



Smashing H-Block: The Popular Campaign Against Criminalization and the Irish Hunger Strikes 1976-1982

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University of Liverpool Press, Liverpool, 2011, pp. 226

In contrast to most accounts of the anti H-block campaign, this book focuses on the popular campaign outside the prison for the restoration of 'Special Category Status', originally accorded to both republican and loyalist prisoners in 1972 but phased out by the Labour Home Secretary, Merlyn Rees, in 1976. Ross maintains that the campaign that grew around the hunger strikes of 1981 and 1982 was 'perhaps the biggest and broadest solidarity movement since Vietnam', much of it driven from the bottom up by the republican grassroots, not its leadership. He also suggests that it propelled the Provisional IRA towards calling a ceasefire and shifting to a political strategy.

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