

The

CAPTIVE VOICE

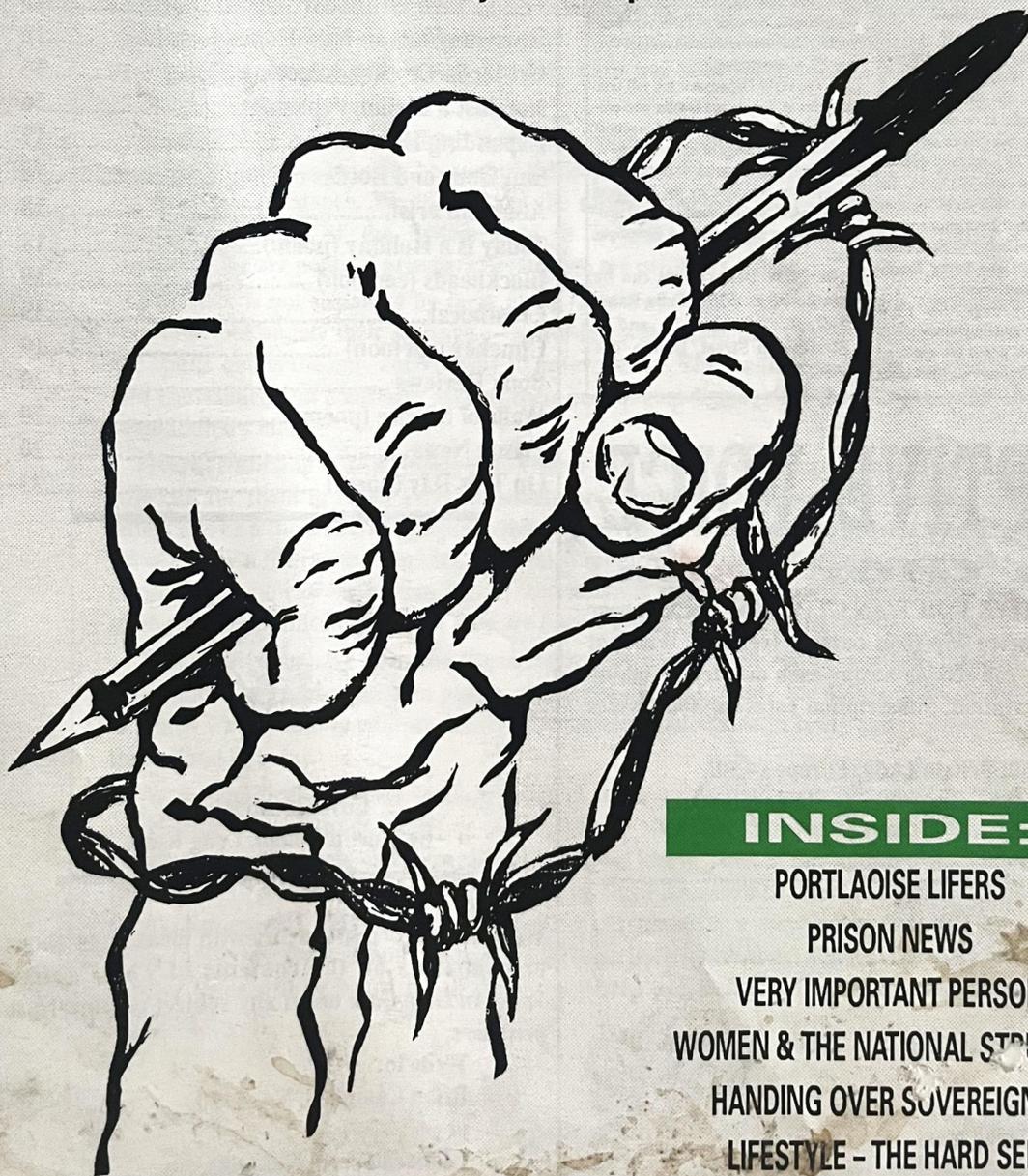
An Glór Gafa

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INSIDE:

PORTLAOISE LIFERS

PRISON NEWS

VERY IMPORTANT PERSON

WOMEN & THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE

HANDING OVER SOVEREIGNTY

LIFESTYLE - THE HARD SELL

The POW Department

The issue of prisons and prisoners has always been to the fore throughout the past 20 years and during that time many different groups and individuals have come to the aid of the prisoners and their families when they most needed help.

During internment, the blanket protests, strip-searching, repatriation or the extradition controversies, various campaigning groups highlighted the plight of the prisoners and acted as a voice for those who were prevented from speaking for themselves. Numerous other groups — Republican Welfare, Republican Transport, Green Cross and An Cumann Cabhrach — provided welfare services.

As time went on and the number of prison-related issues increased, it became apparent that some centralised body was necessary to co-ordinate and oversee the work being done on behalf of the prisoners. As a result of this, the POW Department came into being. The department was established to speak on behalf of the Republican prisoners, to cater for their needs and to co-ordinate the many campaigns being fought around prison-related issues.

In its early days, the POW Department was concerned mainly with the welfare side of prison life and acted as a conduit for the many inquiries being

made about the prisoners. That role has developed since then to encompass a much broader dimension. This expanded role came about following discussions within the prison and between the POWs and Sinn Féin. There developed an awareness that all the gaol campaigns, such as Lifers, Extradition, transfers would be more effective if the POW Department represented the interests of prisoners.

The welfare role of the Department was given great scope to develop a closer working relationship with the families of POWs and with the various groups who have been of great service over the years.

In order to have closer contact with prisoners' families, the Department has developed a network of POW representatives. It is also in constant contact with the POWs themselves.

The POW Department has full-time workers in Belfast and Dublin who provide advice, information and practical help on a wide range of issues relating to the POWs and the prisons — visits, bus services as provided by the Transport Department, parcels, welfare, legal matters, paroles and the various campaigns etc.

The POW Department can be contacted at: 51/55 Falls Road, Belfast, Tel: 249975 and 5 Blessington Street, Dublin Tel: 308664.

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The CAPTIVE VOICE

An Glór Gafa

THE CAPTIVE VOICE/AN GLOR GAFA will appear quarterly price 75p (85p outside Ireland). Why not ensure that you receive a copy each quarter by taking out a subscription. Subscription rates for four issues are:

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Cover illustration
by Martin Gough, Long Kesh.

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The CAPTIVE VOICE

An Glór Gafa

THE CAPTIVE VOICE/AN GLÓR GAFA is a new magazine written by Republican prisoners currently being held in gaols in Ireland, Britain, Europe and the US. Generations of Irish Republicans have experienced the confinement of prison cells and have always recognised that resistance continues in gaol. Through individual and collective struggle and sacrifice, the idea of gaol as a breaking yard has been thrown back in the faces of those who imprison us.

Together with our families, friends and comrades, who have supported us constantly in so many ways and who suffer because of our imprisonment, we have thwarted all attempts to break our resistance. We speak from the direct experience of having confronted the coercive hardware of the British state in Ireland or wherever its military might is stationed. We are political prisoners because we are prisoners of war.

The state is not sustained by force alone. Those who claim to rule over us constantly reinforce and update their message — a message which says that they are right and that the status quo is the only correct way to order society. The media, the education system, and churchmen and politicians all play their part in guarding against the dissemination of revolutionary ideas.

Overt censorship is also employed to ensure that people are not contaminated by those who call for them to reject a system which forces half of our young people to emigrate, which allows a third of Irish people to live in poverty, which is unable to provide meaningful work for a fifth of the workers, and which requires thousands of armed troops to suppress those who call for human dignity and national rights. It is surely a measure of the strength of Republican ideas that they are barred from the broadcasting media.

Thus, the gaols have been the arena for a different struggle — the struggle through education. Time and a common purpose have enabled us to study the nature of the world in which we live and to educate ourselves to become better able to bring about change in the Ireland of today.

We are political prisoners in every sense of the term. In gaol we continue as political activists determined to do all in our power to bring about the day when British troops no longer walk our streets and imperialism's writ no longer runs in our country. *An Glór Gafa* will reflect this by presenting our views on those issues which affect the daily lives of people throughout Ireland and by suggesting our ideas for a way forward. It will also bring to life our feelings and experiences through poetry and short stories. We hope our *Captive Voice* will be heard by all those who share our vision of freedom in a socialist Republic.



The Plight of Lifers in Portlaoise Prison

Republican POWs were transferred to Portlaoise Prison in November 1973. Since that time, no Republican lifer has been released from the prison. There are now ten men serving life and a further four serving 40-year sentences. Sentences served to date range from three men with five years served at one end of the scale to two others, Junior McPhillips and George McDermott, now in their 16th year of imprisonment. In these 16 years, nothing has changed for our comrades serving life and their families. They still have no indication of when, if ever, they can expect to be released.

The Dublin government's Minister for Justice and his department maintain that the cases of life-sentence prisoners are regularly reviewed. According to the same sources, the average life sentence is eight years and eight months. However, the evidence clearly shows that neither of the above applies to Republican lifers.

In the first place, some Republican lifers have already served almost double the average life sentence. Secondly, repeated attempts by the prisoners and people

acting on their behalf have failed to discover what review procedures exist and by what criteria they operate. Furthermore, no prisoner serving life has ever been informed that a review of his case has taken place. Nor has any prisoner been informed of any decision which has been made at these 'regular interviews'. These prisoners have been ignored completely by successive Dublin governments, who, according to Fr Raymond Murray of Armagh in the *Irish Post*, March 4 1989, have "adopted a

'never, never' policy of releases" towards them.

The policy of the Dublin government in relation to life-sentence prisoners is both inconsistent and contradictory. In fact, it has two policies: a 'home' policy and an 'away' policy. In an effort to gain political capital, it claims to be pressing the British government to address the issue of sentence reviews for SOSP prisoners (those detained at the British Secretary of State's pleasure) and those serving life in the Six Counties. In the words of the Fianna Fáil Tanaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Brian Lenihan, he "look[s] forward to further positive developments in 1989 — particularly in relation to the current special review of the sentences of the remaining special-category prisoners in Northern Ireland". Meanwhile, back home in the 26 Counties, he conveniently ignores the special-category prisoners which his government are holding in Portlaoise.

DOUBLE STANDARDS

However, the hypocrisy and double standards do not end there. The case of Liam Townson highlights this. Liam was arrested in the 26 Counties in early 1977 and later that year was sentenced to life imprisonment. Almost simultaneously, two other men were arrested in the occupied Six Counties in relation to the same operation (the arrest and execution of SAS undercover operative Captain Robert Nairac). One received a life sentence while the other was sentenced to SOSP. Both have long since been released by the British — one in August 1986 and

the second in December 1987. Liam Townson, however, continues to be detained by the Dublin government with no indication of a release date.

The attitude of the 'authorities' in the 26 Counties is more than simply intransigent — it is vindictive and vengeful in the extreme. This is borne out by the case of Michael Kinsella, who has been suffering from psychological problems for many years. According to the doctors, these are directly attributable to the indeterminate nature of his life sentence. After many short-term transfers, Michael was eventually transferred permanently to Dundrum Mental Hospital in 1984. His doctors have consistently recommended and argued for his transfer to an outside hospital — they maintain that this is essential if he is to have any chance of recovery. The Minister for Justice, however, displaying callous indifference towards this seriously ill man, refuses to sanction Michael's transfer to an outside hospital near his family, thereby ensuring that Michael's health will deteriorate even further.

LIFERS CAMPAIGN

The intransigent stance of the authorities has not gone unchallenged. Over the past number of years, efforts to effect change in the Dublin government's policy towards lifers have been ongoing. A campaign, with relatives to the forefront, has been organised with the aim of securing release dates for those serving life. Highlighting the contradiction in the Dublin government's policy and stressing the humanitarian

Life-Sentence Prisoners in Portlaoise Prison

(as of August 1989)

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| James McPhillips, Monaghan | 15 years 5 months |
| George McDermott, Monaghan | 15 years 5 months |
| Sean McGettigan, Monaghan | 14 years |
| Liam Townson, Newry | 12 years 2 months |
| Anthony Bryson, Donegal | 10 years 6 months |
| Tom McMahan, Monaghan | 10 years |
| Aaron O'Connell, Cork | 9 years 10 months |
| Seamus Soraghan, Monaghan | 8 years 8 months |
| Jim Gavin, Dublin | 8 years 4 months |
| Eamon Nolan, Waterford | 7 years 5 months |
| Peter Rogers, Wexford | 8 years 11 months (40-year sentence) |
| Pat McPhillips, Dundalk | 5 years (40-year sentence) |
| Brian McShane, Dundalk | 5 years (40-year sentence) |
| Tommy Eccles, Dundalk | 5 years (40-year sentence) |

Michael Kinsella has been on permanent transfer to Dundrum Hospital since 1984.

aspect of the plight of both prisoners and their families, the relatives have sought to enlist the widest possible support on this issue. In an attempt to build people's awareness, literature has been circulated to all prominent people and various groups and bodies throughout the country, outlining the background to the situation in Portlaoise and the refusal of the 'authorities' to address the issue after almost 16 years.

The campaign has been steadily gaining momentum and, as a result, more and more people and bodies are beginning to express their concern and support for the granting of release dates to

the lifers. Recently, Cardinal O Fiaich, in a letter to Clones Urban Council, supported a call for the immediate release of Michael Kinsella, James McPhillips, George McDermott and Sean McGettigan, saying that:

"No useful purpose can be served by keeping them in prison any longer... Anyone who spends 12 to 15 years of his life in prison should be released."

Cardinal O Fiaich has conveyed this view to the Minister for Justice and has been supported by Cardinal John O'Connor in New York, who has done likewise.

Unfortunately, the concern expressed by so many people

in all walks of life has failed to move the 'authorities' to date. Their response has been one of arrogant intransigence towards people working outside the gaol on behalf of the prisoners, while inside the gaol they simply ignore attempts by the prisoners to raise the issue and have it addressed.

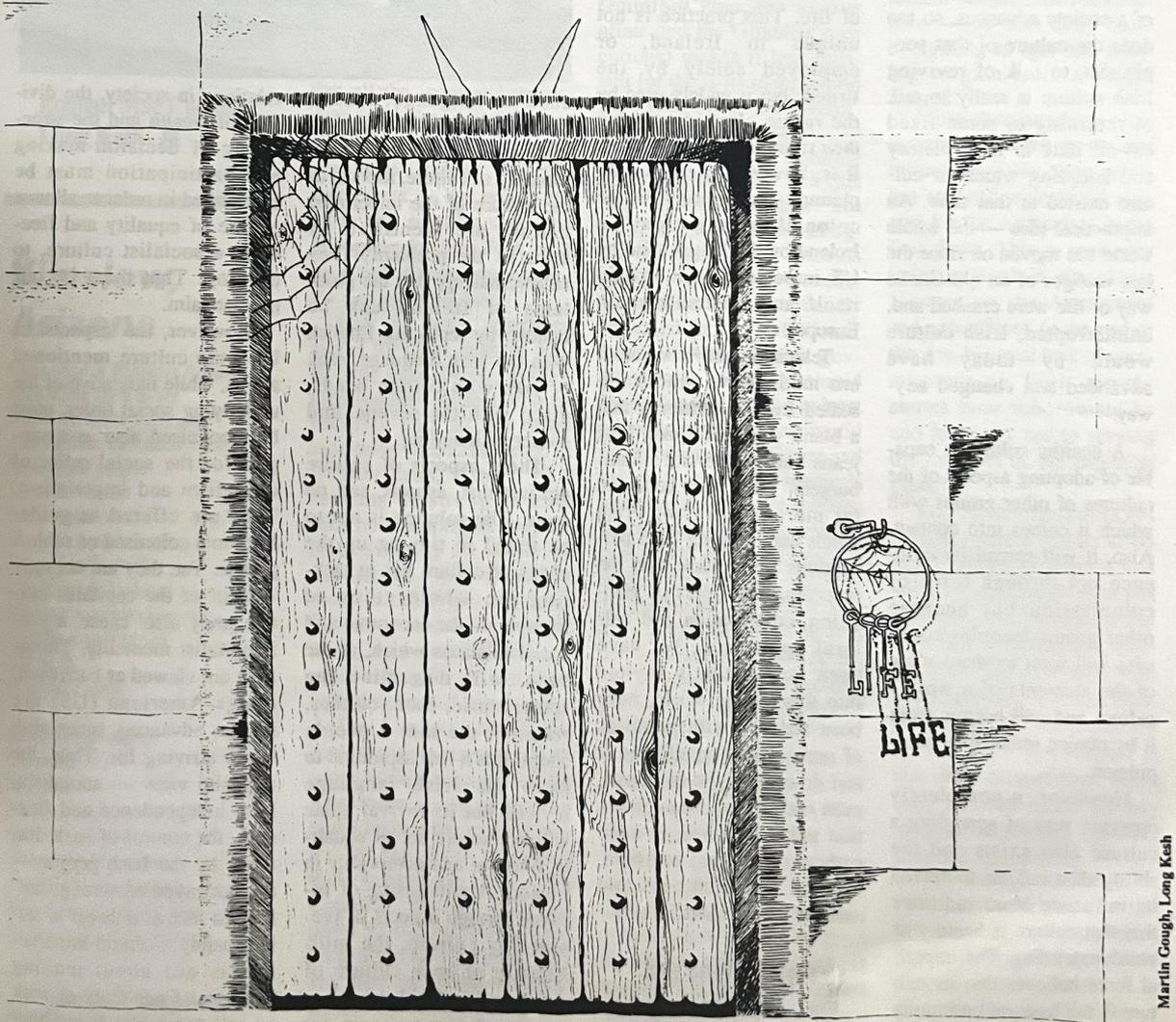
Much remains to be done if this dreadful situation is to be resolved. For our part, we will continue relentlessly to pursue the issue on behalf of our comrades and their families. To quote Cardinal O Fiaich: *"The more people who show a personal interest in the case, the better the chance of success."*

For concerned and interested people outside, the task must be to support the efforts of the prisoners and their relatives and to enlist the support of as many other people as possible. We are confident that such a joint effort will eventually result in success.

**PRO,
Portlaoise ■**

Next Issue: *The Campaign for Lifers in the Six Counties*

■Further details and information can be obtained from: Ann O'Sullivan, POW Department, 5 Blessington Street, Dublin. Telephone: 308783.



Martin Gough, Long Kesh

Lifestyle — The Hard Sell

Cultural imperialism is the 20th-century equivalent of invasion and gunboats. From Delhi to Dublin, Caracas to Carrickmore, a way of life has been created by the needs of Western capitalism. It is small comfort to know that Ireland is not the only country to be blessed with such cultural imports as yuppies, Big Macs, Kylie Minogue and Spanish-style bungalows. As in many other countries, the native culture in Ireland has been deliberately destroyed, but it has also been deliberately replaced with a culture which makes the population more receptive to imperialism and apathetic to whatever is in progress around them.

Culture is an all-embracing term to describe a people's way of life. As a population changes, as the material and economic base of a society advances, so too does the culture of that people. So, to talk of reviving Irish culture is really to talk of returning to some fixed cut-off date in Irish history and adopting whatever culture existed at that time. An impractical idea — the whole world has moved on since the last vestiges of an old Gaelic way of life were crushed and, uninterrupted, Irish culture would by today have advanced and changed anyway.

A healthy culture is capable of adopting aspects of the cultures of other groups with which it comes into contact. Also, it will spread its influence not through force or colonisation but because other groups/peoples/countries will want to share some of the elements of a worthy culture and will borrow from it by choice rather than compulsion.

However, a completely opposite way of spreading a culture also exists and the ability of a culture to spread its influence is no indicator that that culture is healthy or worth extending. The imperial force believes that its culture is the basis of continuity of its way of life and, by extension, its success. Any

opposing culture is viewed as a potential threat, as an enemy lurking on the fringe which might at some stage overturn the 'acceptable' way of life. This practice is not unique to Ireland, or employed solely by the British, but is widely used by the ruling class, promoting their ruling ideas, in all states. It is, however, meticulously planned and imposed in the colonial arrangement in Ireland by the British (and by US imperialism on Britain itself and, ultimately, on Europe).

Television and other modern media have practically sealed Ireland culturally into a bland world of Coke, blue jeans and McDonald's hamburgers. They have achieved far more in invading Irish minds and warping Irish perceptions and culture than the preceding 800 years of plantation, colonisation and cultural oppression. We have been ingratiatingly invited into this plastic world, have been seduced with promises of our cultural equality in it and do not, for the most part, even realise that our exploitation today is worse, is more embracing and yet invisible, than all the pitch caps and exile of British colonial rule.

'THE PROBLEM'

For some, the argument for an Irish culture often centres on symbols and aspects



such as language, music, dance and sport. Because of this narrowing of the understanding of culture, aspects of the culture of the imperialist nations are identified by some as 'the problem'. They believe naively that the problems of Ireland can be undone by replacing English with the Irish language, rock or jazz with ceilidh bands, disco with the sevens, and soccer with hurling.

These aspects of culture are just that, aspects, and no more. The solution is not to be found in tidying up the edges of culture but in tackling the whole ethos of lifestyle — the economic and social relations which, at the base, will determine the sport, music, food, clothes, religion, etc that a people adopt. It is a fine aspiration to have the Irish language revived but its revival alone will not secure social equality, freedom and democracy in Ireland. A minimising of so-called foreign aspects of present-day culture, the mid-Atlantic or soap culture of greed and individualism, is not enough alone to cure our country's ills. The basis of

relations in society, the division of wealth and the structuring of decision-making and participation must be established in order to allow a culture of equality and freedom, a socialist culture, to develop. That must be our ultimate aim.

However, the 'aspects' of US soap culture mentioned above, while indicative of the underlying social order, must be recognised also as a support for the social order of capitalism and imperialism. They are offered as guidelines to a colonised or subject people. Yet, they are not only 'effects' of the capitalist system, they also 'cause' a pro-imperialist mentality. Things Irish are viewed as backward, things American (US) are seen as advanced, successful, worth striving for. Thus, the opposite view — socialism, Irish independence and freedom, the control of Irish destinies by the Irish people — are portrayed as wrong, useless, in fact as a threat to stable society. Cultural imperialism is not about making Dallas or Coca-Cola or rock 'n' roll palatable. It is about capitalism making profits and

Dallas, Coke and rock 'n' roll are means used by the imperialist cultural tailors towards this end.

Cultural imperialism, therefore, is today being identified by Irish Republicans as a major part of the barrier that we must break down to achieve our socialist Republic. Cultural imperialism is not British rule and it is not innocent entertainment. It is the careful construction and implantation of an ideology in the mind. It encourages our transition from a people colonised by the British to a people totally enmeshed in the imperialist control of our lives in terms of economic choice, political system and ability to act. Our option is for socialism — we must create a culture in which socialism can exist.

**Eoghan Mac Cormaic,
Long Kesh ■**

Winslow, Arizona

*I was once in Winslow, Arizona.
Such a fine sight to see
Where the earth seeps dust
And the heat surrounds a lethargy
So deep the people
Turn their heads
In slow motion.
The bars breathe guilt
Round lonely drinks;
Life is on the highway
En route to somewhere else
And the town's streets
Are teeth
In cynical jaws.*

*Yet American culture.
Is a mask
So bright
That in Dundalk
On Friday night
'Round the chip vans
You'd find lots of people
Who'd say they'd just love
To live in Winslow, Arizona.*

**Brian Campbell,
Long Kesh ■**

HILLSBOROUGH Up-Date on Repression

Shortly after the Hillsborough Agreement was signed in 1985, the Republican Movement identified the Agreement's real aims: to isolate and defeat the Republican Movement; to legitimise repression and imperialism; to reinforce partition; and to ensure the survival and growth of the SDLP. It is now clear that in terms of these aims that the Agreement has brought little success for the London and Dublin governments.

This is especially the case with regard to the aim of isolating and defeating the Republican Movement. Here the Agreement has failed completely. The results of the local elections in the Six Counties show support for Sinn Féin remaining solid at over 11 per cent. The fact that all the increased repression, intimidation and censorship — which is such an essential aspect of the Agreement — has not resulted in any significant decline in support for Sinn Féin must be a real disappointment for the two governments.

But the most worrying aspect for them must be that, despite extradition, greater cross-border collaboration on security and all the other repressive measures aimed at Republicans, the IRA remains as strong as ever with no lessening of its ability to strike at the forces of occupation. It is precisely because the Agreement has failed so miserably in this whole area that the RUC are again calling for the introduction of 'selective' internment.

The London and Dublin governments can point to some limited success for the Agreement — at an international level it has made it easier for the Brits to justify their occupation of the Six Counties. Because they can point to the backing of the Free State government, they are able to escape international criticism for being engaged in a colonial situa-

tion. The silence, the inactivity and the total lack of concern shown by the Free State government with regard to a whole series of cases and issues (most notably the Birmingham Six, the Guildford Four, the Stalker affair and the Gibraltar executions) makes it less difficult for the Brits to legitimise their repressive and murderous role in this country.

However, this is severely undermined by the fact that the Agreement has not brought about any meaningful concessions or reforms for the nationalist people. Garret FitzGerald recently indicated in an *Irish Times* article that the British government is just plain stupid for not having granted at least a couple of more meaningful concessions. What Garret and his ilk conveniently ignore is that any substantive reforms would be in total contradiction to the direct interests of British imperialism. What he also implies — and it is a false implication — is that the nationalist people of the Six Counties can be bought off with a couple of minor reforms.

In the Free State, it can be seen that the Agreement has reinforced partition. Fine Gael and the PDs can now confidently talk about removing Articles 2 and 3 from the Constitution. To a great extent, all of this stems from the fact that the Agreement is much more widely accepted in the Free State. All of the main parties, the churches

and the media have combined very effectively to sell the Agreement as an 'honest and genuine' attempt to bring about peace and justice.

The weak position of the Republican Movement in the Free State, the very extensive censorship and ongoing historical revisionism have contributed significantly to making that task very easy for them. Also, the Irish capitalist class simply do not want unification. In fact, partition has become the means of protecting their class interests — by denying the formation of a radical people-based alternative — so that they have everything to fear and nothing to gain from a united Ireland.

More than anything else, therefore, it is the power and influence of this class which has ensured widespread support for the Agreement in the Free State. This in particular helps to explain Haughey's U-turns on the Agreement and extradition. At the end of the day, his total lack of commitment to both simply shows how subordinate he and his party are to serving the interests of the capitalist class.

Finally, the Agreement has certainly been a lifeline to the SDLP. However, since it was intended to be more than just a lifeline, it is significant that they have been unable to substantially increase their vote at the expense of Sinn Féin. Of course, the difficulty for the SDLP in this respect is that after almost four years they cannot point to any meaningful reforms resulting from the Agreement.

It is quite clear who is the dominant partner in the Hillsborough Treaty and, more importantly, whose interests it really serves.

**Fr Vincent Forde,
Portlaoise ■**

Polluters love Ireland

Concern about our environment is rapidly gathering pace as governments the world over come, or are forced, to the realisation that nature cannot go on being exploited in the way it is without causing irresponsible damage.

In countries such as West Germany, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands, where environmentalists and Green Parties are forces to be reckoned with, the governments are up to date with the latest techniques in dealing with pollution in all its forms. This is backed up by tough laws and strict legislation which not only ensures that those who pollute the environment are severely punished but, more importantly, guarantees that rigid criteria are fulfilled before planning permission for new industries is approved.

Ireland, however, works on a different logic. The Dublin government actually welcomes, with generous grants and tax holidays, those companies who use environmentally-damaging production techniques. There is a large number of pharmaceutical plants currently based in Ireland and a substantial number of multinational companies has applied for planning permission to establish subsidiaries, such as

pharmaceutical giants Merrell-Dow and Nordisk Gentaft. The latter, a Danish firm, caused a political storm when the company's director announced that it would be setting up shop in Ireland because of what he termed, "the easier access to the necessary environmental approval".

Polluters love Ireland. Recent statistics show that, of the world's 15 top chemical companies, ten have substantial operations in Ireland, making the country the 12th largest producer of pharmaceuticals in the world. Most of these chemical plants are based in and around Cork harbour, making Cork the area with the largest concentration of chemical plants in Ireland.

Nowadays, the pharmaceutical industry is one of the most competitive in the world but it is also one in which massive profits are generated. However, as more and more multinational companies set up subsidiaries in Ireland, some are finding it increas-

ingly difficult to make these high profits. Consequently, safety procedures are being neglected.

This was borne out in April 1989 when two major chemical plants in Cork harbour, Penn Chemicals and Angus Fine Chemicals, were prosecuted under the Air Pollution Act. These prosecutions arose because of numerous complaints by residents in the harbour area about noxious odours coming from both plants. The companies did nothing to deal with the problem. Thick films of reddish-pink substances were discovered floating on the surface of the water and local children became physically ill. Nevertheless, the companies still refused to identify the source of the pollution and carried on with production. It seems profit in our society is more important than our health.

Things got so bad that Cork County Council entered the fray and in doing so were severely criticised for failing to monitor the situation properly in the first place. In the past, it has been the council's policy to identify the source of pollution and to inform those responsible without tak-

ing any further action.

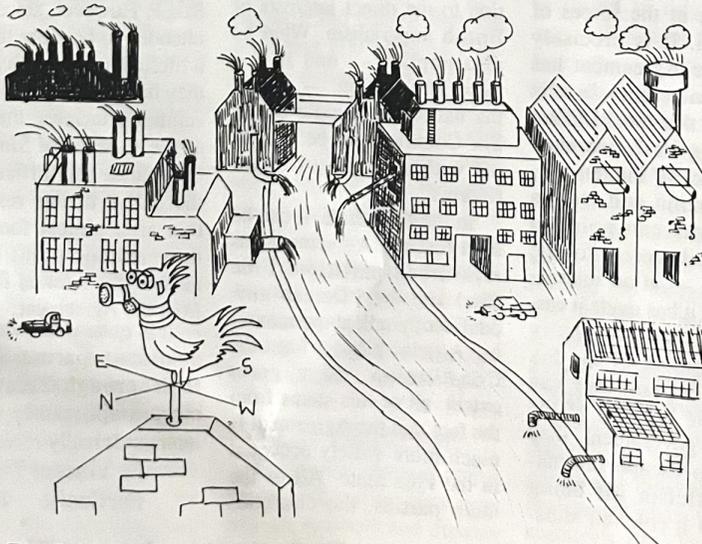
According to statistics released by EOLAS, the science and technology agency, between 4,000-5,000 tons of toxic chemical waste have mysteriously disappeared in Ireland over the past three years alone. It is assumed that the vast majority of this has been illegally dumped on waste tips or into our drainage system.

At present, more than half of all toxic waste in Ireland is disposed of by the producers on their own sites. With little or no up-to-date legislation, it is left up to the local county council, and in some cases the company themselves, to monitor and control its removal or disposal. For those found guilty of illegal dumping of toxic waste, the maximum penalty is a fine of £1,000. This is a totally inadequate law considering the untold damage this can do to our health and environment.

Just why is it that, in an area with so many obvious dangers, legislation is at best weak and at worst non-existent? The Dublin government is very much aware of exactly what is required to ensure a cleaner, safer and healthier environment but they are also very much aware that, if they wish to maintain their links with international big-business interests, then they must not adopt any policies which would discourage foreign investment. The implementation of tough legislation to monitor and control industries would certainly go some way to achieving a cleaner environment but it would be contrary to the wishes of the large industrialists.

This is a road on which the kowtowing government of the 26 Counties simply will not tread.

Denis Gregg,
Long Kesh ■



Handing Over Sovereignty

I am one of the unfortunate few who has experienced the process of extradition, so I have had a particular insight into the whole issue. My perception covers not only those whom it affects but also the general population towards whom it is directed.

Political exemption from warrants to bring people to the Six Counties for activities related to the national liberation struggle had precedent after precedent until the O'Higgins ruling in 1984, which brought Dominic McGlinchey to a Diplock Court in Belfast. This judgement was the culmination of efforts by O'Higgins, Garret FitzGerald and Peter Sutherland as they forced the pace of extradition at any cost. O'Higgins resorted to factual deceit in his ruling on the McGlinchey case. He tried to create a new legal precedent: "That political exemption would only be granted to people whose activities would be acceptable to decent, civilised people." Indeed, this has since been criticised and overturned by his fellow establishment judicial figures. However, the end justified the means.

While O'Higgins and Sutherland sought refuge in Europe as part of their political pay-off, others were left to pick up the pieces of this reactionary and far-reaching decision. To take the O'Higgins judgement to its logical conclusion, Robert Mugabe, Daniel Ortega and Nelson Mandela would all be extraditable. Clearly this shabby attempt to isolate and criminalise the Irish Republican resistance became too obvious and, therefore, had to be re-defined.

In the judgement on my case, Judge Barr did not refer to my activity in terms of how 'civilised people' would view it. However, what he did say was: "Your offences are prima facie political

offences, but your methods are contrary to government policy, and they are empowered by the 1937 Constitution to set policy for Ireland's 32 Counties (sic)". In essence, he ruled that I was usurping the Constitution of the 26 Counties, an indictable offence in itself! Such a ruling was so ludicrous that, of the panel of five judges who heard the case, two (Hederman and McCarthy), in maintaining some legal objectivity, poured scorn on their colleagues' wisdom. Indeed, one of the three judges who ruled for my extradition contradicted his own ruling of 1974 when he refused to extradite Patrick Fell stating: "Offences relating to the situation in the North should be deemed political."

I suppose this is the best indication of the legal gymnastics which have been performed in the 26 Counties. On top of this, when one considers the revisionist-style history which is a feature of Irish society, it is understandable how people can be misled into accepting that extradition is not an issue where Irish sovereignty and integrity are at stake.

One has only to consider the high stakes placed on the issue by leading political figures. Alan Dukes boasted that the enactment of the 1986 Extradition Supplementary Bill was the proudest moment of his entire political career. Fianna Fáil supporters, fed on a diet of republican rhetoric, find themselves in a position of questioning conscience and principle. Similarly, but for different ideological reasons, Labour voters are seeking answers. Irrespective of

their views on my political affiliation, most Irish people realise that, because of England's colonial reactions to Ireland, political actions were inevitable.

That the judicial system has created the Diplock Courts, the Birmingham Six, the Guildford Four and many others is further corroboration of the political dimension of dealing with the Republican struggle. This disillusionment is best seen by the number of groups and individuals call-

ing of its citizens to a country where special courts operate. The stated aim of the 26-County government is to replace the (special) Diplock Courts with a fair system of justice;

Secondly, no other European country would extradite any person having political exemption. Justice Barr and five members of the Supreme Court in the 26 Counties stated in my extradition hearing that: "Your offences are prima facie



● Robert Russell pictured following an appearance in Dublin's High Court on October 10th 1986

ing for an end to extradition. The issue was further highlighted when Fr Patrick Ryan, Neil Blaney and Kevin Boland put 'No to Extradition' on their election manifestos.

Hopefully, by putting it on the agenda once more, Sinn Féin and other anti-imperialists can use it as a galvanising agent in their attempts to expose the contradiction of calling for justice for Irish people in British courts while at the same time handing Irish men and women over to those same courts. Free State politicians and their Six-County allies should not be permitted to ignore an issue which goes to the heart of Irish sovereignty and their own much-loved 1937 Constitution.

No nation can survive if it dilutes its own sovereignty. The ongoing extradition issue dilutes that sovereignty on two major counts:

Firstly, no other European country would extradite one

political offences."

On August 27th 1988, in the foothills of South Armagh, I was handed over to the RUC to face trial in a Diplock Court. On the express orders of the Supreme Court, all of my 'constitutional rights' as provided by the 1937 Constitution should be guaranteed. One of those constitutional rights is the right to remain silent under interrogation. During my trial, John McDermott (Diplock judge) cautioned that for me to remain silent in his court could infer guilt. My 'constitutional rights' were negated.

Other Republicans await the same derogation of human rights. Now that extradition is once more on the agenda, let us ensure that its contradictions remain a millstone around the Free State government's neck.

Robert Russell,
Long Kesh ■

Women and the National Struggle

Women within the occupied Six counties of Ireland are oppressed by both a foreign imperialist state and the sexist ideologies which suppress all women worldwide.

As Republican women imprisoned for our political beliefs, we believe that the struggles for national freedom and for full equality for women cannot be divorced. This realisation came partly from our imprisonment — previously, we viewed the armed struggle as the one and only struggle. However, time and experience have taught us that more than British imperialism needs to be changed.

The present phase of the war in Ireland is the result of a long and complex history of British occupation. The ultimate goal of the Irish people is the establishment of a socialist republic in which the Six and 26 Counties are reunited and the people are free to determine their own future. Throughout Ireland's history, women have consistently engaged in the struggle for self-determination. Before our own imprisonment, we played our role in the struggle and, with few exceptions, we were accepted as equals by our male comrades.

While the position of women in wider society was not one of equality, as women Volunteers we participated

fully in the war. Few of us took any part in the women's movement or seriously devoted much time to the struggle for women's rights. While the rights of women within society were obviously important to us, they were secondary to the military aspect of the struggle. Generally, we thought, in a naive way, that getting rid of the British from our country was most important and other issues could be dealt with when they had gone.

In gaol and removed from the military campaign, we were placed in a good position to develop and raise our own consciousness. Through discussion and debate, we have each contributed to each other's education and helped to broaden our political horizons as well as on a wide range of issues.

From this learning process, we gained a deeper understanding of what affects women and the ways in which they are oppressed within Ireland as a result of British misrule. We have looked further — at violence against women, in the form of rape and 'domestic violence', and at the way women

are exploited and underpaid in employment and so on. As part of our learning process, we established links and engaged in dialogue with various women outside the gaol to discover the day-to-day problems that women face. Through looking at these issues, we identified ourselves with women worldwide and it is in this context that we discovered that women's oppression is universal and that the source is the unequal balance of power between men and women, supported by the ideologies which enforce male dominance and female subordination.

In a socialist Ireland, this imbalance of power must be rectified so that no grouping is free to exploit or oppress another. Men and women must have equal rights and opportunities to fulfil their own potential, free from hindrance, in order to make

Ireland truly socialist. The struggle for women's rights needs to be undertaken and pursued now. It is vital that the success of our revolution that we free ourselves from all forms of injustice. Some injustices will not just disappear when the British have been forced out. The education process must be extended to communities in every way possible and all attempts to do so are to be welcomed and supported. Just as other struggles have been incorporated into the overall struggle for British withdrawal, so must the struggle for women's rights.

The military campaign need not suffer as a result. In fact, it should benefit as women shun the subordinate roles which constrain them and engage more fully in the Republican Movement in all its aspects.

Women POWs,
Maghaberry ■

The Abused

*Screaming, beating, words of scorn
Bruised and aching she stood forlorn
Gone again a while from her life
He leaves behind the battered wife.
So many nights she stands accused
With excuses he justifies abuse.
So many days she tries to disguise
The swollen face and blackened eyes.
Family and friends stare in disbelief
As her suffering remains buried underneath.
Wishing, hoping for strength anew
Completely powerless — who can she turn to?
Always waiting for the turn of the key
What will the 'reason' for this beating be.
Robbed of pride and self respect
The beatings no longer have effect
This treatment she continues to take
If only for the children's sake.
She thinks not of the days ahead
Of future wounds that will be bled
She's waiting until the children leave
In a better future: she must believe.*

Women POWs,
Maghaberry ■

PMT

*Why the effort — why the pain?
Every month its just the same
Tiredness growing deep within
A constant battle that I can't win!
Every step a hundred feels
Every moment I want to squeal
Stop this feeling — go away!
Don't want to be a woman today!*

Women POWs,
Maghaberry ■

MEALTIME

The steam rose up from the gas cooker, like mist rising up from a volcano, as Mary Mooney lifted the lid off the boiling potatoes. She felt tired and drained after the day's work of washing and cleaning, and looking after her seven children. Every day had much the same pattern of work to it, and more work, until at the end of the night she would just fall into the bed exhausted.

Mealtimes were the worst, especially the dinner hour which was at five o'clock every evening. She would need a dozen hands and two brains to take in and do everything she had to; with feeding the children and her husband, Jack, who would be home from work in an hour's time.

The kitchen was small and the big wooden table in the middle of the room took up most of the space, with an old sofa her mother had given her taking up the rest. The room was always like a furnace when the cooking started, and at this time of year, coming into the winter, the fire would add to the heat. She stuck the fork into one of the boiling potatoes and it went in nice and smoothly. They were just about done. The odour from the boiled onions and carrots hung around in the air.

She had just turned back to the cooker when she heard Joe roaring: "Sean, leave me alone! Ma, he won't leave

me alone." Mary looked around at her brood all lined around the wooden table with bent steel spoons in their hands, Joe holding his ear, and Sean looking as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth.

"Sean Mooney, if you don't leave Joe alone I'll redder your arse for you," she shouted, her shoulders tightening round her trapped voice.

"Ma, I didn't do anything, he's making it up," replied Sean.

"Don't test my patience, Sean. You're annoying Joe all day."

On one side of the old sofa were the four boys, Dermot and Jimmy sitting on the arms of the sofa and Sean and Joe kneeling in the middle to bring them up to the height of the table. On the other side were the three girls, Maire, Teresa and Tina. Two of them were sharing a chair, and Maire the eldest having a chair to herself, though this would be shared with Mary

after she had given out the food. There was only a year between each of them. They were like a flight of stairs.

Mary turned back to the cooker taking the potatoes off to mash them and mix them with the onion and carrots. She had already buttered a loaf of bread and placed it in the middle of the table.

Dermot was starving. He felt as if there was a big hole inside him and he was really eager to fill it up. "Hurry up, Ma," he said to himself as he looked across at his mother getting the dinner ready. He looked down at the two slices of bread beside him and decided that wasn't enough for him and his bowl of stew. So out shot his hand to the plate of bread in the centre of the table. He was just about to lift a slice when he felt a terrible pain in his hand.

Maire, his eldest sister, snapped: "You have enough bread, greedy gut." His eyes looked across at her as she brought her spoon back to her own bowl. His temper was out now, so he let go with a kick aimed at his sister's leg. He missed and hit the leg of the table instead, which sent more pain into his body. At this stage, his mother had come to the table, so revenge would have to wait.

Mary took their bowls one by one. The children's eyes were open wide in expectation of the hot stew, hands

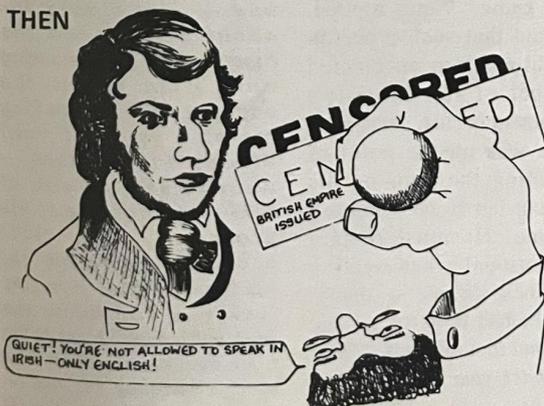
ready with spoons poised for action. "God help the stew," Mary thought as a laboured smile came to her lips. She would have a bit herself when all the children had had theirs. She had Jack's meal slowly cooking. It would be ready in time when he came home. She sat down beside Maire and while she was eating she thought how quiet things had gone as the children filled their bellies as if there wasn't going to be another bite for a month.

God, she wished she could do better for her children. All their clothes were second-hand, hand-me-downs. They never got out much to the pictures or places like the seaside because the money just wasn't there. She looked at each busy face round the table and felt all her worries gathering in a knot in her stomach. As they finished eating, the bowls clattered into the sink and each child raced out.

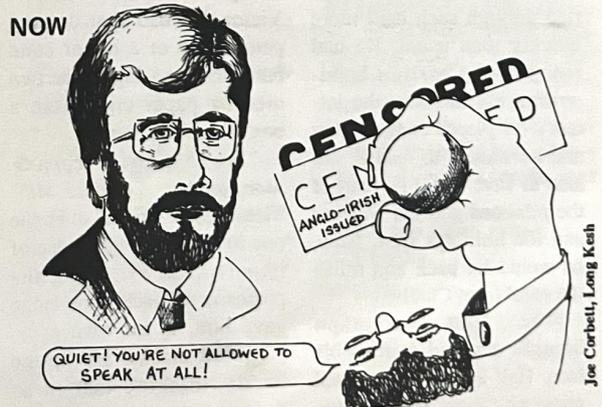
Mary was left alone with the bubbling saucepans, the steam, the heat and the empty table. Then, with a great surge, her weariness buried her alive in the small kitchen. She covered her eyes with her hand and shook her head in despair as she cried.

Nicky Kehoe,
Portlaoise ■

THEN



NOW



Joe Corbett, Long Kesh

Very Important Person

The cornflakes could be seen above the rim of the bowl, a big bowl, one of those big blue ones that had only recently appeared. Even when lying flat, he could see the light-brown flakes sprinkled with sugar, though the table was some inches higher than the bed.

Beside the bowl stood a fresh, unopened carton of milk — a truly magnificent sight. The boys used to spend countless hours speaking of such luxuries and yet there they were now in abundance — but he would not eat them.

A table, bed, chair, small locker and po — most hospital wards have a sparse clinical look to them but a prison one is more sparse and clinical. Fewer items to search when the raiding party makes its periodic visit.

Francy's emaciated figure lay on the bed, propped up with three pillows. Scattered untidily around him lay two postcards and three envelopes — letters sticking out of two of them. They had been read quickly, very quickly. Francy was not really worried about what his relations were doing unless it was devilment of some sort, or about what the weather outside was like, or where so-and-so was going for his holidays that year. Most of that news bored him but he did appreciate that someone had taken the time to write it.

Today though, he had hurried through such mail more quickly than usual. He had recognised Charlie's handwriting the moment the letters were placed on the locker and he wanted to read it, but also to save it. So he read of the relations and the weather and the holidays first. Now, he would lie back and relish the scéal from Charlie.

The first paragraph brought a broad grin to his face. Half-a-page of personal abuse and most of it not too

mild either. No-one else would dare write to a dying man the way Charlie did and the freshness of it brought new life to Francy. Soon he was beside Charlie at the wheel of his Cortina — hand-brake turns in crowded carparks after dances, the look of fear on the faces of the bystanders only enhancing the thrill of it; walking into pubs along the lough shore, slapping the owl boys on the back until their very lungs rattled and the beer spilled over the rims of their tightly-held glasses.

Yet, although they dreaded Francy's 'hello', they knew they would hear a yarn or two before the night was out and the bottle and half 'un that would be set before them would more than make up for what they had lost.

Absorbed in his letter and reminiscing, Francy did not notice the door open and the white-coated medical orderly walk in, the peaked cap and prison service badge an incongruous contrast to the coat. When he did become aware of his presence, he tried his best to ignore him, but you could not ignore Victor. He had that dogged persistence of a minor state bureaucrat chasing up the two missing paper clips from a box of one thousand.

"You've a visitor coming soon, an MP. A Labour MP." Victor seemed proud to be the one to announce this piece of important news. Being the possessor of such knowledge gave him, in his own eyes, elevated status. He spoke loudly, thinking that in so doing others would be

impressed. Victor's problem was that he simply did not have a clue and his lack of knowledge and confidence became apparent every time he opened his mouth.

Francy by this time was motoring along the roads between Bellaghy and Toomebridge and he was greatly annoyed at this interruption. "What do you call him?" he snapped.

"I don't know," said Victor, "but you'll find out soon enough. He's almost here."

Suddenly a thought struck Francy and he turned and stared at Victor. "Labour MP you say? Isn't that wee bastard Mason, is it?"

"I've already told you I don't know," Victor replied, agitated that such a person should refer to an elected member of Her Majesty's Parliament in such a manner.

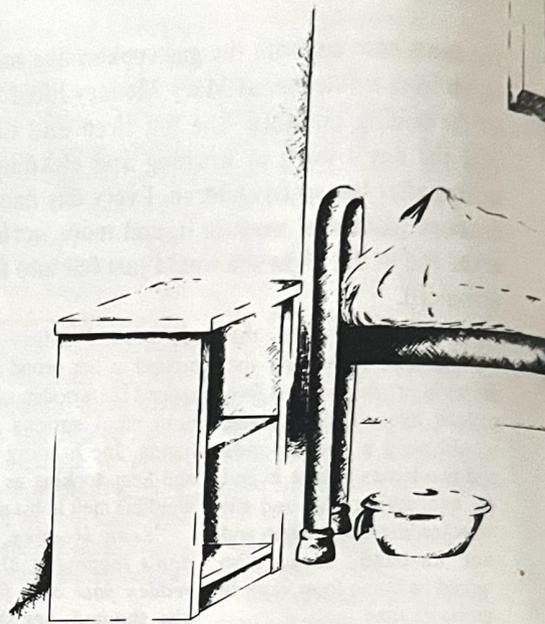
He was on the point of slamming the door on his way out but stopped himself in time. He must remain unemotional when dealing with these people — that is what he had been told — but he found that difficult. "They get under your skin," he had told his wife. "They say

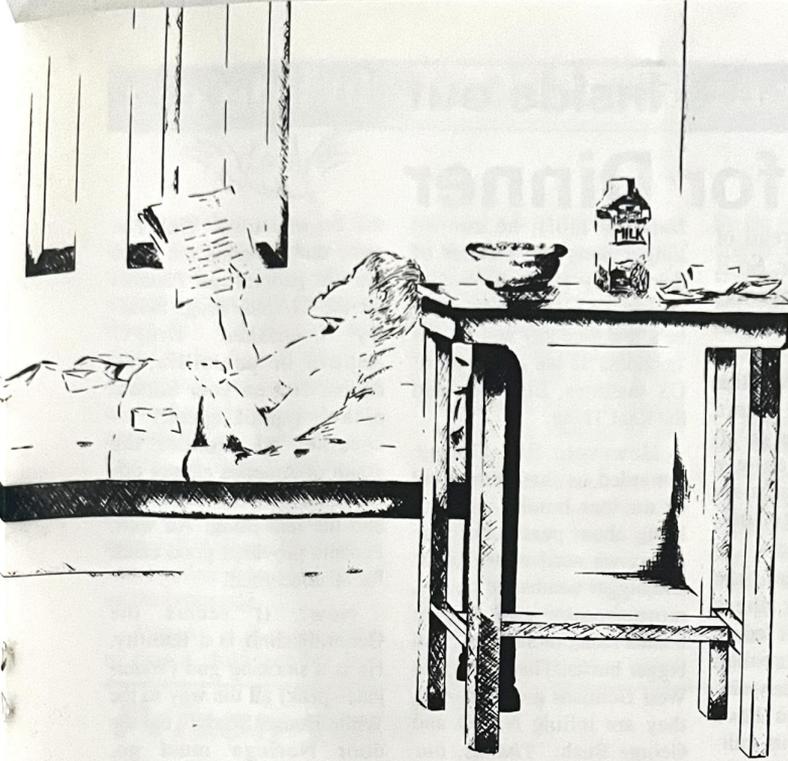
something which sounds very logical and correct but you know rightly it's just a twisted lie — like all their other twisted lies. It's just that I'm not quick enough to answer them."

Victor admitted only to himself that it was not speed of reply he lacked but the ability to come to terms with the fact that a lot of what they said did make sense — and that challenged everything he had been brought up to believe.

Francy was already well back into his letter even as he finished his remark about Mason:

You want to see it, Francy, a real steaker I had — eye closed for about a week and the black's only disappearing now from round the edges. Looked a fucking mess, I can tell you! Bloody big bastard — want to see the size of him — and then his brothers and just because I asked his girl up for a dance! How the fuck was I to know she was with him? First thing I knew was when the sledgehammer hit me on the side of the head!





Johnny Loughrey, Long Kesh

Swear to Christ, Francy, you want to see the size of the hands of this big bastard! Didn't help his car much anyway — he told me to get out of the hall and never come back and I wasn't going to argue but there, wasn't his car parked down the road — didn't leave a fucking window in it — is right — smashed the heap of them. So fuck him and his girl and his hall. He doesn't frighten me — he had his brothers and all — but I'd take him in a straight fight — just me and him — but who would want to go back to that lousy dump anyway!

Francy was laughing to himself by this stage — knowing that on other occasions he would have been with Charlie on just such a night. Charlie is getting all civilised, he thought — saw the time we would have smashed the windows and then fucked the whole car over the hedge! With this thought, he started to imagine what type of car it was and if there was a stereo in it and what type of tapes yer man had. He would be able to judge his character from that.

The door opened again — abruptly. In walked a chief officer, a governor, two unidentified civilians and, following up in the rear, Victor. Francy eyed each one of them as they shuffled into position along the side and front of his bed. One of the unidentified spoke, introducing himself as being from the Northern Ireland Office. Francy could not catch his name, nor did he care. But he did catch the announcement of the identify of "Mr Concannon, a member of the British Labour Party and of the House of Commons".

Concannon stood at the bottom left-hand corner of the bed and introduced himself. "Good morning. How are you?" he said. "I'm Mr Concannon, member of the British Labour Party and Opposition Spokesman on Northern Ireland."

Francy was sure he had heard all this before — about five seconds before.

"I am here," Concannon continued, "as a representative of the Labour Party to inform you and your colleagues that the Labour Party fully supports the policy and stance of Her

Majesty's Government in not conceding any kind of special or political status to terrorists and criminals. Your protest is, therefore, futile and I would advise you to end it before you do yourself serious harm."

Francy's eyes were on him as he spoke but his attention had long since drifted elsewhere. He was thinking of Charlie, of reckless driving in cars, of the owl boys in the pubs around the lough shore and the women around the carparks of the pubs on the lough shore. He thought of the lads in the Blocks and the sing-song they had given him the night before he left for the hospital — how it had lasted until 3am, with him doing most of the singing. Real rebel-rousing ones they were too! He thought of Bobby — another Member of Parliament — and Raymond, and Patsy just down the ward from him, and of the last time he had walked the fields of his townland, at night, in battledress and armed for combat.

His thoughts came back to the small room when he heard his name spoken. Victor, feeling that it was his

responsibility to end the strained silence which had followed Concannon's words, now spoke out loudly in what he hoped was a suitable authoritarian-sounding voice, the correct one to match Mr Concannon's strong and timely message. "Hughes, is there anything you wish to say to Mr Concannon?"

The governor standing closest to Francy gave a start as Victor's voice boomed out, ridiculously loud. Afterwards, he seemed embarrassed at his temporary loss of composure.

"Is there anything I want to say to him?" asked Francy, turning his eyes back to the figure at the bottom of his bed. "There is alright," he said. "Will you shut that door, hi boy — from the outside."

He folded Charlie's letter carefully and replaced it in its envelope. He would take it out again later and re-read it. He knew Charlie had struggled with the last few lines...

Well, Francy, I'll go on here. Everyone's asking for you — the family and all — the whole fucking country. You were never so popular, you big rascal ye! Everyone's keeping well and hoping for the best. You know, Francy, I'm not the best with the owl words but here, sure if you were out here we'd be laughing at this. I'll go on here then. Keep your spirits up — we're all thinking of you and your comrades. So, I'll be on my way here, OK? Christ sakes, Francy, just don't let those bastards get you down.

All the best, mate, Charlie.

He's one mad 'hoor' that Charlie, Francy smiled to himself.

Laurence McKeown,
Long Kesh ■



Stars on Sky for Dinner

Dinnertime in H-Block 8 is generally less a spread of culinary wonders than a feast of caustic banter. So it was the day that George Bush made an appearance, his presence only adding to the potential for indigestion.

George was making a morale-boosting trip to Europe to ease the discord that is creeping into the NATO Alliance (they used to send Bob Hope for these cheer-up-the-troops sessions — George must be more cost effective). The highlight of the trip was his big speech in West Germany. This has been a set-piece for American Presidents ever since JF (Jack, if you want to sound as if you knew him) Kennedy's famous "Ich bin ein Berliner", a sort of "I just love you West Germany". George's speech was transmitted live on television, courtesy of RTE, so he had an audience of sharp-toothed diners here in H8.

By the way, as in keeping with journalistic ethics, I may have erred slightly from truthful objectivity. RTE coverage was courtesy of Sky News. Apparently, Sky have not sold too many of their satellite dishes, so with practically nobody watching they decided to "maximise their viewers" by giving their news station to RTE. It doubles Sky's audience to about 700.

One of the lads at the dinner table remarked that Bush's voice was very similar to that of John Wayne's. Initially, I pretended not to be familiar with the Duke's voice. After all, when one is a satirical columnist, one has to maintain a certain standard.

My informant (or should that be source?) was quite correct, Big George put stress on all the right syllables: ant-eye (for anti-); dee-mock-cra-see (for democracy); get-off-your-horse!

The speech, back to the speech. Apparently, these Germans are a wee bit fed up that their country is coming down with US nuclear missiles. The Germans have found out also that this military-speak 'European theatre of war' is a fancy name which means that their country will be the nuclear battlefield (of course, total destruction is one of the added extras of that particular model). In comes a big bad bear called Gorbachev who offers the West, and particularly the Germans, the opportunity to rid Europe of all these nuclear bombs. Thus the Germans were delighted, but misguided! Hence the need for George to explain to the misguided that these Soviets are so crafty that we cannot believe them, never mind trust them. The only reason that they want to rid West Germany of its nuclear capability (i.e. capability to destroy itself) is to deny "this proud old nation its proper mantle — the defender of democracy".

Bush told the patient audience that this big bad Gorby Bear has been forced into this sly offer. Because of the advance of telecommunications (perhaps Sky is free in

Moscow too!), he can no longer deny the flavour of democracy from the Soviet people. So Gorby is trying to be a real nice guy and all this 'openness' is but the result of US satellites, Big Macs and the Real Thing.

However, Big George reminded us that getting rid of nuclear bombs will not bring about peace. For true peace, we need more bombs and bigger bombs. Of course, more bombs and bigger bombs mean more bucks and bigger bucks. Thankfully, the West Germans are no dozers, they are telling NATO and George Bush: "Thanks, but no thanks for all this defenders of the faith nonsense. Sure if the US of A needs a theatre — there are plenty on Broadway."

DRUGS AND DEE-MOCK-CRA-SEE

I hate to admit this but these Yanks have an inspirational way of spitting out the word democracy. Indeed, for a couple of seconds I was shouting within myself: "Go get them, George". Fortunately, there was a nagging voice somewhere in my subconscious chanting the litany of saints: Pinochet, Democracy; Marcos, Democracy; Duarte, Democracy; Noriega, Democracy. Noriega, now there's a villain and a half and good ol' Georgie has fairly put him in his place. Says George: "Nor-iega, you must go if Dee-Mock-Cra-See is to remain in Panama." No problem there!

Hold on a wee minute! Is this the same Noriega who was on the CIA payroll when the very same G. Bush was head of

the organisation? Yip! The same dude. During the years the old general ran Panama for the CIA, the drugs industry flourished. Drugs? Aspirin or penicillin, no doubt? Not on your bottom nickel (spook-speak) — cocaine! No wonder the youth of America cannot differentiate between Coca Cola and the real thing. Ah well, Panama provided good crack for all concerned!

Now? It seems the Generalissimo is a liability. He is a smoking gun (Watergate-speak) all the way to the White House. So right out the door Noriega must go, Marcos-style. In the meantime, plenty of manure should hit the fan. However, that depends whether or not any journalists will dig it out. Where are the Redfords and Hoffmans these days? Sorry, I'm in a real Hollywood mood. Please re-read that — where are the Woodwards and Bernsteins?

INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS

On the subject of journalists and the evident demise of the investigative side of the profession. It just seems to have faded away. Journalists today appear more concerned with Filofaxes and images, all-year tans, natty suits and far-out ties. I suppose better that than trample on the wrong toes. The search for truth, the real story, leads to isolation, Jenny McGeever-style. Where was trade union solidarity then? Quiet as a chapel! The most searching questions required now are: "Were there any children within six miles of the explosion?" and/or "Where is the nearest old-age pensioner's house?"



Journalists, apart from some very notable exceptions, have failed miserably to search out the truth over incidents like Gibraltar. It was there to be found. Now, as each day passes comes another embarrassing leak and another. Where were they all? Surely it must make the investigative journalists of this world hang their heads in shame. But shame for them is just another five-letter word on the processor.

Anyway, it is much easier to grab a child and her par-

ents and ask of them: "What do you think of the cruel (cue-word) people who could do this?" That will ensure that you are invited to all the right garden parties and enjoy a nice comfortable job in BBCville, Ormeau Road. I wonder if any of the parents of the plastic-bullet victims were ever given the chance to tell how they felt about those who murdered their loved ones. Sure, isn't it more representative, more balanced, to have Dana and the poor underprivileged children of Lagan Bank College (so poor they think

Swiss rolls is what Daddy drives when he's in Zurich) singing a lovely wee song with the 'Peace Wall' as a backdrop. "We want peace and har-money." Peace? Give my head peace, Dana.

Speaking of walls brings me back to where I started, with good ol' George Bush. Of course, once you are in West Germany you just gotta say: "Tear down the Berlin Wall! Walls and barbed-wire fences mean democracy is dead." I look out of my window and see plenty of both. I

agree with you there, George. "Tear down these walls! Ich bin ein Long Kesh!" Anyway, I hope George Bush never gets a second chance to 'Ich bin' himself.

Me? Well, I hope I get a second chance, as a second-choice satirist. I am ready to step out of the shadow again. Till then? Back to dinner with the news team in H8. Slán.

Raymond McCartney,
Long Kesh ■

Prison yard oration thoughts

*Shuffling, ranks shuffled form.
Orders, commands, to attention come.
Morning sun has risen or grey clouds grey out,
While men stand and listen to think. To think.*

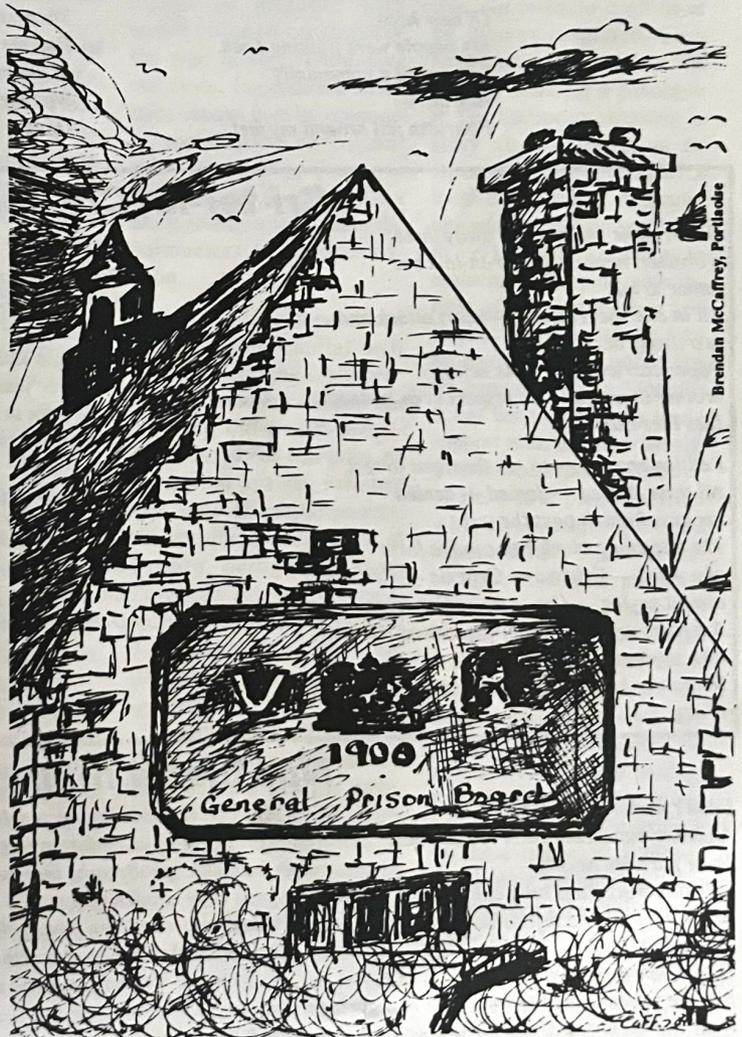
*Ranks full, finished, man after man,
Cleaned, shaved, dressed, homage to pay.
Together, arm's length, near friends,
Though each to himself silent. To think.*

*Thoughts through minds tumble.
How old was he when it started?
Family? Children? Parents? They'll miss him.
Oration given, speaker nervous,
Pages flutter, hands tremble, minds ramble.
To think.*

*Wire squeaks, scabby with years' rotting rust
Sparrows hop on barbs, no sorrow there.
World, weeds, grass, mice move onwards
Grey VR 1900 stares men in the face
and forces them to think. To think.*

*Oration read for a comrade dead
No vacant thoughts nor sops to grief.
A battle cry, a time to think, reflect, rededicate
Then silence. But not the silence of the dead, who
Though silent now, his thoughts our rulers dread.*

Sean Hick,
Portlaoise ■



Rossville Flats — New Hope

I was born out of
 Unionist domination.
 I was the beginning
 Of a new era.
 The poor
 The homeless
 The needy,
 All victims
 Became my people.
 In '66 I was their symbol
 Of new hope,
 I provided them with warmth.
 My body was alive
 With their spirit.
 They became part of me.
 I shared their visions
 Their fears
 Their sadness
 Their joy.
 I was part of them.
 In '69 I became a symbol
 Of new hope,
 My people were fighting back.
 I sheltered a community
 At war.
 Fourteen fell around my feet.

They failed to reach
 The protection of my body.
 By arrest
 By death
 No work
 And long-term imprisonment
 I saw my people suffer.
 I felt my people's anger.
 As the years passed on
 My people found
 New heart.
 Their struggle
 Developed.
 It took on new meaning,
 It now involved me.
 My body was old
 And decaying.
 My people deserved
 And demanded more.
 My death would become
 A victory,
 Their struggle was to
 Pull me down,
 In '88 my destruction
 Was a symbol
 Of new hope.

Kieran Pritchard, Long Kesh ■

Cri-ter-ia/Cry Tears

Death came and carried away three;
 a brother, nephew, father-in-law but
 father to me.

All in one short month — heart attack and
 two tragic accidents.

Paper carried scurrilous news,
 brother branded — no respect even in death.
 Lies Lies Lies

Petition request — to see them put to rest.
 All three denied — denied — denied
 because I didn't pass the test.

The stumbling block came in the form
 of a word — Criteria — Criteria — Criteria,
 almost saying — Cry tears — Cry tears — Cry tears.
 But tears never showed — emotions stunted,
 torn to shreds.

No matter how hard I tried — my eyes refused
 to cry.

Compassionate visit — half-an-hour to console
 With my wife — initially turned away
 from the gate — 'Know nothing of this visit and anyway
 you're too late'.

Eyes ever watchful, ears strained added
 to the pain in that open visiting place.
 Request for privacy refused — 'Not enough
 time you see'.

My family grief — stolen by a thief.

Death came and carried away three
 and with it, took a part of me.

Emotions, by force of criteria,
 Denied Denied Denied.

Joe Corbett, Long Kesh ■

Not just a memory

I don't want to be a memory,
 An anonymous collection of syllables
 To be paraded noisily,
 Like fluttering flags on a cold March wind,
 Nor eulogised and mythicised and my once earthly flesh
 immortalised
 Or become a perennial
 For the utterances of meaningless outpourings
 Over the silent sea of marble and granite that entomb me,
 enwomb me.
 Waiting.

Bring me my dream,
 Comfort my wracked body with the salve of Freedom,
 Breathe into me a gentle vision of my people
 Chainless.
 When you do that, Comrades,
 I'll be one with you,
 And not just a memory!

Séamus O Duinn, Portlaoise ■

Expanding Horizons

Perhaps the most momentous news story of the late Eighties has been the changing nature of superpower relations, which commenced with the inauguration of Mikhail Gorbachev as the head of the USSR. A sharp reappraisal of world political relationships has taken place, resulting in a change of approach towards conflict.

The impetus for this change has come principally from the sobering financial costs of the Cold War, which have acted as a lever in tilting both powers towards accommodation, forcing restraints and a healthy dose of reality upon both. In an age of changing needs, common interests combine to impose a harsh lesson in self-preservation.

The term 'co-existence' sums up the new mood of East and West, with regional conflicts in Kampuchea, Nicaragua, Namibia and Angola all being radically transformed as both powers opt for stability via a political rather than a military resolution. Diplomacy and dialogue replace aggression and hostility (though there is evidence that elements of Cold War thinking remain in the political establishments of Britain and the US). Initiatives and proposals on arms agreement have been able to circumvent suspicion and mistrust in finding favour, particularly amongst a public that is anxious to see vital resources redirected towards the industrial sector of the economy to help improve their standards of living.

Coupled with these developments, the mood of change has also created a wave of boldness internally, which threatens to wash away the old status quo. In the East, the Soviet republics and Warsaw Pact countries are demanding greater autonomy, fragmenting the old power relations and attempting to negotiate the new. In the

West, some of the European members of NATO have been asserting a greater political independence from the US by rejecting US proposals on the installation of new nuclear weapons on their soil and squaring up to the threats of US protectionism by standing firm on trade agreements which favour themselves and not the US.

The knock-on effect of this interaction has consequences for us in Ireland which bear close scrutiny. While there have been fragmentary movements towards independence, both political and sovereign, the economies of the world, and especially those of the West, have become increasingly integrated as financial capital crosses national borders and multinational companies become global empires. Such trends are evident in the 1992 Act of the European Parliament which aims to consolidate its economic power base by tearing down national boundaries, leaving the control of national resources and economic direction largely in the hands of foreign financiers.

In Ireland, the national question is internationalised by external forces which may prove a greater threat than Britain itself. The advent of the 1992 Act has been carefully propagated with the argument that, with the breaking-down of frontiers and the expansion of national identities into a common European citizenship, all the old antagonisms will be made redundant. In light of this, it is argued that any struggle for

national identity or political and economic independence is outdated and displays an ignorance of world events. What relevance North or South, Irish or British, when all national systems will be subsumed within an all-embracing common European entity?

However, Republicans have a social analysis of imperialism and do not equate its presence with armed troops on our streets or the type of flag flying over our cities. Imperialism maintains control here by economic, social, political, cultural and military means, none of which would be lessened, let alone relinquished, within the parameters of Europeanisation.

In 1992, our dependence upon outside capital will increase, working-class people will be worse off and our economy will remain peripheral. Also, 1992 will grant no protection against Britain's vast array of special powers. We already have examples of Britain derogating from European rulings, the most recent being the directive that 7-day detention orders are illegal — Britain simply ignored it.

A more worrying aspect of 1992, and one closely associated with the EEC, is membership of NATO. Our desire to remain non-aligned is being attacked rigorously by those who suggest, via innuendo and double-speak, that the abandonment of neutrality and enrolment in NATO would pave the way for a British withdrawal — all we would have to do is permit the US to install bombs and

missiles over which we would have no control. This scenario already exists elsewhere in Europe. Essentially, it means that, for freedom and independence to be won, they must be surrendered permanently.

World events concern us because the international forces at play help to form and shape the nature of our own struggle. But more than this, our struggle itself must be internationalised. Sinn Féin took a step towards this goal by standing a candidate in the European elections in Italy at the invitation of Democrazia Proletaria, a local Italian party. A further opportunity will present itself in 1991 when the Soviet government, in keeping with the new-style leadership of Gorbachev, proposes to host an international conference on human rights in Moscow. It has been canvassing world support and, not surprisingly, Britain has responded coolly.

Here is a platform from which to highlight and expose British injustices and to mobilise international opinion to isolate Britain and to call for its withdrawal from Ireland. The thaw in East-West relations, the desire for arms reductions and the pressing need to redirect vital resources to civilian production have captured world attention and, by focussing it on these issues, have moved Cold War mountains. Our struggle requires similar ingenuity in tapping world opinion and translating it into action.

**Matt Lundy,
Long Kesh ■**

Sun Gods and Bottles of Glug

Summer in the Blocks. It doesn't quite have the same ring to it as Springtime in Paris, or New England in the Fall, or even a weekend in Waterfoot. But it has its moments. At least it's warm. Sometimes. And occasionally, the sun comes out. Then it's the stampede of the sun gods; the sprint of pink bodies from the Celtic fringe defying the depletion of the ozone layer to turn 40 shades of red.

Some even manage to turn brown — clearly descendants of survivors from the Armada. They must be because, at this time of year when they get their visits, a cruel smile plays across their faces. They sit waiting to greet their visitor, sporting a deep tan gathered from the rays reflected off the corrugated iron in the prison yard.

In walks a bleary-eyed, blotchy-skinned, hungover wreck just back after spending £500 getting drunk on cheap wine on the beaches of

the Costa del Sol. And when he squeals in amazement: "My God, where have you been?", the poor prisoner's tan gently glows.

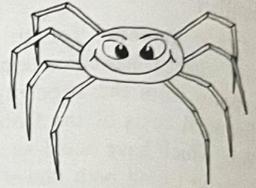
When there is a good film on television, we have a party in our wing. Well, they're not real parties — we just call them parties. They're not like the ones outside where people hang upside down from lampshades and be sick into the goldfish bowl, where there are sausage rolls and sandwiches with the crusts

cut off and wee bits of cheese and pineapple on cocktail sticks and millions of six packs and bottles of glug and all. No, with our parties, each man gets a tin of Coke, a packet of crisps and a Mars bar. That's it.

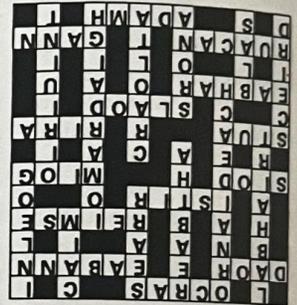
I know, it's embarrassing. But desperate times demand desperate measures.

The toes really curled inside the shoes when one man, newly sentenced, was told there was a party that night. We thought it would cheer him up. It did. Until he saw the crisps, the Coke and the chocolate. "If that's a party," he said with the firm voice we've come to expect of a man facing a long sentence, "I had a party every time I went for a fill of petrol."

At last, something for Republicans to celebrate on the Twelfth of July. This year, the 299th anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne, and for the first time in the history of imprisonment in Long Kesh, ice cream was on the menu. What a glorious day! May it never be forgotten!



The Red Spider ■



Abair sin arís!

Some people may not like what they see but this is not the fault of the media. They do not make society the way it is. Their job is to show it to itself, to tell the story as it is, black as well as white.

— RTE Director General Vincent Finn in *The Irish Times* (May 6th) telling a little lie.

* * *

We are a law-abiding Government and a law-abiding country.

— The Big Lie from British Local Government Minister John Gummer on ITN News (May 10th).

* * *

You could walk for a week in West Belfast before you heard any anxiety about the quality of justice in the Diplock Courts. It's not a real issue.

— British Attorney General Patrick Mayhew

(often seen strolling along the Falls Road) interviewed by *The Irish Times*, quoted by *Irish America Magazine* (January 1989).

* * *

The Government of Ireland Act was intended to lay the basis for an all-Ireland state.

— Dishonest Ulsterman Sean Farren (SDLP) giving his revisionist version history in *The Honest Ulsterman* (Spring/Summer 1989).

* * *

If Gay Byrne had been living in Turf Lodge in 1969 he would have been in the 2nd Battalion of the IRA.

— Martin Lynch (playwright) predicting the past on RTE Radio 1 (June 18th) — and getting it wrong!

[Thatcher] said it was difficult to believe that the Sandinistas were genuinely committed to democracy, and, according to British sources, Mrs Thatcher also pointed to substantial flaws in Nicaragua's electoral and media laws.

— Double double standards from Margaret Thatcher when she met Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega (*The Guardian*, May 9th).

* * *

As far as I am concerned, the importation of arms to any country is prima facie a political case.

— British double standards represented by Chief metropolitan magistrate, Sir David Hopkins, when he refused to extradite Mohammed Rafiq Kahan to Fiji (*The Independent*, March 21st).

Today is a holiday

Today is a holiday for my keeper.

There is no mail delivered or collected and no coats are borrowed for visits.

There are no visits on holidays and no scéal and no lingering perfume on my clothes and my Addidas are still hibernating under my bed on my black concrete floor sensibly well away from my chamber pot which is my toilet while my door is locked.

It is locked now.

Today is a holiday.

Martin Gough
Long Kesh ■

Blockheads



Crosfhocal

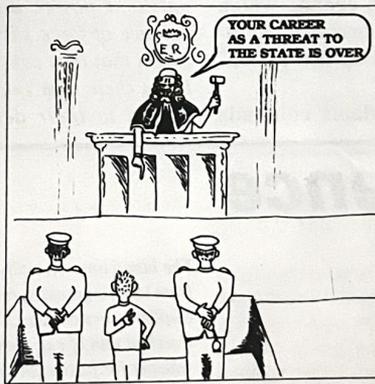
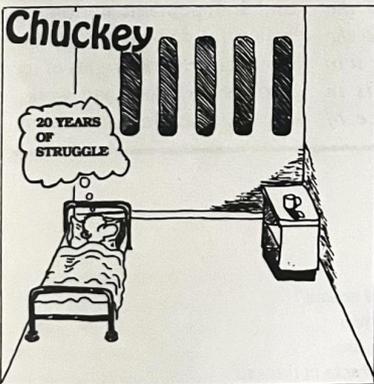
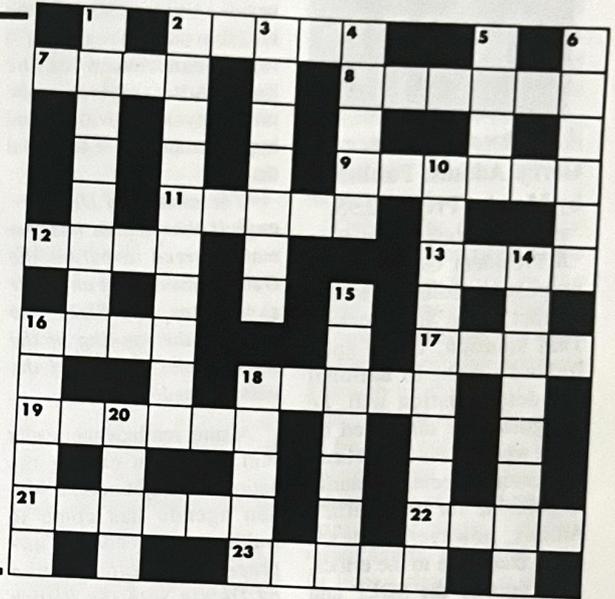
TRASNA

2. Pian mar gheall ar easpa bia so bholg (5)
7. Cime, sclabha príosúnach (4)
8. Adhmaid cruá dubh (6)
11. Ar thalamh, chan ar an fharráige (5)
12. An ceann seo (4)
13. Fuaim íseal éin; gióg (4)
16. Airse, tógáil thar geata (4)
17. Callan, ruaille buaille (4)
18. Sraith, ciseal (5)
19. Feach 8 trasna. 'Seo na gleasanna bána ar phianó (6)
21. Dhiól Molly Malone é seo le dlúicléifín beo (6)
22. In easpa, tearc, i ngátar (4)
23. Tá chulle rud déanta de na

milliún díobhfa.

SIOS

1. Caint, déan comhrá (8)
2. Maisithe, deas, gréasta (10)
3. Pleasccha, pollta (7)
4. Déan níos faide, tarraing amach (5)
6. Gasite, sás, dól (6)
10. Dushlanaigh, cáinigh (10)
14. Foirsteanacht, feiliúnacht (8)
15. Tarchurtha ar an raidió (7)
16. Ait oscailte gan scáth in aghaidh na gaoithe (6)
18. Is iomaí béal a bhris ceann acu seo! (5)
20. Fuaim do fhriotal, nó tás-tail ar bia (4)

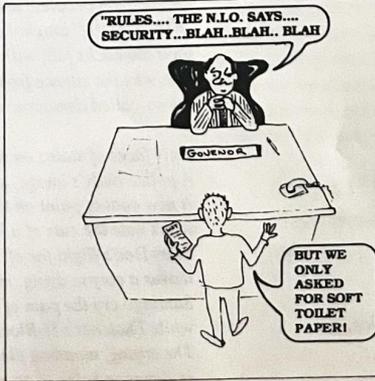


But Chuckey has other ideas.....

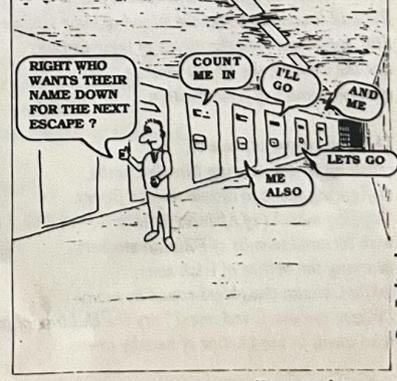
He reads.....



He debates.....



He struggles.....



He organises.....

By Foltach

A Pathway to Peace Gerry Adams MP

A Pathway to Peace by Gerry Adams. Published by Mercier Press, £2.95.

In this book, Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams proposes a solution to the conflict in the Six Counties. That solution, based upon Ireland's right to national self-determination will, he recognises, be dismissed by those who see the Republican Movement as being primarily responsible for the conflict. Adams, however, issues a direct challenge to the critics, most notably the SDLP and their 26-County sponsors, to contribute something more substantial to the search for a solution than sheer political opportunism and knee-jerk

condemnations of armed resistance, especially as these self-styled 'constitutional' nationalists offer no realistic proposals for an alternative form of struggle.

Adams calls upon the SDLP and the Dublin government to temper their "reckless claims" regarding the benefits to nationalists of the Hillsborough Treaty. In a republican review of the Treaty, Adams peels away the many layers of waffle and hype surrounding it to reveal that:

"The essence of Hillsborough is that Britain has formally agreed to permit the Dublin government and their surrogates, the SDLP, to assist in the running of the Six Counties as part of the united Kingdom."

Adams reminds the reader that, far from ending the nationalist nightmare, a hidden agenda has come to fruition. An agenda of "unprecedented collaboration by Dublin with the British regime". An agenda which has brought increased repression, censorship and extradition.

Gerry Adams contends

that the SDLP has a very limited objective. That objective basically entails the cobbling together of some type of internal Six-County settlement which will "provide some space for middle-class Catholics to further their own economic and political aspirations".

In order to achieve this 'settlement', the SDLP and the Dublin government concentrate their energies on "examining ways of reaching an accommodation with unionism". Adams argues that this cannot be done:

"Unionism is a contrived system of politics representing foreign interference in Irish affairs. It has been incapable of making any lasting accommodation with even the most accommodating tendencies of constitutional nationalism. Unionists are not going to be convinced through the force of 'reasoned argument' — no matter how long it goes on — that they should surrender political power unless the balance of force shifts to the extent that they consider it to be in their best interests in regard to their defence of

social and economic power."

This then brings us to the kernel of Adams' proposal for a just and lasting peace. Basing his argument on the premise that Ireland can never develop to its full potential without possession of its sovereignty, Adams insists that Britain must be forced to, "stop supporting the Irish minority — the unionists — and concede to the indivisible national rights of the Irish people as a whole". To this end, Adams calls upon constitutional nationalists, North and South, to join with republicans, socialists and democrats in forming a mass movement which will devise a strategy aimed at narrowing down Britain's "room to manoeuvre" until only one option is left open to it — complete withdrawal from Ireland. Only then, he argues, can the major political forces, including unionists, sit down together and chart out a future for Ireland as a free and independent nation. A nation fully committed to the civil and religious rights of its various traditions and working together in harmony to

Walls of Silence

*In prison cell, alone, disillusioned, afraid.
Where hope sometimes lost,
Where love somehow forgotten,
to hatred, generated by walls,
heavy white-bricked walls,
covered by blood. Tears of self-pity,
brushed over by government-issued paint.
But still it can not cover the blood of their victims.
Still, it can not hide the stains of their torture,
nor the wrongs, the unjust wrongs,
of slow murder of figure within.*

*The walls move in, nearer,
crushing bones, tearing blooded limbs,
disfiguring faces to blood-stained floors.
Gagging mouths of African fathers,
with tortured wombs of Filipino mothers.
Starving the bellies of Irish sons,
while Chilean daughters raped by many.
"Where are our loved ones?" cry the children of injustice,
who await in the ghettos of nearby towns.*

*The blood lines on walls,
from torn fingernails, red and broken.
Swollen sores on searching eyes.
Parched skin of cut, pleading lips,
whisper for justice, through cracks in the wall.
"All we ask, is bread of dignity,
for common people," under military guns.
"FUCK YOU," laugh the armies of fortune,
their stomachs full, with blood of mankind.
But, why the silence from beyond the window,
the so-called democracies, who hide behind lies?*

*Ugly faces of stains on white-covered walls.
A police bully's image, and his torturing hawks.
A new coat of paint on the walls of Manila,
won't hide the cuts of a Marcos claw.
Baby Doc's flight far off to the sun,
leaves a corpse dying, imprisoned STILL.
Santiago cry the pain of darkness,
while Thatcher's H-Blocks still smell of flesh.
The crying, moaning pleas of the forgotten,
in dungeon holes of an unjust world.*

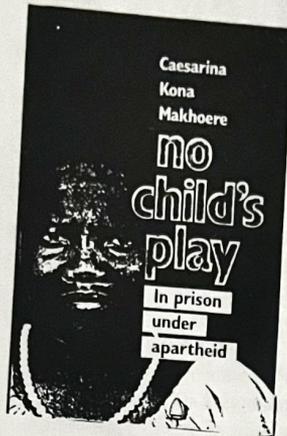
build an Irish society, "based on equality and national reconciliation".

A Pathway to Peace is a positive book. I found it handy as a reference book in that it articulates the republican analysis of the nature of the conflict in a clear and easy-to-read format. Sinn Féin's *A Scenario for Peace* is printed in the appendix and Adams gives a synopsis of the 1988 Sinn Féin/SDLP talks. Gerry Adams offers this book as a "signpost on a pathway to peace". Let us hope that those who oppose the tyranny but not the tyrant can follow directions.

John Crawley,
Portlaoise ■

***No Child's Play* by Caesarina Kona Makhoere. Published by The Women's Press, £3.95.**

Some countries, most notably El Salvador, simply murder most of their political prisoners. Others like to maintain the pretence that they are civilised and decent. They put their prisoners through the 'due process



of law' but once inside the prisons the facade breaks down and the true nature of the system is revealed.

One thing that strikes a prisoner reading an account of prison life in another country is just how similar the regimes can be. One would almost believe that those who run prisons for political prisoners have all been to the same training school. The viciousness of the treatment which the South African regime metes out to anyone who dares to resist its whole dehumanisation process is immediately recognisable.

Caesarina Kona Makhoere, a young woman who was jailed for her activities after the Soweto uprising of 1976, has written a frank and honest account of prison life in South Africa. She focuses on the tactics used to try to break her and her comrades: the denial of the right to wear her own clothes; the use of the death of a loved one as a weapon against her; the attempts to sow discord among the prisoners; and the use of rules and regulations to deny a prisoner almost everything. All so familiar to anyone who has spent time in a British prison.

The book does not attempt to theorise about apartheid. It simply portrays how the system affects one person caught up in its oppressive machinery — from the ridiculousness of separate diets for whites and blacks to the violence, the harassment and the petty degradations.

It is quite clear where the author stands. She opposes oppression and works in support of those who are prepared to resist this oppression by force. She also clearly states her prison philosophy:

"When you talk soft they don't want to listen to you... Until you take action... where people are fighting physically [then] they believe that we mean business."

Makhoere does not disguise her hatred for her captors, especially those who go out of their way to torment the prisoners and her threats as to their fate in a liberated South Africa come across as a normal human reaction. That she admits this hatred makes the account all the more authentic.

Overall, *No Child's Play* could not be described as the best written work in the world. At times it is disjointed and repetitive but then Makhoere probably does not claim to be the world's best writer. What she does claim to be is a political activist outlining her time spent in the prisons of an extremely oppressive state. Despite minor faults, this book with its honest description of one prisoner's experience under apartheid makes compelling reading.

Eamon MacDermott,
Long Kesh ■

*But the cracks are widening on the walls of injustice.
The crumbling of mortar, beneath the strength of a people,
pouring forward in a mass of unified suffering.
As whispers become shouts, as shouts become screams,
as screams become defiance, as defiance becomes revolt.
Revolt brings the downfall of a tyranny long past,
with downfall comes change, a revolution blossoms,
blossoms to the sun,
a beautiful flower of love and equality.*

*Old ladies drink dark, sweet coffee
in the shade of a New York's sun.
Coffee from Chile, so dark, so strong,
with joking workers, picking coffee to midday song.
Smiles on faces in South African jungle,
black smiles, white smiles, one smile.
Children laugh to Belfast street-songs,
no more tanks to drown out melodies.
Sweet whispers of love, a Filipino girl's blushes,
runs through sugar canes, dry, but not bloodied.
The crumbled remains of white wall,
are dust beneath the dancing feet of Mankind.*

*The flickering ray of light,
shines through the cracks of darkened cell.
Life rays of hope, these are my own true dreams.
Thoughts of cheery smiles, kind family faces,
a woman's breast against by cold forgotten face.
A child's chuckle, in my inexperienced arms;
a sweetheart's tears, a father at last.
Thoughts of sweet smells, bright moving colours,
and the feel of wind through green wet grass.
These are my dreams that cling to the wall.
Some day soon, my walls will fall,
in the dust, I'll dance to the chorus of Mankind.*

Joseph P. Doherty,
Metropolitan Correctional Center,
New York ■

Prison News Prison News Prison News

STRIP-SEARCHING

An independent inquiry recently condemned strip-searching and the conditions under which three Irish POWs, Ella O'Dwyer, Martina Anderson and Martina Shanahan, are held in the infamous Durham Gaol. The inquiry by Anthony Lester QC and Dr Pamela Taylor was carried out at the request of Women in Prison, the Prison Reform Trust, the Howard League and the National Council for Civil Liberties.

The condemnation of strip-searching concerns not only the intense regularity of the searches but questions the very need for this form of physical and psychological brutality. The British government claims that the searches are carried out in the interests of security. Yet this argument is dismissed by various international groups, including Amnesty International, who monitor the conditions of political prisoners. Moreover, nothing of significance has ever been discovered during a strip-search.

The British seek no alternative to this de-humanising policy because its primary function is to break the morale of the prisoners.

However, the women POWs in Maghaberry and in gaols in Britain have shown that their morale is unbroken. Through pressure from different support groups and the prisoners themselves, an end to these searches will become inevitable.

The inquiry's report is available from: Women in Prison, 25 Horsell Road, London N5 1XL.

CRUMLIN ROAD GAOL

The Republican POWs in Crumlin Road Gaol have witnessed an unprecedented upsurge in attacks on them by the joint forces of the prison staff and the loyalist prisoners. These are not isolated attacks but are part of an overall policy of forced integration. The prisoners are sent on spurious charges to 'the boards' (solitary confinement), where further beatings are carried out. The harsh realities of the 23-hour lock-up and the filthy conditions in the gaol lead to further tension. The gaol administration has been made aware that Republican prisoners will not be used in a conflict instigated by the Northern Ireland Office.

EXTRADITION

In the process of being forcibly removed from the 26-Counties, Paul Kane was assaulted by the RUC and prison staff in the Six Counties. These incidents occurred after 'guarantees' for his safety had been given by the British.

Dessie Ellis in Portlaoise Prison now faces the grim prospect of being the next victim of this discredited process. It is clear that Irish people will not receive any semblance of justice in the British courts. The anti-Irish racism in Britain, combined with the now-established 'trial by media' ensure that the British secure the convictions they desire.

Owen Carron and Dermot Finucane face the possibility of extradition to the police state of the Six Counties where special powers, non-jury trials and the blatant political bias against the nationalist people have become the norm. Many groups and individuals have joined together in total condemnation of the Extradition Act. It is now time for the Dublin government to rethink its position on this issue.

REPATRIATION

That an independent inquiry has called for the closure of a section of Durham Prison (see above) again highlights the plight of Irish prisoners who have to endure appalling conditions in British gaols. Many of these prisoners meet the criteria set by the British government for their return to gaols in the Six Counties to serve their sentences — the refusal of the British to return them is in keeping with their overall political hostages policy. This is in contrast to the treatment given to members of the crown forces who have been

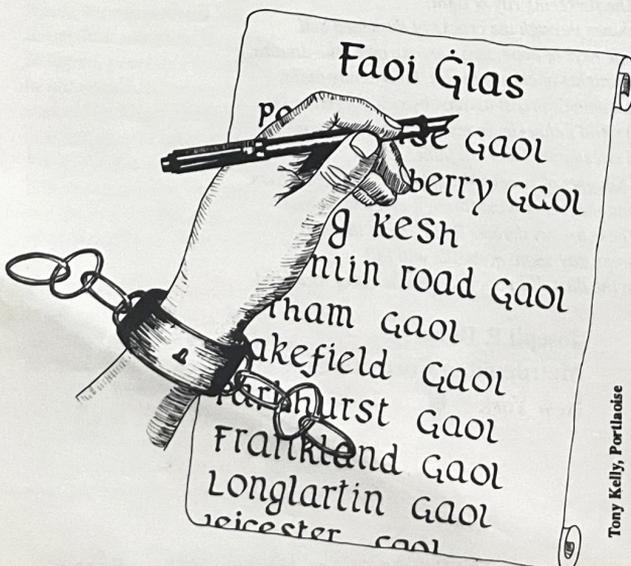
found guilty of serious crime (up to and including murder). These people have an automatic right to return to Britain to complete their sentences.

The families of Irish prisoners continue to suffer a great deal of hardship. The harassment and threat of arrest by the British Special Branch is designed to put them under maximum pressure. Furthermore, the moving of prisoners with no prior warning leads to loss of visits and extra travelling expenses for visitors. Prisoners' rights groups have condemned this racist policy as inhuman and a denial of basic rights.

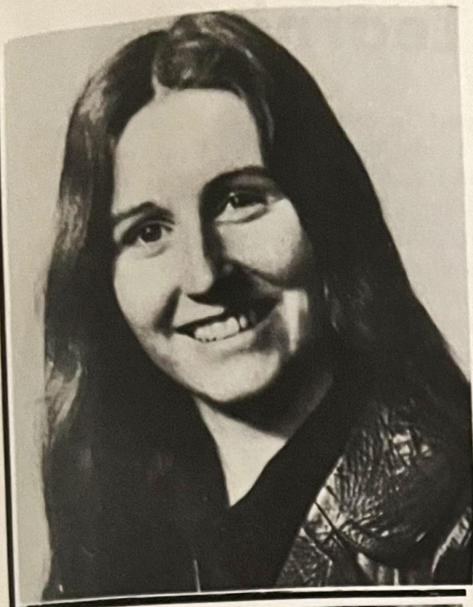
CAMPAIGN FOR LIFERS

Since coming into existence in February 1988, the Campaign for Lifers has concentrated its efforts to bring about much-needed change in the present policy of the Northern Ireland Office in regard to its criteria for the release of life and SOSP prisoners. The campaign has witnessed some positive change with 83 life/SOSP prisoners being released for Christmas parole, along with a number of special reviews taking place with the apparent prospect of release dates being given. While these developments are welcome, the issue is not the number of releases but the actual criteria for release.

In a recent court action by two Republican prisoners, Peter Whelan and Basil Hardy, a Diplock judge ruled that while it was desirable for prisoners to be able to obtain the required information (i.e. details of the secret subjective 'reports' by prison staff) it should not be given in these (political) cases. This is a judicial endorsement which recognises and enforces the NIO policy of political bias against Republican prisoners.

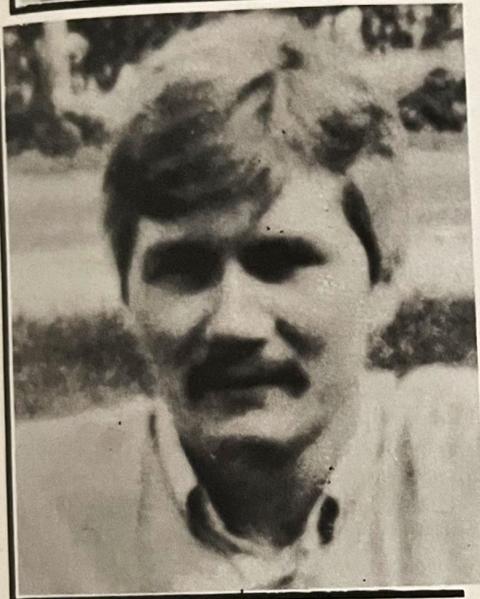


Tony Kelly, Portlaoise

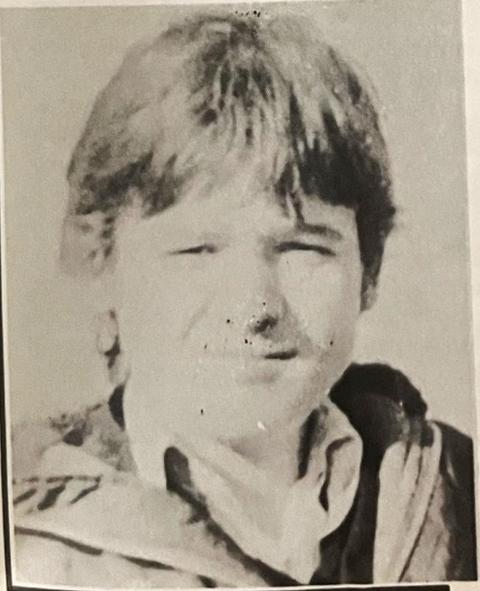


On this day

*Your deaths mean much to us, so close,
But on this day so many of you die.
I can see you dismembered, mutilated,
Left by the 'Guard' in your blood.
I can hear you scream in pain,
While the hot iron is pressed to your back
In some fear-filled police cell.
I can feel the horror you felt
While they tore your legs apart
And raped you bloody and unconscious.
I feel your pain, their pain, as one.
I see your face and theirs, one form,
Each death, each scream is yours; the same.
You die one hundred times, one thousand times
This day in distant lands unseen but felt.*



*But on this day in distant lands unseen but felt,
I also see you born again in life,
Between a mother's legs in slum and hovel.
I hear you shout in anger from the mountain and the city
And hear the mounting march of feet
Against the long oppression.
I feel your joy as you lie embraced
Between your lover's arms
In a land safe, shaped and held by your own hands.
I see your face and theirs, one form,
Each birth, each shout of defiance is yours; the same
For every death you die this day,
One hundred times, one thousand times
You are reborn and breathed to life,
At home, in distant lands unseen but felt.*



This poem is dedicated to Danny, Sean, Mairead and comrades everywhere. It expresses the mixture of sadness and hope which I felt on hearing of their deaths in Gibraltar. Hope that there would be many more such people in the future, more than could ever fall.

Jim McVeigh,
Long Kesh ■

Twenty Years of Learning

Twenty years ago, British troops returned to the Six Counties to uphold what passed for law and justice. In what now seems to be an absurd naivety, beleaguered Catholics welcomed the troops in the desperate hope that somehow they had brought respite from the latest spate of loyalist pogroms which had erupted in 1969. The Civil Rights period of 1968-69 and the subsequent re-emergence of the IRA as a popular people's army stand out as a milestone in our history — the beginning of a national fightback against British imperialist involvement in Ireland.

Today, when the public voices of loyalism and Free State conservatism speak of the last 20 years of IRA violence, it would appear that the British forces in the Six Counties and their surrogates had not been responsible for bloodshed prior to 1969. Shame on them!

The bigoted little statelet of 'Northern Ireland' was born of British violence and the threat of violence and it continues to be maintained by doses of state-inspired violence, oppression and discrimination. It is more likely that the politicians, the so-called Christian churchmen and the long array of 'Northern experts' churned out daily by the media establishments on both sides of the border are more annoyed that in 1969 and since a silent oppressed have begun to stand up and demand equal rights in a free country of their own. Where were these establishment voices before 1969? Those who inflicted pain and indignity on us for so long and those who acquiesced in our suffering by their silence now cry foul when we strike back in defence of our national and civil rights. What hypocrisy!

The naivety of '69 has long passed. Twenty years of hard and bitter struggle have taught us many lessons. It did not take us long to realise that the Brits were not here as protectors. When their rifles were turned on us, it was clear that they were here to prop up their loyal Protestant state. The televised state oppression and pogroms in '69 were bad public relations for Britain throughout the world, caused by bad management at Stormont. A change of management was in the offing — not an end to violence or repression but merely a refinement of the methods. That is what we have had for the past 20 years — more refined and sophisticated forms of British violence and repression, though many in Ireland have chosen to ignore and deny this.

IMPERIALISM

In the past 20 years of struggle, we have learned much about the nature of imperialism and its allies in Ireland. We began those years with a belief that British withdrawal alone would solve most of the country's problems. Britain was the source of all our evils and we believed that the way to effect that withdrawal was through force of arms alone.

We still assert the centrality of partition and imperialism to the fundamental problems facing our nation and the importance of armed struggle as one tactic, among many others, to be used in the struggle for reunification and economic sovereignty. Prolonged struggle and the force of experience have laid bare to us the different forms of imperialist involvement in our country. The independence of 1922 for the 'Free State' has proven illusory — the economy has been dominated by British finance and multinational capital and its interests.

As a consequence, the needs and interests of the great mass of Irish people have been poorly served by the established political parties of the Free State. It is little wonder that mass unemployment, poverty and emigration have never been effectively tackled on either side of the border because the wealth and the means which produce that wealth have never been owned and used in the interests of the nation. We understand now that to have real independence we must have economic as well as political sovereignty.

UNITY OF PURPOSE

This is what the last 20 years of struggle have taught us. We have also learned that armed struggle alone will not gain victory but that a mass democratic political struggle, in tandem with the armed struggle, must be waged against the two faces of imperialism — direct British military and political occupation, and economic exploitation and dependency. Imperialism, allied with Irish big business and their political mouthpieces, Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, the PDs and the SDLP, are the root cause of our nation's problems. To defeat imperialism, to begin in earnest to tackle the problems of unemployment, poverty, emigration, British military occupation and repression, women's oppression and cultural oppression, to overcome all those things that hold us back as a people, as a nation, there must be unity of purpose and unity of action by all those forces who wish to see an end to imperialist involvement in our country and all the evils which it throws up.

This year, the 20th anniversary of the arrival of British troops onto our streets, could be the turning point in the struggle for an end to oppression and exploitation in Ireland but it will only be so if all the isolated forces of progress, presently working separately, unify in an all-Ireland mass democratic political movement — a movement that will give expression to all our national grievances and offer a credible political and economic alternative to the people of Ireland. For our part, we in the Republican Movement, mindful of our inadequacies and failings, offer the hand of friendship and sincerity to all those who would join with us in a spirit of comradeship in building such a movement. Let the forces of progress make common cause — in such unity lie the seeds of future victory. ■