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Representations of the Northern Ireland 'Troubles' within the British media, 1973-1997.

Roseanna Doughty.

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Declaration of own work:

I declare that the following thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgement, the work presented is entirely my own.

Roseanna Doughty
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Abstract.

This thesis investigates British media representations of the conflict in Northern Ireland between 1973 and 1997, and how these affected the lived experiences of the Irish in Britain over this period. The 'Troubles' dominated headlines from the outbreak of communal violence in 1968. As the main source of information on Northern Ireland for most British people, the press and broadcast media were central to how the conflict was reported on and understood in Britain. The British press and broadcast media offered multifaceted and detailed coverage of the conflict in Northern Ireland, contrary to the assumptions made by various scholars, and the belief of many Irish people living in Britain at the time. The prevailing view amongst the Irish in Britain was that the media merely regurgitated the official line, producing one-dimensional coverage of Northern Ireland. Irish political and community activists in Britain from the 1980s campaigned against the media's allegedly oversimplified and biased reporting, which they believed played a significant role in the discrimination and harassment experienced by the Irish, especially as a result of the IRA bombing campaign in English cities. These activists were correct in maintaining that the media contributed to the hostile environment experienced by many Irish people living in Britain throughout the 'Troubles'. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the press and broadcasting bodies failed to engage with the complexities of the conflict in Northern Ireland or indeed provide a critical view of the role of the British state. This thesis presents the findings of an in-depth analysis of a broad and representative range of newspapers and television current affairs programmes. Far from simply parroting the official line, the media resisted efforts by the state to dictate how the 'Troubles' were reported. The media provided far more nuanced, independent-minded and analytical coverage of the conflict than has been acknowledged.

Lay Summary.

This thesis investigates how the British media represented the conflict in Northern Ireland between 1973 and 1997, and the affect this had on Irish people living in Britain over this period. The 'Troubles' dominated headlines from the outbreak of violence in 1968. The majority of people in Britain were reliant on newspapers and television programmes for news and interpretations of the conflict, so the press and broadcast media were central to how events in Northern Ireland were understood elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

The prevailing view amongst scholars of the 'Troubles' has been that the British media provided one-dimensional coverage of the conflict in Northern Ireland, which merely repeated the official line. This view emerged originally as a result of Irish community activists campaigning against media bias and anti-Irish prejudice in the 1980s. They argued that the British media distorted and suppressed news about Northern Ireland and believed that this led to the discrimination and harassment experienced by many Irish people in Britain. These views were absorbed into a collective narrative of the Irish experience of living in Britain during the 'Troubles', which in turn greatly influenced scholarly work on the media's role in the conflict.

This thesis however, demonstrates that the British media's coverage of events in Northern Ireland were much more complex. By analysing a broad range of newspapers and television programmes, it shows that the print and broadcast media provided multifaceted and detailed coverage of the conflict in Northern Ireland, which engaged with a wide variety of perspectives. It recognises that Irish activists were correct in maintaining that the media contributed to the hostile environment experienced by many Irish people living in Britain throughout the 'Troubles', but argues that this did not mean that the press and broadcasting bodies failed to engage with the complexities of the conflict in Northern Ireland or to offer a critical view of the role of the British state. Far from simply regurgitating the official line, the media resisted efforts by the state to influence how the 'Troubles' were reported. The media provided far more nuanced, independent-minded and analytical coverage of the conflict than has previously been acknowledged.

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Contents.

Abbreviations.

BARB	British Audience Research Board
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BFI	British Film Institute
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
DNCA	Director of News and Current Affairs
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
FIS	Federation of Irish Societies
GLC	Greater London Council
IBA	Independent Broadcasting Authority
IBRG	Irish in Britain Representation Group
ICARM	Irish Campaign against Racism in the Media
ICJP	Irish Commission for Justice and Peace
IMG	Irish Media Group
INLA	Irish National Liberation Army
IRA	Irish Republican Army
ITN	Independent Television News
ITA	Independent Television Authority
ITV	Independent Television
JAPP	Journalists Against the Peace Process
LSPU	London Strategic Policy Unit
LWT	London Weekend Television
MEN	Manchester Evening News
MRF	Mobile Reaction Force
NIO	Northern Ireland Office
OUP	Official Unionist Party
PAF	Protestant Action Force
PTA	Prevention of Terrorism Act
PUP	Progressive Unionist Party
RTE	Radio Telefis Éireann
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party

UDA	Ulster Defence Association
UDR	Ulster Defence Regiment
UFF	Ulster Freedom Fighters
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force
UWC	Ulster Workers' Council
UTV	Ulster Television
WAC	Written Archive Centre (BBC)

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Introduction.

On 5 October 1968 civil rights marchers in Duke Street, Derry were met with unrestrained violence from the police. Such attacks were nothing new in Northern Ireland. As Martin Cowley, former London editor of the *Irish Times*, recounted, 'the north of Ireland had seen street violence before, and it had hardly raised an eyebrow elsewhere… What set Duke Street apart was that this time the whole spectacle was caught 'on tape', up close and very personal'.[1] Worldwide, shocking images of baton-wielding policemen attacking unarmed protestors were transmitted into people's living rooms. The day after, newspapers described in graphic detail the violence. For the next thirty years the conflict in Northern Ireland was never far from the headlines in Britain, Ireland and internationally. The media was regarded as a crucial element in the struggle for power and legitimacy by all sides. Participants vied for influence, seeking to shape how the conflict in Northern Ireland was presented so as to encourage support and further their position. As David Miller has observed, alongside the bombs and shootings another war was being waged 'from the offices of the *Irish Times* in Dublin, and in *The Times* in London, to the *New York Times* in the USA'.[2] In this very modern conflict, the press and broadcast media were significant weapons. As the principal source of information on Northern Ireland for most British people, the media was central to how the conflict was understood elsewhere in the United Kingdom. This thesis explores British media representations of the Northern Ireland 'Troubles' between 1973 and 1997, and how these affected the lived experiences of the Irish in Britain over this period.

The media's coverage of the Northern Ireland conflict was both nuanced and detailed; however, scholarly treatment of this subject has tended to be overly simplistic. The prevailing view amongst scholars of the 'Troubles', and the contemporaries who lived through them, is that the British media provided one-dimensional coverage of the conflict in Northern Ireland. They argue that newspapers and television programmes regurgitated the state's line that the conflict was a straightforward struggle against terrorism and Britain an altruistic presence caught between two warring factions. This was the belief of Irish community activists in Britain during the 1980s, who campaigned against the media's allegedly oversimplified and biased reporting. These activists believed that by routinely distorting the facts about Northern Ireland, the British media inflamed the hostility and prejudice experienced by the Irish as a result of the IRA bombing campaign in England.

Historian and Irish activist Liz Curtis consolidated this view in her 1984 book *Ireland and the Propaganda War*, in which she contended that the British media reported on the 'Troubles' 'in an inadequate and partial way'.[3] The press and broadcast media, she asserts, concentrated on violence without providing explanation or context, presenting it as the exclusive preserve of the IRA and ignoring Britain's responsibility and role in the conflict. Curtis argues that the limitations of the media's coverage

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[1] Martin Cowley, 'Duke Street, Derry, 5 October 1968' in *Reporting the Troubles: Journalists tell their stories of the Northern Ireland conflict*, comp. Deric Henderson and Ivan Little (Newtownards: Blackstaff Press, 2018), 1.
[2] David Miller, *Don't Mention the War: Northern Ireland, Propaganda and the Media* (London: Pluto Press, 1994), 12.
[3] Liz Curtis, *Ireland: The Propaganda War: The British Media and the 'Battle for Hearts and Minds'* (Belfast: Sásta, 1998), 275-8.

prevented the British public from engaging in 'rational discussion about how to resolve the situation', thereby prolonging the conflict. This analysis, however, is based on a very limited sample of the vast quantity of media coverage generated throughout the 'Troubles'. Curtis was directly involved in Irish activism in the 1980s and campaigned against anti-Irish bias in the media. *Ireland and the Propaganda War* is, in part, an extension of this activism, and is underpinned by an overtly nationalist bias. In her conclusion, she calls for readers to pressurise broadcasters and editors to provide more thorough and searching coverage of Northern Ireland.[4] Though Curtis makes no secret of her nationalist politics, she presents her work as a corrective of the misleading information offered by the media. For these reasons her analysis needs to be considered with great caution.

Curtis's arguments were heavily influenced by the work of contemporary social scientists and media scholars, including Philip Elliott, whose survey, published in the late 1970s, investigates British news media coverage of Northern Ireland.[5] Elliott argues that the media was preoccupied with stories of violence, reported without explanation or context, often to the exclusion of politics and other stories from the province. Elliott also asserts that the British media paid considerably more attention to incidents which occurred in Britain. He argues that the news media kept stories of bomb attacks in England alive, each day applying 'a new dressing to the wound society has suffered', to show Britain united against, and expiating, the IRA threat.[6] Curtis also makes extensive use of Philip Schlesinger research into the BBC's coverage of the 'Troubles'. Schlesinger asserts that British broadcasting failed to offer more than a one-dimensional picture of the 'Troubles'. He argues that in general, the BBC presented audiences with de-contextualised reports, which pre-eminently focused on violence, and failed to 'analyse and re-analyse the historical roots of the Irish conflict', contributing to the British public's view of the 'Troubles' as incomprehensible and irrational.[7] Both scholars, however, writing in the late 1970s when the conflict was still at its height, neglect to consider the nuance ways in which the media evolved over time.

More recently, Greg Scott Campbell has argued that the BBC's coverage of the conflict was 'dominated by generic media templates, the rhetoric of euphemism, a concerted lack of contextualisation, and empty symbolism of the absent image'. In his doctoral thesis, Campbell explores visual representations of Northern Ireland and domestic terrorism by the BBC during the 'Troubles'. Whilst acknowledging that the BBC's earliest footage revealed to news audiences the true nature and human cost of the violence, he asserts that broadcast journalists failed to provide adequate analysis of the background cases to the disturbances. He argues that as, over the course of the conflict, the

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[4] Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 276-8.
[5] Philip Elliot, 'Reporting Northern Ireland: A study of news in Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland', in *Ethnicity and the media: An analysis of media reporting in the United Kingdom, Canada and Ireland* (UNESCO, 1977), 295-9; Philip Elliot, 'Misreporting Ulster: News as a Field-Dressing', *New Society* (1976), 398-401.
[6] Philip Elliot, 'Reporting Northern Ireland: A study of news in Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland', in *Ethnicity and the media: An analysis of media reporting in the United Kingdom, Canada and Ireland* (UNESCO, 1977), 295-9; Philip Elliot, 'Misreporting Ulster: News as a Field-Dressing', *New Society* (1976), 398-401.
[7] Philip Schlesinger, *Putting 'Reality' Together: BBC News* (London: Methuen & Co, 1987), 205-243; Philip Schlesinger, 'The BBC and Northern Ireland', *The British Media and Ireland: Truth: the first casualty* (The Campaign for Free Speech in Ireland, 1979), 10.

Corporation was subject to greater public and political pressure to report the violence in a way that was favourable to the British government, broadcasters self-censored their reports by reducing the visual coverage of the conflict to a series of meaningless symbols. Campbell contends that, with a few notable exceptions, the bodies and bloody consequences of the 'Troubles' were erased from the BBC news, to be replaced with generic tropes, such as burning vehicles, which 'abbreviated and condemned the complexity' of the conflict.[8] Campbell, however, makes a limited effort to analyse the extent to which content and background was provided in the accompanying commentary instead. Curiously, he also made no use of the BBC archives, which offers important detail about the editorial practices that shaped the production of television programmes about Northern Ireland, including the visual framing of events.

Perceptions of a simplistic and biased British media are by no means confined to work on republican violence. Historian Alan Parkinson examination of media perceptions of Ulster loyalism also argues that the press and broadcast media's coverage was simplistic and devoid of any explanation of the rationale behind paramilitary violence. He contends that this lack of contextual information resulted in the British public predominantly dismissing the conflict as sheer irrationality on the part of the two communities, as well as fostering a general apathy towards events in Northern Ireland. Parkinson argues further that the loyalist perspective on the 'Troubles' was often overlooked, with loyalist concerns about the deteriorating security situation or border violence relegated to the peripheries of the national media. He suggests that the media tended to focus on the negative association of loyalism with bigotry, intransigence and anachronistic behaviour. As a result, loyalists were often blamed by the media for the failure of political initiatives in Northern Ireland.[9]

Other scholars, however, paint a more complex picture. Political sociologist and media studies scholar David Miller, for example, has argued that whilst it was susceptible to exploitation by the British state for propaganda purposes, the media was never simply an instrument of the government. Miller argues that a complex mixture of restrictions was imposed on both the press and broadcast media by the government and state organisations such as the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) and the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). These included economic considerations, direct and self-censorship, legal pressure and intimidation. He contends that journalists tended to mistake authority for credibility, which meant that they often favoured the view put forward by the state. Nevertheless, 'a significant public service ethos remains in broadcasting and that the ideology of the "fourth estate" remains in parts of the press', proving at times an important check on the government in Northern Ireland.[10] The extent to which the media was able to challenge the government and other state agencies was dependent on various factors, above all on the balance of political power. The weaker the government, the easier it was for journalists to challenge its authority. Despite this, the press and television offered important criticism of successive British governments, complicating news coverage of the 'Troubles'.[11]

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[8] Greg Scott Campbell, 'The BBC and the Troubles: 1968-1998', (PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2016), 5; 79.
[9] Alan Parkinson, *Ulster Loyalism and the British Media* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998).
[10] Miller, *Don't Mention the War*, 275.
[11] *Ibid*, 273-83.

Journalists have themselves produced numerous accounts drawing on their experiences reporting the 'Troubles', which demonstrates their desire to investigate beyond the information given to them by state organisations to explore different perspective and engage with the complexities of the conflict. In his recent autobiography for example, Jeremy Paxman, describes his experiences as a reporter covering the Northern Ireland conflict, first for BBC Northern Ireland's *Spotlight* and later *Tonight* and *Panorama*. He explores the 'Troubles' within their historic context and passes comment on the dilemma of trying to report political violence without giving terrorists a propaganda platform.[12] Similarly, RTÉ and the *Observer* journalist, Kevin Myers' 2006 memoir *Watching the Door* offers an autobiographical account of Northern Ireland in the 1970s.[13] Veteran Northern Ireland correspondent Peter Taylor has produce numerous books on the conflict including his Northern Ireland trilogy, which explores the 'Troubles' from the perspectives of the three key participants: *Provos: The IRA and Sinn Féin*, *Loyalists*, and *Brits: The War against the IRA*.[14] Others have focused on specific events or key figures in the conflict, perhaps the most noteworthy example of this is *Guardian* journalist David Beresford's *Ten Men Dead*, which chronicles the 1981 Hunger Strikes.[15] Most recently, Deric Henderson and Ivan Little have compiled a collection of stories from sixty-eight newspaper and television journalists, recounting their experiences of working in Northern Ireland during the conflict.[16]

Academics have also carried out research on specific areas of the media during the 'Troubles'. This includes the work of Jean Seaton, Aogán Mulcahy, Kirsten Sparre and Graham Spencer. Collectively, these scholars have argued that the British media offered a more critical view of the conflict than has previously been recognised. Seaton for example, has demonstrated how the BBC resisted efforts by the British government to impose direct censorship on the broadcast media.[17] Mulcahy has shown that newspapers offered a critical view of the government's criminalisation policy in their coverage of the hunger strikes.[18] Furthermore, Sparre and Spencer have argued that the media played a central role in the peace process, between 1994 and 1998, acting as a conduit for negotiations when face-to-face discussion was not possible.[19]

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[12] Jeremy Paxman, *A Life in Questions* (London: William Collins, 2016).
[13] Kevin Meyers, *Watching the Door: A Memoir 1972 – 1978* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2006).
[14] Peter Taylor, *Loyalists: Ulster's protestant paramilitaries*, (London: Bloomsbury, 1999); Peter Taylor, *Provos: the IRA and Sinn Fein* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998); Peter Taylor, *Brits: The War against the IRA* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002).
[15] David Beresford, *Ten Men Dead: The Story of the 1981 Irish hunger strike* (London: HarperCollins*Publishers*, 1994).
[16] Henderson and Little, *Reporting the Troubles*. Other books and memoirs on the 'Troubles' by journalists include: Robert Fisk, *Point of No Return: Strike which broke the British in Ulster* (London: André Deutsch, 1975); David McKittrick and David McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles: A History of the Northern Ireland Conflict* (London: Viking, 2012); David McKittrick, Seamus Kelters, Brian Feeney and Chris Thornton (eds.), *Lost Lives: The stories of the men, women and children who died as a result of the Northern Ireland troubles*, (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1999); Martin Dillon, *The Enemy Within: IRA inside the United Kingdom* (London: Doubleday, 1994).
[17] Jean Seaton, 'The BBC and the 'Hidden Wiring' of the British Constitution: The Imposition of the Broadcasting Ban in 1988', *Twentieth Century British History*, 24, 3 (2013), 448-471.
[18] Aogán Mulcahy, 'Claims-Making and the Construction of Legitimacy: Press Coverage of the 1981 Northern Irish Hunger Strike', *Social Problems*, 42, 4 (1995), 449-467.
[19] Kirsten Sparre, 'Megaphone Diplomacy in the Northern Irish Peace Process: Squaring the Circle by Talking to Terrorists through Journalists', *The International Journal of Press/ Politics*, 6, 1 (2001), 88-104; Graham Spencer, 'The impact of television news on the Northern Ireland peace negotiations', *Media, Culture and Society*, 26, 5 (2004), 603-623; Graham Spencer, *The Media and peace: From Vietnam to the 'War on Terror'*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

Most recently, historian Robert Savage has challenged the belief that the British government dictated how the broadcast media covered the conflict. Focusing on the BBC, Savage considers how broadcasters questioned the decisions, policies and tactics of consecutive British governments in Northern Ireland. He argues that over the thirty years of violence the BBC provided insightful and critical commentary, becoming an 'integral part of the long and harrowing conflict'. Savage describes the mounting pressure brought to bear on broadcasters by successive governments and argues that, despite efforts to silence them, senior officials at the BBC produced informed and challenging coverage 'critical to comprehending and eventually resolving a long and bloody conflict'.[20] Savage's work represents a growing appreciation that the media played a more complex role in the 'Troubles' than has previously been acknowledged.

Despite these developments towards an understanding that the media had provided a more nuanced multi-dimensional approach, Curtis's thesis that the British media was merely a puppet of the state providing one-sided, over-simplistic coverage of events in Northern Ireland continues to be applied without question by many scholars of the 'Troubles' and related subjects. This is particularly apparent in the literature on the Irish in contemporary Britain. Sociologists in particular have carried out significant work on the Irish in Britain in the second half of the twentieth century. They have tended, however, to concentrate on the Irish experience of discrimination and invisibility. Sociologist Mary Hickman in particular has argued extensively that the Irish were subject to racial discrimination and that the media were in part responsible for this. Also involved in Irish activism during the 1980s, Hickman's conclusions align closely with the views of organisations such as the Irish in Britain Representation Group (IBRG), which campaigned extensively for ethnic recognition and against perceived anti-Irish discrimination. She disregards the view, held by many historians and sociologists writing in the 1980s and 1990s, that by the mid-twentieth century the Irish had assimilated into British society. Rather, Hickman argues that the Irish became an invisible ethnic group in Britain due to the masking effects of what she terms the 'myth of white homogeneity' constructed by the British state and race relations industry.[21] She contends that the Irish were subsumed into a white racial group, and labelled as no different from the white British population, as 'the dominant paradigm for understanding racism in Britain has been constructed on the basis of a black-white dichotomy', the Irish were therefore denied recognition of the discrimination they felt they suffered.[22] Maírtin Mac an Ghaill similarly argued that by 'over-racialising' non-white ethnicities, academics in particular, have denied the possibility of white groups being considered as racialised minorities.[23]

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[20] Robert Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles: Television, conflict and Northern Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 2-3.
[21] Mary J. Hickman and Bronwen Walter, 'Deconstructing Whiteness: Irish Women in Britain', *Feminist Review*, 50 (1995), 5-19.
[22] Mary J. Hickman, 'Reconstructing deconstructing 'race': British political discourses about the Irish in Britain', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21, 2 (1998), 289; 298-9.
[23] Máirtín Mac an Ghaill, 'The Irish in Britain: The invisibility of ethnicity and anti-Irish racism', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 26, 1 (2000), 137-47.

Since the 1990s, this notion of Irish invisibility has characterised the academic literature. Scholars from a range of disciplines have investigated the experiences of the Irish in Britain with the aim of making them visible again. Research has been carried out on Irish experiences of health care, the criminal justice system, employment and so forth.[24] Much of this focuses on disadvantage and discrimination. Perhaps the most comprehensive of these studies has been Hickman, and fellow social scientist Bronwen Walter's report, *Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain*, commissioned in 1994 by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE).[25] These studies have provided a wealth of oral testimony about the experiences of the Irish in Britain during the latter half of the twentieth century, shedding light on a vast range of subjects, not least the effects of the 'Troubles' on Britain's Irish population. As historian, Barry Hazley has argued, however, there is a tendency amongst scholars to treat these accounts as 'objective' fact and accept them at face value. In practice, a complex mixture of subjectivity, influenced by collective memory as well as personal experience, informs such testimony. Interrogating these subjectivities can reveal how individuals negotiate and reconstruct their experiences through the prism of a collective narrative.[26] This is particularly relevant to understanding how the 'Troubles' were recalled, a period when individuals might have formed or repressed certain memories in order to deal with a time of crisis.

The impact of the 'Troubles' has been a prominent theme in the literature on the Irish in Britain. Most scholars have rightly argued that the 'Troubles' marked a period when the Irish were once again imagined as a subversive threat within Britain. Paddy Hillyard's examination of experiences of anti-terrorism legislation in Britain, demonstrates how the association of terrorism with the Irish resulted in Irish people in Britain being constructed as a suspect community.[27] Hazley, on the other hand, investigates how Irish migrants recall and negotiate their experiences of the Manchester bombing in June 1996. He argues that the suspicion experienced by the Irish produced distinct forms of Irish migrant subjectivity, shaping the way in which individuals comprehended their memories of the 'Troubles'.[28] Graham Dawson, Jo Dover and Stephen Hopkins' edited volume explores the response to, engagement with, and memories of the Northern Irish 'Troubles' in Britain through the experiences of different groups, including Irish communities, families and individuals subject to anti-terrorism legislation, miscarriages of justice and associated anti-Irish racism.[29] Most recently, Sarah O'Brien, Gavin Schaffer

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[24]See amongst others Liam Greenslade, Maggie Pearson and Moss Madden, *Generations of an Invisible Minority: The Health and Well Being of the Irish in Britain* (Institute of Irish Studies: University of Liverpool, 1992); P.J. Bracken and P. O'Sullivan, 'The Invisibility of Irish Migrants in British Health Research', *Irish Studies Review*, 9, 1 (2001), 41-51; Paddy Hillyard, *Suspect Communities People's Experience of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts in Britain,* (London: Pluto Press, 1993); Patricia Walls and Rory Williams, 'Sectarianism at work: accounts of employment discrimination against Irish Catholics in Scotland', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 26, 4 (2003), 631-661; Bronwen Walter, *Outsiders inside: whiteness, place and Irish women* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

[25] Mary Hickman and Bronwen Walter, *Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain* (London: Commission for Racial Equality, 1997).

[26] Barry Hazley, 'Re/negotiating "suspicion": exploring the construction of self in Irish migrants' memories of the 1996 Manchester bomb', *Irish Studies Review*, 21, 3 (2013), 327.

[27] Hillyard, *Suspect Communities*.

[28] Hazley, 'Re/negotiating "suspicion", 327.

[29] Graham Dawson, Jo Dover and Stephen Hopkins (eds.), *The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain: Impacts, engagements, legacies and memories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

and Saima Nasar have examined the Irish experience of hostility after the Birmingham pub bombings in 1974. Whilst O'Brien explores the strategies employed by the Irish in Birmingham to deal with the effects of the bombings, Schaffer and Nasar consider the extent to which Irish migrants were victims of racism in the aftermath of the attacks.[30]

Much of the scholarship on the Irish in Britain includes references to the British media and its role in amplifying the hostility experienced by many Irish people during the 'Troubles'. These studies assume that the media was prejudicial and routinely misrepresented events in Northern Ireland, provoking public anger towards the Irish in Britain, without properly examining the content of the media's coverage of the conflict. They frequently cite Curtis without question or comment, failing to engage with the broader discussion of the media and its role in the 'Troubles'. Surprisingly, absolutely no reference is made in the existing literature to her activism, or indeed that of other scholars who have written extensively on this topic and who also campaigned on Irish issues in the 1980s, let alone any consideration of how this might have influenced her views. As this thesis argues, the reality of the media's coverage was far more complex. To fully understand how the media contributed to the lived experiences of the Irish in Britain during the late twentieth century, a more thorough examination is needed of a broader spectrum of media coverage of the 'Troubles', and the way in which Britain's Irish responded to it.

Sociologists Henri Nickels, Lyn Thomas, Mary Hickman and Sara Silvestri have gone some way to addressing this gap in two studies which explore the British newspaper coverage of the Irish and Muslim communities between 1974 and 2007.[31] They argue that Irish and Muslim communities were constructed as 'suspect' by the press, asserting that newspapers placed an onus on both communities to stand against extremism and defend so-called 'British values', positioning them simultaneously inside and outside of Britishness. In her doctoral thesis, Sarah Morgan explores the racialisation of the Irish by newspapers and television programmes and how this affected the lived experiences of the Irish in Britain, paying particular attention to the impact of media coverage of the 'Troubles'. Morgan argues that the press and broadcast media used trait-laden, symbolic stereotypes to portray the Irish, which essentialised them as 'other' and reinforced racialised understanding of Irish people and Ireland within British society. She argues that Irish people living in Britain were aware of, and rejected, the way in which the media portrayed them and believed it informed their interactions with the British.[32]

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[30] Sarah O'Brien, 'Negotiations of Irish identity in the wake of terrorism: the case of the Irish in Birmingham 1973-74', *Irish Studies Review*, 25, 3 (2017), 372-394; Gavin Schaffer and Saima Nasar, 'The white essential subject: race, ethnicity, and the Irish in post-war Britain', *Contemporary British History*, 31, 2 (2018), 209-230.

[31] Henri C. Nickels, Lyn Thomas, Mary J. Hickman and Sara Silvestri, 'Constructing 'suspect' communities and Britishness: Mapping British press coverage of Irish and Muslim communities, 1974-2007', *European Journal of Communication*, 27, 2 (2012), 135-151; Henri C. Nickels, Lyn Thomas, Mary J. Hickman and Sara Silvestri, 'De/Constructing "Suspect" Communities: A critical discourse analysis of British newspaper coverage of Irish and Muslim communities, 1974-2007', *Journalism Studies*, 13, 3 (2012), 340-355.

[32] Sarah Morgan, 'The Contemporary Racialization of the Irish in Britain: an investigation into media representations and the everyday experience of being Irish in Britain' (PhD thesis, University of North London, 1997).

These studies have provided valuable insights into media representations of the 'Troubles'; however, they focus on a limited sample of the vast amount of media coverage on the conflict. Morgan based her research on sampling newspapers from every second month of 1992, as well as carrying out a limited survey of television dramas broadcast between September and December 1993. Consequently, she could only provide a snapshot of the media's coverage in the early 1990s. During this period, political initiatives in Northern Ireland were starting to indicate progress. There was also an emerging shift in British attitudes towards the Irish at this time. The Irish were increasingly viewed in a more positive light by the media. As a result, the way the media reported on Northern Ireland was becoming markedly different from coverage in the 1970s and 1980s. Morgan's methodological approach does not allow for any consideration of how coverage might change over time. Neither does it allow her to examine the media's response to key incidents, for example the hunger strikes or the Birmingham pub bombings, which were essential to how many British people understood the 'Troubles'. Nickels *et al*., on the other hand, focused solely on high-profile incidents, such as the shooting of IRA volunteer Diarmuid O'Neill in 1996. The events they chose took place almost exclusively in Britain, and so do not offer a sense of how coverage of what was happening in Northern Ireland itself affected the Irish in Britain. They also fail to contextualise their findings by considering media representations during periods of relative calm. This prevents them from establishing the significance of the media response to these incidents, whether newspapers were reacting in a knee-jerk manner to serious and often harrowing events, or whether their response was representative of coverage of the 'Troubles' in general. To ascertain more fully how the British media presented the 'Troubles', and its part in fostering suspicion and hostility towards the Irish living in Britain, a much wider sample is required.

As we have seen, few historians have ventured to study the media during the 'Troubles'. The vast majority of the scholarly work on the Irish in Britain during this period and the media's coverage of the conflict has been produced instead by social scientists and political activists. They have tended to concentrate on controversial incidents without providing context or considering the extent to which these represent coverage of the conflict overall. This thesis offers a much-needed historical perspective, locating the media's coverage of the 'Troubles' within its wider political milieu and within the context of broader Anglo-Irish interactions over two centuries. This approach allows due attention to be given not only to key episodes in the conflict, but also to the range of social, cultural and political factors that influenced them and how they were reported by the press and broadcast media. Rather than simply concentrating on events in isolation or fixating on acts of particular violence, this methodology ensures consideration of the conflict as a whole and will therefore achieve a more representative picture of how the media covered events in Northern Ireland at this time. It will also allow for the identification of both continuity and change in the media's coverage of the 'Troubles' and take into account the evolution of the media landscape during this period. In a similar manner, the thesis will endeavour to place its analysis of the experiences of the Irish in Britain during the conflict within the wider context of Irish settlement in Britain since the nineteenth century. This historical approach allows for consideration of continuity in the Irish experience, and thereby contributes to our understanding of constructions of

Irishness within Britain. This range of chronological contexts will facilitate a more informed historical assessment than is evident in much of the social science accounts of the 'Troubles', which inevitably start in 1968.

This thesis will demonstrate that the British media reported the conflict in Northern Ireland in a multifaceted and detailed manner, and that far from simply parroting the official line, the press and broadcast media resisted efforts by the state and others to dictate how the 'Troubles' were reported. Naturally, the opinions and motives of elements of the media and the state would on occasion coincide. Newspapers and television programmes, however, explored the violence from a variety of angles, both engaging with the complexities of the conflict and challenging the policies and decisions of the British government. At times this included calls from some quarters within the media for the government to adopt a harder line on Northern Ireland. Though pressure from the government and controversy could hinder the media's efforts to provide the public with accurate and impartial reports on what was happening in the province, both the press and broadcast media endeavoured to produce informed coverage throughout the 'Troubles'.

The prevailing view amongst the Irish in Britain was that the media recapitulated the government line, producing one-dimensional, distorted coverage of events in Northern Ireland. As observed, this was disseminated by Irish community activists in the 1980s, who believed that the media played a significant role in the discrimination and harassment experienced by the Irish in Britain. It will be argued here that these activists were correct in maintaining that the media contributed to the hostile environment experienced by many Irish people living in Britain during the 'Troubles'. The tabloid press in particular played an important role in constructing a link in the public mind between the IRA and the Irish in Britain. This association meant that the Irish became scapegoats on whom the public could vent their fear and anger. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the press and broadcasting bodies failed to engage with the complexities of the conflict or to provide a critical view of the role of the British state. This interpretation has, however, become ingrained in the collective narrative of the Irish experience in Britain. The thesis will explore how this view informed the way individuals have comprehended their personal experiences and coloured the way in which many Irish people perceived the media. It will argue that these stereotyped impressions of the media have subsequently held sway over public discourse, political discussion and academic debate, preventing a full understanding of the nuances of its coverage of Northern Ireland.

The thesis is based on a systematic analysis of the British press and television coverage throughout the 'Troubles'. For many people in Britain, the media was their primary source of information on Northern Ireland, and so newspapers and television programmes were crucial in the formation of public opinion. This was understood by all sides who sought to influence how the media presented the conflict in an effort to further their position. Examining the print and broadcast media's coverage therefore casts light on events in Northern Ireland, how they were understood in Britain, and consequently how the British state responded to the escalating crisis. To date, however, no scholar has

embarked on a thorough survey of both the newspaper and television coverage over the course of the entire conflict. This thesis, in examining the two medias, will explore how the 'Troubles' were presented across different platforms, which will offer a more complete picture of how the media framed events in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, by exploring archival material and oral histories on the Irish in Britain, the thesis explores their lived experiences during the 'Troubles' and what influence media representations of the conflict had on their daily lives.

Given the sheer volume of media coverage generated by thirty years of conflict, it is impossible to cover every individual news story. Consequently, the thesis focuses on six key years: 1973-4, 1980-1 and 1995-6. In doing so, it covers the full breadth of the 'Troubles', examining many of the important incidents in the conflict, including the bombing campaign in England, the hunger strikes and the peace process. This approach allows for an examination of media coverage during periods of relative calm, as well as heightened political violence, to gain a fuller understanding of how the print and broadcast media represented the conflict, and crucially to track change over time.

The analysis of print media is based on a detailed examination of four of the most popular British daily newspapers: *The Sun*, *The Guardian*, *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Telegraph*. These represent the different ownership, styles, political opinions and readership that characterised the British press during the latter half of the twentieth century. The *Daily Mirror* until the late 1970s was the highest-selling national newspaper in Britain. In 1975, the paper circulated on average 3,968,000 copies daily. Although this figure declined slightly, in 1988 the paper still circulated an average of 3,157,000 copies a day.[33] Owned by publishers Reed International, the tabloid was sold in 1984 to former Labour MP Robert Maxwell. Maxwell was succeeded on his death in 1991 by David Montgomery, himself a Northern Irishman from a conservative Presbyterian background. Despite Montgomery's personal politics, the *Mirror* continued to take a left-wing position throughout this period.[34] In 1978, the *Sun* overtook the *Mirror* as the nation's best-selling newspaper, circulating on average 3,741,000 copies daily. By 1988, this figure had risen to 4,219,000. The paper was bought in 1969 by Rupert Murdoch, who relaunched it as a tabloid targeted towards a mass working-class market.[35] Though it claimed to be non-partisan, throughout the 1970s, the *Sun* became closely associated with right-wing politics, consolidating its Tory-turn by endorsing Margaret Thatcher's election campaign in 1979.[36] The *Daily Telegraph* on the other hand, was the highest-selling British broadsheet, circulating on average 1,433,000 copies a day at its peak in 1980. The paper traditionally positioned itself as unapologetically Conservative. It was bought in 1985 from the Berry family by Canadian businessman Conrad Black. Finally, owned by the Scott Trust, the *Guardian* represented the centre-left. At its height in 1985, the

[33] All readership figures are taken from Audit Bureau of Circulations, Press Council Annual Reports cited in Colin Seymour-Ure, *The British Press and Broadcasting since 1945* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 28-9.
[34] Chris Horrie, *Tabloid Nation: From the Birth of the Daily Mirror to the Death of the Tabloid* (London: André Deutsch Ltd, 2003).
[35] James Curran and Jean Seaton, *Power without Responsibility: The Press and Broadcasting in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1997), 93.
[36] Peter Chippindale and Chris Horrie, *Stick It Up Your Punter!: The Uncut Story of The Sun Newspaper* (London: Faber and Faber LtD, 2013), 57-74.

paper averaged a circulation of 487,000 copies daily. A close and critical reading of these titles will allow for comparison between the approaches and perspectives of different newspapers, providing a detailed, representative understanding of how the British press presented the Northern Ireland 'Troubles'.

The thesis also investigates the BBC, ITV and Channel 4's current affairs coverage of the conflict. Since it was established in 1922, the BBC has become central to the media ecology of the United Kingdom and subsequently in the formation of public opinion. Throughout the 'Troubles' it played an important role in disseminating and shaping news about Northern Ireland. The BBC's status as a publicly funded body, however, meant it was vulnerable to government pressure, which complicated the broadcaster's efforts to reliably inform viewers of events taking place in Northern Ireland. ITV on the other hand, was established in 1959 as a commercial service, and consisted of a network of separate regional television channels run by different franchise companies. Though ITV was not reliant on public funding, the British government did have the ability to refuse to renew a company's franchise. Legal pressure and intimidation were also used in efforts to influence how ITV presented the conflict. Caught between the government and a desire to maintain journalistic integrity television programmes offer an interesting opportunity to explore the relationship between the state and the media during this period. Detailed analysis of the content of television programmes will enable the thesis to ascertain whether claims to editorial independence and integrity were put into practice. The thesis also explores the coverage by Channel 4, which was established in 1982 to challenge the duopoly of the BBC and ITV. It was intended that the new channel would free broadcasters from the constraints of impartiality and allow them to produce programmes for diverse audiences that would address difficult and controversial topics.[37] No other scholar has conducted an investigation into the coverage of all three broadcasting bodies during the 'Troubles'. A detailed examination of the reportage of Channel 4, as well as ITV and the BBC not only ensures full representation of how the conflict was presented by the media but allows for a comparison of the range of approaches to broadcasting the 'Troubles'.

In the case of television broadcasts, the thesis focuses on current affairs programmes; unlike news bulletins with restricted time slots, this format allowed broadcasters the space to explore the situation in Northern Ireland in detail. Current affairs programmes are a platform that allows for perceptions of recent events to be developed, providing a more fully formed assessment of the violence and the context in which it occurred. Miller has also argued that television current affairs broadcasting was favoured by the NIO who permitted journalists working on such programmes access to exclusive information. Whilst this aided investigative reporting, it also meant current affairs broadcasting was vulnerable to attempts by the state to control how information was used and interpreted.[38] An exploration of other television genres and representations of the conflict, though potentially illuminating,

[37] John Ellis, 'What did Channel 4 do for us? Reassessing the early years', *Screen*, 49, 3 (2008), 331-3.
[38] Miller, *Don't Mention the War*, 107-8.

was too ambitious for a project this size. Nonetheless, this thesis will provide a strong platform for a future comparative study of this nature.

The incomplete nature of the BBC, ITV and Channel 4 archives means that it is not possible to carry out an exhaustive investigation into all current affairs programmes produced on Northern Ireland. A number of programmes identified have not survived or have not been made accessible to researchers. As such this study will draw on the sample of programmes about Northern Ireland held by the British Film Institute (BFI), supplemented by programmes from the Peter Heathwood Collection and material available online through video-sharing websites such as Youtube and the BBC iPlayer. Relevant programmes were identified using television guides and databases, including BBC Genome, the BFI and the Television and Radio Index for Learning and Teaching. Additionally, CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet) has a useful, though by no means complete, list of television programmes about the conflict broadcast in the 1970s.[39] Television guides do not always advertise the content of individual episodes in series such as *Newsnight* or *Weekend World*, nor is this information always provided in film databases; as a result, some programmes may have been overlooked. Nevertheless, the thesis draws on a comprehensive and extensive sample of programmes, which cover a broad range of subjects relating to the conflict and provide a clear indication of how the broadcast media presented the 'Troubles'.

Whilst there is a surfeit of media content, it can be extremely difficult to access evidence of how newspapers and television programmes were received by their respective audiences. It is particularly hard to establish readers' reactions to specific articles or aspects of a programme. The general response to different newspapers can be gauged using readership figures, however, these do not indicate what aspects of the newspaper readers were responding to. Similarly, the Broadcasting Audience Research Board (BARB) provides viewing figures, which can give an indication as to how popular any given television programme was. A programme's placing on the viewing schedule can also indicate its popularity. Television programmes on Northern Ireland were routinely scheduled during prime time, which, at the very least, reveals that broadcasters viewed it as important that audiences were informed about the conflict. Again, this does not indicate what aspects of the coverage were responsible for provoking the strongest reaction from audiences.

With newspapers, a more detailed picture of how readers reacted to content can be gained through published letters. As Adrian Bingham warns, however, letters to the editor can be doctored, even invented, and there is no guarantee that they reflect a balance of all letters received. Even so, they can provide some useful insights; if nothing else the fact that newspapers received hundreds of letters testifies to their important in the lives of their readers.[40] In the case of television broadcasts, there are more detailed surveys of viewers' responses to particular programmes, but these are extremely rare.[41]

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[39] 'A List of British Television Programmes about the Conflict (1968 to 1978)', CAIN Web Service, https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/othelem/media/tv10yrs.htm [accessed 15 October 2019}.
[40] Adrian Bingham, *Family Newspapers?: Sex, Private Life, and the British Popular Press 1918-1978* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 9.
[41] One example is J. Mallory Wober 'Effects of Perceptions from seeing a Drama Documenary: The case of Who Bombed Birmingham' (London: International Broadcasting Authority, 1990). Wober surveyed the responses of 2,500

The thesis, therefore, also makes use of archival research undertaken at the BBC and ITV to gain a sense of the British public's response to the television coverage of Northern Ireland.[42] Letters, telephone logs and the minutes of management meetings all provide vital clues as to the viewers' response. They also give insight into how the government reacted to the broadcast media reports on the 'Troubles' and in turn how broadcasters negotiated the pressure brought to bear on them by politicians. Indeed, the rich range of internal documents and external correspondence allow the thesis to develop a picture of editorial strategies and attitudes that shaped the production of television programmes on Northern Ireland.

The analysis of the experience of the Irish in Britain also provides critical context. This study draws on literature by various Irish organisations in Britain held in the National Archives of Ireland and the Irish in Britain archives. It also makes use of archived interviews in which Irish people detail their experience of living in Britain during the 'Troubles', carried out as part of various community projects, and published interviews including those conducted by scholars Mary Hickman, Bronwen Walter, Sarah O'Brien and Marc Scully. This material provides insights into Irish perceptions of and responses to representations of the 'Troubles' in the media. It also allows for an examination of the Irish in Britain throughout the thirty-year conflict and the effect of the media on their daily lives. Hitherto, there has been little examination of the media and its impact on Britain's Irish population, the exploration of which can provide useful insights into constructions of Irish identities in Britain during the late twentieth century. As the thesis observes, however, the literature of Irish activist organisations such as the IBRG has dominated the archives. Their view that the British media covered Northern Ireland in a biased manner has greatly influenced the narrative of the Irish experience of living in Britain at this time, shaping the way people understood, and have remembered, newspaper and television reportage. The prevalence of these groups, despite only representing a section of the diverse Irish population in Britain, has resulted in the simplistic view that the media's coverage was one-dimensional being regularly repeated verbatim in academic literature. This is not to suggest that the views of the IBRG and other organisations had no merit; however, greater scrutiny of these organisations and their influence on the collective narrative of the Irish in Britain will allow for a fuller understanding of the nuances of, and reactions to media representations of the 'Troubles'.

To best explore these themes and capture the changing landscapes, the shifting context and the diversity of coverage, the thesis is organised chronologically with alternating chapters dedicated to the press and television coverage during each decade, as well as two chapters examining the Irish experience in Britain. Chapters one and two will investigate newspaper and television coverage during the early 1970s. Chapter one focuses on the press coverage of the bombing campaign in England, exploring the way the press renegotiated Irish and British identities in view of the IRA threat. It examines how newspapers used established national symbols and references to a shared history to evoke

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members of the Broadcaster's Audience Research Board to Granada's programme Who Bombed Birmingham, broadcast on 28 March 1990.

[42] Sadly,

a sense of national defiance, reinforcing concepts of a British identity. It also charts the resurrection of traditional racialised stereotypes of the Irish by the press, which contributed to the construction of the Irish living in Britain as 'other'. The chapter, investigates the role that newspapers played in creating a link between the IRA and the Irish within the British public's imagination, leading all Irish people living in Britain to be reimagined as a potential threat. Chapter two on the other hand, analyses television coverage of the conflict in Northern Ireland during the early 1970s. It discusses the pressure brought to bear on the broadcast media to support the government in its coverage and the efforts of broadcasters to resist these attempts to dictate the way the 'Troubles' were reported. The chapter demonstrates that the broadcast media was capable of placing the conflict within its broader historic and socio-economic context and of raising serious questions about the British government and security forces' actions in Northern Ireland. It also scrutinises the construction of Northern Ireland in the media as a place set apart from the rest of the United Kingdom by violence.

Chapters three and four both focus on the press and broadcast media coverage of the hunger strikes in 1980 and 1981. Chapter three examines the press coverage of the prison protests, acknowledging that most newspapers adhered to the official narrative, presenting the IRA hunger strikers as criminals. The chapter observes, however, that the press also presented the prisoners as victims, both of the conflict and of the IRA, raising important questions concerning the government's criminalisation policy. The chapter explores the newspapers reactions to the Anti-H Block campaign's electoral successes and to international condemnation of the handling of the hunger strikes. It also analyses press attitudes to political policies in Northern Ireland, in particular the government's pursuit of devolution and its efforts to improve Anglo-Irish relations. Chapter four surveys television coverage of the hunger strikes. It starts, however, by discussing the challenges of broadcasting under the premiership of Margaret Thatcher. The chapter then examines the way current affairs programmes presented the hunger strikes. It observes how broadcasters contextualised the strikes within the history of prison protests in Northern Ireland and examines grassroots nationalist support for the prisoners. It also looks at how television programmes addressed the impact of the hunger strikes on the Republic of Ireland and on Anglo-Irish relations. Finally, the chapter investigates television coverage of loyalist paramilitary activity during this period, demonstrating that broadcasters were capable of providing important analysis into the loyalist psyche.

Chapter five is concerned with the lived experiences of the Irish in Britain and how the media influenced their daily lives in the 1970s and 1980s. It begins by exploring the hostility and long-standing anti-Irish prejudices, which re-emerged during the IRA bombing campaign, and asks to what extent the media contributed to the resurgence in anti-Irish feeling. The chapter investigates how the Irish living in Britain responded to increased hostility and what this meant for Irish identities in Britain. It then explores the rise in Irish political and cultural activism in the 1980s. New Irish organisations such as the Irish in Britain Representation Group (IBRG) emerged during this period and campaigned extensively to obtain the status of a separate ethnic group and with it recognition of the discrimination the Irish experienced. The chapter examines the campaign against anti-Irish racism, for which many

organisations held the British media responsible, especially in its coverage of events in Northern Ireland. It also investigates how the views put forward by the IBRG and other Irish activist organisations have informed how Irish people interpret their personal experiences of living in Britain and how scholars have since understood both the experiences of the Irish in Britain and media representations of the Irish and Irish affairs, not least the 'Troubles'.

Both chapters six and seven focus on media coverage of the Northern Ireland peace process. Chapter six surveys press coverage of the negotiations, focusing in particular on the disputes surrounding the decommissioning of weapons. It explores press presentations of key participants in the process, especially the US government. The chapter also investigates the role of the press in facilitating the entry of militant republican party Sinn Féin into peace talks. Finally, it will examine press coverage of bomb attacks in English cities, which resumed in February 1996 with the collapse of the IRA ceasefire. Chapter seven examines television current affairs coverage of the peace talks. The chapter examines the broadcasting ban, its implications for reporting on Northern Ireland and the efforts broadcasters made to resist censorship. It then investigates the re-introduction of the IRA and Sinn Féin to the screen, and the role of the broadcast media in transforming Sinn Féin from terrorists into legitimate politicians. The chapter also explores how current affairs programmes presented and challenged other key participants in the peace process, in particular unionists, and their behaviour during the Drumcree standoff in 1996.

Finally, chapter eight looks at the lived experiences of the Irish in Britain during the 1990s. It begins by exploring how *Riverdance* and musicians like The Pogues revitalised Irish culture in the 1980s and 1990s to popular appeal, and how this made being Irish hip. It did not, however, prevent the Irish from being subject to hostility and surveillance as a reaction to IRA violence in England during the mid-1990s. The chapter examines the nature of the backlash experienced by the Irish following attacks, and the media's role in perpetuating the belief that all Irish people were potential terrorists.

The media was a valuable and powerful tool in the Northern Ireland conflict, and played a central role in shaping the ways in which events in the province were interpreted across Britain. Scrutiny of the newspaper and television coverage from this period reveals a wide range of viewpoints propagated across the media, and the emergence of a critical voice willing to engage with the complexities of the conflict. By exploring the nuances of the British media, its coverage of the violence and the effect this had on contemporaries, especially the Irish in Britain, this study contributes to a more comprehensive picture of the 'Troubles'.

Chapter One: Newspaper coverage of early 1970s.[1]

The early 1970s saw the violence in Belfast transferred to the streets of English cities. On 8 March 1973, two IRA car bombs exploded, one outside the Old Bailey and the other outside the Ministry of Agriculture in Whitehall. The bombs, which killed one and injured more than two hundred people, marked the start of a twenty-five-year campaign of violence in England.[2] Throughout the 'Troubles', bomb attacks in English cities dominated the media's coverage of the conflict, almost completely eclipsing events in Northern Ireland. As one IRA spokesperson observed 'in publicity terms one bomb in Oxford Street is worth ten in Belfast'.[3] British newspapers produced extensive, nuanced coverage of the campaign in England, designed to maintain morale and minimise the IRA threat. Using established symbols of Britishness and referencing a shared history, they sought to evoke a sense of national defiance and reinforce concepts of British identity.

In contrast with the press coverage at the time, which gave precedence to incidents in England, there is little scholarship on the IRA's campaign outside Northern Ireland. Graham Dawson, Jo Dover and Stephen Hopkins' recent edited collection examines the effects and legacies of the 'Troubles' in Britain, although it tends to focus on events in the province and their impact on the experiences of the British public.[4] Gary McGladdery offers the only comprehensive chronology of the IRA's activities in England between 1973 and 1997, exploring the impact on British policy towards Northern Ireland. His research also includes a limited television survey. He correctly observes the 'lopsided' nature of the media's coverage, which tended to prioritise less serious incidents in England.[5] McGladdery does not, however, examine the reasons for this imbalance. The undue attention given to bomb attacks in English cities was influenced by several considerations, preeminent amongst which was commercial necessity, as newspapers concentrated on stories that were of paramount interest to their readers.

More recently, sociologists Henri Nickels, Lyn Thomas, Mary Hickman and Sara Silvestri have turned their attention to the media's coverage of the England bombing campaign. They map the national and diasporic press coverage of political violence as part of a wider project comparing the experiences of the Irish and Muslim communities between 1974 and 2007.[6] They argue that the press participated in the construction of these communities as 'suspect', representing the Irish as a threat to the British state. Their research, however, focuses on high-profile events such as the Birmingham pub bombings and the introduction of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) in 1974, which they identified as catalysts for the emergence of a discourse relating to the perceived threat of the Irish in Britain. It is

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[1] Please note that many of the following ideas and arguments feature in an article based on this chapter: Roseanna Doughty, 'Seamus O'Fawkes and other characters', *Media History*, 24, 3-4 (2018), 440-457. See Appendix 1.
[2] Gary McGladdery, *The Provisional IRA in England: The Bombing Campaign 1973-1997* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), 61-7.
[3] Christopher Walker, 'If the new Convention breaks down- how close will Ulster be to the brink?', *The Times*, 7 May 1975.
[4] Dawson, Dover and Hopkins, *The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain*.
[5] McGladdery, *The Provisional IRA in England*, 6.
[6] Nickels, Thomas, Hickman and Silvestri, 'Constructing 'suspect' communities and Britishness', 135-151; Nickels, Thomas, Hickman and Silvestri, 'De/Constructing "Suspect" Communities', 340-355.

unsurprising therefore that their findings show that coverage of the role newspapers played in fostering an attitude of suspicion towards the Irish living in Britain, a wider sample of press articles is required, which is not limited to high-profile incidents.

This chapter builds on the work of Nickels *et al*., carrying out more detailed historical analysis of the press and the IRA's campaign in England. It establishes a clearer picture of the complexities that characterised the newspaper coverage during this period and seeks to situate it within the context of the wider conflict. In particular, it examines newspapers' active participation in the renegotiation of Irish and British identities. The bombing campaign in England during the early 1970s will be the key focus. Drawing on a systematic analysis of the *Sun*, *Guardian*, *Daily Mirror* and the *Daily Telegraph*, the chapter examines how the print media reported on IRA activity in England. It argues that the press responded to the bombings by evoking traditional stereotypes of British fortitude. Newspapers (re)constructed tropes of Britishness, drawing on Second World War iconography and national motifs, the use of which was intended to diminish the IRA threat and reassure, whilst allowing newspapers to target a national readership. In doing so, the chapter will contribute to our broader understanding of constructions of British identities, especially during times of crisis. At the same time, it explores how newspapers renegotiated Irish identity in Britain. The chapter observes how, in the light of the IRA bombing campaign, long-standing Irish stereotypes resurfaced contributing to the representation of Irish people in Britain as an internal 'other'. It investigates the role newspapers played in perpetuating the notion that all Irish people were 'suspect', contributing to a resurgence of anti-Irish prejudice in the early 1970s.

In the early 1970s, England experienced one of the most intense periods of IRA violence. Between March 1973 and 1976 the IRA carried out eighty-six attacks resulting in death or injury; in this period alone fifty-eight people died, and 916 were injured.[7] British newspapers, outraged by the attacks on English cities, responded with defiance. The *Daily Telegraph* declared that 'the IRA is sadly ill-informed if it believes that the population of London is liable to succumb to a campaign of terror bombing and demand the withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland'.[8] To begin with, the *Telegraph* argued that the bombings in England were a last desperate effort to intimidate Britain out of Northern Ireland by an IRA in retreat. The paper commended the public's composure in response to the bombings, 'One is tempted to say that there has been *no* public reaction, so phlegmatic have been the inconvenienced crowds at Lord's and Euston, so unterrorised the shoppers still flock to Oxford Street'; and confidently predicted that 'A terror campaign in London could therefore be little more than a short, ineffective and bloody postscript to the battle for Northern Ireland'.[9]

In response to the bombings, all four newspapers evoked the trope of the 'British' as a stoic people facing down the IRA threat. By representing the public as strong-willed and resilient, the press

[7] McGladdery, *The Provisional IRA in England*, 3.
[8] 'On Guard', *Daily Telegraph*, 27 August 1973.
[9] 'A shock for London', *Daily Telegraph*, 22 August 1973; 'On Guard'.

endeavoured to reassure readers and sustain morale. Most newspapers also sought to encourage support for Britain's military and political efforts within Northern Ireland. At the same time, the use of this stereotype served to reinforce an idea of Britishness, cultivated by newspapers in order to create and maintain an imagined national community of readers.[10] The invocation of 'Britishness' to make news stories relevant to all potential readers is a tool used extensively by the press to market itself at a national level.[11] National identity is never a fixed notion and is continuously renegotiated, with the press playing a leading role in its construction. Benedict Anderson argued that the print media facilitates shared identities and a common language amongst a group of people, allowing individuals to share the same experience, and thereby feel part of the same community.[12] Following the Second World War, the decline of Britain as a world power and high levels of immigration, especially from the New Commonwealth, brought into question ideas of what it meant to be British. In the early 1970s, economic crisis, frequent industrial action and a quick succession of governments created instability, which eroded any sense of national cohesion. Against this backdrop, the IRA bombing campaign was used to help reconfigure a British national identity. As Linda Colley has observed, the construction of Britishness has relied on the presence of an, often hostile, 'other'.[13] Chris Waters has argued that post-war, black migrants were constructed as 'dark strangers' and contrasted with the white British population, redefining the boundaries of national belonging.[14] It can be argued that during the 1970s, the IRA were constructed as 'other' and contrasted with their victims in a similar manner, in order to bolster what it meant to be British. The close association of the IRA with the Irish living in Britain meant that they too were cast as an internal 'other'.

To (re)construct a sense of British identity, newspapers used various discursive strategies, drawing on national stereotypes, symbols and a shared national history to create the impression of unified public defiance. The *Daily Mirror* in particular, made use of popular memories of the Second World War.[15] As media scholar Martin Conboy has observed, the Blitz in particular has become a 'routine trope of audience-identification' in Britain, and as a result, almost all national crises have been viewed through this filter; the IRA's campaign in the early 1970s was no exception.[16] In the aftermath of the Old Bailey bombings, for example, the *Mirror* remarked that, 'The London, that took the blitz,

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[10] Martin Conboy, *Tabloid Britain: Constructing a community through language* (London: Routledge, 2006), 14.
[11] Martin Conboy, 'Introduction: How Journalism uses History', *Journalism Practice*, 5, 5 (2011), 514.
[12] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).
[13] Linda Colley, 'Britishness and Otherness: An Argument', *Journal of British Studies*, 31, 4 (1992), 326.
[14] Chris Waters, '"Dark Strangers" in our Midst: Discourse of Race and Nation in Britain, 1947-1963', *Journal of British Studies*, 36,2 (1997), 208.
[15] There is a considerable body of scholarship on the significance of the Blitz myth and Britishness, including Mark Connelly, *We Can Take It! Britain and the Memory of the Second World War* (Harlow: Pearson Educated Limited, 2004); Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattison (eds.), *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014); Geoff Eley, 'Finding the People's War: Film, British Collective Memory and World War II', *American Historical Review*, 106, 3 (2001): 818-838; Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Britain, 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
[16] Similarly, following the 7/7 London bombings, and more recently the Westminster and London Bridge attacks in 2017, the press made extensive use of Blitz imagery to uphold morale and bolster support for the war on terror. See Darren Kelsey, 'The myth of the "Blitz spirit" in British newspapers responses to the July 7th bombing', *Social Semiotics*, 23, 1 (2013), 83-99; Conboy, 'Introduction', 511.

and made cups of tea and jokes, is not going to have its nerve shattered by bombs'.[17] The paper drew on the myth that the British public responded unanimously to Germany's aerial bombardment in 1940 with defiance and resilience, in order to summon a similar strength of character in the face of the IRA threat.[18] It used the idea of the 'Blitz spirit' to encourage the population to show stoicism in defiance of the IRA by reminding the nation of its capabilities. In this example, the *Mirror* drew on the idea of the British ability to respond to crisis with humour, which is also tied to the Blitz myth. The paper suggests that on coming face-to-face with the IRA, Londoners had recaptured the wartime humour with which their predecessors had responded to German bombing raids.[19] That the IRA had chosen to target London, which was at the heart of the Blitz narrative, only served to enhance this parallel. Accordingly, the Britishness being constructed by newspapers reflected a London-centric view of the population.[20] As the Blitz myth necessarily suppressed diversity in order to construct ideas of consensus and unity during the Second World War, the resurrection of this myth in response to the IRA attacks necessitated a deliberate failure to acknowledge that 'the British' are an amorphous group. The Blitz myth nevertheless allowed the paper to draw a connection across the generations that suggested a 'hereditary defiance' in the face of adversity.[21] It also served to place the IRA's campaign within a long history of suffering which London, and by extension Britain, had endured with characteristic resilience.

By directly linking the bombings with the Blitz, the newspaper deftly equated the IRA with the Nazis and Hitler made frequent appearances. Following a spate of bombings in September 1973, the *Mirror* observed that, 'The terrorists will not break the nerve- or even start to break the nerve- of a nation that stood up to the weight of Hitler's bombs'.[22] Similarly, Figure 1 shows Hitler telling the IRA that 'Bombing doesn't work around here'.[23] Published in the aftermath of the Birmingham pub bombings which occurred on 21 November 1974, killing twenty-one people, cartoonist Keith Waite used the image of Hitler to reinforce the *Mirror*'s editorial line, striving to minimise the perceived IRA threat and reassure readers by reminding them of a time when Britain had been victorious against a far greater enemy. The paper also intended to encourage support for Britain's military and political efforts within Northern Ireland. In its use of Second World War analogies, the *Mirror* presented the IRA unequivocally as the aggressors, and Britain as their intended victim.

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[17] 'The Answer to Bloody Terror', *Daily Mirror*, 9 March 1973.
[18] Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Pimlico, 1992).
[19] Darren Kelsey, *Media, Myth and Terrorism: A Discourse-Mythological Analysis of the 'Blitz Spirit' in British Newspapers Responses to the July 7th Bombings* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 88-9.
[20] Kelsey, *Media, Myth and Terrorism*, 85.
[21] Kelsey, 'The myth of the "Blitz spirit"', 89.
[22] 'The terror that must fail', *Daily Mirror*, 11 September 1973.
[23] McGladdery, *The Provisional IRA in England*, 90.

Figure 1: Keith Waite, "Bombing doesn't work around here- I've tried it", *Daily Mirror*, 27 November 1974.

The primary purpose of the Nazi comparison, however, was to revile the paramilitaries and reinforce the fact that the bombers were nothing more than brutal murderers. As Mark Connelly has pointed out, after the Second World War, Hitler became a touchstone to measure evil by.[24] Figure 2 features Hitler offering the IRA the podium for 'the most odious murderers in history', whilst Stalin, Emperor Nero, Genghis Khan and Attila the Hun step down. Produced in the *Sun* by political cartoonist Stanley Franklin after the Birmingham bombings, it connects the IRA with the history of brutality, suggesting that the republican paramilitaries had surpassed all five tyrants in cruelty. The cartoon reflects how newspapers interpreted the IRA campaign in terms of a classic fight between good and evil. By reducing the bombings to this simple binary, the newspapers avoided penetrating discussion of the motivations which lay behind the IRA's actions, and crucially evaded any examination of the extent to which Britain might share some culpability in bringing about a situation whereby these attacks could take place.[25] Such a myopic approach, sought to justify retaliatory action on the part of the British state without addressing the question as to whether or not this was appropriate. It is also interesting to note that the *Guardian* was the only paper not to immediately assume that the IRA were behind the bomb

[24] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 270.
[25] Kelsey, 'The myth of the "Blitz spirit"', 95.

attacks prior to them claiming responsibility.[26] The comparison made between the IRA and the Nazis served to transform what was essentially domestic terrorism into a foreign threat, contributing to the idea of the Irish as 'other' and Northern Ireland as 'a place apart'.[27]

Figure 2: Stanley Franklin, "It's All Yours", *The Sun*, 23 November 1974.

There were those who questioned the appropriateness of evoking Blitz mythology. Following the Old Bailey bombings, *Sun* columnist Jon Akass refuted claims that London had responded to the attack with 'Blitz spirit': 'I imagine there will be much talk now about the spirit of London under the Blitz but the mood was nothing like that. The mood of London yesterday had more of exasperation in it than anger'.[28] It could be argued that Akass played down the Blitz comparison fearing it would lend undue legitimacy to the IRA. The *Sun*, nonetheless, sought to foster a sense of Britishness and British stoicism, using national motifs instead of Blitz imagery. That the IRA targeted buildings of national and historic importance provided a wealth of iconic symbols on which to draw.

Following the Old Bailey bombings, the *Sun* published a cartoon of the statue of Lady Justice situated on top of the Central Criminal Court, with her left hand, which hold the scales of justice, severed (Figure 3). By featuring this metaphoric symbol of two concepts seen as integral to Britishness, law and justice, cartoonist Paul Rigby suggested that the attack on the capital, and its judicial system, had signified an attack on Britain and core British values. The statue's intact sword arm, however, indicates that Britain and justice would prevail and promises swift retribution against IRA savagery. This is

[26] 'London's Bloody Thursday', *The Guardian*, 9 March 1973; 'The bomb in the Tower', *The Guardian*, 18 July 1974.
[27] Kelsey, 'The myth of the "Blitz spirit"', 88.
[28] Jon Akass, 'Please God, we never got used to the bombs', *The Sun*, 9 March 1973.

reinforced by the caption, taken from the eighteenth-century poet laureate John Dryden's *The Cock and the Fox*, which assures the reader that 'tardy Justice will o'ertake the crime'. Dryden's poem is an adaptation of Chaucer's *The Tale of the Nun's Priest*. This nod to Britain's literary traditions served to buttress notions of a Britishness deeply rooted in history.

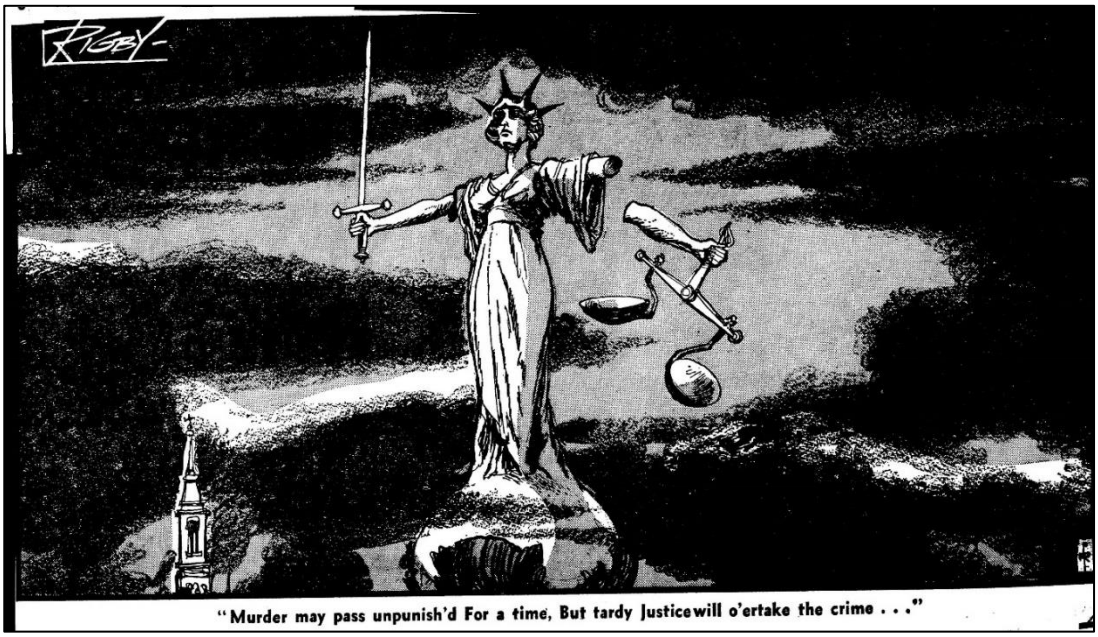

Figure 3: Paul Rigby, "Murder may pass unpunish'd For a time, But tardy Justice will o'ertake the crime", *The Sun*, 9 March 1973.

Born in Australia, Rigby had migrated to London in 1969 to help Rupert Murdoch relaunch the paper and worked as the *Sun*'s editorial cartoonist until November 1974.[29] Interestingly, the *Daily Mirror*'s cartoonist, Keith Waite, was not British either, hailing from New Zealand.[30] Their cartoons, however, played an important role in the newspapers' reconstruction of Britishness during the first months of the IRA's bombing campaign. Pictorial representations are an important part of the construction of national identities in the press. In order for a cartoon to be effective the reader must be able to interpret the message or joke being conveyed. The cartoonist, therefore, draws on easily recognised motifs of a shared culture. The reader's ability to interpret these helps reinforce notions of a shared identity; in much the same way as emphasising a shared history can promote common affiliations.[31] The humour inherent in cartoons also enables them to address ideas not as easily expressed in written reportage. This makes them valuable sources for establishing attitudes towards current

[29] 'Paul Rigby: Biography', *The British Cartoon Archive*, University of Kent, https://www.cartoons.ac.uk/cartoonist-biographies/q-r/PaulRigby.html [accessed 30 June 2019].
[30] 'Keith Waite: Biography', *The British Cartoon Archive*, University of Kent, https://www.cartoons.ac.uk/cartoonist-biographies/w-x/KeithWaite.html [accessed 30 June 2019].
[31] Michael de Nie, *The Eternal Paddy: Irish Identity and the British Press, 1798-1882* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2004), 34.

events.[32] Rigby and Waite's antipodean background is interesting given their role in the tabloids' reconfiguration of British identities during the early 1970s. Arguably their background allowed them to reflect more clearly on British characteristics and traits. As Krishan Kumar has argued, the observations of '"outsiders and émigrés" help… to see more clearly what is not always obvious to the native themselves'.[33] That said, it is also important to note that both cartoonists would produce several drafts from which the next day's cartoon would be selected by the editor. Waite acknowledged that his cartoons were often rejected 'because they did not conform with the newspaper's point of view'.[34] The published work of both cartoonists, represented their respective newspaper's editorial line as much as their own opinions and prejudices.

Figure 4: Paul Rigby, '... Five, four, three, two, one', *The Sun*, 18 June 1974.

Following the Westminster Palace bombing on 17 June 1974, which injured six people, Rigby again evoked ideas of Britishness in an effort to reassure readers. Figure 4 depicts a monstrous creature, labelled violence, about to destroy two of the central pillars of British society, law and democracy.[35] In the background, used detonators stand beside fragmented columns, suggesting that the IRA had already succeeded in destabilising the foundations of British society. Two remaining pillars, civilisation and decency have yet to be primed; Rigby warns that if the IRA are allowed to continue, these would be next. In attacking Westminster, a symbol of law and democracy and fundamental British values, the bombers posed a threat to the British way of life. On the horizon, however, Big Ben rises from the smoke in defiance of the IRA's attack. Rigby uses the image of the clock tower not only to signify the

[32] de Nie, *The External Paddy*, 34.
[33] Krishan Kumar, 'Negotiating English Identity: Englishness, Britishness and the Future of the United Kingdom', *Nations and Nationalism*, 16, 3 (2010), 472.
[34] 'Keith Waite: Biography'; 'Paul Rigby: Biography'.
[35] McGladdery, *The Provisional IRA in England*, 238.

bomb's location, but also to represent British resilience and courage. He draws Big Ben undamaged and operational indicating that despite the bomb, the British government and the values it stood for would endure.

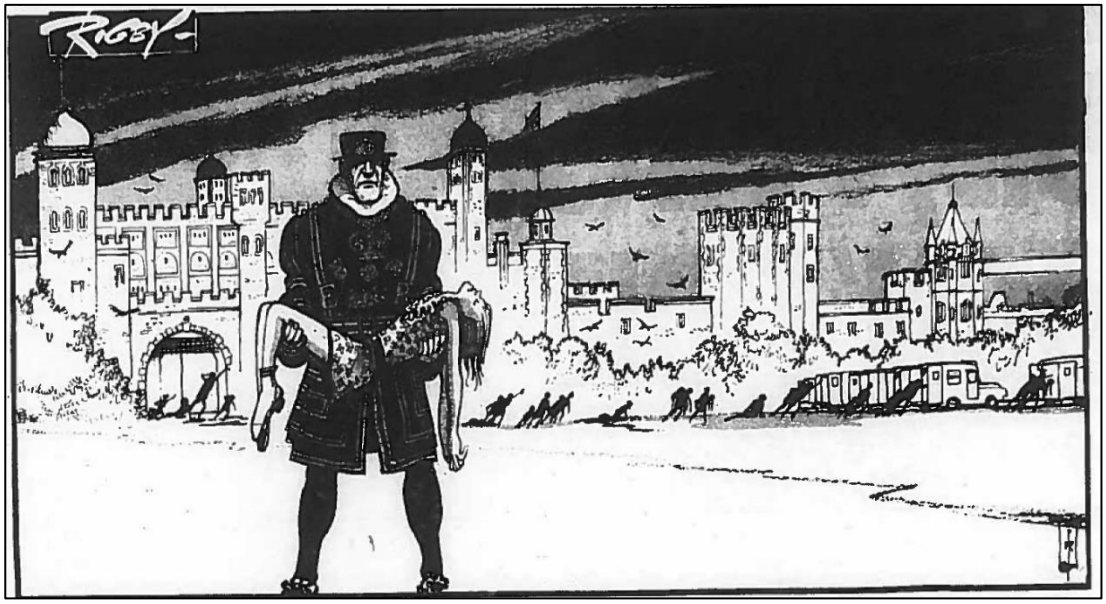

Figure 5: Paul Rigby, 'Satisfied?', *The Sun*, 19 July 1974.

On 17 July 1974, the IRA detonated a bomb at the Tower of London, another historic landmark, killing one woman and injuring forty-two others.[36] The attack caused particular outrage as many of those injured were children visiting the popular tourist attraction on the first day of the school holidays. Rigby's cartoon published the following day emphasised the pointlessness and brutality of the bombing, as well as the dignity and defiance of Britain's response (Figure 5). Drawing on another trope of British identity, the cartoon portrays a Beefeater, resembling a Marvel comic superhero, carrying the inert body of a young woman, simply captioned 'Satisfied?'. The Beefeaters, whose history can be traced back to the Norman Conquest, have traditionally been used to represent 'a sense of "national" permanence'.[37] As historian Paul Ward has argued, they emerged in the nineteenth century as a symbol of historical continuity in response to challenges to the state from the Luddite and Chartist movements. Since then, they have frequently been used to construct a sense of national identity associated with stability and longevity in response to national crises. That the Beefeaters are appointed from non-commissioned officers in the British Army, means that they have become a symbol that transcends class and therefore have come to represent national and class unity. In his use of the Beefeater motif, Rigby sought to

[36] *Ibid*, 79.
[37] Paul Ward, 'Beefeaters, British History and the Empire in Asia and Australasia', *Britain and the World*, 5, 2 (2012), 241-2.

harness concepts of British endurance and togetherness in order to reassure readers that Britain had withstood greater perils.[38]

Rigby further elevates the British character by contrasting it with the heinous nature of the IRA. The woman pictured in the cartoon is forty-seven-year-old Dorothy Household who died in the attack. Throughout the 'Troubles', newspapers were to focus on the plight of women and children caught up in the violence to emphasise the horror of the conflict and elicit a more powerful reaction from readers. Characterised as 'innocent' victims, their mutilation or death is seen as especially horrifying and the perpetrators of such violence beyond contempt.[39] The press, in common with the broadcast media, regularly employed the association between child- and female-victims and innocence to spotlight the contemptuousness of IRA bombers. The tabloids in particular, presented the IRA's female-victims as young, beautiful and by implication innocent, regardless of their true age or physical attributes, for example Rigby's depiction of Dorothy Household is of a significantly younger-looking woman.

Ironically, the *Sun* also concentrated on the youth and beauty of female bombers, Dolours and Marian Price. Journalist John Hiscock described the sisters as the 'pretty, mini-skirted leaders' of the IRA unit responsible for carry out the Old Bailey attack.[40] British newspapers frequently focused on the appearance of the Price sisters and other female Irish paramilitaries in coverage of the 'Troubles'. As linguist Jayne Steel has argued there was an expectation, even a demand, that female terrorists be young, beautiful and sexy.[41] It was often the case that they were presented as such, but as Figure 6 illustrates, just as often newspapers portrayed female republicans as monstrous harpies. The sexualisation of female terrorists allowed newspapers to deflect attention away from scrutinising the rationale behind the violence. This discourse operated on two levels, first by suggesting that the capacity of Irish republicanism for corroding something so beautiful accentuated the destructive nature of the movement (the paper failed to entertain the thought that these women could have consciously chosen to engage in political violence).[42] Second, it served to denigrate the bombers, dehumanising them by fetishisation, their sexiness presented as further indication of their perversity.[43] Steel argues that the media's

[38] The Beefeaters are closely associated with English history, which raises the question do they represent the UK, England or London? Paul Ward contends that the Beefeater is best viewed as representative of an Anglo-Britishness. He argues that their association with the monarchy and army, both of which make substantial claims to be British; and the crucial fact that those recruited to the Yeoman Warders (the Beefeaters) are from across the United Kingdom ensured that the Beefeater were symbols of the United Kingdom and not just England. (Paul Ward, 'The Beefeaters at the Tower of London, 1826-1914: Icons of Englishness or Britishness', in *Four Nations Approaches to Modern 'British' History: A (Dis)United Kingdom?'*, (eds.) Naomi Lloyd-Jones and Margaret Scull (London: Palgrave McMillan, 2018), 161-187).

[39] Lucy Newby, 'Victims, Participants or Peacemakers? Representations of children and young people in memorialisation of the Northern Irish 'Troubles'' (MSc thesis: University of Edinburgh, 2014), 17-19; Helen Brocklehurst, *Who's Afraid of Children? Children, Conflict and International Relations* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 14-18.

[40] John Hiscock, 'Bomb Gang in Scuffle as Girl is Freed', *The Sun*, 15 November 1973.

[41] Jayne Steel, 'Vampira: Representations of the Female Terrorist', *Irish Studies Review*, 6,3 (1998), 274.

[42] Steel, 'Vampira', 277; Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters and Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics*, (New York: Zed Books, 2007), 50.

[43] Sjoberg and Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters and Whores*, 45-9.

representations of female paramilitaries was reminiscent of 'the seductive and deadly qualities of Gothic vampires, draining the will and feeding off the blood of British soldiers and citizens'.[44]

Some newspapers made the link with vampires more explicit. On 3 April 1972, for example, female supporters of the IRA hijacked a meeting of the Women's Together peace movement and accused the attendees of being traitors.[45] *Daily Express* cartoonist Michael Cummings depicted the incident in Figure 6 and presents the women as vampires. Dehumanising political figures by portraying them as vampires or other monsters was a common trope in cartoons on Ireland dating back to nineteenth-century editions of *Punch*. One of the best known examples of this is 'The Irish "Vampire"', published on 24 October 1885, which featured the founder of the Irish National Land League, Charles Stewart Parnell, as a vampire bat hovering over the prostrate body of Erin (the female personification of Ireland). The cartoon suggested that Parnell and his supporters preyed on their fellow Irishmen, leeching the country's lifeblood.[46] In a similar manner, in Figure 6 Cummings denigrated the republican movement by portraying these women as vampires. The vampire was not the only Victorian character to be resurrected in the early 1970s with the purpose of ridiculing republican figures. Bernadette Devlin, the MP for Mid-Ulster and a prominent republican politician, though never a member of the IRA, was often depicted as either a monster or a petulant child.[47]

Figure 6: Michael Cummings, *Daily Express*, 5 April 1972.

[44] Steel, 'Vampira', 274-5.
[45] Simon Winchester, 'Catholic women's peace meeting wrecked by IRA', *The Guardian*, 4 April 1972.
[46] Michael de Nie, 'Pigs, Paddies, Prams and Petticoats: Irish Home Rule and the British Comic Press, 1886-93', *History Ireland*, 13,1 (2005), 45.
[47] Roy Douglas, Liam Harte and Jim O'Hara, *Drawing Conclusions: A Cartoon History of Anglo-Irish Relations 1798-1998* (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 1998), 284-5; John Darby, *Dressed to Kill: Cartoonists and the Northern Ireland Conflict* (Belfast: The Appletree Press, 1983),34-7.

In fact, the petulant child was used to represent Northern Ireland in general. On 21 May 1974, the *Guardian* published Figure 7 in response to the Ulster Worker's Council (UWC) Strike. The strike took place between 15 May and 28 May 1974 to protest against the Sunningdale Agreement, which attempted to introduce a power-sharing Executive in Northern Ireland. The strikers brought the province to a standstill, bringing power-sharing in Northern Ireland to an end.[48] Figure 7 illustrates the frustration felt within the press towards the strike. It shows Ulster represented as a child having a tantrum, threatening to 'stop breathing and die' because his parents, the Irish and British governments (represented by Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave and the newly-elected Harold Wilson) had asked him to do something he didn't want to. The cartoon indicated the inability of the child to perceive the reasonableness of the parent's request. It suggests that the Northern Irish were acting like petulant, spoilt children who lacked political maturity. Moreover, that they were engaging in wilful self-destruction by undermining the power-sharing initiative. Since the mid-nineteenth century Ireland has often been portrayed as an impetuous child in need of assistance, guidance and discipline from Britain, and in this manner cartoonists have sought to indicate Ireland's alleged inferiority.[49] Michael de Nie has observed that during the Home Rule Crises in the late nineteenth century, the Irish child was a popular theme, used to affirm the social and political immaturity of the Irish people, but also to consciously deny them the prospect of self-government. By drawing the Irish as children, cartoonists argued that Britain could not grant Ireland Home Rule any more than a parent could leave an infant to fend for itself.[50] Similarly, Gibbard suggested that the Northern Irish were proving themselves too childish to govern themselves, and that they continued to need the guidance of their political parents the British and Irish governments. The cartoon also suggested that Wilson and Cosgrave, cringing in the background, were being too soft touch with the strikers.

In the early 1970s, cartoonists drew on a host of long-established symbols of Ireland and the Irish in an effort to undermine the IRA threat. Scholars and activists, including Liz Curtis and John Kirkaldy, have pointed to the resurrection of the simian and monstrous Irishmen by the tabloids in their coverage of the 'Troubles'.[51] Figure 2 is a prime example, featuring a simianised IRA bomber recognisable by his black beret, sunglasses and monkey's tail. By portraying him as ape-like, cartoonist Keith Waite sought to signify the debased and inhuman nature of the bombers. Similarly, following the Westminster bombing, Rigby depicted the IRA as a hunched-back, Frankenstein-esq monster primed to blow up the British establishment (Figure 3). Other cartoonists also utilised the simian Irishman, Cummings and the *Evening Standard*'s cartoonist Jak specialised in drawing the Irish as ape-like, violent figures that bore a strong resemblance to the bestial 'Paddy' of Victorian caricatures.[52]

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[48] David McCann and Cillian McGrattan (eds.), *Sunningdale, the Ulster Workers' Council Strike and the Struggle for Democracy in Northern Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).
[49] de Nie, *The External Paddy*, 267.
[50] de Nie, 'Pigs, Paddies, Prams and Petticoats', 46.
[51] John Kirkaldy, 'English Cartoonists; Ulster Realities', *Eire-Ireland*, 16, 3 (1981), 27-42; Liz Curtis, *Nothing but the Same Old Story: The Roots of Anti-Irish Racism* (London: Information on Ireland, 1991).
[52] Kirkaldy, 'English Cartoonists', 34; Curtis, *Nothing but the Same Old Story*.

Figure7: Leslie Gibbard, *The Guardian*, 21 May 1974

The tradition of portraying the 'enemy' as ape- or animal-like dates back to the late eighteenth century and continues to the present day.[53] In the latter half of the nineteenth century, however, the simianised caricature came to be closely associated with the Irish. The Fenian movement saw the popularisation of images of the Irish as inhuman and violent. To underline the dangers of Fenianism, many cartoonists depicted the Fenian 'Paddy' as ape-like monsters.[54] What these cartoons reveal about the nature of nineteenth-century British attitudes towards the Irish has been the subject of much debate. L. Perry Curtis was first to suggest that the simian 'Paddy' reflected an increasingly racialised view of the Irish.[55] His arguments, however, have received significant criticism, most notably from Sheridan Gilley and Roy Foster. Gilley has refuted Curtis' claims that stereotypes of the Irish were necessarily racial, asserting that the Irish 'Paddy' was as much an Irish as a British creation. He argues that nineteenth-century attitudes towards the Irish were inconsistent and social commentators were as likely

[53] See James Gillray, 'Promised Horrors of the French Invasion', 20 October 1793 and 'The Consequences of a Successful French Invasion, 1 March 1798.
[54] L. Perry Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971; Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1997), 37. Citations refer to the Smithsonian edition.
[55] Curtis, *Apes and Angels*.

to be pro-Irish.[56] Foster concurred, arguing that the bestial 'Paddy' was only one of a variety of ways in which nineteenth-century cartoonists drew the Irish.[57] Both Gilley and Foster suggest that religion, class and political violence played a more significant role in shaping British prejudices towards the Irish than ideas of race. More recently, Michael de Nie has argued that in the nineteenth century race was used 'as a vehicle for expressing multiple anxieties and preconceptions, among them class concerns and sectarian prejudices'. Furthermore, for de Nie, conceptions of Irish identity were informed by a combination of ethnicity, religion and class: 'In British eyes the eternal Paddy was forever a Celt, a Catholic, and a peasant'.[58] Curtis's thesis, however, continues to be applied without question by many scholars, regardless of this on-going debate. For both Liz Curtis and John Kirkaldy, the resurrection of Victorian, simianised images of the Irish during the 'Troubles' is evidence of continued racism.[59]

The correlation between the ape-like, monstrous IRA featured in cartoons of the early 1970s and those of the Fenian era, certainly suggest that anti-Irish stereotypes persisted into the late twentieth century. As de Nie has argued however, in the nineteenth century simianised representations of the Irish were in the minority. The cartoons of *Punch* were populated by a host of other characters (mostly negative) which were used to represent Ireland and the Irish people, including 'Erin', the 'Irish child' and 'pig'.[60] The cartoon coverage in the early 1970s presents a similar diversity of characters. In addition to the ape-like 'Paddy', cartoonists employed a range of motifs common to Victorian cartoons. In Figure 4, for example, the image of Dorothy Household being carried from the Tower of London is distinctly reminiscent of nineteenth-century depictions of Erin, who was commonly featured in need of saving from the violent 'Paddy'. Her champion was usually Britannia or St George, both potent symbols of British- and Englishness.[61] In this instance, the Beefeater, another trope of British identity, is cast as the saviour. Nineteenth-century caricatures of the Irish persisted into the latter half of the twentieth century in more variety than Curtis and Kirkaldy have suggested.

Another established figure of nineteenth-century caricatures was Guy Fawkes.[62] There are several Irish cartoons of this period that allude to the Gunpowder Plot in 1605, the best-known example being John Tenniel's 'The Fenian Guy Fawkes', published on 28 December 1867. Following the Westminster attack on 17 June 1974, *Daily Mirror* cartoonist Keith Waite resurrected the Fawkes motif. In Figure 8 Waite depicted children collecting pennies for a Guy dressed in IRA uniform from Prime Minister Harold Wilson. By drawing parallels to the Gunpowder Plot, Waite underlined the destabilising effect of the IRA on the British state. In focusing on the custom of burning the Guy,

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[56] Sheridan Gilley, 'English Attitudes to the Irish in England, 1780-1900' in *Immigrants and Minorities in British Society*, (ed.) Colin Holmes (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978), 85-7.
[57] Roy Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (London: Penguin Group, 1995), 174; 191-4.
[58] de Nie, *The External Paddy*, 5.
[59] Kirkaldy, 'English Cartoonists', 27-42; Curtis, *Nothing but the Same Old Story*; Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 225-8.
[60] de Nie, 'Pigs, Paddies, Prams and Petticoats', 43.
[61] Curtis, *Apes and Angels*, 37.
[62] For an overview of the tradition of cartoons and caricatures inspired by the Gunpowder Plot see Mark Bryant, *Remember, Remember…*', *History Today*, 59, 11 (2009), 53-5.

however, he reminds his readers that Fawkes had failed in his attempts to blow up Parliament; Waite asserts that the IRA would also fail to bring down the state. The IRA's targeting of the Houses of Parliament ensured that the link to Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot was the obvious connection to make. William Jones' (Jon) also referred to the Plot in his cartoon published in the *Daily Mail* on 18 June, which featured a policeman questioning a construction worker who identifies himself as 'Seamus O'Fawkes, sorr' (Figure 9). The Guy Fawkes motif was also employed in coverage of the Birmingham bombings, the *Sunday Telegraph*'s cartoonist John Jensen reproduced Tenniel's nineteenth-century cartoon, 'The Fenian Guy Fawkes', superimposed onto a photograph of inert bodies lying in the rubble of the Mulberry Bush pub (Figure 10). The image is captioned 'A century of progress!'. By republishing the nineteenth-century caricature, Jensen drew attention to a long history of republican violence in England. He suggests that nothing has changed, reinforcing the traditional stereotype that the Irish are backwards-looking and inherently violent. Jensen was a regular contributor to *Punch* and so would have been acquainted with the magazine's back-catalogue, however, his use of Tenniel's cartoon is evidence that there was a general awareness amongst cartoonists of nineteenth-century caricatures of the Irish.

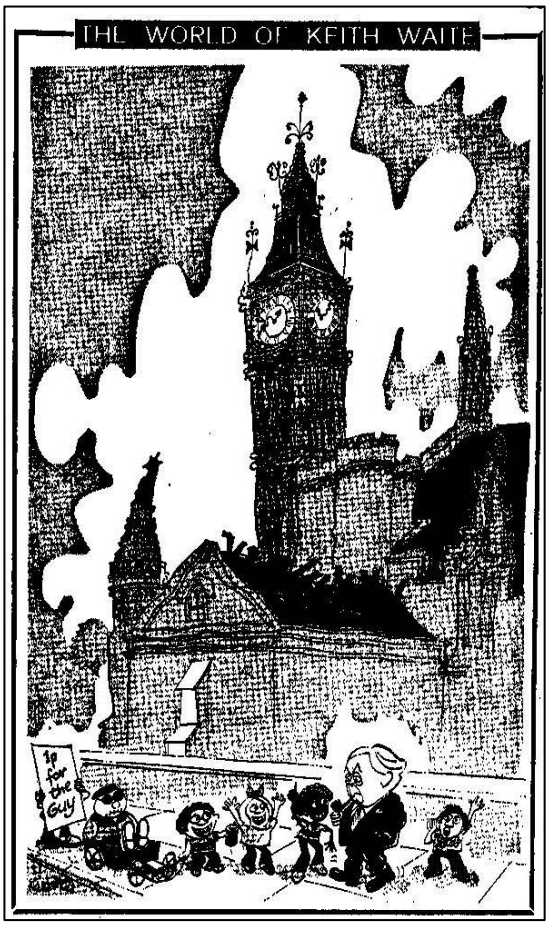

Figure 8: Keith Waite, *Daily Mirror*, 18 June 1974.

Figure 9: William Jones (Jon), 'Seamus O'Fawkes, sorr', *Daily Mail*, 18 June 1974.

Figure 10: John Jensen, 'A century of progress! - with Jensen's acknowledgements to Tenniel, *Sunday Telegraph*, 24 November 1974.

Guy Fawkes cartoons traditionally played on well-established anti-Catholic prejudices. Historically, Catholicism had been regarded as an internal threat to a British identity which centred on Protestantism.[63] The foiling of the Gunpowder Plot was often utilised as a symbol of British resistance to a Catholic peril. In the mid-nineteenth century cartoonists reacted to the perceived threat of Fenianism and Irish Catholic immigration by evoking Guy Fawkes.[64] Some scholars have argued, however, that with the growth of secularism in the twentieth century, anti-Catholicism was rendered negligible; certainly that it no longer played a role in British attitudes towards the Irish.[65] Kirkaldy explicitly states that anti-Catholicism did not play a major part in cartoons during the 'Troubles', that they were exclusively informed by racial stereotypes.[66] The inclusion of Fawkes in cartoon coverage of the IRA's bombing campaign in the early 1970s, however, suggest the opposite, that in fact sectarian prejudices continued to inform British conceptions of Irish identities. Nonetheless, Kirkaldy is correct in his argument that racial stereotypes played an important part in coverage of the 'Troubles', contributing in the early 1970s to the on-going construction of the Irish in Britain as 'other'.

[63] Colley, 'Britishness and Otherness', 320.
[64] de Nie, *The External Paddy*, 13-7.
[65] Colin Holmes, *A Tolerant Country?: Immigrants, Refugees and Minorities in Britain* (London: Routledge, 2015), 50.
[66] Kirkaldy, 'English Cartoonists', 42.

The debate over the extent to which hostility towards the Irish can be described as racism raises questions about the assimilation of Irish migrants into British society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Few historians would deny that nineteenth-century Irish migrants were subject to widespread discrimination and hostility. Many have argued, however, that by the mid-twentieth century the Irish had become assimilated into British society, evidenced by high rates of social mobility, inter-marriage, wealth and education.[67] Since the 1980s, however, the 'assimilationist' argument has come increasingly under attack. Sociologist Mary Hickman in particular has argued that hostility towards the Irish continued throughout the late twentieth century.[68] She contends that the discrimination and disadvantage experienced by many Irish people at work, in access to housing, and in their treatment by the police and public has been rendered invisible due to the Irish being absorbed into a homogenous white racial group.[69] There is evidence of greater integration by the late twentieth century, especially amongst the Irish middle-class. Sociologist Liam Ryan, in an ethnographic study compiled in the early 1970s, found that the Irish had achieved a high degree of integration within British society, particularly those in non-manual occupations.[70] Nonetheless, the status of the Irish in Britain remained precarious, as became apparent following the commencement of the IRA's campaign of violence in England.[71]

The presence of a supposedly integrated Irish population exacerbated fears that the IRA had infiltrated Britain. Following the Westminster bombing, Rigby published a cartoon criticising the security services for failing to prevent the attack (Figure 11). The cartoon, which showed three men in IRA uniforms scaling Big Ben as the police struggled to reach them, reflected a general anxiety at the relative ease with which the IRA had succeeded in bringing violence to the heart of the British establishment. As an essential symbol of Britishness, the attack on Westminster signified an attack on Britain and British identity. The IRA men are drawn climbing all over Big Ben, which suggests that the bombers had free rein to operate within Britain.

It was widely believed that the IRA had been able to plant the bomb by posing as construction workers. Some newspapers even speculated that the bomber had been one of the Irishmen employed on the Commons car-park site.[72] They implied that the IRA were able to move freely into and around Britain by mingling with the rest of the Irish population. The fact that the Irish were not readily identifiable and could assimilate allowed the IRA to 'disappear' into British society.[73]

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[67] For further examples of the assimilationist argument see D.H Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1993) or M.P. Hornsby-Smith and A. Dale, 'The Assimilation of Irish Immigrants in England', *British Journal of Sociology*, 39, 4 (1988): 519-44.
[68] Hickman and Walter, 'Deconstructing Whiteness', 5.
[69] Hickman, 'Reconstructing deconstructing 'race'', 298. For Hickman's full description of myth of homogeneity see pages 296-9.
[70] William Ryan, 'Assimilation of Irish Immigrants in Britain' (PhD thesis, Saint Louis University, 1973) 47-8; 59; 91.
[71] See Chapter 5.
[72] Jack McEachran, 'Day of the Jackal', *Daily Mirror*, 18 June 1974; Jack McEachran, 'Mystery of the Nine Lost Hours', *Daily Mirror*, 18 June 1974.
[73] Morgan, 'The Contemporary Racialization of the Irish in Britain', 101-2.

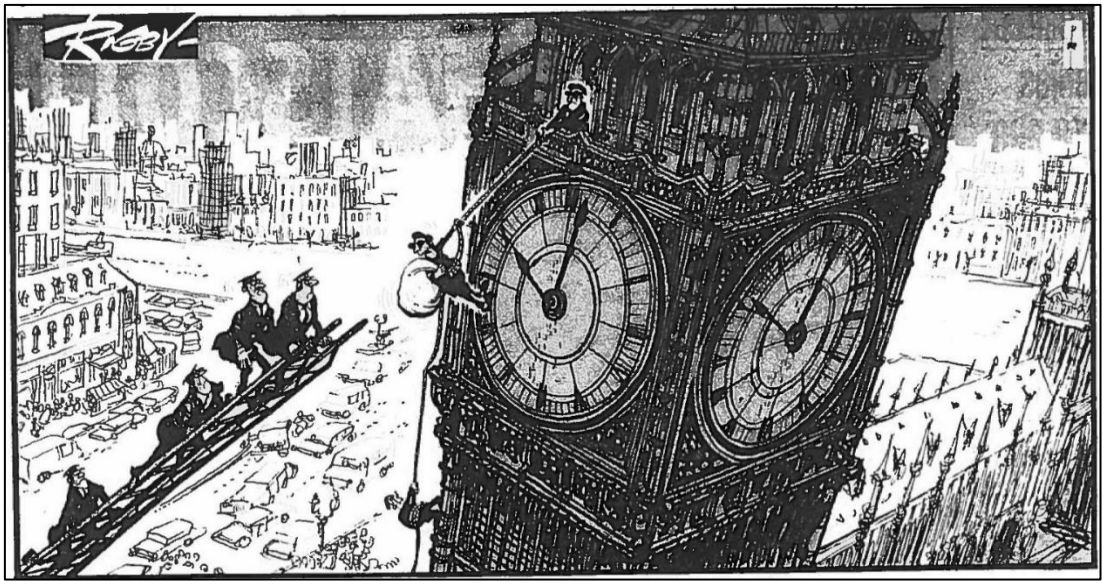

Figure 11: Paul Rigby, 'Shure an' we're just good honest destruction workers, or somet'ing loike dat', *The Sun*, 19 June 1974.

This idea that the enemy could be 'in our midst' preoccupied the press. In an editorial, published on 11 September 1973, the *Daily Telegraph* speculated that 'No doubt many Irish revolutionaries are lawfully equipped with British passports and permanently based in Britain'.[74] The *Telegraph* referred to the fact that many IRA volunteers, as Northern Irish, were British citizens despite wishing to be otherwise. For the paper, this seemingly accentuated the corrupting and dangerous influence of Irish republicanism, that it was coming from within and turning 'our own' citizens into an internal threat. The tabloids on the other hand, honed in on the fact that many of the bombers were established members of the Irish migrant population. The *Sun* in its coverage of the trial of six men (wrongly) accused of the Birmingham bombings noted that all the defendants had lived in Britain since the early 1950s, bar William Power who had migrated in 1968.[75] The *Daily Mirror* covering the death of IRA hunger striker Michael Gaughan on 3 June 1974 also noted that he had joined the IRA after migrating to Manchester in 1966.[76] The *Sunday Mirror* observed, that one of the IRA men at the striker's funeral, distinguishable in black beret and roll-neck pullover, had also worn a London Transport bus conductor's badge, and argued that this was inescapable evidence that members of the IRA had infiltrated Britain and were passing themselves off as respectable members of British society.[77] Similarly, the *Mirror*, covering the death of James McDade, who died on 14 November 1974 after the bomb he planted had exploded prematurely, focused on the extent to which he had integrated into British society. The paper reported with surprise that McDade had been married to an Englishwoman, though it went to great lengths to stress that she had no knowledge of his IRA activities.[78] The widow was

[74] 'Answering Terror', *Daily Telegraph*, 11 September 1973.
[75] Brian Dixon, 'Bombs: Six Accused of Murder', *The Sun*, 25 November 1974.
[76] Philip Mellor and Simon Dowling, 'Hunger Strike Man Dies in Prison', *Daily Mirror*, 4 June 1974.
[77] Jeff Samuels, '3,000 marchers follow coffin', *Sunday Mirror*, 9 June 1974.
[78] 'Women Mourn the Bomber', *Daily Mirror*, 21 November 1974.

presented as symbolic of the British population in general, unable to identify the IRA living and operating amongst them.

Reporting on McDade's funeral, the *Mirror* observed that 'hundreds of Irish sympathisers in Britain are planning to give a "martyrs farewell"' before his body returned to Belfast.[79] The paper claimed that the IRA presence in Britain was significant. The word 'Irish' rather than the phrase 'IRA' sympathisers implies that hundreds of Irish people living in Britain were in some way complicit in republican violence. The looseness of the newspapers' phrasing inevitably meant that the IRA became closely associated with the Irish as a whole. Throughout the 'Troubles', constant references to the ethnicity of the IRA reinforced the link between the paramilitaries and the Irish, especially the Irish in Britain, as illustrated in Figure 11. The cartoon's caption is written phonetically to convey the Irish accents of the IRA men scaling Big Ben. It is worth noting, however, that the accent being replicated is a Southern rather than a Northern Irish accent, demonstrating the indiscriminate way in which newspapers associated all Irish people with the IRA, regardless of whether they were Northern or Southern, Catholic or Protestant. Accent was often the only means by which the Irish - including IRA suspects - could be identified. As sociologist Sarah Morgan has argued, 'accent became the prime signifier of both Irishness and potential IRA membership'.[80] An Irish accent was often enough to attract abuse and suspicion, leading many Irish people living in Britain to modify or hide their accents.[81]

Not only did they suggest that the Irish in Britain were unwittingly harbouring the IRA, newspapers accused some Irish people of wilfully sheltering terrorists. The *Daily Telegraph*, complaining about the difficulty in rounding up suspects, remarked that 'the bombers are operating from reasonably safe bases. They may well be long-term residents in Britain who are familiar figures in their own neighbourhoods or they may enjoy the protection of such people'.[82] Similarly, the *Guardian*, in an editorial entitled 'Those who harbour terrorists', noted that the bombers do not 'bring their murderous tools with them: those are provided by sympathisers here'.[83] The *Daily Mirror* speculated that the bombers 'stay with Irish people who have lived in London for many years'.[84] As social scientist Paddy Hillyard has argued, this association of terrorism with the Irish living in Britain 'perpetuate[d] the impression that the whole of the Irish community… [was] suspect'.[85] Accordingly, the press re-imagined long-established Irish residents as a potential threat.

Newspapers did recognise that not all Irish people supported the IRA, that some had even been victims of the bombs themselves. In cases where the victims of the bombs were Irish, newspapers used their injuries to emphasise the heinous, internecine nature of the IRA, which was willing to target its own. On 18 December 1973, the IRA exploded a series of bombs; sixty people were injured in three

[79] David Thompson and William Daniels, 'That IRA funeral', *Daily Mirror*, 20 November 1974.
[80] Morgan, 'The Contemporary Racialization of the Irish in Britain', 102.
[81] Bronwen Walter, 'Shamrocks Growing out of their Mouths': Language and the Racialisation of the Irish in Britain', in *Language, Labour and Migration*, (ed.) Anne J. Kershen (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 64.
[82] 'Coping with Terrorism', *Daily Telegraph*, 14 September 1974.
[83] 'Those who harbour terrorists', *The Guardian*, 23 November 1974.
[84] Tom Tullett, 'Armed police to hunt terror gang', *Daily Mirror*, 1 September 1973.
[85] Hillyard, *Suspect Communities*, 146.

separate incidents across London. The *Daily Mirror* focused on Rosina Harrington, who had suffered severe shrapnel wounds in a car bomb in Westminster, because she was second-generation Irish Catholic.[86] Similarly, in the aftermath of the Birmingham bombings the *Sun* paid particular attention to brothers Desmond and Eugene Reilly, killed in the Tavern in the Town explosion, whose parents were both from Donegal.[87] Though newspapers made half-hearted attempts at objectivity in their attitude to the Irish, at best they were presenting readers with mixed messages. The impression that the Irish were all suspect dominated the discourse.

In its coverage of the Reilly brothers' funeral, the *Daily Mirror* described how 'Englishmen and Irishmen knelt together… to mourn', noting that the majority of Irish people shared the grief and shock felt following the attack.[88] The press went to considerable pains to distinguish the law-abiding Irish from the violent minority. In an editorial, published on 22 August 1974, the *Daily Telegraph* argued that 'the Irish community in Britain is in general respectable, hard-working and loyal to the institutions of its adopted country. Only a few self-exiled nationalist fanatics, anxious to purge with other people's blood the guilt of deserting Ireland, would be prepared to help urban guerrillas'.[89] Similarly, after the Birmingham bombings the *Guardian* remarked that 'terrorism is condoned, not of course by the mass of Irishmen, at home and abroad, to whom it is utterly repugnant, but by a number large enough to make it possible'.[90] Though both papers assert that the majority of Irish people were 'innocent', they qualify this by pointing out that a small deadly minority were not. Rather than remove suspicion, comments like this served to underline the idea that the Irish in Britain were all potential members of the IRA. They also reinforced the notion that the very existence of an Irish 'community' in Britain provided cover for republican paramilitaries. As Nickels *et al*., have argued, the concept of the 'innocent Irish' constructed the Irish as a potential threat, as by definition for there to be 'innocent Irish', there also had to be 'guilty Irish'.[91] The idea of the 'innocent Irish' itself, relies on a purely negative definition, one which Alessandro Portelli contends confers a sense of 'harmlessness'. Portelli argues, to be innocent does not necessarily exclude responsibility: 'having done nothing wrong is one thing, but having done nothing against wrong is another'.[92] The onus was placed on the Irish in Britain to assert their innocence and prove themselves by publicly disassociating from the IRA and defending 'British values'.

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[86] Alan Gordon, 'Why Me? The whispered words of a young mother caught in the blast', *Daily Mirror*, 19 December 1973; Alan Gordon, 'Thank you, kind hearts', *Daily Mirror*, 24 December 1973.
[87] Brian Dixon, 'Tragedy of 2 Brothers', *The Sun*, 26 November 1974.
[88] Paul Connew, 'Bombs City Weeps for its Victims', *Daily Mirror*, 4 December 1974.
[89] 'A Shock for London'.
[90] 'Those who harbour terrorists'.
[91] Nickels, Thomas, Hickman and Silvestri, 'De/constructing "Suspect" Communities', 351-2; Mary J. Hickman, Sara Silvestri and Henri Nickels, 'Suspect Communities'? Counter-terrorism policy, the press, and the impact on Irish and Muslim communities in Britain, (London: London Metropolitan University, 2011), 17.
[92] Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 150.

Figure 12: Chris Riddell, 'The Blitz', *Observer,* 26 March 2017.

IRA violence in English cities in the early 1970 aroused outrage and suspicion. Not only had conflict spilt onto British soil for the first time since the Second World War, but the enemy was indistinguishable from the rest of the Irish population living and working in Britain. Bomb attacks dominated the headlines, often at the expense of more serious incidents in Northern Ireland.

British newspapers responded to the violence on English streets by re-emphasising conceptions of Britishness. The IRA were used as bogeymen in order to help foster a sense of togetherness during a period of instability, providing a common enemy against which the nation could unite. The press evoked the stereotype of the British as a stoic people facing down adversity by using memories of the Second World War and national motifs to symbolise British resilience and courage. In doing so, they sought to reassure readers and encourage support for Britain's political and military efforts in Northern Ireland. The manner in which the British response to IRA violence was presented, however, was driven as much by the commercial interests of the newspapers as it was by patriotism. As this chapter has shown, by fostering the concept of a national community united against an IRA threat, newspaper editors sought to increase their appeal to a wider audience.

To underline the heinous nature of republican paramilitaries, a wide range of long-established stereotypes of the Irish were resurrected. This is particularly apparent in the cartoon coverage of bomb attacks in England. It has been observed that the violent simian Paddy of nineteenth-century cartoons re-emerged in the early 1970s, however, this chapter also demonstrates that a wider variety of motifs common to Victorian caricatures of the Irish were recycled by the press in the early 1970s.[93] These highlight the complex range of well-established and enduring racial and religious stereotypes, which resurfaced in response to the IRA terror threat.

[93] Kirkaldy, 'English Cartoonists', 27-42; Curtis, *Nothing but the Same Old Story*.

The close association made by the press between the IRA and Irish people living in Britain meant that all Irish people were vulnerable to being cast as the 'other'. Newspapers stoked feelings of suspicion by presenting the Irish as harbourers of terrorists. The existence of an Irish population unwittingly providing cover to IRA activists operating in England exacerbated fears that the IRA had infiltrated and contaminated British society. The ambiguity over which elements of the Irish population supported the IRA allowed blame to be applied to any Irish person and accordingly Irish people in Britain were reimagined as 'suspect'.

The early 1970s, were crucial in shaping the way in which the 'Troubles' came to be interpreted in Britain. By building on existing national tropes, the newspaper coverage offers an insight into the construction of Britishness as well as an Irish 'other'. Following attacks in London and Manchester motivated by Islamic extremism in 2017, the British media were to employ similar methods. Not only did journalists revert once more to seeing crises through a filter of Second World War images, they also evoked memories of the IRA attacks in order to exalt notions of British fortitude. As Figure 12 indicates, the IRA bombing campaign in England has become part of the range of stock motifs to be drawn upon in response to the threat of violence and used to shore up national identity in times of uncertainty. Then as now, the press still has a role to play in shaping understandings of national crisis and issues of identity.

Chapter Two: Television coverage of the early 1970s.

Throughout the early 1970s, Northern Ireland was never far from British television screens. The violence in the province made headlines nightly. The immediacy and potency of television images meant that for many in Britain television provided an important window onto the conflict in Northern Ireland. As the BBC Northern Ireland Controller, Richard Francis, noted, the broadcasting authorities saw it as their responsibility to 'assist[…] people elsewhere in the United Kingdom to a better understanding of the Irish impasse'.[1] All sides, however, sought to place pressure on broadcasters in a bid to shape how the conflict in Northern Ireland was presented, believing that by doing so they would encourage support and sympathy for their position. Incessant wrangling between the broadcasting authorities, successive British governments, and state organisations, such as the NIO and the RUC, threatened to hamper efforts to provide the British public with accurate information on events in the province. Nonetheless, both the BBC and ITV withstood efforts to dictate what should, or should not, be reported on and in the process produced compelling programmes on Northern Ireland. In this very modern conflict television was a significant weapon.

There has been considerable analysis of the role television played in reporting the conflict, including the work of Liz Curtis, David Miller, Orla Lafferty, Jean Seaton and Rex Cathcart.[2] Their scholarship has produced a detailed and valuable picture of the environment in which broadcasters reporting on Northern Ireland operated, yet it also reveals differences of opinion as to the level of autonomy broadcasters enjoyed, and the extent to which the British state influenced television coverage of the 'Troubles'. British broadcasters are legally obliged to ensure balance and impartiality in all their coverage. At the BBC this was traditionally the responsibility of the Board of Governors, a body made up of senior figures from a variety of social and political backgrounds. The Governors were accountable for all the Corporation's activities but had no direct role in programming; this has always been the prerogative of the Director-General and the Board of Management.[3] Commercial television on the other hand, was regulated by a government-appointed body, the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), formerly the Independent Television Authority (ITA), which was responsible for ensuring balance and impartiality across the ITV network, and later Channel 4. The IBA had the power to determine the

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[1] Richard Francis, 'Terrorists on Television', a speech to the Broadcasting Press Guild, 12 July 1979, quoted in Rex Cathcart, *The Most Contrary Region: The BBC in Northern Ireland, 1924-1984* (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 1984), 230.

[2] Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*; Miller, *Don't Mention the War*; Orla Lafferty, 'From 'Fun Factory' to Current Affairs Machine': Coping with the Outbreak of the Troubles at Ulster Television 1968-70', *Irish Communication Review* (2014); Orla Lafferty 'UTV, The Network Relationship and Reporting the 'Troubles', *Journal of the MeCCSA Postgraduate Network*, 3, 2 (2010); Cathcart, *The Most Contrary Region*; Seaton, 'The BBC and the 'Hidden Wiring' of the British Constitution.', 448-71; See also: Martin McLoone, *Broadcasting in a Divided Community: Seventy Years of the BBC in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1996); John Hill, '"The Troubles we've seen": film, television drama and Northern Irish conflict in Britain', in *The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain: Impacts, engagements, legacies and memories*, (eds.) Graham Dawson, Jo Dover and Stephen Hopkins, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 243-260; Bill Rolston and David Miller, *War and Words: The Northern Ireland Media Reader* (Belfast: Beyond the Pale, 1996); Parkinson, *Ulster Loyalism*; Johnathan Bardon, *Beyond the Studio: A History of BBC Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2000); Gary Edgerton, 'Quelling the "Oxygen of Publicity": British Broadcasting and "The Troubles During the Thatcher Years', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 30, 1 (1996) 115-131.

[3] The BBC Board of Management comprised of the Director-General, Deputy Director-General, Advisor to the Director-General, Chief Executive, the Managing Directors and Directors.

broadcasting schedule, to prohibit the transmission of programmes and even to revoke a company's franchise. This pursuit of balance and impartiality, difficult enough under normal circumstances, proved an immense challenge for broadcasters covering the 'Troubles'.

Historian and Irish activist Liz Curtis has echoed Irish republican perspectives in arguing that broadcasters 'hang[…] on the coat-tails of the establishment'.[4] Whilst acknowledging that television had occasionally raised challenging questions about Britain's role in Northern Ireland, Curtis argues that, in the main, the broadcasting authorities bowed to government pressure, censoring television coverage of the conflict to exclude republicans from the airwaves. Curtis highlights numerous examples of programmes that were censored, including 'South of the Border', banned in November 1971.[5] The programme examined how the 'Troubles' affected the Republic of Ireland and included interviews with Provisional Sinn Féin President, Ruairí Ó Brádaigh, and IRA Chief of Staff, Seán MacStíofáin.[6] The justification given by the ITA was that 'the subject would not be helpful in the current situation'. It was the inclusion of these interviews, however, which had led the programme to be censored. Curtis argues that as a result of this sort of suppression a distorted picture of the 'Troubles' was produced, presenting the IRA as solely responsible for the conflict, whilst sanitising Britain's role.[7] Without access to the BBC and ITV archives, however, Curtis was unable to fully analyse the broadcasting authorities' response to this pressure. Many commentators have nevertheless accepted her arguments at face value and assume that the broadcast media adopted a stance favourable to the British government.

Contrastingly, in his review of the history of the BBC in Northern Ireland, Rex Cathcart, former ITA Regional Officer for Northern Ireland, argued that the Corporation attracted criticism from several quarters.[8] He points to the pressure placed on broadcasters by both communities in Northern Ireland to reflect their position. Cathcart argues that in response the BBC sought to represent the whole of society, an approach guaranteed to satisfy no one. Similarly, media studies scholar David Miller argues that a complex mixture of constraints was imposed on broadcasters by participants.[9] He challenges the assumption that the broadcast media was merely a conduit for state views, noting how divisions within and between different state organisations prevented the government from exerting full control. Nonetheless, Miller fails to consider the individual agency of broadcasters and journalists, seeing the broadcast media as a tool to be manipulated by other actors, whether the British government or the IRA. Various other academics, such as Jean Seaton, have also carried out research on specific aspects of British broadcasting, such as the broadcasting ban, contributing to our understanding of the

[4] Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 277-8.
[5] *The Guardian*, 2 November 1971 cited in Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 152.
[6] *Ibid*, 7-9; 151-3.
[7] *Ibid*.
[8] Cathcart had been the Chairman of the Irish public broadcasting service RTE's Educational Advisory Committee and was the regional Officer of the Independent Television Authority (ITA), the commercial regulator body responsible for the ITV network from 1967 to 1973. Cathcart, *The Most Contrary Region*.
[9] Miller, *Don't Mention the War*.

television coverage of Northern Ireland.[10] Increasingly, these scholars have argued that broadcasters resisted efforts, principally by the British state, to influence how they reported on Northern Ireland.

More recently, the availability of new archival material from the broadcasting authorities has offered fresh insight into the motivations behind news broadcasting during the 1970s and 1980s. Historian Robert Savage's examination of the BBC's role in Northern Ireland challenged the common misconception that the British government dictated how the broadcasting body covered the conflict.[11] Drawing on a rich range of internal documents and external correspondence from the BBC, Savage explores the relationship between broadcasters and the state, from the origins of the BBC in Northern Ireland to the introduction of the broadcasting ban in 1988. He argues that far from simply chronicling the 'Troubles', the Corporation became a critical voice and therefore an integral part of the conflict itself. Savage describes the mounting pressure placed on broadcasters throughout the 1970s and 1980s by successive British governments trying to shape the way in which television depicted paramilitaries but argues that senior management at the BBC resisted efforts to silence them. Whilst feuds between the broadcasting authorities, politicians, civil servants and military officials endangered the ability of journalists to provide audiences with an accurate picture of what was happening in Northern Ireland, Savage concludes that the BBC produced critical and informative coverage, which regularly questioned the decisions, policies and tactics of successive governments regarding the province.[12]

This chapter builds on Savage's premise that broadcasters resisted attempts by the state to control the narrative of Northern Ireland. Unlike Savage's research, however, it will engage in detailed analysis of the content of current affairs programmes produced by both the BBC and the ITV network during the early 1970s.[13] This approach provides a highly original way of ascertaining whether claims by the broadcasting authorities of editorial independence and integrity were put into practice. It will enable the investigation of the way the conflict was portrayed on television and the extent to which the broadcast media engaged with the complexities of the 'Troubles'. The chapter argues that by resisting pressure from the state and other participants in the conflict, programme producers provided a nuanced view of the Northern Ireland conflict. Analysing programme content demonstrates how broadcasters often challenged an official narrative, presenting the conflict as a struggle against terrorism and portrayed the British Army as a peace-keeping force caught between two warring factions. It argues that current affairs programming sought to place the violence in its broader historical and socio-economic context, questioning Britain's activities in Northern Ireland, as much as those of the IRA. The chapter will also investigate how programme producers represented Northern Ireland. In particular, it will explore how the television coverage fixated on violence, representing it as un-British and incomprehensible to British audiences. It will argue that these programmes served to differentiate

[10] The Broadcasting Ban introduced in 1988, restricted the voices of representatives of proscribed organisations from being broadcast on television or radio. Seaton, 'The BBC and the 'Hidden Wiring' of the British Constitution.', 448-71.
[11] Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*.
[12] *Ibid*.
[13] ITV was a network made up of separate regional television companies, including Granada, London Weekend Television, Thames Television and Yorkshire Television. The network was regulated and monitored by the Independent Broadcasting Authority, formerly the Independent Television Authority.

Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK by characterising it as a place set apart. By exploring the television coverage of the 'Troubles' during the early 1970s, this chapter will further contribute to our broader understanding of the constructions of Britishness within a multinational state.

The chapter focuses on television programmes broadcast between 1973 and 1974. It draws on a sample of twenty programmes, broadcast by the BBC and ITV and chosen to ensure coverage of a broad range of subjects relating to the 'Troubles'. By concentrating on these two years, it covers many of the key developments in the early stages of the conflict, including the Sunningdale Agreement, the Ulster Workers' Council (UWC) Strike and the commencement of the bombing campaign in England.

Table 1: List of Television Programmes, 1973-1974

Programme	**Series**	**Channel**	**Date Shown**	**Number of Viewers (in millions)[14]**
'No Title'	Weekend World	ITV (London Weekend World)	11 February 1973	0.35
The Irish Problem	Firing Line	BBC	25 February 1973[15]	0.45
'No Title'	Weekend World	ITV (London Weekend World)	11 March 1973	0.45
The Question of Ulster: The Way Forward		BBC	13 March 1973	Part 1: 3.9 Part 2: 3.2
'No Title'	Midweek: Special	BBC	20 March 1973	1.56
'No Title'	Weekend World	ITV (London Weekend World)	25 March 1973	0.8
Life in the RUC	Panorama	BBC	25 June 1973	1.9
A Question of Intelligence	World in Action	ITV (Granada)	10 September 1973	5.2
'No Title'	Weekend World	ITV (London Weekend World)	25 November 1973	0.4
Last Night Another Soldier	Tuesday Documentary	BBC	4 December 1973	5.2
Northern Ireland Executive	Midweek	BBC	29 January 1974	1.25

[14] BBC WAC, 'Series R9: TV Viewing Barometers/BARB TV Audience Figures', 1973-1974.
[15] Firing Line was an American television series founded and hosted by right-wing commentator William F. Buckley. In 1973, numerous episodes on a variety of subject-matter were shown on the BBC.

Children in Crossfire	Tuesday Documentary	BBC	12 March 1974	4.54
'No Title'	Weekend World	ITV (London Weekend World)	7 April 1974	0.4
Remember Strabane[16]	This Week	ITV (Thames Television)	11 April 1974	5.8
Five Long Years	This Week	ITV (Thames Television)	7 August 1974	N/A
Teenagers Talking	RAP	ITV (Yorkshire Television)	1 September 1974	0.2
Broadcasting in Northern Ireland	In Vision	BBC	4 October 1974	0.35
'No Title'	Weekend World	ITV (London Weekend World)	20 October 1974	0.5
The Bomb Disposal Men	Tuesday Documentary	BBC	29 October 1974	7.5
Dealing with the Terrorists	This Week	ITV (Thames Television)	12 December 1974	4.29

On 4 October 1974, BBC's *In Vision* broadcast an episode attempting to communicate to British audiences the unique problems facing broadcasters in Northern Ireland. As the host, William Hardcastle, explained, the pitfalls were many: 'a simple piece of music can be taken by many listeners as an act of provocation, coverage of a sport like Gaelic football as an act of sectarian controversy. Indeed, the tensions of the province reach into nearly every field of human activity'.[17] The programme looked at day-to-day broadcasting in Belfast, as well as the challenges faced by all journalists covering Northern Ireland. As it noted, accessing basic facts was difficult, as the Army and police often refused to provide information such as the religion, name and addresses of victims caught up in the violence.[18] The media's reliance on the authorities for details about incidents meant that broadcaster's efforts to provide impartial coverage of the conflict was hampered by the ability of the government and security forces to withhold information. The programme also discussed accusations, made by republicans in particular, that the BBC showed too much reverence to the authorities. Northern Ireland correspondent for *The Times*, Robert Fisk, who appeared on the programme, argued that this might initially have been the case, but since Bloody Sunday (30 January 1972) when British soldiers shot twenty-eight unarmed

[16] Only twelve and a half minutes of this footage was available to the author, however, this was enough to gain some sense of the programme and its content.
[17] 'Broadcasting in Northern Ireland', *In Vision*, BBC, 4 October 1974.
[18] The Army and NIO repeatedly asked the BBC to refrain from identifying the religion of victims of violence in the province. The broadcasting body, however, maintained that it had a responsibility to report on events in full and that mention of the victim's religion was unavoidable. (Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 120; 142-3).

protesters, reporters in Northern Ireland had been 'much more reluctant to accept, at face value, official statements, including statements from the government'. Rex Cathcart, concurred, stating that 'the growth of news operation in both concerns has been remarkable and this has made it possible for a greater reluctance to accept official statements'.[19] Although both the BBC and ITV came under pressure from the government over their coverage of the conflict both strove to remain impartial and produce challenging programmes on Northern Ireland.

Throughout the 'Troubles', the British media, and particularly the broadcast media, attracted criticism from all quarters for its handling of the conflict. The BBC had traditionally been viewed by the majority of Catholics in Northern Ireland as a unionist puppet.[20] Certainly, up until the late 1950s, the Corporation had been reluctant to challenge the Stormont government and made little effort to produce programmes that engaged with the minority community.[21] From the 1960s onwards, however, the Corporation increasingly questioned the actions of the Stormont government, provoking the ire of the Protestant population.[22] Following the outbreak of the conflict, each community continued to view themselves as marginalised by the BBC, criticising the broadcasters for providing the other with a propaganda platform.

ITV fared only slightly better. Its Northern Ireland franchise, UTV, was regarded, as far more responsible than the BBC in its attitude to reporting on the violence.[23] In March 1972, the RUC attacked a BBC film crew covering the aftermath of a police shooting. The BBC's solicitors were warned that they would receive little sympathy from the authorities if they filed a formal complaint, as 'there is undoubtedly a fairly wide feeling here that the television news as dealt with by UTV, particularly in their local programmes, are superior to that of the BBC'.[24] At a meeting in December 1975, the BBC's Northern Ireland News Editor, Robin Walsh, drew attention to an erroneous report by ITN that the IRA's ceasefire had ended. There had been little reaction to the mistake and Walsh complained that this would not have been the case had the error been the BBC's.[25] Nonetheless, ITV also received heavy criticism from both communities for its coverage of events in Northern Ireland. As the IBA summarised:

> The sad fact is… that both parties of the Northern Ireland crisis believe that the other side has a monopoly of what each describes as the propaganda machine of press, television and radio. Almost any expression on television of the opposing point of view is regarded by people committed to one side of the other as an example of wilful propaganda whereas it is in fact simply an attempt to show that more than one point of view does exist and has to be considered.[26]

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[19] 'Broadcasting in Northern Ireland', 4 October 1974.
[20] Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 7.
[21] *Ibid*, 13.
[22] *Ibid*, 13- 45.
[23] 'Broadcasting in Northern Ireland'; Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 162.
[24] BBC WAC, R78/699/1, letter from Davey to Marshall, 21 April 1972 quoted by Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 98.
[25] BBC WAC, R78/700/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances, Minutes of a Meeting, 5 December 1975.
[26] ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, Northern Ireland Troubles General Volume 2 January 1972- December 1973, Memo regarding a letter to Leslie Collins, 1972.

The heaviest criticism levelled at broadcasters, however, came from the British establishment. Politicians from across the political spectrum expressed fears that by reporting on political violence, the media, would inadvertently lend terrorists legitimacy through 'the oxygen of publicity'.[27] Conservative MPs, among them Airey Neave, John Biggs-Davison and Edward du Cann, placed continual pressure on broadcasters to refrain from reporting on IRA activities altogether.[28]

The visual character of television can lend the medium more potency than the press or radio. As cultural theorist Stuart Hall argued, television can 'reproduce the actual trace of reality in the images they transmit', and are often considered to be resistant to coding, selection and arrangement by broadcasters. The reality, Hall argued is that because they are based on a combination of the visual and verbal, television messages require a more elaborate procedure of coding on the part of the producer to create a narrative that makes sense to the audience.[29] This explains why broadcasters were the target of such ire from politicians and the public during the 'Troubles'. Since it 'came of age' in the 1960s and 1970s, television has been recognised as a powerful tool in shaping public opinion.[30] Politicians, throughout the latter half of the twentieth century were extremely anxious about its ability to sway the public. British governments sought to control the messages about Northern Ireland presented by television programmes, believing broadcasts to have a direct impact on public opinion concerning the conflict. Broadcasters were also aware of their potential to influence audiences, as this IBA report from 1977 indicates:

> There is admittedly difficulties [*sic*] in the impact and reach of a television programme shown in peak-time as compared to newspapers. We have always accepted, for instance, that an interview or an extract from a speech of a member of the IRA or other paramilitary organization advocating the use of violence is in terms of its impact and possible incitement much stronger than a report of the same speech or interview on the printed page. [31]

The report highlights the different attitude of politicians, and to some extent the public, towards a story reported on television and the same story in the press. Despite the obvious potency of television images, as Hall argued, audiences are not passive recipients of whatever message broadcasters might wish to relay, rather they make their own meaning from what they see on television.[32] Although it is of course important to problematise the idea of television's ability to influence audiences, as historian Gavin Schaffer has argued 'it has become all too easy to dismiss contemporary anxieties about the medium's impact as hyperbole and naïve. But failing to take these concerns seriously risks a teleological failure

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[27] Morgan, 'The Contemporary Racialization of the Irish in Britain', 47.
[28] Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 141.
[29] Stuart Hall, 'The rediscovery of 'ideology': return of the repressed in media studies', in *Culture, Society and the Media*, (eds.) Michael Gurevitch, Tony Bennett, James Curran and Janet Woollacott (London: Routledge, 1982), 76.
[30] Curran and Seaton, *Power without Responsibility*, 195.
[31] ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, A/X/0016/1, 'This Week' Coverage of Ulster, 'Programmes on the Administration of Justice in Northern Ireland Part II: The Wider Issues', 27 October 1977.
[32] Stuart Hall, 'Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse', Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Occasional Paper, September 1973.

to understand the social and political history of Britain during this period'.[33] It was the belief that broadcasts could influence audiences, which led successive British governments to attempt to control the television narrative with regards to the IRA. Politicians feared that by providing a platform, television coverage could incite violence or encourage support for the paramilitaries.

There was also pressure to censor coverage of overt paramilitary activity by Loyalist groups such as the Ulster Defence Association (UDA). During the UWC Strike (May 1974), the BBC in particular was accused of having allowed itself to become a mouthpiece of the UWC and loyalist paramilitaries.[34] Critics, including *Times* journalist Robert Fisk, argued that the BBC's coverage had undermined the power of the newly formed Northern Ireland Executive and enabled the strike to gain momentum. Northern Ireland Controller, Richard Francis, however, defended his team, arguing that it was their duty to provide up-to-date information on the strike, especially when information had not been forthcoming from the Executive or the NIO.[35] Overall, Loyalist organisations seem to have been considered less of a concern than the IRA. Arguments against paramilitaries on television for the most part focused on the IRA. Critics from within the British establishment argued that coverage of the paramilitaries' campaign helped generate support for the IRA and served to escalate the conflict. Some even suggested that the media were responsible for the IRA's continued existence. Interviewed in 1974, Frank King, General Officer Commanding of the British Army in Northern Ireland, remarked that 'It would be interesting to know if the IRA would be alive today if it had been ignored, I doubt it'.[36] Broadcasters retorted that by providing accurate information on the IRA, news and current affairs programmes helped prevent violence. In 1975, Richard Francis, dismissed accusations that the BBC's cameras exacerbated the situation on the ground, arguing that:

> permitting rumour to spread unchecked was more dangerous… if people had been killed or hurt it was better to say so because rumour would only multiply the number of those hurt or killed and possibly provoke retaliatory action on an even greater scale.[37]

Broadcasters maintained that if the media did not report on paramilitary activities then the IRA would simply redouble their efforts and the violence would worsen.[38]

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[33] Gavin Schaffer, *The Vision of a Nation: Making Multiculturalism on British Television, 1960-80* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 5.

[34] In March 1973, the British government had proposed the setting up of a new Northern Ireland Assembly, elected by proportional representation and headed by a power-sharing Executive. There was also to be a Council of Ireland composed of members of both Irish governments with executive functions, and it was intended that the Council would eventually administer some public services. The commitment to all-Ireland co-operation was formalised in December 1973 with the signing of the Sunningdale Agreement, and on 1 January 1974 the power-sharing Executive took office, only for direct rule to be re-introduce less than five months later when the Sunningdale Agreement collapsed in the face of a loyalist strike organised by the Ulster Workers Council

[35] Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 127-37.

[36] Robert Fisk, 'Censor's pen cannot write off Ulster terrorists', *The Times*, 3 December 1974.

[37] BBC WAC, R78/700/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances, Minutes of Meeting with Officials of the Northern Ireland region of the British Broadcasting Corporation, 7 November 1975.

[38] For example, at a lecture given in 1977, Richard Francis argued that 'if we don't seek, with suitable safeguards, to report and to expose the words of terrorist front organisations, we may well be encouraging them to speak more and more with violence'. (Richard Francis, 'Broadcasting to a community in conflict- the experience in Northern Ireland', lecture given at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, London, 22 February 1977, London: BBC quoted in Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 147.)

British politicians on both sides expected the BBC and ITV, at the very least, to stick to the official line and present the conflict in terms of moral absolutes with the government and security forces playing the role of the 'goodies', and the IRA the 'baddies'. The putative failure of broadcasters to do so, led to accusations that they were pro-IRA and pro-nationalist. Once again, ITV was viewed in a more positive light than the BBC. During a dinner at the Culloden Hotel (Belfast) hosted by the BBC in November 1976, newly appointed Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Roy Mason, launched a tirade against the BBC, accusing the Corporation of 'stirring up' trouble and likening their coverage to that of *The Sun* and the *Daily Mirror*.[39] By contrast, Mason praised the work of UTV, noting that it was widely respected by the local community: 'The BBC was the divider, not the healer, compared with UTV'.[40] As NIO civil servant, Peter Bell, pointed out, however, UTV's reliance on commercial revenue meant that the company, unwilling to alienate their predominantly unionist advertisers, were more likely to be sympathetic to the authorities.[41] Orla Lafferty has argued that UTV's dependency on advertisers and reluctance to alienate any section of its audience led the franchise to focus on the human-interest angle for fear of providing the terrorists with a platform.[42] As this demonstrates, economic considerations as well as political pressure played a significant role in shaping how broadcasters reported on Northern Ireland. However, whilst UTV was able to self-censor its own output, it was limited in its ability to influence material aired on the national network.[43] Other ITV franchises were supposed to inform UTV if they were making a programme in Northern Ireland, but they were under no obligation to consult them on content.[44] Throughout the 1970s, ITV increasingly developed current affairs programmes on the 'Troubles' that deviated from the government line, attracting widespread criticism. One of the most notable examples was *Weekend World*'s interview with IRA Chief of Staff, David O'Connell (Dáithí Ó Conaill) in November 1974.

The government's preoccupation with keeping terrorists off-screen manifested itself in a fixation with the appearance of members of the IRA in interviews on television. Politicians accused the BBC and ITV of unwittingly providing terrorists with a propaganda platform by allowing their representatives to appear on television. Broadcasters were well aware of efforts by the paramilitaries to use interviews as a propaganda tool.[45] Journalists were repeatedly warned by senior management to be vigilant against attempts by the IRA and other paramilitary organisations to use interviews as a

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[39] BBC WAC, R78/1, 407/1, Northern Ireland civil disturbances, note of after-dinner discussion at Culloden Hotel, Belfast, 4 November 1976, by Richard Francis quoted by Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 156.
[40] *Ibid*.
[41] TNA, NIO, CJ4/1961, memo from P.N. Bell to Wilson, NIO, 25 March 1977 quoted by Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 162.
[42] Lafferty, 'From 'Fun Factory' to Current Affairs Machine', 62; Orla Lafferty, 'Reporting the 'Troubles' at Ulster Television: An archival exploration from 1968-1998' (PhD, University of Ulster, 2013), 251.
[43] Jeremy Potter, *Independent Television Broadcasting Volume 4: Companies and Programmes 1968-80*, (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1990), 201.
[44] ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, 'Programmes on the Administration of Justice in Northern Ireland Part II'.
[45] BBC WAC, R78/700/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances, Any Answers, 11 June 1974; ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, Northern Ireland Troubles General Volume 3 January 1974- December 1977, IBA Paper 277 (74) 'Programmes Featuring Members of the IRA and Similar Bodies: Memorandum by the Staff', 2 December 1974.

platform.[46] At the same time, broadcasters were also wary of becoming a platform for the authorities. In December 1974, the BBC's Editor of News and Current Affairs, Desmond Taylor, urged colleagues to take care in reporting police statements about persons who had been arrested in relation to acts of terrorism, noting that some such statements had 'implied the guilt of persons at present in custody'. Taylor warned that 'the BBC must be very careful in such cases and must not let itself be used by the police in a war of nerves against the I.R.A.'.[47] Both the BBC and IBA had strict rules in place for interviewing members of paramilitary organisations and prior permission was required from the Director-General of the BBC, or in the case of ITV productions, the IBA. As a result, interviews with members of the IRA or other paramilitary organisations were a rarity, a point that broadcasters had been quick to highlight.[48]

The BBC and IBA defended their decision to allow, where appropriate, interviews with paramilitaries to be broadcast, arguing that it was their duty to report on all aspects of the conflict. As the IBA asserted:

> The fact that assorted groups and individuals choose to act outside the proper constituted democratic machinery does not in itself render their case unworthy of attention however horrifying their actions may become. It cannot be denied that the IRA and the UDA are factors in the Northern Ireland situation just as much as the Social Democratic and Labour Party and the Ulster Unionists. An understanding of why they act in this way is essential to any attempt to report and explain the Northern Ireland crisis.[49]

Both broadcasting bodies maintained that through interviews they had shown the British public the murderous nature of the IRA.[50] It was argued that the intense bombing in England during the 1970s meant that this was no longer necessary; however, broadcasters reasoned that occasionally it was in the public interest to be reminded of what the enemy was.[51] Above all, broadcasters stressed the importance of understanding the motives behind the IRA's actions.[52] As the BBC's *Midweek* presenter Jackie Gillot remarked, however 'obscene, irrational, unpardonable' the IRA's activities might seem 'we have got to try and understand what it is that moves their minds'.[53] Regardless of political pressure, in the early 1970s both ITV and the BBC produced a number of programmes, which included interviews with members of the IRA, providing audiences with an insight into the organisation's position.

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[46] BBC WAC, R78/700/1, Northern Ireland civil disturbances, Minutes of a Meeting, 10 June 1974; BBC WAC, Any Answers; ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, IBA Paper 277 (74).
[47] BBC WAC, R78/700/1, Northern Ireland civil disturbances, Extract from Minutes of a Meeting, 6 December 1974.
[48] Defending the BBC against criticism following the broadcast of an interview with David O'Connell on *Midweek* in June 1974, the Director-General, Charles Curran, noted that since 1971 the BBC had only shown two interviews with the IRA. (BBC WAC, Any Answers).
[49] Programme Policy Committee Paper 3 (73), 'Programmes about Criminals', quoted in ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, IBA Paper 277 (74).
[50] ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, 5095/2/10/1, Weekend World-David O'Connell, Letter from Lord Aylesbury (Chairman of the IBA) to Paul Hawkins (MP), 12 February 1973.
[51] Speech to the Broadcasting Press Guild, 12 July 1979, quoted in *The Listener*, 19 July 1979 quoted in Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 147.
[52] BBC WAC, R78/700/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances, Extract from the Minutes of a Meeting, 2 December 1974.
[53] BBC WAC, Any Answers.

The most controversial of these was with David O'Connell, on London Weekend Television's (LWT) *Weekend World* programme transmitted on 17 November 1974. The programme primarily focused on the increase of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland, and the purpose of the O'Connell interview was to clarify the IRA's position in the face of the mounting number of sectarian killings. The interview was carried out by Mary Holland, one of the first British journalists to provide substantial coverage of the conflict. During the 1970s, she had become an increasingly prominent commentator on Northern Ireland. Her unwillingness to self-censor reports on the 'Troubles' gained her a reputation for being sympathetic to the republican movement.[54] In the course of the interview, Holland brought the conversation onto the campaign of violence in English cities seeking to establish who the IRA's intended targets were. She noted that the IRA had repeatedly stated that they had no quarrel with the British people, but pointing to the M62 bombing on 4 February 1974, which had killed twelve people including two young children, she asked: 'Do you see that to British people that looks like a campaign on ordinary British people?'. O'Connell, however, insisted that the coach had been a legitimate target because it was carrying British military personnel: 'The facts are that the coach that was struck on the particular journey was a military coach… They [the IRA] warned civilians not to frequent places where military personnel are known to have established haunts'.[55] O'Connell warned that over the following months the IRA planned an escalation of the campaign in England:

> For five years the British government has had its forces waging a campaign of terror- not just on the IRA, but on the people of Ireland… What have we got from the British people? Total indifference. They have washed their hands. We said last week in a statement that the British government and the British people must realise that because of the terrible [war] in Ireland, they will suffer the consequences.[56]

The main thrust of the interview, however, was to explore the IRA's terms for calling off the campaign and their vision for an independent Northern Ireland. Holland turned her questioning to the likelihood of the conflict descending into civil war if Britain withdrew from the province and asked whether this would be of benefit to the IRA.[57] It was O'Connell's comments regarding the escalation of the bombing campaign in England, however, which critics concentrated on and which led to accusations that LWT had allowed the IRA a platform.

Initially, the interview attracted little response. Directly after the broadcast, the leader of the DUP, Ian Paisley, had called for an emergency debate in the House of Commons, but was refused.[58] LWT reported only receiving sixty phone calls and fifteen letters regarding the programme, the majority of which had been positive. The IBA had received less than a dozen phone calls about the interview and

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[54] Anne McHardy, 'Obituary: Mary Holland', *Guardian*, 9 June 2004.
[55] BBC WAC, R78/700/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances, Transcript of *Weekend World*, London Weekend Television interview with Dáithi Ó Conaill, 17 November 1974.
[56] *Ibid*.
[57] *Ibid*.
[58] 'Protest at IRA man on TV', *The Times*, 19 November 1974; Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 160.

the number of letters in response to it were equally low.[59] Four days after the programme aired, however, two bombs exploded in pubs in Birmingham city centre, killing twenty-one people in the deadliest act of terrorism to occur in England since the Second World War. In the aftermath, the O'Connell interview attracted widespread criticism in the press and from politicians who concentrated on O'Connell's comments regarding the England campaign. Conservative MP, Sir Patrick Cormack, complained that 'nothing had been more nauseating or offensive to British people than the sight and sound from time to time of these blackguards, villains and murderers appearing on television screens or being interviewed on the radio'.[60] Similarly, Edward du Cann told the Commons that 'It is a gross affront to us to have a known terrorist allowed to flaunt his views on TV or any other way'.[61] Some politicians even accused Holland of inciting violence by asking O'Connell whether the IRA were prepared to escalate their activities to include assassinations.[62] The leader of the SDLP, Gerry Fitt, went further suggesting that the interview had indirectly led to the Birmingham bombings.[63]

As the IBA pointed out, most complaints did not relate to the content of the interview per se, but were 'against the very fact that a proclaimed enemy of Britain was allowed the privilege of an appearance on "our" television'.[64] Certainly, of the complaints the IBA received most demanded that the IRA be denied any airtime, and protested the fact that O'Connell had been allowed to issue threats against the British people.[65] The IBA, however, defended its decision to broadcast the interview, stressing the fact that Holland had adopted a tough stance and had succeeded in obtaining valuable information, which would help the British public better understand the conflict.[66] The BBC management's view was that Holland had been 'quite tough and realistic'.[67]

An examination of the programme's transcript shows that Holland's questioning was robust pushing O'Connell to take responsibility for a recent spate of bomb attacks on train stations in London amongst other things.[68] As noted, contrary to criticism, the interview's primary focus was to establish the reasons behind continuing sectarian violence in Northern Ireland. The interview format allowed Holland to force O'Connell to justify the IRA's actions and therefore offer audiences insights into the paramilitaries' mind-set other than those provided by their prepared statements. Holland pushed O'Connell to clarify the IRA's position and justify recent assassinations, particularly those of judges Rory Conaghan and Martin McBurney, whose deaths had sparked a surge in tit-for-tat killings in Belfast

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[59] ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, IBA Paper 277 (74).
[60] Proscribed Organisations, Patrick Cormack, 28 November 1974, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1974/nov/28/proscribed-organisations#S5CV0882P0_19741128_HOC_378 [accessed 3 January 2018].
[61] *Daily Telegraph*, 29 November 1974 quoted in Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 141.
[62] 'Mr Jenkins expects broadcasting authorities to behave responsibly and not view of MPs', *The Times*, 29 November 1974.
[63] ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, IBA Paper 277 (74).
[64] *Ibid*.
[65] ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, 5095/2/10/1, Weekend World-David O'Connell, Assorted Letters, November 1974.
[66] ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, IBA Paper 277 (74).
[67] BBC WAC, R78/700/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances, Extract from the Minutes of a Meeting', 22 November 1974.
[68] Due to the incomplete nature of the ITV and BBC archives I have been unable to locate a copy of the actual programme.

during October and November of 1974. By exploring these issues through the O'Connell interview, the programme's producers evaluated the IRA's position without allowing itself to become a platform.

The programme had undergone rigorous scrutiny before making it to the screen. Consistent with the Authority's policy regarding any programme featuring criminals, producers first had to acquire the approval of the IBA. In response to the resulting criticism, the Authority noted that it had paid particular attention to the extent the O'Connell interview could be held in violation of the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act (1973) by 'encourag[ing] or incit[ing] to crime or to lead[ing] to disorder or to be offensive to public feeling'.[69] On both accounts, the Authority had concluded that the value of the information that would be brought to the public's attention by the broadcast outweighed the risk.[70] It was agreed that LWT would be allowed to proceed with the interview, subject to assurances that the questioning would be 'tough'. In addition, the IBA also requested that they preview the unedited film before giving the final go-ahead.[71] According to the magazine *Broadcast*, a ten-man team from the IBA were 'incarcerated at LWT's South Bank headquarters until 4 a.m. on the Sunday morning of transmission. Their arguments and advice obviously vitally affected the nature and form of the final programme.'.[72]

The IBA had been particularly careful following extensive criticism received after the broadcast of a similar interview in January 1973.[73] This programme also produced by LWT had sought to explore the IRA's proposal for a nine-county Ulster political unit. It also included an interview with O'Connell, carried out by Mary Holland, in which he claimed that the IRA was growing in strength and defended the shooting of members of the British Army and RUC.[74] Whilst viewers seemed unperturbed by O'Connell's appearance - the IBA only received nine complaints - there was outrage among some politicians and the right-wing press.[75] The *Daily Telegraph* likened the programme to 'a BBC interview on Germany's war aims with Dr Goebbels', and claimed that it had led to an escalation in violence as the IRA sought to live up to O'Connell's promises that they would intensify their campaign.[76] Conservative MP and staunch Unionist, John Biggs-Davison called for an emergency debate, stating that 'The programme was clearly offensive to public feeling, particularly among those who have served or suffered in Northern Ireland'.[77] The IBA conceded that Holland had been '"too soft"' and had

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[69] The Independent Broadcasting Authority Act, 1973, Section 4 (L)(a).
[70] ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, IBA Paper 277 (74).
[71] *Ibid*.
[72] *Broadcast*, 2 December 1974 cited by Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 159.
[73] The BBC has also received widespread criticism after interviewing O'Connell on the *Midweek* programme. The programme was publicly condemned by the Bishop of Crediton (South Devon) who accused the BBC of giving too much publicity to terrorists. The Director-General defended the interview commenting that it had been important and that Tom Mangold who had carried out the interview had been 'really tough' in his questioning. (BBC WAC, R78/700/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances, Extract from the Minutes of a Board Meeting, 20 June 1974.)
[74] 'No Title', *Weekend World*, London Weekend World, 21 January 1973; 'A Forum for the Enemy', *Daily Telegraph*, 22 January 1973.
[75] ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, Northern Ireland General Volume 2 January 1972- December 1973, Memo from Blair Scott, 24 January 1973.
[76] 'A Forum for the Enemy'; Trevor Bates, Youth squads called in to plant IRA bombs, *Daily Telegraph*, 26 January 1973.
[77] 'No interview debate', *The Guardian*, 23 January 1973.

allowed O'Connell to make 'unsupported claims of high morale and undepleted strength'. [78] Nevertheless, it argued that the programme had shed important light on contemporary politics in Northern Ireland, leaving 'no doubt in viewers' minds of the nature of the enemy which the people of both Ireland and the United Kingdom are facing'.[79]

The *Weekend World* interviews with David O'Connell led to renewed calls for tighter legal controls when covering terrorism. Northern Irish legislation already placed legal restrictions on how the conflict was reported. Under the Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967, broadcasters were obliged to give any information, which could assist in securing persons who had committed an arrestable offence, to the police. The IBA also had to take into consideration restrictions under the IBA Act (1973), forbidding material that 'offends against good taste or decency or is likely to encourage or incite to crime or to lead to disorder or to be offensive to public feeling'.[80] Some MPs petitioned for restrictions specific to the media to be included in the PTA, the counter-terrorism legislation introduced in November 1974. Wyn Roberts (Conservative MP for Conwy) moved to include a provision that any person who arranged 'a broadcast, newspaper article, or other publicity knowing that the purpose or consequence might reasonably be suspected to support, sustain or further the activities of a proscribed organisation' would be liable to up to three months imprisonment or a fine of £400.[81] The government, however, was reluctant to encroach on the freedom of the media. As a Home Office policy document from 1974 noted 'Censorship of any kind is out. No Government would have it in the Northern Ireland situation'.[82] Having acquired reassurances from both the BBC and IBA that they would re-evaluate their policy on Northern Ireland in view of the proscription of the IRA, the government continued to rely on the voluntary co-operation of broadcasters.[83] A formal ban restricting the broadcasting of interviews with proscribed organisations would not be enforced in the UK until 1988.

Nonetheless, the PTA made covering the conflict, and in particular interviewing the IRA, all the more difficult. Under the Act, to arrange or assist in the arrangement of any meeting between three or more persons known to belong to a proscribed organisation was outlawed. Similarly, anyone who knowingly contributed monetarily, or otherwise, to the resources of a proscribed organisation could be prosecuted.[84] In 1976, the addition of Section 11 made it an offence not to report information on any future act of terrorism or about people involved in terrorism.[85] Yet, as the Head of Current Affairs Radio, Martin Wallace, observed at a meeting in February 1975, in reality the provisions outlined in the PTA

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[78] ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, 5095/2/10/1, Weekend World-David O'Connell, Programme Interventions Report January- February 1973, 16 February 1973.
[79] ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, Letter from Lord Aylesbury to Paul Hawkins (MP).
[80] The Independent Broadcasting Authority Act, 1973.
[81] 'Mr Jenkins expects broadcasting authorities to behave responsibly and note view of MPs'.
[82] NI 34/110/01 6194A. Broadcasting Television and Radio General: Policy. Mr Cudlipp to Gilland, Seaman and Roberts, 1 April 1974 cited in Seaton, 'The BBC and the 'Hidden Wiring' of the British Constitution', 455.
[83] Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 140-2.
[84] Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act, 1974. http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/56/pdfs/ukpga_19740056_en.pdf, [accessed 5 December 2017].
[85] Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act, 1976. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/8/pdfs/ukpga_19760008_en.pdf, [accessed 5 December 2017].

added little to the BBC's own editorial guidelines.[86] Similarly, the IBA concluded that 'in the strict legal sense the position of the broadcasters would seem to have been left relatively unchanged. While creating a new offence, the Act seems of itself to offer no obvious pointer towards fundamental change in our policy'.[87] Nevertheless, both broadcasting bodies undertook to remind their news and current affairs staff of the rules regarding contact with the IRA and other paramilitary organisations.[88] Director-General of the BBC, Charles Curran, promised that he would personally review all requests, whilst the IBA agreed that approval on programmes that explored the views of people who within the British Isles use or advocate criminal measures for political ends would only be given after consultation with all its members.[89] Both the BBC and IBA maintained that there would be no outright ban on interviews with the IRA.

All the same, there were no further interviews with members of any republican group until 1979.[90] Rex Cathcart has argued that the PTA was in effect the equivalent of Section 31 of Ireland's Broadcasting Act (1960), which allowed the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs to issue ministerial orders prohibiting the broadcast of any material specified in the order. In 1976, Conor Cruise O'Brien issued an order prohibiting RTÉ from broadcasting spokespersons from various organisations, including Sinn Féin.[91] In Britain, coverage of the IRA was muted following the introduction of the PTA, and whilst increased political pressure played a significant role in restricting coverage, other factors, particularly commercial interests, also influenced how paramilitaries were presented. Like their counterparts in the press, neither broadcasting body was immune to market pressures. Even though the BBC did not need to attract advertisers, it was important that it maintain its share of the audience in order to justify the licencing fee.[92] As Miller observes, the need to secure audiences 'limits the production of innovative or risky programmes'.[93] Reporting on Northern Ireland was already risky, as *This Week* director David Elstein told film-maker Alan Rosenthal, ratings dipped every time the series broadcast a programmes about Northern Ireland, because 'the British audience is not interested'.[94] The monotony of violence and political stalemate did elicit a general fatigue towards Northern Ireland amongst much of the British public. Bernadette Hayes and Ian McAllister have pointed out that opinion polls called consistently for political and military withdrawal from Northern Ireland and argued that this was evidence that the majority of British citizens viewed the conflict as 'an unwelcome historical

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[86] BBC WAC, R78/700/1, Northern Ireland civil disturbances, Extracts from the Minutes of a Meeting, 7 February 1975.
[87] ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, IBA Paper 277 (74).
[88] ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, Northern Ireland Troubles General Volume 3 January 1974- December 1977, 'Programmes which expose the views of those who use or advocate violence', 20 December 1974; BBC WAC, R78/700/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances, 'Plain Man's Guide to Anti-Terrorism Legislation', 1975.
[89] This decision was made at an Authority meeting on 19 December 1974. ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, Northern Ireland Troubles General Volume 3 January 1974- December 1977, The Northern Ireland Convention Election; appearance of candidates who might use or advocate violence, 27 March 1975; BBC WAC, R78/700/1, Northern Ireland civil disturbances, Minutes of a Meeting, 5 December 1974.
[90] On 5 July 1979, the BBC *Tonight* programme broadcast an interview with the Irish National Liberation Army.
[91] Cathcart, *The Most Contrary Region,* 240.
[92] Curran and Seaton, *Power without Responsibility,* 166-7.
[93] Miller, *Don't Mention the War*, 26.
[94] David Elstein, 'This Week', in *The Documentary Conscience: A Casebook in Film Making*, (ed.) Alan Rosenthal (Berkley: University of California Press, 1980), 124.

anachronism'.[95] As a result, the BBC and ITV could be reluctant to chance programmes on Northern Ireland, let alone the IRA, which might invoke public anger and endanger their viewing figures. They therefore, tailored their coverage according to the strength of public anger towards the IRA, which changed depending on the magnitude of violence, especially in England. Following the Birmingham bombing, for example, the BBC Director-General remarked that 'at this moment the emotional resistance to the sight and sound of an IRA spokesman made it impractical even to contemplate such an interview'.[96] Similarly, the IBA noted that had 'The O'Connell interview […been] shown on the Sunday before the Birmingham bomb outrage. It would [… have been] unthinkable on the Sunday following, precisely because of the effect of that event on public attitudes'.[97]

On 22 December 1974, the IRA announced a cessation of violence; though this was short lived, it was immediately followed by a second ceasefire, which lasted until September 1975. The truce prompted the BBC to consider allowing interviews with Sinn Féin representatives. In light of this, Stan Taylor (Deputy Editor, Radio News) asked if it might now be permissible to interview persons such as O'Connell. The Director-General conceded that it was 'certainly worth considering. The situation had changed in the last month, but it was still very tricky'.[98] This respite did little to relieve the pressure exerted on the broadcast media. As Robert Savage has argued, as soon as the violence resumed the BBC faced renewed complaints, this time for reporting the religion of victims, complainants feared that doing so encouraged retaliation. Robin Walsh, the BBC's News Editor in Northern Ireland, dismissed the criticism, arguing that broadcasters had a duty to inform audiences as to the extent of sectarian violence.[99] Regardless of pressure from the RUC and NIO, both the BBC and ITV continued to report on Northern Ireland as they had previously, providing the names and religion of those caught up in the violence.

Throughout the 'Troubles', broadcasters resisted the efforts of the government, and others, to censor television coverage of the conflict. Accordingly, broadcasters presented a more complex picture than that which the authorities wished to encourage of good versus evil; law and order versus terrorism. As an examination of the contents of current affairs programmes produced during the early 1970s shows, the images of Northern Ireland transmitted to television screens across Britain were much more nuanced than broadcasters have been given credit for and provided a variety of perspectives on the conflict.

In contrast with the press coverage of the early 1970s, current affairs programming focused more on events in Northern Ireland than IRA activities in English cities. This is clearly indicated in LWT's *Weekend World* programme transmitted on 17 November 1974. The programme was to become infamous because of the interview it featured with O'Connell, discussed above. The focus, however,

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[95] Bernadette C. Hayes and Ian McAllister, 'British and Irish public opinion towards the Northern Ireland problem', *Irish Political Studies*, 11, 1 (1996), 65-70.
[96] BBC WAC, Extracts from the Minutes of a Meeting, 2 December 1974.
[97] ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, IBA Paper 277 (74).
[98] BBC WAC, R78/700/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances, Extracts from the Minutes of a Meeting, 3 January 1975.
[99] BBC WAC, N12/123/2, File 2, Northern Ireland Advisory Council, minutes of the Advisory Council, 12 September 1975, quoted in Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles,* 143.

was on sectarian murder, and although the programme acknowledged mounting IRA violence in English cities, the inference was that Northern Ireland was at the root of the problem. As presenter Peter Jay noted in the programme's introduction:

> Over the past year, the violence taken over-all has in fact been ebbing… But nonetheless, there are ominous signs that this may be changing and that things are getting worse, and that Northern Ireland is sliding irresistibly into anarchy. An anarchy into which, on the evidence of over two hundred bombs in the last 18 months, the rest of Britain too is being drawn. But horrific… as that bombing campaign is, the situation as ever is far worse in the streets of Northern Ireland.[100]

The programme examined the effect of sectarian violence on the people of Northern Ireland. Holland noted that the arbitrary nature of these killings had given rise to fears even within battle-hardened Belfast. The programme described the death of a 26-year-old Catholic teacher, Michael Brennan, shot when gunmen opened fire on a Youth Club, and emphasised the randomness of the attack. Holland acknowledged that the Protestant community had also been the target of sectarian killings but argued that Catholics had suffered the most in recent months. She noted that the Catholic community felt that the Army would not defend them from Loyalist violence, a feeling exacerbated by internment.[101] The programme argued that the growing anger and isolation felt in Catholic areas provided 'the most fertile ground for the extremists'. Ultimately, it held the IRA as responsible for the upsurge in sectarian violence, claiming that many people in Northern Ireland believed that if the IRA called off its campaign then the killings would stop. The programme investigated the likelihood of the conflict descending into civil war if Britain withdraw from Northern Ireland and asked whether this would benefit the IRA.[102]

Even when programmes examined bomb attacks in England, broadcasters made a point of placing the events within a Northern Ireland context. This is in part because in order to fill a whole programme, producers had to do more than factually report incidents. They had to examine the background and significance of events; therefore, it was natural that coverage of IRA violence in English cities would be rooted in events in Northern Ireland. Following the Old Bailey bombing on 8 March 1973, LWT's *Weekend World* broadcast a special on the attack, opening with a discussion of the IRA's internal divisions over the question of a widespread campaign in England. Mary Holland and fellow journalist, John Fielding, had talked with senior members of the IRA in Dublin and Belfast and noted that it was generally agreed that the Provisional IRA's Andersontown Brigade had carried out the attack. Holland, however, observed the reluctance of the leadership in Dublin to engage in a sustained bombing campaign in England, which had been disastrous for the IRA when, in 1939-40, they had embarked on a similar campaign in England in an effort to end partition.[103]

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[100] BBC WAC, R78/700/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances, Transcript *Weekend World*, 17 November 1974.
[101] Internment- the imprisonment of suspects without trail- was introduced in August 1971 and continued until December 1975. During this time, 1,981 people were detained, the majority of them Catholic/Republican. See Marc Mulholland, *The Longest War: Northern Ireland's Troubled History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 95-102.
[102] BBC WAC, Transcript *Weekend World*.
[103] 'No Title', *Weekend World*, London Weekend Television, 11 March 1973.

The programme also featured a live audience discussion broadcast from Belfast, aimed at establishing Northern Ireland's reaction to the attack. *Weekend World* regularly included audience discussions in its programmes about Northern Ireland, providing an opportunity for people from the province to recount their everyday experiences. This produced a Northern Irish voice that was largely absent from general coverage. Asked how they felt upon hearing about the explosion in London the majority of the audience conveyed sympathy for those caught in the blast, but agreed that Londoners would never fully understand what the people of Belfast had gone through since the beginning of the 'Troubles' in 1968. The programme noted the 'total unpreparedness of Londoners in this situation'. A significant portion of the programme was dedicated to scrutinising their response to the attack and criticising the delay in evacuating the area around the Old Bailey.[104]

Interestingly, this episode included a second audience discussion broadcast from London. This audience consisted solely of Irish people living in the city. It is the only programme in the sample, which included members of Britain's Irish population, and is significant because the opinions and reactions of the Irish in Britain were rarely included in either the broadcast media or the press's coverage of Northern Ireland at this time. The audience were asked to what extent they felt a sense of divided loyalty in the wake of the bombing and how much support - financial or otherwise - Irish people were expected to give to the broader Republican movement. Presenter, Peter Jay, attempted to moderate the implications of the last question by saying that he did not include the men of violence in his definition of the Republican movement. Nonetheless, these were loaded questions, which presupposed that all Irish people living in Britain were sympathetic to the Republican cause. The programme presents the Irish population of Britain as a potential threat to the rest of the populace. This presumption was one shared by the early 1970s press. Newspapers such as the *Daily Mirror* and *The Sun* frequently implied that Irish people in Britain were sheltering the terrorists.[105] It could be argued that there was a consensus amongst a significant portion of the British media in their construction of the Irish as an enemy-within and their willingness to associate all Irish with the Republican movement. The *Weekend World* programme took this a step further, in his introduction to the segment, Jay suggested that not only might the Irish be harbouring the terrorists, they might also be potential recruits:

> Well over two hundred Londoners were injured on Thursday, and London's multi-million population includes many Irish men. Most of them retain strong links with the mother country, and some strong ideas about it, but they have not, up 'til now, been confronted with the kind of practical decisions, which every Ulsterman has to make about the methods of political objectives which should and should not be pursued. It is even possible that some of the London Irish may be called to convert habitual republican sentiment into hard practical support for IRA activists this side of the Irish Sea.[106]

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[104] *Ibid*.
[105] See Chapter One.
[106] It is worth noting that whilst Jay differentiates between Irishmen and Ulstermen he associates both with the IRA. During the early 1970s, the press and broadcast media frequently conflated Northern and Southern, Catholic and Protestant. 'No Title', 11 March 1973.

Some of the London-Irish audience's responses seemed to confirm this impression. For example, journalist, Gary Lawless, remarked that: 'I don't believe in individual terrorism… [but] I am willing to support, and defend the rights of any section of the Irish people to engage in guerrilla warfare against British imperialism'.[107] Similarly, Paddy Prendeville, later to become editor of the Irish satirical magazine *The Phoenix*, emphasised the need to place the violence in London within the context of British violence in Northern Ireland and the empire, referring to Aden, Cyprus and Kenya. Jay responded by accusing Prendeville of attempting to justify the attack by dressing it as context. What is notable is the extent to which many of those participating in the discussion felt able to be open about their republican sympathies. In response to Jay's question regarding the extent of Irish support for the Republican movement for example, Thomas Beamish (Chairman of the Executive Committee for Irish Civil Rights in Britain) asked 'why is it wrong in Britain for Irish people to want their country united'.[108] Breda Gray has noted that by the 1970s 'a more self-conscious and coordinated Irish identity' had developed in Britain.[109] The confidence of audience members in stating their views speaks to this sense of identity

The audience, however, was not representative as a cross-section of the Irish population in Britain and consisted predominantly of political activists. Several members of the audience in both London and Belfast noting this, questioned if the producers had purposely loaded the audience with left-wing republicans and asserted that Lawless and Prendeville were atypical of the Irish in general. Peter Jay denied these accusations, pointing out that the programme was not trying to present a representative sample of Irish community opinion, nor had it advertised the discussion as such. Nonetheless, the inclusion of outspoken and republican London-Irish within the *Weekend World* programme may have been designed to highlight the potential threat of the Irish in Britain, rather than providing them with a voice. Most of the studio audience stressed that Irish people in Britain disapproved of violence and expressed concern that if the bomb was found to have been planted by the IRA it could lead to a backlash against them.[110]

For the most part, the broadcast media looked more at what was happening in Northern Ireland than England. Curtis asserts that British television in particular focused almost exclusively on violence without providing context.[111] She observes that as early as 1971, media theorist Jay Blumler had criticised television news bulletins for failing to explain what was happening in Northern Ireland, noting that analysis of news stories was 'treated as the preserve of current affairs programmes'.[112] This is

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[107] Lawless wrote for the International Marxist Group newspaper *Red Mole*.
[108] 'No Title', 11 March 1973.
[109] Breda Gray, 'From 'Ethnicity' to 'Diaspora': 1980s Emigration and 'Multicultural' London' in *The Irish Diaspora*, (ed.) Andy Bielenberg (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 71.
[110] 'No Title', 11 March 1973.
[111] This was a view echoed by many Irish political and community activists in Britain during the late 1970s and early 1980s. A policy report on the Irish community produced by the London Strategic Policy Unit in 1986, for example, states that 'the media coverage of 'the troubles' tends to isolate events, particularly spectacular events, from the underlying context from which they arose'. (London Metropolitan Archive, LSPU CS01/08, London Strategic Policy Unit, *Policy Report on the Irish Community*, 1984, 5).
[112] Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 107; Jay G. Blumler, 'Ulster on the small screen', *New Society*, 23 December 1971.

unsurprising, as news bulletins lack the space to provide more than a factual report of events. Current affairs programmes are often used to supply the context and depth of analysis that news programmes lack. The BBC and ITV's current affairs programmes in the early 1970s often incorporated an explanation of recent political and military developments in Northern Ireland. Both broadcasting bodies also frequently produced television specials surveying the conflict to date. In 1974, both ITV and the BBC produced programmes that reflected on five years since the deployment of British troops in 1969.[113] Due to the incomplete nature of the BBC's film archive, only ITV's 'Five Long Years' is included in this sample.

The hour-and-a-half long *This Week* special was intended to provide a retrospective on the conflict, placing individual incidents into context and exploring the complexities that characterised the situation in Northern Ireland. As the programme's director, David Elstein, remarked, previously current affairs programmes had focused on specific, narrow issues: 'When you actually see it in some sort of context it is astonishing and revelatory'.[114] The programme traced the development of the conflict from the Civil Rights movement onwards, though reporter Peter Taylor, noted that the violence was rooted in more than three hundred years of history. Drawing on a wide range of interviews with British, Irish and Northern Irish politicians, as well as political activists, members of the security forces and paramilitaries from both sides of the sectarian divide, the programme explained to audiences the origins of the Civil Rights movement, and its escalation into violence.[115] It then examined the role of the British Army in Northern Ireland, tracking the rise of the IRA and the UDA. Taylor challenged the misconception that responsibility for the conflict lay solely with the IRA, reminding viewers that the Army's first gun battles had been with Loyalist paramilitaries. Finally, the programme explored the Sunningdale Agreement and the events leading to the collapse of the Northern Ireland executive in May 1974.[116] Writing in the *Daily Mail*, television critic Shaun Usher remarked of 'Five Long Years': 'A cheap and easy comment would be that this careful survey told us more than we wanted to know. Not more than we needed to know however…'.[117]

Curtis, rightly, observes that violence dominated coverage provided by television programmes.[118] In his study of the media's coverage of Northern Ireland carried out between 1974 and 1975, social scientist, Philip Elliott, found that two-thirds of news stories in the British media, particularly in the national television news bulletins, dealt with conflict.[119] Current affairs programmes were also reduced to a catalogue of deaths and explosions, frequently begining with a summary of recent incidents, accompanied by a montage of bomb explosions, sectarian graffiti, rioting and army patrols. Even stories from Northern Ireland unconnected to the 'Troubles' were reported through the prism of

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[113] 'Five Years- A Thousand Deaths', BBC, 29 July 1974; 'Five Long Years', *This Week*, Thames Television, 7 August 1974.
[114] Elstein, 'This Week', 124-5.
[115] All interviewees were told beforehand that representatives of the IRA would be included; the only person to refuse to participate was Ian Paisley.
[116] 'Five Long Years', 7 August 1974.
[117] Shaun Usher, 'Life at the back of the queue…', *Daily Mail*, 9 August.
[118] Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 107.
[119] Elliott, 'Misreporting Ulster: News as a Field-Dressing'; Elliott, 'Reporting Northern Ireland', 289.

the conflict. For example, in a segment on BBC's *Nationwide* about Manchester United uber-fan, Harry McKitterick, the feature starts with shots of tanks, soldiers and barbed wire.[120]

The fact that Northern Ireland was characterised by violence is best illustrated in 'Remember Strabane'.[121] Broadcast on 11 April 1974 by Thames Television as part of the *This Week* series, it examined the human and material cost of the 'Troubles' for the Northern Irish border town. Given its location close to the Irish border, Strabane had suffered particularly high levels of violence and was a hotspot for IRA activity. Although the programme explored the relationship between economic hardship and the rise in paramilitary activity, its primary focus was the violence endured by the people of Northern Ireland. In one sequence, the camera panned over bombsite after bombsite, as Peter Taylor listed the buildings and businesses that had been destroyed:

> This used to be the main hotel, the Abercorn; this was the other hotel, the Commercial; this was the biggest and cheapest supermarket in Strabane; this was the next biggest supermarket. The customs post has been attacked by the bombers eight times; the police station has been shot at, rocketed and bombed from the air; the Labour Exchange has been bombed and re-built four times; nine of Strabane's ten petrol stations have been blown up. There used to be two banks on this corner; and this used to be Strabane's biggest building, the Town Hall, it was firebombed and burnt out. The only cinema closed down two years ago; the golf club has been bombed three times.[122]

As Taylor lists the businesses affected, the camera focuses on the destruction. The immediacy of such images allowed viewers to experience first-hand the violence in Northern Ireland with the intention of fostering sympathy for its people. Taylor concludes the programme by appealing to British audiences for patience:

> So far, almost a thousand people have died in the Troubles of Northern Ireland, and there will be more. If that's a figure that you find difficult to grasp and if your patience sometimes wears a little thin with the constant stream of bad news from Northern Ireland, remember the human cost, remember Strabane.[123]

Taylor identifies a growing frustration amongst sections of the British public with the conflict. Throughout the 'Troubles' opinion polls consistently indicated that the majority supported withdrawing troops from Northern Ireland.[124] There are some exceptions to this pattern, as David Miller points out, following periods of widespread violence. Polls carried out in the wake of high-profile IRA attacks showed a notable rise in support for maintaining a military presence in Northern Ireland After Bloody Friday, when on 21 July 1972 more than twenty bombs exploded in Belfast killing eleven people, opinion polls indicated that support for withdrawal dropped to 34 per cent from 59 per cent in 1971. Miller argues that in these instances media coverage played an important role in allowing British people

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[120] 'Football Fan', *Nationwide*, BBC, 7 November 1974.
[121] 'Remember Strabane', *This Week*, Thames Television, 11 April 1974.
[122] *Ibid.*
[123] *Ibid.*
[124] Hayes and McAllister, 'British and Irish public opinion towards the Northern Ireland problem', 65-70.

to identify with victims of violence, resulting in a decrease in the number of people in favour of British withdrawal.[125] It could be argued that Taylor's emphasis on violence in the province encourages support for this viewpoint, whether or not this was his intention, it gave the impression of a place defined by conflict.

Nonetheless, Taylor also provides some social context and by doing so provides a more nuanced perspective. At the start of the film, he discusses the town's economic decline prior to the 'Troubles', drawing a connection between the high rate of unemployment (25 per cent) and the strength of the IRA in Strabane: 'For years Strabane had been a forgotten town, old industries had died, there was no work. …when the IRA re-opened their campaign of violence, the ranks of the unemployed provided them with ready recruits'.[126] He fails, however, to explore the issue in any depth, a problem typical of current affairs programming during the early 1970s. Journalists were capable however of engaging with the wider socio-economic factors in which the violence was rooted. 'Children in Crossfire', broadcast on 12 March 1974, also draws parallels between violence, unemployment, poor housing and the lack of adequate facilities on Northern Ireland's housing estates: 'One set of shops, one factory, virtually no entertainment. Any sociologist could spot a classic environment for vandalism and violence'.[127] Once again, however, the programme missed an opportunity to explore in depth the causes rather than the symptoms of the 'Troubles'.

The excessive focus on violence in the television coverage of the conflict helped (re)construct the perception of Northern Ireland as a place apart. Although territorially part of the UK, Northern Ireland has often been viewed as historically and culturally different from the rest of Britain. As social scientists Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd have argued, it is seen as 'a place where things are done differently, one to which the (more sensible and rational) British way cannot easily be exported'.[128] The perception of Northern Ireland as different, or un-British, is evident in the attitudes of the political and military elite as seen in television interviews during the early 1970s. In 'Five Long Years', Ian Freeland (General Officer Commanding of the British Army in Northern Ireland from 1969 to 1972) responded to questions about Home Secretary, Reginald Maudling's apparent ignorance of the situation in Northern Ireland by asking 'What Englishman does understand the scene?'.[129] The conflation of British and English compounded this sense of the province as a place apart. Whilst Northern Ireland could lay claim to a British identity, it was definitely not English. The view of Northern Ireland as incomprehensible to British or English minds was propagated by the broadcast media. John Hill has discussed how the idea of Northern Ireland as 'alien' might be seen to have been implicit in films and

[125] Miller, *Don't Mention the War*, 279-80.
[126] 'Remember Strabane', 11 April 1974.
[127] 'Children in Crossfire', *Tuesday Documentary*, BBC, 12 March 1974.
[128] Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd, *The Dynamics of Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 224.
[129] 'Five Long Years', 7 August 1974.

plays that dealt with the 'Troubles'.[130] The perception of Northern Ireland as separate or 'different' was certainly evident in current affairs programmes during this period.

These programmes repeatedly stressed that it was Northern Ireland's (supposed) inclination towards violence that marked it out as different, and indeed un-British. Reporters repeatedly foreground the violence and the distinctiveness of Northern Ireland by drawing comparisons between the province and the rest of the UK. A clear example of this can be found in 'Children in Crossfire'.[131] The programme explores the lasting impact of the violence on young people and expresses particular concern at how children growing up in the province's most troubled areas copied the violence around them. In one scene, the camera panned over a group of five-year-olds playing with guns built from wooden blocks. Narrator, Ian Holm, remarked that 'Small boys and girls in any part of Britain play with toy guns, but not like this, this is obsession. Try and take a gun away from one of these children and you have a screaming fit on your hands?'.[132] Holm proffers the British child as the idealised norm, in contrast, he suggests that these children have a natural inclination towards violence, as evidenced by their obsession with toy guns.[133] The programme vocalised fears that the children of Northern Ireland were destined to become a new generation of terrorists; as it pointed out many already played an active role in the conflict throwing stones at soldiers and acting as runners for the IRA. The title sequence showed children from the Creggan estate (Derry) playing with wooden guns; these images were juxtaposed with similar footage of British troops on patrol implying that they were mimicking the soldiers. The documentary goes on to suggest that it was the IRA, however, that the children aspired to emulate. As Holm remarked for these children the IRA gunmen were heroes, an observation Peter Taylor later made in 'Remember Strabane'.[134]

'Last Night Another Soldier', broadcast by the BBC on 4 December 1973, also draws comparisons between Northern Ireland and Britain. The programme shadows eight ordinary soldiers as they embark on a tour of duty in Northern Ireland. As they alight in Belfast, the soldiers are filmed discussing the difficulties in adapting to their new surrounds. One of the officers observes that 'compared with a theatre of war such as the Far East, this is very much an English and British urban environment, which is something they know well and yet it is totally strange at the same time from the urban environment that they know'.[135] Again, it is violence that singles the streets of Belfast out as different. The physical similarities between Belfast and some British cities throws this difference into

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[130] Hill, '"The Troubles we've seen"', 245.
[131] It is worth noting that the transmission of 'Children in Crossfire' was postponed a number of times by the BBC's Northern Ireland Controller, Richard Francis, because of concerns 'at the highest political level' that the programme focused too heavily on the violence, ignoring the recent progress made by the new power-sharing Executive. Francis complained that the film failed to include 'a single reference to the new executive and the remarkable effects of having Catholic Ministers, Community Relations, etc.'. Though the programme was finally broadcast in its original format on 12 March 1974, it was prefaced with a one-minute statement by Francis which declared that since the programme had been made the new executive had been formed and as a result there were more jobs, less tension and less violence in Northern Ireland. (Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 187; 'Children in Crossfire', 12 March 1974).
[132] 'Children in Crossfire', 12 March 1974.
[133] Brocklehurst, *Who's Afraid of Children?*, 101.
[134] 'Children in Crossfire', 12 March 1974; 'Remember Strabane', 11 April 1974.
[135] 'Last Night Another Soldier', *Tuesday Documentary*, BBC, 4 December 1973.

relief. An inclination towards violence was presented as fundamentally at odds with common perceptions of what it meant to be British, a concept centred on perceived values of fair play, tolerance and decency.[136] The persistent emphasis on violence by programme producers reveals as much about what they considered it meant to be British, as what they considered it meant to be Northern Irish. In 'Life in the RUC', broadcast on 25 June 1973, reporter Alan Hart goes one-step further, declaring that events in Northern Ireland were incomprehensible to the British. The programme shows footage of a police band playing outside the City Hall, as the camera pans out viewers see a commotion across the street, followed by a small explosion. Hart remarks: 'What follows is difficult for an Englishman to believe even with the evidence of his own eyes and it could only happen in Ireland. One hundred and fifty yards from where the band plays on, there's a bomb alert and the area is being cleared'. Once again, the implication is that Englishness/ Britishness with its values of rationality and non-violence is incapable of understanding the seemingly irrational violence of Northern Ireland. This is paradoxical, given that the primary aim of current affairs programmes was to educate the British public about the conflict, rather than re-emphasising commonly held views about British national identity.

Bombs on the streets of Belfast posed a considerable challenge to traditional ideas of Britishness. The fact that part of the United Kingdom was engaged in conflict seemed to contradict the self-image of Britain as a moderate and peaceful society that would not tolerate political violence.[137] One way of avoiding this issue was to emphasise the unique position of Northern Ireland within the UK. As John Hill argues, distancing Northern Ireland from the rest of the United Kingdom, allowed the conflict to be viewed as specific to the province, and the British state to be regarded as 'outside of' or 'above' the conflict.[138] Though they attempted to give British people an insight into Northern Ireland, ultimately it could be argued that by presenting Northern Ireland as a 'place apart' these programmes also served to safeguard established ideas of British society as peaceable, and violence as somehow uniquely un-British.

A few programmes did try to challenge the notion of Northern Ireland as a place of violence, seeking to bridge the gap between images seen in news bulletins and reality. On 1 September 1974, *Rap*, a discussion programme for teenagers produced by Yorkshire Television, was broadcast from Belfast. The programme featured a panel of four English teenagers asking questions of an audience made up of teens recruited from youth clubs in Protestant, Catholic and mixed areas across Northern Ireland. The programme explored the effects of the 'Troubles' from the perspective of young people growing up in the province, introducing a variety of Northern Irish voices rarely heard on British television. The local teens strongly objected to the image portrayed in the media of Northern Ireland as a war-savaged country, seeking to place the violence in perspective. They stressed the fact that, contrary to common belief, the 'Troubles' were largely concentrated in small areas of Belfast, Derry and along the border.

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[136] Paul Ward, *Britishness Since 1870* (London: Routledge, 2004).
[137] Jon Lawrence, 'Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post-World War Britain', *The Journal of Modern History*, 75, 3 (2003), 557-589.
[138] Hill, '"The Troubles we've seen"', 245.

Outside of these places, bombs and bullets were as much a rarity as anywhere in Britain. One boy observed that in Bangor, a seaside resort northeast of Belfast, 'you really don't realise you're in the Troubles at all'. Similarly, another boy argued that an armed presence on the streets of his village would have been cause for comment: 'if you stayed a week, you'd swear nothing was happening at all'. Throughout the programme, the Northern Irish participants emphasise that they were perfectly normal teenagers. Their efforts were somewhat frustrated, however, by the way in which the discussion was prefaced. The programme started with footage of Belfast, including shots of an army checkpoint. As the camera focuses on soldiers carrying out searches, presenter, Mike Dornan comments: 'For teenagers here it's normal, it's the only life they know'.[139] This introduction had the effect of undermining any attempt by the teenagers to question the image of Northern Ireland as a militarised zone. Nonetheless, the programme went some way to offering a different viewpoint and challenging established understandings of the violence.

It is unsurprising that much of the coverage focused on attacks carried out by the IRA. Nonetheless, both broadcasting bodies were capable of a more nuanced approach. In 'Remember Strabane', for example, Taylor explores some of the motivation behind the rise in republican violence, noting how the death of 28-year-old Eamonn McDavitt, shot by British soldiers following a Civil Rights march in 1971, had reinforced local hostility towards the security forces. McDavitt, who was deaf and mute, was unarmed, although he had been playing with a rubber bullet at the time.[140] Broadcasters reported violence carried out by the security forces, although it wasn't until the early 1990s that their actions were widely discussed in a critical manner on television. In 1969, images of the leader of the SDLP, Gerry Fitt, being attacked by baton-wielding policemen at a Civil Rights march had been transmitted into living rooms across Britain, bringing home to many the seriousness of the situation in Northern Ireland. This footage would become a stock image re-used by programmes throughout the 'Troubles'.[141] In 'Five Long Years', programme producers showed footage of three British soldiers attacking an unarmed man, suspected of being a member of the IRA, and throwing him to the ground. Commenting on this footage, Taylor, remarked: 'it was not always easy to identify the IRA, Catholics in whose midst they move suffered in the process. Scenes like this left young Catholics in no mood for any kind of politics'.[142] The programme explored the Army's role in the escalation of the conflict during the early 1970s, and the rise of the IRA. It argues that the use of CS gas and violence during the Falls Road curfew in July 1970 had embittered the Catholic community against the Army prompting a surge in support for the IRA, which until then had been practically non-existent.[143] As the programme observes, in the months that followed further abuse and harassment by soldiers persuaded the Catholic community to view the Army as an oppressor. Rather than defending Catholics against Loyalist

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[139] 'Teenagers Talk', *Rap*, Yorkshire Television, 1 September 1974.
[140] See McKittrick, Kelters, Feeney and Thornton (eds.), *Lost Lives*, 91; 'Remember Strabane', 11 April 1974.
[141] Including 'Five Long Years', 7 August 1974.
[142] 'Five Long Years', 7 August 1974.
[143] On the 3 July 1970, the British Army undertook an extensive search for weapons in Belfast's Lower Falls. When rioting broke out the Army imposed a 36-hour curfew, soldiers then moved into the curfew zone carrying out house-to-house searches. In course of these, considerable damage was done to property and four civilians were killed.

extremism, the Army found itself fighting a guerrilla war against the IRA.[144] In presenting the Army as at least in part responsible for the increase in violence, the programme offered audiences a more complicated view of the origins of the 'Troubles' and British intervention in Northern Ireland.

'Five Long Years' also attempted to understand the motivations behind the Army's actions, as it had the actions of the IRA, again demonstrating efforts to provide a nuanced outlook. It acknowledged the difficulties soldiers faced in Northern Ireland, as they carried out their jobs without proper resources and often in the face of hostility from a population that resented their presence. In one sequence soldiers armed with batons, confront a group of young Catholic women who were shouting abuse at them. The camera focuses in on one woman being held back as she attempts to launch herself at the soldiers.[145] Similar scenes in 'Last Night Another Soldier' showed women and children verbally abusing a patrol before cutting to footage of two soldiers in their barracks. One of the soldiers, visibly angry and upset, exclaims 'That woman, I could have killed her'.[146] These images portray the soldiers' reactions in such situations as an objectionable but understandable human response to provocation. Later, 'Five Long Years' featured footage of soldiers sheltering under riot shields from bricks and other missiles. Taylor asks 'In situations like this what could the Army do? They could fire rubber bullets and CS gas. If they fired real bullets, they risk killing innocent civilians'. He notes that in one riot in Derry, two young men, Seamus Cusack and Desmond Beattie, had been shot dead by the Army, further boosting recruitment to the IRA.[147] The image of the security forces presented in these programmes conveys the convolutions of the 'Troubles'. They challenge representations of the Army as either protector or oppressor, presenting instead a multi-dimensional view of the security forces. By examining the Army's part in the violence, and the motivations behind their actions broadcasters added nuance to its coverage.

During the early 1970s, the BBC and ITV produced several current affairs programmes on the British Army in Northern Ireland. To improve their media image, in 1971 the Army had relaxed restrictions on soldiers talking to journalists and began training officers on how to conduct themselves in television interviews.[148] This resulted in a spate of programmes, exploring the everyday experiences and opinions of ordinary servicemen in Northern Ireland. 'The Bomb Disposal Men', broadcast as part of the *Tuesday Documentary* series by the BBC on 29 October 1974, shadowed three British Army Ammunition Technical Officers during training and their first tour of duty in Belfast. The programme followed the three men as they dealt with hoaxes, booby-traps and hair-triggers, and described some of the methods used to defuse the IRA's bombs. At its climax, the programme showed Captain Nigel Thorne enter a Belfast shop to defuse a bomb planted in its storeroom. The programme emphasised the danger faced by Thorne and his colleagues and celebrated their bravery. As it observed, by 1974 twelve bomb disposal men had been killed in the conflict. The three men talk candidly about their dead

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[144] 'Five Long Years', 7 August 1974.
[145] *Ibid*.
[146] 'Last Night Another Soldier', 4 December 1973.
[147] 'Five Long Years', 7 August 1974.
[148] Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 233-4.

colleagues and their own fears of being killed or injured. Nevertheless, they argued that the situation in Northern Ireland justified the risk in order to protect lives and property. Whilst the programme portrayed the bomb disposal men as heroes, it also stressed their ordinariness, by highlighting that the men were fathers and husbands. Reporter Jack Prizzy interviewed the spouses of all three men about the impact of their husbands' occupation on family life. By presenting them as ordinary people taking substantial risks, the programme underlines their heroism.[149] It might be argued that in doing so programmes such as 'The Bomb Disposal Men' sought to encourage public support for the Army in Northern Ireland.

Current affairs coverage generally presented soldiers as ordinary people, living in fear of being injured or killed in a conflict they did not necessarily understand.[150] 'Last Night Another Soldier', referenced above, followed eight men as they embarked on a four-month tour of duty. The aim of director, Eric Davidson, was to show what Northern Ireland had come to mean to the rank-and-file on the streets of Belfast. Spoken commentary is minimal, the programme revolves instead around a series of interviews with the soldiers. The programme opens with shots of the men as they carry out training manoeuvres followed by footage in which two of the soldiers discuss having been injured on a previous tour. Although they make a show of bravado in front of their colleagues, when interviewed alone, the soldiers admit that they were afraid of returning to the province: 'I'm terrified, but I don't like to show it. You think you might get shot, but you don't actually think you'll be killed. If I die, I die - the only thing that worries me is to be turned into a cabbage'. Filming continues in Northern Ireland itself, shadowing the soldiers as they go about their operational duties with particular emphasis on everyday problems such as boredom. One black soldier discusses the racial abuse he has experienced whilst on patrol. Once again, by focusing on the emotions and difficulties experienced by these individuals, the programme portrays them as human and encourages audiences to empathise with them. 'Last Night Another Soldier' was to receive widespread acclaim for its representation of the realities of the Northern Ireland conflict.[151] As the *Daily Mail*'s TV critic, Shaun Usher remarked 'few documentaries give one the sense of being granted an insight on the way things really are. So Eric Davidson… and his cameraman, Nick Gifford, can be proud of illuminating a subject so grim, exhaustively reported, and long-established that it is taken for granted'.[152] This approach differentiates individual soldiers from the Army as an institution, presenting them as victims in much the same way as ordinary Catholics or Protestants, eliciting sympathy from the audience.

BBC *Panorama* programme 'Life in the RUC', broadcast on 25 June 1973, takes a similar approach, exploring the experiences and opinions of members of the police in Northern Ireland. The programme investigates the role of the RUC, following officers as they respond to numerous incidents. Again, the programme emphasised the dangers faced daily by the security forces. It opens with footage

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[149] 'The Bomb Disposal Men', *Tuesday Documentary*, 29 October 1974.
[150] Patricia Holland, *The Angry Buzz: This Week and Current Affairs Television* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2006), 119-120; 131-2.
[151] 'Last Night Another Soldier', 4 December 1973.
[152] Shaun Usher, *Daily Mail*, 5 December 1973.

of the RUC dealing with an unexploded bomb in a residential neighbourhood, as reporter, Alan Hart, states:

> In Northern Ireland today, three people died in an explosion in Tyrone, there was a rocket attack on a police station and every one of the four and a half thousand men of the Royal Ulster Constabulary had to live through another day in which they didn't know if it would end with a bomb or a bullet.[153]

As the programme noted, by 1973 one in every four victims of the 'Troubles' had been police officers. Hart draws particular attention to the cost of the conflict on their wives and children. By highlighting the fact that the police were also husbands and fathers in a similar manner to 'The Bomb Disposal Men', the programme portrays them as ordinary people. This is contrary to how many in Northern Ireland saw the RUC. The predominantly Protestant police force was generally considered to be decidedly anti-Catholic. The aim of the programme was to investigate whether the police could maintain law and order effectively if the British Army withdrew from the province. To this end, it explores the extent to which the RUC supported both communities in Northern Ireland. In 1969, reforms introduced in response to the use of police violence during rioting in Derry saw the reorganisation of the RUC in a bid to build better relations between the police and the Catholic community. This included the disbanding of the (wholly Protestant) Ulster Special Constabulary, commonly known as the B-Specials, a quasi-military auxiliary police force which was notoriously sectarian. 'Life in the RUC' discussed the police's on-going efforts to ingratiate itself with the Catholic community. The programme shows footage of one such initiative, a cross-community children's disco. Hart notes that many of the children had asked for their faces not to be shown having received threats from loyalist and republican paramilitaries. Twenty minutes after the disco ended, the building was wrecked by an Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) bomb. The programme observes that the reforms had led to an increase in loyalist violence as hard-liners tried to score points against the RUC and reinsert Protestant dominance. The RUC therefore avoided confrontation with the Protestant community, which led many Catholics to argue that the police continued to discriminate against them. The programme on the other hand, argues that 'the charge sheets… show that the RUC is pursuing terrorists and extremists on both sides', however, it criticises the force for failing to attract Catholic recruits.[154]

The image of the police presented in 'Life in the RUC' is relatively positive, however, current affairs programmes were also capable of a more critical view of the security forces. In 'A Question of Intelligence', broadcast on 10 September 1973 as part of Granada's *World in Action* series, reporters Sue Moodford and David Boulton investigated the murky issue of Britain's intelligence war against the IRA. The programme raised serious questions about the methods used by Special Branch and British Army intelligence in Ireland. In August 1973, brothers Kenneth and Keith Littlejohn were convicted by a Dublin court of armed bank robbery. Both claimed that they were spies and that British Intelligence had engineered the raid in December 1972 in a bid to encourage the introduction of internment in Ireland.

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[153] 'Life in the RUC', *Panorama*, BBC 25 June 1973.
[154] *Ibid*.

The British government categorically denied any involvement in the robbery, although it later admitted that Defence Under-Secretary, Geoffrey Johnson Smith, had met the brothers who claimed to have information on the IRA. Although never proven, the implication that MI6 were operating in the Republic of Ireland undermined Dublin's trust in the British government.[155] As Sue Moodford told the camera, 'if true it would mean that agents of the British government authorised actions that go far beyond the acceptable limits of normal intelligence'. The programme questioned Britain's role in the Littlejohn affair, presenting the British government as at best dupes. Whilst they conclude that there was no evidence to support Littlejohn's claims, both journalists criticised the government for becoming involved with such unsavoury characters. Moodford remarks 'if Littlejohn is a liar and a conman, perhaps grossly exaggerating the role he played in British Intelligence, the inescapable conclusion is that while spying for Britain, he also robbed banks to line his own pockets'. Similarly, Boulton claimed that 'he [Littlejohn] took British Intelligence and two ministers of the crown for a ride and if he could do it, how do we know that other agents are not doing the same thing'.[156]

The programme also reported on the activities of the Army's Mobile Reaction Force (MRF), a covert intelligence unit, accused of carrying out attacks on innocent civilians. Whilst, the programme dismissed the majority of the allegations against the MRF as malicious, it noted that incidents, such as the fatal shooting of Patrick McVeigh (12 May 1972), indicated that some units were 'acting beyond their orders'. McVeigh was killed when undercover soldiers fired on a checkpoint manned by the Catholic Ex-Servicemen's Association, an unarmed vigilante group set up by local residents to protect Catholic areas. According to witnesses, McVeigh was not a member of the group but had stopped to talk to friends when a vehicle drew up and opened fire. The soldiers later claimed that the group had been armed, but the programme notes that the police forensic report had shown this to be otherwise.[157] Predictably, the programme caused outrage. The *Daily Mail* reported that hundreds of angry viewers had jammed ITV's switchboards with complaints that the programme was biased against the Army and in favour of the IRA.[158] In reality, the programme offered a critical investigation into the machinations of the security forces, challenging the notion of the British Army as arbitrators in the conflict. It demonstrates a willingness to hold to account the Army rather than simply panegyrise them.

'A Question of Intelligence' was one of several programmes during the 1970s, which brought the transgressions of the security forces and other representatives of the British state to the attention of the public. Perhaps the most controversial was the BBC's *Tonight* broadcast on 2 March 1977. The programme featured an extended interview with Bernard O'Connor, a schoolteacher from Enniskillen, in which he alleged to have suffered abuse whilst in police custody.[159] Typically, the programme prompted furious protests from politicians and the security forces who subscribed to the RUC's

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[155] Shaun McDaid, *Template for Peace: Northern Ireland, 1972*-1975 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 47-50.
[156] 'A Question of Intelligence', *World in Action*, Granada, 10 September 1973.
[157] See McKittrick, Kelters, Feeney and Thornton (eds.), *Lost Lives*, 182; 'A Question of Intelligence', 10 September 1973.
[158] Murray Davies, 'TV film on Ireland starts storm', *Daily Mail*, 11 September 1973.
[159] Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 165-183.

allegations that O'Connor was an IRA 'godfather'. Despite extensive research, the *Tonight* team had found no evidence to suggest that O'Connor had any connection with the IRA. The programme prompted an internal inquiry, but as might be expected the Director of Public Prosecutions declined to press charges. Eventually, O'Connor did win compensation, but only after filing a civil suit against the Chief Constable of the RUC. Following the *Tonight* broadcast, further stories of police brutality in Northern Ireland emerged. Television programmes, such as Thames Television's *This Week*'s 'Inhuman and Degrading Treatment' (26 October 1977), which explored the interrogation methods of the RUC, kept the issue of police brutality to the fore, prompting an Amnesty International investigation.[160] Not only did such programmes provide a critical voice, which challenged Britain's actions in Northern Ireland, they also instigated investigations into allegations of misconduct.

For the remainder of the 1970s, relations between security forces and broadcasters steadily deteriorated. Both the Army and the RUC felt that in questioning their work, the media undermined their position in Northern Ireland. The security forces became increasingly disinclined to co-operate with the media, and so it became harder for the BBC and ITV to represent their viewpoints. In particular, this meant the experiences of ordinary soldiers rarely found expression on television. In his final meeting as the Controller Northern Ireland in 1977, Richard Francis told the Advisory Council that he regretted that the deterioration of the BBC's relationship with the armed forces had resulted in this aspect of the 'Troubles' going under-reported.[161] The BBC and ITV, however, continued to produce programmes, which scrutinised the actions of the security forces in Northern Ireland.

Critics of the BBC and ITV have argued that broadcasters were too reverential towards the authorities in their coverage of Northern Ireland during the early 1970s. They argue that the British broadcast media depicted the conflict in simplistic terms, reducing it to a skirmish between warring tribes and presenting the British state and security forces as mere arbitrators.[162] Certainly, Northern Ireland posed a serious problem for broadcasters as they tried to navigate the expectations of all sides, most often pleasing nobody. Despite pressure from all quarters to report on incidents in a way that would justify their standpoint in the increasingly violent conflict, both broadcasting bodies maintained that it was their responsibility to report the news fully and impartially, however unpalatable. Broadcasters argued that by covering the activities of the IRA and other paramilitary groups, far from providing them with a propaganda platform as many politicians feared, they offered British audiences a valuable insight into the situation in Northern Ireland.

Both the BBC and ITV frequently challenged the official narrative, in particular the notion that the British Army was simply a peacekeeping force. Whilst a transparent examination of the security forces' actions was difficult to carry out in the early 1970s, current affairs programmes reported on instances of violence instigated by the Army and RUC. This raised serious questions about the methods

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[160] *Ibid*., 179.
[161] BBC WAC, Northern Ireland Advisory Council, N12/125/1, notes from Controller, 9 September 1977 cited in Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 187.
[162] For example, Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*; Douglas, Harte and O'Hara, *Drawing Conclusions*, 278-9.

used by the British state in Northern Ireland. At the same time, programme producers portrayed British soldiers as themselves victims of the conflict. By exploring the experiences and opinions of soldiers on the ground, current affairs programmes offered a full picture of the 'Troubles', representing a range of different perspectives.

In effect, both broadcasting bodies strove to scrutinise all aspects of, and actors in the 'Troubles'. They not only offered British audiences a detailed examination of the different facets of the conflict, they also provided historical background and sought to engage with the broader social-economic context. Nonetheless, violence did dominate television current affairs coverage, and it was this focus that contributed to long-standing perceptions of Northern Ireland as 'a place apart' from the rest of the UK. Current affairs programmes argued that the perceived predisposition towards violence marked Northern Ireland out as different and un-British. Many television programmes of the early 1970s presented Northern Ireland as incomprehensible to British audiences because of the violence. This sheds much needed light on what many producers understood it meant to be British, and what it meant to be Northern Irish.

Television programmes were of vital importance to how the conflict was interpreted in Britain, as most of the British population accessed news about Northern Ireland through media sources. Despite efforts to dictate the way in which they reported on unfolding events, the broadcasting authorities were determined to examine every possible insight into the conflict, providing a fully rounded version of events. In doing so, the BBC and ITV succeeded in producing engaging, analytical current affairs programming, offering British audiences a nuanced and complex perspective on the conflict. The current affairs coverage of the early 1970s would provide a firm basis for the development of a critical voice which offered British people an independent narrative of the 'Troubles' as they unfolded.

Chapter Three: Newspaper coverage of the early 1980s.[1]

Ten men willing to starve themselves to death in the Maze prison in the early 1980s made headlines worldwide. The hunger strikers' passive resistance to the criminalisation of paramilitary prisoners captured the interest of people around the world, evoking outrage and sympathy for the republican cause in a way that the indiscriminate violence of the armed struggle never could. The majority of British newspapers, along with the government, argued that the strikers' claims to political status were illegitimate, and that the government was right not to negotiate with the prisoners. At the same time, however, newspapers raised important questions about how the efforts to resolve the hunger strikes were being handled. They also sought to explore the strikers' backgrounds, and understand their motivations for engaging in political violence, presenting them as much victims of the 'Troubles' as perpetrators. Accordingly, the newspapers provided their readers with nuanced, multi-faceted coverage of events in Northern Ireland during this period.

As historian Erika Hanna has argued, the hunger strikes were a media event, their momentum and meaning sustained through the mobilisation of public opinion via newspapers and television.[2] Despite their importance as a conduit for interpreting the strikes, nevertheless, little scholarship has been carried out on either the press or broadcast media's coverage of the prison protests or Northern Ireland in the early 1980s. Liz Curtis has argued that the British media 'treated the hunger strike as if it was concocted out of thin air by the IRA'. She contends that the press and broadcast media supported the government's stance unquestioningly, presenting the hunger strikers as violent criminals and their protest as an IRA propaganda exercise.[3] Her arguments, however, are based on an extremely limited survey of the vast amount of press and television coverage of the prison protests. Her examination of the print media is particularly narrow, concentrating on the right-wing tabloids, and failing to consider the range of opinions and complexity present in the British newspapers' reportage during the early 1980s.

Aogán Mulcahy has shown British newspapers provided more nuanced coverage than Curtis concedes, and were capable of challenging the government's criminalisation policy.[4] Mulcahy's research into the press coverage of the 1981 hunger strikes focuses on how the prisoners' claims to legitimacy were treated in the *Irish Times*, *New York Times*, and British centre-right broadsheet, the *Times*. He acknowledges that the *Times* adhered to the British government's account of the prison protests, characterising the prisoners in one-dimensional violent terms, as terrorists bearing sole responsibility for the conflict. Nevertheless, he argues that the paper offered a critical view on the

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[1] Some of the material discussed in this chapter is the basis of a newspaper article and a forthcoming journal article. Roseanna Doughty, ''The hunger strike terrorists': The British press and the hunger strikes', *Irish Times*, 5 July 2016; Roseanna Doughty, ''Pawns in the Terrorist Game'?: The Hunger Strikes and the British Press', *The Irish Review* (forthcoming). See Appendix.

[2] Erika Hanna, 'Photographing the hunger strikes', *Irish Times*, 1 March 2016, https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/photographing-the-hunger-strikes-1.2552410 [accessed 8 May 2018].

[3] Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 202-6.

[4] Mulcahy, 'Claims-Making and the Construction of Legitimacy', 449-467.

validity of the criminalisation policy, particularly in its coverage of the election of hunger striker Bobby Sands to Westminster in April 1981. Mulcahy observed that the paper highlighted how his election undermined the government's claims that the hunger strikers, and the paramilitary organisations they represented, lacked popular support.[5]

Whilst Mulcahy is correct in his observations, his investigation is also limited, focusing on the *Times* alone. It cannot be seen therefore, to provide a comprehensive view of the British press coverage of the hunger strikes. By examining a wider range of newspapers, namely the *Sun*, *Guardian*, *Daily Mirror* and the *Daily Telegraph*, this chapter aims to broaden the number of titles sampled in order to represent the differences in style, political opinion and readership which characterised the British press during the 1980s. In doing so, it aims to provide a more nuanced and complex picture of how newspapers reported events in Northern Ireland.

The hunger strikes in 1980 and 1981 will be one of the key subjects covered in this chapter. It will acknowledge that most British newspapers followed the government's lead, presenting the prison protests as an IRA publicity stunt and the hunger strikers as little more than criminals. By analysing a broader range of newspaper sources, however, it also demonstrates that the coverage of the hunger strikes in the British press went further than this, providing a complex, and multi-dimensional narrative. The chapter argues that the newspapers presented the hunger strikers as simultaneously criminals and victims, both of the IRA and the conflict itself. It will also examine the varied reactions of the newspapers to the Anti-H Block electoral successes, and shows how the *Guardian* in particular, reported that the election debunked the government's claims that the prisoners' lacked support, demonstrating an ability within the British press to challenge the party line. The chapter will then explore the newspapers' response to international condemnation of the handling of the hunger strikes, before finally examining the way in which newspapers raised significant questions about the government's management of the protests. The chapter demonstrates that though the newspapers argued that paramilitary prisoners were not entitled to political status this did not mean they were willing to accept the government's handling of the protests without criticism. The chapter begins, however, by analysing coverage of political policy on Northern Ireland during the early 1980s. It focuses on the newspapers' attitudes towards devolution and developments in Anglo-Irish relations, and how this led, the broadsheets in particular, to attempt to engage constructively with British policy and the conflict, raising concerns, suggesting solutions, and consequently producing nuanced, varied coverage.

On 4 May 1979, the election of Margaret Thatcher marked a significant shift in Britain's political landscape. Breaking from the 'consensus' style politics that had characterised the post-war period, Thatcher promised a fresh, dynamic and determined approach to government.[6] Moreover, having won a majority of forty-three seats she was in a position to deliver. It was expected that this new era of Conservative rule would also lead to new initiatives in Northern Ireland. The Conservative Party

[5] Mulcahy, 'Claims-Making and the Construction of Legitimacy', 455.
[6] Eric J. Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (London: Routledge, 2013), 15-20.

had pledged that the government would make every effort to combat terrorism and re-establish law and order in the province. Writing in the *Daily Telegraph* on 11 February 1980, however, High Tory journalist Thomas Utley remarked that 'In Ulster as elsewhere the question remains: has Mrs Thatcher inaugurated a new era of strong government- or an era of sound and fury signifying surrender?'.[7] There was a sense that Thatcher was untested in government, and, more pertinently, untested in Northern Ireland.

The British press speculated on what the new Prime Minister's approach to the province might be. As a result of their uncertainty, newspapers, in particular the broadsheets, felt obliged to offer their own detailed views on how the conflict should be managed. These were diverse, but they clearly reflect that newspapers sought to engage constructively with Northern Ireland, challenging the British government over policy and offering solutions, albeit not always practical or sensitive ones. That they did so, however, further supports the thesis that the British press produced far more nuanced and complex coverage than it has previously been given credit for.

On coming to power, the Conservatives quickly jettisoned their manifesto promise of further integrating Northern Ireland into the United Kingdom.[8] Instead, as Paul Dixon has argued, the Thatcher administration adopted a policy reminiscent of that pursued by Conservatives between 1972 and 1974: 'power-sharing with an Irish dimension'.[9] Whilst on the one hand striving for devolution, Thatcher's government simultaneously sought to promote Anglo-Irish relations, engaging in talks with Dublin from 1980 onward. Picking up where the Sunningdale Agreement had left off, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Humphrey Atkins, announced plans for a constitutional conference to discuss the future of the province, inviting Northern Ireland's four main political parties, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) - who declined to attend, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and the Alliance Party. In a White Paper, published as part of this initiative, Atkins outlined his intention to pursue devolution, stating that direct rule was 'not satisfactory as a continuing basis for the government of the Province'.[10] The conference, which ran from 7 January to 24 March 1980, however, failed to achieve any consensus between parties.

The *Daily Telegraph*, involving itself in searching for solutions, opposed outright any idea of devolution and argued instead that Britain should maintain direct rule, encouraging the government to fulfil its election promises and set up local government institutions in Northern Ireland.[11] The paper contended that any power-sharing executive would be no more than a 'talking shop'. It also expressed concern that it could become a rallying point for those Protestants calling for independence, the result of which would be an upsurge in loyalist paramilitary violence. The *Telegraph* noted that there had

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[7] T. E. Utley, 'After the Ulster 'initiative': still time for strong government', *Daily Telegraph*, 11 February 1980.
[8] 'Conservative General Election Manifesto 1979', 11 April 1979, available at Margaret Thatcher Foundation https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110858 [accessed 11 June 2019].
[9] Paul Dixon, 'British policy towards Northern Ireland 1969-2000: continuity, tactical adjustment and consistent 'inconsistencies'', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 3, 3 (2001), 350.
[10] *Ibid*, 348-50.
[11] 'Mr Powell Blasts Off', *Daily Telegraph*, 4 January 1980; 'Conservative General Election Manifesto 1979'.

already been a rise in Protestant militancy. Britain's closening relationship with Dublin, exacerbated the feeling amongst loyalists that they were being outmanoeuvred by republicans. In a show of strength, designed to impress upon both the British and Irish governments that loyalists could, and would, defend their right to remain in the UK, Ian Paisley orchestrated a series of rallies protesting against the Anglo-Irish talks and demanding increased border security.[12] The *Daily Telegraph* argued that this rising loyalist threat could be effectively countered through properly integrating Northern Ireland. The paper asserted that if the government committed to governing Northern Ireland as an essential part of the UK, it would alleviate unionist fears that they were being sold down the river and render loyalist paramilitarism unnecessary. Without the threat of loyalist violence, the government could then concentrate all its efforts on tackling the IRA.[13]

The *Daily Telegraph* made frequent calls for the government to emphasise that Northern Ireland was an integral part of the UK. The paper observed that British politicians had become increasingly disengaged from the province. In an editorial published on 25 June 1980, the *Telegraph* noted that 'Today many feel that Ulster has become a peripheral matter in British politics- a cross to be borne dutifully and expensively but without any hope or enthusiasm'.[14] The paper censured politicians for their indifference:

> The alleged life style and habits of these beings makes them envied and mistrusted: their splendid houses, their separation and danger allowances; their flying in on Monday or Tuesday, out on Wednesday or Thursday; their ignorance of and distaste for its inhabitants.[15]

The *Telegraph* insinuated that it was this disconnect which led many in Northern Ireland to feel abandoned and turn to the paramilitaries. It implied that some British politicians encouraged violence, believing that if Northern Ireland continued to be ungovernable, public outcry would be such that the government would be forced to withdraw completely. The *Telegraph* argued, however, that for the most part the paralysis exhibited by politicians resulted from a lack of incentive to prioritise the province. As it remarked on 10 February 1981, 'Ulster's future is no longer seen to be a major issue in British politics. There are few votes to be won or lost, it is thought, by being firm or weak. This reasoning is misguided'.[16] Similarly, the *Guardian* stressed the disconnect felt by the British public towards Northern Ireland. It noted that British voters 'are bored and angered by Northern Ireland, which is for them a country more foreign than America or West Germany'.[17] Both papers accused politicians of becoming preoccupied by economic crisis and civil unrest elsewhere in Britain and neglecting the province as a result. The *Telegraph* pointed out that if the government was unable to effectively manage the situation in Northern Ireland, how could it expect to manage the civil disturbances which broke out

[12] Commonly referred to as the Carson Trail.
[13] 'A Choice for Ulster', *Daily Telegraph*, 25 June 1980.
[14] *Ibid*.
[15] 'Ulster- What Next?', *Daily Telegraph*, 24 September 1980.
[16] 'Ulster and the Nation', *Daily Telegraph*, 10 February 1981.
[17] 'Ireland: the Sticking point', *The Guardian*, 14 May 1981.

in inner-city areas in the early 1980s.[18] By highlighting the apparent apathy demonstrated by the government towards Northern Ireland, both papers sought to hold politicians accountable for their lack of engagement and shame them into a more proactive approach.

In marked contrast to the *Telegraph*, the *Guardian* championed political devolution. The paper took the view that the establishment of a regional legislative body in Northern Ireland could restore political vigour to the province, a vital first step towards finding a permanent solution to the conflict. The newspaper voiced particular support for the idea of 'rolling devolution'.[19] Put forward by Conservative MP for Peterborough, and Belfast-native, Dr Brian Mawhinney, this scheme entailed a new assembly, which would gradually acquire legislative and executive powers over policy areas as it achieved the agreement of a qualified majority. If the assembly found that it could not agree on a given policy area, then that power would be returned to the Secretary of State.[20] This would ensure both communities had influence and that no legislative decision could be made on sectarian lines. The *Guardian* argued that Mawhinney's suggestion offered the best possibility of realising consensus amongst Northern Ireland's political parties, nevertheless, the paper believed that if a lasting settlement was to be achieved devolution was just the beginning.[21]

Alongside Atkins' initiative, Thatcher began to pursue a closer relationship with the Republic of Ireland. By the early 1980s, the British government had come to recognise the necessity of Irish involvement in any Northern Ireland settlement.[22] In May 1980, Thatcher met with Taoiseach Charles Haughey to discuss increased co-operation between the two governments. At a further meeting, held in Dublin on 8 December 1980, the two governments agreed to a series of joint studies which would consider a range of issues, including citizens' rights, security matters, economic co-operation and the possibility of new institutional structures.

The press in general supported efforts to improve relations between London and Dublin; although newspapers were apprehensive that unionists, fearful that Northern Ireland's constitutional status was under threat, would resort to violence.[23] The *Guardian* was particularly enthusiastic at the prospect of greater Anglo-Irish collaboration, having long argued that the conflict was rooted not just in the province, but in the dysfunctional relationship between London, Belfast and Dublin. The paper contended that only by straightening all three sides of this 'lopsided triangle' could a resolution be found.[24] Keen to also engage with discussions on how the Northern Ireland crisis should be broached, the *Guardian* advocated a federal Ireland within a confederal British Isles or within an Islands of the

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[18] Both 1980 and 1981 saw riots in Liverpool, Leeds, London, Birmingham, Bristol and Manchester as a result of racial tension between police and black communities in inner-city areas. 'A Capital Blunder', *Daily Telegraph*, 24 October 1980.
[19] 'A big enough Ulster majority', *The Guardian*, 3 March 1980; Mr Haughey and a pattern of islands', *The Guardian*, 19 May 1980.
[20] Brian Mawhinney, 'Breaking Ulster Assembly Impasse', *The Guardian*, 3 March 1980.
[21] Mr Haughey and a pattern of islands'.
[22] Stephen Kelly, '"The Totality of Relationships": The Haughey-Thatcher Relationship and the Anglo-Irish Summit Meeting, 8 December 1980', *Éire-Ireland*, 51, 3-4 (2016), 254-7.
[23] For an example see: 'A Question of Trust', *Daily Telegraph*, 15 December 1980.
[24] Geoffrey Taylor, *Changing Faces: A History of the Guardian, 1956-88* (London: Fourth Estates Limited, 1993), 142.

North Atlantic. This was the brainchild of Geoffrey Taylor, who was the *Guardian*'s leader writer on Ireland until 1988 and therefore greatly influenced the paper's editorial position regarding the 'Troubles'.[25] He envisaged a confederacy organised on similar lines to the Nordic Council, whereby each unit would retain its own sovereignty, but intergovernmental institutions would allow for close co-operation on areas such as economics or foreign policy. The *Guardian* argued that by allowing for a relationship with both Dublin and London, this framework had the potential to overcome the sectarian and ethnic divides which lay at the heart of the Northern Irish conflict.

The *Daily Telegraph* and the *Guardian*'s coverage shows a variety of responses to the political situation in Northern Ireland. Although there was little coherence amongst newspapers regarding what a political settlement in the province should look like, the way in which both newspapers reported on the conflict in the early 1980s demonstrates a willingness to challenge the status quo and look at how the situation in Northern Ireland might be resolved. Throughout the early 1980s the British government continued to pursue a better relationship with Ireland. This resulted in signing the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985, which officially recognised the Irish government's consultative role in the governance of Northern Ireland, progress was however to be hindered by the hunger strikes in 1980 and 1981.

In the latter half of the 1970s, the British government adopted a strategy of criminalisation in response to the violence in Northern Ireland. As part of these new measures, 'special category status' for prisoners convicted of terrorism offences was abolished; removing the distinction between paramilitaries and common criminals.[26] In 1976, Kieran Nugent became the first prisoner to be convicted under the new regime. Upon arriving at Long Kesh/ the Maze, he refused to wear the prison uniform, instead wrapping himself in a blanket.[27] Nugent was to be joined 'on the blanket' by other newly convicted prisoners protesting their lack of political status. In 1978, the blanket protests escalated into a no-wash protest, which escalated further into a dirty protest, whereby prisoners refused to leave their cells, smearing the walls with their own excrement. By 1980, of the 834 republican prisoners in the Maze, 341 were participating in the dirty protest.[28] Finally, in October 1980, seven prisoners embarked on hunger strike. They listed five demands: the right to free association, access to recreational and educational facilities; the right to wear civilian clothing; access to weekly visits, letters and parcels; the right to abstain from prison work; and the restoration of full remissions.

This first hunger strike came to an end on 19 December 1980, after the British government allegedly conceded on the essence of the five demands. In actuality, the government argued that it had only agreed to supply prisoners with 'civilian-type clothing' and to allow free association in the

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[25] David McKie, 'Geoffrey Taylor Obituary', *The Guardian*, 3 August 2016.
[26] In 1972, republican prisoners under the leadership of Billy McKee had embarked on hunger strike to demand POW status. After thirty-seven days, the government agreed to grant prisoners convicted of terrorist offences special category status and the hunger strike ended. This meant that paramilitary prisoners were exempt from wearing prison uniforms, doing prison work and had freedom of association.
[27] The prison, nine miles southwest of Belfast, officially named HM Prison Maze, was formerly the Long Kesh Detention Centre, consequently it is colloquially referred to as the Maze, Long Kesh or the H-Blocks.
[28] Beresford, *Ten Men Dead*, 31.

evenings and at weekends. When it became apparent that the prisoners' demands had not been satisfactorily met, a second and ultimately more divisive hunger strike began on 1 March 1981. Initially, this protest received little attention as it was widely believed that it too would collapse. On 9 April, the unexpected death of Frank Maguire, MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, occasioned a by-election, won by hunger striker Bobby Sands, with 30,492 votes to 29,046.[29] Despite this victory, and the copious media attention consequently generated by the hunger strikes, the British government continued to refuse to grant the strikers any form of political status. As a result, ten men starved themselves to death before the strike was finally called off on 3 October 1981.[30]

The majority of the British press showed limited compassion towards those whom *Daily Telegraph* journalists Colin Brady and Paul Potts termed 'H-Block terrorists'.[31] The newspapers, for the most part, subscribed to the British government's arguments that paramilitary prisoners were ordinary criminals. In an editorial, published a few days before his death, the *Sun* described the hunger striker Bobby Sands as nothing more than 'a common criminal who is being treated better than he deserves'.[32] The *Daily Mirror*, paraphrasing Thatcher, demanded that the British government stand firm against the hunger strikers, as 'a criminal is still a criminal, a murderer is still a murderer and a terrorist is still a terrorist'.[33] Even the *Guardian*, which tended to be more sympathetic towards the nationalist position, argued that:

> Sands and the three remaining hunger-strikers, like the dirty protesters before them, demand that members of the Provisional IRA should be absolved from the normal punishment for crimes of violence on the ground that they are political fighters for a socialist federal Ireland. …Who kills or maims for the IRA does not redeem the action in the smallest degree.[34]

In order to establish the prisoners' criminality, newspapers drew attention to the violent pasts of the hunger strikers. These details had been made readily available by the NIO, which produced 'fact files' on each hunger striker as part of their counter-propaganda campaign.[35] Aogán Mulcahy has shown how the *Times* drew heavily on this information in its coverage of the hunger strikes, foregrounding the violence committed by each prisoner, to underline their status as criminals.[36] This technique was also used extensively by other British newspapers; in the *Daily Telegraph*'s coverage of Francis Hughes, for example, the paper made it clear that he was extremely dangerous: 'Of all the hunger strikers, Hughes was the most violent according to his record'. The paper went on to outline Hughes' criminal history, noting that he had been found guilty on six counts, including the murder of a British soldier and the attempted murder of another, the attempted murder of a police detective and possession of a gun. The

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[29] Thomas Hennessey, *Hunger Strike: Margaret Thatcher's Battle with the IRA 1980-1981* (Sallins: Irish Academic Press, 2014), 170.
[30] For a full account of the history of the hunger strikes see Hennessey, *Hunger Strike*.
[31] Colin Brady and Paul Potts, 'IRA to exploit poll victory', *Daily Telegraph*, 11 April 1981.
[32] 'Speak out now!', *The Sun*, 1 May 1981.
[33] 'Murderers and martyrs', *Daily Mirror*, 22 May 1981.
[34] 'One more death, as scheduled', *The Guardian*, 6 May 1981.
[35] Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 258.
[36] Mulcahy, 'Claims-Making and the Construction of Legitimacy', 460.

same article provided a potted history of the criminal careers of hunger strikers Patsy O'Hara, who had been convicted in 1979 for possession of a hand grenade, and Raymond McCreesh, who had been jailed on five counts, including conspiracy to murder and possession of firearms.[37]

The press also drew on the violence happening outside the prison, which had been exacerbated by the protests, to undermine the prisoners' claims to political status. Considerable emphasis was put on the riots that broke out in Belfast and Derry following the death of each hunger striker. These were presented as evidence of the criminal essence of the republican movement. Similarly, newspapers paid particular attention to the death of twenty-five-year-old census enumerator Joanne Mathers, who was shot on 7 April 1981 as she collected census forms in Derry.[38] The IRA had initially denied responsibility for Mathers' death, claiming that it was a 'sinister attempt' to discredit Bobby Sands' election campaign, and the prison protests generally.[39] The press presented her murder as further proof that the IRA were criminals. The *Guardian*, for example, in its editorial on 14 May, used the tragedy to argue that paramilitary prisoners should be denied political status: 'To licence [the] killing of passers-by and census makers as well as of soldiers and policemen is to give every criminal with a passing political excuse free licence within the realm'.[40]

Concentrating on violence was intended to offset any sympathy the reader might feel for the prisoners. All four newspapers treated the protests as IRA propaganda and widely described the death of the hunger strikers as suicide. Echoing sentiments expressed by Thatcher and unionist politicians, they argued that the prisoners had chosen to take their own lives, unlike the casualties of republican violence. The newspapers frequently called for these 'forgotten victims of Ulster to be remembered', affording significant coverage to civilians and members of the security forces killed during this period.[41] The *Daily Mirror* and the *Sun* often combined reportage of victims with coverage of the hunger strikes, making explicit the link between the prisoners' protests and the bloodshed carried out by the organisations they represented.

The *Daily Mirror*'s coverage of the funeral of Francis Hughes was twinned with that of fourteen-year-old Julie Livingstone. Livingstone had been killed by a plastic bullet fired by British soldiers attempting to disperse anti-H Block demonstrators in Belfast on 12 May 1981. An article published under the headline 'Two faces of Ulster' described both funerals. By juxtaposing the stories, the paper suggested that in creating an atmosphere of violence, the republican movement was culpable of Livingstone's death. Livingstone and her grieving school friends are contrasted with the 'killers in masks' that attended Hughes' funeral.[42] Their youth enhancing the poignancy of Livingstone's tragic death, throwing into greater relief the disparity between herself and Hughes.

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[37] Colin Brady, 'Sands's fellow fasters 'continue to weaken'', *Daily Telegraph*, 30 April 1981.
[38] The IRA had urged a boycott of the 1981 census. In republican areas families destroyed the census form, whilst in Derry, Cookstown, Strabane and Omagh census enumerators had been robbed at gunpoint.
[39] Hennessey, *Hunger Strike*, 169.
[40] 'Ireland: the Sticking point'.
[41] '6+Maggie lashes out at killers', *The Sun*, 29 April 1981.
[42] 'Two faces of Ulster', *Daily Mirror*, 16 May 1981.

Similarly, the *Sun* integrated details of the funeral of Police Constable Gary Martin with coverage of Bobby Sands. Martin had been killed on 27 April 1981 by a booby trap bomb left on a hijacked vehicle by the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA).[43] The paper focused on the grief of mothers Rosaleen Sands and Rhoda Martin. It reported that Rosaleen had left the Maze in tears after her son had informed her that he would see his hunger strike through to death. Then, the paper described how Rhoda Martin had cried at the graveside as she clutched her younger son for comfort. The two stories were linked by a subheading, which read 'A mother's tears flow yet again in Ulster'. This choice of words was designed to emphasise the connection between the two women and their grief. In equating the suffering of Rhoda Martin with that of Rosaleen Sands, the *Sun* suggests that Rosaleen was also a victim of republican violence.[44] The paper implies that in inflicting this pain on his own mother, Sands was proving himself to be the callous criminal British government policy had labelled him as. That he could treat his mother so, begged the question what else was he capable of, and highlighted the depravity of Sands' protest.

The newspapers were capable of adopting a more nuanced perspective of the hunger strikers, exploring beyond the violence, to examine the strikers' family backgrounds, their early experiences of the 'Troubles' and their position within the IRA and INLA. The press thus provided readers with another dimension to the prisoners, humanising them, and offered an alternative means of understanding their protest, whilst asserting the illegitimacy of the IRA. Though newspapers presented the hunger strikers as criminals, they also viewed them as victims, puppets of an IRA leadership intent on exploiting them for propaganda purposes.

The British government frequently claimed that the prisoners were being controlled by the IRA Army Council. In a speech made during a visit to Northern Ireland on 28 May 1981, Thatcher stated that, 'It is a tragedy that young men should be persuaded, coerced or ordered to starve themselves to death for a futile cause'.[45] Even amongst the hunger strikers' families there is evidence that there was some doubt as to the autonomy of the prisoners. In his book *Ten Men Dead*, *Guardian* journalist David Beresford contends that, at a meeting of relatives, Kieran Doherty's girlfriend Geraldine Scheiss had burst out: 'I don't think decisions are being made inside the prison. I think decisions are being made by people present in this room'.[46] More recently, Richard O'Rawe, the IRA's public relations officer inside the Maze, claimed that the hunger strikes were controlled by the Army Council. He alleges that Brendan McFarlane (Officer Commanding in the Maze) and himself had been willing to accept a deal presented by the British government in July 1981 through secret backchannels which would have allowed them 'to end the hunger strike with honour'. They were informed by the outside leadership, however, that

[43] McKittrick, Kelters, Feeney and Thornton, *Lost Lives*, 857.
[44] Brian Woosey, 'Death-fast Sands stays defiant', *The Sun*, 1 May 1981.
[45] 'Thatcher attacks men of violence in Belfast visit', *The Guardian*, 29 May 1981.
[46] Beresford was the *Guardian*'s resident journalist in Northern Ireland from 1978 to 1984 and wrote much of the paper's coverage of the hunger strikes. Beresford, *Ten Men Dead*, 370.

'more was needed'.[47] This has been a point of considerable contention and it should be noted that McFarlane denies O'Rawe's claims.[48]

The degree to which the IRA did coerce the strikers remains the source of some debate. The British press happily propagated these rumours in a bid to discredit the strikes. In an editorial published on 23 July 1981, for example, the *Daily Telegraph* described the hunger strikers as 'pawns in the terrorist game'. The paper contended that McFarlane, 'himself fortified by regular meals', was ordering them to endure and speculated that threats were made against any family member suspected of encouraging the strikers to abandon their protest. On 10 July 1981, Patrick McGeown joined the hunger strike, despite previously denying that he would replace Joe McDonnell, who had become the fifth striker to die on 8 July 1981. The paper presented McGeown's change of heart as damning evidence of IRA intimidation, reporting that, 'on July 9 he breakfasted saying "they've got the wrong bloody man," on the 10th he refused breakfast saying that he had been ordered to'.[49] The editorial concludes: 'There is, indeed, a reign of terror at the Maze; but it is maintained by the IRA'.[50]

By questioning the autonomy of the prisoners, the *Telegraph* undermines their claims to martyrdom. As Beresford has argued:

> Hunger-striking, when taken to the death, has a sublime quality about it; in conjunction with terrorism it offers a consummation of murder and self-sacrifice which in a sense can legitimize the violence which precedes and follows it… [But] to scream for mercy at the foot of the gallows- or nod at the saline drip… is to affirm that there is no higher value than life and none more worthy of condemnation than those who take it.[51]

Fifty-nine days into his hunger strike, a disorientated Raymond McCreesh asked for milk to break his fast, then changed his mind after a visit from his family. All four newspapers covered this incident extensively, insinuating that the McCreesh family had put pressure on Raymond to continue his protest; allegations which they strenuously denied.[52] Implications that the hunger strikers had been coerced reduced the value of their sacrifice. It suggests that the hunger strikers were themselves victims, press-ganged into starving to death by an IRA high command intent on exploiting them for propaganda purposes. This perspective had the advantage of allowing British readers to sympathise with the hunger strikers, whilst condemning the IRA as a heinous organisation willing to sacrifice its own. As Mulcahy has argued, it also strengthened the government's resolve to refuse to yield to the strikers' demands, as to do so would advantage the IRA.[53]

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[47] Richard O'Rawe, *Afterlives: The Hunger Strike and the Secret Offer That Changed Irish History* (Dublin: The Liliput Press, 2010), 16-18; Hennessey, *Hunger Strike*, 6-7.
[48] Hennessey, *Hunger Strike*, 7.
[49] McGeown spent forty-two days on hunger strike before his family intervened to save his life after he lapsed into a coma.
[50] 'Pawns of the IRA', *Daily Telegraph*, 23 July 1981.
[51] Beresford, *Ten Men Dead*, 38-9.
[52] Hennessey, *Hunger Strike*, 230-33.
[53] Mulcahy, 'Claims-Making and the Construction of Legitimacy', 462.

The *Telegraph* was not alone in questioning the autonomy of the prisoners or playing on the notion of the hunger strikers as victims. In his coverage of Sands' funeral, the *Daily Mirror*'s columnist John Edwards observed that, 'it was a pathetic end for a man who never played more than an average part in the deadly moves called by his IRA masters'. Edwards not only questioned the autonomy of the hunger strikers, but also that of the rank and file IRA members, remarking that 'Nobody could remember what had been said at the funerals of the "volunteers" whose graves were marked unobtrusively all around the one prepared for Bobby Sands, MP'.[54] His emphatic use of quotation marks were designed to suggest doubt as to the extent to which these were willing volunteers. Edwards insinuates that, like Sands, these men and women had been forced to die, and now lay forgotten, implying both the futility of their cause and the cynicism of a leadership for whom membership was an expendable resource.

The *Guardian* also viewed the hunger strikers as victims, not just of the IRA, but of the conflict more generally. The paper persistently presented the prisoners as products of the culture of violence in Northern Ireland. On 18 May 1981, the *Guardian* published an exposé by Paul Keel and David Beresford on the INLA, which outlined the organisation's history, structure, and its relationship with the IRA. The *Guardian* tended to offer more explanation for the hunger strikes than other newspapers, regularly including background information in its coverage of the prison protests, exploring the rationale behind them and shedding light on the complexities of the conflict. The exposé included a profile of the INLA hunger striker Patsy O'Hara. Using the striker's violent past to explain his criminality, it recounted his early involvement in the republican movement describing how he had attended civil rights marches with his parents from the age of thirteen, before joining the youth section of the Official IRA, Fianna Éireann, in 1970, where he received a bullet wound whilst manning a barricade. As the paper noted, O'Hara spent close to five of his teenage years in prison, 'His offences… connected with explosives and firearms: things which preoccupied him as a teenager'. It also observed that O'Hara's childhood home had been yards from where, on Bloody Sunday, thirteen demonstrators had been shot dead by British soldiers; an incident, which it implies left a significant impression on the teenager. Keel wrote of O'Hara '[he] is in every respect a child of '68'.[55] That is, his early experiences of the conflict had led him to become engaged in political violence.

During the first hunger strike, the *Guardian* published an interview with the parents of Tommy McKearney by Beresford. The interview was intended to provide an insight into the hunger strikers' psyche. It also introduced a republican perspective, giving a voice to the prisoners' families, mostly absent from press coverage of the hunger strikes. This demonstrated a willingness to explore, and try to understand, the motivations behind republican activity. The glimpse it provided into the hunger strikers' upbringing, his family and their experiences of the 'Troubles', also enabled readers to consider the extent to which growing up amidst conflict had predetermined the prisoners' involvement in paramilitarism.[56] Beresford remarked that McKearney would not be the first in his family to die for the

[54] John Edwards, 'Belfast's farewell to Bobby Sands, *Daily Mirror*, 8 May 1981.
[55] David Beresford and Paul Keel, 'The hard men in the other world of Belfast', *The Guardian*, 18 May 1981.
[56] Mulcahy, 'Claims-Making and the Construction of Legitimacy', 461.

republican cause. His younger brother, Sean, had been killed when a bomb he was transporting exploded prematurely in May 1974. He also notes that Tommy's brother Pádraig was awaiting trial on arms charges, whilst his sister, dubbed by the press 'the most dangerous woman terrorist in Britain', was wanted on explosive charges in connection with a series of bombings in Southampton in 1975.[57] Despite these extensive republican credentials, Beresford observed that, 'The apparent fanaticism of the McKearney children is not reflected in the persona of their parents, nor particularly in their ancestry'. It followed therefore, that their paramilitarism resulted from their environment. Beresford states that, 'Mr and Mrs McKearney say they would have expected Tommy, with nine O-levels and two A-levels- in ancient and modern history- to go on to university and become a teacher, but for the "troubles"'.[58] He argues that the violence endemic in Northern Ireland had robbed McKearney, and his fellow prisoners, of their future, presenting them as victims of an upbringing dictated by conflict.[59]

By portraying the hunger strikers as victims, whether of the IRA or the conflict generally, the British press offered an alternative perspective on the prison issue to that of the government. It also had the effect of shifting blame for the hunger strikes from the British government to the IRA, vindicating the former's refusal to compromise. This multidimensional approach far from exonerated paramilitary prisoners, rather it emphasised the cost of political violence. The press expressed concern that this cycle of violence would continue, as recruitment to the IRA was enhanced by the prison protests. The *Guardian* warned that as a result of the hunger strikes: 'a new generation of martyrs will succeed in setting back the peaceful evolution of the province and of Ireland by yet another decade'.[60] Similarly, the *Daily Mirror* acknowledged the toxicity of the wider environment and its role in breeding violence, claiming that Sands' fast had 'already recruited acid-throwing teenagers to the junior ranks of the IRA', whilst the *Sun* noted a 'new breed of tiny terrorists' stalk the streets of Belfast.[61]

The hunger strikes also succeeded in promoting republican sentiment amongst moderates within Northern Ireland's nationalist community, belying the claims which British politicians had for a long time espoused that militant republicanism had little support amongst the general public. This was evidenced by the Anti-H Block's electoral successes. On 9 April 1981, Bobby Sands won the Fermanagh and South Tyrone by-election. The election of a hunger striker to Westminster rekindled flagging media interest in the prison protests. The *Daily Mirror*'s coverage was limited to a perfunctory

[57] Liz Curtis has argued that the evidence again Margaret McKearney was shaky at best, but that the police had released information to the press claiming she was 'the most dangerous and active women terrorist operating here [in Britain]' in order to distract the public from their lack of progress in apprehending the bombers. She notes the detrimental, and potentially life-threatening, impact the story, which received considerable and sensational press coverage, had on Margaret McKearney's family in Northern Ireland who had to be placed under police protection after receiving threats from the UVF. She suggests that Peter and Jane McKearney who were assassinated on 23 October 1975, were killed by the UVF because they were mistakenly believed to be related to Margaret. (Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 121-2).
[58] David Beresford, 'The roots of a hunger strike', *The Guardian*, 2 December 1980.
[59] Brocklehurst, *Who's Afraid of Children?*, 100-1.
[60] 'The hunger strikers are augmented', *The Guardian*, 1 December 1981.
[61] 'Moving the target', *Daily Mirror*, 27 April 1981; Brian Woosey, 'The children of violence', *The Sun*, 5 March 1981.

article featured below the front-page lead, reporting the failed launch of Space Shuttle Columbia, but this was the exception, most newspapers gave prominent coverage to the by-election.[62]

The *Daily Telegraph* sought to downplay the extent of popular support for the hunger strikers, and therefore minimise the serious challenge the H-Block victory posed to British policy. The paper argued that the by-election had been determined by 'the almost automatic operation of traditional allegiances', rather than support for the hunger strikes.[63] Even after Bobby Sands' campaign manager, Owen Carron, won the seat on 20 August the paper insisted that this did not imply popular support for the republican cause. It argued: 'What it does mean is that when Irishmen are martyring themselves in a British prison, Catholic nationalists in Ulster feel the pull of tribal loyalty and are not likely to resist it if the only means of doing so is to ensure the return of a Unionist'.[64]

The *Sun* shared a similar view, in the aftermath of Sands' election, columnist Paul Johnson argued that 'Elections in this part of Ulster are a macabre game. The results bear no relation to the quality of the candidate or what he stands for'. Johnson argued that Sands should be expelled from the Commons and a writ issued to prevent serving prisoners from standing for election in future.[65] Whilst the two papers dismissed any suggestion that the election results signified widespread republican backing, they did express concern about the repercussions that might result from Sands' election. Both papers voiced fear that his victory would lead to an escalation of violence in the province.

The *Guardian* on the other hand, observed that Sands' victory had exploded the British government's repeated claims that the hunger strikes, and by extension the IRA, lacked popular support: 'Years of myth-making go out the window with the election of Bobby Sands as MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone. And the biggest myth is that the IRA in its violent phase represents only a tiny minority of the population'.[66] Similarly the *Times*, as Mulcahy shows, indicated high levels of support for republicanism, whilst focusing on how the British government would react to Sands' victory.[67] Though the *Guardian* acknowledged that many had voted on humanitarian grounds, or because they opposed any candidate who would support the union, it argued that the vote showed 'beyond all question… that a majority of people in Fermanagh and South Tyrone are deeply opposed to the political climate in which they have to live their lives'.[68] The election of Carron it concluded, was irrefutable evidence that the hunger strikers enjoyed widespread support in the province. The paper pointed out that, unlike in April when Sands had stood unopposed except by UUP candidate, Harry West, this time the electorate had the option of voting for other nationalists. That voters had chosen to back the H-Block candidate, showed the prevailing view was that 'the men inside the gaol are justified in their gruesome campaign'. The paper reiterated that the 'vote signals the utter disaffection of a majority in the constituency from

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[62] John Desborough and Joe Gorrod, 'IRA hunger striker is elected MP', *Daily Mirror*, 11 April 1981.
[63] 'An IRA Victory', *Daily Telegraph*, 11 April 1981.
[64] 'What Fermanagh Means', *Daily Telegraph*, 22 August 1981.
[65] Paul Johnson, 'The IRA have not got a thing to crow about', *The Sun*, 11 April 1981.
[66] 'Fermanagh Tyrone and the Maze', *The Guardian*, 11 April 1981.
[67] Mulcahy, 'Claims-Making and the Construction of Legitimacy', 455-6.
[68] 'Little cheer in the Irish mist', *The Guardian*, 13 June 1981; 'A vote of disaffection and despair', *The Guardian*, 22 August 1981.

the policies of the British Government, not only in the Maze prison but in the province as a whole'. It suggested that only through joint action on the part of the British and Irish governments could this disaffection be addressed.[69]

The varied interpretations evident in the newspapers' response to the Anti-H Block elections illustrates that there existed a range of approaches within the press towards reporting events in Northern Ireland; contrary to the reductive view of numerous scholars and activists. The *Guardian*'s coverage complicated the official narrative, by demonstrating that there was a portion of British newspapers willing to challenge the assumption embedded in the government's criminalisation policy that the prisoners, and by extension the paramilitary organisations they represented, enjoyed little popular support from the majority of the nationalist population in Northern Ireland. Even so, as Mulcahy has argued, in their coverage of the elections newspapers tended to focus on the political consequences for the British government, rather than the support they lent to the hunger strikers' claims to legitimacy.[70]

Of particular concern to the newspapers was the implication that the election results could have on Britain's international standing. The election of Sands to Westminster revived international interest in the prison protests and Northern Ireland generally. Criticism was heaped on Britain for allowing prisoners to starve themselves, rather than let them 'wear their own trousers', and increased pressure brought to bear on the government to pursue a compromise with the hunger strikers.[71] Following Sands' death, demonstrations and vigils were held across Ireland, in the US, Reykjavik, Paris, Manila, Oslo, Milan and Lisbon. In India, the hunger striker was compared to Gandhi, and opposition MPs in the Upper House held a minute's silence to honour Sands. The Iranian government, renamed the street where the British Embassy was situated in Tehran after Sands, and an emissary was sent to the hunger striker's funeral.[72] As the *Sunday Times'* correspondent Keith Richardson summarised, 'general European impression ranges from pig-headed Thatcher obstinacy, through scandalous misgovernment, to outright genocide. In other words, it could not be worse'. On 31 May, the *Sunday Times* published a survey of the international media coverage of the hunger strikes. The paper had interviewed the editors of sixty-four newspapers across twenty-five countries and found that thirty-six were of the opinion Britain should withdraw from Northern Ireland.[73]

British newspapers responded to the outcry with derision. In an editorial published following the death of Francis Hughes, the *Daily Telegraph* dismissed calls for British pliancy as the 'automatic response' of the Irish lobby in the USA, the Soviet Union and 'a miscellaneous horde of Marxist and Trotskyite organisations in other countries'.[74] The paper argued that Russia's criticism was self-serving, made to discredit the British government, which had been vocal in challenging the Soviet Union's

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[69] 'A vote of disaffection and despair'.
[70] Mulcahy, 'Claims-Making and the Construction of Legitimacy', 456.
[71] 'One more death, as scheduled'; Jon Akass, 'It's OK to die but it's bad publicity to do it too quickly', *The Sun*, 29 June 1981.
[72] Peter Taylor, 'How we answer the IRA's friends abroad', *Sunday Telegraph*, 28 June 1981; Hennessey, *Hunger Strike*, 218; Beresford, *Ten Men Dead*, 132-3.
[73] Phillip Knightley, 'Is Britain Losing the Propaganda War?', *Sunday Times*, 31 May 1981.
[74] 'A Time for Courage', *Daily Telegraph*, 13 May 1981.

human rights record, whilst opposition in the US was largely the result of ignorance and romanticism. The *Sun* too, argued that Britain's critics were using the hunger strikes for their own purposes. Visiting New York in June 1981, Prince Charles had met with anti-British demonstrations and had been grilled by the city's mayor, Ed Koch, who had remarked that 'the British should just get the hell out of Ireland'.[75] The *Sun*'s columnist Jon Akass, sought to minimise the incident, disregarding Koch's behaviour as self-serving and unrepresentative. He accused the mayor of pandering to the Irish-American vote, and argued that 'If it had been a crowd of Italians he would have been photographed eating a plate of spaghetti and quoted as demanding fair play for Frank Sinatra'.[76] The *Daily Mirror* on the other hand, took a slightly different tact, downplaying Koch's importance: 'He has no more to do with Government policy in Ireland than, say, the Statue of Liberty had to do with America's saturation bombing of Vietnam'. The paper argued that before criticising Britain, Americans should look at their country's actions in Southeast Asia.[77] The *Telegraph* too, sought to play down the reaction to the royal visit; noting the low number of demonstrators, it dismissed the idea that they 'represented a gigantic tide of anti-British and pro-IRA feeling in the USA', emphasising instead the fact that most American newspapers continued to express support for British policy in Northern Ireland.[78]

The *Guardian* on the other hand, argued that the international response, though well-intended, came from misinformation disseminated by the IRA propaganda machine. Along with the other newspapers, it contended that many people around the world believed that the hunger strikes were about prison conditions and not political status. In addition, the *Guardian* asserted that few worldwide truly appreciated the difficulties Britain faced in the province. The paper expressed the wish that critics appreciated 'how merciless is the British dilemma in Northern Ireland. We can stay there only under a hail of petrol bombs and sulphuric acid. We can leave only at the risk (which the Irish Republic begs us not to take) of a Loyalist on-slaught against the Catholic population'.[79] The use of 'we' suggests that despite reservations, the *Guardian* accepted itself as a part of the British establishment which was present in Northern Ireland. The newspapers repeatedly emphasised that the regime at the Maze was supposedly one of the most accommodating in the world and stressed that the true objective of the hunger strikes was to obtain prisoner of war status. Whilst these comments were addressed to an international audience, they were also intended to offer reassurance to domestic readers that the British government were right concerning their policy towards the hunger strikers.

In spite of their scornful attitude toward world opinion, all four newspapers encouraged the government to make efforts to defend Britain's reputation. The press played its part in deflecting international criticism by going on the offensive, pointing out that other countries were struggling with similar terrorism problems. The newspapers accused critics of hypocrisy, arguing that any democratic

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[75] Paul Connew, 'Charles grilled over Ulster', *Daily Mirror*, 18 June 1981; Jane Rosen, 'Charles defends Ulster policy', *The Guardian*, 18 June 1981.
[76] Jon Akass, 'It's votes New York's mayor cares about not the Irish', *The Sun*, 19 June 1981.
[77] 'LOOK before you YELL', *Daily Mirror*, 19 June 1981.
[78] 'Ireland and the World', *Daily Telegraph*, 25 June 1981.
[79] 'One more death, as scheduled'.

country would, and indeed had reacted to pressure from terrorists in much the same way. As the first hunger strike reached a crisis in early December 1980, the *Guardian* responded to the international outcry, noting that, 'Several European countries with democratically elected governments, face or have faced terrorist attempts to subvert them. Are the killers of Mr Moro or of businessmen in Germany entitled to a different regime from a back street mugger?'.[80] Put differently, would Italy and Germany be expected to offer privileges to prisoners from militant organisations, such as the Brigate Rosse or the Baader-Meinhof Group.[81] Similarly, the *Sun* countered the international clamour following the death of Bobby Sands, by emphasising the hypocrisy of much of the criticism: 'It is baffling that in countries like Italy, West Germany and Spain, which suffer far more than we do from mindless terrorism, voices are raised condemning Britain's efforts to uphold the law and protect the innocent'.[82]

The *Daily Telegraph*, in an editorial published in late April, accused the US of hypocrisy. Playing on American sensibilities, the paper pointed to the assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan on 30 March 1981 - another tenuous comparison - arguing that 'America has suffered enough from terrorist activities, political, criminal and demented'. The paper noted 'The United States is actively assisting counter-terror campaigns by several friendly governments', insinuating that Britain was not extended the same courtesy because of misguided Irish republican loyalties. The *Telegraph* argued that it would be of benefit to America to support Britain against the IRA, as 'Victories, moral or political, by terrorists in one corner of the world encourage extremist violence elsewhere'. The paper took this one step further, asking: 'Can its leaders pass by on the other side during Ulster's agony?'. At this early stage, and in line with the *Telegraph*'s conservatism, the paper suggested American involvement only as a means of bolstering the British government's position. It did not occur to the *Telegraph* to suggest that America become a mediator, the role it would eventually adopt during the peace process. It is, nonetheless, significant that the paper undertook this more constructive approach, suggesting that America could have a role in formulating a solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland.[83]

What exactly the newspapers expected to achieve from taking such an offensive approach, whether they believed it would reverse the tide of world opinion, is not entirely clear. Certainly, by seeking to minimise and discredit the international outcry, the papers sought to both reassure their readers and actively promote support for the government's policy against the hunger strikers. As the *Guardian* argued:

> The international propaganda battle matters. It matters amongst our Western allies, sometimes perplexed and unhappy about the slew of alien deaths across their screens. It matters to the Eastern block, where instant capital is duly welcome. And it matters, in particular,

[80] 'The hunger strikers are augmented'.
[81] Former Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro was kidnapped and murdered by the Brigate Rosse in 1979; in the late 1970s, the Baader-Meinhof Group, a West German far-left militant organisation responsible for numerous bombings, assassinations, kidnappings and robberies between 1970 and 1998, in late 1977 it had carried out a series of high-profile assassinations including that of Jürgen Ponto, the head of Dresdner Bank and Hanns Martin Schleyer, President of the German Employers' Association.
[82] Paul Johnson, 'Why do we let the IRA pull off these stunts?', *The Sun*, 11 May 1981.
[83] 'American Connection', *Daily Telegraph*, 25 April 1981.

> along the East Coast of America, whence flow the funds that keep the Provos going and enable them to buy bigger and better weapons.[84]

The paper argued that rather than 'keeping the world at bay in Ulster', the British government should harness international interest by encouraging debate, which could bring fresh perspective on tackling the conflict, and acidly observed the lack of innovation from the British government regarding Northern Ireland: 'It is not in the nature of politics for politicians to claim they have no answers. It is not a posture that can be sold for year after year'.[85]

The *Guardian* was not alone in bemoaning a lack of initiative on the part of British politicians, the *Daily Mirror* also expressed dissatisfaction at their level of engagement in finding a solution to the hunger protests. Columnist Keith Waterhouse, on 1 June 1981, remarked that:

> When 30,000 voters return a dying hunger-striker to Parliament and Parliament's only response is that there must be a way of stopping that kind of embarrassment in future, it begins to look as if we are trying to keep our Ulster problem under the carpet.[86]

The *Mirror*, however, was more concerned with the toll the hunger strikes were having on soldiers in the province, than the impact on Britain's international reputation. The paper's cartoonist Keith Waite expressed this frustration with the lack of new ideas on how to end the prison protests in a cartoon published following the death of Bobby Sands (Figure 13). Waite presents a group of British soldiers amidst the rioting that broke out after the striker's death. One soldier, holding a newspaper with the headline 'No Political Status', comments that 'The politicians say it's nothing to do with them'. Waite's scepticism about the government's claims that it had been powerless to avert the hunger strike was ill-concealed. The cartoon infers that the mismanagement of the hunger strikes had resulted in the escalation of violence in the province. It attacks politicians for shirking their responsibilities, whilst soldiers' lives were at risk. The *Mirror*'s position was that Britain should pull out of Northern Ireland altogether. Since the early 1970s, the paper had advocated British withdrawal from Northern Ireland, the only national daily to consistently do so.[87] This editorial stance, however, was not motivated so much by the desire for a united Ireland, but rather concern for the welfare of British troops. During the First World War, the paper had gained a reputation as the 'Forces' Paper', which it continued to cultivate throughout the twentieth century.[88] During the 'Troubles' it had defended soldiers in the province against government policies which it believed detrimental to those serving in Northern Ireland. For the *Mirror*, the hunger strikes were another reason to leave the province. Following Sands' death, the paper

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[84] 'The view from the East Coast', *The Guardian*, 16 May 1981.
[85] 'Home truths from abroad', *The Guardian*, 22 June 1981
[86] Keith Waterhouse, 'Britain on the carpet', *Daily Mirror*, 1 June 1981.
[87] At times the *Sunday Times* had also called for British withdrawal from Northern Ireland, but not with the same consistency as the *Mirror*. Curtis, *Ireland and the Propaganda War*, 206.
[88] In the 1980s, particularly during the Falklands War, as Robert Harries has observed the *Sun* 'moved swiftly to corner the market in patriotism', attempting to replace the *Mirror* as the Forces paper. (Horrie, *Tabloid Nation*, 32; 165; Kevin Williams, *Read All About It! A history of the British newspaper* (London: Routledge, 2010), 184-5; Dennis Griffiths (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of the British Press* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1992), 185; Robert Harris, *Gotcha!: The Media, the Government and the Falklands Crisis* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1983), 44.)

renewed its calls for withdrawal, arguing that 'Britain has been trapped in the maze too long. Its task now is to find the way that will lead it out altogether'.[89]

Figure 13: Keith Waite, 'The politicians say it's nothing to do with them', *Daily Mirror*, 6 May 1981.

The *Mirror*'s disapproval of the inertia shown by politicians with regards to Northern Ireland suggests that newspapers were still prepared to challenge the government over its handling of the hunger strikes. Though the British press widely supported the government in its view that the prisoners of the Maze should not be entitled to political status, it was with some important reservations. The newspaper defended the decision not to bow to the hunger strikers' demands, but it did not follow that they accepted the government's policies towards the prison protests without criticism or raising questions.

The *Guardian* in particular, offered a nuanced perspective on how the strikes were being handled. Though the paper asserted that 'the Government's hands are clean in their dealings with the Maze prisoners', it questioned the advisability of continuing to refuse to concede to the prisoners' demands, urging Thatcher to reconsider her position.[90] The paper argued that, 'None of these [the five demands]

[89] 'Death in the Maze', *Daily Mirror*, 6 May 1981.
[90] 'Fresh thoughts in Belfast', *The Guardian*, 11 November 1980.

in itself bestows political status, nor would a combination of several of them, especially if applied throughout the prison regime'. [91] This view was put more forcefully by the paper's Political Commentator and Policy Editor, Peter Jenkins in his column, published as the first hunger strike reached a crisis point on 17 December 1980:

> They may deserve to be so treated [like all other criminals] - or worse; but what we are having to do in order to uphold the point that they are common criminals and not, as they would have it, prisoners of war, is so degrading to ourselves, so disgusting to behold and difficult to explain to others, that we may wonder whether it is wise or prudent to persist.

He suggested that paramilitary prisoners should be differentiated from other criminals, as the severity of their actions set them apart.[92]As the second hunger strike intensified in April 1981 Jenkins voiced these arguments once more. In his column, published on 15 April, he criticised the British government's intransigence following the first hunger strike, arguing that 'it has handed the IRA the greater propaganda victory'. Quoting his earlier article verbatim, he argued again that the repercussions of allowing the strikers to continue their protest, potentially to the death, outweighed the value of upholding the principle that the prisoners were common criminals. He also repeated his earlier argument that paramilitary prisoners should be categorised not as ordinary criminals but as terrorists. Jenkins contended that in light of the election of Sands to Westminster, it would be wise for the government to relax uniform regulations and allow greater freedom of association within the prison.[93] Though the government refused to make any concessions to the prisoners, the paper nonetheless tacitly supported its policy towards the hunger strikes.

Whilst sympathetic towards the government's position, the *Guardian* was critical of how it handled the effort to resolve the protests. Reporting on Sands' death, it remarked that: 'Her [Thatcher's] policy has been correct, but her posture has been disdainful'. In particular, the paper condemned the treatment of Irish TDs, Síle de Valera, Neil Blaney and John O'Connell, who had visited the prison and met with Sands on 20 April. The three had also requested a meeting with Thatcher but were rebuffed. The Prime Minister told journalists that: 'It is not my habit or custom to meet MPs from a foreign country about a citizen of the UK, resident in the UK'.[94] The *Guardian* censured Thatcher for insulting the three Irish representatives, and voiced fears that the snub could undermine on-going Anglo-Irish talks. The paper believed that the only way of ending the hunger strikes, and the violence in Northern Ireland generally, was through close cooperation between the British and Irish governments.

As the hunger strikes persisted, the *Guardian* increasingly questioned the government's handling of the protest. On 3 June 1981, the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace (ICJP), a lay organisation made up from the Catholic hierarchy, released a statement proposing that by granting

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[91] 'The hunger strikers are augmented'.
[92] Peter Jenkins, 'The Dublin Castle policy of Containment', *The Guardian*, 17 December 1980.
[93] Peter Jenkins, 'What is the nature of the Anglo-Irish game?', *The Guardian*, 15 April 1981.
[94] Colin Brown and Joe Joyce, 'Thatcher refuses to meet Irish MPs', *The Guardian*, 22 April 1981.

reforms across the Northern Ireland prison system on clothing regulations, freedom of association and prison work the hunger strikes might be brought to an end. The situation in Northern Ireland had intensified, as hunger striker, Joe McDonnell, reached a crisis point, bringing increased pressure to bear on the British government to resolve the protests. Reacting to the ICJP initiative, Humphrey Atkins released a statement reaffirming the government's position that whilst they were willing to review changes to the prison regime, as long as the hunger strikes continued this process could not proceed. In response, the prisoners released a statement saying that the British government were mistaken in the belief that they were looking for differential treatment and that they would welcome the introduction of the five demands to all prisoners. This marked a fundamental shift in position. In stating that the five demands could be applied to all, the protestors had effectively abandoned their claim to special status. That afternoon, the ICJP were admitted to see the hunger strikers and relay to them that if they brought the protest to an end the government would be 'morally obliged to move forward' on the issue of clothing, free association and prison work. The prisoners, appeared to accept this deal, but requested a guarantor from the NIO be sent to confirm the government's exact position.[95]

The *Guardian* greeted the ICJP initiative with enthusiasm, praising it as the 'first serious hope of ending the deadlock at the Maze'.[96] The paper encouraged the government to respond to the prisoners' concession on political status with flexibility, especially on 'inessentials' such as clothing.[97] Progress towards a settlement based on the Commission's proposals, however, was complicated, for as historian Thomas Hennessey has put it, the ICJP 'was not the only show in town'.[98] After the prisoners had issued their statement conceding political status, the government had reopened the backchannel with the IRA's external leadership. On the evening of 6 July, it was communicated to the IRA that on condition that it would lead to an immediate end to the hunger strikes, the British government was prepared to allow all prisoners in Northern Ireland the right to wear their own clothes, additionally parcels, visits and letters would be made available, whilst the definition of prison work would be extended to include domestic tasks, as well as educational and constructive work, such as the building of a prison chapel. The government also made a vague offer to restore a proportion of remissions lost because of the protest but restated that there could be no movement on association. This went considerably further than the deal the ICJP had negotiated. According to O'Rawe, the prisoners believed the offer to be acceptable, nevertheless, the IRA dismissed it, arguing that the exclusion of the right to unsupervised association, along with ambiguity over what constituted prison work made the deal unacceptable.[99] Despite several attempts in the weeks that followed by the British to persuade the IRA to accept their deal no further advances were achieved through these means.[100]

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[95] For a detailed account of how the ICJP's role in the hunger strikes played out see Hennessey, *Hunger Strike*, 261-350; Beresford, *Ten Men Dead*, 265-301.
[96] 'A path in the Maze', *The Guardian*, 26 June 1981.
[97] 'The Maze: keep on trying', *The Guardian*, 9 July 1981.
[98] Hennessey, *Hunger Strike*, 309.
[99] O'Rawe, *Afterlives*, 16-18.
[100] For further detail on the backchannel negotiations see Hennessey, *Hunger Strike*, 309-350; 375-6; Beresford, *Ten Men Dead*, 292-301; Richard O'Rawe, *Blanketmen: An Untold Story of the H-Block Hunger Strike* (Dublin: New Island, 2005); O'Rawe, *Afterlives*.

Unaware of the secret talks being carried out with the IRA, when no settlement was forthcoming the *Guardian* held the British government solely responsible. In an editorial, published on 15 July 1981, the paper argued that 'failure to settle the hunger-strikes at the Maze prison has shifted from the prisoners to the British Government'. It called on Thatcher to 'make good' the gains achieved by the ICJP by ratifying concessions on clothing, free association and prison work. The *Guardian* believed that a final agreement had not been reached because the prisoners would only accept a deal from a government official, and that the government had refused to send one, lest they be seen to be negotiating with terrorists. The *Guardian* denounced this behaviour as 'too petty a principle on which to allow more lives - outside the prison as well as inside - to depend'.[101] The paper expressed frustration at the rigidity of the government. Its response to the negotiations shows a capacity within the press to challenge and offer criticism of the British government's policy on the hunger strikes, without having to express support for the prisoners.

A senior NIO official eventually visited the Maze on 8 July, after Joe McDonnell had passed away. The same day, the prisoners released a statement which argued that McDonnell 'need not have died'. They stated that they had offered 'a principled and practical solution for all concerned', but that the government had refused again and again to talk directly with them. The prisoners concluded that even if they wanted to end their protests it was too late.[102] The hunger protest continued, resulting in the deaths of Martin Hurson, Kevin Lynch, Kieran Doherty, Thomas McElwee and Michael Devine. As the strike progressed, however, the impact of each death diminished, as did the amount of attention it was afforded by the media. On 3 October 1981, the hunger strikes collapsed. Three days later the government announced measures to improve the Northern Ireland prison service, effectively granting the five demands.

The limited scholarship covering the media's reporting of the 'Troubles' during the 1980s mostly portrays the British media in one-dimensional terms, as puppets of the British government mobilised in its defence. This view had greatly influenced popular conceptions of the hunger strikes and events in Northern Ireland generally, originating from an extremely restricted examination of the media coverage generated by events in the province in the early 1980s. As this chapter has shown, a detailed analysis of a broader range of newspaper sources demonstrates that the British press, far from parroting the government line, offered nuanced and complex coverage on Northern Ireland throughout this period.

During the early 1980s, the press engaged constructively with events in Northern Ireland, challenging the government on policy, exploring different perspectives and attempting to offer solutions to the intensifying conflict. Whilst all four newspapers broadly echoed the official line that 'a crime is a crime', their coverage went beyond this simplistic view. The papers aided in the construction of paramilitary prisoners as ordinary criminals, but they presented them as victims both of a cynical IRA

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[101] 'The Maze can be settled now', *The Guardian*, 15 July 1981.
[102] TNA FCO 87/1262 Northern Ireland Office Protests and Second Hunger Strike- Weekly Bulletin. No. 20 09.00 hours Thursday 9 July- 0900 hours Thursday 16 July, quoted by Hennessey, *Hunger Strike*, 334-5.

leadership and of the conflict itself. They raised important questions about the British government's criminalisation policy and showed a willingness to challenge the official narrative.

The early 1980s were a significant and transitional moment for Northern Ireland and newspapers were of vital importance to how events came to be interpreted in Britain. Although, still predominantly perpetuating the narrative set by the government, careful examination of the press reports from this time reveals that they increasingly departed from the official line and showed a readiness to engaging with more nuanced readings of the 'Troubles'.

Chapter Four: Television coverage of the early 1980s.

The death of Bobby Sands, MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, propelled Northern Ireland back onto television screens across the world. The slow starvation of men in the Maze generated unprecedented levels of media coverage. As each hunger striker grew weaker, international calls for a solution to the prison protest, and the 'Troubles' generally, reached a new pitch. The government's apparent lack of response meant that Britain increasingly appeared to observers to be intransigent and inflexible. Faced with such condemnation the British government sought to pressure domestic broadcasters into promoting the official view of the hunger strikers as criminals.[1] Restricted access to information, as well as legal, political and financial pressures greatly influenced how programme-makers presented events unfolding in Northern Ireland during the early 1980s. Nonetheless, broadcasters from both the BBC and ITV resisted attempts to control their narrative producing detailed and nuanced programmes on the hunger strikes and events in Northern Ireland.

As observed in the previous chapter, despite its importance for interpreting the strike, little scholarship has been carried out on either the press or broadcast media's coverage of the prison protests or Northern Ireland in the early 1980s. Liz Curtis has argued that both broadcasting bodies supported the government line on the hunger strikes, censoring their journalists in order not to invoke Thatcher's wrath.[2] Curtis' analysis, however, is based on a very limited sample of the vast number of programmes produced on the hunger strikes. As social scientist Howard Smith has shown, television coverage of the prison protest was far from uncritical of the British government. He argues that the BBC offered detailed analysis of the hunger strikes, placing them in their historic context and exploring the response of the nationalist community.[3] Whilst Smith provides a comprehensive account of the content of BBC programmes on the hunger strikes, he fails to develop his analysis to its full conclusion. The lack of any further research into the content of current affairs programmes on the hunger strikes has led to a tendency for Curtis' views to dictate the way in which the media's coverage during this period has been understood. In reality, the BBC and ITV provided a far more multi-faceted portrait of the conflict during the early 1980s.

This chapter focuses on a sample of twenty-two programmes, broadcast by the BBC and the ITV in 1980 and 1981. By focusing on these, it will explore key themes which characterised current affairs coverage during this period. The chapter explores the growing pressure placed on broadcasters by the Thatcher administration to starve terrorists of the 'oxygen of publicity'. It acknowledges that both broadcasting bodies found it increasingly difficult to provide impartial and independent coverage of Northern Ireland, which at times resulted in journalists and producers voluntarily censoring programmes by omitting material, avoiding reporting on contentious subjects, and looking for the safe

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[1] Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 234-249.
[2] Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 202-6.
[3] Howard Smith, 'BBC Current Affairs Coverage of the 1981 Hunger Strike', in *The Northern Irish Question in British Politics*, (eds.) Peter Catterall and Sean McDougall (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1996), 174-181.

angle. Nevertheless, it will also show how programme makers looked for ways to subvert restrictions, pushing the boundaries to challenge the government's position.

The 1980 and 1981 hunger strikes are one of the key focuses of this chapter, which argues that despite restricted access to the Maze prison, broadcasters provided compelling and vivid coverage of the hunger strikes. Analysing programme content demonstrates how programme producers contextualised the strikes in terms of the long history of the hunger protests in Northern Ireland and explored the support given to the hunger strikes by the nationalist community. It argues that the BBC and ITV endeavoured to present a full range of opinion on the hunger strikes especially from the Catholic community. The chapter then, explores the impact of events in Northern Ireland on the Republic of Ireland. It observes how current affairs programmes focused on the possible implications republicanism in the South might have for Anglo-Irish relations. They downplay the extent of support for the hunger strikers in order to offer a reassuring narrative that Dublin would continue to engage in talks with the British government aimed at bringing about a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Finally, the chapter investigates coverage of the increase in loyalist activity in response to the Maze protests and the Anglo-Irish talks. Although it recognises that the broadcast media frequently stereotyped loyalism, the chapter argues that current affairs coverage went beyond the notion of loyalist bigotry to examine the motives behind loyalist attitudes.

Table 2: List of Television Programmes, 1980-1981

Programme	**Series**	**Channel**	**Date Shown**	**Number of Viewers (in millions)[4]**
Fighting Back	Man Alive	BBC	31 January 1980	3
Ireland: Republicans and Loyalists: Part One	Newsweek	BBC	10 April 1980	0.6
What School Did You Go To?	Man Alive	BBC	24 April 1980	1.2
Ireland: Republicans and Loyalists: Part Two	Newsweek	BBC	25 April 1980	0.4
Last Stand at Lisburn	World in Action	ITV (Granada)	14 July 1980	4.2

[4] BBC WAC, 'Series R9: TV Viewing Barometers/BARB TV Audience Figures', 1980-1981. Unfortunately, the BBC have a gap in their Barometers from August 1981 to December 1982.

Thatcher's Other Island: Time to Think Again	Weekend World	ITV (London Weekend World)	23 November 1980	0.8
H-Block Fuse	World in Action	ITV (Granada)	24 November 1980	3.6
Something Else		BBC	8 December 1980	0.4
Britain and Ireland: Dawn of a New Era?	Weekend World	ITV (London Weekend World)	14 December 1980	0.4
Ulster: A War for the Eighties	TV Eye	ITV (Thames Television)	18 December 1980	N/A
Thatcher's Loyal Rebels[5]	TV Eye	ITV (Thames Television)	9 April 1981	1.7
The Waiting Time	TV Eye	ITV (Thames Television)	30 April 1981	2.7
'No Title'	Newsnight	BBC	7 May 1981	Part 1: 1.4 Part 2: 1.1 Part 3: 1.0 [6]
The Hunger Strikers: Forcing a Re-think?	Weekend World	ITV (London Weekend Television)	17 May 1981	0.6
South of the Border	TV Eye	ITV (Thames Television)	18 June 1981	1.3
A Time for Compromise	Panorama	BBC	20 July 1981	2.2
'No Title'	Nationwide	BBC	17 September 1981	N/A
The Provos' Last Card?	Panorama	BBC	21 September 1981	N/A
'No Title'	Nationwide	BBC	16 November 1981	N/A
Unionist Disunity	Nationwide	BBC	23 November 1981	N/A

[5] Only nineteen and a half minutes of this footage was available to the author, however, this was enough to gain a good sense of the programme and its content.
[6] This special episode on the local elections in England and Wales included a segment of the funeral of Bobby Sands, based on the chronology of the programme. Whilst I believe that Part Two relates to the segment on Sands, I cannot be completely certain.

The Preacher and the Peacemaker	World in Action	ITV (Granada)	23 November 1981	N/A
Prior Commitment	TV Eye	ITV (Thames Television)	26 November 1981	N/A

The 1980s were to be a challenging time for British broadcasters covering Northern Ireland. Relations between the state and broadcast media, strained throughout the 1970s, deteriorated further under the premiership of Margaret Thatcher. From her election in 1959 as MP for Finchley, Thatcher had strong views concerning the failings of British broadcasting, especially the BBC, and consistently called broadcasters to account over what she perceived to be partisan coverage.[7] Thatcher believed the BBC to be out of control and politically biased. The very concept of a public service body funded by an annual licence fee ran counter to Thatcher's ideological position, which championed deregulation and free market competition.[8] As she wrote in her memoirs:

> Broadcasting was one of those areas- the professions such as teaching, medicine and the law were others- in which special pleading by powerful interest groups was disguised as high-minded commitment to some greater good… The idea that a small clique of professional broadcasters always knew what was best and that they should be more or less immune from criticism or competition was not one which I could accept.[9]

Thatcher's general antipathy toward the broadcast media increased throughout the 1980s. Television's impartial approach, for example to the Falklands War, the miners' strikes, and the Brixton riots, contributed to worsening relations between broadcasters and the government. As BBC2 Controller Brian Wenham observed: 'It was usually Ireland, it was usually the BBC, it was usually a row bigger, with more heads rolling, than you'd ever think possible'.[10]

Early in her premiership two incidents consolidated Thatcher's opinion of the BBC. On 5 July 1979, the *Tonight* programme broadcast an interview with the INLA.[11] The programme was intended as an in-depth review of the decade since the Army was deployed in Northern Ireland. In an effort to shed new light on the conflict, programme producers had interviewed the INLA, which had come to prominence after killing Airey Neave, Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and a close friend of Margaret Thatcher. His assassination, at Westminster, the symbolic heart of the British establishment had a powerful resonance and piqued British interests in the 'Troubles'. In the interview, the INLA representative described in detail how the group had carried out the attack, declaring that Neave was a 'militarist, [an] advocate of torture in Ireland… and [an] advocate of capital punishment for Irish

[7] Jean Seaton, *Pinkoes and Traitors: The BBC and the nation, 1974-1987* (London: Profile Books Ltd, 2015), 23-34.
[8] Curran and Seaton, *Power without Responsibility*, 209-10.
[9] Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1993), 634.
[10] Institute of Contemporary British History, 'Witness Seminar', *Real Lives* (February 1995), quoted in Curran and Seaton, *Power without Responsibility*, 212.
[11] It should be noted that at the time of recording the INLA had yet to be proscribed. On 2 July 1979 the INLA were added to the list of organisations in Britain and Northern Ireland outlawed by the PTA.

freedom fighters', therefore a 'legitimate target': comments that were bound to provoke a reaction.[12] Journalist David Lomax forcefully countered these accusations, arguing that Neave, a Second World War 'hero', who had suffered at the hands of the Nazis as a prisoner of war was well known for his opposition to the use of torture.[13] Shortly before his death Neave had promised SDLP leader Gerry Fitt an investigation into allegations of the mistreatment of suspects in Northern Ireland, stating that 'those responsible will bear the full brunt of my wrath because I myself was interrogated by the Gestapo and, Gerry it leaves its mark on you'.[14]

The initial public response to the programme was relatively muted, given that it attracted an estimated one million viewers. The BBC received eighty-seven phone calls, which as its Director of News and Current Affairs (DNCA), Richard Francis, observed was no more than would have been expected had the word 'fuck' been broadcast.[15] On 11 July, however, a letter from Lady Neave, addressed to the Director-General of the BBC, Ian Trethowan, expressing outrage at the appearance of her husband's killers on television, was published in the *Daily Telegraph*. Showing a distinct lack of sensitivity, the BBC had failed to warn Diana Neave of the forthcoming interview. The *Tonight* staff had managed to contact the Neave family, but they had decided not to inform her, believing that she would not be watching television that night.[16] In her letter, Lady Neave wrote that 'the decision to transmit the interview betrayed the traditional standards of British broadcasting'.[17] As the grieving widow, Diana Neave claimed the moral authority to mourn without the affront of seeing the INLA on television and given scope to justify their actions.[18] The BBC's disregard for her feelings triggered protests from the press and politicians of all parties. Thatcher was furious. Addressing the House of Commons the following day, she stated: 'I am appalled it was ever transmitted and I believe it reflects gravely on the judgement of the BBC and those responsible'.[19] The Attorney-General, Michael Havers, was ordered to review the programme and advise on what legal action could be taken against the BBC. Reflecting on the INLA interview following the implementation of the broadcasting ban in 1988, *Sunday Telegraph* journalist Andrew Dickinson noted the extent of Thatcher's anger at *Tonight*: 'A

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[12] BBC WAC, N12/127/1, Northern Ireland Advisory Committee, extract from *Tonight*, broadcast 5 July 1979, 4, cited in Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 204.
[13] Paul Routledge, *Public Servant, Secret Agent: The elusive life and violent death of Airey Neave* (London: Fourth Estate, 2002); Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 204.
[14] Anne McHardy, 'A brave man who sought the Ulster challenge', *The Guardian*, 31 March 1979.
[15] In the face of widespread criticism, the BBC's Audience Research Department carried out a survey to determine how the public viewed the *Tonight* programme. The 207 respondents were shown the programme and then asked to read a sample of the criticism levelled against it. Eighty per cent of participants in the study thought it was right to transmit the programme, despite the fact that half of them had participated in the survey a few days after the assassination of Lord Mountbatten. The survey also showed that after seeing the interview audiences tended to exhibit a more hostile attitude towards the terrorists and a more favourable view of the Army and Airey Neave. BBC WAC, R78/1189/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances 1980-1983, Extracts from the Minutes of a News and Current Affairs Meeting, 9 September 1980; BBC WAC, R78/1189/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances 1980-1983, Extracts from the Minutes of a News and Current Affairs Meeting, 5 February 1980; Richard Francis, 'Speech to the Broadcasting Press Guild on 12 July', *The Listener*, 19 July 1979; Richard Clutterbuck, *The Media and Political Violence*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1983), 112.
[16] Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 205.
[17] *Daily Telegraph*, 11 July 1979 cited in Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 164; Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 205.
[18] Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 205.
[19] *Daily* Telegraph, 12 July 1979 cited in Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 164.

colleague of Mrs Thatcher remembers her repeating over and over again the words, 'I will never forgive them'. She meant the broadcasters not the terrorists'.[20]

Three months after the INLA controversy, the BBC's *Panorama* team began work developing a programme on the evolution of Irish republicanism and the current make-up of the Provisional IRA, its aims and tactics.[21] Whilst in Ireland they took the opportunity to film an IRA roadblock outside the village of Carrickmore, County Tyrone.[22] In accordance with editorial guidelines, the incident was reported to the RUC, as well as senior management at the BBC, however, the team failed to inform Northern Ireland Controller, James Hawthorne. Hawthorne learnt of the incident a week later at a dinner with civil servants. This oversight was used as ammunition by the government to argue that the Corporation was dysfunctional and had lost control of its journalists.[23] In reality, neither the government nor the security forces wanted broadcasters digging too deeply into goings-on in Northern Ireland. Whilst it put pressure on the BBC to exclude the footage from the programme, the government was anxious not to draw public attention to the incident. Carrickmore was just eleven miles from a British army base and six miles from a RUC/ UDR barracks. The fact that the IRA were able to make a show of force under the nose of the security forces was highly embarrassing.[24]

In early November, journalist Ed Moloney, however, had accidentally stumbled across the story. Writing in the Dublin magazine, *Hibernia*, on 8 November he described *Panorama*'s visit as 'one of the IRA's most spectacular propaganda coups to date'.[25] In London, the *Financial Times* quickly took up the story. The reaction was one of outrage. Newspapers accused the BBC of being duped and described the incident as 'treason'. Labour leader, James Callaghan, alleged that the BBC had stage-managed the event, conspiring with the IRA in order to manufacture a more sensational news story.[26] When the Prime Minister heard about the incident according to one senior official, she went 'scatty'. In an address to the Commons, she called for the BBC to 'put its house in order'.[27] Once again, the matter was referred to the Attorney-General and an inquiry into the BBC's conduct launched. Special Branch obtained a warrant to search the Corporation's Lime Grove premises, on suspicion that the Director-General had articles, which could be evidence of offences under the PTA. During the search, police found and confiscated the raw film taken at Carrickmore. This was the first time in its history that the BBC had been forced to turn over untransmitted film; a serious breach of the Corporation's independence.[28]

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[20] Andrew Dickson, 'Mrs Thatcher's Revenge', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 23 October 1988 cited in Edgerton, 'Quelling the "Oxygen of Publicity"', 116.
[21] When the programme had originally proposed to develop the programme, it had been rejected because of the assassination of Lord Mountbatten, as well as the Warrenpoint attack in which eighteen British soldiers had been killed on 27 August. (Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 215).
[22] *Ibid*., 216-234.
[23] *Ibid*., 220.
[24] Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 165-7.
[25] *Hibernia*, 8 November 1979 cited in Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 166.
[26] 'Fury over IRA 'TV stunt'', *Daily Express*, 9 November 1979.
[27] *Hansard*, House of Commons debates, 8 November 1979, Vol. 973, col. 607 quoted in Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 222.
[28] BBC WAC, R104/234/1, *Evening Standard*, 13 November 1979, cited in Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 224.

To bring the BBC to heel, Thatcher used her influence over appointments to stack its Board of Governors, traditionally a bi-partisan body, in her favour, establishing greater political control over the Corporation. In 1980, she appointed George Howard as Chairman, and then in 1983 Stuart Young, brother of one of her favourite ministers. Peter Goodwin has argued, however, that both Howard and Young went 'native', proving themselves supportive of the Corporation's traditions, therefore it was not until 1986 and the appointment of Marmaduke Hussey as Chairman that the effects of Thatcher's interference resulted in any substantial change in the BBC's practices.[29] Even so, the INLA and Carrickmore affairs undermined the trust that had existed between the Board of Governors and BBC Management. The Governors tried more and more to intervene in programme making.[30]

This level of governmental interference was exacerbated by the BBC's financial problems. Thatcher used the licence fee as a threat to try and tame the BBC. By the early 1980s, a decline in 'natural' revenue (money generated through an increase in television ownership, the shift to colour licences etc.), combined with rising production costs and increased competition from commercial networks meant that the BBC was struggling with rising debts.[31] An increase in the licence fee needed the support of Thatcher's government, which was ideologically opposed to the idea of a publicly funded body.[32] The government had already broached the possibility of introducing advertising in order to offset public expenditure.[33] The parlous state of the BBC's finances was a convincing argument against unnecessarily antagonising Thatcher's government.

The Attorney-General eventually decided not to prosecute the BBC over the INLA and Carrickmore affairs. Nonetheless in a letter to the Chairman, Michael Swann, he warned that 'I should like to make clear that I regard conduct of the nature which took place as constituting, in principle, offences under section 11, as well as abhorrent, and unworthy of the high standards the public expects of the BBC'.[34] Senior management dismissed the warning as nothing more than a 'finger-wagging exercise', although the *Panorama* programme was shelved and the Director-General, Ian Trethowan, refused permission for the film to be included in any other programme.[35] Responding to a request in January 1980 from *Panorama* producer Roger Bolton to use the footage, he stated that 'I am afraid for us to do so would be seen as a political gesture which is a luxury we must deny ourselves'.[36] Richard

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[29] Peter Goodwin, *Television under the Tories: Broadcasting Policy 1979-1997* (London: British Film Institute, 1998), 36-7; 126.
[30] Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 225.
[31] Curran and Seaton, *Power without Responsibility*, 218.
[32] Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 226; Curran and Seaton, *Power without Responsibility*, 214.
[33] Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 226.
[34] BBC WAC, R108/73/1, Northern Ireland: coverage, exchange of letters released to the press by Sir Michael Swann, Chairman of the Board of Governors: letter from the Attorney-General to Swann, 20 June 1980 quoted in Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 230.
[35] BBC WAC, R78/1189/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances 1980-1983, Extracts from the Minutes of a News and Current Affairs Meeting, 5 August 1980.
[36] BBC WAC, R78/1, 189/1, Northern Ireland civil disturbances, Trethowan to Direct NCA, 30 January 1980, quoted in Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 229.

Francis surmised, whilst the practical situation had not changed, the atmosphere has become 'much more clouded'.[37]

The INLA and Carrickmore controversies served as reminders of the real possibility that journalists could be prosecuted under the PTA, inducing broadcasters to be increasingly cautious about reporting on paramilitary activities. This served only to further the self-censorship already practiced by the BBC and ITV. Both broadcasting bodies reasserted and tightened their guidelines regarding coverage of Northern Ireland. At the BBC, staff were instructed that the Northern Ireland Controller must be consulted on all programmes on Northern Ireland and the Republic.[38] The result was the stifling of innovative and creative journalism about the province, whilst interviews with republicans became a thing of the past. The INLA interview was the last time any representative of a republican paramilitary organisation appeared on British television until the early 1990s. Political, financial and legal circumstances combined to influence programme producers to comply with the government's demands. Despite this unpromising state of affairs, an analysis of current affairs programmes from the early 1980s, particularly those covering the hunger strikes, shows that broadcasters continued to produce searching and insightful coverage of events in Northern Ireland.

The 1980 and 1981 hunger strikes were to pose new challenges for the British media. The prison protests internationalised the conflict, attracting media attention worldwide. Unsurprisingly, the government were anxious to control the narrative as presented on television and so renewed pressure on domestic broadcasters to follow the government line and present the hunger strikers as criminals rather than political actors. Senior management at the BBC and ITV cautioned their staff to exercise the utmost care when reporting on events in Northern Ireland. Both broadcasting bodies warned that all programme items about the hunger strikes were to be set in context. This not only meant highlighting the crimes the protesters had been convicted of, but drawing attention to the IRA's continued campaign against the security forces, and its fatal consequences.[39] Programme-makers from both broadcasting bodies took note, producing programmes which emphasised the strikers' violent pasts, but which also explored their motives and examined grassroots support for the prisoners, giving voice to a spectrum of opinions on the protests.

One key example is Granada's *World in Action* 'The H-Block Fuse', broadcast on 24 November 1980.[40] The programme explored the motivations behind, and reactions to, the hunger strikes. Comprising of a series of interviews with politicians and public figures, including SDLP leader Gerry Fitt, Minister of State for Northern Ireland Michael Alison, and Deputy Commander of the UDA John McMichael, it sought to represent the full range of perspectives on what was happening in the Maze

[37] BBC WAC, Extracts from the Minutes of a News and Current Affairs Meeting, 5 August 1980.
[38] Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 176-7.
[39] BBC WAC, R78/1189/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances 1980-1983, Extracts from the Minutes of a Board of Management Meeting, 10 November 1980, quoted in Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 235; ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, 5005/12/5, Hunger Strikes- Coverage of, Vol.1, February 1981-June 1981, Letter from Brian Young to Anthony Young and Barbara Jenkins, 13 May 1981.
[40] 'The H-Block Fuse', *World in Action*, Granada, 24 November 1980.

prison. The programme notes the widespread support amongst the nationalist community for the hunger strikers, showing footage of Anti H-Block demonstrations. What is most notable about this footage is the diversity: men, women and children from across the socio-economic spectrum participated in these marches. Such images seemed to convey a sense of Catholic unity, something the Republican movement vigorously promoted; however, the programme's interview with Gerry Fitt showed that the reality was far more complicated. Despite his nationalist politics, Fitt opposed the hunger strikes; drawing attention to victims of republican violence, he argued that granting Special Category Status would only provide justification for further violence. Loyalist reactions were more predictable, narrator Chris Kelly describes how the hunger strikes had resurrected a deep-rooted fear amongst Protestants of resurgent republicanism. These fears had resulted in an increase in loyalist paramilitary activity. John McMichael warned *World in Action* that the UDA was prepared for a 'final confrontation'. Asked what this meant, he remarked ominously: 'If the hunger strikes lead to a breakdown of law and order, the Protestant paramilitary organisations will have to go into the Republican areas and take out their leadership'.[41]

The programme's showpiece, however, was an exclusive interview with hunger striker, Raymond McCartney; the only one of its kind to have taken place. The voices of the hunger strikers were usually absent from coverage of the prison protests, their motives and ideology interpreted by a third party, because access to the prison was limited. *World in Action* had been given special permission to film the prison and prisoners by the NIO in an attempt to defuse tension and debunk any accusations of ill-treatment.[42] The programme offers a rare view inside the Maze prison and unique footage of the hunger strikers and blanketmen.

At the behest of the NIO, the interview was restricted to a single question: 'You and your colleagues have been convicted of murders and bombings, why should you have any special treatment?'. Nevertheless, it gave McCartney the opportunity to explain the prisoners' motives and political philosophy:

> The whole system in Northern Ireland both special arrest, special court system without jury, has proved to us beyond all doubt that these courts are set to convince people that we are criminals, which we are not. We are a product of a political trouble in Northern Ireland and the reason why we went on hunger strike is because after four years of long protesting in which we embarked on the dirty protest, after long talks between Cardinal Ó Fiaich and Bishop Edward Daly, we felt that our position had to be highlighted and the only way we felt [this could be done] is by hunger strike. I, and my six comrades, are prepared to go through with this and we are prepared to die to prove that we are special prisoners and our five basic demands are just.[43]

In defiance of the limitations imposed by the NIO, additional notes written by McCartney were smuggled from the prison and read out on the programme. These described his early experience of the

[41] *Ibid*.
[42] James Murray, 'A tricky look at an IRA killer', *Daily Express*, 24 November 1980.
[43] 'The H-Block Fuse', 24 November 1980.

'Troubles', his recruitment to the republican movement and time in prison. Their inclusion demonstrates the creative ways in which broadcaster circumvented the authorities' efforts to dominate the narrative forwarded by the media.

In providing a voice for the hunger strikers 'The H-Block Fuse' offered a republican perspective, which challenged official narratives seeking to present the hunger strikes in criminal rather than political terms. The prisoners' view of themselves as political players was at the centre of their protest, and by stressing their political motivations they sought to claim legitimacy for themselves and the republican movement as a whole.[44] Though the intention of the programme producers was to improve the audiences' understanding of the reasons behind the protest, the McCartney interview provided a platform for the hunger strikers to put forward their position. The footage of McCartney and the blanketmen gave the protest a human face. The artist Richard Hamilton, whose diptych painting *The Citizen* (1981-3) depicts the blanket protests, observed, that the footage of men on the blanket offered 'a strange image of human dignity in the midst of self-created squalor'. Hamilton also notes how the prisoners' long hair, beards and bare chests adorned with the crucifix, conjured up ideas of Christian martyrdom, which did not match the 'oft declared British view of the IRA as thugs and hooligans'.[45] The prisoners' use of their own naked bodies in their protest emphasised their humanity. This created the potential for the viewer to feel empathetic towards the protesters. The view of the hunger strikers as human contrasted with the government's presentation of them as heartless criminals and made it harder for audiences to accept the possibility that the government would allow them to die. By promoting these images, the programme offered a more complicated perspective on the prison protests, raising serious questions about the morality of the British government's policy towards the hunger strikes.

This is not to suggest, however, that Granada sympathised with prisoners convicted of acts of violence. In fact, 'The H-Block Fuse' went to considerable lengths to emphasise the hunger strikers' violent pasts. In their assessment of the Granada programme, the BBC's Board of Management noted 'for a 'World in Action' this has been unusually carefully balanced'.[46] By way of introducing the McCartney interview, narrator Chris Kelly listed all the hunger strikers, their crimes and sentences. He then gave an exhaustive account of McCartney's criminal history, describing in detail McCartney's involvement in the fatal shooting of Derry businessman, Jeffrey Agate.[47] In their coverage of the hunger strikes both ITV and the BBC gave particular attention to the suffering of the victims of republican violence to balance their coverage of the protests and forestall accusations that they were providing the IRA with a propaganda platform.[48] 'The H-Block Fuse' also drew attention to members of the prison

[44] Mulcahy, 'Claims-Making and the Construction of Legitimacy', 450-2; 460.
[45] Hamilton's paintings *The Citizen* and *Finn MacCool* are based on images from 'The H-Block Fuse'. Rita Donagh and Richard Hamilton, *A Cellular Maze*, booklet to accompany exhibition at Orchard Gallery, Londonderry 1983, quoted on 'The Citizen', *The Tate*, http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hamilton-the-citizen-t03980 [accessed 11 May 2018].
[46] BBC WAC, R78/1189/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances 1980-1983, Extracts from the Minutes of a Board of Management Meeting, 1 December 1980.
[47] In February 2007, the Court of Appeal quashed the murder convictions against McCartney. Peter Hain, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, however, declined to compensate McCartney because he had not been proven innocent. The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom overturned this in 2011 and McCartney compensated for 15 years imprisonment.
[48] Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 243-4.

services killed by the IRA in an assassination campaign which ran alongside the prison protests.[49] In one scene, the camera pans over the photographs of eighteen prison officers killed over the course of the four-year protest, before cutting to footage of blanketmen laughing and shouting pro-IRA slogans. The juxtaposition of these images served to remind the audience that the protesters were members of an organisation that not only sanctioned murder but was able to make light of it.

The programme's coverage, however, provided some explanation for McCartney's violent past by examining his family background and early experiences of the conflict. It implies that McCartney's involvement with the IRA was a consequence of his early exposure to the 'Troubles'. In his smuggled note, the hunger striker describes how his grandfather, who had been a member of the IRA in the 1920s, had instilled in him militant republican values. McCartney wrote: 'From an early age my grandfather… used to tell us little folklore stories and that someday Ireland would be a beautiful country, but this could not be until it was free'. McCartney goes on to describe his adolescence, growing up amidst the violence that marked the early days of the 'Troubles'. When he was fourteen, he experienced first-hand the August 1969 riots, which in Derry, resulted in a three-day siege of Catholic areas, as nationalists fought the RUC and B-Specials in what became known as the Battle of the Bogside. In January 1972, McCartney's cousin, James Wray, was shot dead by British soldiers on Bloody Sunday. The programme draws a direct link between these early experiences and McCartney's engagement in paramilitary activities, noting that it was immediately following Bloody Sunday that eighteen-year-old McCartney enlisted in the IRA. In October 1972, he was arrested and sentenced to six months imprisonment for possession of ammunition. McCartney's parents told *World in Action* of their surprise: 'I was shocked because he was at college, he'd come home at 4 o'clock, and he was studying until about 8 or 9 o'clock at night'.[50]

The programme zeroed in on the impact of the hunger strike on McCartney's parents, particularly his mother. Switching emphasis to the effects on the prisoner's families, allowed broadcasters to highlight the human cost of events unfolding in the Maze. It also allowed for a degree of empathy towards the prisoners' families whom the programme presented as victims. Mrs McCartney seemed reconciled with her son's decision, telling the interviewer: 'I must abide by my son's wishes and if he thinks he can do good for the rest of the boys sitting on the protest, well then I must accept it'. Asked whether her son's death would achieve anything, however, Mrs McCartney remarks: 'That remains to be seen'.[51] This suggestion of doubt indicates that the McCartneys were not wholly at ease with the republican party line. Its inclusion in the programme was designed to raise questions amongst viewers as to the validity of the protest. 'The H-Block Fuse' was not alone in suggesting the dichotomy between the political and the personal aspects of the strike. As observed in the previous chapter, *The Guardian* also provided details of the hunger strikers' families and their experiences of the 'Troubles'.

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[49] F. Stuart Ross, *Smashing H-Block: The Popular Campaign against Criminalization and the Irish Hunger Strikes 1976-1982* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), 75.
[50] 'The H-Block Fuse', 24 November 1980.
[51] *Ibid*.

By offering glimpses into their upbringing, both the press and television created the impression that the hunger strikers' violent pasts were a consequence of their childhood experiences.[52] Both the press and broadcast media hypothesised that the strikers would not have committed these crimes but for the political environment in which they had grown up. Neither contemplated that the strikers had become involved in violence of their own volition. By denying the prisoners' agency the media avoided scrutinising the motives of individual paramilitaries and therefore what role Britain might have in leading them to violence. Instead they offered a view of the hunger strikers as much victims as perpetrators; which ran counter to the government's portrayal of them as violent criminals solely responsible for the 'Troubles'.

Responses to 'The H-Block Fuse' were mixed. True to form, the McCartney interview caused outcry amongst politicians. The leader of the UUP, James Molyneaux implored the Prime Minister to ban the programme remarking that: 'There is great indignation in Northern Ireland at this potential further publicity to be given by the media to these hunger strikers'.[53] John McMichael's threats to 'eliminate' the IRA leadership also attracted criticism.[54] John Cousins, spokesperson for the Alliance party, accused the UDA of 'making a public declaration of war against the Catholic population', though he praised *World in Action* for 'the first serious attempt by television to explain the problems of Northern Ireland in a balanced way'.[55] In this instance, anger was directed at the NIO for having allowed the McCartney interview in the first place. Once again, the BBC's Board of Management observed that the NIO had 'been kicked by the Prime Minister for its pains'.[56] As the protests persisted and a second hunger strike commenced, the BBC and ITV continued to report from the Maze. The *World in Action* team, however, were the last journalists, let alone television crew, officially allowed into the prison.

The criticism levelled at 'The H-Block Fuse' was far from atypical. Throughout the early 1980s broadcasters came under constant fire as a result of reports on the hunger strikes. The most common accusation directed against the BBC and ITV was that they concentrated on the prison protests at the expense of covering other news stories.[57] Despite the abundance of detailed coverage on the hunger strikes, there is evidence that British audiences felt increasingly disengaged with events in Northern Ireland. In the week preceding, and five weeks following, the death of Bobby Sands, for example, the BBC Management Unit in London reported that they alone had received 118 letters, fifty of which were complaining that there had been too much coverage of Sands, whilst fifty-eight complained that there was too much coverage of Northern Ireland generally.[58] Director-General, Ian Trethowan, observed in

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[52] Mulcahy, 'Claims-Making and the Construction of Legitimacy', 461.
[53] ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, Northern Ireland Troubles General Vol 4, 'Hunger striker on TV in spite of wire to Thatcher', Belfast Newsletter, 25 November 1980.
[54] 'The H-Block Fuse', 24 November 1980.
[55] ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, Northern Ireland Troubles General Vol 4, Memo from Alan Bremner to Barbara Hosking, 25 November 1980; ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, Northern Ireland Troubles General Vol 4, 'Comments of UDA man on ITV is criticised', *Irish News* 25 November 1980.
[56] BBC WAC, Extracts from the Minutes of a Board of Management Meeting, 1 December 1980.
[57] In May 1981 the BBC had come under consider criticism for its apparent failure to cover the Lord Mayor's Show in Belfast.
[58] BBC WAC, R78/1189/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances 1980-1983, Public Reaction to BBC Coverage of the IRA: Additional Note, 17 June 1981.

May 1981: 'There existed on the mainland a deep sense of frustration and hostility towards the Irish situation'.[59] Nonetheless, broadcasters contended that so long as Sands' story remained newsworthy they had a duty to cover it.[60]

Many republicans on the other hand, argued that the broadcast media intentionally downplayed the prison protests, a view which has also been advanced by Curtis. Echoing the republican stance, she argues that the British media 'treated the Hunger Strikes as if it had been concocted out of thin air by the IRA: as if there were no real feeling behind either the prisoners' actions or the support given them by the nationalist community'. She contends that the media repeatedly invoked the concept of IRA propaganda to explain away events and cast the protest in a light flattering to the British government.[61] To support her arguments, Curtis references 'The Politics of Suicide', broadcast by *Panorama* on 27 April 1981, in which reporter Philip Tibenham argued that the hunger striker Bobby Sands' 'impending death has been seen for what it is- a potentially tragic end to a skilful piece of exploitation and propaganda'. [62] Curtis fails, however, to mention the rest of the programme's content, or to take into consideration any of the other numerous television programmes on the hunger strikes. Tibenham's view that the IRA leadership was merely exploiting the hunger strikers for propaganda purposes was one widely held and propagated by the British media. As discussed in chapter three, the press presented the hunger strikes primarily as a publicity stunt. Broadcasters also questioned the validity of the strike and the autonomy of its participants. 'The Provos' Last Card?', broadcast by *Panorama* on 21 September 1981, presented an IRA document which explicitly stated that volunteers were forbidden to undertake hunger strikes without 'the express sanction of General Headquarters'. The programme also featured an interview with Gerry Adams, in which reporter Peter Taylor challenged claims made by the Vice-President of Sinn Féin that the hunger strikes were a prison-led initiative, arguing that in their support for the prisoners' actions the IRA had sanctioned the protests.[63] Nonetheless, current affairs coverage

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[59] BBC WAC, R78/1189/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances 1980-1983, Extract from the Minutes of a News and Current Affairs Meeting, 19 May 1981.

[60] Interestingly, David Holmes (Chief Assistance to the Director-General) who penned the list, describes the programmes as 'ammunition' against accusations of biased coverage.[60] Similarly, in a board meeting on 28 September 1981, the DNCA, Richard Francis describes an interview on *Nationwide* on the widow and family of an RUC reservist shot after visiting his wife in a Belfast maternity hospital as 'ready ammunition to counter allegations that the BBC concentrated its gaze on the terrorists in Northern Ireland'.[60] The choice of wording here shows the seriousness and persistence of accusations that the BBC and ITV focused too much on the hunger strikes. (BBC WAC, Extract from the Minutes of News and Current Affairs Meeting, 19 May 1981; BBC WAC, R78/1189/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances 1980-1983, Memo from David Holmes to the DNCA, 16 June 1981; BBC WAC, R78/1189/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances 1980-1983, Extract from the Minutes of a Board Meeting, 28 September 1981.)

[61] Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 202-206.

[62] Unfortunately, I was unable to locate a copy of this programme whilst carrying out my research. The Panorama programme broadcast on 27 April 1981 had two segments; I have since discovered that it is held in the BFI archive, under the title 'France's Seven-Year Itch', which refers to the other segment. The catalogue makes no reference to the programme's coverage of Bobby Sands nor does, the BBC's magazine *The Listener* or the newspaper's television guides. Howard Smith, however, published a detailed synopsis of the programme in his examination of the BBC's current affairs coverage of the 1981 hunger strike, which I have used to inform my discussion of the programme. (Smith, 'BBC Current Affairs Coverage of the 1981 Hunger Strike', 174-5; Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 204.)

[63] Peter Taylor, by now a specialist on Northern Ireland, received wide acclaim for this interview. In a meeting of the BBC's News and Current Affairs Team, Richard Francis (DNCA) singled Taylor out for praise: 'Notable too was the interview with Gerry Adams in which the latter had been pressed hard by Peter Taylor'. (BBC WAC, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances 1980-1983, R78/1189/1*,* Minutes of a News and Current Affairs Meeting, 29 September 1981; 'The Provos' Last Card?', *Panorama*, BBC, 21 September 1981.)

also looked beyond the IRA's involvement, scrutinising both the motives for, and reactions to, the prison protests, presenting a much more complicated view of the hunger strikers than as mere puppets.

Far from suggesting that the IRA had concocted the strikes from nothing, current affairs programmes often provided a history of the prison protests, as well as Irish hunger protests generally, offering audiences clear evidence that the hunger strikes were the culmination of a long-running dispute.[64] That Curtis should claim that the British media presented the hunger strikes as lacking support, however, is particularly misleading. On the contrary, it could be argued that, unable to access the prison, television programmes paid a disproportionate amount of attention to the nationalist communities' response to the protests. By restricting access, the NIO had sought to control the flow of information out of the Maze and render the strikers invisible, thereby limiting the scope for alternative perspectives on the protests. Broadcasters, however, rose to the challenge, supplementing official press releases with images, witness accounts and material artefacts to construct their own narrative of the protests.[65]

A key source of information was the prisoners' families. Their accounts offered an insight into the trauma of the hunger strikes and provided a republican perspective. 'The Waiting Time', broadcast by *TV Eye* on 30 April 1981, for example, featured an interview with Oliver Hughes, brother of hunger striker Francis Hughes, in which he describes his brother's condition:

> I sat on the bed and you know I put my hand along his body and he's just nothing, only bones and whenever he looks at me, he sees six of me. He has a lot of headaches. If he drinks water, he automatically vomits it up again. I suppose no man can put a time on any man's life, but seven/ eight days perhaps. We're sad, but we're proud that we have a brother and a son who's prepared to die for his country.[66]

In so doing, he bore witness to his brother's suffering, and allowed audiences to visualise the effects of starvation on the men lying in the Maze.[67] More than this, by expressing his families' pride in Francis' willingness 'to die for his country', Hughes valorised his brother's actions with language of sacrifice and patriotism. The family also utilised the opportunity to reinforce the strikers' message that they were willing to die for the republican cause.

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[64] 'The H-Block Fuse', 24 November 1980; 'Britain and Ireland: Dawn of a New Era?', *Weekend World*, London Weekend Television, 14 December 1980; The Hunger Strikers: Forcing a Re-think?, *Weekend World*, London Weekend World, 17 May 1981; 'A Time for Compromise', *Panorama*, BBC, 20 July 1981; and 'The Provos' Last Card?', 21 September 1981 all include detailed histories of the hunger strikes. Smith has pointed out that 'The Politics of Suicide opened with a history of hunger protests in Ireland, followed by an explanation of the origins of the current strike. Robert Kee's series 'Ireland- A Television History', which traced the history of Ireland, with a specific emphasis on explaining the roots of the 'Troubles' and Thames Televisions five-part series 'The Troubles' were also transmitted in 1980-81. (Smith, 'BBC Current Affairs Coverage of the 1981 Hunger Strike', 174-5).

[65] Anita Howarth has discussed how journalists used images of an empty 'feeding chair' and 'entreal' tubes along with lawyers testimony to defy the US government's attempt to control what information is released to the public about Guantanamo Bay detention centre and construct a narrative on the hunger strike in Guantanamo in 2013. (Anita Howarth, 'The Spectacle of a Hunger Strike: Guantanamo 2013', in *Conflict Trauma and the Media: A Collection of Essays*, (ed.) Guy Hodgson (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 29-50.

[66] 'The Waiting Time', *TV Eye*, Thames Television, 30 April 1981.

[67] Anita Howarth, 'Imagining a hunger strike: Guantanamo 2013', Trauma, conflict and media conference, Liverpool John Moores University, 31 March 2016. https://bura.brunel.ac.uk/bitstream/2438/12526/1/Fulltext.pdf [accessed 10 September 2018].

As Erika Hanna has argued, however, lacking footage from the prison the media largely presented the 1981 hunger strikes in terms of their impact on the streets of Belfast and Derry.[68] News reports about them were commonly accompanied by images of riots and demonstrations. As a result, current affairs coverage gave considerable thought to the depth of popular support for the prison protests within the nationalist community. 'The Waiting Time' goes on to explore the likely response to the death of Sands and the other hunger strikers.[69] Reporting from Belfast, journalist Peter Gill asked whether events in Derry the week before, where troops had been attacked with Molotov cocktails and acid bombs, were 'A foretaste perhaps of more trouble to come'.[70] The potential seriousness of the situation was illustrated by footage of the effects of the previous week's violence. Moreover, the programme presented the reaction of moderate Catholics as of equal concern. It featured footage of an Anti H-Block rally led by Marcella Sands and Bernadette Devlin. The camera pans over the crowd showing the extent of popular support for the strikers. Notable is the number of women and children amongst the demonstrators, their presence in direct contradiction of the government's assertions that the IRA was supported only by a radical fringe within the nationalist community, as the British government had often claimed.[71]

On 7 May 1981, the BBC's *Newsnight* programme featured a special segment covering the funeral of Bobby Sands.[72] The programme followed Catholics from Sands' constituency as they made 'the republican pilgrimage' to Belfast. Through a series of interviews with those travelling to the funeral, the programme captured the strength of grassroots nationalist support for the hunger striker, especially amongst young people in Northern Ireland. One fifteen-year-old girl told reporter Brian Walker that she had played truant in order to attend. Walker observed that 'the hunger strike is breeding a whole new generation of militant republicans'.[73] Fear that young people, angered by the deaths of the hunger strikers, were being recruited into the IRA was a recurring theme in press and broadcast media's coverage of the early 1980s. Both expressed concern that the government's handling of the hunger strikes had helped bolster the IRA by alienating young Catholics.

Footage of the crowds at Sands' funeral underlined the extent of nationalist feeling further. In the interest of balance, *Newsnight* juxtaposed images of the much smaller counter-commemoration for those killed by IRA violence, held outside Belfast City Hall. The programme followed widow Alice Smith, whose son had been killed by republican paramilitaries two months earlier, as she attended the memorial, laying a wreath at the cenotaph. This personal touch served to remind audiences that Sands had represented a murderous organisation. By contrast, the unionist commemoration also demonstrated the strength of support for the hunger strikers. As Walker remarked: 'Whatever distractions offered by Mr Paisley, they could have made no impact in West Belfast as the coffin reached the spot where

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[68] Hanna, 'Photographing the hunger strikes'.
[69] 'The Waiting Time', 30 April 1981.
[70] Peter Gill worked as a reporter for *TV Eye* from its inception in 1979 until Thames Television lost its franchise in 1992 and is best known for his report which first brought attention to the Ethiopia famine in 1984.
[71] 'The Waiting Time', 30 April 1981.
[72] 'No Title', *Newsnight*, 7 May 1981.
[73] *Ibid*.

republicans made their last demonstration for Bobby Sands'. *Newsnight* filmed the full 'display of republican pomp', a bold choice given the pressure on broadcasters to refrain from allowing the IRA airtime. Particularly striking are the images of the IRA gun salute over the coffin. Walker remarked disapprovingly that this public show of illegal IRA activity had gone unchallenged. He argued that the IRA had staged this display in the street 'as a bolder show of strength and an act of greater defiance of the authorities'. Aware that they would be televised worldwide, the IRA carefully choreographed the funerals to emphasise their influence, and to show the Catholic community united in support of the hunger strikers.[74] Given the tone of the programme, Walker concludes by unexpectedly casting doubt on this notion of Catholic unity: 'there remains the Catholic community divided within itself, as sharply alienated from the Protestants and the British as at any time in twelve long years'.[75]

Taken at face value, images of these set-piece funerals might be misconstrued as providing a one-dimensional view of the effects of the protest, giving the impression that the Catholic community was unanimous in its response to the hunger strikes. Reactions to the prison protests amongst Northern Ireland's Catholics were actually varied and motivated as much by humanitarian concerns as republican sentiment. The British broadcast media was keen to demonstrate that alternative viewpoints existed. This is best illustrated in 'The Provos' Last Card?'. Broadcast following the death of Michael Devine on 21 August 1981, it explored the effects of the hunger strikes on the body politic in Northern Ireland, paying particular attention to their impact on the Catholic community.[76] The programme reveals a range of feeling concerning the hunger strikes amongst Northern Irish Catholics. It argues that Britain's handling of the strikes had 'turned muted support into violent hostility'.[77] Recruitment to the IRA, Peter Taylor disclosed, had doubled in the months since the start of the second hunger strike, a boost he warned that could sustain their campaign for a further ten years. Moreover, the strikes had intensified republican feeling amongst moderates, as evidenced in the elections of H-Block candidates to Westminster. 'The Provos' Last Card?' argued that the election had secured them 'political credibility undreamt of before the hunger strikes began'.[78]

The programme however, sought to dig deeper, dissecting the nature of support for the hunger strikers. It contended that sympathy for the strikers amongst moderate Catholics, did not automatically mean sympathy for the IRA. Rather, much of the electorate had voted for H-Block candidates because they did not wish to witness them die. The programme claimed that though many moderate Catholics empathised with the hunger strikers' plight, they openly condemned the IRA's campaign, and the riots which followed the death of each hunger striker. Taylor pointed out that many were unwilling to participate in Anti H-Block marches and demonstrations, because they believed them to be futile and dangerous. Increased violence had led to outright opposition to the hunger strikes from some sections of the Catholic community. On 21 September 1981, the SDLP openly condemned the strike, calling for

[74] Hanna, 'Photographing the hunger strikes'.
[75] 'No Title', 7 May 1981.
[76] 'The Provos' Last Card?', 21 September 1981.
[77] Peter Taylor, 'The Provisionals and the hunger strike', *The Listener*, 24 September 1981.
[78] 'The Provos' Last Card?', 21 September 1981.

the nationalist community to 'unite with one voice behind one just demand… stop the murder'.[79] The 'Provos Last Card?' explored the extent to which this criticism reflected the views of the wider Catholic community. It features an interview with a resident of the Creggan estate (Derry) who described the misery the upsurge in IRA violence had caused:

> It's really been the worse time I remember… the last six months people really lost heart completely, they've really been down, couldn't see an end to the rioting, hunger strikers were dying, and they could see no light at all at the end of the tunnel.

The programme hides the identity of the interviewee, who argued that many who shared her views were too scared to vocalise their opposition. The necessity of disguising their source served to impress upon the viewer the seriousness of the IRA threat. 'The Provos' Last Card?' drew attention to the negative effects of violence on nationalist support, demonstrating a range of views held by Northern Irish Catholics with regards to the hunger strikes. The programme's title was an ironic challenge to Thatcher's assertion that the hunger strikes were the Provisionals' 'last card'. Instead it emphasised the strength of Catholic nationalist support for the protesters in the Maze, giving voice to fears that the hunger strikes had recruited a new generation to the IRA. On the other hand, the programme demonstrated that Catholic attitudes towards the hunger protests were far more nuanced than they might appear at first glance. The programme underlined the fact that most moderate Catholics remained opposed to the violence, and in some cases the strikes themselves. By highlighting differences of opinion within the Catholic community, audiences were offered hope that the boost to IRA prestige was limited.[80]

Support for the hunger strikers extended far beyond Northern Ireland. Current affairs programmes focused on support in the Republic of Ireland and explored the possible implications for Anglo-Irish relations. By the early 1980s, the British government had come to recognise the necessity of Irish involvement in a Northern Ireland settlement.[81] Through a series of summits held in 1980 and 1981, both countries looked to develop a stronger relationship with the aim of resolving the 'Troubles', resulting in the establishment of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council in November 1981, and in the Anglo-Irish Agreement (1985).[82] Britain had much at stake in a successful outcome of these talks, which was strongly dependent on the political climate within the Republic. Naturally, therefore, broadcasters gave considerable attention to contemporary Irish politics in current affairs coverage, recognising that the extent to which the Irish government had to pay lip service to republican sentiment would determine the spirit in which talks could continue.

The tension caused by the hunger strikes contributed substantially to uncertainty surrounding the talks. The prison protests attracted renewed sympathy from the Irish public, who had been broadly

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[79] Anne McHardy, 'Hunger strike 'boosts IRA recruits', *The Guardian*, 22 September 1981.
[80] 'The Provos' Last Card?', 21 September 1981.
[81] Kelly, '"The Totality of Relationships"', 254-7.
[82] For more details and details on the Anglo-Irish Summits see Kelly, '"The Totality of Relationships"', 244-273.

apathetic to the Northern Irish situation.[83] As historian Stephen Kelly has argued, 'for the first time in a generation' the Republic's population was compelled 'to consider their attitude to continued British presence in Northern Ireland and the Irish government's perceived inability to influence London's *modus operandi* in relation to the ongoing 'Troubles''.[84] Brian Hanley, however, warns against over-exaggerating the extent of popular support, arguing that though the prison protests undoubtedly generated sympathy their political appeal was limited.[85] With the death of each hunger striker, support in the Republic became increasingly active. On the evening of Sands' death, a thousand people gathered outside the General Post Office in Dublin for a vigil, before marching to Leinster House to demand the expulsion of the British ambassador. The demonstrators, by this stage approximately three thousand-strong, then marched to Parnell Square, where a breakaway group of about two hundred began rioting, throwing stones at the Garda and smashing windows. Following Francis Hughes' death, demonstrators attacked the British Embassy causing the Garda to mount a baton charge against them.[86] 'A Time for Compromise', broadcast on 20 July 1981, includes striking footage of violent clashes between H-Block demonstrators and Gardaí which took place on 18 July. In one shocking scene, the camera zooms in on an old woman as she tries to escape the crowd, whilst around her baton-wielding Gardaí attacked protesters.[87] The programme suggests that the fact that Dublin was now experiencing this level of social unrest was an indication of how difficult the situation in Northern Ireland had become. There was also the implication that if the Republic of Ireland could suffer from this degree of violence as a result of the actions of an organisation whose principal aim was for a united Ireland, then the 'Troubles' in the North could not be wholly attributable to mismanagement by the British government.

Rather than explore the motives behind the Anti H-Block demonstrations, however, current affairs coverage concentrated solely on the implications the protests might have for Anglo-Irish relations. Broadcasters expressed fear that the spread of violence would force Irish politicians to adopt an anti-British stance in order to appease republican sentiments, scuppering the new spirit of co-operation between London and Dublin and, with it, hope of a solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland. As Jeremy Paxman summarised in 'The Time for Compromise':

> Smouldering resentment in the Irish Republic has turned to outright hostility. For the Irish government not only does this jeopardise relations with London, it also threatens to undermine the stability of the Irish Republic itself… The government most fear that if established politicians can't get a solution to the hunger strikes then people may increasingly turn to paramilitary politicians.[88]

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[83] See Brian Hanley, *The Impact of the Troubles on the Republic of Ireland, 1968-79: The Boiling Volcano?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018).
[84] Stephen Kelly, ''Mr Haughey's silence condemns him': Charles J. Haughey and the Second Hunger Strike, 1981', *Irish Political Studies*, 32, 3 (2017), 463.
[85] Brian Hanley, 'But then they started all this killing': attitudes to the IRA in the Irish Republic since 1969', *Irish Historical Studies*, 38, 141 (2013), 450-1.
[86] Kelly, ''Mr Haughey's silence condemns him', 463-4.
[87] 'A Time for Compromise', 20 July 1981.
[88] *Ibid*.

Paxman feared that the Republic could succumb to militant republicanism, resulting in a breakdown of law and order, turning it into a haven for paramilitaries and making combatting the IRA in the North almost impossible. Similarly, commenting on the footage of 18 July, which also featured in 'The Provos' Last Card?', Peter Taylor focused on the potential consequences of the strikes for the Republic's political stability:

> this is what Irish politicians fear, behind the hunger strike and Sinn Féin lie violent emotions… in July the Republic tasted the street violence, which the border has usually confined to the North… This is the destabilisation the Republic fears if the hunger strike is not resolved.[89]

At the same time, the British broadcast media sought to downplay the extent of support for the hunger strikers in the Republic. On 11 June 1981, hunger striker Kieran O'Doherty and blanketman Paddy Agnew were elected to the Dáil. Northern Irish politician and leader of the SDLP, John Hume, argued that the result proved that Northern Ireland was a serious matter in the minds of Southern voters.[90] In contrast, broadcasters made light of the H-Block's electoral success. 'South of the Border', broadcast on 18 June 1981, analysed the impact of the H-Block victory on Irish politics and explored the views of politicians and the public in the South on the hunger strikes and the issue of Northern Ireland in general. It argued that whilst the hunger strikes had forced the issue of Northern Ireland onto the Irish political agenda, unemployment and inflation took precedence for most voters. The programme endeavoured to explained away the election of O'Doherty and Agnew as a humanitarian, rather than a political response by the electorate. This is illustrated by the inclusion of footage of Goretti McDonnell, the wife of hunger striker and election candidate Joe McDonnell, canvassing with her children. Goretti argued that voting for the hunger strikers could save their lives and stressed the personal impact that McDonnell's death would have on his family by introducing potential voters to her children. As Tuohy argued, the H-Block's campaign purposely 'appeal[ed] to humanitarian values and family feeling'.[91]

Hume, also interviewed on the programme, noted that the H-Block campaign had targeted the border areas of Louth, Cavan and Monaghan, where traditional support for the IRA allied to proximity, meant that voters tended to be more engaged with events in the North. The programme sought to imply that the vote was not representative of wider attitudes in the Republic; a view given credence by voters on the streets of Dublin who, asked by Tuohy how Northern Ireland had influenced the way they had voted, were unanimous in their belief that it was none of their concern. By minimising the significance of republican electoral successes, the programme sought to further undermine the strikers' claim to widespread popularity. It also offered reassurance that Irish politicians would not need to cater to republican demands for a united Ireland and would continue to engage in talks with the British

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[89] 'The Provos' Last Card?', 21 September 1981.
[90] Hennessey, *Hunger Strike*, 269.
[91] 'South of the Border', *TV Eye*, Thames Television, 18 June 1981.

government. The programme also offered a nuanced perspective on the Republic of Ireland, challenging the notion that all Irish people were hard line republicans, sympathetic to the IRA.[92]

In actuality, the H-Block victory was to have a significant impact on Irish politics, at least in the short term. The election of the two prisoners caused Fianna Fáil to lose their majority, resulting in a hung parliament. Fine Gael eventually succeeded in forming a coalition with the Labour party, but its precarious majority meant that a by-election resulting from the death or resignation of the Anti H-Block candidates would upset the balance of power in the Republic. Current affairs programmes followed the election carefully, because, as Denis Tuohy noted: 'for Britain and Ireland, the attitude and political strength of Ireland's next Taoiseach will be vital elements in the next round of Anglo-Irish talks on the question of Northern Ireland'.[93] 'South of the Border' closely analysed the Fine Gael leader, Garret Fitzgerald's Northern agenda for insight into how the potential new Taoiseach would approach the issue of Northern Ireland and the Anglo-Irish initiative.[94] The programme interviewed John Kelly, who became Minister for Trade, Commerce and Tourism, looking for reassurances that Fitzgerald would continue talks. Kelly argued that, unlike their predecessors, Fine Gael believed the solution to Northern Ireland lay with persuading the Protestant majority to accept a united Ireland, rather than searching for a solution from Margaret Thatcher.[95] Nonetheless, Fitzgerald, in a speech featured on the programme, promised that he was committed to continuing talks with London, despite declaring his intention to 'convey to Mrs Thatcher that her present attitude risked alienating an entire community in Northern Ireland'.[96] 'South of the Border' expressed optimism that whatever the outcome of the Republic's political stalemate, the next Taoiseach would continue to co-operate closely with the British government.

Similarly, 'Thatcher's Other Island', broadcast on 23 November 1980 by *Weekend World*, had scrutinised Fitzgerald's predecessor, Charles Haughey's stance on Northern Ireland.[97] The programme, transmitted in the run up to the Dublin Summit, explored the Conservative government's policy on Northern Ireland and the influences which had shaped it, particularly the pressure which had been brought to bear by Haughey and his government. Fianna Fáil had recently won a by-election in Donegal by appealing to the republican sentiments of the electorate. Reporter Mary Holland explained, the 'Troubles' had more immediacy for people in the border constituency, who often worked, did their shopping and so forth in Northern Ireland. Many of them had voted for Fianna Fáil in the belief that it promised to unite Ireland, a view which the party had played up to during the election campaign. This

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[92] *Ibid*.
[93] *Ibid*.
[94] At the time of broadcast neither party had managed to secure a majority, however, the Labour Party had confirmed that they would engage in talks with Fine Gael and so it seemed highly probable that Fitzgerald would be the next Taoiseach.
[95] This belief that the Protestant majority could be persuaded to accept unification if Britain would only declare its intention to withdraw was widely held by politicians in the Republic during the early 1980s. British broadcasters on the other hand, argued that Loyalists remained fervently opposed to a united Ireland, passing judgement on the naivety of Irish politicians. As *Newsweek* reporter Keith Kyle scoffed 'and the Loyalists being so disusually such a hard-headed lot will get the message, realise the Loyalist game is up and sit down to negotiate a good deal for themselves with the South'. ('Ireland: Republicans and Loyalists: Part One', *Newsweek*, BBC, 10 April 1980).
[96] 'South of the Border', 18 June 1981.
[97] 'Thatcher's Other Island: Time to Think Again', *Weekend World*, London Weekend Television, 23 November 1980.

programme also presented the border constituency as unrepresentative of the wider electorate in the Republic. It explores the extent to which republican posturing by Fianna Fáil during the Donegal by-election, reflected their broader policies, and how this might influence the upcoming Summit. The programme argued that the Taoiseach had focused on the Northern Ireland question in a bid to distract voters from the party's poor record on unemployment and inflation and predicted that the issue of Northern Ireland would be used in the same way during the forthcoming general election. The programme's expectation was that further pressure would be brought to bear on Britain to rethink Northern Ireland's constitutional status in order to placate Irish voters, however, it was confident that Britain would not withdraw its guarantee that Northern Ireland would remain a part of the UK unless the majority chose otherwise.[98] Though the programme acknowledged Haughey's republican credentials, including his alleged involvement in the Arms Crisis of the late 1960s and early 1970s, it also presented Haughey as a political opportunist, questioning the degree of political conviction behind his republicanism.[99] By suggesting that there was a strong element of expediency in Haughey's politics, the programmes argued that the Taoiseach would set aside traditional republican aspirations in order to fully engage with the Anglo-Irish talks.

'Thatcher's Other Island' was not alone in suggesting that support for a united Ireland in the Republic amounted to little more than verbal republicanism. On 10 April 1980, BBC's *Newsweek* series broadcast a programme on the strength of the Irish republican tradition, particularly in the Republic of Ireland.[100] The programme was the first in a two-part series which also explored the strength and roots of Loyalism.[101] The series is yet another example of current affairs programmes endeavouring to provide background to the conflict. The first programme traced the history of Irish republicanism from the 1798 rebellion to the present day, before turning to examine the current make-up of the republican movement, its' aims and its' visions for the future. It argued that in the past it had been easy for Irish politicians to vocalise support for a united Ireland as they could not do anything about it whilst sovereignty remained with Britain. The violence in Northern Ireland, and Dublin's increased involvement in the search for a solution, however, had forced politicians to take a more definite stance. As Hanley has argued, whilst sympathy for Catholics in the North was a given, 'faced with the reality of war, the Republic seemed to recoil'.[102] As a result, the programme argued, many Irish politicians, whilst they continued to call for a united Ireland, prioritised peaceful and political methods to establish a settlement. The programme's scepticism that few people in the Republic were willing to actively pursue a united Ireland was echoed by republicans in Northern Ireland. This was illustrated in the programme by the inclusion of an interview with prominent Northern Irish political activist Eamonn McCann in which he remarked: 'Fianna Fáil leaders make militant speeches about Northern Ireland and the only people who believe it are the Loyalists'. By casting doubt on the extent of solidarity with

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[98] *Ibid*.
[99] In 1970 cabinet ministers Charles Haughey and Neil Blaney were dismissed from the Government of Ireland for alleged involvement in smuggling arms to the IRA in Northern Ireland.
[100] 'Ireland: Republicans and Loyalists: Part One', 10 April 1980.
[101] 'Ireland: Republicans and Loyalists: Part Two', *Newsweek*, BBC, 25 April 1980.
[102] Hanley, *The Impact of the Troubles on the Republic of Ireland, 1968-79*, 4.

republicans in the North, the programme provided a reassuring narrative that Dublin would work with Britain towards a solution to the Northern Ireland conflict.[103]

Predictably, the Anglo-Irish talks excited considerable alarm amongst the loyalist population in Northern Ireland who objected to any involvement by Dublin in the province. These fears, exacerbated further by the mobilisation of the Catholic community in support of the hunger strikes, resulted in an upsurge in loyalist paramilitary activity during the early 1980s. Savage has argued, that in an effort to counter-balance the extensive coverage of the hunger strikes the BBC produced several programmes about the threat of militant loyalism, but that the hunger strikes monopolised airtime.[104] It is nevertheless important not to undervalue the significant amount of coverage afforded to the increase in loyalist activity. As the number of programmes in this sample that concentrate exclusively on loyalism suggest, broadcasters viewed this subject as worthy of serious investigation. In the early 1980s, both the BBC and ITV produced a range of programmes, which explored loyalism in Northern Ireland, with specific emphasis on loyalist opposition to the Anglo-Irish talks.

Historian Alan Parkinson has argued that throughout the 'Troubles', television coverage of the loyalist perspective focused on the negative associations of loyalism with bigotry, intransigence, and recalcitrance, at the expense of analysis into the loyalist psyche.[105] There is much in the programmes of the early 1980s to support Parkinson's arguments. Current affairs coverage during this period concentrated on assessing the extent of the loyalist threat and what it might mean for the Anglo-Irish talks. By drawing heavily on stereotyped, negative images of loyalism, broadcasters sought to underline their dissension to the joint initiative between the two governments. Whilst this could be interpreted as oversimplistic, programmes also looked beyond the usual stereotypes to the motives behind loyalist activity. These detailed programmes on loyalism provided audiences with a more rounded picture of the animosity and ideologies which fuelled the conflict and demonstrated that the British media was capable of providing a sophisticated overview of the 'Troubles'.

In contrast to the coverage of the hunger strikes, however, broadcasters during the early 1980s paid little attention to grassroots loyalism. Coverage of the loyalist perspective primarily focused on the extreme attitudes of unionist political leaders.[106] Ian Paisley in particular, received considerable attention. 'Thatcher's Loyal Rebels', broadcast on 9 April 1981 by *TV Eye*, examined the Protestant majority's opposition to the Dublin Summit and assessed the likelihood of an increase in loyalist violence if Thatcher continued to pursue closer relations with Dublin.[107] The programme explained that many Protestants feared that these talks represented a conspiracy to force Northern Ireland into a united Ireland. It argued, moreover, that some Unionist leaders were exploiting Protestant fears for political gain. In particular, 'Thatcher's Loyal Rebels' accused Paisley of stirring up Protestant opinion against

[103] 'Ireland: Republicans and Loyalists: Part One', 10 April 1980.
[104] Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 237-9.
[105] Parkinson, *Ulster Loyalism*, 121-145.
[106] Parkinson has shown that throughout the 'Troubles', television programmes tended to neglect ordinary in favour of their leaders who were considered better copy. Parkinson, *Ulster Loyalism*, 123.
[107] 'Thatcher's Loyal Rebels', *TV Eye*, Thames Television, 9 April 1981.

the British government in a bid to become the dominant political force in Northern Ireland: 'Paisley hopes to gain the undisputed leadership of Protestant Ulster', and warned that he might employ other, more violent, strategies if the Anglo-Irish talks continued. The programme featured footage of the Carson Trail, organised by Paisley to show loyalist strength and impress upon the British and Irish governments that if Northern Ireland's constitutional status was compromised, loyalists could, and would, defend their right to remain in the United Kingdom.[108] The film included a short clip, which showed Paisley and his supporters marching on Hillsborough Castle where Margaret Thatcher was staying in March 1981. The segment was cut short, however, because as reporter Peter Gill explains 'the less genteel of Dr Paisley's supporters knocked our lights out, not for the last time that night'. The presence of these unsavoury characters amongst Paisley's entourage is presented as evidence of his militant loyalism.[109] It also featured footage of Paisley's final rally outside Stormont, at which he threatened an escalation of loyalist militancy, alluding to his plans for a volunteer militia, the Third Force. The programme vocalised fears that Paisley's campaign would ultimately result in confrontation with the British security forces.[110]

Though 'Thatcher's Loyal Rebels' evoked the loyalist threat, the programme questioned the true extent of Paisley's appeal, noting the low turnout at rallies. In Paisley's hometown of Ballymena, where the DUP had expected eight to ten thousand people to attend, Gill observed that at most there had been three thousand. The programme was particularly anxious to mitigate any fears that Paisley had won over moderate Protestant opinion. It interviewed Rev. Houston McKelvey, editor of the *Church of Ireland Gazette*, which was vocal in its opposition to Paisley's campaign. The programme presented McKelvey as representative of a moderate Protestantism in Northern Ireland rarely heard outside the province and sought reassurance in his dismissal of the suggestion that Paisley had come to represent broader Protestant feeling. The programme also featured an interview with James Molyneaux, the leader of the UUP, who likewise rejected the possibility that his party's moderate brand of unionism was being eclipsed by Paisley. Despite Molyneaux's threats to sabotage government efforts to involve Dublin in Northern Ireland, the programme presented the UUP as the lesser threat. It chronicles the party's efforts to combat Paisley's popularity, exemplifying Parkinson's argument that 'hopes that the 'sensible majority' would eventually replace the existing stubborn leadership was a constant theme in British media analysis of the loyalist position'.[111] By endeavouring to navigate the subtle variances in the response of the DUP and the UUP to the talks, the programme shows an appreciation of the nuances within the unionist political perspective.

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[108] Following in the footsteps of Edwardian champion of Ulster Unionism, Edward Carson, in the early 1980s, Ian Paisley organised a series of rallies across Northern Ireland to protest the Anglo-Irish talks.
[109] It is worth noting, however, that even during his rallies, Paisley refused to abide UVF and UDA banners, calling for them to be removed. (BBC WAC, R78/189/1, Northern Ireland, Part 9, memo, 'Not another Carrickmore!', from Assistant Director NCA to the Director NCA and Director-General, 24 February 1981 cited in Savage, *The BBC's Irish troubles*, 238-9.
[110] 'Thatcher's Loyal Rebels', 9 April 1981.
[111] Parkinson, *Ulster Loyalism*, 124.

Much of the coverage from this period played down the threat posed by militant loyalism, in order to protect the potential provided by the Anglo-Irish talks. Not satisfied with merely dismissing Paisley's popularity, the producers of 'Thatcher's Loyal Rebels' actively sought to repudiate his campaign, ridiculing him and his supporters with the use of traditional stereotypes associated with loyalism, such as overzealous religious fervour. For example, Gill describes DUP stronghold, and Paisley's native town of Ballymena as a dour place where council workers chain up the swings on Sundays, 'so that children can't defile the Sabbath by enjoying themselves'.[112] The accompanying image of a dejected boy still trying to play on the immobilised swing lent support to these arguments. By associating Paisley with these images, the programme dismisses him as the voice of unreason, thereby limiting his capacity for disruption.

These scenes also highlight the confused relationship between loyalists and their British identity. Gill implies by his tone that such puritanism was incomprehensible to most British viewers, contributing to a sense that Northern Ireland was 'a place apart'. As discussed in chapter two, throughout the 'Troubles' the broadcast media propagated the view of Northern Ireland as politically and culturally different from the rest of the UK. This allowed the conflict to be presented as specific to the province rather than Britain.[113] Loyalist bigotry, and intransigence were presented by broadcasters as in direct contrast with British values of fair play and tolerance. Despite loyalist insistence on their Britishness, by emphasising the un-Britishness of their attitudes the programme's producers disassociated loyalists from what it meant to be British. The irony in the programme's title, 'Thatcher's Loyal Rebels' drew attention to the contradictory nature of the loyalists' identification with Britain and its government. This sense of dissociation presented in the programme fed the notion of Northern Ireland as alien. Again, it can be argued that this emphasis on difference reveals more about what programme-makers considered it meant to be British, than what they understood by Northern Irish loyalism.[114]

In the vein of 'Thatcher's Loyal Rebels', 'Prior Commitment', another *TV Eye* presentation broadcast on 26 November 1981, portrayed Paisley as ambitious and self-serving. The programme reports on the funeral of the UUP MP Robert Bradford, who had been assassinated on 14 November, one in a wave of IRA killings, that had provoked fear amongst Protestants. The programme, however, argued that Paisley was again exploiting these fears, hijacking the funeral to hold an impromptu press conference to publicise his agenda. As reporter Llew Gardiner wryly observed: 'Here mourning and propaganda walk together to the graveyard'. 'Prior Commitment', also raised the spectre of Loyalist violence, featuring footage of Paisley's 'Day of Action' (23 November 1981), organised to protest the Anglo-Irish talks and pressurise the British government to take a harder line against the IRA. The programme included shots of the first full demonstration of strength by the Third Force which took place in Newtownards that night. Once again, *TV Eye* sought to undermine Paisley by not taking him and his supporters entirely seriously. Gardiner poked fun at 'the militia' describing them as 'a cross

[112] 'Thatcher's Loyal Rebels', 9 April 1981.
[113] Hill, '"The Troubles we've seen"', 245.
[114] 'Thatcher's Loyal Rebels', 9 April 1981.

between a football crowd and the Ulster division of Dad's Army'.[115] Behind the levity, however, there was a more serious purpose; through ridicule the programme's makers sought to use their platform to undermine these opponents of the Anglo-Irish talks. There was a genuine concern that despite the posturing, Paisley was a significant factor in creating an atmosphere, which others could exploit to promote a view that political violence was an acceptable option.

Many within the loyalist community were similarly dismissive of Paisley. In an interview featured in 'The Preacher and the Peacemaker', broadcast on 23 November 1981, Andy Tyrie, the Commander of Northern Ireland's largest loyalist paramilitary organisation, the UDA, accused Paisley of having a loud mouth and a siege mentality:

> He creates the impression right around the world that every Protestant living here looks like Dr Paisley, and that's the sad thing on our part because we're not like that, we're understanding people, we're not bigots, we're trying to work out a system that suits all the community.[116]

Tyrie's comments reflect the increased cynicism felt by the UDA towards unionist politicians, particularly the DUP leader, following the humiliation of Paisley's failed strike in 1977, and an inclination to engage in more moderate politics to solve the conflict. They also demonstrate an awareness that the media was propagating negative stereotypes of Unionists and show that Tyrie was concerned that Loyalists were losing the propaganda war, in large part due to Paisley. By connecting Paisley alone to these stereotypes, Tyrie sought to disassociate himself from them, presenting the UDA as a reasonable organisation intent on peace. The programme failed to highlight the UDA's record of violence and bigotry. The focus of 'The Preacher and the Peacemaker' was Taoiseach Garret Fitzgerald's peace plan and Paisley's opposition to it. Tyrie praised Fitzgerald for his conciliatory approach to Northern Ireland, which had included relinquishing the Republic's territorial claim on the North and challenging some of the Republic's laws to make them more acceptable to Northern Protestants, such as those restricting access to contraception. Paisley dismissed Fitzgerald's initiative as a 'devious plan of treachery', whilst Tyrie commended his bravery, voicing support for better relations between the North and the Republic. Programmers were quick to accentuate the UDA's low opinion of Paisley, in a bid to further soothe any fears that he commanded the support of all Protestants.

Tyrie and the UDA's derision of Paisley and the DUP were indicative of deep divisions within loyalist ranks. Throughout the 'Troubles', animosity between Unionists was subject to considerable television scrutiny.[117] 'Unionist Disunity', broadcast by the BBC's *Nationwide* on 23 November 1981 explored different loyalist factions and their rival approaches to the war against the IRA. The programme argued that Loyalist groups were divided not over what they were fighting for, but what

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[115] 'Prior Commitment', *TV Eye*, Thames Television, 26 November 1981.
[116] 'The Preacher and the Peacemaker', *World in Action*, Granada, 23 November 1981.
[117] Parkinson has noted Thames Television's current affairs series *The Week* alone, produced numerous programmes on factionalism between different loyalist groups. These include: 'Ulster: the Power Game', 6 February 1969; 'The Price of Peace: the Protestants', 24 January 1974; 'The Ulster Strike', 5 May 1977; 'Ulster- The Loyalists Say No!', 18 September 1975. (Parkinson, *Ulster Loyalism*, 131-2).

form the fight should take. Although *Nationwide* profiled all five loyalist paramilitary groups, it focused primarily on the UDA and the newly formed Third Force. It featured interviews with both Paisley and John McMichael, who explained their different strategies for dealing with the IRA. The programme noted that the UDA had boycotted the 'Day of Action', staging their own separate show of strength, and asks why the organisation did not support Paisley. McMichael argued that Paisley was merely sabre-rattling, remarking scathingly that: 'People like Ian Paisley shouldn't march people up and down hills and when they get to the top refuse to fight and walk away. People who wave firearms certificates and bandoliers at the end of the day will not do the fighting'.[118] He contends that the only way to defeat the republican paramilitaries was to seek out individual members of the IRA and assassinate them.

The programme does not allow McMichael's comments to go unchallenged, documenting UDA violence and in particular, its activities during the UWC strike of 1974, which displayed a ruthlessness capable of being extended towards its own members. The programme observed that Loyalist paramilitaries were responsible for at least 600 of the 2500 deaths resulting from the conflict. It reports that astonishingly, though the UDA was responsible for most of these murders, it had not been proscribed. Liz Curtis has argued that the British media suffered from selective amnesia when it came to loyalism, downplaying loyalist violence and implicating the IRA in attacks carried out by loyalist paramilitaries.[119] Certainly, some programmes failed to satisfactorily tackle the issue of loyalist violence, however, not all. 'Unionist Disunity' for example, faithfully documents the part that loyalists played in the conflict. Similarly, 'The Waiting Time', broadcast by *TV Eye* on 30 April 1981, highlighted the threat of loyalist paramilitary violence, featuring footage of the UDA staging a trial mobilisation on the sectarian divide in West Belfast. The programme implied that this behaviour had in turn led to an increase in IRA activity, as ordinary Catholics looked to paramilitaries for protection. To support this argument, it featured footage of a Sinn Féin meeting called to organise contingency plans in an event of a Loyalist attack. The film had included footage of two IRA men calling for those present at the meeting to 'mobilise in the face of ominous threat from certain paramilitaries who are sympathetically regarded by the sectarian RUC and backed up by the British war machine'. The scene was removed before transmission at the IBA's insistence. Rather than what this threat meant for the people of Northern Ireland, both programmes focused on the impact an escalation in the violence would have on the British government and security forces. Peter Gill in 'The Waiting Time' remarked that 'Any clash between the Republican and Loyalist communities will leave Britain in the middle, attempting to separate the two'. He presented the two communities as feeding the conflict through their tit-for-tat responses, and the British as caught between them, neglecting to acknowledge Britain's role in exacerbating tensions for example through its handling of the hunger strikes.[120] Similarly, in 'Unionist Disunity', the producer's primary concern was how far both the UDA and the DUP's Third Force would risk a direct confrontation with the British security forces. It concludes that despite their differences 'the Protestant Army could fight; all it would need would be the right issue for it to unite

[118] 'Unionist Disunity', *Nationwide*, BBC, 23 November 1981.
[119] Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 89-106.
[120] 'The Waiting Time', 30 April 1981.

and mobilise'. The programme considered whether the uncertainty generated by the Anglo-Irish talks and the recent upsurge in IRA violence would be enough to unite Loyalist factions.[121]

'Unionist Disunity' also attempted to probe deeper into the Loyalist psyche, in an effort to explain the appeal of loyalist paramilitary groups. It features an in-depth interview with Acker Gillespie, a forty-five-year-old Protestant from North Belfast and a member of the UDA, seeking to understand why he was prepared to bear arms for the right to remain British. Acker argued that under Catholic rule, Northern Irish Protestants would be denied religious freedom and civil liberties. He explained that he was British, his children were British, and he would take up arms to defend his right to remain British. Interestingly, the programme alludes to a link between Acker's unemployment and his membership of the UDA. This provides further evidence of journalists engaging with the broader socio-economic factors behind the conflict; although admittedly the programme fails to fully explore the influence of unemployment on paramilitary recruitment. By featuring Acker's story, the programme provides clear insight into the motives that inspired rank and file members of the loyalist paramilitary, aiding audiences' in their understanding of this aspect of the conflict.[122]

Throughout the 1980s, the BBC and ITV continued in their efforts to produce innovative programmes, which examined the 'Troubles' often in the face of widespread political disapproval. One notable example is the BBC's *Real Lives* documentary 'At the Edge of Union', scheduled for broadcast on 7 August 1985, which profiled DUP politician Gregory Campbell, and Sinn Féin MP Martin McGuinness. The programme explored the two politician's daily lives, filming them both at home and carrying out constituency business.[123] The appearance of McGuinness, who was at the time believed to be the IRA's Chief of Staff, was considered highly provocative by the British government. Home Secretary, Leon Brittan, immediately moved to prohibit the broadcast, stating that it gave 'an immensely valuable platform to those who have evinced an ability, readiness and intention to murder indiscriminately its own viewers'.[124] As David Miller has argued, the BBC's greatest sin had been to film McGuinness at home with his children. In doing so, the programme served to humanise McGuinness, presenting him as a legitimate politician rather than hardened terrorist.[125] Ignoring the recommendations of senior staff, the BBC Board of Governors voted to ban the film, attracting widespread criticism for submitting to government pressure. Consequently, more than 2,000 BBC journalists and staff staged a 24-hour strike on 7 August. Under pressure, the Board of Governors agreed to lift the ban, and the programme was broadcast on 16 October with the addition of a 20-second

[121] 'Unionist Disunity', 23 November 1981.
[122] 'Unionist Disunity', 23 November 1981.
[123] BBC WAC, Real Lives: At the Edge of the Union System ID 2- Classification C5, 'Radio Times Article: 'Irreconcilable differences?', 9 August 1985.
[124] BBC WAC, R78/3199/1, Real Lives: At the Edge of the Union- Policy, 'The Home Secretary's Letter of 29 July 1985', 4.
[125] Miller, *Don't Mention the War*, 38.

sequence showing the victims of Bloody Friday.[126] The programme was to attract an audience of 4.8 million.[127]

The 1980s proved an extremely difficult time for broadcasters attempting to provide impartial and informative coverage of the Northern Ireland conflict. Despite clamorous threats from the government, however, programme-makers found creative ways to circumvent restrictions imposed by the authorities and produce footage which illustrated a spectrum of opinions on events in Northern Ireland.

The 1980 and 1981 hunger strikes added weight to the pressure brought to bear on broadcasters. The British government, facing mounting international outrage, placed renewed pressure on the BBC and ITV to support their assertions that the hunger strikers were no more than criminals. Broadcasters, whilst ensuring that the prison protests were set in the context of the IRA's continuing campaign of violence, produced numerous programmes, that critically explored the role of all sides in the prison protests. This gave voice to alternative perspectives which challenged the official line and raised serious questions about the government's policy with regards to the hunger strikes. The BBC and ITV have been criticised in republican circles for downplaying the support garnered by the hunger strikers, whereas in actuality, both broadcasting bodies diligently focused their attentions towards the effect of the protests on the streets of Northern Ireland. This was in part forced on them by the difficulty in accessing the Maze prison, although as a result current affairs programmes encapsulated the divergent attitudes within the nationalist community towards the hunger strikers.

This was also true of their reportage of the loyalist reactions not just to the hunger strikes but developments in Anglo-Irish relations during 1980 and 1981. Current affairs programmes produced by both the BBC and ITV demonstrated a range of opinions and divisions within the loyalist community. Although, broadcasters frequently drew on long-standing stereotypes of loyalist bigotry and intransigence, they also explored the motives behind the activities of key unionist politicians and paramilitaries, providing a much-needed insight into the loyalist psyche.

Throughout the early 1980s, both broadcasting bodies strove against the limited interpretation of events that the government wished them to disseminate, instead they offered a nuanced and complex coverage of the 'Troubles'. They not only provided British audiences with detailed analysis of key developments within the conflict, but also examined the historical background and sought to establish the broader context to events in Northern Ireland, providing an additional dimension by examining the effects of the conflict on the Republic.

The events unfolding in Northern Ireland during the early 1980s, including the hunger strikes and the Carson trails, were first and foremost media events. Television programmes were therefore understood to be of vital importance as to how they were interpreted around the world. The BBC and

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[126] Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 286.
[127] Michael Leapman, 'The 'Real Lives' Controversy', in *War and Words: The Northern Ireland Media Reader*, (eds.) Bill Rolston and David Miller, (Belfast: Beyond the Pale Publications, 1996), 117.

ITV continued to produce cutting-edge, critical current affairs programmes, presenting the views of all sides in the conflict including those of the terrorists despite the government's best efforts to silence them. It is testament to the fact that they were largely successful that the Thatcher administration was provoked to introduce the broadcasting ban in 1988.

Chapter Five: The Irish in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s.

The spread of IRA violence to English cities during the early 1970s was met with widespread public outrage, the difficulty in identifying the bombers caused hostility which was directed at the Irish population living in Britain. The Irish as a whole came to be associated with the IRA, and as a result were often the subject of suspicion, abuse and surveillance. This was to affect the way in which many Irish people interacted with the British population and how Irishness was displayed within British society. Through its coverage of the conflict, the media played a significant role in constructing a link in the public mind between the Irish in Britain and the IRA. Many Irish people were aware of the part played by the media in the surge of anti-Irish feeling. Irish activist organisations which emerged in the early 1980s, as a response campaigned extensively against perceived anti-Irish sentiment by the press and broadcast media. For these activists, the media routinely distorted coverage of events in Northern Ireland inflaming prejudice towards the Irish in Britain.

There has been a significant amount of research carried out on the experiences of Irish people living in Britain during the later twentieth century. The majority of this has focused on anti-Irish prejudice and the extent to which it can be considered in similar terms to other forms of racism. Sociologist Mary Hickman has argued that the Irish were presumed to have assimilated into British society and that the discrimination they experienced has been discounted as a result of their 'whiteness'. She contends that 'the dominant paradigm for understanding racism in Britain has been constructed on the basis of a black-white dichotomy'; and so despite considerable evidence that the Irish in Britain suffered disproportionately from ill-health, bad housing, unemployment and other exclusionary practices, the assumption that race is determined by skin colour means that the Irish have been denied recognition for the discrimination they may have suffered.[1] In a similar vein, Máirtín Mac an Ghaill has argued that racial theorists had tended to 'over-racialis[e]' non-white ethnicities, denying the possibility of white groups being considered as racialised minorities. He argued that a multi-faceted understanding of the racialisation of Britain's Irish population could help develop a British sociology of racism and ethnicity, providing an opportunity to consider the processes of including or excluding ethnic minorities, as well as providing a means to explore interconnections between class, religion, gender, sexuality and race.[2] It was within the context of this belief that Irish activist organisations campaigned for recognition as a separate ethnic minority. Scholars have since focused on bringing together empirical evidence of institutional and individual discrimination against the Irish, examining the experiences and responses of both first- and second-generation Irish in a wide range of areas.

In particular, scholars have focused on the effects of the 'Troubles' on the daily lives of Britain's Irish population. Paddy Hillyard, Seán Sorohan, Sarah O'Brien, Barry Hazley, Breda Gray and Graham Dawson *et al*., have sought to examine the experiences of those Irish living in Britain

[1] Hickman, 'Reconstructing deconstructing 'race'', 289; 298-9. See also Hickman and Walter, 'Deconstructing Whiteness', 5-19.
[2] Mac an Ghaill, 'The Irish in Britain', 137-47.

throughout the conflict and who as a consequence have been subject to hostility and surveillance.[3] Most recently, Gavin Schaffer and Saima Nasar have returned to the debate surrounding anti-Irish prejudice by examining Irish experiences of hostility after the Birmingham bombings in 1974, and in this context have considered the extent to which Irish migrants were victims of racism. They argue that, especially during times of crisis, white groups in Britain were drawn into hierarchies of race. Though racism experienced by the Irish differed markedly from that experienced by black and Asian migrant communities, owing in large part to the Irish's lack of visibility, Schaffer and Nasar observe that the 'Troubles' prompted a rise in anti-Irish racism which homogenised the diverse Irish population into 'one troublesome mass'.[4]

Much of the work carried out on the Irish in Britain during the Northern Ireland conflict includes reference to the British media and its role in fuelling or amplifying anti-Irish racism. John Nagle, for example, in his study of the London-Irish remarked that with IRA violence in English cities, 'anti-Irish sentiment flourished, filtered by a complicit media only too willing to portray crude stereotypes and jokes of the "stupid and violent Irish"'.[5] This simplistic view is symptomatic of a general failure amongst academics to complicate the way in which the media portrayed the conflict in Northern Ireland. Only by examining a broader spectrum of the media's coverage of the 'Troubles' is it possible to fully understand how the violence was represented and how that impacted on the Irish living in Britain.

Sociologists Nickels *et al.,* have made some progress in examining the media's influence on the hostility experienced by the Irish as a result of the Northern Ireland 'Troubles'. They argue that both the Irish and Muslim communities have been associated with terrorism and have therefore been constructed as 'suspect' by the British press. They assert that newspapers placed an onus on the Irish and Muslim communities to stand up against extremism and defend 'British values', positioning them simultaneously inside and outside of Britishness.[6] In order to assert what part both the press and broadcast media played in encouraging hostility and suspicion towards the Irish during the 'Troubles' a wider sample of the media's coverage is required. An examination of the way in which Irish people responded to the media, and the hostility that was directed against them following IRA attacks in England, is also necessary in order to establish the scale of influence that the media had on the lived experiences of the Irish in Britain.

This chapter will therefore seek to investigate how British media representations of the conflict in Northern Ireland, and the IRA's bombing campaign in England, influenced the daily lives of Irish

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[3] Hillyard, *Suspect Community*; Paddy Hillyard, 'Irish People and the British Criminal Justice System', *Journal of Law and Society*, 21, 1 (1994), 39-56; Seán Sorohan, *Irish London during the Troubles* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2012); O'Brien, 'Negotiations of Irish identity in the wake of terrorism', 372-394; Hazley, 'Re/negotiating "suspicion"', 326-341; Gray, 'From 'Ethnicity' to 'Diaspora'', 65-88; Dawson, Dover and Hopkins, *The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain*.

[4] Schaffer and Nasar, 'The white essential subject', 209-230.

[5] John Nagle, 'Multiculturalism's double bind: Creating inclusivity, difference and cross-community alliances with the London-Irish', *Ethnicities*, 8, 2 (2008), 182.

[6] Nickels, Thomas, Hickman and Silvestri, 'Constructing 'suspect' communities and Britishness', 135-151; Nickels, Thomas, Hickman and Silvestri, 'De/Constructing "Suspect" Communities', 340-355.

people residing in Britain. It will draw on the extensive literature produced by Irish organisations, as well as interviews, carried out by Hickman and Walter, Sorohan, O'Brien and Scully with Irish people who lived in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s. The chapter begins by examining the resurgence of anti-Irish feeling in response to the IRA bombing campaign. It will argue that by constructing and propagating ideas of the Irish as 'suspect' the media contributed to the hostility and discrimination experienced by much of Britain's Irish population in the early 1970s. The chapter then explores the rise in Irish political and cultural activism during the 1980s. It argues that a collective narrative of the Irish experience in Britain emerged, which has consequently informed how many individuals interpret their personal experiences. Part of this narrative was that the media was responsible for sustaining anti-Irish hostility within British society through the use of crude stereotypes and by distorting coverage of events in Northern Ireland. Finally, the chapter argues that the media's perceived failings not only influenced Irish people's attitudes towards the media, but has since been accepted without question by scholars, resulting in an over-simplified appraisal of the British media's coverage of the conflict.

Throughout the twentieth century, Britain was the chosen destination for migrants leaving Ireland, both North and South. In 1971, the total number of Irish-born living in Britain peaked at approximately 957,000, a further 1,303,450 people in Britain had at least one Irish parent.[7] The 1981 census recorded 849,820 Irish people in Britain, by 1991 this figure had fallen to 837,464.[8] Despite this slight decline, the Irish remained the largest migrant group throughout the late twentieth century.[9] The Irish population was diverse, originating from across Ireland and including men and women from a wide range of religious, social and economic backgrounds.[10] To treat the Irish in Britain as a single homogenous community as the media often has elides significant differences which existed within this population.

Nonetheless, as social scientist Breda Gray has argued, by the early 1970s the establishment of a number of Irish activist and cultural groups, including the *Irish Post* founded in 1970 and the Federation of Irish Societies (FIS) founded in 1973, prompted the growth of 'a more self-conscious and coordinated Irish identity in Britain'.[11] In contrast with the discrimination experienced by Irish migrants in the nineteenth century, by the mid-twentieth century, it appeared that the Irish, though still not fully accepted, were becoming a more integrated part of British society. The exclusion of the Irish from the 1948 Nationality Act, which distinguished British subjects from Commonwealth citizens is often interpreted as representative of this growing tolerance. Even after the Republic of Ireland withdrew

[7] It should be noted that this last figure omits people whose parents were from Northern Ireland and includes people in Northern Ireland with parents born in the Republic of Ireland. Enda Delaney, *Demography, State and Society: Irish migration to Britain, 1921-1971* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 264; Enda Delaney, '*Directions in historiography* Our island story? Towards as transnational history of late modern Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxvii, 148 (2011), 601. Hickman and Walter, *Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain*, 19; Bronwen Walter, 'The Irish Community in Britain- Diversity, Disadvantage and Discrimination', *Runnymede Trust*, https://www.runnymedetrust.org/bgIrishCommunity.html [accessed 24 July 2019].
[8] Hickman and Walter, *Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain*, 18.
[9] Enda Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.
[10] Hickman and Walter, *Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain*, 31-5.
[11] The FIS was an umbrella organisation designed to provide cohesion between the different Irish societies in Britain; as such it was intended to be both non-sectarian and non-political. (Gray, 'From 'Ethnicity' to 'Diaspora'', 71).

from the Commonwealth, the Act ensured Irish people in Britain continued to enjoy the rights of British citizens.[12] During the 1960s, St Patrick's Day parades had become a part of public life in numerous British cities, whilst Irish organisations and individuals showed an increased willingness to participate in British culture.[13] Linguist Sarah O'Brien has argued that this emerging Irishness distanced itself from republican politics, prioritising instead Irish culture in an effort to challenge the historic association of the Irish with disorder and violence.[14] The reality was more complex than this, republican and nationalist politics were still practiced publicly in Britain. On 25 February 1972 for example, the Anti-Internment League held a mass demonstration to protest against Bloody Sunday, by marching on Downing Street carrying coffins to represent the thirteen dead.[15] As a rule, however, Irish organisations eschewed politics, fearful of attracting unwanted attention. This speaks to an awareness of the fragility of the 'acceptance' which the Irish had enjoyed. Although, high levels of Caribbean and South Asian immigration following the Second World War had drawn attention away from Irish migrants, the prejudice experienced by the Irish in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries remained close to the surface as became apparent with the onset of IRA violence.

IRA bombs in English cities in the early 1970s led to a resurgence of anti-Irish feeling in Britain. As one man observed: 'the Irish get it both ways. We get the backlash and we're in as much danger from the bombs as the English'.[16] Speaking to the *Sunday Times*, he was referring to the physical and verbal abuse directed at the city's Irish in the wake of the Birmingham pub bombings. The Irish living in Britain had experienced hostility in the aftermath of earlier incidents, but owing to the severity of the attack, the Birmingham bombings marked a turning point after which anti-Irish discrimination reached new levels. Despite calls from the police and politicians to refrain from striking out, in the immediate aftermath violence erupted targeted at the Irish. Petrol bombs were thrown at Irish pubs and shops in both London and Birmingham, whilst in Birmingham Irish factory workers were attacked by colleagues. The work force at over thirty factories across the Midlands went out on strike to protest against the IRA, Irish products were boycotted, and aircrew refused to handle flights to and from Ireland.[17] Six Irishmen were arrested and charged with the bombings. Beaten into confessing and implicated by questionable forensic evidence, they were wrongly convicted in 1975 and spent sixteen years in prison before their sentences were overturned in 1991. This was just one of the miscarriages of justice which occurred in connection to the IRA's bombing campaign in England.[18]

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[12] Hickman, 'Reconstructing deconstructing 'race'', 293-6; 303.
[13] Marc Scully, 'Whose Day Is It Anyway? St. Patrick's Day as a Contested Performance of National and Diasporic Irishness', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 12, 1 (2012), 120; O'Brien, 'Negotiations of Irish identity in the wake of terrorism', 379.
[14] O'Brien, 'Negotiations of Irish identity in the wake of terrorism', 378-9.
[15] Peter Wilby, '91 injured in battle of Whitehall', *The Guardian*, 6 February 1972; Sorohan, *Irish London during the Troubles*, 61.
[16] 'Why the Provos brought their terror war to Britain's cities', *The Sunday Times*, 24 November 1974, quoted in McGladdery, *The Provisional IRA in England*, 94.
[17] ''Revenge' fire bomb hits a pub', *Daily Mirror*, 23 November 1974; William Daniels, Paul Connew and Frank Palmer, 'Backlash Fury at the Factories', *Daily Mirror*, 23 November 1974.
[18] The Guildford Four, Maguire Seven and Judith Ward were all wrongfully imprisoned for terrorist offences.

Similar hostility was directed against the Irish in the wake of other bomb attacks. Interviewees have highlighted the animosity towards the Irish in Britain following the assassination of Lord Mountbatten and the Brighton bombing. The Queen's cousin was killed on 27 August 1979, along with his grandson and two others, when his boat was blown up off the coast of County Sligo. Five years later, in October 1984, the IRA targeted the Grand Brighton Hotel where the Conservative Party conference was taking place, killing five people.[19] Interviewed in 1987, Father Owen O'Neill, a priest in Leicester, remarked that 'the only time I can truthfully say I found any kind of opposition to the Irish… was after the Birmingham bombing and also [after] Lord Mountbatten was so brutally murdered'.[20] Similarly, in an interview conducted by Hickman and Walter in 1995, one woman noted that: 'Mountbatten, Hunger Strikes and Brighton, I could feel the anti-Irish hostility. Someone said, "They should go to Ireland and 'blow the lot up'". I have had someone labelling me an IRA supporter because I am a Catholic'.[21]

For the most part, the backlash manifested itself in low-level hostility, which went unreported. Numerous interviews carried out by Hickman, Walter, O'Brien and other scholars describe how in the aftermath of an IRA attack participants found themselves social pariahs because of their ethnicity.[22] Frequently, anti-Irish feeling was expressed through social ostracism, which, as O'Brien observes, was difficult to quantify or articulate.[23] Irish people were also to experience physical and verbal abuse. One woman, interviewed by Hickman and Walter, recalled being threatened and intimidated because she was Irish:

> This was a terrible time. All the Irish community was in shock and people reacted to them. I took my children to school and an English woman gave us verbal abuse. She said, 'Why don't you fucking go back?'.[24]

The aggression this woman experienced exemplifies the way in which elements within British society viewed all Irish people as in some way responsible for the bombings and not belonging fully in Britain. The recollection of having been associated with IRA terrorism is a common theme that repeatedly surfaces in interviews with Irish people about their experiences of living in Britain during the 1970s. In another interview carried out by Hickman and Walter, a woman described how after the Birmingham bombings her neighbours had threatened to put a brick through her window: 'If there is trouble, you are all tarred with the same brush'.[25] Similarly, interviewed in 2006 by Gudrun Limbrick, Angela Gilraine, a second-generation Irish woman from Birmingham, recalled that 'We got beaten up after the

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[19] McGladdery, *The Provisional IRA in England*, 125-36.
[20] Leicester Oral History Archive Collection, 981, LO/336/287, 'Interview with Father Owen O'Neil', 16 January 1987.
[21] Hickman and Walter, *Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain*, 215.
[22] *Ibid*., 211-214; O'Brien, 'Negotiations of Irish identity in the wake of terrorism', 372-394; Laura O'Reilly, 'The Birmingham pub bombings, the Irish as a 'suspect community' and the memories of the O'Reilly family' in *The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain: Impacts, Engagements, Legacies and Memories*, (eds.) Graham Dawson, Jo Dover and Stephen Hopkins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 284-299; Schaffer and Nasar, 'The white essential subject', 209-230. See also, Sorohan, *Irish London During the Troubles*; Mary Lennon, Marie McAdam and Joanne O'Brien, *Across the Water: Irish Women's Lives in Britain* (London: Viagro Press, 1988); Anne Holohan, *Working Lives: The Irish in Britain* (Middlesex: The Irish Post, 1995).
[23] O'Brien, 'Negotiations of Irish identity in the wake of terrorism', 384.
[24] Hickman and Walter, *Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain*, 213.
[25] Hickman and Walter, *Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain*, 213.

bombings… All the kids were told not to speak to us… It's like that with 9/11 now - it wasn't all Muslim people who did that but it's all Muslim people who get blamed for it'.[26] The close association made between the IRA and the Irish in Britain meant that they became scapegoats on whom the public could focus their fear and anger.

As discussed in chapter one, the press, in particular, played an important role in constructing a link in the public mind between the IRA and the Irish in Britain. Newspapers presented the Irish population as harbourers of terrorists, either by intent or by their mere existence providing cover to IRA terrorists operating in England. The press emphasised the fact that many of the bombers had been established members of the Irish migrant population. The ambiguity over which elements supported the IRA, however, allowed blame to be applied to all. Accordingly, the Irish as a whole were reimagined as a potential threat. By propagating this association, newspapers stoked feelings of suspicion and therefore of hostility towards the Irish.

Many of those interviewed about their experiences of living in Britain during the 'Troubles' attribute the rise in anti-Irish feeling, at least in part, to the media. Interviewees frequently observed the negative way in which Irish people and issues were represented, particularly by the tabloid press:

> Some of them like the Sun newspaper and the News of the World of course they blackened all the Irish people at the time, as far back as I can remember, they tarred everybody, all of us, with the same brush. The more sensible newspapers had a lot better things to say about us. But it did, certainly, make us conscious of being Irish and people associating us with the violence that was going on.[27]

This quote is from a conversation the author had in 2011 with an Irishman in Manchester and demonstrates an awareness of the role newspapers played in conflating the Irish with the IRA. The interviewee directly links the way in which the Irish were portrayed by the tabloids to the surge of anti-Irish feeling as a result of the IRA bombings. Similarly, in an interview recorded by Hickman and Walter, the respondent observed that the tabloids had inflamed hostilities towards the Irish: 'Well, you get a certain amount of anti-Irish feeling about, stirred up by gutter rags like the *Sun*. [I w]onder how Irish people can read the *Sun*'.[28] Another remarked on how coverage of the Brighton bombing in 1984 had presented all Irish people in a negative light: 'After the Brighton bombing, in the press. I know there are things in the press, the tabloid papers - not exactly a correct image of Irish people'.[29]

Elements within the British media were aware of the hostility experienced by many Irish people in Britain following IRA attacks and the role they could play in moderating, rather than aggravating, this. Archival research undertaken at the BBC shows that at a meeting of the Corporation's Board of Governors on 21 November 1974, Board member, Stella Clarke, highlighted the need 'to guard against the building of public resentment against the Irish community in Britain', observing that she

[26] 'Transcripts of Interviews for St Patrick Day's Project', Birmingham Central Library.
[27] Interview 9, in conversation with author, Greater Manchester, 23 September 2011.
[28] Hickman and Walter, *Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain*, 215.
[29] *Ibid*., 223.

knew of three incidents in Bristol, where she was a City Councillor, when Irish people had been threatened.[30] She expressed concern that the BBC regional news programme for the West of England, *Point West*, had been too soft-touch in interviewing a number of Irish suspects following an IRA bomb attack on the Embassy Gift Exchange on 29 July 1974 and argued that some suspects had been allowed to 'make traitorous statements', which had inflamed anti-Irish feeling generally.[31] The Board of Governors' Vice-Chairman suggested that by increasing the number of Irish people on programmes talking about things other than the 'Troubles', the BBC might be able to show that not all people with Irish accents were IRA supporters.[32] Following the Birmingham bombings, the BBC's Editor of News and Current Affairs, Desmond Taylor, suggested that they address the backlash against the Irish in Britain by producing a story reflecting on what it meant 'to be an Irishman in Birmingham at the present time'.[33] Their concern was, to some extent born of a desire to tell all sides of the story, but it also reflected the belief within the BBC that it had a responsibility to use its platform to tackle discrimination and ignorance as part of its public service remit. It is not clear whether this show was ever produced, but its consideration indicates that the BBC was capable of sensitivity towards the welfare of the Irish. It also challenges the view which, as will be discussed, prevailed amongst Irish people in Britain that the media was anti-Irish.

The extent to which newspapers recognised the backlash against the Irish, however, varied. The *Daily Telegraph*, initially praised the public for its forbearance, erroneously reporting that 'the explosions have not provoked any upsurge of feeling against the Irish community in Britain. Quite rightly, the public has drawn a clear distinction between the ordinary respectable Irish immigrant and the nationalist psychopaths responsible for mindless destruction'.[34] After the Birmingham bombings, the paper repeated calls made by police and politicians to refrain from retaliation, but did little to defend the Irish or deter the hostility directed towards them.[35] As previously observed, assertions made by the *Telegraph* and other newspapers that the majority of Irish people living in Britain were 'innocent' only underlined the fact that there was a deadly minority who were not, and augmented the notion that all were therefore potentially suspect.

In a cartoon published by the *Daily Mirror* on 24 June 1974, Ed McLachlan alluded to the discriminate targeting of the Irish by police. The paper's front-page lead that day reported that Special Branch officers had established a connection between men working on important building sites across Britain and the IRA. As a result, detectives would be screening labourers at Sandhurst and Windsor Castle.[36] The article is yet another example of how newspapers perpetuated the idea that the IRA had infiltrated Britain through the Irish population and contributed to the construction of all Irish people as

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[30] This meeting took place mere hours before the Birmingham bombings; BBC WAC, R78/700/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances, Minutes of a Meeting, 21 November 1974.
[31] BBC WAC, R78/700/1, Northern Ireland Civil Disturbances, Minutes of a Meeting, 7 November 1974.
[32] BBC WAC, Minutes of a Meeting, 21 November 1974.
[33] BBC WAC, Minutes of a Meeting, 22 November 1974.
[34] 'On Guard'.
[35] 'The Worst Outrage', *Daily Telegraph*, 23 November 1974.
[36] Edward Vale and Edward Laxton, 'Marked Men of the Yard', *Daily Mirror*, 24 June 1974.

possible paramilitaries. McLachlan satirises this short-sightedness by depicting Foreign Secretary James Callaghan's 'arrest'; the arresting officer remarks 'When you said your name was Callaghan, I thought 'Hullo, hullo, hullo, that's an IRISH name!'. Surnames, like accents, were a means by which the Irish, who otherwise were not visible, could be identified. An Irish surname therefore became imagined as a signifier of both Irishness and potential IRA membership. Consequently, it could attract hostility, regardless of the owner's actual ethnicity. One woman recalled how after the Birmingham bombings English friends with Irish names had 'received nasty letters and phone calls'.[37] The cartoon (Figure 14) demonstrates an awareness that the police were targeting people simply because they were perceived to be Irish. Rather than challenge this behaviour, however, the cartoon presented it as a source of amusement, helping condone police's behaviour and reinforcing the idea that all Irish people were involved in political violence.

Figure 14: Edward McLachlan, *Daily Mirror*, 24 June 1974.

Other newspapers, however, sought to shine a light on the abuse being suffered by Irish people living in Britain. On 1 December 1974, the *Observer* published an article by journalist and broadcaster Mary Holland, describing the hostility directed towards the Irish in London following the Birmingham bombings.[38] Holland was of Irish descent and, as observed previously, had a reputation for being sympathetic to the republican cause.[39] Her article demonstrates that at least part of the British press was concerned about the discrimination facing the Irish and that some effort, albeit minimal, was being made by newspapers to draw attention to it. Holland warned that if the Irish in Britain were alienated, they would be increasingly less inclined to co-operate and help bring the bombers to justice. Recounting how

[37] Hickman and Walter, *Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain*, 214.
[38] Mary Holland, 'Feeling Irish and isolated', *The Observer*, 1 December 1974.
[39] McHardy, 'Obituary: Mary Holland'.

one Irish publican in North London had been forced into hiding, so virulent were the threats being made against him, she observed how, as a result of the bombings, an identity, which was synonymous with republican violence, was being imposed on the Irish, the majority of whom had long since integrated into British society. She noted that in response many Irish people had adopted a low profile, avoiding going out or speaking in public. Holland recognised the detrimental effect the association with IRA terrorism had on the Irish population, she failed however to scrutinise the media's culpability in cultivating this link.

More than public rancour, Holland argued, the Irish feared the potential impact of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA): 'they do feel that the new measures isolate them as a suspect community'.[40] Introduced in response to the Birmingham bombings in November 1974, the PTA extended the police's power to arrest and detain, and gave them new powers to control the movement of people into Britain and Northern Ireland. It also gave the Home Secretary the power to exclude any person from living in any part of the UK. Whilst the Act would later be extended to tackle international terrorism, up until the mid-1980s it was primarily directed at dealing with Northern Ireland.[41] In a letter to the Chief of Police in 1975, a Home Office official observed that the new exclusion orders only applied to those seeking to 'influence public opinion or government policy with respect to affairs in Northern Ireland', and not 'terrorists of other persuasions'.[42]

The Irish had been subject to increasingly indiscriminate counter-terrorism tactics prior to the introduction of the new legislation. Following a spate of bombings in August 1973, the *Sun* reported that the police had 'swoop[ed] on areas with large Irish communities'.[43] The PTA, however, signified the legitimisation of the indiscriminate targeting of the Irish. As Hillyard has argued, the Act initiated 'one massive trawling operation', designed to gather intelligence rather than apprehending terrorists. Of the 7,052 people detained under the PTA between 1975 and 1991, 86 per cent were released without further action being taken.[44] As such, the majority of those detained under the Act were not targeted because they were genuinely suspected of terrorism but because of their ethnicity. People were arrested at ports and airports or in raids on their homes, often in the early hours, just because they were Irish. Once in custody they could be subject to police coercion, sleep deprivation, denied clean blankets, hygiene products or the right to contact lawyers and loved ones. This often had an adverse effect on their relationships with friends and could result in the loss of jobs.[45]

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[40] Holland, 'Feeling Irish and isolated'.
[41] Hillyard, *Suspect Community*, 4-8.
[42] NA, CI4/1220, Letter from DHJ. Hilary (Home Office) to the Chief Officer of Police, 7/2/1975 quoted in Schaffer and Nasar, 'The white essential subject', 219.
[43] 'Bomb Riddle: Who is He?', *The Sun*, 1 September 1973; Similar examples include: Peter Gray, 'Anti-IRA swoops at Dawn by 500 police', *The Sun*, 14 April 1973; Tom Tullet and John Sandiford, 'Detectives Swoop in hunt for IRA Gang', *Daily Mirror*, 31 August 1973; Reginald White, 'Terror Squad Swoop on UDA', *Daily Mirror*, 6 February 1974; Hillyard, *Suspect Community*, 88).
[44] Home Office Statistical Bulletins 1974-91, cited in Hillyard, *Suspect Community*, 5.
[45] Hillyard provides an extensive account of the experiences of people examined, detained and arrested under the PTA in Hillyard, *Suspect Community*.

Little consideration was given to the effects of the new legislation on the Irish in Britain by the media, which had few reservations about the introduction of the PTA, or its potential for abuse. Even the *Guardian*, which might be expected to challenge such a breach of civil liberties, outraged by the bomb attack on Birmingham, adopted a hard line, arguing that:

> A liberal society cannot let its freedom, and its concern for the rights of the individual, be abused in order that it shall be torn to pieces. From now on anybody who complains that he is being harassed by the police bomb squad will find a less sympathetic audience. Our society is suffering murder and mutilation and it must protect itself. If this means closer surveillance of people suspected of sustaining the Provisional IRA in Britain then they must either act to free themselves of the suspicion or accept that infringement of their privacy is a small price to pay to prevent further terrorist outrages.[46]

The assertion that people must 'act to free themselves' shows that the paper was aware that counter-terrorism could bring people with no link to the IRA under scrutiny. It considered this as a minor inconvenience, however, when weighed against the benefits of averting further violence. An expectation was placed on the Irish in Britain to assert their innocence and prove themselves by publicly disassociating from the IRA.

The media, particularly the tabloid press, was in fact often complicit in the authorities' policing of the Irish, newspapers frequently appealed to the public to report suspicious behaviour to the police:

> The police need every scrap of help and information that the public can give.
>
> Someone, somewhere, must have a suspicion - however tiny - that might give the police a lead.[47]

Though they did not always specifically mention the Irish, their association with the IRA, which had been cultivated by the press, meant that readers would have interpreted these appeals as referring to them. A significant number of those detained under the PTA were brought to the authorities' attention by members of the public.[48] There are examples of similar appeals made in the early 1990s which specify that the public should be on the alert for Irish people acting suspiciously. In response to the attempted bombing of Canary Wharf in November 1991, for example, the *Sun* called on readers to inform the police if: '…you or a friend rented accommodation to someone Irish recently who had not returned in the past few days?'.[49] Sister Sarah Clarke, an Irish-born nun who worked with Irish prisoners in Britain, recalled an announcement on the radio in the mid-1970s, encouraging the public to report anyone listening to traditional Irish music.[50] These appeals reimagined Irish culture as a possible sign of republican militancy, and reinforced the idea that anything that could be deemed Irish was potentially suspect. This conflation of Irish cultural traditions and republican violence, created in part by the media,

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[46] 'Savagery and the law', *The Guardian*, 22 November 1974.
[47] 'The Terror that must fail'.
[48] Hillyard, *Suspect Communities*, 122; 259.
[49] 'Help us nail IRA bombers', *The Sun*, 18 November 1992 quoted in Morgan, 'The Contemporary Racialization of the Irish in Britain', 104-5; Appendix 78-9.
[50] Sister Sarah Clarke, *No Faith in the System: A Search for Justice* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1995), 53.

meant that people were reported for singing. Father Patrick Mee, an Irish priest working in London in the 1970s, recalled how shortly after the introduction of the PTA, the London Irish Centre had hosted the County Associations dinner. Some of the guests had begun singing traditional songs and the neighbours had called the police, as a result 'loads of special branch… raid[ed] the whole centre, they were looking for guns and bombs and all the rest of it'.[51] Accordingly, many people in the 1970s eschewed Irish cultural activities, fearful of attracting attention to their Irishness.

Public demonstrations of Irish culture ceased in the face of hostility and police surveillance. The Birmingham St Patrick's Day parade was immediately suspended following the pub bombings and was not held again until 1996, whilst in other cities celebrations were confined to 'Irish areas'. The one exception was the Council of Irish Associations' church parade, which continued in London despite facing considerable abuse from the public.[52] St Patrick's Day and other forms of cultural associationalism continued to be celebrated behind closed doors throughout the 1970s. After 1974, even these private forms of cultural engagement were curtailed, in part because of an absence of spaces where Irishness could be expressed in a positive way. Following the bombings, the Birmingham Irish Centre closed, whilst other spaces were placed under police surveillance.[53]

It was not uncommon during this period for Irish people to refrain from participating in politics, Irish or otherwise, out of fear that they would attract the attention of the police. As one Northern Irishman stated:

> I think the important thing to bear in mind is the PTA, it created fear, and it would have affected my behaviour, I would have not done certain things, I wouldn't have hung about with certain people, I did not want to get tarred with that brush.

He remarked that though he had been involved in the Labour party, he'd avoided Northern Irish politics because he 'didn't want to get known as someone who was may be, in some way, connected with what was going on'.[54] Such fears were not unfounded. Hillyard has argued that the PTA was used to deter all political activity; he has shown that information that a person was politically active could result in them being stopped under the PTA.[55] Not only did the Act frighten people away from Irish politics, but it deterred them from becoming involved in any politics. As Father Bobby Gilmore, an Irish priest based in London, observed, the PTA 'sought to prevent Irish people from expressing those opinions, which were of a political nature, peacefully'.[56]

The standard response by Irish people in Britain to the hostility was to 'keep their heads down' and conceal their Irishness. As one man remarked: 'It just became second nature… that you didn't a)

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[51] Irish in Britain Archive, Video Collection, 'The Irish in England', *Channel 4*, 23 October 1983.
[52] Scully, 'Whose Day Is It Anyway?', 121.
[53] O'Brien, 'Negotiations of Irish identity in the wake of terrorism', 385-6; Interview with Father McCabe cited in Sorohan, *Irish London During the Troubles*, 82.
[54] Interview 2, in conversation with author, Greater Manchester, 1 July 2013.
[55] Hillyard, *Suspect Community*, 61-3.
[56] Interview with Father Bobby Gilmore cited in Sorohan, *Irish London During the Troubles*, 84.

flaunt your Irishness or b) express any sympathies in a context that would be misunderstood'.[57] In addition to avoiding politics and cultural activities, many Irish people sought to disguise their accents or refrained from speaking in public altogether in order to avoid negative attention. This has long been a strategy used by the Irish in Britain to deflect ridicule and discrimination and was resurrected in the 1970s to avoid hostility.[58] As Nancy Lyons, an Irish nurse living in London, confessed: 'When a bombing or anything like that happens I say, "Thank God for supermarkets", because you don't have to speak, you don't have to ask for a loaf of bread'.[59] Instead, many Irish people retreated into the comparative safety of all-Irish environments.

Irishness had become something private, leading to the temporary erasure of expressions of positive Irish identities from British society. At the same time as it discouraged people from participating in Irish activities, however, the hostility many experienced during the 1970s accelerated the formation of a revitalised, coherent Irish identity in Britain. As Schaffer and Nasar have argued, demonstrations of anti-Irish feeling in response to IRA bomb attacks 'sharpened ethnic focus'.[60] Confronted with their own ethnicity, people were compelled to reflect on what being Irish meant to them. The fact that many then took refuge amongst other Irish people, and Irish associational life, reinforced and reshaped ideas of Irish identity in Britain. This growing awareness of their Irishness would serve as a foundation for community activism in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which sought to assert the Irish as a recognised ethnic minority, and fight discrimination in housing, employment, education and the media.

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The 1980s saw a resurgence in Irish political and cultural activism in Britain. Whilst many continued to 'keep their heads down', there emerged a growing number of Irish people willing to challenge their status within British society, and generate a more positive narrative of Irish identity, than one proscribed by association with IRA violence. A plethora of new organisations and groups were established to address the political, social and cultural needs of the Irish in Britain. These included the London Irish Women's Centre, established in 1980; the Irish in Britain History Group, established in 1981; the Action Group for Irish Youth, established in 1984; and the Irish in Britain Representation Group (IBRG) also established in 1981. Arguably the most pre-eminent of these new organisations, the IBRG was born out of widespread frustration at the lack of an effective Irish voice in Britain during the hunger strikes. Intended to represent the political interests of the Irish, by 1984 it consisted of over forty branches nationwide, campaigning on issues of education, welfare, gender equality and racism.[61] At the same time, pre-existing groups became increasingly politically vocal. Having been severely criticised for its inaction regarding the prison protests, the FIS, which had determinedly avoided politics in the

[57] Interview 3, in conversation with author, Greater Manchester, 4 July 2013.
[58] Walter, 'Shamrocks Growing out of their Mouths', 65-8.
[59] Lennon, McAdam and O'Brien, *Across the Water*, 175.
[60] Schaffer and Nasar, 'The white essential subject', 220.
[61] Irish in Britain Archive, Irish in Britain Representation Group, Box 1 and 2; Working Class Movement Library, Irish in Britain Representation Group.

past, announced at its annual congress in 1980 a resolution calling for the repeal of the PTA.[62] Their campaign was launched the following year, after a series of IRA attacks in London led to a further spike in arrests of Irish people. In November 1981, the Chairman of the Federation, Michael Hogan, wrote to the Home Secretary William Whitelaw, protesting against the 'unnecessary hardship and distress' experienced by innocent people arrested under the Act.[63]

This new assertiveness emerged despite hostility which continued to be directed against the Irish as a result of the IRA's campaign; if anything, the hostility galvanised activists into vocalising their opposition to the act. In a letter to the Irish Foreign Affairs Department, dated 12 February 1982, Gerrard Corr (First Secretary of the Irish Embassy in London) observed that: 'In many ways, the overt opposition of the organised Irish Community is related to the degree of intensity with which the PTA is operating'.[64]

The renaissance of Irish politics and culture was driven, in part, by the changing composition of the Irish migrant population. In the 1980s, a new wave of young, well-educated migrants arrived from Ireland, many to take up professional and managerial positions. The 'Ryanair generation', as they were dubbed by the Irish media, had left an Ireland which was beginning to view itself with new confidence as a modern nation, and this was reflected in the mentality of its diaspora.[65] At the same time, the children of Irish migrants who had come to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s were coming of age, and becoming increasingly more politically and culturally aware. Activism offered the second-generation Irish in Britain a means of asserting an Irish identity, which was frequently called into question not only by British people, but also by those Irish recently-arrived in the 1980s, who derisively referred to the second-generation as 'Plastic Paddies'.[66]

Events in Northern Ireland, in particular the hunger strikes, also inspired a greater engagement in Irish politics. The hunger strikes signified a different approach by the republican movement to the conflict in Northern Ireland, one of passive resistance rather than violence. Men starving themselves to death gained support in both Ireland and Britain, where violence had previously failed, drawing Irish people in Britain together, encouraging them to speak out for a common cause. Interviewed by Channel Four in 1983, Steve Brennan (Vice-Chairman of the IBRG's National Executive Committee and a member of the Greater London Council's (GLC) Ethnic Minorities Unit) remarked: 'I think the death of the hunger strikers have really changed, certainly for the better, the Irish people's attitude to politics, the Irish people living here [in Britain] anyhow'.[67] Mary Lennon *et al*., observed that, 'The time had

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[62] National Archives of Ireland, 2013/27/1649, 'Letter from Gerard Corr, First Secretary to Gerry O'Connor', 9 June 1980.
[63] National Archives of Ireland, 2013/27/1649, 'Letter from Michael Hogan, Chairman of the Federation of Irish Societies, to William Whitelaw, Home Secretary', 10 November 1981.
[64] National Archives of Ireland, 'Letter from Gerard Corr, First Secretary to Ivan King, Department of Foreign Affairs'.
[65] Gray, 'From 'Ethnicity' to 'Diaspora'', 65-70.
[66] Mary J. Hickman, Sarah Morgan, Bronwen Walter and Joseph Bradley, 'The limitations of whiteness and the boundaries of Englishness: Second-generation Irish identification and positioning in multiethnic Britain', *Ethnicities*, 5, 2 (2005): 160-182; Marc Scully, 'Discourses of authenticity and national identity amongst the Irish diaspora in England' (PhD thesis, The Open University, 2010), 46-9; 85-9; 172-6.
[67] Irish in Britain Archive, 'The Irish in England'.

come, for some, including many second generation Irish, to take a stand'.[68] The hunger strikes played a particularly significant role in the second-generation Irish becoming politically conscious of their ethnicity. Brian Dooley, for example, reflected how 'On the weekend of my eighteenth birthday, Bobby Sands began his hunger strike, and I chose an Irish passport'.[69] In Britain, the Hunger Strike Action Committee organised public meetings, leafleting campaigns and rallies to show support for the strikers.[70] On 7 December 1980, the Committee organised a march through London, attended (according to police) by just under 2,000 people.[71] Though the turnout was low, it nonetheless signified a growing willingness amongst some Irish people to 'put their head above the parapet'.[72]

It was initiatives to promote multiculturalism on the part of local authorities, however, which provided the main impetus for increased activism by the Irish in Britain. Calls for racial equality from Asian and black migrants in the late 1970s initiated the development of multicultural and anti-racist policies in Britain. During 1980-1, unrest and rioting by black youths in English cities in response to institutionalised racism within the police and other agencies, consolidated these practices and generated widespread discussion about the position of ethnic minorities within British society.[73] It was within this context that Irish political and cultural activism emerged. An increased focus on ethnic recognition allowed the Irish to conceive of themselves as a distinct ethnic minority. When interviewed by psychologist Marc Scully, Kate, who was second-generation London-Irish reflected that the GLC's multicultural initiatives had led to 'people being much more open about talking about ethnicity and identity and nationality'.[74] Confirming their status as a separate ethnic group, and with it recognition of the discrimination the Irish experienced became the primary objective of this activism. These processes also meant that at least at a local government level the Irish were recognised as an ethnic minority. This greatly bolstered the emergence of Irish politics and culture in Britain, not least because it meant that Irish organisations were able to access resources and financial aid.

The GLC was of paramount importance in the establishment of the Irish as a distinct ethnic minority. By advocating a multicultural agenda, which included the Irish, the GLC was the first governmental body to recognise their minority status. In a policy report on the Irish community, published in 1984, the GLC stated:

> The overall picture of London's Irish community in this report indicates a community poorly housed, and suffering from a disproportionately high incidence of mental illness in relation to its

[68] Lennon, McAdam and O'Brien, *Across the Water*, 10.
[69] Brian Dooley, *Choosing the Green?: Second Generation Irish and the cause of Ireland*, (Belfast: Beyond the Pale, 2004), vii.
[70] Irish in Britain Archive, Hunger Strikes, Coventry and District Hunger Strike Action Committee, 'Hunger Strike News Sheet No.1', 13 February 1981; Irish in Britain Archive, Hunger Strikes, London Hunger-Strike Action Committee, 'Victory to the Hunger-Strikers!', 1980; Irish in Britain Archive, Hunger Strikes, London Hunger-Strike Action Committee, 'Bobby Sands: Portrait of a Hunger Striker', 1981.
[71] Angela Singer, 'London demo for hunger strikers', *The Guardian*, 8 December 1980.
[72] Interview with Diarmuid quoted in Sorohan, *Irish London During the Troubles*, 144.
[73] John Solomos, *Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 142-171; Barry Hazley, 'The Irish in Post-War England: Experience, Memory and Belonging in Personal Narratives of Migration 1945-69' (PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2012), 24-5.
[74] Scully, 'Discourses of authenticity and national identity amongst the Irish diaspora in England', 175.

> size. It is a community baited by the media, suffering constant attacks on its cultural and social identity and deterred from political mobilisation by the threat of imprisonment and exile under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The root of these problems lies in racism against the Irish, a factor yet to be acknowledged as a major problem in British society.[75]

The report singles out the role of the media in exacerbating the disadvantages experienced by the Irish in Britain. It argued that stereotyped representations of the Irish in the press and on television 'had a noticeably negative affect on relations between the Irish community and other Londoners'. It was particularly concerned that media reporting on Northern Ireland 'recreates and reinforces negative racial stereotyping of the Irish as irrational, reckless and naturally predisposed to violence'.[76] It is important that the GLC attributed the discrimination experienced by the Irish to racism. To establish themselves as an ethnic minority activists allied the Irish experiences with those of other minority groups; and as such enabled the discrimination that they experienced to be redefined as racism.[77] As discussed in chapter one, the extent to which anti-Irish hostility can be considered racism has been the subject of much academic debate. The view that they were racially discriminated against, however, was widely acknowledged and disseminated by the Irish themselves in the 1980s. Until it was dissolved in 1986, the GLC worked closely with Irish groups to produce policy aimed at tackling this problem, appointing the first local government Irish Liaison Officer in 1983.[78]

The Council also provided Irish organisations with considerable support and financial aid with the aim of encouraging 'community' projects. In 1983, for example, the Hillingdon Irish Society was granted £40,000 by the GLC to convert a former youth club into a cultural, welfare and social centre for the Irish.[79] In 1984, Newham Council and the GLC provided £110,000 to set up an Irish cultural centre in the borough, much to the disapproval of the local press which ridiculed the notion of the Irish 'as a *bonafide* ethnic minority'.[80] Similar criticism was directed against the GLC's other Irish initiatives by the tabloid press, which dismissed the idea that the Irish could be victims of racism. Regardless, between 1983 and 1985, the GLC provided in the region of £3,000,000 to fund Irish 'community' projects. This investment allowed Irish organisations and agencies to flourish, as a result by the end of 1985, there was approximately thirty Irish welfare and cultural services in London alone.[81]

Though these organisations had different focuses and agendas, the majority were committed, principally, to gaining recognition as an ethnic group and raising awareness of anti-Irish discrimination at a national level. Rather than reflect the full diversity of views to be found within Britain's Irish

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[75] London Metropolitan Archive, *Policy Report on the Irish Community*, 10; Gray, 'From 'Ethnicity' to 'Diaspora'', 73-4.
[76] London Metropolitan Archive, *Policy Report on the Irish Community*, 4-5.
[77] Scully, 'Discourses of authenticity and national identity amongst the Irish diaspora in England', 71.
[78] Gray, 'From 'Ethnicity' to 'Diaspora'', 71.
[79] London Metropolitan Archive, LSPU/REPG/03/10, 'Irish Centre may open by Easter', *Uxbridge and Hillingden Gazette*, 24 November 1983.
[80] London Metropolitan Archive, LSPU/REPG/03/01, '£110,000 Aid Plan for 'Abused Irish'', *Newham Recorder*, undated.
[81] Gray, 'From 'Ethnicity' to 'Diaspora'', 71.

population, these organisations, tended to be run by a small core group of politically like-minded people who shared the same priorities. To achieve their aims, it was essential for Irish activists to gain the endorsement of the CRE. Between 1984 and 1993 Irish activists petitioned the CRE on numerous occasions to include the Irish within its multicultural framework with limited success. Although, the CRE agreed to the establishment of an Irish Research Advisory Group to investigate anti-Irish racism in 1991, the Commission ultimately concluded that 'the paucity of evidence on discrimination against the Irish was still a bar to accepting'.[82] The CRE's eventual acknowledgement of the Irish as a discriminated-against minority in the mid-1990s was the result of a radical restructuring, which brought about a new, more sympathetic regime. In order to qualify for consideration within the multicultural frameworks which were being promoted by organisations such as the CRE, it was necessary for Irish activists to give witness of the discrimination they suffered. This is apparent in the reports of welfare organisations and committees, as well as the literature of activist groups such as the IBRG, which made a point of framing Irish issues and grievances in the context of victimisation and racism.

From these efforts to secure the recognition of a separate Irish ethnicity in Britain, a particular Irish identity was formulated which emphasised a Catholic, nationalist Irishness and had the potential to exclude many sections of the Irish population, such as Protestants, the middle class and LGBTQ+. Some of these groups did seek to assert alternative Irish identities by establishing their own societies. In London during the late 1980s, for example, several middle-class Irish organisations were established including the London Irish Network and the London Irish Society. These organisations supported and promoted a range of social and cultural activities, including organising Christmas and St Patrick's Day parties to raise money for Irish charities in Britain. They also strove to make significant and valuable contributions to British society.[83] Despite their efforts to assert alternative Irish identities, the tendency was for a Catholic, nationalist, largely working-class profile of the Irish in Britain to dominate.[84] The pre-eminence of this identity resulted in the creation of a narrative of Irish experience in Britain based on assumptions of racism. This discourse, as Hazley has observed, offered a subject-position from which other Irish people could understand and contextualise their personal experiences.[85] It also coloured many Irish people's perceptions of their interactions with the host society, leading them to automatically read racism into exchanges. In particular, it manifested itself in a suspicion of the British media which was considered to be hugely influential in shaping anti-Irish attitudes through its reliance on stereotypes and its failure to report the complexities of the conflict in Northern Ireland.

Many Irish organisations felt, with good reason, that the principal culprit in sustaining anti-Irish racism was the media. For this reason, they focused their energies on challenging what they saw as ingrained prejudice in the media's portrayal of the Irish and Irish affairs. Accordingly, one of the stated objectives of the IBRG was its pledge to challenge 'censorship, propaganda and anti-Irish racism

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[82] Kevin Howard, 'Constructing the Irish of Britain: Ethnic recognition and the 2001 UK Census', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 29, 1 (2006), 113-4.
[83] Gray, 'From 'Ethnicity' to 'Diaspora'', 75.
[84] *Ibid*., 73-4.
[85] Hazley, 'Re/negotiating "suspicion"', 329.

in the media'.[86] The IBRG considered media representations of the Irish as perpetuating long-standing negative stereotypes and argued that this discouraged the Irish in Britain, especially second-generation, from engaging positively with their roots. In an article featured in *Irish Studies in Britain* (established in 1981 as part of efforts to encourage interest in Irish history and culture), the organisation explained the adverse effects of anti-Irish racism:

> When an Irish accent immediately turns a person into a figure of fun: when the racist stereotype of the drunken, whimsical, "thick Paddy" is so widely believed: when the very word "Irish" has become a synonym for "stupidity"- how can we expect people to hold their heads up and say they are Irish?[87]

The IBRG believed that coverage of events in Northern Ireland had particularly inflamed the hostility and prejudice experienced by many Irish people living in Britain through the 'Troubles'. The organisation accused the British media of myopia, producing over-simplified, biased coverage, which 'routinely distorted' the facts about Northern Ireland; a view that has often been repeated by scholars.[88] It claimed that the tendency to report violence without context, and as the exclusive preserve of the IRA, sustained a view of the conflict as an irrational battle between two warring factions in which the British Army was an altruistic, peace-keeping force. This had reinforced anti-Irish prejudice and provoked public anger towards the Irish in Britain. Speaking at a conference on 'Irish Perspectives on British Education' (organised by the IBRG in October 1990), Elinor Kelly, who had led the Macdonald Enquiry into racism and racial violence in Manchester's schools, highlighted the link between coverage of the 'Troubles' and the discrimination experienced by many Irish people in Britain.[89] She referred to a survey carried out in 1984 by the University of Nottingham where 800 schoolchildren were asked to identify characteristics they associated with different ethnic minorities. It found that the Irish were perceived to be 'dull' and 'violent'. One schoolteacher also told researchers that 'in the school there is a feeling that anything to do with Ireland is backwards or stupid and the Irish children would be ashamed of wearing the shamrock'. Kelly asked:

> Is this surprising? Since 1969 when the British troops were sent into Northern Ireland, there has been a barrage of media coverage portraying the barbarous behaviour of Irish nationalists and the restraint of the Army against intolerable provocation. If the children did not have an alternative version of current affairs and had not been taught about the positive and creative contributions of Irish people, then how could they fail to dislike the Irish- mock their accents, joke about paddies?[90]

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[86] Irish in Britain Archive, Irish in Britain Representation Group, Box 1, 'IBRG Pamphlet'.
[87] Irish in Britain Archive, Irish in Britain Representation Group, Box 1, 'The Irish in Britain Representation Group', *Irish in Britain Studies*, no. 3, 1982.
[88] Irish in Britain Archive, Irish in Britain Representation Group, Box 1, 'London Regional Council Paper on Northern Ireland (Six Counties)', 12 June 1983.
[89] The Macdonald Enquiry was set up in 1986 after the racially motivated murder of thirteen-year-old Ahmed Ullah, killed by a fellow pupil in the playground of a Manchester school.
[90] Irish in Britain Archive, Irish in Britain Representation Group, Box 1, 'Irish Perspectives on British Education: Report of a National Conference', 13 October 1990, 6-7.

The certainty amongst Irish activists that the media was biased and racially discriminatory in its approach to the Irish people developed into a key element of their narrative of the Irish experience in Britain.

The IBRG also alleged that biased reporting was a contributing factor towards the continuing violence in Northern Ireland. Their members questioned how a solution to the 'Troubles' could be found if the British public were not provided with a comprehensive explanation of the political motivations behind the violence, and were instead assailed by prejudiced and sensationalised news stories.[91] The organisation believed that persistent anti-Irish stereotyping, particularly by the press had been detrimental to the cultivation of Anglo-Irish relations and therefore a hindrance to efforts to resolve the conflict. In an article featured in the organisation's newsletter *An Pobal Éirithe*, published in 1989, Pat Reynolds (the IBRG's Public Relations Officer) accused the British media of 'misus[ing] dirty propaganda and censorship… deliberately mislead[ing] the British public into stereotyping the Irish people and believing myths about Ireland'.[92] Similarly, in a lecture given to the Irish in Britain History Group in 1986, Liz Curtis, who was active in various Irish organisations, argued that the use of anti-Irish stereotypes and jokes by the media 'blunt[ed] the sensibilities of British people' leading them to presume that the 'Troubles' were a result of Irish irrationality rather than British policy.[93] Curtis contended that by desensitising the public, the media prevented people from challenging the British presence in Northern Ireland, thereby prolonging the conflict.[94]

The IBRG monitored media output at both a national and local level, setting up a Fleet Street branch in 1983 dedicated to tackling discriminatory material in the national press.[95] The organisation endeavoured to spotlight and challenge racism in the media. One particularly high-profile, and oft-cited case was against a cartoon published by Jak (Raymond Jackson) in the *London Evening Standard* on 29 October 1982. The cartoon (Figure 15) shows a fictitious film poster, advertising 'The Irish: The Ultimate in Psychopathic Horror', featuring 'the IRA, INLA, UDF, PFF, UDA, etc. etc.' and illustrated with grotesque figures reminiscent of the nineteenth-century simian, monstrous Paddy.[96] Produced three months following the Hyde and Regent's Park bombings (20 July 1982), in which eleven people were killed, the cartoon reflects heightened public anger towards the Irish, and is clear evidence of discrimination and stereotyping by the media. Curiously, Jak's mother was from Ireland; nonetheless his cartoons were filled with Irish and other racial stereotypes, leading journalist Duncan Campbell to criticise the latitude that *Standard* editor Charles Wintour allowed Jak 'to picture all black medics as

[91] Working Class Movement Library, Irish in Britain Representation Group: Racism Against the Irish Asserted Documents and Press Cuttings, 'Irish Studies in the Secondary School', 1984.
[92] Irish in Britain Archive, Irish in Britain Representation Group, Box 1, Pat Reynolds, 'No Time for Love in the Morning', *An Pobal Éirithe*, Issue 3, February 1989, 5.
[93] Information on Ireland published information on Ireland and the conflict in Northern Ireland that it felt the British media censored. Curtis, *Nothing but the Same Old Story,* 102.
[94] Irish in Britain Archive, Audio Collection, Liz Curtis, 'Irish People in Britain and the Media', (Irish in Britain History Group, 1986-7).
[95] Irish in Britain Archive, Irish in Britain Representation Group, Box 2, 'IBRG Newsletter', 1983.
[96] There was no group called the PFF, presumably Jak meant the Protestant Action Force (PAF).

primitive witch-doctors and all Irishmen as dumb navvies'.[97] An interesting parallel can be made between Jak and the nineteenth-century cartoonists featured in *Punch*, many of whom, including Robert Hamerton and John Leech, prominent traducers of the ape-like Paddy, were Irish or of Irish descent. Foster has suggested that their exclusion from mainstream Englishness led these cartoonists to 'define the concept all the more emphatically; it seems that some of the transplanted Irish entered into the process of psychological compensation with an almost unholy gusto'.[98]

The IBRG denounced the Jak cartoon, as extremely offensive, and yet another example of anti-Irish racism in the media.[99] It brought its objections to the GLC's Ethnic Minorities Unit, which immediately withdrew advertising from the *Standard* and reported the case to the CRE, the Attorney-General and the Press Council, on the grounds that the cartoon was racially inflammatory. In its complaint to the Press Council, the GLC explained that:

> The Council considers that the Jak cartoon was likely to be upsetting and cause concern to the Irish community in London. Although the initials of terrorist organisations were included in the cartoon, it is considered that the featuring of the bold words 'The Irish' was so placed as to cast aspersions on the Irish people generally.[100]

Expressing his regret if 'Irishmen with no sympathy for such organisations or such violent activities were to feel they had been included in Jak's condemnations', the *Standard*'s Editor, Louis Kirby, dismissed the GLC's allegations, arguing that Jak 'clearly mentioned 'IRA, INLA, UDF, UDA etc.' as its specific targets'. In a letter to the Director-General of the GLC he explained that the cartoon had been a reaction to the mounting violence in Northern Ireland.[101] The Attorney-General told the GLC that he would not prosecute, arguing that any jury would see the cartoon as aimed at terrorists and not the Irish as a whole. The CRE decided against prosecuting the *Standard* on the same grounds and also withdrew its complaint to the Press Council.[102] The Press Council rejected the case out of hand anyhow, accusing the GLC of 'using the power of its purse' to influence the newspapers' content and 'coerce the editor'.[103]

In November 1984, the Irish Media Group (IMG) brought a similar case to the attention of the GLC, this time against the *Sunday Express*'s editor John Junor regarding his comments in the wake of the Brighton bombing:

> But surely the saddest, sickest thing of all is that along the Falls Road and in the Republican homes in Crossmaglen and elsewhere, glasses have been raised and no doubt still are being raised in exultation at what the Brighton assassins achieved in the name of

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[97] 'Raymond Jackson 'Jak': Biography', *The British Cartoon Archive*, University of Kent, https://www.cartoons.ac.uk/cartoonist-biographies/i-j/RaymondJackson_Jak.html [accessed 22 August 2019].
[98] Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch*, 178.
[99] London Metropolitan Archive, LSPU/REPG/03/30, 'Council Agenda', 23 November 1982.
[100] London Metropolitan Archive, LSPU/REPG/03/30, 'Press Council Complaint', 11 March 1983.
[101] London Metropolitan Archive, LSPU/REPG/03/29, Letter from Louis Kirby (Editor of the *Standard*) to Sir James Swaffield (Director General and Clerk to the GLC), 6 December 1982.
[102] London Metropolitan Archive, LSPU/REPG/03/22, Press Council: Press Release, 8 April 1983.
[103] *Ibid*.

> Ireland. With compatriots like these, wouldn't you rather admit to being a pig than to being Irish?.[104]

Junor had caused offence earlier that year, stating, in reference to President Ronald Reagan's upcoming trip to Ireland, 'Ah well, every man to his own taste. For my own part, I would infinitely prefer to spend three days in June looking for worms in a dung heap'.[105] In a letter to Paul Boateng (Vice-Chairman of the GLC's Ethnic Minorities Committee), the IMG urged the Council to withdraw advertising from the *Express* group, explaining that on this occasion they would not be taking their complaint to the Press Council as 'past experience has shown it to be slow moving, biased and because of its lack of power, irrelevant'.[106] Despite the IMG's disinclination to report the incident, Junor's comments did eventually come to the attention of the Press Council who admonished the *Express* editor, forcing him to issue an apology.

Junor's slurs made a lasting impression, as one Irish woman from London, interviewed by Hickman and Walter in 1995, observed, 'A few remarks on TV and in the papers that I don't like. In the *Express* John Junor said the Irish were pigs and rolling in muck. There are others. I can't think of their names. It's very degrading and I don't agree with it'. [107] As this shows derogatory comments of this nature were, understandably, experienced as a personal affront by some Irish people. Moreover, it demonstrates how instances of anti-Irish racism in the media entered the collective memory of the Irish. Such prejudicial comments were frequently presented as evidence of the pervasiveness of discrimination and became part of a narrative of Irish experiences in Britain, which generalised the media as racist, seemingly unconscious of the individual merits of the wide variety of articles and programmes on the Irish and Irish affairs. This had resulted in a one-dimensional understanding of the British media in the 1970s and 1980s both amongst the Irish in Britain but also within the scholarship.

As well as tackling racism through official channels, the IMG, and other like-minded organisations, encouraged the Irish living in Britain to boycott offending publications. Figure 16, for example, is part of a series of posters and leaflets issued by the Irish Campaign against Racism in the Media (ICARM) to raise awareness of the anti-Irish leanings of newspapers such as the *Standard* and the *Sunday Express*.[108] The poster lists publications which regularly published discriminatory material, calling not only on the Irish, but the public in general, to boycott them.

ICARM was launched in 1984 and was one of several groups dedicated to raising awareness of anti-Irish sentiment in the press and broadcast media. An important component of its campaign, and that of similar organisations, notably Information on Ireland founded in 1978 by Liz Curtis, was providing 'accurate' information on the Irish and Irish affairs to compensate for the perceived failure of the established media to do so. As Curtis explained:

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[104] John Junor, *Sunday Express*, 28 October 1984.
[105] *Ibid*.
[106] London Metropolitan Archive, LSPU/REPG/03/38, Letter from Sean Sexton (Chairman of the Irish Media Group) to Paul Boeteng (GLC), 1 November 1984.
[107] Hickman and Walter, *Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain*, 223.
[108] Irish in Britain Archive, Troops Out Movement, 'Spread the Word' *Troops Out*, 1985.

> The main function of protests, if made publicly, is probably to develop among viewers (and readers) a collective 'crap-detector' so that we are better able to assess the information we receive and to some extent immunise ourselves against its habitual biases.
>
> Developing an awareness of the shortcomings of the media does not itself fill the gap in the coverage. For that, it is necessary to turn to alternative sources of information. In the case of Ireland there are plenty: newspapers, magazines from a variety of perspectives, publications from concerned organisations, as well as videos and films.[109]

Far from providing 'a variety of perspectives', these publications were for the most part produced by a small group of activist organisations with distinctly nationalist agendas, and so carry their own biases. Curtis' book *Nothing but the Same Old Story* (1984), which chronicles the history of anti-Irish racism in Britain (paying particular attention to the media's role in perpetuating prejudice), was published by Information on Ireland, with financial assistance from the GLC, as part of these efforts.[110] Information on Ireland and the IMG also petitioned the BBC and ITV for the provision of Irish television and radio programmes.[111] The IBRG on the other hand, advocated the establishment of an Irish community media, in addition to the *Irish Post*, which offered extensive coverage of the situation in Northern Ireland and other news stories from Ireland.[112] To this end, it set up its own newsletter *An Pobal Éirithe*, published quarterly, intended to communicate relevant issues to Irish people in Britain, promote Irish culture and foster a positive identity. The IBRG also endorsed independent film projects, organising screenings aimed at providing the public with alternative information on Ireland; though it seems likely that these screenings would have attracted a largely Irish audience.[113]

Irish activists sought to alert the public to the insufficiency of the media's coverage of Northern Ireland in particular. In 1979, Information on Ireland produced a pamphlet entitled 'The British Media and Ireland', as part of its Campaign for Free Speech on Ireland, consisting of quotations, newspaper clippings, speeches and academic articles analysing the media's coverage of the conflict in Northern Ireland. The pamphlet was assembled to show that the British media routinely distorted, misrepresented and suppressed news about the situation in the province. It argued that the press and broadcast media parroted the views of the British government, presenting the conflict in simplistic terms as between two irrational factions prevented from descending into all-out civil war by the ministrations of the British Army, whose own role in perpetuating the violence was minimised or ignored. The pamphlet's message

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[109] Working Class Movement Library, Irish in Britain Representation Group: Racism Against the Irish Asserted Documents and Press Cuttings, Aengus MacNeil, 'The Media and Racism', *Troops Out*, May 1987, 8-9.
[110] Curtis, *Nothing but the Same Old Story*.
[111] Irish in Britain Archive, Irish Media Group, 'Interim Report', September 1991; Irish in Britain Archive, Irish in Britain Representation Group, Box 1, 'IBRG Policy on Anti-Irish Racism', 22 October 1988.
[112] Irish in Britain Archive, 'IBRG Newsletter', 1983; Irish in Britain Archive, Irish in Britain Representation Group, Box 1, Gearóid Ó Caireallain, 'The Banned Community', *An Pobal Éirithe*, Issue 3, February 1989, 10-1.
[113] Irish in Britain Archive, Irish in Britain Representation Group, Box 1, 'Activision Studios LTD', *Irish Voice: Haringey's IBRG Community Magazine*, Issue 5, 1988, 13-4; Irish in Britain Archive, Irish in Britain Representation Group, Box 1, Janice McKnight, 'The Case for Film', *Irish Voice: Haringey's IBRG Community Magazine*, Issue 4, 1987, 23-4; Irish in Britain Archive, 'Videos… Videos… Videos', 1990, 9.

is clearly stated on the opening page: 'If you don't know what is happening in Northern Ireland, you must have been watching British television, listening to British radio and reading the British press'.[114]

To support these claims, it includes contributions from scholars Philip Schlesinger, Liz Curtis and Philip Elliott, who argued that the media produced one-dimensional, stereotyped coverage of the conflict. The pamphlet also includes articles and comments from prominent journalists, such as Peter Taylor and Jonathan Dimbleby. In an article, which first appeared in *Index on Censorship* (1978), Taylor acknowledged the increased pressure brought to bear on broadcasters to uphold British policy in Northern Ireland. He recounts how several programmes he had worked on had come under fire after deviating from official narratives of the conflict. Though critical of the broadcasting authorities' failure to stand up to government pressure, Taylor emphasised the efforts of individual journalists to produce challenging coverage of the conflict.[115] Jonathan Dimbleby, in a speech made to the inaugural meeting of the Campaign for Free Speech on Ireland in March 1977, observed the important role journalists played in shaping public attitudes to Northern Ireland and the responsibility they had to ensure that 'Northern Ireland is put in context, the events there are explained, the possible future analysed. Otherwise we will continue to deny the British public the political issue that any government has had to face'.[116] The contributions of academics, but more particularly journalists, vocalising their dissatisfaction with how Northern Ireland was reported, gave considerable weight to the argument that the British media's coverage of the 'Troubles' was at best superficial and at worst outright lies. Undeniably, the media came under increased pressure from the government, which at times resulted in journalists voluntarily censoring themselves, omitting material or avoiding contentious issues. The very fact that these journalists were vocalising their concerns and raising awareness of the restrictions imposed upon them, however, indicates that attitudes in the media towards Northern Ireland were much more complex than Irish activists suggested and that there was a willingness to produce more searching coverage and push back against censorship.

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[114] The Campaign for Free Speech on Ireland, 'The British Media and Ireland: Truth: the first causality', (London: Information on Ireland, 1979).
[115] Peter Taylor 'Reporting Northern Ireland' in The Campaign for Free Speech on Ireland, 'The British Media and Ireland: Truth: the first causality', (London: Information on Ireland, 1979), 21-5.
[116] Jonathan Dimbleby, 'Speech to the inaugural public meeting of the Campaign for Free Speech on Ireland', 13 March 1977 quoted in The Campaign for Free Speech on Ireland, 'The British Media and Ireland: Truth: the first causality', (London: Information on Ireland, 1979), 3.

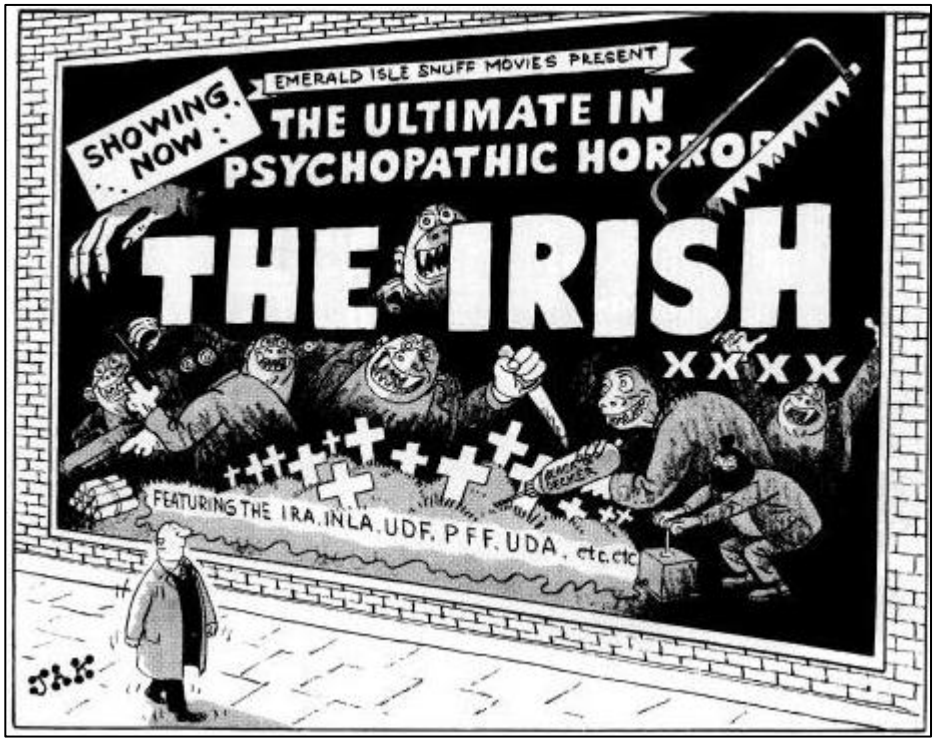

Figure 15: Jak, 'The Irish', *London Evening Standard*, 29 October 1982.

Figure 16: Irish in Britain Archive, Poster Collection, 'Irish Campaign Against Racism in the Media'.

The British media exacerbated the hostility directed against the Irish as a result of the 'Troubles'. The press in particular played an important role in constructing the Irish in Britain as 'suspect'. By propagating the idea that the IRA were hidden within the Irish migrant population newspapers encouraged readers to regard all Irish people with suspicion. This not only fuelled anti-Irish hostility but served to legitimise surveillance of the Irish population under the PTA. The resurrection of nineteenth-century caricatures, by the tabloid press in particular, reinforced long-standing stereotypes, including that of the Irish as inherently and innately violent. Though the British media could be guilty on occasion of being over-simplistic, in reality its coverage of events in Northern Ireland was considerably more complex. As we have seen both the press and the broadcast media could also produce extensive, detailed and nuanced analysis of the conflict. In these cases, journalists sought to profile different perspectives, offering background to the conflict and exploring the motivations behind the violence, producing complex and engaging coverage. Whilst views advocated by the media sometimes aligned with those of the government, the press and broadcast media regularly challenged British policy in Northern Ireland; albeit not always in a way that would gain the approval of groups such as the IBRG. Some sections of the media for example believed that the government was too lenient in Northern Ireland and encouraged more authoritarian action. In reality, newspapers and television programmes held a wide range of different, often opposing and contradictory views, as the British media was not a monolithic entity.

Nonetheless, the view put forward by the IBRG and other Irish activists that the media coverage of Northern Ireland was biased and one-dimensional became an integral part of the narrative of the Irish experience in Britain. The heightened awareness this discourse engendered, could result in people reading discrimination by default into something that they may have otherwise interpreted differently. This predisposition has also informed much of the literature on the Irish in Britain, and the literature on the 'Troubles'. Scholars often take it at face value that the media acted as a puppet of the British government, providing coverage of events in Northern Ireland that was one-sided and oversimplified. They frequently cite Curtis unquestioningly, rarely considering the influence her involvement in groups like Information on Ireland might have had on her writing. This tendency by scholars to dismiss all media coverage of Northern Ireland as distorted and stereotyped is in part because the literature of activist groups such as the IBRG dominates the archives and so has had a disproportionate influence on the historiography. In addition to Curtis, several academics who have contributed considerably to scholarship on the 'Troubles' and the Irish in Britain were involved in Irish politics and cultural activism during the 1980s. Sociologist Mary Hickman, for example, who has carried out valuable research into the experiences of Irish-born and second-generation Irish during the late twentieth century, served as the secretary for the IBRG Paddington branch and was involved in various initiatives to develop Irish Studies in Britain.[117] Whilst her political and cultural activism by no mean invalidates her findings, they inevitably have a bearing on her emphasis. It is therefore

[117] Irish in Britain Archive, Irish in Britain Representation Group, Box 2, 'List of IBRG Branches and Secretaries', 1984.

unsurprising that the conclusions reached by Hickman and others align with those of the IBRG. It could be argued that the prevalence of this critical approach towards the media espoused by Irish activists in the 1980s has prevented many scholars from exploring more nuanced examples of the media's coverage of Northern Ireland.

Irish organisations in the 1980s denounced the British media for producing simplistic, biased coverage of the Northern Ireland conflict, which inflamed hostility towards the Irish living in Britain during the 'Troubles'. Undoubtedly, the press and broadcast media played a significant role in the construction of the Irish as suspect. The close association of the Irish with IRA terrorism, propagated by the tabloid press in particular, meant that the Irish living in Britain became the focus of public anger. IRA bomb attacks on English cities gave rise to violence and abuse targeted at the Irish, who also came under surveillance as part of new anti-terrorism legislation. Many Irish people responded by keeping a low profile, eschewing Irish cultural and political activities, even disguising their accents so as not to attract unwanted attention. As a result, by the mid-1970s Irishness had become something largely practiced in private and positive Irish identities were temporarily erased from British society.

The early 1980s, however, witnessed a resurgence of Irish political and cultural activism, the primary objective of which was to gain recognition for the Irish as a separate ethnic minority group. Newly emerged Irish organisations sought to challenge their status in British society and generate a narrative of Irish identity other than one proscribed by association with the IRA. They campaigned on a wide range of issues, but most particular anti-Irish racism. It was widely believed amongst the Irish that the British media, especially its coverage of events in Northern Ireland, was in large part culpable for the heighten prejudice towards them. Organisations such as the IBRG exerted considerable energy to challenge ingrained anti-Irish prejudice and what it perceived as one-sided coverage of the situation in Northern Ireland.

The certainty amongst Irish activists that the media was biased and racially discriminatory in its approach to the Irish and Irish affairs developed into an essential element of their narrative of the Irish experience in Britain. The prevalence of these groups, despite only representing a section of the diverse Irish population in Britain, has resulted in the view that the media's coverage was one-dimensional often being repeated verbatim in academic literature. In reality the situation was much more complex, as this thesis shows, the British press and broadcast media were capable of providing challenging and multifaceted coverage, offering detailed analysis of a variety of perspectives on the conflict. To date, the failure to problematise this simplistic view of the media has prevented a full understanding of the nuances of its coverage of Northern Ireland, and therefore how the conflict was understood in Britain.

Chapter Six: Newspaper coverage of the mid-1990s.

On 31 August 1994, the IRA announced that: 'in order to enhance the democratic peace process and underline our definitive commitment to its success, the leadership of the IRA have decided that as of midnight… there will be a complete cessation of military operations'.[1] The response to the ceasefire ranged from jubilant celebrations to distrust and apprehension. This spectrum of emotions was reflected in the press; reporting on the ceasefire the *Sun* newspaper warned that 'There must be no appeasement, no surrender, no sell-out', whilst the *Guardian* heralded 'The promise of peace' and declared that 'An historic resolution of Northern Ireland's bloody Troubles began to emerge last night after the IRA took the dramatic step of ending its 25-year campaign of violence'.[2] Over the next four years, British newspapers were to report on the advances, obstacles and impasses that characterised the fraught negotiations. For the most part, the press promoted the Northern Ireland peace process as an effective political process, but newspapers naturally varied in their opinion of how negotiations should be handled. Throughout the mid-1990s, the press raised questions and challenged the actions of participants in the process, often presenting different, sometimes opposing, views. By taking an active and diverse approach to reporting the peace process, newspapers offered their readers varied and critical coverage during this last phase in the Northern Ireland conflict.

Though much has been said on various aspects of the peace process by both academics and participants, examination of the media's coverage of the negotiations has been limited. Political scientist Gadi Wolfsfeld argues that academics, like journalists themselves, tend to be drawn to the drama of terrorism and violence, and so the study of peace processes is frequently relegated to the corner as the 'poor stepsisters of the field'. Peace journalism, however, is often more subtle and complex than coverage of violence and therefore offers a valuable insight into how news and information is disseminated through the media.[3] This said, social scientists have begun to investigate the role the media played in reporting the peace process. Their scholarship offers a valuable picture of how the media promoted, then choreographed the peace process.

Graham Spencer has argued that journalists, particularly broadcasters were 'full and active participants' in negotiations. He contends that by broadcasting 'the contestations between parties, carrying dialogue and communications, and publicizing the dynamic and direction of talks, the news media became a political participant in the peace process and produced expectations and pressures which were absorbed into negotiations'.[4] Kirsten Sparre similarly argues that newspapers and television

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[1] Irish Republican Army (IRA) Ceasefire Statement, 31 August 1994, https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/ira31894.htm [accessed 22 April 2019].
[2] 'Peace… But not at any cost', *The Sun*, 31 August 1994; David Sharrock, Martin Walker and Stephen Bates, 'The promise of peace', *The Guardian*, 1 September 1994.
[3] Gadi Wolsfeld, 'Review of *The Propaganda of Peace: The Role of Media and Culture in the Northern Ireland Peace Process* by Greg McLaughlin and Stephen Baker', *Political Communication*, 28, 3 (2011), 400-2.
[4] The extent to which we can view the press and broadcast media as 'political' participants in the negotiations is problematic due to the absence of any meaningful debate on core issues, such as how to reconcile conflicting notions of ethnic and national identities. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter Seven. (Spencer, 'The impact of television news on the Northern Ireland peace negotiations', 604; 611).

provided an important channel through which participants could communicate. She asserts that by using the media to float new ideas, provide clarification, issue threats and hint at concessions participants were able to move negotiations forward. She has also shown how some journalists, recognising the potential role the media could play in the process, took it upon themselves to use their platforms to advance peace talks, publishing articles and interviews with key actors in that process.[5]

David Miller and Greg McLaughlin, have also argued that 'all sides have attempted to use the news media in the negotiations process, and this has meant that the media have themselves been key players in the unfolding drama'.[6] They claim, however, that television in particular was slow to adjust to Sinn Féin's new status as a legitimate political party and argued that its coverage was largely 'an unreflective parroting of [the] government propaganda line', that journalists rarely questioned or pointed out contradictions in the negotiations.[7] Whilst Miller and McLaughlin present numerous examples from the BBC and ITN news, demonstrating a reliance on government briefings, they fail to examine the coverage provided by more open formats such as current affairs programmes, which have the space to explore a range of perspectives. Their work also focuses on a limited time period, beginning with the publication of the Hume-Adams initiative in August 1993 and ending with the Downing Street Declaration in December of the same year.[8] The negotiations that took place during this period were for the most part carried out behind closed doors. To cover these talks at all, journalists were forced to rely on official briefings more than usual, which inevitably limited the scope for engaging with alternative perspectives.

Much of the scholarship to date has tended to concentrate on television coverage, whilst the role of the press has yet to be thoroughly investigated. Greg McLaughlin and Stephen Barker have gone some way to addressing this in their examination of the media's role in conflict resolution. By examining a wide variety of media formats, including newspapers, film, television drama and situation comedy, they found that the media constructed a 'peace process "consensus"', which 'pre-empted the need or desire to question, re-imagine or propose alternatives'.[9] They argued that different media platforms communicated very similar narratives which closely followed the official line that there was no alternative to the peace process if it should fail. This allowed little room for competing perspectives and limited political discourse in the province. Whilst their investigation benefits from examining other forms of media and cultural expression, it limits itself by concentrating exclusively on local television

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[5] Kirsten Sparre, 'Megaphone Diplomacy in the Northern Irish Peace Process'.
[6] Greg McLaughlin and David Miller, 'The Media Politics of the Irish Peace Process', *The International Journal of Press/ Politics*, 1, 4 (1996), 116.
[7] *Ibid*., 128.
[8] The Hume-Adams statements rejected the idea of an internal settlement and asserted the right of the Irish people as a whole to self-determination- these ideas would form the basis for further peace discussions. These formed the basis for the Downing Street Declaration made by both the British and Irish governments. They stated that both governments were committed 'to foster[ing] agreement and reconciliation, leading to a new political framework… with Northern Ireland, for the whole island and between these islands'. On the basis of these promises, the IRA announced a complete cessation of violence on 31 August 1994. In October of that year, loyalist paramilitaries declared a reciprocal ceasefire, marking the beginning of a new phase in the Northern Ireland peace process.
[9] Greg McLaughlin and Stephen Baker, *The Propaganda of Peace: The Role of Media and Culture in the Northern Ireland Peace Process* (Bristol: Intellect, 2010), 96.

and newspapers. The national press and broadcast media also played an important part in promoting peace, especially amongst audiences in the rest of the UK. Though the British media rarely deviated from the pro-peace line, it did provide a critical voice, questioning the priorities and strategies of participants, especially the British government.

This chapter offers a more historical perspective, locating the coverage of the peace process within the wider context of the conflict. This approach allows for the consideration of a range of factors and issues that influenced negotiations. It ensures that due attention is given to the process by which participants reached the negotiating table, and the atmosphere in which they sat down to talks, rather than simply concentrating on the events themselves. Most of the current scholarship focuses either on the 1994 IRA ceasefire or the negotiations immediately before the signing of the Good Friday Peace Agreement in 1998. This chapter will concentrate on the years 1995 and 1996, when many key developments took place which influenced the spirit of multi-party talks. These include the publication of the Framework Documents, the Mitchell Report, and President Clinton's visit to Belfast. By examining how these events were reported in the press, it will contribute to a more complete understanding of the peace process, and how the British media engaged with it.

The dispute surrounding the critical issue of decommissioning will be a key focus. The chapter will argue that newspapers not only provided critical but varied commentary, challenging the government over its management of the decommissioning issue, and offering opinions on how it should be handled. The chapter then explores press attitudes towards American involvement. It argues that most newspapers were wary of American intervention, distrusting the pro-republican tendencies of the Clinton administration. This changed following Clinton's visit to Belfast in November 1995. Increasingly the press was inclined to accept the necessity of America playing a role in negotiations. The chapter also explores press attitudes towards Sinn Féin, arguing that newspapers brought pressure to bear on the British and Irish governments to involve the republican party in talks. Finally, the chapter will investigate the collapse of the ceasefire and the resumption in 1996 of the IRA's campaign of violence in England. It argues that newspapers were more tempered in their manner of reporting bomb attacks, that rather than simply covering the violence they made efforts to understand the motivations behind the paramilitaries' actions.

From the outset, the peace process was plagued by disputes over the sincerity of the IRA's ceasefire. Sceptical as to the motives of the republicans, the British government insisted on the prior decommissioning of paramilitary weapons before Sinn Féin was allowed entry into all-party talks. Speaking in Washington on 7 March 1995, Northern Ireland Secretary of State Sir Patrick Mayhew stated that Sinn Féin would not be allowed into negotiations unless there was a tangible beginning to the disarmament process. The IRA, however, refused to give up its weapons, arguing that to do so would effectively be surrender.[10] The press followed this dispute closely, frustrated by the slow pace of

[10] For a full account of the decommissioning debates see Thomas Hennessey, *The Northern Ireland Peace Process: Ending the Troubles?* (Dublin: Gill and McMillan, 2000), 67-114.

negotiations. Journalists condemned the failure to convene all-party talks, fearing that delays were fuelling suspicion on all sides and putting the peace process at risk. Their criticism tended to be largely directed at the British government's stand on decommissioning, but although most newspapers questioned the government's approach to disarmament, they had very different ideas on how this obstacle should be managed.

The *Guardian* was particularly vocal in its criticism. Echoing the nationalist viewpoint, it argued that the government was creating unnecessary hurdles on the road to peace. Though the paper stressed that it was important that the IRA make a show of good faith through a symbolic decommissioning of arms, it believed it unreasonable to expect the paramilitaries to hand over all weapons before talks began. The *Guardian* argued that a timely concession by the republicans could help unionists to commit to the peace process:

> the key to surer progress would be significant steps towards decommissioning the IRA's arsenal of weapons. No single action would do more to encourage the atmosphere within which the politicians are now working.[11]

At the same time, the *Guardian* contended that the government was mishandling the issue, accusing ministers of 'digging a trench full of pre-conditions'. The paper argued that the only way the government would succeed in persuading the paramilitaries to disarm was to engage in direct talks with the IRA and its political wing, Sinn Féin.[12]

In marked contrast, the *Sun* criticised the government for being too willing to give way to the IRA, arguing that under no circumstances should Sinn Féin be allowed to participate in talks until the IRA handed over all weapons. In an editorial marking the first anniversary of the IRA ceasefire, the *Sun* remarked that:

> John Major said it would make his stomach turn to have to talk to terrorists. But the day is not far away when Sinn Fein, mouthpiece of the IRA, WILL have a seat at the peace table.
>
> To most people it will seem incredible that political respectability will have been gained by the use of the bullet not the ballot, with not one gun, grenade or bomb being given up.[13]

The *Sun* resigned itself to the early release of paramilitary prisoners but demanded that this 'must be the last concession until something is given in return'.[14]

Norman Tebbit, columnist and prominent right-wing politician, was particularly outspoken in his opposition to concessions. His uncompromising position is unsurprising, as the former Conservative Cabinet minister had been injured, and his wife left paralysed, by an IRA bomb attack on the Grand Hotel in Brighton on 12 October 1984. He had also been the Chairman of the Conservative Party and

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[11] 'An early end to arms', *The Guardian*, 7 March 1995.
[12] 'A single speed on the road to peace', *The Guardian*, 14 April 1995.
[13] 'The peace we must not lose', *The Sun*, 31 August 1995.
[14] 'Last gesture', *The Sun*, 26 August 1995.

had held senior governmental positions under Margaret Thatcher, whose hardball negotiating strategy stood in marked contrast with Major's willingness to pursue a political settlement. For the *Sun*'s readers, Tebbit's personal experience at the hands of the IRA, lent him a certain moral authority and his comments on events in Northern Ireland often featured in the paper. The erstwhile politician was extremely critical of what he perceived as the government kowtowing to the IRA over decommissioning. Commenting on Mayhew's Washington speech, Tebbit was clear that he believed the government had shown itself to be weak. Echoing arguments made elsewhere, he asserted that by pandering to the IRA the government were sending the message that violence pays:

> There was a time when there would be no talks with Sinn Fein, the IRA's representatives, until they promised a permanent ceasefire.
>
> … Then there was no question of talking to Sinn Fein until they handed over their guns and bombs. Then the weapons had only to be decommissioned. Then not all of them had to be decommissioned at once but there had to be 'substantial progress'.
>
> Now there is no need for 'substantial progress'
>
> *… The secretary of State Sir Patrick Mayhew, might as well cut down the Union Jack and get out the white flag from the cupboard*.[15]

The *Daily Telegraph* offered a more nuanced perspective. Though critical of concessions made to Sinn Féin, the paper was sympathetic to the difficult balancing act the government faced in trying to maintain peace and advance towards all-party talks, whilst keeping both sides on board. On 25 August 1995, the *Telegraph*'s editorial remarked on the fact that Mayhew was expected to announce an increase in the remission of sentences for all prisoners convicted of terrorism in Northern Ireland:

> Whatever ministers may say, only the most ingenuous will fail to discern here a link between decommissioning weapons and the early release of prisoners. Many, including this newspaper will find such a notion repugnant. Yet faced with the risk that the peace process would otherwise run into the sand, we can sympathise with Sir Patrick's anxiety to break the impasse.

The paper accused Mayhew of using prisoners as a bargaining chip to induce the IRA to hand over weapons. Whilst its disapproval is evident, the piece also underlined the complexity of the task facing Mayhew. It goes on to acknowledge that the prisoner issue was dear to republican hearts and so it was possible that by conceding ground on their early release, the IRA could be coaxed into disarmament. The editorial however, also noted that the government had 'fudged its earlier requirements that the republicans should permanently renounce violence' to no avail, and warned that 'Only if ministers are now prepared to adhere rigorously to their insistence on decommissioning as a pre-condition for talks, can these new moves to placate Sinn Fein be justified'.[16]

The *Telegraph* cast doubt on the integrity of the ceasefire, arguing that the IRA had no intention of ending its violent campaign before achieving its goal of a united Ireland. The paper's scepticism is

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[15] Norman Tebbit, 'IRA peace talks are hard to swallow', *The Sun*, 9 March 1995.
[16] 'A year of peace in Ulster', *Daily Telegraph*, 25 August 1995.

indicated by the frequent use of scare quotes whenever it referred to the peace process, expressing doubt not only on the validity of the peace, but also the viability of the process itself. The paper pointed to the continuation of punishment beatings as evidence that the IRA had far from renounced violence. On 6 September 1995, it noted that the punishment shootings and attacks, 'show all too clearly that the republicans have not lost their old appetite for violence and intimidation'.[17] The *Telegraph* recognised that much of this was associated with the drugs trade, in which the IRA and other paramilitary groups had a vested interest, however, the paper argued that it was 'intended for a wider audience as well'.[18] In an editorial, published in late December, it argued that the paramilitaries were using punishment beatings to 'signal that republicans will return to fully fledged terrorism if Sinn Fein is not rapidly admitted to all-party talks'.[19]

The only paper not to criticise how the problem of disarmament was being handled was the *Daily Mirror*. This was not because the paper supported the government's strategies, rather it was because it expressed so few opinions on the peace process, reporting key developments in the negotiations, but offering little substantive comment. Compared with the other three newspapers the *Mirror*'s political content regarding the peace process was scant. The paper's coverage in the mid-1990s tended to concentrate on 'human interest' stories from Northern Ireland or reports of violence. It could be argued that this focus was commercially driven, as conflict rather than peace sells. The relative lack of drama surrounding peace politics was undoubtedly a significant reason for the paper's neglect.

Except for the *Mirror*, the newspapers were all outspoken in their criticism of the British government. The variety of attitudes evident in newspaper coverage of decommissioning shows once again, that the media was capable of diverse approaches towards reporting on Northern Ireland. Despite differing opinions, the newspapers were eager to engage with the peace process and held the government to account for its responsibility in delivering a settlement.

To break the deadlock, in November 1995, the British and Irish governments announced their twin-track initiative, whereby disarmament would take place alongside all-party talks. The two governments also promised an international body to provide an independent assessment of the decommissioning issue. This was to be chaired by former US Senator George Mitchell, who was later to play an important role as the chair of multi-party talks in June 1996. The Mitchell Commission published its report on 24 January 1996, endorsing the twin-track approach and offering clear steps by which disarmament could be achieved. It also recommended all participants sign up to six principles of democracy and non-violence. The British government, however, insisted that before all-party talks commenced, there needed to be elections to reinforce the democratic mandate of participants. As with many issues raised by the peace process, newspapers were divided in their response to the report. The *Guardian* was extremely enthusiastic in its praise, applauding the Commission for having 'got the

[17] 'Peace in crisis', *Daily Telegraph*, 6 September 1995.
[18] 'Gun Law', *Daily Telegraph*, 4 January 1996.
[19] 'IRA's true intentions', *Daily Telegraph*, 29 December 1995.

deadlocked parties off the decommissioning hook they have been on for so long'.[20] The paper was dismayed by the government's response to the report, declaring that 'Mitchell provided a golden opportunity to get off the hook on decommissioning. Now it seems to have hung itself on a new one over the elections'.[21] The *Daily Telegraph* on the other hand, asserted that 'on the vexed question of decommissioning, [the report] was as vague as any Irish nationalist could have wished', and argued that 'in the absence of a credible step towards decommissioning [elections…] would at least establish the democratic mandate of those who will debate, and hopefully settle, a new political dispensation for the province'.[22] The *Sun* simply declared the Mitchell report a 'cop-out'. It argued that 'Mitchell's findings prove that ever since the IRA ceasefire, we've been losing the propaganda war to Sinn Fein, Dublin and America's Irish lobby'.[23] The paper's comments highlight its reservations concerning the neutrality of Mitchell, and therefore the fitness of the Americans to be involved in the peace process.

The press paid considerable attention to American responses to events in Northern Ireland. From an early stage, the influence of the Clinton administration had played an important role in promoting peace, especially within the republican movement.[24] American support made it more difficult for Sinn Féin and the IRA to reject the peace process. Their involvement also countered any accusations that the republicans were surrendering to the British and unionists.[25] Another benefit of American interest was that it brought pressure to bear on the British and Irish governments to move the peace process forward. The imminent US Presidential visit to Belfast in November 1995, had led to panicky efforts to resolve the stalemate over decommissioning and the announcement of the twin-track initiative. According to Mitchell the British were 'most worried about offending President Clinton'. [26] Washington's role in accelerating the decision to commit to a twin-track approach was not lost on the press. In an editorial published on 29 November 1995, the *Guardian* argued that 'It is indisputable that the new initiative would not have been agreed in the way that it has without the pressure of President Clinton's visit to the British Isles'.[27] American mediation came, however, largely at the behest of the British and Irish governments and both worked closely with the Clinton administration on the peace process.

Newspapers were on the whole wary of American interference in British affairs. They believed that American interest in the peace process was borne out of a compulsive need to meddle in the business of other states. This attitude is illustrated in a humorous manner by Figure 17, which shows the Queen

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[20] 'Breaking the deadlock', *The Guardian*, 25 January 1996.
[21] 'Bad politics and bad faith', *The Guardian*, 26 January 1996.
[22] 'Let Ulster's people speak', *Daily Telegraph*, 25 January 1996
[23] 'Get tough', *The Sun*, 25 January 1996.
[24] For an in-depth analysis of America's involvement in the Northern Ireland Peace Process see Adrian Guelke, 'The United States and the Peace Process', in *The Northern Ireland Question: The Peace Process and the Belfast Agreement*, (eds.) Brian Barton and Patrick J. Roche (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 222-237; and Adrian Guelke, 'The USA and the Northern Ireland Peace Process', *Ethnopolitics*, 11, 4 (2012), 424-438.
[25] Marc Mulholland, *The Longest War: Northern Ireland's Troubled History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 168.
[26] George Mitchell, *Making Peace: The Insight Story of the Making of the Good Friday Agreement* (London: William Heinemann, 1999), 96.
[27] 'Mr President forces the pace', *The Guardian*, 29 November 1995.

declining Clinton's help with Diana and Charles' martial problems. On the table in front of her are the papers listing his peacekeeping efforts in Bosnia, the Middle East and Ulster. The cartoon, published by the *Sun* just a few days before Clinton visited Northern Ireland, jests that Clinton suffered from a superhero complex, which led him to force America's attentions upon the world's trouble spots. Despite this gentle prodding, the piece acknowledges that Clinton had a positive impact on the international crisis. A framed copy of the cartoon was presented to Clinton by the *Sun* during his visit and was received with good humour.[28] Accusations of American interference in British affairs, nonetheless, appears in a more solemn form elsewhere in the newspaper. The *Sun* frequently put forward the view that Clinton, in order to boost his failing image at home, had involved himself in the Middle East, Bosnia, Haiti and now Northern Ireland. It argued that Clinton hoped that a show of support for republicanism would enhance his support amongst Irish-Americans.[29]

Figure 17: Tom Johnston, "No, Mr Clinton... We Won't Be Needing Your Help With Diana!", *The Sun*, 24 November 1995.

Throughout the conflict considerable space had been accorded to America's reactions to events in Northern Ireland by newspapers. The focus of much of this attention was on what was perceived to be the detrimental effect of the pro-Irish lobby on US policy towards Northern Ireland. The prevailing view was that America was susceptible to IRA propaganda. In their reportage of the peace process, newspapers continued to emphasise America's supposed predilection towards republican sentiments. For example, in an editorial on 2 March 1996, the *Daily Telegraph* called for more to be done to counter IRA propaganda: 'The British Embassy and information services, not to mention Ulster Unionists, should redouble their efforts to educate the American public about the IRA's anti-democratic ideology

[28] 'President Clin-toon', *The Sun*, 30 November 1995.
[29] William Langley, 'Sham-rock peace fixer is sure to get bogged down', *The Sun*, 30 November 1995;

and links with anti-western regimes'.[30] The press feared that the US would favour the republicans, hindering attempts to persuade the IRA to concede ground and at worse legitimising terrorism. As both Adrian Guelke and Alan Parkinson have argued, fear that Britain had lost its standing in Washington accounts, at least in part, for the strength of the press's opposition to American involvement.[31] It might also be argued that the press's reactions reflected anxiety about Britain's decline, and the US dominance, in global affairs more generally.

In March 1995, these fears seemed to be vindicated, Clinton granted Gerry Adams a second visa that allowed the Sinn Féin leader to raise funds in the US.[32] Whilst in the States, Adams was also invited to attend the White House's St Patrick's Day reception. The British press was outraged. The *Sun* in particular, slammed the US President for 'gladhand[ing the] Sinn Féin leaders'.[33] The paper saw Clinton's actions as lending legitimacy to IRA terrorism by according Adams the same treatment due any other political leader. It argued that Clinton had betrayed Britain, destroying the 'special relationship' between the two countries, for the Irish-American vote. Similarly, the *Daily Telegraph* accused Clinton of stabbing Britain in the back by feting Adams. In a cartoon, published on 16 March, the *Telegraph*'s political cartoonist Nicholas Garland presented Clinton as Brutus, hurrying Adams away from the dead body of the 'special relationship' (Figure 18). The caption cites the prophecy received by Julius Caesar, 'beware the ides of March', an allusion to the paper's frequent warnings about America's susceptibility to republican propaganda. The cartoon gives credence to Guelke and Parkinson's arguments that fear of losing influence in Washington was a significant factor in explaining Britain's apprehension towards American involvement in the peace process.[34] Guelke has argued, however, that the British press overstated the seriousness of the visit.[35] Despite his anger at Clinton's decision to act as Adams' host, Major continued to work closely with the US President on the peace process and the 'special relationship' remained relatively intact.

[30] 'Don't just blame Clinton', *Daily Telegraph*, 2 March 1996.
[31] Guelke, 'The USA and the Northern Ireland Peace Process', 428; Parkinson, *Ulster Loyalism*, 94-5.
[32] Despite stringent opposition from the British government, Clinton had granted Adams a 48-hour visa in January 1994 to attend a conference in New York arguing that it would help bolster support for the peace process within the republican movement. This decision too was lambasted in the British press.
[33] 'Shame of a cynical President', *The Sun*, 13 March 1995.
[34] Guelke, 'The USA and the Northern Ireland Peace Process', 428; Parkinson, *Ulster Loyalism*, 94-5.
[35] Guelke, 'The USA and the Northern Ireland Peace Process', 430.

Figure 18: Nicholas Garland, 'The Ides of March', *Daily Telegraph*, 16 March 1995.

Some newspapers were quick to capitalise on American outrage a month later, in the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing by domestic terrorists on 19 April 1995. The *Sun* noted the hypocrisy of Clinton and the American public's condemnation of the bombers, when they were happy to support the IRA. The paper expressed the hope that America would now re-evaluate its relationship with Irish republicanism:

> Perhaps when they emerge from their grief, Americans will realise that their dollars helped the IRA inflict on the United Kingdom the kind of carnage the U.S. has now suffered?
>
> Perhaps they will understand how queasy we feel when we see President Clinton condemn the Oklahoma bombers as 'evil cowards' so soon after he shook hands at the White House with Gerry Adams.[36]

Similarly, the *Telegraph* asked, 'Was this national leader, who spoke with such anger and passion about the wickedness of criminals who murder innocent civilians in pursuit of political objectives, the same man who last month clasped the hand of Gerry Adams at the White House?.[37] The *Guardian* on the other hand, argued that 'this is not an appropriate moment to score cheap debating points'.[38]

The *Guardian* provided a slightly more measured view of the American initiative. In an editorial, published on 13 March 1995, the paper chastised British politicians for 'huffing and puffing'

[36] 'World War', *The Sun*, 21 April 1995.
[37] 'Sympathy and Irony', *Daily Telegraph*, 21 April 1995.
[38] 'No time for cheap points', *The Guardian*, 22 April 1995.

over Adams' US visit, and argued that they should be concentrating instead on recruiting Clinton's help to further the peace process.[39] Even so, the paper called for America to do more to persuade the Sinn Féin leader to accept the need to disarm:

> … the lionising of Gerry Adams by American politicians has got to stop. By all means meet Mr Adams- like the Irish government has, like the British government should. But cut the crap. Give him a hard time as well as a handshake.[40]

Under pressure from the British government, at a late stage Clinton did use the visit to encourage Adams to begin serious discussions about decommissioning, redeeming himself in the eyes of at least some newspapers. In an editorial, published on 18 March, the *Daily Mirror* noted that:

> Throughout the dark years of bloodshed in Northern Ireland, America played a significant role. And it was not for the good…
>
> The omen was not hopeful when President Clinton invited Gerry Adams to Washington and said he could raise funds for Sinn Fein.
>
> But yesterday the President did exactly what was required.
>
> He left Mr Adams in no doubt about the next step towards a permanent peace.'[41]

The important role America could play in the peace process was conceded, but also the need for Clinton to continue to pressure the republicans to give up their weapons. The *Sun*, on the other hand, argued that Clinton had talked around the subject, failing to tackle the issue of decommissioning head on.[42]

Following Clinton's visit to Belfast in November 1995, where he was received with enthusiasm by Northern Ireland's two communities, all four newspapers were forced to re-evaluate their attitude to both the President and America's involvement in the peace process. Even the *Sun*, no friend of the American government, had to accept that 'Clinton courageously did his part by warning the IRA their day is done and urging them to surrender their guns'.[43] The *Daily Telegraph* praised the President's sensitivity to both unionist and nationalist sensibilities and argued that Clinton's visit had, at least in the short term, made a return to terrorism more difficult. The paper, also urged caution, warning against pinning too much hope on American intervention. It argued that the US was still inclined to favour the republican position, as it did not have to deal with the fallout from their violence, and reminded readers that:

> If the IRA returns to violence, Mr Clinton will not be seen nipping in and out of Belfast shops: he will be far away, across thousands of miles of water. It is our Government that will be left with the consequences, and the people of Northern Ireland who will live with them.[44]

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[39] 'Our interests and those of Mr Adams', *The Guardian*, 13 March 1995.
[40] 'A shamrock circus', *The Guardian*, 18 March 1995.
[41] 'US must keep the peace', *Daily Mirror*, 18 March 1995.
[42] Trevor Kavanagh, 'Clinton Ducks IRA Guns Row', *The Sun*, 18 March 1995.
[43] 'Price of peace', *The Sun*, 1 December 1995.
[44] 'The buck stops with us', *Daily Telegraph*, 2 December 1995.

When multi-party talks finally began in June 1996, the *Telegraph* criticised the appointment of Mitchell as chairman, arguing that 'Given the close affinity between America and Irish nationalism, it was anyway unwise of London to allow these talks to be chaired by an American'.[45] The *Mirror* also questioned the degree to which the United States should be allowed to contribute to negotiations remarking that: 'Although Mr Clinton has done much to encourage the peace process, there has always been a suspicion that the Americans do not properly understand Northern Ireland'.[46] As the peace process developed, the newspapers became more inclined to support the US's increased involvement, recognising the influence it could bring to bear over the IRA, whilst remaining cautious of America's pro-republican tendencies.

This wariness related to the press's broader concern that the republican movement was dictating the agenda at the expense of unionists. Unsurprisingly given its conservatism, the *Daily Telegraph* frequently observed the need for the British and Irish governments to take greater heed of unionist sensitivities. It emphasised the importance of ensuring that unionists, as well as Sinn Féin, remained a part of the peace process. This neglect, the *Telegraph* argued, was particularly apparent in the nationalist tone of the Framework Documents. On 22 February 1995, the British and Irish governments published a blueprint for the future governance of Northern Ireland and its relationship with both Britain and the Republic.[47] The documents were distinctly green in hue, and included plans for a series of North-South bodies, which would have 'executive, harmonising and consultative functions' and would promote cooperation between the people of the island of Ireland, whilst recognising and reconciling the rights, identities and aspirations of both the unionist and republican traditions.[48] Though the *Telegraph* supported the Framework Documents, it criticised a lack of provision for unionists, arguing that 'After 25 years of chiefly Nationalist violence, Dublin's fingers seem to us to reach further into this pie than Northern Ireland's Unionists should be expected to tolerate'.[49] In an editorial, published on 10 March 1995, the paper argued that the Documents 'emphasises the extent to which the Unionists have so far been left outside the tent', and that 'To date, the peace process has encompassed everyone except the Unionists'. The editorial, however, pointed out that the 'remedies also lie in their hands' and encouraged unionist politicians to talk to Dublin:

> The peace process is in danger of becoming a one-way affair. It is time the Unionists made their voice heard more effectively, both to stiffen the resolve of British ministers and to extract concessions of their own from Dublin.[50]

It is worth noting that the other three newspapers did not subscribe to the *Telegraph*'s criticisms. The *Guardian* praised the Framework Documents as 'neither republican ramp nor sell-out to unionism', reminding unionist objectors that 'it is exactly what it says it is a framework for an agreement, not a

[45] 'Mitchell doesn't help', *Daily Telegraph*, 12 June 1996.
[46] 'A child's message of peace', *Daily Mirror*, 1 December 1995.
[47] A partial draft of the documents had already been leaked to the *Times* in early February.
[48] For more details on the Framework Documents, see John D. Cash, *Identity, Ideology and Conflict: The Structuration of Politics in Northern Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 203-220.
[49] 'This fragile framework', *Daily Telegraph*, 23 February 1995.
[50] 'Fighting their corner', *Daily Telegraph*, 10 March 1995.

final take-it-or-leave-it solution'.[51] Similarly, the *Daily Mirror* heralded the documents as a symbol of hope, dismissing those who opposed it as 'intransigent in their position'.[52] The *Sun* too, though acknowledging the validity of unionist fears, warned that 'standing still will not work. They [the unionists] have to take another big step along the road to a lasting peace'.[53]

Despite the conservative leanings of the *Telegraph*, it should not be taken as given that the paper would automatically support the unionist cause. Like much of the right-wing British press, the *Telegraph* often sought to distance itself from unionist politics, which it viewed as anachronistic and uncompromising. As early as 1969, Max Hastings, the paper's editor between 1986 and 1995, had remarked that the ugly way in which the unionist establishment had acted overrode his conservatism, and as a result he had found himself siding with the Catholics:

> As the weeks went by and personal experience broadened a detectable feeling for the Catholics crept more and more into everything I wrote, coupled with a dislike for the Protestants, the Unionists, and much of what they stood for.[54]

Under Hastings, the *Telegraph* had pursed a particularly liberal line on Northern Ireland, much to the disquietude of the paper's proprietor Conrad Black. In 1989, Black had expressed concern about the *Telegraph*'s 'flirtation with incorrect thinking about Ulster'. Under pressure to adopt a more Conservative view, on 29 September 1995 Hastings quit the *Telegraph* to be replaced by Charles Moore, who was more right-wing.[55] Despite his conservatism, Moore also remained cautious of lending outright support to the unionists. Throughout this period, even on occasions when the paper expressed support for unionism, it remained critical of its' inflexibility and reactionary tendencies.

Nonetheless, the *Telegraph* repeatedly urged unionists to assert themselves in the peace process. The paper felt that they were frequently side-lined in favour of securing republican participation in negotiations. Following the election of David Trimble as leader of the UUP in September 1995, the paper commented that 'A strong unionist voice is badly needed to redress the imbalance that has been allowed to develop within the peace process'.[56] Interestingly, the *Guardian*, which was traditionally unsympathetic to the unionist cause, agreed. It celebrated Trimble's uncompromising honesty and his willingness to engage with the Irish government, arguing that 'unionism needed to acknowledge the peace process and the peace process needed to acknowledge unionism'.[57] Both papers sought to impress upon their readers that a settlement would not be possible without the input of unionists.

The British press fêted David Trimble for his broad-minded attitude. It hoped he would move the UUP away from Orangeism and inject a strong moderate unionist voice into the peace process. This contrasted with the initial apprehension the press had voiced at the appointment of an Orange hard-liner.

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[51] 'A text and a context for a hope of peace', *The Guardian*, 23 February 1995.
[52] 'The start of a new beginning', *Daily Mirror*, 23 February 1995.
[53] 'Debt we owe to the dead', *The Sun*, 22 February 1995.
[54] Max Hastings, *Ulster* (London, 1969), quoted in Parkinson, *Ulster Loyalism*, 104.
[55] Curran and Seaton, *Power without Responsibility*, 77.
[56] 'Ulster counterbalance', *Daily Telegraph*, 11 September 1995.
[57] 'Culture change', *The Guardian*, 2 October 1995.

In a cartoon featured in the *Guardian* (Figure 19), Martin Rowson had likened Trimble to the extreme loyalist leader Ian Paisley. The cartoon shows Orangemen measuring the strength of Trimble's bellow, pronouncing it four feet short of Paisley's, implying that Trimble was only marginally less obstinate than the DUP leader.[58] The *Telegraph* observed however, that Trimble had been swift to allay concerns that he was 'a wild Orangeman', proving instead to be a 'flexible as well as intelligent politician'.[59] Similar sentiments were echoed by the *Daily Mirror*. In February 1996, the paper nervously reported a rift between Ulster Unionist MPs and John Major, after the former voted against the government on the Scott Report into arms sales to Iraq by British companies in the 1980s. The *Mirror* voiced concern about what this could mean for Northern Ireland, but took comfort in Trimble's level-headed attitude to peace, arguing that:

> Trimble has shown in the short time he has been their leader that he is an honourable and thoughtful man.
>
> He will not wish to interfere with the advance made yesterday over all-party talks.[60]

The *Daily Telegraph*, however, warned both the British and Irish governments that whilst Trimble had proven himself open-minded and willing to engage with Dublin and London in order to establish a lasting peace, a 'fudge' especially over the issue of disarmament 'could all too easily force both him and his followers back into the traditional Unionist laager'.[61]

It is worth noting that press support for the unionists did not extend to the more militant DUP. The *Telegraph* cautioned the UUP that if they did not make their voices heard not only would republicans dominate the process, but the hard-line loyalist parties would unduly influence negotiations:

Figure 19: Martin Rowson, 'No Title', *The Guardian*, 12 September 1995.

[58] Parkinson, *Ulster Loyalism*, 111.
[59] 'The measure of Trimble', *Daily Telegraph*, 23 October 1995
[60] 'A time to save lives, not face', *Daily Mirror*, 28 February 1996.
[61] 'The measure of Trimble'.

> The groundswell for peace is as strong among Unionists as nationalists. If the Unionist leaders try to retreat into their tribal bunker they will just lose yet more ground to their nationalist adversaries on the one hand and to Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists and the fringe loyalist parties on the other.[62]

The paper believed that the best chance of the peace process succeeding was through close co-operation between moderates on both sides. It feared that if Paisley were to gain the upper hand, unionism would fall back on the traditional sectarian intransigency. Paisley continued to be presented as the epitome of the extremes of loyalist obstinacy and his popularity viewed as a real threat to the peace process. The *Guardian* noted its effect on the UUP's willingness to be flexible; in an editorial published on 24 February 1995, the paper commented that: 'the ghost of Mr Paisley-past and Mr Paisley-future looms over all Protestant politics. The more pragmatic Ulster Unionists have rightly allowed the peace process to develop, where Mr Paisley tried to stop it. But they are afraid of embracing it too wholeheartedly for fear of the DUP's power to wreak electoral nemesis'.[63]

Newspapers continued to associate the unionist leadership with traditional negative stereotypes of loyalism, including inflexibility, bigotry and intransigence.[64] Despite the *Telegraph*'s sympathy for the unionist position, its journalists were not blind to their shortcomings. The paper was critical of the unionist tendency to respond to any political initiative that seemed favourable to the republicans in a knee-jerk fashion. It frequently warned the British and Irish governments not to underestimate the ire of unionist politicians: 'Their capacity to say no is legendary'.[65] The *Telegraph* was particularly concerned that if provoked unionists could destabilise Major's government which relied on their support to maintain its slim parliamentary majority. A few weeks before they were officially released, a partial draft of the Framework Documents was leaked to the *Times*. The *Daily Telegraph* was particularly critical of the way in which unionist politicians responded. The paper's political columnist Noel Malcolm dismissed claims that they were being 'sold down the river'.[66] He argued that the unionists were 'protesting too much' and impatiently suggested that they were being overdramatic: 'the term "treachery" must be said to be inappropriate here. Betrayals take place behind their victims' back, in acts of secrecy and duplicity'.[67] The *Telegraph* implored the unionist leadership not to reject the Framework Documents out of hand:

> And the Unionists should beware of destroying the best opportunity for peace that Northern Ireland has seen in a generation, when they still hold so many cards in their hand. This is not the time for gesture politics.[68]

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[62] 'Drumbeat of disaffection', *Daily Telegraph*, 12 July 1995.
[63] 'The Orange kneejerk', *The Guardian*, 24 February 1995.
[64] Parkinson, *Ulster Loyalism*, 100-144.
[65] 'Unionists beware', *Daily Telegraph*, 17 February 1995.
[66] Malcolm joined the *Telegraph* in 1992 after working as a political columnist and then foreign editor for *The Spectator*. In 1995, however, he left journalism to become a research fellow at Oxford, specialising in British and European early modern history.
[67] Noel Malcolm, 'Is that shaggy dog an Irish wolfhound, by any chance?', *Daily Telegraph*, 2 February 1995.
[68] 'Irish peace in the balance', *Daily Telegraph*, 2 February 1995.

The paper, however, took heart from what they perceived as the unionist public's willingness to accept compromise. It noted that the reaction to the Framework Documents amongst ordinary Protestants had been 'notably milder than among their leaders'. The paper argued that by capitalising on the desire for peace amongst the unionist and republican communities, politicians on both sides could be pressured into compromise: 'there is a palpable yearning for peace throughout both communities in Northern Ireland. Therein lies the hope for success'.[69] Similarly, the *Guardian*, in an editorial covering Clinton's visit to Belfast in November 1995, argued that 'the way to peace in Northern Ireland lies through the people as much as through the politicians'. British and Irish ministers were encouraged to emulate Clinton, engaging more positively with the hopes and fears of the ordinary people of Northern Ireland to win their support.[70] The press viewed politicians of Northern Ireland and their intransigent attitudes as being part of the problem, and the people as the solution. In his column, published on 23 February 1995, Noel Malcolm argued that: 'In order to ensure a future for the "peace process", it is necessary to go over the heads (or under the feet) of the Northern Ireland politicians, appealing directly to the people themselves'.[71]

Reference to the 'people of Northern Ireland' was commonly used by both the press and broadcast media in an effort to exert moral pressure on politicians to engage constructively with the peace process. All four newspapers consistently sought to remind them of how life had transformed in the province since the cessation of violence. In an editorial marking the first anniversary of the IRA ceasefire, the *Daily Mirror* outlined the changes in the province, drawing attention to the dramatic improvements to the well-being of ordinary people:

> Businesses have thrived and tourists have returned in large numbers promising a new prosperity. But it is the effect on the ordinary people which has been the most remarkable change. They have discovered what it is like to live free from fear and horror.[72]

The paper warned that 'anyone who threatens to destroy the peace will never be forgiven'.[73] The *Sun* produced a similar article describing the positive effects of the ceasefire and warned that, 'The people of Belfast have enjoyed the fruits of peace too much to tolerate anyone who puts their new-found prosperity and security at risk'.[74] The *Sun*, however, also emphasised the responsibility of the people of Northern Ireland to be pro-active in demanding peace. In an editorial printed after the publication of the Framework Documents, the *Sun* remarked that, 'The prize is peace if the people of Northern Ireland want to take it. Their destiny rests firmly in their own hands'.[75] Implicit in this is the suggestion that the Northern Irish might not want peace, an allusion to the stereotype of the Irish as irrational, violent people spoiling for a fight. The *Daily Telegraph* also used the trope of the people of Northern Ireland to pressure politicians on specific issues relating to the peace process. For example, columnist Noel Malcom evoked

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[69] 'Unionists beware'.
[70] 'A rich vein of optimism', *The Guardian*, 1 December 1995.
[71] Noel Malcolm, 'Oh come along, Ulstermen, what have you got to lose?', *Daily Telegraph*, 23 February 1995.
[72] 'The dream that must last', *Daily Mirror*, 31 August 1995.
[73] *Ibid*.
[74] 'One year of living less dangerously', *The Sun*, 1 September 1995.
[75] 'Debt we owe to the dead'.

it to pressure unionists into giving the Framework Documents a chance: 'The people of Northern Ireland… will not forgive any politician who lightly or carelessly bring these halcyon days to an end'.[76]

By highlighting the impact of the ceasefire on the Northern Irish, newspapers, like television current affairs programmes, sought to promote peace to the public, especially to readers in the rest of the UK. Interest in Northern Ireland's problems amongst the British public, which had begun to flag as early as the 1970s, went into steep decline during the peace process as people became weary of the circular conversations about decommissioning, prisoner release and so forth. Securing support was important to ensure that the government could engage fully with the process without fear of public opposition. As Miller and McLaughlin have observed, however, the government had long ignored the public's calls for withdrawal. They contend that 'altogether it is clear that certain opinion constituencies are regarded as important, public opinion still seems to have little impact on policy'.[77] It could be argued therefore that the media sought to canvass public support in order to bring pressure to bear on the government to push forward with the peace process. Journalists, by emphasising the benefits for the everyday lives of people in Northern Ireland, endeavoured to illustrate what was at stake if it should fail. As Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam remarked in an article published by the *Daily Mirror* on 31 August 1995: 'In Britain, without the bombs on our streets or horrific pictures on our TV screens, our memories fade. We don't feel that palpable sense of relief'.[78] The press undertook to remind readers of the violence by focusing on what it meant for individuals in the province. Through 'human interest' stories, the press strove to give its readers some relief from the tedium of the political process, and by providing the human face of events, they hoped to revive interest and engagement in the talks.

Frustrated by the lack of progress, on 9 February 1996 the IRA ended its ceasefire by exploding a bomb in the Docklands area of London, killing two people and injuring forty others.[79] In marked contrast with their coverage of IRA bombs in the 1970s, newspapers sought to place the attack within a Northern Ireland context. They saw the return to violence in England as potentially detrimental to the future of the peace process. The *Daily Mirror* featured the responses of ordinary people in Northern Ireland to illustrate the full effect of the bomb attack. Through interviews with young people in Belfast, journalist Ted Oliver sought to convey the anger and upset felt in the province at the news of the bomb: 'One young Belfast woman recalled… "I was in my kitchen making a cup of tea. I'll tell you what I was doing - sitting at the table crying my eyes out"…'. The article also recounted the story of a young couple, Mary and John. Mary was a Catholic nurse from the Falls Road and John a Protestant from East Belfast. Oliver, a Protestant originally from Bangor (Co. Down), had himself married a Catholic and had written extensively on mixed marriages.[80] As he asserted, an ecumenical relationship such as John and Mary's had been near-impossible before the ceasefire. In the light of the news that it had ended, the

[76] Malcolm, 'Oh come along, Ulstermen, what have you got to lose?'.
[77] McLaughlin and Miller, 'The Media Politics of the Irish Peace Process', 131.
[78] Mo Mowlam, 'Together, we can heal the hurt forever', *Daily Mirror*, 31 August 1995.
[79] McGladdery, *The Provisional IRA in England*, 192.
[80] 'Obituary of Ted Oliver', *Daily Telegraph*, 29 November 2007.

couple had postponed plans to visit her parents out of fear that John might be attacked: 'People have been murdered before just for daring to go out with someone with a different religion'. John explained how the peace process had made their relationship possible:

> Having somewhere safe to meet, being able to get home late without worrying and not looking over your shoulder in case somebody from your area is in the pub - those things are important.[81]

Both Mary and John, however, expressed their determination not to allow the return to violence to break up their relationship. Oliver reiterated these sentiments repeatedly throughout the article, underlining its key message that the ordinary people of Northern Ireland refused to be beaten. In this, one detects an echo of the trope of the British as a stoic people in the face of IRA violence, which was prevalent in the newspaper coverage of the early 1970s. This was despite differentiations regarding the extent to which the communities of Northern Ireland considered themselves to be British, and the media's repeated depiction of the province as a place 'apart'.

The personal touch, which Oliver employed in covering the Docklands bombings, was intended to impress upon readers the realities of violence in Northern Ireland and therefore the importance of the peace process. By emphasising the danger inherent in everyday activities taken for granted elsewhere in the UK, it sought to elicit a sense of empathy from the reader. Oliver's emphasis on youth was also deliberately designed to drive home the trauma of the bomb attacks:

> The time and the date - 7.01pm on Friday February 9, 1996 - etched into the minds of a new generation in Northern Ireland… They were the precious moments when the hopes of the young for a bright future seemed to have been dashed.[82]

He used phrases such as 'precious moments', 'hopes of the young' and 'bright future', contrasting with the abrupt 'dashed', to underscore the heinous nature of the IRA's actions. The article argued that the end of the ceasefire had the potential to rob the young people of Northern Ireland of their future, and so sought to put pressure on participants in the peace process to ensure that this did not happen.

All four newspapers were, naturally, outraged by the IRA's return to violence and expressed fear that the bomb would, as the *Sun* put it 'light the fuse of another war in Northern Ireland'.[83] Evident in their coverage is also a strong sense of fatigue borne out of frustration not only with the government's failure to push the peace process forward, but also the insincerity and intransigency of the IRA. Their coverage of the bombings was muted, however, when compared to the coverage of similar incidents in the 1970s and 1980s. It might be that this was a deliberate editorial policy, to avoid exacerbating public outrage, which could lead to demands for immediate withdrawal and place the peace process at risk. In the wake of the Docklands bombing, the *Daily Mirror* noted that 'We are united in revulsion at it. But we must also be united in our determination that peace can and will be restored. And that it will last

[81] Ted Oliver, 'They won't ruin our lives', *Daily Mirror*, 12 February 1996.
[82] *Ibid*.
[83] 'Mad dogs bite again', *The Sun*, 10 February 1996.

forever'.[84] Similarly, the *Guardian* argued that 'The case for restarting the peace process is stronger than ever for it has to be faced that Friday's IRA bombing had reminded many people of what is at stake'.[85] Both papers hoped that the bomb attacks would provide renewed impetus for peace.

Following the Manchester bomb on 15 June 1996, in which 206 people were injured, even the *Guardian* was forced to revise its thinking. In an editorial published on 17 June, the paper asked 'how, even trying to put all indignation aside, are we to interpret this… as anything other than the deliberate burial of the 1993-96 Northern Ireland peace process'. It argued that whilst earlier bombs might be understood as a reaction to the government's 'mishandl[ing]' of the Mitchell report, the start of multi-party talks five day previously meant there could be no justification for the Manchester bomb. In marked contrast with its previous argument that the government should promote talks with the IRA free from prerequisites, the paper now argued that the Manchester bomb showed that 'the republican movement had not renounced the use of violence and never will', and even if the IRA renewed its ceasefire, this would 'no longer be enough to allow Sinn Fein immediate entry into talks'.[86] Nonetheless, the *Guardian* continued to support negotiations and encourage the government in its efforts to secure a second ceasefire.

The return of IRA violence simply confirmed the *Telegraph* in its belief that the paramilitaries had no intention of upholding any ceasefire. For the *Telegraph* the Docklands bomb had destroyed the hope of peace and it dismissed efforts to salvage negotiations as delusional. This was reflected in this pessimistic message:

> The clocks [in the office, blown off the wall by the bomb] had stopped at 7.02 pm. They are worth preserving as the most vivid memento of the precise moment when the "peace process" came to an end.[87]

Reporting on the Prime Minister's address to the Commons in the aftermath of the bomb, the *Telegraph* commented that 'It is now clear that the Government believes that the "peace process" is still alive'. The choice of phrasing suggested the paper's scepticism that negotiations could survive the return to violence. The paper voices concern that rather than standing firm against the IRA, the government would yield to the terrorists in order to safeguard peace at any cost. It warned that 'there is a danger now, spurred by an understandable nostalgia for those months of peace, of ministers turning their backs on reality and pretending that nothing has changed'.[88]

Their muted response to the bombings allowed newspapers space with which to examine the IRA from new and varied angles. It enabled the press to see beyond the IRA as a monolithic body and examine the power-structures within. Six days after the Docklands bombing, a second incident proved that it had not been a one-off attack. On 18 February, a bomb exploded prematurely on a bus travelling

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[84] 'We must stand firm for peace', *Daily Mirror*, 12 February 1996.
[85] 'One bomb must not stop the talks', *The Guardian*, 12 February 1996.
[86] 'Violence beyond belief', *The Guardian*, 17 June 1996.
[87] 'Vote for peace', *Daily Telegraph*, 12 February 1996.
[88] 'All changed, changed utterly', *Daily Telegraph*, 19 February 1996.

through Aldwych in London killing IRA volunteer 21-year-old Edward O'Brien and injuring a further eight people.[89] Unsurprisingly, the attack elicited an extremely angry response from the press; in an editorial published on 20 February, the *Sun* declared that, 'The IRA is one man short today… Don't expect anyone to shed a tear for him or his wounded pal who is under guard in hospital. Decent people will cheer the IRA's loss'.[90] Curiously, the next day, the *Sun* had modified its opinion, displaying some sympathy towards the young bomber:

> … the cowardly godfathers who trapped him in their web of murder will shed no tears. They'll claim Ed's life was sacrificed to their "cause", and blame John Major. Then they'll risk other young lives while they stay in the shadows.[91]

The paper contended that O'Brien was a victim of the IRA leadership. It argued that they had viewed him as an expendable resource, brainwashing him in order to exploit his youth and naivety. By insinuating that O'Brien had been duped, the *Sun* implied that young volunteers did not join the IRA on the basis of any political rationale, rather they were conditioned. The paper refused to consider the possibility that any young person might choose to join the IRA of his or her own volition. The *Sun* focused on O'Brien's youth, 'At 21, Ed O'Brien should have had everything to live for', impressing on the reader the tragedy of his demise at the hands of the IRA 'godfathers'.[92] Tom Johnston's cartoon (Figure 20) published in the *Sun* on 22 February makes a similar point. The image, which depicted an IRA recruitment stand outside a school, asserted that such was the immorality of the IRA leadership that they were actively enlisting and exploiting young people. Parallels can be drawn between press representations of O'Brien and the hunger strikers in 1981, also presented as victims of the IRA leadership. Just as the press coverage had sought to demonise IRA leaders in the early 1980s, the *Sun* sought to discredit the republican paramilitaries in 1996.

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[89] McGladdery, *The Provisional IRA in England*, 200.
[90] 'Support peace or go to hell', *The Sun*, 20 February 1996.
[91] 'Victim of the IRA's greatest lie', *The Sun*, 21 February 1996.
[92] From the late-1970s, it was common for press journalists to describe the IRA leadership as the 'godfathers', drawing a link between the paramilitaries and Italian/ Italian-American criminal networks. Liz Curtis has argued that the British press used this mafia metaphor to present the IRA as 'external to, and unrepresentative of, the nationalist community'. She contends that stories about armed robbery and racketeering were part of a strategy to criminalise the IRA. (Curtis, *Ireland The Propaganda War*, 128-130).

Figure 20: Tom Johnston, 'No Need To Lie About Your Age', *The Sun*, 22 February 1996.

The empathy evident in the *Sun*'s coverage of the bus bombing owed much to O'Brien's parents' reactions. Miley and Margaret O'Brien had denounced the IRA and banned them from attending their son's funeral, stating that: 'We don't want any of them playing soldiers while we bury our son'.[93] The paper reported approvingly that when an IRA 'welfare officer' had visited the grieving couple at their home in County Wexford, 'The front door of the family's tidy, grey, terraced council house was slammed firmly in his face'.[94] The connection between Miley and Margaret O'Brien's condemnation of the IRA and the sympathy the tabloid afforded their son is particularly apparent in Norman Tebbit's column from the 22 February. Usually resolute in his condemnation of the IRA, Tebbit wrote, 'It is hard to weep many tears for any bomber, but one had to feel half sorry for one so young and immature suckered into the sick world of terrorism'. He underscored his point by voicing his sympathy and admiration for Miley and Margaret: 'And who would not share the grief of his parents, nor admire the courage they have shown in condemning the crime committed by their son'.[95] In foregrounding the grief and defiance shown by his parents, the narrative shifts away from O'Brien's IRA activities and focused instead on its catastrophic consequences for his family. In doing so, the tabloid press presented Miley and Margaret as victims of the IRA. Television presenter, Anne Robinson, also writing for the *Sun*, argued that 'most of all, to me, he represents a loss of another poor mother'. Controversially, she compared Margaret O'Brien to the family of Angela Gallagher, an 18-month-old girl killed by an IRA sniper in 1972 and asks whether the IRA leadership would dismiss O'Brien's death as 'an unfortunate accident, a hazard of guerrilla warfare', as they had Angela's.[96]

[93] Nick Parker, 'Bomber's dad blast evil godfathers', *The Sun*, 22 February 1996.
[94] 'Ed was no hardened terrorist… he must have been brainwashed', *The Sun*, 22 February 1996.
[95] Norman Tebbit, 'Terror is the lesson nobody ever learns', *The Sun*, 22 February 1996.
[96] Anne Robinson, 'The Wasted Years', *The Sun*, 23 February 1996.

The tabloids were outraged when, in defiance of the family's wishes representatives of the IRA attended O'Brien's funeral. The *Mirror* gave voice to its anger at the hypocrisy implicit in the IRA's callous conduct: 'Grinning IRA godfathers hijacked boy bomber Ed O'Brien's funeral yesterday laughing and joking on the day Downing Street offered fresh hopes of peace'.[97] The paper attributed added significance to their behaviour as it coincided with the British and Irish government's announcement that they intended to begin all-party talks on 10 June 1996. The implication is that the IRA, through their presence at the funeral, were mocking the British government. Though the demand for prior decommissioning was dropped, both governments agreed that Sinn Féin would not be admitted unless the IRA reinstated its ceasefire. The press was sceptical that the paramilitaries could be persuaded to give up violence. The *Mirror*'s coverage of O'Brien funeral emphasised the lack of sensitivity betrayed by the IRA's actions and drew the conclusion therefore that the IRA did not want peace. The *Telegraph* was also cynical about the IRA's integrity, arguing that having broken one ceasefire, there was nothing to force them to honour a second: 'As for the renewed demand that Sinn Fein once again forswear violence, well that did not prove so difficult last time round, did it?'.[98] It wasn't until 19 July 1997 that the IRA finally announced the renewal of the ceasefire and Sinn Féin was finally allowed a seat at the negotiating table.

Nonetheless, on 10 June 1996, talks finally began, though at this stage Sinn Féin was excluded. Progress, however, continued to be impeded by the spectre of paramilitary violence. Just five days after multi-party talks commenced, the IRA exploded a bomb in Manchester city centre, injuring 206 people.[99] Encouragingly, however, Labour won the general election in May 1997, thereby breaking the unionist stranglehold on the British government. Prime Minister Tony Blair renewed efforts to bring the republican movement into the process, repeating the offer to include Sinn Féin in talks on the proviso that the IRA restore its ceasefire, and talks were scheduled to reconvene on 15 September 1997. Under increased pressure from the British, Irish and American governments, on 19 July 1997 the republican movement announced the re-establishment of the IRA ceasefire. Despite numerous setbacks, the admittance of Sinn Féin into negotiations accelerated progress, which finally resulted in the signing of the Good Friday Peace Agreement on 10 April 1998.

The British press throughout the peace process followed a qualified pro-peace line. Most newspapers sought to encourage the talks, providing critical coverage, which challenged participants over intransigency and pushed for a successful end to negotiations. Though striving for a common aim, there was little consensus between papers regarding the correct strategy to bring this about, they therefore presented a variety of different, sometimes opposing views, which reflected their wider editorial positions. The multifarious nature of the press coverage was apparent in reports on the decommissioning dispute. Newspapers were critical of the government's position on the issue, but deeply divided over how it should be handled. The *Guardian* was of the view that the British

[97] John Williams and John Kierans, 'No Last Respects', *Daily Mirror*, 29 February 1996.
[98] 'The bombing has worked', *Daily Telegraph*, 29 February 1996.
[99] McGladdery, *The Provisional IRA in England*, 202-3.

government was hindering progress by insisting on unrealistic preconditions, whilst at the other end of the spectrum the *Sun* and *Daily Telegraph* believed the government was pandering to the IRA and demanded complete disarmament.

Newspapers were also at odds in their views concerning the desirability or otherwise of American involvement in the peace process. Wary of US interference, some newspapers believed the Americans were susceptible to republican propaganda and were therefore reluctant to allow them a role in the negotiations. Elements within the press were concerned that republican sensibilities were dictating the agenda of the peace process. Both the *Telegraph* and *Guardian* sought to stress how critical it was that unionists remained a part of the peace negotiations. They encouraged the UUP to assert their interests by engaging in direct talks with Dublin, and celebrated the appointment of David Trimble as leader, hoping that he would ensure a strong but moderate unionist voice in the peace process.

The end of the IRA ceasefire posed the greatest threat to establishing a peaceful settlement. Though outraged by the resurgent violence, the press deliberately tempered its coverage so as not to stoke public demands for withdrawal. Papers used the bombings as an inspiration towards peace, putting moral pressure on participants to push forward with negotiations.

Just as the press had offered nuanced, detailed analysis of the conflict in the 1970s and 1980s, newspapers produced critical commentary on the Northern Ireland peace process, which helped explain the complexities of the negotiations. At the same time, the press provided a platform upon which a diverse range of views were expressed, and the priorities and strategies of all participants scrutinised. As multi-party talks progressed the British press continued to provide this analytical voice, chronicling the negotiations, until the Good Friday Peace Agreement officially brought the conflict to an end.

Chapter Seven: Television coverage of the mid-1990s.

On the evening of 10 April 1998, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern emerged from Stormont Castle to inaugurate the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement. Just as television cameras had chronicled the violent history of the thirty-year conflict, they also captured this final episode. Throughout years of negotiations, the broadcast media had relayed each new development and setback of the peace process to audiences across the world. In Britain, this coverage was for most people the primary source of information about events in the province. Broadcasters reporting on the talks had significant potential therefore to shape public understandings of the process. Programmes sought to provide audiences with an appreciation of the intricacies of the peace process and the motivations of all parties involved. The broadcast media, moreover, played an active role in the process, facilitating and promoting negotiations. Throughout the 1990s, programme-makers at the BBC, ITV and Channel 4 used their unique position to challenge intransigence on the part of key players and remind them of their responsibilities to that process. As television had lent a critical voice to the coverage of the violence in the 1970s and 1980s, it now provided analytical coverage of the developing peace.

This chapter will analyse current affairs coverage during the last decade of the 'Troubles'. It will begin by exploring the implications of the broadcasting ban, and argue that despite restrictions, broadcasters continued to cover the conflict in a detailed and nuanced manner. The chapter then investigates coverage of the peace process focusing on the years 1995 and 1996. It argues that broadcasters produced in-depth reports, which sought to promote peace and allow audiences a better understanding of the complexities involved in the negotiations. The chapter examines the broadcast media's role in the transformation of Sinn Féin into a legitimate political party. It notes that television, like the press, served as an alternative conduit for dialogue, and explores how some broadcasters endeavoured to use their programmes to promote peace. It will argue that current affairs coverage critically examined the actions of all participants, challenging the inflexibility of republicans, unionists and the British government alike. It contends however, that programmes rarely engaged with more than the mechanics of the peace process, making little effort to examine the substantive debates which lay at the heart of the conflict, such as how the two communities could co-exist, and what role the British and Irish governments would have in the province.

Restricted access to archival material from the 1990s has prevented a detailed examination of policy and editorial strategy in this chapter. Consequently, the following is based solely on a close analysis of the content of current affairs programmes produced in the years leading up to the Good Friday Agreement. All the same, by carrying out a comprehensive survey of television programmes, this chapter provides a clear indication of how news and information was presented by the broadcast media in the latter years of the conflict. It will concentrate on programmes broadcast by the BBC, ITV and Channel 4 between 1995 and 1996, covering many of the key developments in the peace process. These programmes demonstrate the way in which all three broadcasting bodies endeavoured to present a range of perspectives, in order to offer a critical commentary on the peace process.

Table 3: List of Television Programmes, 1995-1996

Programme	**Series**	**Channel**	**Date Shown**	**Number of Viewers (in millions)**
The Man We Hate To Love	Panorama	BBC	30 January 1995	2.9
No Title	Newsnight	BBC	1 February 1995	0.8
Martin McGuinness	Jonathan Dimbleby	ITV (London Weekend World)	12 March 1995	1.2
No Title	A Week in Politics	Channel 4	18 March 1995	0.8
Beating Crime	Public Eye	BBC	6 June 1995	0.9
More than a Sacrifice		Channel 4	29 August 1995	0.5
Ceasefire Special	Newsnight	BBC	31 August 1995	0.6
David Trimble and John Hume	Jonathan Dimbleby	ITV (London Weekend World)	28 January 1996	1.1
No Title	Jonathan Dimbleby	ITV (London Weekend World)	11 February 1996	1.7
The End of the IRA Ceasefire	Panorama	BBC	12 February 1996	3.5
Gerry Adams	World in Action	ITV (Granada)	12 February 1996	4.6
The Peace Prize	Dispatches	Channel 4	24 April 1996	0.7
No Title	Frontline	Channel 4	1 June 1996	0.7
Dealing with Terror	World in Action	ITV (Granada)	24 June 1996	3.7
Drumcree: The Aftermath	Panorama	BBC	15 July 1996	4.4
Men with Nine Lives	Equinox	Channel 4	24 November 1996	1.6

The broadcast media's ability to maintain a level of nuance in its coverage of Northern Ireland met with its biggest challenge in the late 1980s. The efforts of successive British governments to censor the way in which broadcasters reported on Northern Ireland culminated in the introduction of the broadcasting ban on 19 October 1988, prohibiting the broadcast of direct statements by representatives

of any organisation proscribed in Northern Ireland and Great Britain, and of Sinn Féin.[1] Principally, the ban was directed at Sinn Féin, whose support had grown significantly since the hunger strikes. By 1988 the republican party boasted an MP and more than sixty local council seats. Its status as a legal political party had made it difficult to keep them off the screen without compromising British democratic values. Media historian Jean Seaton contends, that the broadcasting ban was a means of curtailing interviews with members of Sinn Féin without seeming to undermine Parliament's commitment to upholding freedom of political expression.[2]

The ban was introduced following several programmes, which had ignited government anger and contributed further to the deterioration of the poor relationship between broadcasters and Thatcher's government. The most notable of these was 'Death on the Rock', broadcast by *This Week* on 28 April 1988, which explored the shooting of three members of the IRA on Gibraltar on 6 March.[3] Initial reports stated that Sean Savage, Daniel McCann and Mairéad Farrell had been shot by the SAS after planting a car bomb on the peninsula. It was reported that the three had been armed and that a gun battle had ensued.[4] The next day, Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe told the Commons that:

> On their way towards the border, they were challenged by the security forces. When challenged they made movements which led the military personnel operating in support of the Gibraltar police to conclude that their own lives and the lives of others were under threat. In the light of this response, they were shot.

Howe was forced to concede, however, that the three had been unarmed and that there had been no bomb.[5] The programme caused widespread controversy by presenting new evidence that brought into question this official version of events. Eyewitnesses featured on the programme alleged that the security forces had not verbally challenged the IRA volunteers, and far from making threatening movements the three had raised their hands as though to surrender.[6] This raised serious allegations that the security forces were operating a shoot-to-kill policy with regards to suspected terrorists. Similar allegations regarding the use of lethal force had been made against the British Army and the RUC on several occasions during the 1970s and 1980s. The issue had become a high-profile news story in 1984, after Deputy Chief Constable John Stalker was appointed to investigate the shooting of six men by the RUC and the possibility that the security forces were engaging in shoot-to-kill strategies. Before the inquiry was completed, Stalker was removed from the investigation following false allegations that he had associated with criminals, and his findings were never made public. Stalker later claimed that he

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[1] Douglas Hurd, Home Secretary, told Parliament that broadcasters were 'to refrain from broadcasting direct statements by representatives of organisations proscribed in Northern Ireland and Great Britain and by representatives of Sinn Féin, Republican Sinn Féin and the Ulster Defence Association. The notices will also prohibit the broadcasting of statements by any person which support or invite support for these organisations', the only exceptions were when broadcasting of Parliament or during elections. (Douglas Hurd, *Hansard*, 19 October 1988.).
[2] Seaton, 'The BBC and the 'Hidden Wiring' of the British Constitution', 469; 471.
[3] 'Death on the Rock', *This Week*, Thames Television, 28 April 1988.
[4] ITN reported that 'a fierce gun battle broke out'. Roger Bolton, *Death on the Rock and other stories* (London: WH Allen, 1990), 190.
[5] Two days after the shooting their explosives were found in a car parked in an underground car park in Marbella. Geffrey Howe, *Hansard*, 7 March 1988.
[6] 'Death on the Rock', 28 April 1988.

had been dismissed to prevent his findings from being made public.[7] Unsurprisingly, 'Death on the Rock' which once again raised the spectre of a shoot-to-kill was not welcomed by the government or security forces.

During the production process, the government had been kept informed of *This Week*'s intentions.[8] Two days before transmission, however, Howe phoned the Chairman of the IBA, Lord Thomson, to express concern that the programme would prejudice the coroner's inquest into the killings and requested it be postponed. Thomson promised to look into the matter but concluded that there was no good reason to withhold transmission.[9] The IBA expressed some concern that the programme had been too strong in its suggestion that the coroner's inquest would be unable to establish the truth and that evidence supplied by the Gibraltar police was unreliable. The Authority also expressed concern about the programme's suggestion the Prime Minister had prior knowledge that the IRA unit had travelled to Spain. *This Week* editor Roger Bolton successfully persuaded them, however, that on this point his evidence was impeachable.[10] The programme was broadcast as planned, attracting widespread criticism from politicians and the right-wing press. Both the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland argued that the programme amounted to 'trial by television'; whilst Thatcher told journalists that it went 'deeper than that': 'Trial by television or guilt by association is the day that freedom dies'.[11] The IBA, however, argued that 'to postpone the programme until after an inquest which is apparently a long time away would give the IRA more "oxygen of publicity" and would certainly not prevent it being shown elsewhere'.[12] An inquiry into the programme in September 1988 concluded that *This Week* had acted in good faith. 'Death on the Rock' was awarded a BAFTA and the Broadway Press Guild Award for best documentary.[13] The government, however, had its 'revenge', refusing to renew Thames Television's franchise in October 1991, which was widely interpreted to be retribution for the company's insubordination.[14]

'Death on the Rock' demonstrated once again broadcasters continued determination to lend a critical voice to coverage of the 'Troubles'. Crucially, it showed that if the broadcasting authorities remained resolute in their decision to transmit a given programme, there was little the government could do to prevent them. As David Miller argues, 'Death on the Rock' had revealed the limit the government was able to go to without resorting to direct censorship and therefore it introduced the broadcasting ban.[15] It is important, however, to acknowledge that Northern Ireland was not the only news story responsible for the introduction of direct censorship. Broadcasters' coverage of topics, such as the

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[7] John Stalker, *John Stalker*, (London: Harrap, 1988), 263.
[8] Bolton, *Death on the Rock*, 223.
[9] Howe also tried to suppress BBC Northern Ireland's *Spotlight* programme on the Gibraltar killings. The BBC decided to broadcast the programme but restricted the transmission to Northern Ireland.
[10] Bolton had also been the editor of *Panorama* during the INLA and Carrickmore controversies; Bolton, *Death on the Rock*, 228.
[11] Bolton, *Death on the Rock*, 234.
[12] Miller, *Don't Mention the War*, 46.
[13] *The Windelsham/ Rampton Report on Death on the Rock* (London: Faber, 1989), 144, quoted in Miller, *Don't Mention the War*, 47; Bolton, *Death on the Rock*, 300.
[14] 'Thatcher 'took her revenge"', *The Times*, 21 September 1991.
[15] Miller, *Don't Mention the War*, 54.

miners' strikes or the Brixton riots, had also contributed to their deteriorating relationship with the government.[16] In particular, even-handed television reports of the Falklands War had reinforced the government's determination to establish control over broadcasting. Thatcher regarded the BBC's coverage, particularly its insistence on referring to 'the British troops' rather than 'our troops', as traitorous.[17]

From the outset, broadcasters sought ways to circumvent and undermine the broadcasting ban. The BBC's Director-General, Mike Checkland, had immediately instructed his Controller of Editorial Policy, Johnny Wilson, to 'test what we can do with it, push them, but make your own mind up- and I will back you up'.[18] The ban's vague wording meant that whilst the voices of Sinn Féin and the IRA could not be broadcast, their words could. Broadcasters reported statements by Sinn Féin and IRA representatives, initially by using subtitles; later actors, including Stephen Rea, an ardent republican, dubbed the voices of spokespeople, arguably intentionally out of sync, to draw attention to the fact that broadcasters were being forced to censor material. Sinn Féin representatives were also allowed to appear on television uncensored if in a non-party capacity. In the same programme therefore, viewers might hear Gerry Adams talking about Westminster, and then in a dubbed voice discussing Sinn Féin.[19] As Seaton has argued, it was through these strategies that the BBC and ITV regained some of their freedom as broadcasters and communicated to audiences the absurdity of the ban.[20] By subverting the restrictions placed upon them, programme-makers showed an active opposition to this assault on their freedom, and underlined their commitment to independent coverage. As media studies scholar Max Pettigrew has shown, the ban was interpreted in the press as farcical.[21] Although newspapers protested that the ban was undemocratic and a threat to civil liberties, there was little appetite for an active campaign to have it lifted. The right-wing press blamed broadcasters for having made a farce of it. The *Daily Mail* argued that broadcasters enjoyed 'thumbing their noses at the Government by using lip synchronisation and dubbing'. Pettigrew argues that the presentation of the ban undermined its seriousness; critics fixated on the techniques used to circumvent it and failed to consider the enormous threat it posed to media freedom.[22]

Broadcasters were equally determined not to allow the ban to stop them from producing valuable current affairs programmes on Northern Ireland. Immediately after it was announced, the Deputy Director-General of the BBC, John Birt met with veteran Northern Ireland correspondent Peter Taylor to request 'something big on Northern Ireland, dig deep'.[23] Accordingly, during the late 1980s

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[16] *Ibid*., 35.
[17] Curran and Seaton, *Power without Responsibility*, 212; Edgerton, 'Quelling the "Oxygen of Publicity"', 120; Seaton, *Pinkoes and Traitors*, 149-169.
[18] Jean Seaton interview with John Wilson cited in Seaton, 'The BBC and the 'Hidden Wiring' of the British Constitution', 470.
[19] *Ibid*., 470.
[20] *Ibid*.
[21] Max Pettigrew, 'The Oxygen of Publicity and the Suffocation of Censorship: British newspaper representations of the broadcasting ban (1988-1994)' (PhD thesis, Cardiff University, 2011), 130-137.
[22] *Ibid*., 135.
[23] Jean Seaton interview with Peter Taylor cited in Seaton, 'The BBC and the 'Hidden Wiring' of the British Constitution', 470.

and early 1990s numerous important and challenging programmes were produced on the 'Troubles'. One key example is the docudrama 'Who Bombed Birmingham?', produced by *World in Action* and broadcast on 28 March 1990.[24] The programme, based on research undertaken by journalist-turned-MP, Chris Mullin, examined the Birmingham bombings in 1974 and the case against the six accused of carrying them out.[25] It cast serious doubts on the safety of the convictions, revealing flaws in the evidence as presented at trial, particularly the forensics. Controversially the programme also alleged that the police had known the real identity of those responsible for the attack since 1975. The programme ended by naming four of the five IRA men believed to have planted the bombs.

The resultant outcry focused entirely on the decision to broadcast the four names. *World in Action* was accused, by the press and politicians from across the political spectrum, of carrying out a trial by television; Granada's assertion that, 'in order to demonstrate the innocence of the six, they needed to identify those they alleged were the real murderers' was widely disputed.[26] Arguably, the inclusion of the four names was also motivated by what would make good television, and a dramatic reveal made for good television. In a letter to the Director-General of the IBA, Labour MP Tony Benn, condemned the decision:

> what GRANADA intends to do could almost be compared to the late Khomeini's 'death sentence' on Salman Rushdie since those whom they name on this programme might well themselves be killed - without any trial - by anyone who having seen the broadcast had become convinced they were simply carrying out an approved execution.[27]

Chris Mullin also objected to the names being made public and asked to be removed from the credits.[28] By contrast, media analyst J. Mallory Wober found that 63 per cent of those who watched the programme agreed with the statement 'The programme was right to name the "new five"'.[29] The IBA defended Granada's decision to broadcast the names, arguing that the men were all members of the IRA with serious criminal records who were known to any potential assassins. It also refuted claims that the programme could jeopardise future legal proceedings, arguing that the names had been known to the

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[24] 'Who Bombed Birmingham?', *World in Action*, Granada, 28 March 1990. 'Who Bombed Birmingham?' was actually the second such *World in Action* programme on the Birmingham Six. The first, broadcast on 28 October 1985 had contributed to getting the case referred to the Court of Appeal. For details, see Chris Mullins, *Error of Judgement: The Truth about the Birmingham Bombings* (London: Poolbeg Press, 1987), 238-9. Another programme which explored the case against the Maguire Seven, who were implicated in the case against the Guildford Four and convicted of handling explosives for the IRA, entitled 'Auntie Annie's Bomb Factory' was broadcast by Yorkshire Television on 6 March 1984. In 1986 and 1987, respectively Yorkshire Television's *First Tuesday* series produced two more programmes on the Guildford Four: 'The Guildford Time Bomb' (1 July 1986) and 'A Case That Won't Go Away' (3 March 1987).

[25] The programme is in part based on the information in Mullin's book *Error of Judgement*. (Mullin, *Error of Judgement*.)

[26] ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, 5014/27, Who Bombed Birmingham, 'Who Bombed Birmingham?': Paper by Television Division, 9 April 1990.

[27] ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, 5014/27, Who Bombed Birmingham, Letter from Tony Benn to the Director General, 24 March 1990.

[28] Simon de Bruxelles, 'Mullin disowns TV trial of 'Birmingham Five'', *The Guardian*, 25 March 1990.

[29] Wober's findings are based on a survey of the responses of 2,500 member of the Broadcaster's Audience Research Board to the Granada programme. J. Mallory Wober, 'Effects on Perceptions from seeing a Drama Documentary: The Case of Who Bombed Birmingham' (London: International Broadcasting Authority, 1990), 11.

authorities since 1975, yet no efforts had been made to extradite them, nor were any plans for a trial in prospect.[30]

The programme attracted an audience of nearly ten million, helped no doubt by the controversy.[31] As journalist Mary Holland observed, 'This […was] done in a context where the general British reaction to any television programme about Northern Ireland is to reach for the remote control gadget to switch channels'.[32] Its effect on public opinion was considerable, Wober found that 51 per cent of those who watched the programme agreed with the statement 'the six men in prison for the crime of bombing the pubs, seemed to be telling the truth about being innocent'.[33] In August 1990, the case of the Birmingham Six was once again referred to the Court of Appeal as a result of fresh evidence provided by the programme and Mullin. On 14 March 1991, the Birmingham Six were released after sixteen years false imprisonment. 'Who Bombed Birmingham?' is indicative of the powerful role television current affairs can have in actualising positive change.

'Shoot to Kill' is another example of the valuable and challenging coverage produced on Northern Ireland during the broadcasting ban.[34] Made by Yorkshire Television and broadcast on 3 and 4 June 1990, the two-part docu-drama examined the death of six unarmed men, suspected of carrying out the Kinnego embankment explosion by the RUC in 1982, which had led to the Stalker Inquiry.[35] Drawing on new information provided by Stalker's deputy, John Thorburn, Yorkshire Television reconstructed the shootings, and the subsequent investigation into allegations that the RUC had been exercising a shoot-to-kill policy.[36] The programme raised serious questions about the rectitude and competency of both the police and government. It argued that not only had the RUC unlawfully killed the six, but that they had attempted to cover it up by fabricating evidence. The programme also insinuated that Stalker had been dismissed from the inquiry to prevent him revealing that the British government had sanctioned shoot-to-kill operations in Northern Ireland. Social scientist Jane Roscoe, in her investigation of audience reactions to 'Shoot to Kill', found that the programme succeeded in challenging viewers' preconceptions of terrorism. She argues that the programme created a space for discussion, which allowed for alternative readings of what constitutes a terrorist, with some viewers describing the RUC as state terrorists. Certainly, 'Shoot to Kill' raised significant questions about the legitimacy of state-sponsored violence, however, as Roscoe acknowledged, the extent to which the programme reversed existing perceptions of the RUC was limited. She notes that most viewers when asked 'who are the "terrorists" within the programme?', observed that the RUC had acted like terrorists, but that they believed that the police could not be considered terrorists.[37]

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[30] ITA/IBA Cable Authority Archive, 'Who Bombed Birmingham?': Paper by Television Division, 9 April 1990.
[31] Raymond Fitzwalter, *The Dream that Died: The Rise and Fall of ITV* (Leicester: Matador, 2008), 146-7.
[32] Mary Holland, ''Faction' on Six beats the turn-off factor', *Irish Times*, 4 April 1990.
[33] Wober, 'Effects on Perceptions from seeing a Drama Documentary',7.
[34] 'Shoot to Kill', Yorkshire Television, 3 June 1990; 4 June 1990.
[35] It was not screened in Northern Ireland on the grounds that its transmission could constitute contempt of court.
[36] Miller, *Don't Mention the War*, 98.
[37] Jane Roscoe, 'The 'Irish Conflict' as portrayed in British drama-documentaries. An analysis of the television text and audience interpretations', (PhD thesis, University of East London, 1994), 152-8; 164-5.

Yorkshire Television drew attention once more to the alleged shoot-to-kill policy, attracting widespread criticism particularly from Conservative politicians. Their outrage was further exacerbated by the decision to screen the programme to schedule, despite the murders of two British officers by the IRA days previously. Ivor Stanbrook (MP for Orpington) condemned the programme as 'pure propaganda for the IRA. It is diabolical that it should be allowed to go ahead'.[38] The programme was also accused of inaccuracies and misrepresentations. The Chairman for the Conservative's backbench Northern Ireland committee, Ian Gow (assassinated by the IRA a month later) and UUP politician (soon-to-be leader) David Trimble claimed that the film had both lied and misled viewers by giving them the impression that a 'shoot to kill' policy had existed.[39] Defending Yorkshire Television, the IBA remarked: 'Shoot to Kill is a serious programme that explores the difficulties in countering IRA terrorism. It is a legitimate subject for television, and regrettably there are few periods in which its transmission would not coincide with IRA or other terrorist activities'.[40] Amongst the public, 'Shoot to Kill' was well received winning the Royal Television Society and the Broadcasting Press Guild awards for best drama. The *Daily Mail* described the programme as 'simply superb television', whilst the *Guardian* stated that: 'it was a brilliant programme… Seductively watchable, beautifully filmed, spaciously elaborate in its slow build-up of the characters and evidence on each side of the argument'.[41]

Both 'Shoot to Kill' and 'Who Bombed Birmingham?' are testament to the powerful role television played in challenging the authorities' actions regarding Northern Ireland. In doing so, they had a direct and positive role in redressing high-profile injustices. Despite legal restrictions, they provided new information, and represented aspects of the conflict which would otherwise not have come to the public's attention, adding to the complex picture of events in the province produced by the media throughout the 'Troubles'. Both demonstrate broadcasters' commitment to producing nuanced current affairs coverage, which offered alternative perspectives, despite the best efforts of the broadcasting ban. This dedication to providing probing and stimulating coverage, apparent in the 1970s and 1980s, was to continue to be a hallmark of current affairs programming throughout the rest of the conflict and the peace process.

In the early 1990s, a shift in Britain's political landscape occurred with the resignation of Margaret Thatcher and the appointment of the more moderate John Major. Within this context, the Northern Ireland peace process began in earnest when on 31 August 1994 the IRA announced a complete cessation of violence, marking a new phase in the journey to peace. In the months that followed loyalist paramilitaries declared a reciprocal ceasefire and preliminary dialogue began between the political parties of Northern Ireland, the British and the Irish governments. The establishment of all-party talks, however, were obstructed due to disagreement over the terms of Sinn Féin's entry into them.

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[38] Richard Middleton, 'Tories condemn TV 'propaganda' for terrorists', *Daily Mail*, 4 June 1990.
[39] 'Shoot to Kill: The Issues', 4 June 1990; Lance Pettitt, *Screening Ireland: Film and television representation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 241-2.
[40] Middleton, 'Tories condemn TV 'propaganda' for terrorists'.
[41] Elizabeth Cowley, 'Sights are set high in Ireland', *Daily Mail*, 4 June 1990; Hugo Young, 'Shooting to thrill', *The Guardian*, 15 October 1990.

Britain's insistence that the IRA decommission its weapons before Sinn Féin could be allowed a seat at the negotiating table, delayed talks and ultimately resulted in the collapse of the IRA ceasefire in February 1995.

Following on the heels of the ceasefire came the decision to end the broadcasting ban and the return of Sinn Féin and the IRA to television screens. Under the ban, the number of appearances on television by representatives of Sinn Féin had fallen by 63 per cent.[42] The party's central role in the peace process, however, necessitated that broadcasters interview its representatives. Following the first of the Hume-Adams statements in August 1993, there was a significant increase in the number of television appearances by republicans. Social scientist, Rita Lago, found that between September 1993 and December 1994, representatives of Sinn Féin were formally interviewed on the BBC, ITV and Channel 4 144 times; compared to only 34 interviews conducted during the first year of the ban.[43] Lago, and David Miller, both note a change in the tone of interviews, their duration and location; not only were the interviews conducted post-1993 considerably longer and less hostile, but they tended to be carried out in the studio rather than on the street.[44] Lago argues that this more formal setting conferred a sense of legitimacy and status onto those interviewed, which would have provoked outrage before the peace process began.[45]

The peace process saw the evolution of Sinn Féin from terrorists into politicians, and television was instrumental in facilitating this reinvention. Access to television gave Sinn Féin a forum to articulate their position for the benefit of British and crucially unionist audiences.[46] Additionally, it allowed them to communicate to the nationalist community and to curry support for the new strategy of 'unarmed struggle'.[47] That they were afforded this space enabled them to be considered as legitimate players in the negotiations. Television also allowed for dialogue between Sinn Féin and other participants away from the negotiating table. This was especially important whilst Sinn Féin was excluded from 'all-party' talks. It was only through the medium of television that republicans and unionists had any direct dialogue prior to September 1997 when Sinn Féin was finally admitted into

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[42] It is worth noting that Sinn Féin never enjoyed much exposure. ITN told the Court of Appeal in December 1989 had the ban been enforced a year earlier it would only have affected 8 minutes and 20 seconds of over 1200 hours of airtime. Journalists challenged the broadcasting ban and lost successively in the High Court (26 May 1989), the Appeal Court (6 December 1989) and the House of Lords (7 February 1991). Lesley Henderson, David Miller and Jaqueline Reilly, *Speak no evil: the British broadcasting ban, the media and the conflict in Ireland* (Glasgow: Glasgow University Media Group, 1990), 37; Edgerton, 'Quelling the "Oxygen of Publicity"', 125.

[43] Rita Lago, 'Interviewing Sinn Féin under the new political environment: a comparative analysis of interviews with Sinn Féin on British television', *Media, Culture and Society*, 20, 4 (1998), 678; Henderson, Miller and Reilly, *Speak no evil*, 30.

[44] Lago, 'Interviewing Sinn Féin under the new political environment'; David Miller, 'The media and Northern Ireland: censorship, information management and the broadcasting ban', in *Glasgow Media Group Reader: Industry, Economy, War and Politics*, (ed.) Greg Philo (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995), 68-71.

[45] On 2 November 1993, Conservative MP Dame Jill Knight addressing the Prime Minister called for the restrictions regarding televising interviews with members of Sinn Féin to be tightened. In response, Major promised a review of the ban to establish whether it needed to be tightened, however, soon after the ban was lifted. (Jill Knight, *Hansards*, 2 November 1993). Miller, 'The Media and Northern Ireland', 69; Lago, 'Interviewing Sinn Féin under the new political environment', 678; Henderson, Miller and Reilly, *Speak no evil*, 30.

[46] Spencer, 'The impact of television news on the Northern Ireland peace negotiations', 604.

[47] Paul Dixon has discussed how political elites produced scripts, or stories, presented through the media to sell the peace process to their supporters. Paul Dixon, 'Political Skills or Lying and Manipulating? The Choreography of the Northern Ireland Peace Process', *Political Studies*, 50, 4 (2002), 725-741.

negotiations.[48] On 12 August 1997, the BBC's *Newsnight* hosted the first live televised debate of the peace process between Ulster Unionist MP Ken Maginnis and Sinn Féin's chief negotiator Martin McGuinness.[49] As the BBC's Ireland correspondent, Denis Murray explained, this was a monumental step forward, as it was the first time a unionist politician had engaged in a face-to-face debate with a member of Sinn Féin:

> To see a republican and unionist talking in the same studio was a considerable step. It wasn't so much what they said, the fact that it was disagreeable was understandable, but it was the symbolism of the two sides meeting. That really was a sign of movement.[50]

Television also provided an alternative space where participants could negotiate without making face-to-face contact. Participants practiced what has been termed 'megaphone diplomacy', using television and newspapers to put forward new ideas, offer clarification, issue threats and most importantly hint at concessions.[51] As media scholar, Kirsten Sparre, has argued 'the news media can serve as a notice board where it is possible to post messages to the other side'.[52] This 'notice board' became an important channel of communication between the different parties and by these means key issues were worked out. For example, Stephen Grimason (former Northern Ireland political editor for the BBC) highlighted the role television played in negotiating the issue of prisoner release:

> One week Paul Murphy [Minister of State for Northern Ireland] would appear with his view about what would happen vis-à-vis the prisoners and the next Sinn Féin would respond. Sinn Féin would not have made a deal had they not got something in terms of the amnesty that evolved from the process for their prisoners and about several months before it all came together there were a number of interviews by the government to send the signal that they were engaged and realized how important this was.[53]

Broadcasters and journalists were not merely the passive tools of those involved in peace talks. There was considerable support for the process amongst British and Irish journalists, with many using their programmes or publications to help promote peace. *Irish Times* journalist Ed Moloney has claimed that several of his colleagues would drop stories that had the potential to undermine talks, recalling how journalists who attempted to scrutinise the peace process too closely were labelled 'unhelpful'. One *Irish Times* reporter even coined the name Journalists Against the Peace Process (JAPPS).[54] Similarly, on Channel 4's *Frontline* programme broadcast on 1 June 1996, Irish commentator Eoghan Harris noted that to criticise the peace process in Britain and Ireland was 'neither popular nor profitable'.[55] Sparre has shown how some journalists, especially those working on Irish and Northern Irish newspapers,

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[48] In protest at Sinn Féin's presence at talks the DUP and the United Kingdom Unionist Party walked out of negotiations.
[49] The BBC had scheduled a live debate between Maginnis and Adams for 9 February 1996, however, a few hours before it was due to air the Docklands bomb had exploded and the programme was cancelled.
[50] Spencer, 'The impact of television news on the Northern Ireland peace negotiations', 612.
[51] McLaughlin and Miller, 'The Media Politics of the Irish Peace Process', 130.
[52] Sparre, 'Megaphone Diplomacy in the Northern Irish Peace Process', 90.
[53] Spencer, 'The impact of television news on the Northern Ireland peace negotiations', 611-2.
[54] Ed Moloney, 'The Peace Process and Journalism', *Britain and Ireland: Lives Entwined II* (London: British Council, 2006), 77.
[55] 'No Title', *Frontline*, Channel 4, 1 June 1996.

consciously endeavoured to facilitate negotiations, publishing articles by, or carrying out high-profile interviews with, key actors in the process.[56] Other journalists used their platforms to challenge the behaviour of participants. By asking the right questions or persistently bringing up uncomfortable issues, journalists sought to engineer small adjustments in a party's standpoint with the potential to create forward momentum within the peace process. Sparre highlights, as an example, the activities of Tom Collins, editor of the Belfast-based nationalist daily, the *Irish News*. In 1995, the newspaper won three News Focus Awards for its coverage of the negotiations, and Collins was personally commended on his 'thoughtful comments and cross-community initiatives'. *Guardian* journalist Roy Greenslade remarked that 'The paper has played a significant part in the peace process, never disguising its nationalist sympathies but always ready to be impartial and balanced'.[57] Collins himself, described how during the clarification debate, frustrated at Sinn Féin's refusal to accept the explanations offered by the British government, he had republished the Downing Street Declaration, annotated with additional information and clarifications that had been released by the two governments, in the hope that 'we might achieve a breakthrough'.[58]

Television presenter Jonathan Dimbleby's eponymous programme on 12 March 1995, featuring Martin McGuinness, is one of numerous examples of how Sinn Féin's new relationship with the media played out on television.[59] The programme explored decommissioning as a precondition for Sinn Féin's entry into talks. The issue had emerged publicly five days earlier when Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Patrick Mayhew had made his Washington speech, stating that there needed to be a tangible beginning to the decommissioning process before Sinn Féin could be allowed to participate. This would come to be a major stumbling block to progress. Current affairs programmes tended to support the view that Sinn Féin needed to be included in all-party talks, even if the IRA continued refusing to disarm. At the same time, broadcasters were still capable of challenging Sinn Féin on the republicans' failure to decommission.

Dimbleby invited McGuinness to respond to Mayhew's demands, affording him the respect due to a legitimate politician. That Dimbleby was willing to make the effort to accommodate McGuinness's views is evidence of a significant shift in approach to that of a political commentator critically questioning a credible politician. Accordingly, Lago and Miller have both argued that after

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[56] Sparre, 'Megaphone Diplomacy in the Northern Irish Peace Process', 99-101.
[57] Eamon Phoenix, *A Century of Northern Life: The Irish News and 100 Years of Ulster History, 1890s-1990s* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 1995), 37-8.
[58] In December 1993, the British and Irish governments issued a joint declaration pledging to 'foster agreement and reconciliation, leading to a new political framework… within Northern Ireland, for the whole island, and between these islands'. The declaration affirmed British support for a united Ireland, with the consent of the majority of people in Northern Ireland. This fell short of traditional republican demands and hesitant to endorse it, Sinn Féin asked the two governments for clarifications. Fear of alienating the Ulster Unionist, stopped the government from engaging in private talks with Sinn Féin. When it did respond, the British and Irish governments did so mainly through public speeches reported by the media. On 19 May 1994, the British government published a twenty-one-page clarification of Sinn Féin's questions through the press. Sinn Féin remained reluctant to accept the declaration, meeting in July 1994 to consider the proposals. (Sparre, 'Megaphone Diplomacy in the Northern Irish Peace Process', 90-3; 100-1;)
[59] 'Martin McGuinness', *Jonathan Dimbleby*, London Weekend Television, 12 March 1995.

1993, broadcast journalists were less hostile when interviewing members of Sinn Féin.[60] This is not to say, that where appropriate individual journalists were reluctant to challenge republicans such as McGuinness or Adams.

McGuinness argued that whilst his party was committed to lasting peace, it was not in a position to effect disarmament. He insisted that at no point during private negotiations with the British government had the issue of prior decommissioning been alluded to, and declared that he had no intention to sacrifice his party's unique position of influence by coming into conflict with the IRA over its weapons: 'It is not realistic or sensible to expect in the present peace process that Sinn Féin should go to the IRA and demand that the IRA decommission its weapons before Sinn Féin goes into talks with British Ministers'.[61] *Jonathan Dimbleby* facilitated the presentation by McGuinness of the republican perspective concerning decommissioning, not only clarifying Sinn Féin's standpoint for the benefit of the other participants, but providing audiences with a better understanding of the complexities of the debate surrounding disarmament and the reasons why republicans were reluctant to give up their weapons. Dimbleby, a seasoned current affairs presenter with extensive experience covering Northern Ireland, however, pushed McGuinness further asking him to justify Sinn Féin's unwillingness to endorse decommissioning.[62] He questioned republican's commitment to peace, asking if they would risk the collapse of negotiations, homing in on McGuinness's argument that Sinn Féin would support universal disarmament, if it included an equal commitment from the British Army:

> Let's stay in the world we are now in, let us say that the British government is prepared to discuss in their terms all those things you have just put in your terms. What the Secretary of State will want to know is are you willing or are you not willing to say… we will discuss the ways in which not only in principle we can achieve total disarmament but work out the ways that would practically bring that into effect.[63]

Though Dimbleby demonstrates a degree of respect towards McGuinness and a willingness to listen to the republican point of view, he also suggests that McGuinness was being unrealistic in his demands. The presenter grasps at the opportunity to coax the Sinn Féin representative into conceding ground. Using his programme, Dimbleby attempts to extract from McGuinness a further commitment to disarmament given certain conditions.

Similar themes are present in television coverage of, and interviews with, Gerry Adams. Arguably, no one person represented the republican rebranding better than the President of Sinn Féin, who became the focus of much television attention. On 30 January 1995, the BBC's *Panorama* series profiled Adams. 'The Man We Hate To Love' explored his transformation from 'hardened terrorist to

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[60] Lago, 'Interviewing Sinn Féin under the new political environment'; Miller, 'The media and Northern Ireland', 68-71.
[61] There is much ambiguity as to when the issue of decommissioning first arose. For a detailed discussion see Eamonn O'Kane, 'Decommissioning and the Peace Process: Where did it come from and why did it stay so long?', *Irish Political Studies*, 22, 1, (2007): 81-101.
[62] Dimbleby started his career in television in 1969 and worked as reporter on *The World at One* before joining *This Week* in 1972. He worked on numerous high-profile programmes about Northern Ireland including 'Death on the Rock'.
[63] 'Martin McGuinness', 12 March 1995.

peacemaker'.[64] The programme tracked Adams' role in bringing about the IRA ceasefire in 1994. Reporter John Ware contended that it was 'Gerry Adams that led the IRA to take the first critical step to stop shooting so they could start talking and be listened to'. Ware emphasised the immensity of trying to persuade the paramilitaries to move forward with Adams, especially as the peace that was being proposed fell far short of the organisation's ambition for a united Ireland. The programme argued that Adams had been tasked with carrying out a near impossible balancing act and asked whether the government was doing enough to help keep IRA hardliners on side.[65]

'The Man We Hate To Love' presented a particularly positive view of Adams.[66] Ware describes him as 'courteous, even gentle' and 'the best hope for peace since Ireland was divided'.[67] A further manifestation of the shift towards treating members of Sinn Féin as legitimate political actors, this portrayal was in marked contrast with John Ware's earlier description of Adams, in 'The Honourable Member for West Belfast' broadcast on 19 December 1983, as 'the man whose following is set to crush any chance of reconciliation in Northern Ireland'.[68] As Miller has argued the reporter's change in attitude is 'real evidence of the process of "Mandelization" in which Adams was transformed in the manner of Nelson Mandela from "terrorist godfather" to "legitimate peace-making politician"'.[69] Arguably the extent to which Adams succeeded in shrugging off his association with terrorism, however was limited.

The lifting of the broadcasting ban allowed journalists to interview members of Sinn Féin and present them in a positive light without fear of evoking the government's wrath. This new-found respect shown to Sinn Féin representatives by Ware and others, however, was in large part a result of that party's central role in the peace process. As Channel 4 news anchor, Jon Snow explained on *Right to Reply* in March 1995:

> We're now in a completely different circumstance from the one under which the ban operated. Then he [Adams] was linked with active terrorism, now he's part of a peace process… Gerry Adams is amongst a number of people who have made a difference in Northern Ireland… That's inescapable.[70]

This more receptive attitude towards Sinn Féin did not dissipate following the collapse of the IRA ceasefire in February 1996. In the aftermath of the Docklands bombing, *World in Action* broadcast a special episode featuring an interview with Gerry Adams, once again hosted by Jonathan Dimbleby, exploring the reasons behind the IRA's return to violence and its implications for the future of the peace process.[71] As Dimbleby remarked, the end of the ceasefire 'put Gerry Adams in the dock'. The bomb,

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[64] 'The Man We Hate To Love', *Panorama*, BBC, 30 January 1995.
[65] 'The Man We Hate To Love', 30 January 1995.
[66] Several newspapers remarked on this, although this was the extent of their criticism. 'Panorama: Gerry Adams- The Man We Hate To Love', *Daily Mail*, 30 January 1995; 'Television: Watching Brief', *Guardian*, 30 January 1995; 'Television 2', *Daily Express*, 30 January 1995.
[67] 'The Man We Hate To Love', 30 January 1995.
[68] 'Television: Watching Brief', *Guardian*, 30 January 1995.
[69] Miller, 'The Media and Northern Ireland', 71.
[70] *Right to Reply*, Channel 4, 25 March 1995 quoted in Miller, 'The Media and Northern Ireland', 71.
[71] 'Gerry Adams', *World in Action*, Granada, 12 February 1996.

and Adams' refusal to condemn it, raised serious questions concerning both the Sinn Féin leader's continued ability to influence the IRA and his commitment to peace. The programme offered Adams the opportunity to convince audiences that 'he really was a man of peace and not just an apologist for terrorism'. Dimbleby approached the interview with characteristic toughness, endeavouring to force Adams to revile the bombers. Unsatisfied by his insistence that the government's failure to engage in substantive talks was to blame, Dimbleby accused Adams of 'ducking and weaving' his questions, reminding him of his accountability to the peace process:

> Let me suggest to you that a great many British people watching, here in Northern Ireland and on the mainland, and many people beyond who may be watching this programme, will say his failure to condemn this atrocity is in practice to condone it.[72]

Evoking international and domestic demands for peace, Dimbleby emphasised the importance of republican transparency if the process was to advance. Adams was forced to admit that he had not been warned about the bomb and was unable to confirm whether this was the beginning of a new campaign in England. This prompted Dimbleby to question the extent to which Adams had it within his power to contribute to the peace process:

> And meanwhile, you as leader of Sinn Féin cannot deliver a ceasefire, cannot guarantee that the IRA won't start bombing in a great campaign all over again, cannot deliver anything required to get the talks back on track nothing.

Dimbleby's tone indicates his frustration at the lack of accountability shown by Sinn Féin and the IRA for their part in maintaining the developing peace. He accused the IRA of having failed to make any conciliatory gesture in order to forward negotiations. Despite these criticisms, the tone of the interview remained that of a reporter grilling a politician. Dimbleby allowed Adams a voice and the space to put across the republican position and so engage in the peace talks. Had an interview of this nature been broadcast during the 1970s or 1980s, Granada would have been vilified for allowing the terrorists a propaganda platform. By the mid-1990s, the *World in Action* interview attracted little negative attention. The absence of any backlash from the Adams interview is testament to the transformation of Sinn Féin and suggests a shift in public perceptions too.

As current affairs coverage of McGuinness and Adams shows, the broadcast media created a space in which Sinn Féin could come to be viewed as legitimate actors within the process and a forum which enabled them to engage in ongoing talks. It also demonstrates how individual journalists used programmes in order to maintain the developing peace. Social scientist Graham Spencer has argued that television journalists were 'full and active participants' in the peace talks. He contends that by broadcasting 'the contestations between parties, carrying dialogue and communications, and publicizing the dynamic and direction of talks, the news media became a political participant in the peace process and produced expectations and pressures which were absorbed into negotiations'.[73] Miller and

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[72] *Ibid*.
[73] Spencer, 'The impact of television news on the Northern Ireland peace negotiations', 604; 611.

McLaughlin also contend that 'all sides have attempted to use the news media in the negotiations process, and this has meant that the media have themselves been key players in the unfolding drama'.[74] Certainly analysis has shown that television's current affairs coverage played a role in facilitating and helping to advance negotiations over the mechanics behind the peace process. Media coverage, however, rarely explored beyond the processes of the talks, to scrutinise the core issues that would ultimately form part of the Good Friday Agreement. Few programmes tackled ideas of national and ethnic identities or what role the British and Irish governments would have in the province. Likewise, there was no discussion as to how the issue of a united Ireland could be reconciled. As Gadi Wolsfeld argues, the news media was 'an important tool for promoting the peace process', but for this reason it would be wise to exercise caution as to the extent to which the media can be viewed as political participants in the negotiations.

Not content with interviewing Sinn Féin, the lifting of the broadcasting ban meant that the IRA appeared once more on television screens. On 20 December 1994, ITV's *Network First* broadcast a series of interviews with IRA volunteers, exploring the motivations and experiences of the IRA foot soldier.[75] This was the first-time republican paramilitaries had been interviewed on British television since 1979. Over the course of the peace process, broadcasters produced several current affairs programmes featuring interviews with IRA and ex-IRA volunteers, as well as the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and other Loyalist paramilitaries. These programmes sought to explore the mind-set of the rank and file, with the aim of better understanding the impetus behind paramilitarism, especially that of the IRA, and demonstrating the importance of involving all parties in the peace process.

'Dealing with Terror', broadcast by *World in Action* on 24 June 1996, interviewed former IRA bomber Shane Paul O'Doherty and ex-UVF assassin Billy Hutchinson about the rationale behind terrorist actions and what it might take to persuade paramilitaries on both sides to abandon their armed campaigns.[76] The programme described O'Doherty and Hutchinson as 'the most dangerous men ever to be convicted of terrorism in this country'. O'Doherty had been convicted in 1976 of thirty-one counts of attempted murder for his part in a London letter bombing campaign, whilst Hutchinson was imprisoned in 1975 for the murder of two Catholics. Both men, however, had renounced violence whilst in prison, and since his release Hutchinson had become an advisor to the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP). O'Doherty and Hutchinson explored their beliefs as young men and their eventual realisation that terrorism was not the way to achieve their goals. As O'Doherty states 'it is vitally important that you know how I felt then, because there are still people in Britain who feel this way and who are working with explosives, and bombs'.[77] In giving both men a voice, the programme helped audiences to

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[74] McLaughlin and Miller, 'The Media Politics of the Irish Peace Process', 116; Gadi Wolsfeld, *The News Media and Peace Processes: The Middle East and Northern Ireland* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 2001), 30-41.
[75] Peter Paterson, 'A war with no winners', *Daily Mail*, 21 December 1994; Miller, 'The Media and Northern Ireland', 71.
[76] 'Dealing with Terror', *World in Action*, Granada, 24 June 1996.
[77] O'Doherty also featured in 'Men with Nine Lives', broadcast on 24 November 1996 as part of Channel 4's *Equinox* series. The programme looked at the British Army's bomb disposal unit in Northern Ireland and drew on the

contextualise the conflict. It sought to provide viewers with a better understanding of the violence, instead of presenting it as a random manifestation. Explaining the motivations behind the paramilitaries' activities, allowed the programme to offer a more complex perspective to one of the conflict as an irrational battle between two violent tribes. The programme showed, once again that the broadcast media were capable of presenting a more nuanced view of the 'Troubles' than they have been credited with.

The programme's rationale was that only by understanding the motives which lay behind the violence, could the peace process advance. O'Doherty described how engaging with Labour politicians Philip Whitehead and Andrew Bennett, who had visited him regularly in prison and had listened to his grievances without preconditions, had led him to rethink his hard-line republican views. Hutchinson on the other hand, explained how talking with republican prisoners had taught him that he shared many of the same values and experiences as his so-called enemies. Both men argued that if the British and Irish governments engaged with extremists without prerequisites and began to establish common ground between paramilitaries on both sides, they might move away from violence completely. The programme observed, however, that this advice had been disregarded by the British government who continued to refuse to talk to Sinn Féin whilst the IRA held onto their weapons. It voiced fear that following the Manchester bombing on 15 June 1996 prospects of talks with Sinn Féin were even more remote. The programme concluded with comments from both Hutchinson and O'Doherty who condemn the failure to move forward towards all-party talks.[78] These closing scenes imply criticism of all those who opposed the entry of Sinn Féin into the peace negotiations, and especially the British government.

Broadcasters tended to be critical of the government's handling of the peace process, especially concerning the issue of decommissioning. Most programmes presented the view that for the peace process to be successful Sinn Féin needed to be included. Some even went so far as to suggest that the British government's intransigence over the terms of Sinn Féin's entry into negotiations was endangering the peace process. Three days after the Docklands bombing, *Panorama* broadcast a review of the previous eighteen-months of peace and asked what lessons could be learnt moving forward.[79] The programme, hosted by David Dimbleby, featured an extended report on Northern Ireland by Peter Taylor exploring nationalist and republican frustration with the speed of the process. Taylor argued that the government's inflexibility was at the root of the current setbacks: 'the crisis we face today can be traced back to frustrated expectations to what the IRA had been led to believe it would get from the ceasefire'. He remarked that 'from the beginning the British government insisted on conditions which it maintained were essential if ever the Unionists were to be brought to the negotiating table'. The programme explained that the government had first insisted that the IRA declare its ceasefire to be permanent, then decommission its weapons, now it was insisting that elections be held before talks.

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experiences of O'Doherty to track the IRA's technological advances and gain a better understanding of the terrorist mind-set. ('Men with Nine Lives', *Equinox*, Channel 4, 24 November 1996).

[78] 'Dealing with Terror', 24 June 1996.

[79] There had been a programme on drugs in sports scheduled, but in the light of events in Northern Ireland it was postponed for this special edition of *Panorama*. 'The End of the IRA Ceasefire', *Panorama*, BBC, 12 February 1996.

Taylor's choice of words and intonation served to indicate that he did not agree with the government's view that such measures were necessary to ensure unionist cooperation. Instead, he points out, that by fixating on decommissioning the government risked alienating the nationalists: 'To nationalists and republicans and increasingly the Dublin government these conditions seemed hurdles on the road to peace'. Taylor concluded, with some pessimism, that all participants in the process, including Britain, needed to make the necessary compromises in order to prevent further violence and establish all-party talks.

Taylor's cynicism was shared by Dimbleby, as is evident from the host's interview with Minister of State Michael Ancram. Dimbleby echoed republicans in accusing the government of 'dragging its feet', and put to Ancram that 'every time you looked as though you were about to get to the negotiating table, there seemed to be some other hurdle'. He questioned the logic behind Major's insistence on elections, asking Ancram how this would resolve decommissioning. Dimbleby implied that, if holding an election would allow Sinn Féin entry into all-party talks, then the IRA's failure to disarm could not have been as big a stumbling block as the government had claimed. He also challenged Ancram on why the government could not accept Mitchell's recommendations without the precondition of elections. Ancram argued that only an election could establish the confidence in the republican movement, necessary to ensure the unionists would agree to sit around the negotiating table, at which point Dimbleby questioned whether the government had been tough enough, insinuating that they were allowing unionists to dictate negotiations, and in the process risking the collapse of the peace process.[80] What the viewer witnessed was a hard line of questioning, by constantly pushing the agenda, Dimbleby, like Taylor, sought to hold the British government accountable, raising questions regarding its culpability with respect to the end of the ceasefire and its potential future role in bringing about a successful conclusion to negotiations.

Panorama produced several other programmes during this period which challenged the British government's actions concerning Northern Ireland. In July 1996, trouble erupted in Portadown (Co. Armagh) after police attempted to re-route the Orange Order's annual Drumcree parade in response to demonstrations by Catholic residents. After the RUC reversed its decision to disallow the parade from marching its traditional route down the Garvaghy Road, loyalist violence gave way to rioting in nationalist areas. *Panorama* criticised the government for failing to take action over the standoff and questioned the extent to which they had allowed themselves to be cowed by the unionists. In a special edition, broadcast on 15 July, the programme investigated the extent to which the government was responsible for the march going ahead.[81] The Chief Constable of the RUC, Hugh Annesley, in an interview featured on the programme, insisted that he had made all decisions regarding the handling of the crisis independently. John Major, also interviewed on the programme, likewise denied that his government had played any part in allowing the Drumcree parade to progress.

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[80] *Ibid*.
[81] 'Drumcree: the Aftermath', *Panorama*, BBC, 15 July 1996.

Both Taylor and Dimbleby cast doubt on these claims, arguing that given the political implications it seemed inconceivable that the government had no influence on the decision to allow the Order down the Garvaghy Road. In an interview, Dimbleby put it to the Prime Minister that given the sensitive nature of the march, and its potential implications for peace talks, the government should have been directly involved in resolving the crisis. He argued that this degree of conflict within a part of the United Kingdom warranted they play a part alongside the Chief Constable to find a peaceful solution. He also suggests that even if Major was to be believed, that the British government had played no role at Drumcree, by virtue of doing nothing they must own their part in the violence and this potential threat to the peace process. Dimbleby argued that to nationalists it appeared that unionists had once again got their own way, undermining their confidence in receiving fair treatment in the peace process and leaving them to question the point of engaging constructively with negotiations. Once again, Dimbleby used his position to hold the British government to account, challenging them over their handling of events in Northern Ireland.

Dimbleby also put it to Major that the loyalists had prevailed through violence and sheer force of numbers and asked if unionists could flaunt the law with impunity because of Major's dependency on the UUP for his parliamentary majority. Major's slim majority, exacerbated by deep divisions within the Conservative Party, had given unionist MPs a pivotal role in British politics.[82] In 1995, John Redwood's bid for the Party's leadership had further underscored the precariousness of Major's position. Fear of losing the UUP's support was certainly a factor in the way in which the government approached the peace process, although the extent to which Major was held hostage by the Ulster Unionists requires further scholarly investigation.[83] Dimbleby raises the possibility that Major, fearful of antagonising the UUP, was soft on unionists, not only at Drumcree but in the peace process. Dimbleby took a hard line, scrutinising the government's motives and pressing Major to account for its part in the violence. His tough stance attracted comment; writing in the *Sun*, columnist and former Conservative Cabinet minister, Norman Tebbit, usually an outspoken critic of Major, applauded his 'self-control, discipline and determination' in the face of Dimbleby's questions, which he accused of being 'downright offensive'.[84] It is clear that Dimbleby demonstrated a willingness within the British media to critically examine the government's actions in Northern Ireland.

At the same time, the programme criticised the Orange Order's part in the dispute. The programme argued that the trouble was rooted in displays of triumphalism when, the year before, the marchers had been permitted to pass down the Garvaghy Road. It refuted unionist claims that these allegations were the invention of Sinn Féin and the IRA to 'whip-up feeling' showing footage of David

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[82] Paul Dixon, '"The usual doubletalk": The British political parties and the Ulster Unionists, 1974-94', *Irish Political Studies*, 9, 1 (1994), 36-8.
[83] John Holmes private secretary (Overseas Affairs) to John Major has argued that many of the peace initiatives backed by the Prime Minister had provoked the unionists. He points to Framework Documents issued by the British and Irish governments in February 1995 as an example; green-tinged, these had infuriated unionist leaders. John Holmes, 'Movement and transition in 1997: Major to Blair' in *The British and Peace in Northern Ireland*, (ed.) Graham Spencer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 179-80.
[84] Norman Tebbit, 'Get off the fence before they bomb you off, Major', *The Sun*, 18 July 1996.

Trimble and Ian Paisley on the 1995 march holding their hands aloft in a gesture of triumph as they reached the end of the Garvaghy Road. Taylor noted that these scenes were being repeated and predicted that this would continue to have damaging consequences in the future. Rather than simply condemn the unionists, however, the programme offered an explanation as to their rationale. Attempting to communicate the importance of the march for the loyalist community, Taylor explained that 'the issue was not simply about marching down a road; it was a matter of survival, as if their whole lives, future and culture was at stake'. Trimble, interviewed on the programme, noted that unionist fears of being manipulated out of the UK, had been aggravated by what his community saw as constant concessions by the British government in its dealings with militant nationalism. By which he meant yielding to republican pressure over issues such as prior decommissioning. The programme argued that for many unionists 'Drumcree was heralded as Ulster's last stand'. In doing so *Panorama* demonstrated a capacity to look beyond the violence to better understand the loyalist psyche.

Even so, *Panorama* condemned the Order's actions during the standoff, presenting them as stereotypically intransigent. Taking an equally tough stance to that adopted by Dimbleby towards Major, Taylor confronted Trimble, questioning his refusal to meet with the Garvaghy Road residents. Taylor accused the Orange Order of turning away from an opportunity to resolve the crisis. In 1982, the leader of the Garvaghy Road residents, Breandán Mac Cionnaith, had been jailed for his part in an IRA bomb attack on Portadown's British Legion Hall. Taylor remarked: 'if the loyalists had been looking for an excuse not to compromise then Mr Mac Cionnaith's record was ready and waiting'. His choice of words implies that Mac Cionnaith's criminal record would be just that, an excuse, and that the unionists had no intention of coming to a compromise with the residents' association. Indeed, Trimble insisted that the association was a front for Sinn Féin and that the Order would not engage with militant republicans.[85] The programme sought to hold unionists, as it had the British government, responsible for their part in the conflict and to bring pressure to bear on them to find a compromise.

The irony was not lost on Taylor that though Trimble refused to talk to Mac Cionnaith, he was willing to engage in talks with loyalist paramilitaries. The reporter recounted how he had been sitting in Drumcree Church Hall at the height of the crisis when Trimble had arrived for a secret meeting with representatives of the outlawed loyalist paramilitary group, the UVF, including former prisoner Billy Wright. The programme then featured a brief interview with Wright who denied involvement in the standoff. Taylor challenged Trimble on the issue of loyalist paramilitary involvement, questioning whether he had done enough to prevent them from aggravating an already volatile situation. Special Branch sources had suggested that paramilitaries on both sides had stepped in to prevent a deal being brokered. Taylor points out the hypocrisy of talking to the UVF, and not Sinn Féin or the IRA, encouraging the viewer to examine why unionists refused to negotiate with Sinn Féin directly in the peace process. Taylor recognised that the unionists were using the Orange march to underline their dominance and challenged it head-on. He gave voice to a widespread frustration at the lack of

[85] 'Drumcree: the Aftermath', 15 July 1996.

accountability and unwillingness to compromise shown by unionist politicians both at Drumcree and in the peace process.[86] *Panorama* succeeded in presenting the Drumcree standoff in a nuanced manner by helping to explain the importance of the marching season, and nationalist objections to it.

It is worth noting that the Drumcree special also addressed the issue of violence perpetrated by the RUC when instructed to clear Garvaghy Road residents who were peacefully protesting. Its footage of baton-wielding police officers attacking protestors is hauntingly reminiscent of that filmed during the Civil Rights marches in 1968. Contrary to Miller's claim that 'television news journalists are with the police', and in marked contrast with the way in which violence carried out by the security forces was reported during the early days of the 'Troubles', *Panorama* was candid about police brutality.[87] The programme presented footage of residents, being interviewed by Taylor, showing the cameras the injuries inflicted on them by the RUC. With the help of this footage, the programme sought to demonstrate not only the physical damage caused by these attacks but also the damage done to nationalist confidence that the peace process had brought about change and that they would no longer be subject to discrimination. This was epitomised in a shot of one female resident, who shouts at the cameras filming the clearance: 'This is outrageous what's happening in Portadown. What are we to make of this? The implication of this is that the greater threat has won'. Put differently, the Orange Order had been allowed to triumph by a police force which retained a bias against the nationalist community; her words lend support to Dimbleby's argument that nationalists believed that the unionists always got their way. The programme vocalises fears that nationalist anger at the RUC would endanger the peace process.

Panorama was not alone in questioning the unionist commitment to the peace process and their willingness to compromise. Much of the broadcast media's coverage in the mid-1990s presented the unionists as an impediment to progress, rather than engaged participants in the process. In an episode of *Dispatches* entitled 'The Peace Prize', broadcast by Channel 4 on 24 April 1996, reporter Eamonn Mallie went so far as to remark that 'The unionists were never players in this peace process'. His comments were supported by images of Trimble and Paisley walking with their hands raised triumphantly down the Garvaghy Road. Mallie's observation, juxtaposed with these striking scenes, suggested not only that unionists were unwilling to compromise but questioned whether they were serious about participating in negotiations at all if the absolute preservation of the Union and the protection of unionist traditions could not be guaranteed.[88] Expectations of a unionist backlash preoccupied broadcasters, who nervously monitored their behaviour for any sign that presaged them pulling out. The cumulative effect of programmes such as 'The Peace Prize' and 'Drumcree: The Aftermath' reinforced long-standing stereotypes of the 'No Surrender' faction within the unionist

[86] *Ibid*.
[87] The issue of police violence towards peaceful republican protestors is also addressed in the Channel 4 programme 'More than a Sacrifice', broadcast on 29 August 1995. David Miller, 'The media, propaganda and the Northern Ireland peace process', in *Media in Ireland: Issues in Broadcasting*, (ed.) Declan Kiberd (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), 124-5.
[88] 'The Peace Prize', *Dispatches*, Channel 4, 24 April 1995.

community. The editorial lens through which these programmes interpreted unionism viewed its lack of engagement in, and resistance to, the peace negotiations as evidence of ingrained recalcitrance and a siege mentality.

This was a view widely shared throughout the rest of the UK. On 1 February 1996, *Newsnight* dedicated its programme to examining the implications of the leaked Framework documents on the peace process.[89] The reaction of unionist politicians to the documents was one of outrage, fearing that they would open the door to a united Ireland. The programme asked whether unionists still had faith in the British government, or believed that they had 'been sold down Belfast Lough'. Taking part in a panel discussion featured on the programme, Michael Mates (former Northern Ireland minister) described Paisley and the Deputy Leader of the UUP, John Taylor, as 'two Unionist bulls…looking for red rags because they want to create a row'. Paisley lent credence to Mates' observations shortly afterwards by storming off set. His temper tantrum served to reinforce impressions that unionists were petty, negative and liable to respond in a 'knee-jerk' fashion to the slightest provocation. It should be noted, however, that not all unionist politicians appeared in such a negative light; also interviewed on the programme was UUP Councillor Chris McGimpsey. He urged fellow unionists to reserve judgement until the Framework Documents had been published in full, but called for John Major to initiate all-party talks immediately, as 'the rumour mills in Belfast are certainly grinding very quickly'. This level-headed attitude prompted Mates to praise his 'calm and sensible words'. The inclusion of McGimpsey on the programme injected a refreshingly moderate unionist voice into the television discussion of the peace process. Broadcasters for the most part, however, presented the view that unionist political leaders were responsible for stirring up deep-seated fears of absorption into the Republic of Ireland amongst the Protestant community; hindering negotiations, rather than looking for viable and constructive alternatives for peace. It might also be suggested that the tendency to present unionism at its most extreme served to provide viewers with dramatic television viewing.

Current affairs coverage in the mid-1990s centred on interviews and panel discussions. This was in part because of the broadcast media's emphasis on facilitating peace discussions. The danger of this format was that it could result in the presentation of an over-simplistic and detached view of the peace process. As Spencer has argued, current affairs coverage often 'reduce[d] the complexities and details of political change to a battle of wills' between members of the dominant parties, the British and the Irish governments.[90] Broadcasters, for example, had a tendency to ignore the smaller parties, such as the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and the Alliance Party, both of whom played an important role in the process, despite failing to provide the dramatics of a John Hume, Ian Paisley, Gerry Adams

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[89] In February 1995, the British and Irish governments released two documents which offered a blueprint for the future governance of Northern Ireland and its relationship with both Britain and Ireland. The documents included plans for a series of North-South bodies, which would have 'executive, harmonising and consultative functions' and would promote cooperation between the people of the island of Ireland, whilst recognising and reconciling the rights, identities and aspirations of both the unionist and republican traditions. A few weeks before their official release, however, a partial draft of the Framework Documents was leaked to *The Times* arousing suspicion and anxiety amongst unionists. See: Cash, *Identity, Ideology and Conflict*, 203-220.).'No Title', *Newsnight*, BBC, 1 February 1995.
[90] Spencer, *The Media and peace*, 139.

or David Trimble.[91] This emphasis on the big players, served to flatten some of the more subtle nuances of the peace process, presenting it as 'a contestation between two opposing voices'.[92] Their rankling could also make for dry television, which often disengaged British audiences, already inclined to change the channel when programmes about Northern Ireland were featured.

Programme-makers attempted to explore the human implications of the peace process, investigating its effect on everyday life in Northern Ireland. Programmes often included audience discussions, live from Belfast with participants representing a broad section of Northern Irish society, or interviews with people on the streets of Belfast and Derry who explained how their everyday life had been transformed by the cessation of violence, and shared their hopes for the peace process. All the *Jonathan Dimbleby* programmes included a live discussion with a local audience made up of representatives of both communities.[93] This contributed to a growing Northern Irish voice on television. It also provided viewers with an insight into the range of public opinion in Northern Ireland on key issues, such as decommissioning or police reforms, which, in turn, offered a greater appreciation of the difficulty of the task at hand and the complex requirements that negotiators needed to take into account in order to achieve a lasting peace. By emphasising the positive impact of the ceasefire, and the demand for peace from ordinary people in Northern Ireland current affairs coverage promoted the peace process to the British public. By attempting to generate widespread popular support for the process in Britain, the media sought to bring pressure to bear on the government to act more decisively and push forward with talks.

Following the Docklands bombing and the end of the IRA ceasefire, broadcasters used interviews with people on the streets of Northern Ireland to demonstrate the broader implications of the bomb attack for the province. The interviews illustrated not only the disbelief and desperation of people in Northern Ireland, but also their frustration with participants in the peace negotiations, particularly the British government, for failing to advance all-party talks. The Docklands bombing served as a reminder of the turmoil which would follow if the peace process collapsed. This was to be the broadcaster's focus, drawing attention to the reaction of members of the public in Northern Ireland, to provide renewed impetus to the peace process.[94] 'The End of the IRA Ceasefire', broadcast by *Panorama* on 12 February 1996, for example, opened with a short montage of interviews with people in Belfast giving their

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[91] In this sample, *Newsnight* was the only series to include interviews with representatives from any organisation other than the four main political parties, and even then, they were given limited airtime. On 1 February 1995, the leader of the Alliance Party Dr John Alderdice was among the numerous politicians interviewed about the Framework Documents. He criticised the British and Irish governments for not having published the documents earlier, arguing that the secrecy had aggravated fears among Unionists that the two governments' planned to sell them down the river. Similarly, in *Newsnight*'s Ceasefire Special, the deputy leader of the Alliance Party, Seamus Close, was one of many politicians to take part in a live audience discussion about the peace negotiations ('No Title', 1 February 1995; 'Ceasefire Special', *Newsnight*, BBC, 31 August 1995).

[92] Spencer, *The Media and peace*, 136-9.

[93] Martin McGuinness, 12 March 1995; David Trimble and John Hume, *Jonathan Dimbleby*, London Weekend World, 28 January 1996; 'No Title', *Jonathan Dimbleby*, London Weekend World, 11 February 1996.

[94] Gadi Wolsfeld has shown that there was a similar reaction to the Omagh bombing in August 1998. See Wolsfeld, *The News Media and Peace Processes*, 34-5.

reaction to the Docklands bombing. All of those interviewed expressed their dismay at the end of the ceasefire and their fear that violence would return to the streets of Northern Ireland:

> *Interview A:* I just couldn't believe it you know, I thought we were getting somewhere with the peace process, and I just couldn't believe what had happened.
>
> *Interview B*: My reaction was one of anger. Anger, that we had an opportunity for the last eighteen-months of resolving this problem and the British government with unionism has squandered an opportunity.
>
> *Interview C:* My immediate thoughts were with the people in London, and then of course I started to think about us here. All of us who have worked and believe that it had come, that peace was with us. That we were in this, normal society and suddenly it was just grabbed from under us again.[95]

Channel 4 dedicated whole programmes to the experiences and reactions of the people of Northern Ireland during the mid-1990s, as a way of demonstrating its support for the peace process. *The Slot*, a series in which politicians, political activists and members of the public were invited to discuss topical issues, produced several programmes featuring young people from Northern Ireland discussing the peace process and their hopes and fears for the future.[96] To mark the first anniversary of the IRA ceasefire Channel 4 produced a two-part series, 'More than a Sacrifice' and 'The Troubles with Peace'. The two programmes, broadcast on 29 and 30 August 1995 respectively, investigated the impact of the eighteen-month ceasefire on both communities in Northern Ireland.[97] 'More than a Sacrifice' focused on four republicans, Gary Fleming, Raymond McCartney, Maureen Shiels and Donna Bradley, shadowing them through its first year.[98] All four described the relief and optimism with which their community had greeted the ceasefire. Though they remark on how daily life had improved they note that change had remained limited. One scene, for example, featured Maureen Shiels and her young children as they celebrated Halloween. The frivolity is somewhat tempered, however, by the RUC and tank presence at the celebrations, a reminder that the conflict could easily begin again. By emphasising the fragility of the peace, the programme sought to impress upon the viewer the importance of successful peace talks. All four participants, also expressed their frustration at the lack of progress and their fears that if all-party talks did not begin soon the conflict might reignite.

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[95] Interview A is with a young woman who looks to be in her late teens, Interview B a man in his early thirties and Interview C a middle-aged woman. ('The End of the IRA Ceasefire', 12 February 1996.)

[96] The BFI holds a large number of *The Slot* episodes, some examples of programmes about Northern Ireland are 'Emma Morgan', *The Slot*, Channel 4, 22 February 1995; 'Ciara and Gareth', *The Slot*, Channel 4, 21 February 1996.

[97] Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate a copy of 'The Trouble with Peace'. The BFI catalogue lists 'The Trouble with Peace' but it turns out to be a duplicate of 'More than a Sacrifice'. 'More than a Sacrifice', Channel 4, 29 August 1995; 'The Trouble with Peace', Channel 4, 30 August 1995.

[98] Both McCartney and Fleming were members of Sinn Féin and had spent time in prison on terrorist charges; McCartney participated in the 1980 hunger strike. Donna Bradley was the widow of an IRA volunteer shot by the SAS in 1981. Their appearance on the programme attracted very little comment, speaking to a shift in attitude towards the IRA on television.

'More than a Sacrifice' placed particular emphasis on the experiences of children, and the opportunities the peace process had afforded them for normal childhood experiences. The programme showed footage of Donna Bradley's son getting his 11-plus results, Maureen Shiels' children enjoying Christmas and Gerry Fleming as he prepared to attend his youngest son's first communion; all recognisable milestones for most of the audience.[99] By foregrounding ordinary family life, the programme presented Northern Ireland in a manner that was accessible, which would promote a sense of empathy in the viewer and underline the importance of peace if such scenes were to survive. The programme borders on emotional blackmail by suggesting that the failure to compromise and secure a lasting peace, on the part of those involved in the negotiations had the potential to rob these children of a future.[100] Similarly, following the end of the ceasefire *World in Action* visited the maternity wing of Mater hospital (Belfast) and interviewed parents who talked about their desire for a peaceful future for their new-borns and their fear of what implications the Docklands bomb could have for Northern Ireland. The programme's presenter Jonathan Dimbleby remarked: 'they should symbolise hope but these babies were born after the ceasefire had broken down'.[101] By focusing on new-borns the broadcast media set out its hopes for a peaceful future.

By concentrating on the everyday experiences of the people of Northern Ireland, programmes such as 'More than a Sacrifice' illustrated what was at stake if the peace process failed. Emphasising the human dimension of their story, they attempted to promote an understanding of the importance of acquiring peace amongst British audiences. In doing so, they hoped to generate public support for the peace process in Britain, which would put pressure on the government to act decisively in that direction.

Free from the restrictions of the broadcasting ban, broadcasters were once again able to interview republicans on television. Sinn Féin's return to television screens saw them transformed from terrorists into legitimate politicians. Current affairs programmes played a significant role in this metamorphosis by providing a forum for their representatives to articulate their political objectives and participate in peace discussions. Whilst most programmes supported the view that Sinn Féin needed to be involved in all-party talks, if necessary without IRA disarmament, broadcasters proved themselves equally capable of challenging the republican stance on decommissioning and other key issues.

The broadcast media played an active role in the peace process by creating an alternative space not only for Sinn Féin, but for all sides in the peace process to engage in dialogue. Use of the 'notice board' model, by the news media allowed participants to articulate their position, put pressure on other players in the process and hint at potential concessions. Individual broadcasters and journalists were active participants, using their programmes to promote negotiations. By featuring interviews with key players such as John Major, Gerry Adams or David Trimble, broadcasters helped move the dialogue forward. They achieved this by asking challenging questions of unionists, republicans and the British government alike, holding them to account if they appeared to be obstructing the road to a lasting peace

[99] 'More than a Sacrifice' 29 August 1995.
[100] *Ibid*.
[101] 'Gerry Adams', 12 February 1996.

settlement. On occasion, a tough interviewing technique could engineer small changes in a party's standpoint.

Scholars such as Graham Spencer, David Miller and Greg McLaughlin have emphasised television's function in the peace talks, arguing that broadcasters were political players in their own right.[102] This chapter has shown that television current affairs programmes proved to be a valuable tool in promoting peace. In addition to acting as a conduit for negotiations, many programme-makers mobilised popular support for the process by focusing on the lived experiences of the people of Northern Ireland in order to highlight what was at stake if politicians failed to reach an agreement. The current affairs coverage, however, did not seek to address the issues at the core of the conflict, including the role of the British and Irish governments in the province and the reconciliation of opposing ethnic and national identities. To this extent the media limited its participation in the peace process, seeing themselves primarily as facilitators of that process.

In the same manner as their coverage in the 1970s and 1980s had demonstrated, the BBC, ITV and Channel 4 continued to critically examine all aspects of the negotiations, producing nuanced coverage, which helped explain the complexities of the negotiations and the motivations of the key players in the peace process to British audiences.

[102] Spencer, 'The impact of television news on the Northern Ireland peace negotiations', 603-623; Spencer, *The Media and peace*, 123-141; McLaughlin and Miller, 'The Media Politics of the Irish Peace Process', 116-134.

Chapter Eight: The Irish in Britain during the 1990s.

In the early 1990s a new wave of IRA bomb attacks on English cities gave rise to widespread anger across Britain. The Irish predictably became scapegoats once more. The backlash against those Irish people living in Britain, however, was more restrained than it had been in previous decades. The growing popularity of Irish culture had resulted in a shift in British attitudes towards the Irish. By the mid-1990s Irishness was becoming something to be celebrated and the Irish were increasingly accepted in British society despite the on-going violence. Nevertheless, Irish people continued to come under suspicion, especially as fears grew that active IRA units were operating within Britain itself. Once more the media's coverage of IRA activity helped perpetuate a link in the public's imagination between the Irish in Britain and the IRA.

As discussed in previous chapters, there is a wealth of research on the lived experiences of Irish migrants residing in Britain during the twentieth century. This scholarship, however, tends to concentrate on the 1970s and 1980s, or focuses on the period following the collapse of the Celtic Tiger. Few scholars have examined the Irish in Britain during the 1990s. This is perhaps because it was a period of relative calm compared with the hostility of the 1970s and 1980s. It was this decade, however, that witnessed a significant transformation in British perceptions of the Irish, who had become increasingly accepted as a valued constituent of British society. A comprehensive examination of the 1990s is essential therefore to fully understanding both the contemporary status of the Irish in Britain and their experiences throughout the twentieth century.

Scholars have begun to address this period, but further investigation is needed in order to provide a fuller picture. Psychologist Marc Scully has explored the revival of Irish culture in the 1990s and its effect on perception of Irishness in Britain. He argues that whilst Irishness was becoming fashionable, this did not necessarily mean an end to anti-Irish prejudice. Scully notes that the British media played a role in initiating this transformation by depicting the Irish in a more positive light.[1] He does not, however, carry out any analysis of the media's coverage during this period and as this chapter will show, the reality was more complex. Whilst the media did present the Irish more positively, tabloid newspapers in particular were also capable of reverting to the use of traditional derogatory stereotypes and continued to present the Irish in Britain as potential terrorists. Further analysis of how the press and broadcast media portrayed the Irish in the 1990s is therefore necessary in order to understand the true extent of the shift in British attitudes at the end of the twentieth century.

Other scholars have examined Irish experiences of hostility (or lack thereof) after the Manchester and Warrington bombings in 1993 and 1996 respectively. Barry Hazley has used the Manchester bomb to explore how Irish migrants negotiated their memories of IRA bomb attacks and the relationship between 'suspicion' and the formation of different Irish subjectivities. He argues that discourse about discrimination, invisibility and suspicion experienced by the Irish, which entered

[1] Scully, 'Discourses of authenticity and national identity amongst the Irish diaspora in England', 81-5; 176-184.

mainstream culture in the 1990s curtesy of activist groups such as the IBRG, were, and continue to be, appropriated by individuals to reconstruct their personal experiences of this period.[2] Lesley Lelourec, on the other hand, has examined the response to the Warrington bombing and argues that rather than direct its anger at the town's Irish, the local community sought to respond constructively to the bomb, engaging in projects which attempted to help foster a closer relationship between Britain and Ireland.[3]

This chapter will build on the existing scholarship, examining the renascence of Irish culture and the response to IRA activity in Britain in the 1990s. It will first explore the reconfiguration of traditional Irish music and dance to incorporate modern trends, arguing that this gave rise to a reassessment of British attitudes towards the Irish. By providing alternative versions of Irishness to that associated with IRA violence, popular Irish culture helped transform being Irish into something to be celebrated rather than feared or dismissed. The Irish continued to be subject to hostility but on a lesser scale than in the 1970s and 1980s. The chapter examines the nature of the backlash experienced by the Irish following high-profile IRA attacks in English cities in the mid-1990s. It acknowledges the restraint shown by the public in the aftermath of bomb attacks, but nonetheless argues that the Irish in Britain continued to be considered as a suspect community. The chapter explores the press's role in reinforcing this belief, in particular its preoccupation with the presence of IRA sleeper cells, which ensured that the Irish in Britain continued to be imagined as an internal threat. It argues that whilst the status of the Irish had improved, whatever acceptance they enjoyed remained precarious.

By the mid-1990s, a significant shift in British perceptions of the Irish had occurred. After being viewed primarily with hostility and suspicion throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the Irish in Britain found themselves increasingly 'cool'. As Kathleen, an Irish woman living in Milton Keynes, told Marc Scully, 'Irish is flavour of the month'.[4] This change can be attributed, at least in part, to the IRA ceasefire and the Northern Ireland peace process, which prompted a decline, though by no means an end, to anti-Irish hostility resulting from IRA bomb attacks in English cities.

Economic prosperity in Ireland during the Celtic Tiger years was also a factor in bringing about this transformation. Scully has argued that the success of the Irish economy, and the consequent association of Ireland with progress and modernity, defused the power of anti-Irish stereotypes and jokes.[5] The improved economy created a new sense of confidence, encouraging a revival in Irish culture on a global scale. It also prompted a shift in the composition of the Irish migrant population. An increase in return migration, especially amongst Irish people working in manual labour, attracted home by the boom in Ireland's construction industry, meant that those who remained were increasingly middle-class professionals who could not be as easily labelled with stereotypes, such as the thick, violent Paddy. Interestingly, this would suggest that there was a class dynamic to the hostility experienced by many

[2] Hazley, 'Re/negotiating "suspicion"'.
[3] Lesley Lelourec, 'Responding to the IRA bombing campaign in mainland Britain: the case of Warrington', in *the Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain: Impacts, Engagements, Legacies and Memories*, (eds.) Graham Dawson, Jo Dover and Stephen Hopkins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 263-278.
[4] Scully, 'Discourses of authenticity and national identity amongst the Irish diaspora in England', 176.
[5] *Ibid*., 178.

Irish people during the 'Troubles'.[6] The fact that anti-Irish sentiment declined with the falling numbers of Irish working class in Britain indicates that the discrimination experienced by many Irish people during this period was influenced at least in some part by class prejudice. This had certainly been the case during the nineteenth century, when stereotypes of the working class as drunken, dirty and lazy had informed attitudes towards poor Irish migrants. As Michael de Nie argues, concerns of class, religion and race converged to inform British attitudes towards the Irish.[7]

The main impetus behind the improved status of the Irish in Britain, however, was the growing popularity of Irish culture. In the 1980s and 1990s, the success of musicians both from Ireland, and from within the Irish diaspora was instrumental in raising the profile of the Irish, not only in Britain, but globally. These included artists and bands such as U2, The Pogues, The Smiths, Dexy's Midnight Runners and Oasis. Music rooted in traditional Irish folk found audiences in Britain. In 1982, Clannad, an Irish folk rock band, made number five in the UK singles chart with the theme from the 'Troubles' television drama *Harry's Game*. It was the first time musicians had sung in Irish on *Top of the Pops*.[8] The appeal of the Irish music produced in the 1980s and 1990s was not just that it reclaimed Irish traditions, these bands signified a reconfiguration of traditional culture to incorporate modern trends to popular effect. Groups like Planxty and Moving Hearts married Irish folk with rock and jazz, whilst second-generation London-Irish group The Pogues fused folk and punk.[9]

Emerging during the 1980s, a period when 'it was neither popular nor fashionable to be Irish', The Pogues in particular offered a very different construction of Irishness to the one proscribed by association with IRA violence.[10] Rather, as media studies scholar Sean Campbell has argued, the image that they conveyed was of 'an Irishness that was confidently cosmopolitan and contemporary'.[11] This was in spite of the band's association with alcohol and pub culture which reinforced the traditional stereotypes of the drunken Irish. The band's popular appeal made it possible to claim back a sense of pride in being Irish at a time when anti-Irish hostility had been intensified by the IRA bombing of English cities. The Pogues, and musicians like them, rejected the inclination to conceal their Irishness in the face of prejudice and in fact used their platform to address some of the issues facing the Irish in Britain. The song 'Streets of Sorrow/ Birmingham Six', released in 1988, for example, protested the mistreatment of Irish migrants under the British judicial system, criticising the conviction of the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six, wrongfully imprisoned for the pub bombings in 1974. The song was censored by the IBA, who argued that the lyrics 'indicate a general disagreement with the way in

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[6] *Ibid*., 179-181.
[7] de Nie, *The External Paddy*, 5.
[8] Bill Rolston, '"This is not a rebel song": the Irish conflict and popular music', *Race & Class*, 42, 3 (2001), 52.
[9] *Ibid*., 52-4.
[10] *The Great Hunger: The Life and Songs of Shane MacGowan*, BB2 (1998) quoted in Sean Campbell, 'Beyond 'plastic paddy': A re-examination of the second-generation Irish in England', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 18, 2-3 (1999), 275.
[11] Sean Campbell, *Irish Blood English Heart: Second Generation Irish Musicians in England* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), 60.

which the British Government responds to, and the courts deal with, the terrorist threat in the UK', and consequently might invite support for proscribed organisations.[12]

Crucially, The Pogues provided the Irish, especially the second-generation, with a voice and the ability to take pride in their ethnicity. The majority of the band had been brought up in London by Irish parents and were the first to identify themselves as unapologetically 'London-Irish'. Their unrepentant attitude was instrumental in giving other second-generation people the confidence to articulate their Irish identities. The band offered 'focus' and 'pride' for an ethnicity often denied them by the Irish on the one hand, who dismissed them as English, and the British on the other, who sneered at them for being Irish.[13] The Pogues' bassist, Cait O'Riordan explained that the band showed the second-generation that 'there was a way to be who you were and proud of who you were and proud of your cultural background'. She argued that their concerts provided catharsis for fans to voice their experiences and show that Irish migrants were not simply 'thugs and weirdos'.[14] The appeal of The Pogues was not restricted, however, to Britain's Irish population, as journalist Ann Scalon observed the band's audience had a 'cross-cultural identity of its own: from punks, football supporters, psychobillies, students and folk fans to anyone with green tinted blood'.[15] It was the ability of The Pogues, and bands like them, to transcend ethnic boundaries and present another face to Irishness that helped facilitate the shift in British attitudes towards the Irish.

The success of *Riverdance* also played an important part in the growing popularity of Irish culture, and consequently the shift in British perceptions. Conceived as an interval piece for the 1994 Eurovision Song Contest, principal dancers Michael Flatley and Jean Butler updated traditional Irish dancing by incorporating flamenco and Russian folk dance, adding showbiz glamour and sex appeal.[16] Their energy and skill attracted audiences worldwide. *Riverdance-the Show* became the top-selling British video of the summer, and in 1995 the company was invited to perform at the Royal Variety Show and the Royal Gala VE Day celebrations.[17] *Riverdance* presented an alternative, progressive and modern image of what it meant to be Irish. The prowess of the dancers worked to undermine stereotypes of the Irish as lazy, hard-drinking and backward.[18] As sports scientist Joyce Sherlock has argued such displays of talent added to the growing confidence of the Irish: 'the precision, power and virtuosity create a feeling of belonging legitimating a sense of no longer needing to succumb to the subordinate social location often implied by Irish'.[19] Most importantly, by emphasising cultural traditions *Riverdance* and Irish musicians commodified a non-threatening Irish identity, which contrasted with the violence of the IRA. It is interesting to note that *Riverdance*, like the music of The Pogues and other

[12] Annette Gartland, 'Terrorist ban hits pop song', *Observer*, 20 November 1988.
[13] Campbell, *Irish Blood English Heart*, 71.
[14] Cait O'Roirdan interview with Sean Campbell, quoted in Campbell, *Irish Blood English Heart*, 72-3.
[15] Ann Scanlon, *The Pogues: The Lost Decade* (Omnibus Press, 1998), 65 quoted in Campbell, *Irish Blood English Heart*, 70.
[16] Fintan O'Toole, *The Ex-isle of Erin: Images of a Global Ireland* (Dublin: New Island Books, 1993), 143-153.
[17] Joyce I. Sherlock, 'Globalisation, Western Culture and *Riverdance*' in *Thinking Identities: Ethnicity, Racism and Culture*, (eds.) Avtar Brah, Mary J. Hickman and Máirtín Mac an Ghaill (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1999), 206.
[18] Mary J. Hickman, '"Locating" The Irish Diaspora', *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 11, 2 (2002), 17-18.
[19] Sherlock, 'Globalisation, Western Culture and *Riverdance*', 210.

prominent Irish acts, was deeply rooted in the diaspora. Most of the dancers were Irish-American, and the show itself is a narrative of emigration. It might be argued that a degree of separation represented by the second-generation allowed them the distance to reflect critically on Irish culture, and thereby contribute to its revitalisation.

The renascence of Irishness was best illustrated by the resurrection of St Patrick's Day parades in British cities during the 1990s and early 2000s. In 1996, the Birmingham St Patrick's Day parade took place for the first time since the pub bombings in 1974. This was in spite of the Docklands and Aldwych bomb attacks in February of that year. The parade attracted over five thousand people and was heralded a success. Father Joe Taaffe, who was instrumental in its organisation, declared the parade 'a resurrection of the Irish in Birmingham'.[20] Councillor Tony Kennedy, interviewed by local historian Gudrun Limbrick, described how the parade had allowed the Irish to reassert themselves in the public space of the city, after decades of being treated with suspicion and hostility:

> I felt very strongly that the Irish community needed to come out from under its cover it had been under since the pub bombings… It was a great deal of work… to bring the idea of the parade to reality in 1996, but I feel a personal pride for being part of getting it going again, and [in] the establishment of a modern Irish identity in the city.[21]

Over the following years the event grew and by the end of the 1990s the parade had become part of a week-long celebration attended by an estimated 80,000 people.[22] The Manchester St Patrick's Day celebrations were also reinstated in 1996 as part of the city's first Irish Festival, and in 2002 the London parade was routed through the city centre for the first time.

For many Irish people the St Patrick's Day parades symbolised their acceptance as an integral and valued part of these cities, moreover, they signified recognition of the Irish contribution to British society.[23] Addressing revellers in 2001, London Mayor Ken Livingstone remarked that 'St Patrick's Day will mark the enormous contribution which Irish people have made, and continue to make, to the economic, social and cultural life of this city'.[24] The celebrations offered a safe space, not only to present Irishness, but to celebrate it. This was especially the case for those second- and third-generation Irish whose ethnicity was so often challenged. The parades contributed to improving the status of the Irish in Britain by offering a positive representation of Irishness. The fact that these were celebrations of culture, and so essentially non-threatening or political in nature enabled the public to view the Irishness on show

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[20] Jon Hurt, 'Irish Celebrations Return to Streets of Birmingham', *Birmingham Post*, 18 March 1996 quoted in James Moran, *Irish Birmingham: A History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 212.
[21] Ted Kennedy was interviewed by Gudrun Limbrick who carried out a series of interviews with members of the Birmingham Irish community between March and November 2006. These were used to inform an exhibition and book.Gudrun Limbrick, *A Great Day: Celebrating St Patrick's Day in Birmingham* (St Patrick's Day Festival, 2007), 84.
[22] Moran, *Irish Birmingham*, 223-4.
[23] John Nagle, '"Everybody is Irish on St. Paddy's": Ambivalence and Alterity at London's St. Patrick's Day 2002', *Identities*, 12, 4 (2005), 576.
[24] Ken Livingstone, 'A Message from the Mayor' in *London: St Patrick's Day Festivities* 2001 (London: Greater London Authority) quoted by Nagle, '"Everybody is Irish on St. Paddy's"', 576.

as something distinctly separate from IRA violence. Marc Scully and John Nagle, however, have both argued that the Irishness promoted on St Patrick's Day is often an essentialised form of Irish, characterised as 'Craic, céilís and Celticism' - one might also add Catholicism - which can obscure more nuanced individual expressions of identity.[25] This has the potential to silence alternative Irish voices; in particular the association of St Patrick's Day with Catholicism and nationalism has tended to exclude Protestant Irish identities. Even amongst those Irish people from a Catholic nationalist background, there are those who resent 'the green foam hats and wall-to-wall Guinness coverage', feeling that it fails to reflect an authentic Irish ethnicity.[26] As Scully concludes, however, for most the form of Irishness being performed mattered less than the fact that some positive form of Irishness was being performed at all.[27] In interviews carried out with Irish people in the 1990s, it is apparent that many were aware that there were limits to the acceptance that they were beginning to enjoy. As one Irish woman remarked, 'it's actually… cool to be Irish… but we can remember the days when it certainly wasn't cool to be Irish'.[28]

Despite the revival of Irish culture, a wave of IRA bomb attacks on English cities in the 1990s gave rise to an anger which was once again directed at the Irish living in Britain. Following the Manchester bombing on 15 June 1996, for example, the Irish World Heritage Centre received in excess of forty abusive phone calls and in Middleton an Irish-themed pub was violently vandalised, whilst many Irish people once again experienced verbal abuse and social ostracisation.[29] As Mike Harding, a local radio DJ who was widely known to be second-generation Irish, remarked to the *Manchester Evening News* (MEN):

> This is not, I suppose, a fashionable time to mention Ireland or the Irish in Manchester- in fact, judging from one extremely abusive letter I had from a deranged pensioner in Cheetham Hill this week it isn't even a safe time to have any Irish connections at all.[30]

Manchester's community and civic leaders, many of whom were of Irish descent, called for public restraint, and on the night of the attack, the leaders of the city's council, Richard Leese and Martin Pagel visited the Irish Centre to offer their support.[31] They condemned the attacks, reminding the public that the Irish in Manchester were also victims of the bomb. The Manchester-Irish, sought to disassociate from the IRA by presenting themselves as victims, like other Mancunians. In the aforementioned *MEN* article, Mike Harding remarked that 'The Irish in the city are as saddened and sickened at the Manchester bomb as anybody else and look on it with the same feeling of despair and fear that the peace process might well be ended'.[32] Similarly, Mike Forde, chairman of the Irish Centre,

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[25] Scully, 'Whose Day Is It Anyway?', 123; 128-9; Nagle, '"Everybody is Irish on St. Paddy's"', 567-9.
[26] Scully, 'Whose Day Is It Anyway?', 128-9; Scully, 'Discourses of authenticity and national identity amongst the Irish diaspora in England', 211-18.
[27] Scully, 'Whose Day Is It Anyway?', 127.
[28] Scully, 'Discourses of authenticity and national identity amongst the Irish diaspora in England', 176.
[29] Andrew Grimes, 'IRA "bombed their own"', *Manchester Evening News*, 20 June 1996; Christopher Elliot, 'Manchester's Irish Brush off the Verbal Backlash but Feel the Sorrow', *The Guardian*, 17 June 1996.
[30] Mike Harding, 'We're not whingers', *Manchester Evening News,* 13 July 1996.
[31] Elliot, 'Manchester's Irish Brush off the Verbal Backlash but Feel the Sorrow'.
[32] Harding, 'We're not whingers'.

reflecting on the contributions the Irish had made to Manchester, told the paper that the IRA 'were bombing their own. This is an Irish city… This horror, that has been done in the name of the Irish people, has sickened the Irish people everywhere, and not least in Manchester'.[33] By emphasising Irish opposition to the bomb, and their contributions to the city, both men sought to lay claim to a sense of belonging for the city's Irish whilst asserting their innocence.[34]

Compared with previous high-profile IRA bombings in England, the backlash on this occasion was relatively constrained. The fact that there had been no deaths in the Manchester bombing goes some way to explaining this. Even after the Warrington bombing on 20 March 1993, however, in which two young boys - Jonathan Ball and Tim Parry - died, public hostility towards the Irish was comparatively subdued. The Irish club was vandalised and an outbuilding set alight, but otherwise the backlash was minimal.[35] Instead, as Lelourec has discussed, the local community initiated a series of projects aimed at building bridges between the people of Britain and Ireland, and in promoting peace. In October 1993, the Warrington Project, an educational programme designed to bring together schoolchildren from across Britain and Ireland was launched by Irish President Mary Robinson and Prince Charles. Efforts were also made to celebrate the town's Irish heritage, and on the second anniversary of the bombing its first Irish festival was held. Prominent amongst those involved in these initiatives were the parents of Tim Parry. They played a key conciliatory role, which was instrumental in maintaining a lasting and positive response in the aftermath of the bomb.[36] This spirit of reconciliation was also influenced by the outcry in the Republic of Ireland. On 28 March, a 20,000-strong protest calling for an end to republican violence took place in Dublin, organised by Susan McHugh as part of the Peace '93 campaign.[37]

Taken as a whole, the calibrated response can be seen as indicative of a shift in attitudes towards the Irish in Britain, and a growing inclination to accept that the IRA did not represent all Irish people. Certainly, the *Independent* newspaper attributed the restraint evidenced following the Manchester bombing to the new-found popularity of the Irish in Britain: 'Manchester had not taken its anger out on the Irish community. Perhaps this is understandable: 20 per cent of the population had Irish roots… But an important reason may be a huge change in perceptions. Suddenly, Irishness is hip'. The paper went on to describe the vibrant scenes to be found in O'Shea's, a city-centre Irish pub:

> 'The Rocky Road to Dublin' is belting out at a fierce pace. Behind the bar, the Irish Post, Longford Leader and Sligo Champion are on sale… drink is flowing. Denis Keegan, Guinness in hand is waxing on about how proud he is to be Irish…A few years ago, such a pub would probably not have existed. If it did, the publican would have boarded it up for fear of a backlash. But old attitudes have been transformed.[38]

[33] Grimes, 'IRA "bombed their own"'.
[34] Hazley, 'Re/negotiating "suspicion"', 330-1.
[35] 'Bomb blasts hole in town's sense of contentment', *The Guardian*, 22 March 1993.
[36] Lelourec, 'Responding to the IRA bombing campaign in mainland Britain', 269-72.
[37] Owen Bowcott, 'Dublin rally calls for end to killing', *The Guardian*, 29 March 1993.
[38] Jack O'Sullivan, 'If you're hip, you must be Irish', *The Independent*, 1 July 1996.

The newspaper's presentation of these jovial pub scenes as evidence of the city's defiance speaks to this shift in attitude. A similar article in the 1970s would have in all likelihood represented such blatant expressions of Irishness as evidence of approval on the part of the Irish patrons. In spite of the bombing, the Manchester Irish Festival was held the next year, and acclaimed as a great success. It was to become an established part of the city's civic calendar and continues to the present day.

Though hostility towards the Irish in Britain lessened, nonetheless, they continued to be treated as a suspect community. There was widespread shock that the IRA had bombed Manchester at all, given the city's strong ties with Ireland and its large Irish population. Following the attack, the *MEN* published an editorial entitled 'Why us?': 'there are 50,000 Irish-born people living in the area … So why did the evil IRA terrorists choose to blast the centre of our welcoming city'.[39] The paper sought to emphasis the internecine, callous nature of an organisation willing to endanger their 'own'. By referring to the size of the Irish community in Manchester, however, the paper implicitly links the two. The *MEN* echoed the words of Councillor Leese and others, arguing that the Irish in the city were 'as much victims of the outrage as anybody else', but nonetheless the paper speculated that 'a local active IRA cell could be capable of further attacks'.[40]

The press, especially the tabloids, once again played a key role in the construction of the Irish in Britain as potential terrorists. This is evident in the coverage of the Aldwych bus bombing on 18 February 1996. Amongst those seriously injured in the attack was Dublin-born Brendan Woolhead. Due to his nationality, it was suspected that Woolhead might be a second bomber and so he was placed under armed guard in hospital. On this evidence alone, the tabloid press jumped to the conclusion that he was a terrorist; the *Daily Mirror* reported that Woolhead was a Provo 'minder', there to 'ensure their deadly operation… ran smoothly', whilst the *Sun* ran the headline 'One IRA Bomber Dead, One Sadly Clings to Life'.[41] When it became apparent that Woolhead had no connection to the IRA, the *Sun* did issue an apology, but the *Mirror*, though it admitted that Woolhead had been in the wrong place with the wrong accent, failed to acknowledge its own role in propagating suspicion.[42] In their treatment of Brendan Woolhead, the tabloids showed that their default was to regard all Irish with misgiving.

Both papers cast further suspicion on the Irish in Britain by suggesting that Ed O'Brien, who had exploded the Aldwych bomb, had been recruited by an IRA cell in London.[43] The *Daily Mirror* reported that there were five or six active service units stationed in England and Scotland.[44] The *Sun* remarked that O'Brien had settled in Lewisham, so as to 'blend in' with its large Irish population.[45] The paper's assumption was that the Irish by their mere existence were guilty of harbouring terrorists. As

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[39] 'Adams! Why us?', *MEN*, 18 June 1996.
[40] 'The Miracle of Manchester', *Manchester Evening News*, 17 June 1996.
[41] Don Mackay, 'Front Seat Bombers', *Daily Mirror*, 20 February 1996; Don Mackay, Peter Allen and Nic North, Bomber in VIP Ward', *Daily Mirror*, 20 February 1996; 'Rest in Hell', *The Sun*, 20 February 1996.
[42] 'Sun admits mistake', *The Sun*, 24 February 1996; John Kierans, Peter Allen and Jane Kerr, 'Wrong Time.. 10.38pm. Wrong Place.. Strand. Wrong Accent.. Irish', *Daily Mirror*, 21 February 1996.
[43] 'The Boy Bomber', *Daily Mirror*, 21 February 1996.
[44] Don Mackay and Ted Oliver, 'Inside the IRA', *Daily Mirror*, 18 February 1996.
[45] 'Analysis', *The Sun*, 23 February 1996.

had been the case previously, by making this association the *Sun* and *Mirror* casually implicated hundreds of Irish people living in Britain into collusion with the IRA, and perpetuated the myth that the whole of Britain's Irish population was suspect.

Fear that the IRA had established sleeper cells in Britain preoccupied the tabloids throughout the mid-1990s. The idea that the IRA was operating within Britain was nothing new, in 1975 a sleeper cell had carried out a sustained campaign in London's West End. The dramatic arrest of the unit after a six-day siege in Balcombe Street (Marylebone, London) had been captured by the BBC and broadcast widely. Throughout the 'Troubles' the idea that the IRA was able to infiltrate Britain through its Irish population had contributed greatly to the construction of the Irish in Britain as a suspect community. Unlike the sleepers in the 1970s, however, the *Sun* reported that IRA cells in Britain in the mid-1990s were 'a mixture of young "Lily-whites" - with English accents and clean records - and Northern Ireland veterans'.[46] Lily whites were young recruits with no known republican links and therefore completely unknown to the security forces.

The alleged anonymity of these new IRA volunteers was of deep concern to the press. In an editorial published on 19 February 1996, the *Daily Mirror* remarked that 'Today's Provo killers could be living next door, leaving every morning in suit and tie for a respectable office job - and maybe having a pint beside you in the local of an evening. They may not even have an Irish accent'.[47] Their anonymity enhanced the perceived threat, making these IRA volunteers invisible and therefore even more deadly. Both the *Mirror* and the *Sun* fixated on the possibility that these volunteers had English accents. As Bronwen Walter has argued, because the Irish in Britain were not a visible minority, their voices were often the prime identifier of their ethnicity.[48] An Irish accent had come to be viewed as an indication of potential IRA membership.[49] The absence of an Irish accent therefore increased the invisibility of the bombers, compounding suspicions that there was a hidden 'enemy' in Britain. Operating and recruiting in English cities, the IRA was seen as symbolically attacking British values. As Hickman *et al*., have argued, the press's horror at the idea that people born in England could be implicated in paramilitary activities suggested that the IRA had succeeded in contaminating Britishness itself.[50] The tabloids viewed the enlistment of 'English' volunteers as evidence that through the Irish population the IRA's pernicious ideology was seeping into Britain, and infecting its people. This all served to bolster the perceived threat of the Irish in Britain, in a similar manner to that seen in recent media coverage of British Muslims and Islamic terrorism. Newspapers have tended to present Muslim communities in opposition to the 'West' and therefore a threat to British civil society. By adopting this approach, the press has raised serious questions about the place of Islam and Muslims in Britain.[51]

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[46] 'Revenge', *The Sun*, 22 October 1996.
[47] 'Chain of command that gives hooded killers their orders', *Daily Mirror*, 19 February 1996.
[48] Walter, ''Shamrocks growing out of their mouths'', 58.
[49] Morgan, 'The Contemporary Racialization of the Irish in Britain', 102.
[50] Hickman, Silvestri and Nickels, ''Suspect Communities?'', 18.
[51] Nickels, Thomas, Hickman and Silvestri, 'De/Constructing "Suspect" Communities', 345; 347; 351-2.

Tabloid fears were seemingly confirmed when on 23 September 1996 police raided an IRA cell in Hammersmith, West London. During the course of the raid, one of the suspects, Diarmuid O'Neill, was shot dead. O'Neill had been brought up in London by Irish parents. In their coverage of his death, most newspapers described O'Neill as English- or British-born, rather than as simply English or British. Nickels *et al*., have argued that the phrase 'English-born' implies that the subject is not '*wholly* English', that they had merely been born in England.[52] In describing O'Neill thus, newspapers negate his Britishness, disassociating him from British values. This raises interesting insights into how the press engaged with ideas of what constituted Irish-, English-, and Britishness during the mid-1990s. It would suggest that rather than viewing national identity as dictated by where someone was born, newspapers factored in notions of heritage and allegiance. It might be argued that this was also indicative of a common perception of Irishness as not only defined by place of birth, but by a series of inherited characteristics, one of which was violence. This would suggests that the British media continued to perceive the Irish in terms of long-standing stereotypes. The ambiguity of a phrase such as 'English-born' extended suspicion to second-generation Irish in particular.[53] By asserting that the Lily-whites were descended from Irish migrants in Britain, papers hinted once again at the corrupting influence of the Irish in Britain. In suggesting that second-generation Irish were now actively involved in the IRA, the media insinuated that their parents had not integrated into British society and therefore had failed to pass on British values.

Despite this tendency towards paranoia, there were occasions on which the press demonstrated a degree of caution in their assessment of the 'Irish threat' in Britain. The convictions against the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six were reversed in 1989 and 1991 respectively, after they had served sixteen years for the pub bombings in 1974. The media played an important role particularly in proving the innocence of the Birmingham Six. 'Who Bombed Birmingham?', broadcast by *World in Action* on 28 March 1990, revealed new information which contributed to the case against the Six being over turned.[54] More importantly, the programme influenced a real change in public opinion, as media analyst J. Mallory Wober demonstrated, 51 per cent of those who watched the programme agreed with the statement, 'the six men in prison for the crime of bombing the pubs seemed to be telling the truth about being innocent'.[55] These miscarriages of justice represented the extreme consequences of anti-Irish attitudes on the part of the police, judiciary and on occasion the media, whose prejudicial coverage had contributed to the convictions. Following their release, the media displayed a new-found sensitivity to the potentially serious implications of anti-Irish prejudice. On 2 April 1996, for example, the *Daily Mirror*, reporting on a proposal which would give the police the power to stop and search pedestrians in high-risk areas, raised concerns that the legislation would be used to target the Irish. The *Mirror* argued that abuse of these new powers could drive Irish people toward the IRA: 'We must all be united in the fight against the IRA. So it is vital that the Irish community in Britain is not alienated. The police

[52] *Ibid*., 351-2.
[53] *Ibid*.
[54] 'Who Bombed Birmingham?', 28 March 1990.
[55] Wober, 'Effects on Perceptions from seeing a Drama Documentary',7.

must be sure to use their new powers with care'.[56] The paper demonstrated a nuanced grasp of the potential effects counter-terrorism could have on the lives of the Irish in Britain, but unfortunately their concern tended to be sporadic and of limited scope.

The publication of reports such as *Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain* (1997), funded and published by the CRE, also played a role in publicising the experiences of the Irish in Britain.[57] As previously discussed, the report has also greatly influenced how Irish people interpreted their personal experiences. The report succeeded in bringing about affirmative action for tackling some of the disadvantages experienced by many Irish people living in Britain. Even before its publication, the CRE and other governmental bodies had made positive steps in this direction, including introducing an Irish category into its ethnic monitoring systems.[58] On the strength of the report, the CRE also successfully petitioned the Office for National Statistics to include an Irish category to the ethnicity question on the 2001 census; something Irish activist groups had long campaigned for.[59] These successes were arguably symptomatic of an acceptance that the Irish experienced specific problems that needed tackling.

For Irish activists the necessity of such measures was illustrated by the media's negative response to the report. The fact that the CRE had commissioned research into anti-Irish discrimination was met with incredulity, especially from the tabloids. The *Sun* dismissed the initiative as a 'load of codswallop', offering researchers 'a flying start' by publishing forty-one Irish jokes.[60] This accurately demonstrates the limitations of the Irish's new-found acceptance. Although elements within British society were becoming more open to discussing the idea of anti-Irish discrimination, the Irish continued to have their critics, prominent amongst whom were the tabloid press, which perpetuated prejudicial stereotypes.

The 1990s witnessed a radical transformation in perceptions of the Irish in Britain. Having been treated throughout the 1970s and 1980s with suspicion and hostility, with the advent of the Northern Ireland peace process and the Celtic Tiger economy the Irish had found themselves in vogue. The success of *Riverdance* and Irish musicians including The Pogues, U2 and Oasis had a particularly profound impact on reconstructing the Irish as 'cool'. By reconfiguring traditional Irish culture to incorporate modern trends, artists offered an alternative, more positive view of what it meant to be Irish. As a result, Irishness, or at least a version of Irishness, had come to be celebrated.

This new-found popularity also had the benefit of cooling public hostility towards the Irish in Britain. Though public anger in the wake of IRA bomb attacks was more subdued, nonetheless, the Irish

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[56] 'Tread wearily', *Daily Mirror*, 2 April 1996.
[57] Hickman and Walter, *Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain*.
[58] *Ibid*, 5.
[59] Howard, 'Constructing the Irish of Britain', 115.
[60] *The Sun*, 22 January 1994 quoted in Hickman and Walter, 'Deconstructing Whiteness', 15.

continued to be negatively associated with the IRA and presented as potential terrorists. This was exacerbated by fears of active IRA units operating within Britain.

The British media, particularly the tabloid press, played a prominent role in reinforcing the construction of the Irish as a suspect community. Newspapers obsessed over the presence of IRA sleeper cells, compounding long-standing fears that the Irish in Britain were harbouring terrorists. The belief propagated by the tabloids that these cells were increasingly made up of young British- or English-born recruits added to the public's concern and exaggerated the perceived threat of the Irish in Britain. The tabloids considered the Irish to be a corrupting influence, whose presence allowed IRA ideology to contaminate British society.

Although by the mid-1990s the Irish had advanced up a hierarchy of belonging, their degree of acceptance remained precarious. The Irish continued to be subject to surveillance and negative stereotyping. It was not until the turn of the century, when the threat of Islamic terrorism eclipsed that of Irish Republicanism that the Irish were replaced by a new suspect community, the Muslims.[61]

[61] Christina Pantazis and Simon Pemberton, 'From the 'Old' to the 'New' Suspect Community: Examining the Impacts of Recent UK Counter-Terrorist Legislation', *The British Journal of Criminology*, 49, 5 (2009), 646-666; Gareth Peirce, 'Was it like this for the Irish?', *London Review of Books*, 30, 7 (2008), 3-8; Aisha Phoenix, 'Somali Young Women and Hierarchies of Belonging', *Young*, 19, 3 (2011), 313-331; Wendy Webster, 'Defining boundaries: European volunteer worker women in Britain and narratives of community', *Women's History Review*, 9, 2 (2000), 260-1. Parallels have been drawn between the experiences of the Irish and Muslim communities, see for example: Hickman, Silvestri and Nickels, ''Suspect Communities'?'.

Conclusion

The ‘Troubles’ were in many ways a media event. Newspapers and television were recognised by all sides as being of vital importance in the interpretation of events in Northern Ireland around the world. The media played an essential role in the dissemination of news and information about the conflict. In Britain, where for many people the press and television were the primary source of information on Northern Ireland, the media was crucial in the formation of public opinion and, consequently, the British state’s response to the escalating crisis. Participants therefore vied for influence, seeking to manipulate how the conflict was presented in order to gain legitimacy and support for their respective positions. This was a war conducted as much through the newspapers and on screen as it was on the streets of Belfast. As such, the press and broadcast media are essential to a full understanding of the conflict and to comprehending prevalent attitudes towards Northern Ireland at this time.

For journalists and broadcasters, covering the ‘Troubles’ proved immensely challenging. Aside from the inherent difficulties of reporting any conflict, the propaganda war that ensued caused much consternation amongst government officials in London and in Belfast. Acutely aware of the potential power of the media to encourage sympathy and support for the IRA and other paramilitary organisations, the British government sought to control how the conflict was framed, and what could and could not be featured in the media’s coverage (especially that of the broadcast media). Incessant wrangling between journalists, successive British governments and state organisation threatened to hamper efforts to present the British public with accurate, detailed and balanced information on what was happening in the province.

The British print and broadcast media, nevertheless presented complex and multifaceted coverage of the conflict. However, the prevailing view has been that newspapers and television programmes merely regurgitated the official line, producing one-dimensional, superficial and biased coverage of events in Northern Ireland. This thesis, in offering a much-needed historical based perspective, has demonstrated that the media’s approach to reporting the ‘Troubles’ was more nuanced, that the press and television current affairs programmes engaged with the complexities of what was happening in the province, covering events in a sophisticated and detailed manner. This historical approach, which firmly locates the media’s coverage within its wider political and historical context, has uncovered valuable detail regarding how the conflict was represented. It has provided insight into the reasoning behind the way in which the media framed events in Northern Ireland, which allows for a better understanding of the significance of the media’s coverage. Most importantly, this approach has provided a more comprehensive picture of the media’s role in the ‘Troubles’. It has ensured that due attention is given to the changing social, cultural and political factors that influenced how the conflict played out, and how it was reported by the press and broadcast media. The use of historical methodology has also ensured that the conflict is considered in its entirety. This allows for the identification of continuities and variations within the narrative of the ‘Troubles’, which is largely absent from the work of the social scientists and activists who have so far dominated this field.

This thesis is also based on a more expansive source sample, than that of previous scholarly works. It not only engages with both the print and television media, but also examines the approach of all three British broadcasting bodies, something no other scholar has done to date. This has enabled a full exploration of the range of approaches and perspectives towards reporting events in Northern Ireland, providing detailed analysis of how different aspects of the British media covered the 'Troubles'. The use of archival material to provide critical context to media content has similarly added an important dimension to the existing literature on this subject. In particular, it has provided valuable insight into the editorial strategies which informed the production of media content, contributing to our comprehension of the way in which the 'Troubles' were framed by the press and television news.

A thorough examination of the press reports and television current affairs coverage from across the course of the 'Troubles' challenges assumptions that the media was overly-simplistic and biased. It reveals instead a willingness and conviction to present more nuanced readings of the violence in Northern Ireland. The British media offered audiences in-depth and detailed coverage of events in the region, which engaged with the complexities of the conflict from a variety of angles, taking into account different perspectives, and challenging the actions of all participants, especially the British state.

Admittedly, the media, and in particular the tabloid press, often prioritised IRA bomb attacks in England over those in Northern Ireland.[1] This was especially the case at the height of the bombing campaign in the early 1970s. Even so, newspapers covered the violence in English cities in a far more complex manner than has previously been acknowledged. Outraged, journalists used established national symbols and memories of the Second World War to evoke a sense of national defiance in response to the IRA threat. The IRA were used as the 'other' against which the press consciously measured and reconstructed notions of Britishness. Specifically, newspapers elicited stereotypes of British fortitude to reassure readers and draw them into a sense of togetherness. This manner of presenting the British response to IRA violence, as with other editorial strategies concerning Northern Ireland, was driven in part by the commercial interests of the newspapers, although little attention has been given to such economic considerations, and their impact on reporting. By attempting to foster a national community united against an IRA threat, editors sought to increase their appeal to a national audience and sell more newspapers. This encourages further reflection on the role practical considerations, such as the media's financial priorities, can have on the construction of national identity. The violence in Northern Ireland, and the IRA bombing campaign in England, seriously challenged traditional ideas of what it was to be British. In exploring the way in which the media dealt with this, the thesis also contributes to our broader understanding of constructions of British- and Irishness in a multinational state.

To underline the heinous nature of the IRA, newspapers resurrected a wide range of long-established stereotypes of the Irish. This is particularly evident in cartoon coverage at the time. Scholars have observed that the violent, simian Paddy of nineteenth-century cartoons re-emerged in the early

[1] Elliot, 'Reporting Northern Ireland', 295-9; Elliot, 'Misreporting Ulster', 398-401.

1970s as a response to the 'Troubles'.[2] This thesis offers a more informed historical assessment. It has shown that cartoons deployed a much wider variety of disparaging motifs common to Victorian caricatures of the Irish. This reinforces and adds further depth to arguments made by Hickman and others that anti-Irish prejudice continued to inform British attitudes towards the Irish at the very least into the late twentieth century.[3]

Hitherto, the effect of these representations on the Irish living in Britain has largely been ignored in surveys of the media's coverage of the 'Troubles'. By centring the experiences of the Irish in Britain, this thesis has been able to provide important context concerning the interpretation, and impact of media representations. The close association made by the press between the IRA and Irishness meant that all Irish people living in Britain were vulnerable to being cast as 'other'. Many Irish people experienced verbal and physical abuse and were subject to surveillance as a result of the IRA bombing campaign in England. Through its coverage, the British media, especially the tabloid press, inadvertently aggravated this situation, associating the Irish in Britain with the IRA in the public's imagination. By repeatedly pointing to the fact that many of the bombers has been established members of the Irish migrant population, and by conflating the term 'Irish' with the IRA, newspapers constructed all Irish people as potential terrorists. Propagating this association stoked feelings of suspicion and therefore of hostility towards the Irish. Even though newspapers often asserted that the majority of Irish people were 'innocent', this served to underline the fact that there were those Irish people who were not, perpetuating the impression that the Irish as a whole were a suspect community, and reinforcing the notion that their very existence in Britain provided cover for IRA bombers. In presenting the Irish in Britain thus, the press was capable of inflaming anti-Irish hostility. This gives some insight into how audiences responded to newspapers and television coverage of the conflict and contributes to our understanding of the influence of the media generally on public opinion.

By the 1990s, the increased popularity of Irish culture worldwide, and the promise of the Northern Ireland peace process had encouraged a positive shift in British perceptions of the Irish. Irishness became something to celebrate, as the resurrection of St Patrick's Day parades in British cities illustrated. This growth in popularity meant the backlash against the Irish in Britain following high-profile bomb attacks was notably more subdued. Little previous research has been carried out on the Irish experience during this later stage, perhaps because it was a period of relative calm compared with the hostility of the 1970s and 1980s. This decade, however, witnessed a significant transformation in British perceptions of the Irish, and is therefore significant to fully understanding the Irish experience in Britain. Comparisons in the treatment of the Irish across different decades allows us to properly appreciate the extent, and nature, of anti-Irish discrimination. The constraint shown in the 1990s, speaks to the way in which constructions of the Irish changed over time as they advanced up a hierarchy of belonging in Britain, replaced by other migrant groups, not least the Muslim community who, due to

[2] Kirkaldy, 'English Cartoonists', 27-42; Curtis, *Nothing But the Same Old Story*, 82-3.
[3] Hickman, 'Reconstructing deconstructing 'race'', 288-307.

the rising threat of Islamic terrorism, became the new suspect community.[4] Historical analysis of the Irish experience therefore, provides a more complete and complex picture of both the contemporary status of the Irish in Britain, and their experiences throughout the twentieth century. More broadly, the insight it provides into how the media portrays minority groups, especially during times of crisis, have wider implications for how we understand other issues and incidents, not least the treatment of the Muslim community in the face of the current threat from Islamic terrorism or recent discussions surrounding the Hillsborough disaster (1989) and the media's negative portrayal of the Liverpool football fans, which played a significant role in efforts to cover up what happened.

The thesis has also explored how such hostility affected the way in which many Irish people interacted with, and how Irishness was displayed within, British society. This provides further illuminating detail regarding the interpretations of, and responses to, the media's coverage. Reactions were often varied and changed over time, so a historical approach is essential to teasing out these nuances. It is well-documented that in the 1970s, the common response to hostility was to keep a low profile: many people eschewed Irish cultural and political activities; and in certain circumstance disguised their accents so as not to attract unwanted attention. Less consideration has been given to Irish political and cultural activism, which emerged in Britain in the early 1980s. Numerous Irish organisations were established, the majority of which were committed, principally to challenging the status of the Irish in British society. These organisations, the most prevalent example of which was the IBRG, campaigned extensively against perceived anti-Irish prejudice, especially within the media. By exploring the extent to which such organisations, and their views, have come to dominate, this thesis has complicated the established narrative of the Irish in Britain and consequently challenged assumptions regarding the media's coverage of the 'Troubles'. These Irish organisations first put forward the view that the British press and broadcast media distorted and suppressed news from Northern Ireland, which a systematic analysis of the media coverage refutes. A critical examination of the composition, alignment and motivations of these groups does not exist in the current literature on the Irish in Britain, despite their prevalence. This prevalence, however, has meant that their views were absorbed into an emerging collective narrative of the Irish experience of living in Britain during the late twentieth century; literature produced by them also dominates the archives. As a consequence, their views have been accepted at face value by most of the scholarship to date, resulting in misleading assumptions about the British media's role in the 'Troubles'. The thorough historical appraisal of Irish activist groups and their influence, as the preceding chapters have demonstrated not only contributes to a better understanding of the daily lives of the Irish during the conflict, but illuminates the way in which stereotyped impressions of the media, posited by groups such as the IBRG, has become entrenched, and helps to dismantle those same stereotypes. Though Irish activists were correct in maintaining that the media contributed to the hostile environment experienced by many Irish people living in Britain

[4] Phoenix, 'Somali Young Women and Hierarchies of Belonging', 313-331; Webster, 'Defining boundaries', 260-1.

throughout the 'Troubles', this does not mean that the press and broadcast media failed to engage with the complexities of the conflict in Northern Ireland.

On the contrary, the media produced searching coverage, which scrutinised all aspects of the conflict, and actors in it, despite considerable pressure to cover events in a way that would justify the British state's standpoint. Of particular note, is the effort made by the broadcast media to investigate and challenge the British government's actions in Northern Ireland. This is especially apparent in their coverage of the hunger strikes in 1980 and 1981. Events such as the hunger strikes focused the media's attention on Northern Ireland - as opposed to bomb attacks in England - and forced journalists to dig deeper into the motivations behind the violence. A detailed survey of the television coverage in the early 1980s, shows that, far from merely reciting the party line of 'a crime is a crime', broadcasters critically explored the role played by all sides in the prison protests and endeavoured to give voice to a full range of perspectives. *World in Action* even succeeded in securing access to the Maze prison to interview 1980 hunger striker Raymond McCartney.[5] This unique interview provided audiences within an insight into the prisoners' motives and, crucially, an alternative perspective, which challenged the official line. In addition to being further evidence of how the media complicated coverage of the 'Troubles', it also enriches academic understanding of the hunger strikes, providing exclusive insight into the mindset of the protesting prisoners. Examples like this dispute the current consensus that the media was a mere puppet of the British government, demonstrating instead the kind of complex narratives put forward for audiences. They can also serve as a useful means of examining the relationship between the state and media, both in the case of Northern Ireland and more generally.

Coverage of the hunger strikes also demonstrate that, contrary to claims made by previous scholars, the media acknowledged support for the republican cause. The McCartney interview was exceptional; in the main the NIO prohibited access to the prison and so journalists were confined to reporting the effects of the hunger strikes on the streets of Northern Ireland. This meant that the media paid considerable attention to the support given the hunger strikers by the nationalist community. Footage of anti-H Block demonstrations and interviews with family and supporters frequently featured in the media and introduced a grassroots perspective. Broadcasters, in particular endeavoured to provide detailed analysis on the full range of opinion within the nationalist community on events in the prison. Newspapers on the other hand, varied in their approach to covering the grassroots support of the protests. Whilst the right-wing press did play down the level of support enjoyed by the hunger strikers, even in the face of Bobby Sands' election to Westminster, the *Guardian* criticised the government's criminalisation policy and argued that the election had exploded claims that the strikers lacked support. Recognising such differences in approach between the press and broadcast media highlights the complexities within the media coverage itself, adding to our understanding of media representations of the 'Troubles'.

[5] 'The H-Block Fuse', 24 November 1980.

As the media represented a broad spectrum of political thought, it followed that throughout the 'Troubles' it would present a range of varied opinions. The approaches chosen by reporters covering the conflict varied enormously. Newspapers and television programmes adopted a range of stances that were sometimes opposing, even contradictory. This was thrown into sharp relief by the press coverage of the peace process and in particular the treatment of the debates surrounding the decommissioning of weapons. Britain's insistence that the IRA disarm fully before Sinn Féin be allowed entry into the peace negotiations delayed the start of all-party talks considerably. Newspapers were generally critical of the government's position on decommissioning, but deeply divided over the correct strategy for handling disarmament. The *Guardian*, for example, was of the view that the government was hindering progress by insisting on unrealistic preconditions, whilst the *Sun* and *Daily Telegraph* believed that they were pandering to terrorists and demanded the IRA immediately surrender all weapons. By addressing the diversity of coverage about Northern Ireland, this thesis challenges the tendency amongst scholars (not just of the 'Troubles') to treat the media as a monolithic entity and adds further depth to discussions concerning coverage of conflict.

The media became a valuable tool in supporting and facilitating the peace process. Newspapers and television programmes served as an alternative channel for dialogue when face-to-face discussion was not possible. Through articles and interviews, participants in the process were able to articulate their position and hint at concessions. Broadcasters and journalists actively assisted in this process. Individuals sought to use their platforms to help promote negotiations, challenge participants on key issues, and hold them to account in the hope of engineering small shifts in position that might help forward the peace negotiations. The media also played an important role in promoting peace to audiences in the rest of the UK. By emphasising the human impact of the peace, journalists sought to encourage support amongst the British public in order to bring pressure to bear on the government to engage constructively in negotiations. In its coverage of the peace process, the press and broadcast media proved once again, that it was capable of a nuanced and critical approach to events in Northern Ireland, which had the potential to make a real difference to resolving the conflict.

The British media was of vital importance to how the conflict in Northern Ireland was interpreted. Despite efforts on all sides to influence the way in which they reported on the unfolding events, throughout the 'Troubles', the press and television journalists were determined to explore every possible insight placed before them, ensuring fully rounded coverage of events. Through an extensive and historical assessment, this thesis has demonstrated the media's commitment to presenting the complex narratives of the conflict in a detailed and balanced manner, challenging the stereotyped presupposition that the press and television were biased and their coverage simplistic. In doing so, it has enriched the current literature on the media and the 'Troubles', furthering our understanding of the 'Troubles' overall. More broadly, the thesis has indicated how the media struggles to present complex narratives about conflict. Its findings suggest the need for scholars to scrutinise more carefully the processes involved in reporting other historical and contemporary wars. The ways in which the media engages with and portrays outbreaks of violence, especially in a domestic setting, is never

straightforward. By acknowledging these difficulties, and fully investigating these processes, we can gain a more nuanced picture of the media's coverage. Scrutiny of the newspaper coverage and television programmes during this period reveals a readiness to engage with the intricacies of the conflict. Throughout the 'Troubles', the British media succeeded in producing analytical and crucially multi-faceted commentary, supplying British audiences with a nuanced and complex perspective on the conflict in Northern Ireland.

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Appendix 1.

Roseanna Doughty, 'Seamus O'Fawkes and Other Characters: The British tabloid cartoon coverage of the IRA campaign in England', 24, 3-4 (2018): 440-457.

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SEAMUS O'FAWKES AND OTHER CHARACTERS
The British tabloid cartoon coverage of the IRA campaign in England

Roseanna Doughty

On 8 March 1973, the violence of Belfast spread to the streets of London as the IRA launched their bombing campaign in England. This article examines the cartoon coverage of IRA bomb attacks on English cities published in the British press during the early 1970s. By investigating political cartoons from leading national newspapers, this article sheds new light on reactions to the violence and explores how this affected the lived experiences of the Irish in Britain. It highlights how newspapers used symbols of Britishness and WWII iconography to (re)construct an imagined British community in the face of the IRA threat. The cartoons also indicate a more ambiguous image of the Irish in Britain, one of both harbourers and victims of terrorists. This focus on pictorial representations reveals the complexity of press attitudes towards IRA bombings as the humour inherent in cartoons enables them to allude to ideas journalists could not.

KEYWORDS IRA bombing campaign in England; Cartoons; Britishness; Second World War imagery; Irish in Britain; harbourers

The early 1970s saw the violence of Belfast spread to the streets of English cities. On 8 March 1973, two IRA bombs exploded outside the Old Bailey and the London Central Army Recruiting Office, killing one person and injuring a further 265. This was the start of a campaign of violence in England, which would last twenty-five years, causing the death of 115 people and injuring countless others.[1] The day after the Old Bailey bombings, The Sun's editorial cartoonist Paul Rigby published a cartoon featuring Lady Justice, the statue situated on the top of the Old Bailey, with a severed left hand holding the scales of justice (Figure 1). The cartoon focused on the physical impact of the bombing, suggesting that the attack had threatened core British values. Lady Justice's intact sword arm indicated that Britain and justice would prevail and promised swift retribution in the face of IRA savagery.

Scholars have long used political cartoons to shed light on the complex relationship between Ireland and Britain. In 1971, historian, L. Perry Curtis was the first to use cartoons to explore Victorian attitudes towards Ireland and the Irish people. Focusing on the comic art of satirical magazines Punch and Judy, Curtis controversially argued that nineteenthcentury caricatures reflected the increasingly popular view in Britain of the Irish as racially inferior.[2] As Curtis observed, cartoons are 'multilayered graphic texts filled with values and beliefs of political import' and as a result, they offer unique insights into contemporary debates and opinions.[3] The humour inherent in cartoons enables them to address ideas

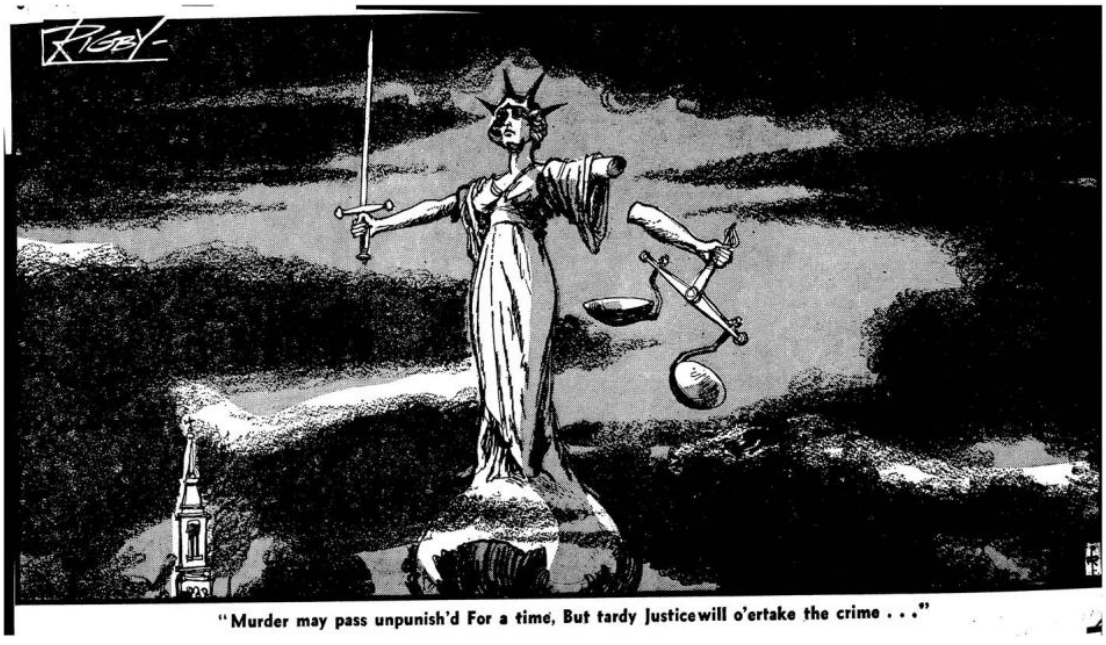

FIGURE 1
Paul Rigby, 'Murder may pass unpunish'd For a time, But tardy Justice will o'ertake the crime', The Sun, 9 March 1973, News UK, 'British Cartoon Archive, University of Kent'.

not easily expressed in written reportage, making them a valuable source for establishing attitudes towards contemporary events.[4]

Following Curtis' example, historians have drawn on cartoons to illuminate a wide range of topics relating to Ireland, particularly the 'Troubles'. John Kirkaldy, Liz Curtis, John Darby, and Roy Douglas et al., have all analysed pictorial representations of the Northern Ireland conflict in the British press.[5] Little attention, however, is given to the cartoon coverage of IRA attacks on English cities during this period, in marked contrast with contemporary media coverage. Throughout the 'Troubles', IRA bomb attacks in England dominated headlines, leading one IRA spokesperson to observe that 'in publicity terms one bomb in Oxford Street [was] worth ten in Belfast'.[6] Accordingly, an examination of the cartoon coverage of IRA violence in England is important if we are to obtain a comprehensive picture of how the British media represented the conflict.

This article undertakes a systematic investigation of how the IRA bombing campaign in English cities during the early 1970s was portrayed in cartoons of the British tabloid press.Whilst the cartoons that appeared in broadsheets during this period mainly covered political developments in Northern Ireland, the tabloid

papers provided more detailed cartoon coverage of the bombing campaign in England. The tabloid press also provides a unique window onto popular culture, allowing us to explore how representations of the conflict were developed and disseminated through society.[7] In particular, this article will explore how cartoons in two of the most popular titles, the Daily Mirror and The Sun represented the bombings. These papers have been selected because they offer contrasting political orientations: the Daily Mirror being left-of-centre, whilst The Sun has traditionally aligned itself with the right. By investigating the cartoon coverage of the bombing campaign this article will highlight how the tabloid press drew on British motifs and Second World War iconography to (re)construct an imagined British community in the face of the IRA threat. The cartoons also indicate a more ambiguous image of the Irish in Britain, simultaneously portraying them as both harbourers and victims of terrorists.

The attitude of the Daily Mirror and The Sun towards the IRA are best illustrated in the way they drew comparison to the British population. Throughout the bombing campaign both papers consistently employed the trope of the 'British', itself an amorphous grouping, as a stoic people facing down the IRA threat. In doing so, they reinforced an idea of Britishness, cultivated by both papers in order to create, and maintain, an imagined national community of readers.[8] The invocation of 'Britishness' to make news stories relevant to all potential readers is a traditional tool used by the press to market itself at a national level.[9] National identity, however, is not a fixed notion and is continuously being renegotiated, with the press playing a leading role.[10] In the latter half of the twentieth century, the decline of Britain as a world power and high levels of immigration brought into question what it now meant to be British. As Chris Waters argues, migrants played an influential role in the post-war reconfiguration of notions of national belonging.[11] Black migrants in particular were constructed as the 'dark strangers' and contrasted with the white British population, redefining the boundaries of national belonging. During the 1970s, the characteristics of the IRA were contrasted with those of their victims in order to bolster what it meant to be British. The IRA's association with the Irish living in Britain, however, meant that they too were cast once more as an internal 'other'.

One technique used by the Daily Mirror to (re)construct a sense of Britishness was through reference to a shared history.[12] Since 1945, the Second World War has become a 'routine trope of audience-identification' and as a result, almost all national crises have been viewed through the prism of Second World War imagery.[13] During the IRA's bombing campaign Second World War memories, particularly those of the Blitz, were mobilised by the Mirror to invoke

in readers a similar stoicism to that associated with the response to German aggression in the 1940s. For example, in an editorial published after the Old Bailey bombings the Daily Mirror remarked that 'The London, that took the blitz, and made cups of tea and joked, is not going to have its nerve shattered by bombs'.[14] Similarly, following a spate of bomb attacks in September 1973, the paper remarked: 'The terrorists will not break the nerve- or even start to break the nerve- of a nation that stood up to the weight of Hitler's bombs'.[15] Filtering the Old Bailey bombings and other IRA attacks through images of the Blitz, the paper harnessed the concept of a united British community fighting a common enemy. In doing so, it strove to both minimise the perceived IRA threat and reassure readers by reminding them of a period when Britain had been victorious against a far greater enemy. [16]

By drawing on Second World War imagery, the Daily Mirror equated the IRA with the Nazis. Hitler was a common feature in cartoons referring to the IRA attacks in England. On 21 November 1974, two bombs exploded in the 'Tavern in the Town' and 'Mulberry Bush' pubs in Birmingham, killing 21 and injuring 183 people.[17] In response to the bombings, the Daily Mirror's cartoonist Keith Waite drew Hitler telling the IRA that 'Bombing doesn't work around here'. Waite evokes the memory of the Blitz, resurrecting associated stereotypes of the British as resilient in the face of adversity. It is worth noting, however, that drawing analogies to the Nazis was common currency during the 'Troubles', and used in reverse by the republican movement. In his account of life in Long Kesh, for example, Gerry Adams describes the prison as 'Britain's concentration camp'.[18]

The reasoning behind the Nazi comparison was to reinforce the fact that the bombers were nothing more than brutal murderers. As Mark Connelly points out, after the Second World War Hitler became a touchstone by which to measure evil.[19] In the aftermath of the Birmingham pub bombings, The Sun's cartoonist Stanley Franklin took the analogy further. His cartoon showed Hitler making room for the IRA as Stalin, Emperor Nero, Genghis Khan and Attila the Hun stepped down from a podium labelled 'The Most Odious Murderers in History'.[20] The cartoon not only drew parallels to Hitler, but a long history of brutality, implying that the IRA had surpassed all five in cruelty.

In contrast with the Daily Mirror, The Sun largely avoided referencing the Second World War in its coverage of the IRA's campaign in England. Instead, the paper sought

FIGURE 2
Keith Waite, 'Bombing doesn't work around here- I've tried it', Daily Mirror, 27 November 1974, Keith Waite, British Cartoon Archive, University of Kent.

to create a sense of Britishness through other national motifs. Following a bomb attack on Westminster Hall on 17 June 1974, Franklin's predecessor at The Sun, Paul Rigby, produced a cartoon depicting a monstrous creature, labelled violence, about to destroy two of the central pillars of British society, law and democracy (Figure 3). In the background, used detonators stand beside fragmented pillars, and this, alongside the crumbling nature of the pillars, suggested that the IRA had already succeeded in destabilising the foundation of British society. The two remaining pillars, civilisation and decency have yet to be primed: Rigby warns that

if the IRA are allowed to continue these will soon be next. The cartoon suggested that the IRA had threatened the British way of life by attacking the Houses of Parliament, a symbol of the rule of law and other British values. On the horizon, however, Big Ben rises from the smoke in defiance of the IRA's attack.[21] Rigby uses the image of the clock tower not only to signify the bomb's location, but to symbolise British resilience and courage. He draws Big Ben undamaged and operational indicating that despite the IRA's efforts, the British government and the values it represented would endure.

In its coverage of the Westminster bombing, the British press used the image of Big Ben extensively, to signify British fortitude.[22] Pictorial representations have traditionally played a significant role in the establishment of a national community. In order for cartoons to be effective, the reader must be able to interpret the message or joke being conveyed, therefore cartoonists rely on easily recognised motifs and preconceptions.[23] The reader's ability to interpret these images helped reinforce notions of a shared identity; in much the same way emphasising a shared history can promote common affiliations.

In the wake of the Tower of London bombing on 18 July 1973, The Sun drew on another trope of Britishness, the Beefeater. This attack caused particular outrage as it

FIGURE 3
Paul Rigby, ' ... Five, four, three, two, one', The Sun, 18 June 1974, News UK, 'British Cartoon Archive, University of Kent'.

FIGURE 4
Paul Rigby, 'Satisfied?', The Sun, 19 July 1974, News UK, 'British Cartoon Archive, University of Kent'.

was seen to have deliberately targeted children visiting the site on the first day of the school holidays. In his cartoon, Rigby emphasised the pointlessness and brutality of the bombing. Figure 4 shows a Beefeater, drawn to resemble a Marvel comic superhero, carrying the inert body of a young woman simply captioned 'Satisfied?'. The Beefeater, whose history can be traced back to the Norman Conquest, was intended to represent what Paul Ward has described as 'a sense of "national" permanence'. [24] Rigby depicts the Beefeater as a powerful figure, somewhat at odds with the retired non-commissioned officers of the Tower of London guard, to symbolise the perceived heroism of the British people.

The woman pictured in Rigby's cartoon represented forty-seven-year-old Dorothy Household who died in the bombing. Throughout the early 1970s, both the Daily Mirror and The Sun frequently focused on the plight of women and children caught up in the bombings to emphasise the horror of the Northern Ireland conflict and elicit a more powerful reaction from readers. The mutilation or death of women and children, characterised as 'innocent' victims, is seen as especially horrifying and the perpetrators of such violence beyond contempt.[25] The tabloid press regularly employed the association between child- and female-victims and innocence to spotlight the contemptuousness of the IRA bombers.

Both papers presented the IRA's female-victims as young, beautiful and by implication innocent, regardless of age or physical attributes, for example Rigby's depiction of Household as a significantly younger looking damsel in distress.

In comparison, female republicans were portrayed as hideous and animal-like. In the early 1970s, Bernadette Devlin, the MP for Mid-Ulster, frequently featured in cartoons on Northern Ireland portrayed in a negative light. Young and outspoken she had initially been popular with the British press, but with the outbreak of violence in Northern Ireland, she was increasingly depicted as a petulant child.[26] The 'Irish child' has long been an established figure in cartoons commenting on Ireland and reflects the enduring stereotype that the Irish were politically immature and in need of guidance from Britain.[27] British tabloid papers often rationalised the 'Troubles' as evidence of this lack of political maturity in order to justify the British presence in Northern Ireland. Devlin and other female republicans were also presented as monstrous harpies.[28] Commenting on a meeting, hijacked by female supporters of the Provisional IRA in April 1972, the Daily Express cartoonist Michael Cummings depicted the women as vampires confronting the Northern Ireland Secretary, William Whitelaw. A thought bubble coming from Whitelaw reads 'Maybe they should be given a sex-test to check if they really ARE women'.[29] The cartoon presents these women as unfeminine and therefore, not belonging to the standard narrative that women were expected to fit. By distinguishing them from 'real' women, Cummings suggests that they were irrational, and subsequently their support for the IRA irrational.[30] Irish republicans depicted as vampires and other monsters were also a common trope of earlier cartoons.

In cartoons depicting IRA violence in England during the 1970s, the Daily Mirror and The Sun drew on a range of long-established symbols of Ireland and the Irish. The simian or monstrous Irishmen in particular, were resurrected by both papers in their coverage of IRA bomb attacks on English cities. The Daily Mirror's cartoon (Figure 2) commenting on the Birmingham pub bombings for example, showed a simianised IRA man, recognisable by his black beret, sunglasses and monkey's tail. By portraying the bomber as ape-like, cartoonist Keith Waite sought to highlight the inhumanity of the IRA's actions. In a similar way, following the Westminster bombing The Sun's cartoonist, Paul Rigby, depicted the IRA as a hunched-back Frankenstein-esq monster primed to blow up the British establishment (Figure 3). The simian Irish terrorist was a recurrent theme throughout the British tabloid press's cartoon coverage of the 'Troubles'. Michael Cummings and the Evening Standard's cartoonist Jak in particular,

specialised in drawing the Irish as ape-like, violent figures that bore a strong resemblance to the bestial 'Paddy' of Victorian cartoons.[31]

The tradition of drawing the 'enemy' as ape- or animal-like dates back to the late eighteenth century and continues to the present day.[32] In the latter half of the nineteenth century, however, the simianised caricature was closely associated with the Irish. The Fenian movement especially, popularised the image of the Irish as subhuman and violent, as cartoonists sought to emphasis the danger of the Fenians by depicting them as ape-like monsters.[33] What these cartoons reveal about the nature of nineteenthcentury British attitudes towards the Irish, however, has been the subject of much debate. As indicated, L. Perry Curtis' argument that the simian 'Paddy' reflected an increasingly racialised view of the Irish has received significant criticism, most notably from Sheridan Gilley and Roy Foster.[34] Gilley refuted Curtis' claims that British stereotypes of the Irish were racial, asserting that the Irish 'Paddy' was as much an Irish as a British creation. He argues that nineteenth-century British attitudes towards the Irish were inconsistent and social commentators equally as likely to be pro-Irish.[35] Foster concurred, arguing that the bestial Paddy was one of a variety of ways in which cartoonists drew the Irish.[36] Both Gilley and Foster suggested that religion, class and political violence played a more significant role in shaping British prejudices towards the Irish than ideas of race. More recently, Michael de Nie has argued that in the nineteenth century race was used 'as a vehicle for expressing multiple anxieties and preconceptions, among them class concerns and sectarian prejudices'.[37]

Curtis' thesis, however, continues to be applied without question by scholars examining British attitudes towards the Irish since the nineteenth century. John Kirkaldy, for example, has argued that the resurrection of the simianised 'Paddy' in coverage of the Northern Ireland conflict during the late twentieth century demonstrated 'the very depths of English anti-Irish feeling'.[38] It is worth noting that Rigby and Waite were from Australia and New Zealand respectively; accordingly, they were more removed from British stereotypes of the Irish. That said, both cartoonists would produce several drafts from which their editor would select the next day's cartoon. Waite acknowledged that his cartoons were often rejected 'because they did not conform with the newspaper's point of view'.[39] The published work of both cartoonists therefore, represent their respective newspaper's editorial strategies as much as their own opinions and prejudices.

The correlation between the ape-like, monstrous IRA featured in the cartoons of the early 1970s and those of the Fenians shows that some anti-Irish

stereotypes persisted into the late twentieth century. As de Nie has argued, however, in the nineteenth century simianised representations of the Irish were in the minority as many other characters were used to represent Ireland and the Irish people, including 'Erin', 'the Irish pig' and various Irish politicians.[40] The Daily Mirror and The Sun's cartoon coverage of the late twentiethcentury bombing campaign in England include a similarly diverse range of characters. Not only do these cartoons feature the ape-like 'Paddy' referred to by Kirkaldy, but they also employed other motifs common to Victorian cartoons.

In Figure 4, for example, the image of Household being carried from the Tower of London is reminiscent of nineteenth-century depictions of Erin. The female personification of Ireland, Erin was one of the most common symbols in nineteenth-century cartoons commenting on the Irish Question.[41] She was typically portrayed as a young maiden in need of saving from the violent 'Paddy', usually by Britannia or St George, both potent symbols of British- and Englishness respectively.[42]

Keith Waite's cartoon in the Daily Mirror the day after the Westminster bombing referenced Guy Fawkes.[43] Throughout the nineteenth century, Fawkes was widely used as a satirical device and there are several Irish cartoons of this period that allude to the Gunpowder Plot, notably John Tenniel's 'The Fenian Guy Fawkes'.[44] In his cartoon, Waite pictures children collecting pennies for a Guy dressed in IRA uniform from the Prime Minister Harold Wilson (Figure 5). By drawing parallels to the Gunpowder Plot Waite underlined the destabilising effect of the IRA on the British state. In focusing on the custom of burning the Guy he reminds his readers that Fawkes had failed in his attempts to blow up Parliament; Waite asserts that the IRA too had failed to bring down the state.

The racial diversity of the children featured in the cartoon, proposes an inclusive image of Britain at odds with the apparent construction of black and Asian ethnic minorities as un-British during the post-war period.[45] This disparity highlights the complexities of national identity and ideas of Britishness during the late twentieth century. Waite's cartoon suggests that all these different people could buy into the concept of Britishness based on their opposition to the IRA. By constructing the IRA as an internal threat potentially affecting everyone, he reinforced the notion of a shared Britishness. As Eric

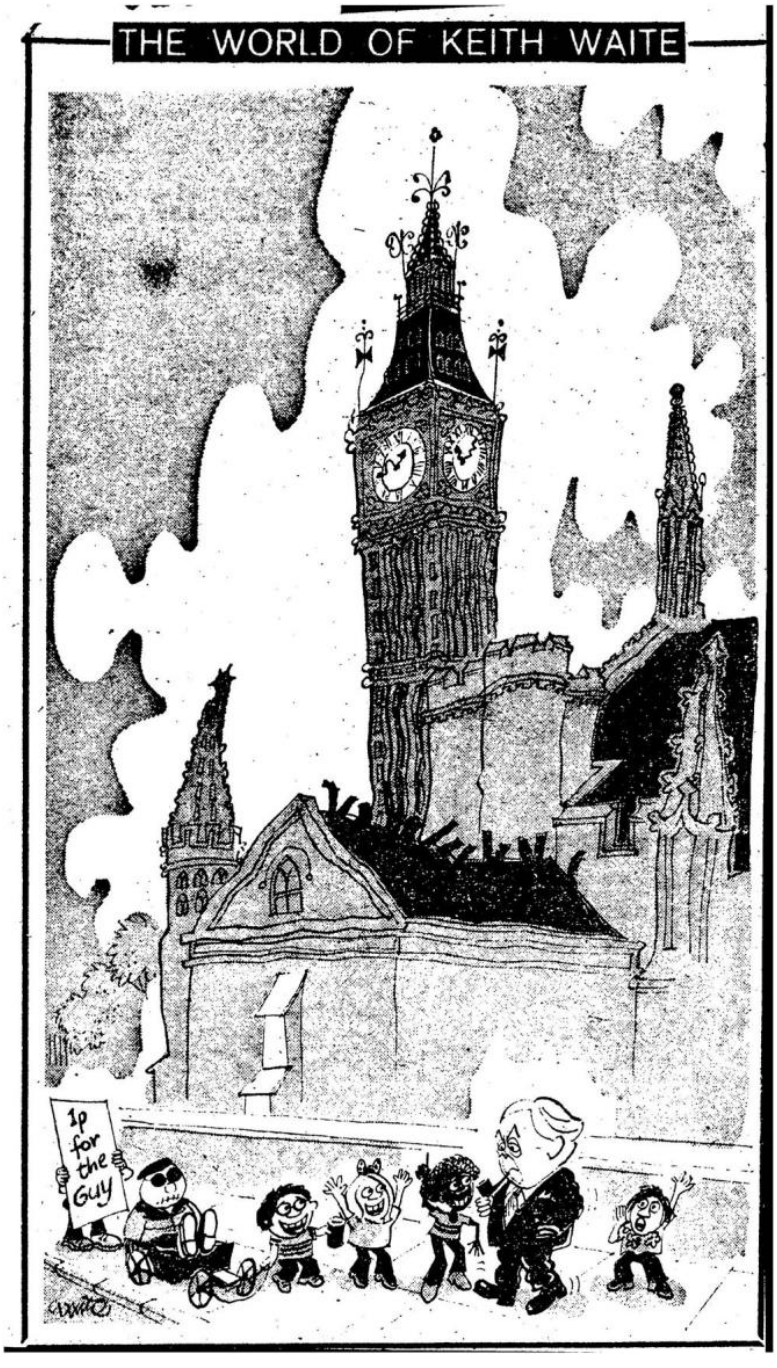

FIGURE 5
Keith Waite, 'Bombing doesn't work around here- I've tried it', Daily Mirror, 27 November 1974, Keith Waite, British Cartoon Archive, University of Kent.

Hobsbawm argued, 'There is no more effective way of bonding together the disparate sections of restless people than to unite them against outsiders'.[46] By

generating 'a sharpened awareness of "us" as against "them"', this perceived IRA threat fostered a sense of unity, which reinforced notions of British defiance in the face of a common enemy.[47]

The British press repeatedly drew on the theme of Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot in its coverage of the bombing campaign. William Jones' (Jon) cartoon in the Daily Mail responding to the Westminster bombing depicted a policeman questioning a construction worker who identifies himself as 'Seamus O'Fawkes, sorr'.[48] Similarly, after the Birmingham pub bombings the Sunday Telegraph reproduced Tenniel's cartoon 'The Fenian Guy Fawkes' superimposed onto a photograph of an inert body lying in the rubble caused by the bombing with the caption 'A century of progress!'.[49] By replicating the actual nineteenth-century caricature, this image drew attention to the long history of republican aggression and in doing so reinforced the traditional stereotype that the Irish were inherently violent.

The Guy Fawkes cartoons also tap into well-established anti-Catholic prejudices. Historically, Catholicism had been regarded as an internal threat to a British identity centred on Protestant values.[50] The foiling of the Gunpowder Plot was representative of British resistance to a Catholic peril. During the latter half of the nineteenth century acts of perceived papal aggression led to a resurgence of anti-Catholicism in Britain.[51] Popular opinions on Catholicism in turn reinforced anti-Irish attitudes in Britain and explain the popularity of the Guy Fawkes motif in satirical cartoons.[52] Some historians have argued that the growth of secularism in the twentieth century meant that anti-Catholicism played a lesser role in hostility towards the Irish than in previous centuries.[53] The Guy Fawkes in cartoons relating to the IRA's bombing campaign in the early 1970s, indicate that such prejudices continued to inform British attitudes to Ireland and the Irish people. de Nie argues that during the nineteenth century ethnic, religious and class prejudices, informed British conceptions of Irish identities.[54] The revival of traditional anti-Catholic prejudices in cartoons of the early 1970s would indicate that religious stereotypes, as well as the racial stereotypes emphasised by Kirkaldy, played an important role in shaping late twentieth-century British attitudes towards the Irish.

The debate over the extent to which racial prejudices have influenced British attitudes towards the Irish, in turn raises questions as to the extent to which Irish migrants assimilated into British society throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many historians have argued that by the early twentieth century the Irish had fully assimilated into British society, evidenced by high rates of social mobility and inter-marriage, amongst other factors.[55] Since the 1980s,

this 'assimilationist' model has come under attack. Sociologist Mary Hickman in particular, argues that the Irish residing in Britain during the late twentieth century continued to be subject to discrimination.[56] She argues that these experiences have been rendered invisible, however, due to the incorporation of the Irish into a homogenous white British race in response to increased immigration from the Caribbean, Africa and South Asia.[57] Although there is evidence of greater integration by the late twentieth century, especially amongst the Irish middle-class, the position of Irish people in Britain remained precarious.[58] The IRA's campaign in the early 1970s brought about a surge of hostility rooted in a longer history of prejudiced behaviour directed towards the Irish.

The presence of a supposedly integrated Irish population exacerbated fears that the IRA had infiltrated Britain.[59] Two days after the Westminster bombing Rigby published a cartoon showing three men in IRA uniform scaling Big Ben as the police struggled to reach them.[60] Rigby criticised the security services for allowing themselves to be hoodwinked by the IRA, who it was believed gained access to Westminster Palace disguised as construction workers. This criticism reflected a wider fear over the relative ease with which the attack had been carried out. The fact that the IRA were pictured climbing all over Big Ben, a symbol of the British state, pandered to fears that the bombers were operating from within Britain.

The IRA were repeatedly associated with the Irish living in Britain during the 1970s.[61] Following the funeral of James McDade, killed attempting to plant explosives at the Coventry telephone exchange on 14 November 1974, the Daily Mirror noted that 'hundreds of Irish sympathisers in Britain are planning to give a "martyr's farewell" to McDade'.[62] By linking the term 'sympathisers' with a reference to the Irish the paper suggested that hundreds of Irish people living in Britain were involved in some way with the violence. The paper reinforced this notion of complicity by using the same term but prefixed with IRA in a follow-up article, reporting that 'IRA sympathisers were … warn[ed] against wearing para-military uniforms in Britain'.[63]

Similarly, following the bombing of the National Defence College (12 February 1974) the paper observed that the IRA were using safe houses 'owned by IRA sympathisers who take in lodgers, including Irish labourers- and terrorists'. By equating Irish labourers with terrorists, the article implies that they were the same.[64] As sociologist Paddy Hillyard noted, by sustaining this idea that the IRA were infiltrating Britain through the Irish population, the press 'perpetuate[d] the

impression that the whole of the Irish community … [was] suspect'.[65] Accordingly, both papers re-imagined long-established Irish residents as a potential threat.

Many Irish people suffered from social ostracism, verbal and even physical abuse because of the bombings. Following the Birmingham pub bombings, Irish businesses were attacked, while thirty factories in Birmingham were forced to close in order to guarantee the safety of Irish workers.[66] In addition, the Irish faced discrimination and harassment from the authorities. The Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), introduced in November 1974, gave the police the power to examine, detain and arrest without grounds for due suspicion. Many Irish people were wrongfully arrested, indeed of the 7052 people detained in connection with Northern Ireland between 1974 and 1991, 86% were released without any further action being taken.[67] The press was complicit in encouraging the authorities' policing of the Irish, calling for people to report any suspicious activities. For example, following attacks on Euston and King's Cross in September 1973, the Daily Mirror reminded readers:

> The police need every scrap of help and information that the public can give. Someone, somewhere, must have a suspicion- however tiny- that might give the police a lead. It should be passed on quickly.[68]

Faced with this level of hostility many Irish people living in Britain adopted a low profile.[69] An Irish accent was often enough to attract abuse and suspicion, subsequently many members of the Irish community sought to modify or hide their accents.[70] One woman, interviewed in the late 1980s, confessed that 'When a bombing or anything like that happens I say, "Thank God for supermarkets", because you don't have to speak, you don't have to ask for a loaf of bread'.[71] It was also common for Irish people to refrain from participating in political activities for fear of being identified as sympathetic to the IRA.[72]

Both the Daily Mirror and The Sun, however, recognised that not all Irish people were IRA supporters and the Irish were victims of the bombs themselves. The tabloid press gave Irish victims particular attention, as they allowed them to advance the idea that the IRA's campaign was internecine. Paradoxically, both papers presented the Irish population as harbourers of terrorists while also highlighting the fact that the wider Irish community in Britain did not endorse the attacks. In the wake of four bomb attacks on 18 December 1973, the Daily Mirror spotlighted Rosina Harrington who had suffered severe shrapnel wounds. Emphasising the fact that she was second generation Irish Catholic, the paper highlighted the heinous nature of the IRA who were willing to sacrifice their own compatriots. In a follow-up article, the paper printed well wishes sent

anonymously to Rosina by an Irish couple, condemning the attacks: 'Try not to hate the Irish. We will never forgive the animals who did this'.[73] By demonstrating to its' readers that the IRA did not have the support of the majority of the Irish population, the newspaper conferred a sense of illegitimacy onto the group.

Similarly, The Sun called attention to the Irish roots of brothers Desmond and Eugene Reilly who died in the Birmingham pub bombings, quoting their mother: 'we are all from Donegal, but both my sons were born in Birmingham. They were youngsters. They didn't want to know about fighting and killing in Northern Ireland'.[74] Mrs Reilly presented her sons as apolitical and innocent, emphasising their age and ignorance. References to the 'innocent' Irish, however, by definition implied that there were also 'guilty' Irish, reinforcing the notion that the Irish population were harbouring terrorists.[75] The ambiguity over which elements of the Irish population in Britain supported the IRA meant that perceived blame was potentially spread to any Irish person. Even those Irish deemed 'innocent' were imagined in some way as complicit in the IRA's activities by not being seen to be pro-active in condemning the bombings. As Alessandro Portelli argues, this dynamic emerges from 'the purely negative definition given of innocence', that suggests a sense of 'harmlessness': 'having done nothing wrong is one thing, but having done nothing against wrong is another'.[76] Seán Sorohan observes that pressure was exerted on the Irish in Britain to publicly disassociate themselves from the IRA.[77]

The IRA's campaign in England was viewed as a serious threat to the British way of life. Not only had conflict spilt onto British soil for the first time since the Second World War, the enemy was difficult to distinguish from the large number of Irish people living in Britain. The British press responded to the IRA threat by re-emphasising conceptions of Britishness. The IRA were enlisted to help foster a sense of togetherness during a period of change resulting from heightened immigration, providing a common enemy against which the nation could unite. In both their written reportage and political cartoons, the Daily Mirror and The Sun evoked the stereotypes of the British as a stoic people facing down adversity by using memories of the Second World War and mainstream national motifs to symbolise British resilience and courage. It is worth noting, however, that the manner in which the IRA were presented was as much guided by commercial interests as patriotism. By fostering the concept of a national community united against the IRA threat, newspaper editors sought to increase their appeal to a wider audience.

Anger at the bombers was transferred onto the Irish living in Britain, serving to reinforce perceptions of them as an internal other, whilst both papers

stoked feelings of suspicion by depicting the Irish in Britain as harbourers of terrorists. In their presentation of the IRA, the British tabloids also drew on a wide range of long-established stereotypes of the Irish. Kirkaldy has rightly observed, in the early 1970s cartoonists resurrected the simian Paddy of nineteenth-century caricatures. Yet, this article demonstrates that the Daily Mirror and The Sun's cartoon coverage of the late twentieth-century bombing campaign in England re-employed a variety of motifs common in Victorian cartoons. This highlights the complex range of well-established and enduring racial and religious stereotypes, which reemerged during the early-1970s in light of the terrorist threat, shaping British attitudes towards the Irish.

The IRA bombing campaign in England was a transitional moment in the Northern Ireland conflict, determining how the 'Troubles' came to be interpreted in Britain. Cartoonists were instrumental in this process: by building on existing national tropes of resistance, the cartoons of the early 1970s offer an insight into the construction of Britishness as well as the other. Following the recent terrorist attacks in London and Manchester, the British media have again employed such methods. Not only have they reverted to seeing the crisis through the prism of Second World War images and other national motifs, but they also evoked memories of the IRA attacks in order to exult notions of British fortitude. It would seem that the IRA bombing campaign in England has itself become part of the range of stock motifs drawn upon in response to violent threats and used to emphasise national identity at times of uncertainty. Then as now, cartoons are central to shaping our understanding of national crises and issues of identity.

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Notes

1. McGladdery, The Provisional IRA in England, 3; 63.
2. Curtis, Apes and Angels, xxxi.
3. Ibid., 147.
4. de Nie, The External Paddy, 34.
5. Kirkaldy, “English Cartoonists”; Curtis, Nothing but the Same Old Story, 82–6; Darby, Dressed to Kill; Douglas et al., Drawing Conclusions.
6. Walker, 1975, “If the New Convention Breaks Down- how Close will Ulster be to the Brink?” The Times, 7 May.
7. Bingham, “Reading Newspapers,” 142.
8. Conboy, Tabloid Britain, 14.
9. Conboy, “Introduction,” 514.
10. There is a considerable wealth of scholarship on the formation of Britishness for example see Colley, “Britishness and Otherness,” 309–29; Weight, Patriots; Mandler, The English National Character; Kumar, “Negotiating English Identity,” 469–87.
11. Waters, ““Dark Strangers” in our Midst,” 208.
12. Conboy, Tabloid Britain, 69.
13. Conboy, “Introduction,” 511.
14. “The Answer to Bloody Terror,” 1973, Daily Mirror, 9 March.
15. “The Terror that must Fail,” 1973, Daily Mirror, 11 September.
16. Connelly, We can Take it!, 268.
17. McGladdery, The Provisional IRA in England, 90.
18. English, Armed Struggle, 190.
19. Connelly, We Can Take It!, 270.
20. Franklin, 1974, “It’s all Yours,” The Sun, 23 November.
21. This image is particularly reminiscent of the iconic photograph ‘St Paul’s Survives’.
22. See The Sun, 18 June 1974; Daily Mirror, 18 June 1974.
23. de Nie, The External Paddy, 34.
24. Ward, “Beefeaters, British History and the Empire,” 241–2.
25. Newby, “Victims, Participants or Peacemakers?,” 17–19; Brocklehurst, Who’s Afraid of Children?, 14–18.
26. Douglas et al., Drawing Conclusions, 284–5.
27. de Nie, “Pigs, Paddies, Prams and Petticoats,” 46; de Nie, The Eternal Paddy, 222–3.

28. It is worth noting that although Devlin was a staunch republican and socialist she was not affiliated with the Republican movement.
29. Cummings, 1972, Daily Express, 7 April; Curtis, Apes and Angels, 175.
30. Sjoberg and Gentry, Mothers, Monsters and Whores, 50.
31. The cartoons of both these artists provoked protests especially from Irish people in Britain. In 1982, the Greater London Council withdrew advertising from the Evening Standard following the publication of a Jak cartoon depicting a cinema poster advertising a film called 'The Irish: The Ultimate in Psychopathic Horror', arguing that it cast aspersions on the Irish people generally. (Kirkaldy, "English Cartoonists," 27; 34; Curtis, Nothing but the Same Old Story, 82–3.
32. For examples of eighteenth-century simianised caricature see James Gillray's 'Promised Horrors of the French Invasion' (20 October 1796) and 'The Consequences of a Successful French Invasion' (1 March 1798).
33. Curtis, Apes and Angels, 37.
34. Ibid., xxxi.
35. Gilley, "English Attitudes to the Irish Minority in England," 85–7.
36. Foster, Paddy and Mr Punch, 174; 191–4.
37. de Nie, The Eternal Paddy, 5.
38. Kirkaldy, "English Cartoonists," 30.
39. "Keith Waite: Biography"; "Paul Rigby: Biography".
40. de Nie, "Pigs, Paddies, Prams and Petticoats," 43.
41. Ibid., 46.
42. Curtis, Apes and Angels, 37.
43. In 1605 Guy Fawkes along with eleven other men were implicated in a failed assassination attempt on James VI/I. Known as the Gunpowder Plot, the plan had been to blow up the House of Lords as the prelude to a popular revolt which would see James's daughter installed on the throne as a Catholic monarch.
44. Bryant, "Remember, Remember … ," 55.
45. Waters, ""Dark Strangers" in our Midst," 208.
46. Hobsbawn, Nations and Nationalism since 1780, 91.
47. Colley, "Britishness and Otherness," 322.
48. Jon, 1974, "Seamus O'Fawkes, Sorr," Daily Mail, 18 June.
49. Jensen, 1974, "A century of progress!," Sunday Telegraph, 24 November.
50. Colley, "Britishness and Otherness," 320.
51. de Nie, The External Paddy, 15.
52. Gilley, "English Attitudes to the Irish in England," 93.
53. Holmes, A Tolerant Country?, 50; Kirkaldy, "English Cartoonists," 42.

54. de Nie, The Eternal Paddy, 5.
55. Ryan, “Assimilation of Irish Immigrants in Britain”. For an example of the assimilationist argument, see Hornsby-Smith and Dale, “The Assimilation of Irish Immigrants in England”.
56. See Hickman, “Alternative Historiographies of the Irish in Britain,” 236–53.
57. Hickman, “Reconstructing Deconstructing ‘Race’,” 298.
58. William Ryan observes that in the late 1960s/early 1970s 45% of non-manual Irish workers were highly assimilated into Britain compared to 23% of manual labourers. (Ryan, “Assimilation of Irish Immigrants in Britain,” 47–8; 91; Delaney, The Irish in Postwar Britain, 2.
59. At the start of the campaign in 1973, the number of Irish people in Britain was approximately 950,000, plus an estimated 1.3 million second generation Irish. (Walter, “The Irish Community in Britain”; Hickman and Walter, Discrimination and the Irish Community in
    Britain, 19.
60. Rigby, 1974, “‘Shure an’ we’re Just Good Honest Destruction Workers, or Somet’ing loike dat.’” The Sun, June 19.
61. Hickman et al., “Suspect Communities?,” 16.
62. Thompson and Daniels, 1974, ‘That IRA funeral’, Daily Mirror, 20 November.
63. “Black Beret Mob Warned,” 1974, Daily Mirror, 21 November.
64. Tullet and Laxton, 1974, “Ten Hurt as Bomb Rips College,” 13 February.
65. Hillyard, Suspect Communities, 146.
66. “‘Revenge’ Fire Bomb Hits a Pub”, 1974, Daily Mirror, 23 November; Daniels et al., “Backlash Fury at the Factories,” 1974, Daily Mirror, 23 November.
67. Home Office Statistical Bulletins 1974–91, cited in Hillyard, Suspect Community, 5.
68. “The Terror that Must Fail”, 1973, Daily Mirror, 11 September; For further investigation into the media’s role in policing the Irish in Britain see Hillyard, Suspect Communities, 130–1; 259.
69. Hickman and Walter, Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain, 216–19.
70. Walter, “Shamrocks Growing out of their Mouths,” 64.
71. Lennon et al., Across the Water, 175.
72. Further historical analysis on the effect of the IRA campaign in England on the lived experiences of the Irish in Britain is available in my Ph.D. thesis.

73. Gordon, 1973, Why Me? The Whispered Words of a Young Mother Caught in the Blast," Daily Mirror, 19 December; Gordon, 1973, "Thank You, Kind Hearts," Daily Mirror, 24 December.
74. Connew, 1974, "Bombs City Weeps for its Victims," Daily Mirror, 4 December.
75. Hickman et al., "Suspect Communities?", 17.
76. Portelli, The Battle of Valle Giulia, 150.
77. The majority of the Irish in Britain did seek to disassociate themselves with the IRA and Irish community leaders in Britain would often publicly condemn the violence; Sorohan, Irish London During the Troubles, 88.

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Roseanna Doughty, School of History, Classics and Archaeology University of Edinburgh, William Robertson Wing Old Medical School 4 Teviot Place, Edinburgh EH8 9AG, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. E-mail: R.J.Doughty@sms.ed.ac.uk

Appendix 2.

Roseanna Doughty, ‘‘Pawns in the Terrorist Game’?: The Hunger Strikes and the British Press’, *Irish Review* (*Publication Pending*).

‘Pawns in the Terrorist Game’?:

The Hunger Strikes and the British Press[1]

Roseanna Doughty

Ten Irishmen starving to death in the Long Kesh/Maze prison in the early 1980s made headlines worldwide. On 5 May 1981, Bobby Sands died following 66 days without food in pursuit of political status for republican prisoners in Northern Ireland. Over the following months, a further nine men would die in their bid to refute ‘the tag of criminal with which the British have attempted to label us’.[2] The hunger strikers’ passive resistance to the criminalisation of paramilitary prisoners drew attention to the Troubles, evoking outrage and sympathy for the republican cause in a way that the indiscriminate violence of the armed struggle never could. Much of the world’s press condemned the British government’s stance towards the hunger strikes.[3] In Britain, the hunger strikes provided ammunition for large sections of the press to use against the IRA; even so, a significant minority of British newspapers characterised the hunger strikers as victims themselves.

Journalists and other social commentators have written extensively on the hunger strikes, but the comparatively recent and sensitive nature of the protests means that few academics have studied them in isolation.[4] While recent scholarship has turned its attention to re-evaluating the hunger strikes, offering new perspectives and challenging preconceptions, media representations of the protests have yet to be fully explored.[5] As a major source of information on the hunger strikes for many British people, newspapers were central to how they were received and understood. Aogán Mulcahy’s excellent analysis of the strikes’ coverage in the *New York Times*, London *Times*, and *Irish Times* highlights the fact that, despite the papers’ criticism of Britain’s criminalisation policy, they did not present the prisoners’ demands as legitimate.[6] However, by focusing on *The Times*, Mulcahy limits his investigation to a small section of the British press. He argues that the paper adhered to the British government’s account of the hunger strikes, presenting the protesters as

violent criminals and the strike itself as a propaganda exercise.[7] This is a view echoed by historians, most notably Liz Curtis who asserts that most of the British media wholeheartedly supported the government's policy.[8] By examining a broader cross-section of newspapers, we are able to gain a wider and more nuanced perspective on the British press coverage of the protests.

This article undertakes a systematic investigation of how the hunger strikes were portrayed in British newspapers. It explores how four of the most popular titles, the *Daily Mirror*, the *Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian* and *The Sun*, reported on them. These papers have been selected because they offer contrasting political orientations: the *Telegraph* and *The Sun* were largely right wing, while *The Guardian* and the *Mirror* were left-of-centre. These publications also broadly represent the range of styles, readership, and ownership that characterised the British press during the Troubles. This article questions the assumption that the British press parroted the British government's line that the hunger strikers were terrorists who bore sole responsibility for the conflict; in fact, these four newspapers provided a much more nuanced examination of the protest than might be assumed.

The majority of the British press showed little compassion towards people who were perceived to be 'H-Block terrorists'. [9] The newspapers all supported the Conservative government's position on the status of republican prisoners, echoing Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's assertion that 'a crime, is a crime, is a crime. It is not political'.[10] In an editorial written four days before the death of Bobby Sands, *The Sun* described him as 'a common criminal who is being treated better than he deserves'.[11] Similarly, following an attack near hunger striker Raymond McCreesh's home, in which five soldiers died (19 May 1981), the *Daily Mirror* stated that 'a criminal is still a criminal, a murderer is still a murderer and a terrorist is still a terrorist'.[12] Even the left-leaning *Guardian* displayed little sympathy for the hunger strikers' demands, declaring in an editorial following Sands' death that: 'Who kills and maims for the IRA does not redeem the action in the smallest degree'.[13]

This is not to suggest that the paper accepted the government's handling of the crisis without criticism. Though *The Guardian* conceded that Thatcher's 'policy has been correct', it did not always condone her comportment. In particular, it criticised her attitude towards Irish MPs, Síle de Valera, Neil Blaney, and John O'Connell. In April 1981, the three politicians were granted permission to visit Sands; they, subsequently requested a meeting with Thatcher to discuss the prison dispute and called for an intervention by the European Commission

for Human Rights. Thatcher rebuffed them, stating that 'It is not my habit or custom to meet MPs from a foreign country about a citizen of the UK, resident in the UK'.[14] *The Guardian* feared that this snub would damage talks between Britain and Ireland. As early as May 1980, Thatcher had led a delegation to Dublin which aimed to develop the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. These talks had resulted in the two governments commissioning joint studies into new institutional arrangements, security matters, economic cooperation, and measures to encourage mutual understanding, and they eventually led to the establishment of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council in 1981. [15] *The Guardian* celebrated this increased cooperation between London and Dublin, which it argued offered the only way to resolve the conflict. Throughout its coverage of the hunger strikes, the paper consistently warned that, unless both countries continued to nurture this relationship, there was no hope of ending the violence in Northern Ireland. Following the death of Bobby Sands, the paper counselled that 'unless Britain and Ireland can agree to pool their political resources they will be in no position to influence events in the North away from the tribal warfare of the past and towards an inter-tribal agreement'.[16]

The *Daily Mirror* also used the hunger strikes to forward its long-standing editorial position on the Troubles. The *Mirror* was the only national daily to consistently support the withdrawal of Britain from Northern Ireland. Following the collapse of the Sunningdale Agreement in May 1974, the paper had argued that 'Britain must now face the most sombre option of all – to pull out the troops and abandon sovereignty over the province'.[17] For the paper, the hunger strikes provided further support for British withdrawal. In the wake of Sands' death, the *Mirror* reiterated that 'Britain has been trapped in that maze too long. Its task now is to find the way that will lead it out altogether'.[18] The paper argued that the people of Northern Ireland should be left to fight it out amongst themselves. Its view broadly reflected wider British public opinion, which polls revealed to be largely in favour of withdrawal, and presented the British as a long-suffering, altruistic presence in Northern Ireland.[19] By holding the paramilitaries on both sides solely responsible for the conflict, the *Mirror* avoided scrutinising Britain's role in the violence.

For the most part, however, the papers sought to support the government and aid it in its attempts to criminalise the IRA and other paramilitary organisations. One technique used by the *Daily Telegraph* to delegitimise the protest was to outline each new hunger striker's criminal record. These records

were readily supplied by the Northern Ireland Office, which produced 'fact files' on each hunger striker as part of its counter-propaganda measures.[20] The *Telegraph* made it clear that Francis Hughes was an extremely dangerous criminal: 'Of all the hunger strikers, Hughes was the most violent according to his record. At his trial, the judge said "You are a dedicated and hardened IRA terrorist"'.[21] Hughes had been found guilty and imprisoned in 1978 on six counts, including the murder of a British soldier. The *Telegraph*'s coverage of Sands' fast was similarly accompanied by a potted history of his criminal career.[22] References to prisoners' violent pasts was a recurring theme throughout the British press coverage of the hunger strikes. As Mulcahy notes, the *Times* also emphasised the criminal activities of the hunger strikers. In doing so, newspapers sought to 'typify' paramilitary prisoners as criminals rather than political actors.[23]

Coverage of the violence that accompanied the prison protests was also used to undermine the hunger strikers' claim to political status. Significant coverage was given to the rioting that broke out in Belfast and Derry following the death of each hunger striker and to the shooting of census enumerator Joanne Mathers, a 29-year-old woman with a young son, as she collected census forms in Derry on 7 April 1981. The tabloid press echoed Thatcher's assertion that the hunger strikers had chosen to take their lives, while those who had died at the hands of the IRA had not, and called for these 'forgotten victims of Ulster' to be remembered.[24] In order to remind their readers of the victims of the conflict, *The Sun* and the *Daily Mirror* gave considerable coverage to those killed in the escalating violence and often reported on their deaths in tandem with coverage of the hunger strikes.[25] The *Daily Mirror* combined coverage of the funeral of Francis Hughes on the 16 May 1981 with that of Julie Livingstone under a headline that cited them as the 'Two faces of Ulster'. Livingstone, a 14-year-old girl, was killed by a plastic bullet fired by soldiers attempting to disperse pro-hunger strike demonstrators in Belfast on 12 May 1981. Although British soldiers were responsible for Livingstone's death, the paper's juxtaposition of these stories suggested that the republican movement, as represented by Hughes, was culpable. The article presented Livingstone and her grieving school friends as innocent victims of the conflict, markedly different from the 'killers in masks' that attended Hughes' funeral.[26] This contrast exhibits the paper's contempt for the hunger strikers and the violent organisations they represented.[27] Child casualties were frequently used by the tabloid press to

emphasise the trauma of the Troubles, but it is important to note that children were by no means always presented as passive onlookers.

The Sun also combined its coverage of the hunger strikes with details about the funerals of other victims of the conflict. For example, on 1 May 1981, *The Sun* integrated details of the funeral of Police Constable Gary Martin, killed in a bomb attack, with a report detailing a conversation that Sands had had with relatives, in which he informed them that he must see his hunger strike through to death. The juxtaposed stories focused on Rhoda Martin and Rosaleen Sands and their grief over the deaths of their respective sons. The paper reports that Rosaleen Sands left her prison visit 'in tears', before going on to note that 'A Mother's tears flow yet again in Ulster' in relation to Rhoda Martin's grief. The headline suggests a connection between two women destined to lose their sons to the conflict. Rhoda Martin, the article notes, had 'clutche[d] her nine-year-old son Darren for comfort at yesterday's funeral of her other son'.[28] Through its equation of Rhoda's suffering with that of Rosaleen, *The Sun* highlighted the depravity of Sands' protest, which unnecessarily made his mother into a victim.[29]

All four newspapers presented the hunger strikers both as cold-blooded terrorists and as victims. The *Daily Mirror* and the *Daily Telegraph* treated the hunger strikers as puppets of the IRA leadership who were being exploited for propaganda purposes. Reporting on Sands' funeral, the *Daily Mirror* journalist John Edwards observed that 'it was a pathetic end for a man who never played more than an average part in the deadly moves called by his IRA masters'.[30] In an editorial published on 23 July 1981, the *Daily Telegraph* described the hunger strikers as 'pawns in the terrorist game'.[31] This view, that the prisoners were controlled by the IRA leadership, was widely shared by British politicians. In a speech made during a visit to Northern Ireland on 28 May 1981, Thatcher declared it 'a tragedy that young men should be persuaded, coerced or ordered to starve themselves to death for a futile cause'.[32] Even amongst the hunger strikers' families, there were doubts over the autonomy of the prisoners. At a meeting of relatives organised by Sinn Féin, the political wing of the Provisional IRA, Geraldine Scheiss, the girlfriend of hunger striker Kieran Doherty, declared that, 'I don't think decisions are being made inside the prison. I think decisions are being made by people present in this room'.[33]

Republican prisoners fell under the command of the IRA's Army Council but, as journalist David Beresford puts it, 'the inmates were a tail capable of wagging the dog'.[34] Under pressure from the prisoners, the Army Council

reluctantly agreed to the first hunger strike in October 1980. Despite rumours to the contrary, the IRA maintained that both strikes remained prisoner-led initiatives. Speculation that the IRA leadership had manipulated the hunger strikers re-surfaced with the publication of Richard O'Rawe's *Blanketmen* (2005).[35] O'Rawe, who had been the prisoners' public relations officer, alleges that the Army Council controlled the prisoners and that on two occasions in July 1981 the Council turned down an offer made by the British government, moves that led to the continuation of the strikes and further deaths.[36] Recently released classified documents pertaining to the hunger strikes indicate that a renewed offer was made. It promised prisoners access to their own clothes, parcels, visits, and letters; the partial restoration of remissions; and assurances that work would predominantly consist of domestic tasks, charity work, and educational activities, following the immediate termination of the strike.[37] The extent to which the prisoners controlled the hunger strikes, however, continues to be the source of much debate.

In a bid to discredit the strikes, the contemporary British press propagated rumours that the IRA leadership was forcing prisoners to die. In its editorial on 23 July, the *Daily Telegraph* asserted that:

> [T]he strikers are under the command of the leadership of the Provisional IRA represented at the Maze by Brendan McFarlane who, himself fortified by regular meals, orders their behaviour. Threats, no doubt are freely delivered to mothers and sweethearts who are suspected of encouraging resistance to these demands. There is indeed a reign of terror at the Maze; but it is maintained by the IRA.[38]

By questioning the autonomy of the prisoners, the paper sought to undermine their claims to martyrdom. The implication that the hunger strikers had been forced to die by the IRA leadership reduced the value of their sacrifice. The editorial also suggested that the hunger strikers were themselves victims and were being murdered by the IRA. Other newspapers echoed this view. For example, the *Daily Express* described Bobby Sands as 'the IRA's latest victim'.[39] Neither paper, however, was excessively sympathetic towards the strikers, and both reiterated that the men were still criminals. Instead, these reports served to further demonise the leadership and emphasise the heinous nature of a

movement which was willing to sacrifice its own. The papers asserted that any move by the British government to yield to the strikers' demands would only play into the hands of the terrorists.[40]

The *Daily Mirror* questioned the autonomy not only of the hunger strikers but of the rank and file membership of the IRA. In John Edwards' coverage of Sands' funeral, the journalist asserted that, 'Nobody could remember what had been said at the funerals of the "volunteers" whose graves were marked unobtrusively all around the one prepared for Bobby Sands, MP'.[41] The emphatic use of quotation marks suggests doubt about the extent to which these people were willing volunteers. Edwards insinuates that, like Sands, these men and women had been forced to die. The suggestion that their funerals had been forgotten further implies the futility of their cause, because the British government would not concede to the IRA's demands; Edwards also insinuates the cynicism of a leadership for whom membership was an expendable resource. By presenting the hunger strikers as acting under coercion, the *Daily Mirror*, and to a lesser extent the *Daily Telegraph*, dismissed claims that the IRA had a valid political agenda and portrayed the organisation instead as one only interested in violence.

The Guardian on the other hand, saw the hunger strikers and other paramilitaries as products of the conflict itself. In an exposé on the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), journalist Paul Keel described hunger striker Patsy O'Hara as being 'in every respect a child of '68', implying that O'Hara's childhood experiences of the conflict had led him to engage in violence. He notes O'Hara's early involvement in the republican movement – O'Hara had attended civil rights marches from the age of 13 – and observes that his 'upbringing included Bloody Sunday – the day in 1972 when 13 demonstrators died on a street only yards away from his home'. [42] The article outlines the INLA's history, explaining the make-up of the organisation and its relationship with the IRA. Unlike other newspapers, which provided little explanation for the hunger strikes, *The Guardian* frequently accompanied its coverage with background information on the prison protests and the rationale behind them. In doing so, the paper offered more than the simplistic analyses often seen as typical of British media coverage; instead, it worked actively to shed light on the complexities of the conflict. The paper also gave a voice to the prisoners' relatives and supporters. These stories served to demonstrate the impact of the conflict on the everyday lives of republican families; they also posited the theory

that the prisoners would not have committed these crimes but for the political environment in which they had come to maturity.[43] In an exclusive interview with the parents of 1980 hunger striker Tommy McKearney, *The Guardian* revealed that 'they would have expected Tommy, with nine O-levels and two A-levels – in ancient and modern history – to go on to university and become a teacher, but for the "troubles"'.[44] By exploring further than the hunger strikers' criminal credentials, *The Guardian* suggested that O'Hara, McKearney, and their fellow protestors, were victims of an upbringing dictated by violence.

This is not to argue that *The Guardian* sought to vindicate the hunger strikers' past behaviour. On the contrary, the paper drew attention to the effects of the Troubles on children precisely in order to emphasise the reprehensible nature of republican violence. As we have already observed, child casualties were used throughout the coverage of the conflict to illustrate the despicability of the political violence carried out by paramilitary organisations. Children also played a role in the violence itself, throwing stones, building barricades, and making petrol bombs. British papers regularly featured images and accounts of children fighting. For example, in Keel's *Guardian* exposé, he recounts how 15-year-old Patsy O'Hara had been 'the recipient of a bullet wound "manning" a barricade'.[45] As Helen Brocklehurst argues, such reports claimed that growing up in this violent atmosphere had robbed children of their childhood and innocence.[46] The newspapers represented children, not only as physical victims of the conflict, but as people who had been deprived by violence of any kind of 'normal' life. *The Guardian* feared that the hunger strikes were continuing this pattern. As the first hunger strike reached a climax in December 1980, the paper warned that 'a new generation of martyrs will succeed in setting back the peaceful evolution of the province and of Ireland by yet another decade'.[47]

These fears were also voiced by the tabloid press. For example, when Sands reached a crisis point, the *Daily Mirror* claimed that his fast had 'already recruited acid-throwing teenagers to the junior ranks of the IRA'.[48] Similarly, *The Sun* noted that a 'new breed of tiny terrorists' was now stalking the streets of Belfast.[49] All four newspapers reported on the hunger strikes in terms of propaganda victories believed to have been won by the paramilitaries. They presented the hunger strikes primarily as a publicity stunt designed both to attract support for the republican movement in Northern Ireland and to undermine Britain's reputation abroad.

For the British press, the biggest and most successful propaganda exercise of the protest was Bobby Sands' parliamentary campaign. On 9 April 1981, when Sands was elected as a member of parliament for Fermanagh and South Tyrone by 30,492 votes to 29,046, the election result suggested that the hunger strikes had increased popular support for the republican cause. Sands' electoral success demonstrated what could be achieved through the ballot box and this would eventually lead the republican movement to take a more political direction. In the aftermath of the hunger strikes, however, as Richard English notes, elements within the republican movement continued to see violence as the only means of achieving their aims.[50]

The election of Sands to Westminster also succeeded in rekindling flagging media interest in the prison protests. The 1980 hunger strike had dominated headlines from the outset but, until the election, the second hunger strike had received little press coverage. The *Daily Mirror* still paid only fleeting attention to Sands' election win, limiting its coverage to a perfunctory article under the front-page lead which focused on the failed launch of the Space Shuttle Columbia, but the *Daily Telegraph*, *The Sun*, and *The Guardian* all featured extensive coverage of the election.[51] *The Guardian* described Sands' victory as a 'Poll coup for [the] IRA [and] a blow to Thatcher' and noted that the result had 'dealt a serious blow to the Government's security policy in Northern Ireland'.[52] The paper observed that the election of Sands demonstrated high levels of support for the hunger striker amongst voters:

> Years of myth-making go out of the window with the election of Bobby Sands . . . And the biggest myth is that the IRA in its violent phase represents only a tiny minority of the population.[53]

The election results certainly challenged the axiom, cultivated by the British media, that the IRA lacked the backing of the wider nationalist community. Yet *The Guardian* also saw the election as an opportunity to end the strike, tentatively suggesting that, in carrying out his duties as MP, Sands should be permitted to wear his own clothes and abstain from prison work, a move that might have allowed the government to concede to the protesters' demands without losing face.[54]

The *Daily Telegraph* and *The Sun* on the other hand played down Sands' election success, arguing that it did not indicate widespread support for the IRA. Although the *Daily Telegraph* acknowledged that the election had been a 'propaganda bonus' for the paramilitaries, the paper dismissed the results as 'determined by the almost automatic operation of traditional allegiances'.[55] Similarly, *The Sun* argued that 'Elections in this part of Ulster are a macabre game. The results bear no relation to the quality of the candidate or what he stands for'.[56] Both papers conceded that Sands' election had revived international interest in Northern Ireland and shifted world opinion in favour of the IRA. As the *Daily Telegraph* observed, 'Sands' victory has strongly fortified the provisional IRA campaign, particularly in the United States.[57]

From the US to the Soviet Union, there was widespread condemnation of the decision to allow an elected member of the British parliament to starve himself to death over 'wearing his own trousers'.[58] In a survey carried out by the *Sunday Times* of 64 newspapers across 25 countries, 36 said that Britain should withdraw from Northern Ireland or enter immediate talks with Dublin over reunification: 'Editor after editor said that the hunger strikers had improved the image of the IRA'.[59] As the paper's European correspondent, Keith Richardson, observed, 'general European impressions ranges from pig-headed Thatcher obstinacy, through scandalous misgovernment to outright genocide. In other words, it could not be worse'.[60]

The *Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, and *The Sun* all dismissed such concerns as stemming from IRA propaganda. The *Telegraph* accused the IRA of attempting to 'extort concessions from the British Government by hauling Britain before the court of world opinion'.[61] *The Guardian*, however, played down international concern about the hunger strikes as 'well-intended' but 'ill-informed'.[62] The paper believed that foreign media and politicians mistakenly understood the hunger strikes to be about prison reform rather than political status. *The Guardian* feared that these 'foreign misunderstandings' would jeopardise talks between London and Dublin, which it saw as the only solution to the crisis.[63]

The *Daily Telegraph*, on the other hand, disregarded international criticism altogether as the 'automatic response' of the Irish-American lobby and 'miscellaneous hordes of Marxist and Trotskyite organisations'; it claimed that the majority of newspapers in the US, as well as a significant number in Europe,

had expressed sympathy for Britain's position with regard to the hunger strikers.[64] The paper argued that those who had condemned the British government for their treatment of the protesters were self-serving, and it noted, for example, that the Soviet Union used the hunger strikes as 'a handy tool for accusing Britain of hypocrisy over human rights'.[65] This was a view also expressed by *The Sun* in an article that responded to comments made during Prince Charles' visit to New York in June 1981 by the mayor, Ed Koch. Koch remarked that 'the British should just get the hell out of Ireland'; *The Sun* dismissed the incident and accused Koch of pandering to the electorate: 'If it had been a crowd of Italians he would have been photographed eating a plate of spaghetti and quoted as demanding fair play for Frank Sinatra'.[66]

Nonetheless, both papers sought to defend the British government's handling of the protest. In order to offset international criticism, the *Daily Telegraph*, *The Sun*, and *The Guardian*, frequently presented their coverage of the hunger strikes alongside similar protests and terrorist activities worldwide.[67] The 1970s and early 1980s saw violent protests and terrorist attacks in several countries. These protests included activity organised by nationalist movements, not only in Northern Ireland but also in the Basque country and Brittany, which adopted violent methods, albeit on a smaller scale, in order to further their campaigns.[68] By highlighting the similarities between the conflict in Northern Ireland and the problems faced by governments elsewhere, the papers reproached foreign powers for opposing Britain's policy towards the hunger strikers. In April 1981, the *Daily Telegraph* admonished the American government for not speaking out against pro-IRA groups, observing that America, which had recently witnessed an assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan (30 March 1981), 'has suffered enough from terrorist activities, political, criminal and demented . . . Can its leaders pass by on the other side during Ulster's agony?'.[69] Responding to the international outcry in the wake of Bobby Sands' death, *The Sun* remarked that 'It is baffling that in countries like Italy, West Germany and Spain which suffer far more acutely than we do from mindless terrorism voices are raised condemning Britain's efforts to uphold the law and protect the innocent'.[70] Similarly, as the first hunger strike reached a crisis in December 1980, *The Guardian* observed that, 'several European countries, with democratically elected governments, face or have faced terrorist attempts to subvert them. Are the killers of Mr Moro or of businessmen in Germany entitled to a different regime from a back street mugger?'.[71]

Conversely, the *Daily Mirror* paid little attention to international opinion. Following the publication of the *Sunday Times*' survey of foreign press reaction, the paper's columnist Keith Waterhouse acknowledged that 'one of the hunger strikers' chief aims which is to win foreign sympathy for the IRA was succeeding'. Waterhouse, however, did not attempt to defend the British government's policy and instead criticised the lack of new solutions for tackling the prison protests:

> When 30,000 voters return a dying hunger-striker to Parliament and Parliament's only response is that there must be a way of stopping that kind of embarrassment in future, it begins to look as if we are trying to keep our Ulster problem under the carpet.[72]

This was the only article to appear in the *Daily Mirror* that dealt with the response to the hunger strikes abroad. The paper's lack of interest in coverage overseas arose in part because international pressure for Britain to withdraw from Northern Ireland aligned with the paper's own views.

Scholars such as Mulcahy and Curtis have observed that, in keeping with the government's position on Northern Ireland, British newspapers continually characterised the hunger strikers as terrorists who were wholly responsible for the violence.[73] Newspapers were quick to defend Britain's position, particularly from international criticism, and *The Guardian*, the *Daily Telegraph*, and *The Sun* highlighted the hypocrisy of foreign commentators who failed to acknowledge similar problems in their own countries. Regardless of its defensiveness in the face of international criticism, the press was not afraid to challenge aspects of the government's policy in Northern Ireland. The *Daily Mirror,* for example, presented the hunger strikes as further evidence to support the need for British withdrawal from the province.

While all four papers broadly echoed the government line that 'a crime, is a crime', their coverage of the hunger strikes went beyond this one-dimensional view. The newspapers all depicted the hunger strikers not only as perpetrators of violence but also as victims of the republican movement. The *Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Mirror* presented the prisoners as 'pawns' of the IRA leadership. These papers believed that the hunger strikes were a republican propaganda exercise and sought to discredit them on the grounds that, far from being a

prisonerled protest, they were a carefully orchestrated publicity campaign by the IRA leadership in which the strikers themselves were exploited.

The Guardian took a different approach and attempted to represent the hunger strikers' criminal pasts as stemming directly from their childhood experiences of violence.[74] The paper theorised that the prisoners would not have become involved in violence but for the Troubles. The impact of the conflict on children was a recurring theme in the press, and newspapers regularly featured accounts of children either as casualties of, or active participants in, the conflict. *The Guardian* feared that the hunger strikes would recruit a new generation into the violence, a fear echoed by the wider British press.

Newspapers were of vital importance in determining how the hunger strikes were interpreted in Britain, as the majority of the British population received news about the protest through media sources. The hunger strikes represented a significant and transitional moment in the conflict in Northern Ireland, and this shift can be retrospectively traced in British press coverage. Although, contemporary newspaper reportage did in the main perpetuate the government's narrative that 'a criminal is still a criminal, a murder is still a murderer and a terrorist is still a terrorist', careful examination of coverage during the hunger strikes reveals increasing divergence from the official line and a willingness to engage with the more nuanced details of the Troubles.

1 'Pawns of the IRA', *Daily Telegraph*, 23 July 1981.

2 Statement by PRO, blanket men, H-Blocks, 10 October 1980, Linen Hall Library, Political Collection, quoted in R. English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* (London: PanMacmillan, 2012), p. 192.

3 For examples, see 'World Press Uncertain on Sands' Death', *The Guardian*, 7 May 1981.

4 D. Beresford, *Ten Men Dead: The Story of the 1981 Irish Hunger Strike* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994); P. O'Malley, *Biting at the Grave* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990) and R. O'Rawe, *Blanketmen: An Untold Story of the H-Block Hunger Strike* (Dublin: New Island, 2005).

[5] For example, R. English, *Armed Struggle*, pp. 187-222; T. Hennessey, *Hunger Strike: Margaret Thatcher's Battle with the IRA, 1980-1981* (Sallins: Irish Academic Press, 2014).

[6] A. Mulcahy, 'Claims-Making and the Construction of Legitimacy: Press Coverage of the 1981 Northern Irish Hunger Strike', *Social Problems*, 42:4 (1995), pp. 449-467.

[7] Mulcahy, 'Claims-Making and the Construction of Legitimacy', p. 463.

[8] L. Curtis, *Ireland, The Propaganda War: The British Media and the 'Battle for Hearts and Minds'* (Belfast: Sásta, 1998), pp. 202-206.

[9] C. Brady and P. Potts, 'IRA to Exploit Poll Victory', *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 April 1981.

[10] J. Wightman, 'Thatcher Rebuffs Irish MPs', *Daily Telegraph*, 22 April 1981.

[11] 'Speak Out Now!', The Sun Says, *The Sun*, 1 May 1981.

[12] 'Murderers and Martyrs', Mirror Comment, *Daily Mirror*, 22 May 1981.

[13] 'One More Death, as Scheduled', *The Guardian*, 6 May 1981; R. Doughty, '"The Hunger Strike Terrorists": The British Press and the Hunger Strikes', *The Irish Times*, 5 July 2016, http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/the-hunger-strike-terrorists-the-british-press-and-the-hunger-strikes-1.2706714 (Accessed 28 January 2017).

[14] C. Brown and J. Joyce, 'Thatcher Refuses to Meet Irish MPs', *The Guardian*, 22 April 1981.

[15] M. Mulholland, *Northern Ireland: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 115.

[16] 'One more Death, as Scheduled'.

[17] 'The Troops and Ulster', Mirror Comment, *Daily Mirror*, 3 June 1974.

[18] 'Death in the Maze', Mirror Comment, *Daily Mirror*, 6 May 1981.

[19] In a MORI poll carried out in December 1980, 50 per cent of the 1,071 adults interviewed in England, Scotland, and Wales said that Northern Ireland should leave the UK. D. Lipsey, 'Let Ulster Quit UK is Majority Verdict', *Sunday Times*, 21 December 1980.

[20] Curtis, *Ireland: The Propaganda War*, p. 258.

[21] C. Brady, 'Sands's Fellow Fasters "Continue to Weaken"', *Daily Telegraph*, 30 April 1981.

[22] 'Catalogue of Crime in Life of Sands', *Daily Telegraph*, 24 April 1981.

[23] Mulcahy, 'Claims-Making and the Construction of Legitimacy', p. 460.

[24] C. Brown, 'Political Status "License to Kill"', *The Guardian*, 6 May 1981; 'Maggie Lashes out at Killers', *The Sun*, 29 April 1981.

[25] Mulcahy, 'Claims-Making and the Construction of Legitimacy', p. 460. Mulcahy's research indicates that *The Times* also featured coverage of the strikes alongside details of other victims of the conflict.

[26] 'Two faces of Ulster', *Daily Mirror*, 16 May 1981.

[27] A. Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), p. 150; L. Newby, 'Victims, Participants or Peacemakers? Representations of Children and Young People in Memorialisation of the Northern Irish 'Troubles'' (MSc thesis, unpublished: University of Edinburgh, 2014), pp. 17-19.

[28] B. Woosey, 'Death-fast Sands Stays Defiant', *The Sun*, 1 May 1981.

[29] Doughty, 'The Hunger Strike Terrorists'.

[30] J. Edwards, 'Belfast's Farewell to Bobby Sands', *Daily Mirror*, 8 May 1981.

[31] 'Pawns of the IRA'.

[32] 'Thatcher Attacks Men of Violence in Belfast Visit', *The Guardian*, 29 May 1981.

[33] Beresford, *Ten Men Dead*, p. 370. [34] Beresford, *Ten Men Dead*, p. 33. [35] O'Rawe, *Blanketmen*, pp. 16-18.

[36] O'Rawe, *Blanketmen*; Hennessey, *Hunger Strike*, pp. 15-17.

[37] Hennessey, *Hunger* Strike, p. 334.

[38] 'Pawns of the IRA'. Brendan 'Bic' McFarlane was the IRA Officer Commanding in the Maze during the 1981 Hunger Strikes.

[39] 'Propaganda of Death', *Daily Express*, 6 May 1981; L. Curtis, *Ireland, The Propaganda War: The British Media and the 'Battle for Hearts and Minds'* (Belfast: Sásta, 1998), p.204.

[40] 'Pawns of the IRA'.

[41] Edwards, 'Belfast's Farewell to Bobby Sands'.

[42] D. Beresford and P. Keel, 'The Hard Men in the Other World of Belfast', *The Guardian*, 18 May 1981.

[43] Mulcahy, 'Claims-Making and the Construction of Legitimacy', p. 461.

[44] D. Beresford, 'The Roots of a Hunger Strike', *The Guardian*, 2 December 1980.

[45] Beresford and Keel, 'The Hard Men in the Other World of Belfast'.

[46] H. Brocklehurst, *Who's Afraid of Children? Children, Conflict and International Relations* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 100-101.

[47] 'The Hunger Strikers are Augmented', *The Guardian*, 1 December 1981.

[48] 'Moving the Target'.

[49] B. Woosey, 'The Children of Violence', *The Sun*, 5 March 1981.

[50] English, *Armed Struggle,* pp. 205-206.

[51] J. Desborough and J. Gorrod, 'IRA Hunger Striker is elected MP', *Daily Mirror*, 11 April 1981.

[52] D. Beresford, 'Poll Coup for IRA a Blow to Thatcher', *The Guardian*, 11 April 1981.

[53] 'Fermanagh Tyrone and the Maze', *The Guardian*, 11 April 1981.

[54] 'A Political Sort of Status', *The Guardian*, 15 April 1981.

[55] Brady and Potts, 'IRA to Exploit Poll Victory'; 'An IRA Victory', *Daily Telegraph*, 11 April 1981.

[56] 'The IRA have not got a thing to crow about', *The Sun*, 11 April 1981.

[57] Brady and Potts, 'IRA to Exploit Poll Victory'.

[58] J. Akass, 'It's OK to Die but it's Bad Publicity to do it too Quickly', *The Sun*, 29 May 1981.

[59] 'Is Britain Losing the Propaganda War?', *The Sunday Times*, 31 May 1981.

[60] 'Is Britain Losing the Propaganda War?'; Doughty, 'The Hunger Strike Terrorist'.

[61] 'Pathos and Menace', *Daily Telegraph*, 22 April 1981.

[62] 'Whoever Wins Must go on Talking', *The Guardian*, 8 June 1981.

[63] 'Whoever Wins Must go on Talking', *The Guardian*, 8 June 1981.

[64] 'A Time for Courage', *Daily Telegraph*, 13 May 1981; 'Ireland and the World', *Daily Telegraph*, 25 June 1981.

[65] Taylor, 'How We Answer the IRA's Friends Abroad'.

[66] J. Akass, 'It's Votes New York's Mayor Cares About Not the Irish', *The Sun*, 19 June 1981.

[67] Doughty, ''The Hunger Strike Terrorists''.

[68] J. M. Wober, *Broadcasting and the Conflict in Ireland: Viewers' Opinions of Two Series and their Contexts*, (London: Independent Broadcasting Authority, December 1981), p. 1.

[69] 'American Connection', *Daily Telegraph*, 25 April 1981.

[70] P. Johnson, 'Why do we Let the IRA Pull Off These Stunts?', *The Sun*, 11 May 1981.

[71] 'The Hunger Strikers are Augmented'.

[72] K. Waterhouse, 'Britain on the carpet', *Daily Mirror*, 1 June 1981.

[73] Mulcahy, 'Claims-Making and the Construction of Legitimacy', pp. 463; Curtis, *Ireland: The Propaganda War*, pp. 202-206.

[74] Beresford and Keel, 'The Hard Men in the Other World of Belfast'; Beresford, 'The Roots of a Hunger Strike'.