

# Northern Ireland

cont. from p. 24

Finally, four days later, British troops arrived in Belfast. Within days a hastened peace was created between the two sides and a degree of sanity returned, but this was short-lived. By July 1970, it soon became clear that the army was there to protect the status quo, and the Catholic population prepared itself for a long bitter fight.

The army began clean-up operations in the Catholic Falls Road area of Belfast in July 1970 and after ransacking houses in search of weapons, Catholic hostility quickly returned. Police hatred soon came to be replaced by hatred of the British Army and all that it stood for.

At this time as well, a major event occurred that would change the face of the conflict. The IRA and its political wing, Sinn Fein, split internally. The result of this was a break-away group called the provisionals of both IRA and Sinn Fein who felt the official group was docile and not representing the Catholic interest in such a way as to be useful, given the militaristic situation. The provos, as they are called, were committed to and saw the necessity of violence for political and social gain. They sought to destroy the system which they felt was simply and imperialist British appendage. The Catholics, through the provisionals, were saying in a unified voice that change was needed immediately. Marches again were organized by Catholics. They were stifled by the army, which took a hardline approach, thus furthering Catholic distrust and hatred. To them it was an admission of bias by the army, a bias

they had seen all too often in the past.

The renewed activity drew Chichester-Clark's resignation. He was replaced by Brian Faulkner in March 1971, who would prove to be the last Northern Irish premier. Faulkner, who had big ideas, failed to understand the historical conflict. His mind soon turned to internment, which he felt would break the Catholic population by undermining the provisionals.

On 9 August 1971, 342 men were interned and taken to the Maze prison complex. The result was instantly felt. Support grew immediately for the IRA and Faulkner's vision quickly backfired. Instead of breaking the Provos, Faulkner had served their interests.

Again the marchers turned out. Scattered incidents occurred throughout the North in 1971 as an increasingly edgy army had to support a weakening Northern government. Control came to rest more and more with the army and, after an army attack on a peaceful Bogside March on 30 January 1972 in which fourteen unarmed civilians were gunned down, the government was in shambles. This day came to be known as Bloody Sunday. Catholic MP's withdrew support for the Belfast government and Paisley and others attacked the government internally. The army became more and more autonomous and by 24 March 1972, the government fell. Direct control of Northern Ireland now came from London through the army.

Official internment was ended in 1975, but a renewed Special Powers Act served as an official sanction for unofficial internment. In

1976, special status was removed and all political prisoners became, to the official British Machine, common criminals. If arrested under the Special Powers Act, one can be detained on suspicion for three days. As seen through documented cases of mental and physical torture, the prisoner is interrogated and forced to sign confessions. If you fail, you come up before a judge. You have no defense lawyer and all you need to be convicted is the word of a policeman. You are sentenced as a political prisoner through a military type court and sent to prison. Then you are called an ordinary criminal.

Today the hunger strikers are willing to die for a cause. They are political prisoners and they view themselves as POW's. They demand this status. The British government is fostering military rule and sidestepping the legitimate grievances of the Catholic population in order to maintain the Protestant loyalist population, who, for economic and political reasons, demand protection from Britain. The interests of capital, which is domin-

ated by Protestants, is being protected at the expense of a subjugated Catholic population who are simply reliving an historical occurrence. For every time they speak as one voice for legitimate rights, they suffer the wrath of the Protestant capitalists and their followers who guard their interests with their lives. There are, of course, no simple answers. Each side, if looked at objectively, has legitimate claims. Yet one has to wonder how long the present scheme can be maintained. This war is now in its twelfth year and all sides are very edgy. The hunger strike at Maze may appear on the surface to many Canadians as senseless. When looked at historically, however, these men are struggling for what they believe in against a much superior foe. Their determination is wholehearted. The British government cannot continue in Northern Ireland. They must realistically appraise the situation, which, until now, has been impossible. If they fail to do so, they run the risk of long term unrest and possible large scale violence, which would dwarf the present conflict in both scope and consequences.



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- regular bartenders

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- SUN ad manager
- Yearbook ad manager
- SUN typist
- SUN co-editors
- CIMN manager
- Yearbook editor
- Student Disciplinary committee members
- Photographers for SUN, yearbook, photo club
- Electoral officer
- Recording secretary for student council
- Speaker for student council
- Social committee chairperson
- Movie club chairperson
- Orientation committee chairperson
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- Winter Carnival chairperson

Interviews for these positions will be held in early April. Applications and job descriptions available at the Barn. Get your applications in as soon as possible.

## Farmer George.

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