hauled away by the screws.

Dermot Kelly and Liam Shannon of Armagh PD succeeded in getting out the first written account of their experiences. Photos of handcuffed men being hauled to the helicopters appeared in the National Press. Gradually the truth was becoming known. There were 142 men aboard the *Maidstone* – the numbers were to rise, too – and for them life was much worse than for the men in Crumlin Road. Hunger strikes broke out frequently in protest against the poor food and the cramped conditions. The food was not improved by the practice of soldiers in putting human hair, dirt and even bits of glass into it. Exercise was limited to two hours on deck in the morning and two in the afternoon. To ward off the boredom the ship's committee, which comprised four Provisionals and two Officials under the chairmanship of the veteran Derry Republican, Sean Keenan (who had already experienced 11 years imprisonment without charge or trial), drew up rotas of men to take care of the food serving, as well as those detailed to latrine duty. Several of the prisoners objected to this, claiming that they saw no purpose in being what they regarded as lackies. "Let them do the work," was their demand.

Friction on the boat was exacerbated by the fact that while the committee might represent those detainees who were members of either wing of the Republican movement, the independents, the socialists and those arrested by mistake were not represented. Cassin, Kelly and Shannon, all of Armagh PD, ran into trouble with the committee several times over their demand that they were entitled to bombard the governor and the Ministry for Home Affairs daily with protests about their arrest, treatment and conditions. They believed that there was no point in accommodating the authorities either by agreeing to appointed spokesmen or by accepting 'lag labour'. Kelly later claimed that what he termed 'aggro' was one means of remaining sane. In fact, both he and Shannon were to pay for their 'impertinence' in demanding their liberty and rights. After five weeks' incarceration they were informed that their lawyers were on the *Maidstone* to see them. They were pushed into the interview room only to be confronted by two RUC men from Armagh. The door was locked. Kelly, an accountant, was charged with burning cement lorries 18 months previously; Shannon, a solicitor, was charged with "scandalizing a court and preventing the course of justice" (by defending a client successfully). Two days later both men were released. In fact, nothing more had been heard of these charges 20 months later, but they are indicative of the attitude of officialdom.

The hunger strikes were all abortive.^[2] The rota system fell into disarray and the committee split up. Morale was low and tension high. A plan to take over part of the ship was voted down at the last minute, leaving bitter allegations about vote rigging. Cooped up as they were for twenty hours a day (longer if it rained) and with only 2,000 square feet of deck and that encrusted with the excrement of scavenging seagulls, and surrounded by barbed-wire, many men were edgy and irritable. One 18-year-old, an epileptic, had to be taken off the boat so bad was his condition which had been brought on by the savage beatings he received at Ballykinlar.

The sleeping habits of some internees added to the sense of unreality. There were men who remained awake all night and slept throughout the day. Solo, bridge and chess were their ticket to sunrise. Others displayed more individualistic traits. Art McAlinden, an old internee from the 40's, never slept in a bunk after the first night, but remained curled up on an old couch. Sean McShane – 'the Cuckoo' – moved continually from bunk to bunk each night, with a marked preference for the bunks of released detainees, believing perhaps that their 'luck' would be transferred in some symbiotic way to him. Another constant irritant was the frequency of 'reprisal' raids and 'searches' by troops. For example, on 27 February the detainees were locked up for three hours while troops literally plundered their quarters, stealing their cigarettes and destroying their hand-painted handkerchiefs and match-stick crosses. All complaints to the governor were stonily ignored.

14 September saw the release of a handful of men, and during the following week others were transferred to Long Kesh. But still the numbers built up. On 16 January 50 men were taken from the ship by helicopter to the new camp at Magilligan. Next day the 'Magnificent Seven' escaped. The ship was being used increasingly for detainees, many of whom had just been through the 'interrogation process' at Palace barracks – and many of whom had to be removed to hospital after it.

At the end of May a determined hunger strike was begun. After nine days it was called off. The news had just been announced. Direct Rule. Whitelaw to be Supremo. One of Whitelaw's first actions was to free 47 internees and 26 detainees. Two days later, 9

April 1972. the men on the *Maidstone* were moved to Long Kesh. It was announced that the ship was no longer to be used as a detention centre. A sordid and ignominious chapter in its history had ended.^[3]

MAGILLIGAN CAMP

MAGILLIGAN camp is situated by the beach in the wind-wept reaches of Co. Derry, 24 miles from Derry city. It became Brian Faulkner's second internment camp on 16 January 1972 when 50 men were moved there from the already overcrowded *Maidstone*. It contained four cages, laid out on the Long Kesh pattern. Each of the first three cages contained two sleeping huts, with a separate combined canteen and recreation hut; the fourth cage had four sleeping huts, smaller than the Long Kesh ones and restricted to 16 men to each hut. Consequently, at its peak wage, the camp held 160.

Christy Canavan, who inside six months experienced the *Maidstone*, Long Kesh and Magilligan, felt that Magilligan was definitely the worst. There were far fewer recreational facilities; for instance, no carving or carpentry work was permitted. The cold wind from the Atlantic blew continuously and the damp huts were not improved by the heating system, an inadequate coke fire which gave off noxious fumes. The camp's remoteness meant real hardship for visiting relatives, and although there were only 160 internees, they were nevertheless divided in such a way as to separate brother from brother and father from son. Greg Quinn was elected O/C and he tried to get the usual classes organized, but time hung heavy on the men and the frequent arrivals and departures meant a lack of continuity.^[4]

Escape was on everyone's mind, especially with Co. Donegal so near, just across Lough Foyle. The only attempted escape, however, was a spontaneous one as four Officials who, on their second day in the camp, took advantage of a power-cut to go over the wire. They got through two sets of wire and were crawling across the ground outside the huts which accommodated the soldiers who guarded the perimeter when the electricity went on again. Their lives were saved by one of the warders who wrestled with a trigger-happy guard who was about to open fire. Other internees claimed that this escape attempt frustrated a planned escape bid for that weekend, because security was tightened next day. Tunnelling was considered and rejected because of the unsuitable sandy soil.

The camp contained its quota of spies, but, as usual in a tightly-knit community such as Northern Ireland, this ploy was unsuccessful: anyone who was not personally known would have his story checked out quickly. The life was monotonous and grim; one internee who experienced acute delusional paranoia had to be quickly moved to a mental home. The only real highlight was in January when an anti-internment march to Magilligan was stopped by members of the 1st Paras on the beach outside the camp. As internees climbed onto the roofs of the huts and waved flags, the marchers, after their four miles cross-country trek, straggled along the beach. There, oblivious of the TV cameras, Paras batoned people indiscriminately. Viewers saw people being savagely kicked as they lay on the ground and rubber bullets being fired at them from close range. Despite widespread protests no inquiry was held, no disciplinary action was taken. A week later the Paras were in action again – on 'Bloody Sunday'. This time their

toll was 13 dead.

The Whitelaw takeover spelt the end of Magilligan – as an internment camp. On 1 May it was closed and the remaining internees were moved to Long Kesh where the releases of the previous week had provided vacant billets. But that was not the end of the camp. Next day 60 short-term (less than three years) prisoners from Crumlin Road, which was grossly overcrowded, were moved into Magilligan. Loyalist associations protested as the majority of the prisoners moved to Magilligan were 'Loyalists'. This, however, was but an interim measure. Magilligan's days as an internment camp were at an end.

Footnotes Chapter 8:

1. Council minutes, 2 March 1972.

LONG KESH

1. 22 September 1972. Long Kesh means 'the long bog crossing'.
2. Mitchell also had his own ideas on how to deal with the situation. He told a *Guardian*, Manchester, reporter, Terry Coleman: "I would send round a list of 100 suspects and then just start shooting them; by the time you've knocked off ten of them the rest will be in Killarney. They can't stand up to it." He added: "I'd like to have a machine-gun built into every TV camera and then say to the IRA, 'Come out and let's talk...' and then shoot the lot."
"After a trial?"
"That would be a complete waste of time," Mitchell replied.
That Mitchell did not earn his soubriquet 'mad' for nothing few could doubt, but the frightening thing is that although patently 'unstable' he was a lieutenant-colonel in the army for years and is now a Tory MP. Coupled with this are his close links with the UDA. His namesake, Captain Robert Mitchell MP, announced that he wanted to see a camp for internees set up in "a remote area of Canada". But then, he also said that he wanted the army to use flame-throwers against demonstrating crowds.
3. In fact, according to Unionist hardliner John Taylor, the plans for Long Kesh were drawn up in London.
4. For example, the four McKay brothers, Sean McKenna senior and junior, and Frank Hughes and his son Cathal.
5. Paisley, nonetheless, was one of the very few MPs prepared to visit his constituents there.
6. It was not the only occasion on which belongings were stolen or destroyed. Men of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) pioneer corps, and 13/18 Hussars were all guilty of this.
7. One of the most unfortunate internees was Cathal 'Yoho' Lenaghan. He was not involved in any way with the IRA or even with the Socialist movement and was completely bewildered to find himself in Long Kesh. When he heard there would be

trouble he hid himself in a locker. After the noise of the beatings had died down and all was quiet Cathal heard men coming into the hut. Thinking they were returning internees he opened the locker door and jumped out, shouting: "Yoho, here I am." Confronting him were five soldiers who cried: "There you are, you bastard," and beat him mercilessly. He was hospitalized and, on release, was nicknamed 'Yoho'.

8. During previous periods of internment neither Catholic nor Protestant Churches had made any protest about the detention of men without charge or trial. 1971 was to see a change when the Catholic Church in the form of Cardinal Conway spoke out for the first time. The major Protestant Churches also issued a statement. On 10 August, the day after Faulkner reintroduced internment, a joint statement from Rev. Charles Bain (Methodist), the Right Rev. Rupert Gibson (Presbyterian), and the Most Rev. George Simms (Church of Ireland) recognised that "because of the continuing violence and bloodshed for which there can be no Christian justification, the Government in its duty to all citizens had no option but to introduce strong measures which may be distasteful to many". Brian Faulkner was photographed smiling as he left his place of worship that Sunday.
9. Alcohol was manufactured mainly from potatoes. The older screws turned a blind eye; the younger and more naive prison officers couldn't understand why so many spuds were being ordered.

THE *Maidstone*

1. *The Irish Times*, Dublin, 18 August 1972.
2. The one on Christmas Day was an occasion for the screws to sadistically tempt the hunger strikers with brandy pudding, roast chicken and other choice foods.
3. There was an attempt by Ritchie Ryan, Fine Gael spokesman on Northern Ireland affairs, to claim that the ship was out of the jurisdiction of Stormont, since mention of territorial waters had been omitted from the 1920 Government of Ireland Act. Nothing came of this quaint piece of legalism.

MAGILLIGAN CAMP

1. Things would have been worse had it not been for the tireless efforts of the eccentric Father Shields – a priest, zoo-keeper, mushroom-factory owner and cafe organiser, who raised money for provisions and who was always on hand with advice.

Chapter 9

ESCAPES 1971-1972

THE 1971-1972 internment period became notable for the number of escapes successfully effected. These were, of course, immensely beneficial for the morale of the internees and those engaged in the civil resistance campaign – and very damaging for the Government's already dented image.

The first attempt was made in September in Crumlin Road jail. Five men, using ropes made of sheets to which were tied hooks from the metal struts of two tables, succeeded in getting on top of the outside wall, during a football match. The escape had been timed to coincide with an explosion outside the wall set off by comrades, but it 'backfired' when the men heard a nail bomb go off on the Antrim Road and mistook this for the signal. They got to the top of the wall, however, only to be confronted by an army patrol pointing their guns at them. The coincidental nail bomb had alerted the army. The five jumped back down and mingled with the footballers who were restraining the screws. An immediate investigation to determine the identity of the five would-be escapers was thwarted when all the men in C wing threw their sheets out onto the landing in a pile so that the escapers could not be identified.

Faulkner announced that security was being tightened. The following month the nine 'Crumlin Kangaroos', as they became known, went over the wall when rope ladders were thrown over from outside. Dressed in football gear, on 17 November, nine men^[1] went over the wall, through the already-cut barbed-wire perimeter and into waiting cars. "Screws made only half-hearted attempts to stop us," one escaper said. Two, Keenan and Mullan, were recaptured near Omagh, but the other seven successfully crossed the border and were soon to appear at a press conference in Dublin. Two monks and several local businessmen were subsequently charged with aiding and abetting the escapers.^[2] In fact, the IRA had its own escape committee, both inside and outside the prisons and camps, but even they had nothing on the opportunity provided by the next piece of bureaucratic incompetence. Sean Hanna, of Henrietta Street, walked out the front gates of Crumlin. He had just finished a two-month sentence and was to be brought to court to appear on an explosives charge. If acquitted of this, he was certain to be interned. (Over a dozen men acquitted in the courts or against whom the Crown had withdrawn all charges were arrested as they left the court and interned. But the prison authorities had made a 'mistake'. Hanna, having walked out, completely disappeared. The Government announced that security was being tightened.

Two weeks later an even more embarrassing escape was made. The Green Howards, stationed in Ardoyne, were cock-a-hoop. They had captured Martin Meehan and Tony 'Dutch' Doherty, two of the most wanted local Provisionals. Both were severely beaten up and then tortured in Palace barracks. Next they were detained in Crumlin in the last week of November. (It is interesting to note that the army informed the press, who gleefully splashed it, that Meehan and Doherty had been responsible for nearly every murder that had taken place in Northern Ireland in the previous three years. They had "conclusive proof," they said, that Meehan and Doherty had killed the three Scottish soldiers shot in Ligoniel, to say nothing of the five Green Howards shot in Ardoyne. Despite all this 'proof' Meehan and Doherty were not charged with any crime – just detained under the Special Powers Act).

On 2 December the prison authorities got a phone call from the press. Reporters had asked people of Ardoyne why bonfires had been lit and were told that it was because Meehan and Doherty had escaped; could the prison authorities confirm this, the reporters asked. The authorities were startled. It was the first they'd heard of it. A check

was made and the awful truth revealed. Meehan, Doherty and Hugh McCann^[3] were, indeed, gone. In fact, Meehan and McCann had crossed the border before the prison authorities even knew they had escaped. Doherty stayed around to take care of some business and leisurely crossed over the next week. For five hours they had hidden, uncomfortably, in a manhole, up to their knees in water, until the rest of the prisoners had gone in from exercise, and then, under cover of fog, went over the wall, using a sheet. Comrades on the inside had wrecked the normal head count by staging an 'incident'. Furious, Faulkner ordered an inquiry into prison security. It was prepared by Cyril Cunningham and handed to Faulkner on 7 December. On 9 January 1972, a wet and stormy day, Brendan Dunlop (18) escaped from the Palace barracks torture compound. He had been escorted by a policeman to the toilet and, on his return, had ducked behind the hut instead of re-entering it. The policeman, preoccupied with the rain, assumed that Dunlop had gone in and he wandered off. Dunlop waited a while and then escaped over the barbed-wire fence under cover of the storm. He then calmly walked five miles across town to a friendly house. Two days later he was in Dublin. On 9 January also an attempted tunnel escape from Crumlin was foiled. Three tunnels, two nearly complete, from C wing Nos. 9, 14 and 20 were discovered. Three days later two guns were found in Crumlin. It obviously wasn't as secure as was desirable and so several men were moved to the *Maidstone* since it was 'more secure' – but it was also very overcrowded. Consequently on 16 January fifty men were taken from the *Maidstone* to the new camp at Magilligan. This sudden move spurred on the internees on the ship. Next day seven^[4] of them escaped from the 'escape-proof' *Maidstone*. This was the most bizarre of all the escapes. The men had been watching the tide for weeks, trying to gauge it. Tin cans were tossed out and their movements checked. The antics of a young seal were observed. Finally, the men were ready to go. Butter had been collected from food parcels and, during the evening recreation period, 5 o'clock, the men smeared themselves all over with the butter as a precaution against the cold. Then they daubed on boot polish, and, clad for the most part only in football shorts or pyjamas, they cut the bar on the porthole with a fret saw and slipped through. Meanwhile, their comrades chatted to the overconfident guards. No escape was expected and vigilance was slack. After all, armed guards on the deck manned searchlights, the water around the ship was full of barbed-wire, and it was also far too cold for anyone to survive in. Undaunted, the men clambered down the *Maidstone's* steel hawser and entered the water. Several of them were cut by the barbed-wire but all succeeded in struggling through it. In single file they slowly swam the 400 yards through the bitterly cold water to the shore. It took them twenty minutes. Then the first hitch occurred. Two cars, and members of the Andersonstown unit with warm clothes were waiting for them – 500 yards away. The men had landed at the wrong spot. Moreover, a delay in their starting time caused by a recount on board meant that when they finally made the pier on Queen's Island their comrades were nowhere to be seen. Resourceful as ever, they reverted to the stand-by plan. Peter Rodgers, in his soaking underwear, emerged from cover and approached Queen's Road bus terminus. A startled bus driver having a cup of tea was asked for the loan of his greatcoat; Rodgers explained that he had fallen in. The driver lent him the coat and set out on his run back to the City Hall. The men, tired and freezing, waited until the bus returned at 6.30 p.m. The driver went into the security office, presumably to report the incident and the 'loan' of his coat. As he entered, the seven men broke cover. Rodgers, who before internment had been a

bus driver, leapt into the cab and drove off as the others piled in. 'Gunning' the bus – "the bloody thing only did 40 mph" – Rodgers drove for the main gates. The security guard had several minutes to phone through an alert which would result in the heavy gates being closed, but luck was on the escaper's side. The gates were open. As they drove past the gesticulating gate-men they waved back. The security guards, perhaps too astonished by the sight of semi-nude black men, did not fire. The bus headed for Verner Street in the Markets area, across the bridge. It was soon picked up by an army land rover but the soldiers were not foolhardy enough to pursue it right into the heart of this staunch Republican area. Instead, they alerted the local regiment, the Royal Horse Artillery. Colonel Tony Budd appeared in front of the TV cameras that evening to inform an alarmed public that everything was under control. The escapers were surrounded in the area and could not get away. In the morning they would go in and arrest them. This caused some amusement to the 'Magnificent Seven' (as they were instantly named) who were by then sitting in a drinking club in a completely different part of the city, watching the Colonel on TV. In fact, they had been no more than three minutes in the Markets. Word of their arrival had spread instantly through the grapevine and people had flocked into the narrow little streets bringing them clothing and two get-away cars. They were clear before the soldiers arrived.

Next day the Royal Horse Artillery indulged themselves by smashing down doors and ransacking the area, but to no avail. Frustrated, they vented their rage on a few local inhabitants and detained 25 men for 'screening'. But no escapers, wanted men or guns were found. Within a week the Magnificent Seven were giving the by then customary press conference in Dublin.

By now things were all set for an escape from Long Kesh. There had been an abortive attempt in the first week of November when eight men had tried to break out of Compound 1 which lay closest to the perimeter. They had slipped out of their nissen huts at night and successfully cut their way through the first barbed-wire fence. But a patrol of soldiers with guard dogs had spotted them and they had had to dash back to the huts. The authorities were unable to identify any of them, but security was again tightened. Not enough, however. On Monday 7 February, Francis McGuigan, a well-known Republican (Provisional) from Ardoyne, walked out of the camp. As with the Meehan – Doherty – McCann escape, the press were the first to know. McGuigan's mother was able to tell them that her son was safe before the camp commandant was even aware that he was missing. McGuigan was soon over the border, but reticent about his method of escape as other people were involved and it could be used again. Rumours flew and Unionist MP's alleged that he had escaped disguised as a priest. In a heated question-and-answer session, the Junior Minister for Home Affairs at Stormont, John Taylor, revealed that it had taken 18 hours to discover his escape because "it wasn't possible, without the assistance of the army, to have periodic roll calls or even head counts at Long Kesh. Needless to say, the internees do not cooperate in such exercises," he added. Rev. William Beattie of the Democratic Unionist Party displayed his brand of Christian charity in the comment: "The Minister's attitude that the internees be given human treatment only insults this House because they are not human; they are subhuman."

Crumlin Road jail was soon to be in the news again. On 12 February a mass jail break by 85 political prisoners on remand in C wing was narrowly foiled. The theme tune of TV's 'Dr. Who' was the signal for the break, and at 5.50 p.m. all the prison officers on C wing

were 'taken over' by the internees. No violence was used, except in the case of one English officer who struggled, and a young lad, who wasn't involved in the break, thinking it was just a riot, hit him with a billiard cue. The screws were tied up and "treated courteously," according to the would-be escapers' statement. Using the keys, the men got into the passage leading to the exercise yard and sawed through two bars with the omnipresent hacksaw. Out into the yard they went with mattresses and blankets to put over the barbed-wire. Meanwhile, three more screws chanced to walk in and two of them were tied up also – making eight in all. One, however, seeing what was happening, ran back and gave the alarm. As the men were getting over the wall the soldiers arrived with orders to shoot. The men were forced back and, rather than risk death, they surrendered. "But for one bit of bad luck, C wing's 85 'remands' would all have been freed," claimed a statement smuggled out of the jail to *The Irish News* and published on 15 February 1972.

Nor was that the end of tribulations of the security forces at Crumlin Road jail. On 5 May 19-year-old Michael Joseph Willis of Belfast disappeared from it. Again it took an anonymous phone call to alert the authorities that an escape had taken place. Willis, an Official Republican, had just been sentenced to ten years on a firearms charge. After ten days he was rescued by the IRA, escaping in a garbage truck. A week later he, too, appeared in Dublin. An interesting sequel was his appeal against the sentence. This was heard, *in absentia*, on 1 June, and the sentence was reduced to seven years, the judge commenting that "Willis seems to have absented himself from custody."

Footnotes Chapter 9:

1. Seamus Storey, Thomas Maguire, Thomas Fox, Peter Hennessy, Bernard Ellison, Thomas Kane, Terence Clarke, Chris Keenan, David Mullan. All were remand prisoners.
2. Rev. Thomas O'Neill was fined £500, and Brother Patrick Sheehan £250.
3. Hugh McCann was recaptured in Andersonstown in May. Martin Meehan was recaptured on 9 August 1972 – one year after the introduction of internment.
4. Seamus Convery (31), Tom Gorman (26), James Bryson (23), Thomas Toland (25), Thomas Kane (24), Peter Rodgers (27) and Martin Taylor (25). 'Tucker' Kane and Martin Taylor were recaptured in May 1972, Tom Gorman and James Bryson in September. Bryson was to be in the news again. On 22 February 1973 he made a sensational escape from Crumlin Road courthouse. Using a gun smuggled to him the night before, he overpowered four warders, made off wearing one of their uniforms and got clean away.

Chapter 10

THE CIVIL RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

THE 1971-1972 internment period witnessed a new element in the internment saga: a massive civil resistance movement. The most important aspect of the movement was its spontaneity.

Internment had been in the air in the months of June and July 1971. Faulkner had consistently requested it, and, by and large, all anti-Unionist groups had felt the need for a united front to oppose its imposition. The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association called a conference several weeks before 9 August after discussions with the Official Republicans, the People's Democracy and the SDLP. The meeting was held before an enthusiastic audience in St. Mary's Hall, Belfast, and speaker after speaker was cheered as he denounced internment and the Special Powers Act and pledged support to a united front. But the proposed next meeting, which had been agreed upon by the audience, was not called. The NICRA began to procrastinate, and in the end Brian Faulkner pre-empted everyone by introducing internment on 9 August 1971.

The sorry truth is that there was no real basis for a united front against internment. The SDLP with six MP's is a middle-class Catholic party which had never contested an election. The party had been formed from the remnants of the old tired Nationalist Party, civil rights independents, the Labour Party and Gerry Fitt's Republican Labour Party group. At the time when internment was merely in the air they had been desperate to get off the hook of non-participation in Stormont which their constituents in Derry had pushed them onto after the Deny shootings of Cusack and Beattie on 7 July 1971. But internment finished that. There could be no longer any question of the SDLP participating in Stormont, or in Brian Faulkner's tempting and lucrative parliamentary committees. They abstained from Stormont, but continued to draw their salaries and to have secret meetings with conservative MP's.

NICRA was in an awkward position. What once had the pretensions to be a mass public movement had shrunk to a small faction which could no longer hide its obvious function as an Official Republican front with CP backing. For over a year their policy, in line with CP and Official leadership in Dublin thinking, had been reformist: 'democratise Stormont', and a 'Bill of Rights'. But events and the people had passed them by. They were, however, to provide a very real stumbling block to unity with their insistence that any mass movement against internment must be under their control. This was clearly unacceptable to many people and it led to the formation of the Northern Resistance Movement which, in turn, came to be regarded as a front for the Provisional Republicans and the PD.

The NRM was born out of the failure of several meetings in Omagh and Dungannon to agree on a formula for a mass movement. NICRA insisted on having total control. The PD and many individuals felt that NICRA would be undemocratic and a brake upon militant action. The Provisionals were then concerned with the military campaign against the British army and had little time for what they described somewhat contemptuously as 'politics'.

The fact was, however, that the people at grass roots had, as usual, outstripped their self-appointed 'leaders'. Within minutes of the initial internment raids by the army on the morning of 9 August 1971, women were out rattling bin-lids as a warning, youths were throwing stones and bottles, barricades were erected. Soon local units of both wings of the IRA engaged troops. Taking advantage of the situation, 'Loyalists' began to intimidate and to burn people out of their homes and, in some cases, to snipe from roofs. In the first few weeks of violence 35 people died. The numbers were soon to rise

with the concerted bombing and shooting campaign of the Provisionals.

Internment succeeded in uniting the minority as nothing else had ever done. With this final ham-fisted blow Faulkner managed to totally alienate nearly 40% of the population against the State. Nor were most of the 60% that pleased either. Boal and Paisley of the Democratic Unionist Party, as well as the Alliance and Labour Parties,^[4] condemned internment. The main prop of the civil resistance was the rent-and-rates strike.

The strike began spontaneously. It was not organized by the SDLP, the Official Republicans or any other movement, though some were to claim it as their creation. The idea caught on like wildfire. Traditionally, strike action by the Catholic minority in the North has always been an impractical weapon. There were very few jobs in which they held key positions or a majority of the workforce, unlike the Protestant Vanguard who were to show they could bring the province to a standstill, though harming themselves more than anyone else in the process. Catholics did have several one-day industrial strikes, especially after 'Bloody Sunday', but it was the strike against the State that was the most effective.

Within weeks, more than 40,000 households were on rent-and-rate strike. Placards to this effect appeared in windows all over the country – as well as the more contemptuously militant slogan 'Rent Spent'. At the conference called by the Tyrone Central Civil Resistance Committee in Omagh on 17 October 1971, which was to lead to the setting up of NRM, delegates gave some examples of the effectiveness of the strike. In Newry 95% solidarity. The Newry Urban Council had lost £150,000 in ten weeks. In Lurgan 4,000 were refusing to pay; £10,000 a week was being held back. In Derry, the Creggan with 15,000 people had 98% strike success; the Bogside and Brandywell had 90%. Coalisland 95%. Andersonstown, 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. In many areas Local Government had been halted completely when Opposition councillors and businessmen withdrew from the councils and commissions. Newry, Strabane, Coalisland and various smaller towns were left with no town councils at all and the Government had to step in and try to take over their functions. Faced with the wholesale refusal to pay rent and rates, Unionists had to abandon the normal process of enforcing payments. Their answer was the Payment for Debt (Emergency Powers) Act.

Professor Peter Townsend of the Child Poverty Action Group called it "The worst piece of social legislation passed in the UK in this century." He was right. It had all the crude simplicity of a totalitarian decree.

The Act provides that anyone who owes money to the State and who refuses to pay is to have his or her debts paid by way of deductions from their State entitlements. Families on rent strike have the rent money and arrears deducted from benefits they usually received, before any benefits are paid over. The money so deducted is then paid to the local housing account. These benefits can include any that Stormont controls: supplementary allowances, unemployment benefits, sickness benefits, pensions or family allowance and even death grants. But the Act went even further. As Kevin Boyle, a lawyer and university lecturer, pointed out:

This extraordinary Act concerns itself with more than debts owed to the State. A private landlord whose tenants are withholding rent can also dip into their State benefits to make up the rent. So also may a building society where a person stalls or defaults on repayments; for example gas, electricity or water, can be met in the same way. For those defaulters who have no State

benefits to subtract from, powers exist to attack wages or debts, seize property or charge land. An employer who refuses to dock money from his employees' wages, once ordered, becomes personally liable for his employees' debts. The Act's provisions are retrospective, all of these powers being available for debts accruing from 1 April 1972.

To implement this debt-collection service a special administrative unit has been set up at Stormont Castle. Eighty Civil Servants have been seconded from all branches to work the new machinery, a task some regard as distasteful. Their removal from other departments has caused considerable strain on the functioning of normal services, and in the special unit itself conditions have been described as administrative anarchy. There is evidence in the non-payment or delayed payment of some benefits that parts of the social services are close to breakdown with the additional task of collecting 30,000 rents each week. The whole machinery may be unable to cope, particularly if the refusal to pay continues on the present scale, which it shows every sign of doing.

The functioning of this penal act has inevitably brought hardship to the poorer families in the North. In theory, the civil servants can take all the benefits a person receives in satisfaction for the rent and arrears owed since August, and there is no appeal against deductions once made. In practice, directions have been given as follows: The amount to be deducted is the rent money for the week, an amount for the arrears depending on the status of the beneficiary. If the person is unemployed and on the standard rate of benefit, the maximum to be taken for arrears is £1.50 per week. If the person has an earnings related supplement, i.e. not the standard rate of benefit, up to £3.50 can be taken as arrears. If he is employed, then the amount taken is the weekly rent and arrears up to £2.00. It is obvious that persons either on supplementary benefit or low wages are going to be in severe straits as a result of these deductions. The supplementary benefit standard allowance is taken as the official poverty line, and the effect of this Act will be to put many thousands of families below that line throughout this winter. Particularly vulnerable will be those families affected by the 'wage-stop', the device whereby benefits are pegged to the level of wages last earned by the husband. Pensioners and the disabled who get inadequate money at the best of times will also suffer special hardship.

Indeed, hardship is guaranteed by one provision in the debt act, which declares that no exceptional needs grant will normally be paid to a rent defaulter. That has already been administratively interpreted as meaning no payments at all, and there is no appeal against the refusal.

But perhaps the most extraordinary feature of all is that the bureaucracy of the Act will mean for the normal family that it can never leave the rent strike! If a person wishes to start paying his rent, he must inform the local authority, who in turn must inform Stormont Castle, who, again, must inform his local supplementary office. It is calculated that all this will take, in present circumstances, at least two weeks. Meanwhile the tenant will have had money deducted for rent out of his weekly benefit, so he will be effectively paying double rent as well as a sum for arrears. Few families in the rent strike could afford such payments, and even if special secret arrangements exist whereby double payment could be avoided, few are going to pursue them. It is known that the unprecedented publicity campaign prior to this act, to cajole people out of the strike, produced negligible results.

The administrative costs of the new machinery may yet exceed the rent revenue being collected. Civil Resistance and Disobedience committees are determined to increase costs by making applications for extra benefits and information on a massive scale.

The Act did, indeed, fail. The Government tried everything from threats to bribes but to little avail. Full-page advertisements were published in all the newspapers claiming that the Government had information that "... many people withholding rent and rates are *unwilling participants* in the campaign. They are doing so only through fear of intimidation or reprisals. Nevertheless, nearly 2,000 families in the areas concerned have already asked that part of the supplementary benefit should be paid direct to their housing authority, so as to secure the tenancies." Roy Bradford, ex-disc jockey and the then Unionist Minister for Development, cut a sorry sight on television with his 'Do not

be misled – Civil wrongs secure no rights' speech. Two weeks later^[2] the Andersonstown Civil Resistance Committee were able to conclusively answer him:

The Unionists have been asked to disclose the facts about the rent and rates strike they have refused! We give you the facts. At 20th November 1971, Local Authorities and Housing Bodies had registered 14,000 applications for collection of Rent and Rate from Social Benefits. Civil Servants estimate that by 30th December 1971, 30,000 applications will have been made. Thousands of pounds have been spent on advertising aimed at breaking the anti-internment campaign. *Bradford has failed!* Less than 1/4 of one per cent (only 80 people) have started to pay. The Unionist party is now a debt-collecting machine. Unionism has a future for you ... behind bars.

The continuation of the violence showed even more conclusively that internment had failed.

In the four months prior to internment:

four soldiers, four civilians and no RUC men died.

In the four months after internment:

30 soldiers, 73 civilians and 11 RUC and UDR men died.

The violence of the army when patrolling, raiding and sacking the Catholic ghettos cemented the alienation. The tortures and brutalities exacerbated it even further. The plain and simple truth is that the Unionist Government, the army, the police and the courts had lost all credibility. The Unionists had for years resisted even the most minor demands for justice. The PM Brian Faulkner had been denounced as 'treacherous', 'devious' and 'untrustworthy' by members of his own Cabinet and by the ex-PM Terence (later Lord) O'Neill. He was hardly the man to inspire confidence in anyone.

The RUC had been condemned by two British Commissions (Scarman and Hunt). Many were party to what their own commander, Sir Arthur Young, termed "a conspiracy of silence". The courts were denounced for their bigoted magistrates and unjust sentences. For example, between 28 October 1971 and 16 February 1972, no fewer than ten men were acquitted, whether by jury or the direction of the judge, only to be interned as they left the court. In December 1971 alone, four men were granted bail and detained under the Special Powers Act as they attempted to leave.^[3]

As Henry Kelly^[4] has pointed out: "As for the office of public prosecutor, some idea of Unionist urgency in introducing this minor but necessary reform can be gauged from the fact that the first incumbent, Mr. Barry Shaw, QC, took up office only in April 1972, nearly three years after the idea was proposed." Meanwhile, a Stormont Government could continue to introduce repressive legislation such as the Criminal Justice (Temporary Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) in one late-night sitting. And despite promises by PM O'Neill, the notorious Special Powers Act not only remained *in toto* on the Statute Book but had actually been strengthened.

The civil resistance campaign was to have important side effects apart from the discrediting of internment. Foremost, of course, was the downfall of Stormont. Lord Brookeborough had been PM of Northern Ireland for 20 years. Terence O'Neill lasted from 1963 until April 1969. Chichester Clark survived only from April 1969 until March 1971. Brian Faulkner, who had schemed for, intrigued for, and coveted the job for so long, was to last only 12 months exactly. When he fell, Stormont and the Unionist monolith fell with him.

Nor was the resistance campaign confined to Ireland North and South. Branches of the

Anti-Internment League, formed in London immediately after the introduction of internment, by John Gray and Bowes Egan, proliferated throughout the 'British Isles' and as far afield as America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. International organizations, such as Amnesty and The Red Cross, investigated. Reports went to the Human Rights Commission in The Hague and the UN. The Civil Rights Association co-operated with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to involve trade unionists throughout Britain. Similarly, in many towns the National Union of Students organized demonstrations and protests against internment.

But again, the old tried-and-true tactic of marching, so successful in the early days of the civil rights campaign, was to become decisive. With internment on 9 August Faulkner had imposed a ban on all marches for 12 months. Soon those opposed to repressive legislation began to clamour for street action. NICRA, the traditional march organizers, refused – their logic was simple – you couldn't march because it was illegal and they might put you in jail if you did! Resentment and frustration 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 PD's, called a march for Christmas Day. It was to go from Beechmount in Belfast along the M1 motorway to Long Kesh itself, ten miles away. Of course, everyone knew that they would not be allowed to get there.

Nonetheless, despite the atrocious weather and the delights of the traditional Christmas afternoon, 4,000 people assembled in the snow and marched. The army blocked the left-hand lane to the motorway but, undaunted, the marchers swung past them and began to march down the other lane into the oncoming traffic. They got three miles before the army were able to stop them. The temerity of people, not only parading on the motorway but going down the wrong lane, was apparently beyond the experience of the army.

The march was a great success. The law had been flouted and floodgates were opened. NICRA shamefacedly had to call their own march – straight up the Falls Road to the heart of the ghetto. But the marching season was on. Marches at Magilligan camp, protests at Long Kesh, and finally the march in Derry on 'Bloody Sunday'.

In Derry the British army showed its 'answer' to illegal marches: cold-blooded murder. Lord Widgery was to find that the Paras had, indeed, killed 13 innocent civilians, but that they (the marchers) "shouldn't have been there in the first place." British justice. The death penalty, without trial, for marching against repression. Laws like the Special Powers Act. "In order to protect the law we had to break it!"

Next week saw an enormous crowd of some 70,000 marching in Newry. This time, with the world's press there, the soldiers refrained from gunning people down. Marches became a weekly occurrence, despite NICRA's attempts to restrain the people.

Moreover, the 'Loyalists' began holding their own marches. The Loyalist Association of Workers (LAW), a crypto-fascist organization led by Billy Hull, held regular marches throughout the towns. The Vanguard movement was formed and parades of men in para-military uniforms – later, masked as well – became a regular feature. Somehow these marches were never illegal – only those of the anti-Unionists were so designated – and none of the organizers was arrested. Members of the NRM, PD and NICRA did not fare so well. In the space of five months, Michael Farrell, PD, collected two years jail sentences (in the form of four separate six-months sentences – none of which he had to serve), Bernadette Devlin MP received three years and Frank McManus MP got five years in all. All were appealed and the process was dragged out for several months.

Meanwhile the courts insisted on suspending the sentences passed upon the 'respectable' MPs, Fitt, Paddy Devlin, Hume and Cooper.

Eventually, tiring of the farce, Farrell, Devlin and McManus announced that they had no intention of turning up at the courts to answer yet more marching charges, nor would they appeal. Legally, they should have been arrested at once. Political considerations intervened, and Whitelaw, the new supremo, on 27 April announced an amnesty for all sentenced for breaking the march ban. Simultaneously, the ban itself was scrapped. It had been yet another piece of bad legislation from Brian Faulkner, popular with no one, not even with the Orangemen who became increasingly militant as the traditional 12th July marches approached.

The Civil Resistance campaign, in conjunction with the IRA's military campaign, proved to be a combination with which the Unionist Government could not cope. They had 50 years of uninterrupted rule and had become stultified and inflexible. The resistance campaign did not end internment, but it helped to bring down Stormont. Even more important, with its resistance councils it gave many people, for the first time in their lives, the chance to see that they could "seize the time"; that they could exercise a very real measure of control over their jobs, their streets, their areas. Resistance councils proliferated. Some were better organized than others. Some were experiments which failed.^[5]

When we look at the New Lodge Road though, with a council and street committees elected by everyone over the age of 16, area committees, defence, welfare, health, finance and recreational committees, meeting every week, running their own clubs, newspapers, barricades (when necessary), we can see real democracy in action. And freedom is a contagious virus. Internment has brought the people together and made them see the need for organizing from the grass roots up, instead of relying on traditional 'leaders'. Certainly, many of the people will never be the same again after their involvement in the anti-internment campaign.

They have changed. "A terrible beauty is born."

Footnotes Chapter 10:

1. It is true, unfortunately, that the Northern Ireland Labour party was only lukewarm in its condemnation. They would not even expel David Bleakley, the Labour MP who had disgraced the party by joining Faulkner's Cabinet.
2. 4 December 1971. On 27 November 1972, 15 months after the introduction of internment, the Ministry was forced to concede that at least 18,000 families were still on rent-and-rate strike. Council-house tenants had withheld £2,250,000, of which only £1,130,000 had been recovered by deductions from social security benefits. In the private sector a further £850,000 was still owed. See *The Irish News*, Belfast, 17 August 1972, and *The Irish Times*, Dublin, 28 November 1972.
3. One man, Seamus O'Kane from Derry, was more fortunate. He was arrested in England and grilled non-stop for 72 hours in connection with the Aldershot bombing. Police realized then that he had nothing to do with it (indeed, he had

been in Derry at the time of the bombing). Nevertheless, they phoned the RUC who took him back to Belfast on the pretext of an old charge dating back four years. He received a suspended sentence and was told by an RUC man to go down to his cell to collect his belongings prior to his release. Rightly suspicious, however, O'Kane declined and made his exit through the front door of the court and into a waiting car. Meanwhile, two disappointed Special Branch men sat holding his internment order in his cell.

4. HENRY KELLY, *How Stormont Fell*, Dublin (Gill & Macmillan), 1972.
5. A factor in the campaign, which should not be forgotten, was the power of song. Internment brought a whole spate of ballads, the most popular being 'The Men Behind the Wire', recorded by the Barleycorn, which raised a lot of money for the Andersonstown Civil Resistance movement. But dozens of songs proliferated about the 'Crumlin Kangaroos' and the 'Magnificent Seven' escapers, and the tragic events of 'Bloody Sunday' in Derry. All were designed to keep up the spirit of resistance.

Chapter 11

TORTURE AND BRUTALITY

My mind could not conceive it. I was living in the twentieth century – the year AD 1951. Surely these men could never bring themselves to torture me in cold blood. Looking around their faces I saw neither passion nor compassion in any of them.

Two of my ribs were cracked from kicks; my head, shoulders and thighs were sore and bruised; my back was covered with cigarette burns, which smarted at the slightest touch from my filthy clothes.

The story that these men had to tell appalled us.... Captain Walters had been compelled to stand to attention for over 40 hours before he collapsed...

– Extracts from *The Edge of the Sword* by Major FarrarHockley. He was writing of his experiences in Korea in 1951, not on the Falls Road, where he served in 1971.

TORTURE and brutality are emotive words. They are words used frequently by propagandists. Nonetheless, in the Northern Ireland context, in the year 1971 – 1972, they are more honest words than the emasculated semantics of Sir Edmund Compton or the bland lies of Brian Faulkner and General Tuzo. For the simple fact is that brutality by the British army became so usual as to be commonplace, while torture was systematically – and generally inefficiently – carried out by both army intelligence and the RUC Special Branch on an increasing scale.

Britain has a record of torture in Aden, Cyprus and Kenya. Her policy, with the possible exception of Kenya, may not have been as brutal and widespread as that of the French in Algeria or the Americans in Vietnam. There seems to have been no general torture plan emanating from Whitehall, rather it was the work of a handful of soldiers – the name of one soldier crops up in both Cyprus and Aden, for example – who, nonetheless, were

acting with official blessing; but torture was undoubtedly carried out. In 1957,^[49] specified cases of torture by British troops in Cyprus were alleged against Britain at the Council of Europe. It took a hurried conference at Zurich for the cases to be dropped.^[1] Peter Benenson of Amnesty International has written of the torture (which was common knowledge throughout Cyprus) but, as usual, officialdom did nothing – apart from cashiering a captain in the Intelligence Corps and an acting captain in the Gordon Highlanders.^[2]

In Aden, in the summer of 1966, following Amnesty reports by Dr. Salahaddin Rastgeldi, a Swede, about torture at the Fort Morbut interrogation centre, the British Government reluctantly set up its own inquiry,^[3] under the then Deputy Speaker in the House of Commons, Roderic Bowen QC. The report, however, was a pathetic whitewash which satisfied no one – the Special Branch investigator did not examine the complainant's medical records, and, though eventually three of the torturers were identified, on the orders of the Director of Intelligence nothing was done.^[4]

The main list of allegations against the 'intelligence service interrogators' in Cyprus and Aden – bears a certain similarity with subsequent events in Northern Ireland, but before coming to what actually went on in the compounds at Palace barracks, Holywood, and at Girdwood Park, Belfast, it is worth pointing out why the tortures occurred. Cyril Cunningham, a former Ministry of Defence authority on brain-washing techniques, was very revealing when he gave a lecture on 'The Intelligence Service and the Law' at the ICA in London in May 1972.

"What we saw in Northern Ireland was a bunch of roughs – who shall be nameless^[5] – belonging to field interrogation teams sent out as scouts. People have the idea you can make an interrogator overnight. You can't.... Violence in interrogation occurs when the agency has failed to create an 'intelligence environment' where good public relations do not exist because the public is hostile and where overt and covert sources of intelligence are not available. If it is deprived of these it often resorts to what we interrogators call "spontaneous overt verbal examination" – i.e., "if you don't tell us, we will beat it out of you." Cunningham went on to say that "it seems the intelligence services in Ulster were run into the ground and were scraped together at the last minute to cope with the situation: it is the same wherever we have pulled out."^[6]

The British army's 'expert' on counter insurgency was Brigadier Frank Kitson,^[7] whose ill-written and indiscreet (from an army point of view) book, *Low Intensity Operations*, was obligatory reading. The main interrogation centres were at Palace barracks, Holywood, five miles from Belfast, and at Girdwood Park camp which adjoins Crumlin jail.

Palace barracks was the HQ of the 1st Parachute Regiment who were serving a two-year term of duty in Northern Ireland. Also based there were members of the shadowy 22nd Special Air Service Regiment. Major A.H. Watchus, who had been associated with the Joint Services Intelligence Centre at Ashford in Kent, was their CO. The torture compound consisted of four huts surrounded by a corrugated iron perimeter wall. It was located well to the rear of the camp and could not be seen from the road. It was officially called an RUC reception centre, and while soldiers guarded the barracks as a whole, the compound was protected by members of the RUC Special Patrol Group (Number 7 section code named 'Silver' and based at Musgrave St. barracks). It was their inefficiency which allowed young Brendan Dunlop to escape on 8 January. Nor were the Paras able to prevent one of their own number from setting off three bombs in the barracks on 27

January before he deserted.^[8] Nonetheless, security was pretty strict. Most of the physical brutality was inflicted by ordinary soldiers during search and arrest operations. Many of them were young and inexperienced. Many were confused and frightened. Their own living conditions were poor. Constant patrolling in a hostile environment, waiting for an urban guerilla to take a pot shot at you or for a claymore mine to go off, is an unpleasant task. Nevertheless, the behaviour of many soldiers cannot be excused. A large number of the men arrested had served with the British army during the war and refused to believe that the behaviour of the troops in Belfast in August 1971 was normal. It is a convenient myth fostered by the British that "our soldiers" just like "our policemen" are "the best in the world": bright, keen, alert, courageous – yet courteous young men, who could bear no relation to the brutal and at times drunken or Mandrexed louts described by the frightened inhabitants of Belfast. But, alas, it is only a myth. The British soldier is no better nor no worse than the American, Russian or French soldier. He will blindly obey orders (although it is true to say that desertions increased and recruitment fell after soldiers had seen what was happening in Belfast) and he will, in many cases, resort to sadism and violence. No account of arrest, detention and interrogation in Northern Ireland from August 1971 to April 1973 could be completed without the assistance of the Association for Legal Justice. A non-political body, its members worked tirelessly to expose the brutality and torture, interviewing virtually all the detainees, compiling reports of intimidation and publishing them daily. It was through their efforts that the English press, and the *Sunday Times* in particular, eventually had to admit that there was a nasty smell emanating from army HQ in Northern Ireland. And all the air fresheners of Sir Edmund Compton couldn't mask it. The torture falls into four phases. Firstly, 9-11 August 1971, the brutality inflicted upon those arrested in the initial internment swoop and held at Ballykinlar, Magilligan and Girdwood barracks. At Girdwood barracks the brutality was generally unorganized. Most of it was the work of the arresting soldiers who panicked in their haste to get men out of hostile areas at 4.00 a.m. Fathers were arrested in mistake for sons, nephews for uncles, and so on. Severe beatings were administered as men were dragged along the streets in their pyjamas, to the accompaniment of rattling bin-lids. In certain cases the troops could excuse themselves on the grounds that suspects 'resisted arrest', though the *Sunday Times* and BBC TV '24 Hours' were to highlight a number of particularly scandalous cases, such as those of James Magilton (60) and John Murphy (61), both of Clowney Street. These two men, who were in bad health, were beaten savagely. They were released within 48 hours. It had been 'a mistake'. Nor can the stubbing out of cigarettes on Eamoun Kerr's neck by soldiers under Major Lloyd's^[8A] command, outside Mulhouse Street barracks, be forgiven. But the brutality at Girdwood barracks was of a different order. Men against whom no charge had been made were held in custody there by armed military policemen, most of whom took turns at beating, threatening and sadistically maltreating many of their prisoners. It was there that the infamous 'helicopter treatment' was given, and that barefoot prisoners were forced to run over broken glass. At Ballykinlar and Magilligan the treatment was even worse. What Compton called 'positions of discomfort' amounted, in fact, to torture, the Armagh County Court decided six months later. Judge Conaghan declared that, clearly, several army officers had been guilty of telling lies to the enquiry (the officers in question were Lieutenant Barton, Sergeant Smith and Corporal Robert Graham) and he awarded William John Moore of

Portadown £300 damages on 18 February 1972. Also, Captain D. David Plant was severely criticised by Judge Conaghan. Subsequently, agreed damages of £3,900 were awarded to 16 internees and former internees from Armagh for the treatment meted out to them by the security forces. (See also chapter on [Compton Report](#)).

The second phase of the torture concerned eleven men^[9] during the period 11-17 August 1971. These men were firstly detained on detention orders signed personally by Brian Faulkner and later removed on removal orders also signed personally by Faulkner. They were secretly taken away and held totally incommunicado for a week. They were hooded, spreadeagled against a wall for days, subjected to the 'noise machine', deprived of sleep, food, drink and toilet facilities, and in addition were badly beaten. Part of a description of the torture, by Paddy Joe McClean (39), a remedial teacher, follows. McClean was not a member of any section of the IRA; he was merely a local civil rights worker. He was arrested and taken from his home in Beragh, Co. Tyrone, at 5 a.m. on Monday 9 August 1971. He is married and has eight children. McClean stated:

I spent the first 48-hour period with the other detainees at Magilligan camp. At the end of these initial 48 hours a hood was pulled over my head and I was handcuffed and subjected to verbal and personal abuse which included the threat of being dropped from a helicopter while it was in the air. I was then dragged out to the helicopter, being kicked and struck about the body with batons on the way.

After what seemed about one hour in the helicopter I was thrown from it and kicked and batoned into what I took to be a lorry. The lorry was driven only a couple of hundred yards to a building. On arriving there I was given a thorough examination by a doctor. After this, all my clothes were taken from me and I was given a boiler suit to wear which had no buttons and which was several sizes too big for me.

During this time the hood was still over my head and the handcuffs were removed only at the time of the 'medical examination'.

I was then taken into what I can only guess was another room and was made stand with my feet wide apart with my hands pressed against a wall. During all this time I could hear a low droning noise, which sounded to me like an electric saw or something of that nature. This continued for what I can only describe as an indefinite period of time. I stood there, arms against the wall, feet wide apart. My arms, legs, back and head began to ache. I perspired freely, the noise and the heat were terrible.

My circulation had stopped. I flexed my arms to start the blood flowing again. They struck me several times on the hands ribs, kidneys and my kneecaps were kicked. My hood-covered head was banged against the wall.

[It is thought that this method of torture lasted for two whole days and nights.] McClean continued:

During this time certain periods are blank – fatigue, mental and physical, overwhelmed me; I collapsed several times only to be beaten and pulled to my feet again and once more pushed. spreadeagled against the wall. Food, water, the opportunity to relieve my bowels were denied me. I had to urinate and defecate in my suit. I collapsed again.

I came to in what I believed to be Crumlin Road jail, having been pushed into a chair. The hood was removed and I was handed what I was told was a detention form. I was told to read it. My eyes burnt and were filled with pain; they would not focus and I couldn't read the form.... The hood was pulled over my bursting head. I was roughly jerked to my feet and half pulled, half kicked and beaten for about 400 yards. This was the worst and most sustained beating to date. Fists, boots, and batons crashed into my numbed body, someone else's not mine. Hands behind my back, handcuffs biting into my wrists. Pain! Someone was pulling and jerking my arms. Thrown headlong into a vehicle – soft seats, beating continued, boots, batons, fists. Then the

noise, that dreaded helicopter again. Dragged out of the vehicle by the hair, thrown onto the floor of the helicopter. Blacked out!

When he regained consciousness he was again spread against a wall and examined by a doctor. Then followed an interrogation which was carried out against a background of bright blazing lights. His statement continued:

I was told I would be given half an hour to rest and think. Then I would be asked more questions and if I didn't answer them I would be taken back to the 'music room' – the room with the noise. Feet wide apart, hands handcuffed – against the wall. Droning noise filled my head. By this time I could feel no pain. Just numb. Dragged away from the wall, legs buckled under me, fell to the floor. Dragged by the ankles up and down shallow steps. Didn't care – past feeling pain. Didn't have a body.

From now on it was interrogation – back to the 'music room' – some sleep. Then the first taste of water in – how many days? Some dry bread and more water.

We were given our first 'meal'. This consisted of a cup of watery stew which I had to eat using my fingers as utensils. The hood was lifted just enough to leave mouth free. We were allowed then to the toilet for the first time since we arrived.

Punishment now eased off. Interrogation continued. Strict questioning – no beatings – just threats and personal insults. Food of a more substantial nature still badly cooked and served, but at least it was regular.

The hood was taken off and I was allowed to wash....

The hood had remained over his head for six full days except for the brief period when he was served his detention orders, and on one other occasion when the hood slipped off accidentally.

.... Now I was allowed to sleep, but the room was so cold that sleep was hard to come by. The fear of more beatings was still with me. I was terribly alone! They gave me one blanket – to keep me warm, they said.

I was then told it was 'all over', and that I was to be interned in Crumlin Road jail. I didn't believe then – another trick. I thought. Still uneasy, still worried – still alone.

Hood still over my head, but treated better now, no questions, no beating. Journey to Crumlin Road jail by lorry, helicopter and Land Rover. I was still alive – still sane, thank God!

McLean was also strung up on a coat hook by handcuffs. His wrists still bear the scars. The purpose of hooding was to cause sensory deprivation. Dr. Anthony Starr, a psychiatrist, explained:[\[10\]](#)

The normal brain depends for its proper functioning upon a continuous stream of information reaching it from the external world. Deprive it of this sensory input, and it begins to function abnormally. In addition to preventing subjects from solving problems, experiments show that continuous hooding increases suggestibility by as much as eight hundred per cent. A high proportion of victims suffer from hallucinations. In experiments with volunteers, one in five cracked up within forty hours.

The noise machines were designed to restrict the men's auditory experience to one loud, monotonous, unpleasant noise. Starving the men meant also that their brains would not receive the necessary sugar, thus increasing irritability and suggestiveness. Being forced to stand upright for hours against a wall (43½ hours in the case of Archie Auld) also impairs the blood supply to the brain. Sensory deprivation is frightening enough for volunteers; to innocent men, dragged from their beds and subjected to it for days it was

terrifying. Most lost over a stone in weight. Two were mentally affected for months afterwards. It took an exceptionally courageous man like McClean to withstand it. The publicity given these cases was such that the Government eventually had to prohibit the use of hooding and noise machines, but Her Majesty's men in Palace barracks were not too worried. Rules could always be bent.

The next phase of the brutality and torture has been listed by Fr. Denis Faul as being from 23 August to 10 December 1971, when interrogation with brutality and a variety of bizarre tortures took place at Palace barracks on men who were subsequently either released or detained on HMS *Maidstone* or in Crumlin Road jail. Most of the examples of brutality which follow came either from personal interviews or the Association for Legal Justice. In addition, two English Social Scientists, Eric Preston and Danny Kennally of the Independent Labour Party, published a booklet^[11] detailing many examples of ill-treatment.

Even though Government announcements stated that the brutality (or 'ill-treatment') was to stop, it was, in fact, to become intensified. By November the conservative *Sunday Times*^[12] had to admit that torture was still going on when they reported the case of nine men who had been held in Palace barracks for up to 48 hours and then released.

Independent and respectable doctors had examined them and found the clear marks of maltreatment. Thus, Patrick O'Neill, arrested on 2 November, was so badly beaten at Girdwood barracks that he was unable to return to work for three months. J. P. Lane, a surgeon at the Mater Hospital and a former officer of the Royal Army Medical Corps, testified that O'Neill's left heel was fractured and that the soles of his feet bore the marks of some form of bastinado (a carpet rod). P. L. O'Neill, arrested on 13 November and examined in Crumlin Road jail five days later by Dr. Conor Gilligan, had extensive bruising to the "face, chest, abdomen, lumbar areas, groin, thighs, hands." The extent of the bruising on the abdomen on Patrick McGee, Gerard Maxwell, James Quinn, Thomas Sinclair, Seamus Lynch, John Watson and Michael Nelson was given by other doctors.^[13]

In addition to severe bruising, Nelson had "a traumatic perforation of the ear drum." Dr. J. P. Lane and these other doctors were, unfortunately, in a small minority in their profession. All their protests to official channels were relentlessly blocked. The General Medical Council refused to comment on the behaviour of army doctors at the interrogation centres. Likewise, the British Army Medical Authorities refused to comment or to act. Consequently, many doctors were involved in torture-centre activities, either actively or passively. Their first function was to ascertain whether men were 'robust' enough to stand up to 'interrogations. In some cases men with weak hearts were set aside. Doctors were often called in to examine men lying on the floor in agony; then, after 48 hours, they had to certify that men were 'fit to travel'.

The International Code of Medical Ethics, adopted by the 3rd General Assembly of the World Medical Association, held in London in October 1949, lays down that "under no circumstances is a doctor permitted to do anything that would weaken the physical or mental resistance of a human being." The declaration of Geneva in 1948 was even stronger. "Even under threat I will not use my medical knowledge contrary to the Laws of Humanity." Those doctors who witnessed the beating, the electric shock treatment, the administration of hallucinogenic drugs, sensory deprivation, starvation and enforced sleeplessness have much for which to answer. Certainly they have not lived up to their Hippocratic Oath.

By November 1971 authenticated reports of electric-shock treatment were coming out of

the interrogation centres and were common knowledge. But it was not until 5 March 1972 that any English newspaper was prepared to print the truth. Again, it was *The Sunday Times*. It reported that Patrick Fitzsimmons and William Joseph Johnston had been subjected to electric-shock treatment at Girdwood barracks on 14 and 24 January. These men were only the tip of the iceberg, however; from October over 20 men had been subjected to this form of interrogation.

Moreover, from November drugs were used on some men to obtain information. On 5 December the CRA identified two types of drugs being used on selected men. In one category the drugs were Imipramine, Desipramine, Antitryptaline, Nialomide, Isocarboxid and Tanylecypromine, all of which cause dizziness, sweating, muscle tremors and hallucinations. In the other category, the CRA allege that Monomine Oxidase was used to make the victims feel elated and garrulous. Several released detainees experienced sensations similar to hallucinations under LSD. But, finally in May, came medical evidence. Tom Kearns from Newry was arrested that month and taken to Newry police station. For 48 hours he was questioned by Special Branch officers and fed cups of tea. He soon began to feel very unwell and to experience strange sensations. After 48 hours he was released and went to see a local solicitor who got him to give a urine specimen which was sent to the City Hospital in Belfast for analysis. It contained enough Amphetamine to indicate that he had been given a considerable dosage.

One of the most disturbing aspects of this case to minority representatives was that it occurred well after the Whitelaw 'takeover'. Although Whitelaw did not sign any internment orders, in the first month of his take-over more than 20 men were detained – indefinitely. Moreover, although Whitelaw may have ordered a cessation of the brutality, it continued unabated. A particularly bad case was that of Edward Duffy (17), Gerard Bradley and Gerald Donnelly (29), all of Belfast. They were arrested on 20 April, taken to the local military barracks and given a savage beating – particularly around the testicles. After 20 hours the SB men and soldiers responsible panicked and rushed them to Armagh prison. The MO there, however, took one look at their condition and refused to accept them, for fear that at least one of them might die in his custody. They were hurriedly transferred to the military wing of Musgrave hospital. Duffy was unable to appear in court with the others two days later. The others collapsed. The RM expressed horror at their appearance. After five weeks Duffy was still not fit to appear in court. All charges against them were dropped and they were released. However, since it was announced that their cases were to be heard at the European Court of Human Rights in September 1972, they were subjected to heavy army harassment.^[14]

But this case, while horrific, was only typical. By April 1972 even the Ulster judiciary, notoriously one of the most reactionary bodies in the province^[15] had begun to throw Crown cases out of court when the only 'evidence' was alleged 'confessions' by battered prisoners. From January, at least six major cases, ranging from causing explosions to shooting soldiers, were thrown out of court because the 'confessions' were clearly the result of torture. As the accused left the court, as 'free men', they were, however ceremonially arrested and detained under the Special Powers Acts.^[16]

Army and police often announced 'inquiries' but no report was ever published.

Eventually Whitelaw accepted that there must be an inquiry into the treatment meted out to John Carlin of the Waterside in Derry, after John Hume, had taken up his case. As yet, nothing has been announced.

Father Denis Faul and Father Raymond Murray (prison chaplain in Armagh) did

extensive investigation into the torture allegations and found conclusively that a wide variety of tortures were used.^[17] They list over thirty, including hand squeezing of testicles, "insertion of instruments in the anal passage", injections, electric cattle prod, burning with matches, cigarettes and electric fires, beating with batons on every part of the body. Russian roulette, firing of blanks in prisoner's mouth, urinating on prisoners, deprivation of sleep, food, liquid. In addition, there were the usual threats – to prisoners and their families – bribes offered and confessions alleged. It was standard practice for prisoners in Palace barracks to be forced to stare at a peg-board wall from 18 inches away and monotonously count the number of dots for as long as 12 hours, under a glaring light. When drugs were used in conjunction with this disorientation technique the effects were most frightening.

These are no wild allegations, but carefully documented instances backed by medical evidence. Small wonder that the Ministry of Home Affairs refused to allow a panel of local doctors to examine detainees 24 hours after arrest. Faulkner said that it was 'unnecessary' and "a slur on the security forces." Moreover, it must be stressed, for example, that of the first 2,357 people detained no fewer than 67% of them – 1,600 men – were released after 48 hours, as completely innocent. In most cases they could receive no compensation for their injuries, however, and many psychiatrists were extremely worried about the lasting effect such experiences were bound to have on many men.^[18] It is worth noting that the internment periods of 1938-1945 and 1956-1961 saw virtually no brutality. It was an innovation. General Massu, Commander of the 10th Parachute Division in Algiers, ten years after the bitter civil war there, wrote with pride in *Le Figaro*, in 1971, of the tortures he had ordered and distinguished between them and the methods used by the Nazis which were bestial "We didn't degrade people with the water torture or the Gégenè" (electrodes run off a car battery and attached to genitals) – though he didn't mention some of the more sexually depraved methods used by his paras on Algerian women.^[19] Perhaps ten years from now General Tuzo's memoirs will relate with pride the actions of 'the fine bunch of men' in Palace barracks. Somehow I doubt it. The brutality meted out to innocent men during 1971 and 1972 in Ulster may just go down as another sordid chapter in the History of British Imperialism, but it is unlikely that anyone will brag about it – not even Frank Kitson. (See also important Amnesty Report in [Appendix I](#)).

Footnotes Chapter 11:

1. The complainant was Greece. After the Colonels' coup in 1967 Greece herself was expelled from the Council, for the use of torture and barbarity.
2. PETER DEELEY, *Beyond Breaking Point*, London (Arthur Baker), 1971.
3. Procedures for the Arrest, Interrogation and Detention of Suspected Terrorists in Aden - Her Majesty's Stationery Office (1966).
4. PETER DEELEY, *Beyond Breaking Point*.
5. Why? It should be remembered that while several Branch men became notorious for their brutality, the really guilty men are the shadowy and anonymous figures who came over from England and set up the 'interrogation centre' at Palace

barracks, complete with its noise machines and disorientation equipment. It is they who used the internees as guinea pigs in order to further their 'scientific knowledge' of human resistance to 'stress and strain'. Their discreditable part in this shabby affair cannot be forgotten when scapegoats are eventually made of a few Branch men (on 21 November 1972 it was announced that the Director of Public Prosecutions was to prosecute over 70 members of the security forces for alleged brutality). Meanwhile, many of the more notorious Branch men were given a golden handshake and a plane ticket to the colonies.

6. *The Observer*, London, 7 May 1972.
7. Kitson had a history of counter intelligence in Kenya (where 10,000 suspected Mau Mau were killed and 40,000 interned), Muscat, Oman, Cyprus (where he blotted his copybook), and Malaya. He is acclaimed as the up-and-coming Intelligence expert, though those who do so acclaim him seem to forget that the British have been expelled from all these countries. Whitelaw insisted on his dismissal and he was transferred to Warminster as commandant of the School of Infantry, there to continue his fantasies of stopping the revolution in England from 1975-1980, which he believes is probable.
8. The man was sickened by the Paras' attitude towards the forthcoming Civil Rights march in Derry on 30 January 1972. Finally, disgusted with his companions' remarks about "getting the Fenian bastards", he collected three bombs, rigged them with timers and placed them around the mess room. He then drove his car out of the barracks and straight to the border. The bombs went off that evening, 27 January 1972. The military authorities refused to reveal details of the damage done. For the full story see *This Week*, Dublin, 16 March 1972.
- 8A. This was not the first time that troops under the command of Major Ian D. Corden Lloyd had been involved in this sort of behaviour. In 1964, while serving with the 10th Princess Mary's Gurkha Rifles in Borneo, he was implicated in an incident involving the torture of a 64-year-old Dayak by two Gurkhas. At their courtmartial, which had happened only because of the probing of a Scottish missionary, they claimed that they had been acting on the orders of their C/O - Ian Corden Lloyd. No further action was taken. The regiment was disbanded in 1968. Lloyd was promoted to lieutenant-colonel in November 1972. (See *An Solas*, No. 2, October 1972 - Belfast Republican paper).
9. Archie Auld, Joe Clarke, Kevin Hannaway, Paddy Joe McLean, Sean McKenna, Francis McGuigan, Pat Shivers, Mickey Donnelly, Gerry McKerr, Brian Turley, Patrick McNally.
10. *The Observer*, London, 21 November 1971.
11. *A Case to be Answered*, London, 1971. Obtainable from the Independent Labour Party (ILP), 197 King's Cross Road, London WC1. Price 30p.
12. *The Sunday Times*, London, 28 November 1972.
13. Drs. Beirne, Breslin, Shearer and Donaghy.
14. Eventually, two Special Branch officers, George McKinney and William Burrell, along with a private in the Kings Own Borderers, William Craig, were, after three hearings, remanded on nominal bail to appear before the City Commission. The judge had expressed his horror at the account of the injuries related by five doctors.

The army doctor said that he had been through Korea and never seen anything like it. Despite this, the two Branch men were apparently still on duty and were seen often about Falls Road.

15. Anyone doubting this should read some of the sectarian utterances of men like R.M. Walmsley or Judge W.W.B. Topping. For example, Topping, the 'impartial judge': "The Protestant religion has two great enemies. Firstly, the Roman Catholic Church seeks to impose their religion upon Protestants and secondly, Communists try to take religion away from Protestants." Or, "The first duty of the Orange man is to uphold his Unionist Government." For a host of other sectarian quotes see Hansard, 18 May 1971, Vol. 81, Cols. 48-68.
16. e.g. 19 January 1971, William Close was found not guilty but was interned. Previously, he had been granted bail, but was detained as he left the court. A High Court judge granted his habeas corpus application and remarked that the authorities had shown "scant regard for the liberty of the individual". 1 February 1971, William Kennedy had a ten-year sentence quashed because of the judge's misdirection. From the dock he said: "Is there any justice when the Special Branch will take me as I leave the court?" They did. They took him to Palace barracks for another beating. 16 February 1972, charges on which John Dougan had been remanded for months were dropped. He was interned as he left the court. Even after the advent of Whitelaw the same thing happened to Brian Morgan and Michael Finnegan - on 24 March 1972. P.J. McCashin had been held in custody since 14 December. Charges against him were dropped but he was interned also. For more details see *Unfree Citizen*, No. 39. 28 April 1972, and previous issues of *The Free Citizen*. Published weekly by the People's Democracy, Belfast. Copies and subscriptions: Paul Dillon, 50 Newry Road, Armagh, Northern Ireland.
17. 'British army and RUC Special Branch Brutalities', December 1971-January 1972.
18. For reference to psychological torture see Calder, *The Mind of Man*, London (BBC), 1970, pp. 27-41. J. Zubek, 'Prolonged Sensory and Perceptive Deprivation', *British Medical Bulletin*, 20: pp. 38-42. M. Zuckerman, *Perceptual Isolation as Stress Situation*, 1964. The ALJ has a full list of reference works.
19. GISELE HALIMI and SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR, *Djamila Boupacha*, London (Andre Deutsch), 1962.

Chapter 12

THE COMPTON REPORT

"IF any of these things had happened it would have been public knowledge within 24 hours" – Brian Faulkner on allegations of brutal treatment of men arrested on 9 August 1971, which resulted in the Committee of Inquiry and the Compton Report. An introduction to the report, written by Reginald Maudling, begins:

On 31 August 1971, I appointed a Committee of Inquiry under the chairmanship of Sir Edmund Compton, GCB, with his Honour Edgar Fay, QC, and Dr. Ronald Gibson, CBE, as members, with the following terms of reference: To investigate allegations by those arrested on 9 August under

the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act (NI) 1922 of physical brutality while in the custody of the security forces prior to either their release, the preferring of a criminal charge or being lodged in a place specified in a detention order. The Committee of Inquiry visited NI from 1 September until 26 October and have now sent me their report which is published in this command Paper. The Government are grateful for the care and thoroughness [*sic*] with which the members of the Committee of Inquiry carried out their difficult task.

Maudling continued with an attack on the IRA. and an attempted justification of internment.

But what of the report itself?

The Compton Report is one of the shabbiest and incompetent attempts at whitewash since the Warren Report in the USA into the assassination of President Kennedy. Even by the standards laid down by the English Royal Commission of Tribunals it falls far short of the minimum requirements on no fewer than seven counts. Lord Justice Salmon, the eminent English High Court Judge, had presided over the Royal Commission set up after the farcical Denning Report into the 'Profumo Affair'. He recommended that: (1) All future inquiries be conducted in public in order that the public could have confidence and justice "could be seen to have been done." Compton sat in secret. (2) Salmon recommended that the chairman of any committee should be "a person holding high judicial office." Compton is not and never has been such a person. He is a Unionist functionary who acted as a supposed 'ombudsman'. (3) Salmon recommended that the other members of the committee be appointed by the head of the judiciary in order to avoid any appearance of political bias. Gibson and Fay were appointed by Reginald Maudling. (4) Salmon recommended that none of the members "should have any close connection with any political party." Sir Edmund Compton, in his role as 'ombudsman', had had very close 'connections' with the Unionist Party. (5) Again, ignoring Salmon's recommendation, the committee was not vested with power to compel the attendance of witnesses. (6) The committee had no power to demand the production of documents – such as medical reports, police duty books, etc., again contrary to Salmon. (7) Initially, the detainees were allowed no legal help at all. Subsequently, after public and professional outcry, they were allowed a lawyer, but he was barred from even seeing or hearing, let alone questioning, the defence witnesses (army and police witnesses were legally represented).

From the detainees' point of view the 'inquiry' was a complete farce. They started with no faith in the impartiality of three Englishmen in hearing complaints principally against English soldiers. Even the conservative *Observer* was moved to comment that the appointment of Sir Edmund Compton was 'unfortunate'. It also described him as "notoriously bureaucratic and defensive". Moreover, if a detainee was not allowed to confront the people whom he was accusing of brutality, how could he identify them? No one in Girdwood barracks wore a number, and some prisoners had to wear hoods. Secret hearings in front of English functionaries, however 'distinguished' they might be, presaged an obvious whitewash. Accordingly, of 342 men arrested on 9 August all but one boycotted the Inquiry. Compton reports that "only *one* of those arrested on 9 August has availed himself of the opportunity to substantiate his complaint by appearing before us; this has not frustrated our Inquiry, since material for our investigations has been made available to us in the form of allegations published in the press and transmitted to us from a number of other sources." It is interesting to note what Lord Justice Salmon said on this point: "A tribunal should not base any finding on comment, on anything

save the evidence given before it at a hearing." Compton, moreover, refused to accept evidence from organizations such as Amnesty International or the Association for Legal Justice. The Inquiry also ignored the police authorities' call for legal aid for the detainees (20 August).

In fact, Compton was set up by Westminster, following reports in *The Irish Times* and, more important from the English point of view, *The Sunday Times*, of persistent torture. It is clear beyond any doubt that by its very nature the committee was intended to be effectively disabled from arriving at the truth, but at the same time give the impression of concern and efficiency. The terms of reference deliberately excluded investigation into the most sadistic tortures. Moreover, the Inquiry was limited to those arrested on 9 August; many of the worst tortures came after that date when the interrogation-torture centre at Palace barracks, Holywood, became fully operational. In addition, the Inquiry was limited to 'physical' torture, no brief being given for psychological maltreatment.

Lord Justice Salmon in concluding his report observed:

The public may be left with the feeling that the Inquiry, if behind closed doors, is no more than what is sometimes referred to as "the usual whitewashing exercise" – the odds against any such tribunal being able to establish the truth, if the truth is black, are very heavy indeed. Any government which in the future adopts this procedure will lay itself open to the suspicion that it wishes the truth to be hidden from the light of day.

The Compton Commission's task was, as Claud Cockburn expressed it in *The Irish Times* of 19 November 1971:

(1) "to make with the whitewash as liberally as possible. (2) But in doing so it was not supposed to bring itself into total ridicule and contempt. Some of the things that could not be denied without complete loss of credibility, had to be admitted. (3) It had to prepare the mind of the British public to accept the previously supposedly 'unacceptable'."

And yet, from the Government point of view the Inquiry was a dismal failure. True, the report was couched in such a way that the Unionist *Belfast Newsletter* could have banner headlines, 'No brutality' says Compton, while the same morning the *Irish News* could proclaim, "Ill Treatment Admitted By Compton". Nonetheless, this clumsy attempt to differentiate between 'brutality' and 'ill-treatment' was too grotesque to convince anyone.

According to Compton (paragraph 105): "We consider that brutality is an inhuman or savage form of cruelty, and that cruelty implies a disposition to inflict suffering, coupled with indifference to, or pleasure in, the victim's pain. We do not think that happened." In other words, what they admit as having occurred is merely 'ill-treatment' since those inflicting the 'ill-treatment' took no pleasure in the exercise. "This is going to hurt me more than it hurts you." It is a distinction which those at the receiving end of the brutality find difficulty in understanding. It is gobbledygook.

The seeming 'naïvety' of Compton is incredible. Judge Conaghan was not to be so naïve when he awarded compensation for ill-treatment at Ballykinlar and found that Compton's chief army witnesses were liars! The judge found that men at Ballykinlar were forced to carry out a lengthy series of floor exercises "which were physically taxing and of long duration" (paragraph 159); Compton prefers to call the exercises "position

changes". He accepts they went on all day on 9 August. He accepts that they were "done under some degree of compulsion" – i.e., you were beaten if you didn't do them. He concludes, however, that these vigorous exercises were devised "to counteract the cold and stiffness of which the arrested persons complained." (Many were still in their pyjamas). He regrets that Desmond Smith, who had 'back trouble' connected with a slipped disc, was made to do these "position changes" all day.

If the picture of solicitous guards, concerned with the physical warmth of the detainees and, therefore, leading them (all day) in a series of "position changes", à la Eileen Fowler, does not strain the credulity, how about the following example of 'Comptonese'?

We drew the attention to the evidence contradicting the allegations of men taken off the ground in the helicopter, threatened with dogs or otherwise assaulted. In this regard we give special weight to the evidence of *the RAF crewman who has the status of an Independent witness* [my emphasis].

A member of the armed forces, involved in a process of forcing men to crouch and run out to a helicopter (while batoned all the time), get in, pushed out again backwards, and dragged between rows of armed military policemen. Subsequently, when there are complaints about brutality, the RAF man becomes an independent witness!

The whole purpose of this bizarre incident at Girdwood barracks on the morning of 9 August was, Compton blandly accepts, "a deception operation". "Anyone watching would assume that the men were being transferred elsewhere while in reality they were being kept in Girdwood." Since the helicopter didn't fly off, the point of this deception might be regarded as somewhat ludicrous. Those watching from the houses which overlooked Girdwood must have thought that the soldiers had gone insane. Not so. Merely engaging in a harmless bit of sadism.

The catalogue of obscenities continued. Schoolteacher Paddy Joe McLean apparently slept in his own urine and faeces for three days because he liked it. "He could have gone to the toilet if he had wanted to." In reply to Joseph Clarke's complaint about the beating of his numb hands, we were told that, in a number of instances, as a result of maintaining *the required posture* for a considerable period (43½ hours up against the wall at finger-tip stretch) a prisoner would find his hands or arms had become numb. In such cases the guards would rub the hands to restore normal feeling. We were, however, told that Clarke was a strong young man who resisted, with considerable force, attempts to make him adopt and maintain the required posture. It is admitted that in order to restrain him he was handcuffed. The first pair of handcuffs were too small for him and chafed his wrists. The notes made at the time by the supervisors at the centre show that Clarke was aggressive and resisted strongly. They could not tell us how the injuries [which are now at last admitted – author's note] were suffered (paragraph 80).

Throughout, Compton reiterates that the security forces deny hitting or mistreating anyone, and that he sees no reason to disbelieve these "trained men". He is at a loss to account for the marks recorded by medical officers on a lot of the men.

The report records some dissatisfaction with the medical facilities (Girdwood, in particular, suffered from this lack of attention to medical planning). There were two medical officials, neither of whom appeared to know that the other existed until they met by chance. Moreover, owing to the rescinding of a Brigade administrative order, no medical examination took place either on admission or discharge from the camp

(paragraph 336). This is in direct contradiction to General Tuzo who, in August, stated that everyone had been medically examined and that the records were available – except to the press.

In their conclusions the Compton Tribunal state that "we consider that the following actions constitute physical ill-treatment: posture on the wall, hooding, deprivation of sleep, diet of bread and water" (questioning in depth, as it is picturesquely called). "The 'helicopter incident' constitutes a measure of ill-treatment." With regard to the "obstacle course at Girdwood, we conclude that the men concerned may have suffered some measure of unintended hardship." "We consider that the compulsory exercises (at Ballykinlar) must have caused some hardship but do not think the exercises were thought of and carried out with a view to hurting or degrading the men who had to do them."

Thus are the beatings, maltreatment and, in some cases, specific torture – men hooded, deprived of sleep and food and subjected to incessant noise for up to eight days as well as being beaten into position every time they collapsed – dismissed. Even the *Observer* was scathing. "Six grains of truth and a bucket of whitewash" was the headline on 21 November.

The report did, however, "horrify many sensitive MP's" and consequently Maudling ordered the setting up of a new body under Lord Parker to consider guidelines for future interrogation methods. Denis Healey, the former Labour Minister, indignantly denied that 'our boys' had done anything like that in Aden – although the 'guidelines for interrogation methods' date to 1967 – and a Labour Government.

Chapter 13

THE BROWN TRIBUNAL

WITH Long Kesh being rapidly filled, the Unionist Government appointed an "advisory committee to consider representations from internees." Its chairman was Justice James A. Brown QC (56), a county court judge from Co. Down. Its other members were Reginald Berkeley (62), a managing director of the Belfast Steamship Company and "a notable figure in NI business circles." He had been a member of the 'advisory committee' during the 1956-62 period. The third member was the obligatory 'Castle Catholic', Philip Neale Dalton, South African born, English educated, a former Attorney General in Zanzibar, with plenty of experience as a colonial administrator. The press were quick to reassure internees, lest this background might make them feel despondent, that he was a good Catholic.

Like the Compton Committee, these men did not inspire confidence. Nor did the committee work, as Merlyn Rees MP, one of the ten members of the all-party delegation of British MP's who visited the camp, testified. More than 90 per cent of the men in the camp refused to have anything to do with the board. There were many good reasons for this. Firstly, an internee appearing before the committee was asked to prove his innocence without even being informed of what he was being accused. This clearly violated the supposedly sacrosanct principle of 'British Justice' that one is innocent until proved guilty. Secondly, the advisory board had no executive power whatsoever. It was ordered to merely *advise* the Minister for Home Affairs, who just happened to be the

PM who just happened to be the man who had signed the internment orders in the first place, and happened to be the man who had appointed the members to the committee. In most cases, even if the committee were bold enough to recommend a release, Faulkner merely ignored the 'advice'.^[1]

Moreover, the internee, completely in the dark as to what allegations about him were being made by anonymous Special Branch men, was only allowed a lawyer to prepare a written submission. The lawyer could not attend the oral session to help the internee put his case to the sophisticated legal 'experts' (two of the three Board members were lawyers), despite the fact that this is contrary to all accepted legal procedures. As well, many questions about the evaluation of supposed 'evidence' remained unanswered. The committee refused to state whether it personally examined those police officers, Special Branch men or paid informers upon whose say-so the suspect was interned. Brown remained silent about this, but one 'power' did emerge – as a result of interrogating internees: Brown could recommend that persons not already interned could be arrested and put in Long Kesh!

To most of the internees there was an even more serious objection: 'the oath'. In Ireland oaths are taken much more seriously than would appear to be the case in England. Men who had not been charged or tried found it extremely objectionable to be required to take an oath never "to join any illegal organization or engage in violence," especially when, under the Special Powers Acts, the Unionist Minister for Home Affairs had the power to declare illegal any political, social or trade union group, without giving any reason. Many, too, felt that to give such an oath would be a tacit admission of previous guilt, and so men like Councillor James O'Kane, whom the board accepted was guilty of no crime, had to languish in camp for four months more before they were released. [In England, except for those holding or accepting high office of state, the oath is not administered. In Northern Ireland, as Austin Currie has pointed out, "one had to take an oath to even become a sheugh cleaner" (ditch digger).]

Brian Faulkner had said that Republicanism was a legitimate political philosophy, provided that violence was not used to obtain its ends, and yet his committee (by their own admission) tried to force innocent men to swear an oath to the monarch, an oath which is repugnant to any Republican, Nationalist, agnostic or atheist, however pacific they may be. Under this duress innocent men like Billy McBurney, Ivan Barr, Pat Shivers, Charles Fleming (67) and Terry McCullough had to take the oath in order to be released. That the oath-taking was only a charade was soon to be demonstrated anyway in the case of Ian Campbell, the only member of the Communist party to be originally interned. He was recommended for release, refused to take the oath and kept in. Two weeks later he was released anyway.

As to the actual proceedings of the 'advisory committee', Paddy Joe McClean, writing to *The Irish Times* of 28 October 1971, gave a fairly typical account. In an open letter to Judge Brown he said:

On Tuesday October 5th, you invited me to meet you. As far as I can recollect the following conversation took place:

You introduced yourself, Mr. Dalton and Mr. Berkeley to me. You told me that the function of your advisory board was to recommend or not recommend a man's release. You then asked me if I had anything to say. I said I had but that I would need to know why I had been interned in the first place. I told you I could get no answers to this question from anyone and I had asked the military (who wrongfully arrested me), the police, the prison governor and Mr. Faulkner. You

said that you had not noticed my open letter to the press but that over 200 people were interned because they were connected with the Official or Provisional wings of the IRA. I went on to say that my letter to the press had publicly stated that I had no such connections but that I was engaged in a number of organisations, notably the GAA, the CRA, the National Graves Association and registration work. You then asked me if I was politically involved and I stated that I was always politically interested, having worked at elections since I worked for a Fianna Uladh candidate in 1953, until the last Westminster election when I supported Miss Devlin MP in her campaign. Both of us agreed that all this was perfectly legal and was, indeed, a man's moral duty. You seemed to wonder that I should support an illegal organisation like Fianna Uladh until I pointed out to you that Fianna Uladh was declared illegal by the then Minister of Home Affairs on or about December 27th 1956 and I had been interned on December 21st. When I was released in 1960 Fianna Uladh was non-existent so I could not have supported an illegal organisation. (This by the way, was the first indication I had of why I was interned from 1956 to 1960).

You then were kind enough to inquire about my wife and family. I told you how my wife's mother had died on the morning of my arrest, how our new baby, our ninth, was about to arrive, and how I was taken away for a week's torture at an unknown destination. You quickly intervened to say that that was no concern of yours and then invited both Messrs. Dalton and Berkeley to ask me any questions, which they declined to do. We then parted. Can you imagine my surprise when on October 15th I learned that your board had recommended the release of some 5 men who were required to sign a document which the news media referred to as an oath? Now, as you know, I and all other teachers take an oath; you never asked me about it – in truth you did not suggest in any way that I had broken it that same day a prison officer came round and sympathised that your board had not recommended my release. No reason was given. You, as a judge, had condemned me to an indefinite prison sentence as a result of the above conversation. Is this justice? I suggest that you owe it not only to me whose liberty is at stake, but to the dignified position you hold to explain how you arrived at a verdict of guilty. Do you wonder that, seeing this execution of 'justice', other internees refuse to even bother to see you? Internee No. 2466. Patrick J. McClean.

The Brown Committee was an abject failure. Even before Whitelaw and direct rule it had been allowed to fall into disuse and its members had resigned. They were replaced by Whitelaw's own functionaries: the British Judge Leonard (deputy chairman of Oxfordshire Quarter Sessions), it was announced on 2 May, would head the new "advisory committee to consider representations from internees," but it was little more than a piece of window dressing. The general review of releases was solely the prerogative of Whitelaw himself, and it became obvious that all releases would be not on possible grounds of "danger to the community," but on purely political expediency. Whitelaw was making little secret of the fact that the internees were nothing more than hostages.

Footnotes Chapter 13:

1. It is worth noting that while the Special Powers Act (regulation 12) specifically calls it 'an advisory committee', Faulkner, in yet another semantic game, always referred to it as 'an appeals tribunal' although it had no judicial powers whatsoever. But then, 'tear smoke' always sounded better than old-fashioned 'tear gas'. (See also appendix on [Parker Committee](#) and [Special Courts](#), respectively).

Chapter 14

IRISH POLITICAL PRISONERS 1900-1973

THE British Government imposed no fewer than 105 Coercion Acts to protect the Act of Union.^[1]

Internment in England was first introduced in the 20th century under the Defence of the Realm Act 1914. The new Stormont Government introduced it under the Special Powers Act 1922. The Free State used the Public Safety Act 1923 and later the Offences Against the State Act. But throughout the last seventy years Ireland has seen her fill of political prisoners who, although not formally interned, were sentenced under such repressive or derisory legislation that their status is that of political prisoner.

Of course, there is bound to be an area of confusion. A man arrested in possession of arms may claim to be a political prisoner, and certainly in some cases he indeed may be one. Equally possible also is the fact that he may be a 'common criminal'. The position is complicated in Northern Ireland where the difference between a 'legal' and an 'illegal' gun is often its owner's religion. Any 'Loyalist' who wishes to own a gun has little or no difficulty in obtaining a permit for it from the police.^[2] A Catholic will generally not be so fortunate. Nonetheless, there are various clear examples of political prisoners in Ireland, both north and south of the border, and an outline of their treatment and its difference from that of internees is necessary.

Before Independence and Partition, under DORA and in particular under its special 'Irish clauses', literally thousands of people were arrested, charged and jailed. The most common offence was the vague one called 'sedition'. This could entail a speech, an article, possession of an 'illegal' newspaper, a flag, or even whistling 'derisively' at a policeman. More important prisoners were shipped out to England; the jails in Lewes, Usk, Lincoln, Birmingham, Manchester and Wakefield were all used, and whether the prisoners received 'political status' or not depended largely upon the prison governor. The vast majority of Irish prisoners insisted on this status. They refused to wear the broad-striped arrow of the convict and refused to do convict labour; they demanded their own clothes and demanded free association with their comrades. In their fight for political status they resorted to various tactics, foremost of these being hunger strikes. The most famous hunger strikers were Terence MacSwiney, Lord Mayor of Cork, who died in Brixton prison, London, on 25 October 1920, after 74 days without food; and Thomas Ashe who died in the Mater Hospital, Dublin, on 25 September 1917, from forcible feeding during a hunger strike in Mountjoy prison. It should be recalled also that men like Mick Burke from Glencole endured, and survived, a hunger strike of 90 days in Cork jail during August, September, October and November 1920. After Ashe's death the authorities never again attempted forcible feeding, preferring to rely on the cat-and-mouse tactics of release and re-arrest.

From 1922 hunger strikes were of value only when a Government was likely to be embarrassed sufficiently by the death of a prisoner. This was true of the first de Valera government, but rarely in the North. Hunger strikes in Crumlin were frequent, but seldom successful, and then only when minor concessions were sought.

Another ploy was the 'Lewes tactic' of wrecking the jail. The best example of it took place during the big Belfast jail riot in December 1918. John Doran of County Down, who was

a prisoner awaiting trial in D wing, was refused the political-prisoner status accorded the men in B wing. As a result the political prisoners 'kidnapped' him and kept him safe in B wing. The men, through their elected leader, Austin Stack, declared that they were prepared to lose lives to establish the principle that they, the prisoners, were the only judges as to who were or were not political prisoners. A siege ensued, during which the men wrecked the iron railings along the cat walks of B2 and B3, making approach to the cells very difficult and dangerous. They climbed onto the roof of the laundry and planted a tricolour, but Belfast was not Dublin and a hostile mob gathered outside the jail and stoned them. The gas, food and water were cut off, but gas was restored when the prisoners, who had by now demolished the roof, threatened to burn everything. It was over a fortnight before a truce could be arranged through the offices of Larry O'Neill, Lord Mayor of Dublin. Eleven of the men involved, including Doran, were removed to Strangeways, Manchester, on 29 April 1919. It should be noted that times were then exceptional. Many of those jailed as political prisoners were TD's including Austin Stack, Piaras Béaslaí, James Crowley, Fionan Lynch, Harry Boland and Ernest Blythe. After the twenties the 'Lewes tactic' seems to have largely died out. Hunger strikes continued but a new tactic was introduced, the 'strip strike'. This was generally as a refusal to wear the ordinary convict clothes, but was also used in protest against the general conditions which, especially in the North, were appalling. The first strip strike in Belfast was in June 1943.^[3] Twenty-two men took part, many of them Treason and Felony men. An old Republican, first jailed in 1929 for political offences, recalled to me: "In the first week we lay on a board and mattress. For food we got gruel, rotten potatoes and porridge. We got out of our cells only for one hour a day, and not at all on Saturday. We tried everything, but it wasn't until the Treason and Felony men came in, in 1936, that things improved."

On 25 April 1936, 13 IRA men were arrested in a raid on No. 10 Crown Entry, Belfast. They were tried under the Treason Felony Act of 1848, last used in the 1880's. It charged that they "with divers other evil disposed persons feloniously and wickedly did compass, imagine, invent, devise and intend to deprive and depose our Lord the King from the Style, Honour and Royal name of the Imperial Crown of Great Britain, Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the seas, and the said felonious compassing, imagination, device and intention then feloniously did express utter and declare by divers overt acts (that they intended) to levy war against the King."^[4] With this sort of law one could be found guilty of nearly anything. Moreover, as the Crown prosecutors knew only too well, Republicans always made things easy for them by refusing to recognise the court or defend themselves. This meant that they could get six months to start with.^[5]

Basically, the strip strike was a foolish idea. The men refused to wear prison clothes and sat naked in their cells. The authorities retaliated by taking every item from their cells, from bedding to handkerchiefs. Bedding was returned at 8.30 p.m. each night, but no books, other than the Bible, were allowed. The boredom was killing. The June 1943 strike was a failure and was called off after three months. The hunger strikes were as unsuccessful as the strip strikes.

Geordie Shannon was one of the 150 political prisoners housed in A wing of Crumlin. He had been sentenced to two years for possessing a pistol and refusing to recognize the court. At the time he was 16½. Like the others, he was bitter at not being accorded the 'political' treatment of the internees. The food was "army left overs that no one would eat." "A man who complained at finding part of a dead mouse in his porridge was given

three days bread and water."

Shannon says of the strip strikes: "My arse was black from sitting on the pipes (for warmth), for three years after I got out." The brutality was much worse for the political prisoners. By and large internees were not too badly treated, but the political were "kicked up to see the Governor and kicked back down again." Under the Special Powers Acts floggings were still officially and legally carried out. Many of the senior prison officers were so hated that they became virtual prisoners themselves within the walls. One was shot dead in Durham Street when he ventured out. Another had a fortunate escape when a bullet hit his belt buckle.

Being refused political prisoner status had severe financial consequences too.

Dependants received nothing from the PDF or the Green Cross. On release, most prisoners had 'security risk' stamped on their insurance cards and consequently found it almost impossible to get a job.

As well as the suffering and hardship caused to the sentenced men and their dependants, there was also a spiritual problem for many of the more religiously devoted among all the prisoners. They had been denounced from the pulpit for belonging to immoral, illegal secret organizations. As Geordie Shannon put it "There were only a handful of Republican-minded priests we could go to for confession." Despite this, he claims, "no one lost their faith." Such was not the case in England. There, during the war, the bulk of men caught during the ill-fated and disastrous bombing campaign languished in Dartmoor, Wormwood Scrubbs, Pentonville and Strangeways. Denounced by their Church and denied absolution by most of the English Catholic priests in the jails, many drifted away from the 'old faith'.

Most of the men lifted in England were young – by 24 July 1938 and the Introduction of the Prevention of Violence (Temporary Provisions) Bill at Westminster 66 IRA men had been convicted, and the numbers were to rise to 89. Their sentences were long: 20 years for many, and with the campaign a disastrous failure from the start, they were left to rot in English jails. They were not accorded political treatment despite their protests. They were also, in many cases, attacked by other prisoners, egged on by the warders, especially after the Coventry explosion on 25 August 1939 when five people were killed by a bomb which went off in the Broadgate.^[6] Irish prisoners in Dartmoor were savagely attacked. Eleven were hospitalized. Jack Healey had his leg broken. Those in Chelmsford prison were kept in isolation from the English prisoners for some time afterwards. Most prisoners became disillusioned. Men like Gerry Dunlop, who was very young at the time, were defeatist from the start. "I knew I would be caught," he said, "but orders were orders." He got 20 years and served ten. During that time, like many, he re-thought his ideas. He says that reading broadened his mind and he became a socialist. Since his release in 1949 he has never been in trouble with the police. "Most of us were very disillusioned with the movement then, long before the end," he said.^[7] Ten years passed very slowly, and there was no 'release the prisoners campaign' going on outside for most of the time.

The most horrific experiences of political prisoners occurred in the Twenty-six Counties. During World War II virtually every prominent member of the IRA and allied Republican groups was arrested. Under the Emergency Powers (Amendment) Act 1940, some 800 were interned, but many others were sentenced as political prisoners for 'refusing to answer questions', 'possessing illegal radios', 'belonging to proscribed organizations' or 'possession of firearms'. The most notorious cases involved George

Plant, an old-style Republican and Protestant dissenter. He, together with Joe O'Connor, was accused of the murder of Michael Devereux, believed to be an informer, whose body was discovered in a cave in Tipperary in September 1941. Michael Walsh and Patrick Davern were allegedly accomplices and were savagely beaten by the police to get them to incriminate Plant and O'Connor. At the trial they announced that they had been beaten and refused to give evidence. The charges were dismissed. Plant was not let go. He was rearrested in the courtroom and taken to Arbour Hill. Gerry Boland transferred the case to a military tribunal, where the sentence was death. And there was no right of appeal. The normal rules of judicial procedure were revoked. Plant was retried and the illegally extracted 'confessions' of Davern and Walsh were used against him. All three were sentenced to death. On 5 March 1942 George Plant was officially dispatched by a firing squad. The other two were reprieved. O'Connor was not re-tried. The war period was to see even more barbarity. Hardcore Republicans like Sean McCaughey, Liam Rice, Tomas MacCurtain (son of the Lord Mayor of Cork, murdered by the RIC), Jim Grafton and Michael Traynor were not accorded political treatment when incarcerated in Portlaoise jail, with MacCurtain and McCaughey with death sentences commuted. They went on strip strike. From 1941 to 1943 they were naked and in solitary confinement. They were not even permitted to go to the toilet. In 1943 they were allowed to meet each other for two hours a day and get one letter a month. They received no visitors. In the four-and-three-quarters years he was in there, McCaughey received no visits. On 19 April 1946 he went on hunger strike. After five days he went on to thirst strike also. He died on 11 May after suffering excruciating agony. Paddy McLogan, who saw the body, said that the "tongue had shrunk to the size of a three penny bit."^[8] An inquest was held in the jail, but Sean McBride, counsel for next-of-kin, was not even allowed to cross examine the governor. The prison doctor, Duanne, admitted that he would not treat his dog in the fashion McCaughey had been treated. News of what was going on in Portlaoise shocked the people; war-time censorship meant that few had any earlier idea of the conditions, which became public only through the McCaughey inquest and subsequent Dail questions. The 'release the prisoners' campaign raised a clamour. With a change of government in 1948 the new Minister for Justice, General Sean MacEoin, who himself had been sentenced to death by the British in 1921, released the political prisoners.

Since then, however, there has been no shortage of political prisoners to fill the cells of Belfast and Dublin. In addition to internment, each State has Emergency Powers (Northern Ireland has apparently been in a state of emergency for 50 years) which means that people can be jailed for their politics. Co-operation between the Special Branch, North and South, has been effective, one of the notorious examples being Harry White who was arrested in Deny in 1945 and handed over to the gardai on a trumped-up murder charge. White escaped the death penalty, however, on appeal.

In the Twenty-six Counties the Offences Against the State Act is still in force, and the Forcible Entries Act makes squatting a political offence. In the North the mandatory six-month sentences ordained by the Criminal Justice (Temporary Provisions) Act 1970 have proved the measure to be not only extremely repressive but even counterproductive from the Government point of view. The *Sunday Times* of 21 November 1971 reported that even the Attorney General, Basil Kelly, admitted that, "Harsh cases will arise as a result of this Bill, perhaps even wrong convictions on the basis of mistaken identity." Captain Robert Mitchell said, with satisfaction, "It brings in

an element of ruthlessness." It brought, in fact, chaos to the courts. Moreover, between 1 July and December 1970, when it was repealed, 109 people went to court. All were convicted and given the mandatory six months.^[9]

In the totally justified indignation which internment has aroused in the minds of many, we should not forget the plight of the political prisoner in Irish history – from the horrors and rigours suffered in English jails by the old Fenians like O'Donovan Rossa (handcuffed and in chains, often naked, he had at times to lap his bread-and-skilly off the floor like a dog, while held in a perpetual dark cell in Chatham jail) to men like Jimmy Steele, the old Republican who died in 1969, having spent 17 years in jail – most of them as a prisoner without charge or trial, or when charged on the obscure Treason and Felony 1848 Coercion Act. Nor should we forget that today an increasing number of young people are being jailed for their political beliefs, whether these take the form of civil disobedience or physical attempts to defend their homes when attacked. The jail conditions accorded them have always been worse than those grudgingly allowed to internees, and the International Red Cross, on 30 November 1971, reported that these conditions are inadequate.

1972 saw a new development in the struggle for political status. Within Crumlin Road jail it is accepted by all, except the governor, that anyone convicted of some violation of the law connected with politics, from rioting to being in possession of a gun, is a political prisoner. As usual in jail "prisoners have no rights, only privileges." Political prisoners have no privileges. These are reserved for the 'trusties' – generally toadies, informers or good 'Loyalists' – all of whom are eligible for parole, extra visits, reductions of sentence. In 1972 over 50 convicted men were let out to make room for internees found guilty of no crime. The old principle of divide and rule still operates. 'Loyalists' get the jobs with 'perks' – kitchens, orderlies. They are allowed to have any papers sent in – including John McKeague's *Loyalist News* with its threats and support for sectarian thuggery. Republican political papers like *An Phoblacht* are banned. Loyalist badges such as the Red Hand, Orange Widows and Ulster Covenant are permitted. Neither Connolly nor Red Fist badges are allowed, since they are held to be provocative. In themselves, these are mere minor irritants, but in the claustrophobic atmosphere of a jail they can have lasting effect. Catholics who in 1971 wore Easter Lilies in memory of the dead of 1916 were locked in their cells for the day. James Daly, lecturer in Scholastic Philosophy at Queen's University, Belfast, who spent time in Crumlin Road jail for his principles (he refused to fill in his census forms or to pay the fine) wrote:^[10]

There is no sense of guilt on the part of political prisoners, only one of resistance to oppression. The level of revolutionary consciousness is high and this includes consciousness of national as well as class oppression. In Crumlin, as in Long Kesh, our own Irish warders are preferred to the insufferable English ones.

Daly may have been a shade optimistic. A more prevalent view, I believe, would be that of Niall Vallely of the People's Democracy, who served terms for political offences. He believed in locating the "most decent, amiable screw and beating the shit out of him, in order that he wouldn't confuse other prisoners about the intrinsic evilness of jailers." But things were stirring in Crumlin Road. The 'Loyalist' prisoners had started to change their attitude to prisoner status. The Republican and Socialist prisoners have always regarded themselves as political prisoners. Many have the scars and the memories of broken limbs provided by the Special Branch torturers to convince them of it. At the

beginning of May 1972, 35 of the 'Loyalists', including men like Gusty Spence,^[11] serving 20 years for shooting a Catholic barman in Malvern Street in 1966, announced that henceforth they were to be regarded as political prisoners, members of the banned but still very much active UVF. The 'Loyalists' began to produce *The Orange Cross*, a monthly paper printed for them by John McKeague. More surprising still, on 7 May 1972 the *Sunday News* reported how 'Loyalist' and Republican had formed an alliance to demand political status. Michael Mallon, A wing, Official IRA, claimed that they "were bound to win since the Loyalists are with us and they hold the key jobs like cooking and heating. They can stop the jail dead with a work strike." The Provisional IRA were also prepared to strike but refused to have anything to do with the UVF men.^[12]

From Monday 8 May the groups refused to wear the official prison uniform and instead appeared in civilian clothes, hoarded over the previous few months. The *Loyalist News* was quick to deny that any 'Loyalists' were co-operating with the 'rebel scum', but nonetheless, unity was soon to be seen again when an integrated group of would-be political prisoners rioted in the recreation room on 12 May. Troops in full riot gear stood-by in a yard but were not called in when the men eventually agreed to go back. Whitelaw had made a statement three days previously stating that there could be no question of political prisoner status being granted, but the governor, in a bid to cool the situation, assured the prisoners that their requests had not yet been rejected out of hand. The political prisoners, however, refused to climb down. One of the things that particularly incensed them was the 'double standard' under which they were treated in that if they applied for parole like other prisoners they were turned down on the grounds that they were political. Yet when they applied for political status, which would result in more letters and visits being allowed, they were told they were mere common criminals. The work strike continued.

The question of political prisoner status proved contagious. 18 May 1972 saw the most violent demonstrations in the history of Mountjoy prison in Dublin. Many men had been held there for months awaiting trial and were on indeterminate remands – this often meant that Republicans could be arrested, charged, remanded for six months and then acquitted on lack of evidence.^[13] Their frustration over the refusal of the authorities to accord them political status was exacerbated by these delays, as well as by the poor food, but the final spark was the refusal to allow a Republican, Joseph Canning from Ardoyne in Belfast, parole to get married. As the PO was locking up B wing, where most of the remand prisoners were held, he was overpowered and his keys were taken. Other prisoners were released by their comrades and a major six-hour riot ensued. Provisional IRA men climbed on the roof and shouted their demands, claiming they would negotiate only with the Taoiseach Jack Lynch or Provisional leader Sean MacStiophan. Over 400 men were involved and at one time Chief Officer Ralph Lee was held as hostage. Extensive damage was done to the jail. The Minister for Justice, Desmond O'Malley, claimed that "almost everything that is breakable, from furniture, doors and bars to toilets, showers and baths, is destroyed." A bizarre note was sounded when O'Malley was asked whether the prisoners had smashed up the gallows. They had.

O'Malley: I don't know. I wasn't sure there was one.

Reporter: The one where Kevin Barry was hanged?

O'Malley: I thought Kevin Barry was shot. I may be wrong.

After the six-hour riot a truce was called and gardai entered to survey the wreckage. The authorities denied that they had made a deal with the prisoners to avert reprisals for the damage caused. "Those prison rioters who can be identified will be charged," claimed O'Malley. Chief Officer Lee, unharmed after his ordeal, was promoted "on the spot." Joseph Canning did get out to be married that Saturday. The large crowd which had gathered outside the prison and stoned the gardai were dismissed as "the usual gurrer element" by the Minister for Justice. "There was no popular feeling against the gardai," he added.

More important, however, was the aftermath to the riot. 178 prisoners were moved from the wrecked prison. Forty men, including 30 Republicans on remand, were moved to the Curragh detention barracks, 'The Glasshouse', and held there under military guard. Thirty-six were taken to the maximum security prison at Portlaoise, 35 to St. Patrick's in Dublin, and 67 transferred to another military detention centre in Cork, Collins barracks. At once there were cries from Republicans that this, in fact, constituted a form of internment – men being held without trial in camps surrounded by armed soldiers. The Minister for Justice rejected these allegations, though again his answers were perhaps not as convincing as he may have hoped. Prison warders would be going down to the Curragh, he said, but the Press would not at present be able to inspect the conditions.^[14] Rest assured, the 'Glasshouse' had not been used during the internment period in the fifties, it just happened to be in the same camp. Yes, the warders would have the assistance of the army. He did not accept, and "thought that it had never been accepted in the history of the State, that there was any such thing as a political prisoner." (But then, O'Malley knows very little about his country's history, about Kevin Barry or the IRA either). "All these people have been charged with ordinary criminal offences" (such as belonging to proscribed organizations, refusing to recognize courts, etc.). "At least one-third were there of their own volition;" they had been offered bail, very nominal bail, and refused to take it. In fact, as O'Malley must have been only too well aware, all this was standard ploy. He knows well that, stemming from their historical traditions, members of the Provisional wing of the IRA are dismissed from their organization if they recognize a court by applying for bail (a foolish tactic which makes it all too easy for the police or gardai, and one which has caused dissension in the ranks). The Minister admitted that 40 prisoners "who were not ordinary prisoners" would be divided around different prisons. As to what constitutes the difference between an 'ordinary' prisoner and the 'extraordinary' prisoner the Minister was at a loss to say.

Within three days of the riot in Mountjoy special legislation was rushed through the Dail to ratify the situation. The 'emergency' Prisons Bill became law on 25 May and empowered the Minister for Justice to transfer Republican prisoners to military custody in 'exceptional' circumstances, the Minister being the one to determine the circumstances. The Bill was passed in a day by 114 votes to eight. The *Irish Times* described it as "internment with trial". Republicans were more critical. Moreover, O'Malley announced that the Government was preparing mechanics for the reactivation of Section V of the Offences Against the State Act of 1939-40, so as to introduce Special Criminal Courts. There had been no evidence of intimidation of jurors or witnesses, but Fianna Fail, heartened by what they felt to be a mandate from the overwhelming success with the EEC referendum, pushed ahead.^[15] By Government proclamation – and consequently no discussion on the subject could take place in the Dail – Part V of the

Offences Against the State Act was reactivated. Special Courts with three judges and no juries. Five days later Joe Cahill, former O/C of the Provisionals in Belfast, and Rory and Sean O'Bradaigh of Kevin Street Sinn Fein, were arrested under the Act and remanded in custody. They immediately went on hunger strike. Two weeks later the Special Courts began to jail people.

Meanwhile in the North, hunger strikes were entering their third week. On 15 May four Provisionals in A wing in Crumlin went on hunger strike for political status. They were led by veteran Republican Billy McKee,^[16] Belfast O/C until he was framed by English SB officers on an arms charge in 1971. A week later another five men joined them. Outside, the campaign of support built up. Six Republicans in Armagh jail went on hunger strike in support of the demands of their comrades in Crumlin. Forty internees in Long Kesh joined in. Vigils, fasts and pickets were held in major Catholic areas. But the authorities refused to budge. Then, on 6 June, after 21 days, Robert Campbell, from the New Lodge Road, Belfast, had to be moved to hospital, so weak had he become. Campbell, a 30-year-old married man, serving 11 years for armed robbery, had lost four stone in weight and his condition was giving cause for alarm. Accordingly, he was transferred to the adjoining Mater Hospital. Anxiously, people waited. Campbell proved resilient, however. In spite of his weakened condition he managed to escape through a ground-floor window at 8.00 a.m. the next day while the RUC and the Paras strolled about the corridors. He fell six feet and was carried to a waiting car by comrades. As usual, the Ministry for Home Affairs was the last to know of the escape – after the BBC informed them that it had occurred.

On 13 June, the 28th day of the strike, a rumour spread around Belfast that Billy McKee had died. Reaction was almost instantaneous: eight buses were hijacked and burnt before the death rumour was officially denied. The prison authorities still said, however, that they were unconcerned about the hunger strikers. But publicity was becoming too widespread for their liking. Despite the indifference of Lord Windlesham,^[17] Minister of State for Northern Ireland, it became obvious that it would be impolitic to let McKee and his comrades die.

On 19 June, the 35th day of the strike, McKee was moved in a very weak condition to the Royal Victoria Hospital. That day, following talks with ex-internee Councillor O'Kane, and the two SDLP MP's, Hume and Devlin, Whitelaw announced that changes would be made in the prison. Henceforth 80 Republicans and 40 'Loyalists' would be housed in a separate wing, away from the 'common criminals'. They would be allowed to wear their own clothes, receive more visits and parcels and have greater opportunity for education. Of course, the Government "refused to be blackmailed" etc. or to concede that any such thing as political prisoner status even existed, but the feebleness of the protestations served only to convince everyone that at long last the category of 'political prisoner' had been officially recognized. The courage of the hunger strikers had paid off. On Tuesday 20 June the men began the slow process of being weaned back onto food again. They had their first glass of milk."^[18]

By September 1972 there were 184 men in A wing in Crumlin with definite political prisoner status. They were left to their own devices by the warders, had no prison work to do, could receive one visit a week and unlimited letters, as well as one food parcel a week. Old-timers described it as 'heaven' compared to the 'bad old clays'.

On 8 January 1973 the last 220 political prisoners were transferred from Crumlin Road jail to Long Kesh and the damp squalor of its cages. The reason given was 'security'

following the discovery, during the previous week, of a 40-yard tunnel from outside the jail towards A wing. Despite this, Daniel Keenan (17) from Derry walked out of the jail on 11 January and escaped, masquerading as another prisoner who was due to be released that day.

[Although not legal even under the Special Powers Acts, Joseph Conlon (22) from Ardoyne, Belfast, was released from custody and deported to England. Special Branch men brought him from Long Kesh and put him on the Liverpool boat on 10 January 1973.]

Footnotes Chapter 14:

1. During the Home Rule crisis of 1911-1914 the British Government decided that "no matter what illegalities the gentlemen who arrogated to themselves the title 'Ulster' committed, they must not be 'coerced'." The illegalities included the Larne gun-running and open drilling.
2. There are 117,000 'legal' guns in civilian hands.
3. Jimmy Steele wrote an account of this in *Resurgent Ulster*, 1954, part of which is quoted in Tim Pat Coogan's *The IRA*, London (Praeger), 1970, pp. 193-196.
4. City of Belfast Commission of 21 July 1936. One would have thought that such obviously outdated legislation as the Treason Felony Act 1848 would no longer be used. Not so. Michael Callinin, Louis Marcantonio and Thomas Quinn were arrested on 14 June 1972 at Hyde Park Corner, traditionally the home of free speech, and charged with incitement – urging people to go and fight in the North of Ireland. They are also charged under the 1848 Treason Felony Act – which can carry a sentence of life imprisonment, and refused bail. (See 'Inside Story', No.5).
5. This has now changed. Many of the older Republicans still refuse to recognize the court, but not so the younger ones. Consequently, in 1971 the Special Branch men were very bitter: "In the past we only had to arrest you and that was it. But now a lot of you are sneaky [*sic*]. You defend yourselves and even get lawyers, and some would even take an oath to sign out. All the old values are dying." So said SB man Harry Taylor to Hugh Corrigan on 9 August 1971. The Provisional IRA still expect their members not to recognize the court – e.g. 'Dutch' Doherty, 1972, was expelled for so doing. Sean MacStiofain, however, recognized the court when arrested 19 November 1972.
6. The bomb had not been intended for there, but had been left by a panicky volunteer. Barnes and McCormack were executed on 7 February 1940. McCormack (alias Frank Richards) had made the bomb, but Barnes, though an IRA man, had had nothing to do with it. The volunteer responsible is still alive, according to the *Sunday Times*, London, 6 July 1969.
7. Nevertheless, despite being in the clear for 22 years, on 9 August Gerry Dunlop was lifted, interned, and kept in Long Kesh until April 1972.
8. See T. P. COOGAN, *The IRA*, pp. 258-259.
9. The Act had been rushed through Stormont in 18 hours. It had been brought in

because of the incompetence of army witnesses during riots. Their evidence was frequently so poorly manufactured that nearly everyone was acquitted. After the Act the handing out of prison sentences was a simple matter. In the most notorious case, John Benson, a Belfast docker, got the mandatory six months for painting the words "no tea here" on a wall.

10. *The Irish News*, Belfast, 10 March 1972.
11. Spence even sent a letter of condolence to the widow of Joe McCann, the IRA man and revolutionary who was gunned down in the markets. Spence escaped while on parole on 2 July 1972, but was recaptured on 4 November 1972.
12. A bizarre incident involved William John Stoker, a 'Loyalist' serving three years. His brother Cyril left him a book on witchcraft at the jail and when the censor went through it two hacksaw blades dropped out! Asked by Crown Prosecutor, Desmond Boal, if it was not surely impossible for the blades to have fallen into the book by accident, Stoker replied that he couldn't answer this as he had not been inside the book at the time. Boal said that surely if Stoker was a White Witch, as he claimed, it might have been possible for him to be in the parcel at that time. Stoker replied "Witchcraft is my religion – don't mock it." He got 14 months. See *The Irish News*, Belfast, 9 June 1972. Two UVF men, Cull and Stilt, escaped from Crumlin also. By September 1972 the UVF, so long declared to be non-existent by the RUC, decided to adopt a Republican principle. For example, on 15 August 1972 four self-confessed UVF men, each sentenced to six years for armed robbery, answered from the dock that they refused to recognize the court because "it is illegal and undemocratic – with no disrespect to you, your honour". Other 'Loyalists' followed this example.
13. For example, the case of Desmond Hensey, Liam Walsh and Leo Delaney, arrested on 19 February and charged with being members of an illegal organization, eventually came to trial three months later. The judge threw the case out of court on the grounds of no evidence.
14. Protest marches from PD and NRM were met with fixed bayonets and guns with live rounds.
15. 1,041,890 voted 'Yes' for joining the EEC; 211,891 voted 'No'.
16. The others were Malachy Leonard of Armagh, Martin Boyle of Tyrone, and Robert Campbell of Belfast.
17. Windlesham refused to telephone the hospital or prison to tell the authorities that the Government had, in fact, capitulated.
18. The granting of 'political status' to certain prisoners did not please Basil Strange, chairman of the Police Federation of Northern Ireland. On 4 September 1972 he made a bitter speech denouncing this "appeasement of murderers". Yet another example of police meddling in politics.

Chapter 15

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA DURING INTERNMENT

To many people in Ireland one of the most disturbing features of the internment period was the consistent distortions, omissions and, in all too many cases, the downright lies of the media as to what was happening in the Six Counties.

From the beginning the vast majority of the daily newspapers, in addition to both the BBC and ITV, slavishly accepted as gospel statements by the Unionist government and the British army. It became definite policy for most newspapers that 'our army' could do no wrong. Thus, for example, the *Daily Mail* on 19 August 1971 had the headline "Army Shoots Deaf-mute Carrying Gun". The inquest subsequently showed that Eamonn McDivitt of Strabane at no time had a gun and that the soldiers who gave evidence anonymously, contradicted one another. The *Mail* made no apology. Similarly, everyone shot dead by the soldiers must, of necessity, have been a gunman or mad bomber – even the unarmed 13 killed by the Paras on 'Bloody Sunday'. And if that fails to convince, obviously he or she must have been shot by the IRA, or 'in crossfire'. John Chartres of the *Times* even invented a new category: thus Danny O'Hagan of the New Lodge Road, shot by the army on 31 July 1970, was an 'assistant petrol bomber'. As Eamonn McCann pointedly asked "What do 'assistant petrol bombers' do? Hold coats?" In *The British Press and Northern Ireland*^[1] Eamonn McCann details literally dozens of cases of flagrant distortions. Number 1 of *Inside Story*^[2] provides several more. One of the most bizarre was the front page of the *Daily Mirror* of 23 October 1971. The screaming headlines proclaimed "Red Assassin shot dead in Ulster". The authors (rather than reporters) of this 'Mirror Exclusive' were 'Joe Gorrod and Denzil Sullivan' and they told how "soldiers in a patrol which stalked and killed a terrorist sniper identified him as a Czechoslovakian. He carried a Russian-made Kalashnikov AK 47 rifle, one of the most deadly ever produced and the one most favoured by assassins." The shooting was mysterious – the *Mirror* men could not say when or where it occurred. They also introduced another romantic element: "a man dressed all in black who was a Lithuanian firing with a Czech rifle."

In fact, as the army were to admit in the *Sunday News*,^[3] the entire story was "a bit of fantasy" which had "been going round for the past year." But then, if you're short of copy and too frightened to venture out of the bar of the Europa Hotel, any piece of rubbish will do for the readers of the *Mirror*.

But rather than totally fictitious – and poorly constructed – stories, the more serious aspect of the media was that of censorship.^[4] On 31 October two MP's, Bernadette Devlin and Frank McManus, devoted most of their speeches to instancing omissions and distortions of the press. Not one paper carried the story.

Take the issue of torture allegations. On 15 October *The Sunday Times* published a 'sensational scoop' story on the third degree torture of internees. This was the first the British public had heard of torture. Yet what *The Sunday Times* published on 15 October had been common knowledge in Ireland for nearly two months.

Most of *The Sunday Times* statements had been taken by the Association for Legal Justice in Belfast and distributed to the Press by 20 August. By the end of August all these accounts had appeared in the reputable Irish papers. In the first week of September all British papers, including *The Sunday Times*, were circulated with a ten-page dossier produced by the Anti-Internment League. Some of the cases eventually cited by *The Sunday Times* on 15 October were contained in that dossier.

In fact, many British journalists adopted a policy of self censorship. What they did not want to believe, they did not write about. In addition, many editors brutally silenced

those members of their staff who began to find the truth.

More serious still was the clear evidence that came to light in November that both the BBC and ITV adopted a clear policy of censorship in their handling of affairs in Northern Ireland. *Private Eye* No. 258 contained extracts from internal memoranda circulated within the BBC. These documents were drawn up at the weekly meetings of the News and Current Affairs Group at the BBC. The chairman at these meetings was Ulsterman and Unionist sympathiser, Desmond Taylor.

The minutes reveal that '24 Hours' was prevented from doing an in-depth programme on the IRA. John Crawley, Chief Assistant to the Director-General, said "Such a programme setting out the roots of the IRA would be unacceptable."

An interview with Michael Farrell, prominent in the People's Democracy, was to have gone out on 1 September 1971. Farrell had just been released from detention. The interview was banned. Roland Fox, assistant to Taylor, explained: "It had not been possible to make the item's treatment defensible as a whole on the grounds of fairness;" it was "a description by an admitted extremist of conditions in the Crumlin Road prison."

Waldo Maguire, BBC Controller for Northern Ireland, was particularly strenuous in his attempts to get censorship adopted, in particular a virtual ban on Radio Telefis Eireann material. Maguire is known for his forthright views. At an *Irish Times* reception in Belfast in January 1971 he was introduced to a member of the People's Democracy. Maguire reacted with a string of words which are of a kind undoubtedly censored on all BBC channels and he then threatened some of that violence for which television today is so renowned. In fairness to Maguire, *The Irish Times* had provided 'ample refreshments'. Such was the resentment generated within the BBC over this censorship that the Director-General had to admit that he could "see that the editorial staff did not relish being interfered with."

Interference on ITV was, if anything, more ham-fisted and blatant. A 'World in Action' programme on the IRA in the Twenty-six Counties was banned from all networks on Monday 1 November. The programme had been approved by Dr. Rex Cathcart, an Irish Protestant who reviews ITV's Irish coverage. Who watched the programme again and then banned it? The answer is nobody; however, the Independent Television Authority, the ruling body of ITV, banned it without seeing it. It was enough for Lord Aylestone, Chairman of the Authority, to describe it as "aiding and abetting the enemy". So much for impartiality.

The London Post Office Tower was damaged by a bomb on the night of 30 October. The only suggestion that any Irish group was responsible came in one anonymous telephone call. As 20,000 people marched in peaceful protest on Sunday 31st the papers and the news were full of accounts of an IRA terror campaign in Britain. On Monday 1 November *The Telegraph* led with the headlines "IRA Blast Post Office Tower". *The Telegraph* was just one of many.

Both sections of the Republican movement denied any responsibility for the tower bombing on the Monday, through spokesmen both in Dublin and London; the police denied that they were looking for Irishmen. The Angry Brigade claimed responsibility, but, because the anonymous telephone call fitted the prejudices of Tory newspaper editors, the IRA threat held the headlines. Even on Thursday the *Evening News* reminded readers of the horrors of the war-time bombing campaign. They also included a piece of deduction: "It was significant that the bomb planted at the Post Office Tower

was left in the women's toilet. There are more women IRA officers now than there were six months ago!"

It was not long before Tory spokesmen jumped on this bandwagon. On Wednesday 4th Lord Carrington, Tory Defence Secretary, did his best to whip up anti-Irish feeling when speaking in the House of Lords. Talking of the Irish crisis he said: "It will almost certainly be that we shall see much more bloodshed and even an extension of it to this country." This piece of bloodthirsty wishful thinking was quickly snatched upon by the *Daily Mail* with the headline: "I.R.A. War Threat in England".

Thus, in a week in which no IRA spokesman had advocated 'a terror campaign' and no Irish group had started one; a week in which by contrast Republicans had joined in a massive and peaceful political protest march, what were the British public told? The Tory leaders and their newspapers 'informed' them that the Irish in England had begun a bombing campaign. If such allegations had been made against coloured immigrants it would, quite rightly, have been described as incitement to race hatred.

Eventually, official pressures became so repressive that some 200 leading journalists and broadcasters decided to meet at the ICA in London to consider what steps they might take to assert their right to tell the truth. Godfrey Boyle of *The Irish Times* reported on the meeting^[5]:

"It's got to the stage where we're being repressed," was how Jonathan Dimpleby of the BBC's 'World at One' programme put it. Editors, he said, were now so worried about pressures from above that they tended to approach a story not with the aim of discovering the truth, but in a manner that would ensure that they didn't get into trouble. Shooting incidents, for instance, were covered merely as events, and little attempt was made to uncover the reasons, if any, that lay behind them.

Following *The Sunday Times* disclosures about 'ill-treatment' of detainees, BBC men, Dimpleby said, had been given permission to interview internees, but they were not allowed to interview witnesses such as doctors or priests who might have had evidence which would have corroborated internees' allegations. He also pointed out that the BBC's editor of current affairs had to listen to every item on Northern Ireland before it was broadcast, on the specific instructions of the DirectorGeneral.

ITV communicators had their problems too. The Granada TV men, who had had their programme on the IRA banned without its even having been seen, pointed out the significance of the recent attempts of Ulster Television to influence the ITA. UTV's managing director, 'Brum' Henderson, was, they pointed out, the brother of Bill Henderson, a public relations officer to the Unionist party and managing director of the *Newsletter* and had, therefore, a 'natural anxiety' about allowing certain programmes to be shown on UTV. UTV had indeed 'opted out' of several programmes on Northern Ireland which had been networked throughout the rest of Britain.

In a passionate speech Keith Kyle of the BBC's '24 Hours' was scathing about current BBC policy on Northern Ireland, which, he said, could be paraphrased as 'Programmes as a whole must vindicate the BBC's detestation of terrorism'. And to those who claimed that a policy of censorship should be imposed in "the national interest", Kyle retorted that "there is no higher national interest than avoiding self-deception on Northern Ireland."

Another important point about censorship, according to John O'Callaghan of the *Guardian*,^[6] was that if, as seemed quite possible, the Republican movement was defeated, then censorship would be seen by the Government as an important instrument in that defeat and, therefore, a powerful argument for an increase in its use in Britain.

The mood of the meeting was summed up in the 'declaration of intent' suggested by Roy Bull of the *Scotsman* which read: "We deplore the intensification of censorship on TV, radio and the press coverage of events in Northern Ireland and pledge ourselves to oppose it."

Despite 'passionate speeches', the new 'Free Communications Group' got nowhere and the call for a work ban by BBC staff sent to Northern Ireland to take effect from 10 January was a flop. The system ground on inexorably. Alternative papers such as *Ink* and *7 Days* folded for lack of capital. The 'impartial' *Daily Telegraph* in a goodwill gesture gave £70,000 for colour TV sets for "our gallant boys in khaki" [sic]. In perhaps one of the most macabre scenes recorded on film, Granada TV's 'What the Papers Say' awarded a prize for "the best piece of investigative journalism" to *The Sunday Times* 'Insight' team for its inquiry into torture on internees, the prize being presented by Reggie Maudling whose Ministry must be held accountable for the self-same tortures.^[2] Eighteen days later that paper was to tone down its 'radical crusader' image when it suppressed its own reporters' investigation into the shooting of 13 unarmed civilians in Derry by the Paras on Bloody Sunday. This was done on the grounds that the matter was *sub judice* because of the Widgery Inquiry – legally incorrect as *The Sunday Times* knew. When their toned-down report was eventually published it suggested that the army had lied and that some soldiers had acted with a reckless disregard for life. In Northern Ireland the position was that of *The Irish News* printing what the Catholic people wanted to read, while the *Newsletter*, far more bigoted and bitter in its coverage,^[8] daily gave the story of the latest atrocity committed against its long-suffering and tolerant readers. It was left to the supposedly moderate *Belfast Telegraph*, the only evening paper available in the North, to give the game away. When the Compton Report was published it included a long list of papers which, Compton claimed, had been of assistance to the inquiry, *The Belfast Telegraph* was not amongst them. Furious, the editor summoned his reporters and demanded of them why this was so. Finally, one reporter dared to suggest that the reason that no use had been made of *Telegraph* files was that they hadn't published a single allegation against the security forces, of brutality, torture or even possible ill-treatment, despite the fact that every other newspaper in Ireland (with the exception of the *Newsletter*) had been headlining them for over a month. "How strange," said the editor.^[9]

As an instructive tailpiece to the Northern Irish press, it should be mentioned that at a special meeting of the Northern Ireland chapel of the National Union of Journalists called on 30 October 1972 a vote was taken to 'black' all press releases from the Civil Rights Association and Sinn Fein. Through an unfortunate oversight most journalists on 'Catholic' newspapers did not receive notification of the special meeting in time to be present, although five members of the British army who have 'press credentials' were notified. In effect it made little change since journalists on the *Newsletter* and *Belfast Telegraph* had been operating just such a ban for months.

In the Republic of Ireland the press initially had a field day during the early days of internment castigating 'the old enemy', but that was not to last too long. Following pressure from Ted Heath, Jack Lynch in turn rounded upon RTE. Required by law to "maintain a balance of views," RTE was doing just that until Minister Collins issued a directive restraining them from putting out matter "which could be calculated to promote... the IRA or the attaining of any particular objective by violent means." Regrettably, RTE caved in without much of a fight and paved the way for right-wing eccentrics such as Gerry L'Estrange, to get away with hysterical utterances about (unnamed) anarchists and subversives in RTE." RTE's news coverage of the North dwindled rapidly from being the most comprehensive to having virtually no coverage at all.

With the main daily papers in the South, with the honour-able exception of *The Irish Times*, shackled to the coat-tails of either Fianna Fail or Fine Gael, it is important that at least the radio and TV be free, but this has never been Government intention. For example, the then Taoiseach, Sean Lemass, stated:^[10]

RTE was set up by legislation as an instrument of public policy and as such is responsible to the Government the Government reject the view that RTE should be, either generally or in regard to its current affairs and news programmes, completely independent of Government supervision the Government will take such action as may be necessary to ensure that RTE does not deviate from the due performance of (its) duty.

At length Fianna Fail went too far for even RTE. 'This Week', on 19 November, broadcast an interview with Sean MacStiofain, on the very day he was arrested, breaking, the Government said, the ban on allowing air-time to men of violence (Lynch was apparently in no way disturbed to hear 'Shoot to kill' Craig and his colleague John Taylor being interviewed almost weekly and issuing threats to all and sundry). Since the Government used this very interview to convict MacStiofain of membership of an illegal organization, it seemed, to many people, hypocritical for them to sack the nine members of the RTE authority and replace them with more docile functionaries. Kevin O'Kelly, the reporter who conducted the interview, was given six months for 'contempt' by the very special court which had used his evidence to convict MacStiofain. The personnel of RTE were sufficiently indignant to stage a 24-hour strike and they were joined the next day by the staff of the Dublin and Cork newspapers. Only one reporter, Kevin Myers of RTE, was disgusted enough to actually resign, and after their token protest and march the 'media men' returned quietly to work. Lynch went on to weather yet another crisis and successfully passed the Amendment to the Offences Against the State Act. So much for a "free media in a free state."

If the crisis brought on by internment and the death days of Stormont has shown anything, it has exposed totally the polite fiction of "freedom of speech in a democratic country such as ours." Such a freedom is not merely a demand made by liberals, it is the *sine qua non* of a truly democratic society, such as does not exist in Ireland, North or South, nor in the rest of the 'British Isles'. Unless we are to be satisfied with the system today, so accurately described by Marcuse as 'repressive tolerance', we must fight strenuously to wrest control of the information centres from the hands of the personally-motivated few and place them firmly at the disposal of all.

Footnotes Chapter 15:

1. Obtainable from the Northern Ireland Socialist Research Centre, 6 Cotton Gardens, London E2, 12p.
2. March 1972. Obtainable from 3 Belmont Road, London SW4. 25p. *This Week*, Dublin, 21 September 1972, carried a lengthy article on the bias of British broadcasters, written by former '24 Hours' editor Anthony Smith.
3. 24 October 1972.
4. One of the most important items censored in all English newspapers by the ubiquitous D Notice system concerned the activities of the shadowy SAS with its 'Aden Gang'. (See Proinsias MacAonghusa in *The Sunday Press*, Dublin, 12

December 1971). The black propaganda squad, as recommended by Brigadier Kitson, continued to be active. ITN's second item on 23 August 1972 was a story about three tiny girls, aged eight, who had been used by the "unscrupulous IRA" to push a pram containing a huge bomb towards a military post at the back of the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast. The "chivalrous soldiers were shocked and refused to fire, even at the risk of their own lives". The entire story was subsequently admitted by the British Army Press Office to be totally untrue. But ITN carried no denial. Similarly, the same week saw the London *Evening News* and *The Sun*, both unobtainable in Ireland, carrying lead stories about IRA gunmen bestially raping young girls at gunpoint in the Markets area of Belfast. Gruesome details were given to titillate jaded English palates. The black propaganda squad would appear to have gone a little too far that time in alleging that no fewer than four of the girls had become pregnant. Realizing, perhaps, that the 'super-potency' of the IRA in the area would be regarded with pride by some, the army got the RUC to issue a statement admitting that the story was completely false. Journalists in Belfast had hazards other than being fed false stories. The *Civil Rights Bulletin* of September 1972 revealed that the Europa Hotel, where most reporters stayed and entertained on expense accounts, was bugged. The CRA alleged collaboration between the hotel management, the army, the RUC and the UDA. According to the NICRA, a leading journalist received a threatening letter from the UDA, quoting verbatim what he had phoned from the hotel to his editor, two days previously. Several journalists had their notebooks taken from their rooms. Two days later these were returned to them by the management, who claimed that the "chambermaids had taken them in error". (See *The Sunday Press*, Dublin, 27 August 1972). For more sinister exploits of the SAS see *The Irish News*, Belfast, 31 August 1972. More detailed information is given in *Hibernia*, Dublin, 8 September 1972. In September 1972, Irishmen who had experienced the British army's arrest, detention and interrogation processes could be permitted a wry smile, perhaps, when they saw and heard on TV haggard British journalists describing what had happened them when they were expelled from Uganda by General Amin - himself an ex-British soldier. Outraged reporters told how soldiers "hurled abusive language at us"; "refused to tell us under what law we were being arrested"; "made us stand against the wall for hours"; "threatened us", etc. These "terrifying experiences" lasted all of 24 hours! To listen to the pressmen talk, one would imagine that all this had never happened anywhere else, still less on territory claimed to be a part of the UK. As late as 12 September 1972 the *News of the World*, London, was claiming that the Provos were responsible for the explosion in the London GPO tower, which the police accepted as the work of the Angry Brigade, and for the bombing of the Para headquarters in Aldershot, which was the work of the Officials. But then, the paper's correspondent was the former Unionist PRO Trevor Hanna.

5. *The Irish Times*, Dublin, 24 November 1971.
6. One of the very few reporters with enough integrity to resign after it had become clear that his paper's editorial policy was at variance with the facts.
7. Was it coincidental that the English Press, with the exception of *Private Eye* which ran its own crusade, made virtually no reference to the fact that the man

responsible for the treatment of prisoners in Britain's only internment camp was himself being accused in New York of complicity in a multi-million real estate swindle and that his close friend, Gerry Hoffman, was found guilty and sentenced to a term of imprisonment? Indeed, it was not until the Home Secretary's involvement in the Poulson scandal that the press turned the searchlight in his direction and the indelicacy of his position forced him to resign.

8. Those readers unacquainted with the *Newsletter*, Belfast, who feel that this might be somewhat of an exaggeration, could do worse than read the editorial of 3 October 1972, after the Strasbourg European Court had agreed that Britain should face charges of brutality and torture by her 'security forces'. Under the heading "Lynch's latest absurdity" they pontificated: "At some expense, not least to her credibility as a good neighbour of England, Eire has scored what she believes to be a point ... the IRA and their sympathisers here bellowed loud and long about the brutality allegedly meted out to suspected terrorists ... if such potato-republic tactics were not so dangerous they would be funny ... the Strasbourg Court has come to be recognised as a toothless terrier ..."
9. The first allegation that British soldiers might conceivably have misbehaved themselves did not come until 24 November. Then the victims were two Englishmen whom the army shot at and attacked as their car passed Palace barracks, Holywood, on 23 November. The army later apologised for this 'unfortunate mistake'.
10. In the Dail, 12 October 1966.

Chapter 16

INTERNMENT OUT – DETENTION IN

THE truce called by the Provisional IRA for 27 June 1972 was, for them, a masterpiece. When the Officials had earlier called their truce they had done so from a position of weakness, following the Derry public's revulsion at the shooting of Ranger Best. Whitelaw and the middle-class ladies of 'Women Together', with the active co-operation of the media who played up any peace move for all that it was worth – and then some – took the initiative. All the Officials' truce had got them was the release of the vast majority of their members in Long Kesh (by 16 August there were only two Officials still in the camp), but for the Provos it was a different story. Their highly successful (militarily) bombing campaign had demonstrated that their strength was undiminished despite numerous arrests. The more perceptive amongst their leaders, in particular Daithi O'Connell, now recognised that there was a need for a cessation of hostilities in order not to provoke a sectarian civil war which the well-armed and increasingly militant Ulster Defence Association was threatening. The Provos' bombing campaign had been a dangerous piece of brinkmanship, but, on 28 June, it almost looked as if they had got away with it. Despite all the oft-repeated ministerial pledges about "no question of talks with killers" (just as they had said about Makarios, Kenyatta and even Nehru) the Provo command was well aware that Whitelaw was prepared to meet them

personally – talks through intermediaries, of course, had been going on for some time. This was a considerable coup for a primarily military organization, whose lack of a really viable political wing was their biggest weakness. Up to now the SDLP had been the nominal representatives of the Catholic minority, despite the fact that in many areas the people had completely rejected them (in Andersonstown they had been burned in effigy outside Casement Park), the more so after the betrayal of their repeated pledge of no talks until the last internee was released.

But the truce was to be shortlived. Too many people had a vested interest in seeing that it failed. Various die-hard Provos, such as Seamus Twomey of the Belfast Command, wanted to fight on – "one big push to finish it once and for all" being their *raison d'être*, regardless of the risk, or certainty, of civil war. (Sectarian murders were already a nightly occurrence with gunmen cruising in cars and gunning down total strangers merely because they were in a Catholic area – thus did 'Loyalists' demonstrate their fealty to Her Majesty). Twomey obeyed orders in Belfast and the truce was declared, but it was obvious that it would not take too much to provoke him.

Others, too, had a vested interest in the failure of the truce. The UDA leaders, fearful of a sellout at the peace talks and a diminution of their own power and patronage, became increasingly provocative and menacing. From the minority point of view the open collusion in some areas between the British army, RUC and the UDA was an ominous sign. In Belfast fraternisation was blatant in the Ligoniel, Woodstock, Crumlin, Donegall and Old Park roads, as well as the Tiger Bay and Ballygomartin areas. The arrest of several Protestant members of the 'impartial' UDR on murder charges did nothing to further confidence in the regiment, most of whose officers are ex-B Specials. One particular example, in Belfast, was the attack upon the home of Frank Gogarty, the veteran and tireless civil rights worker. This was not the first time that a 'Loyalist' mob had attacked Gogarty's home on the Antrim Road but on 28 July the attack was fiercer than usual and Gogarty called the police and the army. They arrived, but stood by for several hours and allowed the attack to continue unabated. Finally, a senior police officer approached Gogarty and demanded that the local masked commandant of the UDA be permitted to enter the house to search for arms. Gogarty, a respectable dentist, was incensed at this open collusion between the supposed guardians of law and order and a mob of masked attackers, but was powerless to prevent the search being carried out, with the police seemingly taking orders from the UDA officer. In the event, nothing was discovered and the attack was called off.^[1]

Nor were the examples of collusion restricted to Belfast. Not at all. A fairly typical incident occurred in the first week of August on the main Armagh-Portadown road. Three members of the Armagh People's Democracy were returning from a meeting in Belfast when their car was ambushed on the main road. Masked men used stones and clubs to break the windows and six shots were fired into the car, wounding John Rocks in the right arm and pock-marking the car with bullet holes; despite this the PD members were able to drive on but were pursued by another car at high speed. On arrival at Armagh they went straight to the police station to report the murderous attack and were themselves arrested. This was at midnight. For three hours the police intimidated them, waved guns under their noses and claimed that they were under arrest "for not stopping at a (completely illegal) UDA roadblock." Their jackets were taken "for forensic tests" and police continually refused to take statements or get medical assistance. At 3.30 a.m. they were bundled into landrovers and driven to

Portadown where the same process was repeated. Requests to make statements or consult a lawyer were constantly refused until 7 a.m. when the police grudgingly acceded to them. They were released at 8 a.m., their faith in Whitelaw's "new policy of police-civilian relations" scarcely enhanced.

Nor were the UDA and Vanguard the only Protestants with an interest on seeing violence continue. Ex-PM Brian Faulkner, having momentarily recovered from his pique at his summary dismissal, began to openly attempt to discredit Whitelaw, for any success for the English Minister was yet another nail in Faulkner's political coffin. His speeches became increasingly bitter and aggressive; he attempted to resurrect a working alliance with William Craig, to the latter's discomfort since the majority of 'Loyalists' wouldn't trust Faulkner as far as they could throw him and in September he was physically stoned off the Shankill Road. There was another split in the Unionist ranks when rank-and-file members of LAW broke away alleging that the leaders were only intent on personal aggrandizement. More and more Faulkner bemoaned "the lack of democracy in Ulster under Whitelaw" – somewhat incongruous coming from the man who had introduced internment without trial. In fact, as Andrew Boyd^[2] has pointed out, when traditional Unionists complain about this they really mean that:

Their power and privileges, upheld for so many generations against the wishes of the majority of the people of Ireland, were being effectually challenged and abolished.

Whitelaw had promised that internment would be speedily ended if there was a truce. The Provos claim that he broke his word since he said that the camp would be empty within a fortnight. Both sides could not completely agree on what was said at the secret meeting. The Provos were represented by Twomey, O'Connell, Martin McGuinness of Derry, Joe Cahill, Ivor Bell and Gerry Adams, all of whom were offered safe conduct to London and were transported by army helicopter and RAF plane on 7 July. By 'coincidence' two British officers in plain clothes strayed into the Bogside at the same time and were promptly captured by the Provos. They were released unharmed as soon as the spokesmen returned from London.^[3] *Der Spiegel*, the German paper, claimed that the talks went so well that an actual document was signed by both parties. Whitelaw was angrily to reject such an allegation when it was put to him by Enoch Powell in the Commons on 7 August, but English readers of *Der Spiegel* found that their favourite paper was not available that week.

People in the North breathed a sigh of relief when the truce was announced, but internment was still there and the men in Long Kesh were still held as hostages. More experienced political commentators, moreover, took a less optimistic view of peace continuing. Intimidation and victimization of Catholic families were still rife. For example, 300 families forced out of Rathcoole in July, and increasing numbers of Protestants were harassed and bullied into moving home by 'patriotic' Catholics. Nor did the killings stop. In the four months from 30 March to 30 July, 182 people died. Of these, 47 were soldiers,^[4] seven members of the UDR, two RUC men, and 126 civilians, of whom 88 were Catholic and 38 Protestant. The Catholic Ex-Servicemen's Association broke down the civilian casualties as follows:^[5]

Catholic	Protestant
Dead	Dead

Killed by the British army	25	3
Killed by Protestant extremists	42	7
Killed by Catholic extremists	–	13
Killed by explosions	13	10
Killed by crossfire	4	5

In addition, there were four Catholics killed in uncertain circumstances. Given that the CESA may not be the most impartial body, it is nonetheless clear that increasingly large numbers of Catholics were being murdered by assassination squads of 'Loyalist' persuasion. *The Sunday Times* of 13 August alleged that the RUC had captured one such squad which had been responsible for no fewer than 16 deaths. In 1973, however, 12 'Loyalists' were charged with different sectarian murders.

But the British army, despite the truce, had not ceased their fraternisation with the paramilitary UDA and it was to be this which sparked off the 'Lenadoon Affair' of 9 July which resulted in the breakdown of the truce. Twomey may have been spoiling for a fight, but the behaviour of the troops involved, the 20th Medium Regiment, Royal Artillery, seems to have been so crass: first encouraging the families to occupy the vacant houses in Horn Drive and next minute preventing them, that it was no surprise when the shooting started, each side blaming the other. The Provos had thrown away their negotiating advantage. They were further to jeopardize their position with the murderous bombing of 'bloody Friday' 21 July. Two days previously, in an effort to patch up the truce, they had talked to Harold Wilson, who had agreed to act as an agent for Heath; nothing was achieved. And then, on the 21st, 22 bombs exploded in Belfast, killing nine people (two of them soldiers), wounding 130 and destroying thousands of pounds worth of property. In all cases warnings had been given and the Provos accepted responsibility, blaming the police and army for failing to act quickly enough to warn people, but it just would not wash. Many who had been prepared to give at least tacit support to the Provos were totally sickened. Even though in many cases an hour's notice had been given, with that number of bombs exploding in the city centre it was inevitable that innocent civilians would be maimed or killed, but this did not deter the Provisional IRA who, by their actions, played into the hands of Whitelaw and the SDLP.^[6]

Public revulsion was such that Whitelaw was able to get another 4,000 troops, making 21,000 in all (and necessitating permission from NATO allies, including Richard Nixon – Jack Lynch was informed out of 'courtesy') and to mount the long-delayed operation 'Motorman' (or 'Murderman', as the hitherto 'no-go' areas referred to it). And so, in the early hours of 31 July 1972 the armoured columns of the British army poured into Creggan, Bogside and Andersonstown. Resistance was virtually non-existent. The IRA wisely melted away, choosing to fight again another day. All that the soldiers encountered was sullen hostility, exacerbated when the army occupied the local Catholic schools and used them as billets. In Belfast, the army's seizure of the GAA pitch and clubhouse at Casement Park was to provide the focal point for the next week's riots. Meanwhile, despite the release of 47 more internees as a 'goodwill gesture' on the part of Whitelaw, there were still 283 men held hostage in Long Kesh. That their status was precisely that of hostage was by now in no doubt whatever. Both Whitelaw and Faulkner were prepared to release men upon the 'defenceless public' who only the day before they had been castigating as vicious killers and mad bombers, if it were politically

advantageous. Whitelaw no longer formally interned men; merely 'detained them', a polite euphemism for the same thing. A Government spokesman said:^[7] "About 30 detention orders have been signed under direct rule" (in fact, the figure was 42). Some detainees, such as Billy Kelly of Unity Flats, spent four months in Long Kesh, were released on 8 June only to be re-detained on 13 August. From 'Bloody Friday' 21 July 1972 to 12 August the army arrested some 258 men, of whom 159 were released and 94 charged. Five were still 'helping police with their inquiries'. Nor had the brutality ceased with the introduction of direct rule, as the European Commission on Human Rights was to hear. (See chapter on brutality, page 115).

Talks had, however, commenced between Whitelaw and the SDLP. For months secret meetings had been held but publicly the SDLP had clung to their 'no talks until the last internee is out' formula, which public opinion had forced upon them. Using the excuse of the horror bombing of 'Bloody Friday' and the terror bombing in Gaudy on 31 July in which nine people died (the Provisional IRA denied responsibility for the Claudy explosion, but their credibility was strained this time), the SDLP publicly announced that they were having "talks about talks" and then "talks". Whitelaw announced an all-party conference to be held in England, between 25 September and 27 September, and broadly hinted that all internees would be released by then. Most political commentators felt that this was hardly likely to provide any solutions and was merely designed to give the Tories a chance to impose the political 'solution' they had already decided upon following the 'breakdown' of talks. But in Long Kesh the mood of despondency finally lifted and men really began to believe that their release was imminent. 18 August saw the release of the last two Officials^[8] – at the height of the internment period there had been 297 Officials behind the wire – although some 22 were still held as 'detainees'.

But the internees' optimism was to be shortlived.^[9] The continuing bombing campaign, albeit on a lower key than before 'Operation Motorman', was still enough to harden governmental resistance to ending internment. As the UDA, UVF, LAW and Vanguard movements came closer together, following the shooting of two unarmed men on the Shankill Road by the now infamous Parachute regiment, so their cries for the retention of internment became more strident. Gone were the days when the *Loyalist News* could denounce internment as an 'evil weapon' which was about to be used on true blue loyalists – they had claimed that a special camp was being set up near Lisanelly in Fermanagh. Now they demanded the continuation of this "evil weapon" and threatened to "paralyse the province" if it were ended. As they made these threats, 'Loyalist' power workers were doing just that with political strikes over the refusal of Whitelaw to hold an inquiry into the actions of the Paras on the Shankill Road.

Army brutality and harassment continued unabated, too, despite Whitelaw's bland assurances to the contrary. It was not enough to transfer the Government interrogation centre from the by-now-notorious Palace barracks to Castlereagh police station. In order to stop the ill-treatment Whitelaw would have needed to make sweeping changes in the personnel of the RUC and the army and this he was unable or unwilling to do. And so the persecution of young boys like Gerard Bradley continued; because Branch men did not want him to give evidence about the terrible beatings he and his friends received from them, his young brothers and sisters were harassed and terrified nightly, and forced to leave their home.^[10] More publicised cases concerned remand prisoners at the Maze prison, as Long Kesh was being called. Complaints that they were being regularly

beaten and degraded by the police on their visits, in an old water cannon, to the remand courts led on 11 September to a sitdown protest at the prison, but to little or no avail. Soldiers were sent in to baton the peaceful demonstrators, who included a 14-year-old boy on remand on an arms charge.^[11] It is noticeable that this protest occurred at a time when in other parts of the 'British Isles' prisoners were climbing onto roofs and staging much more violent demonstrations. In no case did the authorities deem it necessary to send in armed soldiers to beat up the demonstrators and then destroy their few pitiful personal possessions.

In the Catholic ghettos resentment grew at the continued occupation of local schools and recreation centres and the erection, at great expense, of armed encampments. For example, 'Fort Silver City' and 'Fort Apache' at Slieve' gallion Drive and Lenadoon Gardens cost over £120,000. In the West Belfast area alone eight fortresses ringed Andersonstown. Clearly, the army's 'hearts and minds' campaign, despite all their posters, leaflets and stickers, was a dismal failure. Reluctantly the SDLP had to accept this. In order to keep up the polite fiction of 'No talks until the last internee was released' the SDLP met with Heath at Chequers and then with Wilson – at which, they claimed, the former PM denounced internment yet again.^[12] They then announced that because of their high principles they were going to boycott the talks.^[13] In fact, as Ben Carragher, a senior member of the party admitted, there was no need to go to the talks. They had already had a private meeting with Heath, had explained their position and published their proposals, and lost nothing by avoiding sterile argument with the rump of Faulkner's Unionist party and the Alliance and Labour parties which were the only other groups bothering to attend. In any case, it was widely accepted that the talks were only for show and that the Government intended to present its own 'solution' when the talks inevitably produced nothing.

The army continued to have their successes, although their own casualty rate went up. Well-publicised escapers like Martin Meehan, Terence Clarke, Jim Bryson and Thomas Toland were recaptured, as was Eddie Campbell, claimed by the army to be a batallion OC. But still the army had to have recourse to the Special Powers Act. Embarrassing inquests, for example, were banned or indefinitely postponed.^[14] As it became clear that the synonym 'detention' was being used for 'internment' even Brian Faulkner began to revise his opinion about internment which he had always regarded as essential. Now he claimed that all along he had favoured special courts, adding, hypocritically, that the power to intern without trial was perhaps too much for one man to have. Many observers felt that it didn't really matter what Brian Faulkner thought anymore since, with the defection of three of his lieutenants and his ignominious flight from the 'loyal' Shankill Road in front of a stone-throwing mob, he counted for little in local politics despite his desperate effort to woo Bill Craig. 22 September saw the long-expected announcement of Special Courts, although none of the details were spelt out. Clearly, they were internment by another name and, at that, hardly necessary since men were being remanded without trial for up to a year already: witness the case of Sean McGuigan.^[15] The announcement, however, was not designed, as some speculated, to tempt the SDLP to the conference table, but to provide some ammunition for Sir Peter Rawlinson in his efforts to get Britain off the hook at the European Court at Strasbourg where allegations of British torture were due to be heard. Unfortunately for Sir Peter, the court was to find, on 30 October, that many of the charges were admissible and that consequently Britain would have to answer them at a future court.

(When internment was introduced in 1971 Britain had to derogate from Article 5 of the European Convention of Human Rights. She did not, however, derogate from Article 6 of the European Declaration of Human Rights and the Special Courts and Detention of Terrorists Act are a flagrant violation of her international obligations).

As the security situation showed little sign of improvement, despite the arrest of more and more Provos – indeed the *Guardian* pointed out that the army had arrested more men claimed to be Provo officers than they had claimed to be in the entire IRA – the UDA flexed its muscles and declared a 24-hour war on the British army – which lasted 24 hours. William Craig gave his 'shoot to kill' speech to the Monday Club – and 'gravel in the kidneys' became a new journalistic euphemism for 'drunk'. Many people were interned for saying less than Craig or John Taylor. The UDA claimed several bombing raids into the Twenty-six Counties, and denied any responsibility, despite army finds of explosives on their premises, for bomb attacks in the North. Meanwhile in the South seven Provos escaped by tunnelling out of the Curragh camp^[6] on 29 October and Desmond O'Malley, Minister for Justice, announced that he would be drawing up a Bill to outlaw Sinn Fein. The Bill, which O'Malley described as "rather controversial," was designed to force suspects to prove their innocence rather than requiring the courts to prove a suspect's guilt. The new Act, known as the Offences against the State (Amendment) Act 1972, completely transgressed normal legal practice and stated that henceforth "any statement made orally, in writing, or otherwise (semaphore signalling IRA members?) or any conduct by an accused person implying or leading to a reasonable inference that he was at a material time a member of an illegal organisation shall, in proceedings under section 21 of the Act of 1939, be evidence that he was then such a member." Moreover, failure to deny a report that stated that one was a member of an illegal organisation was, under the new Amendment, to be taken as admission of the report's accuracy – even though the person might not have seen the report. Worse still, one of the 25 chief superintendents of the Garda Síochána had, in future, only to state that he believed a man to be in the IRA for that to be accepted as 'evidence' by the courts. Meetings, peaceful pickets or demonstrations outside courthouses or judges' homes were also banned.

It looked as if the Bill would be defeated when Fine Gael, albeit reluctantly, agreed with Labour and four Independent TDs to oppose the Bill. Debate was repeatedly extended but it still looked as if the Government were going to be defeated until the news reached the Dail that two carbombs had exploded in Dublin that evening, killing two and injuring 114 people. No warning was given in Dublin although the *Belfast Newsletter* was informed 15 minutes prior to the explosions. As yet, the identity of those responsible is unknown, but clearly it was not the IRA since this *deus ex machina* enabled Fine Gael to abstain and so allow O'Malley's Bill to be passed. Had the Bill been defeated Lynch had announced his intention of holding a general election, and with the prospect of losing possibly as many as 12 seats Fine Gael had probably as vested an interest as Fianna Fail in seeing the Bill passed. Next day it went to the Senate. Fine Gael were soon to win the general election – but only when in coalition with Labour.

Postscript

5 February saw the first 'Loyalists' 'detained' – Sammy McCreary and William Halsall. A general strike in protest over this on 7 February brought Belfast to a standstill and led to widespread arson and the murder of a fireman. Within two months 22 'Loyalists', including John McKeague, were behind the wire of Long Kesh. It was ironic to see men who, 20 months previously, had marched on the Belfast City Hall demanding the introduction of internment now themselves behind bars without charge or trial. Conditions in the camp didn't improve either and Under-Secretary Peter Mills revealed in February that more money was spent on food for the guard dogs in Leicester jail than on the internees in Long Kesh – £2.50 per week as opposed to £2.20. Perhaps it was the poor food that spurred William James Kelly into escaping. At any rate on 11 March, in a dense fog, he cut his way through the wire to become only the second man to escape from the camp.

By April £1 ½ million had been spent on the 65 acres of Long Kesh/Maze. A further 15 acres were about to be utilised, and while the anguished British press, public and parliament worried about the unfortunate Peter Niesewand being badly treated by the evil Smith régime, 338 people, including four women, were being detained without charge or trial, 234 of them had been lifted since November 1972 and 46 per cent of them were under 22. 23 of them were only 17 years old. *Plus ça change...*

Brigadier Kitson, Britain's up-and-coming 'strategist' has said that "the law should be used as just another weapon in the Government's arsenal". He went on to admit that in this case it became "little more than a propaganda cover for the disposal of unwanted members of the public". This is now the case in Ireland, both North and South. Internment has not ended. All that has happened is that "the names have been changed in order to protect the guilty".

Footnotes Chapter 16:

1. Gogarty and his family were finally forced to leave their home for good.
2. ANDREW BOYD, *Brian Faulkner and the Crisis of Ulster Unionism*, Tralee (Anvil Books), 1972, p. 112.
3. Despite this, the two captains, Millard and Cornwall, were, it is reported, disciplined, fined and sent back to England (17 August 1972).
4. The figures given out by the British army as to the casualties suffered by them are often grotesquely understated. In many cases the evidence of doctors, nurses and morgue attendants is that many more soldiers are killed than the army is prepared to admit. This is ignoring the claims of IRA snipers who will, of course, just like the British marksmen, claim hits in a most nonchalant fashion. Eyewitnesses – the author included – have actually seen the dead bodies of soldiers lying on the road, and read next day in the papers of "one soldier receiving a minor injury". Some such casualties are subsequently 'killed off' in 'road accidents' or service accidents in Germany. An army medic has confirmed this to me personally and said that one way of hushing up figures is to tell parents not to make any publicity about the loss of a son lest "the IRA come over and try to kill you too". It is to be noted that many

soldiers in today's army are orphans recruited straight from children's homes. Obviously, credence cannot be given to all the tales of dead soldiers in morgues, but research has shown me that a conservative estimate of British army casualties would put them at 50 per cent higher than the official figures – which were 209 killed up to 1 May 1973. In contrast, the old myth of the IRA 'burying' its dead down the manholes is precisely that: a myth. The IRA do lie about their injuries on occasion but it is most unlikely that the body of a volunteer would be treated in such a disrespectful fashion by an organization which could almost be said to be obsessed with funerals – honouring the dead is a national pastime in Ireland and one that Republicans take very seriously.

5. *The Irish Press*, Dublin, 31 July 1972.
6. Allegations that the British army deliberately let innocent people be killed, including two of their own men, have been made by Republicans. Certainly, the political capital that the British Government made out of Bloody Friday was of inestimable value to them, and nothing in these cloak-and-dagger days can be ruled out. However, British jeremiads against terrorism ring hollow when one recalls the wanton destruction of Dresden (a non-military target) and the saturation bombing of Hamburg during the second world war; and, since then, the barbarous treatment of political prisoners in Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus, and Aden. In Kenya the British Government paid her troops a bounty for every dead Kenyan nationalist: 12/6 for a male head, 10/- for a female and 5/- for a child's (*An Phoblacht*). Nonetheless, those who use such instances of barbarity to justify acts of terrorism against the general public are no better than the perpetrators of other atrocities. Twenty-two bombs in the heart of a crowded city in broad daylight are bound to kill people no matter what warnings may be given, and the Provisional IRA must bear the full responsibilities for these murders, whether the British were deliberately negligent about passing on the warnings, or not.
7. *The Irish News*, Belfast, 14 August 1972.
8. Eamonn Kerr and Charlie Fleming.
9. Indeed, some 60 men in cage five were so cynical about their release date – or, perhaps, they were bored – that they tried to burrow their way out. The tunnel, a sophisticated affair with electric lighting, went for 60 yards before rain caused subsidence which led to its discovery, on 8 August 1972. As usual, this led to a revenge raid upon cages by the soldiers and the destruction of the internees' few paltry personal possessions.
10. Father Denis Faul forwarded to the European Court of Human Rights at Strasbourg, dossiers of no fewer than ten cases of illegal arrest, detention and ill-treatment in the space of one week: 15-22 August. See *The Irish News*, Belfast, 5 September 1972.
11. Gerard Wilson. By September most juveniles were remanded to the adult remand centre at Long Kesh following the escape of 16 of the 18 juveniles from the youth centre where they had been committed. Two weeks later it was the turn of the remand prisoners in cage six to experience the soldiers' wrath. This time, according to the ALJ, 78 men were injured, some seriously. As usual, the prison commandant remained silent.

12. The SDLP would have done well to remember that, as late as 22 May 1969, Harold Wilson said: "Not a Government in the world would do without its (Special Powers Acts) authorization until they were assured that there would be a period of law, order, peace, calm and quiet." (House of Commons debates, Vol. 784, Col. 667, 22 May 1969.)
13. 218 internees from cages two, three, four and five in an advertisement in *The Irish News*, Belfast, "deplored the horse-trading of internees with the Whitelaw regime by politicians claiming to represent the people". Eventually, on 25 November 1972, the SDLP conference agreed to open talks with Whitelaw.
14. See, for example, the case of Patrick McVeigh, shot dead on 12 May 1972. McVeigh, a member of the Catholic Ex-Servicemen's Association, was standing with an unarmed group of vigilantes at the corner of Riverdale Park South Belfast, when a burst of fire from a passing car cut him down dead and wounded four others. The first army statement claimed that one of their patrols had been fired upon and had returned fire. Twenty minutes later a senior officer contradicted this and claimed that a civilian car had been involved. Next day the army admitted privately to persistent Pressmen, as well as to a detective chief inspector, that it had been "some of our boys in plain clothes. It's all been a most regrettable mistake." Surely the understatement of the year. Not until 21 December 1972 was an inquest held. Again the army admitted that he was shot by one of their plain clothes squads – and that he was unarmed. No report of the inquest was published.
15. McGuigan, of Jamaica Street, in Belfast, was remanded for 51 weeks on 36 different charges. All were thrown out by different magistrates when the police produced no evidence. Eventually, after almost a year, he was released – and rearrested as he left the court. He is now in Long Kesh.
16. Colm Murphy, James Hazlett, Pat Quinn, Michael McVerrey, James McCabe, Chris Murphy and Tom McGrath. McGrath was subsequently arrested in the North, in Armagh, and extradited back to the Curragh.

Appendix I

MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL TO THE PARKER COMMITTEE ON INTERROGATION PROCEDURES

A Committee of three Privy Councillors, under the chairmanship of Lord Parker, was appointed on 16 November 1971 by the British Prime Minister "to consider whether, and if so in what respects, the procedures currently authorized for the interrogation of persons suspected of terrorism and for their custody while subject to interrogation require amendment."

1. Amnesty International begs to present this memorandum to your Committee for the following reasons:

(i) One of the objects of Amnesty International, as laid down in its constitution, is "to secure throughout the world the observance of the provisions of Article 5 ... of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," which provides that "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

(ii) In the ten years of its existence Amnesty International has observed with horror that there has been a growing tendency throughout the world for governments to authorize or condone the use of torture or of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; and such treatment is most commonly inflicted not upon prisoners who have been charged and convicted of an offence, but on suspects in the course of interrogation, in order to obtain information. There are several countries where, within a period of a few years, the use of torture, at the outset sporadic and exceptional, has become an invariable routine part of any interrogation.

(iii) The purpose of your Committee is, so far as we are aware, unique, for although judicial or quasi-judicial tribunals have often been established to consider whether ill-treatment has in fact taken place in the course of interrogation, it has always been stated or implied that such treatment, if it were found to have taken place, was wrong, and that disciplinary or other measures would, if necessary, be taken to prevent its recurrence. For the first time, however, a committee has been established to decide not whether ill-treatment has taken place, but whether it should take place in the future.

(iv) The consequences of your deliberations will extend far beyond the confines of Northern Ireland or even those of the United Kingdom and its dependencies, and in saying this we are particularly mindful of the composition of your Committee and the high respect with which the English judiciary is universally regarded. The approval by your Committee of any of the measures characterized by the Compton Report as physical ill-treatment would be taken throughout the world as a statement by the English judiciary that torture was not only permissible but desirable. Any statement of this kind would in our view be profoundly retrogressive, and would place a mantle of respectability and legality on a practice which has long been outlawed by civilized nations.

2. We may assume that your Committee will test any interrogation procedures that may be brought to court attention by asking four questions of them:

(i) Is their use harmful to the suspect, and if so, to what degree?

(ii) Is their use immoral?

(iii) Is their use lawful, having regard both to United Kingdom internal law and to the international conventions to which the United Kingdom is a party? and

(iv) To what extent, if at all, has it been shown that it is helpful to the authorities to use such methods, having regard both to the amount of reliable information obtained and to the wider military and political consequences?

3. It is clear that the procedures associated with "interrogation in depth" described in paragraphs 43 to 105 of the Compton Report must have been painful and frightening to those subjected to them. It is significant that no less than 7 out of the 11 men who made complaints of physical ill-treatment during the period of intensive questioning were found to be suffering from physical injuries by the medical officers who examined them on their departure from the Interrogation Centre or at Crumlin Jail (*Compton Report*, paragraphs 79, 80-82, 85, 88 and 89). We consider it unreal to suggest that men might be kept at the wall for many hours without being subjected to direct physical violence by their guards. Moreover, the procedures were designed to disorientate and break down the mind of the suspect by sensory deprivation and the infliction of physical injury was ancillary to this purpose. We understand that your Committee will be receiving medical evidence relating to the serious physical and psychological injury that may be caused by the use of the methods of interrogation described in the Compton Report, and we do not seek to rehearse such evidence in this memorandum.

4. We have attempted to answer the three remaining questions referred to above. In paragraphs 5(i)-(ii) we have expressed our belief that it is immoral to use such methods; in paragraphs 6(i)-(ix) we have shown that the use of any physical ill-treatment during interrogation is both illegal and contrary to the public policy of the United Kingdom. In paragraphs 7(i)-(xiii) we have considered whether there is evidence that there is even a marginal intelligence gain to be derived from the use of physical ill-treatment. We have reached the conclusion that there probably is not, and that its use is both politically and militarily harmful to the cause it is intended to serve.

5 (i) It is said that the physical ill-treatment described in the Compton Report is less severe than the methods of ill-treatment used by other regimes in other countries. But this should not serve to disguise or blind us to the true nature of the procedures described in the Compton Report. There is a danger that even by considering the procedures at length we become anaesthetized to the degree to which they constitute an offence against the person. It is a form of torture to force a man to stand at the wall in the posture described for many hours in succession, in some cases for days on end, progressively exhausted and driven literally almost out of his mind by being subjected to continuous noise, and being deprived of food, of sleep, and even of light.

5 (ii) But the moral impropriety of these techniques principally derives not from their physical effects at all, but from the fact that they constitute a grave assault on the human mind. It is clear that the purpose and effects of these techniques is to disorientate and break down the mind by sensory deprivation. If we regard the physical ill-treatment as merely a means to achieve the same effect as would be achieved by the forcible injection of an hallucinatory drug or of a drug designed to break down and disorientate the mind, we begin to appreciate the true nature of the moral offence committed. It is because we regard the deliberate destruction of a man's ability to control his own mind with revulsion that we reserve a special place in our catalogue of moral crimes for techniques of thought control and brainwashing. Any interrogation procedure which has the purpose or effect of causing a malfunction or breakdown of a man's mental processes constitutes as grave an assault on the inherent dignity of the human person as more traditional techniques of physical torture.

5 (iii) The torture and ill-treatment of prisoners has, in recent years, become a matter of major concern to international organisations such as Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists, the International Committee of the Red Cross. They have repeatedly drawn attention to the tendency of some governments to ill-treat and torture prisoners. This question has also been taken up actively by the Churches. The Christian Churches held a Consultation representative of *all* the Christian Churches in 1970 in Baden, Austria. The Conclusions of this Consultation deal specifically with "torture" and "ill-treatment of prisoners" at pages 55 and 56 of the English version of the Conclusions. These Conclusions, *inter alia*, declare:

"There is today a growing concern at the frequency with which some authorities resort to the torture or inhuman treatment of political opponents or prisoners held by them.... There exists at the present time, in certain regions of the world, regimes using systematic methods of torture carried out in the most refined way. Torture itself becomes contagious.... The expediency of the moment should never silence the voice of the Church Authorities when condemnation of inhuman treatment is called for."

(Report of the Consultation on Christian Concern for Peace sponsored by the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace jointly, held at Baden, Austria 1970, published by SODEPAX Geneva).

This Report also draws attention to the United Nations "Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners" and requests that "acts of brutality or inhuman treatment of prisoners should always be reported to the highest Church authorities."

5 (iv) The World Conference on Religion and Peace (Kyoto, October 1970) which was a Conference representative of all the world's religions, also drew attention to the torture and ill-treatment of prisoners. In its findings it declared:

"The torture and ill-treatment of prisoners which is carried out with the authority of some governments constitute not only a crime against humanity, but also a crime against the moral law."

(Findings of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, page 31).

5 (v) Morality and law are inextricably joined, and the belief that the use of ill-treatment for the purposes of interrogation is immoral is enshrined in both the municipal law of Northern Ireland and in the international conventions to which the United Kingdom is a party. It is to those that we now turn.

6 (i) We list below the main rules of the internal law of Northern Ireland which have bearing upon interrogation procedures. There is no lawful justification for the commission of those acts characterized as ill-treatment in paragraphs 92-96 of the Compton Report, nor, so far as we know, has any legal justification ever been advanced. *Prima facie* all those persons who committed or who aided or abetted or counselled or procured the commission of those acts are guilty of one or more of the offences specified below and of the sorts of assault, battery and conspiracy.

(a) A person is guilty of an assault if he unlawfully displays force against another in such a way that he intentionally creates in the mind of that person the belief that force is about to be used against him;

(b) a person is guilty of battery if he intentionally uses unlawful force against another;

(c) assault occasioning actual bodily harm is contrary to the provisions of s.47 of the *Offences Against the Person Act, 1861*. "Actual bodily harm" includes any hurt or injury calculated to interfere with health or comfort, and includes an injury to a person's state of mind: *R - v Miller* (1954), 2 Q.B.282; unlawfully and maliciously inflicting grievous bodily harm upon any other person is contrary to the provisions of s.20 of that Act;

(d) the intentional application of force to the person of another without his consent, unless authorized by law, also amounts to the civil wrong of battery, entitling the victim to compensation. Even to touch a person without his consent or some other lawful reason is actionable. "It is also probably a battery to project heat, light, noise or vapours onto another person in such manner as to cause physical injury or personal discomfort" (*Salmond on the Law of Torts*, 15th ed., p.158). The act of putting another person in reasonable fear or apprehension of an immediate battery by means of an act amounting to a threat to commit a battery amounts to an actionable assault. It is actionable conspiracy when two or more persons combine to commit an assault or battery upon another.

It is right to point out that it is possible that the men who themselves physically enforced the procedures described in the Compton Report in August 1971 might be able to avail themselves of the defence that they were acting in accord with superior orders if they reasonably believed that what they were doing was lawful. There is an *obiter dictum* of Willes J. in *Keighley - v. - Bell* (1866), 4 F.&F., 763 at 790, that such a defence probably exists in English law, but this has never been decided; and we would suggest that the better view is that superior orders do not provide a defence but in appropriate cases would serve to mitigate punishment. In any event such a defence would not avail the senior officers who gave such orders nor would it be available in any civil proceedings.

6 (ii) Any interrogation procedures which depend upon the use or threat of force or the causation of bodily harm by depriving the suspect of food, sleep, or light, or subjecting him to an excess of noise, will therefore be unlawful according to the existing law of Northern Ireland. It is impossible to point to any doctrine of common law in justification of such procedures. Nor does there exist any statute, or order or regulation made under the *Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act (Northern Ireland), 1922*, which can be invoked as legitimizing interrogation of this kind. Indeed it is doubtful whether any order or regulation made under that Act which purported to authorize the use of ill-treatment for the purpose of interrogation would be valid. We do not doubt that the legal power to arrest, detain or intern a citizen carries with it the implied right to exert reasonable force where that is necessary to make the arrest, detention or internment effective. And a prison or detention centre cannot be operated without some restrictive disciplinary measures. But the power to arrest or detain does not carry with it the right to use or threaten to use force, or to inflict bodily harm for any other purpose.

6(iii) Not only are such interrogation procedures prohibited by the internal law of Northern Ireland but the United Kingdom is also a party to a number of international legal instruments which apply to interrogation procedures. The most important of these in the current situation is the *European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, because it alone has an adjudication mechanism and can investigate and determine whether there has been a violation of the Convention and can in effect review the domestic legislation of the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom, which ratified the Convention in 1951, undertook by Article 32 (4) to regard as binding upon it any decision of the Committee of Ministers. Article 3 of the Convention provides that

"No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

6 (iv) It is important to note that although Article 15 (1) of the Convention provides that in time of war or other public emergency threatening the life of the nation, any contracting power may take measures derogating from its obligations under the Convention, Article 15 (2) specifies that no derogation from Article 3 can be made under this provision. Article 3 represents an absolute minimum standard of civilized behaviour and treatment from which not even war can justify departure.

6 (v) Whether or not it is right that the procedures characterized by the Compton Report as ill-treatment could fairly be described as a form of torture – and, in the submission of Amnesty International they do amount to a form of torture – it is clear beyond argument that they constitute degrading treatment within the meaning of the Convention. It is significant that the United Kingdom made a proposal for additions to the original draft texts of the Convention which sought to apply Article 3 explicitly to particular types of ill-treatment including "imprisonment with such an excess of light, darkness, noise or silence as to cause mental suffering" (see J. E. S. Fawcett, *The Application of the European Convention of Human Rights* (Oxford University Press, 1969), pp 34-5.)

6 (vi) It is difficult to envisage how it would be possible to subject a man to interrogation procedures which were in effect a limited or restricted form of the procedures described in the Compton Report without at the same time degrading him. Procedures whose purpose is to destroy a man's ability to control his own mind must serve to degrade him. To countenance the use of any such restricted or limited forms of ill-treatment would be to countenance serious breaches of the European Convention.

6 (vii) The United Kingdom is not only a party to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Article 5 of which is recited in paragraph 1(i) of this memorandum, but has also signed, although not ratified, the *United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, Article 10 of which provides that

"All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person."

6 (viii) Article 3 of the *Geneva Convention Relative to the treatment of Prisoners of War* (1949) provides that

"In the case of armed conflict not of an international character occurring in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties ... persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed *hors de combat* by ... detention ... shall in all circumstances be treated humanely ...

To this end the following acts are and shall remain prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever with respect to the above-mentioned persons:

(a) violation to life and person, in particular ... cruel treatment and torture ...

...

(c) Outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment."

It is strongly arguable that this Article applies to the present conflict in Northern Ireland, since it is an "armed conflict not of an international character," and this is apparently the view of Her Majesty's Government, who in s.2(d) of their Note on Interrogation set out in paragraph 46 of the Compton Report, appear to accept that Article 3 applies to "civil disturbances". If that be the case, it is also arguable that, if we are correct in our view that the procedures described in the Compton Report constitute a form of torture,^[1] those who carried them out are guilty of an offence against the *Geneva Conventions Act, 1937*, punishable with imprisonment for 14 years. This Act made it an offence under the law of the United Kingdom for any person, whatever his nationality, whether inside or outside the United Kingdom, to commit a grave breach of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, 1949. Such breaches include torture or inhuman treatment or wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health.

6 (ix) Finally, and this will no doubt weigh heavily in your deliberations, although Article 17 of the Geneva Convention does not apply to the present conflict in Northern Ireland, it would apply to all cases of declared war or any other armed conflict which might arise between the United Kingdom and any other party to the Convention. This Article provides that

"No physical or mental torture, nor any other form of coercion may be inflicted on prisoners of war to secure from them information of any kind whatever. Prisoners of war who refuse to answer may not be threatened, insulted, or exposed to any unpleasant or disadvantageous treatment of any kind."

The *Geneva Conventions Act* was enacted by the United Kingdom Parliament to enable the Geneva Conventions to be ratified by the United Kingdom, and ratification was effected in 1958. The legislators must have appreciated in 1957, and it must have been appreciated by the United Kingdom when it signed the Convention in August 1949, that in times of war there is a pressing need to obtain information from captured soldiers, information upon which the very survival of the State and the outcome of the war might depend, and yet nevertheless this restriction upon the conduct of any future war was accepted. It would be highly unsatisfactory if the United Kingdom were to tolerate a lower standard of conduct towards its own citizens than it accepts, as a matter

of public policy, it should display to citizens of other countries with whom it may be at war.

7 (i) The only argument adduced by those in the United Kingdom who advocate the use of physical ill-treatment during interrogation is one of expediency, and runs along the following lines: the authorities are, in effect, engaged in a war against terrorism; terrorism must be defeated; the lives and property of innocent people must be protected and the rule of law must be restored; a continuous supply of tactical information relating to the identity of the enemy and the location of his weapons is vital to achieve these ends, and cannot be obtained without the use of physical ill-treatment; this may be illegal, it may, in the eyes of many, be immoral, it may inflame one's political enemies and alienate many of those who were previously uncommitted, but its military value is established, and that alone serves to justify its use.

7 (ii) It is Amnesty International's contention that expediency cannot in any event justify the use of physical ill-treatment to obtain information, and we have set this out in paragraphs 5 and 6 above. But we have also considered whether it is, in fact, expedient or necessary to use physical ill-treatment to obtain information. In order to do this we shall consider whether the use of physical ill-treatment in interrogation procedures does in fact produce a greater flow of reliable information than is produced by interrogation procedures which do not involve physical ill-treatment, and secondly, whether the political effects of the use of physical ill-treatment make it more difficult for the authorities to defeat terrorism and to achieve a lasting political settlement.

7 (iii) The use of physical ill-treatment during interrogation in Northern Ireland has been explicitly or implicitly defended by reference to the increased flow of intelligence since these methods were introduced. It is said that as a result of these methods the number of wanted men arrested, and the quantities of arms, ammunition and explosives seized, have all been far greater during the three and a half months since 9 August 1971 than they were during the first seven months of this year.

7 (iv) These facts do not in themselves demonstrate that there has been any marginal intelligence gain as a result of the use of physical ill-treatment during interrogation. The validity of an argument of the kind advanced can be challenged on the following grounds:

(a) During the period after the re-introduction of internment on the 9 August 1971 a far larger number of people were arrested and interrogated than during the first part of the year. One could expect that the greater the number of people interrogated the more information would be obtained, and it is therefore highly probable that there would have been a dramatic increase in the supply of information after the 9 August 1971 whether or not those interrogated were subjected to physical ill-treatment;

(b) For the reasons set out in paragraphs 7(vii) to 7(xii) below, it is quite possible that if those detained had been skilfully interrogated by methods which do not involve the use of physical ill-treatment, or the threat that it might be used, the amount of reliable information obtained might have been even greater;

(c) Only 14 of those arrested were subjected to interrogation in depth; the total figures of intelligence gained do not reflect upon the value, if any, of the intelligence provided by this small group.

7 (v) One may expect that those who were actually responsible for the interrogation in which physical ill-treatment was used would believe that any information obtained by these methods could not have been obtained in any other way. The following considerations may be relevant in determining the weight that should be attached to such evidence. Firstly, it is quite common that when someone has obtained an objective by one method, he will tend to believe that it could not have been obtained by any other; secondly, the men concerned may be unversed in more skilful types of interrogation procedures; thirdly, and most important of all, for reasons which may be clear in the light of paragraph 7(ix) below, once an interrogation involving the use of physical ill-treatment has been started the prospects of obtaining information from the suspect by any other means are, and will appear to the interrogator to be, very slight. If reliable information is eventually obtained by these means the interrogator will therefore tend to believe that it could not have been obtained in any other way.

7 (vi) – We have searched for any reasoned justification from authorities in other countries in support of the contention that the use of physical ill-treatment during interrogation leads to a marginal intelligence gain. The only material that we have found is a report produced by a M. Wuillaume, a senior French servant, made in 1955 at the instance of the French Government to enquire into allegations of torture during interrogation in Algeria. The techniques of interrogation which he found to be prevalent far exceeded in their inhumanity any of those mentioned in the Compton Report. M. Wuillaume in the course of his Report stated, "I myself am in no position to assert that these practices were effective and am compelled to rely on the statements of those who assured me of this and who, it should be noted, were highly thought of by their superiors." Thus he was not prepared to say on the evidence presented to him that information could not have been obtained by other means; and it would appear that in Algeria the use of the most inhuman torture to extract information was automatic, so that, so far as can be gathered, there was little attempt to obtain information by less brutal methods. (It might be noted that M. Wuillaume in his Report dated 2 March 1955 did not unambiguously condemn the use of torture, and from that time until the end of the Algerian War in 1962 the use of torture by the authorities was not only endemic in Algeria but spread to Metropolitan France itself). An English translation of the Wuillaume Report may be found in Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Torture: Cancer of Democracy*; Penguin, 1963).

7 (vii) – We have searched for, but failed to find (perhaps because of the limited time available to us), any written evidence from those who have been professionally concerned with the conduct of interrogation in times of war or insurgency in recent years on behalf of the United Kingdom, that there is a marginal intelligence gain to be derived from the use of physical ill-treatment; on the contrary, all the evidence that we have seen from such sources indicates that the use of physical ill-treatment decreases the amount of reliable tactical information obtained. At the very least it is problematical

whether or not there is even a marginal gain, and even if there were a marginal gain it would be outweighed by the political losses.

7 (viii) In the first place, we would draw your Committee's attention to the wider military and political effects of the methods of interrogation used. The use of methods of interrogation which will be characterised as torture by those who have been subjected to them will tend both to imperil the political objectives for which the Government is striving and to strengthen the effectiveness of those to whom the Government is opposed. They are dependent upon the support of the local population; the use of torture gives them a powerful propaganda weapon; their uncommitted but potential supporters identify with the victims of ill-treatment, and become increasingly bitter towards the authorities; the credibility of the Government's claim that it is endeavouring to maintain civilized values is irretrievably weakened when the Government itself stoops to methods which many – including its own supporters at home and abroad – find abhorrent. And the greater the degree of bitterness and hostility that the Government creates by its actions the more difficult it will find it to achieve any political solution whose success depends upon the support and cooperation of all sections of the local population.

7 (ix) Secondly, there appear to be two separate reasons why the use of physical ill-treatment as a method of obtaining information is likely to be relatively ineffective. The first is that interrogation procedures using physical ill-treatment suffer from the crucial weakness that the interrogator has to give his intelligence aim away. He has to inform the suspect what information he wishes to know, and the suspect will therefore know what to conceal or where to provide false information. Furthermore, all kinds of physical ill-treatment, including those with which we are concerned in this memorandum, are felt by the suspect to be painful, degrading and humiliating, and the suspect therefore becomes increasingly hostile and resentful. Whether or not he possesses the information that is sought he is tempted to give false information, either to avoid suffering from further ill-treatment or to mislead the authorities. A large part of the information provided by men subject to physical ill-treatment is therefore likely to be false and the authorities must expend a great deal of time seeking to verify it, if verification be possible. But skilful methods not involving physical ill-treatment can lead a prisoner to provide, utterly unwittingly, the piece of information sought in circumstances in which he may even be unaware that he is being interrogated. The information so obtained is likely to be true, for the interrogator can see that it is given by the suspect voluntarily from his own experience. The second reason is that advanced by Professor Patrick D. Wall, Director of the Cerebral Functions Research Group at University College, London, in a letter to *The Times* on 24 November 1971. According to Professor Wall, the effect of the methods described by the Compton Report is to disorientate the suspect and lead him to make a fantasy confession which he believes to be true: "The anxious confused hallucinating prisoner searches for any act which will terminate his misery. These are the conditions under which fantasy confessions are made by men completely believing their own false story."

7 (x) On the other hand, there is strong testimony to the effectiveness of methods of interrogation which do not involve physical ill-treatment. According to Donald

McLachlan, who served in the Naval Intelligence Department during the Second World War:

This [prisoner of war interrogation] is a great art and there are many methods, but the civilized and intelligent method, in my experience, is the best. If you can convince a prisoner of war that there is no point in his concealing information from you because you know so much already; if you can convince him that you really know all about his U-boat flotilla, or his officers or his torpedos, or the wavelength of his search apparatus and so on and that you merely want the odd detail, just to make a clearer picture in your mind – then he will succumb; even the best-trained man will succumb eventually. To achieve that, the man who is doing the interrogation has first to be fully briefed by the intelligence staff behind him. They have to tell him all they know about the man's unit or U-boat, and what it is that they *want* to know. This technique of briefing was gradually evolved with great success by all services and I think it is true to say that it was the only method which worked.

Donald McLachlan, 'Intelligence: the common denominator', *The Fourth Dimension of Warfare*, ed. Michael Elliott-Bateman, (Manchester University Press, 1970), pp.62-3.

7 (xi) This assessment of the effectiveness of "the civilized and intelligent method" was supported by Mr. L. St. Clare Grondona, who was Commandant during the Second World War of the Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre, in a letter to *The Times* on 27 November 1971:

They [German prisoners of war] possessed valuable information of which it was our job to extract as much as possible; but *always* with proper regard to the Geneva Convention. So it was that our interrogators (then and thereafter) had to be as wily as they were resourceful. The methods they used were processes of "painless extraction" seasoned with legitimate guile. More often than not a "guest" would be unaware that he had given us useful data. Courtesy was extended to every prisoner so long as his behaviour warranted this – and it usually did. Comfortable quarters were provided, and prisoners' fare was precisely the same as for British personnel.

It is the simple truth to say that if one of our interrogators had suggested submitting any prisoner to *any* form of physical duress (which would certainly not have been permitted) he would have been a laughing-stock among his colleagues. Nevertheless, the "intelligence" we obtained (all the items of which were carefully correlated) was of inestimable value.

7 (xii) The superiority of methods of interrogation which do not involve physical ill-treatment is also attested to by Sir Robert Thompson, who was concerned with security in Malaya from 1948 to 1960 – by the end of which period he was Secretary for Defence – and in South Vietnam from 1961 to 1965, where he was Head of the British Advisory Mission:

Well-treated and carefully interrogated, sometimes over a long period, [captured or surrendered enemy personnel] reveal a tremendous amount of information. A situation gradually develops whereby any later individual who is captured or surrenders can then be interrogated on the basis of a mass of information already available to the intelligence organization. This shocks the truth out of him far more effectively than torture. Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency* (London, Chatto & Windus, 1966), p.87.

7 (xiii) Again, Mr. Cyril Cunningham, who was Senior Psychologist engaged in prisoner of war intelligence on behalf of the British Government, wrote to *The Times* on 25 November 1971 in the following terms:

If the Royal Ulster Constabulary, or indeed the Army, is using the methods reported, they are being singularly stupid and unimaginative. Interrogation by overt verbal examination backed by fear is a blunt, mediaeval and extremely inefficient technique.

8. For these reasons Amnesty International believes that the use of ill-treatment for the purpose of interrogation is immoral, illegal, and inexpedient. But expedient or not, Amnesty believes that its use should never be tolerated. The only proper rule, from which there should be no departure, is that provided by Article 17 of the Geneva Convention: no physical or mental torture, nor any other form of coercion, should be inflicted on prisoners to secure from them information of any kind whatever; prisoners who refuse to answer should not be threatened, insulted, or exposed to any unpleasant or disadvantageous treatment of any kind.

Footnote Appendix 1:

1. Article 147 of the commentary, published in 1938, on the *Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons a Time of War* gives the legal definition of torture as:
"the infliction of suffering on a person to obtain from that person, or from another person, confessions or information."

Appendix 2

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE McELDUFF CASE

It is important to note that even under the draconian Special Powers Act the initial arrests in 1971 were illegal, as is demonstrated by the McElduff case. James McElduff was arrested at 4.30 a.m. on 9 August 1971 at his home in Merchantstown, County Tyrone. He was one of 342 people arrested that morning by the army as part of the internment sweep, and, like the others, he was improperly arrested. Subsequently he was improperly arrested a second time and, on foot of that invalid arrest detained illegally for a period of two months before his application to the High Court in Belfast on 12 October. The illegalities stemmed from the misapplication by the security forces of the several powers of arrest provided under the Special Powers Act which were integral to the whole detention operation.

There are at least three powers of arrest under the Special Powers Act, which in this application Mr. Justice McGonigal held to be quite separate powers of arrest, authorising detention on different grounds and leading to different consequences.^[1] In the body of the Act, section 7 provides the arrest power for crimes and offences against the Act itself. Regulation 10 provides a power of arrest for the purpose of interrogation,^[2] regulation 11 (1) a power of arrest for an indefinite time on suspicion of subversive acts or intentions, and regulation 11 (2) provides for custody under 11 (1) to be converted into preventative detention by means of a detention order.

The internment operation of August 1971 involved initially the utilisation of regulations

10 and 11. The operation was conceived of as a sequence. First, pursuant to an authorisation from the Chief Constable of the RUC, Shillington, given under regulation 10, units of the army arrested persons, including McElduff, for the purpose of interrogation. Those arrested were brought to various holding centres, (in McElduff's case, Magilligan camp) where interrogation by RUC detectives took place. This was followed in the majority of cases by the making of detention orders and the transfer of the men to detention centres – either Crumlin Road jail or HMS *Maidstone*, (with the notable exception of the 11 hooded men in whose cases Brian Faulkner signed removal orders after which the men were taken to various places, including Palace barracks, Hollywood, and tortured). The detention orders were then subsequently converted into internment orders under section 12 of the Special Powers Act.

The simple issue of fact in the McElduff case was whether, following his arrest under regulation 10 and his conveyance to Magilligan he was arrested again, this time under regulation 11 (1), a step argued to be necessary if his detention under regulation 11(2) was to be valid. This was not the first application for habeas corpus by McElduff.

Together with Sean Keenan he had applied to the English High Court for a writ, in the hope that if successful they would have had to be taken to England and there freed since the Special Powers Act had no power there. Embarrassed, Vacation judge Ackner passed the whole matter onto the Court of Appeal who found that, the Government of Ireland Act notwithstanding, the English High Court had no powers of jurisdiction over habeas corpus in N. Ireland. Thus making a mockery of the entire 1920 Act and leading some people to believe that some form of Craigite UDI had already been declared.

Back in Belfast, however, McElduff was successful in his application in the High Court before Mr. Justice McGonigal, who found that it was not enough for a policeman or an army officer to say to a man 'I arrest you under the Special Powers Act'. In McElduff's case it was a somewhat pyrrhic victory. Released on a writ of habeas corpus he was, like so many others, rearrested as he left the court and interned in Long Kesh, yet again demonstrating the RUC Special Branch's scant regard for due process of law.

Nonetheless, the case did pave the way for some interesting developments. In an action in the High Court McElduff received £900 for false imprisonment and loss of wages and immediately a flood of claims followed. By December 1972 over 300 claims were pending. The British taxpayer may yet rue the fact that soldiers and policemen have in the past felt that all that was needed to effect an arrest was brute force and a few obscenities. High Court judges prefer that the accused be at least informed under what regulation or law he is being seized.^[3]

Footnotes Appendix 2:

1. Arguably regulation 12, authorising various restrictions on movement including 'house-arrest' and internment provides further powers of arrest.
2. A former regulation, providing for detention for purposes of interrogation made it an offence to refuse to answer any questions whether incriminating or not (regulation 22b, revoked by S.R. & O. (N.I.) 1949, No.147). A similar provision is still in use today in the Republic. Since August 1971, the interrogation of persons

under this regulation has, in theory, been guided by the *Joint Directive on Military Interrogation in Internal Security Operations Overseas*. The procedures authorised by this directive were withdrawn in March 1972, following the publication of the *Report of the Committee of Privy Councillors Appointed to Consider Authorised Procedures for the Interrogation of Persons Suspected of Terrorism* (1972: Cmnd. 4901).

3. For the full legal arguments see the N. Ireland Legal Quarterly Vol.23. No.3. I am indebted to Kevin Boyle for permission to use his draft manuscript for this appendix.

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Appendix 3

THE SPECIAL COURTS

The Detention of Terrorists (N.I.) Order came into operation on 7 November 1972. It had already been foreshadowed in a statement to the House of Commons on 21 September and produced no real surprises. Three commissioners^[1] were named and commenced work that week, their first task being to announce the names of the first 43 internees and detainees whom they wished to try.

It was clear from the terms of reference that little if anything had changed. Men were no longer 'interned', merely 'detained' – indefinitely. Under Section 4 (1) of the Order the Secretary of State or one of his ministers could make an 'interim custody order' for the detention of a person "suspected of having been concerned in the commission or attempted commission of any act of terrorism or in the direction, organization or training of persons for the purpose of terrorism". Under Section 4 (3) the detention period was limited to 28 days and then the suspect had to be examined by one of the commissioners, who, under Section 5 (3) then had the power to detain indefinitely, having informed the detainee why he had taken this step. Section 6 allowed for an appeal – which the authorities knew full well would be unlikely to be forthcoming since Republicans in the main would refuse to recognise the Commission let alone the appeal tribunal. This was provided for by statutory periods of imprisonment for "contempt of court".

Evidence that there was still no real separation between the Executive and the Judiciary came in Section 9 which provided the Secretary of State with the power to overrule the commissioners in order to release or detain a suspect.^[2] Further provisions permitted up to five-year sentences for any detainees who escaped and were recaptured – obviously the exploits of the 'Magnificent 7' and the 'Crumlin Kangaroos' still rankled –

and similar penalties for anyone harbouring "any person requested to be detained". But it was the 'trial' process which showed how little had really changed. Juries were out. Detainees would be told three days in advance – a ludicrously inadequate period of time to find witnesses or prepare a defence – of the nature of the 'evidence' against them and were permitted legal representation, but the evidence of the prosecution could be heard in camera and Branch men could have private chats with the commissioners. Rules of law had been almost totally abandoned – for example, alleged confessions which were the result of torture or 'ill-treatment' at Palace barracks or Girdwood Park or indeed the more recent centres at Springfield Road, and Castlereagh Road barracks in Belfast or the more notorious police holding centre at Enniskillen were not necessarily to be ruled invalid as the Northern Ireland courts had done.

Clearly the 'evidence' against the 284 men interned/detained (the figure on 7 November when the Commission began its work) was slight or they would have been tried normally in the courts, for the hoary old fable of the inability of the courts to obtain convictions because of intimidation had been given the lie by the government itself when it revealed that between January and October in 1972, during the height of the bombing campaign, there had been no fewer than 330 prosecutions for murder, attempted murder, explosions, possession of firearms and riotous behaviour, resulting in 117 convictions, 33 acquittals, 29 withdrawn charges, and 97 cases pending. Many of the convicted were self-confessed IRA men and UVF men. Whitelaw's claim that he had not interned anyone during direct rule was also looking rather feeble too by November with 103 men detained, including 28 internees who had been released in July and redetained within months.

Reaction to the courts was predictable. Prisoners refused to recognise them. The Association for Legal Justice called it "detention with a caricature of a trial". "The waiving of the normal rules of evidence demonstrated that the real purpose of the special courts is to allow dubious evidence from tainted or hostile sources to be given in secret and prevent the accused of rebutting it," they said. The National Council for Civil Liberties, based in London, said that they were "appalled" and accused Whitelaw of keeping the worst aspects of the Special Powers Acts. The Civil Rights Association condemned them also and pointed out the new 'Comptonese' language employed – thus former internees became 'respondents' who were "subjects of a reference" i.e. held without charge or trial a further four weeks. Paddy Devlin and Ivan Cooper of the SDLP denounced the courts too, while in the Twenty-six Counties Jack Lynch, who already had his secret and special courts, kept remarkably quiet. The People's Democracy and the Northern Resistance movement organised yet another march.

None of this made the slightest difference. On 10 November the first eight men appeared before the commissioners. That night two of them – Patrick Joseph Smyth and Patrick Joseph Largy, both from Belfast – were released. They had been held since 9 August 1971 – fifteen months, for nothing.

Some idea of the courts can be judged from the 'charges' presented to the internees three days before the 'trial'. For example, one man was accused of "being suspected of being responsible for robbing a post office-in 1943! Another was accused of causing 650(!) explosions in a six-month period. Of another it was alleged that "in or about 1966 you were adjutant of an IRA unit in Belfast and therefore it is said that you were concerned in the direction and organization of persons for the purpose of terrorism". In 1966 there was not one single recorded instance of 'IRA terrorism'.

Billy Reid (27) from Belfast was charged with "being an IRA man" and with having had guns, ammunition, maps, masks and 'disguise coats' in his house. None of these was produced. Instead, a voice from behind a red curtain claimed to have seen Reid "in a house where arms had been stored". Harry Taylor, of the Special Branch, then appeared and said that Reid's home in Little Distillery Street "had been under observation for some time". When it was pointed out that Reid did not live in that street, Taylor commented "I don't know why he has been arrested at all." Neither did the Commissioner, who released him at once. Nonetheless, he had served 16 months. Another voice from behind the curtain, when queried by a Commissioner about a charge, replied: "I know nothing about this charge; I am only reading it off the sheet." On such hearsay nearly 300 men rotted for another winter in Long Kesh, waiting for the Diplock Commission^[3] to report how opponents of the system could be effectively dealt with without the embarrassing word 'internment' actually being used. (That many men were merely hostages is easily seen from the release figures given by the commissioners. By 13 December 1972, of the first 141 men 'examined' 55, or 40%, were released "without a stain on their character" and 16 months missing from their lives).

Footnotes Appendix 3:

1. Judge James Leonard (England), Sir Ian Lewis (Nigerian colonial service) and Sheriff John Dick (Scotland). The sprightly 73-year-old Sir Gordon Wilmer, a former Lord Justice of Appeal, was appointed to take charge of a Detention Appeals Tribunal.
2. For example, Peter O'Reilly (21) of Belfast was interned in September 1971. After 15 months in Long Kesh he appeared before a commissioner, who, after hearing the 'evidence' against him ordered his release. His family were notified and began to prepare a welcome-home party. After being served his release papers O'Reilly was waiting for transport from the camp when he was rearrested by two Special Branch men and 'redetained' in Cage 9. So much for the authority of the commissioners.
3. The members of the commission, which started its work on 20 October 1972 and handed its report over to the Government six weeks later, were Lord Diplock, Professor Rupert Cross, Sir Ken Younger and the trade unionist George Woodcock. None of them had even rudimentary legal training apart from the chairman, Diplock himself.

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Appendix 4

THE DIPLOCK REPORT

ON 20 December 1972 the findings of the Diplock Commission were announced and accepted immediately by Whitelaw on behalf of the Conservative government. In essence they 'recommended':

- (1) A continuation of internment. For the sake of international reaction it should be renamed 'detention', just as internees should be referred to as 'suspected terrorists'. It still meant indefinite imprisonment in a camp – or 'centre' as these were now to be known.
- (2) No jury trials for political prisoners or suspected 'terrorists', ostensibly because of possible intimidation. In future, one judge would suffice to determine a man's fate.
- (3) When the judge felt so inclined the 'onus of proof' would be shifted from the prosecution to the accused. Henceforth, those accused of membership of an illegal organisation or of being in the vicinity of explosives or weapons discovered by the security forces would have to prove their innocence. They were to be considered guilty until proved innocent, a fundamental breach of British law.
- (4) In future, the courts should continue to accept the 'evidence' of unnamed, and, in many cases, absent Special Branch men or paid touts and informers. The accused should not be permitted to cross-examine these 'witnesses' lest he recognise his accusers. Moreover 'confessions' allegedly made by the accused after intensive 'interrogation' should not be thrown out of court as had been done by several judges during late 1972. Thus were the torturers encouraged yet again.
- (5) In addition Diplock recommended what he referred to, some-what strangely, as "increased powers of detention for soldiers". From now on they would be able to detain people for four hours to confirm their identity. Since for two years troops had been detaining and 'screening' people for up to 24 hours this 'new power' seemed to most people to be in fact a restriction on the army, were it ever actually adhered to.
- (6) A speeded-up programme of prison building with special provisions for juveniles – felt to be necessary since over twenty juveniles on arms and explosives charges had absconded effortlessly from the juvenile remand centres.

It is doubtful if the British Government really expected anything more than a publicity exercise out of the Diplock Commission. It is even more doubtful if Diplock will make the slightest difference to the complex situation that is Ireland today. The simple message that should have been learnt by all in the past fifty years is that repressive legislation like the Special Powers Acts and the various Offences against the State Acts solve nothing. And neither, as should be patently obvious to all by now, does internment. Depressingly, the Detention of Terrorists Act, the Offences against the State Amendment Act and the Diplock Commission show that the powers that control Ireland, both North and South, today have not as yet learnt this simple lesson. Diplock did at least admit that the scale of initial arrests in August 1971 "led to the arrest

and detention of a number of persons against whom suspicion was founded on inadequate and inaccurate information". This was a direct slap in the face for Brian Faulkner. From Direct Rule to October 1972 Whitelaw ordered the release of 561 internees and 174 detainees and subsequently the Commissioners let out a further 63.

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Appendix 5

EVIDENCE SUBMITTED BY THE BRITISH SOCIETY FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN SCIENCE TO THE COMMITTEE ON INTERROGATION PROCEDURES – JANUARY 1972

The Compton Report stated that detainees in Ulster had been subject to a particular procedure – wall-standing (standing spread-eagle against a wall), hooding, masking noise, bread-and-water diet and sleep deprivation. It considered each of these to be physical ill-treatment, a term it never defined. The Report did not explain why they should be so considered, nor what their purpose was. We believe that a consideration of the effects of the procedure will show that the value-judgement implied in the Report's attempt to distinguish between ill-treatment and brutality is not viable.

The history of certain aspects of this procedure is widely known. The techniques resemble those used by the KGB in Russia for interrogation purposes. The prisoner there was arrested and taken to the detention prison, where he underwent an introductory routine which included removal of all clothes and possessions, this all occurring with no explanation. He was then placed in solitary confinement in a featureless room for an indefinite period, totally isolated from human contact except during interrogation. He had to sit or stand in a fixed position all day, was allowed to attempt to sleep only at certain times and always in a fixed position facing light. Any deviation from this regimen was punished. Throughout he was fed on an inadequate diet.

Obviously there are certain common elements between this and the Ulster procedure. However, the hooding and the noise were not part of the Russian procedure. They appear to have been developed from a line of research initiated in the early 1950s – sensory deprivation. This research began partially in an attempt to understand brain-washing, but was also being used by the Canadian psychologist, Hebb, in the development of a theory that there exists an optimum level of arousal for cognition, a theory stimulated by Moruzzi and Magoun's work on the reticular formation. The first sensory deprivation experiments were conducted in Hebb's laboratory in Montreal.

They involved student volunteers who lay on a comfortable bed wearing translucent goggles that admitted only diffuse light and cuffs which reduced tactile stimuli. They were in a partially soundproofed cubicle, and a masking noise drowned any noises which had not been completely blocked by the sound-proofing. Despite being paid twenty dollars a day few were willing to remain more than two or three days even though they slept for a considerable portion of the time. They became very bored, desperate for any kind of stimulation, could not concentrate and hallucinated. What was generally anticipated to be a handsomely-paid rest turned out to be extremely unpleasant.

Since the original study, a very large number have been performed in the USA principally sponsored by Defence Department agencies, ostensibly because of the increasing number of restricted and monotonous environments in which military personnel now operate such as in space vehicles, submarines and polar stations. In contrast we know of very few published English studies, which suggests that psychologists in England have in general found insufficient theoretical interest in the procedure to warrant the ethical difficulties involved.

The studies have used various methods of producing sensory isolation. In the most extreme studies subjects were suspended in a tepid bath of water wearing nothing but a breathing mask which also covered eyes and ears. In this environment only ten per cent of subjects were able to last more than ten hours (Shurley 1966). Such an experimental situation is expensive to construct and so more typically a totally darkened room is used either sound-proofed or with a white-noise source masking extraneous sounds. Clearly such an environment is very similar to the 'noise' and 'hood' of the Ulster procedure. Schultz in a review written in 1965 listed fifteen studies concerned with the affective changes produced by sensory deprivation. For example in a study by Smith and Lewty (1959) twenty subjects volunteered to undergo the normal treatment for as long as they could stand it. The average endurance-time for men was 29 hours compared with the maximum of 43 hours reported by Compton. The authors reported that all subjects experienced anxiety and frequent panic attacks either early in the session or more commonly shortly before they gave up. Those who terminated early gave unbearable anxiety, tension and panic attacks as their reason for leaving. Nightmares involving suffocation, drowning and killing people were reported by five.

There are various ways of increasing the affective consequences of the situation. One is to restrict the subjects' movements. This can be so powerful that even with a monotonous, but not totally deprived, sensory environment psychotic-like effects can occur. Thus Leidermann and his team (1938) noted such symptoms with confinement to an iron lung or with restriction of body movement due to complex traction. The symptoms only responded when the sensory and social environment were improved. In the Ulster situation, the spread-eagle position at the wall serves this function, as well as being a physical torture. Subjects in sensory deprivation experiments normally reduce its effects on them by sleeping extensively; this is prevented in Ulster.

Of great relevance in the Ulster situation is that psychological variables interact with the physiological ones in intensifying sensory deprivation effects. Ignorance of termination time, for instance, was sufficient to produce confusional states and fears of insanity in only a two-hour deprivation period in one experiment. Solitary confinement can produce many similar effects to that of sensory deprivation. Moreover endurance in the typical situation seems strongly related to personality dimensions such as neuroticism,

neurotics being less able to stand the situations. Clearly for the detainees the psychological pressures must have been enormous. Sudden arrest in the middle of the night, being physically beaten and dreading what the future might hold can be expected to interact traumatically with the sensory deprivation situation. This could be expected also to increase greatly the pliability of the detainees under interrogation, as sensory deprivation increases the suggestibility and lowers intellectual competence. (These latter phenomena may be related to its progressive slowing of EEG frequencies in the alpha range (Zubek, 1969)). However, greater pliability and suggestibility do not produce more accurate information.

The Ulster methods have much in common with methods used by the KGB (see Hinkle and Wolff, 1956). The period of confinement is much shorter but the isolation techniques are more powerful, solitary confinement being superceded by the 'hood'. The scars left by Communist methods on the personalities of their prisoners have become well known in the West (e.g. Sargant, 1957), although the best documented are the consequences of Chinese methods (Lifton, 1961). Typically one obtains symptoms of anxiety neurosis similar to those that can be generated by any traumatic event. As an indication of this possibility Dr. O'Malley of the Mater Hospital, who has interviewed three of the detainees at the request of their solicitors, considers that probably one and possibly another will suffer long-lasting anxiety neurosis symptoms. He points out that this is only a preliminary diagnosis based on the one and a half hour interview allowed him by the authorities with each of the three.

The British Society for Social Responsibility in Science had hoped to send an independent team of psychiatrists and other scientists to examine the extent of ascertainable psychological damage among those internees and detainees who suffered the full rigour of the 'disorientation' techniques. However, the Home Secretary has not seen fit to recommend to the Northern Ireland Government that it should grant us interview facilities. We regard this as regrettable, particularly in view of Lord Balniel's statement in Parliament (Hansard, 30 November 1971) that it will be for the Parker Committee to decide from whom it wishes to take medical evidence. We have still not received a reply from the Northern Ireland Government to our request, and so must present our evidence without the benefit of a report from our investigating team. In the light of the information currently available, both as to the techniques of interrogation used in Northern Ireland and their observed and likely effects, we hold that such techniques – wall-standing, hooding, masking noise, bread-and-water diet, sleep deprivation – should be prohibited. If adopted as official practice, they would incorporate a further misuse of science and technology, as well as a crudely behaviouristic view of the individual as an object to be manipulated mechanistically by the State.

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