

since its formation in 1970, believed his party was wrong in its decision to boycott the conference and resigned from it. More generally he complained that the SDLP was becoming less socialist and too nationalist. The party's other most prominent socialist, Paddy Devlin, had already gone, citing similar reasons.

Fitt and Devlin had been among Northern Ireland's best-known political personalities since the 1960s, providing much of the SDLP's early socialist character. Devlin had once declared, in a statement which also reflected Fitt's approach: 'I am basically a trade unionist and a socialist. I am not a Catholic or an Irish nationalist.' Both disapproved of the SDLP's increasing commitment to a stronger Irish dimension and its move away from the idea of powersharing.

As the years went by, however, the SDLP became greener and less left-wing, a process which was mirrored within the republican movement and within northern nationalism in general. The move away from the left was also in line with the trend in Britain, where Thatcherism was becoming the order of the day. Fitt and Devlin had thus tended to become isolated as nationalism shifted in a direction they disliked. When they eventually left, the fact that no one of note followed their lead illustrated the sense that they were figures who had not evolved in line with the rest of the party.

Fitt's natural successor as leader was John Hume, who as deputy leader had always been seen as the party's dominant theorist and strategist. The unique feature of Hume, who was already a well-known figure in both Europe and the US, was seen as his ability to combine theory with practical politics. He was among those who challenged the traditional nationalist assertion that the root of the problem was the British presence in Northern Ireland. He argued that the heart of the Irish question was not the British but the Protestants, that the problem was the divisions between Unionist and nationalist, and that partition was not the cause of division but a symptom of it. The mission of nationalism, he contended, was not to drive out the British but to convince Unionism that its concerns could be accommodated in an agreed Ireland.

The agenda for the Atkins conference illustrated that significant changes had taken place in London's thinking in ways which struck out in the opposite direction to the SDLP's progressively greener line. An official working paper set out a number of models, most of which were variations on the theme of powersharing. Some of its models envisaged having nationalists in government; others did not. The working paper specifically

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## The hungerstrikes

1980-81

1980

This was a year of comparative calm before the storm which was to break in 1981. It was a year when violence continued at a fairly low level while a half-hearted attempt at making political progress petered out within months. On the political front, in late 1979, Humphrey Atkins had announced plans for a conference of the major parties on devolution. The fact that the government made little attempt to apply serious pressure to the participants meant that from the start expectations were low. *The Economist*, for example, in an article entitled 'An initiative born to fail', declared, 'Even before the launch it was clear that the move stood little or no chance of success. Not a single Northern Ireland politician expects any real gains to come from the exercise.'

The conference precipitated an important personnel change at the highest level of Northern Ireland politics. Gerry Fitt, leader of the SDLP

ruled out any return to either the old Stormont system or any revival of the Sunningdale Agreement, saying there was no prospect of agreement on either scheme. In a major change of policy, it flatly ruled out any Irish dimension, Atkins saying that, if the Irish dimension was raised at the conference, 'I shall rule it out of order, I shall say that it is out of order'.

This was clearly a major retreat from the approach of the last Conservative government which had insisted on the Irish dimension and whose preferred solution had been Sunningdale. At the same time the fact that a return to majority rule was firmly ruled out meant the conference held little attraction for Unionist politicians. While the SDLP eventually agreed to attend, to the surprise of many the conference was boycotted by the Ulster Unionist party, which had also acquired a new leader in the person of James Molyneux.

Molyneux took over in 1979 from Harry West, who had been trounced by Paisley in a European election. The party's official policy remained that of devolution, but it was an open secret that Molyneux's personal preference was for integration. Seen in this light, his decision to stay away from the Atkins conference on devolution was perhaps predictable.

Although he was to serve as leader of the Unionist party for more than a decade and a half, until 1995, Molyneux was such a quiet, reserved figure that he hardly became known to the British public. While his long-time rival Ian Paisley was noisy and obstreperous, Molyneux was unflinchingly courteous, the most low-key of politicians. What he had in common with Paisley was that he was simply not in the business of making a deal with nationalists. His belief, unshaken during his long years as Unionist leader, was that Unionism was best served by adopting a defensive posture to fend off all new initiatives and attempts at finding inter-party agreement. He once compared his role to that of 'a general with an army that isn't making anything much in terms of territorial gains but has the satisfaction of repulsing all attacks on the citadel'.

The models put forward by Atkins had included one which had evidently been designed to attract Molyneux's interest, but the Unionist leader decided to steer well clear of the whole exercise in the hope that it would fizzle out and pave the way for a new integrationist approach. The government never would come round to an integrationist approach, but the Atkins conference certainly did rapidly peter out.

## Violence and the prisons

The death toll for 1980 was 86, a considerable drop from the previous year's toll of 125. The year brought a new tack in loyalist violence, as the UDA expanded its activities from the random killing of Catholics to attacks on a number of prominent nationalist and republican figures. These included Protestant nationalist politician John Turnley, university lecturer Miriam Daly, and INLA activist Ronnie Bunting. In another attack in January 1981, Bernadette McAliskey, who as Bernadette Devlin had been MP for Mid-Ulster, had a near-miraculous escape from death when she and her husband were repeatedly shot by UDA gunmen.

What all these targets had in common was their prominence in what was known as 'the H-blocks campaign', which was waged in support of the continuing protests by republicans inside the Maze, the new name for Long Kesh prison. This dispute had been going on since 1976, though attracting little attention from the outside world. In late 1980 and in 1981, however, it developed into a fierce battle which is seen as one of the most important watersheds of the troubles.

In 1972 William Whitelaw had granted what was known as 'special category status' to prisoners associated with paramilitary groups. He had done so to defuse a hungerstrike by republican prisoners, at a time when he was anxious to open exploratory links to the IRA. The prisoners demanded to be treated differently from inmates jailed for criminal as opposed to paramilitary offences. Whitelaw would in later years admit that he had made a mistake in introducing special category status, or 'political status' as it was called by republicans, and subsequent Labour administrations worked on ways of bringing it to an end.

In the absence of adequate cell accommodation, internment and the special category system had given rise at Long Kesh to what in many respects resembled a World War Two prisoner-of-war camp. The internees and convicted prisoners lived in wartime Nissen huts within barbed-wire compounds. The continuation of special category status was a logical affront to the approach of criminalisation developed by Rees and later put into effect by Roy Mason, in that it was taken as an affirmation that jailed paramilitary inmates were in a sense political prisoners.

Republican and loyalist internees and 'special cats', as they were nicknamed, served their time in compounds inside Long Kesh, where they responded to orders not from warders but from their paramilitary 'OC', or

Officer Commanding. To a large extent they controlled their own compounds. They wore their own clothes, were not forced to work, and were allowed additional visits and parcels. Prisoners and prison officers went their parallel but largely separate ways, with soldiers guarding the perimeter. The prisoners, divided into compounds by organisation, basically ran their own lives. It was this semblance of prisoner-of-war status which Rees had decided should end.

The authorities shied away from the idea of removing special category status from those inmates who already had it, correctly surmising that any such attempt would result in major disturbances. In late 1975 Rees announced that from early 1976 special category status would be phased out, with newly convicted prisoners expected to wear prison uniform, carry out prison work and have only limited association with other prisoners. These prisoners would be held not in the compounds but in newly built cell blocks in another part of the prison. These became known, because of their shape, as the H-blocks. Furthermore, there was to be an end to the segregation of paramilitary and non-paramilitary inmates. The H-blocks, as the authorities would repeatedly insist, provided some of the most modern prison conditions in western Europe. Loyalist prisoners initially objected to the changes and briefly staged protests but reluctantly accepted the new circumstances.

Many republican prisoners by contrast determinedly resisted the changes, seeing prison uniform in particular as a badge of criminality they refused to acknowledge. A republican song became the unofficial anthem of the protest, summing up their attitude:

I'll wear no convict's uniform,  
Nor meekly serve my time,  
That England might  
Brand Ireland's fight  
Eight hundred years of crime.

From the autumn of 1976 on, republican prisoners refused to put on prison clothes, and were punished by being kept in their cells wrapped only in a blanket. A refusal to wear prison uniform left prisoners naked, confined almost permanently to cells and regularly punished for non-conforming by three days 'on the boards' when all cell furniture was removed. Without uniform there were no family visits and remission was lost, which in practice could double the time spent in prison.

By mid-1977 almost 150 prisoners were refusing to co-operate with the authorities. Mason had approached the issue with characteristic grit, declaring in his memoirs: 'Whatever happened I was determined not to budge. The prisoners were criminals and as far as I was concerned would always be treated as criminals.' Relations between prisoners and prison officers, which in the compounds were largely remote, rapidly became bitter. Prisoners complained of beatings by groups of warders, while outside the prison the IRA went on a systematic offensive against prison officers. Nineteen were killed between 1976 and 1980, with ten dying in 1979, one of whom was deputy governor of the Maze with particular responsibility for the H-blocks.

Adams wrote in his biography: 'Bitterness between prisoners and screws was extreme. The screws were implementing a criminalisation regime, which included the violence and indignity of forced washing. The IRA meanwhile were carrying out a policy on the outside of shooting members of prison staffs.' After prisoners stepped up the protest by smashing cell furniture they were each left with only a mattress and blankets. By 1978 there were already 300 'on the blanket'. As early as 1977 senior IRA members inside and outside the prison were suggesting to them that the protest was going nowhere, but the advice to drop it was rejected.

A frequent Unionist, and sometimes government, misconception throughout the years of protest was that these prisoners were unfortunate victims who were being sacrificed by a ruthless IRA leadership. In fact all the evidence points to an IRA leadership opposed to and frustrated by the tactics of the prisoners. These formed the one group within republicanism which was in a position to act against the wishes of the leadership in that they were accorded a freedom of action not normally permitted to others. They also had strength of numbers, for at any given time there were probably more IRA members in prison than outside: in 1980 for example there were over 800 republican prisoners.

The problem for the 'blanket men' was that by 1978 the protest was in its third year, the prison system appeared to be containing it, and outside the prison they had little support apart from the rest of the republican movement. A newspaper reported in early 1978: 'The current campaign has been going on for 18 months, with no sign of abating but equally no sign of success. Public support is minimal.' With their morale low, the prisoners stepped up the protest by resorting to a tactic which was

simultaneously repulsive and, in Mason's later words, 'a brilliant stroke'. They launched what was initially a 'no wash' protest. As one prisoner wrote later: 'The pressure was on for movement. So we decided to escalate the protest and embark on the no wash protest. On hearing this, morale rose again. The lads were on a high.'

Up to that point they had left their cells to wash, empty their chamber pots, have showers and attend mass. Now they refused to leave the cells at all, leaving prison officers to empty the chamber pots. The clashes this led to meant that excrement and urine literally became weapons in the war between prisoners and prison officers. The no wash protest quickly became the 'dirty protest' with the remains of food and the overflowing chamber pots left in cells. Soon the protest was again escalated, prisoners spreading their excrement on the cell walls. As conditions reached dangerous levels with maggot infestations and the threat of disease, the prison authorities forcibly removed prisoners to allow cells to be steam-cleaned with special equipment. The prison authorities also responded with forcible baths, shaves and haircuts of protesting prisoners.

The dirty protest succeeded in its aim of winning publicity for the prisoners. The leader of the Catholic Church in Ireland, Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich, brought the issue to the fore when he paid a much-publicised visit to the jail and emerged to say he had found conditions similar 'to the plight of people living in sewer-pipes in the slums of Calcutta'. While he stopped short of calling for the reintroduction of special category status, he said republican prisoners must be looked upon as different from ordinary prisoners. He declared: 'No one could look on them as criminals. These boys are determined not to have criminal status imposed on them.'

Mason, like Unionist politicians, was outraged by what he later described as the cardinal's 'emotive and grossly biased' words. The Northern Ireland Secretary had until that point regarded the protest as embarrassing but containable, but the cardinal's visit received worldwide coverage. Mason later wrote: 'The image of prisoners naked in their cells with nothing for company but their own filth is undeniably potent, and it was being trumpeted round the world. But despite the adverse publicity I couldn't give in. To do so would give the IRA its biggest victory in years. It would mean the abandonment of the policy of police primacy and the rule of law.'

Although a major propaganda war raged between the republicans and the government from then on, there was still only minimal sympathy for

the protesters. By 1980 even this extraordinary protest had become part of the prison routine, republican veteran Joe Cahill reluctantly concluding that 'the main demonstrations on the H-block issue have remained within the nationalist ghetto areas'.

### The first hungerstrike

In 1980 the prisoners decided to employ what was seen as their ultimate weapon: a hungerstrike. It was a tactic with a chequered but revered place in republican history, being regarded as close to the ultimate in self-sacrifice and possible martyrdom. Although special category status had first been won in 1972 with a hungerstrike, other uses of the tactic had not proved effective. In the light of this record the overall republican leadership was very much against the idea, Adams recording that he wrote to the prisoners: 'We are tactically, strategically, physically and morally opposed to a hungerstrike.' One prisoner who was to spend seventy days on hungerstrike later wrote that if the IRA had forbidden the move 'it would have been an absolute disaster because people would have gone on hungerstrike anyway, and it would have caused a major split within the IRA'.

Seven prisoners, who included one member of the INLA, went on hungerstrike in October 1980. Republicans abandoned their other protests, ending the killing of prison officers and winding down the dirty protest. There were five demands: the right to wear their own clothes; no prison-dictated work; free association; weekly letters, visits and parcels, and the restoration of all remission lost as a result of the protests.

Their adversary in chief was Margaret Thatcher, whose reputation as the Iron Lady was partly to stem from her stance during this period. At the time however she was a relatively untested prime minister who had not yet established her full authority. She saw the prison confrontation as one between good and evil, democracy and terrorism. She had lost a close friend and associate, in Airey Neave, to republican violence, and as prime minister had been shaken by the Mountbatten assassination and the deaths of eighteen soldiers at Warrenpoint. As the hungerstrike began she stated: 'I want this to be utterly clear - the government will never concede political status to the hungerstrikers or to any others convicted of criminal offences.'

Through intermediaries the Northern Ireland Office indicated to

republicans that concessions on matters such as clothes and the nature of work would be possible, but only once the hungerstrike was ended and prisoners conformed to the prison regime. Previous clandestine IRA links with MI6 were reactivated and a government document making some proposals was circulated. In December 1980, when one of the hunger-strikers lost his sight and was removed to a Belfast hospital, by all accounts on the point of death, the prisoners called off the hungerstrike amid much confusion. Although Sinn Féin initially claimed victory, it soon emerged that the prisoners had not triumphed. Exactly what concessions had been promised, how they were supposed to be implemented, and whose fault the breakdown was has been the subject of much debate. What was clear, however, was that prisoners had not won their demands, and as this became clear plans were laid for a second hungerstrike.

### The second hungerstrike

The second hungerstrike began on 1 March 1981: this was to be a phased exercise, with the first republican to go on hungerstrike being joined at intervals by other inmates from both the IRA and INLA. The first to refuse food was the IRA OC in the Maze, Bobby Sands, whose name was to become known all over the world. Sands was to be joined on hungerstrike after two weeks by another inmate and then another each week thereafter, with the purpose of creating ever-increasing pressure on the government. In launching the second hungerstrike Sands and the others again rejected the advice of the outside IRA leadership. The IRA felt the hungerstrikes represented a serious diversion of resources of all kinds from their main campaign of violence, and feared another damaging and divisive failure.

From the beginning of the second hungerstrike it was judged highly likely that this time there would be deaths, for Sands and the others believed the fiasco of the first strike had to be avenged. His own reputation for determination was evident in his nickname Geronimo. He grew up in the mainly Protestant Rathcoole estate on the outskirts of north Belfast, but his family were among a large number of Catholics forced to leave the area by a systematic campaign of loyalist intimidation. The family moved to west Belfast where he became an active member of the IRA, serving a short prison sentence in the early 1970s before being sentenced in 1977 to fourteen years' imprisonment after being arrested in

possession of a gun in a car while on an IRA operation.

Tensions mounted to an extraordinary degree as the strike went on amid a major propaganda battle, with polarisation between ordinary Protestants and Catholics reaching new levels. For many nationalists the brutal clarity of the issue left no room for ambiguity, and many who did not support the IRA nonetheless reacted against what they saw as British inflexibility.

In propaganda terms Sands benefited from the fact that he developed an aura of victimhood and self-sacrifice. He was a convicted member of the IRA yet his personal image was highly media friendly. He had been jailed for having a gun rather than for murder, and the photograph of him which appeared thousands of times in newspapers and on television projected a good-looking young man with long hair, sporting a fetching grin. The fact that he looked more like a drummer in a rock band than a ruthless terrorist was important in the propaganda battle that raged all around the world.

As the days passed, numerous groups and individuals sought to mediate in the dispute, but they made little progress with either the prisoners or the authorities. The IRA suspected such groups were likely to confuse the issues, bypass the IRA itself or be manipulated by the authorities. The fact that IRA violence continued, including the killing of a young mother in Londonderry, merely hardened the characteristic Thatcher resolve. She observed that 'if Mr Sands persisted in his wish to commit suicide, that was his choice'.

Although Adams and the republican leadership had been against the hungerstrike, sheer chance delivered them a golden political opportunity. Five days after Sands began refusing food, independent nationalist MP Frank Maguire died suddenly, creating a by-election in the Fermanagh-South Tyrone Westminster constituency. Maguire's brother was dissuaded by republicans from going forward, and Sands became the sole nationalist candidate. In the election he beat Harry West, the former Unionist party leader who was attempting a comeback, to win the seat by 30,492 votes to 29,046 on an 87 per cent poll. It was a propaganda victory of huge proportions for the IRA, made possible by the widespread nationalist sense that Thatcher was adopting altogether too rigid a stance. Since Sands's victory was one of the key events in the development of Sinn Féin as an electoral force, some observers regard it as the genesis of what would eventually become the peace process. At

the time, however, it made no difference to the government's attitude, and the stalemate continued.

Sands died at 1.17 a.m. on 5 May, instantly becoming one of republicanism's most revered martyrs. Thatcher coldly informed the Commons that 'Mr Sands was a convicted criminal. He chose to take his own life. It was a choice his organisation did not allow to many of its victims.' But although there was little sympathy in Britain, his death generated a huge wave of emotion and anger among republicans and nationalists, an estimated 100,000 people attending his funeral. From the wider world came much international criticism of Britain and of Thatcher, who was widely condemned for inflexibility. World attention was focused on Belfast, Adams later recalling that the death of Sands 'had a greater international impact than any other event in Ireland in my lifetime'.

The widespread street disturbances arising from the hungerstrike helped drive the death toll for 1981 up to 117 from the previous year's total of 86. Deaths caused by the security forces increased as troops and police used large numbers of plastic bullets in response to street disturbances. As a result seven Catholics were killed, two of them young girls. Although the security forces usually maintained that those killed had been active rioters, it often emerged afterwards that this was not so. In five of the seven cases, inquests later specifically found that those who died had been innocents, and more than £75,000 was paid out in compensation cases.

James Prior, who replaced Humphrey Atkins as Northern Ireland Secretary in the autumn of 1981, recalled in his memoirs: 'The police and army were firing prodigious numbers of plastic bullets. A number of innocent people, including children, were killed or maimed, their deaths adding to all the bitterness.' One example of this was the death of an innocent fourteen-year-old girl, Julie Livingstone, who was killed when she was struck by a plastic bullet. She had not been involved in rioting and her family later received compensation. Her mother recalled: 'She was a lively wee girl, into everything, keeping the wee lads going. The despair would hurt you now and again. Most days you get it some part of the day. I'll never get rid of her name - she wrote it anywhere, inside the airing cupboard and on books. I was changing a pillow and she had written her name on the inside of it. In the kitchen, just under the cooker under the wallpaper, she must have lifted a brush and written her name on the bare wall.'

Such tragedies were not confined to the nationalist side. In the same month as the Julie Livingstone killing, during rioting which followed the death of Sands, a crowd in north Belfast stoned a milk lorry. The vehicle went out of control in a hail of missiles and crashed into a lamppost, killing Protestant milkman Eric Guiney and his fourteen-year-old son Desmond who was helping on the milk round. After the deaths Mrs Guiney said: 'Everyone loved Desmond - he was always such a jolly wee boy and would have given you the coat off his back. Once when they changed part of the milk round, the customers phoned the dairy to ask them to put Desmond back.'

The months that followed are remembered as being particularly grim and destabilising as the confrontation continued, with neither the government nor the hungerstrikers prepared to give way. With hindsight, it is clear that each deeply misunderstood the other: Thatcher never came close to grasping the IRA's psychology, while some republicans persisted in believing that she was bound to give in eventually. Even after six hungerstrike deaths Brendan McFarlane, who had taken over from Sands as the IRA OC in the Maze, wrote in a smuggled message to Adams, 'I do feel we can break the Brits'.

The unyielding attitude of both sides resulted, between May and August 1981, in the deaths of a total of ten hungerstrikers, seven from the IRA and three from the INLA. As the summer progressed and prisoners died, numerous mediators tried to resolve the problem with no success: the Red Cross, a European Court of Human Rights delegation, the Catholic Church in Ireland, a Vatican representative, John Hume, Irish government representatives, the IRA-M16 secret link.

Prior visited the Maze and had a glimpse through a window of a prisoner on the forty-sixth day of his hungerstrike. Prior recalled later: 'He was just sitting there, staring into space. There was no great sense of agony, of emaciation, nor any sign of pain. I was struck by how much this man looked at peace with himself.' Prior said he began to realise that there were on both sides 'a number of people of utter determination and conviction, prepared to commit acts of violence and in a stubborn, yet courageous, way to accept the inevitable and to die'.

The ending of the hungerstrike came soon afterwards, largely through the intervention of the families of prisoners, encouraged by prison chaplain Father Denis Faul. The families began to realise that the government would not concede, and to conclude that the deaths of their husbands and

sons were both inevitable and futile. An increasing number of families took action once their sons had lapsed into the coma which normally preceded death, asking the authorities to medically revive them. In October the hungerstrikers called off the protest, thwarted by their families rather than by the government or the prison authorities. Within days Prior eased regulations to allow prisoners to wear their own clothes at all times and made limited concessions on the other demands.

The original feeling among republicans was that they had suffered a huge defeat in the hungerstrike. One prisoner wrote: 'Despite my relief that no one else would die, I still felt gutted because ten men had died and we had not won our demands. My morale was never as low.' Thatcher had taken on the IRA head-on and in the end their willpower cracked while hers did not. She said at one point, 'Faced with the failure of their discredited cause the men of violence have chosen in recent months to play what might be their last card.'

Yet hers was a Pyrrhic victory. One newspaper recorded:

This has been one of the best times the IRA has ever had. The Northern Ireland problem is seen worldwide as the IRA has always wanted it to be: the hammer and the anvil, the Brits versus the Provos, nothing in between and nobody else relevant. The paradox at the centre of all this success for the Provisionals is that their gains have come through an election won by the very opposite of a Provo campaign, a campaign based on an appeal to save life, and through the self-sacrifice of their men. Somebody somewhere among the Provos has finally come to accept the truth of the old saying that it is not those who inflict the most who ultimately win, but those who endure the most.

The hungerstrikes had lasting effects, most of which were bad for the authorities and for almost everyone apart from the republican movement. For one thing, the extended trauma of the months of confrontation seared deep into the psyches of large numbers of people, stirring many deep and troubling emotions. Community divisions had always been deep, but now they had a new rawness. Prior said he arrived in Belfast to find 'an embittered and totally polarised society'.

## Aftermath

In November 1981, IRA gunmen assassinated the Reverend Robert

Bradford, a Unionist MP and Methodist minister who had advocated a tougher security line against the IRA. At the funeral James Prior was jostled and verbally abused by angry loyalists, several hundred surging forward to bang on the roof of his car. He was hissed as he walked into the church, and as he left he was again surrounded, some members of the crowd calling, 'Kill him, kill him'. The day of the funeral was marked by a widespread work stoppage by Protestants as memorial services were held in many towns. Paisley threatened to organise tax and rent strikes as part of a protest campaign to make Northern Ireland 'ungovernable', and loyalists staged a day of action at which members of a 'third force' were paraded.

Those who had already viewed Northern Ireland as a dysfunctional society whose people could never be brought to live amicably together seemed confirmed in their view, while many others sadly concluded that they were probably correct. Certainly the fact that an apparently modern society had been so convulsed for so long left the lasting impression of structural political instability.

As far as IRA prisoners were concerned the 1981 hungerstrike had ended in defeat. Although they were subsequently allowed to wear their own clothes, this was granted as a concession from a government which appeared to have won the exchange. As the IRA prisoners saw it, ten colleagues had given their lives, apparently in vain. Describing the hungerstrike as 'an Everest amongst the mountains of traumatic events which the Irish people have experienced', Gerry Adams would write a decade and a half later, 'I cannot yet think with any intensity of the death of Bobby Sands and the circumstances of his passing without crying.'

Yet the hungerstrike was to bring republicans many gains. The ten deaths effectively put an end to the criminalisation argument. The hungerstrike had not technically achieved special category status but in effect it had achieved something much more potent: political status. There could have been no more definitive display of political motivation than the spectacle of ten men giving their lives in an awesome display of self-sacrifice and dedication. It was possible to view this as outlandish fanaticism, and many did; but it was not possible to claim that these were indistinguishable from ordinary criminals. The hungerstrikers thus won political status in the eyes of the world.

Radicalised recruits flocked to the IRA and Sinn Féin, swelling the ranks of both and laying the foundations for both further violence and an

infiltration of the political system. The republican electoral advances pointed to a new potential in the north and possibly south. Ahead lay more violence and a regular vote for Sinn Féin.

This fired sweeping new ambitions among the republican leadership. Three weeks after the end of the hungerstrike, Adams aide Danny Morrison outlined to the Sinn Féin ard fheis (annual conference) a grandiose new vision, declaring: 'Who here really believes we can win the war through the ballot box? But will anyone here object if, with a ballot box in one hand and the Armalite in the other, we take power in Ireland?' Adams would later sum up the paradoxical outcome of the hungerstrike which he had never wanted: 'Physically, emotionally and spiritually, the hungerstrike was intensely draining; yet we derived immense new energy, commitment and direction from the extraordinary period during which our ten comrades slowly and painfully sacrificed their lives.'

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## Anglo-Irish accord

1982-85

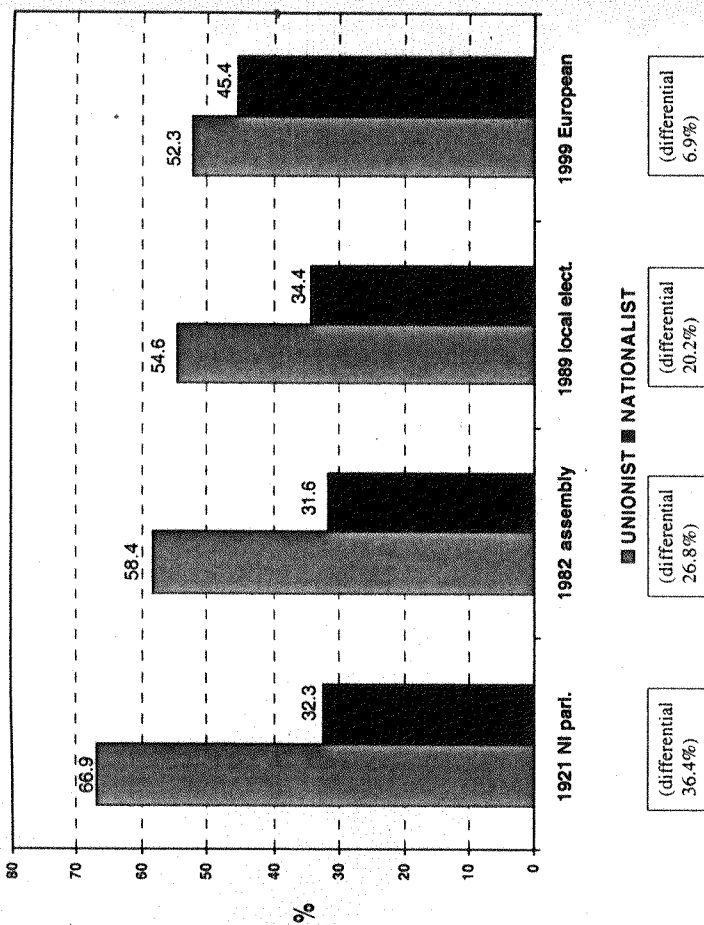
### Men of violence

The years after 1981 saw a variety of political and security initiatives as London and Dublin sought to cope with the aftermath of the traumatic hungerstrike period. The IRA once again returned to bombing targets in England, while the security forces attempted to counter them with new military and legal measures. Loyalist killings went on at a relatively low level, while 1982 saw the violent end to the violent career of one of the most notorious loyalist killers. This was Lenny Murphy, who as leader of the UVF Shankill Butchers gang had been involved in at least eighteen killings over a full two decades. Murphy met his own death at the hands of IRA gunmen who shot him twenty-two times as he drew up in his car outside his girlfriend's home.

Although attention has tended to be concentrated on such well-remembered incidents, the sobering fact is that over the years of the



TABLE 5 UNIONIST - NATIONALIST VOTING



## Glossary

Alliance party - Founded in 1970, it was alone among the major parties in attracting significant support from both communities. Based mainly in the greater Belfast area, it attracted up to 14 per cent of the vote in the 1970s but its support fell to around 7 per cent in the late 1990s.

*An Phoblacht/Republican News* - Often known as *APRN*, the weekly newspaper is the official organ of the Provisional republican movement.

Apprentice Boys of Derry - One of the Protestant 'loyal orders', its main activity is organising various annual demonstrations commemorating the events surrounding the Siege of Derry in 1688. It has around 10,000 members. Some of its parades have been the subject of controversy, its major demonstration in Londonderry each August regularly being the occasion of increased tension. Many of the Apprentice Boys are also members of two other bodies, the Royal Black Preceptory and Orange Order.

Ard fheis - Irish term for an annual party conference.

Armalite - An American-made rifle favoured by the IRA, especially in the 1970s, because of its light weight and rapid rate of fire.

Army Council – The seven-member ruling body of the IRA which determines the organisation's strategy.

B Specials – See Ulster Special Constabulary.

Campaign for Democracy in Ulster – A pressure group set up by Labour members at Westminster in 1965 to press for reforms in Northern Ireland.

Campaign for Social Justice – An early civil rights pressure group established in Dungannon in 1964.

Combined Loyalist Military Command – An umbrella group established in 1991 comprising the UDA, UVF and Red Hand Commando. The CLMC declared the loyalist ceasefire in October 1994.

Dáil – The lower house of the Irish parliament in Dublin.

Democratic Unionist party – Founded in 1971 in succession to the Protestant Unionist Party, its leader is the Reverend Ian Paisley.

Diplock report – Produced in December 1972 by English judge Lord Diplock, it recommended that juries should be abolished in troubles-related trials. This gave rise to the term 'Diplock courts'.

E4A – The RUC's covert surveillance unit.

Fianna Fáil – Its name meaning 'Soldiers of Destiny', it is the largest of the Republic's political parties. During the troubles it was led by Jack Lynch, Charles Haughey, Albert Reynolds and Bertie Ahern, all of whom served as Taoiseach.

Fine Gael – Literally 'Tribe of the Gael', it is the second-largest political party in the Irish Republic. In 1985 its leader and then Taoiseach Garret FitzGerald signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement with Margaret Thatcher.

Free Presbyterian Church – The Church headed by the Reverend Ian Paisley.

Garda Síochána – The police force of the Republic. Most of its officers, known as gardaí, are routinely unarmed.

H-blocks – Cell blocks within the Maze prison, so named because of their shape. The H-blocks were the focus of major republican protest campaigns, most notably the 1981 hunger strike.

Irish National Liberation Army – An extreme republican paramilitary group, it was established in 1974 as a breakaway from the Official IRA. INLA members engaged in a number of republican feuds, and three of its number died in the 1981 hungerstrike.

Irish Republican Socialist party – The small political wing of the INLA.

Long Kesh – The original name of the Maze prison until it was changed by the authorities in the mid-1970s. Republicans continued to use the term 'Long Kesh'.

Loyal Orange Lodge – This is the basic unit of the Orange Order. The leader of a lodge has the title Worshipful Master. Lodges combine with others to form a District which in turn form a County Grand Lodge. The ruling body is the Grand Lodge of Ireland.

Loyalist Association of Workers – Set up in 1971 with close links to the UDA, it played a prominent role in harnessing loyalist industrial power for a short period in the 1970s. It was superseded by the Ulster Workers Council.

Loyalist Volunteer Force – A dissident faction of the UVF formed in the late 1990s, it was mainly made up of former mid-Ulster UVF members opposed to the organisation's ceasefire in the late 1990s. It carried out a number of sectarian killings, especially following the death of its leader, Billy Wright.

M-60 – A US army belt-fed general-purpose machine gun, several of which were acquired by the IRA in the 1980s and used in a number of attacks in which security force members were killed.

Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association – Established in 1967 and modelled on the tactics of the American black civil rights movement, it launched a campaign centring on marches and demonstrations.

Northern Ireland Labour party – A socialist party founded in 1924 and with links to the British Labour party, it had its greatest success in the NI elections of 1958 and 1962, winning four seats in each. It later ceased to be a political force.

Northern Ireland Office - The department of the British government established in 1972 to administer Northern Ireland under direct rule from Westminster, through a Northern Ireland Secretary who has a seat in the British cabinet.

Official IRA - A republican paramilitary group, it has remained largely dormant, or at least discreet, since declaring a ceasefire in 1972.

Orange Order - The largest of the 'loyal orders', it was founded in County Armagh in 1795, and by the time of the Home Rule controversies in the late nineteenth century it expanded into an important Protestant umbrella group. Throughout its existence its tradition of marching has led to recurring controversy. Its extensive programme of marches culminates annually on 12 July in a commemoration of the victory of King William III at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690.

Peace-line - Originally large fences made from corrugated metal, these were erected in the early 1970s to provide a physical barrier between some Catholic and Protestant districts. Many of the peace-lines in north and west Belfast have been replaced by permanent structures.

Plastic bullet - Officially described as a plastic baton round (PBR), it is a controversial riot-control weapon used extensively from 1973 on. Use of the weapon in Northern Ireland resulted in sixteen deaths.

Progressive Unionist party - The political wing of the UVF, it is a small political party which is strongest in working-class areas of Belfast. Its most prominent spokesmen are David Ervine and Billy Hutchinson.

Proportional representation - An electoral system designed to ensure that representation is closely related to votes cast in an election. In use for elections in the first years of Northern Ireland's history, it was abolished during the 1920s. It was reintroduced in the early years of the troubles and is now in use for all elections other than for Westminster.

Provisional Irish Republican Army - Generally known simply as the IRA and by the security forces as PIRA, it is the largest of the republican paramilitary groups. Following a split with the Official IRA in 1969, its violent campaign proceeded virtually unbroken for almost three decades. Known in Irish by republicans as Óglaigh na hÉireann, in August 1994 it declared a ceasefire which was later broken and then restored.

Royal Irish Regiment - A regiment of the British army established in 1992 when the UDR and Royal Irish Rangers were merged. The RIR is made

up of the Home Service battalion of full-time and part-time soldiers, which is effectively the former UDR, and the regular General Service battalions which mainly comprise members of the former Royal Irish Rangers.

Royal Ulster Constabulary - The police force for Northern Ireland established in 1921.

Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve - Made up of both full-time and part-time members, it has an identical uniform to the RUC and functions alongside regular officers.

Rubber bullet - A riot-control weapon, it was used extensively until its replacement by plastic bullets. According to official figures, 55,688 were fired between 1970 and 1974.

Sinn Féin - Regarded as the political wing of the IRA, it claims descent from a party established in the early years of the twentieth century. An all-Ireland political organisation, it has representation in the Dáil, the House of Commons and the Northern Ireland assembly. Headed by Gerry Adams, its MPs do not take their seats at Westminster.

Social Democratic and Labour party - The main nationalist party in Northern Ireland, it was established in 1970 with the aim of promoting a united Ireland by peaceful means. Its leader is John Hume.

Special Air Services - A special forces unit of the British army officially known as 22 SAS Regiment, it was formally deployed in Northern Ireland in 1976.

Stormont - The building, completed in 1932, which housed the Northern Ireland parliament until it was prorogued in 1972. It became the seat of the assembly established after the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. The term 'Stormont' is often used to refer to the Unionist government of the period 1921-72.

Supergrass - A person formerly active in a republican or loyalist group who agreed to give evidence against alleged former associates. The emergence of more than two dozen such figures in the early 1980s led to a series of large-scale trials in Belfast.

Taoiseach - The term, literally meaning 'chief', for the Irish prime minister.

TD - A member of the Dáil, the Irish parliament.

Third Force - This was a loyalist militia, more often threatened than

sighted, which was said to exist at various times during the troubles.

Ulster Defence Association – The largest loyalist paramilitary organisation, the UDA was established in Belfast in 1971 and proscribed in 1992.

Ulster Defence Regiment – A regiment of the British army made up of full-time and part-time members recruited exclusively in Northern Ireland, it was raised in 1970 after the disbandment of the B Specials. In 1992 the UDR was amalgamated with the Royal Irish Rangers to form the Royal Irish Regiment.

Ulster Democratic party – The political wing of the UDA, its most prominent representatives have been Gary McMichael, David Adams and released prisoner John White.

Ulster Freedom Fighters – An alternative name for the UDA, first used in 1973.

Ulster Protestant Volunteers – A loyalist group which supported Ian Paisley; its members often appeared at counter-demonstrations against the civil rights movement.

Ulster Special Constabulary – Established in 1920, it was an armed auxiliary force under the command of the RUC. An exclusively Protestant force which attracted much nationalist criticism, it was abolished and replaced by the UDR. In later years it was more commonly referred to as the B Specials.

Ulster Unionist Council – The 800-strong ruling body of the Ulster Unionist party.

Ulster Unionist party – The main Unionist party in Northern Ireland, it provided the government from 1921 until 1972, securing an overall majority in every election. From 1974 until the early 1990s it was sometimes referred to as the Official Unionist Party. In 1995 David Trimble MP became its leader.

Ulster Volunteer Force – A loyalist paramilitary group which emerged in the mid-1960s, it carried out the first three killings of the troubles. Banned in June 1966, it was legalised in April 1974 before again being declared illegal in October 1975.

Ulster Workers Council – A loyalist grouping which helped organise the loyalist strike that brought down the powersharing executive in May 1974.

Unionist Party of Northern Ireland – A short-lived political party established by Brian Faulkner in 1974 to promote the aims of the powersharing tendency within Unionism.

United Ulster Unionist Council – An umbrella group of Unionist parties opposed to powersharing, it existed from April 1974 until 1977.

United Unionist Action Council (UUAC) – An umbrella group of loyalist parties and other groups which staged the 1977 loyalist strike.

Vanguard Unionist Progressive party – A political party established in 1973 by William Craig, the former minister of home affairs in the Stormont government. The party developed from the earlier Ulster Vanguard movement which emerged in early 1972.