

FREEDOM FOR IRELAND

In this issue, we print brief summaries of the aims and practice of three Irish solidarity groups in Britain. Each is written by a member of the group. The Troops Out Movement is a relatively large, national organisation. The other two are small, locally-based groups. Troops Out represents a broad movement for British withdrawal. The Irish Hunger Strike Commemoration Committee and the Campaign for a Free Ireland are both based on overt support for the Republican Movement. Troops Out and IHSCC both aim to change people's views on Ireland. CFI concentrates on the practical side of solidarity work.

In England, we are part of an oppressor nation and it is our role only to support the Irish national liberation struggle, not to determine how it should be waged. As communists, we recogn-

ise the right of the Irish nation to self-determination, and we support the Irish people's right to fight for liberation by any means necessary, including the armed struggle. This means giving unconditional support to the Republican Movement, who are the spearhead of the liberation struggle.

As communists, we also see that struggles can only be won by uniting all who can be united, and using all and any of the contradictions which can assist the struggle. This means trying to work with and to win over more and more people to support British withdrawal, even if they only do so because they do not want any more British lives to be lost. Only the broadest and most widely-supported movement can give the Irish people real political assistance in their struggle for the withdrawal of British imperialism.

IRISH SOLIDARITY

CAMPAIGN FOR A FREE IRELAND

Mention the Campaign for a Free Ireland (CFI) in Strabane, and people will point to a mini-bus used by relatives of Republican prisoners to visit their loved ones. CFI has made two donations of £2,000 towards the cost of the mini-bus, and the Sinn Féin local council of Strabane (a town with one of the highest unemployment rates in Europe) presented CFI with a plaque bearing the town's coat-of-arms.

CFI is not a propagandist group, like other strands in the Irish Solidarity movement. Its own pro-Republican stand is well-known. But for CFI members, actions speak louder than words, and they consciously restrict CFI's activity to practical work. CFI has now worked in North London for five years in support of the relatives of Republican prisoners.

Fund-raising activities include socials and car boot sales, as well as providing catering services at Republican and other Irish meetings.

CFI does not compete with other solidarity organisations. Individual members support other initiatives on Ireland. They recognise that a unified solidarity movement would be beneficial to the Irish struggle but that is still far off. In the meantime, CFI must continue its work, a practical contribution to the Irish people's struggle.

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TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT

The Troops Out Movement believes that the only responsible contribution Britain can possibly make towards ending the conflict in the North of Ireland, is to withdraw its troops immediately. It further believes that Britain has no right to govern any part of Ireland. The Irish people alone, and as a whole, have the right to determine the future of their country, free from British interference. The movement's two demands are, therefore: "Troops Out Now" and "Self-Determination for the Irish People as a Whole!"

The current role of TOM is to campaign for these two demands and to help people better understand what Britain is doing in Ireland. For this purpose the movement produces a wide range of information and material, such as leaflets on policing strategies and strip-searching as well as exhibitions. There is also a monthly paper 'Troops Out' which covers the news that the mainstream media ignore or distort. A wide range of videos and books can also be obtained through the national office.

TOM has also taken part in many "single issue" campaigns, such as those against plastic bullets and the Prevention of Terrorism Act, working alongside those who do not necessarily share our two demands but are nevertheless prepared to take a stand on certain of the issues.

Nationally, the movement has organised major annual demonstrations for British withdrawal from Ireland.

It organises the annual August delegation to the North of Ireland. This enables people to see British rule in Ireland for themselves. It also shows the troops that not everyone in Britain sees them as peace-keepers.

The backbone of TOM is its branches which organise local pickets, meetings, film show and lobbies. TOM is also publishing an important new book on Ireland to mark the 20th anniversary of the re-deployment of British troops in the North of Ireland. It will be called 'An Obstacle to Peace-Britain's Role in Ireland 69-89'.

Troops Out Movement, PO Box 353,
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THE IRISH HUNGER-STRIKE COMMEMORATION COMMITTEE

The Irish Hunger-Strike Commemoration Committee (IHSCC), Birmingham, was set up five years ago following an initiative by the Birmingham branch of the Irish in Britain Representation Group.

It was formed to fill the need to hold an annual commemoration of the twelve Republican freedom fighters who died on hunger-strike.

Membership is open to those who accept unconditional support for the Republican Movement. The IHSCC is an overt solidarity organisation in which Irish people give the leadership.

Although the main focus of its work is the annual commemoration (of which there have been four so far), it also supports the Republican POW Campaign's prison pickets and the pickets of Durham gaol on International Women's Day.

The committee has always actively supported campaigns and demonstrations organised by broader organisations, calling for British withdrawal from Ireland.

The IHSCC is an essentially Irish organisation. But this does not exclude people and organisations of other nationalities. The black national minorities have given the committee its most consistent support. There is support from a small number of English organisations but in the main such organisations choose to do their Irish solidarity work on broader-sounding and often pro-Labour Party campaigns.

The IHSCC is a legitimate part of the broad spectrum of organisations fighting for the rights of the Irish people. Its role complements the attempts to build a broader-based campaign.

English organisations in particular must respect the right of the Irish people in Britain to set up solidarity organisations such as the IHSCC.

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