

## Writer's visit to Northern Ireland

# Streets of Derry still strained battlegrounds

By ROBERT BARLOW

As I walk towards the centre of Londonderry four British soldiers are scampering up the street, from doorway to doorway, with guns at the ready. Bishop's Gate, one of the four entrances in the old wall of the city, is covered with steel plates and barbed wire.

As I go through I am thoroughly frisked. One soldier sits behind an enclosed concrete barrier. His machine gun points at me through a slit in the bricks.

In the downtown area, a good many of the buildings have been bombed out. Army checkpoints are placed every fourth block or so, and I am frisked each time I go through one. I soon get used to it, and begin raising my arms automatically as I approach the soldiers. Female soldiers frisk the women and search through their purses and parcels.

In the buildings that aren't ruined, business goes on. Merchants have

put up small, hand-made signs apologizing for the rubble and inconvenience. Customers are told not to leave bags unattended. The washrooms are locked, and you have to ask to be let in.

Later I go for a walk in the Catholic part of Derry, which is the poorer part. It lies outside the old wall. One piece of graffiti warns, "Local labour only. Others will be shot."

The shell of a burned-out bus blocks the top of one street. Cars drive up on the sidewalk to get around it.

A group of Catholic boys, none of them beyond the age of twelve, gets out of school as an armoured personnel carrier drives up and stops. The children surround the carrier and begin spitting and shouting. Some of them have good aim. The spittle lands inside the carrier.

As I go back into the core of the city a soldier points his rifle at me and orders me to click my pen. I suppose he thinks it might be some sort of concealed weapon. I slowly take it from my pocket and click it. I can't

help but laugh a bit at the absurdity of it. A woman, who's in her forties and being searched beside me, smiles back at me and says, "At least you can still laugh." She resents the army's presence.

The day after I leave Derry I hear that a woman has been shot dead while driving her mother and children home from shopping. Caught in the crossfire between soldiers and a sniper.

A few days later I arrive in Belfast. An army helicopter circles the city in the sky above.

While I'm buying something to eat in a sandwich shop a British army officer begins talking to me about the weather. I agree with everything he says. He has a machine gun strapped on his back and a pistol at his side.

Down one sidestreet a car has been parked with the keys left in it. A soldier patrolling the street gets suspicious and calls in the bomb squad. The street is quickly cordoned off. A primary school for girls which is nearby is evacuated. The girls don't seem concerned; the nun

tells me they're used to it.

Three armoured cars arrive. A small parcel can be seen in the back seat of the car. A charge is fired into it. No explosion. A second shot rings out. Still nothing.

Down another street workmen are sweeping up broken glass and bits of debris in front of a clothing store. I am told that the store was bombed the day before.

An article in the paper that day estimates that only one per cent of the population is involved in the

fighting. But it's guerilla warfare in the streets, and not much can be done to stop it. A billboard tells people to "Stop the terrorists. Stop the bombers and murderers. If you see anything suspicious, call the confidential number." The line is open 24 hours a day.

A soldier, no older than 20, is standing by himself in the doorway of a bombed-out building. His eyes are sad and he seems apprehensive. We exchange smiles of frustration.

I head for the nearest pub.

## Rapists dubbed philanthropists

LOS ANGELES (CUP-ENS) - One of the jurors who convicted Inez Garcia of second-degree murder for killing the man who raped her expressed a rather unique view on rape during a radio interview.

Samuel Rhone said, "A guy who rapes someone isn't trying to kill her. He's just trying to screw her and give her a good time."

According to American statistics, someone tries to force a woman "to have a good time" about once every 14 minutes.

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