

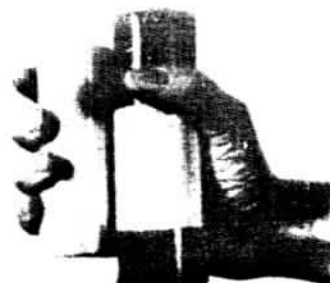
# **PLASTIC BULLETS— PLASTIC GOVERNMENT**

**DEATHS AND INJURIES  
BY PLASTIC BULLETS,  
AUGUST 1981 -  
OCTOBER 1982**

**By Fr Denis Faul, Fr Raymond Murray**

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This book is a continuation of RUBBER AND PLASTIC BULLETS KILL AND MAIM which recorded deaths and injuries from 1970-1981. It is prepared for the second International Tribunal to be held in Belfast, 16 October, 1982.





## PLASTIC BULLETS - PLASTIC GOVERNMENT



Fourteen persons including seven schoolchildren have been killed by rubber and plastic bullets in Northern Ireland since 1972, most of them in 1981. No person, neither British soldier nor RUC man has been charged. Almost 100 persons have been seriously injured by plastic bullets; no one has been charged with these serious actions. Some of the killings and woundings took place while nothing resembling a riot took place.

What conclusion are we to draw from this slaughter of innocents and lack of accountability of the agents of the state? The same conclusion as is borne in on us by the 124 innocent persons killed by the British Army and the over 1000 tortured and brutally ill treated by the agents of the state with immunity and impunity, with the help of cover up and fixed law. The use of ill treatment, blackmail and frame up has brought many persons into jail.

The conclusion is that the system of law and democracy as it manifests itself in practice and in fact in Northern Ireland, Britain and to a lesser extent in the Republic of Ireland and indeed in the USA and other democracies, is prepared to kill some people, torture or ill-treat others and falsely imprison others and cover the illegal work of its agents and refuse to admit mistakes; this is done to preserve the state and its constitution; they claim it is necessary to break the law and the constitution in order to preserve them. If weak people go to the wall and suffer that is too bad for them for being weak people.

There is a severe fault in the democratic system as it works at home and abroad today; and this fault is magnified many times in a phoney artificial sectarian "democracy" like Northern Ireland. This is a fundamental fault in the democratic and legal system of the present time, namely, that it condemns innocent people to be killed, brutally ill-treated and falsely imprisoned by agents of the state whose activities will be covered up, every level of legal and judicial activity playing a part or failing to do its duty as the case may be.

Only extremely vigilant and fearless men and women and groups can counter this margin of law breaking and injustice by the state; the margin may not be great compared to the number who enjoy freedom and liberty. Many well-to-do and comfortable people may feel content that people suffer at the hands of the state and its agents or they may be afraid to speak out, preferring to close their eyes to the cases as to take them up may bring them into conflict with the state with its power of patronage and they fear the smear and misunderstanding, the exclusion from the corridors of power and from the media.

So the Churchmen do not speak, the Academics are silent, the Trade Unions speak not, the Media Men are bought by fear of dismissal and hope of promotion. Where are the men and women and groups fearlessly dedicated to fight for human rights, who will fight the hopeless cases, keep telling the unpalatable truth, refuse to shut up, cannot be bought or intimidated or flattered or conned by the ministers of state or religious dignitaries, who remain close to the suffering and suffer with them and their families? These men, if they can be found might well be called Christians and may suffer the fate of Jesus.

# THE DEATHS

July 1981 - April 1982

## THE DEATH OF PETER DOHERTY

Peter Doherty, aged 33, died on 31 July 1981 after being hit on the forehead by a plastic bullet about 1 a.m. on Friday morning 24 July. He was standing in the kitchen of his first floor flat in Divis Flats, Belfast. The plastic bullet was fired by a marine commando. Mary McAree also of Divis Flats who was in the flat with her friend Ann Sprat describes what happened:-

"On Friday morning, 24th July at around 1.00 a.m. we were in the working kitchen, looking out the window at rioting further on down Cullingtree Road. Peter told me and my friend Ann Sprat to close the window in case we got hit with plastic bullets. The next thing we realised Peter had been hit on the left temple with a plastic bullet. He fell to the ground and all we saw was blood over his head and coming up his throat. He was knocked unconscious. I started to scream for an ambulance and some first aid man came in and applied first aid. The ambulance came and Peter was rushed to the Royal Victoria Hospital. They couldn't operate immediately because Peter had a rare blood group and while they had enough to do the operation it meant if an emergency arose they would have none of this blood in the bank, so they waited until later on on Friday to operate. The doctor told me Peter had extreme brain damage and he might be lucky enough to pull through. He also said he might be left paralysed.

At the time of this writing he is still heavily drugged and on a life-support machine. The doctor said they would try to take him off the machine on Monday 27th. I went to Hasting Street Police and made a complaint. Peter is still in intensive care. The police told one of the first aiders that a metal cap was buried in Peter's head and they needed the bullet to match it up. They asked him to tell me to bring it to them."

Signed: Mary McAree  
Witnessed: Clara Reilly  
Dated: 26/7/81

This version is confirmed by his son John (18) who with other relatives spoke to the **Irish News** which published an account on 25 July. The relatives said there was only sporadic rioting in the Divis Flats complex. Earlier in the night this had taken place about 100 to 150 yards away from Mr Doherty's home in Cullingtree Walk. After he went to see his father in the Royal Victoria Hospital John said - "I hope that my father pulls through but when I went to see him today in the intensive care unit he had severe head injuries and was unconscious. He was standing at the kitchen window just moments before he was shot. My mother and some of the children were



standing looking out and he told them to come away from it as they might be hit by plastic bullets. I had just walked out from the bathroom into the working kitchen and he was standing at the window and then I suddenly saw him falling - we have found the plastic bullet which hit him."

John claimed that he was constantly harassed by soldiers after the shooting. "After coming back from the hospital today the Army stopped me and some of the soldiers were sniggering. I asked what they thought was so funny. The soldier said - 'What are you slobbering about - we'll be back to take you.' "

At the inquest on 7 September 1982 a neighbour who administered first aid to Peter Doherty said that when he went into the flat the plastic bullet was still in his forehead. He administered first aid before contacting an ambulance and another first aider, and when he returned to the flat the plastic bullet had been removed. In a statement read to the inquest by an RUC detective, the soldier who fired the bullet, a Royal Marine commando, said that British Army vehicles accompanying the mechanical scoop had been attacked with stones and petrol bombs from the blocks of flats containing Mrs McAree's flat and a neighbouring block. He said that about 20 petrol bombs had been thrown. "I saw three persons at the window of one of the flats. I saw one person throwing a missile and I fired one plastic bullet at that person but did not hit him. I aimed again and I saw that they were still throwing missiles from the window. I fired again and saw that one person had been struck." The soldier said he fired from a distance of about 40 metres from the window of the flat. The commander of the armoured carrier in which the soldier who fired the shot was travelling agreed the armoured carrier would have been 50 to 60 yards away



from the Cullingtree block, but disagreed that it would have been impossible to hit the vehicle from that distance.

Mrs McAree denied the soldier's claim that missiles were being thrown from the flat at Cullingtree Walk at the time. She said that since the incident on 24 July 1981 no member of her family had been charged or questioned by the RUC about throwing anything from the window. The Deputy State Pathologist said Mr Doherty died from lacerations to the brain and multiple fractures of the skull.

The Coroner, Mr. James Elliott, discharged the jury and called for a new inquest after the jury had twice failed to agree on whether Mr Doherty had been firing missiles when he was shot. The seven-strong jury, four men and three women, adjourned twice to consider their findings. At least two jurors wanted to add that they believed no stones or petrol bombs had been thrown from the window.

In February the Director of Public Prosecutions ruled that the soldier involved should not be charged.

## THE DEATH OF PETER McGUINNESS

Peter McGuinness lived on the Shore Road, Belfast, in the end of a row of old terraced houses, elevated some four or five feet above the road. The houses face out on a new urban motorway and in the distance one can see Belfast Lough. The motorway and redevelopment have added to the decay of the area, a familiar scene in Belfast, half-hearted planning, the decay mixed with harsh new ugliness, the local working-class community — most of them unemployed — left to accept poverty stricken conditions.

The McGuinness family lived beside a community centre, Hillview Social Club, next to which is a little side-street, Dandy Street. Behind this lies a small Catholic housing estate, Bawnmore, a little nationalist enclave in a generally Protestant area.

Peter McGuinness was going on forty-one years of age when he was killed by a plastic bullet fired by a RUC man in the early morning of 9 August 1981. He and his wife Isobel had five children. The children now range between 9 and 15 years of age - Margaret (15), Sean (14), Hugh (12), Louise (11), Robert (9).

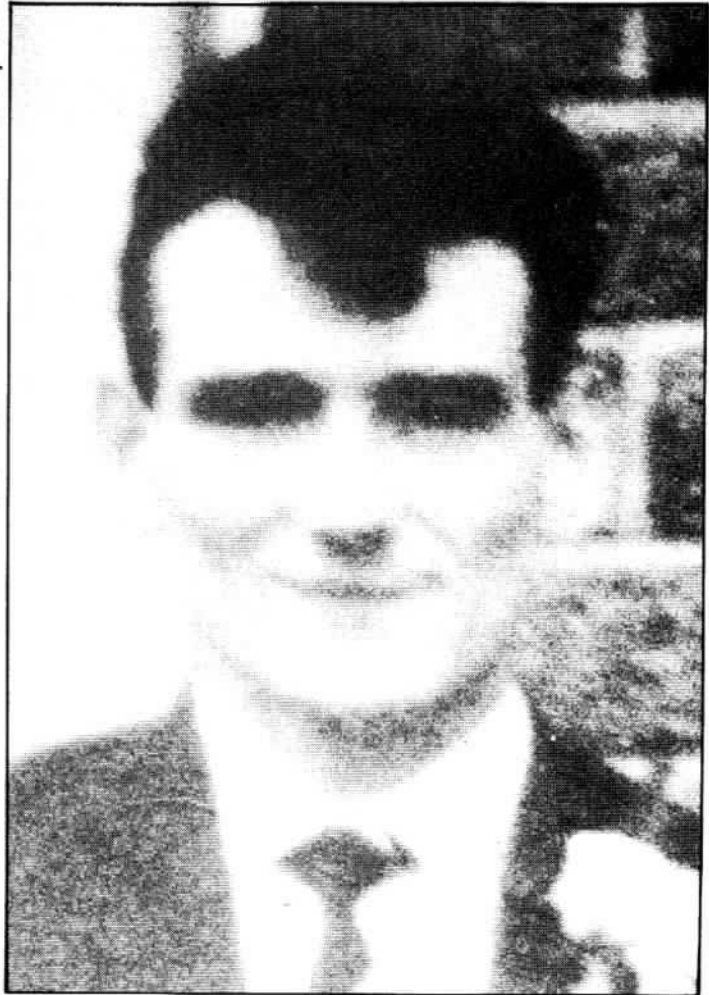
Since 1971 there has been sporadic rioting and dust-bin clanging in nationalist areas to commemorate the anniversary of internment on the 9th August. Michael Donnelly a social worker was killed by a plastic bullet in the early morning of 10 August 1980.

Peter McGuinness was unemployed but he used to help out in the Community Centre, often as doorman. He was a highly respected man in the area. Because of his work in the community centre he knew all of the young people in the area. He was not involved in rioting. In fact he was helping to defuse a dangerous situation. The RUC shot dead an innocent man.

Statement: Mrs Isobel McGuinness tells the story:

It was Saturday night, just going into the 9th August. A bonfire had been lit behind our houses at Bawnmore. People were standing around. Me and my eldest wee girl were up at it. A row - not so much a fight developed between two factions, "Sticks" and "Proxies". Peter was not there. He had been in the Hillview Social Club at the corner of Dandy Street and had gone home.

When the row developed we came home. We came through the little entry beside the club and into our house, No. 24, the first house in the row. Peter was in the house. This was between 12.45 a.m. and 1.00 a.m. I made tea then when we came down. Then the fighting had



developed and they had come down the Shore Road. They moved up towards our front door. They started throwing petrol bombs, a good number. But it wasn't the factions were fighting at this time - just young fellas, drunk and all, that were throwing petrol bombs at the black taxis going down the road, UDA taxis that serve Rathcoole.

Then it developed into faction fighting - unbeknown to me - anyhow it seemed there was another row - fighting among each other. Peter had gone out a number of

times - young fellas with sticks and bricks, fellas around 18, 19, 20. Peter knew them all. He got it quietened again and had come into the house.

Then it started up again, petrol bombs going up again. There is a big tree in the hedge at the right hand side in our garden. Next thing a petrol bomb landed in our front garden. I was afraid of the tree going up and then the roofs of these old houses catching.

Bernard Girvan, Barney Cash, Peter and I were out then talking to them. We were standing at the black emergency doors of the Club. Next thing there was a shout - "the cops are coming!" An RUC jeep pulled up. Bernard Girvan said - "Let's go out of here". A petrol bomb landed on the top of the jeep. Bernard had me by the arm. I was just up at the front door when the petrol bomb landed on the jeep, just at the door of the hall. Then I heard the bang. I thought Peter was coming behind me. I turned round to see if Peter was coming. He was just coming round the corner with Barney Cash, behind me. He just ran up to me and said - "Bel, I have been hit". He just ran past me and collapsed on the floor of the front room. There was a blood stain on his chest. We phoned for the ambulance. The ambulance came and the ambulance man worked on him 10 to 15 minutes, and that was it. That was about twenty minutes or a quarter to two.

He lay there until 4 a.m. when a police doctor came and announced him dead. Greencastle RUC Barracks is just a few minutes up the road.

We had got the priest first, Father Donaldson, the new curate, my own cousin.

About 3 a.m. two detectives came and took a statement and I told them what had happened as I told you.

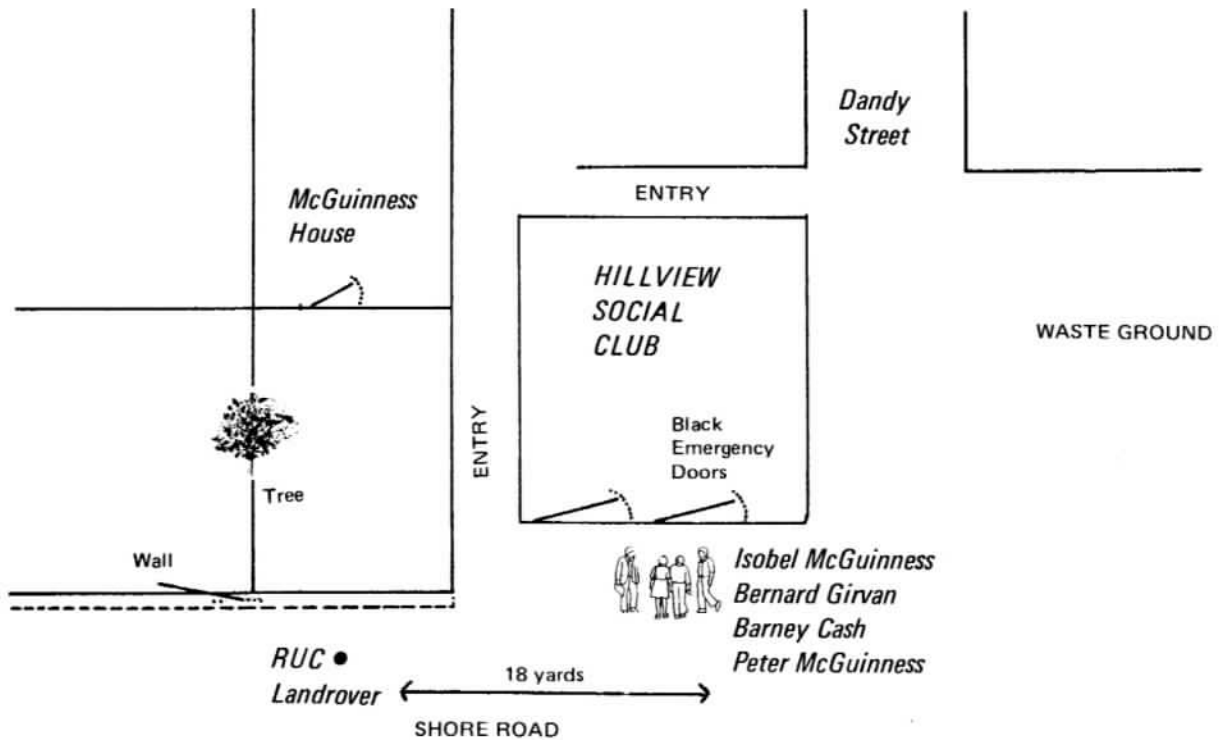
On 15 August I gave a second statement to two detectives in Greencastle RUC Station who were doing an investigation. Bernard Girvan and Barney Cash gave statements and later signed them after consulting their solicitor.

In November 1981 the DPP declared there would be no prosecution. An Inspector came out to tell me. I wasn't pleased.

I learned from my solicitor that there was an allegation of intoxication. Peter had only a few drinks that Saturday night but on the Friday night he had taken more drink and I had to take him home. That was unusual for Peter; he had met a friend who had been in hospital and they had taken drink together. But on the Saturday night he had only a few drinks. Somebody explained to me that the drink might still have been in his system.

I had no word again from the RUC until I got notice about the Inquest to be held on 27 October.

**Signed: Isobel McGuinness**  
**Witnessed: (Fr) Raymond Murray**  
**10 October 1982**



**THE DEATH OF STEPHEN McCONOMY**





On 16 April 1982 the sun was shining in Derry. Mrs Maria McConomy, mother of three little boys, was up early and got all her housework done. On account of the good day she thought she would make an early dinner. She went down to the Market Flats to collect her eldest son Stephen. Stephen, somewhat of a loner, was standing at the wall. He was eleven years old but perhaps made a little older by life itself, almost acting as a tiny father figure in the family since his father and mother were separated for the past four years. All came in and had their dinner.

After dinner he lay around the sofa waiting for his mother's permission to go out again. The mother who was very close to him and often shared her secrets with him read his mind. "Son", she said, "you want to go out again?" "Aye, Ma", he said. Outside the house he turned back and opened the wee window of the kitchen to say a few words to his mother. "Ma", he said, "I'll be in at half eight." Her little boy, or her "Wee Un" as Derry folk are wont to say, had a lovely face. People always remarked how his whole face lit up with his smile. She never saw him alive again.

That evening between eight and half past eight just the time when Stephen would have turned from his play to head home, he was at Fahan Street which lies under the shadow of Derry Walls and runs down from Butcher's Gate. The Rossville Flats tower over the area and there is a lower group of dwellings called Joseph's Place at an elevation and there a balcony and ramp runs to connect up with the roadway.

Around eight o'clock Martin Moore went to Donagh Flats in the Rossville Flats to visit his girl friend Elaine McGrory. On his way he saw a saracen parked on the slip roadway running down from the Butcher's Gate. There was a bomb scare up at Butcher's Gate. Things were quiet as is usual when there is a bomb scare. RUC men were stationed on the wall above Fahan Street. He saw five or six children playing around the saracen. The remarkable thing was that they had a tricolour and they were placing it over the front of the jeep. A "game" was going on between the soldiers and the little boys. He remarked on this when he went in to the McGrory Flat; Elaine, Rosemary, Mrs McGory, and Martin went to the windows to look out. The windows were very big and there is a fantastic bird's eye view from the big windows. The flat is on the eighth storey.

On the same evening James Meenan of Lisfanan Park was coming from his home to the Rossville Flats. He saw the saracen parked half way down Fahan Street. He saw the children throwing a few stones at the saracen, four or five children, he thought, about 10 to 12 years old. He walked up to Joseph's Place which meant he was standing above the saracen. He noticed Stephen at the front of the saracen. He was wearing a brown bomber jacket. A friend John White joined James at this time at Joseph's Place. Both of them were watching what was going on.

High up in the Donagh Flats Mark O Donnell was also watching the scene from his window. This was at 8.05 p.m. He noticed the saracen starting and revving as if to charge the youngsters. He noticed one boy with a stick hitting the saracen. James Meenan says he saw four or five boys at the back of the saracen and one was trying to

pull the shields off the sides of it. All those who were watching saw the latch come down on the driver's side.

They were frozen with apprehension when they saw the plastic gun coming out. Four or five of the boys turned to run towards Rossville Street. Stephen was at the front. He had been watching them trying to tear the shields off the side of the saracen. Stephen turned as if to go away, his two hands in his pockets. He mounted the footpath. Then the bang. The force of the shot lifted him on to the grass. He lay lifeless.

James Meenan and John White ran down the ramp to where he was lying. James shouted at the driver of the saracen - "Can we get the Wee Un?" He did not answer but kept the plastic gun out. He shouted again - "Can I get the child?" The driver said - "Go near him and I'll shoot you." People were shouting "Can we go up?" They still did not answer. The soldier who fired the plastic bullet had a grin on his face.

James describes how they got him to the hospital:

"Two or three minutes later the passenger soldier in the "Pig" said "You can go up an get him now. My friend and I ran up and we were crouched down with our hands over our faces because he still had the plastic gun out of the hatch. I lifted him and carried him towards Joseph Place. We were in the car park and an RUC jeep came around. My friend John White banged on the side of the jeep on the side door and they told us to put him in the back. Both of us placed him in and went with him. The RUC said the ambulance was meeting us half way cross the bridge. We went to Altnagelvin hospital and there was no one to meet us.

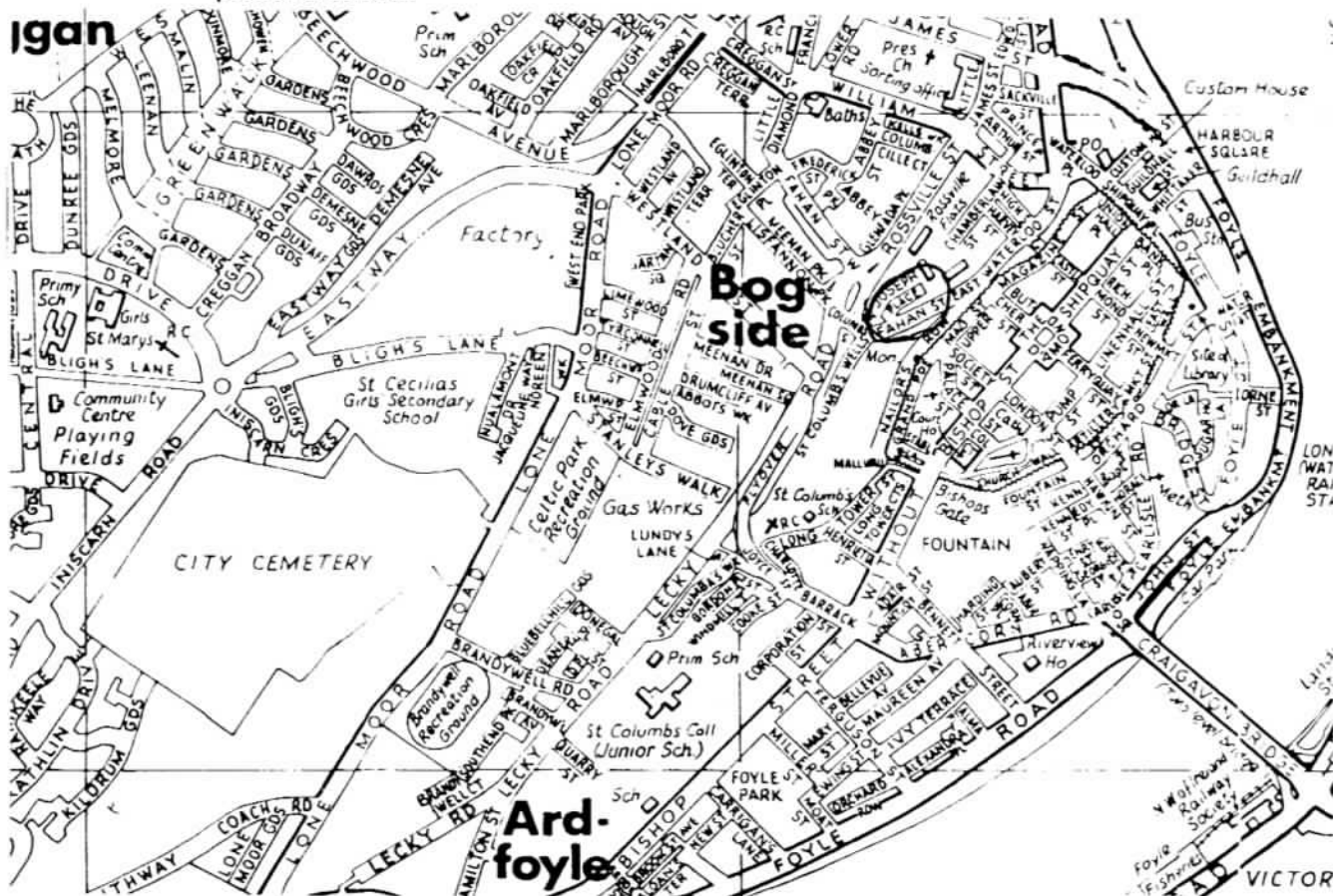
I carried Stephen into casualty and I laid him on the bed in the casualty. The nurse told me to take him into the next room and lay him on the bed. We walked out then and waited. CID men came up about twenty minutes later and asked me and John White to go to the barracks. I said I wanted to stay and see how Stephen was doing. They said they would bring me back but they did not. When I lifted the boy I noticed he had been hit on the back of the head. In the jeep I held my arm under his neck and blood went through my jacket, jumper and shirt. At times he was not breathing; other times he was breathing in thick jerks; he was unconscious the whole time."

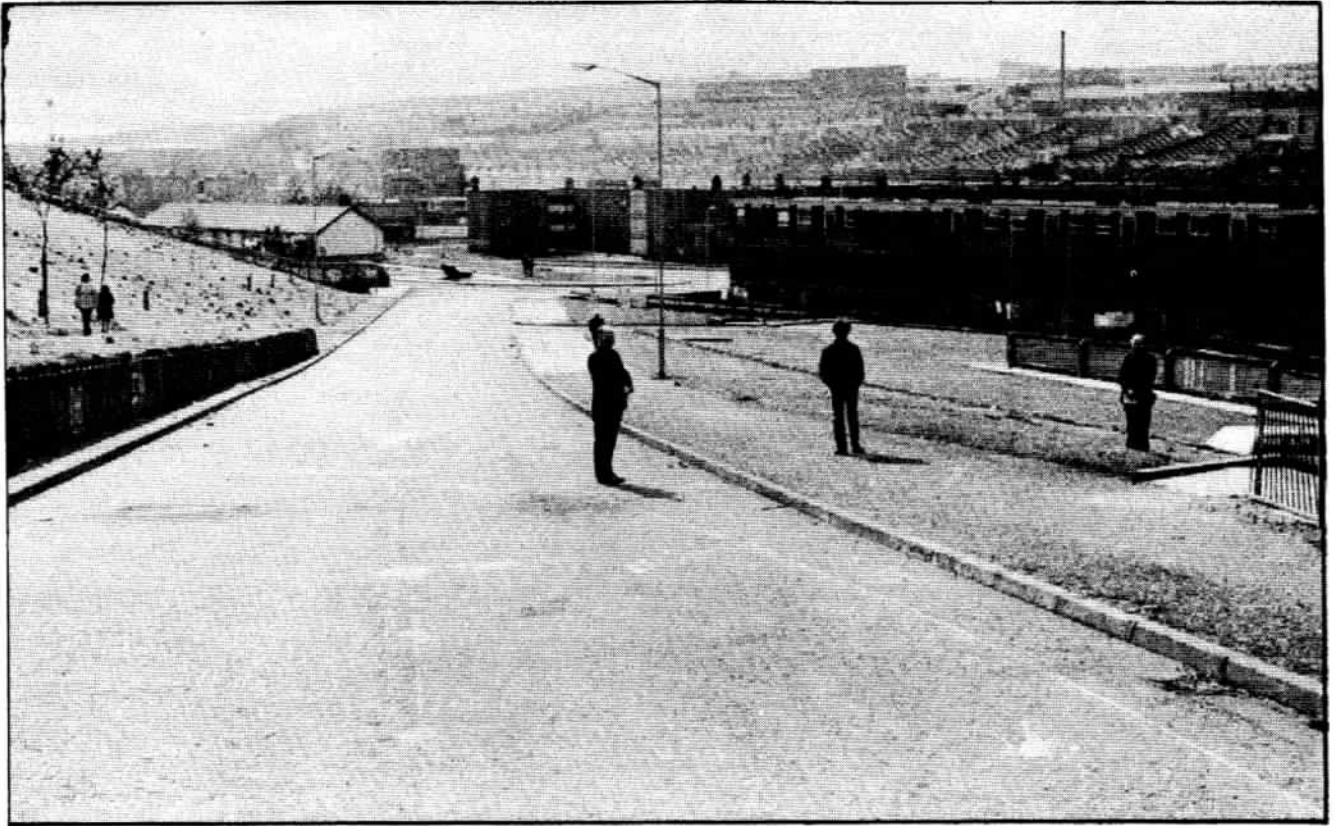
Mrs McConomy heard the news at her sister's when a little boy came knocking to say that he had been "hit with a plastic". Then followed the traumatic visit to Altnagelvin and the watching by his bed side at the Royal Victoria Hospital. There was no hope for Stephen. His head had been cracked and his brain damaged. He died on Monday afternoon.

There was strong reaction to the death of Stephen. There was some rioting in Derry. Angry mothers staged a protest march from the Bogside to the Guildhall. Bishop Daly said - "There has been too many deaths and serious injuries in Derry and elsewhere in the North in recent years, through the use of plastic bullets. The whole question of their use should be subjected to the most careful scrutiny. This supposedly non-lethal weapon has caused so many deaths and serious injuries that it should not be used again whatever the circumstances before a detailed inquiry takes place." His words were voiced by many others.



View of Donagh Flats. Figures from left to right mark where Stephen lay, where he was hit and position of saracen.





Above: View of Fahan Street from Butchers Gate. Figures mark (from left to right) the position of saracen, where he was hit and where he lay. Below: View of Fahan Street, looking towards Butchers Gate.





More than a thousand people attended the Requiem Mass at Saint Columba's Church. Among the congregation were children from Saint John's primary school where Stephen had been a pupil. During the Mass the school choir sang the hymns and members of Stephen's class read the lessons, the prayers of the faithful, and presented the offertory gifts. Bishop Edward Daly presided at the Mass which was celebrated by Fr. Michael Collins and Fr Seamus Kelly.

The RUC promised an urgent investigation. On 16 August 1982 the RUC confirmed that the DPP had decided against making charges against the soldiers

who fired the plastic bullet which killed the boy. This brought an outcry from churchmen and Catholic politicians. Bishop Daly said he was dismayed at the DPP's refusal to prosecute. He called for clear answers to the question why charges had not been brought in a case where there was an apparent lack of observance of military regulations and death had resulted. So distraught was Mrs Maria McConomy and her sister Rhona they threatened to go on hunger strike.

The inquest has yet to be held and in view of the many statements available one hopes for a further police investigation.



## STATEMENTS

**Mrs Maria McConomy, Dove Gardens, Derry. Aged 29 years.**

Children: Stephen Robert William, Date of birth: 16 September, 1970; Mark Joseph, Date of birth: 6 September, 1971; Patrick Emmet, Date of birth: 7 July 1974.

On 16 April 1982 Stephen left the house that morning at 11 a.m. and he says "If you are looking for me Mammy I am down at the Market Flats." I says - "Right son". The other two boys were out in the street playing and I tidied up the home for it was a nice day and above all days I decided to do a dinner early. I went down to the Market Flats at 3.30 p.m. and Stephen was just standing at the wall and I said - "Son, dinner's ready", and he said - "God, Ma you made it early", and I said "Aye - Son, miracles! I did it early today because I was all red up anyhow". Me and Stephen walked up the Lecky. There was no bother. The sun was shining. All came in here and had their dinner.

He lay round the sofa after dinner waiting for me to give him the go-ahead to go out again. I said - "Son, you want to go out again?" "Aye, Ma, half eight." He went out of the house and opened the wee glass window of the kitchen and said - "Ma, I'll be in at half-eight," and that's the last I saw of him.

I was down in our Rhona's house above the Spar shop 25 Main Square, near my own house. A knock came to the door. The wee boy thought Rhona was me, and he says to Rhona - "Mrs McConomy, your Stephen has been hit by a plastic." Rhona came in and said the exact same thing as that wee boy said to her. We went over to Altnagelvin Hospital, Rhona, my brother Michael, and sister Sally, and Sally's husband Michael. We went to the Enquiries Department and I just said - "A wee boy come in here tonight. He's my wee fella. He's been hit by a plastic". She says - "Who's his name?" and I said "Stephen". Just when I said "Stephen" two CID boys were standing beside me and they were from the Waterside. All we could get out of them was "Stephen who?" A whole scene started. They said - "We're only here to help", and Sally said - "You wouldn't help God's mother if she was asking for a drink of water."

The next thing I remember I seen a priest walking towards me and I said to myself - "Oh no, he isn't walking towards me." There was a Chinese doctor along with him. We went into a wee room and the doctor said - "It doesn't look good". He says - "We're going to try X Rays". He told me then "There's a hole that size in the back of his head" and he made a circle of his thumb and forefinger and he said there was a crack right down his head.

We went into another wee room - the family and the priest. He was wild good; he couldn't do enough for us. We got tea. Jim Meenan's coat was lying on a chair in the room. The coat and the chair were cluttered in blood. A man - I think he was a porter - took it away.

The Sister came out and said - "Mrs McConomy, prepare yourself for a shock". Well, I've never seen blood, Father, not that kind of blood. We went into the room - Casualty. They had Stephen lying on his side. They had that green material covering his wee head and that big machine covering his wee mouth. Then they




decided to shift him up the stairs into intensive care. Some man came down the corridor after they removed him and all they kept saying was - "Prepare yourself for the worst for it doesn't look good." We went into the wee room in Intensive Care and that priest gave him his last rites and all. Then they decided to shift him to the Royal because they knew a surgeon who deals with the head. When the men had left Friday night in the ambulance and got there Saturday morning - Saturday, Sunday, they said no change in the Wee Un at all. Our Michael said to the surgeon in the Royal - "What's the damage?" He said "The brain's destroyed and there's nothing we can do."

When they left that Friday night all came back to the house to see the other two boys. We left Derry at six a.m. on the Saturday morning, five of us shoved in a van. All we could do was sit and wait. Michael said - "It's a waiting game for us." He had like a little screw on his head, telling them what pressure was on his head - it was 35. They had an apparatus pumping oxygen into his lungs. They had a needle in one arm - and a drip leading up the foot - just the word "Drugs" written on it. They kept turning him over so he wouldn't get sores. Every time they checked his eyes they would talk to him. His temperature was falling. His eyes had a fixed stare when they checked him. We sat there. A neuro surgeon came up and he said "We have a choice, we can keep Stephen on the machine or we can knock it off." I looked at Stephen and all. There was no change in him. And I just turned round to the Surgeon and said - "I want the Wee Un home with his two brothers." He says - "Look, give me a couple of minutes and you can come back up again." They took away all the tubes. We went back up to see him. He was dead.

The Surgeon said he was for an autopsy in the morning. And that was that. Even without the tubes you would think he was sleeping. There was a Padre Pio prayer on his shoulder.

The undertaker went up and collected him and we met them and we brought the Wee Un to the house. Then as you know yourself - everybody started coming in. I lost a week. I couldn't make out where that week went. Then after he was buried it was just back to the family and that was that.

Me and Michael met Martindale and another policeman in the Parochial House, Long Tower - they had sent for us a few weeks later. I gave them a statement. Michael did the same. They phoned our Sally and said - "Tell Mrs McConomy to come down to the Barracks" and there I received the following letter:-

 THE ROYAL ULSTER CONSTABULARY

Police Station  
Strand Road  
RUC Station  
LISNAHERRY  
DUBLIN 7AA  
Telephone No. 65161 Ext. 275

13th August 1982

Our reference:  
Your reference:  
Any replies to this communication should be addressed to:  
J/Insp J L Martindale

Dear Mrs McConomy

SUBJECT: INVESTIGATION CONCERNING THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE DEATH OF STEPHEN ROBERT WILLIAM MCCORMY, DUBLINER, DURING OF FRIDAY 16TH APRIL 1982 AT FAHAN STREET EAST

I have to inform you that the investigation papers relative to the death of your son have been studied by the Director of Public Prosecutions who has directed, 'No Prosecution'.

Should there be any aspect of this investigation you wish to discuss with me please do not hesitate to contact me at the above Telephone Number so that a meeting can be arranged.

Yours faithfully

*J. L. Martindale* Detective Inspector  
J. L. MARTINDALE

I used to say to our Rhona and Michael I never thought bother like that would come to our door and I said - "Now I know how the parents of Julie Livingstone and Carol Anne Kelly feel."

Stephen used to say - "I'm your Mammy and your Daddy and your best friend". For a wee boy of eleven he took over the role of the Da. Me and him would share secrets that I wouldn't share with the other two. I am separated from my husband. He is four years gone. He loved cleaning his teeth - if he ate a sweet he would clean his teeth. He was a loner. I saw him many a day standing on the street and I would say to him - "What are you doing there?" "Nothing, Ma." He used to stand for hours looking out the window. He got an "Action Man" for Christmas and he redressed it like an Irish soldier. He went to St. John's school in Blay's Lane. He was going to St. Joseph's School if he had lived. He joined the Mickey Devine Band to play the wee tin flute and I think the only reason he joined was to get the uniform. I said this to him and he started to laugh.

The time Paul Whitters was hit by a plastic Stephen came running to tell me. When I was sick he was always the one who was beside me. The other two boys didn't understand. Stephen had a soft heart. His birthday is coming up. It is strange isn't it, born on the 16th, hit on the 16th.

Signed: Maura McConomy  
Witnessed: Fr. Raymond Murray 23/8/82

**Elaine McGrory, Donagh Flats, Derry. Aged 21 years.**  
It was between 8 and 8.15 p.m. on 16 April 1982. I remember that because I had a date that night. I was out in the kitchen washing my hair, had it washed. I was drying it at the window. By that time my boyfriend Martin Moore had come in. He had seen what was going on, on his way down. When he came up he said to us - "Look out the window." Me and my mother were in the kitchen looking out the window and my sister Rosemary and Martin were looking out the living room window. When Martin came he said - "There is a saracen in Fahan Street and a tricolour sitting over the front." That's why we went to the window to see the tricolour on the saracen. We are eight stories high and there is a new window; there is a great view to the left. We could see the Saracen plainly and the tricolour on it. When I went to the window the tricolour was on it. "The wee uns have put a tricolour on the jeep" - that's what Martin had said. At a rough guess there were about six wee boys around it, but I couldn't really say how many. They were as young as my younger brother and he is only ten. When we looked out the window Stephen was standing out at the front end of the jeep. He was on his own and the others had moved to the back. I didn't know him. They were carrying on and cheering. There was no stone throwing at that time or anything like that. Stephen was standing facing the jeep and at that Stephen turned his back and with his two hands in his pockets as if he was coming from it. Stephen was making his way down away from the jeep. I was looking at Stephen and the next thing Martin shouted to me "The flap is down. They are going to shoot somebody." At that the gun came out - I saw it coming out - I heard the bang and saw Stephen falling. Stephen fell. My mother had gone over to the kettle - she came over to the window. She stood behind me. I said to her - "If that Wee Un dies I am only after witnessing murder." I'll never forget it. Then Martin called in to me - "That boy isn't even moving". Just where he fell, he just lay there. Rosemary was shouting. Jim Meenan - I know him to see - came over and was standing behind a wall and calling up to them could he go up and get the Wee Un. They let him lie there for ages before Jim went up to him. After it seemed ages. Jim lifted him and then the jeep came round and Jim took Stephen into it and I think they took him up to the Hospital.

**Elaine McGrory  
Witness: Fr. Raymond Murray.**

**Statement of Rosemary McGrory (15), Donagh Place, Rossville Flats.**

On the night of 16th April 1982, I heard that there was a saracen outside with a tricolour and I looked out I saw about 6 youngsters on the driver's side of the saracen and about four on the grass. The children on the driver's side were taking the tricolour off the saracen and putting it on other parts of it. The children on the bank threw a few stones before anything happened.

Nothing happened for about five minutes. Then the slot went down on the driver's side and we heard the bang. The wee boy was on the path. The force of the shot lifted him on to the grass; he lay there lifeless and everybody ran behind the wall. After that the bigger young fellows from behind the wall called up to see if they could lift the



young boy. The plastic bullet gun was pointed at them so that they could not go up. About three or four minutes after the gun was taken away from the slot. The fellas went up with coats over their faces and they lifted the wee boy. Women came out and the wee boy was taken into the back of the landrover. The saracen stayed and did not move.

**Signed: Rosemary McGrory**  
**Witness: Fr. Denis Faul 23/8/82**

**Statement of Mark O'Donnell, Donagh Place, Rossville Flats, Derry.**

On the evening of 16th April 1982 at 8.05 p.m. I noticed a saracen starting and revving to provoke the youngsters - letting on to charge the youngsters. I noticed one boy with a stick hitting the saracen which was parked on Fahan Hill, beneath my window. I sat down again and I heard a bang. I got up and I looked out the window and I saw wee Stephen lying on the ground outside. There was a plastic bullet gun sticking out the window of the armoured vehicle. It was being moved about in the window. The young fellows were shouting to let them up to the boy, but they were afraid to go up because of the plastic bullet gun. Eventually the soldier got the plastic bullet gun taken in and another soldier made a signal for the young fellas to come forward and pick up the young boy. They knew there was something wrong with the young fella. A man in a grey suit came up and looked at the young fellow. He lifted him and the young fellow flopped over. An RUC jeep arrived and the young fellow was put into it and it drove away. After the jeep left the soldiers reversed the saracen back up the hill and stopped and sat there.

**Signed: Mark O'Donnell**  
**Witness: Fr. Denis Faul 23/8/82**

**Statement of James Meenan (19) Lisfannan Park, Derry.**

On 16th April, 1982, between 7 p.m. and 7.30 p.m. I was coming from my home towards the Rossville Flats. I looked up Fahan Street and I noticed some wee-uns throwing stones at a "Pig"; the "Pig" was stationary half way down Fahan Street. I saw about 4 or 5 children throwing a few stones at the "Pig". They were about 10-12 years old. I walked up to Joseph's Place which meant that I was standing above the "Pig". 4 or 5 boys were at the back of the "Pig" and one was trying to pull the shields off the sides of it. I noticed Stephen at the front; he was wearing a brown bomber jacket.

The latch came down on the driver's side of the "Pig" 4 or 5 wee boys were running down the steps towards Rossville Street. Stephen was just turning to run. He was at the front watching them trying to tear the shields off the sides - a plastic bullet gun came out and I heard a bang - He fell on the grass on his face. We ran down a ramp to where he was lying; we were behind a wall at the bottom of the ramp. I shouted to the driver of the "Pig" "Can we get the wee-un?" He did not answer but kept the plastic bullet gun out. I shouted again. "Can I get the child?" The driver of the "Pig" said, "Go near him and I'll shoot you." Our people were shouting at him, "Can we go up?" and they still did not answer. The soldier who fired the plastic bullet had a grin on his face.

Two or three minutes later the passenger soldier in the

"Pig" said "You can go up and get him now." My friend and I ran up and we were crouched down with our hands over our faces because he still had the plastic gun out of the hatch. I lifted him and carried him towards Joseph Place. We were in the car park and an RUC jeep came around. My friend John White banged on the side of the Jeep on the side door and they told us to put him in the back. Both of us placed him in and went with him. The RUC said the ambulance was meeting us half way across the bridge. We went to Altnagelvin hospital and there was no one to meet us.

I carried Stephen into casualty and I laid him on the bed in the casualty. The nurse told me to take him into the next room and lay him on the bed in the next room. We walked out then and waited. CID men came up about twenty minutes later and asked me and John White to go to the barracks.

I said I wanted to stay and see how Stephen was doing. They said they would bring me back but they did not. When I lifted the boy I noticed he had been hit on the back of the head. In the jeep I held my arm under his neck and blood went through my jacket jumper and shirt. At times he was not breathing; other times he was breathing in thick jerks; he was unconscious the whole time.

**James Meenan**  
**Witness: Fr Denis Faul 23/8/82**

**Statement of John White (18) Greenwalk, Derry.**

On the 16th April, 1982 at 8.00 p.m. approximately, I was standing in Joseph's Place with my friend James Meenan. I saw one saracen near the top of Fahan Street at the top of the steps. I saw a few young lads up stoning it. There was a wee boy standing at the front on his own - he was not involved in the stoning. The other young lads were between 10 and 12 and 13. They were throwing small stones.

The next minute the hatch opened and they fired out the plastic bullet and it hit Stephen on the head. As soon as we heard the noise we saw him dropping. When we saw him falling to the ground me and Jim ran down. The soldier had the plastic bullet gun facing towards us. We halted and we stood behind the wall. We shouted up to him, "Can we get the child?" two or three times. The soldier shouted back, "If you go near him, we will blow the head off you."

About a minute later the passenger soldier leaned over and said "You can get him now." The driver still had the plastic bullet gun outside the hatch. We walked over and stepped down with hands covering our face. We got over and the soldier put the plastic bullet in again. Jim lifted Stephen up and carried him onto the car park. The RUC jeep came around. We put him in the RUC jeep and took him to Altnagelvin. In the jeep Stephen was lying dead still and then jumping, jerking and breathing heavily. There was blood on the jeep. The ambulance was supposed to meet us on the road but it never came. In the hospital Jim took Stephen into a treatment room. The CID took us to the Barracks and they took a statement from us.

**Signed: John White**  
**Witness: Fr. Denis Faul 23/8/82**

**Mrs Rhona Toland, Dove Gardens, Derry. Aged 27 years. Sister of Mrs Maria McConomy.**

Stephen used to run my messages every Friday. I used to even send him away down the Strand - I always thought he was older than what he was, never realising he was a child until I saw him in Altnagelvin. He had a good head on his shoulders. When he laughed his whole face used to light up. He had a beautiful smile. They couldn't take that away from him even in death. He was still smiling in his coffin. He was like a wee man around the house - sort of understanding things he shouldn't have for his age. He used to start saving for Christmas, knowing his mother hadn't much money - buying the things himself - he would buy Maria something.

The day of his Confirmation was two weeks before he died. I sent him up to a friend's house for the loan of a fur coat for me to go to the Confirmation. He went four times for it. He wanted us all to be there. You could always trust him with money. At school he studied hard. When the wee boy came to the door, I answered the

door. My reaction was - he's lying there groaning in hospital. I never realised the effect of plastic bullets until I saw him lying in the hospital.

I couldn't understand God - you know the things going through your head - you know why Stephen - why Maria who has been carrying crosses since she was sixteen, and now Stephen lifted from under her. They say God works in mysterious ways - and I looked and there was nothing at all to be done for Stephen. It just wasn't fair. Started to talk to God and all, and then I began to think of other things - his wee Confirmation Box that he had his Rosary Beads in, the picture of the bishop confirming the Wee Un and the Holy Ghost pouring into him - and then weeks later he got murdered on the street!

I know he is in Heaven. He has to be. Caring for his mother. It would be difficult enough if he was knocked down by a car. But plastic bullets are meant to kill.

**Signed: Rhona Toland  
Witness: Fr Raymond Murray**



Photo: Pacemaker Ltd.



## INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL OF INQUIRY INTO DEATHS AND SERIOUS INJURIES CAUSED BY PLASTIC BULLETS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

3 - 4 AUGUST 1981

This inquiry was held in the Greenan Lodge Hotel, Belfast, under the auspices of the Association for Legal Justice. The Inquiry was chaired by Mr Sean McCann, chairman of the Association for Legal Justice. The members of the tribunal were:-

**DENIS DILLON**

District Attorney for Nassau County, New York. Member of the Democratic Party, U.S.A.

**PETER KING**

Counsel for the town of Hempstead, New York. Member of the Republican Party, U.S.A.

**ANTOINE LAZURUS**

Doctor of Medicine, Paris, France.

**TIM SHALLICE**

Neuropsychologist. Member of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science, London, England.

**ANTOINE COMTE**

Lawyer. Member of the International Federation of Human Rights, Paris, France.

Presentation papers were submitted by medical and legal sub-panels. The Inquiry was open to the public. Formal invitations were sent to:-

**Amnesty International**

International Committee of the Red Cross

International League for Human Rights

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

Action des Chrétiens Pour L'Abolition de la Torture

Irish Civil Rights, New Zealand

Association for Legal Justice, Dublin

N. Ireland Association of Socialist Lawyers

Incorporated Law Society of N. Ireland

National Council for Civil Liberties

Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association

National H Blocks Committee

Ombudsman

British Medical Association

Irish Medical Association

Acadamh na Li

Surgeons and Doctors, Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast

Surgeons and Doctors, Mater Hospital, Belfast

Surgeons and Doctors, Altnagelvin Hospital, Derry

Mr Kevin Boyle, University College, Galway

Mr Tom Hadden, The Queen's University, Belfast

Mr Paddy Hillyard, University of Bristol

Most Rev. John McCormack, Secretary, Irish Episcopal

Conference

His Eminence Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich

Most Rev. William Philbin

Most Rev. Edward Daly

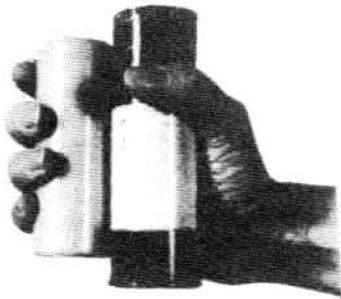
Irish Commission for Justice and Peace

Irish Council of Churches

Pax Christi

Irish Congress of Trade Unions





## Address of Chairman, Mr Sean McCann

The cases of deaths and injuries from plastic bullets which this International Tribunal of Inquiry has been set up to inquire into, constitute yet another black page in the book of suffering which the Northern Irish Catholic Nationalist Community has had to endure, particularly over the last twelve years of the present troubles. It can be seen to be part of the pattern and policy of repression of this historic section of the Irish people of the North of Ireland, dating, in this era from the time of the artificial partitioning of our country in 1921, until and beyond the revealing remark of the then British GOC, General Tuzo, in September 1971, that the British army was going to, as he put it, "lean on" the Northern Irish Catholics.

Part of the same policy of repression was the blatant discrimination by the old Stormont regime, in the matters of housing, jobs and civic rights, which came to a climax when the Civil Rights marchers were savagely attacked at Burntollet. The killing of thirteen people by British Paratroopers on Bloody Sunday in Derry, the sensory deprivation torture cases of which Britain was found guilty at Strasbourg by the European Court of Human Rights - following submissions by the Irish Government of the day, Amnesty International Report of 1978 which confirmed that inhuman and degrading treatment of suspected persons, held for interrogation by the RUC, had in fact been taking place, and a whole catalogue of assassinations of innocent Catholics by Loyalists, killings by the British Army, repeated arrests and subjection to the tender mercies of the notorious Diplock Special Courts, close military invasion of Nationalist areas obsessively patrolled by military vehicles and heavily armed foot patrols, repeated so-called "census taking" operations - totally illegal in themselves - and, literally, a whole host of human rights violations that have been reported to, and documented by our Association down the years, by Fathers Denis Faul and Raymond Murray, and by other concerned organisations and individuals - all this has been the lot of the Northern Irish Catholics, and as I said at the beginning these latest deaths and injuries from plastic bullets of innocent children, women and others constitute yet another page of their suffering and repression.

In the three months from late April into July of this year, the Association for Legal Justice has received reports of, and been documenting at least sixty cases of deaths and injuries from plastic bullets. The deaths during that period

were those of Paul Whitters, aged fifteen years, Julie Livingstone, aged fourteen years, Harry Duffy aged forty five years, Carol Anne Kelly, aged twelve years and Mrs Nora McCabe, a lady in her late thirties. As I write this, I have just learnt that Peter Doherty, of Cullingtree Walk, Belfast, has died also from a plastic bullet injury.

The injuries range from severe head injuries, necessitating maintenance on life support machines and neuro surgical operations, to damage to the sight and in at least five cases actual loss of eyes, severe mouth face injuries, severe bruising of the kidneys, a suspected split liver, and arms and hands badly smashed. Of the children injured, the youngest was David Madden who is four and a half years. Of the women, the most senior was probably Mrs Maguire, an elderly lady struck on the back of the head, on the 8th of May, when plastic bullets were fired at a group of people saying the rosary at Kennedy Way, Belfast. The luckiest person - from the point of view of avoiding death and injury - was probably Mrs. Begley from Beechmount, who had a plastic bullet fired through the window of her front door in an almost totally deserted street, and with two small children playing in the hallway at the time. People who took part in peaceful protests on the road, especially around the times of the deaths of the hunger strikers, were specially vulnerable - even if not actually taking part in the protest, as the sad case of Julie Livingstone will illustrate. But then again, a woman coming out of a shop after buying a lollipop for her grandson, with no commotion of any kind happening outside, could also be struck and injured by a plastic bullet fired by British soldiers, - as was Mrs. Wildy on the 17th of May at 9.30 p.m.

Among the documentation supplied to the distinguished members of the Tribunal and general public today, is a dossier of cases compiled by our Association, and a booklet prepared by the Reverend Fathers Faul and Murray. At the next part of the proceedings, members of the Board of Presenters will present and discuss these, together with other relevant documentation. The most important documentation of course will be the actual testimony of the victims themselves or of their relatives and friends.

## REASONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL INQUIRY

The reasons for this inquiry are basically four-fold:

1. Subsequent to nothing happening following our call at a Press Conference in the Lake Glen Hotel on the 28th of May last, for an immediate public inquiry, by an independent body into the totally and unacceptable dangerous policy of firing plastic bullets at innocent children and civilians, to present to our distinguished panel and to the general public at large, a succession of cases, to show that in Northern Ireland particularly over the last few months, April - July 1981, a large number of totally innocent persons, including children and women in insignificant numbers, have been either killed or seriously injured by plastic bullets fired by the British Security Forces - the British Army and the RUC - in circumstances of non-riot, and total uninvolved.

2. To demonstrate consequently that these lethal projectiles, categorised by US military research as being in the "Severe damage range" are totally unacceptable in the civilian population situations that obtain in the North of Ireland, and should be banned immediately.

3. To investigate and illuminate the circumstances of their indiscriminate and deadly use by the British Security Forces in Northern Ireland.

4. To allow the victims themselves, or in the cases of those who are dead, their relatives and friends, the opportunity of telling their own story before the distinguished members of the International Tribunal and the general public.

Finally, a few words to conclude. The Chief Constable of the RUC, Mr. Jack Hermon, in an extended interview on Downtown Radio, a few days after the death of the schoolgirl, Carol Anne Kelly, on the 22nd of May last, made some extraordinary comments in defence of plastic bullets.

1. *"They are used against rioters and only against rioters", he said, "who are themselves determined to kill or to cause destruction. They are purely defensive".*

We answer: Are peaceful protests and rosary rallies composed of people who are determined to kill and cause destruction? Was young Carol Anne Kelly, aged 12 years, for example, and in an proven non-riot situation, mounting an attack on the security forces who killed her? Or Colin Deary, aged thirteen, struck on the back while standing in his own front garden? Or, Mrs. Collins, hit on the foot when coming out of a polling booth on the 20th of May?..... to give only a few examples. Were these determined rioters bent on killing and destruction? Of course they weren't!

2. *"They are a minimum force weapon," said Mr. Hermon. "They are not intended to kill, and the fatalities should be viewed against the fact that a large number had been fired without causing serious fatalities.*

We answer: - They have killed at least nine people already. So much for minimum force. The mortality is many times greater than the rubber bullet which itself had to be withdrawn. The surgeons and medical records at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, will confirm the terrible damage wrought by this allegedly minimum force weapon.

3. *"There are proper procedures for complaints about plastic bullets which assure a thorough and impartial investigation".*

We answer: - Many of the victims of these plastic bullet outrages have already lodged complaints. Does Mr. Hermon mean by this that those members of the security forces who have killed or seriously wounded Paul Whitters, Julie Livingstone, Harry Duffy, Carol Anne Kelly, Mrs McCabe, Kevin McLaughlin will actually be charged and brought to trial? Might we ask once again how many members of the security forces have spent a day in jail over the past twelve years, following killings, injuries and other malpractices? Is it 17 or 27 or perhaps 37

4. *"These complaints procedures are in preference to dramatic unsubstantiated assertions which by their nature appear to have more to do with propaganda, than concern to establish the facts."*

We answer: - If Mr. Hermon thinks that these matters will not be voiced and highlighted for fear of the slur "propaganda", then he is very much mistaken. Deaths and serious injuries are by their nature dramatic, but the cases we present to the distinguished International Tribunal are certainly not unsubstantial.

i. There are signed statements of witnesses now in the hands of solicitors.

ii. Hospital records will testify, verify, the extent of the injuries received from these plastic bullets, and

iii. the sad accounts of relatives and friends tell their grim and truthful stories.

We would refer Mr. Hermon to the reported statements of British police chiefs, following the recent large scale and most vicious riots in England, who on Thursday the 15th of July came out against the use of CS gas and rubber or plastic bullets, because in their view,

i. It makes matters worse,

ii. the traditional role of the British policeman as the protector of the people would be lost forever.

Where does this leave Mr. Hermon's RUC viz a viz the Northern Irish Catholic population who have suffered drastically down the years until and including the present?

But the most damaging admission of all, perhaps, has come from William Whitelaw, the British Home Secretary who when asked on Monday the 6th of July if he would sanction the use of plastic bullets against English rioters, without a moment's hesitation answered "No", to use such a weapon he said, would mean inflicting injury or even death on rioters, something he could not endorse. No concern is expressed however when it comes to the "mere Irish".

But the presence today here of these distinguished members of this International Tribunal adds grace to the deep concern felt by humanitarian people about the trauma and sufferings presently being endured by the Northern Irish Catholic Nationalist people.



**Mr Antoine Comte**

The Commission of Inquiry has been quite astonished by the evidence given on the question of indiscriminate shooting. As far as the evidence goes we have concluded that in the last three months or more there has been quite a lot of shooting of plastic bullets against the civilian population. The age of persons has varied from 9 to 10 years old to elderly persons. This has struck us as significant. The Commission has decided in its findings to underline this indiscriminate shooting on a wide scale.

on life-saving machines. Notable are injuries to the thorax and the abdomen with internal injuries. These injuries could have proved fatal. Quick operations with removal of damaged organ have helped these people to live.

Most of the injuries are quite recent. It is not possible to be sure of the incidents and the consequences. But some of the children we have examined, we can be sure, will have certain handicaps, either total or physical or mental difficulty so that it would be impossible for them to work, partially or totally. One must remark also on blindness caused by plastic bullets.

**Dr Antoine Lazurus**

I would like to point out that we have only the word of the evidence given by witnesses. We have not had the occasion to examine the medical records.

People have died from the shooting of plastic bullets. The people who died had been examined by doctors, had been operated on, and received intensive care. Therefore their injuries must have been profound. It appears then that plastic bullets can be lethal when used in certain ways.

People have been severely injured. They included children, young men, and women. The shots were virtually a close point blank range. Some have been put

**Mr Tim Shallice**

One remarks firstly on the unacceptable nature of the injuries. The use of the rubber bullet was discontinued in 1975 partially because there were serious doubts about injuries. However recent figures indicate that the plastic bullet is in fact more dangerous. Three times the number of deaths have occurred with only about a third the number of bullets fired. Our medical panel which

appeared yesterday consisting of four doctors all agreed that in their experience the injuries that arose from the plastic bullet were more severe and more widespread than those that arose from the rubber bullet. The panel believes that the most likely reason for this is that the plastic bullet is designed and intended to be fired directly at the person while the rubber bullet was designed to bounce up into a crowd. Therefore it is not surprising that the plastic bullet should produce greater injuries. In addition there was American research done as early as 1973. The conclusion of the American Army Team regarding a particular weapon equivalent to the plastic bullet in its effect was that it was unsatisfactory as a riot-control agent as it was in the severe damage region - in the region of producing severe damage such as skin lacerations, skull fractures, ruptures and destruction of the liver and kidney and effects on the heart. Well before the plastic bullet was introduced one would have expected its effects to be as lethal as in fact they turned out to be.



## Mr Denis Dillon

Basically there isn't much to discuss because the facts brought out before us seem to support incidents of the use of unreasonable force under all circumstances by the Security Forces. It has been stressed by other members of the panel that the use of plastic bullets is clearly the use of a lethal weapon. Eleven people have been killed. There have been many serious injuries. People have suffered permanent disabilities. People have been permanently crippled and even blinded by the use of these bullets.

We heard from our sub-committee of lawyers that under N. Irish law the weapon that fires the plastic bullet itself is under the definition of firearm, and yet the way the plastic bullet has been used in Northern Ireland does not fall under any of the controls that generally apply for the use of firearms.

We find for instance that the military does have some controls over the use of firearms by means of a yellow card which has some regulations controlling that use. But we have found that based on the testimony we have heard that there are clearly no controls in the firing of plastic bullets. We have heard about indiscriminate shooting into peaceful groups and we have heard also about the deliberate aiming of plastic bullets at very short ranges at innocent people including children. So the force that is being used by the security forces is clearly not reasonable under the circumstances.

Now under N. Irish law there are remedies for the use of unreasonable force. Criminal complaints can be brought and there are also civil remedies for compensation. But we found, based on the testimony of witnesses, that these remedies are often not meaningful in N. Ireland. The reason they are not meaningful is that investigations of the incidents are not being done by the security forces or the police. Complaints are made and they are not being followed up. No efforts are being made to identify the soldiers or the RUC men who are involved. In addition to that there is evidence of witnesses having been intimidated and being told that if they make complaints to the authorities about what they have seen they can be charged themselves with being involved in a rioting situation. And so, although the remedies are in the law courts, the remedies are not really there for the victims. Because the legal remedies are not available, we have concluded that the best course in N. Ireland is to recommend the banning of plastic bullets altogether. To give you just some idea, just so that the members of the press who were not here for the hearing, may understand I talk about the deliberate killings of innocent children that has not been followed up by the authorities and where there doesn't seem to be any remedy. I will just cite two:

The killing of Julie Livingstone which took place on the 12 May of this year:- There was a peaceful protest going on, banging of bin covers and blowing of whistles by women. No men were involved with this protest according to the evidence. Two armoured cars approached at high speed. This 14 year old girl was returning from the store. She sought cover. The armoured cars stopped and shot from about eight yards



from this young girl. The conclusion is clear - that they were either indiscriminately shooting, or they couldn't see, or that they deliberately stopped, took aim, and shot this girl. There were about five to six jeep loads of police who were watching from about 20 yards away and which had taken no action earlier against the people who were banging the bin covers - the incident was reportedly filmed by CBS News according to witnesses. There were many civilian witnesses. There were five corroborating witnesses present at the Tribunal. One of the armoured cars present was identified and the license number secured. When one of the witnesses went down to try to tell the police about what she had seen, she was told she would be liable for prosecution for being present at a riot if she came forward as a witness. According to the witnesses that came before the Tribunal there was no follow-up by the authorities to find out what they saw. There doesn't seem to be any particular remedy.

One other case I would like to talk about involved Carol Anne Kelly who was 12 years of age. She was returning home from a shop. She had gone to the shop to buy a pint of milk for a neighbour. The witnesses testified that after Bobby Sands' death the British Army and the RUC had been coming into the area where Carol Anne Kelly lived and firing plastic bullets at children from speeding landrovers. Now one thing that also developed in the testimony was the very poor visibility - the people firing out of these little openings in the land rovers. Once the weapon is placed in the opening there is hardly any room for anybody to see what they are firing at. On this particular day the child was shot from eight to ten yards away. The witnesses testify there was no trouble going on in the area at the time, no riot going on. She suffered extensive head injuries and she died after three days. Julie Livingstone died after eleven days. She also suffered severe head injuries.

It is for these reasons that we feel that even though the use of plastic bullets might be reasonable under certain circumstances, in certain places reasonable under the law, in Northern Ireland under the lack of remedy, the lack of follow-up by the authorities, that the plastic bullets should be banned.



I would like to add personal comments upon the conduct of the British Army and the RUC. The abuse of the plastic bullet has been and is disgraceful and is unworthy of any civilized power. We have today called for the banning of the plastic bullet in N. Ireland. Quite frankly, however, based upon Great Britain's conduct in N. Ireland, we have little hope that such a ban will be implemented. Accordingly I believe that it is essential that all of us work within our own governments, within other countries, to do what we can to bring international pressure upon England and hopefully bring this before an international body such as the United Nations. I know that in my own country I will be working with the Ad Hoc Committee for Irish Affairs in the United States Congress and all appropriate government bodies. It is essential that as many governments through the world speak out on this issue to bring whatever pressure can be brought to bear so that the use of the plastic bullet will be eliminated in N. Ireland.

**INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL OF INQUIRY INTO DEATHS  
AND SERIOUS INJURIES CAUSED BY PLASTIC BULLETS  
IN NORTHERN IRELAND 3rd, 4th August, 1981**

**SUMMARY CONCLUSION**

We have heard evidence about the 9 deaths and 66 injuries, many severe, arising from the use of Plastic Bullets against a civil population. The injuries approach in severity those that would occur in war, especially in the case of injured children. We therefore consider the Plastic Bullet a lethal weapon.

Second, there appears to have been, over the last 3 months at least, widespread indiscriminate shooting by Plastic Bullets of people not involved in riots, which in view of the total lack of official response to complaints, we can only assume to be tacitly tolerated by the authorities.

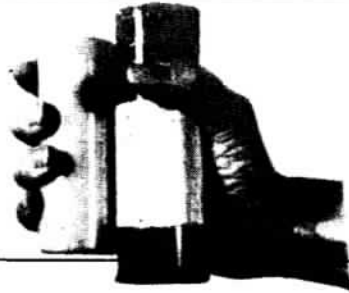
Based upon the lethal nature of the Plastic Bullet, the lack of effective control in the past and the present official tolerance of abuse, we recommend:-

- (1) that the plastic bullet be banned from use in Northern Ireland.**
- (2) that urgent inquiries be carried out by the Northern Ireland authorities into the cases of death and serious injury that have occurred from the use of Plastic Bullets, most particularly the deaths of Carol Ann Kelly, Julie Livingstone, Mrs Nora McCabe and Paul Whitters. Detailed findings should be made public.**
- (3) if the Plastic Bullets are not banned by the authorities, a further International Commission be brought to Northern Ireland in a few months to assess the situation. Preferably it should be under the auspices of an international body like the United Nations.**

**Denis Dillon, U.S.A.  
Peter King, U.S.A.  
Antoine Comte, France  
Timothy Shallice, Great Britain  
Antoine Lazurus, France**

# The Harmless Bullet That Kills

Dr Tim Shallice



**Dr Tim Shallice, a senior scientist at a British research unit, was one of the members of the commission. This is his account.**

Mrs Nora McCabe lived in Linden Street, just off the Falls Road in Belfast. On 8th July this year, at about 7.45 a.m., she left home with Karen McGlennon, a friend who had been staying with her. Together they walked up the street towards the main road where - as a video recording of the scene bears witness - a few small boys had thrown stones at a passing RUC jeep, approximately 100 yards from Linden Street. Passers-by were not treating this as a dangerous situation.

Just before Mrs McCabe and Karen McGlennon reached the main road, an RUC jeep appeared at the corner. It stopped and almost at once Mrs McCabe was shot in the head with a plastic bullet, fired at less than five yards' range through an aperture in the side of the jeep. She was shot directly opposite the H-Block Centre the morning after one of the hunger strikers had died; she died the next day.

This evidence was given to the commission of enquiry by three witnesses, including Karen McGlennon. The Association for Legal Justice - the most active civil rights organisation in Northern Ireland, who organised the inquiry - has become alarmed at the recent significant increase in deaths and injuries to unarmed civilians from plastic bullets by the security forces. Between April this year and the holding of the enquiry on 2/3 August there had been six deaths and many injuries to unarmed civilians from plastic bullets; another man died last weekend. The total of deaths is now greater than that from all forms of riot control technology - as officially defined - used in Northern Ireland from 1968 until this March.

Our commission was composed of three lawyers, one medical doctor and myself. The lawyers were M. Comte, from France, Dennis Dillon, a member of the US Democratic Party, and Peter King, a member of the US Republican Party; the medical doctor was Dr Lazarus, from France, and myself. We heard evidence from two sets of expert witnesses - doctors and lawyers - and also, in 29 cases, from the injured themselves or their relatives. In most of these cases - which included five of the recent deaths and many injuries - there were also eye-witnesses.

In assessing the evidence we had to decide whether it was totally one-sided. The large number of people willing to testify to many separate incidents meant that even if some witnesses had been embroidering what had happened, this could not have affected the overall picture of what is happening on the streets of Northern Ireland.

It is not credible, for instance, that so many close relatives of the victims would have put their names publicly to statements to the Association for Legal Justice which they knew to be false. It would surely be stretching the notion of conspiracy too far to assume that two well-known priests, Fathers Faul and Murray, one the chaplain to Armagh jail, four doctors and five lawyers would have been associated with an enquiry where the evidence was rigged.

We were astonished by the widespread indiscriminate use of plastic bullets and by the negligible official response. One's image from television is of the unprotected security forces firing plastic bullets at youths lobbing a hail of stones and petrol bombs. But we heard evidence of many cases, in addition to that of Mrs McCabe, which were very different. Soldiers and policemen inside armoured Saracens and jeeps had shot people who were not rioting, from such close range that it could not be other than intentional.

Take the case of Julie Livingstone, aged 14. She was passing a bin-lidding protest of 40-50 people. Nine witnesses present at the inquiry all agreed that although the road was partially blocked by the women in the sit-down protest, there was no rioting. Indeed seven to eight jeep-loads of police had been nearby watching the protest for 20 minutes. Two Army Saracens then speeded up the road and, as the women fled, Julie was hit on the head by a plastic bullet shot from ten yards or less. She died the following day.

We received evidence about five of the recent fatalities. In two of them rioting had been going on but even in those cases the authorities used much more than 'reasonable force'. One victim, Mr Docherty, was not involved in the rioting at all. A friend of his, Mrs McAree, came to the inquiry the day after the funeral to testify. She said that Bob Docherty had been shot through the kitchen window of her first floor flat and that nothing had been thrown from the flat. In the case of Paul Whitters, aged 15, Peter McKensie, a baby-sitter in the house opposite, said that Paul had thrown a stone, but that he was totally isolated from the rest of a small crowd when four policemen came unseen out of a gate: one of them fired at Paul's head from a few yards away.

Could these deaths be a few exceptional and unlucky incidents where a particular soldier or policeman behaved aberrantly? The toll of injuries received showed that shots from close range even to the head are far from exceptional. Take for example the written evidence presented to us by the Association for Legal Justice for the month of May. (It may be incomplete as the



association does not have access to hospital records). In addition to three deaths, there were 25 head injuries requiring hospital treatment including at least six, probably seven, of such severity that life support machines were required to prevent brain damage. Fifteen people required hospital treatment for other injuries such as broken arms or damaged kidneys. It was the view of the medical doctor on the commission that it was only the exceptional medical services which have been developed in Northern Ireland during the troubles which prevented the death rate being even higher.

We were also astonished by the manner in which these injuries occurred. Incidents in which unprovoked and unjustifiable shots occurred at close range were frequently described. Thus in the cases of Martin Rooney, aged 13, Kevin McLoughlin, aged 14, and Michael McAlorum - all of whom received severe head injuries requiring neurosurgical operations - witnesses said there was no rioting at that place at the time. Or take William Firth - shot three times at close range with plastic bullets while lying on the ground after being ordered out of a taxi. He sustained fractures to the skull, cheek bone and jaw and severely bruised and swollen genitals. Or Mrs McGuire, an elderly woman, who received 26 stitches for a facial injury. She was in a Rosary Rally the day before Bobby Sands died. Six RUC jeeps, she said, raced up the street into the procession, with plastic bullet guns firing on both sides 'like fireworks'.

Are such incidents the undisciplined response of individual soldiers and police in circumstances of increasing stress caused by the recent IRA campaign? Or are such incidents something the authorities tacitly accept? The authorities' response to civilians complaints strongly supports the second interpretation.

Hardly surprisingly, an immediate complaint on the spot received short shrift. A father complained about his son being hit on the back in his own garden. The response was to fire at the father, too, hitting him on the arm. Much less predictably, formal complaints to the police seemed to receive little attention. Frequently we asked witnesses whether they had been interviewed by the RUC. On every occasion the witness said that the RUC had not been to see them.

In the case of one death, a letter of complaint to Mrs Thatcher received the reply that there was no evidence. Yet we heard five witnesses of the incident and the Association for Legal Justice have statements from four more. This case illustrated other disturbing features of the use of plastic bullets.

The victim, Carol Anne Kelly, aged 12, lived on Twinbrook estate, as did Bobby Sands. Ten days after his death, she was outside the house of her next-door neighbour returning from a shop with a carton of milk. She was shot in the head by a plastic bullet from a passing jeep, 15 yards away. She died three days later. Witnesses agreed that there was no rioting going on, but that the soldiers were agitated and had been shouting at the residents comments like: 'We'll get you for our five mates today' (a reference to the five soldiers killed by the IRA in South Armagh). One of the witnesses was the neighbour, Mrs Toner. Two days later she read in a newspaper that the

RUC were looking for witnesses. She rang up the police to say that she would be willing to testify. The same evening her house was shot up again and there are now plastic bullet holes in both her kitchen wall and the front door. The local residents certainly believed there was a connection between those events and a make-shift wooden fence was erected in front of Mrs Toner's house. In front of this, the road is partly blocked by a burn-out car to ensure that passing jeeps have to go round it slowly and so can be easily identified if shots are fired. Mrs Toner has still not been interviewed by the RUC.

Legally, too, the whole situation appears to trap the victims. If they complain to the RUC there is a danger of being charged with riotous behaviour; why else would a plastic bullet have been fired? Thus a Mrs Hanna, one month after receiving a head wound requiring 12 stitches from a plastic bullet, went to the police station to complain. She told us that the police said they knew who the soldier was, but that in any case she would be charged with rioting. Two Canadian witnesses gave evidence that they later overheard a soldier threatening her with a plastic bullet shot.

Two solicitors and a barrister - Oliver Kelly, Paddy McGrory and Eilish Kelly - produced a lengthy written submission to the commission. In the sorts of situations which had been described by witnesses, they considered that the use of plastic bullets would be illegal. Even so throughout the whole history of the use of rubber and plastic bullets in Northern Ireland no soldier or policeman has been convicted for their misuse. It seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Northern Ireland authorities tacitly accept the way they are used. It appears to the Catholic community that, as one witness eloquently put it. "Free rein is being allowed to police and army on the streets". Given the amount of visible support for the hunger strikers among the Catholic population, perhaps this should not be surprising.

The authorities can be in no doubt about the terrible potential of the weapon their soldiers and police have been using. The plastic bullet derives indirectly from the wooden 'baton round' which was developed by the Hong Kong police as a way of striking demonstrators with wooden sticks without the inconvenience of a baton charge. But the baton round was considered by the British too dangerous - it splintered - and so the rubber bullet was developed and introduced in 1970. According to Jane's Infantry Weapons rubber bullets were withdrawn in 1975 because of their disability and serious injury rate 'were not considered acceptable'. The plastic bullet replaced it but until this April had been much less used - 13,000 between 1973 and 1981 compared with 55,000 rubber bullets in the 1970/75 period.

Superficially the plastic bullet differed very little from the rubber bullet. It is 3½" long and 1½" in diameter, a little harder than the rubber bullet but also a little lighter (4¾ oz. by comparison with 5¼ oz.) and with a similar muzzle velocity of 160 mph, roughly double that achievable by a fast bowler. Yet rubber bullets are very inaccurate and were supposed to be mainly used to hit a crowd after a bounce. Plastic bullets have a different type of trajectory and are intended to be aimed at 'selected persons ..... so that they strike the lower part of the body directly (i.e.

without bouncing' (Army rules). Since the impact energies of both the rubber and plastic bullets, when fired direct, are very similar it was obvious that the plastic bullet would cause more injuries. This was actually predicted by Jonathan Rosenhead of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science in an article in the *New Scientist* in 1976. His analysis has been entirely justified by events. The death rate has been much higher. All four doctors who gave evidence to the commission agreed that the plastic bullet is the more dangerous of the two.

The clearest evidence that the authorities must have known of the lethal potential of the plastic bullet comes from the extensive experimentation on impact weapons done by research workers at the US Army Land Warfare Laboratory in the early 1970s. The plastic bullet at a 50 yard range has an impact energy of 110 foot pounds. Yet the American scientists categorised impact energies of more than 90 foot pounds as in the 'severe damage range', after experiments on baboons and pigs. A weapon with an almost identical impact energy, the stun bag, was therefore rejected as 'unsatisfactory at all ranges'. It was disclosed in answer to a Parliamentary Question (25 March 1977) that information exchanges had taken place with the US on impact weapons, so the British authorities must have known of this research.

Indeed, on 6th July this year Home Secretary William Whitelaw was asked, while touring Liverpool riot areas, whether he would endorse the use of plastic bullets. He unhesitatingly replied 'No', as using such a weapon could inflict injury or death. He appears to have slightly modified this position when making a parliamentary statement on 15th July: on that occasion he thought CS gas and plastic bullets should be available and police officers were being trained in their use.

The authorities seem to be relying on the media image of the plastic bullet as a device which appears harmless other than in very exceptional circumstances. After all, deaths when they occur from plastic bullets tend to take place not under the noses of TV cameras, but a few days later in hospital, when interest has waned. If six unarmed civilians had been shot dead on the spot by rifles, the outcry would be immense.

The conclusion seemed inescapable to the members of the commission: the Northern Ireland authorities were knowingly allowing widespread, indiscriminate and illegal use of a weapon whose lethal potential was well known. In addition to recommending that the plastic bullet be banned from use in Northern Ireland, we urge that enquiries be carried out into the causes of death and serious injury that have occurred in the use of plastic bullets, in particular the five deaths mentioned. The detailed findings should obviously be made public.



# The Use of Plastic Bullets - The Legal Position

## PRESENTATION PAPER SUBMITTED BY LEGAL SUB-PANEL

There is no special legal provision to deal with the use of these weapons, in the sense that there is no statutory authority for their use, nor is there any statutory prohibition against their use. To examine the question one has to turn to the body of law which governs the civil and criminal wrongs of assault, and the legitimate or unlawful uses of force.

We described the objects as "weapons" and will continue to do so, without apology, as we have been unable to find any other proper description for them. So also shall we call them "plastic bullets", the term commonly applied to them by security forces. The anxiety to have them looked upon as "baton rounds" is easily explained: a baton indicates a weapon defensive in its nature and restricted in its capacity to cause injury, especially accidental injury; but "bullet" brings to mind an object potentially lethal in its intent, and notoriously liable to cause grave injury, even where none was intended, or to cause injury to innocent or uninvolved people.

We are here because our experience places these weapons in the category of lethal weapons, a fact that has a bearing on the legal position. One need look no further than the frightful litany recited in the programme for this Tribunal of Enquiry, to answer whether these are "batons" or "bullets" - blinding, loss of an eye, damage to sight, brain damage, partial paralysis, loss of movement ability, and then to add the sad trio of deaths, of little Julie Livingstone, Carol Anne Kelly and Mrs Nora McCabe.

So in legal appreciation which follows, we are dealing with the use of lethal weapons (and a firearm), and the cases where such use is lawful, or where it is a criminal act, or a civil wrong, or in many cases, both, to use them.

1. Prima facie, to fire a plastic bullet at person is to assault him - to commit a civil wrong against him, and to commit a crime, for which one is answerable to the State.

Without going into legal distinctions between "assault" and "battery", we use the common term of assault in this connection.

2. The assault might be further defined in accordance with its **effect, or the intention of the doer**. Thus a common assault suggests a milder form of assault, and terms like "assault occasioning actual bodily harm" and "assault causing grievous bodily harm" or "to shoot with intent to maim, disfigure or disable, or do other grievous bodily harm . . ." really speak for themselves:

3. Of course, not every application of force, or attempt to apply force, by one person against another, is an assault, for the law in every country supplies a number of defences which are open to people charged with assault. Here are some of them —

Misadventure:

That it was an accident.

Consent:

That the person consented, as for example in friendly horseplay.

Lawful Sport:

If the force was used in a lawful sport or game.

Lawful Correction:

As in the correction of a child by its parents, or in any other cases, such as in schools, where lawful punishment is used

and, lastly, the one which is really the subject for investigation here — **Use of force to protect persons or property and otherwise to keep the peace, by lawfully appointed security forces, and self-defence.**

It should be said that in none of the defence cited would the use of every degree of force be accepted as a defence. In all there is a border-line of severity of the force used. Cross that line, and what was lawful becomes unlawful, and every case has to be looked at on its merits.

4. It is frequently said, and just about as frequently forgotten, or overlooked, that legitimately armed security forces, charged by Governments with keeping the peace, are in all respect as subject to the Rule of Law as are ordinary citizens, and this applies to the manner in which they use the force which it is at times their duty to use.

5. We are accustomed in this jurisdiction to hearing of the "Yellow Card". It is issued to British soldiers to instruct them how and when they may lawfully discharge their firearms. Although treated with great secrecy there is nothing very secret about it. It is really a "potted" lecture on the law about the use of firearms, reducing it to a few simple rules which the ordinary soldier will readily understand. We may take leave to doubt whether all of them do, and whether their commanders and political leaders always care very much whether they do understand them, or follow them if they do.

6. We do not know if, for the purposes of the Yellow Card, the gun which fires a plastic bullet has now been included in the term 'firearm'. If it has not been, then it



seems to us that it ought to be. The manner of discharge, by an explosive charge, the high muzzle, velocity of the projectile and the deadly effects are well known, and place it firmly in the category of a firearm. A simple airgun, discharging a lead pellet by the use of compressed air, is regarded as a firearm, in law.

A firearm is legally defined as "any lethal barrelled weapon from which any shot, bullet or other missile can be discharged . . ." And see *Moore v. Goodenham* (196) 1 W.L.R. 1308, D.C. And see the Firearms (N.I.) Order 1981, Part 1 Interpretation.

7. In these cases where force is lawfully permitted, the test at the end of the day is whether the force actually used was reasonable - whether it was a reasonable time and a reasonable place to use it, and whether the degree of force used was reasonable - was it justified in the circumstances? If the force used was excessive, that is, if it was unreasonable, then a crime may have been committed, whether or not the person who used the force was a soldier or a policeman, and whether or not he was, initially, acting in the course of his duty. His duty is not a justification for the use of excessive force.

8. The onus, therefore, on police and soldiers to use weapons lawfully in the course of their duty is a heavy one - since weapons have more capacity to inflict injury, the greater the capacity that weapon has to inflict injury, the greater the onus of care is.

9. When rubber, succeeded by plastic, bullets were first introduced we well remember the demonstrations of their correct usage on television or for the benefit of press photographers, and the assurances that they were meant to "sting" or at worst "bruise" members of rioting crowds, and so protect persons and property by breaking up riotous assemblies. One important point was frequently made, and that was that they were not designed to be aimed directly at the body of a person, even a rioter. They were to be aimed at the ground near the rioters, and they would strike the ground and "bounce", thereby losing some of their initial velocity.

It is assumed tests showed that to do otherwise would be too dangerous to life and limb, and applying the test of what is reasonable force, it was felt it would be unreasonable, and therefore unlawful, to permit firing directly at a rioter. This is an example of where the circumstances dictate the degree of force which is reasonable. What might be reasonable if firearms were used against security forces, is not reasonable if the worst weapons-used by rioters are stones.

10. But in the event, very soon the rubber bullets were being fired at the bodies and heads of crowds, and even individuals, and the authorities, if they did not already know it, soon discovered that these weapons had the capacity to inflict very severe injuries, and even death.

11. In considering the question of plastic bullets, the knowledge is a very important element.

To cause injury, or even death, by some unforeseen and unforeseeable mischance is one thing, but to act in full knowledge of the probable consequences, is another, whether or not death or serious injury is actually intended. Legally, you are presumed to intend the natural consequences of your acts.

12. The plastic bullet, we now know, leaves the muzzle of the gun at a very high velocity, higher by far than the rubber bullet, and it is harder. Its potential to cause serious injury or death is therefore obviously greater. This has been demonstrated, in part by the sad cases investigated here. We must therefore conclude that soldiers, and those who command them, are not in any doubt about the capacity of these weapons to kill, maim and disfigure.

13. So, using the guidelines set out, is the present use of these weapons lawful, or is it unlawful, or is it sometimes lawful, and sometimes not?

14. We have looked at the state of knowledge of the soldiers relating to the capacity of the bullets to injure severely or kill, and we have concluded they have full knowledge of that capacity.

15. Now we must look at  
i. the manner of firing the bullets, and  
ii. the intention in doing so.

If we do this, we will see that the answer to the three questions posed above - whether firing plastic bullets is always, or never, or sometimes unlawful, the answer has to be that it is sometimes unlawful, but sometimes lawful.

16. Mere negligence in the discharge of a lawfully held weapon, which a test which would give rise to a civil action for damages, would not amount to a criminal offence unless the negligence were of a gross kind "reckless" might be the most accurate word to indicate the degree of negligence required.

17. The best way to approach the matter is to apply the legal tests to a number of sample situations and this may give a better picture of our view of the legal position, than the recital of a number of legal principles.

18. Soldiers are protecting themselves, or property, or some civilians who are liable to be attacked. They are faced by a mob of youths and adults, who are hurling bricks, stones, sticks and bottles. The soldiers are protected by their vehicles, and are equipped with shields and helmets. The mob seems to be content to hurl missiles, and verbal abuse.

(a) Would the discharge of plastic bullets be legally justified? In my opinion it would not, because it is not necessary for the protective purposes of the soldiers.  
(b) Would it be lawful for the soldiers to fire plastic bullets to **disperse** the crowd?

In my opinion, no. Unless to fire in the air for the frightening (and warning) effect, because there are other methods of dispersal, including the old-fashioned baton charge, open to the soldiers.

(c) Would it be different if the mob were to use petrol bombs? That would depend on whether the persons being protected, including the soldiers, were placed in any real danger, **and there was no other way** of containing the situation. It would also depend on whether the plastic bullets could be discharged without danger to innocent persons. The mere throwing of petrol bombs, falling short of their target, by a few

persons in a crowd would not be lawful justification for firing plastic bullets which might kill or maim some other person. In a civil action such other person might properly be accused of contributory negligence, but that is a different matter.

(d) What if a rioting crowd was about to overwhelm the soldiers, and break out to loot, or burn, or attack people? people?

This seems to be a sample of a situation where the use of the bullets could be lawful, because, apart from the use of even more lethal weapons, there would seem to be no other method of defence open.

19. The samples do not cover, and cannot cover, every situation. There are a number of factors to be taken into account - the range at which the bullets are fired, the size of the crowd, the age group of the crowd, the degree of determination to attack displayed by the crowd, and therefore the degree of danger to life and property, the existence, or absence, or alternative methods of dealing with the situation.

20. Some disturbing examples have come to light of very clearly unlawful use of these weapons in non-riot situations. These include the firing of bullets at a few people merely to disperse them, the deliberate aiming of a plastic bullet at persons insulting or verbally abusing police, and, in a recent case, the firing of several bullets at the retreating backs of 4 middle-aged men who were walking away from soldiers with whom they had had an argument.

It is also clear that the bullets have been discharged at a small group of rioters when innocent persons were lawfully close by.

21. One of the worst features of the present use of the weapon is the question of aim. It must now be very clear that, aimed at the head, these weapons have caused fearful injuries, and death. Off-hand, we can think of hardly any situation, apart from the use of a firearm or other deadly weapon, in which these weapons should be aimed at the head. If they cannot be so precisely aimed as to be sure of avoiding the head, then they should not be used at all. However, many cases indicate that at the usual fairly short range, they can be precisely aimed. In that case, aim at the trunk of the body would lessen the risk of serious injury to a considerable extent.

22. Lastly. Should they be used at all?

If they were always to be used in accordance with the law, it would be hard to argue that they should not be used at all, because of the very real danger that in this jurisdiction, soldiers and police, deprived of their use, may resort (unlawfully) to the use of the rifles and other lethal weapons at their disposal.

But the IF posed is a very big if. So far, no real attempt has been made by the commanders of the police and soldiers to ensure that totally unlawful uses of the weapon do not occur. Assuming these to be disciplined forces, one must doubt the will to ensure that these most dangerous weapons are not misused.

It is a matter of considerable significance that in recent very vicious rioting by large mobs, including petrol bombers, in England, they were not used. And the Secretary of State has been quoted as saying they were too dangerous to be used in the usual type of riot situations. If he was accurately quoted, then no doubt he said it on the best legal advice.

With his advisers we can only respectfully agree.



Members of the Association for Legal Justice (from left) Fr. Raymond Murray, Fr. Denis Faul, Mrs Anne Murray, Mrs Clara Reilly and Miss Frances Murray.

# Ban The Plastic Bullet



BY FR DENIS FAUL  
FR RAYMOND MURRAY

**The law is the protector of the life, liberty, property, and human rights of the citizens. The agencies which administer the law can only command confidence among the people if they are seen to be busy protecting the people impartially, more especially in any case where the forces of law and order are themselves alleged to be aggressors.**

The International Tribunal of Inquiry into Deaths and Serious Injuries caused by Plastic Bullets in N. Ireland met in Belfast 3-4 August. It concluded that the plastic bullet was a lethal weapon, that over 3 months, end of April to July, there was widespread indiscriminate shooting by plastic bullets of people not involved in riots which in view of the total lack of official response to complaints led to an assumption that the deaths and injuries were tacitly tolerated by the authorities.

Since April 1981 seven persons have been killed by plastic bullets, all innocent of taking part in riots - Paul Whitters (15), Julie Livingstone (14), Carol Ann Kelly (12), Henry Duffy (45), Nora McCabe (30), Peter Doherty (33), Peter Magennis (41). There is no evidence or sign observable to the public that any investigation is taking place into their deaths. Not a single one of the witnesses of these crimes carried out by the RUC and the British Army has been interviewed by the RUC themselves. A few who volunteered to give statements at RUC stations were received with bad grace and some threatened by legal proceedings for rioting.

The RUC were seen to be busy about the protection of the citizen in the case of the 9 year old girl from Ballinderry who was so tragically abducted and found murdered in a lake. The whole community was moved and the RUC exerted themselves very publicly in promoting an investigation. But when a 12 year old girl had the back of her head shattered by a plastic bullet fired by the British Army in Twinbrook and a 14 year old girl suffered a similar fate on the Stewartstown Road at the hands of the British Army in the presence of jeep, loads of RUC officers, nothing was done and nothing was seen to be done. What a startling contrast! Who can explain the different treatment given to the tragic and criminal deaths of these three little girls?

When 7 people have been killed by a particular weapon in a space of three months that should give grave worry and anxiety to those responsible for law and order. There should be a reappraisal of the weapon. The call from the International Tribunal to ban the weapon should be heeded. An immediate public inquiry should be held into the circumstances of each of the seven deaths by the authorities of the state and the RUC. The total of 13 deaths of Catholics, many of them children, from rubber and plastic bullets is as great a disaster proportionately to the Catholic nationalist population of the North as Whiddy and Stardust are to the South. The

Irish Government has set an example in its public and meticulous inquiries. The authorities of the state and the RUC have done nothing and nothing will happen because a political decision has been made by the British Cabinet to blow the heads off Irish women and children by use of a firearm which Mr Whitelaw would not use in the recent riots in Great Britain. The RUC and the British Army have been given carte blanche to use this firearm to crush ruthlessly the population in the poor Catholic areas.

A firearm is legally defined as "any lethal barreled weapon from which any shot, bullet or other missile can be discharged . . ." (see Moore v. Goodenham -196-, 1 W.L.R. 1308, D.C.; and the Firearms N.I. Order 1981 Part I Interpretation). The lawyers in a submission to the International Inquiry said "We do not know if, for the purposes of the Yellow Card, the gun which fires a plastic bullet has now been included in the term 'firearm'. If it has not been, then it seems to us that it ought to be. The manner of discharge, by an explosive charge, the high muzzle, velocity of the projectile and the deadly effects are well known, and place it firmly in the category of a firearm." We are disturbed that the instruction for firing the plastic bullet gun calls for direct strike. It is clear that a direct strike to the head or chest under 70 metres could cause death, and certainly serious damage. The instruction says that it should not be fired at less than 20 metres. But there is general evidence from witnesses that the guns have been fired as close as six yards. Do the commanders and political leaders care even about this instruction or see that it is followed?

At the recent International Inquiry no surgeons from the leading hospitals in Derry or Belfast attended or were willing to give evidence about the dreadful effects of the weapon. Their performance in the hospitals has to a certain extent prevented more deaths, because quite often vital organs have been hit in the shootings. By contrast, however, when a young black professional footballer was struck by a CS gas cartridge in Toxteth, the surgeon who treated him went on television under his own name and protested about the use of that illegal weapon. Obviously here the sense of medical ethics gives way to political fears of harassment and disfavour. The doctors who attended the International Inquiry all agreed that the effects of the plastic bullets are worse than rubber bullets and they had been withdrawn in 1975 because of their dangerous effects. The doctors agreed that plastic bullets should be banned. Most of those severely injured are children, young men and women. The most serious cases are the head injuries on children. It has been common to put them on life machines. The injuries to the throat and abdomen can be fatal and only thanks to quick operations with



removal of the damaged organ have these people lived. Most injuries are recent but it is certain that some of the children will be handicapped, either totally or be unable later to work. Head injuries account for a great deal of chronic disability. Common physical defects following head injuries are cranial nerve lesions, and peripheral sensory defects. Head injuries frequently result in post traumatic epilepsy, post concussional syndrome, intellectual deterioration, neurosis causing anxiety and depression, psychosis, personality change. There are a great number of head injuries which shows that those firing are not following instructions to hit the lower part of the body.

Head injuries cause great suffering to the patient, his relatives and to those in society who are sympathetic by nature. Great precautions are taken by government agencies to prevent head injuries. It seems remarkable that the British Government are going out of their way to inflict so many head injuries among the Catholic civilian population in Catholic areas of Belfast. Every effort should be made to stop this carnage and it is vital that steps are taken to obtain adequate financial compensation for the unfortunate victims of these injuries.

The Royal Marine Commandos have been brought into west Belfast this summer because of the H Block

situation. They are trained to act instantly with lethal and savage retaliation at the least sign of hostility, real or imaginary. Nobody likes them. They are universally detested because of their past thuggery in Belfast and Derry. When they are met with the hostility they deserve even from women and children, they react by firing plastic bullets at anything that moves. General Sir Richard Lawson is responsible for these troops. Have we observed any sign that he is concerned about the deaths and serious injuries caused by his troops to men, women and children in recent months, not forgetting also the assassination of Danny Barrett, aged 15 years, by a live bullet from a Flak Street soldier in Ardoyne? We are advising the relatives of the plastic bullet victims to make explicit and individual complaints to the Police Authority of N. Ireland and the Police Complaints Board. We call on our leading churchmen and politicians to seek interviews with the Chief Constable and the Police Authority of N. Ireland to know why this lethal firearm has not been banned in all situations and why proper investigations have not been carried out into the deaths and serious injuries.

Are we going to see the same level of tolerance given over a long period of time to these actions by plastic bullets as was given to the Shankill Butchers?

(The Irish News 8/9/81)

## MEDICAL SURVEY

In September 1981 it was announced that leading specialists in hospitals in N. Ireland were compiling a detailed dossier on the dreadful injuries caused by plastic bullets. They included chest specialists, dentists, neuro and plastic surgeons, all of whom had experience of the weapon which claimed many deaths and injuries. It was thought it would be similar to the report on 90 patients injured by rubber bullets in 1970-1972 which was published in the **British Journal of Surgeons** in 1975 (Volume 62).

More information was gained about this study in an article by David Beresford in **The Guardian** 15 May 1982 and the May/June issue of **Fortnight** magazine. Mr. William Rutherford and a senior registrar, Dr. Lawrence Rocke, conducted the survey between April and August 1981. They used a sample of 100 patients injured by plastic bullets. Initial results showed an increase in the number of skull fractures - eight in the case of plastic bullets compared to three in the rubber bullet survey - although there has been a reduction in the overall number of head and facial injuries. There is also a substantial increase in the number of patients with bruises indicating they had been hit by the nose of the missile - 17 in the plastic bullet study compared with only two in the rubber bullet survey. Mr. Rutherford told **The Guardian** that the figure suggested that the plastic bullet was more lethal than the rubber counterpart and required modification.

Speaking to **The Irish Medical Times** (Vol. 16, No. 19, 7 May 1982) Dr. Lawrence Rocke said that the broad result of the study "would seem to indicate that plastic bullets are not safer than rubber bullets." They caused more serious skull and brain injuries. Three patients died from plastic bullets in the 100 cases. Dr. Rocke said he had two main concerns - that plastic bullets are dangerous, particularly to children and that the situation which necessitates their use should not arise in the first place. Dr. Rocke said that of eleven victims who died from plastic bullets three were hit in the chest, one in the face, and seven in the head.

An article from Keith Piper in **Hospital Doctor** 17 June 1982 continued a warning from Mr William Rutherford on the medical menace of the weapon: - "The real danger of plastic bullets comes when they hit the face or head - in those cases injuries are nearly always very serious. As long as they hit below the neck the chance of major injuries are relatively slight. There have been cases of ruptured lungs or spleens, and you occasionally get fractured limbs. This is all exceedingly rare. But bones in the face, the nose, cheeks and jaws - are all easily broken, and plastic bullets are often responsible for blindness when they strike and rupture the globe of the eye". Mr Rutherford was speaking just after European MP Dr Barry Seal appealed to the Home Secretary William Whitelaw to outline what he called "these horrific weapons". Dr Seal said the European Parliament was strongly opposed to the use of plastic bullets.

# Correspondence With Mr. James Prior, M.P., Secretary of State



Letter sent to:  
The Secretary of State  
The Chief Constable RUC  
The Police Authority N. Ireland.

Father Dennis Faul and  
Father Raymond Murray  
Parochial Hall  
ARMAGH

Enclosures:  
Plastic Bullets Kill and Maim (Book)  
Ban the Plastic Bullet (Irish News)  
Statement of International Inquiry  
(Association for Legal Justice)



Northern Ireland Office  
Stormont Castle  
Belfast BT4 3ST  
Telephone Belfast 63011

30 October 1981

Parochial House  
ARMAGH  
26 September 1981

Dear Sir,

In the months April-August 1981, seven people have been killed by plastic bullets and 60 severely injured. Many of these happened in non-riot situations, for example, Carol Anne Kelly aged 12 years and Julie Livingstone aged 14 years.

The plastic bullet has been used to terrify the entire Catholic community as well as stopping legitimate protest.

Even in a riot situation a firearm which has killed seven people should not be used because it is a lethal weapon. This too is the argument of Mr William Whitelaw.

It should be the urgent task of the Chief Constable of the RUC to find out, charge, and put on trial members of the RUC and British Army who have used the plastic bullet to kill and wound in non-riot situations. Some of these cases look like murder. The RUC have given no evidence of any serious investigations. It would seem that the violent and indiscriminate use of this firearm has been tolerated and promoted contrary to law.

If such killings and woundings had happened in Toxteth, Highross, and Brixton in non-riot situations or riot situations, the English public including MPs, churchmen, surgeons, doctors and pressmen would have created a furor day after day and the media would show an immediate intense interest.

The Catholic community draw the conclusion that their right to life and integrity is being viciously disregarded by the British Government and those in charge of the British law here. They have failed in their duty.

Yours sincerely

Fr Denis Faul  
Fr Raymond Murray

Dear Father Faul and Father Murray,

Thank you for your letter of 26 September about plastic baton rounds. The Secretary of State has asked me to explain first of all why it has been necessary to use plastic baton rounds in Northern Ireland.

During the period of the recent hunger-strike campaign the police and Army were frequently confronted by crowds of rioters intent on burning and damaging property, hijacking vehicles and attacking members of the security forces using not only stones but petrol bombs, blast bombs, nail bombs and acid bombs. In such circumstances it is the duty of the security forces to restore order so that more widespread damage to property and loss of life will not occur. In doing so they adhere to the principle of minimum force and it is the considered professional judgement of the Chief Constable, supported by the General Office Commanding, that the use of the plastic baton round is the minimum force likely to be effective in these circumstances. The plastic baton round is a purely defensive weapon used to keep rioters at a distance. Alternative methods which the security forces might otherwise be obliged and legally justified to adopt would almost certainly entail greater risk of injury. You will be aware that the Home Secretary has made plastic baton rounds available to the police forces in England and Wales. The use of baton rounds is governed by clearly defined instructions. All deaths and injuries alleged to have been caused by their use are fully investigated. Reports are considered by the DPP who will decide whether prosecutions should be mounted. Similar investigations and reports are made into all complaints received about the use of plastic baton rounds. Where the incident has resulted in fatality all the known facts are also reported to the relevant coroner who must hold an inquest to establish the cause of death.

All enquiries are painstaking and detailed and regrettably in some cases the investigations may be protracted as the need to establish the facts must be the main concentration. It is not our practice to refer to details of particular cases, nor to comment on enquiries which are not complete.

We totally refute the allegation that the baton round is being used specifically against the Roman Catholic

community. It is used, whenever necessary, to control rioting and violent disturbances, as I have described above, by any members of the community. Nor has it been used to stop legitimate protest; it is used only where protest has got out of hand and has degenerated into violent disorder.

It is also completely untrue to suggest that the Royal Marine Commandos were brought into West Belfast this summer because of the H-Block situation. They replaced another unit which had completed its allotted tour of duty, and their own period of service in West Belfast had been planned for many months. As regards their conduct in West Belfast - again, if you have specific complaints these should be made to the police, who will investigate them. General, unsubstantial allegations cannot be investigated.

Your sincerely,

**NOEL CORNICK Private Secretary**

**James Prior, M.P.  
Secretary of State.**

Parochial House,  
Armagh.  
23/11/81

Sir,

Your reply of 30 October to our letter of 26 September is not satisfactory. Seven people have been killed, or should we say, murdered and nothing has been done about it. This represents negligence and brings the administration of law into contempt. One gets an impression fortified that any murder by the security forces will be covered up and no effective prosecution will be mounted. The facts are that no British soldier, no RUC detective has served a day in jail in Northern Ireland since 1968 (the two Argyll and Southern Highlanders sentenced for stabbing two Fermanagh Catholics to death are a doubtful exception). Yet we can supply you with a list of 120 innocent people killed by the Army and RUC and almost 100 brutality/torture cases by RUC. Surely there is a systematic cover up here.

Take the case of Julie Livingstone a 14 year old girl killed by a plastic bullet fired by the British Army on May 12. This killing took place in a non riot situation and was witnessed by three jeep loads of RUC; yet six months later no one has been charged with the murder of this little girl; the same applies to Carol Ann Kelly killed in a non riot situation while going for a carton of milk. We are not satisfied that your investigations have been urgent and mounted with sufficient respect for the serious loss of seven lives that has taken place. One feels compelled to suggest that if the killings had been of Englishmen and women and children in England or even of North of Ireland Loyalists a much quicker result would have been obtained. In short, we accuse your office of covering up the murders of seven innocent people, including two children.

What we are afraid of is that plastic bullets will be used to kill Catholics indiscriminately while they will not be used in British cities nor against Loyalist threatening behaviour. Are you now going to give in to a "Third Force" who want to kill Catholics under the uniform of the Crown, knowing that this uniform secures immunity

from effective prosecution? What a bonus\* to IRA recruitment! We shall have to judge your sincerity about the control of security forces by the investigation of the plastic bullet victims. If you cannot or will not give justice even against your own forces then we must appeal to international tribunals and declare no confidence in the Army and RUC.

Please help us to get justice for the relatives of the seven.

**Fr Denis Faul  
Fr Raymond Murray**

**Parochial House  
ARMAGH  
9 December 1981**

Dear Sir,

The two Frenchmen, two Americans, and the Englishman who formed the panel of the International Enquiry into the Use of Plastic Bullets held in Belfast last August, expressed astonishment at the indiscriminate shooting. The age of persons killed and maimed varied from four and half years to elderly men and women. They underlined the fact that the indiscriminate shooting was on a wide scale. Altogether 13 people have been killed by rubber and plastic bullets, many of them children.

It was clear from the Tribunal that there were in fact no controls, by yellow card and otherwise. The RUC and British Army shot into peaceful groups and deliberately aimed bullets at very close range at innocent people. Under law in the North of Ireland there are remedies for the use of unreasonable force.

Criminal complaints can be brought and there are also civil remedies for compensation. Often these are not meaningful because complaints are made and there are no efforts to identify the soldiers or RUC involved. What is worse, in the case of plastic bullets there has been evidence of witnesses having been intimidated and being told that if they make complaints to the authorities about what they have seen they can be charged themselves with being involved in a "riot situation". Because legal remedies are not really there for the victims, these plastic bullets should be banned altogether.

Mr Prior and Lord Gowrie will not listen to legal and medical advice concerning the use of plastic bullets. I would make this plea to them. Read the report on 90 patients injured by rubber bullets in the period 1970-72 written by four surgeons of the Royal Victoria Hospital. Another report on the greater injuries caused by plastic bullets is being prepared by surgeons in the same hospital - ask for the draft copy. Deaths from plastic bullets don't take place in the street. They occur in the hospital away from the TV cameras when the attention of the public has waned. If the 13 people, children, both boys and girls, a woman, and young men, had been put up against a wall and shot churchmen and politicians would have shouted loud. As it was they did not visit the hospitals and see the children on the life machines.

Mr Prior says the plastic baton rounds are necessary and takes up the argument used by the RUC on many occasions, namely, that they are necessary against



stones, petrol bombs, blast bombs, nail bombs and acid bombs. If people accepted this widespread damage theory about property and life, then the argument is clear - it is better to kill a few with baton rounds and stave off full scale violence. On his own point I want then to ask the Secretary of State a number of questions.

Was there a riot at the time of the killing of 12 year old Carol Anne Kelly? Did the little girl returning from the shop with a carton of milk in her hand pose a threat to five British Army jeeps so that they had to use the plastic bullet as defence? The soldier who killed her leaned out of his jeep and blasted off the back of her head from distance of eight yards. If baton rounds are governed by clearly defined instructions, what was the justification of that? There are many intelligent witnesses of this heinous barbaric crime. The horror of their accounts at the International Tribunal was terrifying. What is the professionalism of the report sent to the DPP? Why have we not heard of the identification of the killer or prosecutions?

In face of the refusal of the British Government to ban the plastic bullet it is the duty of the Church, whose child she and her family belonged to, to speak with all the authority at its command to see that justice is done in this case where the law of God is broken - "murder is murder" - to offer sympathy and aid to the relatives and work with governments in other countries to bring international pressure upon England. The Association for Legal Justice hope to bring the banning of the plastic bullets before the United Nations. Good. And Mr Neil Blaney is bringing the subject before the European Parliament - Good.

Whatever the arguments about certain circumstances of petrol and acid bombs, the deaths in non-riot situations appear to the public as murder. In riot situations I see no justification for it as minimum force - there were plenty of riots here in the past and there was no need for a lethal weapon as defence. Mr Prior, I am appalled by the lack of remedy and the lack of follow-up in these plastic bullet maimings and killings. Your sincerity will be judged on remedy.

Yours sincerely

**Fr Raymond Murray**



Northern Ireland Office  
Stormont Castle  
Belfast BT4 3ST  
Telephone Belfast 63011

**Father Faul and Father Murray**  
Parochial House  
ARMAGH

31 December 1981

Dear Father Faul and Father Murray,

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your three recent letters of 23 and 26 November and 9 December. The last was under Father Murray's signature only.

Two of your letters make a number of points about plastic baton rounds and their use by the security

forces. I can assure you that the security forces are in no way above the law as you allege in your letter of 23 November. The deaths allegedly caused by baton rounds have been investigated by the police, and indeed in six out of the seven cases you mention, reports have been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions. He has directed no prosecution in the cases of McGuinness and Duffy but has as yet made no direction in the other four. In one case, that of Paul Whitters, the police are continuing their enquiries.

In his letter of 9 December Father Murray alleges that there are no controls over the use of baton rounds. As I explained in my letter of 30 October, clearly defined instructions for the use of baton rounds have been issued by both the RUC and Army. Their use is closely monitored by the respective authorities. All deaths and injuries allegedly caused by baton rounds are investigated.

Several general complaints about the behaviour of the police and army are also made in the letter. It is not possible to investigate such generalised allegations but if you have evidence of specific incidents it should be passed on to the police who will investigate.

As I explained in my letter of 30 October it is not our practice to comment on cases which are subject to police investigation and consideration by the Director of Public Prosecutions. I cannot therefore comment on the case of Caroline Kelly.

In your letters of 23 and 26 November you raised a number of points about the so-called Third Force. The Secretary of State and the Chief Constable have made it absolutely clear that private armies will not be tolerated. As you know, prosecutions are the responsibility of the Chief Constable and the Director of Public Prosecutions. I understand that the RUC are currently compiling evidence of possible criminal offences arising out of Third Force activities; it would be wrong for the Secretary of State to seek to anticipate the findings of the police or the legal authorities. I can, however, assure you that both the Chief Constable and the GOC have ordered enquiries into allegations of possible participation in illegal activities by individual members of the security forces. If you have evidence of such participation, the security force authorities would be glad to receive it.

Yours sincerely

**NOEL CORNICK**  
Private Secretary



Northern Ireland Office  
Stormont Castle  
Belfast BT4 3ST  
Telephone Belfast 63011  
10 March 1982

Dear Father Faul,

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent letter forwarding the enclosed booklet about the death of Danny Barrett on 9 July 1981

As with all other violent deaths in Northern Ireland, the RUC have investigated the circumstances of the death of Danny Barrett and have presented their findings to the Director of Public Prosecutions, whose responsibility it is to decide whether any criminal proceedings should be instituted. In these circumstances the Secretary of State believes it would be wrong of him to make any comment on the case at this stage.

More generally, however, the Secretary of State has asked me to say that it is quite wrong to allege that the Army and the RUC were given permission to do whatever they liked to disperse the protest meetings or quell the riots associated with the hunger strikes. At no time were the normal rules and regulations governing the actions of the police and Army relaxed or suspended, despite the often considerable difficulties faced by the security forces in maintaining law and order. During the period of the hunger strikes they were required, as they are at all other times, to operate within the law which it is their duty to uphold.

The Government has never condoned, and never will condone, a policy of murder or torture as an instrument of policy; nor will a blind eye be turned to the use of such methods. The security forces are subject to the law like everyone else. Any fatalities or serious injuries allegedly caused by baton rounds are thoroughly investigated by the police. Their findings are considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions who must decide whether any of those involved should be prosecuted. Of the 7 deaths allegedly caused by baton rounds last year the DPP has directed no prosecution in 4 cases, and his decision is awaited in the remaining 3 cases, including those of Julie Livingstone and Carol Ann Kelly. Members of the security forces who have broken the law on other occasions, whether on or off duty, have been dealt with through the courts in just the same way as any other citizen.

Yours sincerely,

NOEL CORNICK  
Private Secretary

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**NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE**  
**GREAT GEORGE STREET,**  
**LONDON SW1P 3AJ**

**Neville Sandelson Esq MP**  
**House of Commons**  
**LONDON**  
**SW1A 0AA**

**13 May 1982**

Dear Neville

Thank you for your letters of 16 April enclosing a copy of an article from the Sunday News and a letter from Mr Duffy.

I shall, if I may, deal first with the question whether the use of baton rounds (or plastic bullets as they are more generally known) should be discontinued. Baton rounds have proved to be the most effective way of dealing with the sort of serious rioting we experience in Northern Ireland consistent with the principle of

minimum force. We are looking with an open mind at any new ideas for the control of rioting, but the currently available options such as water cannon and CS smoke are seldom appropriate in the conditions of disorder that we face in Northern Ireland. Disturbances there may continue over extended periods of time and a wide area of ground, they are often under terrorist direction and may be used as cover for shooting attacks. Less effective measures would be likely to result in increased casualties both to the security forces and to rioters since the security forces might well be obliged to have recourse to conventional bullet-firing weapons.

I accept that, whatever the facts may be, every death is tragic and causes a strong emotional reaction. (Any cases involving death are of course fully investigated and the Director of Public Prosecutions decides whether a prosecution should be mounted.) But politically a loss of control over a riot would almost certainly cause greater immediate resentment in the community, not to mention long-term consequences. Against that background I could not agree that a weapon which has enabled the security forces to deal with extremely serious rioting over the last year should be withdrawn, though we will keep the situation under review.

Mr Duffy has raised two technical points about the existing baton rounds. Firstly he refers to an article in the Sunday News of 4 April, which alleges that deaths attributed to baton rounds were in fact caused by a "metal ring". The metal ring referred to may be the small aluminium cap which retains the baton round in its cartridge. As only one of the inquests into deaths caused by baton rounds has so far taken place it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the allegations raised by the article. But you can assure Mr Duffy that equipment used by the security forces is kept under constant review and if it were revealed that there was a general design fault which substantially increased the risk involved in the use of the equipment, steps would be taken to remedy it.

Mr Duffy also quotes an opinion that the rubber baton round may have been less dangerous than the PVC round now used. The PVC round was specifically designed to be more accurate and thus more effective while offering no significantly greater hazard than the rubber bullet. As I explained, we keep the performance of riot control equipment under review. Comparisons between different weapons in different circumstances are difficult, and rubber rounds have not been used for a number of years. But I can assure you and Mr Duffy that if an alternative means of controlling rioting were shown to be as effective as the existing baton rounds, it would be introduced.

Finally, so far as compensation is concerned, it is of course open to those injured by baton rounds or their families to make civil claims through the courts against either the Police Authority or the Ministry of Defence, and I understand that a number of people have done so.

Yours,  
Jim

## European Parliament Bans Plastic Bullets

In September 1981 Mr Neil Blaney TD and European MP began preparations for a motion in the European Parliament seeking the banning of plastic bullets. He proposed the motion early in October but for tactical reasons withdrew it until support would grow. Mr Gary Duffy, a student at Queen's University, lobbied British politicians in an attempt to have the firearm banned. He received letters of support from four British MEPs: Dr Barry Seal (Yorkshire West), Mr Roland Boyes (Durham), Mr Alf Lomas (London North-East) and Ms Ann Clwyd (Cardiff).

In November Mr Neil Blaney and a group of European MPs distributed over 400 copies of **Rubber and Plastic Bullets Kill and Maim** to members of the European Parliament including the leaders of the six main political parties to remind them of the need to debate the use of plastic bullets against civilians in N. Ireland. In a letter accompanying the books Mr Blaney said the debate had been refused although demands for it had been supported by the largest political group. "You can hardly dispute the matter is urgent", said Mr Blaney - "Every day innocent civilians including women and children are being wounded, maimed and even killed by these bullets of which 24,000 were fired by security forces in N. Ireland in the first seven months of this year, causing seven deaths, including five children." Mr Blaney determined to press for a debate again at the December session of the Parliament.

After the death of 11 year old Stephen McConomy a resolution supported by Mr Neil Blaney, Mr John Hume, and Welsh Labour Members Mrs Ann Clwyd was withdrawn so that they could have the opportunity of resubmitting the resolution at the next Parliamentary session. The resolution was withdrawn because it would have been referred to a parliamentary committee causing long delay and it was thought better to wait for a parliamentary debate.

Again on 22 April there were further moves to have a resolution passed banning plastic bullets. A resolution was submitted by Mr Blaney. One of the Labour members supporting his call for an emergency debate was Mr Richard Balfe who claimed that unless it was banned in N. Ireland it would be used for crowd control in Britain. He said there had been serious rioting in France and Belgium in recent months but because water cannons were used no one had been killed. Mr John Taylor opposed the debate. Mr Prior speaking on radio said - "I do beg people, particularly parents, to keep from any source of rioting and then this sort of very unfortunate thing will no happen". At the same time Fr Raymond Murray called on the Irish Episcopal Conference to launch a massive campaign at the June meeting on the sacredness of human life; such a campaign would go a

long way to ending all killings including the deaths of children by plastic bullets.

The debate in the European Parliament was postponed to May. On 22 April Mr Blaney had withdrawn his motion because he felt the debate would not be given a satisfactory hearing.

On 13 May the banning of plastic bullets was debated in the European Parliament and a vote taken. Confronted by four resolutions the Parliamentary managers gave it top priority. Three of the resolutions were tabled by Irish Members Paddy Lalor, Neil Blaney, Joe McCartan and Mark Clinton. The fourth on behalf of the Socialist Group, the largest in the Parliament, was in the name of Mr John Hume. Mr Hume said the British Home Secretary had described plastic bullets as "lethal" and that they had been banned by the Swiss authorities after two youths were blinded in Zurich.

By an overwhelming majority the European Parliament voted to ban the use of plastic bullets throughout the EEC. It would be difficult for any country to ignore such a ban. It will remain highly embarrassing for the British Government.

Only the 42 Conservatives and Mr Ian Paisley voted against the Irish motions. Afterwards Mr Hume said: - "Every party in Europe and every nationality were voting solidly in support of our motions and this must mean enormous pressure on the British Government to cease using these weapons." During the 20 minutes of voting, the House agreed to call for a ban by 110 votes to 43. Conservative amendments to insert references to the number of policemen and soldiers killed in N. Ireland, to delete a clause noting that plastic bullets were not used during recent riots in Britain and to delete reference to a statement by the British Government saying that they would not be used, were all defeated.

Miss Sile de Valera opened the debate. She said it was a nonsense to suggest that plastic bullets needed to be used for riot control by the security forces in the Northern part of her country. Since 1981, 13 people have been killed and 60 wounded by the weapon and many of these were defenceless children. No action had been taken as a result of inquiries into the deaths and she wanted to see soldiers prosecuted for these murders. There should be an end to the situation where there was one law for soldiers and another for civilians.

Mr Hume said the debate was not about the political situation in the North or the campaign of murder and violence waged by paramilitary groups. He was totally and fully aware of the serious damage to the community that riots caused, but he wondered did the House believe that the death penalty was a proper penalty for riotous behaviour. Rather than controlling riots, plastic bullets created them, because of the angry backlash. Mr Whitelaw said he did not want them used in Britain because they were lethal. One had to conclude that the attitude towards their use was racist.

Mr Jaak Vandeneuwebroucke (Flemish Nationalist) said that plastic bullets had been banned in Switzerland after two children had been blinded.

Mr Blaney said that if the motion was not passed, plastic bullets would be used in other countries and no one wanted this. They were lethal and indiscriminate.



Peace-keeping forces fired them at children from moving vehicles. He wondered could anyone honestly say that young children were endangering the security forces.

Mr Richard Balfe (British Labour) asked if the British Conservatives move to defeat the reference to their Government's statement that they would not be used in Britain meant that these members wanted them used in Britain. It would not be the first time, he said, that something was practised in N. Ireland for export to Britain.

Summing up, the Danish Commissioner, Poul Dalsager, said that as the motions were addressed to the member states, the Commission could only observe that there had indeed been many innocent victims. The Commission hoped that they would not be used and that violence generally would decrease.

Following the ban the Association for Legal Justice demanded that the British Government respond positively. A senior RUC officer said - "We will continue to use them where occasions of rioting put the lives of our men and other people at risk". Mr Prior was defiant in his attitude - "Less effective measures would be likely to result in increased casualties both to the security forces and to rioters, since the security forces might well be obliged to have recourse to conventional bullet-firing weapons. "He pointed out that the current available options such as water cannon and CS gas were seldom appropriate in the conditions of disorder faced in the North.

Reporting in *The Guardian* of 14 May, David Pallister and Leonard Doyle in Strasbourg said that the British Government had no intention of implementing the decision of the European Parliament - "The response from Whitehall was little less than dismissive. They reported that the bullets were also in service in Belgium and Italy; the prospective EEC partner, Spain, had used them with two reported fatalities".

On 25 May, amid sharp exchanges, a motion condemning the use of plastic bullets and calling on Mr Prior to respect the judgement of the European Parliament was carried in Derry Council by 16 votes to 9.

## HOUSE OF LORDS DEBATE 26 MAY 1982

Baroness Ewart-Biggs asked the Question:

*To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, in view of the European Parliament's recent decision against the use of plastic bullets, they will urgently review the equipment used for riot control in Northern Ireland.*

In the debate Lord Gowrie, the Minister of State, N. Ireland Office, argued that riots in N. Ireland differed from other parts of the world - "We know that small groups of people, even small groups of children, can cause fatalities deliberately to the security forces.... I would not wish that the security forces would be forced to use lead rather than plastic bullets which would result in considerably more loss of life. He affirmed that the situation was under review but that there would be no restriction on the discretion of the local commander in their use.

Lord Bleasdale pointed out that apart from propaganda

publicists there was widespread and genuine concern among parents, community leaders, the clergy, and the security forces about their use in riot situations. He called for consultation with community leaders to ensure the active control over children in such situations. Viscount Brookeborough put before the House the case of the soldier who was run over by his companion after teenagers threw a petrol bomb in Derry ... "May I ask to assure the House that many lives have in the past been saved by the use of baton rounds?"

Lord Shinwell asked if police were asked their opinions to the type of weapon or means of defence they might use. Lord Gowrie affirmed their favour towards the weapon pointing out the requirement of minimum force.

Lord Cledwyn of Penrhos:- My lords, while I appreciate the appalling difficulties which face the security forces in seeking to deal with these most difficult situations that exist in N. Ireland, may I ask the noble Earl whether he is aware of the figures which his right honourable friend the Secretary of State gave in answer to a question in another place on 24th May? Details, which must be distressing to every noble Lord in the House, indicate that since 1975 a number of children under 15 have been killed: a boy of 11, a little girl of 11, and then boys and girls of 10, 13 and 14. I appreciate that children of this age, who are not responsible for their own acts, may nevertheless be involved due to the influence of others, but is it not worthwhile to take account of the question of my noble friend Lady Ewart-Biggs and at least look at alternative methods of crowd control, which might not have the appalling result that plastic bullets have?

A discussion ensued between Lord Glenamara and Lord Gowrie on the effectiveness of water cannon.

The debate concluded with an exchange between Lord Brockway and Lord Gowrie.

Lord Brockway: My Lords, is the noble Earl aware that I have one of these riot weapons and that I would be prohibited from bringing it, as a dangerous weapon, into this House? Would he not agree that if I threw it at the Benches opposite and it hit a Member, it might injure him seriously? Is it not the case that 11 people, including many children, have been killed by this weapon, which has the velocity of a gun?

The Earl of Gowrie: My Lords, the noble Lord's invective is quite sufficient weapon directed at a number of Members of your Lordships' House in successive Governments. Of course we very much regret the use of any weapon against crowds of people or individuals. The issue is whether this particular weapon, which I abominate, as I abominate all weapons, has not in fact saved more lives, since people must in the end be able to defend themselves and their tasks in what are very tense and difficult situations. I should like to add that I appeal to the people of Northern Ireland, and since the activities of very young people are on our minds at the moment, in particular to parents there, to try to control their children, who often join demonstrations as a matter of excitement, but who end up in very lethal positions indeed, and of course put themselves, as well as the security forces, at very great risk.



## PLASTIC BULLETS AND THE ORGANISATION OF CONCERNED TEACHERS

The Organisation of Concerned Teachers has as its motto Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood".

The co-founders, Mr Pat Canavan and Mr Larry Burns, decided to form the organisation after reading a letter by Fr Raymond Murray calling on all responsible adults to make public their opposition to the use of plastic bullets. They hope to act as a pressure group on controversial issues such as wrongful arrest, housing allocation, and job discrimination. Their first campaign is directed against plastic bullets and after the call by the European Parliament for the banning of plastic bullets in all 10 Common Market countries they organised the collection of signatures to a declaration to provoke a positive response from the British Government. The declaration printed below with the first 300 signatures was published in European countries, North and South America, and translated into European languages and also Japanese and Arabic.

Mr Pat Canavan said: - "Responsible British MPs have advised us that publicity abroad does get a response from the British Government. The fact that the European Parliament have opposed their use and the USA Army say they are unsuitable is a strong moral case. If there was a co-ordinated campaign by a widespread number of people throughout N. Ireland, we feel the British Government would be forced to change their policy."

### DECLARATION

On May 1, 1982, the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly to ban the use of plastic bullets in all 10 Common Market countries.

We, the undersigned Irish teachers resident in the Northern part of our country, call on the British Government to implement the decision. We are alarmed that there have been no prosecutions despite the fact that 14 innocent people have been killed by rubber and plastic bullets and more than 60 seriously injured. Their right to life is being viciously disregarded.

Since exhaustive attempts to remedy these wrongs in the British Courts have failed it is now necessary to bring the cases to the European Court of Human Rights and to the United Nations.

As concerned individuals who abhor violence from whatever source, we unreservedly condemn the killing of 14 people by means of this lethal weapon. For teachers, the fact that of the 14 dead, seven are children is particularly alarming. The fact, also, that the only crime committed by these children was to be out of doors, makes it impossible for responsible adults to be silent.

### CHILD FATALITIES FROM RUBBER AND PLASTIC BULLETS

Francis Rowntree (aged 11½ years). Hit on the head by a rubber bullet fired by a British Soldier of the Royal Anglian Regiment. He was so seriously injured he was unrecognisable and died in hospital some hours later. He had been out walking with his friend.

Stephen Geddis (aged 10 years). The first child to die by plastic bullet. The second child victim of the Anglian Regiment, he was struck on the head near his home. He died in hospital three days later. Although there was a disturbance at the time, eye-witnesses claim he had not been involved in the stoning which was endorsed by the fact that his hands were clean when examined in hospital.

Brian Stewart (aged 13 years). Died six days after being struck on the head with a plastic fired by King's Own Scottish Borderers Regiment. Many witnesses testify that the area was quiet at the time of the incident. His mother has campaigned for six years and will now take the case to the European Court at Strasbourg.

Paul Whitters (aged 15 years). Shot in the head at a range of approximately five yards by an R.U.C. man. Eye-witnesses testify that while he had a short time earlier been engaged in stone-throwing, at the time he was struck with the bullet there was a lull in the rioting. He was standing alone when confronted by four policemen, one of whom ran towards the boy and fired at his head from almost point blank range.

Julie Livingstone (aged 14 years). Died one day after being struck on the head by a plastic bullet. At the time there was no riot situation only bin-lid bashing and some blowing of whistles by a group of women following the death of hunger striker Francis Hughes.

Carol-Anne Kelly (aged 11 years). Another young girl struck on the head by a plastic bullet fired from the rear of a British Army jeep as she returned from a nearby shop with a carton of milk for her mother. Recently at her inquest the coroner established her innocence and though an Army witness alleged there was rioting, that was denied by all other witnesses.

Stephen McConomy (aged 11 years). Hit on the head by a plastic bullet some two months ago and died next day in hospital. His father said: "A British soldier murdered my child." His mother said before he died: "There is nothing left of Stephen. His brain is gone and he is an empty shell. All I want is to bring him home." Twenty witnesses say that he was not in a riot area.

This list of casualties and simple unvarnished description of the brutality of the deaths fully justifies the American Army's decision not to use this killer weapon and dramatically underlines the immediate need for the civilised world to bring all its moral authority to bear on

Britain, to persuade that country to cease using the plastic bullet weapon in the North of Ireland or indeed at all.

Therefore we call upon individual groups and governments in the democratic world to publicly press Britain to comply with the European Parliament's call for a ban on the use of plastic bullets - a call which Britain recently rejected - or at least for Britain to place a moratorium on the use of this weapon until an independent enquiry can investigate further the tragic consequences attendant on its deployment.

T. Cavanagh; T. Trainor; Dymrna O'Harte; Sean McIlroy; P. Toale; B. Clements; Madeline Cole; Rose Tumilty; B. Garigan; S. A. Hanna; G. O'Hare; M.A. Murphy; W. McGuinness; F.P. Sands; M. Rogers; Alma Brown; Sister Mary Rose McSherry; H. McShane; Kathleen Bell; Grainne McCoy; Fr. Desmond Knowles; Bernadette McMahon; Eugene McKernon; S.E. Purzina.

V. Loy; M. Russell; Christine McAlinden; Sr. Mark Holywood; Sr. Emilia Hurley; Kathleen McSherry; G. McGuinness; Mary Vallely; Nuaia McConnell; Miss McAlinden; Mary Lowry; Maura Tully; C. Morgan; C. McAuley; R. McNeice P. Dundas; A. Maguire.

B. Mallon; M. McCartan; L. Kelly; Dolores McCann, N. Ewings; R. Crilly; A. Toremans; Danny Burke; M. Rainey; Monica Culbert; Daniel Dougan; K. Best; J. McPartland; J. Coyle; D.P. Carlin; S. O'Docherty; P. Quinn; P. Ward; Prionnsios O'Labhradha; D. Gordon; E. Turner; H. Carville; J. McClean; H. Trainor; Frank Maguire; James Flynn; J. Docherty; G. Connor; V. Burns; R. McHugh; K. Fegan.

R. McGinnity; D. Mulhern; P. Price; F. MacRory; S. Dorrian; Paul Drain; U. Lowrie; G. Hughes; M. McGeown; Dorrian; Paul Drain; U. Lowrie; G. Hughes; M. McGowan;; M. McCullough; G. Murphy; N. Beatty; maria Hozier; B. McAllister; B. McGowan; M. Murphy; Mary McBride.

M. Mac Gribon; S. Lavery; J. McVie; Maighread Ni Chinneide; Eileen Morgan; Anne Drain; C. Fay; P. Gavan; A. Doris; D. Hale; M. O'Kane; S. McCanny; Maura Rodgers; M. McGuone; R. Lavery; U. Sherry; D. Magee; J. McGuckin; J. Walsh; Monica Pimley; Diarmuid O'Tuana; Aine M. Andrews; Margaret McNulty; Frank Shannon.

Roisin Shannon; Joe Magee; Desy McKee; Mary Feeny; Martin O'Farrell; F. Collins; E. McGinley; Sr. Phelim Morrison; A. Lavery; A. Gatt; B. Dougan; A Gallagher; K.

Breen; Marian Orr; M. Rolston; A. Cassidy; M. McGuigan; M. Farry; Maria Graham; B. Ramsden; Pat Canavan; C. Mac Eogan; M. Martin; Paul Lundy.

Laurence Burns; Cathal Mac Carrain; Fergus O'Hare; Robert McDade; Padraig Mac Carrain; Patrick Magee; J. Brannigan; Patrick McLean; Sean P. Murphy; W. Torrens; Sean McCann; Kevin Keenan; P. O'Hagan; J. McDermott; John McCann; Kieran McGeown; A. McElkerney; P. Hennessey; J. Brown; O. Thornton.

Aloysius O'Loan; J.C. McEldowney; Brian McAlinden; Aine Ni Sheanain; Hugh McCloskey; Mairtin O'Grianna; Thomas Boyle; O.P. Waters; Kevin Teague; Ciaran Austin; Gerard Sullivan; Padraig MacPartlaine; Philip Smyth; J. Devlin; M. Gannon; P. Hurray; S. Ewins; Jim McCann; T. Morgan; D. Smylie; V. Meenehan; C. Linden.

P. Collins; D. Daykin; M. Farrell; P. McKinney; E. Cunningham; C. Edwards; I. Jordan; J. Cunningham; E. Smyth; Mairead Gannon; F. Callan; D. Breen; R. Morris; A. McHugh; M. Geoghegan; A. Turner; P. Walsh; P. McGorman; J. V. Hannon; P. MacManus; E. McManus; M. Brown; G. Kelly.

E. McMahon; F. McEvoy; S. Moss; M. Byrne; P. McKay; R. Mulholland; M. Morris; D. O'Brien; F. O'Daghain; Patrick Rice; Aine Mac Aindrea; A. Thompson; M. Fitzmaurice; Seosamh O'Misteail; Aine B. Mhic an Iolair; L O'Ceallaigh; A. MacPoilin; A. Andrews.

B. Mhic Sheain; Maire B. Mhic Sheain; I. O'Cradair; Moya Barry; Celia O'Reilly; Mary Kelly; Sister M. John; L. G. Andrews; B. O'hAirt; David Rice; Eamonn McFlynn; S. MacDiarmada; Maire Murray; Alice Kennedy; Bernard Kennedy; M. McHenry; D. Ferran; Mary McKeown; E. Sullivan; N. Chambers; A. Pheonix; G. McIlwee; M. F. Mooney; Maura Burns; Kate Green.

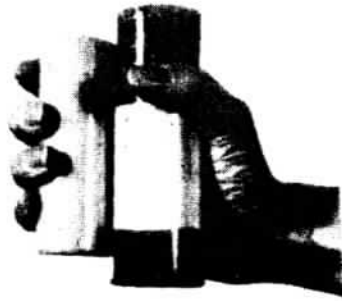
Catherine Hunt; Fedelma Byrne; K. McCarrick; R. McArdle; S. McKenna; M. McGaughey; Teresa G. Murray; Geraldine Moore; Geraldine Matthews; Mary J. McKenna; Aileen Mullan; A. McElroy; Teresa Quinn; Clare Agnew; Peter Louis Forte; Eileen M. Carragher; Patrick Doris; M. Wilson; M. White; Leo Boyle.

Patricia Rosbotham; Siobhan O'Doherty; Ann Hamill; Marie Kelly; Finbar McCormack; Gregory Hinds; Declan Marrison; M. Zubier; Kevin Smyth; J. Denvir; P. Connolly; M. Thompson; P. G. Aherne; Alaistir O'Cuinn; P. Malone; M. O'Hare; T. O'Hare; Pat Lavery; G. Barrett; A. Dullighan; N. O'Neill.





# Plastic Bullets:



## Teachers and the Sacredness of Human Life

### INTRODUCTION

All human life is sacred. This statement must be analysed. Does it mean only that the processes of reproduction and birth must be sacred or does it mean that the killing of a person draws attention to the fact that his life is sacred?

Must we not assert that every phase, indeed every moment, of a human life is sacred? The human person has the continual potential to love God. That is why his life is sacred. He is holy to God. But he can only exercise his love of God from an environment where his human rights are respected as absolute. If his human person is degraded by racism or religious bigotry or an unequal application of the law or by being subjected to material wealth such as money, oil, or gold, then the sacredness of his human life is being destroyed.

### TEACHERS AND THE GROWTH OF HUMAN LIFE

In the Republic of Ireland when a child goes to school he is registered in a new name. Patrick Sweeney becomes Padraig MacSuibhne. He gets a new identity symbolised by the change of name. It is as if the state took on a propriety right to provide for his education, introduce him to human rights and develop his potential.

Teachers have a particularly important part to play not only in fostering in the young mind the sense of the uniqueness and sacredness of his own life, and the respect and reverence due to the lives of others, but also the teachers must defend the lives of the children entrusted to their care.

Parents will feed and protect their children out of love in most cases, out of maternal instinct in the rest. I think, however, that the child's first contact with the outside world is with the "state", the "government", the "civil power", the "law" when he goes to school. In an ideal situation the child should see all these powers as benign and protective of his existence in human rights. What a tragedy if the school child sees them as hostile, as murderers and deceivers who blow off the heads of his tiny companions with plastic bullets and cover up the

crime? Surely the child in his own way, perplexed by the hatred and hostility from public life and the authorised agents of the government, will turn to his teachers and say - "Make it right. Make it right." Most of the injuries from plastic bullets have been children. In the words of the International Tribunal in Belfast last year, "their injuries approach in severity those that would occur in war." I will never forget the 14 year old boy who moved like a crab across the floor to testify at that tribunal. Surely the message of the deaths and injuries of these children by plastic bullets is - "Destroy the iniquity and the evil. Restore publicly the love and protection of family life."

The teachers of Belfast and Derry have seen ten of their children killed by the state in a hostile and brutal fashion. No explanation is forthcoming. In each case the crime has been covered up (The DPP recommends no prosecutions). Some people give the impression that a child is expendable - "only a child, they say" - as if the children of the city streets do not count, as if their lives were less valuable. To teachers this is doubly hurtful because they realise the potential that is there. This is the great fulfilment and satisfaction in the world of teachers - their nearness to potential and the springs of life in children. Despite last year's International Tribunal, despite the fact that the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly to ban the use of plastic bullets in all 10 European Common Market countries, the Secretary of State Mr Prior, Lord Gowrie, Sir John Hermon insist on retaining them for use against Irish children. They will be brought out again. More children will die. People said the plastic bullet was used in vengeance in the hunger strike period and that it would not be used after that. People with power and influence in state and church withdrew. Then Stephen McConomy, aged 11 years, was killed.

Teachers have to face a **death culture** which is the opposite of the living imaginative potential culture they are called to promote and enjoy in others. Teachers watch their children grow and express themselves in art forms, life, joy and liberty. That should be the way, but they face the death culture - like the Ballymurphy slogan - "Is there a life before death?" It is the state, who should be the upholders of law, who are promoting the death culture as well as "outlaws". Take a look at West Belfast. On one side of the M1 lies Boucher Road with its splendid factories, on the school side of the M1 colossal unemployment. The Miltown and City cemeteries are more than symbolic. Teachers of West Belfast are faced with a death society.

### THE CHURCH

The pro-life constitutional amendment in the Republic is current news. The Church supports it because the Church regards human life as sacred from the first moment of conception to birth. The Church has also been very clear in its condemnation of murder but the intensity and directedness and follow-through of its condemnations has sometimes appeared to vary with the social importance of the person murdered. Can it be said that the reaction to some murders, and I mention here the 14 rubber and plastic bullet deaths and the slaying of Danny Barret (aged 15 years), suggests that the Church is

strong with the weak and weak with the strong? Carol Anne Kelly, Julie Livingstone and Danny Barret have been largely forgotten by the people who took responsibility for them when they passed outside the family home, namely the schools and the Church. The ghosts of these children are knocking at the doors of the people who said - "We will be responsible for moulding you and shaping you and upholding your potential and your talents." "The ghosts of these children are asking - "you people who took responsibility for our growth why are you not speaking publicly and effectively about the way in which the growth of our young lives was cut off." The motto of the Christian Church should be - "Don't take me for granted". The day that the state, the government, the army, the media can smugly predict that the Church will react within the ambit of their power will be a day of death for the Church. The Church must always be ready to do the unexpected, to take the path of greatest loss to defend the "little ones".

Jesus told a parable about children - "See that you don't despise any of these little ones. Their angels in heaven, I tell you, are always in the presence of my Father in heaven. What do you think? What will a man do who has one hundred sheep and one of them gets lost? He will leave the other ninety-nine grazing on the hillside and go

to look for the lost sheep. When he finds it, I tell you, he feels far happier over this one sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not get lost. In just the same way your Father in heaven does not want any of these little ones to be lost."

Mr Kevin Boyle, Professor of Law, Galway University will be bringing the cases of the deaths by plastic bullets here to the European Commission of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The Association for Legal Justices, Fr. Denis Faul, and myself appreciate the support in this action from the Organisation of Concerned Teachers. Young people often say that they cannot see a way to justice except by violence, that the violent only yield to force and violence. The Church's call to a peaceful political way to justice is just hollow words unless it provides the practical alternative. It must be seen to identify and work with the unemployed, the poverty line, the plastic bullets' victims, to leave the ninety-nine grazing and go after the "little one" that is lost.

*Fr Raymond Murray*

**Text of lecture delivered to the Organisation of Concerned Teachers, Lake Glen Hotel, Belfast, 24 June 1982.**



## Condemnations in the U.S.A.



The tragedies connected with the use of plastic bullets have a wide publicity in the United States. Mr Denis Dillon, District Attorney for Nassau County, New York, member of the Democratic Party and Mr Peter King, Counsel for the town of Hempstead, New York, and a member of the Republican Party, who both were on the panel of the International Inquiry on plastic bullets in Belfast, August 1981, broadcast the findings when they returned to the United States. Both men testified before the Ad Hoc Congressional Committee for Irish Affairs (Chairman: Congressman Mario Biaggi). Summaries of their testimonies were published in the November-December edition of the National Hibernian Digest, newspaper of the Ancient Order of Hibernians U.S.A.

Mr Denis Dillon also spoke on TV commercial aired on WABC-TV, New York during February and March and on WPLJ-FM Radio on St. Patrick's Day. This is the script of the commercial:-

### THE HONORABLE DENIS DILLON

February 1982

*"The British Army and Royal Ulster Constabulary are killing and maiming innocent men, women, and children in Northern Ireland. I'm Nassau County District Attorney Denis Dillon. Recently, as a member of an International Tribunal which met in Belfast at the request of the Association for Legal Justice, I heard evidence of how Plastic Bullets have been used by British Security Forces to kill seven people and severely injure more than 150 others over the past year. Twelve year old Carol Anne Kelly was deliberately shot and killed while returning from the store with a pint of milk. Thirty year old Nora McCabe was deliberately shot and killed while going to the store for a pack of cigarettes. I believe that such use of weaponry is lethal in intent and effect. Evidence suggests that it is purposive action and part of policy in Northern Ireland".*

This was played on Radio Ulster on 5 March with unfavourable commentary. That brought a response from Fr. Raymond Murray who write to the Director of Radio Ulster and to the BBC, London. The letter was published in the press:-

### BBC Radio Ulster News bias

Sir, - On Friday morning March 5, listeners to BBC Radio Ulster heard a recording of an advertisement of American Irish Unity on ABC television against the use of plastic bullets for killing and maiming by British forces in the

north of Ireland. The voice was that of Mr. Dennis Dillon, District Attorney for Nassau County, New York, a distinguished member of the Democratic Party. Nassau County has a population of a million and a half and Mr Dillon would be the equivalent of a Minister of Justice here.

What I want to object to here is the disgraceful biased commentary of Miss Wendy Austin. She referred to American Irish Unity as "so-called". Why "so-called"? That is its name. She referred to Mr Dillon's protest against the killing of seven civilians and the injuring of many other by plastic bullets as "propaganda". What Mr Dillon stated was factual. It is just that Miss Wendy Austin and the news room editor of Radio Ulster can not accept such facts.

Mr Denis Dillon was a member of an International Tribunal of Inquiry into deaths and serious injuries caused by plastic bullets in N. Ireland which took place in Belfast 3-4 August last year. The other distinguished members were Mr Peter King, counsel for the town of Hempstead, New York, and a member of the Republican Party, Mr Antoine Lazurus, doctor of medicine, Paris, Mr Tim Shallice, neuro sychologist and a member of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science, London, Mr. Antoine Comte lawyer, and a member of the international Federation of Human Rights, Paris. They considered the plastic bullet a lethal weapon and recommended that its use be banned in N. Ireland.

Would Miss Austin consider the killings of Julie Livingstone, aged 14 years, Carol Ann Kelly, aged 12 years, Mrs Nora McCabe, housewife, aged 30 years and mother of three little children, as "propaganda"? Would she consider the blinding of Mrs Emma Groves, aged 51 years and mother of eleven children "propaganda"? Would she consider as "propaganda" the gross maiming of Martine Prior (14 years), Mrs Mary Cairns, mother of eight children, Mrs Sarah Taggart, Mrs Bannon, Mrs Bridget Croston, aged 66 years, Anne Marie McMullan, aged 15 years, Mrs Maguire (an elderly lady), Mrs Sarah Wildy, Mrs Begley, Mrs R. Murray, Mrs Collins, Mrs McDonald, Margaret McElorum (15 years), Marie McKernan (15 years), Mrs Kathleen Hanna (24 years), Mrs Rosaleen Magee, Anne Bradley (13 years), Christine Maguinness (16 years)?

These killings and injuries were horrifying. Consider the testimony of a witness of the shooting of twelve year old Carol Ann Kelly:- "The children came into view just as four army jeeps pulled around a bend in the road. A shot was fired and 12 year old Carol Ann Kelly crumpled to the sidewalk.

"As I stood shocked, one of my neighbours rushed to the girl's side and shouted for a towel .....I ran inside, got a towel and came running out. He put the towel under her head. There was one massive big hole in her head. "

"By then, the patrol - later identified by the army as members of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers - had returned, jeering and shouting, 'One for our five mates'." It is disgraceful that the news editing of Radio Ulster shows no sensitivity to the Irish Catholic identity who make up forty per cent of the population here. I would like to see freedom of the media here as I have



experienced it in the U.S.A., New Zealand, Germany, Italy and France. We should press for independent radio so that a substantial people here can have its fair say, political-wise, cultural-wise and religious-wise. - Yours etc.

Fr. Raymond Murray  
Armagh.

Mr James Hawthorne, Controller, BBC, Northern Ireland, replied as follows:

16th March 1982

Dear Father Murray,

Thank you for your letter of 8th March, which I had read earlier in the Irish News.

That innocent people can be killed by plastic bullets is indeed a tragedy and, rightly, a matter of public concern; concern which, I would submit, has been reflected through recent BBC programmes. Nor is there any doubt about the integrity of many who hold strong views about the use of plastic bullets and who wish to campaign against their use.

But the story about American Irish Unity's paid commercial on ABC opens up other questions about the way the troubles here are presented and perceived in America. It was proper that, having replayed the entire content of the "commercial" (which in this country would be illegal under the various broadcasting Acts) we should stand apart from it editorially. In that context Wendy Austin's comment that "it smacks of propaganda" was justifiable, indeed restrained. As to the prefix "so called",

I would concede that it implies a degree of non-acceptance but this often happens to organisations whose titles (a) contain an implication and (b) are new to the ears of the majority of our listeners.

## U.S.A. Condemnations

Mr Denis Dillon and Mr Peter King, District Attorney and Controller respectively, of Nassau County, New York, issued a joint statement on St. Patrick's Day 1982. Besides the deaths of the Hunger Strikers, torture, and degrading prison conditions they mentioned the lethal plastic bullet "which is used to intimidate the Catholic community by the cold-blooded murder of innocent men, women and children".

The testimony of Mr Dillon and Mr King was taken up by other Irish organisations among them "American Irish Unity Committee" who sponsored Mr Dillon's commercial and included information on plastic bullets in circulars. Mr Peter King spoke on the plastic bullets on 3 December 1981 sponsored by the New York Brehon Society. New York H-Block/Armagh Committee featured the story of the wounding of 11 year old Dermot Gallagher in Twin brook in a new sheet 14 September 1981. The **Boston Irish Echo** printed large extracts of **Rubber and Plastic Bullets Kill and Maim** in its edition of 24 October 1981. The death of Julie Livingstone was featured in an article on Belfast in **Time** 11 January 1982. The Political Education Committee of the Ancient Order

of Hibernians carried an article "England's Plastic Bullet - A Killer" by Ray O'Connor of Florida in its **National Newsletter** (Vol. 6, No.5).



Clara Reilly (ALJ), shows plastic bullets to the Philadelphia Inquirer - Monday September 13 1982

## Allegheny International

On 28 April Mrs Emma Groves who was blinded by a rubber bullet fired by a British paratrooper into her home on 4 November 1971 flew out to New York with Mr Alec McLaughlin (19) of Derry who lost an eye on 21 April 1981 when British troops fired on a group outside a dance hall. They hoped to meet the president of Allegheny International, a multi-national metals company based in Pittsburgh with sales of two billion dollars in 1981. The occasion was the annual general meeting of the shareholders. According to the report by Sean Cronin in **The Irish Times** 1 May 1982 a shareholder who identified himself as John Treacy said at the end of the 1981 report - "What connection has Schemuly with Allegheny International?" He said that there two victims of Schemuly's products outside in the anteroom who would like to meet Mr Buckley. "I would like to meet them after the meeting", Mr Buckley said. A second shareholder stood up and identified himself as James Rooney. He asked "Why is Allegheny making plastic bullets that kill people in Northern Ireland?" Mr Rooney placed a plastic bullet on Mr Buckley's table. "What's this?" the president of Allegheny asked. "One of our plastic rounds that is used in Northern Ireland", he replied.

"We don't produce them anymore," Mr Buckley said. "We haven't made a shipment recently. The last consignment under that arrangement was one year ago.

That product was not considered lethal."

A third shareholder, Mr Pat Quinn asked - "If this is such a small part of our business, why do we do it?" Mr Buckley shouted - "It's part of a product in our business of riot control. We got out of the business but we are still distributing the product. You are now out of order". The meeting was adjourned.

Mr Buckley did not meet two victims. A group of demonstrators milled about the entrance to the club. Asked if he did not think it odd that a company with so many Irish-Americans on its top management should supply plastic bullets to the British Army for use in N. Ireland, Mr Clayton-Sweeney, executive vice-president, replied: "When the matter of Northern Ireland came to our attention, we did what we could to end it. And we ended it".

At home Fr. Raymond Murray took exception to Wendy Austin's interview with Mrs Groves on BBC Scene Around Six on 27 April before she left for the U.S.A. His letter appeared in the press:-

Sir, - It is a tragedy for our country that a genial faced Jim Prior MP should declare on BBC 1 **Question Time** on April 29, that the British Government would continue to use the plastic bullet in the north of Ireland. It is a murderous weapon and it will mean the death of more Catholic children like Stephen McConomy who will be blasted on the head from close range. Mr Prior at the same time appeals to the nationalist Catholic people to support his devolution plans.

Can he not see that he is going forward with the ballot box in one hand and the plastic bullet gun in the other? It does not take a prophet to foresee that if an election takes place there will be people who will write "Ban Plastic Bullets" over their ballot paper (shades of a previous election for an assembly while internment continued).

I thank Mrs Emma Groves and Alex McLaughlin, both injured by these bullets, for going to the United States to bravely speak in their quiet way against this terrible weapon. Mrs Groves is the mother of twelve children, one of whom she lost in an accident when he was a child. She has eighteen grandchildren. She would love to see them but she can't because she was blinded by a British paratrooper who fired through the open window of her home because he could not stand Irish music.

I do not thank the BBC **Scene Around Six** who interviewed her on Tuesday 27th April. Wendy Austin immediately got down to business with questions on "Propaganda" and "Provisional IRA". This is grossly unfair. There has been enough data given on plastic bullets for Wendy Austin to know enough to conduct an interview in a fair manner. I feel this is typical of the policy of Radio Ulster and **Scene Around Six**. What a contrast to the daily breakfast special Radio Ulster gave us when the Loyalist delegation visited the United States! Anything that has not got a pro British and Anti-nationalist slant is censored on Radio Ulster. Isn't it high time we had a free radio to voice other aspirations?

The hospital authorities objected recently to the horrendous picture of poor little Stephen McConomy dying on the "Life Machine". If the promised medical survey on deaths and injuries by plastic bullets appeared

soon, then there would be no need to publish such photographs. What is the delay? Is it not a matter of life and death?

During the Brixton riots when a young man got injured on the back by the casing of a CS cannister the surgeon was so annoyed that he appeared on television and gave an interview to the **Guardian** newspaper. Rightly so and what was that compared to the present racial policy against Catholic Irish children. - Yours.



**Mrs Emma Groves, the Belfast women blinded by a rubber bullet ten years ago, with her 4½-year-old granddaughter Louise, whom she has never seen.**

Shortly after Mrs Groves arrived back from the U.S.A., after lobbying Allegheny people and meetings arranged for her with Congressman Mario Biaggi and other Congressmen by the Irish National Caucus, her home was raided by the British Army from 6.30 a.m. to 11 a.m. on 25 May. Fr. Faul said it was obvious that the efforts made by Mrs Groves "to stop the use of a lethal weapon which blinded and killed school children had displeased the British".

All this pressure from Irish Americans proved successful when Allegheny withdrew from the business of plastic bullets. Allegheny is the parent firm to the Wilkinson Sword Group Ltd., a British Company that manufactured the plastic bullets. Mr Robert J. Buckley, chairman and president of the conglomerate sent the following telegram to Mr John Thornton editor of the **Irish Echo** (see its issue of 26 June). Here is a photostat copy:-

Telegram

1982 JUN 15 14:25

PGA157(1122)(1-010597A166)PD 06/15/82 1120

ICS IPMPGPB PGH  
02050 PITTSBURGH PENN 98 06-15 1140AM EST  
PMS MR JAMES CALDWELL  
CHAIRMAN PITTSBURGH CHAPTER  
IRISH NATIONAL CAUCUS INC  
803 SWISSVALE AVE  
PITTSBURGH PA 15221

HAND DELIVER ONLY

MEMORANDUM TO:  
SUBJECT:  
FROM:  
DATE:

CONCERNED PARTIES  
PLASTIC BULLETS  
ROBERT J BUCKLEY, CHAIRMAN AND PRESIDENT  
JUNE 15 1982

IN RESPONSE TO INQUIRIES REGARDING ALLEGHENY INTERNATIONAL'S  
INVOLVEMENT IN THE MARKET FOR PLASTIC BULLETS USED FOR RIOT-CONTROL,  
THE COMPANY WISHES TO STATE THAT IT HAS WITHDRAWN COMPLETELY

W.A. 1201-SF (A8-08)

Whatever reasons Allegheny had for ending the plastic bullet business Mr Buckley made it clear on an interview to Radio Ulster that it was for commercial reasons only. On 3 June 1982 the Irish National Caucus sponsored the appearance of Mr Richard Balfe, Member of the European parliament, before the Congressional Committee for Irish Affairs. Mr Balfe included the banning of plastic bullets in his address and his speech was carried in the *Irish Briefing*, publication of the Irish National Caucus.

### Congress Resolutions

Several resolutions were introduced in both Houses of Congress calling on the British Government to ban the use of plastic bullets. The resolutions in the House of Representatives were as follows:-

#### H. Con. Res. 356

To call for an end to the use of plastic bullets by British Security forces in Northern Ireland

#### IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. Biaggi (for himself, Mr. Gilman, Mr. Zefeferetti, Mr. Carney, Mr. Fish, Mr. Foglietta, and Ms. Ferraro) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

### Concurrent Resolution

To call for an end to the use of plastic bullets by British security forces in Northern Ireland

Whereas since April 1981 seven people, including five children under the age of fifteen, have been killed in the six counties of Northern Ireland by plastic bullets fired by British security forces;

Whereas since January 1981 one hundred and eighty-one persons have been seriously injured by plastic bullets, including several individuals who were blinded;

Whereas many of the aforementioned deaths and injuries were among innocent civilians in nonriot situations;

Whereas official statistics from the Northern Ireland office indicate that twenty-four thousand eight hundred and thirty plastic bullets were fired during the first seven months of 1981;

Whereas the British Government specifically refused to use plastic bullets in Manchester; and



Whereas the European Parliament overwhelmingly adopted a resolution calling for a ban on the use of plastic bullets by member Countries: Now, therefore, be it.

**Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress hereby expresses its opposition to the use of plastic bullets by British security forces in the six counties of Northern Ireland, and urges the President to call on the British Government to terminate its use of plastic bullets in the six counties of Northern Ireland.**

### **Friends of Ireland**

The Friends of Ireland group in Congress also tabled resolutions on plastic bullets and in addition they called for a ban on the UDA. The resolutions were in the name of Senators Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.) and Patrick Moynihan (D. N.-Y.) in the Senate and of representatives James Shannon (D-Mass.), and Charles Dougherty (R-Pa.) in the House. The resolution on the plastic bullets said the Friends of Ireland delegation which visited Ireland the previous month received a "negative response" from the British authorities to their representations on the use of plastic bullets. The resolution asked Congress to condemn the employment of plastic bullets in N. Ireland and to ask the British Government to ban their use.

Senator Kennedy in a statement on the plastic bullets said "when fired, a plastic bullet has a muzzle velocity of 160 miles an hour. That velocity as the British describe it, is approximately the speed achieved by a fast bowler in cricket. In terms with which the Senate is more familiar, the velocity of a fastball pitched by Nolan Ryan of the Houston Astros, the fastest pitcher in baseball, reaches 100 miles an hour. So a civilian facing a plastic bullet is, in effect exposed to a missile travelling about twice as fast as Nolan Ryan's fastest pitch. And that can kill you."

### **New York**

The effect of the unjustifiable killings of innocent civilians can perhaps be best understood by the extract from a letter in the press from Clara Reilly (28/9/82):

While out sight-seeing on a recent holiday in New York, I was astonished one day to see a large gathering of people demonstrating outside the British Consulate right in the centre of the city.

A voice was booming from a loud-hailer: "Who killed 14-year-old Julie Livingstone?" The crowd shouted back, "The British." The voice continued, "Who killed 12-year-old Carol Anne Kelly?" Back came the answer "The British". Who killed 15-year-old Danny Barrett?" Again, "The British".

On and on the voice went recalling the deaths of numerous people killed by the RUC and British Army. I couldn't believe my eyes and after speaking to some of the organisers, learned that every day for the past 17 months from the day Bobby Sands commenced his hunger strike in fact, a two hour daily picket has been taking place outside the Embassy.



**STANDARD PLASTIC BULLET. ACTUAL SIZE.**



# Plastic Bullet Injuries

July 1981 - October 1982



## 1981

### May-August: Anne Bradley, Belfast.

Statement of Anne Bradley, Glenaline Park, Belfast. Age 13. On 14th May at around 10 p.m. I was in the Disco in Ballymurphy Community Centre on Whiterock Road. There had been some trouble on the road so my mother came to the disco to bring us home. In Glenalina Road some young lads were rioting but all was quiet in Glenalina Park. One soldier fired 2 rubber bullets up our street and I got hit by one on the back of the left leg. I got into the house but couldn't get to the hospital that night because of the rioting. My mammy took me to the Royal Victoria Hospital on Saturday 16th May. My ankle and calf of my leg was black. The doctor said it would probably be like that for 10 days. We never reported it to the police but on Monday 17th August the police came to my home and told me to go to the the Henry Teggart Police Station that night. We went over that night at 7.45 p.m. and spoke to a C.I.D. man. He never told us his name. The first words he spoke was directed to my mother. He looked at her and said, "Is any of your family involved". My mother asked what he meant and he said, "Involved in the I.R.A." My mother was shocked and said she was there to answer questions about me and not about her family. The next question was again to my mother. "Are you involved yourself". My mother said she was 49 years of age and that was a stupid question. He said daft or stupid he had to ask because from the youngest to the oldest are involved nowadays. He then went on to ask about the rubber bullet injury. He brought out a sheet of paper and wrote on it that we had no objections to the police inquiring into the hospital records. This only took up about 4 lines of the page and he asked both my mother and me to sign the top and bottom of the page. My mother said she wanted me to sign directly below the 4 lines as the rest of the page would have been left blank. He very reluctantly said she could. He took a statement concerning the incident and we left.

The police came back to our house on Wednesday 19th August to see if we could go back over to the station that night. My mother said she couldn't go, so he said to go the following night between 7 and 7.30 p.m. We didn't go. They came back on Friday between 10 and 10.30 a.m. and spoke to me asking why we didn't go Thursday night. We were told to go over between 2 and 3 o'clock on Friday. My mother was getting a bit annoyed and

went and reported it to the Whiterock Resource Centre. We didn't go back and the police came on Saturday morning around 12 and said they were sent over to tell us, if we didn't go over they would be out to arrest me. My brother said they couldn't arrest me because I was only 13. The policeman told him to accompany me if he wished and my brother said no. He then told us to "bring Mary with you". My mother said "Mary who" and he said "Mary McMahon, Councillor". My mother asked him where had he been, Mary was not a Councillor any more". He then told us to bring Sean Flynn. They then left.

**Anne Bradley**  
**Signed: B. Bradley**  
**Witnessed Clara Reilly**  
**21.8.81**

### 22 May 1981 Maria McKernan, Belfast. (Statement, July 1981).

Statement of Mrs McKernan, Stanfield Row, Belfast. Concerning plastic bullet injury to her daughter Maria, aged 15 years. My 15 year old daughter got up out of bed when we heard bin lids going on 22nd May at around 1.00 a.m. I told her to check that my 3 year old son was alright in bed. When she went up he was not there. He had got up and run out the back door to my sister's who lives out the back. Maria went out the back and I went out the front. She told me later she didn't remember what happened, except she saw the soldiers at the corner and one fired a plastic bullet at her hitting her on the right breast. She appeared to pass out.

I become so angry I pulled a soldier about the shooting. I was told by neighbours that this soldier had in fact shouted at the other soldiers and told them they had no cause to fire the bullets as there was no riot taking place. Maria was taken to the Royal Victoria Hospital and examined. She was badly bruised and was allowed home.

**Signed: Patricia McKernan**  
**Witnessed: C. Reilly**  
**Dated: 29/7/81**

## **June/August: Christine Maguinness, Belfast.**

Statement of Christine Maguinness, Divismore Crescent, Belfast. Age 16. Around June the street I live in was full of soldiers. They were searching some of the houses as there had been some shooting and a soldier got hit. A lot of people came into the street and the soldiers started making threats but the people wouldn't get back into their houses. One soldiers shouted "Let them have it", and the other soldier started firing plastic bullets at both people and windows. One came through our bathroom window. I was standing at the front door. I turned to run in and got hit on the right leg with a plastic bullet. There was trouble on the road so we couldn't get to the hospital until the following day. The doctor said the ball of the leg was badly bruised and to come back if it started to go red as there could be a clot. I still have a lump where I was hit. I did not report it to the police but on Monday 17th August they came to our house with a note asking us to go to New Barnsley Police Station that night at 7.30 p.m. When we went the CID. I made a statement, also my mother.

**Signed: Christine Maguinness  
Witnessed: Clara Reilly  
19/8/81**

## **8 July, Robert Brady, Belfast.**

Statement of Mrs. K. McQuillan, Monagh Crescent, Turf Lodge concerning plastic bullet injury to her brother, Robert Brady, on the 8th July.

On 8th July '81 my brother Robert was on his way to my mother's shop in the Kashmir Road, at around 8.30 a.m. He was crossing the Falls Road at Leeson Street when he was struck in the stomach by a plastic bullet fired by the R.U.C. The police landrover did not stop and some fellow took him to the Royal Victoria Hospital. He was operated on and the doctor said he had internal bleeding and they had to stitch the liver and the bladder. He was critically injured and the doctor said it was touch and go.

The operation lasted four hours and he was given the last rites. He remained in the Intensive Care for several days and was then moved to Ward 20. On his release he consulted a solicitor, who contacted the police, who said they were not aware he had been hit. The solicitor is pressing for compensation. At the moment Robert is not allowed to smoke or drink and he looks really ill from the incident.

**Signed: Mrs. K. McQuillan  
Witnessed: Clara Reilly  
Dated: 2/8/81.**

## **22 July - Brian McDonnell, Belfast**

Statement of Brian McDonnell, Springfield Ave., Belfast, Relating how he was struck on the back by a plastic bullet. On Wednesday 22nd July at around 9.15 p.m. I was driving my taxi down the Glen Road to get diesel oil. I was stopped by an army foot-patrol. They asked me to turn the engine off and asked for my driving licence. I was just getting out of the taxi and a person I knew came over. He

was standing on one side, soldier on the other ran up and a few words were exchanged.

I was standing spread-eagled on the taxi when I heard a bang. I held on to the door and tried not to fall down. I was only 4 feet away. They took money out of my pocket and placed it on the bonnet. They searched me and then the taxi, then walked away. I went to the police station and made a complaint. The policewoman on the desk started to write down my statement. A sergeant came in and asked me did I want to see the superintendent. I said no the policewoman would do. The sergeant told the policewoman he would take over. The superintendent came in and they all walked into a room and left me standing there. I went to the door and told a policeman, I was going to Springfield Road. They advised me not to go to the hospital and I would have to go to Andersonstown as it happened in that area. I went to the Royal Victoria Hospital where I was detained until the following day. I was badly bruised and shocked. I have now put my case in the hands of my solicitor. I have been harassed by the same soldiers who keep asking me what about my back. I went again to the police and made a complaint about the harassment.

**Signed: Brian McDonnell  
Witnessed: Clara Reilly  
Dated: 2/8/81**

## **30 July: Michael Irvine, Belfast.**

Statement of Michael Irvine, St. Peter's Row, Belfast. Age 16. I was coming out of work on 30th July at around 5 p.m. I had reached the bottom of Northumberland Street on the Falls Road. I saw 2 saracens coming up Albert Street and the soldiers started shouting out at me and they gave me the fingers sign. I gave the sign back again. I noticed the plastic bullet gun coming out of the hatch of the second saracen. I heard a bang and felt the pain in my right arm and felt sick. I fell to the ground. The saracens drove on. I was helped up and taken to the priests house. He took me to hospital were I was detained for 14 days. I have a compound fracture of the arm and had 4 stitches inserted in a wound. I also might lose my job as I work in a training centre and they have said they can't hold my job open. The soldiers were the Royal Marines Commandoes.

**Signed: Michael Irvine  
Mrs C. Irvine.  
Witnessed: Clara Reilly  
19 August 1981**

## **1st August, Paul Hall, Belfast.**

Statement of Paul Hall, 107 Ballymurphy Road, Belfast. I had been to a party and was on my way home with my brother and his wife. This was Saturday 1st August 1981 at around 2.00 a.m. We were walking down the Springfield Road. I don't remember even getting hit but was told later than police jeeps came past and fired plastic bullets at us. I got hit with 2 bullets, one on the crown of the head, the other over the left ear. I was knocked unconscious and was carried into a house. I was taken to the Royal Victoria Hospital and was detained. I had around 35 stitches inserted in the head



wounds and the whole upper part of my right arm mostly my shoulder is black. I don't know if I got hit there with a third bullet. I have to attend the Out-patients later in August. I can hardly eat food as it's painful to chew. There was rioting further down the Springfield Road at the time I was hit but I was no way involved.

**Signed: Paul Hall**  
**Witnessed: Clara Reilly**  
**Dated: 11/8/81**

## **2 August, Patricia McGivern, Belfast.**

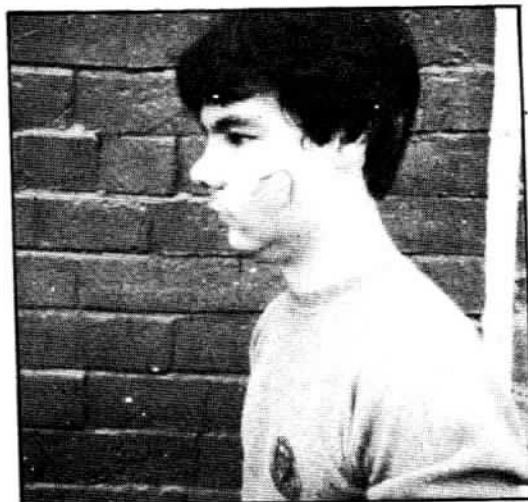
Statement of Patricia McGivern, Sevastapol Street, Belfast. Status: Married, 3 children. On Sunday 2nd August 1981 at around 8.40 p.m. I came out of my home and walked down the street to get my son and daughter who were rattling bin lids. The word had just come that Kieran Doherty had died on hunger strike in Lor.g Kesh. A number of soldiers were standing at the top of Leeson Street, pointing their guns in our direction. I got a bit afraid as we were right beside them. I held the bin-lid which I had picked up from the ground in front of my face. I had a feeling they might fire plastic bullets. I said to the soldiers not to be pointing their guns at people's heads. A crowd of young fellows came running down the Falls Road and started throwing stones. I bent down to lift the bin lid which I had dropped and the next thing I knew the soldier had fired the plastic bullet which struck me on the right hand. I was stunned and fell on glass on the ground. I remember jumping up and running into someone's hall on the Falls Road and I then collapsed when I saw the blood over my hand. An ambulance came on the scene and I was taken to the Royal Victoria Hospital. I had a number of stitches inserted in my knee where I had fallen on the glass. The doctor said he was not experienced enough to do my hand so they had to send for a surgeon. A lot of injuries were done to my hand which is now in a plaster of paris. The skin was completely taken off my hand with the impact of the rubber bullet. The doctor ..... asked me the following morning when I returned what I had been holding. When I told him a bin-lid, he said I was a lucky woman. He said the hand was not as bad as he first thought and I was to return on Thursday to see about skin graft. I have no feeling in my fingers at the time of writing and I intend taking an action against the soldiers involved.

**Signed: Patricia McGivern,**  
**Witnessed: Clara Reilly**  
**Dated: 4/8/81**

## **August** **Dermot Gallagher, Twinbrook,** **Belfast.**

There was no riot when 11 year old Dermot Gallagher finished delivering newspapers and ran from an alley to the footpath near his home. "They just fired a plastic and it hit me and I fell," the boy said. "A soldier grabbed me by the arm and took me to the jeep. Then some other fellows took me to hospital". The boy suffered a fractured skull and a broken nose. He was three weeks in hospital. He still has trouble trying to flex his hand. His mother was afraid that this was due to brain damage.

## **4th August -** **Steven McFarlene, Belfast**



Statement of Mrs Rosaleen McFarlene, Highbury Gardens, Ardoyne concerning the plastic bullet injury to her son, Steven, aged 16yrs. Some rioting had been taking place in Butler St., and my son was brought into my mother's house out of the way. This was on 4th August at around 1.30 a.m. She kept him there until that time. My mother sent my brother to take Steven home. They had reached the corner of Butler St. when Steven was struck on the left side of the face by a plastic bullet. He was knocked unconscious and was taken to hospital by car. He was detained overnight and had around 20 stitches inserted. Mr..... said they were not sure if he had a hair line fracture. It was confirmed later that he had. His face was very badly swollen and is scarred. The doctor told him to be careful of the slightest knock because he could end up having a big operation. Steven has complained that a bone in his face has moved. He has to attend the out-patients of the Royal Victoria Hospital every week. Part of his face he has no sense of feeling and on Sunday 9th August blood was oozing from the wound. I'm not sure if it was the police or army who fired the bullet.

**Signed: R. McFarlene**  
**Witnessed: C. Reilly**  
**Dated: 12/8/81**

## **5th August, Paul Smith, Belfast.**

Statement of Paul Smith, Rockmount Street, Belfast. On Tuesday, 5th August 1981 I went to the shop to get some milk and cigarettes. As I got to the corner of my street Rockmount Street/and the Falls Road, I had just walked by a couple of houses on the Falls Road and there was a soldier standing at some railings along in front of me. This soldier fired a plastic bullet at me hitting me on the right hand. As soon as this happened I came up home again. A neighbour went to the soldiers to ask them to send an ambulance but was told that no ambulance was getting into the area. I was taken to hospital in a private taxi. I was kept in the hospital for 6 days. I have compound fractures of my index finger and the one next to it. I am still attending hospital. I have my finger

strapped up and they told me at the hospital I will have them like this for about 6 weeks. The incident happened just after midnight. I have 6 stitches in my fingers.

**Signed for Paul Smith by his wife as he couldn't use his hand.**

**Witnessed: P. Kelly  
Dated: 15/8/81.**

Add. After I got out of hospital I had to report to Springfield R.U.C. Station as my wife had phoned them about the incident. I made a statement to the R.U.C. about the incident on the 11/8/81.

Note: A police Constable . . . pushed the soldier who kept on firing at the time of the incident against the saracen and told him to stop firing and that he would do witness for any hit with a plastic bullet.

## **9 August, Niels Henrik, Nielsen, Denmark.**

Statement of Erik Nielsen. Concerning the plastic bullet injury to his friend Niels Henrik Nielsen. Both belong to a group of Danis Observers sent here. On Saturday night 8th August 1981, around midnight my friend and I stood watching the bon-fire in the New Lodge Road. We were standing on the perimeter when we noticed the soldiers with their faces blackened.

I heard some shots and I believed it was the RUC who fired them because 3 or 4 of their vehicles had drove up to the corner. We started to run when I saw Niels Henrik fall. Two people lifted and carried him into the H-Block centre.

An ambulance came and he was taken to the Mater Hospital with a plastic bullet wound to the lower part of his stomach. Two people were also in the ambulance with plastic bullet injuries to the legs. My friend remained in hospital overnight and is still in constant pain.

**Signed: Eric Nielsen  
Witnessed: Clara Reilly  
Dated: 11/8/81**

Statement of Greta Trojgaard Hausen, Denmark. 13th August, 1981, Belfast. I hereby state that Niels-Henrik Nielsen the 9th of August (first after mid-night) was hit by a plastic bullet on the groin. The incident happened in the New Lodge area where a bon-fire was taking place. A lot of people were standing (gaily) watching this. Suddenly several soldiers with blackened faces appeared and they started firing plastic bullets.

I want to make it absolutely clear, that there was no rioting in the area and therefore there no need for using these plastic bullets. I can add that several other people needed hospital care after they were hit with plastic bullets on the same night but I don't know the names of these injured people.

You can contact me for further information on this case.

Statement of Inger Viuther Johansen, Denmark, I hereby state that on the night of August 9th (after midnight) when my friend Niels Henrik Nielsen was hit on the groin by a plastic bullet fired by British soldiers

there was no riot taking place whatsoever. We, a group of Danish reporters, had just left a pub and were watching a bon-fire which had just been lit. Everything was peaceful and quiet. British soldiers moved in and were watching the scene. Suddenly they started firing plastic bullets after which people started running in all directions while the soldiers kept on firing. Most of the people round the bonfire were children. I myself had plastic bullets flying past my head as I ran. After I had turned round a corner of a house and I was out of firing range. I looked back and discovered that Niels-Henrik Nielsen had been hit: he was half carried by two men. I didn't see him being hit.

## **9th August. James Neeson, Belfast.**

Statement of Mrs. M. Blaney, Turf Lodge, Belfast. Concerning the plastic bullet injury to her brother James Neeson of Duncairn Parade. My brother was coming home through the New Lodge Road on Sunday 9th August 1981 at around 12.30 a.m. Some rioting was going on and he walked into it. He saw some soldiers and one fired a plastic bullet at him from a distance of 6'. James half turned and was hit on the left side of the back. He was brought into a house and an ambulance was sent for. He doesn't remember anymore until he woke in the Mater Hospital. He was put on the drip as blood clotted in the lung, and they had to make an incision in his side. He was also put on a heart monitoring machine and he is still in the Intensive Care Unit of the Mater. We haven't spoken to any doctor to find out his exact medical condition.

**Signed: Mrs. M. Blaney  
Witnessed: Clara Reilly  
Dated: 12/8/81.**

## **21 August Martin O'Neill Belfast**

Statement from Mr. O'Neill, Butler St., Ardoyne, concerning the plastic bullet injury to his son Martin O'Neill aged 9 years. My 9 year old son Martin and some friends were at the bottom of Brompton Park when some rioting broke out. This was around 7.30 p.m. on Friday 21st August. According to some eye-witnesses Martin was bending down when he was struck by one of several plastic bullets fired by the R.U.C. The bullet hit a gable wall then struck Martin on the left eye. He was taken by car to the Mater Hospital and detained.

The doctors were worried he was going to lose the eye so he was transferred to the Royal Victoria Hospital and at the time of this writing is still detained there. He was examined by a brain surgeon who said he was confident that Martin could have a complete recovery. We have taken advice from a solicitor.

**Signed: Daniel O'Neill  
Witnesses: Clara Reilly  
Dated: 24/8/81**

## 28 August: Paul Corr, Belfast.



**Paul Corr**

Statement of John Corr, Beechmount Pass, Belfast. Age 12. Concerning the plastic bullet injury to his brother Paul aged 12 years. On Friday 28th August 1981 at around 7.45 p.m. my brother Paul and a few of his friends were at the top of Beechmount Grove. Paul had been riding on his friend's bike, and according to eye witnesses he had got off the bike and was standing beside a wall at the side of a house. Two army jeeps passed and one plastic bullet was fired in the direction of Paul and his friends. Paul was hit on the face. Someone came for me and I ran to the scene. His injuries were horrible and he was covered in blood. Some women were holding a folded towel to his face and it was drenched in blood. When the towel was removed I saw his nose was nearly severed. The palate of his mouth had to be re-set in hospital, as it was smashed. A lot of damage was done to his mouth. He was rushed to the Royal Victoria Hospital and was then transferred to Dundonald Hospital for plastic surgery. Paul was operated on overnight and the nurse said a piece of his nose was missing but they hope to correct that with the plastic surgery, over a period of time. At the point and time Paul was hit, there was definitely no riot taking place. My mother and witnesses went to Springfield Road police station to lodge a complaint. The policeman admitted the plastic bullet should never have been fired. The soldiers concerned were the Royal Marine Commandos. Shortly before Paul was hit, local women were about to circulate a petition around the area against the use of plastic bullets.

**Signed: John Corr**  
**Witnessed: Clara Reilly**  
**Dated: 30/8/81**

Paul Corr underwent emergency surgery at the Ulster Hospital, Dundonald, after being rushed there from the Royal Victoria. His sobbing mother told how Paul had gone out on his bike after watching television - "A few minutes later a group of children came to the door saying Paul had been shot by a plastic bullet. I couldn't believe it; he is such a quiet wee boy - why should anyone want to do such a thing? There was no trouble in the district, otherwise he wouldn't have been allowed out in the first place. It was an attack on the child that certainly he in no way deserved."

A youth who was leaving his home off Beechmount Grove was one of the first to reach Paul after the shooting. Liam Burns said - "When I was closing the door I noticed a small group of four or five year olds throwing stones at a jeep. At the same time a wee lad came down across the hill on his bike. There was a bang and when I turned my head the lad was lying on the ground with the bike beside him. His face was ghastly. There was a big hole in it and blood was everywhere. A woman brought out a towel and tried to wipe his face. A short time afterwards the ambulance came and took him away.". Liam said there was no possibility of Paul Corr having thrown any stones - "He was riding the bike; it would be impossible to throw anything at the same time."

Another witness, Mr Robert Burns who lives at Beechmount Crescent said: "I was walking up Beechmount Grove on the way home when two British Army Landrovers passed me. Soldiers were making threatening gestures with their plastic bullet guns at children standing about but I thought they were only joking. Suddenly there was a bang and the Army vehicles sped off. It was a soldier in the second Landrover who fired the plastic bullet. I ran up to the corner where I heard screaming. The injured boy looked awful. His face was completely distorted. He was screaming in agony. Someone must have called an ambulance and a couple of minutes later it arrived and the boy was taken off. No one was throwing bricks or stones at the soldiers. There were only kids about, all under the age of 10. How in God's name could they hurt a big soldier?"

The family went to Springfield RUC barracks and made a complaint. In the Ulster Hospital, Dundonald, the surgeon leading the team of experts told Mrs Corr about the extent of his injuries before she saw him in the intensive care unit. The surgeon told her the bullet had shattered the palate of his mouth and had badly damaged his nose. Comforting her the surgeon said "He doesn't look too bad now. The damage was pretty devastating, but we've been able to fix it, although a little later in life Paul will have to have some more plastic surgery".

Mrs Corr said she wished the marine who had fired the plastic bullet could see the damage he had done to her child. Paul's father died six years ago from cancer.

There was mounting tension in West Belfast over the deaths and injuries and a decision was made to hold a mass demonstration. The Alliance Party and Sinn Féin expressed concern.

On 31 August Paul Corr was taken off the danger list at the Ulster Hospital.

On 30 April 1982 an article entitled "Mutilated for Life" by David Morgan appeared in the **Irish News**. He said that Paul suffered from nightmares, constantly reliving his ordeal. After three days in intensive care he was to undergo four hours of major surgery and spent four months indoors recovering. Morgan wrote - "Paul's injuries were terrible. He had lost pints of blood, his pallet was badly damaged, his teeth had been smashed back into his mouth. And for the next five weeks he could take only liquids and his mouth had been wired



up. Four months later Paul had made a remarkable recovery. But despite the skill of the surgeons he still bears the scars, both physical and mental, of his ordeal. Mrs Corr also relives the events. "They should definitely ban plastic bullets; they have taken too many lives. Paul was one of the lucky ones." She continued "Paul is very nervous but I don't want to start him on tablets. He still has nightmares and he doesn't go out a lot."

### **8th September, Joseph Cartmill, Belfast.**

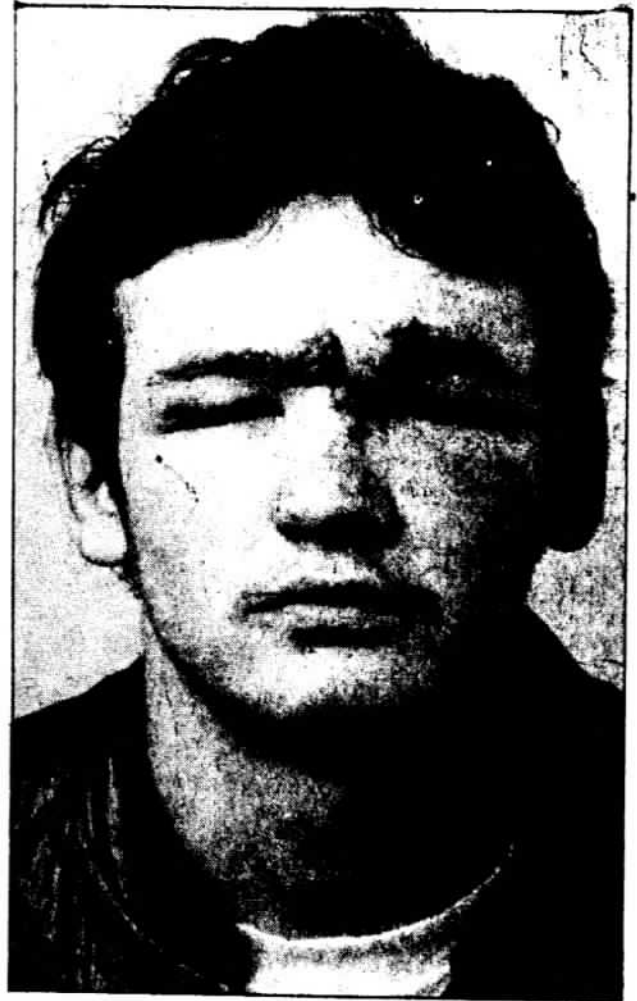
Statement of Mrs. Cartmill, Norglen Parade, Turf Lodge, Belfast. Concerning the plastic bullet injury to her son Joseph, aged 8 years. My son Joseph was staying with his grandmother in Ballymurphy on Tuesday, 8th September. He and a few friends had lit a small fire in Divismore Crescent. The time was around 7.45 p.m. Two jeeps came into the area from the direction of Springfield Road. My son said the jeeps were chasing some young lads. Everyone ran and Joseph stayed where he was. He told me he didn't run because he wasn't doing anything. The second jeep fired a plastic bullet at him and he was hit on the right thigh. He was taken to the hospital and the doctor said he was lucky he didn't get the full impact of the bullet. Joseph's leg was very badly bruised and burnt but he was allowed home after treatment. He had to keep his leg elevated for three days.

My mother went to the Henry Teggart to make a complaint. They said because she didn't witness it they couldn't take a statement off her. They told her to come back if and when she got a witness. She contacted a solicitor about the incident.

**Signed: Mrs. M. Cartmill.**  
**Witnessed: Clara Reilly**  
**Dated: 14/9/81**

### **25 September Michael Mervyn, Belfast.**

Michael Mervyn had a narrow escape from being blinded when struck with a plastic bullet between the eyes. He was coming out of a fish and chip shop near Clonard Street with a friend when, it was stated, a patrol of Marine Commandos came along, stopped on the other side of the road and called the youth over. It is claimed the plastic bullet was fired at him as he was crossing the road towards the patrol. Local residents described how the victim ran into a nearby house, but was pulled out and kicked on the ground by the soldiers. An ambulance was called and he was taken to the Royal Victoria Hospital where he had to receive 20 stitches and suffered a broken nose. His father made an official complaint at Springfield R.U.C. Station. It was emphasised that no disturbance of any kind had been taking place in the vicinity at the time of the incident, nor had the victim who had a speech impediment, been adopting an antagonistic attitude - a view which was shared by eyewitnesses.



Statement of Mr. Mervyn, Brassy Street, Belfast. Concerning his son Michael aged 18 years. On Friday, 25th September at around 11.30 p.m. my son Michael was coming out of a chip shop at the bottom of Clonard Street. A foot patrol of Royal Marine Commandos were on the other side of the street. They called him over and when Michael was approaching them they fired one plastic bullet at him hitting him between the eyes. He fell and got up and ran into a woman's house and the soldiers ran after him. They dragged him out by the hair and punched him in the stomach. An ambulance was called and Michael was taken to the Royal Victoria Hospital where he had 20 stitches inserted in his head. His two eyes were swollen and completely closed. He also had a broken nose. He was detained overnight in hospital and on release I took him to Springfield Road police station and made a complaint. There was no trouble on the road when Michael was hit. He has consulted his solicitor and is taking a case against the army.

**Signed: W. Mervyn**  
**Witnessed: C. Reilly**  
**Dated: 4 October 1981**

**Note: My son has a bad speech defect and has to carry his birth certificate with him in case he is stopped by the army.**

**15 August 1982**  
**Conor Campbell, Lurgan.**



**CONOR CAMPBELL**

After speaking to Conor Campbell, Lurgantarry, Lurgan. Fr. Denis Faul writes: "Conor a very fit 18 year old has a speech impairment and a dent on the left side of his head after being struck by a plastic bullet discharged by RUC at Kilwilkie, Lurgan, on 15 August 1982. The fact that Conor was so fit, due to his football training with St. Peter's Club, Lurgan and his boxing activities, did a lot to help him recover from a very serious injury. It could have been fatal and his mother said he was on the life support machine for most of a week.

The 15 August is a traditional bonfire night for Catholics as the 12 July is for Protestants. But the RUC seem to treat one as an official celebration, the other as a riot. On 15 August last that was their reaction in Lurgan.

Conor was not near the bonfire. He left St. Peter's Club at 11.00 p.m. approximately and while making his way in the direction of the Bonfire, the RUC fired three plastic bullets at him innocently walking on the street. This indicates the illegal and sectarian use of plastic bullets that has been so widespread. When Conor came near the bonfire he was struck on the head and remembers no more.

His mother said the RUC trailed him into their landrover; they were too stupid or angry to notice that he was badly injured. Later he was taken from the RUC station to Craigavon Hospital and to the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast. His life was saved, but he has permanent damage and is still attending neuro-surgical clinics at the Royal Victoria Hospital. Only the skill of the doctors and his superb fitness and cheerful spirit kept Conor alive. When one listens to his impaired speech and sees the dent in his red head, one must say, "Never again will plastic bullets be used on the Catholics of Northern Ireland."

**RUC Fire Into Hotel Disco**

**22 year old Youth, Belfast.**

On Saturday 10 October I was at a dance in the Lake Glen Hotel and at around 11.45 p.m. a number of police and army came into the dance hall. Everything was normal and the police started questioning and taking several people out. A lot of people started to chant SS. RUC and the next thing I saw was a number of bottles being thrown and the police and army left the hall. In a few seconds they returned and a policeman shouted 'Fire' and I then heard a number of plastic bullets being fired. Some people were hurt and I had been hit on the back and right arm by a ricochet bullet. I walked into the toilet and coming out again I went to get my coat. I was stopped by the police and asked where I was sitting. By this time the hall had all cleared. When I showed them they then said I was being arrested. I went to get my coat and I was told "If you move I'll shoot you". I still went to get my coat and the next thing I heard was another policeman shouting "If he moves hit the bastard." I was then struck across the top of the head with a plastic bullet gun. I was knocked out and didn't come around until I was being taken out of the jeep in Andersonstown station. I was rushed into the back room. My white shirt was covered in blood as was my jeans. They tried to close me into a room but I refused to let them close the door as a number of other people were being brought in, including a fellow who had been hit in the chest by a plastic bullet. This fellow fell off a chair onto the floor. I went to go to his assistance and was grabbed by the throat and thrown back into the room. It was about 1 hour before an ambulance came and myself and this other fellow were taken to the City Hospital and I was detained and had 5 stitches inserted. I discharged myself on Sunday lunchtime. I think the other fellow is still in hospital.

**Witnessed: Clara Reilly**  
**Dated: 10/10/82**

**20 year old Youth. Belfast.**

Some friends and I were at a dance in the Lake Glen Hotel on Saturday 9th October. It was around 11.45 p.m. and I noticed a number of police and army standing at the door. I saw the police firing plastic bullets direct into the crowd and the crowd responded by throwing bottles. I left by the back door, I was carrying a beer bottle which I was drinking out of. At the door I was stopped by the police and told to put the bottle on the ground. I did so and was told I was being arrested for having an offensive weapon. Put into a jeep and taken to the police station and put into a chair. I saw a neighbour — — come into the station covered in blood. He was shouting something at the policeman who then started hitting him around the head. — — shouted to me and asked did I witness what was happening. I answered yes. The same policeman then came over to me and I was punched in the mouth. My tooth fell out and I told him I wanted to make a complaint. He said "If you make a complaint, we will have to charge you and keep you in custody until Monday morning." I then said I wouldn't make a complaint just to get out. I was released around 2.30 a.m..

**Witnessed: Clara Reilly**  
**Dated: 10/10/82**



# Chronicle 1981

SEAN MACBRIDE

## 1 August

"In regard to Ireland," Mr Sean MacBride told a day-long symposium at the Biltmore Hotel, New York, last week, "The British Government and establishment are just incapable of being objective, fair-minded or just". To illustrate his charge he cited the indiscriminate use of plastic bullets in the North. "Over 50 people - mostly children - have been killed or permanently maimed in Northern Ireland by these plastic or rubber bullets". This was denied by the British who maintained they were harmless. During the recent riots in Britain, the use of plastic bullets for crowd control was discussed. The British Home Secretary, Mr William Whitelaw, said he would not permit it "because they can be lethal". Mr MacBride commented: "It is alright to use them in Ireland and to kill women and children there - but not in mainland Britain." (Washington Letter from Sean Cronin, *The Irish Times*).

## U.S. NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION REPORT

## 5 August

In 1972 a comprehensive report to the U.S. National Science Foundation listed thirty-four different weapons, those such as plastic bullets to which we have become familiar and others which seem to have come out of science fiction, for example the Taser - a dart with a cable connected which can carry 50,000 volts. Such developments prompted a comment by an American Congressman, Joseph Scheuer - "We can tranquilize, impede, immobilise, harass, shock, upset, stupefy, nauseate, chill, temporarily blind, deafen and control violent individuals and entire mobs without injury." Statements such as these have been echoed by successive British Governments and have led the public to believe that weapons with the euphemistic labels of plastic and rubber bullets, water-cannon and tear-gas

represent soft and gentle forms of control and are in fact harmless .... Since the rioting continues despite the plastic bullet it is probably only a matter of time before it follows the way of its rubber bullet counterpart into disuse. Then we can wait in anticipation for the British Government to introduce new and more exciting ways of killing people. (Pol Mag Uidhir, *Irish News*)

## COLONIAL STATUS

## 6 August

As Mr John Hume said just three weeks ago - Nothing could underline our colonial status here in Northern Ireland more callously and blatantly than the refusal of the British Home Secretary, Mr William Whitelaw, to sanction the use of plastic bullets against British rioters after the savage outbreaks of violence in the Toxteth area of Liverpool, and in other British cities. They must not be used, said the Home Secretary, because their use would "mean inflicting injury or even death on rioters". ... Just why is the Liverpool heaver of paving stones or Molotov cocktails more privileged than his opposite number in Northern Ireland? The answer is, of course, is the one supplied by Mr Hume. We are the lesser breed without the law; or, in other words, there are no votes in Northern Ireland and no one cares. (Editorial, *Irish News*)

## CALL FOR INQUIRY

## 7 August

Following the International Tribunal of Inquiry into plastic bullets Mr Michael Canavan, the SDLP law and order spokesman, wrote to the Secretary of State, Mr Humphrey Atkins, calling for an immediate inquiry into the deaths by plastic bullets - "The death and injury toll prove beyond all doubt the lethal nature of the missiles and the necessity for banning their use".

## RIOT INCIDENT

## 15 August

The annual Ancient Order of Hibernians march held in Ballycastle, County Antrim. A group of youths started stoning RUC men directing the procession down a street to the seafront. Plastic bullet guns appeared and two plastic bullets were fired.

## "PLASTIC DEATH"

## 23 August

"Plastic Death", an article by John McGuffin and Diarmaid Mac Dermott appeared in *The Sunday Tribune Magazine* Vol. 1 No. 10



## RIOT INCIDENT

**24 August**

There was rioting in Coalisland after a visit to the town by the newly elected M.P. Mr Owen Carron. Police fired plastic bullets at youths hurling petrol bombs and stones at the RUC station.

There was also an outbreak of violence at Unity Flats, Belfast. RUC fired plastic bullets at stone-throwing youths.

### "POLICE BEAT"

**25 August**

The RUC magazine **Police Beat** defended the use of plastic bullets in an editorial - "They are an example of the RUC's desire to use minimum force even in the face of determined attacks by gangs armed with the products of sick and vicious minds, acid bombs, petrol bombs and a whole range of ingenious and potentially deadly explosive devices". The Magazine warned that the only people to benefit from a successful campaign to undermine the use of plastic bullets would be the terrorists and their "fellow-travellers". The article asked what course of action would be left for police officers if plastic bullets were banned and warned that mob rule would develop. (**The Belfast Telegraph**)

## LEGAL ADVICE

**4 September**

Fr Denis Faul stressed that people injured by plastic bullets were not obliged to report the matter to the police in order to make a personal injured claim. He claimed that "serious" interference with medical secrecy was imposed on hospitals to try to bring charges of rioting against anyone injured by plastic bullets. (**The Irish News**)

### CHIEF CONSTABLE JOHN ALDERSON

In a submission to the Scarman Tribunal investigating the Summer riots in England, Mr John Alderson, Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall, accused the Government and police leaders of "misunderstanding the challenge" of the troubles. "Some seem hell-bent on sacrificing a police style which is the envy of the world just because of a few hours madness on the streets.... The official response in the aftermath of the rioting falls far short of the stimulus needed to achieve a worthwhile solution. The Home Office has come up with de-humanising equipment such as plastic bullets and CS gas, greater police powers and the prospect of a detention camp on Salisbury Plain... if we are to save ourselves from incessant conflict, we must start talking hearts and minds, not CS gas and plastic bullets. We should be seeking to preserve our great tradition of policing-with-the people and declare our abhorrence of the alternative now on offer". (**The Irish News**)

## USE LEAD BULLETS

**8 September**

The Official Unionist Party came out against the use of plastic bullets in riot control. Their party press officer and head of the Orange Order, the Reverend Martin Smyth said that from the point of view of accuracy the use of low velocity bullets is possibly better.

## BRITAIN - STRICTER CONTROL

**11 September**

Britain's police chiefs have been told that the use of plastic bullets should be under stricter control than in Northern Ireland.... Developments seem to be leading to three major differences in future British policy from that followed in Ulster.

First it is being suggested by the Home Office that instead of issuing police forces with baton rounds, stocks should be held in regional "depots" to which Chief Constables will have to apply for supplies.

Second, Chief Constables only would bear responsibility for giving the order to fire plastic bullets. In Northern Ireland individual commanders in the field have that authority.

Finally, the minimum range for firing baton rounds in Britain, it is believed will be raised from 20 metres in force in Ulster. Although no precise figure has yet been mentioned, the maximum effective range is about 45 metres.

While refusing to comment, the Association of Chief Police Officers, to which Chief Constables belong, are understood to welcome the additional restrictions, British chief constables have made no secret of their great reluctance to adopt plastic bullets as equipment: "We are very firmly against them".

Mr Jonathan Rosenhead, of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science and an expert on baton rounds, said: "I am sure greater restrictions on their use in Britain is both operationally correct and sensible politically".

## PERMANENT DAMAGE

**12 September**

A 16 year old youth, said by his solicitor to have permanent damage from a plastic bullet, was charged with riotous behaviour and possession of a petrol bomb. The alleged offence took place on 22nd May 1981 at St. Agnes Drive, Belfast. The youth was remanded in custody. The solicitor said he would apply for bail in view of his client's injuries. (**The Belfast Telegraph**)

## MARGARET THATCHER

13 September

If Margaret Thatcher, the British Premier, is sincere about seeking a political solution to the problems of our fellow Irishmen and women in N. Ireland and creating a peaceful and stable climate, she would be best advised to insist that the use of plastic bullets be discontinued forthwith. (Mary Carew, Northern Initiative Committee, Dun Laoghaire, The Irish Press)

## PROTEST MARCH

A march took place in west Belfast to protest against the use of plastic bullets by the RUC and the British Army in N. Ireland. The march ended at Linden Street in the Lower Falls, when Mrs Noral McCabe was killed by a plastic bullet in July. Among the speakers were the mother of Brian Stewart, the 12-year old boy who was one of the first victims of the weapon in 1976, the brother of Carol Anne Kelly, killed by a plastic bullet in May, and Mr Joe Austin of Sinn Fein.

Mark Kelly, of Cherry Park, Twinbrook, started to cry while telling how his 12 year old sister had been struck on the head while walking near her home on May 20. Thousands of people calling for the banning of plastic and rubber bullets turned out for the march and rally. Among the crowds were hundreds of men and women carrying placards stating: "British plastic and rubber bullets maim and murder Irish children".

## POLITICIANS AND CHURCHMEN

15 September

Fr Denis Faul and Fr Raymond Murray called leading politicians and churchmen to seek interviews with the RUC authorities on the use of plastic bullets. They advised relatives of plastic victims to make "explicit and individual complaints" to the Police Authority of Northern Ireland and the Police Complaints Board. They asked the politicians and churchmen to find out from the chief constable and the police authority why "this lethal weapon firearm has not been banned in all situations and why proper investigations have not been carried out into the deaths and serious injuries". Referring to the recent international inquiry they criticised surgeons for not attending the inquiry and for being unwilling publicly to give evidence about the effects of the bullets. (Irish Press)

## SDLP DELEGATION

The Deputy Chief Constable of the RUC, Mr Michael McAtamney, told an SDLP delegation that the use of plastic bullets was dictated by street violence created by terrorist organisations. The delegation included Mr Michael Canavan, and Belfast Councillors Mr Paschal O'Hare and Dr Brian Feeney. They complained about four illegal practices in the use of plastic bullets, in non-riot situations, within ranges of less than twenty five yards, with victim's heads as targets and firing from moving vehicles when proper aim was impossible.

## "SCENE AROUND SIX"

18 September

I would like to call to attention to a remark made by a BBC interviewer on "Scene Around Six" on Tuesday 15 September. During an interview about plastic bullets with SDLP spokesman on law and order Mr Michael Canavan the interviewer asked was it correct for the SDLP to complain about the use of plastic bullets given the recent killing of two members of the security forces. I would ask whether it is official BBC policy to rate the death of members of the Security Forces higher than that of members of the anti-Unionist population murdered by plastic bullets? ("Peoples Democracy", The Irish New)

## VIEW OF NEW ZEALAND RESIDENT

Last week I attended in Belfast all the sessions of the International Tribunal of Inquiry into Deaths and Serious Injuries caused by Plastic Bullets in N. Ireland. I am a New Zealand resident. I would like to give some impressions of the Inquiry.

First of all I was horrified at the litany of deaths and serious injuries caused by this sophisticated weapon. I was impressed by the evidence and the quality of the many witnesses who came forward. There were moments of drama during the Tribunal hearings: the evidence of people blinded by rubber bullets, and the moment when a boy of 14 (who looked 11) moved like a crab across the floor to give his testimony. He had been struck on the head by a plastic bullet fired by the Security Forces and is permanently paralysed down one side. Most moving of all were the accounts of deaths of young children killed in non-riotous situations.

I find it difficult to believe that the majority of Irish people, North and South, can appear so unconcerned at the



indiscriminate use of these lethal firearms by the police and by the Army. In New Zealand or in England if these fatalities and injuries were inflicted upon domestic pets or horses there would be a public outcry.

In N. Ireland it is estimated that around 7,000 plastic bullets (The Irish News, August 7) have been fired at civilians during the past five months.

From the evidence presented to the Tribunal, it is clear to me that this lethal firearm is being used, not just as a means of riot control, but to intimidate the people of the Catholic ghettos, and, in some instances, to take revenge for the killing of members of the Security Forces.

It may be significant that most of the recent deaths caused by plastic bullets occurred after the deaths of hunger strikers.

From the evidence presented to the Tribunal, one fact was so repetitive that it cannot be ignored: there is little or no official response to complaints. In fact there is more likely to be intimidation and continual harassment of witnesses and families of victims.

It was the opinion of at least one member of the Tribunal that those responsible for the plastic bullet deaths should be tried for murder.

It is clear to me that while people remain silent, and while there can be a cover-up of fatalities and most shocking injuries, the official and public tolerance of the use of and abuse of these weapons will continue. What long-term effects such a policy will have on the victims and on those who fire plastic bullets with intent, and also on attitudes to the abuse of law and on society itself, is a question that the people of Ireland and Great Britain must ask themselves.

Rev. Patrick F. Murray  
Parish Priest,  
Te Awamutu,  
New Zealand. (The Irish Times)

## CHIEF CONSTABLE JOHN HERMON

### 25 September

The Chief Constable of the RUC, Mr John Hermon, defended the use of plastic bullets - "Policemen are positively encouraged not to use it at all if possible, and when there is no alternative to use it sparingly and effectively and accurately." He said there was no possibility that plastic bullets would be banned.

## CALL FOR INQUIRY

### 26 September

Fr Denis Faul and Fr Raymond Murray called for a serious probe by the RUC into the deaths of seven people and the injuring severely of 60 others by plastic bullets since April.

## REVENGE AND FRUSTRATION

### 29 September

Gerard Walsh, 22 years old, of Broadway, Belfast, was struck by a plastic bullet as he travelled to work early on the morning of 21 May. Later that night between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. there was rioting on the Falls Road and he joined in throwing stones. His solicitor speaking on his behalf in court on 29 September said he had taken part in the incident through revenge and frustration. He was fined £50.

## STUDENT S' UNION, QUEENS UNIVERSITY

### 17 October

The Student s' Union of Queen's University, Belfast, passed a motion seeking the banning of plastic bullets and resolving to start a letter-writing campaign against them.

## LONDON PHOTOGRAPHER

### 20 October

It was embarrassing for British Security Forces' chiefs when a photographer on the staff of a London daily newspaper was seriously injured by a plastic bullet while covering a riot situation in Derry. There might have been excuses made that sounded plausible had the photographer been in the thick of it. He wasn't.

He was observing what was going on from a distance when a soldier fired and hit him on the leg. This in itself was clear evidence that the claims being made by politicians and Churchmen on the Nationalist side of the community that baton rounds were fired indiscriminately - and rejected by the British Security Forces' chiefs and Stormont Office Ministers as quickly as they were made - were soundly based.

The London photographer was one of the lucky ones. There are people in the community, innocently caught up in riot situations and, at the risk of repeating myself, some of them not within howling distance of the riot, who will carry the marks and disfigurements caused by baton round with them to their graves.

It would be refreshing to have the Secretary of State, Jim Prior, repeat as a guideline for troops and police in Northern Ireland what Mr Whitelaw has laid down for the Security Forces in Britain.

It would be even more refreshing if, in any future riot situations, the guidelines were actually observed.

I won't even suggest that Jim Prior should prove me wrong. I know he won't. There's a limit to what Maggie will permit him to do.

(Tom Samways, Irish News)



## IRISH EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE

Fr Denis Faul and Fr Raymond Murray wrote to the Irish Episcopal Conference expressing their disappointment that their statement issued at their October meeting did not refer to the slaughter of innocent Catholics by plastic bullets in the period April - August 1981.

## LORD GOWRIE'S DEFENCE VULGAR

21 October

Fr Denis Faul and Fr Raymond Murray said that Lord Gowrie's defence in the House of Lords on the use of plastic bullets in Catholic areas during the last six months appeared to give unqualified approval to the lethal weapon. "His prejudice against the Catholic community has been vulgarly displayed by the approval of criminal acts by the British Army and the RUC in the use of these weapons".

## MINIMUM FORCE!

23 October

Mr Michael Canavan SDLP spokesman for law and order asked the Government what action has been taken to bring to justice the security forces responsible for innocent civilian deaths in N. Ireland by plastic bullet

impact. He said that most of the 27,000 plastic bullets used in N. Ireland should never have been fired, in the light of the British Home Secretary's report to Parliament outlining the rules governing the use of plastic bullets. He asserted that "the minimum force laid down in the resort, all too often became first resort and maximum force in N. Ireland".

## MR DON CONCANNON M.P.

9 December

The N. Ireland Secretary rejected a demand by the Labour spokesman on the North, Mr Don Concannon, for a review of the use of plastic bullets. The Association for Legal Justice challenged him to hold an immediate inquiry into those cases which they had sent to him and to the Prime Minister Mrs Margaret Thatcher.

## DERRY COUNCIL

17 December

The members of Derry Council agreed to write to the Secretary of State Mr Prior asking for the immediate withdrawal of plastic bullets. The motion was proposed by Councillor Fergus McAteer of the Irish Independence Party. All nine Unionists voted against.



Anne Marie  
McMullan,  
Age 15 years,  
Hit by plastic bullet  
9 August 1980



# 1982



The parents of Paul Whitters at the 1981 International Inquiry.

## A PRE-EMPTIVE WEAPON: PAUL WHITTERS

March/April 1982

**Rights** the Journal of National Council for Civil Liberties Vol. 6, No. 4 contained an article "Plastic Bullets - but the deaths are real", following the investigation by Lord Gifford into the deaths of Gary English and James Brown run over by a British Army Land Rover on Easter Sunday 1981 and Paul Whitters killed by a plastic bullet fired by an RUC man. The article stated:-

The authorities' justification for the use of plastic bullets is that soldiers and police officers, under fire or faced with a rioting crowd throwing petrol bombs and other lethal missiles, must be able to defend themselves. Plastic bullets, it is argued, are preferable to real ones.

NCCL has strongly condemned violence against the security forces or any other targets. But we cannot accept that the use of plastic bullets is an appropriate or effective method of self-defence. The deaths investigated by Lord Gifford and others make it clear that police officers do not confine their use to situations where there is an immediate danger to the life of a police officer or member of the public, and where the use of lethal force is legally justified.

Although the Government has referred to 'sustained attacks' on the security forces by petrol bombs and other missiles, David Beresford of the Guardian has pointed out that, during the period when plastic bullets were used most intensively - from April to August 1981, there were no reports of officers being seriously injured during riots. Lord Gifford concludes that the plastic bullet gun is used as a pre-emptive weapon to keep the crowd at bay, rather than as a defensive weapon in response to a commensurate attack. A pre-condition of acceptability of

a weapon used for crowd control must be that it does not kill those it hits. Clearly neither plastic bullets nor army Land Rovers driven at speed into crowds, pass this test.... Eye-witnesses interviewed by Lord Gifford report that Paul Whitters was standing by himself - possibly intending to throw a stone at a bakery which had been stoned a few minutes earlier by a number of youths who had then moved away - when the police, ensconced in the bakery, emerged and one officer fired at point-blank range directly at Paul Whitters' head. Lord Gifford concludes from the evidence that it is clear that the police could easily have arrested Paul; that no warning was given of the intention to fire; that the shot was aimed at the head, and not at the ground. There was nothing in Paul's hand which could be mistaken for a gun and Lord Gifford concludes that the officer's action was neither in self defence nor a reasonable use of force. 'Firing in those circumstances' he believes, 'with a weapon which is known to be highly lethal at that range, was an act of murder for which I can see no possible defence'.

Paul Whitters' death has been ignored by the security services. As far as his family and other enquiries have been able to establish, no investigation has been held into the incident. Although Paul was killed in April 1981, no inquest has yet been held.

## CLAIMS FOR INJURIES

11 March

Seventy-nine claims for injuries allegedly caused by plastic and rubber bullets have been lodged in Northern Ireland since the hunger-strike disturbances began last May, according to information divulged in the British House of Commons.

Responding to a series of written questions from Labour MP, Mr Reg Freeson, British Ministers said that 45 claims had been received by the Ministry of Defence alleging injuries caused by plastic bullets fired by soldiers. A further 34 claims had been lodged against the RUC.

Mr John Patten, Parliamentary Under-Secretary, said legal liability had not been admitted in any case, and no damages had been paid.

The Northern Ireland Secretary, Mr Prior, revealed that at one stage the RUC's supply of plastic bullets had run out, and that for a time police had reverted to the use of rubber bullets.

Mr Prior said the use of rubber bullets had been discontinued as seen as plastic rounds again became available.

He would not comment on a question asking how many had been killed and injured by either type of missile, saying that it would be inappropriate to comment before the coroners' inquest.

(David McKittrick, *The Irish Times*)

## "THEY SHOOT CHILDREN"

12 March

A press conference was held at the House of Commons to launch a new booklet "THEY SHOOT CHILDREN: the use of rubber and plastic bullets in the north of Ireland". Among those present were the European MP Richard Balfe (Labour, London South Inner) who was campaigning in the European Parliament for the banning



Cover photo shows 12-year-old Carol Ann Kelly in her coffin.

of plastic bullets; Jonathan Rosenhead of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science, author of numerous on the subject; Peter Hain, prospective Labour Party parliamentary candidate for Putney; and Liz Curtis, author of the booklet and member of the Information on Ireland publishing group.

## SPREADING HATRED

18 April

It has to be said to Mr Prior that the use of plastic bullets is breeding hatred in nationalist areas. The bullets are being used almost willy nilly in the slightest skirmish like Strabane, West Belfast, Swatragh and Derry.

Invariably rioters are charged and brought before the court. No one has complained about this. In contrast there have been no prosecutions in five out the seven of the recent plastic bullets cases which resulted in deaths. The authorities, I believe, do not realise the hatred being stirred up in areas where many of these victims, particularly young children, live.

(Fergus Hall, *The Sunday Press*)

## NO CHARGES

21 April

Plastic bullets are lethal missiles that bring death and terror. No soldier or policeman has ever been charged in connection with any death caused by rubber or plastic bullets. (David Morgan, *The Irish News*)

## NEW IRELAND GROUP

23 April

Death of children from plastic bullets is an outrage. Northern Ireland cannot afford any more such deaths, however offensive the appearance of rioting children on our streets may be and however irresponsible or compromising it is for parents to see them there. Unless there is a political settlement many more experiments will be used to cope with riot control. Death must put a stop to this one experiment. The further use of these bullets is inexcusable and counter productive. (J.D.A. Robb *New Ireland Group*)

## NCCL

The National Council for Civil Liberties called for a ban on the use of plastic bullets in N. Ireland.

## DAMAGE

24 April

An indication of the damage was given by the former N. Ireland Secretary Mr Humphrey Atkins last July in a written House of Commons answer. He revealed that, of 110 people injured by plastic bullets in the preceding two months, no less than 40 had sustained head injuries; not surprisingly, three subsequently died. But, as anyone who has witnessed crowds scatter at the sight of a plastic bullet gun can testify, the weapon is truly scarifying and effective in dispersing rioters. Despite the political furore over its use and the fact that resulting deaths and injuries often produce more rioting and alienation, the Army and the police would be unwilling to put the plastic in mothballs.

("From Hong Kong to Belfast: the progress of the plastic bullet", Ed Moloney in *The Irish Times*)

## IRISH EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE

26 April

It is disappointing that the heads of the churches, the Irish Episcopal Conference, the clergy of Belfast and Derry, the trade unions and rank and file politicians have not lent their support in a significant way to the banning of this weapon. The only way the plastic bullet will be banned will be to include the plastic bullet killings with the condemnations of all killings. A massive campaign initiated by the Irish Episcopal Conference at their June meeting, similiar to the Chilver Report Campaign, on the Sacredness of Human Life and a Guide to a Peaceful Way to Justice would go a long way to ending all killings including the deaths of children by plastic bullets.

(Fr Raymond Murray, *The Irish Times*)



## STOP THE BLOODSHED

29 April

How simple are the British junta, are they so afraid of the stonethrowers that the easiest way to deal with mob is to kill and maim innocent bystanders? Recently the British Government and the media have been highlighting the atrocities that have taken place in Argentina. Yet the same atrocities are taking place in Britain's own backyard. There has been enough blood spilt and far too many deaths of innocent children. I ask the British Army and the paramilitaries for God's sake to stop the bloodshed and let the people live in peace.

(Liam Hunter, *The Irish News*)

## MOST DANGEROUS 'LESS-LETHAL' WEAPON IN THE WORLD

May/June 1982

An extract from "Soldier Blue" by Jonathan Rosenhead in *New Socialist*:-

The plastic bullet is the most dangerous "less lethal" riot control weapon in service with national security forces anywhere in the world. Yet so far the public, official Labour Party spokespersons, even the charming Lord Scarman, have shown little anxiety about their transfer from Ireland to the streets of British cities. The Scarman report "recognised the necessity" of Whitelaw's decision to put them, along with CS grenades and water cannon, in the hands of the police.

When Mrs. Thatcher demanded in parliament that Michael Foot should state whether he was for or against the use of such riot control weapons, his reply was that "we are as much determined to stamp out illegality as anybody else". In a debate on the urban disturbances immediately after Whitelaw's decision to supply this hardware to the police, Labour's Shadow Home Secretary, Roy Hattersley, warmly endorsed Whitelaw's approach, and told him "I am not implying any goodwill towards the government when I say, 'May you continue long in your office' ". Those MPs such as Hugh Jenkins in the last parliament and Reg Freeson currently, who have taken up the issue actively, are honourable exceptions to a depressing rule.

The absence of effective opposition has given police and government a free run in presenting their new weapons as humane, almost benign. The argument has been that if it wasn't gas (or plastic bullets) it would be guns. In fact in almost all cases where CS and rubber or plastic bullets have been discharged in Northern Ireland, the use of firearms, it has been admitted by a Ministry of Defence official, "would have been inappropriate if not unlawful". In Ireland it has not been plastic bullets instead of lead bullets, but plastic bullets as well as lead ones.

To ease public acceptance, ministers have been at pains to stress that such weapons will be used only if all else fails. Whitelaw's guidelines to Chief Constables state that CS or plastic bullets "are to be used only as a last resort where conventional methods of policing have been tried and failed". The Home Office Working Group took their cue well and litter their report with "last resorts" at least ten on my count.

But these paper promises are worth just as much as all those earlier promises that CS and plastic bullets would not be used at all in Britain, or that plastic bullets were to be used only with the utmost reluctance in Ireland. In fact in 1981 (to mid-November) 29,665 were loosed off. Thirty thousand instances of "last resort"? Or one straightforward instance of double standards? The implication that human lives in Belfast or Derry can be handled with less care than elsewhere has already provoked adverse reaction in Ireland.

I am at least as worried about the converse proposition that once the novelty of the weapons has worn off and the British public accustomed to their presence in the police armoury, the lax standards of control over their use in Ireland will come to be the norm in Britain too.



## CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

5 May

If those in the "minority" population who hold public office had refused to take part in any British Government type assembly from 1972 when Francis Rowntree was hit and killed by a doctored rubber bullet then Julie Livingstone, Carol Anne Kelly and Stephen McConomy etc might still be alive. As for keeping our children locked up, Peter Doherty who never was involved in any riot situations was killed in his working kitchen some 35 feet from the ground.

(P. McCann, Belfast. *The Irish Times*)

## HOUSE OF COMMONS MOTION

13 May

Twenty-two Members of Parliament in Britain signed a House of Commons motion calling for the ending of the use of plastic bullets in N. Ireland. Motion 434 **Baton Rounds (Plastic Bullets) in Northern Ireland** reads:-

*That this House deplores the increasing use of plastic bullets by the Army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Northern Ireland which has caused serious injury, disablement and death to innocent victims; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to withdraw their use in order to avoid further tragedies and worsening relations between the Northern Ireland community and the security forces.*

## BRITISH RULE

21 May

### British Police

Sir - There seems to be a widespread and mistaken belief in Ireland, reinforced by statements from various politicians, that the use of plastic bullets in Britain has been forbidden.

While British Home Secretary William Whitelaw did initially say that plastic bullets would not be used in Britain because they were too dangerous, he subsequently retracted this. In mid-July last year the British government announced that plastic bullets, as well as armoured personnel carriers and water cannon, would be made available for use in British cities. At the same time, senior police officers from 'riot areas' in Britain went to the North of Ireland for a crash course in riot control from the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Then, in a written reply to the House of Commons on February 25 this year, Whitelaw revealed that 'Some 3,000 baton rounds (plastic bullets) and 1,000 CS projectiles of approved types are now held by police forces in England and Wales for anti-riot purposes'. Both the Metropolitan Police in London and the Liverpool police admitted to BBC 2's Newsnight programme (12 March) that they hold stocks of plastic bullets - presumably intended for use in Brixton and Toxteth.

Anyone who doubts that British police would use these weapons should remember that there is no love lost between the British Government and police on the one hand and black and unemployed people on the other. Over the past 13 years there has been a steady transfer of repressive technology from the North of Ireland to Britain,

generally for use in the first instance against the black community. Last year CS gas cannisters, of a type designed for use against barricades, were fired at people in Toxteth, causing a number of serious injuries.

The equipping of British police with plastic bullets is part of this trend, and has been possible because British people are kept in almost total ignorance of the lethal nature of the weapon. Hopefully the European Parliament's overwhelming vote for a ban - though scarcely mentioned in the the British popular press - will begin to get the message home, and lead to increasing pressure on the British government to ban them. - Your, etc.,

Liz Curtis,  
London.

(*The Irish News*)

## EUROPEAN COURT

31 May

Fr Denis Faul and Fr Raymond Murray have been taking legal advice this weekend with a view to bringing the British Government to the European Court over the alleged abuse of plastic bullets in N. Ireland. Fr Faul said - "We want to keep the pressure on at the European level following the decision by the European Parliament to condemn and call for the banning of the plastic bullet."

A lawyer says anyone sustaining a plastic bullet injury on release from hospital is invariably picked up by the police under Section Eleven of terrorist legislation and taken to Castlereagh holding centre. The aim, the lawyer claims, is to get the detainee to admit to rioting on the specific day on which he was alleged that, whether or not rioting was taking place, the result must be rioting in the eyes of the law. The lawyer in question claims he is aware of about 60 such cases and he claims an officer has already admitted in court that a special police unit is already in existence to deal with such cases.

The Labour party spokesman on the North, Don Concannon, believes the security forces in some cases are flouting the law governing the use of the plastic bullet.

(Fergus Hall, *The Sunday Press*)

## IRISH EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE

1 June

Fr Denis Faul and Fr Raymond Murray wrote to the Irish Episcopal Conference asking the bishops to call for the banning of plastic bullets at their June meeting pointing out that another child Stephen McConomy had been killed.

## POLICE FEDERATION N.I.

The chairman of the Police Federation for N. Ireland, Mr Alan Wright, defended the use of plastic bullets but emphasised that the RUC did not wish to continue in the paramilitary role for any longer than necessary. - "We are not, as some would have believe, blood-thirsty animals, firing dangerous weapons at will with the sole purpose of killing. We are the parents of young children too, and we are appalled by the death of an innocent bystander. But when faced with a masked teenage petrol bomber, are not entitled to wonder why their parents are not castigated for actively aiding violence".

(The Belfast Telegraph)

## SIR KENNETH NEWMAN

2 June



Sir Kenneth Newman, Chief Constable of the RUC for much of the 1970s, was recently appointed to head the London Metropolitan Police in succession to Sir David McNee. Since then, senior police officers from 'riot areas' in Britain have been given crash courses in the use of plastic bullets and snatch squads from the RUC.

(The News Line)

## POLICE FEDERATION N.I.

The defence of the use of plastic bullets by Police Federation Chairman, Constable Alan Wright, brought sharp criticism from husband of Mrs Nora McCabe killed by a plastic bullet in July 1981. Mr Jim McCabe said that Mr Wright's remarks ignored the reality of "how these terror weapons are used". - "My wife Nora was not wearing a hood, was not part of a riot, and was not carrying a petrol bomb. She was in fact walking to shops for cigarettes with a friend when a plastic bullet was fired at her from an RUC jeep. This happened on the morning of 8th July 1981 and she died in hospital 24 hours later. The RUC murdered my wife and have so far got away with it. Does Mr Alan Wright who has never seen the horror and hardship inflicted by a plastic bullet on innocent victims, justify the murdering of my wife and the orphaning of three young children?" (The Irish News)

## LORD GOWRIE



Lord Gowrie the Deputy Secretary of State, defended the use of plastic bullets by the security forces. Addressing members of the Police Federation at their annual conference in Newcastle he said: - "I hate the bloody things as I'm sure everyone in this room does but I have to say that they are better in the last resort than bullets made out of lead". (The Belfast Telegraph)

## SIR DAVID McNEE

25 June

On the BBC's Radio Ulster lunchtime news on Wednesday an item referred to the Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, Sir David McNee, just published by HMSO. Sir David, it said, commenting on last year's riots, expressed disapproval of the use of plastic bullets for riot control in Britain ... that disapproval of the use of plastic bullets for riot control in qualification is always interesting. If integrationists, who try so hard to persuade themselves and others that Belfast is Birmingham and that N. Ireland is as British as Middlesex, had their way, plastic bullets would be banned here too. But as we all know, Ireland is no such thing - more than 40 per cent of the population demands its just and democratic say in the running of the area, something which has always been coldly and deliberately denied it. If the British Government were to pay the attention it has always failed to accord to its representatives, there would be no urge on any one's part to riot, and no need for the plastic bullet, more delicately described as the baton round. (Editorial The Irish News)

## MRS THATCHER

SDLP spokesman on law and order, Mr Michael Canavan, called on Mrs Thatcher to consult people in N. Ireland over the issue of banning plastic bullets.



## DERRY TRADES COUNCIL

29 June

Derry Trades Council have submitted a motion asking the Annual Delegate Conference of the Irish Congress of Trade unions meeting in Belfast to call for a ban on plastic bullets "in the light of the tragic deaths that have occurred by the use of this so-called non-lethal weapon".

### MOTIONS FOR LABOUR PARTY

4 July

Labour anger grows over Plastic Bullets - Labour Party leaders facing demands for a ban on the use of plastic bullets by the RUC. Four motions submitted for this year's annual conference in Blackpool are severely critical of the use of plastic bullets and demand that the next Labour Government should ban them outright. One motion from Brentford and Isleworth constituency notes with alarm

the death and appalling injuries resulting from the use of rubber and plastic bullets". Other critical motions have been submitted by Sheffield Park constituency, Manchester, Moss Side, and Deptford.

(The Belfast Telegraph)

## LORD GOWRIE

16 July

Lord Gowrie in a speech on Anglo-Irish relations in the Irish club in London again defended plastic bullets as being better than lead ones.

# British law & order = plastic death

### Numbers of rubber and plastic bullets fired in the North of Ireland

Rubber bullets	
1970	238
1971	16,752
1972	23,363
1973	12,724
1974	2,612
1975	145
Total	55,834

Plastic bullets	
1973	42
1974	216
1975	3,556
1976	3,464
1977	1,490
1978	1,734
1979	1,271
1980	1,231
Total	13,004

1981 (by month, to 11 Nov)	
Jan.	68
Feb.	48
Mar.	320
Apr.	1,959
May	16,656
June	606
July	6,182
Aug.	3,755
Sep.	40
Oct.	24
Nov (to 11)	7
Total	29,665

Total plastic bullets	42,669
Total rubber and plastic bullets	98,503

**Note:** The Royal Ulster Constabulary acquired plastic bullets in 1978, but the figures for 1978, 1979 and 1980 refer only to plastic bullets fired by the army. The 1981 figure includes plastic bullets fired by the RUC.

Information on Ireland, London, published AN IRISH TRAGEDY - BRITAIN'S DISGRACE, a poster magazine produced in response to the killing of 11 year old Stephen McConomy by a British soldier in Derry.

## PRIOR AND GOWRIE

19 July

At the beginning of Mr Prior's term in N. Ireland some Catholic church leaders and members of the SDLP put considerable faith in him, but that goodwill has since evaporated. Neither he nor Lord Gowrie has lived up to their sympathetic mutterings on a number of issues. The prison problems, to a degree, still linger. The plastic bullet question remains a bitter unresolved matter. Emergency legislation deemed to be unnecessary by academics and objective observers is still in operation .... his devolution bill is designed to suit Unionists.

(Fergus Hall, *The Sunday Press*)

## MERSEYSIDE STOCK

28 July

Merseyside police revealed they keep a stock of plastic bullets - in defiance of local council Police Committee's wishes. (*The Sun*)

## WEST YORKSHIRE

31 July

The Labour majority on the West Yorkshire police committee yesterday banned the use of plastic bullets by the county's police. They rejected the advice of the Chief Constable, and the wishes of the Police Federation that the bullets should be available for riots. A Labour councillor, Mr Alan Speck, said several children had been killed in N. Ireland by the bullets. The committee decided not to order any more bullets. They accepted an undertaking from Mr Gregory that those in stock would not be used.

The chairman, Mr Ronald Decker, said: "The use of these bullets has resulted in innocent people being maimed and in some cases killed". (*The Guardian*)

## ARWEN 37



12 August

The manufactures of Arwen 37 at the Royal Ordnance Factory in Enfield London, which can fire up to five plastic rounds from one revolving magazine were given permission to sell the gun to any police force or army in the World. But the Cabinet has ruled that any new weapon introduced into N. Ireland would be politically embarrassing. (*The Daily Mail*)

*An advertisement from the Irish News, May 4, 1982*

# PLASTIC BULLETS

(AND RUBBER BULLETS)

**Have KILLED 14  
people including 7  
Irish Catholic  
Schoolchildren  
THEY ARE LETHAL**

"MURDER IS MURDER, IS MURDER". Politicians who allow murder of small children to be used to promote their political objectives do not deserve any support whatsoever.

**PLASTIC BULLETS ARE RACIST** - Not used in Britain, in Toxteth and Brixton.

**PLASTIC BULLETS ARE SECTARIAN** - Not used against Orange rioters or Third Force

**PLASTIC BULLETS ARE USED IN NON-RIOT SITUATIONS** as a weapon of political repression and terrorism, to repress entire communities.

**PLASTIC BULLETS ARE FIRED DIRECTLY AT THE HEADS** of small children from point blank range, contrary to firing rules.

Although 14 people have been killed and 70 severely maimed (blinded, etc.), **NO** British soldier or RUC man has been charged. This represents a breakdown of Law and Order. It gives permission to kill and maim to Britain's agents in Ireland.

## MORE ACCURATE!

20 August

The gun used to fire plastic bullets is being modified to make it more accurate. (The Belfast Telegraph)

## NEWRY & MOURNE COUNCIL

6 September

A call to the Secretary of State to immediately ban plastic bullets was made by Newry and Mourne Council when there were heated exchanges between Unionists, the Social Democratic and Labour Party and Irish Independence Councillors.

## £32,000 COMPENSATION

22 September



**LOST AN EYE**

**Brendan Kelly**

Brendan Patrick Kelly (22) Dungiven was awarded £32,000 damages in the County Court Magherafelt for loss of an eye when he was hit by a plastic bullet in Maghera on 23 April 1981. A riot had followed a H Block demonstration. Mr Kelly denied being involved in the riot. He said he had just gone two steps from the door of public house in which he had been attending a stag party, to cross the street to his car, when he was struck on the right side of the face by an object and was knocked unconscious. He made his move to get across the street in what he thought was a lull in the trouble. An RUC inspector said that 72 plastic bullets had been fired that night.

## LIBERALS BAN PLASTIC BULLETS

23 September

The conference of the Liberal Party voted overwhelmingly for a ban on CS gas, and rubber and plastic bullets. Speakers referred to the set-back to community relations caused by the killing of injuring of children by the weapons; and also described their use to control street demonstrations as a "form of death sentence".

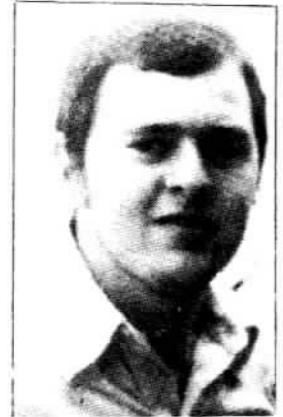
## HARASSMENT OF VICTIM

25 September

"Lay off me, says plastic bullet survivor". This article appeared in The Irish News:-



**SERIOUSLY INJURED**



**Sean Tumelty**

A 28-year-old man - partially paralysed after his skull was smashed in by a plastic bullet last year - claims that the RUC and the British Army are harassing him and members of his family

Sean Tumelty, from Farset Walk in Divis Flats, feels he can call himself the Miracle Man with justification. He lost one-third of the left side of his brain. His family despaired of his life after he was injured in an incident involving Welsh Fusiliers in May last year. He was technically dead for two minutes.

Sean, a father of four daughters, claims he was beaten up by soldiers and that, when he was already injured, they fired a plastic bullet at his head from point-blank range. Now, he says the soldiers taunt him with his disability in the street: "And I want them to lay off me."

"Last Thursday week, the police and soldiers raided my flat. I was in my mother's flat at the time. They smashed the lock on the door, broke holes in the walls and smashed things. The police came down to my mother's. "They even took away two children's bikes that I had bought for my daughters. The bikes were to be their Christmas present and I did not want the children to know about them. A neighbour told us she saw the soldiers riding on the bikes before they took them away to Hastings Street police station.

"They could not even let the children alone. The police told them 'we know that we are going to get Christmas bikes.' - They had no need to tell the children.

"I was buying the bikes from a catalogue company and the collector told the police how much he had paid for them, but they still held them.

"Last week when I was coming out of the Chapel (St. Peter's beside the flats), the police stopped me and they said 'Next time you get done, you won't come bouncing back.'

"The soldiers know I cannot walk properly and, last week, when I was trying to cross the road, two Land Rovers came along and revved up. I had to stop in the middle of the road".



Sean Tumelty does not remember much about the day he was injured. He said he had been drinking in the house and the British soldiers began raiding the flats.

"Somehow, I must have been caught up in it. They took me up an entry at Ross St., behind the health centre. I ended up with several cracked ribs and was black and blue from the beating they gave me. People heard the bang of the plastic bullet gun going off. It must have been up against my head for there were powder burns," he claims.

"It was the Royal Welsh Fusiliers who were involved. I did not wake up until about six weeks later in Musgrave Park Hospital. Apparently, I had died for two minutes and was saved by the life support machine.

"The surgeons had to take away a third of the left side of my brain and I have a titanium plat in my head. When they tried to work at the skull, the bones just fell away.

"When I was in the intensive care unit, the soldiers came up to my mother's flat and called up that I would be as well off dead because I would only be a vegetable if I survived. "While I was in Musgrave Park Hospital, I was guarded all the time. Later, when I was in another ward at the hospital - officially the ward is part of Crumlin Road Prison - there was a special court held at my bedside and I was charged with riotous behaviour. I still face that charge.

"On December 14, I was discharged from the military wing of Musgrave Park on bail and then, on March 20, there were other charges made against me. But these have now been dropped. Earlier in the year, I had bail to attend physiotherapy.

"I am paralysed down the left side. My left arm is limp. I cannot walk properly. My left leg is in calipers, otherwise, I could not walk at all for my toes would hang down. I have no power to raise my toes. The physiotherapists say there is no hope that I will get over these injuries, but I keep doing the exercises.

"Afterwards, I started to suffer from blackouts and I have to take tablets to keep them away.

But I feel stronger and happier now and have put on weight. I have the will to live. I just have to accept that I cannot do things I once did. I used to be a very fast walker. Even now, my mind is ahead of me. It is dangerous when I try to cross the road for I am slower on my feet than I think".

On the morning he talked to the Irish News, police had raided his mother's flat and taken her into custody because they found two children's bikes which his sister Kathleen, said she bought in town for her two children after they heard that Sean's kids were getting bikes for Christmas. The family were trying to get their mother out so that she could attend a wedding the next day.

## LORD GOWRIE

### 26 September

Mr Prior's administration has done nothing about the use of plastic bullets in the province. Lord Gowrie has again been beating his breast declaring: "I hate the goddam things", but has sat back and done nothing other than asking someone else to come up with an alternative. I've

already told Lord Gowrie what might be considered to be a step in the right direction. He should ensure that anyone in uniform discharging a plastic bullet which results in death be arrested and tried. Lord Gowrie knows right well there is a case to answer at some level of investigation. He knows that it cannot be a coincidence that no uniformed members of the security forces have been convicted as a result of a plastic bullet death. No one complains when the bomber or petrol bomber is sentenced. The Catholic and Protestant communities accept that the law breaker has to pay a price. Equality before the law is what is being demanded. No one wants to see a soldier or policeman reduced to a ball of flame. No one wants to see a child with plastic bullet buried in its head. (Fergus Hall *The Sunday Press*)

## "SILENT TOO LONG"

### 29 September

Two members of the "Silent Too Long" group began a three day visit to England. Mr James Barrett, father of Danny Barrett shot dead by a British soldier and Mrs Rhona Toland, aunt of Stephen McConomy killed by a plastic bullet, spent the next three days meeting members of the National Council for Civil Liberties, handing in a petition at Downing Street, and lobbying MPs and other delegates to the Blackpool conference. They said they were simply seeking justice for their families.



■ Two members of Silent Too Long who will present files to Mrs Thatcher on plastic bullet deaths are Rhona Toland and Jimmy Barrett.

## UNIONS' SUPPORT

30 September

The Deptford constituency party urged time for debate of plastic bullets at the Labour Party's annual conference at Blackpool. They claimed they had received the backing of several leading trade union figures including Mr Arthur Scargill, Mr Ray Buckton, and Mr Moss Evans.

## BAN PLASTIC BULLETS - OFFICIAL LABOUR POLICY

1 October

A ban on the use of and production of plastic bullets became official policy of the Labour Party at their conference in Blackpool. The vote for a ban was almost unanimous with only a dozen people dissenting. Mrs Joan Millbank, Mr George Doherty, and Mr Alex Kitson spoke eloquently for the ban. Mr Don Concannon opposition spokesman on N. Ireland indicated that in government he would not withdraw the bullets unless there was a suitable replacement.

## SACK CONCANNON

2 October

Fr Denis Faul and Mr Michael Canavan SDLP called for the sacking of Mr Concannon as spokesman on N. Ireland.

3 October

## MR DENIS HEALY M.P.; SIR KENNETH NEWMAN

The article "Police Inquiry", **Sunday Times Magazine**, 26 September 1982, includes a profile on Sir Kenneth Newman, now Commissioner of the London Metropolitan Police and remarks on the RUC - "If it was to take over law and order from the army, he decided, it would have to have a riot role: so the RUC were given plastic bullets". Regarding his new role in London he was asked in an interview in **The Observer** - "So you expect to see plastic bullets used in London?" He replied - "Oh, no. I do, however, agree with their controlled and disciplined use as a last resort to protect life and property. But you start from very low-key options, such as using influential local people to defuse a situation. Even if rioting breaks out, I shall first use conventional methods. People must get it clear that squads of police with truncheons can cause quite serious injuries. A wise and discriminating commander might say; "I would cause less inquiry with plastic bullets. I find it hard to envisage circumstances in London where I would use CS gas. It's not particularly effective, anyway."

Speaking on Radio Eireann Mr Denis Healy M.P., Deputy Leader of the British Labour Party, said there was evidence that plastic bullets had been misused in N. Ireland, and that there was a lot of evidence that the plastic bullet is a very unsuitable weapon.

Book in German on the  
Technology of Political Control.  
Published 1982 — it contains chapters  
on Northern Ireland.



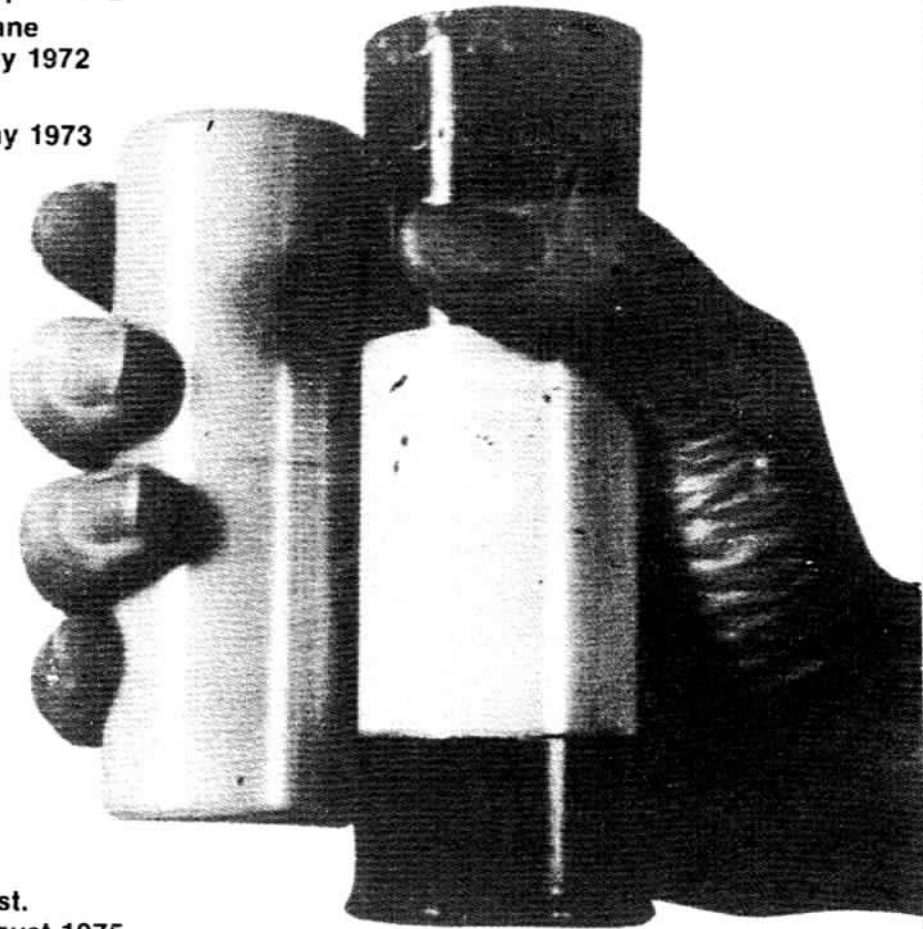
## Deaths

### RUBBER BULLETS

**FRANCIS ROWNTREE**, Belfast  
Age 11½ years. Died 23 April 1972

**TOBIAS MOLLOY**, Strabane  
Age 18 years. Died 16 July 1972

**THOMAS FRIEL**, Derry.  
Age 21 years. Died 22 May 1973



## Deaths

### PLASTIC BULLETS

**STEPHEN GEDDIS**, Belfast.  
Age 10 years. Died 30 August 1975

**BRIAN STEWART**, Belfast.  
Age 13 years. Died 10 October 1976

**MICHAEL DONNELLY**, Belfast.  
Age 21 years. Died 9 August 1980.

**PAUL WHITTERS**, Derry.  
Age 15 years. Died 25 April 1981.

**JULIE LIVINGSTONE**, Belfast.  
Age 14 years. Died 12 May 1981.

**CAROL ANN KELLY**, Belfast.  
Age 12 years. Died 22 May 1981.

**HENRY DUFFY**, Derry.  
Age 45 years. Died 22 May 1981.

**NORA McCABE**, Belfast.  
Age 30 years. Died 9 July 1981.

**PETER DOHERTY**, Belfast.  
Age 33 years. Died 31 July 1981.

**PETER MAGENNIS**, Belfast.  
Age 41 years. Died 10 August 1981.

**STEPHEN McCONOMY**, Derry.  
Age 11 years. Died 19 April 1982.





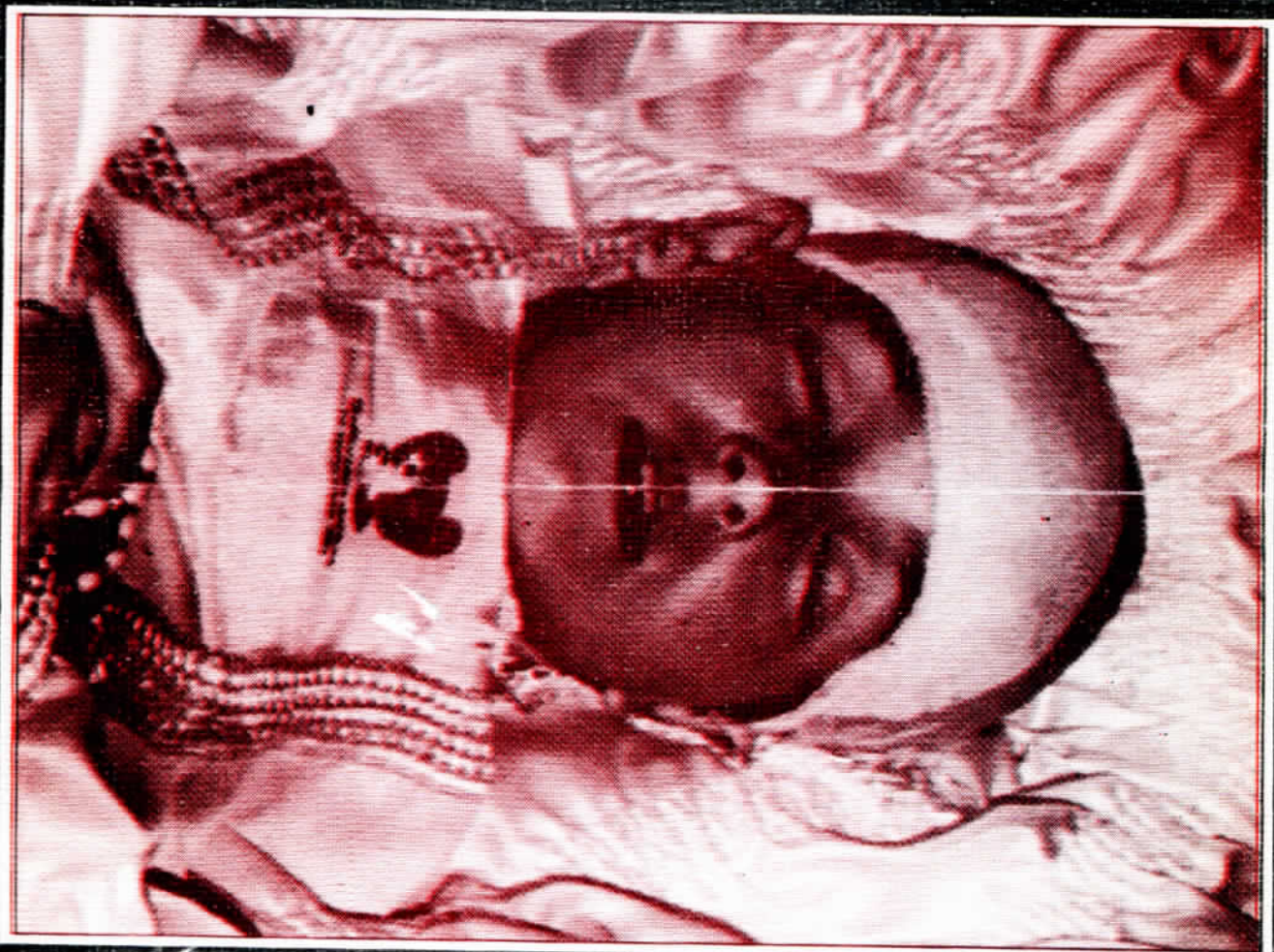
Francis Rowntree, aged 11½,  
died 23 April 1972



Julie Livingston, aged 14,  
died 13 May 1981



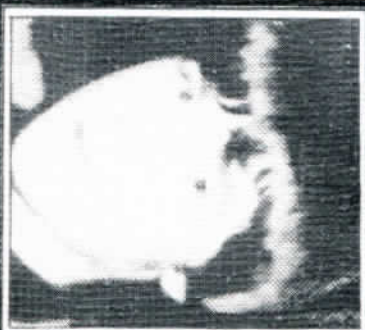
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aged 12, died 22 May 1981