

Twenty-one.

The rebellion in the camps of north Wales was followed at once by similar risings on every hand. By these early days of the new year, after all, there were some hundreds of thousands of detainees in punitive, isolation, labour and transit camps throughout the United Kingdom. A further class of psychiatric detention-centres was administered by a special section of the Department of Health, in association with the religious police and the Home Office.

Broadly, these detainees fell in one of two categories: those imprisoned on account of an offence under a specific regulation, or those detained on account of membership of a proscribed group.

The first category comprised those guilty of a wide range of offences. These included illegal possession of a radio, typewriter or printing-press, black-marketeering, agrarian arson, industrial defeatism, profiteering, and religious superstition, fanaticism and sabotage. They also included anti-social propaganda, illegal assembly, attendance at prohibited processions and demonstrations, striking work, illegal association, possession or distribution of slanderous literature, compilation of lists of prisoners, dissemination of hostile fabrications and religious propaganda, malicious hooliganism and parasitism, infringement of the law relating to cults, failure to register religious allegiance, organisation of domestic Bible classes, evangelism, attendance at unlicensed prayer meetings, espionage, treason, wrecking and banditry.

Many of these detainees were tried and sentenced by the normal criminal courts, within the letter of new legislation or - more often - emergency wartime legislation, or within the spirit of earlier legislation still nominally in force but which had been deemed to

have fallen into desuetude. More serious cases, however, came before the much-feared three-man tribunals of the Militia, which could arrest, investigate, try, sentence and execute sentence as it chose. These tribunals were further empowered to work in secret, and often in the absence of the accused.

In the second category of detainees were to be counted: all officers with any wartime decoration for gallantry; recalcitrant magistrates, sheriffs and judges; recusant clergy; senior head-teachers and most professors; linguists; philatelists; members of the landowning class and rural gentry; important police officers; proven royalists; traitors with blood relations overseas or with a record of overseas visits; and those lesser citizens formerly in leading membership of proscribed organisations such as Church Guilds, Freemasons, Church Army, the British Legion and the Women's Rural Institute.

All second-category detainees were tried and sentenced by the Militia tribunals, without recourse to the normal courts. They were also subject to penalties unknown to these normal courts, including withdrawal of rights to correspondence, sustainable nutritional rations, and timely and proper medical attention. Yet more penalties included confiscation of property, exclusion of children from further education, deprivation of liberty of spouse, and prohibition of paid employment subsequent to release.

These were the detainees who rose in murderous rebellion in the wake of the rising in north Wales.

In the south-east, three camps in the rolling Vale of Kent exploded in the space of one morning, whereupon fifteen thousand escapees commandeered vehicles and headed for London. Within a day there were further rebellions and breakouts in the vicinity of

Chatham, Crawley, Aldershot, Bracknell, Maidenhead, Luton and Harlow. Then the disturbances spread west to the Hampshire Downs, to Salisbury Plain and to the North Dorset Downs and Dartmoor. Cornwall by mid-week appeared to be in a state of general rebellion, with attacks reported on police stations and isolated Paramilitary blockhouses.

Cornwall was also home to the first rebellion in the nation's network of advanced centres for the treatment of religious mania. Set back in the hills beyond St. Ives, a little reformatory had been built in the very early days of the Protectorate. On account of the extremely strict security it enjoyed, little was known about it in the town. Enquiries were in any case strongly discouraged, and in the early days a number of prominent citizens had been formally threatened with deportation if they continued with these enquiries. Thereafter, nobody mentioned the place; and quite soon, it was more or less forgotten about.

A coarse track had been carved across the hillside by bulldozer and for some weeks truckloads of prisoners had been brought down daily from a camp on the moors above Barnstaple, that they might surface the track with broken stone. Then they built two concrete blockhouses, a chain-link fence fifteen feet high and two watchtowers serviced with machine-gunners from the new Militia public-order force. After that came an inner ring of protective wall, consisting of blank concrete slabs topped with razor wire: and within that a number of huts around a central administration building. When it was all finished, there was some talk in St. Ives that the prisoners from Exmoor had been machine-gunned and thrown into the sea: but nobody cared to dwell on the matter: and again, it was soon forgotten.

Patients then began to arrive - no more than small handfuls of them, for the full complement of the Mania Reform Institute was never more than a hundred at any one time: although each was, of course, a patient of exceedingly dangerous character. By January 1948, with the exception of some patients suffering from extremely advanced forms of religious mania, this prisoner corps was composed of members of the millenarian and apocalyptic sects, old or new, with which the country teemed: Fifth Monarchists, New Levellers, Daniels, Second Adventists, Modern Quakers and Anabaptists of twenty varieties.

Their treatment consisted of exposure to primitive precursors of the drugs which would later characterise the higher reaches of Soviet political psychiatry: powerful neuroleptics with devastating side-effects; and aminazin, haloperidol and triflazin. Others were brutally-early versions of tizertsin, sanapax, etaperazin and phrenolon; while trisedil, mazheptil, seduksin and motiden-depo were reserved for specially intractable cases. Gigantic doses of hallucinogens such as lysergic acid were also readily used. Insulin was injected in heavy doses over a number of days, in the form of shock-therapy, until the subject went into hypoglycaemic coma and approached the brink of death. Injections of sulphazin, meanwhile, though without any therapeutic value, were used on a punishment basis, inducing raging and suicidal fevers.

Collectively, these treatments occasioned very considerable side-effects: blood and pigmentation disorders, sensitivity to light, stupendous weight gains and weight losses, and significant jaundice. Many patients also endured marked symptoms of parkinsonism, of extra-pyramidal derangement, with muscular

rigidity in all cases, slowness of body movement in some, and hyper-restlessness in others.

But somehow, in the early days of January, these prisoners rose in rebellion, overcame their psychiatric staff and the armed guards who surrounded them, massacred the lot with triumphant barbarity, and calmly made their way in equally triumphant procession down into St. Ives. The first the townspeople knew of the breakout was when the patients arrived among them: all dressed in the coarse, green gowns and rubberised slippers which were regulation wear in the Institute.

Oddly, all seemed to to be entirely free of side-effects from their treatment and all appeared to possess a peculiar and haunting authority. The gowned escapees quite calmly waited in one of the town's public houses for the first public transport which was headed east. When this bus arrived, they happily commandeered it, and were last seen heading for Plymouth and Bristol while loudly singing psalms.

Meanwhile, there had been a general rebellion in the camps scattered across Scotland. Most of these were in the north of the country, straddling the arterial routes that led there. On the A9 there were camps at Dunkeld, Pitlochry, Blair Atholl (where the castle had been requisitioned), Newtonmore, Kingussie and Daviot. Outside Inverness, the former psychiatric hospital at Craig Dunain had also been pressed into service as a holding-centre for category-hostages and other low-security prisoners.

And on the western route to the north, there were camps to be found all the way to Fort William, with specialist centres the length of the eastern side of Loch Lomond. One particularly savage centre was to be found on the low ground between Crianlarich and

Tyndrum, much given to flooding and with a mortality rate notorious even by the average rate prevailing in these camps. There was another at Kinlochleven, and yet more to the north of Fort William, beyond Spean and Roy Bridges.

There was trouble too at the camps which had been established in the Glasgow area, on the hills above Greenock, and out in the countrysides of Ayrshire and Lanarkshire.

Not all of these rebellions were successful, of course, and not all ended in breakout and mass escape, whether in Scotland or south of the Border. One short-term holding-centre for Fife miners was bombed and machine-gunned from the air before the rebels had even managed to seize the block of management buildings. Yorkshire and Durham miners also failed in a covert but large-scale break-out - by means of tunnels - from a detention centre on the North Yorks moors. No more than a handful managed to make their way to Hull, where they enlisted as casual deck-hands on a number of trawlers leaving that night for the North Sea grounds. All surrendered themselves to the authorities at the end of their first trip.

And on the north Norfolk coast, the inmates of a re-education unit for urban prostitutes were apprehended, roaring drunk and fighting, in one of the nearby seaside villages, following outraged telephone calls by villagers to the regional headquarters of the Militia.

Some Militia units were swiftly evacuated in the face of this rising tide of violence. The prisoners, office personnel and records of a highly-sensitive unit in the Surrey countryside south-west of London, reserved for preliminary investigations of matters of the very highest state security, were trucked away at night to an unknown destination, and the establishment burned behind them as

they went. At Carlisle, a converted racket-sports complex in the west of the town was witness to the slaughter of all of its prisoners, whose bodies were at once buried under the tennis courts.

The last camp to rise in rebellion was a mixed transit unit, in which various grades of prisoner were held prior to being sent to their final destination. Some five hundred of these were held in a converted whisky warehouse on the north side of Glasgow. Some fifty of them were former volunteers for the Spanish republic, who were deemed to be dangerous for both political and military reasons, and who were scheduled for execution in the very near future. As a consequence they were held in chains in the basement. Much of the time this basement was flooded to a depth of two feet, for the bond had been built close to the line of an abandoned canal. Some more of these transit-detainees had been sentenced by Militia tribunals to exile overseas. These were held in the strictest isolation on the first floor of the bond, again chained to the bars of the generous windows. The second floor, meanwhile, was given over to women who were being held as hostages for the good conduct of their families. And the top floor of the building was occupied by Welsh and Scottish prisoners who had been apprehended on account of national deviationism, and who expected to be shipped overseas at the earliest opportunity.

On account of the intermittent rioting which had characterised affairs in the city, much of the regular Militia guard at the bond had been re-deployed to help remove barricades in the Calton district. On a strictly temporary basis, they had been replaced by criminal recidivists from the city's long-term prison population.

These criminals were deeply feared by all the detainees; but the women held as hostages managed to trick them, and then

overpower them. They at once liberated the national deviationists on the top floor. Both groups then attacked with considerable violence the second floor, murdered all but one of the staff, and persuaded the remaining survivor to free the chained men there who had been marked for shipping overseas. Many of these, it transpired, had been held on account of involvement in illegal shop-floor activity in heavy industries, notably ship-building, coal and steel. Thereafter it was an easy matter to overcome the few remaining guards at the front gate, and free the republican volunteers in the half-drowned basement. By that same evening, they had made their way to the east of the city - all the bridges and ferries over the river were heavily defended and Glasgow's south side was cut off - and made themselves known to the rioting populace there.

The next morning the countryside rose in rebellion too. In the sheep country of north Wales, it began with the tumbling of dykes - for since the last round of stock-requisitions, there were no sheep left to enclose within these ancient arms. Then isolated attacks began on Paramilitary and Militia offices in remote parts of Wales. Most of these were with farmers' shotguns which had been hidden and never handed-over in any of the firearms amnesties which had been declared. Quickly, the tumbled dykes became roadblocks. When Paramilitary units attempted to break through them, they came under sustained fire from weapons stolen in the earlier incidents. There was even some talk of desertions from Paramilitary units. Escaped prisoners from the regional camp complex were soon among the farmers too. A unit of Regulars with armoured cars was beaten back, and one of its cars captured by the rebels. Then a

reconnaissance plane was shot down: and the state withdrew its forces from north Wales in their entirety.

The region was at once declared liberated, and the striking miners of the south were urged to rise and return control of the entire country to those to whom it rightfully belonged. Two envoys were sent south with this message, but were captured by a Militia patrol in the hills near Lampeter.

By this point the spirit of rural rebellion had spread elsewhere. In Scotland civil order in the countryside was breaking down fast. The beef farmers of Aberdeenshire had seen their herds slashed in numbers as a result of requisition and confiscation, while the price paid by the state for the remaining animals was much less than the cost of feeding them. Here too, the farmers in the snow-covered hills attacked and murdered representatives of the state. There were few outrages, though some Militia men who were caught in the vicinity of Alford in plain clothes were very cruelly put to death over a slow fire. This unit was well-known in the district, and had earlier been the author of numerous atrocities during the large-farm collectivisation campaign of the previous spring. Now, cattle which had been concealed in the hills were driven out from hiding. One herd was lashed down to Aberdeen, where there had been reports of popular hunger. A Soviet battleship lying at anchor offshore recalled its men from shore-leave, and trained its guns inland.

The Lothians and Borders were also liberated, on occasion by the pitchfork; while in Yorkshire considerable violence flashed across the moors and soon tumbled down into the coastal villages of the east. In the rich grain lands of the English south, where the farmers had burned the wheat in the fields the previous autumn rather than hand it over to requisition teams, there were pitched

battles, with barns burned and houses smashed. But against guerrilla forces driven by desperate and hungry savagery and without apparent leadership or clear aims, the conventional military, police and security forces of the state were of little value. After some vicious reprisals on each side the Militia, running out of fuel and ammunition on account of the strike-wave, was ordered to withdraw. When a train bringing reinforcements to that region was derailed, and its Paramilitary passengers massacred, the state forces withdrew from the countryside in their entirety.

Then, the urban areas began to fall too. In Newport and the Welsh valleys the general strike had ended, as planned, after three days; but this did not blunt the political force of the rising. Indeed, it strengthened it. In one morning Newport was seized by armed detachments of miners, and control of the town was formally claimed by a popular council. Paramilitaries were urged to mutiny, and many did; for members of the Militia, however, there was less sympathy and officers in particular were handled very badly. The popular council went at once into permanent session and called for as many as possible to join its guard battalions. These quickly took possession of the principal building from which the town had until then been governed, and a gigantic red flag was soon floating above it.

The council formally debated the spirit and terms of the Pitmungo Charter. At length, and after stormy debate, the council issued a demand for annual parliaments, free elections, a four day working week, an end to the truck system, and the abolition of the Militia. The meeting was also addressed, in Welsh, by the one envoy from the sheep-farmers of the north who had managed to get past the patrols and road-blocks of the Militia towards Lampeter.

The council also called on the people in other regions of Wales to form similar associations, and make similar demands. And in Newport, by way of giving a lead, the council called on the people to tumble the Protectorate Parliament in London, to arm themselves as rapidly as possible by whatever means possible, and to declare an independent republic.

That afternoon, in a heavy snowfall, there was rioting on a gigantic scale in most of the cities of England. Savage hand-to-hand fighting surged all day in the streets of Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Coventry, Leicester and Nottingham. There was particularly vicious fighting in Derby's locomotive plants, and in the transmitter hall and short-wave power-room of Rugby's gigantic radio-relay station. In Manchester and the surrounding towns of Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield and Halifax the state forces were, for the most part, obliterated with extreme violence. In Cheshire, there was savage fighting in the vicinity of the Ester Salts and Mexphalte oil refineries, which soon spread to tankers lying in the nearby Manchester Ship Canal.

In Plymouth, heavily-armed detachments of Soviet marines were sent ashore from the battleships lying at anchor inside the breakwater, with orders to drive the insurgents out of the town. In Southampton, there was heavy fighting around the passenger-liner and freight terminals, and by dusk columns of smoke were rising from many parts of the city and surrounding countryside.

In the north of Ireland that same evening rioting broke out in a dozen towns. By midnight, what had started as a general rising against the Protectorate had progressed to savage sectarian combat, and within a hour much of east Belfast was on fire. There was fierce fighting in all the towns along the border, and well before

dawn the forces of the state had withdrawn from the southern counties of the province. That withdrawal unleashed a further spate of rioting and destruction, and the government of the nation to the south send troops to Dundalk 'to protect its territorial sovereignty'.

By the following dawn large parts of Liverpool and surrounding district were under the control of a popular council formed on the Newport model, but somewhat improved in the view of those who composed it. One of the Irish ferries was commandeered and sunk in the entrance to the Mersey, blocking access to the estuary for any of the Soviet warships loitering among the sandbanks close offshore. Looting broke out on a large scale by breakfast time, and then large-scale industrial sabotage. Some gangs of men sank a vessel in the ship canal, and wrecked a pair of lock gates for good measure. Fraternisation by Paramilitary units was widespread, and by lunchtime the entire Paramilitary regional command had deserted and put itself at the disposal of the popular council.

In Newcastle, shipyard crews led the early stages of the rising, but were soon assisted by detachments of miners from the Durham coalfield. The mining villages had already been cleared of state forces, and almost at once the principal towns of the region began to fall too; among them Sunderland, Gateshead and South Shields. There was a fierce battle for possession of the medium-wave radio transmitter station at Stagshaw, near the north-eastern capital. Further south, miners led assaults on Stockton, Darlington and Middlesbrough, while men and women from Shotton attacked Durham. Here - still in very heavy snow - there was a fierce and bloody battle in the vicinity of the cathedral, where a detachment of Militia had taken refuge. After very bitter hand-to-hand combat, the

cathedral was taken; there were no survivors reported from among the defending forces.

By lunchtime, an illegal radio service was in operation; it reported in jubilant tones the fall in the last 24 hours of large parts of those regions of England that lay outside London. A Welsh republic had been declared; the historic demands of the Pitmungo Chartists had everywhere been adopted; and the working people of England were calling on their Scottish brethren to follow their example and drive the forces of the state into the sea. In all districts, key plant and locations had fallen into the hands of the people, or were at that moment being attacked with savage determination. Road and rail junctions had been seized, and either wrecked or at least rendered inoperable. Seaports and docks were, for the most part, in possession of the insurgents.

There had been some setbacks, of course. A number of regional airports had been attacked, and attempts made to fire the control towers and aircraft; but these had been repulsed at great cost to each side. Telephone exchanges, however, had been captured by postal workers. Power stations remained in the hands of their engineers (for in this industry, the general strike had continued). Squads of Popular Guards had taken over the control valves and sluices of water reservoirs, dams and pumping stations. Miners were in full command of the coal dumps with which their pits were surrounded; dockers had done the same for coastal coal supplies awaiting shipment overseas. In almost all areas, looters and profiteers were to be shot by the men and women of the Popular Guards on sight. All able-bodied men, especially those with military service in either war, were ordered to report to their local popular council without delay. And the popular councils of

Newcastle, Manchester and Birmingham had simultaneously issued a Grand Remonstrance of their grievances and called for an all-national convention of such councils to be convened without the slightest delay. That, however, was the last item from the illegal broadcaster: for after sounds of a struggle, and what sounded like gunfire, it went off-air without warning.

The Scottish cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh were the last to fall to the insurgents. In the latter, Soviet marines had been ferried ashore for some number of previous days, and had established themselves in a base camp at Granton. Heavy units of Militia, backed by Regulars, had also been drafted into Edinburgh, to reinforce key points in the city. There was some talk that fifty battle-tanks were on stand-by in the countryside at Penicuik and Dalkeith. War vessels which had lain for weeks past in the docks at Leith also moved out to anchorage in the middle of the Forth; one kept its guns clearly trained on the ferry terminal at Queensferry. But in the event, there was less violence than these preparations might suggest. With a general strike in effective operation, huge crowds surged in the streets. Schools closed as an unofficial token of support; on account of the continuing snow, all public transport ceased. Public houses remained open and were packed, but there was no drunkenness.

Then the Militia withdrew from Edinburgh. In the afternoon, a heavily armed Militia regiment came down the High Street from the direction of the castle and headed south, past the National Library in column, and on, on out of the city by the Dalkeith Road. Later an armoured train carrying scores of tanks was seen to trundle out of Waverley towards Glasgow. By the evening, it was clear that the occupying forces had abandoned Edinburgh without a shot. A

strange silence prevailed. Then the snow stopped and the sky cleared. The lights of Fife could be seen across the firth; some people even thought they could see the intermittent flash of heavy gunfire. But no one could be too sure; or too sure of what would happen next.

In Glasgow, meanwhile, there was fierce fighting all day in most quarters. From the early hours of the morning - as word of the trouble throughout England began to spread - armoured units of the state had taken up station throughout the south and east of the city. There were four tanks at Govan Cross and another pair at Gorbals Cross. Six tanks were at Bridgeton and armoured cars patrolled the London Road. Two heavy artillery pieces were positioned with their muzzles pointing directly at Dixons' Blazes, and there were machine-gun nests at every lesser industrial site. Very-heavily armed Regulars took control of the locomotive works at Cowlairs, and patrols stalked through the empty and eerily-silent shipyards on the banks of the upper Clyde. In the west end of Glasgow there were tanks and armoured cars all round the university and more in Dumbarton Road. In the city centre a tank was also positioned at each corner of George Square, with more held in reserve towards the High Street.

It was here that the trouble started that afternoon, with an attack on the tank which stood on the corner of the square and George Street. Some Aldredist partisans attacked from the Dunrobin, a nearby public house. At two o'clock, while a relief crew was just talking up its duties, these Aldredists tossed a simple petrol bombs into the main hatch of the machine. Simultaneously, other fighting units attacked all the remaining tanks. As these machines were petrol-powered, the subsequent explosions were spectacular.

There were now no more than two hours remaining before darkness fell. Popular fighting-units swarmed from their hiding places throughout the city and fell upon Militia forces with great brutality, courage and skill. By dusk much of the eastern side of Glasgow had been taken; and by midnight Cowlairs and the north of the city was in the hands of the insurgents. All that night there was fierce fighting in the shipyards on both banks of the upper and the lower Clyde.

And by the following breakfast-time, Glasgow had fallen in its entirety, with the forces of the state having been driven out into Lanarkshire and northwards to Loch Lomond. Elsewhere, insurgents were also in command of their cities, and vast swathes of the British countryside. Only London remained in the hands of the state.

Within an hour, heavy snow was falling once more. It was the morning of January 15, 1948.