

The

CAPTIVE VOICE



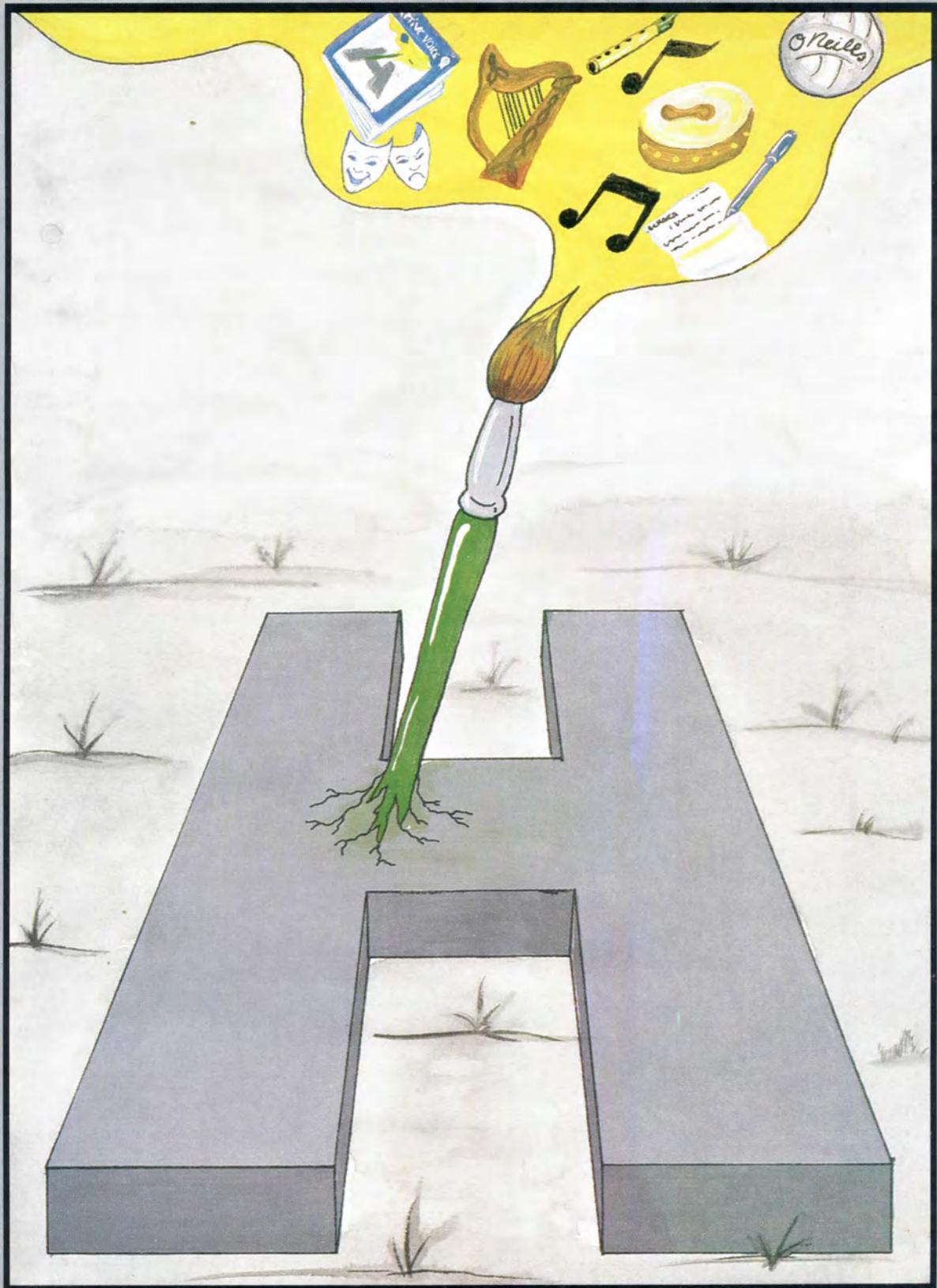
An Glór Gafa

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The Voice of Irish Republican Prisoners of War



The CAPTIVE VOICE

An Glór Gafa

The Captive Voice/An Glór Gafa is a quarterly magazine written in its entirety by Irish Republican POWs currently being held in Ireland, England, Europe and the US. It is published by Sinn Féin's POW Department.

Irish republicans have always recognised that resistance to British misrule does not end upon their arrest. The battles to be fought and the tactics to be employed may change but the enemy remains the same. In the words of our comrade Bobby Sands:

"The jails are engineered to crush the political identity of the captured republican prisoner, to crush his/her resistance and transform him/her into a systemised answering-machine with a large criminal tag stamped by oppression upon his/her back, to be duly released on to the street, politically cured — politically barren — and permanently broken in spirit."

The establishment of this jail journal is a tribute not only to our families, friends and comrades, whose strength and support have been inspirational to us all, but also is a

clear recognition that we are what we are — political prisoners, unbroken in our deep-rooted desire for freedom.

The Captive Voice affords us a platform and an opportunity to present in print our views on those topics and issues which affect daily life both inside and outside of the jails. The magazine contains political analyses of current national and international affairs, culture, short stories, poetry and the latest updates on prison-related campaigns and issues. Satire and humour can also be found within the special features, cartoons and artwork illustrations.

We have been pleased and greatly encouraged by the response to the magazine. It is hoped that the sharing of our feelings and experiences through the pages of *An Glór Gafa* will be both beneficial and enjoyable for all our readers.

We are determined that our message and our captive voice shall be heard by many.

— The Irish Republican Prisoners of War. ■

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Cover illustration



■ By Mícheál Doherty
(Long Kesh)

We welcome correspondence with ideas, suggestions or comments on the contents of *The Captive Voice/An Glór Gafa* or on any subject of concern to prisoners.

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The

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An Glór Gafa

TWENTY YEARS AGO the British government released the last of the internees from Long Kesh. They presented it as a progressive step towards "normality". In reality they could no longer resist the human-rights campaign and international pressure against internment. And as Bernard Fox points out in his article *Last Day In The Cages*, the British delayed this release of prisoners until they had built the H-Blocks and had prepared a new quasi-judicial mechanism for removing political activists from the streets.

Twenty years later, the British government has announced the restoration of 50% remission of sentence for political prisoners — a return to the 1989 situation. They are presenting it as a progressive step towards "normalising prison arrangements". In reality it is a cosmetic gesture motivated by sharp criticism of their reluctance to engage in the peace process. It is cosmetic because it releases only 29 republican POWs, who would have been released within months anyway; because it ignores life-sentence prisoners (for example, Paul Norney is now in his 21st year of imprisonment and others have been told they must serve 50 years); because it is academic to the majority of the POWs who are serving long sentences (for example, some will now serve 15 years instead of 20). And it stands in stark contrast to the case of British paratrooper Lee Clegg, not only released from jail, but promoted for shooting dead a teenage girl. Indeed, Clegg may feel hard done by since British forces have killed hundreds of Irish people without ever facing a court, never mind imprisonment.

It proves yet again that imprisonment is a weapon in Britain's arsenal of repression, to be used as and when it suits British interests. The use of this weapon is incompatible with a peace process. Therefore, if there is to be peace in Ireland, Britain must discontinue its use of repressive weaponry and release all political prisoners.

However, although Britain seeks to use prisoners as political hostages, we refuse to be victims of this strategy. This is clearly illustrated by our participation in cultural struggle, as outlined in several articles in this magazine. We remain political activists, committed to fundamental constitutional change and a negotiated political settlement.



AUSCHWITZ — Instead of exterminating everyone, they decided to use some Jewish people for slave labour in order to keep the German war machine going

Helen's Story

ON WEDNESDAY, 7 JUNE 1995, Helen Lewis began a tour of Long Kesh, giving talks based on her book, *Time To Speak*. A few days before her arrival, I took the opportunity of reading this book in order to learn more about our invited guest. The Stephen Spielberg film *Schindler's List* had recently been shown throughout the blocks and considerable media coverage had been given to this period of history, marking the end of the Second World War 50 years ago. All of this helped to generate considerable interest in this forthcoming visit.

In the packed classroom in H7 everyone was seated ready and waiting at 10am when a small elderly lady arrived. She seemed nervous, but was immediately made welcome and soon felt comfortable enough to begin telling her story in her own time and way. Helen began by explaining her background, born in Trutnov in the

Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia and reared with German as her first tongue. Her family were of Jewish background although they didn't follow the customs in a very orthodox manner. It was only during her school days that Helen noticed the religious divisions within her country between German and Czech

■ By Gerard Magee
(Long Kesh)

speakers. In 1938, after completing her grammar-school education, she persisted with an ambition to make a career out of dancing. Later that year she was married to Paul. During this period, as the Germans were threatening war, many Jewish people emigrated and one of her old friends, called Harry, ended up in some far-away place, hardly known to Helen, called Belfast.

After the German invasion of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, many restrictions were placed on the Jewish people. They had to wear a yellow star at all times in public and eventually were forced to vacate their homes, taking only a suitcase of possessions. In August 1942 Helen and Paul had to report to the main hall in the Fair Trade Building in Prague. People of all ages were then packed into cattle trucks and transported by rail to Terezin, a constructed Jewish ghetto north of Prague.

Helen and Paul were to spend almost two years in this ghetto, virtually an open prison with organised slave labour. Here she took ill with acute appendicitis and underwent two emergency operations. It wasn't until July 1943 that she was able to get out and walk around.

Much of what I read and heard from Helen, as she told us her story, focused my mind on the various scenes in the film *Schindler's List*, though I quickly realised there was a huge difference between a mere film or secondary-source history book and the reality directly recounted by someone who went through these experiences.

Throughout the existence of the Terezin ghetto there were continuous departures to the East — to Poland. No one ever returned to explain anything, but the name Auschwitz generated feelings of terror and fear. In May 1944, Helen and Paul were among a group selected for transport. After a long train journey in cramped cattle trucks they arrived in Auschwitz. Everyone was herded out under the watchful gaze of armed SS guards and lined up to be tattooed with a number and to sign a document for "Special Treatment". Auschwitz, as an extermination camp, had been in full operation for some time and many train loads of people were moved straight from the platform to the gas chambers. Some, however, were kept alive for periods in surrounding camps. Here Helen became aware of the dreadful reality of Auschwitz and was able to establish a six month pattern to the extermination. A train load from September lasted to March and with Helen's group arriving in May, she expected to live until November.

A month after Helen arrived in Auschwitz the Allies landed in Normandy and the Germans changed their strategy. Instead of exterminating everyone, they decided to use some Jewish people for slave labour in order to keep the German war machine going. This led to a selection process, with everyone lined up naked before Dr Mengele. Anyone who displayed a blemish or who was too old or too young was shown through a door and never seen again. Helen knew what that meant and knew she wouldn't get past Dr Mengele with the prominent scar from her appendix operation.

When she was approaching the desk she suddenly decided to take the initiative as there was nothing to lose. A line of people, who were passed as being fit for labour, was a short

distance away and Helen could either remain in the queue and go straight to the gas chamber or take the risk of being shot; so she took a few quick steps, joined the others and quickly put on her clothes. No one had spotted her and she became one of the first people to leave Auschwitz alive. It was at this time that Helen got split up from Paul and was never to see him again. He died in Schwarzhilde concentration camp in April 1945. That night she watched the flames light up the sky as they consumed the bodies, including Paul's mother — the same flames that would have consumed herself if she had remained in that line.

Helen was to go through another selection process before being transported north to Stutthof, near the Baltic Sea. A few miles outside Stutthof this labour force was somehow expected to build an airfield with spades and shovels. Moreover, these women were starved and falling over with diseases. They also had to endure the bitter cold of a Baltic winter with minimal clothing. They were forced to slave under these conditions and often beaten, sometimes shot by a sadistic SS guard. Yet despite these hardships, Helen got to know a number of SS guards who were willing to take risks and help them out with regular food parcels. She even ended up giving comfort to a very young woman in an SS uniform who broke down at being placed in these circumstances.

Failure to comply with the brutal regime led to severe beatings and being listed for the weekly transport back to Stutthof's gas chamber. One of Helen's friends, called Edith, who slept in the same bunk, received a severe beating for wearing a sock without permission. After this, Edith gave in to the torture and volunteered to be taken away to the gas chamber. Many others volunteered and three of the five women in Helen's bunk left in this manner. By December 1944 Helen was becoming very weak and inevitably an SS guard singled her out for the following Sunday's transport to Stutthof. However, while she was waiting for the end Helen was suddenly asked to give dancing lessons as

someone heard about her talents from the days in Prague. Despite being so weak, she managed to join in and was rewarded with some extra bread and soup.

With the advance of the Allies in both the East and West the Germans were coming under severe pressure. In January 1945 they decided to evacuate this camp and the women were brought on a long walk, later known as a death march. At this stage the SS guards, if they had any sense, as Helen put it, they would have discarded their uniforms and made a run for it, but instead they stuck rigidly to their last orders in a totally hopeless situation. The women were marched along the snow-covered roads in no particular direction and quite often they were going around in circles. They were clinging to each other for support to survive, while the weakest were being isolated, shunned and left to die. Communal support was essential. However, Helen began to turn in on herself, became isolated and eventually she gave up the struggle to survive. Some women were dying in a barn they had been staying in for some days and were lying in a line near the door. Helen went over to this group, lay down and pulled a blanket over her head.

The details of this part of Helen's story were so horrific that I had to remind myself that it was a genuine recollection by someone who actually experienced these events. No fictional writer could possibly describe such an appalling tragedy. It was one of the most graphic illustrations of the 'Law of the Jungle' being applied to human beings and drawn out to the point of life and death. I felt it was very understandable that Helen summarised over these most horrendous details during her talk.

For reasons unknown to herself, Helen somehow picked herself up and went back to sit among the living. A short time later the doors were opened and everyone was ordered to get on the road again. Afterwards, the line of dying women who could not move were bayoneted to death. Further along the road the women were unable to keep their balance on the icy surface,



At this stage the SS guards, if they had any sense, as Helen put it, they would have discarded their uniforms and made a run for it, but instead they stuck rigidly to their last orders

and those who fell were shot on the spot. Eventually the point came when Helen could no longer keep going. The other women, who were slightly stronger, viewed her as a threat to their own survival. Mitzi, who shared a bunk with Helen in the labour camp and gained extra food through the dancing performance, let go of her arm and, just like in the selection line of Auschwitz, Helen had only one option. Helen noticed a deep ditch filled with soft snow on her left and while there was some commotion going on Helen let herself fall into the ditch. The procession moved on and for the first time in almost three years she was completely free of German authority.

After climbing out of the ditch Helen went to a number of Polish farmhouses where she was given shelter before being finally liberated when the Russian army arrived. During the following weeks she spent some time recovering in hospital before making her way home to Prague. Eventually she learned that her husband died a short time before the liberation. Helen was to spend more time in hospital and then one day in October 1945 a friend came in and told her: "I have a surprise for you." It was a letter from her old friend Harry in Belfast.

They were married in June 1947 in Prague and then moved to Belfast where they have remained and reared two sons. Helen was eventually able to fulfil her life's ambition as a dance teacher, choreographing for theatre and opera and this led to the foundation of the Belfast Modern Dance Group.

It was a moving and unforgettable experience to listen to this woman tell her story. Helen then answered a series of questions from the audience and afterwards said it was the best audience she had ever spoken to and was very impressed with the standard of educated and informed questions. She has discovered that few young people in Ireland today have any real understanding of what happened to many people like Helen over 50 years ago. At the end of her first talk in H7 she was presented with a signed copy of the book *Nor Meekly Serve My Time*. Afterwards she was invited to the Big Cell, got tea and continued to discuss her story among a smaller group. She then showed us the tattooed number on her arm from Auschwitz. Before she left, Helen posed the idea of taking a small group of us for dancing classes in the future, a really overwhelming offer from a very special guest. ■



■ Illustration by Seán Connolly (Long Kesh)

The Sky at night

■ By Séanna Breathnach (Long Kesh)

ONE OF THE MOST PROFOUND changes in our conditions here in Long Kesh occurred last summer when we embarked upon a protest to draw attention to the deteriorating situation with the visits here. That is not to paint a totally dire picture concerning visits of course, but since the administration and the NIO introduced "agency status" working conditions, we find ourselves treated as the proverbial football between these people and their hirelings in the Prison Officers Association (POA). We have been experiencing marked delays in transport to and from visits and increases in the number of both POWs and visitors who "get lost", put in the wrong visiting area or kept waiting for lengthy periods in poorly-furnished waiting rooms.

So we had a protest. A lovely word that, but here in the context of the H-Blocks, especially for the auld hands, it has a long history of suffering and sacrifice, even the deaths of our comrades in the ultimate protest of

1981. Some would say that with this sort of a history how can you even call this present endeavour a protest, but protest it is.

What did this protest entail? What torture and sufferings did we bring down on our heads? Well, we refused to lock-up from the yards at eight o'clock in the evening. Normally the yards are opened at around 8am and locked in the evening at 8pm. Our protest was to stay out in the yards until 10pm and then come in to allow the screws to close them. Initially they did so, but then after a week or two and for reasons still not very clear to us, they didn't lock the yards at all. As a result we had 24-hour access to fresh air for the first time in the history of the camp.

Unless you have found yourself locked in a concrete tomb, staring between cold pillars and grey steel wire at the puddles and the stars and the full yellow moon you can never imagine what night-time access to the yards mean. How then can I explain it, how can I ever hope to let you see through our eyes, breathe with our lungs, hear with us the low distant sounds, sights and smells of the night?

I remember one cynical republican (yes there really are

such rare, exotic beings) complaining about the overuse by republicans of that well worn-cliché "at the end of the day". He opined that the only thing that happens at the end of the day is that it gets dark. Well he should see this place now. At the end of the day the blocks come alive and take on a totally different aspect. Guys who spend hours making harps and crosses, dust themselves off and take to the yards. Others who have spent long hours poring over Open University books or who have been engrossed in the various ranganna emerge from their cells phantom-like. The TV-watching bubble-heads are followed by the swaggering Mr Macho body-builders. All, in one macabre procession, come out to walk off the stress and strain of confinement with 50 other sweating, smoking, farting, back-stabbing comrades.

As we discuss all the latest scéal on the twists and turns of the peace process, dissect and scorn the latest "loose talk" from the original "reliable source", and even rake over the heavy scéal and scandal some of us are more practiced at, we begin to feel the pressures of the day ease and wane. The craic and slagging among groups of men become more audible with every figure-of-eight shaped lap of the yard.

It could be said that this night walking is almost like one big mass therapy session, where we can peel off the defences which are used to get through the day, let our hair down and relax our guard. All of this is of course exaggerated, sure it wouldn't be me if it wasn't, but there has been a marked improvement in the atmosphere and a lessening of tension over the past couple of months.

There is, as with everything, a downside. The guys who retire at about eleven o'clock or earlier should ensure to get a cell on the opposite side of the block from the yard.

Some of the lads can get a wee bit carried away when they're listening to the Walkman or recounting a story of adventure from days gone by.

On a more personal note, I have discovered that it's not just a matter of a couple of stars here and a "Plough" there, but there are thousands of them out there — up there. They twinkle and shine and pose another imponderable question on the meaning of life. They remain fascinating and inexplicable to most of us. So it is that I have no defence to offer as I haul my blanket and a few staunch allies out into the middle of the yard to lie on my back and stare, with the aid of a Shredded Wheat box, into the heavens.

Many's the long night I have endeavoured to place Vega and Altair with the Northern Cross, Cygnus, in order to get my bearings on the many constellations which speckle the sky. Scanning the Ursa Major to Polaris and southeast to Cassiopeia, these road signs in the sky stand out against the background of the Milky Way and as yet other unidentified (by us!) bodies.

Of course we have the aid of a few odd books and even a "map" à la Patrick Moore. But what the heck, it helps us do our whack and forget about Mayhew and Major for a few hours every week. So we take the banter and abuse, we endure the pitying, head-shaking stares and get on with the business of identifying Pegasus and Perseus and wait for Orion to put in an appearance. That's unless there's a major crisis "outside" of course — but then that's the tale for another day. ■

Féile Mhuire

Night enters with the silent fanfare
Of orange, pink and red
on shades of blue,
Through rusted coils.
The night-watcher huddles in a summer
chill.
Murmurs in the breeze.

A gate unlocks,
locks.
A walkie-talkie blares the breeze.
A shadow shifts along the chink
between ground and galvanised.

Domhan i ndomhan
Oíche na hoiche.

The murmur moves
to a beach,
a drink,
a sunset,
to grey-haired men
firing rockets and machine-guns
and helicopter gunships
swooping roaring on a car
darting through the hedges
of an August country lane.

The radio snarls again.
Tea cools too quickly in our mugs.
And tyres pan the motorway,
always going somewhere.

Agus sise liom,
labhairt liom,
suí liom
cos 's gruaig liom.
Súile mar an fharraige,
ciúnas na farraige.
Gaoth bhog na binne
's binneas a glóir.

Gaoth gan ghaoth.
Binneas a binnis.

■ By Tarlach O Conghalaigh (Long Kesh)

Remembering — women in the struggle

■ By Mary McArdle (Maghaberry)

AS WOMEN, we are often reminded that our contribution to the struggle has gone largely unnoticed and unrecorded. We were delighted therefore that the theme for Prisoner's Day 1995 was to be Women in the Struggle and we were honoured to be able to make our own contribution to the events. I, along with Mary Ellen Campbell, had the privilege of attending to represent women POWs. The event attracted ex-prisoners from all parts of the country, including Bronwyn McGahan from Tyrone, the most recently-released woman POW from Maghaberry Jail. Also present were Donna Maguire and Póilín Uí Chatháin, both of whom were recently released from jails in Germany.

The day began with a volleyball match between Armagh and Maghaberry, an enjoyable event for both the players and the spectators. The winning trophy, in memory of Rosaleen Russell, a tireless worker on behalf of women's rights who died earlier in the year, was presented to the Maghaberry women who were victorious on the day.

At lunchtime, Tar Anall, the new drop-in centre for ex-POWs and their families was officially opened. Maura McCrory gave a short speech after which Pamela Kane and Brieghe Norney unveiled the opening plaque. Maura outlined the importance of Tar Anall and invited everyone to avail of its services. Brieghe then spoke of the plight of prisoners in English jails and the hardships endured by their families.

After the formalities were dispensed with, those who had gathered for the opening mingled informally before moving next door into the Felons' Club which hosted a variety of prison-related exhibitions. Among these exhibitions was a photographic display representing the various roles women

have played throughout the war. Cell-like structures had also been created to show different phases of prison struggle — with detailed information provided on each particular chapter. The traditional array of POW handi-

crafts was also on display. One poignant aspect of the exhibition was the display which included personal letters belonging to Tom Williams, as well as newspaper cuttings about his case and trial. Also included in this display was the shirt Tom wore on the day of his arrest.

A quilt made by Irish Women's groups, which was taken to the UN Women's Conference in Beijing, also featured. The theme of this quilt was 'Women's Rights



are Human Rights' and the women POWs in Maghaberry had contributed a panel to it. A massive poster expressing

solidarity with the Basque prisoners seemed particularly appropriate with a large Basque delegation in attendance.

A video entitled *What Did You do in the War Mammy?* which documented the experiences of republican women through several decades, was one of the highlights of the day. Full credit for this excellent production goes to the Falls Women's Centre for their hard work and persistence which, despite this being their first venture into the world of film-making, produced this high-quality documentary. Narrated by Caral Ní Chulainn, the video was a clear testimony to the changing role of women in the republican struggle and had Eileen Brady, a long-time activist, lamenting the fact that she wasn't 19 again.

After the showing of the video, several women shared a panel and spoke of their experiences of imprisonment, which included internment, the no-wash protest and hunger strikes in Armagh, the opening of Maghaberry Jail and the present-day conditions faced by women POWs. Pamela Kane talked of her experiences in Mountjoy and Limerick Jails, outlining the hardships and isolation associated with being the only female IRA prisoner in the 26 Counties. There then followed a question-and-answer session, chaired by Una Gillespie, which raised many pertinent questions in relation to women's struggle.

The evening function proved to be a moving event. A statement, paying tribute to the sacrifice of the women who had given their lives during the struggle, was read out on behalf of the

women POWs in Maghaberry. It further acknowledged the roles that women have played over the years and called on this potential to be utilised in all future initiatives.

Presentations were then made to Louise McManus, Anne O'Sullivan and Lily Fennell for their selfless work on behalf of the Republican Movement. Other presentations were made to ex-prisoners Bronwyn McGahan, Pamela Kane, Póilín Uí Chatháin and Donna Maguire. Madge McConville and Greta Nolan, both of whom were arrested with Tom Williams, were presented with framed pictures in recognition of long years of dedication to the republican cause. Madge and Greta then unveiled a cross in memory of the dead volunteers and presented it to Liam Shannon who accepted it on behalf of the Felons' Club.

A colour party led by a lone piper then entered the hall, their flags lowered as a mark of respect and a minute's silence was observed. The sombre mood that had descended upon the proceedings created a fitting atmosphere for the presentation ceremony for the families of our fallen women comrades. The family of each Volunteer was presented with a plaque which contained a small photograph of their loved one. I was touched by the dignity and courage of the families whose grief, despite the passing of time, is still so apparent.

Finally the day was at an end. It had been a long day and after months of research, hard work and effort, it was, despite its sadder moments, a day that republican women could be proud of. What we, as POWs, had wanted most of all was to ensure that the role of women in our struggle was not forgotten. We especially wanted to honour our comrades who died for Irish freedom and to offer our support to their families. We sincerely hope that we achieved that. ■

PRESENTATIONS WERE MADE TO THE FAMILIES OF THE FOLLOWING COMRADES WHO HAVE DIED:

Patricia Black

Margaret McArdle

Máire Drumm

Rosemary Bleakley

Anne Parker

Anne Marie Petticrew

Mairéad Farrell

Bridie Dolan

Dorothy Maguire

Maura Meehan

Eileen Mackin

Laura Crawford

Catherine McGartland

Sheena Campbell

Ethel Lynch

Julie Dougan

Bridie Quinn

Pauline Kane

Vivienne Fitzsimmons

Lies, damn lies and the British inquest system

IN 1981 the British government initiated changes in the Coroners' Courts system in the Six Counties. As a result of these changes, neither the coroner nor the jury can express an opinion pertaining to questions of criminal or civil liability in cases where the circumstances of death are clearly suspicious. These restrictions, similar to those introduced during the Tan War after juries consistently found the Black and Tans guilty of unlawful killings, mean that an inquest cannot investigate the circumstances surrounding suspicious deaths — including the investigation of those responsible for the killings. In addition, unlike other deaths, inquests into killings by British forces can be delayed for many years — in the hope that the general public will have forgotten the horrific facts of the killings.

This judicial travesty has been widely criticised by Amnesty International and other human-rights organisations, whose comments, in every single inquest where the circumstances of death have been disputed, have been ignored by the British government. The family of Séamus McElwaine, the relatives of those who died at Loughgall and at Seán Graham's bookmakers in Belfast, can bear painful testimony to this.

The inquest into the death of IRA Volunteer Séamus McElwaine, which was held in Enniskillen on 11 January 1993, exposed the corrupt nature of these courts and caused much embarrassment for the British government. There was controversy when the jury refused to abide by the 1981 legislation and instead returned a verdict of unlawful killing by the British army. The coroner, John Leckey, refused to accept the jury's decision and told them that they could only decide the cause of death — by gunshot. The role of the Coroner's Court clearly was to legitimise the SAS execution of a captured IRA Volunteer as he lay wounded. No other verdict was acceptable under the "law".

The deaths of three men at Seán Graham's bookies shop on

the Whiterock Road, Belfast, on 13 January 1990, has left many questions unanswered. Why were these men, who had been under constant surveillance, shot dead while trying to rob a betting shop using replica weapons? Why had one of the men been shot dead at close range without warning while sitting in a car? Why did the coroner decide not to call two soldiers, who were involved in the killings, as witnesses? Why were eye-witnesses to the killings not questioned or asked to give evidence to the court? The inquest system failed to address the circumstances of the deaths — because to do so would expose the British policy of summary execution of suspects.

The Loughgall inquest began on 30 May 1995, eight years after the incident in which eight IRA Volunteers and a civilian were shot dead by undercover British soldiers. The coroner, Henry Rodgers, instructed the jury to record the "findings" rather than a verdict. Rodgers wore this straitjacket quite comfortably as he responded in a hostile manner when dealing with Philip Magee, a barrister representing the families of the



bereaved, while treading gently with the multiplicity of representatives acting on behalf of the British Minister of Defence, the British Lord Chancellor and the Chief Constable of the RUC.

It was immediately apparent, to both the families of the bereaved and their legal representatives, that the purpose of the inquest was not to seek the truth, but rather to give an official explanation, which could not be challenged, of the deaths of those killed at Loughgall. Those responsible for the deaths were not compelled to give oral evidence — instead written statements were read out on their behalf. It is impossible to cross-examine a statement.

The British soldier in charge of the ambush, described as Soldier A in his statement, gave exact details of how, as the principal officer, he had briefed the other soldiers a full 24 hours beforehand. There were, apart from himself, 23 other soldiers present at this briefing. Soldier S, one of those present, said in his statement that on the night of the attack they had heard gunfire and moved towards the road. He said that they believed they were under fire and could hear bullets striking the ground around them. He saw a number of men in dark clothing but couldn't tell if they were armed or masked. He then said he saw a white car which he fired upon until it stopped 20 feet away from where he was situated. He said he fired because he believed it contained armed terrorists involved in an attack on

Loughgall barracks. He said the front seat passenger, who was wearing blue overalls, tried to get out of the car and was shot in the head.

The occupants of this car were the Hughes brothers, Anthony and Oliver, two local men who were driving home from work along the Loughgall Road. These supposedly highly-trained soldiers who claimed to have had at least 24 hours prior notice of a planned attack by the IRA on Loughgall barracks, shot the Hughes brothers, killing Anthony and seriously injuring Oliver. Legal representatives of the Hughes family could not question this account or cross-examine soldier S. The Hughes family have never received an apology from the British government for the murder of their son, Anthony, or for the serious injury inflicted upon Oliver.

A doctor who examined the bodies at the scene stated that gunpowder burns on the body of my brother, Declan Arthurs, confirmed that he had been shot dead at close range while lying on the ground. Other evidence was given that Declan was not wearing a mask and had been unarmed. Why therefore was he not arrested? Why, if the British army had at least 24 hours prior notice of a planned IRA attack on Loughgall Barracks, were none of the IRA Volunteers arrested?

On the first day of the Loughgall inquest, the barrister representing the bereaved families, was handed witness state-

ments, maps and photographs. He immediately asked for an adjournment to study the evidence, arguing that this was the first time he had seen such potentially vital evidence, and that after waiting over eight years, in the interests of justice, an adjournment was necessary. The coroner overruled this request and after much legal wrangling the families and their legal representatives had no choice other than to withdraw from the proceedings.

The changes in the inquest system, which allow the coroner to ignore all defence and independent evidence, is similar to the creation of the non-jury Diplock courts, where a line judge plays the dual role of judge and jury. The Six-County inquest system is a further example of the corrupt nature of the state itself. It represents British colonialism in Ireland, which dictates that those acting in the interests of the state can make and break laws as they so wish. For years they have carried out a "shoot-to-kill" policy on republican activists and supporters, while those who are paid to carry out this policy act with impunity, safe in the knowledge that even the inquest system will protect them.

The families of those killed at Loughgall will now take their case to the Courts of Human Rights at Strasbourg where the relatives of the three unarmed IRA Volunteers killed at Gibraltar recently won a ruling proving that the British government were responsible for the unlawful deaths of their loved ones. ■



THE LOUGHGALL INQUEST — The coroner, Henry Rodgers, instructed the jury to record the "findings" rather than a verdict

GROWING UP ON THE BLANKET

First came the cold,
heralding the dawn of consciousness
emanating from the heart out,
dispelling the layers of innocence
of a soul that had no perception
of mans ability for sadism.
We huddled in concrete tombs
whose walls rebounded our cold upon us

the cold terror of fear
which clung to every minute of every day,
a malevolent spirit
intent on negating our dreams.
We felt the pain amid our tears
and endured the isolation of years.
Our thirst for the dream propelled us on
in sacred quest for the vision
which we,
and only we,
nurtured in the sacred chambers of our
hearts.

■ By Gerard Hodgins (Long Kesh)

Quotations

"Maybe the system is wrong. If you are hurting and I am hurting — and that is a good thing that we should be hurting — and the people are hurting and the people who have been abused are hurting and the people who feel locked out of the church because of rules and regulations, they are hurting ... Now if that is the truth and you admitted it and I have admitted it — so where is the compassionate church?" — **A passionate plea by Fermanagh priest Fr Brian D'Arcy to Cardinal Cahal Daly in reference to the nonexistence of compassion in modern-day Church Policy, *The Late Late Show*, 3 November 1995.**

"When we look at the Irish Famine we are dealing with the most important episode of modern Irish history and the great social disaster of 19th Century Europe — an event with some of the characteristics of a low-level nuclear attack." — **Terry Eagleton, Warton professor of English literature at Oxford University, *Sunday Independent*.**

"To deny a people their right to self-determination for well on a hundred years is to subject them to slavery. ... To take away the resources of a people and refuse to give them anything in return is to subject them to slavery. ... To take away the land of a people who depend solely on land for their survival and refuse to pay them compensation is to subject them to genocide." — **Ken Saro-Wiwa, Writer and spokesperson for the Ogoni people who was executed by the Nigerian government on 10 November 1995, *Without Walls*, Channel 4, 16 November 1995.**

"Nigeria must be expelled forthwith from the Commonwealth and subjected to immediate international sanctions following yesterday's act of murderous barbarism. The Commonwealth will destroy its very nature if it continues to give sanctuary to the amoral thugs responsible for the outrage... timed to occur just as the Commonwealth conference was getting under way in Auckland." — **Reaction to the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa. Leader comment from the *Guardian*, 11 November 1995.**

"It had to be remembered that we were in Northern Ireland fighting not only a military war, but a propaganda war." — **Edward Heath laying the ground rules for Widgery's tribunal into the deaths of those killed on Bloody Sunday, 1 February 1972 (one day after the massacre of 13 Derry men).**

"It shows that the conspiracy of silence indulged in over this period of our history has been instigated at the highest levels of the British administration. There can be no more British government inquiries into British crimes against the Irish people. An independent, international, public inquiry with wide-ranging terms of reference must be set up immediately. The Bloody Sunday cover-up was just the worst example of British government disinformation and black propaganda exercises." — **Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness speaking after the discovery of a document containing minutes of a meet-**

ing held in 10 Downing Street between the then British Prime Minister Edward Heath and Lord Widgery, *Irish News*, 9 November 1995.

"Although terms of truce were virtually agreed upon, they were abandoned because the British leaders thought these actions indicated weakness, and they consequently decided to insist upon a surrender of our arms. The result was the continuance of the struggle." — **British obstacles to a peace process in 1920, *The Path Of Freedom* (1995 edition), a collection of speeches from Michael Collins.**

"Only by moving forward in trust and taking risks can a humane future be created. This is no impossible dream. It is the only pragmatic way forward. There is no other way. Alternatives are too terrible to contemplate... The aspiration of republicans for a new Ireland is paradoxically possible if this does not deny unionists a new Ulster. ... We could, with patience, eventually fulfil the dream of Presbyterian republicans to be Irish, as long as this does not exclude being British, republican or whatever." — **Official Unionist Party member Roy Garland, *Irish News*, 6 November 1995.**

"The British government... pretends to be neutral. But there is no neutrality in a stance which allows for no constitutional reform in practice if unionists do not endorse it. That is what is known as the unionist veto." — **Dalton O Ceallaigh, General Secretary of the Irish Federation of University Teachers, British TUC Conference, September 1995.**

"We all have to learn to forgive. Republicans have their grievances too. We all need to look forward." — **Republican POW Seáneen Baker, speaking on her release from Maghaberry Prison, BBC *Inside Ulster* news, 17 November 1995.**

"And let Shauneen Baker be sure of one thing. The first step will be to put her and the scum like her, right back behind bars, where in justice they belong." — ***Sunday Express*, 19 November 1995. Typically regressive comment, looking forward only to the resumption of the conflict, from the paper who called so stridently for the release of British paratrooper and murderer Lee Clegg.**

"We did not attach many conditions. We took those sorts of leaps in good faith on certain issues. History sometimes opens a window of opportunity, when all the forces involved are ripe for negotiations. It is the task of statesmen to recognise such windows and lead their followers through, before history once again slams the window shut." — **FW De Klerk, Deputy President of South Africa, speaking at the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation in Dublin, 20 November 1995. Does John Major read this page?**

"It may be that there is no Northern Ireland De Klerk because there is simply not enough pressure on unionism as yet to produce one." — ***Irish Times* editorial, 22 November 1995.**



Diary of a drama project

ON THE RARE occasions that I thought about drama, my mind's eye conjured up pictures of the Opera House filled with dickie-bowed, evening-dressed, upper-class audiences watching some Shakesperian play — not something that would have appealed to me, coming from a working-class background. My perception changed however after seeing the Tom Williams play written by Toby McMahon and performed by a local cast as part of the West Belfast Festival. This perception changed to an even greater extent when, as a resident in the H-Blocks, I took part in several 15-minute skits as entertainment for the rest of the lads on the block, at specific times of the year like Christmas or Easter.

It was after one such skit that I was asked to join a new drama group being set up on the block, after it had been arranged that Tom Magill of Community Arts Forum would come into the jail to work with us. My feelings of apprehension were quickly dispelled after meeting Tom as part of a group of ten. Soon we were learning of Augusto Boale and the "theatre of the oppressed", of surreal, minimalist theatre, something we, or at least I, had never tried before. Tom introduced us to a range of exercises which would help us develop our acting skills: Warm-up exercises, team games to generate trust and mutual support with-

in the group, improvisation and other exercises to stretch our imaginations and creative abilities. At first these exercises were difficult both because I was self-conscious about making an idiot of myself and because I was using muscles and artistic talents which I never knew existed. It could also be highly embarrassing when one of the lads would pop his head around the door to find ten grown men playing a game similar to Blind Man's Buff — off he would scoot down the wing to tell the rest of the lads what we were at.

After a short period a couple of the lads realised that this project wasn't for them and dropped out, leaving our num-

bers at eight. We went on to learn about style, movement and expression, but were getting impatient to put all these things into practice. It was decided the time was right to tackle a play. Tom suggested taking a poem and trying to adapt it for the stage — for example Oscar Wilde's *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. We suggested a trilogy of epic poems by Bobby Sands: *The Crime of Castlereagh*, *Diplock Court* and *H-Block Torture Mill*. Both suggestions were given a lot of thought and consideration, but it was felt that as we had all directly experienced the 'Diplock conveyor belt' we would have a deeper understanding of the Sands' poem and therefore be able to contribute more in terms of ideas, images and emotions. In addition, Bobby Sands' epic trilogy was a masterpiece, rich in language and imagery and packed full of social and political meaning for everyone concerned with human rights. As republican prisoners we were not only interested in developing ourselves as individuals, but in articulating the experiences of our community. In this respect, the poetry of Bobby Sands was ideal material.

Tom warned us of the magni-

■ By Dan Kelly
(Long Kesh)

tude of the task we were about to embark upon. Not only had the poems — 200 stanzas in all — to be transposed from poem to play, but they would have to be tried again and again until the right image was found for each line. This was the exploration phase of our project, when in a series of workshops we dissected the text of its meaning and imagery and tried to relate it to our own experiences. It was also a period of self-exploration and we discovered more and more creative abilities and acting talents within ourselves. The work was indeed hard and at times frustrating, especially when one or other of the lads couldn't attend due to visits, education classes and the myriad daily activities on the wing. Each obstacle was tackled and cleared as it arose. Another disappointment came when two more of the cast left, leaving our numbers at six. We felt we could press on, but that total commitment was required from the remaining cast.

We soon learned the meaning of minimalist theatre when a bedstead was used as a fence, a scaffold and a witness bench.

A towel was used as a whip, a gag, a noose and reins. Normally we would have made all these props ourselves, but since getting used to this style of theatre nothing was looked at in the same light. A book was not alone just a piece of reading material, but had 101 other uses. We were developing a new perspective not only on drama but on the world around us.

By December we had completed the first poem, *The Crime of Castlereagh*, and had a good half-hour's worth of drama. But we were still very unsure of the quality of our work — or whether anyone could make sense of the images and actions we had created. So we arranged for Chrissy Poulter, a lecturer in drama, and Imelda Foley of the Arts Council, to come in under the auspices of the Jail Welfare Department to see the work in progress and give us some feedback. Essentially this meant that we performed our work to date in a very basic way — few props, no costumes, no stage or curtains — just us in the wing classroom doing our stuff. Fortunately, and with some relief on our part, Chrissy and Imelda were impressed with our efforts and encouraged us to continue with the project. So it was onward to scene two: *Diplock Court*. Unfortunately at this point Tom Magill's term of work with us came to an end. He had offered us an insight into a new style of theatre and a series of exercises to develop our skills. Now it was time to use the knowledge and skills independently.

Some weeks down the line and the project was going on longer than any of us had expected. Then the inevitable happened. Two more of the lads, due to prior commitments, had to pull out. A crisis meeting was called. At the meeting it was decided that too much time and energy had been put into the project to let it collapse. It was decided to try and find two new members, which we did and they were in place for the next workshop the following week. They quickly caught on to this 'alien' style of acting and were soon coming up with many suggestions of their own.

As each week passed the work got harder, new stanzas were transposed while old ones



BOBBY SANDS

had to be rehearsed, but a certain bond was emerging amongst the members as we learned to trust each other's competence in performing difficult tasks and in our own ability to carry the whole thing off. A picture of the play started to emerge and we could see clearly how things were progressing. Although very tired after each session, we also felt a little exhilaration, the buzz from which lasted the whole day. We worked out that the whole play would last one and a half hours, the longest ever produced in the blocks.

The play was two-thirds finished and we were working on the final poem of the trilogy, *H-Block Torture Mill*. We were constantly learning new skills and creating new images, we were organising our own exercises, directing each other's performances. We had managed to get Tom Magill back into the camp for a few sessions, but by now we had become self-sufficient. At times the work was very tough, but each time our momentum slowed, someone in the group would take the lead

and their enthusiasm would revitalise us all.

Nine months had now passed since we first began work. The rest of the lads on the wing would give us all a lot of stick, saying they were expecting something special after all this time, which only added to the pressure. The last two members to leave the cast were now free of other obligations and rejoined the group, which gave everyone a boost. Then two more were recruited for the music and sound effects, bringing the group's numbers back to ten. A buzz of curiosity built in the blocks as everyone knew we were nearing completion. The last few stanzas were completed with a new-found energy and when we rehearsed the whole play it lasted just over the hour-and-a-half predicted.

We had actively pursued the idea of performing the play in the gym for the whole camp, or taking it around the various blocks. We had also hoped to invite a few people from the arts world to see the play and provide us with some feedback. Tom Magill, from his end, was

also pressuring the jail administration to let a wider audience see the play. In addition we were very aware of the limited shelf life of our work and wanted it to be recorded in some way, perhaps by video. However, at this stage all our requests were refused by the administration.

Finally in May we decided to put it on for the lads on our block within three weeks, which meant a lot of organising and rehearsing. Each man was delegated at least one job to look after. A small number of props and costumes had to be made from the limited materials we had on the wing — a scythe from a brush pole, a wig from a mophead, a judge's cloak from a red mattress cover, a mask from a football cut in half and painted. A stage had to be designed and layout agreed. The wing canteen had to be transformed into a mini-theatre. Everything a drama group outside would take for granted, we had to improvise. All this had to be organised while we were in a period of intense rehearsals and jangling nerves. This was not the time to engage in that traditional jail pastime, the wind-up!

One thing we could be assured of was a captive audience. On Monday, 5 June at 5.30pm 80 men crammed into the canteen, some on the floor, others on top of the fridge. If only we had charged them admission we would have made a small fortune! There they waited in anticipation, munching sandwiches and slurping Coke, as our adrenaline was bubbling out our ears. Was this drama craic really such a good idea? In the event a few minor mistakes were made during the performance, but we covered for each other and the audience was none the wiser.

When the curtains closed the lads gave a standing ovation that seemed to go on forever. Each and every one of us had a great feeling of pride and achievement. Tom was delighted with the final result and the play was the talk of the block for weeks afterward. Since then we have achieved one of our goals and have performed the play in each block to great receptions. Those feelings of pride and achievement return after each performance. ■

Review of drama on page 18

Last day in the cages

■ By Bernard Fox
(Long Kesh)

Friday, 5 December 1975, 8.45am

ALL IS QUIET as I make my way from the half-hut to the washroom. Most of the cage is still in bed, where I would have been had I not had a visit this morning.

Peter Hartley is in the study hut reading papers. A 'Principal Officer' screw named Larkin, who is rumoured to be related to Big Jim of Dublin Lockout fame, comes to the wire.

"Make that a good wash," he shouts.

I stop to look across at him and he calls me over. I ask him what he means. He's been around, this PO, and knows that any shouting at this hour of the morning is not welcomed by the lads. It's now quite obvious to me that something big is happening.

"You're all going home this morning."

"The heap of us?"

"Yes, the lot of you."

I don't wait to hear any more, but run into the end hut where our OC, Martin Meehan, resides. I switch the lights on and shout:

"Internment's over! We're all going home today!"

Before I get saying any

more, I am pinned against the nearest cubicle wall by half-a-dozen bleary-eyed comrades.

"If this is your idea of a joke, you're dead."

"No, no, PO Larkin just told me." My God, I says to myself, have I been taken in here? No, oul' Larkin wouldn't pull a mix like that, would he?

"Ah fuck the heap of youse. If you want to stay here then do so. I'm away home!"

I have to appear confident to get out of their clutches, so I run back to our own half-hut and get all the lads up while Martin goes to the gate for confirmation of the news.

By the time he gets back all the lads in the half-hut are streaming out, shouting, screaming, heading for our last wash. Men are sharing showers, dancing and singing as the doubting Thomas's arrive from the other two huts. There are 43 of us left in Cage 4, and a Stick from Lurgan called O'Hagan in Cage 3. We are informed by our

OC that we will be released in batches of eight in alphabetical order. After the hype, excitement and spontaneous reaction dies down a bit, we start realising that our sentenced comrades in the other cages are remaining behind and, specifically in our own cage, Billy McAllister, who is facing a charge of attempting to escape. Once we have established that the enemy has no intention of letting Billy go (they want him out this morning and into Cage 5) we all feel bad about leaving him.

The place is bedlam as we gather up all our belongings and keepsakes. We pack trolley-loads of handicrafts, food, tools and clothes destined for our comrades in the sentenced cages. Martin calls his last parade, but this time it is to be different. We form up in our usual Sunday parade ranks and to the commands of our TO [Training Officer] we march around the cage while Billy McAllister takes photographs of us as we pass the huts. Once we have done a complete circuit of the cage and face the front of the huts, Martin makes his farewell address to us, ending

with the message: "You all have 24 hours to report back to your local unit upon release." The last day of internment has meant for Martin halving the normal 48-hours reporting back time! Amid all the buzz and the din we accomplish our last parade with honour, pride and dignity. The screws, the Sticks and our comrades in Cage 5 are all out watching us and all hear Martin's final instructions. What a day!

Soon the screws are calling us out in alphabetical order. Some of the ones going out with me on the same minibus are Tommy Gorman, Dickie Glenholmes and Peter Hartley. It is pandemonium in the car park, with TV crews and media people doing interviews. Martin has made a gigantic key cut out of tin foil which the media will love — Martin won't mind it either! I just want to get home. So I jump into a visitors' bus heading for Belfast. There are some New Lodge families on it and Jim Brown, who has since been tragically murdered by loyalists. I get off the bus at the Falls Road and savour the walk down to my home.

Postscript: In January 1974, a British Labour Party delegation, including Kevin McNamara, visited the cages. "If we get into government we'll end internment in the morning," they told us. They got into power in February 1974, but internment did not end until December 1975. What took them so long? They needed to replace it with something similar — they were building the H-Blocks. ■

The Yard

A rectangle of asphalt,
cold and impersonal,
a gaping black gash on which
the perennial footsteps of despair are felt.

Entombed by iron and steel
where nature may not be,
the soft peat of the glen
nor the firm rock of the town
will those feet ever feel.

Condemned to walk
in endless monotony
like a goldfish in captivity,
endlessly swimming in circles
from nowhere to nowhere your only walk.

While high above in the sky
a stiletto of silver gracefully glides by,
unaware of the man
who stands in solitary isolation
with a silent tear in his eye.

■ By Gerard Hodgins (Long Kesh)

Lessons of a peace process

A PEACE PROCESS does not begin by some miraculous stroke of luck or genius. It requires conditions which need to be created and a series of steps are necessary to keep it alive and working towards a negotiated peace settlement. As Gerry Adams has pointed out:

"Pace does not come in one great and all encompassing gesture. It requires a process... it requires lateral moves by all the principal parties to a conflict. It requires that gestures of goodwill be responded to and built upon; that, above all, they should not be arrogantly dismissed or thrown back."

The resolution of the South African conflict is often cited as an example for the current Irish peace process. Interestingly the requirements outlined by Adams are illustrated in a recently published book, *Tomorrow Is Another Country* by Allister Sparks (Heinemann, £7.99), which gives an account of the South African peace process.

The first tentative steps in the South African peace process began when Nelson Mandela and an official from the South African government met in 1985. Throughout the mid-1980s the world watched in horror as South Africa slipped further into violent conflict between the South African government and the liberation

■ By Seán Lynch
(Long Kesh)

movement, particularly the ANC, struggling to end Apartheid. However, throughout this period, before the rest of the world knew anything of it, the future of South Africa was being explored in secret conversations in hospitals, prisons and in a cabinet minister's home. These conversations were between government officials and the most famous political prisoner in the world, Nelson Mandela.

The struggle by the ANC to demolish the Apartheid system had begun over 40 years earlier, initially through mass mobilisation, boycotts and strikes. However, as the state became more repressive the ANC began the armed struggle in 1961, with Nelson Mandela as the first chief of staff of its army, Umkhonto We Sizwe (Spear of the Nation). A number of years later he was arrested and put on trial for treason and sentenced to life imprisonment. He said during his trial:

"... The the armed struggle was imposed upon us by the violence of the Apartheid regime."

By the early 1980s the anti-Apartheid struggle as a whole had captured the attention of the world. The South African government was under growing international pressure as nations across the globe began to impose economic sanctions on Pretoria.

Faced with crisis at home and pressure from abroad, PW Botha and his government hoped to alleviate its difficulties by means of a dual strategy. On the one hand they employed greater repressive measures to defeat Black resistance to the regime; and on the other they were trying to use the secret talks with Mandela as a counterinsurgency tactic. Their intention was to isolate Mandela from his imprisoned comrades and the external leadership of the ANC by offering him a conditional release from prison in the hope he could be persuaded to broker a political arrangement with other Black leaders prepared to be used as puppets for the Apartheid regime. In this way opposition to Apartheid would be divided and thrown into disarray, while the Apartheid regime would gain a veneer of legitimacy without any fundamental change.

Mandela wasn't fooled by the government's strategy. He held strong, refused the terms of his release and announced that he was a disciplined member of the ANC, supported its policies, strategies and tactics. He sent a message to the government stating his view that negotiation, not war, was the path to a final solution of the conflict. He stressed:

"Only free men can negotiate, prisoners cannot enter into contracts."

Mandela's analysis during the mid-1980s was that the South African struggle for freedom could be best pushed forward through a negotiated settlement, that if dialogue between the government and the ANC didn't start soon that both sides would be plunged into a darkness of repression. However, whilst Botha wasn't prepared to begin genuine talks with the ANC towards the dismantling of the Apartheid system, there were those within

the South African government who recognised that a solution to the conflict could only be found by entering into dialogue with the ANC. Despite the government's strategy, the secret meetings continued. In 1986, the Minister of Justice Kobie Coetsee visited Nelson Mandela in a prison hospital. Mandela outlined to Coetsee that he believed a military stalemate existed and that the time had come to start talks on resolving the conflict.

The meetings between the Minister of Justice and Mandela continued throughout 1987 and 1988. Mandela continued to argue for talks to begin towards finding a democratic political solution. However Coetsee, on behalf of the South African government, argued that the ANC should fulfil a number of requirements before they could enter into any talks with the government. Again Mandela held strong and rejected the



NATIONAL CONGRESS

PEOPLE'S POWER!



government's approach of setting preconditions before talks. Finally Mandela sought and was granted a visit with the state president, PW Botha. This meeting took place while the government was publicly stating that they would not talk to a "terrorist" organisation like the ANC. The meeting failed to break the deadlock. It was becoming increasingly evident that no fundamental change would take place while Botha remained in power. Botha mistakenly thought he could defeat the ANC and placate the struggle of the oppressed masses by continuing a strategy of trying to reform Apartheid. However, the only result of his intransigence was to strengthen the resistance of the Black population and the ANC's insistence on negotiations between the government and the ANC.

An opportunity to break the impasse and move the peace process forward arose in 1989

when Botha, the major obstacle to progress, resigned as state president. The man who was to become a key figure throughout the subsequent negotiations, FW De Klerk, was elected as the new president of South Africa. De Klerk's conservative leanings dampened expectations of radical change. However, after he was briefed on the ongoing secret talks between the still imprisoned Mandela and government officials, he granted Mandela's request to see him. Mandela outlined to him a number of issues the government needed to address if they were to demonstrate their genuine intentions of breaking the log-jam and moving the process forward. He stressed that negotiations without preconditions between the government and the ANC should begin immediately to break the log-jam. De Klerk reflected on the situation and saw change as not only necessary, but inevitable.

He decided, therefore, that a fundamental step in a new direction was required to overcome the developing crisis in the country. Unlike Botha, he wasn't prepared to freeze the process, but took a quantum leap to break free of the old Apartheid mindset. The giant step forward occurred on 2 February 1992 when in a major speech, De Klerk legalised a whole spectrum of liberation groups, announced the release of Nelson Mandela and many other political prisoners and declared his readiness to enter into negotiations with all parties to work out a new democratic South Africa. All previous preconditions sought by the government from the ANC were dropped, thus opening up the opportunity for the process to develop.

De Klerk's imaginative move brought about one of the most important phases of the peace process in South Africa. The government had finally made the decision to engage proactively in the process, with the result that the process had reached the organic stage: Taken on an irreversible dynamic and momentum, leaving it difficult for any single force or individual to scupper it. This is the crucial step required from the British government to move forward the Irish peace process. Unless and until John Major, like De Klerk, comes on board and engages in the process there is always the potential danger that every effort by those genuinely seeking a peace settlement will come to nothing.

Irrespective of an oppressor having taken imaginative steps, it would be a grave mistake to believe they will relinquish power easily through a process of negotiations. Mandela said of negotiations:

"The point which must be clearly understood is that the struggle is not over, negotiations themselves are a theatre of struggle, subject to advance and reverses as any other form of struggle."

De Klerk's speech had demonstrated that the Apartheid thinkers had come a long way, but they were still not free from their ideological mindset. Despite De Klerk's seemingly progressive action, he was by no means a man who intended to negotiate himself out of pow-

er. His goal was to create a form of power sharing which, if implemented, would preserve a modified form of minority rule. He was completely opposed to the ANC's objective of majority rule, primarily because he saw that it would end White domination in a single stroke. In an effort to veto the ANC's objective, De Klerk's nationalist party hoped to prevent democratic change by building an anti-ANC alliance with the Inkatha party and other movements. In other words, De Klerk wanted to use these groups as a veto over fundamental change. De Klerk's tactic of maintaining power and trying to determine the outcome of negotiations through these groups was similar to Britain's use of the Orange card; that is, their attempt at preventing movement towards a democratic resolution of the conflict by making all progress subject to the unionist veto. However, as a response to the limited first steps taken by De Klerk, the ANC suspended its armed struggle in 1990 to show their good faith and commitment to developing the conditions for peace.

Whilst the organic stage of the peace process is a qualitative development, it can also bring about a dangerous fragile stage, unleashing negative reactionary forces opposed to change and negotiations towards a democratic society. The emergence of a Third Force in South Africa, consisting of sections of the military establishment, vividly demonstrates this point. The strategy of the reactionary forces in South Africa was to organise and exploit racial differences, particularly Inkatha, in an effort to undermine and weaken the ANC's negotiating power and derail the peace process. A series of developments, including Third Force activities, evidence of De Klerk's possible complicity in such activities, his unwillingness to tackle these problems and his intransigence in relinquishing White rule, called into question De Klerk's peaceful intentions and forced the negotiation process into crisis. Mandela accused the government of having a double agenda. They were using negotiations not to achieve peace but to secure their own petty political aims. Interestingly, De Klerk tried to use the issue of

ANC arms to pursue his own political agenda and question the ANC's commitment to peace. He accused the ANC of failing to disclose the locations of arms dumps and rebuked them for maintaining a private army. Mandela angrily responded:

"The ANC has suspended the armed struggle to show their commitment to peace and weapons would be handed in only when the ANC was part of the government collecting the weapons, and not until then."

As a consequence of the government's failure to resolve the crisis in the peace process, the ANC suspended talks and laid out a number of demands upon which they could re-enter them. With negotiations stalled, the ANC and its allies agreed on a policy of rolling mass action. This new tactic played a vital role in the ANC's overall strategic objectives. These were: (i) To provide a channel for the growing anger and frustration among the population with a lack of positive results from negotiations; (ii) To maximise pressure on the government to take the necessary steps to break the log-jam in the process. As a result of the increasing violence of the Inkatha party and other anti-democratic forces and the success of the ANC's mass action campaign, De Klerk and his government were forced to abandon their strategy of pursuing an anti-ANC alliance, and instead had to adopt democratic principles and seek agreement with the ANC towards finding a final solution. De Klerk finally agreed to accept the principle of majority rule and reluctantly agreed to all of the demands laid down by the ANC, one of which was the release of 500 political prisoners. The path to a final agreement was eventually cleared.

The success of the ANC's mass action strategy underlines the need for all Sinn Féin activists and general nationalist supporters to mobilise and create a genuine sense of participation, responsibility and ownership in the peace process. They must help shape and define it, maintain its momentum and eventually allow nationalist representatives, like those of the ANC, to enter nego-



NELSON MANDELA

tiations with strength and clear grassroots support.

De Klerk's change in direction to find a final agreement with the ANC meant that the peace process in South Africa had reached the most important and final stage. Implacable enemies throughout the conflict had converged and were aligned within the basic framework of abolishing the old Apartheid order and reconstructing a new democratic future for the country. Mandela's words at this

juncture were: *"To make peace with one's enemy, one must work with that enemy, and that enemy becomes your partner when seeking a final agreement."*

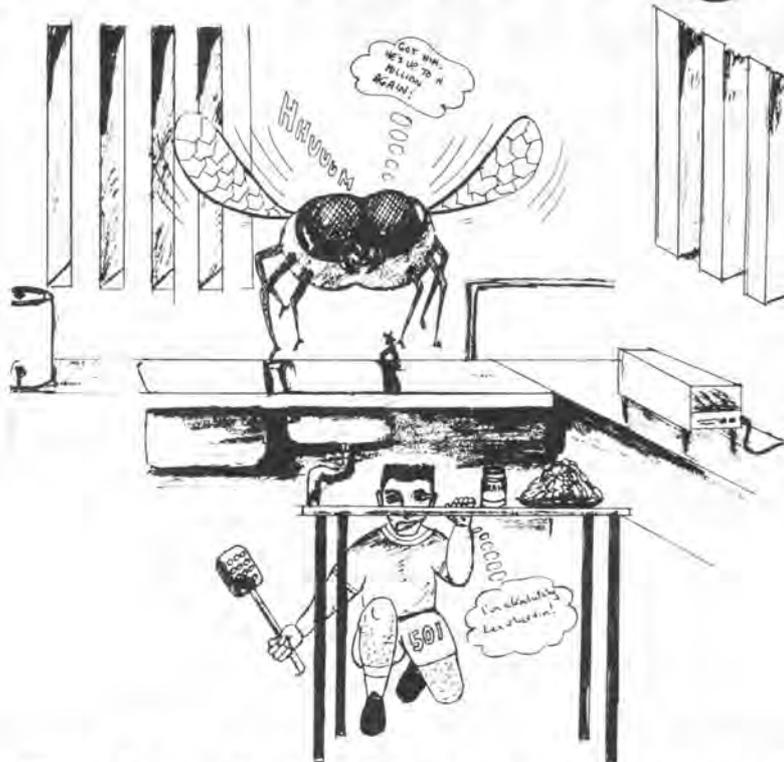
The final stages of negotiations were carried out with considerable good faith from both sides. Issues which had previously caused problems were resolved with a degree of flexibility and compromise, two of the essential requirements for bringing a peace process to a successful conclusion.

Whilst the details of the South African peace process are different from the Irish peace initiative, there are many parallels and general rules which apply to both. The South African example demonstrates the steps required to ensure the survival and success of the faltering Irish peace process. John Major's government needs to follow the courageous path that De Klerk embarked upon and positively engage in the process with vision and imaginative thinking. Major must take the decisive step and initiate all-party negotiations which tackle the fundamental causes of conflict in the Six Counties. The South African peace process was protracted, fragile and dangerous, but it proved that a conflict situation can not be resolved without the major protagonists showing courageous leadership, being prepared to take risks and eventually getting around the table and tackling the core issues of the problem. Unless John Major does likewise in Ireland, the main difference between the South African and Irish peace processes will be that of success and failure.

The central condition highlighted throughout Allister Sparks' book is that of engaging in political dialogue. Only through dialogue did the South African peace process get off the ground and create the opportunity for the ANC and the South African government to break down barriers and stereotyped images of each other. Dialogue was crucial to building trust and confidence between both parties, enabling them to overcome crises and problems that arose throughout the process. And only through dialogue with multi-party negotiations did all sides reach a final agreement and a peaceful democratic resolution of the conflict that had plagued the county for more than 40 years.

The British government has much to learn from the political realism of FW De Klerk. Rather than stall an inevitable process as Britain has done, De Klerk had the strength of his political convictions to stay with the developing process and bring about a resolution of the conflict in South Africa. Perhaps some one should send John Major a copy of Allister Sparks' book. ■

Of flies and men, stars and oranges



■ Illustration by Sean Connolly (Long Kesh)

SOME MEN can be very fussy about their food. Take Ned Flynn (anywhere!) His favourite salad was up for tea one afternoon — the rubbery spam, mouldy lettuce, squashed tomato, sweaty cheese, a hard-boiled egg of dubious vintage and of course the beetroot with that strange wheelie-bin smell. It's not to everyone's taste, but it's perfect for Ned's low-fat diet and Ned is a man who guards his food with his life.

So Mark Skillen passes no remarks when he enters the canteen to find Ned standing over a brimming plate, brandishing a fish slice in one hand, an empty jar of Branston pickets in the other and eyeing furiously around the room.

"Here Mark," says Ned. "Nip down to the cell and get us another jar of Branston."

Mark, an obliging sort of chap, retorts: "Why the flip can't you get it yourself?"

"I don't want to leave this salad. There's a fly buzzing about."

With that, he lunges past

Mark's left ear with the fish slice.

Life in the H-Blocks can be very stressful. There are handicrafts to varnish, ranganna to attend, books to read, dishes to wash, football matches to argue over and of course decisions about which TV channel to watch. So when the wing education man began taking names for a yoga class, he was nearly knocked down in the stressed-out rush. Top of the list was Paddy Fox...

The class began with a few stretching exercises, moved on to strength-building poses and then some strange contortions. A few men had turned purple by this stage, but they were all still breathing. Finally the class wound up with a well-earned ten minutes of meditation. A dozen men stretched out on the floor, placed their hands on their pleasantly rounded stomachs and commenced to breathe deeply. They let their thoughts drift away to palm trees and waterfalls.

Unfortunately their concen-

tration was interrupted by the sound of a kango hammer — presumably the screws were digging a hole in the tarmac outside. Still, you can't have everything and when the class was over everyone got to their feet, relaxed and refreshed.

Everyone, that is, except Paddy Fox. There he lay on the floor, with a crowd gathering around him, as he snored away to his heart's content — like a proverbial kango hammer.

As you may have read elsewhere in this magazine, last summer, for the first time, POWs in Long Kesh had access to the exercise yards all night long — and were much amazed by the delights of the celestial lights in the sky — stars, satellites and the occasional flight of holiday-makers from nearby Aldergrove airport. In addition, the gates between A and B Wing yards and between C and D Wing yards were taken away, allowing men to walk a figure-of-eight lap between two yards.

Also this did not lessen the

petty rivalries between wings. John Brady was strolling around the yards one night with a few of his comrades, some from A Wing, some from B Wing. He was quiet for a while as he gazed skywards, counting under his breath. Finally he spoke in an accusatory tone:

"How come there's more stars in your yard than in ours?"

In 1989 as part of a security clampdown, helicopter wire was placed around the H-Blocks. The wire covers the camp like a web and is situated about 20 feet above the ground. It is designed to stop stray helicopters from landing and taking an odd POW or two on a tour of the Free State, or further afield. In order to avoid the calamity of a low-flying aircraft colliding with the wire, bright orange balls, similar to the ball-cock in a toilet cistern, have been placed along each strand of wire.

Through time, however, many of these balls have been knocked off during football matches in the yard as the budding Niall Quinns directed their shots skyward instead of goalwards. In H7, where football is often played three times daily, the orange balls in one wing have all gone.

It was to this wing that Gabe Magee arrived. This wing is also one of the few wings where greenery can be seen over the tops of the perimeter fence that surrounds each block. And so it was on his first stroll in the yard, Gabe suddenly stopped half-way around the first lap and exclaimed:

"Jesus Christ lads, Orange trees!"

He had of course seen the greenery and some of the orange balls on the wire outside the block. ■



■ By the Red Spider

Festival drama in the Blocks

■ By Paddy O'Dowd
(Long Kesh)

ON SUNDAY, 6 AUGUST, as part of Féile an Phobail (the West Belfast Festival), republican prisoners in Long Kesh staged a performance of their play *The Crime of Castlereagh* — an adaption of Bobby Sands' epic trilogy of poems *The Crime of Castlereagh*, *Diplock Court* and *H-Block Torture Mill*. It charts the experiences of a prisoner as he moves from the physical and psychological torture of Castlereagh to the farce of a Diplock trial to the mixture of brutality and comradeship during the blanket/no-wash protest in the H-Blocks.

This production had been nine months in the making. The previous week the cast had spent many hours rehearsing and preparing. The capacity audience which had packed the canteen was full of expectations. At the end of the night no one was disappointed. Indeed, what took place over the next hour-and-a-half far exceeded anything which might have been expected. This production was excellent and must be the most thought-provoking, emotionally-charged and energetic play ever performed in the H-Blocks.

The first scene wasted no time in setting the standard for the rest of the night. The curtain opened to reveal an iron bed from beneath which emerged two black-clad ghouls in grotesque masks, filling the stage with an evil mischief. There was no room for idle props in this production, with the two figures using a towel as a noose, creating a mock gallows from the bedstead and staging a mock hanging with both all the while laughing menacingly.

The arrival of the prisoner (Frankie Quinn, who brought great energy to a very demanding role) was swift and brutal as he was thrown onto the stage and ably assaulted by the guard or "Watcher" (Tony Doherty, who performed all his roles with zeal). With the Watcher's departure it soon became clear that the ghouls were the torments of

the prisoner — all his fears and doubts came to life. Amid all their taunting, his loneliness and terror came across clearly, evoking a sympathy which was always choking when the narration began:

"I scratched my name, but not for fame.

"Upon the whitened wall."

Micheál Mac Giolla Ghunna's delivery was perfect, the slow drawl carrying the feel of history and, as he was hidden

from the audience's view, the walls themselves seemed to speak the words. And what better narrator of this trilogy than the walls of a H-Block.

"Bobby Sands was here, I wrote with fear.

"In awful shaky scrawl."

The audience had no difficulty in relating to the plight of the tormented figure on stage. The tension was razor sharp, built up with the music and sound effects of Eddie Higgins and Paddy Devenny — using everything from bodhrán and whistle to kitchen utensils. Many a hair stood on not a few necks as the narration continued:

"When Christ I stared as at me glared.

"The death name of Maguire."

"Maguire... Maguire," the ghouls echoed hauntingly. (Brian Maguire died under controversial circumstances in a

Castlereagh cell in May 1978).

After exploring the psychological torment of waiting for the interrogation, the scene shifted to physical pain. A casual costume change on stage (subtle but effective) transformed the ghouls into two interrogators. (Dan Kelly and Martin Og Meehan managed all the 'qualities' of these roles, even instilling a little humour amid the tense proceedings.) Meanwhile Johnny McCann and Marty Morris, as torturers' assistants, graphically demonstrated some of the ways they use:

"To loosen up your tongue..."

"Till a man cries for the womb.

"That gave him birth to this cruel earth.

"And torture of that room."

The use of the sparse props throughout was superbly imaginative, a description on paper could never do it service, within this one scene a pole was used in all manners from a torture rack to a stairway, and none of it seemed out of place. To the strains of *The Blanket Song* the prisoner climbed to the top of that stairway, signalling his defiance in the face of the interrogators and the end of the first scene. Thirty minutes had passed and no one was leaving their seats.

The second scene was set in a Diplock Court. Its opening confronted us with the operative: The doctor who only diagnosed self-inflicted wounds, the branchman and the prosecutor — all sharpening knives like butchers. The prisoner was dragged in by a screw, past this terrifying sight. Isolated, the prisoner was placed in:

"That dock a lonely island there.

"And I a castaway.

"The sea around alive with sharks.

"And hatred's livid spray."

In terms of imagery this was unsurpassable: The re-enactment of torture, the physicalised murder of truth, the slithering snake of witnesses, swooping prosecuting hawk, pig-in-wig judge, the circle of lies — all done effortlessly and still with the ability to induce an emotional response from the audience.



If the farce of Diplock and its central role in the conveyor-belt system was ever "captured", this was it. The dignity of the prisoner was brought to the fore as he emerged from a repressive scrum of characters trying to bury him:

"And see that splendid sun.

"That splendid sun of freedom born.

"A freedom dearly won."

The audience was even more engrossed as the curtains closed a second time.

The opening of the third and final scene brought us to the *H-Block Torture Mill*. This conveyed the horrors of the blanket/no-wash protest, as well as the strength of those who endured the physical and psychological torture while tending others' wounds and pulling a comrade back from the edge of mental breakdown. Full credit to the cast for managing to put so much into one scene without it seeming disjointed or unreal. The sight of the three blanketmen lying in the background upstage while the death and funeral of the screw/torturer took place downstage was a striking image, one for the self-righteous politics of condemnation:

"Yet! Whinging voices cried aloud.

"What did this poor man do?

"He only did what madmen did.

"Upon the silent Jew."

The part of the POW who is losing control in face of all the brutality was a great performance by Johnny McCann. Even the blankets around the men's bodies were used as props to signify the claustrophobic pressure, whilst the selective use of sound effects cued us easily into the mounting degrees of tension. The pain of imprisonment was brought out by a fine piece in which, to the strains of *Only Our Rivers Run Free*, one of the POWs escapes the squalor around him and dreams of a life beyond his concrete tomb:

"To dance and prance to love's romance.

"Is elegant and neat..."

But he is jolted back to terrible reality by his comrade's need to use the toilet, which for him is the corner of the cell:

"To eat and sit where you've just shit.

"Is not so bloody sweet!"

The tension climaxed when the POWs were dragged out one at a time by the screws, using various brutal search procedures. The cell was cleaned and the men were returned individually and badly assaulted, signifying all the horrors of the wing shift and the opportunism of the screws to systematically degrade and beat the prisoners. Yet the comradeship and unity of the blanketmen could not be broken:

"And to our doors we stood in scores.

"To conquer their black fame.

"For loud and high we sang our cry.

"'A Nation Once Again!'"

And while singing this song the three POWs smeared the walls of their cell again. This was no romantic struggle — this was resistance by the only means available and a determination not to be defeated.

For the closing of the scene and the performance, the narrator emerged to walk among the cast reciting with conviction:

"We do not wear the guilty stare.

"Of those who bear a crime.

"Nor do we don a badge of wrong.

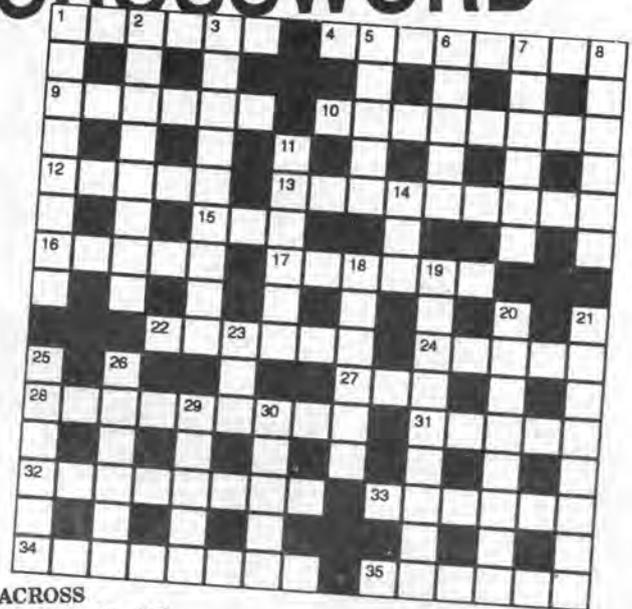
"To tramp the penal line.

"So men endure this pit of sewer.

"For freedom of the mind."

The closing of the curtains ended an unforgettable performance, one greatly appreciated as shown by the sustained applause. This type of theatre had not been tried in the blocks before, and all involved carried it off superbly. Prisoners toughened and made cynical by long years of struggle were close to tears. With the lights turned on again I sat in the brightness of the canteen amid the appreciative buzz of my comrades. The banner above the stage was so appropriate: "Nor Meekly Serve My Time". The words and imagery of Bobby Sands — created under the most appalling circumstances — have come a long way, from the darkest day of the blanket protest, to the jail conditions that such sacrifice has achieved for us today, enabling his poetry to be brought to life by a new generation of republican prisoners. For those of us privileged to see it, this play was a proud reminder that we are part of that same noble struggle. ■

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

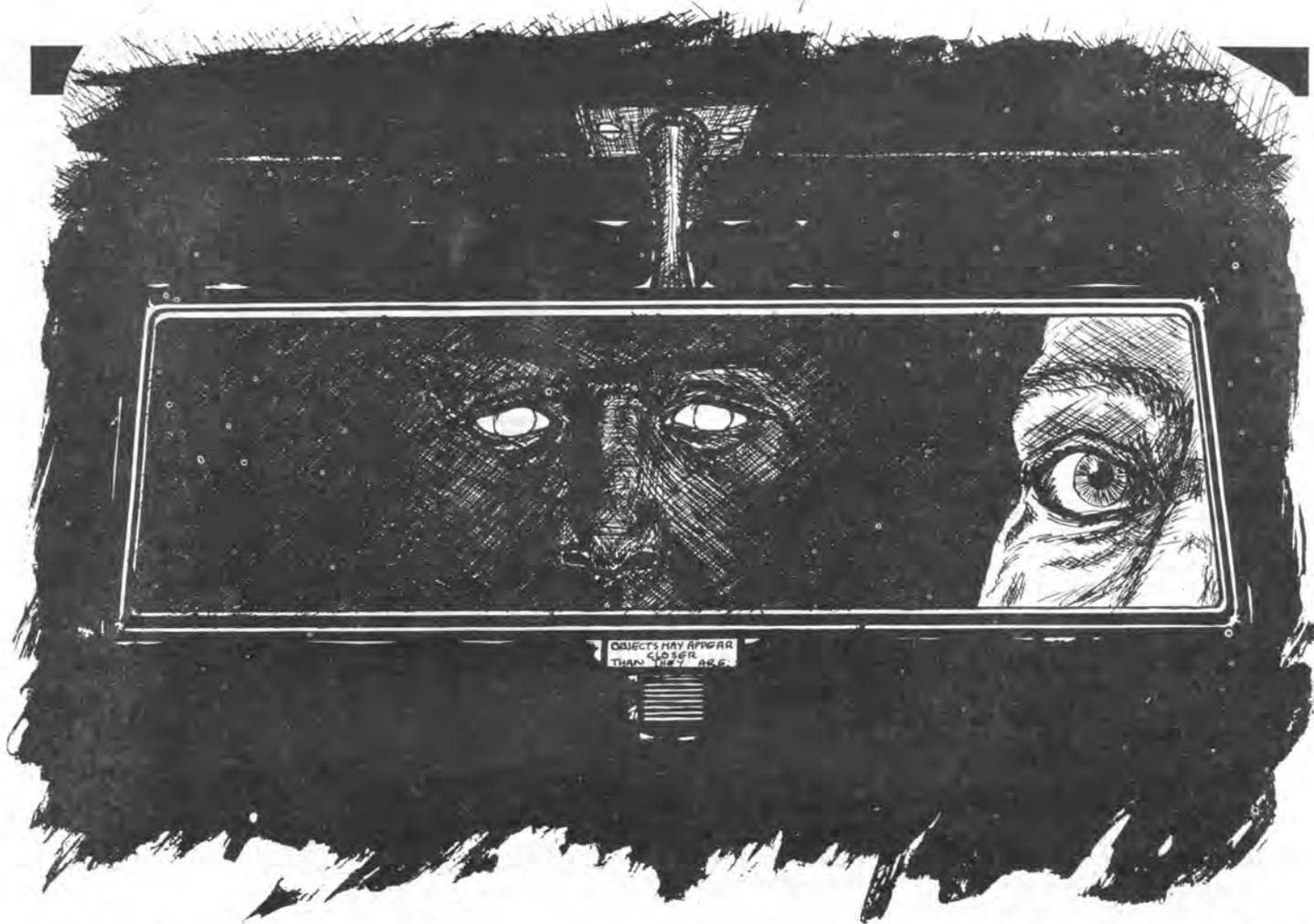
- Seek and find (6)
- Ken Writer, spokesperson for the Ogoni people, executed by the Nigerian government (4-4)
- Guidebook or form of labour (6)
- Average or equable (8)
- Destroys like remains of old building (5)
- Actor who is inclined to exaggerate (9)
- The people's army (1-1-1)
- Type of paper used for Christmas decorations (5)
- Talked to God (6)
- Sample to tickle the buds (1-5)
- Shyer than (5)
- "Catcher in the ..." by JD Salinger (3)
- Attacker (9)
- Free in France (5)
- This requires an answer (8)
- Whooped, hollered (6)
- Looses temper, fragments (8)
- A delicate situation for Workers' Party member (8)

DOWN

- Joker poem in Irish country (8)
- Discuss the possibility (8)
- Brief or fleeting (9)
- Odour (5)
- last letter of Greek alphabet (5)
- Quandry, dilemma (2-1-3)
- Representatives (6)
- Changes to suit (6)
- Labour month (3)
- Starve to avoid dangers (6)
- Surpass oneself during this period of fasting (9)
- Representative of (8)
- Cordial and amicable (8)
- Each and every (3)
- Euskadi, country of Herri Batasuna (6)
- In a state of slumber (6)
- Prefix (abbrev) (5)
- Higher than, and beyond (5)

ANSWERS

ACROSS: 1. Locate; 4. Sero Wiva; 9. Manual; 10. Moderate; 12. Ruins; 13. Dramatic; 15. IRA; 16. Crepe; 17. Prayed; 22. A Taste; 24. Coyot; 27. Rye; 28. Assailant; 31. Libre; 32. Question; 33. Yelled; 34. Explodes; 35. Sticky.
 DOWN: 1. Limerick; 2. Consider; 3. Transient; 5. Aroma; 6. Omega; 7. In A Fix; 8. Agents; 11. Adapts; 14. May; 18. Averts; 19. Excellent; 20. Sym-bolic; 21. Friendly; 23. All; 25. Basque; 26. Asleep; 29. Intro; 30. Above.



■ Illustration by Noel McHugh (Long Kesh)

Objects in the rear-view mirror

■ By Dan Kelly (Long Kesh)

TWILIGHT submitted to dusk as Joe lit a cigar and turned onto the slipway of the Boston Interstate. A light snow flurry brushed the dusty windscreen and soon became a proper snow shower. The radio played *Merry Christmas Everyone*. Joe laughed and sang along, tapping his fingers to the beat on the steering wheel.

"Snow is falling all around,
"Children playing, having fun."

He felt good about himself. At 35 he was the number-one salesperson for "Calco" fascia-board house fronts, and had been so for the past three years, since knocking Kenny Spring off the number one spot. They were bitter rivals. Kenny, in Joe's eyes, was a sucker for a sad story who took no for an answer too easily. Only the

best deserved the "extras" the number-one position brought: choice of new car, free holiday, and 10% higher cut of commission, not to mention the prestige. Joe had become very used to the attention and the almost celebrity status associated with the position. He wasn't about to give that up lightly. The three newly signed contracts in his briefcase would ensure that.

The sweeping wipers formed little ridges of snow on each side of the screen until blown away by the car's motion. The road was quiet, usually he preferred some traffic. Lonely travellers of the night, unified by some unseen bond that lasted the short space of time they were visible to each other. Eventually a set of headlights appeared in the magnified mirror. He noticed the sign at the bottom of the mirror — familiarity had made him forget it.

"Objects in the rear-view mirror may appear closer than they are."

As if on cue the radio played Meatloaf singing *Objects in the Rear-View Mirror*.

"Hold on a second," Joe said to his stubbled reflection. "Is this guy psychic or what?" He was making connections between songs and events.

"Get a grip of yourself, Joe," he smiled.

He was still smiling when the car behind started to overtake. As it drew level, the passenger slowly turned his head to look at Joe. They both passed an overhead light and for a split second it shone on the man's face. Joe slammed on the brakes forcing the car to skid on the slushy surface. It careered onto the hard shoulder. He stared hard in disbelief at the red tail lights disappearing into the swirling snow. The blood in his veins ran cold, he could almost hear the palpitations of his heart, his breathing quickened, while knuckled hands felt weak. He lifted them off the steering wheel and covered his ashen face.

"It couldn't have been," he said. "I know it couldn't have been... But it was... It was George."

Joe's parents divorced when he was 15. While they were sorting out the messy details he had stayed with his Uncle George and

Aunt Mary on their small-holdings farm in San Francisco. Although they were strict on both principles and morals, they were also fair, giving him the respect his own parents had not. He remained with them for the rest of a happy adolescence. The relationship turned sour however, when some years later George accused his nephew of shady dealings concerning lease holdings with the neighbouring farm. Joe always regretted not making his peace with his aunt and uncle before they died in an horrific car crash three years ago.

"Get a grip of yourself," he repeated, slapping his face as if to waken himself. "I need a break, that's it, I need a break. I've been on the road most of the year. As soon as I get these contracts registered, I'll take the family on a short New Year vacation. Bella has been nagging me about the hours anyway." The radio still blared its music, but now it began to bug him. He punched a button; any button. Some Reverend preached a sermon over the air waves, not really Joe's scene, but somehow it was soothing to the ear.

I'll rest here for a few minutes, he thought. Still feeling a little weak, he lit a half-Corona and inhaled heavily, laid his head on the headrest and blew a pall of grey smoke at the car's roof. It rolled along the padding like the plume of a miniature explosion. The voice on the radio faded to a smooth drone. His eyes relaxed, blinked, then closed.

"Have you earned money ignobly today?" the radio blared. His eyes jarred open.

"Yes you! I'm taking to you, if you're thinking about it, then I'm talking to you." The Reverend was laying it on thick, Mississippi style. Joe blinked his eye preparing to drive off.

"Give it back, redeem yourself and give it back."

"Yeah yeah," he said nonchalantly, then switched back to the music channel.

"The truth hurts, doesn't it Joe?"

His head jerked towards the radio, but it was playing music.

His eyes crept towards the mirror. The beam from a car's lights travelling in the opposite direction pierced the darkness in front. His eyes continued in the mirror's direction, almost afraid to look at it. In the flash of light caused by the passing car, he saw, reflected in the mirror his uncle's unmistakable likeness, his salt and pepper beard the most distinguishing feature. Joe's whole being jumped with shock. He drew a sharp breath that pained his chest, he could hear his own pulse pounding in his ears. The cold shiver returned and tingled the length of his body from head, through his spine, to his toes. He could feel a breath of cold air on his neck. Cautiously he edged his head to look over his shoulder, fearing what he was about to see, while nervous eyes watched what was now just an outline in the mirror. Then with a quick jerk of head and body he turned to face the back seat.

Nothing.

"There's nothing there," he sighed with great relief.

Joe looked at his open shaking hands. His heart was still pounding. He rubbed his face as though he were washing. "Jeez I'm cracking up," he said. Once again he checked the mirror — nothing. He reached for the glove compartment, took out a bottle and swallowed two large slugs. His face was still cringed from the taste of raw whisky when the voice returned.

"What did I always tell you about drinking and driving?" He looked at the mirror once more. Still nothing. His face distorted as he put the bottle to his head again.

Ten miles were clocked before the voice returned in whispering tones.

"Give it back Joe."

He was determined not to look, but disobeying eyes drew to the mirror like pin to magnet.

"Go away," he screamed. "Go away and leave me alone, you're not there, go away."

"How can I go away if I'm not there?" the voice asked.

"You're only my imagination, go away. I'm not going to think about you."

"Call me what you will Joe, I'm here." The voice hung in the stuffy, smoke-filled air of the car.

"Go, leave me in peace, get out of my mind."

"Give it back Joe, and I'll leave you in peace."

"Give what back?"

"The contract you got tonight, and the other two in the case with it." The flash of lights from an on-coming car blinded him for an instant. As his sight was returning he could have sworn he saw George finishing the sentence.

"Those people can't afford new house fronts."

But when he checked again there was nothing. With shake of head he asked,

"Why am I talking to myself?"

He laughed aloud, a nervous laugh, and said,

"Joe man, I think it's time to lay off the booze as well."

"They can't afford it," the voice whispered. Still there was no shadow, just a voice in his head.

"Of course they can afford it, they wouldn't have signed if they couldn't." His ice-blue eyes danced between mirror and road.

"You've had the Herrins' contract in your case from Monday. Would you like to see what happened to the Herrins, Joe?"

"No."

"Look at the mirror, Joe," the hypnotic voice demanded.

"No!"

He tried not to look, but suddenly the mirror came to life, like a miniature television screen. Both the Herrins stood by the Christmas tree, embracing each other, both crying. The two-year-old twins played with the unfinished Christmas decorations.

"They weren't like that when I left them," Joe protested.

"They weren't like that when I left them."

"No they weren't," the voice sighed. "But Mr Herrin hadn't lost his job then."

"I can't help that, I'm only trying to do my job. Anyway, I'm sure he'll find another job soon enough."

"They can't afford it Joe."

His eyes moved nervously from mirror to road. Why was he torturing himself like this, he thought.

"Remember Mrs Martin, Joe? You sweet talked Mrs Martin into signing, with promises of easy repayments, and the best after-sales services. You knew she was vulnerable, going through a bad patch with her husband. Then you, a sweet-talking, good-looking young man chat her up and she falls under your spell, but look at her now. LOOK AT HER," the voice demanded.

Again his eyes drew unwillingly towards the picture. The Martins were in the middle of a heated argument, presents scattered across the living-room floor. Then Mrs Martin was walking out of the house, carrying a suitcase in one hand, a child clung to the other, and two others followed in her wake. All in tears.

"I'm not a Goddamn marriage-guidance counsellor," Joe snapped. "Their marriage was probably on the rocks anyway."

"It was tough Joe, but they would have made it."

"I want you to look at the Baker household six months from now."

"NO! NO. I don't want to look at these stupid pictures."

The mirror showed a picture of Mr Baker, the man who had signed the contract that very night, sitting on his settee. Then the picture panned out to show him fitting a false hand to the stump of his right wrist.

"Mr Baker was finding it hard to make the repayments, so he started moonlighting at a meat-processing factory at nights, but the two jobs were taking their toll on him. He fell asleep at one of the machines."

"Look, you can't blame me for the world's wrongs. I'm sorry for Mr Baker, but I'm sure the insurance will look after him."

"Wrong Joe. You see he was moonlighting, and the insurance company, like your own, has fine print too."

"You were the one who told me it's a competitive world, and to get out there and take my slice."

The voice became harsh and loud.

"Not at other people's misery and expense. When I told you these things, you had a heart. Do you think you would have done as well without my help?"

"I got to this position on my own steam," he barked, thumping the steering wheel.

"Did you? Did you now? And how long ago would that have been then?"

In a whispered stammer, he replied. "Three ye... Three years ago."

"Since my accident... All I ask you to do is to search your heart and give these people a chance. You have — in your briefcase — the opportunity to change their lives."

His head slowly dropped from mirror to road. He drove in silence for some time. I must be going crazy, he thought to himself, hearing voices, seeing images.

Joe drove the next five miles recalling cases where families, through their ambition to improve their homes with a "Calco" house front, had actually forfeited their mortgages when they couldn't keep up the repayments. The pictures of the three families appeared in his head time after time after time. His conscience gave him no rest. Eventually he relented.

"Okay," he said solemnly. "Okay, Monday morning I'll post the contracts back to them." Suddenly, as if hitting a series of small ramps, the car shuddered and he felt drained and cold. He turned the heating to full, then noticed the sign for the turn off for his home town.

Bella greeted him at the door. After the family dinner, when the kids were tucked into bed, he explained his experience on the motorway.

"Joe," she said sternly. "I didn't want to bring the subject up again, especially at this time of the year, but you know wh..."

"Don't start this all over again Bella, I'm sick listening to it."

"You may be sick listening to it Joe, but you're doing nothing about it. Your health has run down to such a state that you're hallucinating, or maybe it was the drink. Your boss wouldn't be so proud of you if he knew you were doing that, would he?"

Joe sat with head bowed.

"No I didn't think so. You would be out quicker than Jack Flash."

"Look," Joe snapped, finding his voice again. "I do all this for you and the kids and..."

"Don't give me that, Joe," she said with raised voice and scornful look. "You haven't seen your kids most of the year, you couldn't even make it to one of their birthdays. How many times am I going to have to ask you, for the sake of our marriage, to give that job up."

They argued for most of the weekend, both getting nowhere.

Monday morning arrived. All 200 sales representatives of "Calco" fascia-board house fronts were present in the dining hall, as was required by the management. Eleven am was the deadline for the final contracts to be included in this year's tally, deciding who would be top dog. A cushion-stuffed Santa Claus and two mini-skirted helpers passed out sandwiches and drinks. Most of the reps had put their contracts in between 9am and 10am. There was only a handful left. Protocol dictated that the five top men were last to go, in order of running from five to one. By the time Kenny Spring walked to the tall desk there was quite a buzz of anticipation. It died down as he removed the contents of his briefcase. He held slightly aloft four contracts. The captivated audience cheered and whistled.

Joe watched the crowd applaud and yell messages of congratulations and support to Spring. His tally came up on the board, two more than Joe's. As Spring walked by him with a wry grin, they both glared at each other.

"Joe?" the girl at the tally desk said, with an outstretched hand. He looked at her hand, then slowly turned to look at the new quietened crowd. Someone popped a balloon, bringing a ripple of laughter.

"Joe?" she repeated. He felt his briefcase and started at the crowd. Little beads of sweat glistened on his brow. One by one they started to egg him on. "Joe, Joe, Joe, Joe." The whole crowd seemed to be chanting in unison: "Joe, Joe, Joe, Joe." They were like supporters at a football match and Joe felt like the star of the

■ Illustration by Noel McHugh (Long Kesh)



team. He smiled at them, felt the leather-bound case once more, then in a quick jerking movement put it on the girl's desk.

"Three," he said.

"Did he say three?" someone in the crowd asked.

"Looks like it's Joe's," another said.

A murmur of excitement swept the room.

He watched the girl open the case. A charred piece of paper whirled into the air. Joe watched astounded as it floated past his face. He looked to the case, his eyes widening with horror. He plunged both hands into the ashes and rummaged through it. The girl stared at him in amazement, the hushed crowd looked at each other, then to Joe. His tally went up on the board, the crowd went wild cheering, popping balloons and throwing streamers. Spring was lifted shoulder high and carried out of the canteen, Joe, stunned, was looking into empty space when the girl at the tally desk eventually got his attention.

"Joe, Joe," she said, tugging at his sleeve. "The boss has just phoned. He wants to see you in his office right away."

"This is Peter Burnstein," his boss said. "He's a very good friend of mine... He's with the Boston PD."

Joe shook hands with the tall slim figure, who then turned and sat on the two-seater by the wall.

"Take a seat," the boss said. An order more than a request. His boss Karl was a burly six-foot-two. He sat on the corner of his desk, the corner closest to Joe's chair, his towering frame intimidating at such close proximity. He looked down at Joe, who dropped timid eyes.

"You've been with us how long now, Joseph?" He always called people by their full Christian name.

"Six years," he replied.

"And how many of them at the top?"

"Three," he answered proudly.

"I expected better from a man in your position."

Joe felt his face flush. He could do without a dressing down in front of the boss's friend.

"It wasn't my fault Karl, if I ..."

"Wasn't your fault?" he said, getting off the edge of the desk.

"Wasn't your fault?" His tone was sharp. "Well if it wasn't your fault, whose damn fault was it?"

He thought about trying to explain the charred remains of the contracts, but decided it would be better to remain silent.



"I'll be back up there next year, Karl, I'll be on top of the pile again, it's just that," he lowered his voice to a whisper. "It's just that I've been having a few problems at home, but I guarantee I'll be back on top next year."

"Not with this firm you won't," Karl said.

Joe's lower jaw dropped an inch. "Won't be ... Won't be back?" he couldn't believe what he was hearing. "You mean to say... Let me get this right," he said, wiping the back of his hand across a sweating brow. "You mean to say you're going to let me go because I didn't make it back to the top. What kind of..."

"Back to the top? What are you talking about man? Surely you know why you're in here and it has nothing to do with any tally."

Joe was puzzled for a moment, then turned to look at the slim figure sitting quietly behind him. It was only then he realised his boss's friend wasn't here for a Christmas reunion.

"Where were you on Friday night Joe, say between the hours of eight and midnight?" the policeman inquired. Joe's heart pumped a little faster now, realising he wasn't in the office for a dressing down.

"Friday night?" His thoughts went into overdrive. "Friday night? Ah ...I, ah... Yes!" he said, with a certain degree of relief. "I was driving on the interstate between those hours."

"In your own car?"

"Yes, well, in the company car," he said with a twitching grin. He could feel a little trickle of sweat plough its way down his back.

Karl fed a video into the machine, the picture came up with a still photo of his car, the number plate quite clear. "This is your car Joe?" he asked pointing to the time, date and location record in the corner.

"Yes... Yes it is," he said, still puzzled.

"And by your own admission, you in it."

No answer was given, and none expected. His boss hit the play button. Joe watched in horror as his car swerved from lane to lane cutting across other traffic. The speedometer recorded speeds at times in excess of 100mph.

"You see Joe, Peter here has agreed that seeing as no one was hurt in this madness," he said, pointing to the screen with a pen, "that the action I am about to take will suffice instead of lengthy legal proceedings." The words just whirled around in Joe's head as he glared at his actions on the video.

"Even though you are one of our best reps and we are in the

mouth of Christmas, I can't ignore actions such as these. There is no doubt in my mind that you must have been drinking on Friday night. You know we have a very strict policy about that. It must be quite clear to you that our company can't afford multi-car pile-ups. I'll expect your resignation on my desk by the end of business today. The rest of the staff will know nothing of this, they'll simply think you're a sore loser. By the way," he added, as a stunned Joe walked out the door. "You can also leave the keys of the car."

Snow had fallen all weekend and lay thick on the branches of the tree-lined avenue. Joe arrived home in a hired cab. There was another sitting outside the house with its engine running. He wondered who it might be for. As he walked along the pathway to get his answer. Bella was coming out carrying a suitcase, with three children in tow.

"What's goi..." He knew what he wanted to say, but the words wouldn't come easy, they choked their way out.

"Bella... What's happening? What's going on?"

"Go on kids, into the cab." She ushered them past their father, leaving fresh footprints in the virgin snow.

"For God's sake Bella," he said, taking her by the wrist.

"Tell me what's going on."

She looked with cold eyes, then walked back into the house with him. "I think it's pretty clear what's going on Joe, we're leaving."

"What do you mean you're leaving?"

There was panic in his voice, mixed with nervous laughter, the type that makes one's own voice unrecognisable.

"I don't... I don't understand."

"That's the problem Joe. That has always been the problem. How often have I told you that you were a stranger to your own kids? They didn't even want to kiss you goodbye for God's sake."

Fury didn't mix well with confusion. His eyelids half-closed. He lifted a hand and slapped Bella hard on the face, something he had never done the whole time of their marriage. Her face turned with the slap. He lifted his hand to slap her again.

"Why now? Why now?" he yelled.

She didn't try to cover her face but simply stared at her husband, his hand remained above his head. The sparkle of a tear appeared in her eyes caused not by pain, but what had become of him. He crashed his hand against the door frame. They both stood a moment in awkward silence, searching each other's eyes.

"Bella forgive me please," he said. "Let's work this out, we can work it out. I've left my job. I'll have more time for you and the kids. Please Bella, I'll never raise a hand in anger again, you know that. I love you and the kids. Please don't go."

She stared at him still, but with eyes of pity, not love.

"It's too late, Joe. You received love freely but you wouldn't give it back. It's too late," she repeated in a whisper as a tear fell from her cheek. He didn't want to, but something made him loosen his grip on her wrist. She lifted the suitcase and walked out the door without a backward glance. He knew he had lost them.

Joe fell into his chair in the study, buried his head in his hands and cried.

"It's all going wrong. I've lost a job and a family all in one day. What have I done to deserve this?" He sobbed for some time. Self-pity eventually turned to anger. Taking the bottle of whisky from the drawer he tried to open it with his right hand, but it had throbbed painfully since he crashed it against the door frame. He took the bottle in his left and smashed the neck on the desk. He stretched his right hand trying to ease the pain, but the whisky eased it better. He fell into a drunken slumber.

The pain in his hand woke him some hours later. It took him a moment to focus on the empty bottle on the table. Then he lifted his hand to check the throbbing pain. Rubbing his eyes to look again, still not believing what he thought he was seeing, he turned on the table lamp. His eyes widened with shock. Before him was a hand twice its normal size and almost black. He screamed an unmerciful sound that echoed around the empty house. NO...! GEORGE PLEASE... NO. ■

Interning the spirit of freedom

■ By Michael McKee
(Long Kesh)

"Internment was a calculated humiliation which unionist governments had, since the inception of the state, regularly visited upon our community. In the '20s, '30s, '40s and '50s the RUC had come storming into our areas at night, dragged our people from their beds and taken them off to camps and prison ships, where they were often held for years; no charge, no trial, nothing." (Eamonn McCann, War and an Irish Town).

THE BACKGROUND: A FAILED POLITICAL ENTITY

INTERNMENT: *"A measure demanded by unionist right wingers and regarded by Faulkner as the panacea for the IRA's accelerating campaign"* (Ed Moloney and Andy Pollak, *Paisley*) had always been an option. Initially the British opposed it, not from any moral reasons, but simply because they recognised the dangers of it failing. Furthermore, although the British may not have seen it, the risk was there that the unionists would use it as they had in the past, as a measure that would: *"Punish their foes, ie, the Catholic community. A massive sweep of them would once more put the Fenians in their proper place"* (J Bowyer Bell, *The IRA — The Secret Army*). However, despite their misgivings the British allowed themselves to be half-persuaded and from April onwards the RUC Special Branch and the British army began making their preparations.

In June 1971, Faulkner had announced a new repressive measure: "Troops could not shoot 'with effect' at anyone acting suspiciously" (Michael Farrell, *The Orange State*). The first shooting occurred in Derry on 8 July: The British army shot Séamus Cusack and he subsequently died. The next day Desmond Beattie was shot dead. It was a critical turning point, as Gerry Adams in *The Politics of Irish Freedom* makes clear: *"Before that it had primarily been a battle between beleaguered nationalists and the Stormont administration for equal rights; then it became a battle between beleaguered*

nationalists and the British establishment."

The SDLP withdrew from Stormont, leaving only one NILP member as opposition to the unionist regime. Thus the last vestige of democracy was stripped from the Stormont parliament and the constitutional politicians appeared to be fading out of focus. Now *"political battles were to be fought on the street and the weapons were the Thompson and the Sten rather than the private notice question or the point of order"* (Eamonn McCann).

Ninth of August saw the introduction of internment. As a measure against republicans it

was a failure as most of the younger activists were either unknown to the RUC or else had been forewarned by the various 'dry-run' operations that had taken place in the weeks prior to the ninth. But the initial swoops pulled in: *"Ancient and long-retired republicans, youthful revolutionaries from the People's Democracy, trade unionists, respectable middle-class civil rights activists"* (Eamonn Mallie and Patrick Bishop, *The Provisional IRA*). But there was method in this madness. While the main thrust of the operation was to be directed at republicans, the Catholic community as a whole was to be intimidated and furthermore the arrest of civil rights activists was designed to remove the potential leadership from any campaign against internment.

On balance, internment was a disaster for both unionists and the British. As the breadth of the swoops became clear and the reports began filtering out from the prisons and the prison ships of the systematic torture and brutality inflicted on those arrested, the middle ground in the Six Counties was swept away. Internment succeeded in *"alienating many of the still neutral Catholic middle classes, in no way damaging the structure of the Officials or the Provos and to an increasingly fascinated world revealing the sectarian nature of justice — British justice supposedly — in Northern Ireland"* (J Bowyer Bell). The reaction among the nationalist community was complete alienation from the state. Catholic barristers refused crown briefs, councillors resigned from councils, prominent people left official government posts. Internment had created a clear case of *"them*

and us". What had been envisaged as a measure that would blunt resistance had *"led Northern Ireland into open rebellion"* (J Bowyer Bell).

There was simply no room for the type of constitutional political activity needed by the SDLP. It was now all-out war, with the bomb and the bullet being all that mattered. In this atmosphere the republicans through the IRA, though lacking in political sophistication, were able to supply what was being demanded. Even the Official IRA, more given to constitutionalism, was forced into military confrontation — to do otherwise would have been the end of their credibility in most areas. Internment changed the nature of the political situation in the North. It was clear that given their experiences of 50 years of Stormont and unionism's inability to tackle its own extreme elements since 1969, for the moment the ordinary nationalist people looked to the IRA to defend them and represent their opposition to the northern state.

The introduction of internment had a dramatic effect on all parties to the conflict. Michael Farrell, an internee himself and a leader of People's Democracy, in his book *The Orange State*, summed up nationalist thinking at the time: *"A subtle political change had taken place as well. Up to this, mass support in the northern Catholic population had been for civil rights and for reform within the northern state, with Irish unity following gradually. Now most Catholics felt that the northern state was unreformable, and that they would only get civil rights in a united Ireland. The objective was no longer to reform Northern Ireland, but to destroy it."*



Internment brought the Republican Movement its greatest boost for many years. For the first time since the 1920s the IRA was engaged in a campaign that was not only widespread and effective, but also one that commanded a large degree of popular support. Internment had, at a stroke, eliminated for the time being any middle ground that existed in the Six Counties. Most working-class nationalists never had much faith in the system to begin with and so they were now prepared to allow the IRA to wage a war in their name and to support that war at least tactically if not actively. It did appear that only the IRA was capable of giving the state an answer that it could understand — all-out war. For the Republican Movement, internment had removed all doubts about the possibility of waging a campaign. Indeed, for the first time it did appear that all the conditions were right for not only waging a campaign, but even a possible successful conclusion. An editorial in *Republican News* summed up the attitude.

"Faulkner must go and with

him the whole Stormont regime. Now is the time for a vast united effort to flatten the tottering edifice. It is afflicted on all sides from within and without... It is therefore imperative that in this, our finest hour, we stand united to face what may be the most repressive period in our history. Faulkner's olive branch has already been rejected by our people. He had nothing left to offer us but the iron fist. It is our duty to make every hour count in the preparation for it."

With the middle ground now lost, or at least abandoned, the SDLP found itself unable to lead its constituents. The party had to follow the mood of the hour and found itself drifting into extra-parliamentary activities. For example many members of the SDLP, particularly John Hume in Derry, were to the fore in the Rent-and-Rate strike. As a protest against internment all monies were withheld from the appropriate housing bodies. To offset their earlier withdrawal from Stormont over the Cusack and Beattie shootings and coupled with nationalist outrage over internment they constituted their own

assembly. In October 1971 in an assembly session, the SDLP cautioned:

"Today we do not recognise the authority of the Stormont parliament and we do not care twopence if this is treason or not. Ever since then (1921) we have had government without consensus because the free consensus of all the people had not been given to the system of government. And when you have a situation like that, you have a sort of permanent instability. And when you have permanent instability, you have recurring acts of violence. And surely that has been the history of the last 50 years of this system of government."

Now that the big card "internment" had been played and having the opposite effect to what unionists had promised, the writing was on the wall for the continuance of unionist domination. The splits within unionism between the pseudo-liberal and the extreme elements became publicly apparent. In the following months more militant loyalist parties grew and strengthened.

As regards the British gov-

ernment, they had effectively been in charge ever since troops had been introduced onto the streets, although they had permitted limited control to remain at Stormont. The consequences of internment helped to ensure that Britain would seek ways to take total and direct control.

The Dublin government, however, was totally opposed to the use of internment and saw itself as the protectors of nationalists' rights in the Six Counties. It also was keen to ensure that the SDLP would remain the authentic voice of nationalism. The Dublin government, to fulfil its unofficial role of "protector", took the case of the "hooded men" to Strasbourg.

THE FACTS: TERROR AND TEDIOUS

Internment without trial was introduced on Monday, 9 August 1971. It was code-named Operation Demetrius. Throughout the Six Counties there were 342 arrests of which 226 were finally interned. Not a single loyalist was arrested. All arrests were made by either the RUC or British army personnel. It was later discovered that the British army personnel had no actual powers of arrest in this type of situation. All those arrested solely by this method were eventually awarded damages for wrongful arrest.

All those arrested were taken to a number of holding centres which included Palace Barracks, Hollywood. It was here that 12 men were selected for special interrogation techniques; these became known as the Five Techniques:

1. They were hooded;
2. They were forced to stand throughout their interrogation;
3. They were denied sleep;
4. Food and water was provided in small and irregular amounts;
5. They were subjected to a high-pitched noise known as the "white-noise treatment".

The Dublin government, acting on these men's behalf, took the British government to the European Court of Human Rights and Britain was found guilty of "inhuman and degrading treatment". The internees were also awarded substantial

damages in the courts. John McGuffin wrote a compelling insight into their cases, entitled *The Guinea Pigs*.

From the experiences of the other internees emerged a pattern of systematic torture involving beatings, running the gauntlet of batons, and the ruse of being thrown out of flying helicopters when in fact they were only inches off the ground. The first picture to emerge about this torture was from the chaplain of Armagh Prison, Fr Raymond Murray, where some of those brutalised were held for a period on remand after having had "confessions" forced from them in Palace Barracks.

The internees were moved to a number of prisons on or about 11 August. 124 men were sent to Crumlin Road Jail in Belfast. This was the main prison in the North and was not designed to take this type of 'prisoner'. 102 men were placed on the British navy ship, the Maidstone, in Belfast Lough. It was from here that seven internees swam to freedom in January 1972. The conditions on the Maidstone were poor and led to a number of hunger-strike protests for humane conditions.

From the beginning the Stormont regime was under pressure not solely about the decision to use internment, but the places they used to house the internees. Therefore in October 1971 a purpose-built internment camp was constructed in a disused airfield called Long Kesh. Initially it had three compounds, which the internees soon named cages because of the mass of wire surrounding them. As internment became more widespread, so too did the size and capacity of Long Kesh. At its height Long Kesh had ten cages housing upwards of 1,500 internees. There was also a number of women interned in Armagh Prison. The first was Liz McKee, who was interned on 1 January 1973. The last batch of women was freed from Armagh in April 1975.

In an attempt by the British government to legalise internment without trial, a quasi-judicial process was introduced in September 1972 and the term "internee" was substituted with "detainees". A number of retired judges sat on what was called The Detention Commission (under the Detention of Terror-



From the beginning the Stormont regime was under pressure not solely about the decision to use internment, but the places they used to house the internees

ists Order) where much of the evidence could be given in camera. In general it was boycotted by the prisoners. The *Andersonstown News* described the role of the Commission as:

"To convince the Catholic population that internment has ended. Second ... [the British] are desperately trying to salvage British prestige in the world, especially in Europe."

Internment by its very nature threw people from all over the Six Counties together and created an atmosphere and a life of its own. Kevin Kelley remarks in his book:

"We were all thrown together in the Kesh — PD members, students, old line republicans, offi-

cials, anarchists, people who had read Che Guevara, people who had never heard of him. Education became a big priority for a lot of us ... It gave us time to think, to reflect, to argue, to develop some kind of political understanding."

Imprisonment, rather than deterring or blunting resistance, became a staging post in the internee's political maturity.

An indication of the life in Long Kesh can be found in the book *An Interlude With Seagulls*, by Bobby Devlin. Here are some small extracts:

On conditions he writes: *"A typical cage consisted of four Nissen huts. Two-and-a-half of these were used for living accom-*

modation. The partitioned half of one hut was used as a wood-work room. The last hut was used as an assembly hall. There was a little tin hut which was called a drying place and then there was the washroom. All these buildings were in a confined space and 60% of the ground was unsurfaced.

"In Cage Three part of our activities involved woodwork and leather work, which had developed to a very high standard of art and handicraft. The articles ranged from colour-designed hankies, harps, celtic crosses, music boxes and spinning wheels, plus other ornamental designs.

"One of the most heart-warming gestures from the nationalist people was the way they rallied their protest against our internment through various marches, meetings, etc.; the highlight of which was the Rent-and-Rate Strike."

Family relations: *"Although I experienced many light-hearted moments in Long Kesh, there were other times when anguish, remorse or even horror took their place. The people who were incarcerated there will never forget walking around looking out through wire, just like animals in a zoo. Their mental condition bore great strain due to the worry for their loved ones on the outside. Many ex-internees will never recover from a nervous disturbance which was caused by just being there."*

Unlike sentenced prisoners who are aware of their release date well in advance, it was not so for internees. Devlin's own account of his release is typical of the procedure:

"In September I was at Francie Brolly's Gaelic-language class whenever a screw came to the hut door asking for me. I was brought to the front gate and ushered into the PO's hut. There was an assistant governor seated there and he asked, 'Are you Robert Devlin?' I replied in the affirmative, then he said the magic words, 'The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has deemed it necessary to release you.'"

Internment lasted until 5 December 1975 and in that time there were 2,158 papers signed by the unionist government and later by the British Secretary of State. ■

RUC: Repressive Unionist Chauvinists

■ By Paddy Devenny and Martin Og Meehan (Long Kesh)

DURING A RECENT address to a high-powered inter-church conference in Dublin, Down and Connor Auxiliary Bishop Michael Dallat made the following comments:

"In Catholic West Belfast, one cannot miss the professionally printed and strategically planted notices demanding that the RUC be disbanded... No indication is given as to who or what will replace the RUC. No society can exist without a police service. This is a very sensitive area. I do not know how many really want the RUC disbanded. Many Catholics, moderates who have had no connection and no sympathy with the violence, would not go for disbandment, but they would want radical and genuine reform of the police in Northern Ireland, so that we may have a police service that is acceptable to all sections of the community."

Since the IRA cessation of 31 August 1994, there has been a lot of debate regarding the acceptability and efficacy of the RUC as a police force. Much of the discussion to date has concentrated on whether the RUC, despite its history, is capable of being reformed into an acceptable community police service within a new democratic state. A variation on this debate is whether the RUC is capable of being reformed sufficiently in the interim period prior to the establishment of a new democratic Ireland.

In February 1995, during a Sinn Féin discussion on policing, Jim Gibney, a member of the Ard Comhairle, expressed a compelling need for Sinn Féin to con-

sider a comprehensive and viable alternative to the RUC, especially for nationalist areas across the Six Counties. The easiest part of this debate he said:

"Is to raise the slogan, correct though it is, 'Disband the RUC'. The hard job is to come up with an alternative which is viable."

In making his assertions, Gibney underlines the importance of action as well as rhetoric.

It is important that we, as republicans, involve ourselves in all debate regarding the future of Ireland. In seeking a viable alternative to the RUC however, it is equally important, particularly in light of comments similar to those made by Bishop Dallat, that we articulate clearly our analysis that the RUC are an inherently irreformable body and that the complete disbandment of this discredited force is required as a step towards eventual lasting peace in Ireland.

The RUC was formed as a 'Special Constabulary' comprising 30,000 men in 1921. They were funded by a British treasury who felt "it was the easiest way to police the state", and they were in effect the northern equivalent of the Black and Tans. They were both 100% Protestant and 100% loyalist. In the main they were members of the UVF or one of the other loyalist institutions. The make-up of this anti-Catholic state militia was summed up by General Ricardo, a former UVF leader from County Tyrone who

stated:

"Every man... who has lost a job or who is at a loose end has endeavoured to get into the 'Specials' and many have succeeded... Their NCOs are not good, the pay is excessive and there is much trouble from drink and consequent indiscipline... They form a distinctly partisan force and it is impossible to expect the impartiality that is necessary in an efficient police force."

In describing them thus, General Ricardo, essentially one of their own, underlines the innate contradictions within this purposely-created sectarian body.

From the outset the RUC fulfilled a military as opposed to a policing role. In every decade since their formation they have been responsible, both directly and indirectly, for organising sectarian attacks on nationalist areas, many of which resulted in the slaughter of Catholic men, women and children. The infamous Arnon Street and the McMahon murders, when whole Catholic families were murdered in their homes and on their streets, are an example of the atrocities which were to become synonymous with RUC behaviour throughout the 1920s.

Over the next 50 years the RUC was to serve their political masters well. Savage attacks, such as those carried out on workers during the 'Outdoor Relief Strikes' of the 1930s, exemplified their behaviour. During this time some Protestant workers were to experience at first hand the brutality that their Catholic counterparts had been experiencing since

the foundation of the state. Protestants who were prepared to defend workers' rights were portrayed as papist supporters as the Orange card was once again produced to good effect. These attacks by the RUC on Protestant workers were deliberately designed to maintain a sectarian divide, underlining the paranoia of Stormont ministers about the prospect of working-class unity.

During the 1940s and 1950s, as attacks on nationalist communities continued, there was a steady increase in RUC membership which remained exclusively Protestant. A crack paramilitary unit, containing up to 500 men was established and trained by the British army. At their disposal were weapons more common to a conventional army including heavy Bren machine guns, mortars, grenades, anti-tank weaponry and armoured vehicles — weapons to be used against beleaguered Catholics in the Six Counties.

In 1968, during the Civil Rights campaign, the RUC and B Specials played their familiar part in undermining legitimate protests when they batoned, beat and intimidated protestors off the streets. In 1969, they actively engaged in arson attacks on many nationalist areas, particularly in Belfast, resulting in the destruction of homes and streets. These attacks on peaceful civil-rights demonstrators in the late 1960s proved to be a watershed as nationalists, who for decades had borne the brunt of state brutality, began to organise in defence of their communities. Any notion that the RUC could operate impartially when dealing with civil-rights demands died with Samuel Devenny, from Derry, who was beaten to death by RUC men as he sat in his own home in April 1969.

At the height of the sectarian murder campaign of the 1970s, RUC members were directly involved in arming loyalist paramilitary killers. One of the most notable cases of this period concerns the self-confessed loyalist assassin Albert 'Ginger' Baker. Baker's contact, an RUC sergeant



■ Illustration by Micheál Ó Dochartaigh (Long Kesh)

who supplied weapons to kill Catholics, was stationed at Mountpottinger Barracks in Belfast. This activity by the RUC, like the plastic-bullet murders of Nora McCabe and Paul Whitters and the interrogation and torture of young nationalists like the Beechmount Five and Ballymurphy Seven, show clearly why the RUC will never be acceptable to the nationalist community — a community whose wounds cannot be healed while the RUC remains in existence.

For years, those who dared to challenge the corrupt sectarian nature of the RUC were dismissed as extremists by those whose interests lay in the maintenance of the status quo, including some 'Castle Catholics' who conceded only that there were "rotten apples in every barrel". The Stalker and Stevens inquiries of the 1980s put paid to this notion and showed that the RUC barrel itself was putrid. What these inquiries proved, if proof were needed, was that the RUC is a law unto itself and that contact between the RUC and loyalist paramilitary organisations exists at every level. Attempts by Stalker to investigate these contacts were thwarted, as the RUC closed ranks to protect its membership. This wall of silence, which had the full support of their chief constable, underlined the absolute power and sectarian nature of the force.

Bishop Dallat is correct when

he says that no society can exist without a police service, in particular if that society is to be democratic. The crux of the issue in relation to disbandment is that the RUC was formed to protect and maintain a society which was not democratic and one which, by its very nature, is incapable of being democratic. Bishop Dallat does not appear to accept this reality and his remarks, which are at best naive, at worst disingenuous, reflect this. The RUC, like the state itself, is irreformable. This is not simply a cliché but a statement of fact. If we are to create a true democracy then we must also create a police service that is reflective of this, a democratic police service which will work for and protect the interests of everyone, a police service devoid of sectarianism and one which will not discriminate against any section of the community.

It is also a statement of fact, however, to say that the RUC will not disappear overnight and although the case for its disbandment is crystal clear, experience has shown that it will not simply pack up. Instead, it will hang on by its fingertips in an attempt to create a false impression of acceptability. Commercial advertisements, such as those sponsored by the NIO to promote the RUC, are part of this. So too are attempts to enter nationalist communities through school programmes and youth work — a

cynicism which becomes outrageous given the number of nationalist children maimed, killed and orphaned by the RUC.

The question remains however, with what do we replace it? The creation of a new independent police service is not going to be an easy task, but it is one which we must accomplish if we are to see a lasting peace established. Those who talk of reform, of changing badges and the colour of uniforms, must not do so out of a sense of frustration because the task at hand appears too great. There may well have to be certain reforms in the short-term for reasons of practicality. For example, community representatives could be delegated to look after policing requirements in their particular area. The mechanics of such a scheme would need to be discussed thoroughly with an input from all who live in the community so that people's opinions are heard and respected. Within this there may have to be some link with the present RUC but this should at all times be minimal.

Long-term radical reform of the RUC is impossible. For example, suggestions of a two-tier approach to policing our communities, whereby the RUC liaises on a daily basis with appointed community wardens is impracticable. The RUC is the main cause of many of the problems within our communities — how will community wardens deal with such problems? In a mixed area, with a

significant Catholic minority, dominated by a unionist community police, the relationship between this force and the Catholic minority would be akin to that of the local black people and the racist police forces which operate in the southern states and other parts of America. A new police service, with a democratic input from elected political representatives and a principled code of conduct for professional standards as well as a national watchdog, is needed. But this is only possible in the context of a democratic state.

There are other forces in society such as the Fire Service and the Society For the Protection Of Cruelty To Animals who, on the whole, are seen to act in an impartial manner and are accepted by the community in general. There is a consensus among the community that the issues with which these organisations are involved reflect the interests of everyone. There is no such consensus with regard to policing in the Six Counties. The role of the RUC is to maintain the state at all costs. The *raison d'être* of the RUC is one of sectarianism and conservatism whose duty it is to protect unionism, in particular the interests of middle/upper-class unionism. There is a strong need for a new independent police service whose interests are community-based, democratically controlled and which are representative of the whole population of the island.

The issue of policing must be resolved as part of a negotiated settlement and republicans must set out the broad framework of principles for the new police service: Democratic accountability, community interests, impartiality and non-sectarianism. Sinn Féin must give leadership and direction to the debate. But the details of the new police service cannot be decided by any one group or political party. Instead these must be worked out in negotiation with a broad cross-section of the people, ensuring that all interests and fears are addressed, and that for the first time we have a real police service based on consensus.

There is an onus on us all to create the conditions whereby the establishment of an independent, community-based police service, which is representative of the needs of the whole community can be realised. ■

Pól O Muirí, Siosafas Coiscéim (lch. 70) Léirmheas le Conchúr Mac Giolla Mhuire

Cnuasach gearrscéalta atá sa leabhar seo. Deirtear gurb é an rud is fearr faoi ghearrscéal maith ná i ndiaidh duit é a léamh, smaoiníonn tú air, déanann tú machnamh agus b'fhéidir go bhfoghlaimíonn tú rud in teacht uaidh. Sin mar a mhótaigh mé i ndiaidh dom an leabhar seo a léamh.

Chuir sé iontas orm chomh leathan is a bhí téamaí agus ábhair an aon scéil déag. Más cruinn m'eolas is é seo an chéad leabhar próis le Pól O Muirí agus is léir go bhfuil bua na scríbhneoireachta aige. Ní hé amháin go bhfuil a chuid scéalta suimiúil, ach tá siad beo, tarraingteach, spreagthach.

Cuir i gcás an scéal as a dtugann teideal an leabhair féin — "Siosafas". Scéal é seo atá bunaithe ar sheanmhiotas Gréigeach faoi rí scéalaíochta na gCornith d'arbh ainm Siosafas nó "Sisyphus". Dao-radh ag na déithe é chun carraig mhór a chasadh suas cnoc go deo deo. Is é seo leagan Gaeilge an Mhuirigh agus léiríonn sé éadairbheachas an tsaoil frí sclábhaíocht Siosafais, ach san am céanna miníonn sé dúinn gurb é saol ina bhfuil sásamh ann. Seo frith-chosúlacht an tsaoil nach bhfuil réiteach air, mar is é Siosafas an té a bhaineann tairbhe agus ciall as an obair agus cé sinne breithiúnas a thabhairt?

Is léir go bhfuil léann fealsúnachta ag an údar, léann nach bhfuil agamsa, agus ina scríbhneoireacht bíonn ceistean-

na nó smaointe á bplé aige go hoscailte agus go fo-thairseachúil. I "Cuimhíonn Plató", tá Plató ag cuimhíú ar a chara buan Sócráiteas agus ag iarraidh freagra ar cheist a bháis, mar is scéal faoi chailleadh carad é seo. Arís tá ceist níos doimhne taobh thiar de — cad chuige nár éalaigh Sócráiteas nuair a bhí an fhaill aige agus mar gheall air sin cé acu is fire, gur chuir sé lámh lena bhás féin nó gur chuir sé ordú forghníomhaithe na cúirte i bhfeidhm air féin?

Ní seanscéalta athchuímh-nithe iad uilig, ar a dtugann an t-údar a bhrí agus a chiall féin — cé gurb é seo neart an tsaothair. Tá rogha scéalta eile ann, mar "I gCuimhne" agus "Mac Dhubbh na bhFál" ina dtaispeántar gnáthshaol an lae inniu. Ar ndóigh níl, nó tá súil

agam nach bhfuil, a leithéid de dhuine ann agus "Abraham", príomhcharachtar an dara scéil anseo; ach thiocfadh leat a chreidhbheáil go bhfuil a leithéid ann — mar is sórt meascáin é de dhaoine a tchíff agus a chluiní i measc pobail Gealaigh Bhéal Feirste agus ar an dóigh sin is carachtar inchreidthe é. Bhain mé an-sult as an scéal deisbhéalach géarchúiseach seo.

Is taiscéaladh de shaghas in teacht an leabhar seo ach má tá aon téama treise ag rith frid an chnuasach is é sin cuartú ar fhiúntas an tsaoil roimh ár mbás cinnte críochnaitheach. Is scéalta spreagthacha iad don chuid is mó ach gan iad a bheith móiréiseach nó gruama. Mar sin tá mé cinnte go mbainfeadh sult agus taitneamh as an leabhar fiúntach seo ag léitheoir ar bith. ■

Síocháin Shíle

It was the first Winter morning.

Cold clear air.

She announced Autumn,

and deferred

politely.

Summer has been long

in dusty stuffiness

and machinations.

A Claddagh Heart crested watch

for a birthday present.

Prescriptions

for cop-on tablets

followed shortly.

You're in no position

to play reality:

wombs and homes,

social mores and things.

she soothed.

Dreams gurgled

in the grip of brinkmen

born to lead.

What's the highest bid for earth?

Cut the dear in two,

he drolled

laboriously

under half-moon

glasses.

Wednesday night again.

The pan of motorway

and wind,

varnish gleam

on knots and grains.

Ireland shining green

in royal blue.

■ **By Tarlac O Conghalaigh (Long Kesh)**

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