

More than 250 children killed during Troubles

By Marie Louise McCrory

THE killing of children by all sides was a grim reality during the Troubles.

More than 250 children lost their lives during the conflict, according to the respected resource, Conflict Archive on the Internet (Cain).

Between 1969 and 1998, 23 children aged five and under were killed. There were also 24 children aged six to 11 who lost their lives, as well as 210 12-to-17-year-olds.

Of those deaths, 67 were blamed on the security forces, 90 were attributed to republicans and 74 to loyalists.

The bomb blast in Lurgan town centre is the second time in two weeks that children have become victims of paramilitary attacks in Northern Ireland.

Saturday's attack, which left a 12-year-old girl, an 11-year-old girl and a two-year-old girl in shock, came a week after another child escaped injury.

In Kilkeel last week a policewoman putting her young child into a car seat outside her home spotted a bomb attached to her vehicle.

The first child fatality of the Troubles happened in August 1969 when Patrick Rooney, aged nine, was shot as he lay sleeping in his bed in Divis Flats in west Belfast.

The child was killed by a tracer bullet fired by the RUC from a Browning machine gun.

The Scarman Tribunal later concluded that the shooting had been unjustified.

In March 1993 two children in England were killed when an IRA bomb -



■ INNOCENT VICTIMS: Jonathan Ball, aged three, and 12-year-old Tim Parry were killed by the IRA when it targeted the English town of Warrington in a bomb attack in 1993 - using an explosive device planted in a litter bin, as in Lurgan on Saturday

also planted in a bin - exploded.

Jonathan Ball, aged three, and 12-year-old Tim Parry died when the device exploded in Warrington town centre.

Seven months later seven-year-old Michelle Baird and Leanne Murray (13) were killed in an IRA bomb attack on Frizell's fish shop on the Shankill Road in west Belfast. Two two-year-old boys were injured in the blast.

Last week another child death of the Troubles prompted calls for a full apology from the British army.

A report from The Historical Enquiries Team (HET) - due to be published in the coming weeks - is expected to dispute the British army's version of the circumstances of the

death of 12-year-old Majella O'Hare.

The schoolgirl was shot in the back by a soldier on patrol near her home in Ballymoyer, south Armagh, in August 1976, as she walked to confession.

She died in her father's arms on the way to hospital.

Private Michael Williams stood trial for Majella's manslaughter but was acquitted.

The army she had been accidentally killed in crossfire and that the soldier had been aiming at a gunman in nearby hedges.

However, a new HET report is expected to state that there was no gunman.