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# **NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN**

Department of Sculpture, Faculty of Fine Art

Photographing the Northern Ireland "Troubles": Difficulties and  
Complexities

by

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## INTRODUCTION

There are two stereotypical images of Ireland: that promoted by the Tourist Board (viz. a beautiful, rural, Gaelic, Catholic country) and the other a colonised country belonging to Britain, where people fight over religion and politics and kill each other. Photography has a lot to do in portraying these diverse images of Ireland, nationally and internationally.

In the North of Ireland almost two decades of immersion in photographic propaganda has bred a distrust of the seemingly direct image. Northern Ireland has been the centre of media attention for over twenty years now. It is an area under a lot of stress in which trust, honesty and integrity are strained to their utmost.

The reality of living in Northern Ireland, contrasted with twenty years of photo-journalism and television pictures, reinforces an awareness of how photographic images can distort and devalue. Their extreme selectivity deprives us of context; those repeated images of soldiers and children, etc., are a form of reductionism. Photography lies. The image of soldiers with looming weapons dominating children is only one recognised cliché and is a propaganda statement, not an exploration.

The Northern Irish Tourist Board projects its images of beautiful Northern Ireland with its lakes, mountains and folklore. The two types of projection confuse and corrupt an already confused and corrupted area.

In the visual arts in Northern Ireland there are very few artists making art which directly deals with the crisis in Northern Ireland. American art critic, Lucy Lippard, on her visit to Ireland noted:

I thought that Irish art would divide itself into mythical and modernist. Because of the troubles I had expected the relationship between art and life to be more developed in Ireland than in other 'high art' worlds. I found little explicitly political/social art, even in the North.<sup>1</sup>

Photographs are the main material usually available in the North or about the North for the wider public. Therefore, I found it interesting to pick up on this point and see how photographs are used as a portrayal of the 'troubles'.

It is really only since the 1970s that photography as fine art, worthy to be exhibited in art galleries, has been taken seriously either in the North or South. The Arts Council of Northern Ireland does little for the medium and has only recently taken to supporting token exhibitions.

There are really two issues I wish to look at here. Accepting the fact that Northern Ireland has been in the media's eye for twenty-five years, re-photographed, under surveillance, televised etc. I wish to look at how photographers today work around or with this history of propaganda and media attention. I will examine the difficulties and complexities that each photographer finds in photographing the North and how I perceive it.

As I live on the border on the East coast and travel frequently to Newry and Belfast, I constantly see signs stating "No Photographs Please. Film will be confiscated". Though displayed for security reasons, signs like this also show the power of photography and how it can be manipulated.

I have divided this thesis into five chapters. Each chapter deals with a different photographer, his images and publications. In order, these photographers are: Willie Doherty, Victor Sloan, Sean Hillen, Paul Graham, Clive Limpkin, the photographers of Still War and Willie Carson.



I begin with Willie Doherty, a fine art Photographer whose work is mostly about living in Northern Ireland but whose images are specifically of Derry. Willie Doherty uses text and image to relate his experience and the general experience of living in the North and responds through his work to the media and tourist documentation of Northern Ireland. "I am more interested in ideas than painting or photography. My decision to use photography is based on the belief that it as a language is more populist."<sup>2</sup>

Victor Sloan, living and working in Portadown, is a Protestant and was brought up in the Protestant tradition of Unionism and Orange Day parades. In his photography he looks at the existence of this tradition and its influence on Northern Ireland. Sloan's technique is that of scratching, painting, marking and toning the negative and print. Although he used to be a painter, he now sees himself as neither painter nor photographer but as a combination of both.

Sean Hillen was brought up in Newry, Co. Down, but now lives and works in London. Though he studied as a print student he moved into photography. His work is about the relationship between Newry and London but also the traditions that go with the two places. Hillen's technique is photomontage, where he combines the comical and serious using postcards, colour and black-and-white images and religious imagery.

Paul Graham is a photographer from England who came to Northern Ireland to photograph it. He made a series of photographs in colour. He is considered a social-landscapist and his photographs are formal and defined.

The final chapter incorporates three different books made by photojournalists, some freelance, some working for the press and television.



Still War<sup>3</sup> is a combination of photographs and text made for a book by Laurie Sparham, Mike Abrahams and Trisha Ziff, all from England. The images were specifically for the book which tells of life in Northern Ireland from a Nationalist viewpoint.

Battle of the Bogside<sup>4</sup> is a book made by the English photo-journalist Clive Limkin, who worked in the North off and on during the 1970s. He was working for the Sun and Daily Mirror while staying there and compiled some of his photographs to make this book.

Willie Carson, a freelance journalist living and working in Derry, made a series of books related to Derry. I have chosen to discuss Derry - Thru the Lens,<sup>5</sup> a series of photographs taken and stories written during the seventies.

Each photograph adds or subtracts another version of the already much photographed North. Each photograph does it in its own way. I will discuss these ways and through this hope to learn more about Northern Ireland. I do not discuss the acceptance or otherwise of photography as a fine art because this itself is defined differently by each photographer.

Throughout the thesis the different ways of working and commenting on the North reveal themselves and though we learn more it also seems to reinforce how complex and layered the situation really is. I found it interesting to see how difficult it was to get information on a number of the photographers and ended up telephoning or meeting them to discuss their work. As Susan Sontag reflected: "A photograph is a secret about a secret"<sup>6</sup>. As Arbus observed "The more it tells you, the less you know".



## CHAPTER I Willie Doherty

Willie Doherty was born in 1959 in Derry. He grew up as part of Derry's nationalist community. Although he studied and lived in both Belfast and Dublin for a period of time, he made a decision several years ago to live and work in Derry. More than anything else, this city appears repeatedly in Willie Doherty's work.

Doherty is a photographer whose work is based on the situation in Northern Ireland. For Doherty it was a way for him to come to artistic terms with a situation which in real life was unacceptable. Willie Doherty sees his photographs being "Workman like, factual and straight forward, in a sense anybody would have taken them"<sup>7</sup>.

His photographs deal with many elements of living in the North and draws on the documentary tradition and tourist coverage of Northern Ireland. The first piece of work to be discussed is a black and white photograph using text: Stifling Surveillance: Last hours of daylight: The Bogside 1985.<sup>8</sup> (Fig. 1)

This photograph is of the urban landscape of Derry. The image is misty and the rows and rows of houses or flats are behind this misty cover, which may be smog or chimney smoke. Near the front of the image it is less foggy and one is able to see the flats clearly. It is a sleepy, silent image: the people are tucked away in their own spaces. There is not a sound or a movement. The camera is looking on and the viewer is positioned in front of a flat where he can see the windows clearly and can look in. However, Doherty keeps us at a distance and we are just too far away to see the interior but near enough to cause discomfort to the people living in the flats. The viewer seems to be trapping the people who





S T I F L I N G

S U R V E I L L A N C E

LAST HOURS OF DAYLIGHT

↑  
FIG:1





live in these flats, knowing when they leave or turn on a light or come to the window - a suggestion of the more intense surveillance that happens daily.

As Foucault said "For the observed, visibility is a trap"<sup>9</sup>. From what Doherty shows us, it certainly is. The image itself is pretty innocent. It tells a story of overcrowding, poverty and depressing urbanisation. When the text is added the photograph changes:

Text provides another layer of information that the photograph does not, you can literally put the opposite beside something and you start a whole flow of associations moving between two things. [Interview with Willie Doherty 1984].

The added text, "Stifling Surveillance", gives a feeling of claustrophobia so light and timeless. There is nowhere to run and hide; every street corner every closed door is watched, through the eye of the lens. In Northern Ireland the landscape is heavily photographed and surveillance towers are plotted all over the countryside and city.

As Doherty said in Picturing Derry <sup>10</sup> "How can one photograph a psychological state you experience daily? Surveillance is a condition which happens all the time. It is like the weather in winter, constantly grey. There is no break. It is only afterwards that you realise the extent of the oppressive situation you are in".

Doherty succeeded in creating this timeless, wintery, uncomfortable urban mess. The situationists comment that all space is "occupied"<sup>11</sup> but the enemy takes on a renewed implication in this case. The image is of the Bogside, the Catholic Community of Derry. However, for Doherty it is everyone who is the enemy and everyone who is the victim. In *Partial View* Doherty explains this:

Because no-one in Northern Ireland can afford to be indifferent to the gaze of the other, virtually everyone participates in its discourse of concealing projecting and imagining a self that it is not 'I' and that 'I' could be either





Protestant, Catholic, Loyalist, Terrorist or victim.<sup>12</sup>

Underneath the text "Stifling Surveillance" there is another text - a smaller text: "Last hours of daylight". Everyone is preparing for a long night of watchfulness, unrest and anxious waiting, but also the fake reassurance of daylight is diminishing and the hidden prevailing darkness takes command. But still, the lens keeps watching. In his work Willie Doherty dispenses with any simple concern to use photography to represent a 'real' event. Instead, his work exists as a contrast to the photographic practices of the media and his art is a condemnation of the use of photography as a means of control. His work stands as a critique of surveillance photography as operated by the state.

Another subject that interests Doherty is the duplicity and difference, and how this identity and difference have manifested themselves in nature. As Doherty points out. "The Northern Irish conflict is as much a result of an entended disagreement about the meaning of nature as anything else"<sup>12</sup> Partial View. 1993

In Willie Doherty's two part photo installation, Stone Upon Stone (1986), (Fig. 2) this conflict is evident. Designed for a narrow corridor - like space, the photographs face each other such that the viewer cannot see both in full view simultaneously. Each photograph is quite like the other in that they are both images of the river bank. The two views are of the West and East Shores of the River Foyle. The west side (nationalist side) is stony and barren in comparison with the East. Both photographs could be anywhere, a riverside in England, France, Ireland, Russia, it would not matter. If taken in colour it could be easily one of the photographs in the Tourist Board brochures. What makes this impossible is the text Doherty stamps over the images (like a headline changes an image in a newspaper).



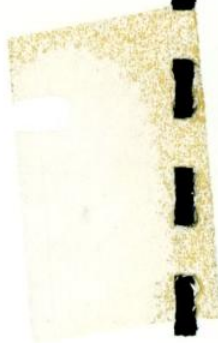


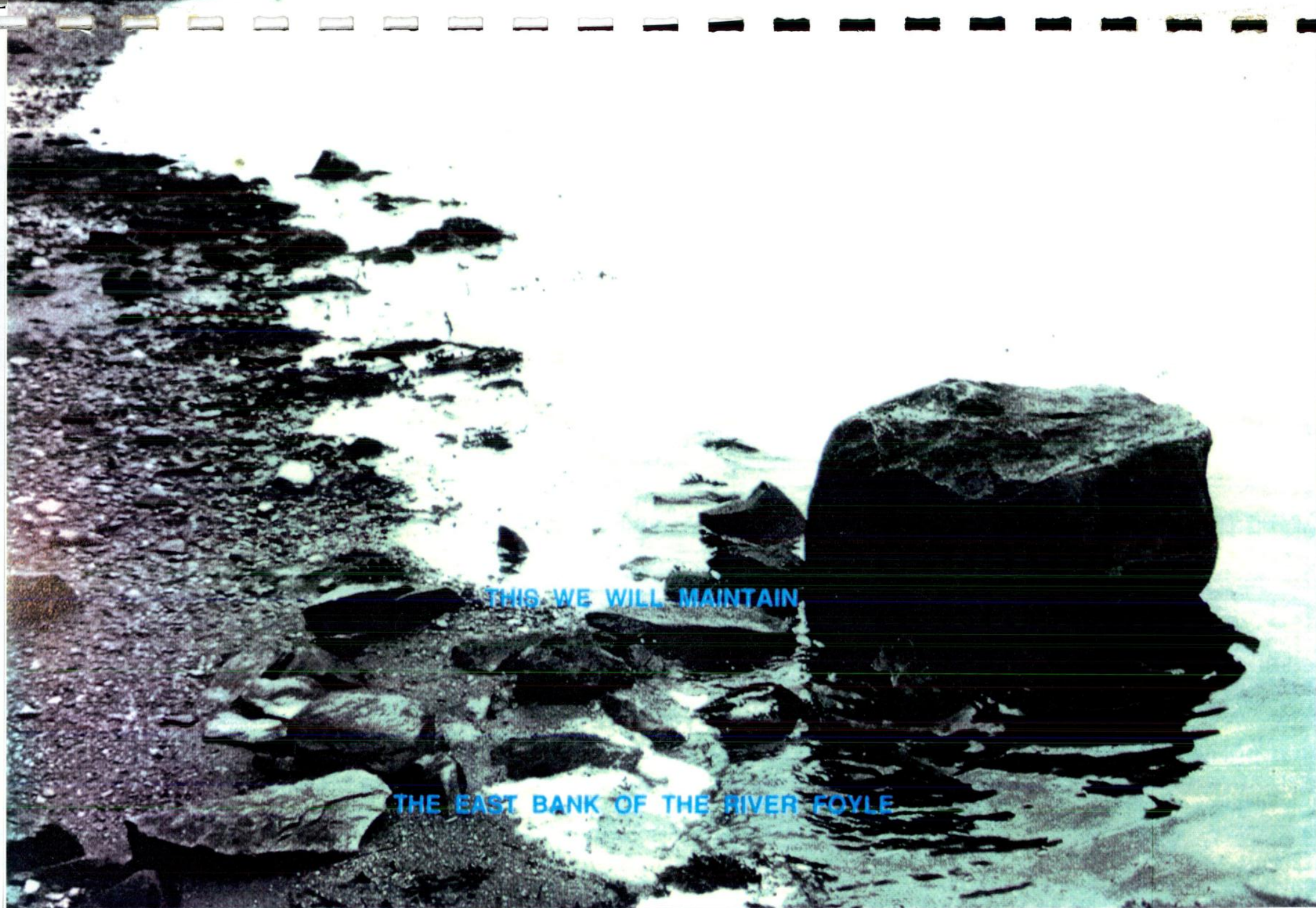
STONE  
UPON  
STONE

TÍOCFAIDH ÁR LÁ

THE WEST BANK OF THE RIVER FOYLE







THIS WE WILL MAINTAIN

THE EAST BANK OF THE RIVER FOYLE

↑  
FIG. 2





On the two images the text "Stone Upon Stone" may refer to the heaped stones on the shore or, alternatively, describes a wall. Or is it layered understandings? Underneath this text on one image is written in green, "Tiocfaidh ar la", a Gaelic expression used by the Republicans in 1921 and still used today - meaning our day will come. This expression is seen all over the nationalist walls of Belfast, Derry etc. It has to do with a struggle, a fight for freedom. Our day will come and Ireland will be free again. The shore becomes apart of this struggle. A rough, barren landscape - always Ireland was described as such, "The Wild Irish". Willie Doherty uses this history to enhance the vacant nationalist phrase - I'm sure he could easily have found an equally smooth part on the beach on the west bank! The landscape becomes a metaphor for a struggle. Jean Fisher states that "for many it is the earth that legitimizes cultural identity."<sup>13</sup> The west bank of the Foyle represents Catholicism, republicanism, struggle and Irishness.

The other image - the east bank of the Foyle is a lucid proud, clear watery image. The water softly licks up to the rock on the shore. Again, Doherty enhances historical knowledge of the proud, resolute wealthy Orangemen who will not bow down to the unrefined Irish. The text in this image is written in blue and reads, "This we will maintain", a loyalist phrase used as widely as the republican "Tiocfaidh ar la". Again, the landscape on the East bank of the River Foyle is loyalist, Protestant and defiant. The search for identity and control has a lot to do with defining the land.

As Kavanagh wrote:

"Who owns that half a rood of rock in no man's land,  
A stone mile of kingdom?"<sup>14</sup>

Both sides are engaged in a mutual misrecognition, both sides are building their own stone walls of tradition and myth. Edward Said, in his



pamphlet Yeats and Decolonialism, 1988, stated:

Nativism reinforces the distinction by re-evaluating the weaker or subservient partner. To accept nativism is to accept the consequences of imperialism too willingly, to accept the very radical religious and political divisions imposed on places like Ireland by imperialism itself. To leave the historical world for the metaphysics of essences.... Irishness is a word to abandon history"<sup>15</sup>.

While loyalism is equally trapped in a metaphysics of essences it is the 'naturism' or 'Celtic twilight' sentiment, haunting Irish nationalism, that Doherty questions in his work.

Like Victor Sloan, Willie Doherty, as a native of Northern Ireland, sees nature as being part of the conflict, willingly or unwillingly. It always was and still is! In *Stone Upon Stone* this rings true and importantly. The political divisions are seen through nature and land.

"Can we seriously believe and without cynicism still believe of the earth to be a matter of aesthetics or spirituality without acknowledging that for others suffering the consequences of Western barbarism it is fundamentally a political issue"<sup>16</sup>.

Victor Sloan, Sean Hillen and Paul Graham are three other artists who take this viewpoint. They see the earth of Northern Ireland as playing a part in the segregation and violence and fear which people live with in the North. To me it is interesting to note how few artists are aware of this reality or choose to be. Irish artists tend in general to be caught up in the 'Irishness' of Ireland.

Philip Nairne, an artist living in Northern Ireland, said in a Random Access Meeting '93 that art is more about the given environment you live in socially and politically and that people should look to their surroundings more and see what is going on. It seems as though the biggest of all Irish heroes today







A photograph of a street at sunset. The sky is a vibrant yellow and orange, with some clouds. The street is paved and has a white line down the center. On the left side of the street, there are trees and a street lamp. On the right side, there are buildings and a street lamp. In the distance, a white sign on a building reads "YOU ARE NOW ENTERING FREE DERRY". The text "GOLDEN SUNSETS" is overlaid in white capital letters across the middle of the image.

G O L D E N   S U N S E T S

WAITING





is Ireland itself. We cannot but be anxious about our identity if we doom ourselves to be always in search of an idea, so elusive that no society could ever embody it.

In another of Willie Doherty's photographs, Waiting, (Fig. 3) he plays ironically on the image of Ireland as a pastoral idyll nurtured by tourist-directed representation and republicans' desire for a united Ireland.

Doherty chose to use colour for this photograph. In Circa (1986, No.27). Doherty said that it was Paul Graham's Troubled Land series that helped generate his plunge into colour. His work, he said, attempted to address new British colour work.

As we know, colour photographs are most widely used by tourist boards in their portrayal of any area. It is this type of 'normality' that Doherty is questioning.

So, as Doherty said in an interview at a later stage, "By using colour the photographs look real but official colour increases the artificiality. The works are not about absolute realities"<sup>17</sup>. What one sees in his photographs is an urban setting of houses, cars and roads, in fact, not a very interesting urban setting, but with this magnificent sunset causing an exaggerated ray of golden light to fall on the road and houses. (Follow the yellow brick road.) The dull depressing plight of the poor urban dwellers is enhanced by the beauty of the evening. The sunset as described by Synge and Yeats in Irish literature is part of a romanticised Ireland. As Sean O'Faolain said, 'One would imagine from the bulk of Irish literature that there wasn't a city in the whole of Ireland.'<sup>18</sup>

What interrupts this blissful image is the gable end of a house positioned



near the middle of the photograph. On it is written in bold black letters, "You are now entering Free Derry". So we know we are in Derry. We are positioned on the 'Unfree' side of Derry where the sunset does not shine. I wonder if there would be a sunset over all of Derry if the Unionists turned Republicans? Except there is not. As Sean Hillen says of the political graffiti and murals, "No matter how cliched or debased these images have become they do portray a relationship to what people in the North experience and believe"<sup>19</sup>. The gable end has stood for years in Derry. As Willie Carson says, "These walls have a history of their own ... Talk of removing them would cause a near revolution for in their own way they depict the feelings of two communities in the city".<sup>20</sup>

Over Doherty's image the words "Golden Sunsets" are written, re-defining the already exaggerated image. This cynical statement stings because it is part of a dream for the Republicans who live in a romanticised past but also for the people living in the North who wish to look at a non-violent golden sunset.

Underneath this text is a larger text, 'Waiting'. The viewer begins to feel uneasy. What are we waiting for? What is this community waiting for? Freedom, revolution, night-time ? How long must these people wait and how long have they been waiting ?

There is hardly any sign of life portrayed in the image; no cars are moving and no people are walking. The depressed urban area is quiet. The viewer is aware that the artist is not sole author of the image, titled Waiting, as it already has christened itself "Welcome to free Derry".

As Doherty says in Camera Austria:

My photographs can be understood as a process of bringing together a number of ideas, words, images which already have a place within the collective consciousness and the collective unconscious of potential viewers, what is important is the acknowledgement of pre-existing images.<sup>21</sup>





In Doherty's phototexts particularly Stone Upon Stone and Waiting, the images can be seen to derive from a variety of sources including political rhetoric, graffiti, wall murals, advertising, myth and history.

In an interview given to the Tom Cuglianni Gallery in New York he tells us:

"I wanted to address these pre-existing images rather than explore fine art photography".

Unlike Sloan or Hillen, Doherty's photographs themselves are simple and direct. They document a given place, but with the addition of text and exaggerated colour or shadow due to his favourite times for photography, which is either very early or late in the day. The straight documentation is layered with cynicism, irony and, at the same time, emotional detachment.

In Circa (1986 No. 27) Doherty says that in his colour work he attempted to recode the way colour is understood and used by the nationalist tradition. He attempts to look at those values that colour is so involved with and the way in which it is understood. Willie Doherty does not believe that Paul Graham's work on Northern Ireland manages to get close to understanding these codes - this I will go into in further detail later.

In a more recent work, shown in the Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, in 1993 Doherty deals with a specific historical event. This installation is called 30th January 1972. (Fig. 4)

The work consists of two slide projections, a sound-track and a ceilingless room that can be entered by two darkened corridors painted deep red. One of the slides is projected onto the interior of this built room and the other onto the









↑  
FIG: 4





exterior wall. From the stairs in the Douglas Hyde Gallery, where you enter the gallery space, which is lower than the front entrance of the gallery building, it is possible to see the slide projected onto the interior of the ceilingless room. This image is taken from the television footage of Bloody Sunday. It is a grainy black and white slide. The slide on the exterior is a colour slide taken from an urban setting of today. It is of a group of houses which look unlivd in, a blue skip and graffitied walls; the cul-de-sac looks in a state of urban decline. Around the general area of the gallery there are a number of speakers attached to the walls which broadcast a sound-track taken from the streets of Derry, comments on what Bloody Sunday meant to the public, some memories and some stories.

The installation room has an exit and entrance so one passes in through a small corridor, walks across the slide wall and through the other small corridor. The image inside is unclear, in that it is very grainy. It is part of a crowd shoving and moving. It is very difficult to see or make out a facial expression; it is claustrophobic. The image is taken straight from the television coverage of that time in Derry. Doherty choose this image, above all the images available; it seems to be more about a people than an action. These people are stuck in time, visually as well as literally. Bloody Sunday today is still used as a retaliation plug for the I.R.A. How do these two slide images relate?

They activate an awareness of the relationship between the historical moment and the subsequent economic decline. The two corridors hint at the role of memory in this process. The past and present in Northern Ireland are very muddled and at most times inseparable. Today's violence at times is done in the name of yesterday's beliefs and heroes.

For Willie Doherty and his generation the fact that responsibility for Bloody Sunday as never acknowledged. The overwhelming amount of evidence suggested that the official Government investigation into the matter was far



from thorough or unbiased. This knowledge has been as devastating as the brutal reality and the killings themselves. In psycho-social terms, then, the trauma of Bloody Sunday persists because it cannot be reconciled, because its status as unfinished business has not to date been acknowledged.

According to Doherty an almost 'mythical quality' has become attached to the event stemming from the role that Bloody Sunday has played in the formation of Derry's image both from inside and outside (the double-sided image).

The exhibition raises many questions. It brings with it the voices of Derry today, the image of the past and the urban image of today. It does not try to force an opinion and is perhaps a bit too tasteful, too arty! It is his style of presentation. The work is to an extent both confronting and inviting. It invites you to look and listen but it seems trapped within its own reality and existence. When entering the corridor and passing the slide of the crowd you become for one instant part of the crowd. But then you walk out through the other corridor leaving the crowd behind. However, the voices and comments of the people of Derry continue but it is only on tape; it is not as if you are talking to someone face to face.

As I walk out of the exhibition my future lies ahead of me, but these people are locked in a time warp. Dublin is only a three-and-a-half-hour drive from Derry and in Derry another time warp is in existence.

There is a failure to confront the nature of difference and identity and this results in an endless repetition of myths and imagined truths about the intransigent and inhuman nature of the other.

In Doherty's work there is no image of riot-torn Derry or no picturesque landscape of beautiful Derry. Willie Doherty denies the "here today, gone tomorrow" photography and he denies the rustic tradition of Ireland - quite like Victor Sloan, except that in Sloan's work it is the Orange Day parades he interrogates: "Never let a sleeping dog lie".

## CHAPTER II Victor Sloan

Victor Sloan is a photographer from Portadown who up until 1981, ignored what was going on in the North. As he said himself, he didn't want to "jump on the bandwagon"<sup>22</sup>. Sloan was not always a photographer. He began his career as a painter, later moving to photography. He manages to combine the two, creating a very layered aesthetic which contributes to a dynamic body of work.

Victor Sloan stresses that he does not wish to be seen as a 'Northern Irish artist' because he feels that if art is to have any permanent value it must transcend political boundaries. In Creative Camera (1988) he adds to this idea:

"I don't care what they call us, whether it's Ulster or Ireland. I comment on what's here. I do not try to change it, it's not a Protestant or a loyalist viewpoint but me as a human being."

Victor Sloan uses a number of techniques before he comes to the final image. He scratches and scrapes the negative and may add toners on the print; he may use watercolours, acids or dyes as well. The beginning image is only part of the process. Quite like the way Doherty adds text onto his photographs, the initial image changes and can change dramatically.

Sloan's photographs could take hours or weeks of adding and subtracting. In Creative Camera (No.4 1988) he tells us:

"My images are the result of two reactions, an initial reaction to the subject and a reaction to the resulting photographic negative and/or print. If the original isn't good it'll never be any good, no matter what you do to it."<sup>23</sup>

Sloan tends to work in a series. Each series of work is titled and takes



another view of the overall subject, such as the Orange Day parades. These parades are held annually in Northern Ireland always on the same day, the twelfth of July. The parades are ostensibly a celebration of the victory of the Protestant King William of Orange (hence Orange Day parades) over the Catholic King James at the Battle of the Boyne almost 300 years ago. However, they are also a present day assertion that the Protestant ascendancy will be maintained forever in the North of Ireland. The Orange Day parades are organised by the local lodge of the order. Bands march and men walk behind large colourful banners, which usually commemorate Orangemen who have been killed by the I.R.A. or celebrate Orange heroes. The financial element in itself (banners, bands, costumes, etc.) exemplifies the wealth which the Orange Order can muster. The parades are an inbuilt part of the Unionist lifestyle, a carnival and celebration.

Most of Sloan's work is about this carnival. As a child Sloan always went to such occasions; being a Protestant living in Northern Ireland, it was a most normal thing to do. As an adult he brought his own children: the parades have been difficult to avoid as they passed near his house. When Sloan started to make work on this subject, his aim was to try to "Show the parades..... why they're here and what they're doing". This initial explanation has involved him in a dense social and political arena which is layered, oblique and resonant. All his work to date looks at different viewpoints, e.g.. carnival, celebration. I have chosen a few different works from some of the different series Sloan has finished over the years.

The Walk, The Platform and The Field, is the title given to one series. Sloan looks at the idea of celebration that goes in hand with the parades. His work in this series shows pomp, laughter and a sense of occasion. As with all his photographs there is a great deal of scratching. Large lines, like fireworks or

ribbons, surround the uniformed men and children. Though the photographs are in black-and-white, the action and substance of Sloan's technique almost invents a black-and-white colour.

We see large drums, bowler hats and sashes. Sloan's marks add to the excitement and cheer ; they go with the beat of the drum and the step of the foot. There are few carnivals which do not have some element of political import, nor is there an anniversary parade which does not have some element of carnival. Carnival is about how people enjoy themselves, not who they are. An anniversary parade is about who they are. In this series Sloan lets the anniversary parades march in celebration as they did once for him as a child.

The markings separate us from the initial image. The Unionists seem showered in a storm of occasion; each mark adds to this.

Sloan's initial image could be on the front page of a newspaper, as newspapers usually cover celebrations, for example the St. Patrick's Day Parade. It is Sloan's technique, which begins with a journalistic image, that encourages the comparison with realist photography as a whole, in the gallery (as well as in the newspapers.) As his subject matter overlaps with that of the media his work has connections with photojournalism.

If we look at the coverage of the Orange Day parade in newspapers we will see that the coverage and representation in the papers depends on the paper's political viewpoint. As an artist, Sloan does not censor himself. Though there were some photos in the Derry Journal during the week of the twelfth of July, there were only two reports concerning the twelfth. These reports make a connection between the events of Orange Day in Derry and the anniversary of Hitler's move on Danzig. The newspaper also related two speeches made by



different members of the Order on the falling birth rate of the Protestant community. Another local paper, the Londonderry Sentinel, had wide coverage of the parades; however, the headline read 'Protestants face the same today as in 1690.'

Hoping for some disturbance, the national newspapers sent some reporters to the scene but, not getting any violence, they went home and no photographs appeared. The same went for the London newspapers where there was no photographic coverage at all. The media give more attention to the activities of the parades only when they correspond with the 'troubles'. Sloan's coverage is not dependent on the 'troubles'. Sloan has a level of commitment that results in a body of work that considers the parades from all angles.

In the Drumming series (1986) he looks at the siege mentality of Unionist Northern Ireland. The subject matter is related to the current political context in that the 1986 parades took place at a time of tension caused by the Anglo-Irish agreement, an agreement which caused suspicion among the Protestant population. "Ulster says no" was one of the main catchphrases seen in banners and graffiti around the streets of the North at that time. The parade took on this banner that year so that it took on a definite sense of the present, whereas the marching season is meant to commemorate a 300 year old triumphalism.

Drums are usually perceived as providing the beat, the rhythm. They can also refer to war drums, to the Orange tradition of drumming (territorial) and to the notion of drumming something into somebody's head. It is both celebration and war cry. As Brian Mc Avera puts it in Marking the North, the parades are:

"...an assertion of identity, and an imposition of identity both as a continuation of a richly endowed culture and of the stubborn grip of outmoded concepts."<sup>24</sup>



Fig. 5





Two particular images in Sloan's Drumming series will be discussed. Carrying the Crown (Fig. 5) is the title of one of these pieces. The image is of a girl dressed in a uniform of frills and poms carrying a crown on a plush looking cushion. The crown is a replica of the Queen's crown, symbolising the loyalty of Unionists to the English monarchy. Beside the girl is a large banner, but it is impossible to make out any precise image. The young girl is being attacked by marks and scratches on all sides. She looks lost or in a dream and does not seem to mind because of the moment that is in it and the honour attached to carrying the crown. Layer and layer of scratches and toners confuse and sedate the viewer and the young girl.

If we look at it in its context, the young enjoy these parades, the fancy clothes, the partying, the music, the honour. However, without knowing it, it is part of an adult world of faith, loyalty, violence and myth, too complex for them to understand. These quite willing participants in today's parades might be the perpetrators of the violence of tomorrow. Is there any innocence left in Northern Ireland?

Another image in that series is Field II. (Fig. 6) In this image we see a large banner beside the field where the Orange Day speeches take place. On the banner is written "Co. Armagh Orangemen still say NO !!". Here Sloan combines Orangeism and its celebratory rites with current politics. The landscape is scratched and torn with marks. In this image we do not see any parades or marches but know that this is part of the countryside they march through. As Sloan tells us, "I followed them from about six am in the morning until they went home that night <sup>25</sup>. Their music and costumes and marches seem to leave no celebratory goodness. This image reinforces that "Ulster says no". Sloan's angry scratch cannot get rid of this fact. He can mark and scratch all he likes but it is a fact: this banner is there and will stay there! The image





FIG: 6 ↑



is layered and could mean a great many things to a variety of people. For an Orangeman the markings and scratch might mean a dream and belief that is being scratched away or a reinforcing dominance over the land..

In Art Review (London Nov 89) Gerry Burns comments:

The objective photographer is a fiction, what counts is the controlling intelligence behind the camera linked to a sensibility which is itself the product of the social, political, religious and cultural circumstances, which have helped to form the 'image' being snapped.

When photographing the North one has to be aware of the history of photography in the North, how the media's cameras have been clicking for 25 years. Before people learned of the power of the camera and of the damage it can create, a petrol bomb was shown for the camera to record or a small mural painted for media attention. People used to talk and invite people into their homes. Today you're looking at a population who have had enough; who have been hurt glorified and abused by the media's lenses. Taking photographs of the North incurs a huge responsibility.

As Sean Hillen says, it is impossible to get a pure truth but most artists search for it. Using the camera makes this harder because of its history of abuse. He uses the weapon of the media to try to get to a truth or an understanding of the Northern Irish situation.<sup>26</sup>

In Birches 1988, Sloan looks at man's relationship to the land. Following the parade through the northern countryside, he looks at the relationship of the parade mythology and mentality as applied to the daily existence of Northern Ireland.

The images Seek Me and Find Me (Fig. 7) deal with this. In the image titled





↑

Fig 7

↑



Seek Me there is a text nailed onto a tree It is a biblical legend:

The Lord saith and ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29/3.

Trees seem to be used a lot in Northern Ireland, as we will see later in Paul Graham's images.

The tree tells a story of religious belief. Maybe once ignored this tree becomes a message holder. Sloan has superimposed a faint image of a man in an Orange Day uniform onto the tree. Does this mean that the tree becomes a loyalist tree as well; or is the immovable state of the tree transferred to the Loyalist? That the landscape is marked and defined is a part of the conflict. As we have seen earlier in Doherty's work and later in Graham's this seems to be the case. Behind the superimposed image is a piece of farm machinery-symbolising the working land.

The other image, Find Me, is of the same Orangeman except now the machinery, tree and landscape have been practically scratched away and the Orangeman is more defined.

The Lord told the Orangeman to find him and seek him and he found him in the working land. Is the Orangeman a victim or conveyor of this belief? Like the girl carrying the crown he has grown into the way of living and seems so caught up he does not even question it.

Royal Black Preceptory (Fig. 8) is another portrayal of this idea. It is a photograph of an Orangeman's head and shoulders; he has a bowler hat on and a sash around his shoulders. Sloan has superimposed a landscape over the image. The man's face is hardly recognisable. He looks totally deformed. It is skeleton-like, animalistic, masked and aggressive. The territory walked on by the man as he parades through it becomes him and in a hideous way distorts





↑ FIG. 8



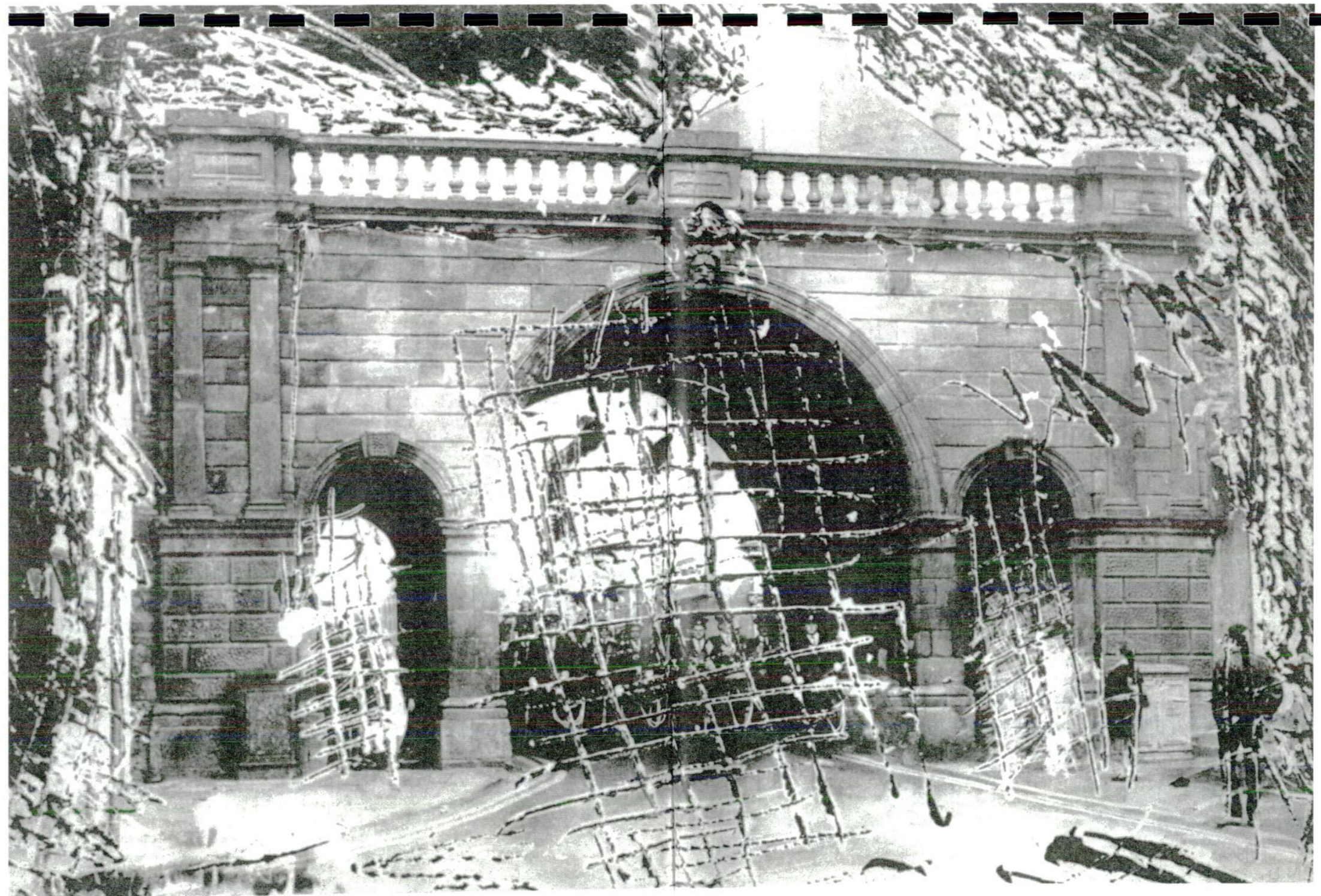
him as pride or greed might. The parade marches through the landscape, beating its loud drums, a cry of territorial claim. The man is a monster in charge of his territory dressed in a uniform of control. It is almost a fascist statement. The image makes one feel a mixture of disgust and sympathy, as one can feel for the whole Northern conflict

In Sloan's Walls series of 1989 the theme of siege runs through his image, psychological and physical notions of siege. In the time of James I, Derry was given to the city of London - hence the city Londonderry. They built the city and circled it with walls to keep out the Gaels. In 1641 a large part of the colonialists were sent off the land by the Gaelic Irish Catholics. Atrocities were committed but, as historians note, were hugely exaggerated through time. However, today these stories are the 'truth' to many Ulster Protestants, like the Bloody Sunday exaggerations to the Republicans.

In 1688 the City of Derry was again a refuge. There were reports that Protestants were being massacred by Catholics loyal to James II. When a garrison was sent in James' name there were stories of a massacre.

Thirteen apprentice boys took matters into their own hands and locked the gates against the Catholic might. A blockade started and this siege is enacted today around the Walls of Derry and is remembered physically as the structures of the gates still stand. Today these walls are fortified with barbed wire and army trucks - a reinforcement of what was already there, reinforcing the memory and architecture. Sloan has an image of this gate which is called Ferry Quay Gate. (Fig. 9) On the original image, the negative that is, Sloan shows the Orange Day parades marching through the triple archway. However, Sloan has intervened and he marks the three arches in a mesh-like pattern disrupting any passage that might have been open. There is no way through. The marchers





↑ FIG:9



march and in this image seem to march and march on the one spot not going anywhere. The loyalists are trapped in their own gateway, trapped in time and physically trapped.

Walls today and all around Europe hold the same meaning. They keep you in or out! Psychologically they block out information or keep it in. Walls are a symbol of lack of communication. They abandon a hope of dialogue or understanding. Victor Sloan in Mannheimer Morgen 22/23 June '91 says:

"I want to make people look at the image in a different way; see behind the image. People tend to discuss photographs as just being photographs."

I think Sloan's photographs are challenging and dynamic. He seems to work his way through a complex process of production towards an image that will convey the meaning of the parades and his reaction to them. The excitement of Sloan's work lies in the difficulty which the viewer faces in trying to produce a single all embracing statement about it.

### CHAPTER III Sean Hillen

Sean Hillen is an artist from Newry, Co. Down. He moved to London to study art and ended up living and working there until recently. He held a show in the Gallery of Photography in November 1993 in Dublin and, since then, Hillen has decided to live and work in Dublin. In the 'eighties Hillen spent a lot of time taking photographs of Northern Ireland, which he combines with his recycled found imagery - tourist postcards and Catholic iconography and the cowboy-and-Indian Hollywood postcards, fantasy figures, space invaders, etc.

He manages to combine all this information into a body of work about the 'troubles'. Unlike Doherty and Sloan, Hillen's daily landscape is the city of London, and in his work he looks at Northern Ireland from London, using imagery of the City and juxtaposing it with Newry, his home town.

Doherty and Sloan both use individual techniques in discussing the North. They layer their photographs, either through text or marking; Hillen uses montage.

Montage is a French word meaning the fitting of parts by an engineer. Photomontage has survived longer than the urban industrial revolution with which it was originally associated, which was, for example, a way of presenting America with its industrially-inspired technological utopias. Today's dystopic images of cities and technology out of control are more the norm. Sean Hillen shows cities at war. The images of racing cars and aeroplanes used excessively and loved by montage artists the '20s are in Hillen's work replaced by jeeps and helicopters of the British Army. There is a satirical potential of montage: juxtaposing, masking, turning the world upside down. Photo-montage has a



history of aesthetic detail, painted, sprayed and retouched photographs like that of John Heartfield, but it also has a history especially throughout the 1920s of an anti-painting machine aesthetic. Sean Hillen prefers this anti art look, where joins are visible. In his work it is possible to see where the knife cuts and the image is repeated and also where the source of material comes from. For example, Hillen leaves the edges of the postcard where it is written, for example, 'This is a John Hinde postcard'. At times Hillen titles his work from the title of the postcard, e.g. The professionals, Who is my enemy? (Fig. 10)

As Hillen says:

You in some way define and possess a source by naming or picturing it ... titles have become very important in setting the context for the pictures. The modes of thinking and use are obviously linguistically related - but it's usual images which are my medium of expression.<sup>27</sup>

In some respect this is like Willie Doherty's concept where text derives from wall-graffiti, tourist brochures, handkerchiefs etc.

Hillen's overall aim is to avoid a display of craft skills which might interfere with his political message. He wants his work to be raw and tangible. There is enough of the pristine image and enough patching and covering up in the political arena of Northern Ireland.

"I try to make the work as open as I can. Maybe that's disingenuous of me, but that's what I attempt" [White Noise Ikon Gallery Birmingham Sept '92]

Hillen uses so many already crafted images that it adds to the friction when these typically crafted commercial images are joined together with a rough clear separation.

Another element of Hillen's work is humour. As he has said on numerous occasions:

"I like art that entertains. If you amuse, you can get people on your side, so that







MASTER ADVENTURE LIBRARY—No. 71—WHO IS MY ENEMY

FIG: 10 ↑







fig 10 ↑





they're not so immune to ideas. I believe in white noise - piercing art."<sup>28</sup>

The sense of humour in Hillen's work is sharp, witty and dynamic. He adds comic relief to the serious subject matter by using ridiculous characters like Superman and leprechauns and spaceships. Wittgenstein described 'Social structure as games'. The Americans describe their manoeuvres in space as 'Star Wars' and this is part of what Hillen is getting at. As Shakespeare wrote:  
 "All the World's a stage,  
 And all the men and women merely players."<sup>29</sup>

This is one element that Doherty and Sloan do not go near. There is no hint at all of comedy in either of their works - this may be because of Hillen's distance from the North. He states:

"The child in me is in the Streets of London, looking at Ireland, glimpsing little scraps of Ireland through the media".

You could say that his removal is enforced:

"My home town is militarily occupied, I don't fancy the fight.... head for the hills is my natural instinct"<sup>30</sup>

From listening to Hillen one can understand where his cowboy-and-Indian imagery comes from. The cowboys invaded the Indian territory, planted and tried to wipe out a race.

Unlike the majority of Northern Irish artists Hillen takes sides and will openly support a united Ireland without the British army occupation. In Hillen's work there are the similar themes of surveillance, landscape, religion and violence.

In Hillen's montage Who is my enemy? we see a montage city of buildings, footpaths, lights, people walking. The city is made up of London and Newry imagery. On the footpath you have the ordinary crowd you get in any city except

Hillen has added a TV character to the crowd, one of 'the Professionals' who is holding a gun in a crouched position ready for anything. The man looks half mad in the environment Hillen has put him in. There are numerous connotations to this image. First, is everyone pretending normality and heedlessness when they are tense and aware that a bomb could be let off at any minute? There is a definite sense of paranoia something like that which Willie Doherty deals with in his images of innocent bushes and houses, transforming them by text as in 'Unseen' or 'Stifling surveillance'.

In the book Media and Northern Ireland, Trisha Ziff quotes Julie Doherty from Derry Camera Work:

If we take photographs of scenery, trees .... lovely green fields we don't know what's behind the trees and bushes. My husband was shot by the British Army. They lay in waiting for him behind the trees and bushes, he was shot dead in a very normal scenic setting.

The image tells of people in London who do not have to worry or not to the same extent as the people of Northern Ireland, even though Northern Ireland is ruled by Westminster. Maybe Hillen is portraying himself as this paranoid Irishman who can never be unheeding because even though he is in London he does not feel safe in a city of 'enemies'.

The image of 'the Professionals' is saturated with strong male role models which glorify conflict and danger - simplistic odysseys where hero identification is easy regardless of which side you are on. In his works all the male figures seem to see themselves as heroes! Like in Sloan's Orange Day parade images - we rarely see a woman. It is all mostly men or else children.

In Hillen's image the child personification is seen in his use of the cartoon





St. Christopher Appears In London, Security Forces investigate...







image. In the case of both Sloan and Hillen, the child is shown as innocent but the child's loss of innocence is part of the weightier conflict that both artists are referring to. Recently in the news this was a major issue in the Jamie Bolger case. How could two "innocent" ten year olds murder another child maliciously and why were they not stopped? Part of the blame was attached to a video called Child's Play III where a child's doll was brutally murdered. Hillen, like Sloan and Doherty, comments on the mass media's control and coverage of Northern Ireland. As Sean McCrum said in his essay (Oct'93): "This is an age of mass media. This is an image-fixated society, and photography is part of this."<sup>31</sup>

Where does that leave artists who want to make unique images from photography and the mass media? Hillen derives some of his images from media imagery, using it within an expression of individual and personal concepts. He re-defines the image. His own photographs, taken in black and white, are of army tanks, soldiers, derelict houses and surveillance towers. Onto these images he attaches colourful postcards and cartoon imagery. He plays the two types of images off one another, almost waiting for them to self-destruct.

In his image St. Christopher appears in Newry, security forces investigate. (Fig 11) he uses the postcards of the Houses of Parliament. On the bridge in front of the tower he has placed his black and white photographs of armoured trucks from Newry. The trucks are coming over the bridge. To the right of the picture he has a colourful kitsch image of St. Christopher ( saint of safe travel ) holding baby Jesus in his arms coming out of the Thames.

The combination of the Kitsch image of St. Christopher, the documentary photograph of the armed RUC trucks and the tourist postcard of London's Houses of Parliament, Westminster, creates an ironic and humorous comment. The formal juxtaposition of the images and the device of combining colour with

black and white seemingly on the one plane is challenging.

Hillen's work draws upon mass reproduction and unique photographic images. As he said in an interview in the Gallery of Photography, "Any image can be moved into any context as required; for example, Benetton used a burning car to sell clothes. Coke and Pepsi and Levis are as subtle in their approach. Image becomes more significant than actual content."<sup>32</sup> Hillen wishes to disturb this and challenge it.

In his image London Newry (Fig. 12) the title relates to the content and context of Hillen's situation as an Irishman living in London. In this group of photographs Hillen's approach is autobiographical, concerned with historical specifics. In one image he has an image of the English guards practising their routine on horses - all decked out in their costumes. Superimposed on this image is a black and white photograph of the IRA in training in uniform holding rifles. The two images look highly exaggerated and propagandist but it is a reality and the belief of each group is as valid as that of the next: both look ridiculous. Jokes, drama and art are all structures for reconciling the impossible; it is unimaginable to assume that the English guard and the IRA could ever practise on the same field. Both symbolise opposing powers. One is part of the English system of King and Crown, of palace and colonisation. The other is an outlawed terrorist organisation, anti everything. David Evans in his essay (Oct 93) thinks that Sean Hillen insists that Britain not Ireland constitutes the problem.<sup>33</sup> After talking to Hillen I found that he supports the cause but not the violence of the IRA.

Discussing his montage work London Newry in a magazine article (April 5th '91) Hillen says: "In the montage there are experimental places and worlds. I suppose they ask the question 'How would you like it on your streets'<sup>34</sup>? When Hillen last went to London he kept imagining soldiers on the streets and now





↑ FIG:12





he materializes those images in his montages.

"It might be to excise those images by bringing the war home to England" (Evening Press). There exists a wall of misinformation on photography. In general it is 'well known' by the majority of people looking at the news that photographs are inherently accurate, objective - a reliable source of information. Cameras are seen as machines that never lie. This would apply to people in England who have never been to the North and would read media information as truth.

Hillen puts all these different 'truths' together creating a lie. However, by doing this he is nearing his own truth. His aim is through montage to put his images on trial so that each image must defend itself. So you have a variety of truths on the one image and it is up to the reader to find his/her own truth from it, which indeed could be a lie.

The camera always lies; it chooses what it feels like choosing, always editing. However, I feel in montage there is that extra possibility of opening the one image, by overlapping numerous layers of what it is or is not. The montage process seems very suitable, and Hillen's wit and humour adds to this.

"Yeats said in 1916 'A terrible beauty is born' Well, I think that I've sometimes tried to turn terrible truths into beautiful images".<sup>35</sup>

#### CHAPTER IV Paul Graham

Paul Graham is an independent photographer living and working in London, England. Graham is known as a 'social landscapist'. His previous work related to people on the dole and dole offices in England: The series was called Beyond Caring.<sup>36</sup> He documents and comments on the way of life of these people and their environment - the dole office. Along with a number of other artists like Martin Park, Chris Killip, etc., he was involved in a photography book called The Thatcher Years.<sup>37</sup> He is part of a group of artists in England whose work is formalist, colourful, and social. Their work, though broadly socially oriented, is not political with a capital 'P'. As Gerry Badger puts it in Troubled Landscapes.<sup>38</sup>

The contemporary photographer of the social landscape may be said to be more concerned with experience rather than history, with psychological issues rather than directly political states of being.

Graham decided to come to Ireland and photograph the North. His first ambition in coming to photograph the North was "to challenge what he perceives as the bland superficiality of our received photographic view of Northern Ireland"<sup>39</sup>. Many critics (Gerry Badger, Brian McAvera)<sup>40</sup> seem to agree that it is to the English photographer that Northern Ireland is at once too close and too far. It is too close to be seen as an alien place and for requiring in effort of understanding and too far from the centre of political affairs to be treated as a matter of intense concern. Often the pursuit of aesthetic qualities has affected the work of a wide range of photographers of the North of Ireland conflict.

"In Britain one is fed a tightly controlled diet of news from Ulster and beyond that media coverage which portrays the menacing/protective British or the peacekeeper/oppressor - serving all sides of the propaganda scene!"





↑  
fig 13







writes Belinda Loftus.<sup>41</sup> She goes on to say: "Another mode of Ulster imagery is donated to the public by the Ulster tourist board. Which is that the six counties except for a few working class ghettos is unspoilt and charming and simple denying the existence of your Ian Paisleys and Derry."

So very little information or confused information is communicated. The public and wider public can not get a definite grasp on what's going on. Photography is a system that everyone can and does see all around them and they take these pieces of so called 'straight' information for granted.

Graham is determined to avoid the simplicities of media reportage and refuses to participate in the romance of rural Ireland. He is an outsider attempting to construct a form of social reality. Graham is endeavouring not simply to record the external landscape itself but also to reflect the social and cultural landscapes we use to organise our lives and sadly, in the North, used to destroy lives.

In his book Troubled Landscapes: the social landscape of Northern Ireland, Graham's photographs are full of flags and emblems, Republican or loyalist, which litter the landscape of Northern Ireland.

In the image, Paint on the Road, Gobnascale Estate, Derry 1985 (Fig. 13) we have a country road heading into an estate in the distance which is beside a long river, probably the Foyle, the backdrop being a mountain range and a beautiful blue sky. The composition is very formal and organised. The roadway is centred so that our eye will see the surrounding imagery in relation to this roadway, on the outskirts of Derry. On the roadway are paint splatters of blue, red and white the whole way down to the estate. These colours symbolise the English flag. Obviously they were splattered on the roadway to assert power and

ownership of a landscape. This is a British landscape. If a Catholic walks down this roadway they are walking on British, Unionist land. The photograph does not dramatise or exaggerate the roadway but makes it impossible to miss, as it intersects the photograph compositionally. Graham looks at a landscape that one might see on a tourist brochure. 'Welcome to beautiful Derry'. However, beautiful Derry is graffitied. People cannot remove these graffiti, unlike in England, as it could result in a violent retaliation. The other photographs of painted pavements are in the Irish colours of green, white and gold: Republican Coloured Kerbstones, Crumlin Rd. Belfast 1984. In another image, 1688 - 1690 Antrim 1980, he shows an estate with its kerbstones painted in the British flag colours of blue, white and red. We see graffiti taking on a more aggressive stance. In this case colour defines the landscape and reminds people who they are and where they come from.

"Graham creates a formal plan and a colour palette that reinforces the psychological experience his photographs are intended to convey". (Gerry Badger). By his use of colour, Graham reinforces the tourist image and highlights the dominance the troubles have over this touristic image in reality. He shows the rest of the picture as such. As an outsider Graham finds it important to convey this to an English public who would not see the rest of the picture, but also he shows that all over the landscape, urban and natural, a walk from A to B is not a quiet, uninterrupted thing; that walking out of your house onto a pavement you are reminded you are a Republican or a Unionist.

Willie Doherty told Circa in 1986 that Graham "... didn't recode anything, whereas I did, I attempted to recode the way colour is understood and used by the Nationalist tradition". One can see what Doherty means if we compare Doherty's use of colour in Golden Sunsets and Graham's Republican Coloured Kerbstones. Graham uses colour directly and Doherty changes the given colour





Belfast (RA)  
(City centre)  
Outer Ring  
A 55  
Newtownards  
10 miles

↑  
FIG. 14







to subtly get a point across.

However, Graham is not as aware of our literary romanticism and our glorification of myths. Graham said himself that he “came to Northern Ireland with a degree of naivety and myth, open mindedness and a willingness to learn”. The process of working was for Graham a process of learning . His task was to experience the situation at first hand and then decide how he might convey the different texture of normality in the North to largely non-Irish audiences, without falling back upon the clichéd excess of much of the imagery he had viewed prior to his visits to the province.

Another image that struck me for its suitability of composition was Graffiti on Motorway Sign, Belfast 1985. (Fig. 14) This image is of a main route into Belfast. The majority of the image is taken up by road and the heavy blue sky. To the left of the image is a blue motorway sign, not too far away from the blue of the sky. The sign gives us directions on where to go - Belfast straight ahead. On the sign beside the word ‘Belfast’ someone has written ‘IRA’. You would barely notice the difference because it is in the same colour of white as ‘Belfast’. Driving to Belfast and seeing this on the sign, especially if you were not used to the North, must make you wonder if you will go there at all. As Gerry Badger said, “The work itself is only a piece of the jigsaw”.<sup>42</sup> This small piece of graffiti on a motorway sign might seem insignificant. However, it signifies and symbolises a rage of violence on-going for 25 years in Northern Ireland.

Graham shows things as they are. During the hunger strike and elections up North and as part of the daily lifestyle in Northern Ireland, graffiti played a huge role in showing opinions, anger and involvement. As Luke Gibbons writes, “There is no privileged space beyond the conflict”.<sup>43</sup>

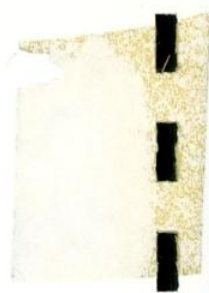
In Graham’s photograph Jesus Saves Co. Down 1985, (Fig. 15) we see





↑  
FIG. 15





another picture of the landscape. This time the graffiti is a religious message painted onto and nailed to a tree. 'Jesus Saves' is painted in red and stands out alarmingly in the close up shot of trees, fields and sky. As Sloan and Doherty show us, religious imagery is part of the landscape in Northern Ireland, psychologically as well as physically.

Compared with Sloan and Doherty's photography based on this subject, Graham's image is very simple and direct showing us exactly what is there - a religious sign on a tree. He offers no contrast or definition - it spells fact. In any country, England, America the Republic of Ireland, religious graffiti are found on trees, walls, etc. Graham fails to get across the complexity of the religious conflict in the North. This image is over simplified and the fact that the photograph was taken in Co. Down is irrelevant.

If you compare Sloan's image Seek Me and Find Me, which is discussed earlier, with Graham's image Jesus Saves, it is obvious to see that despite Graham's striving for an oblique approach the images are not layered. Instead, they opt for a singular viewpoint - one reason why the likes of Victor Sloan have shunned the singular pristine image in favour of the layered manipulated image.

Graham's image might contrast religion to landscape but in Ireland as part of our tradition the landscape is seen as God's creation anyhow.

In Willie Doherty's image, the text, "God has not failed us", is taken from a Protestant sermon, and is scribbled on walls around the North. The image is of run down flats which look onto a high line of steel railings. The viewer can not see the street as the image is taken from basement height.

The protection wired mesh around the windows are falling off and the





**GOD HAS NOT FAILED US**







place looks in a severe state of urban decline. In the background there is a unmanned police station. "God has not failed us" is the text across the image. Does it mean that one puts up with these conditions because they think God will save them?. Or that their political beliefs are to them so righteous and correct that they put up with living in the fountain (a Protestant estate) because God will save them. The situation is so desperate that all that's left is God and his protection!

Doherty cynically looks at this outrageous and pathetic existence. There is a combination of rueful truth and unabashed romanticism. Like Sloan, Doherty's images are layered and talk of a whole situation of existence.

Brian McAvera in his book Art Politics and Ireland said of Graham's work that "he replaces one set of simplicities with another set of the same".<sup>44</sup> For the Northerner Graham's interest in graffiti signs, posters etc. is a day to day thing. Graham says that troubled landscape, deals with the insistent signs of deep political division within the landscape. These insistent signs tell a story of tension separation and borders but other than the obvious accumulation of these signs, what else does Graham offer us?

Graham has a keen eye and a fantastic handling of composition and timing. One photograph, I feel shows this superbly: Roundabout, Andersonstown, Belfast 1981. (Fig. 16) The image is of a roundabout with houses, cars, street lamps etc. an urban setting with the backdrops of green mountains and the blue sky. At the very front of the image is a metal fence and graffitied in white paint is written PIRA. - Provisional Irish Republican Army. Across the road and on the roundabout a British soldier is running, at the same time a resident of the area is walking across the road to where a large wall is standing with "Smash H Block" written on it. Heading down into the rows of houses are two British Soldiers walking. On the roundabout there are street lamps and on these lamps





↑  
FIG. 16





are political posters asking us to vote for Morris.

This image seems to be an amalgamation of what Graham separately deals with in his other photographs. I think Graham's lack of insight into the psychology of Northern Ireland makes his photographs seem naive and simple. However, Lucy Lippard (in "Divisions, Crossroads, Turns of the Mind")<sup>45</sup> thinks, "If we don't imagine a person being bombed up, tortured by the police state, what hope have we of providing a counter vision?"

I don't think one needs to offer a counter vision for what to some extent would involve taking sides which many artists refrain from doing. As an artist Graham brought with him his strength of composition, colours, formality and realism. Graham had one exhibition and one well informed catalogue about Northern Ireland. Sloan and Doherty and Hillen dedicate their lives to it. It is for Graham another exhibition of the social landscape; he offers another image to that of the media. It was new for him - being from England and he managed to present some beautiful images as well as another view of Northern Ireland. Maybe not a critique or discussion, maybe not layered, maybe too simplified, but he was aware as an Englishman and photographer of the need to present Northern Ireland's landscape as it was to him, not just as a tourist board would present it in England. It's another part of the need for a more visual critique of Northern Ireland by artists.



## CHAPTER V Two Photojournalists

"Seeing is believing only to the innocent eye".<sup>46</sup> The single image of photojournalism simplifies substance into ideology. The soldier with his looming weapon a small child, political leaders, parliamentary fighters IRA. bombings, RUC. trucks etc. are propaganda statements. As Belinda Loftus tells us:

These are the subjects which have dominated English photographic coverage of the Northern Ireland Troubles. Such images are incapable of breathing the oxygen of context. They de vaccinated the complexities of history and politics and social articulation. These images occur again and again in the popular press; newspapers, political news sheets, independent books, magazines and postcards.<sup>47</sup>

In chapters V and VI, I will look at some newspaper coverage of the North of Ireland, and at Battle of the Bogside, by Clive Limpkin, an independent photojournalist from England; Still War, a book of documentary photography by two English Photographers working for network; and at a book on Northern Ireland by Derryman, Willie Carson, an independent photojournalist.

Curtis, has documented the output of the British media in relation to Northern Ireland and has found it badly lacking:

The record of British Media coverage of Ireland has been far from heroic. Those in positions of power both in government and in the media have proved most reluctant to provide a full picture of events in the North in their context, and have made considerable efforts to prevent journalists, dramatists and film makers from exploring the situation from any angle other than that favoured by the British establishment.<sup>48</sup>

Schlesinger also studied Northern Ireland as part of a wider consideration of the making of the BBC News. In general broadcasting presents us with a series of decontextualized reports of violence, and fails to analyse and re-

analyse the historical roots of the Irish conflict. Such an approach is largely shared by the rest of the British media and this cannot but contribute to the dominant public view of Northern Ireland's present troubles as largely incomprehensible and irrational. It is not surprising that many see 'terrorism' as the cause of the conflict there rather than as one of its symptoms.<sup>49</sup> Elliot's careful analysis of the output of newspapers in Britain, the South of Ireland and Northern Ireland stands as a unique study of its kind. His conclusion confirms that the Irish and British print media work by different rules; for example, while the British tend to accept official sources in relation to Northern Ireland unquestionably 'The Irish papers were generally more open about how they had come to know what they reported'.<sup>50</sup>

There are no major world press agencies or newspaper maintaining offices in the six counties, aside from Pacemaker Agency in Belfast. World coverage emanates from London. The New York Times sends a reporter over to the British Army Press office for its stories. There are journalists in their multitudes arriving in the North for weekend stays every few weeks. They take their shots and leave. I think that the separating of such events from their lived context creates an alienated view for the outsider. As a result of this process, Ireland becomes distant. The English, as Trisha Ziff put it, "feel detached, uninvolved and ultimately not responsible, it is no longer our problem!".<sup>51</sup>

The Northern Ireland conflict is portrayed generally, as a manifestation of a 'Sectarian Struggle' or 'Religious War' e.g. New York Times Tuesday March 5 1991. "Protestant Group admits Killing of 4" - "Ulster Volunteers forces raid on Pub West of Belfast - Victims are Catholic" or just as frequently "The Mindless Terrorism of fanatics". This was from the Buffalo News, Sunday, March 20, 1988 also "Mob Brutalises, Kills British Soldiers Found at Funeral of IRA Man in Belfast". The reasoning, if there is any or discussions or criticism into the whole



matter is always shoved off. The real social and political situation is ignored and the media coverage, therefore, makes the whole issue either too complex to understand or not worthwhile really understanding. It seems like "The Blind leading the Blind" The camera is abused constantly; the power of the machines' abilities is either extremely underestimated or in the view of deviants - in a way you could call them 'visual vandals'.

"Photography is the only language understood in all parts of the world and bridging all nations of the world, it links the family of man ..... We become eyewitness of the humanity and inhumanity of mankind..."

What Helmut Gernsheim<sup>52</sup> says rings true. Photojournalism in the North has got to be taken with an awareness of the theatrical slant and its editing factor - or else ignored, unless there is no censorship involved - and that is almost an impossibility.

In the year 1994 people are still censoring lives, thoughts and information - it is no joke. In the Independent 18th Aug 1989 a photographer who once worked in the North of Ireland said, "Twenty years of violence brought 200 photographers from around the world to Belfast, Derry. They were there because of this history, they did not cause it". Photojournalism did not cause the initial blast but I don't see how it helped over the past 25 years of media excess. Photojournalism has created its own Northern Irish history; for those who have never been to Ireland or England or both would only learn the history of the North from literature and then the coverage on newspapers and as I said earlier more accessibly through the photographic image. Edward Steichen in his essay, 'Witness and recorder of humanity',<sup>53</sup> believes that 'any photograph that is made - the very instant it is completed, the very instant the button has been pressed on the camera - becomes a historical document'. I agree with him.

The Daily Mirror's 17th March 1988 coverage of the three IRA members killed by the SAS in Gibraltar is a good example of the power of reportage. The front page of the newspaper introduces us to the event with its headline 'All in the Name of God'. The main image is of a woman in pain, injured being carried by her fellow mourners. In small script under the image of her is written "three died and this girl was one of the eight hurt yesterday when a Protestant gunman struck at an IRA funeral". The image is on top to the right is a small out of focus picture of Michael Stone one loyalist gunman. 'In the name of God' suggests a religious affair, it depoliticises the event and turns it into an irrational religious war, undermining the seriousness. In the inside page the text reads, "They were buried as they lived in agony and violence murder and hatred." Don McCann, Mairead Farrell and Sean Savage's photographs appear in small at the top right hand corner. This could suggest that they are responsible for the violence at the funeral at Milltown Cemetery, where three died and many were injured by a loyalist gunman. The images under the tabloid are of people screaming, hiding behind tombstones, panicking defenceless and wounded. The mourners lose their status and become screaming victims but at the same time participants in violence, murder and hatred - why else would they be at the funeral? The paper manages to undermine the murder of three civilians and the loyalist gunman doesn't look so bad.

No historical background or discussion is available to put this into context, or to try to understand the situation, obscured by the commercial competition and with the obsession of dramatic pictures, the more the better! Drama is the key word: they will sell, rather than those which try to understand.

As Willie Doherty says "Irishness is criminalized once someone's face appears in the newspaper".<sup>53</sup>



### Battle of the Bogside

Clive Limpkin a photographer from England made numerous trips to Ulster in the early years of the 'troubles' for the Daily Sketch and the Sun. Out of his collection of photographs he independently made a book called Battle of the Bogside published in 1972. He found working in Belfast and generally the North very frustrating because bomb blasts and shootings, etc. could happen anywhere at any time as he explained to Forge Leuvinski; author of The Camera at War,<sup>54</sup> the photographer was invariably on the scene too late. "All he is left with is a kind of mock-up of the incident - a picture of a dead kid on a mantelpiece or sweeping up rubble of the street. It used to depress me so much. No front lines there where you can go take a few pictures and come back again later". So he moved to Derry where he could count on the daily predictable " 'aggro corners" and retreat to peace in his hotel in Tonnage. As another journalist said in the Guardian 18th Aug 1989 "you don't have to set up picture here, news is happening all the time."

All Limpkin's photographs are in Black and White all action packed - on the scene type photographs. They are very grainy and are at times unrecognisable as to what precisely is going on. Throughout the book he has stories, song and references to the images.

His images are of guns, soldiers, riots, Orange parades, gas bombs etc. etc., each image telling a story of violence aggression and, basically, war!

The idiosyncrasies of Black and White photographs are tolerated in the war zone, or social settings of desperation where the grittiest type of realism is called for, traditionally the past photographs of the Ulster Troubles have been in Black and White.<sup>55</sup>





FIG. 17 ↑



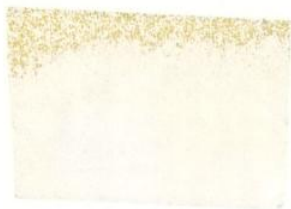






↑  
fig 7





This is what Limpkin has succeeded in accomplishing. As part of his introduction to the book he talks of religion , inequality the IRA and the RUC. The basic history of Northern Ireland is skeleton like and brief.

The Protestants feels so British, enjoying all the benefits of British citizenship ..... the catholic who feels he is being ruled by a foreign government and with every act of violence, moderates and alienated and polarisation to extremism snowballs, while the silent majority gets smaller and smaller everyday<sup>56</sup>

Under images of people running from gas bombs , frantically across the streets of Derry the lens being in the centre of it all, is a typed 'story' or detail, Dr. Ben Carson , one of the co-inventors of C S gas has called it "a service to mankind"; a description which hardly goes with the image of a Bogsider who has been choking, weeping and vomiting with it everyday, but if you try to imagine the streets of Derry since 1969 without the use of C S gas, then you are inclined to agree with Dr. Carson it has been a service to the Irish.

Along with more images of running soldiers, crying children and pointed guns, Limpkins goes on to say "perhaps no conflict has ever been photographed and reported with such immediacy and intimacy as that in Northern Ireland", he continues "geographically Derry is perhaps the easiest area of Northern Ireland to cover, for the arena of violence is so compact ..... to the borders of the Bogside and Creggan".

In Derry you hear it said, that the world isn't getting any worse, its just that the news coverage is getting better. This is usually quoted by the pressmen, never the Irish.

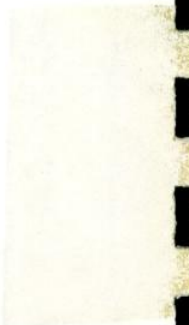
Limpkin is not exactly taking sides. He plays with his readers. At times you hate the British soldier and other times the Bogsider. Each are portrayed





fig: 18 ↑







with their elements of militarism and patheticness, the British with their arms and the Irish with their tantalising rhymes and petrol bombs.

This is one of the action proud photographs, lacking information and clear description, bulging with emotion and vigour for a public who read his book and the press.

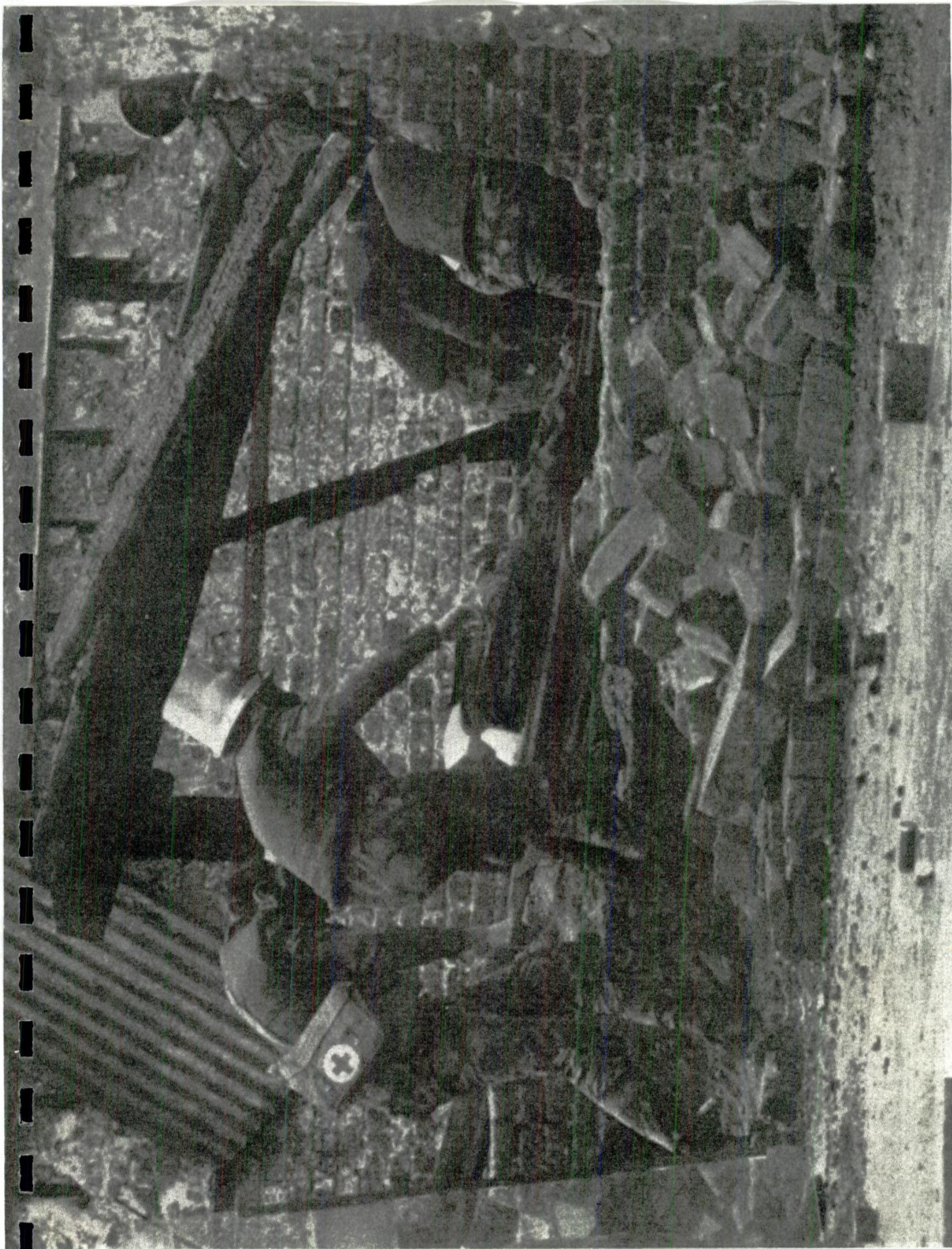
"Hey mister d'you want to photograph a dead fucker then?. We've got a bastard through the head. We shot his fucking head off. Over here..... do you want to photograph his brains then.... all over the fucking pavement".

This text is written (typed) beside an image of four British soldiers carrying out a fellow soldier on a stretcher from a derelict building - probably a bombed building. Bricks are everywhere, another soldier is seen standing along the bricked wall, gun pointing outwards to the camera protecting the backs of the British soldiers who are helping the injured or dead soldier out!

Limpkin doesn't mention where the quote came from or who said it or if it has anything to do with this image. It must not because no-one would admit so freely of shooting in front of five British officers. Therefore I can take it that Limpkin has taken it on himself to combine images and remembered quotes. I do not wonder that he works for The Sun but he should keep his rubbish with the 'rag'. This all probably did happen and such words were passed but as an intelligent human being I wish to know the story - the whole story. After flicking through the book again I return to the introduction and re-read "...compared with Vietnam Pakistan ... [it] is no more than a sketch, a local invitation".

For over 20 years this type of distortion about Northern Ireland has been deliberately and intricately woven with such intensity that only those deter-





↑  
Fig. 19





mined to come and at all cost, seek the truth for themselves stand the slightest chance of finding it.

Limpkin finishes his "Battle of the Bogside" with the words "Northern Ireland needs more Christianity, but not in the name of the churches, and if time is, to be the greater healer then it must be measured not in months or years, but in generations".

On that "optimistic" note Clive Limpkin seems to be reassuring the young pressmen that they and their sons/daughters will still have jobs, photographing the North for generations to come!

### **Still War**

Day in day out for the past twenty years we have seen the work of photographers who fly in make their news stories and leave. The people of the North of Ireland are seen merely as actors in the news drama. This book questions that representation and chooses to picture a more reflective search for images of daily life in a community at war writes Trisha Ziff in describing *Still War*.<sup>57</sup>

In 1986 Laurie Spahram and Mike Abrahams, both Network photographers, joined Trisha Ziff in Derry. Trisha Ziff had been living there since 1982. She says that it was "the pictures she had seen on television of rioting, mayhem, during the hunger strike of 1981 that filled her with enthusiasm for going there."<sup>58</sup>

She was invited, not to create yet another version of the media's mass information but to share her photographic skills with a group of young people who wanted to make their own photographs. "I planned a year I stayed five".



The book *Still War* was to combine Trisha Ziff's research and experience with Laurie Spahram's and Mike Abraham's photographs. It is a portrait of nationalist communities from three main areas: Belfast, Crossmaglen and Derry.

Trisha Ziff, from London, lived in the Nationalist ghetto of the Bogside, and learned to live and be a part of this nationalist community and therefore, chose to write about her experience as part of this community. She says "They are of everyday life after the crews have packed up their equipment and gone home and the papers have been put to bed."

The photographs in this book consist of different voices, visions and themes together with the photographs producing a view an outside view of course, but one not seen in many mainstream papers. Ziff points out that the book is an alternative to the media's approach. It is, unlike Limpkin's, both direct and clear and tells a personal story of the people she met in Derry camerawork, on the street, at meetings and basically living in the Nationalist community.

The book Still War has, naturally, nationalist sympathies. This is because of the fact that the photographs are of day to day life in the republican communities of Derry Belfast and Crossmaglen. Bernadette McAliskey in her introduction to the book proclaimed that Still War "...is a contribution to establishing the stark reality..... it can be charged and found guilty of disturbing the peace".

Still War is a book which verges on propaganda. However, what keeps it out of the bracket of propaganda is the fact that Trisha Ziff is telling of an experience. The book openly accepts the fact that it tells one story and that

another story can be told from the other side. The photographers are from England and it is unusual to find such sympathy for the nationalist community, plus the fact that the quotations in the book are from a variety of people. However, the book by some could veer into the state of propaganda as it is one sided in nature and urges sympathy of one community and has no mention of the sufferings of the other. Colin Jacobs from Independent Magazine May 1989 said of Still War that "This book is documentary photography at its best - imaginative comprehensive and concerned".

Unlike the grainy black and white photographs of Limpkin, Spahram and Abrahams manage to create stark, obscuring defined black and white images. Unlike Willie Doherty's documentary photography, Still War presents a singular image with a singular objective, a documentation of life in the Catholic community. Doherty's work is a more subtle, cynical and interrogative approach.

Lucy Lippard, while over in Ireland from New York, was looking for "activist art" related to the troubles and she found little explicit political or social art relating to the troubles. Maybe Still War incorporates the type of reaction or activity she was looking for, but then Still War was photographed and composed by English people. The artist, John Kindness, seems to express a good understanding of this:

"How could anyone.... defend the British Military presence here or alternatively support the republican struggle without becoming tainted by these horrors?"..Later in the article he points out that to be engaged in this "activist art" one needs to be committed and then he/she needs to take sides, to make a choice that most artists would find impossible".<sup>59</sup>

Doherty or Sloan would say that they photograph from experience but with a critical eye and in doing so incorporate the whole Northern Irish psychology, mentally as well as physically. As Aiden Dunne said of Willie Doherty, which I





fig 120 ↑





• FIG. 21 ↑



think can also apply to Sloan:

"Each photograph is presented as an illustration of an argument or a "decisive moment" but as a latent carrier of attitudes and assumptions to which we are invited to adopt a critical approach."<sup>60</sup>

Still War in my mind, could not be considered art photography as the likes of Doherty, Sloan, Hillen, or Graham. The photographers are not artists but more in the lines of journalist come documentary photographers, and they agree this with themselves. So taking this into account I think we can safely say that as 'outsiders' and documentary photographers their one-sidedness can be understood and accepted.

The foreword in Still War written by Jacobson enhances their willingness and careful research which went into Still War to ensure that though one-sided it is comprehensive.

Sometimes grandiose claims are made for the power of photography as a means to human understanding and social change, I doubt these myself. If the eye, and therefore the soul, is not seduced into compassion by human tragedy in the real world, I cannot believe a published photograph will work this miracle. I claim a more modest role for photography, that of opening the eyes in the first place, and therefore challenging indifference.<sup>61</sup>

This indifference is referring to a people who wish the Irish 'problem' to go away, south of the border as well as across the water.

The photographs vary from interior to exterior from the joyous occasions to the violent and sad ones. To take a few examples, on one page of the book



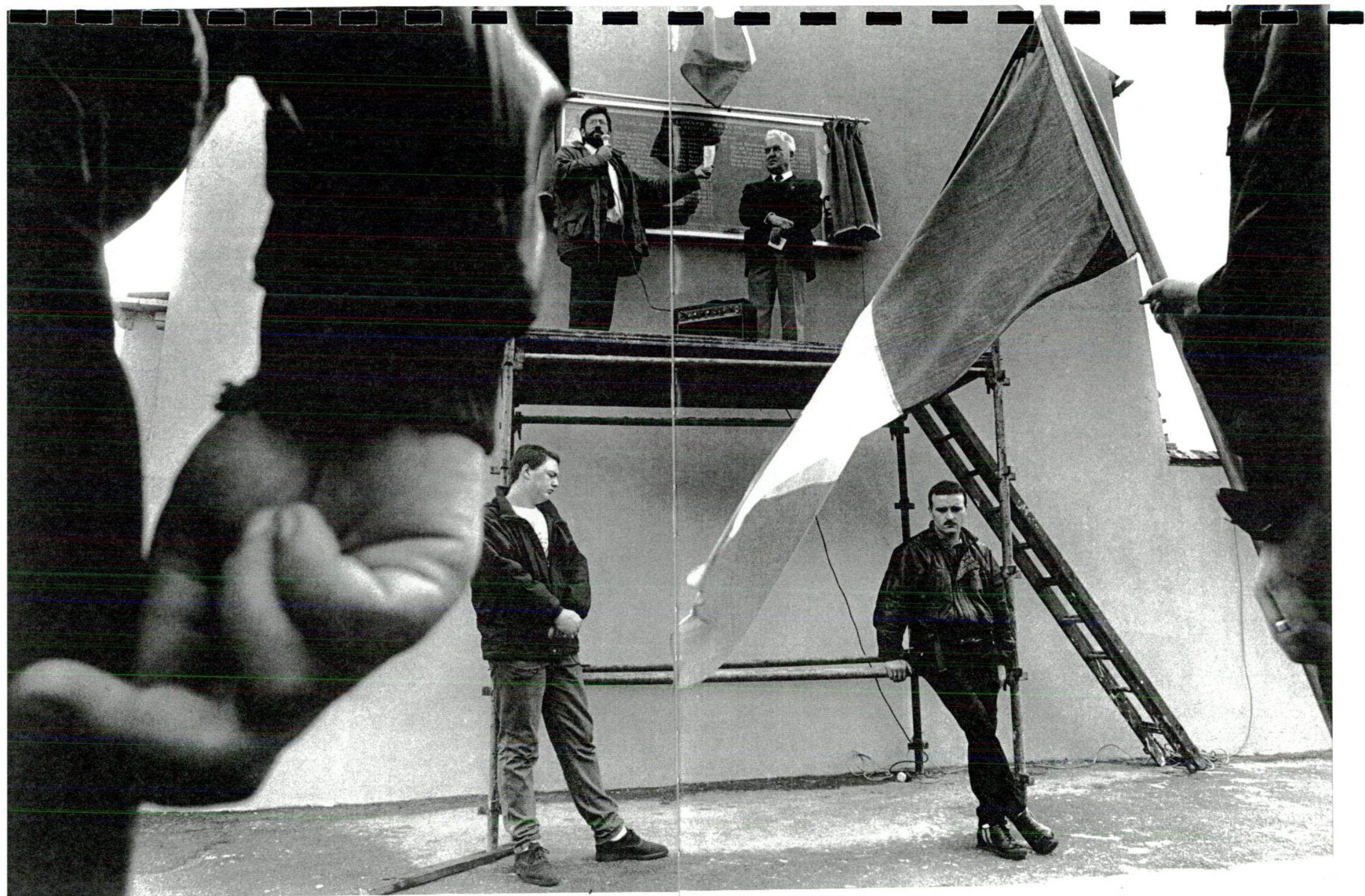


fig. 22 ↑



ARE NOW  
ENTERING



fig:23 ↑



are images of people getting ready to go out to a dance, having pints, eating a meal and dancing. (Figs. 20 & 21) Another image shows Gerry Adams speaking in public while unveiling the flag in commemoration of the dead IRA members, West Belfast. (Fig. 22) Other images incorporate band practises and an interview of a member of the band beside the image which reads, "Each band has its own identity, some are named after a volunteer from the district others after hunger strikers. The Brits think we're young Provos but it is not an offence yet to play the flute in a band". (Fig. 23)

There are large images of guns going off at IRA funerals. children playing on the street, families at church, the army on foot patrol, and graffiti and murals.

The photographs cover a wide range of imagery. One man is being stopped by a routine RUC 'stop and search' in Belfast as his family stand by. Written beside the image is a conversation between the man and the RUC officer:

"Give me your name," said the RUC man.

"No," replied Jimmy, "I can't do that."

"Why?"

"Well if I give you my name then you'll have two and I'll have none." (Fig. 24)

In Still War many people offer information: Jim McAllister, a Sinn Fein councillor; an unnamed taxi man; Eamonn McCann; Julie Doherty from Derry Camera-work; mural painters etc., etc. Each has his own piece of memory or information on life from his own point of view in the North of Ireland.

One image taken in 1986 is of a family in South Armagh. The family are split in half exactly five feet from each other except half of them are in Co. Armagh in the North and the other half in Co. Monaghan in the south. The line which





fig. 24 ↑



runs through their fields is invisible. This invisible border is part of the most heavily watched and defended ground in Europe, costing the British government many millions but none of this is evident in the photograph. This exact photograph was used in an essay "Photographs at War" in The Media and Northern Ireland<sup>62</sup> to explain how close and strange the border situation is. The image was also used again in 1993 when the Independent, 18 August 1989, did an article on the North titled "The Lawless Roads". This time the image tells another story. Beside the image we see some text in which we learn that in 1990 two of his sons, shown in the picture were shot, one dead and one injured and two British soldiers were charged with the murder. (Fig. 25)

The photographs in this book are the result of many visits and much research and discussion. This is evident. However, one must always be aware of the photographic image and the information that goes with it.

Still War seems to me to represent an alternative way of covering 'troubled areas' for a public to see and understand in an efficient way. Because of the power of the camera it is important that images which document are put in context and defined by the photographers.

It is a step ahead, that, as English photographers, instead of relocating themselves in a hotel in Donegal like Limpkin, they lived in the areas, the homes of the people photographing the community.

The people of Northern Ireland are continually being photographed. Many buildings have video cameras at the entrances and soldiers both openly and secretly photograph the nationalist population.

I feel, though, that what is needed now, is a similar book relating the stories and photographs of the Unionist Community living in Northern Ireland,





fig.25 ↑



if one community suffers the other must equally suffer!

## CHAPTER VI Willie Carson

Willie Carson has covered "the troubles" exclusively since 1969 and he has written four books about Derry: Derry thru the Lens, Vanishing Derry, Yesterday when our troubles seemed so far away, and A decade and a half. He is now working on his fifth book, So this was Derry.

As Willie Carson said himself, "to be a journalist was always my ambition, from the first day I entered the premises of the Derry Journal in 1945".<sup>63</sup> Willie Carson, after working there for eleven years selling advertising, left, and became a free lance cameraman. This was just before the troubles began in 1968 in Derry. Since then he has worked for papers in England, Ireland, Europe and the United states.

In relation to his book Derry thru the Lens he says "this book I hope will be unlike others about the troubles, which have been chucked out from the platens over the past 5 years. My message is of the city I love, and the people therein". Derry thru the Lens was first published in 1976. Carson living and working all his life in Derry as a freelance cameraman and journalist has amazing unusual stories to tell about Derry. He was always called on or asked by different people in Derry to photograph events. He was always on the scene in time and the people knew his face and trusted him. He had this advantage - in that he lived with the troubles as well as anybody else but also was a photojournalist. This heightened his accessibility to images.

There's an old cliché, he tells us: "a photographer records the incident as it happens - reporters record what happened". In Carson's book we have a detailed inside story to things that happened in Derry. He has taken



photographs - which were used for newspapers, etc., and has combined them to make the book - just like Limpkin or Ziff. However, along side each photograph there is a true story about the happenings at that time and a full explanation of the context the photograph was taken in.

Unlike Still War in which images were specifically taken for the book and of a particular view - that of the lives of the nationalist community, and, unlike Battle of the Bogside, in which images are only action packed and text has no overall context, Carson's book tells of part of his life as photo journalist in Derry. The late nights early mornings and happenings. Overall, Carson spoke the same accent, knew the same jokes, had the same history, he lives there with his family and still does. Limpkin and Trisha Ziff are now back in England continuing their lives.

Since Carson went out as a freelance cameraman "I have produced some very fine pictures and some very poor ones to even up the score; I have had my head split open with a rock: gassed: almost paralysed with a rubber bullet : threatened and eventually almost washed down a grating by the paratroopers". He goes on to say:

Such are the interesting points of my life in journalism..... Derry people are known the world over as kind, good humoured, and with a personality second to none. They love their city as I do and are just as happy when the news of the city's progress reaches them in respect of housing, industry and rebuilding programs.<sup>64</sup>

The cover of Derry thru the Lens is of a lens of a camera and in the lens are two hands opening a gun to reload, like Still War which has British Army troops grimly looking ahead or Battle of the Bogside, which has a balaclava-hooded man with a gun in his hand. Possibly the covers all aim to induce you to have a look at the book but also to tell you about the troubles in the North

and for selling - each cover looks dramatic and exciting, photojournalists know how to catch the eyes of a public.

The images in Carson's book are black and white and are quite grainy but clearer than Limpkin's. Again Carson is not making references to the role of photojournalism and its use of black and white photography as Doherty, Sloan, or Hillen might. Carson is a photojournalist.

One image Carson has taken is of a provisional IRA guard of honour for one of their volunteers who was killed, an image that one would not see too often. We see the men in their black berets, backs to the camera, and hands tightly clasped behind their backs. The Irish flag is flying and in the background we see a row of houses. Some members of the public are hanging around. The IRA are in uniform and in straight lines, leg spread. The whole thing looks very serious.

Carson a lot of the time has been asked to photograph these events. He was once asked by the IRA to photograph a Kangaroo court hearing in which the IRA ordered five men to be tarred and feathered. Then he had to photograph the actual tar and feathering, which must have been horrific. As Carson tells himself "There is a code of ethics which I as a journalist must observe, up to this moment [the tarring and feathering] I had never any qualms about the pictures I had taken in the past, but this was one time I felt that I was not keeping the ethical code". We see none of these pictures in Vanishing Derry.

Another image is of Mr. Brian Faulkner talking to a group of Derry dockers, who were having their morning break, at their favourite corner at the foot of Ship Quay Street, partly hidden in the photograph, is Mr. John Hume. As Carson said, "This type of picture will not ever be taken again in Derry".



Carson was the only newspaper photographer to get a picture of the first soldier shot during the riots in Derry. Carson explains the story: he was lying in agony on the ground and Carson photographed him, "always looking over my shoulder dreading another pressman". He then went to the city hotel where the other reporters were hanging out. When he told them what he photographed "panic gripped them"; they had lost their chance. Carson says he certainly enjoyed the papers the next morning. On page one there was the lead story "Soldier shot in Derry riots".

The image is of a soldier leaning against the wall his eyes closed and mouth open, two other soldiers lean over him bandaging his wound with rags. Carson does not show the soldiers as victims or heroes. It is a straight photograph taken on the scene, it is not dramatised or undermined, but maybe the journalist and headlines are responsible for this.

Carson's job was to take photographs and his aim to be first with the information to the newspapers! However, because of his active role in society in Derry he can identify more than the "fly in, fly out" photographer, We see this in a photograph taken in Nov. 1971 of two young Derrymen dead with their heads covered in hoods on a lonely country road near Creggan. As Carson says: "They were like most men of their ages out for a drink the night, but did not return home".

He says it was the saddest occasion of his life to date. "The only reason I took this photograph was simply to let the world know just what a scene like this can do to you". Here were two young men enjoying life, and some group set themselves up as judge, jury and executioners. "A very sad day for Ireland and one I shall remember for a long time to come."<sup>65</sup> Since then, Carson has got rid of the negative: the image is no longer available.

The difference is obvious - Limpkin would have some angry remark made by an IRA volunteer or the British Army or some passer by ..Alongside the image in his picture of a British officer being carried out, dead, through ruins, he had, "Hey mister do you want to photograph a dead fucker ...." We don't even know if Limpkin's images and texts are compatible.

Carson also shows the 'comedy' that went in unison with the violence. He reports that during a fire caused by riots, a riot leader approached an army officer asking for return of some of their stones, as they were running short. At the same time three girls were being put into a landrover after being arrested; and with the world press and TV. cameras surrounding the scene one of the captives yelled at a friend "Don't tell me ma, or she'll kill me".

Carson's book Derry thru the Lens has no leaning towards any side as he was there and pictured what was there - we can see this because of the information he gives us, taking photographs of rioters, politicians, murders, and the British army.

Another funny episode occurred during rioting in the Rossville Street - William Street area. A coloured soldier was taking a breather when a boy of ten sauntered up to him, stared at him and then asked, "Are you a Catholic or Protestant mister?" The soldier's reply was "Jesus, boy I'm black ... Don't I have my own problems?".

I think what made my job interesting at that period was simply that there was a certain amount of variety. I had got contract work from the commission and I, to a point was on both sides, in one day I would be covering the opening of some factory or the completion of a housing project, next day or on the same day cover the bombing of premises or some other building.<sup>66</sup>

One episode in the history of Derry which Carson missed was Bloody



Sunday and it probably was one of the most photographed and talked about events that still lingers over the lives of the people of Derry. He was there at the beginning, but got hit with the hose, covered in purple dye which the army was hosing among the rioters and got a blast of CS Gas in the face so he went home to change and return. While he was at home the news of the shooting came over the radio. The army had shot into the crowd, killing people in the crowd as Carson says "As it turned out I knew every one of them". Numerous people thought he was one of the victims because he was not in his usual role as photographer.

Another example of the people of Derry's acceptance of Carson as 'their photographer' was during a demonstration in the city when riots were about to begin. Carson was about to leave, when a stone hit him on the head from the RUC riot squad. "And even then I could not avoid laughing because those behind barricades knew me and they were livid at the cheek of anyone daring to strike me with a stone". Then a police landrover was hit with a firebomb and a voice yelled "Bring Carson back here its a good picture for him". Some of the rioters helped and protected him towards the burning van when he had taken his pictures they helped him back and shouted "Take this man to the hospital". No other photographer would get this attention or fellowship. Carson must have had a good reputation and relationship with the crowd. How else really could he have the freedom, to photograph the IRA. inside people's houses, riots, British Army? Carson really cannot be compared to Sloan and Doherty as his aim and ambition are totally different.

Doherty in 1993 had an exhibition called '30 January 1972' and was in its way a look at the different aspects of Bloody Sunday. Carson will never do this as his idea of photography is at the time it happens - to be on the scene with the camera is his job. Carson will tell stories of it but he will not look at it or view

it photographically the way Doherty will. Carson will photograph a dead body on a country road. Doherty will photograph the country road and subtly point out that every country road in the North is the same, and what lies behind the bush or the tree could be an armed man in waiting to shoot.

I think Carson is unusual. The fact that he loves his city and people adds another dimension to what would be the quick, unthoughtful propaganda of Limpkin. Carson is a Derryman and, though a photojournalist, cannot actually separate himself from his given situation.

One out of every six petrol bombs meant a fire, and although a fire meant a good picture, I was often upset because being a Derryman and proud of it, I felt very sad when I gazed on a house or business premises burning ferociously. It was a house or shop belonging to someone I knew and it was upsetting watching it going up in flames.<sup>67</sup>









↑  
FIG.  
27





P16:28 ↑





FIG. 29 ↑



## Summary

After looking at very different photographers and seeing how they choose to photograph the North of Ireland, I notice that no one photographer has come up with any given conclusion. For Doherty, Sloan and Hillen, being from Northern Ireland, it is a life-long piece of work. For Carson it is a life long job; for Limpkin and Graham, part of a larger portfolio; and for the members of Still War it was a single challenging project.

I think that for me it was interesting to see the combination of images and concepts within the context of Northern Ireland.

Doherty's photographs, based on the documentary tradition are subtle and not so easy to read, he uses text and image to contrast the given image and its underlying reality.

Victor Sloan, is more of an emotional, expressive photographer, layering and confusing the initial image with marks and toners. Both Sloan and Doherty live and work in the North and find it impossible to deny their existing surroundings.

Sean Hillen uses montage, mixing the comic and serious, the commercial and original image, again resulting in a layered image. Witty and direct, he approaches the context ( Northern Ireland ) in a more playful up front way.

Paul Graham, the English photographer, in his series of colour photographs makes straightforward images. Unlike the Northern photographers, his images were technically unlayered, however, visually very layered.

Graham experienced and latched onto the contrasts and hypocrisies of the Northern landscape. His photo works are simple and tend at times to oversimplify too readily.

Still War defines its priority in photographing the North and carries it out. The Nationalist community were photographed in almost every public context. Though one-sided it managed to document the community.

Limpkin, a typical press photographer, shows us how information can be misrepresented by being oversimplified and offered with very little context.

Carson, freelance journalist from Derry, manages to adapt his press photography in a more informative way. Though Limpkin's and Carson's images do overlap at times, Carson is much more aware of living in the North and his expression is more defined.

As a photographer and photographing the North of Ireland you must choose your own way. Doherty, Sloan and Hillen discuss, interrogate and investigate, Carson and Limpkin document and project, like Sparham, Abrahamns and Ziff - Still War bringing coverage to the masses, and Graham portrays a social landscape as it is.

As the problem will not be solved by these images, and these images are not revolutionary, they do not clarify, enhance, or have an answer the given situation of northern Ireland. All are part of the documentation process of Northern Ireland and the troubles, and all viewpoints and techniques piece together the greater story of Northern Ireland.

"Twentieth Century art has done a very, very good job. What job? To open



people's eyes, to open people's ears. What better job could have been done? We must turn our attention now, I think to other things, and those things are social." John Cage, B.B.C. interview 1989.

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