Trotskyism and the Bloody Sunday massacre: a record of principled opposition to British imperialism

18 June 2010

The findings of the Saville Inquiry are a political vindication of the stand taken by the Socialist Labour League, then the British section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

The British Trotskyists opposed the sending of troops to Northern Ireland and conducted vital work exposing the crimes carried out on Bloody Sunday and outlining the revolutionary political tasks confronting the British and Irish working class. The following articles illustrate this principled record, in contrast to the rank political opportunism of the Stalinist and fake left groups such as International Socialism, forerunner of the British Socialist Workers Party, and the International Marxist Group, affiliated to the Pabloite United Secretariat.

* * *

From the Newsletter, *August 16, 1969*

Civil war in Ulster? Withdraw Troops Now


The Newsletter

WEEK END

Civil war in Ulster?

WITHDRAW TROOPS NOW

'Spectre' of unity in Belfast riots

After the franc devaluation

Furnace strikers determined to win

JULY TRADE GAP WIDENS TO £37 MILLION

The Port Talbot men's case

S. Wales miners may take strike action

1,100 B.S.A. workers to join Birmingham's jobless

At the time of writing, 300 British troops are standing by on the outskirts of Londonderry ready to intervene in what has been described as the most serious riots yet seen in Northern Ireland.

Acting, no doubt, in collusion with the so-called Labour government of Harold Wilson, the Ulster Tories have banned all meetings and marches, thus taking away the basic democratic rights of the working class, both Protestant and Catholic, with one stroke of the pen.

In what has been described by eye-witnesses as an orgy of unprecedented police brutality, two men have been shot at the height of the street fighting.

This situation can only be described as one of civil war in which the ultra-right government of Ulster in alliance with Wilson and the Labour traitors have encouraged provocations which will now enable them to bring in the armed forces.

There was some speculation in Ulster, says the "Evening News" of August 13, 1969, "that the troops may be used to relieve weary police." This is a formula for the intervention.

The capitalist press has gone out of its way to describe the disturbances as the results of a holy war between Catholics and Protestants.

Whilst in some cases it may take this form, it is basically nothing of the sort. The real reason lies in the economic crisis now affecting the six counties and stemming from the worsening position of British capitalism as a whole.

Chronic unemployment, the threat to jobs, rotten housing, low wages and rising prices have drawn tens of thousands of ordinary men and women into bitter conflict with the so-called forces of law and order.

The capitalists are determined to crush the Catholic and Protestant workers alike. To do this they drag out all the old prejudices, pageantry and lies from the past. But the truth will out.

What is at stake is the future of the working class as a whole not only in Northern Ireland, but throughout the length and breadth of Britain.

That is why it is necessary to organise the maximum mobilisation to force Wilson to withdraw the troops immediately.

* * *

From the Newsletter, *September 2, 1969*

Revisionism and the struggle in Ireland

By Cliff Slaughter

The revisionist group calling themselves "International Socialism" share with the Communist Party a position of support for the British troops in Ulster.

Entering the struggle, as this article will make unmistakably clear, with no independent programme for the working class, they emerged as the supporters of the British Army to defend them from reaction!

The attitude of "International Socialism" is all the more revealing when we look at their "Socialist Worker" for April 26, 1969. Its headline is "Ulster: British troops out".

Wilson had just drafted troops resident in Ulster to guard key installations on the pretext of a series of bomb attacks coinciding with workers' demonstrations.

In the same issue, Eamonn McCann, who last week welcomed the intervention of the Army, said "British socialists must organise the struggle for the withdrawal of British troops, who are being used to release the RUC and 'B' Special to suppress Derry".

In their magazine, "International Socialism", the state capitalists carried an article in April-May 1969 by John Palmer and Chris Gray saying "…it

is necessary to demand…the withdrawal of all British troops from Ireland".

When it was a case of a general demand at an early stage of the struggle, the state capitalists could make very "left" noises (whereas the Communist Party from the start adopted the reactionary position of calling on Wilson to intervene).

But when the British capitalist state intervened in strength to impose military rule, and every "ally" in the civil rights movement and the Catholic organisations welcomed them because of fear of the working class, our "state capitalists" capitulated.

They behaved in a similar fashion on every other issue, in each case showing their spineless middle-class politics.

In every case "left" phrases are replaced by a miserable retreat when the battle begins and their relations with the reformists and the bureaucracy are endangered, from the Labour Party Young Socialists to the struggle on productivity deals.

The Newsletter has consistently explained the "instant revolution" and "punch-up politics" of the state capitalists, the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, and the groups who worked with them, as a dangerous, middle-class tendency opposed to the serious task of building the revolutionary party. It could only lead to a dead end.

In the last few months a great deal of publicity has come the way of the student group in Queen's University, Belfast, called "People's Democracy", members of which took a leading part in Ulster Civil Rights marches, and from which Miss Bernadette Devlin came.

Leading members of this organisation are connected with the "state capitalist" group International Socialism.

A close examination of the "People's Democracy", which might have appeared to some as a success for the type of opportunist policies we have criticised, will be useful.

It illustrates forcefully, the cul-de-sac inevitably reached by short-cut opportunist attempts to build a movement.

The latest issue of "New Left Review" (No. 55) carries an interview, "People's Democracy: a Discussion on Strategy", the participants in which are Liam Baxter, member of the "Revolutionary Socialist Student Federation", Bernadette Devlin, MP, Mike Farrell, executive member of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, Eamonn McCann, "Derry Young Socialists" (not connected with the Young Socialists organised in branches throughout Britain and Northern Ireland) and a frequent writer in the "state capitalist" "Socialist Worker", and Cyril Toman.

All are leading members of People's Democracy.

Farrell describes the formation in 1968 of People's Democracy, riddled as it was with anti-centralist and anti-Marxist ideas of the Cohn-Bendit type:

"PD is not just part of the Civil Rights movement, it is a revolutionary association. Its formation was considerably influenced by the Sorbonne Assembly and by the concepts of libertarianism as well as socialism. It has adopted a very democratic type of structure; there is not formal membership and all meetings are open".

Farrell says difficulties now make more co-ordination necessary, and further: "There have recently been some sharp disagreements within PD and differences have arisen between socialists and an alliance of anarchists and right wingers."

Such was the penalty of dreaming up "revolutionary associations" not on Leninist but on "libertarian" or anarchist lines.

On the eve of revolutionary developments they were involved in an internal fight with anarchists and right wingers working against socialism.

Farrell goes on to make it clear that the revisionists were in at the very beginning of PD, and that the state capitalists bear every responsibility for the present situation, where liquidation into the middle-class movement, abandonment of the political independence of the working class, has ended in support for British troops.

"Right from the start", Farrell says, "the Young Socialist Alliance was the core of PD. It involved three of the people who are here now".

McCann criticises the work of his own group in a way which confirms everything the *Newsletter* has ever said about it.

"The consciousness of the people is still most definitely sectarian (in the religious sense). The reason that we have failed to get our position across is that we have failed to fight any sort of political struggle *within* the Civil Rights movement."

And further: "Now suddenly, since October 5, we have found that we have an audience listening to us and applauding us, of tens of thousands of people. We got carried away by this, and submerged the Young Socialist Alliance in the PD; we submerged our politics in the Civil Rights movement."

In other words, the present capitulation to the imperialist troops was prepared by capitulation to the middle-class reformists.

And the capitulation was prepared by anti-Leninist semi-anarchist conceptions of organisations which go with the anti-communist politics of the "state capitalist" group.

From this McCann can only draw the most pessimistic and sectarian conclusions about the working class, preparing to blame them for his own betrayals: "The consciousness of the people who are fighting in the streets at the moment is sectarian and bigoted."

Farrell echoes him: "So there is now a more radicalised Catholic working class (McCann thinks this is 'very wrong') whilst the Protestant proletariat is still as remote and inert as ever".

The sorry tale continues. The interviewer asks to what extent Protestant areas are leafleted to explain to the workers there why Civil Rights marchers are demonstrating through their streets.

"Absolutely none", replies McCann. "Only occasional half-hearted efforts have ever been made at doing this. We have never had a perspective here".

And he explains why:

"There has been no concrete work done because there is no organisation which has been able to sit down and say this is our perspective, this is our reason for being in the Civil Rights movement… All our failures spring from the lack of anything even resembling a revolutionary party."

This is a suitable epitaph for the years of bitter middle-class opposition to Leninism and the Socialist Labour League carried on by the state capitalist group of Tony Cliff. It is at the root of their present capitulation to the British army of occupation.

The interviewer drives the lesson home, and asks: "This raises the question of your own organisation. What is the state of it?"

Miss Devlin replies, "We are totally unorganised and totally without any form of discipline within ourselves".

And McCann adds "…the reason we have no organisation is that we effectively dissolved ourselves politically into the Civil Rights movement: so effectively, in fact, that we have nothing to recruit people into once they have been radicalised by that movement. It has been a crucial error and a grievous one".

This then is the end-result of that kind of politics which starts from "where the action is" and which has become the rule for all the revisionist groups: it is nothing more than a trap which takes militants into the camp of the middle class.

After Farrell tries then to boost the popular character of Civil Rights associations like that in Derry, and McCann corrects him:

"The Derry citizens' action committee was not elected by a mass meeting of any sort. It was elected by a meeting of about one hundred of the Catholic middle class of Derry on October 9, specifically to steer the movement away from dangerous territory. There is a millionaire among its four leading members but not a single working man…"

When the discussion turns to programme, the confusion is complete, and reveals once again that there had been no basic clarification of any

kind when launching into the political campaigns of the last year.

Farrell favours an utterly adventurist line, which looks revolutionary but serves only as a road back to the Catholic hierarchy. He advocates *Catholic* workers' councils as a possible form of "dual power" in opposition to the Unionist government.

McCann, after criticising this dangerous nonsense, concludes: "We cannot form a Bolshevik party overnight. Rather than set up councils, we must try to set up some sort of radical socialist front between republicans and ourselves".

McCann proposes to repeat exactly the mistake he has earlier criticised.

The role of this revisionist group was to go into the recent struggle giving the impression they were a socialist tendency but in fact serving as recruiting sergeants to the middle class traitors, because they had no independent working class programme.

Their participation in the Ulster elections, including mid-Ulster, exposes this even more clearly.

Farrell says: "I am worried about two aspects of the electoral campaign in Mid-Ulster. The first is that Nationalist MPs did speak on Bernadette's platform, which clearly was a grave embarrassment. The people are Green Tories, they are capitalists and they are Catholic sectarians and even their so-called left wingers are as much our enemy as the Unionist Party".

When they are asked in what way British workers can assist the Northern Ireland struggle, no answer emerges, except for Farrell's generalisation that English comrades should "make the English revolution".

But Devlin thinks nothing at all can be done because the British workers "…simply do not understand the mentality or the basic personality of the Irish people."

Farrell says that British workers fail to appreciate the complexity of the situation and "…they should get the complexity of the situation here into their heads."

This interview is an object lesson. Those sectarian and revisionist groups who joined the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign with great flourishes about mass movements, who allied with anarchists and Stalinists, who hailed the role of students and rejected the revolutionary role of the working class, who rejected the analysis of capitalism in crisis, and who above all fought at every point against the Socialist Labour League and the building of the revolutionary party—now stand thoroughly exposed.

Farrell sums up: "…we cannot form any high level organisation, as we do not yet have the theoretical basis for any clearly determined policies, in fact we have not even discussed some elementary problems."

That such an admission could be made only a few weeks before the Ulster fighting of August this year, and that the situation resulted in support for British troops, is a crushing condemnation of the reactionary role of Mr. Tony Cliff and his state capitalist group which publishes "International Socialism" and "Socialist Worker".

* * *

From the Workers Press, *October 3, 1969*

Northern Ireland—a touchstone of revolutionary principle

By Cliff Slaughter

The establishment of 'law and order' by the army of British imperialism in Northern Ireland has proved a touchstone of revolutionary principle.

As always, the Irish question has forced home the class issues in the British labour movement.

In issues of 'The Newsletter,' forerunner of the Workers' Press, we have explained at length the stand of the Socialist Labour League—'Withdraw Troops Now!'—and contrasted it with the acceptance and even welcoming of these troops by the Communist Party, the Labour 'lefts' and the revisionists of the state capitalist group 'International Socialism.'

Now the so-called 'International Marxist Group' has added its voice to the chorus of opportunism. This is the group which was prominent in the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, and includes Pat Jordan, Ernest Tate, and Tariq Ali. It is affiliated to the Pabloite so-called 'Unified Secretariat.'

The monthly journal of this group, 'International', for September 1969 contains Jordan's article, 'Ireland: the struggle goes on.'

After all sorts of declarations of 'principle', Jordan discovers a formula to avoid fighting for the withdrawal of troops, and does a thorough-going whitewash job for the state capitalists. He writes:

> 'Withdraw British Troops Now: this slogan flows directly from the position of self-determination [of the Irish nation] but there are people who are willing to support the line of self-determination, but not the slogan of the immediate withdrawal of British troops. Again we have to make it clear to whom the slogan is directed and in what context it is being used.
>
> 'The civil rights movement of Ireland is opposed to this slogan and is anxious that the British solidarity movement does not advance it. It argues that the arrival of British troops prevented a pogrom and for it to demand a recall would be suicidal.
>
> 'This dilemma cannot be dodged by shouting about "revisionism" and "sell-outs". These are real problems involving—as has been demonstrated—people's lives.
>
> 'The slogan demanding the withdrawal of British troops is *an educational one* designed to clarify the actual political relationship of forces…
>
> 'The slogan demanding withdrawal of British troops is one which the British movement must adopt if it is to correctly implement a policy of fighting for self determination. *The emphasis given at a particular time to this slogan is a tactical question.*' (our emphasis, Editors)

You can take a horse to water, but you can't make him drink!

You can't assert that a question is a principled question (though in reality a different principle is involved from what Jordan thinks) and then say that whether you fight for it is a 'tactical question', i.e., in some cases you fight for it and in others not.

The British capitalist government, a Labour Government, has sent troops to defend the rule of the Northern Ireland Tory (Unionist) government, because that Tory government is the caretaker for British and other capitalist property in Ireland.

The capitalist state consists, Marxists say, of *bodies of armed men* for the defence of capitalist property, however this state may be dressed up with democratic rights, representative government, and so on.

This principled question cannot be altered in any way by 'tactical' consideration. There are *no* situations in which troops and police are not used by the state for this purpose.

Much less can Marxists confuse the question with talk about the saving of lives, as Jordan does. This is only the usual middle-class rubbish in objecting to the Marxist theory of the state: 'don't the police help old ladies across the road, rescue drowning children, etc.?'

All these things are happening every day, but they do not affect in the slightest the Marxist theory of the state and the principled politics which flow from it.

In this specific case, the issues are very clear. The middle-class leaders of the civil rights movement are *for* British troops, because they want a few reforms under capitalist rule, and they fear the independent action of the working class.

Under protection of these troops the forces of capitalism reorganize themselves—restructuring of the police and security forces, closer liaison

with British High Command and the Westminster Cabinet, preparation of conspiracy proceedings against the left—for the coming attacks on both Protestant and Catholic workers.

But Jordan says the slogan is purely 'educational', i.e., for talk.

In reality it is a slogan which brings together the whole preparation necessary by the working class of both Ireland and Britain.

Not to fight on this slogan now in Britain is to leave the advanced workers under the domination of those who want to paralyze them while the employers prepare their ground for the end of the Labour government.

Jordan is contributing his own special talents—talents for twisting Marxist phrases to opportunist ends—to the bourgeois domination of the working class.

His talk about 'tactical emphasis' is his gift to the state capitalists to excuse their capitulation.

Of course 'everybody', including the Stalinists, is in favour of the 'withdrawal of troops now' *in general*!

But to say the emphasis given to the slogan *at a particular time* will vary is to deny the slogan: 'Withdraw the troops *now*'!

Jordan is for this slogan…but only for 'educational' purposes. For the slogan 'Withdraw the Troops now!'…but not now!

This absurdity is not a mistake of logic, but the direct result of the political contortions of Jordan's group: it follows directly from their whole orientation towards middle-class protest movements like civil rights: they end up as 'Marxist' attorneys for the middle class.

This is why they present the principle involved as simply that of self-determination of nations, of defending in Britain the right of a colonial country to independence.

In this way they avoid the history of the working-class movement in Ireland, betrayed by the bourgeois nationalists in 1916-1922, confronted with *socialist* tasks as the only way of completing the national struggle, and more and more now brought into relationship with the struggle for revolutionary leadership in the British Labour movement.

The issue presents itself very concretely in the British Labour movement and in a way which allows no 'tactical' watering down.

To carry through the fight against Wilson and against the Tories, and to build a revolutionary leadership for the struggle for workers' power in Britain, it is essential to fight the Irish question as a principled question requiring socialist solutions.

Those who are unable to fight for the withdrawal of British troops now will be utterly incapable, as they are now, of carrying through the fight against the British ruling class and its agents.

The activity and politics of the 'International Socialism' group on the Irish struggles is an anti-working class line of the most craven kind, and yet it is this line which Jordan is covering up for when he says there are 'tactical' limits to the demand for the withdrawal of troops.

In its editorial of September 11, the state capitalist paper 'Socialist Worker' repeated its line:

> 'The breathing space provided by the presence of British troops is short but vital. Those who call for the *immediate* withdrawal of the troops before the men behind the barricades can defend themselves are inviting a progrom which will hit first and hardest at socialists.'

A week earlier the 'International Socialists' had held their national conference, and so this represents their considered line.

It seems that the socialists of Northern Ireland are to be grateful for the presence of British troops as the guarantor of their ability to arm themselves and fight back against the repressions which are undoubtedly coming.

Of course, within days of this editorial being printed, the barricades were down, and Northern Ireland once again takes the road of class conflict, some of it in the religious guise; with this difference—7,000 British troops. The 'International Socialists' (state capitalists) have no political strategy for the workers of Ireland. Instead they say things like this:

> 'The lessons of the past week's rioting for the beleaguered Catholics of Belfast are plain. The barricades must stay. More must be built, and more must be reinforced.'

After many months of a disastrous reliance on the middle-class civil rights leadership, the Catholic workers find themselves isolated from their Protestant brothers in the barricaded slum areas.

Whatever the problems of 'law and order' for the capitalists, this situation is *politically* a good one for them.

All those who work to perpetuate the divisions and the isolation of the Catholic workers of Derry and Belfast, instead of turning to the Labour movement for the urgent job of mobilizing the workers as a *class*, Catholics and Protestants, are playing a reactionary role which is subservient to the Catholic hierarchy and the Unionists.

The 'International Socialism' group is playing such a role.

Having advocated maintaining the isolation of the Catholic workers in the North, they go on:

> 'They (the Catholic workers) should call on their supporters in the South to open a second front on the Green Tory regime in Dublin: to send them arms from the Southern arsenals to enable them eventually to demand the withdrawal of the British troops in the confidence that they themselves can stave off a pogrom.'

Of course, the workers of the South started a long time ago a real 'second front', in a series of strike struggles which is posing insoluble problems for the Lynch regime.

What is required in Northern Ireland is a *class* orientation in the trade unions and the Labour movement which will link up with this powerful development in the South and the struggles here in Britain.

All the talk about arms is adventurist rubbish at this stage.

The first and essential requirement in Ireland is political and theoretical preparation, above all to work for the independent political action of the working class, the only force which can bring the necessary socialist solutions to the problems left in Ireland by imperialism.

Basically, the struggle for Marxism against idealism in all its forms, from Catholicism to Protestantism to the middle-class adventurers who call themselves "International Socialists' is the key to the building of the revolutionary party, section of the Fourth International, which is needed in Ireland.

* * *

From the Workers Press, *January 31, 1972, published the day of the Bloody Sunday massacre and drafted before it happened.*

What we think: Pacifist blind alley

In preparation for the inter-party talks on Ulster and the completion of a political deal between premiers Jack Lynch and Edward Heath, the British army is carrying out a policy of selective and premeditated provocations.

They are arresting and interning the nationalist and working class opposition's most militant supporters, while leaving the reformist leaders free to pursue their collaborationist policies.

This is the sinister meaning of the deployment of 2,000 police and

troops in Dungannon and Londonderry over the weekend.

In Dungannon on Saturday CS gas and rubber bullets were used extensively to prevent civil rights marchers from breaking Faulkner's ban on parades.

In Londonderry, the Protestant Loyalists threaten to stop the civil rights marchers if the army doesn't. At the same time Lynch's garda [police] obligingly round up IRA Provisionals who only recently escaped from the hell holes of imperialism.

On both sides of the border imperialism and its agencies are working concertedly to isolate and repress the militant opposition to leave the field clear for negotiations to continue towards a "federal solution".

So the pacifist civil rights leaders' policy and tactics play dangerously into the hands of the army and administration. By separating the issue of civil rights from the vital questions of wages, employment and the issue of forcing the Tories to resign, the NICRA [Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association] leaders are taking their supporters into a blind alley.

Furthermore, by tying the civil rights movement to the objective of a "negotiated political solution" with the Tories in Westminster and Dublin, NICRA leaders perpetuate sectarian divisions and lay the basis for a colossal betrayal of the national struggle in Ireland.

Predictably the NICRA leaders are backed up in this bankrupt policy by the Ulster Stalinists who see in the present crisis an opportunity for implementing their Popular Front policies.

This is the reactionary logic of the so-called "political solution" postulated by Stalinism and petty-bourgeois pacifism in Ulster.

We are not opposed to marches and demonstrations, but we are opposed to a policy which subordinates workers' militancy to reformist middle-class demands and allows the army to pick off the best leaders at will.

The only way forward for the Ulster and Irish working class is the construction of a Marxist leadership independent of Stalinism and pacifism which will integrate the democratic demands of the oppressed minorities with the struggle to overthrow British imperialism and establish a socialist republic in Ireland and the UK.

* * *

From the Workers Press, *February 1, 1972*

Londonderry, Sharpeville: Tory Hand Pulls the Trigger

By Alex Mitchell


workers press

LONDONDERRY SHARPEVILLE

TORY HAND PULLS THE TRIGGER

BY ALEX MITCHELL

THE LONDONDERRY massacre was a deliberate act of the Tory government at Westminster.

13 NAMED

'Sharpeville' in Ulster ?

INSIDE

STALINISTS WIN RELEASE CLYDE SHIP VOTE

BHUTTO IN PEKING

The Londonderry massacre was a deliberate act of the Tory government at Westminster.

The whole operation was planned militarily and politically in the Cabinet office.

When Ulster premier Brian Faulkner slipped into London last Thursday he saw both [Prime Minister Edward] Heath and [Home Secretary Reginald] Maulding to discuss the final details of the plan.

The shooting down of 13 civilians—most of them hit in the back—is the latest and most murderous phase of the Tories' campaign to intimidate the N. Ireland working class.

In Britain the same government is preparing another kind of war against trade unionists. Their aim is to starve the miners into submission and the Industrial Relations Act is gradually coming into operation to strip unions and their members of hard-won rights.

Yesterday Londonderry was like a morgue city. Nobody went to work and the streets were deserted except for small crowds of people holding heated discussions.

The common enemy of the entire community is the British army.

Workers Press warned as long ago as October 26 that the army was moving towards another "Sharpeville". Further Evidence of their intentions came in December when the army, with Cabinet's approval, altered the Yellow Book which governs firing regulations.

On Sunday afternoon the First Battalion, the Paratroop Regiment, did not even observe these permissive regulations. They fired at anybody.

The demonstrators were marching to protest peacefully against internment. They were opposing the introduction of the fascist-style Special Powers Act, which enables the police and army to pick up innocent people, detain them and torture them and then dump them in internment camps.

The "paras" were specially brought from Belfast to Londonderry "to deal with" with demonstrators.

A Fleet St. defence correspondent told *Workers Press* yesterday:

"It's quite obvious why they brought in the paras. The army believed that the local force stationed in Londonderry was too 'matey' with the people. They wanted a group of soldiers who could be brought in to do the dirty work".

This savage intervention by the army now makes the fight to get the Tory government out of office the most urgent task.

And those, like the Communist Party, who refuse to fight for the ending of the Heath government, must bear responsibility for Sunday's massacre.

* * *

From the Workers Press, *February 4, 1972*

What we think: "Bloody Sunday" is censored

A *Workers Press* reporting team has compiled a reconstruction of the Rossville massacre that occurred in Londonderry last Sunday. After interviewing scores of eye-witnesses and the wounded, we had a complete dossier showing the bloody events which led to 13 people being gunned down.

Now, however, the Heath government has acted to prevent publication of this detailed investigation.

By setting up the tribunal [under Lord Widgery] under the Tribunals of Inquiry (Evidence) Act, 1921, the government has given it the status of a High Court. This means that the laws of contempt apply. And this means that none of our information can be published because it would be in contempt of Mr. Justice Widgery's tribunal.

In other words the establishment of this tribunal has successfully gagged the press. Government censorship is operating on life-and-death issues in Ulster.

What are the legal precedents for vesting a tribunal with such important powers?

The two most recent cases are the Aberfan inquiry and the investigation into the affairs of the Vehicle and General Insurance crash.

When the Labour government announced the appointment of the legal inquiry into Aberfan, it was Edward Heath himself who apparently complained bitterly about censorship.

But when Heath announced Widgery's appointment on Tuesday, the Opposition leader Harold Wilson made some mealy-mouthed objections to the fact that is was a one-man inquiry.

Wilson didn't want a single Widgery in charge—he wanted two or three more.

Although our Rossville inquiry cannot now be published, readers will be continually kept informed of events in Ireland in spite of government and army intimidation.