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A health service in disarray

By Jeanette Cullen

You are feeling unwell and have been for some time. Not alone is the disease itself causing this, but the very idea of the treatment and what it entails is adding to your mental anguish. You come out of your home and walk to the bus stop. You are unsure how long you will be required to wait, but you know that when the bus does come along you will be on it for forty minutes. That would not be too bad as journeys go, but you will not have reached your destination. That requires you getting another bus and the journey will again last another forty minutes. It would be great if you could afford a taxi, but money has been short since you fell ill and couldn't carry on working. The idea that getting home again will necessitate repeating the whole process only adds to the stress you are already under. When you think that the reason for travelling in the first place is so you can receive chemotherapy treatment for cancer, and that will also take time, you would be forgiven for wondering why this was in fact necessary. Halfway through your first bus journey, about 20 minutes from your home, you just passed one of the biggest hospitals in the city, which for some strange reason does not provide the treatment you need.

Or we could look at a different scenario. You are taken to the Accident and Emergency department of the hospital with a suspected fracture. There are no beds available in any of the wards so you have to remain lying on a trolley in one of the corridors. You don't feel too odd, as there are others in the same boat. You remain there for two days, until the doctors finally decide that you are not suffering from a fracture but only damaged ligament in your hip and that you can be discharged. What does surprise you is the letter which arrives at your home two weeks later with a bill from the hospital for 250 euros. This letter explains that the government would like you to pay for the privilege of lying on a trolley in a busy hospital corridor even though you have been paying PRSI for

years.

You think all that is bad. Well how would you feel if you were the man who was over two years on a waiting list to have a tumour removed from his brain? In this case, the hospital informed him that if he wasn't operated on within 5 years, then it would 'become serious'. Despite these examples, and there are thousands of others, most of the government ministers, using Paddy's Day as an excuse, jet off around the world supposedly promoting Ireland as a first world country, while sustaining a third world health system. A system in which the sick and infirm can look forward to sleepless nights on trolleys in draughty emergency ward corridors, being attended to by

overstretched and overtired medical staff with little resources. It is extremely hard to listen to the Taoiseach trying to justify the spending of 40 million euros on a new jet to enable these self-same politicians to fly off to far-flung corners of the world. To this can be added the millions spent on the 'Millennium Spire', for which, like the health service, we had to wait an extra three years.

All Irish workers pay TAX and PRSI, and one would naturally assume that if

you were unfortunate enough to fall ill, you would at least receive prompt medical attention because of your weekly payments to the government to cover its cost. Instead, the care you get is dictated by your financial status. If you can afford private medical attention well and good, if not then you are left lying about the place. This is a terrible indictment of the society we are living in and the way the economy has been handled by various governments. Going by the health service as it is, it would seem that the so-called Celtic Tiger has feasted on the weakest of the society that spawned it before retreating back into the undergrowth from whence it came.

Jeanette Cullen is a mediator with Connolly Inner-City Employment Services

Barron Inquiry points to MI5 cover-up

By Phil Forsythe

May 17th will be the 29th anniversary of the Dublin and Monaghan bombings in which 33 people were killed. It is about this time that a report, compiled by Justice Henry Barron, will be due for publication. The Barron Inquiry was established as a result of tireless campaigning by the families of the victims, and the fact that it has taken so long is damning testament to the attitude of successive Dublin governments to the murder of Irish citizens. Maybe at last, with the publication of the Barron report, the truth can finally begin to be uncovered.

The report is said to concentrate on illegal British military operations in the South, particularly the Dublin and Monaghan bomb attacks. The exposure of these covert operations could prove to be very embarrassing for both the British and Irish governments, which probably explains why the British Ministry of Defence has been minimalist in its co-operation with the inquiry. This is despite the fact that Northern Direct Ruler Paul Murphy had assured Bertie Ahern that all relevant material would be forthcoming. However the inquiry is said to be drawing inferences from the lack of co-operation from the Ministry of Defence, which could indicate that Justice Barron and his team believe there was a cover-up with regard to the Dublin and Monaghan bombings.

But even with the lack of evidence from the MOD the inquiry has made some headway in exposing and understanding the mindset of British Military Intelligence in the early 1970's. Important in revealing British military tactics of the time is a memo, prepared in October of 1971, now in the hands of the inquiry team. In this memo the British military admits that it is failing to contain the IRA in the border regions, stating that only increased troop levels - at least an additional 18 to 29 battalions - would effectively seal the border to IRA volunteers. This would have meant withdrawing troops from other parts of the world, an embarrassing admission the British weren't prepared to make. After all, they were supposed to be involved in a 'policing action' not a war.

The memo concluded that the British Government had three options in how the military should proceed. The first option was to simply maintain the status quo, but this was dismissed outright because it would never appease the more militant unionists who feared the introduction of direct rule if the security situation didn't improve. The second option basically recommended the introduction of martial law.

This included an identity card system, curfews and the closing of border crossings. But it was felt in some government quarters that this would only fuel the republican struggle and so it was also discarded. The third option recommended the intensification of cross border incursions, the aim being that pressure would be put on the establishment in the 26 counties to adopt more repressive measures against republicans. This third option was approved. Six months later, on the 31st May 1972, the first car bomb attributed to loyalists was detonated south of the border.

The Barron inquiry has further documentary evidence in its possession, which is



said to finally corroborate allegations of collusion between loyalist murder gangs and the British military. Elements of the British army are said to have provided logistical and material support to loyalists, providing them with both firearms and explosives. In relation to the bomb attacks on Dublin and Monaghan two senior members of the RUC and a number of British army officers, based in Lurgan, were also instrumental in planning and carrying out both attacks. One former British army officer has stated to the inquiry that it was his belief that loyalists were incapable of carrying out the attacks on Dublin and Monaghan. Backing up this statement are the scientific studies carried out by the Barron inquiry. One report concludes that the explosives used in the Dublin and Monaghan bombs was of the same type used by the IRA - technology that was not in the hands of loyalists at the time, or it would seem since. Maybe the British forces were reluctant to share this technology with loyalists and were content in supplying the explosives. After all, knowledge is power, and what better way to control their reactionary gangs.

Whilst the Barron Inquiry was specifically established to investigate the Dublin and Monaghan bombings, during the course of the investigation information about other serious incidents has come to light. At least five other bombing incidents and three murders, all committed in the 26 counties and

all with probable British military involvement, have come under the scrutiny of the inquiry team.

Other cases being investigated by Justice Barron include the killings of Francis Greene on the 10th January 1975, Christopher Phelan on the 20th June 1975 and Séamus Ludlow on May 1st 1976. The murder of Francis Greene, who commanded the North Armagh IRA, was said at the time to have had significant bearing on the breakdown of the 1975 cease-fire. Greene was shot dead in a farmhouse near the border in Co. Monaghan. Christopher Phelan was found stabbed to death near the railway line outside of Salins, Co. Kildare. Earlier an attempt had been made to blow up a train carrying official Sinn Féin supporters. Phelan, it is believed, stumbled across the UVF bombing team and was killed. The Barron inquiry has evidence that claims that an undercover British army unit was operating in the Salins area at the time of Phelan's murder. Séamus Ludlow is said to have been a victim of mistaken identity. He was shot outside Dundalk after being misidentified as a local IRA commander. Again British army involvement is suspected. To this day authorities in the south have failed to properly investigate the murders of these men.

Other events which are being investigated by the inquiry include bombs that were detonated in Dublin on December of 1972 and January 20th 1973, a bomb blast in Belturbet, Co. Cavan in 1972, which killed two children, and another explosion in Castleblaney in 1975. It has also been stated in Leinster House that between March 1970 and May 1985 there had been 812 authorised incursions by British forces into the 26 counties. How many more, one wonders, have gone undetected? The Irish government can hardly claim ignorance of these incursions. As early as 1972 the then Minister of Defence, Garry Cronin, was contacted by the Irish army's Chief of Staff with regard to the incursions across the border by the British army and loyalists. It is not known if any action was taken to curtail these activities, but on the face of it it would seem there wasn't. Did elements of the political establishment in the south give tacit support to these incursions? Considering that the British army was probably not the only branch of British security to infiltrate the south, it begs the question as to whether the Irish political system has been compromised by the intelligence services of Britain. Judging by the stalled investigation into the Dublin and Monaghan bombings one could be forgiven for thinking this was the case.

Betraying the Cause

As the Provisionals' seemingly inexorable abandonment of republican principles continues apace, Colm Byrne offers his views on how Europe's most formidable resistance movement was transformed into one whose primary goal was the aggrandisement of the few

The past number of years has seen the Irish republican cause suffer its severest setback in generations. There is no need to repeat here the lengthy list of lies and betrayals perpetrated by the present Provisional leadership. It is sufficient only to observe that long gone are the days when they demanded a united Ireland and the creation of a thirty-two county socialist republic.

What is particularly galling is that this defeat was entirely self-inflicted and only happened because the Provisional leadership enthusiastically went along with a process - the so-called 'peace process' - that was designed solely to bring about what the British state had failed to do in thirty years - defeat the IRA. Given the transparent nature of what was occurring, it is impossible to believe that the Provisional leadership didn't realise that their acquiescence would inevitably end in the disaster of the Good Friday Agreement.

Pan-nationalist consensus?

Not only was their handling of the entire process completely inept, it was one of their own tactics - the pan-nationalist consensus - that was the primary source of the disaster.

The rationale for the coalition of nationalist parties, put forward by the Provisional leadership, was simple: more could be achieved by a tactical uniting of republicans with the SDLP, the Dublin government and Irish-America than could ever be achieved by republicans acting alone. They argued that the pan-nationalist front would either put enough pressure on the unionists that they would sign-up to a republican-looking agreement or more likely they would walk away and the British government would do a deal over their heads. This assumed that the British government was looking for a solution to the conflict in the north. If the premise sounded dubious enough, it contained within it some very basic miscalculations.

The first contentious issue was armed struggle. It was obvious that the other members of a pan-nationalist front were not going to accept republican inclusion without an IRA ceasefire. To overcome this, the IRA, despite the many previous examples of the dangers of such a move, called a cessation in August 1994. Privately, the republican leadership was assuring activists that for republicans it was a win-win situation. If the pan-nationalist consensus delivered republican objectives then the project could be deemed a success, if it didn't, the IRA could return to war arguing that it had tried its best to bring a resolution to the conflict.

It didn't take long for republicans to realise that the British government was using the breathing space afforded to them to build new police and army bases, improve their intelligence on republicans, and carry out other measures that hardly seemed consistent with a government serious about negotiating a fair settlement. This result was that any return to armed struggle was always going to be met with a better-prepared British state. The IRA, it seemed, was being sabotaged from within.

In another indication of their real intentions, the British govern-

ment began introducing various pre-conditions to talks. Their contemptuous reaction to the first IRA ceasefire was hardly surprising given the almost desperate manner in which some of the Provisional leadership sought to enter into negotiations. One would have thought that the IRA was on the point of defeat rather than being the most formidable guerrilla army in Europe.

But worse was to follow. Instead of the pan-nationalist front putting pressure on the Unionists and the British, as it was supposedly designed to do, it turned instead to pressurising republicans into accepting the unionist veto. This should hardly have come as a major shock considering that parties such as the SDLP, Fianna Fail, and Fine Gael had spent thirty years trying to defeat the republican movement.

Everyone accepts that in any negotiations of a serious nature compromises are going to have to be made. Capitulation is, however, another matter. With the Good Friday Agreement, the Provisional leadership succeeded in turning, what was at worst, a political and military stalemate into a cata-

strophic result for republicanism. Considering their avowed political beliefs, incredibly, the Provisional leadership somehow managed to negotiate a deal whereby it would be administering British rule in Ireland. If it wasn't such a serious issue, it would almost have been laughable. Not only were the British not about to withdraw but partition was copper-fastened. The single biggest opposition to the British occupation of Ireland - the IRA - had been blunted and effectively destroyed.

Prisoners betrayed

The Provisional leadership, with its minimalist goals, even managed to mess up the one positive aspect of the agreement for republicans: the release of prisoners. Instead of being released in a united and dignified manner, IRA men and women were released, like criminals, in twos and threes. The Provisional leadership cannot even blame the British government for this because the Provos retrospectively criminalized the whole thirty years of struggle through their one-sided acts of decommissioning. And if the prisoners thought their ordeal was over once they were out, they were to be sadly mistaken. To this day, five years on from the signing of the Agreement, ex-prisoners continue to be treated like criminals as they are refused certain jobs, jailed and deported from the US and other countries, while all the time living under the threat of being returned to gaol. Of course the Provisional leadership has no such problems entering countries like the US to attend \$500 a-dinner fundraisers. And, unlike the majority of ex-prisoners, they don't have to worry about a job, for there's plenty of well-paying jobs administering British rule in Ireland.

Apart from the prisoners, the only 'successes' that the Provisional leadership can point to is the reduction in the number of British soldiers on the streets of the six counties. Although it is often hard to tell that this is indeed the case, as the people of the border counties



Stormont: a republican parliament for a republican people?

in particular can verify, it needs to be remembered that like the fact that there were no prisoners in 1969, there were no British soldiers on the streets or watchtowers along the border either. What we are witnessing are not political successes, we are witnessing the normalisation of the occupation. This British government policy, staunchly resisted in the 1970s and 80s by republicans, is rather bizarrely claimed by the Provisional leadership as a success in 2003. And of course, while many republican prisoners were released, many others were being jailed. But because of the duplicity and deceitfulness of the Provisional leadership who sold away political status (something for which others had given their lives), today republican prisoners in the six counties are, once again, being treated like criminals and are forced to share landings with Loyalists.

While many republicans are rightly furious and bitter over the abandoning of republican principles by its leadership, it is not good enough to sit back smugly and say, 'I told you so' as some seem content to do. It would be far more beneficial to examine how this happened. Otherwise republicans will be doomed to forever be betrayed by their leaderships.

It is one of the greatest ironies of the past few years that while the Provisional leadership proved itself repeatedly incompetent in its dealings with the other political parties, it proved itself very adept at handling its opponents within republicanism.

Failure to articulate a credible alternative

The primary reason the Provisional leadership was able to do what it did was simply because no credible alternative was ever articulated by those opposed to the Good Friday Agreement. 'Brits Out' is fine as a slogan on a gable wall but it is hardly adequate as the beginning, middle and end of a political manifesto. That this is still the case, five years on from the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, is an indictment on every single republican opposed to the agreement.

And if it seems unduly harsh to ascribe that level of simplicity to the anti-agreement position, it is only possible to do so because of the utter failure of us to articulate our alternative view.

There can be little doubt that within the republican community, those opposed to the Good Friday Agreement have lost the argument. As well as providing little or nothing in the way of a political message, it seemed at times that all we could promise was another thirty years of struggle and sacrifice. And to the republican community, which had borne the brunt of the previous thirty years, this was hardly an attractive offer. Especially when there was no coherent strategy - either military or political - to go with it.

It is equally futile to blame the Provisional leadership or the media or other political parties for our inability to articulate our opposition to the Good Friday Agreement. The onus is on us, not anyone else, to make our voice heard. Of course, the stupidity and recklessness that led to the Omagh bombing seemed to confirm that we had nothing positive to offer. Apart from the immense tragedy for the people killed and injured, Omagh represented the single biggest coup for the Provisional leadership in their battle to win the hearts and minds of republicans.

And five years later, it seems that some anti-agreement republicans still haven't learned that lesson. Like the Provisionals who have made political power the end rather than the means, there are anti-agreement republicans who believe that armed struggle is an end in itself. They believe that a pipe-bomb a month shows the

British state that there are still those opposed to their presence in Ireland. But the reality is that such a 'war' is only a very minor irritant to the British. The only people being inconvenienced by pipe-bombs in Belfast and Derry are the people of Belfast and Derry. Perversely, one of the effects of this current pipe-bombing campaign is that it makes it very easy for our enemies to claim that it is republicans who are the oppressors and that it is the British army - called out to defuse these bombs in public places - that is defending the people of the six counties. Meanwhile, the gaols continue to fill with young republicans who are eager and willing to oppose British rule in Ireland but whose dedication is being wasted on such futile activities.

Future Prospects

In such circumstances it becomes hard not to despair at the prospect for a recovery of the republican movement. But it is only by

acknowledging the reality of the situation, however uncomfortable or unpalatable that may be, that we can pick ourselves up and move forward.

It is going to be an enormous task to turn things around. The first priority is for republicans to get their own house in order and decide what republicanism means today. For thirty years, the Movement has consisted of a wide variety of individual views and opinions. The one uniting factor was the support for the IRA's war against the British state. Now that that war is all but over, certainly for the foreseeable future, it is time for a degree of critical analysis. In fact, had it been possible to do this

before now, it is likely that the Provisional leadership would have been unable to so easily dupe and lie its way to betrayal. For all our professed politicisation, it is arguable that a truly politicised movement would never allowed its principles to be so easily and cheaply abandoned.

The other major opportunity in the months and years ahead is the continued degeneration of the Provisional movement. While clearly, there are still many principled and dedicated republicans supporting the Provisional position, it is likely that over time the mixture of increased gangsterism together with the policy of personal gain and corrupt political practices will lead to an exodus of the republicans on whom the Movement was founded.

This degeneration is perhaps best exemplified by the baseball bat brigade, many of whom never lifted a finger to fight the British, but who have suddenly discovered courage now that the fight is against other republicans or indeed anyone who speaks out against either their political betrayal or who opposes their various private money-making schemes.

In the final analysis, republicans should not be angry with the Provisional leadership because they abandoned the armed struggle, republicans should be angry with them because they abandoned republicanism. And as the disillusionment of grassroots republicans with the Provisional leadership grows, with Sinn Féin becoming the Fianna Fáil of the north, republicans opposed to the betrayal of republican principles must be ready to grasp the opportunity to provide a truly articulate and coherent alternative. Otherwise we may as well give up now and go home.



The final salute: but was their sacrifice in vain?

Too late to panic?

As the 'Celtic Tiger' retreats into the mists of economic mythology, leaving behind a country riven by corruption, scandal and inequality, Brian Moore looks at the state of the nation and its republican opposition and asks: Is it already too late to panic?

Connolly's Other Legacy

We declare the right of the Irish people to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible...

The Irish Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally...

Famous words, from the 1916 Proclamation of the Republic, well known to all republicans. So well known, in fact, that we sometimes forget just how radical a statement of intent that document really was. Radical not just in its own time, which it surely was, but also as a yardstick by which we can measure the Ireland of today. The Proclamation promised equality for all, democratic control of the nation's wealth and resources, and a government dedicated to the welfare of all its citizens. The twenty-six county state claims it as its founding document, the historical source of its political legitimacy. But for most in the South the Proclamation remains a historical document, carefully cleansed of any contemporary relevance. Certainly, it does not inspire the actions of the Southern political establishment. Even leaving aside the issue of the North, it is clear that the aims of the Proclamation have never been fulfilled - more, that its fulfilment has never seriously been contemplated by those in power. Ireland today is a country riven by inequality and corruption, an aristocracy of wealth and influence masquerading as a democracy. How we arrived here, and what can be done to change the situation, are central questions all republicans must face.

The wording of the Proclamation, and the politics of the early republican movement, was infused by the spirit of James Connolly, the great republican socialist who, along with Jim Larkin, laid the foundations of trade unionism in Ireland in the early decades of the twentieth century. Connolly's Citizen Army, forged during the Dublin Lockout of 1913, provided a steely working class core to the IRA that emerged from the ashes of the 1916 Rebellion. His vision of a radically different Ireland would inspire generations of young working class men and women to take up arms in defence of the republican ideal. But the Citizen Army was formed not just to fight for national independence, but also to defend Irish workers from the greed and rapaciousness of their own countrymen. This, Connolly's *other* legacy, has proved a troublesome bequest to the republican movement, although it is in fact the essence of republicanism. Troublesome because it inspired, and continues to inspire, the vicious hatred and fear Southern politicians feel towards republicans. For them, republicanism has always been 'the enemy within'.

Ironically, the founding fathers of the twenty-six county state all, at one time or another in their political evolution, proclaimed themselves to be republicans. The state they created, however, was a child of the counter-revolution, spawned during the Civil War from the unholy alliance of the religious, business and political elites that formed the Free State side. In victory, the rhetoric of republicanism was maintained to provide a veneer of legitimacy, but government policy advanced in a very different direction. It is estimated that up to one hundred thousand republicans - including many of the most

progressive elements in Irish society - were forced to emigrate in the aftermath of the Civil War. In their absence, the social gains which had been made during the revolution were quickly rolled back. Women, so prominent in the independence struggle, disappeared from Irish politics for generations, while social policy was handed over to the control of the Catholic Church. We are still coming to terms with the consequences of those policies today.

Given its origins in the victory of reaction, it is difficult to see how the Free State could have developed in any other way. Republican opposition, certainly, has been less than successful, while the republican movement itself, in an effort to appease the Southern establishment, has too often ignored Connolly's legacy in favour of simplistic 'wrap the green flag round me boys' nationalism. As a result, republicans have repeatedly allowed themselves to be incorporated into the state they professed to oppose; seduced by the rhetoric of reform, they have been absorbed and neutralised by the enormously resilient capitalist system. Today, as the mirage of the Celtic Tiger years dissipates, and we find the economy teetering on the brink of a major recession, it is vital that we take stock of the situation and consider the state of the remaining republican opposition. Republicanism is weaker now than it has ever been, but, with the cracks in Southern society showing as never before, the opportunity for regeneration - for forging a new republicanism - is unparalleled.

State of the Nation

It would be impossible, in the space available here, to provide a comprehensive catalogue of the failings and abuses of the Irish state. A brief survey, however, will be sufficient to confirm the thesis that the Irish government has failed its people. The recent spate of tribunals and sex-abuse scandals have revealed a country rotten to the core, its political and business establishment mired for decades in a culture of bribes, kick-backs and back-room deals, while the institutions of the state colluded in covering up the horrific abuses of an all-powerful Catholic Church.

The Moriarty Tribunal first pulled back the covers on the culture of corruption at the heart of Irish politics, revealing that even former Taoisigh were not immune to the allure of bribery. The Flood Tribunal is still uncovering evidence of planning corruption in the Dublin area, exposing the back-room deals that allowed a small number of land speculators and their political lackeys to make vast fortunes while ordinary citizens were, and still are, unable to afford decent housing. The consequences of their planning decisions will haunt the capital's citizens for decades to come. The Ansbacher scandal, meanwhile, showed the lengths to which the nation's business elite are prepared to go to avoid contributing their fair share to the nation's finances, while the government's leniency in dealing with what was clearly a criminal conspiracy spoke volumes about their priorities.

That other great institution of the southern state, the Gardai, has fared equally poorly in recent years. The Barron Inquiry into the Dublin Monaghan Bombings of 1974 is expected to confirm MI5 involvement in the attacks, involvement which was long known but actively covered up by both the Gardai and political establishment. The Morris Tribunal into Garda corruption, meanwhile, has uncovered an 'appalling vista' of systematic abuses, including 'fitting up'

suspects, manufacturing evidence, and widespread bullying of vulnerable citizens.

The elite, it is becoming clear, have been well looked after by the Irish state. Ordinary citizens, on the other hand, have not done so well. The primary school system is in a state of collapse, struggling to cope with a third world-style infrastructure, while the fundamental inadequacies of the health system are becoming ever more apparent, even as major cutbacks are announced on a weekly basis.

The fundamental problems besetting the Irish state have been masked in recent years by the much-trumpeted success of the 'Celtic Tiger' economy. Falling unemployment and superficial prosperity have played a major part in assuaging popular discontent. However, with the nation now facing into a serious recession, and the world economy itself teetering on the brink of collapse, these supports are about to be removed. Indeed, even while it lasted, the so-called 'Celtic Tiger' was little more than a media-spun mirage. The 'miracle economy' was built on a foundation of cheap labour and low corporation taxes, an unsustainable arrangement that brought little real or long-lasting benefit to Irish society. Poor quality jobs with low wages, few rights and unsavoury conditions - exemplified by the galley slave-like phenomenon of the 'call centre' - are its only legacy, and will soon be lost to the even more 'competitive' economies of China and India.

A minority, of course, have done extremely well from the 'boom' years. A recent ESRI report revealed unparalleled levels of economic inequality in Irish society, and the problem is getting steadily worse. We are heading, it seems, for a US-style economy where a select few enjoy the privileges of vast wealth while many more struggle to meet their basic needs. Behind this increasing inequality lies a more fundamental problem - the absence of genuine democracy in Irish political life. The contempt of the Irish political elite for their electors was amply demonstrated in last year's general election when Fianna Fail lied their way back into power with a deliberately misleading manifesto that was quickly jettisoned once the victory had been secured. Their contempt for the democratic process has since been confirmed by their open support for the US government's Middle Eastern adventure, despite overwhelming domestic opposition.

The problems facing the Irish state are many and varied, with their causes deeply rooted in Irish history. There can be no easy solutions. Worryingly, the government is now attempting to eviscerate the Freedom of Information Act - clear evidence that they have no intention of dealing with the corruption at the heart of Irish life. With the politicians batten down the hatches, the situation, it seems, is set to get much, much worse.

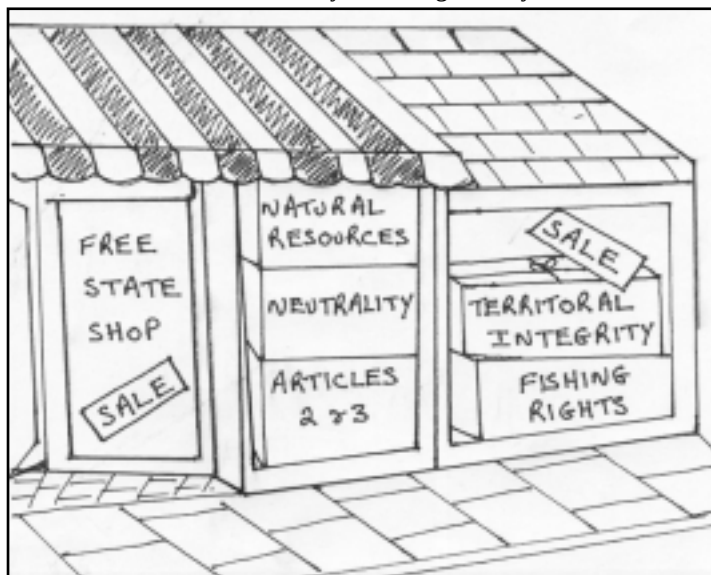
The Opposition

So what of the opposition? Throughout the history of the Free State, the republican movement has offered itself as an alternative - a 'government in waiting', ready to take up the reins of power. It has rarely been credible in this role, never less so than at the present moment. All revolutionary movements are susceptible to factionalism - most revolutionaries, it could be said, end up hating each other more than their original enemy. Republicanism is no exception, and we must always try to avoid the pettiness it

inevitably brings. A desire to avoid factional backbiting, however, should not prevent us from taking a dispassionate look at the republican 'alternatives' on offer.

The Sinn Féin party, it should now be clear to all, has only the most tenuous of holds on the appellation 'Republican'. Its mostly well-intentioned membership, having been suckered down the reformist path by a demoralized leadership, has little chance of finding its way back. A recent rival, the Sovereignty Movement,

now appears completely defunct, its demise no great loss to the republican cause. An older challenger, Republican Sinn Féin - an organization that seems to specialize in somewhat shabby and ill-attended commemorations - can only be described as worthy but harmless. An appreciation of the past is of course important, but RSF seems to have lost itself in the mists of historical obscuratinism. So much for the political options. For the more militaristically inclined, a selection of 'IRAs' are now available to the republican connoisseur, with little, at this moment, to recom-



mend any of them.

In short, republicanism is a mess. The alternatives are little better. The trade union movement is now firmly wedded to the political establishment, incapable of forcing radical change. The anti-capitalist movement, although well meaning, is too disparate and unstructured to have any real impact on the system it opposes. A new republican movement is urgently needed, and with it a new republicanism.

A New Republicanism?

The people of Ireland, we are told, are disillusioned with 'politics'. Disillusionment comes from the absence of a viable alternative, and republicanism is not yet fit to play that role. If we are to rebuild the movement, we must first rebuild our concept of 'republicanism'. Unfortunately, most professed 'republicans' have only the vaguest idea of what the term actually means. Republicanism is not nationalism, which is about subservience to an entity - the 'nation' - that exists independently of its people. Republicanism is very different. It is, in essence, about giving real power to the people; the power to control their own lives, to shape their own destiny. It is about giving them, in the words of the Proclamation, 'ownership' of their own nation.

Connolly's vision of an Irish Republic was abandoned by the Southern political classes even before they had established themselves in power. Their only serious opposition, the republican movement, has all too often paid lip service to his ideals while never treating them with the seriousness they deserved. Today, we are suffering the consequences of that shortsightedness. Looking at the state of the nation, and the state of the republican opposition, it is clear that it is indeed too late to panic. We have long passed that point. Instead, it is time to begin building a credible republican opposition - to forge a new republicanism for the twenty-first century. The politics of reform have failed. Only through a republican revolution can Connolly's vision - 'the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland' - ever be secured.

Global greed

By Kieran Connolly

One of the major problems of the modern world is the unequal distribution of wealth. Some 20% of the world's population controls 80 % of the world's wealth. If we also consider the fact that the world's population will have increased from six billion to nearly eight billion by the year 2025, and that almost all of this increase will be in what we term 'third world' or developing countries, this imbalance will be even greater. These countries are already facing major problems as it is, and a major increase in their populations will aggravate this situation even more. There are numerous examples of hunger, poverty and disease, along with lack of education, clean water and health care. These problems have occurred for many varied reasons, some stemming back to colonial times. Countries in Africa and Asia, despite their natural wealth, have been unable to utilize their resources to meet their people's needs.

Post-colonial civil wars, dictators, widespread corruption, as well as the continued exploitation of these countries by their former colonial masters, have all added to the situation. Many of them have been saddled with a huge debt owed to the International Monetary Fund or World Bank. This debt, in most cases, was not used for the benefit of the people or the development of the various countries. Instead, it was used to line the pockets of a select few. The World Bank and IMF were fully aware that this scandal was occurring when they lent the money in the first place, yet today these same institutions are bleeding these countries dry to repay money which none of their people received or benefited from. Today these debts are so large that it is an almost impossible task to service these debts, never mind have money over to address present day issues like hunger, AIDS, etc..

As well as exploiting this situation, the developed countries engage in the charade of 'International Aid'. In the year 2002 the aid given by the wealthy countries to the third world amounted to 0.2% of their gross national product. When one considers the amount of money spent by countries like the United States, Britain, France, etc. on military spending and on various wars they have been engaged in, one gets a better perspective of the tiny amount which is directed to solving these problems. The US government, for example, spends over \$600

billion a year on its armed forces. In contrast, with an estimated 30 million AIDS victims in Africa alone, and with the numbers increasing daily, many countries are helpless to do anything given the (relatively minuscule) cost of the medicines required.

Much of the wealth generated by the wealthy nations and their international companies is at the expense of the underdeveloped ones. The exploitation of natural resources and child labour are all justified on the grounds of profit. The US economy is now the strongest in the world, and the

could never use, even if they lived a 1,000 years. The United States, for example, has 268 billionaires while 35 million of its citizens live below the official poverty line.

However, just as there have been those who would exploit their fellow man, there have been others who struggled to liberate them from such exploitation. Countless men and women have fought to build a world where each human being would stand tall, free from oppression and tyranny. Socialists the world over have seen successes and their failures. Different revolutions in various countries tried to raise the standard for their peoples. The capitalists think that the many setbacks which have occurred, and the success of various counter-revolutions instigated by countries like the United States, proves that the future of this planet and its people lies under their feet. Nothing could be further from the truth. Along with all the revolutionary struggles going on, the emergence of the anti-globalization Movement is an indication that many people are coming to see that the exploitation must stop.

In the years ahead, along with seeing the United States and its allies trampling on the rights of nations as well as individuals, we will see people fighting to end this new world imperialism. As well as seeing people imprisoned without charge or trial and denied their human rights, we will see people fighting to gain their freedom. If the greedy few think that they can keep a world of billions in chains and poverty, then they are badly mistaken. All those who struggled for a better world under socialism had a vision. While it has had its setbacks it is still worth fighting for today. It will only be under such a system that the human race can join in cooperation to overcome poverty, disease, hunger and all the other aspects of the human situation which prevent us from living decent and worthwhile lives.

Kieran Connolly is a community worker and anti-globalization activist

Inequality - US vs Them

U.S. Billionaires vs Third World Countries

Billionaire/Country	Wealth/GDP
Bill Gates	\$85 Billion
Walton Family (Wal-Mart)	\$85 "
Warren Buffet	\$31 "
Mars Family	\$17 "
Dominican Republic	\$15 "
El Salvador	\$12 "
Ghana	\$ 7 "
Zimbabwe	\$ 6 "

US government is using its unparalleled economic muscle to push the agenda of 'globalization'. This rampant new imperialism is being advanced as the 'economic saviour' of the planet. Greed and profit, the ideological foundations of the globalization project, ignore the large-scale suffering and unnecessary deaths of millions. In its thirst for even more wealth, capitalism is prepared to do anything irrespective of the consequences.

Every human being born on this planet has the same right as any other to a decent life, free from hunger, poverty and disease. No man or woman, or child for that matter, is born so that they can be exploited for the greed of others. The wealth of our planet should be there for the betterment of mankind as a whole, not just a small number who already have more wealth than they could possibly use. It was always part of man's nature to cooperate and share with fellow members of his group. It was this very cooperation which allowed human beings to develop to where we are today. The capitalists, who exploit their fellow human beings, would have us believe that greed and selfishness is our true nature. They think we should accept a world where you have millions living in poverty and disease while a few accumulate wealth they

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The views expressed on this page are not necessarily those of the editorial board.

FORUM MAGAZINE

Israeli state terrorism

Bush and Blair have cited the apocalyptic capabilities of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, Saddam Hussein's threat to regional stability, his violation of human rights and his blatant disregard of UN resolutions as justifiable grounds for an invasion of Iraq. Yet the overwhelming majority of the international community rejected these allegations along with the claim that there was any 'moral case' for war at this time. However, let us pause for one moment and place Israel under the same moral scrutiny.

Jane's Intelligence Review estimates that Israel possesses over 400 nuclear and thermonuclear weapons. Israeli delivery systems include the Shavit inter-continental ballistic missile, the Jericho I and II missiles, three Dolphin-class nuclear capable submarines, neutron landmines, nuclear capable F-16, F-15 and F4 jet fighters, along with artillery-fired nuclear weapons. The Israeli Institute for Biological Research (IIBR) at Nes Ziona is the nerve centre of Israel's biological and chemical warfare programme. Yet London or Washington has never demanded that the IIBR be subject to UN scrutiny. In fact, the Knesset's Defence and Foreign Affairs Committee is prohibited from visiting the institute, such is the veil of secrecy surrounding the IIBR.

It is a cause for concern that Israel possesses such a lethal arsenal. This is even more so when one examines Israel's record of military aggression since 1948. Israel has been involved in seven regional wars and currently occupies large tracts of Egypt and Syria along with the Palestinian territories of Gaza and the West Bank. The Israeli invasions of Lebanon (1978, 1982) cost in excess of 18,500 Palestinian and Lebanese lives. Clearly, Israel stands apart as the major threat to regional stability.

This taut situation is exacerbated when one factors Israel's genocidal treatment of the Palestinian people into the political equation. The annexation of territory, mass expulsions and dispossession; the killings of civilians, torture, and illegal detentions; the denial of free movement, education and healthcare; the demolition of houses, the destruction of agricultural lands and the expropriation of water supplies; the murder of Palestinian firefighters and ambulance personnel, military assaults by tank or fighter aircraft upon defenceless Palestinian civilians: these have been the infamous tactics utilised by Israeli governments since 1948. All of this has taken place with US political support, US equipment and US finances.

In 1948 Israel occupied 78% of historical Palestine. The remaining 22% was annexed in 1967. Notwithstanding this fact, in 1988 the PLO acknowledged that they would accept a partitioned, two-

state resolution of the conflict. To date Israel has refused to formally accept this solution. Indeed Israel remains one of the few countries who refuses to define, or place any limitations upon, her national frontiers. Israel is also currently in violation of 31 international law conventions and 64 UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs). For example, UNSCR 242 calls upon Israel to withdraw completely from the territories it occupied in 1967 and UNSCR 446 'deplores' Israel's settlements policy in Gaza and the West Bank which it states 'has no legal validity'. Israel, with the

support of the US, continues to disregard these UNSCRs without sanction from the international community.

The Oslo 'peace process' changed the modalities of the Israeli occupation but not the basic concept. Before joining Ehud Barak's government, the historian Shlomo Ben-Ami wrote 'the Oslo agreements were

founded on a neo-colonial basis, on a life of dependence of one on the other forever'. Ben-Ami went on to become the architect of the US-Israeli Camp David proposals (2000), the blueprint of which remain intact.

However, the escalation in Israeli aggression since the second Intifada of September 2000 signals a more sinister approach. With each new murderous incursion into the West Bank and Gaza, Sharon seems to be attempting to annihilate any remaining vestige of Palestinian national life. How else can one explain the destruction of transport, communication, sewage and water systems by tanks and helicopter gunships? What 'anti-terrorist' purpose is being served by the removal of records from the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Education, the theft of Ramallah's municipal documents and the demolition of hospitals, schools and health-care centres, not to mention the catastrophic cost of these incursions in human terms? When Bush declares that Sharon is a 'man of peace', he spits upon the grave of every dead Palestinian and the remains of those buried beneath the rubble of Jenin.

Qadura Fares, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council for Ramallah, wrote 'there is a 100% chance that Sharon will start to transfer us if there is a war on Iraq. He wants to do this - he's always said that he wants a Palestinian state, just that he wants it in Jordan'. Is the international community about to ignore the final dispossession of the Palestinian people?

When Anglo-American politicians warn of the imminent irrelevance of the United Nations their comments are greeted with derision in the West Bank and Gaza. For there is a grotesque double standard at the heart of the so-called new world order.



Letters and articles can be sent to Forum Magazine at:

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Red flag over Nepal

By Sean Mulligan

Over the past seven years the downtrodden people of Nepal have been waging a war to change the face of their country and raise the red flag on 'the roof of the world'. A country once known only to tourists and mountain climbers, Nepal is now a strategic place of struggle between the aims of imperialists like the United States and Britain on the one hand, and a revolutionary people on the other.

For centuries, life for the people of this small, impoverished country has changed little. India and the West have dictated its economic conditions. Its people have served as a pool of cheap labour for India's economy, or as mercenary soldiers for foreign armies. Nepal's natural resources were likewise used to aid India's economy instead of its own. Its political system today remains a corrupt feudal regime, which has kept the mass of Nepal's 23 million people living in poverty. The Nepalese people are kept in conditions that appear medieval in comparison to life in Europe. According to the United Nations' list of the Least Developed Countries, Nepal is second from the bottom, with 70% of its population living below the absolute poverty line. Life expectancy for the Nepalese is only 56 years, with women having an even lower expectancy, making Nepal one of the few countries in the world where this happens. Many children die of malnutrition, cholera and influenza, and the infant mortality rate is running at ten times that of developed countries. Health care is non-existent, and malaria, typhoid and tuberculosis are rampant. A sick person in Nepal has only two choices - either get better by themselves or face an untimely death.

These internal conditions and the misery they cause are compounded by the so-called 'friendship treaties' between Nepal and its larger neighbour, India. These treaties virtually strangle any possibility of economic growth in Nepal, and are so one-sided and oppressive in nature that the Nepalese army, to give just one example, cannot buy arms or munitions from any country except India. The treaties were entered into by the corrupt monarchy and government of Nepal, who are supported by the feudal landlords and a small middle class. This rotten political system, embodied in a reactionary state, is protected by the police and Royal Army working under a raft of draconian laws. Prior to 1990, all political parties were banned in the country, but following political unrest the previously absolutist monarchy was forced to introduce cosmetic changes. A parliamentary system was set up, but it left the monarchy and army in

power and failed to address the grievances of the people. The many forms of exploitation, oppression and backwardness under which the people lived continued unchecked. Most importantly, the parliamentary reforms failed to bring about a much-needed agrarian revolution, leaving a small number of landlords in control of 65% of the good land while the mass of the people remain landless. Indeed, many of the changes that were made have since been revoked by King Gyanendra, following his



Nepalese peasant women have flocked to the revolutionary banner

ascent to the throne in the aftermath of the recent murder of the previous king and his family. It is widely believed that Gyanendra was in fact the person behind his brother's death.

Many Nepalese peasants, having witnessed the transformation which occurred across the border in China as a result of the Maoist revolution there, became determined to change their lives as well. In 1996, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) initiated a 'People's War' against the country's corrupt ruling classes. Over this past seven years this war has seen the People's Liberation Army unleash a wave of uprisings and attacks against representatives of feudalism and the state. Police and army bases have been destroyed, and hundreds of police and soldiers killed and wounded. In the beginning the PLA was poorly armed, but their campaign has been so successful that they have managed to arm themselves with weapons captured in these attacks. This in turn has enabled the People's Liberation Army to grow in strength and confidence, and has enabled them to gain control over large areas of the country. The

government, of course, has attempted to fight back with mass suppression of peasant political activity. Vigilantes armed by and loyal to the government, along with special police commandos, have been given orders to arrest and kill political activists in an attempt to regain control of rural areas. India, the United States and Britain have also intervened, and the government of Nepal has received planes, helicopters and arms with a view to defeating the PLA. India and the US have stopped short of sending in large numbers of troops, however, fearing that China would look on this as a threat to their interests. The US, particularly, does not want to antagonise China at the moment given the situation in North Korea. However, a small number of western military 'advisers' have been seen on patrol with the Royal Army and police.

Despite this Western aid, the revolutionaries remain in control of much of the country. This in itself has resulted in major changes for the people living there. In these 'liberated' areas the PLA has begun taking land from the landlords and giving it back to the people. 'People's Courts' have been created in order to give justice and rights to the Nepalese peasants which they never had before. Women especially have found themselves empowered in many aspects of their lives, having suffered previously under the burden of Hindu custom. Many young women now fill the ranks of the People's Liberation Army and are fighting to maintain these newfound freedoms. The PLA are now engaged in negotiations with the government, although this should not be interpreted as the struggle being over. At present there is a form of military stalemate, which the PLA is using to consolidate its position in the liberated areas, from which it will be able to launch an even more determined attack on the feudal regime. In addition, according to a PLA spokesperson, the revolutionaries 'did not want to give the government the excuse that they would not talk or were too 'weak' to do so'. No matter how these talks go, the destiny of the 23 million people of Nepal will be decided as the struggle unfolds. On the one hand lies a future shackled to a feudal world of poverty and oppression, on the other a vision of a new democratic Nepal under the control of its people. For too long the Nepalese, like so many others in Asia, have been denied the right to a decent life for themselves and their children. A victory for the Nepalese people, with the red banner flying high on the white snows of the Himalayan mountains, would undoubtedly inspire others in the region to follow their example.

US jails Irish human rights priest

By Paul Maguire

In March 2003, Fr. Jim Hynes, the parish priest of Our Lady of the Angels in San Antonio, Texas, and a native of Ballyfermot, County Dublin, was arrested and sentenced to six months in a Texan jail for participating in an Anti-War protest at the School of the Americas (SOA) military academy in Fort Benning, Georgia.

The fifty-eight-year-old priest was one of ten thousand people who assembled outside the military academy last November to demand the closure of this infamous American institution. Fr. Hynes was accused of crossing over a protest line into the military camp and was charged with trespassing two months after the demonstration, in January 2003. However, Fr Hynes was only one of eighty-two people to be charged on the day of the peaceful demonstration. Those charged included a number of nuns and priests, along with many other human rights activists.

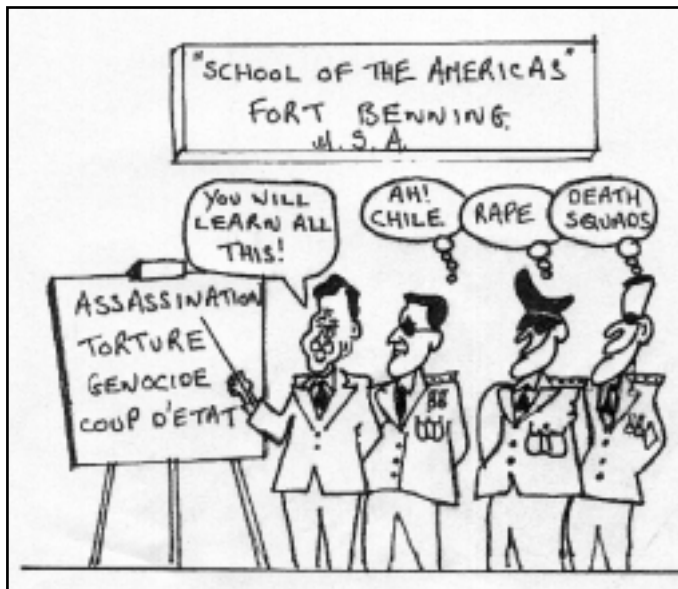
At his trial Fr. Hynes adopted a very principled position, using the proceedings to highlight the infamous role that the SOA has played in American politics over recent decades.

Founded in 1946, the SOA was established to extend US military and political control over Central and Latin America. The Bolivian Revolution of 1952 and the Cuban Revolution of 1959 created paranoia within the CIA as they feared that they were 'losing' the region to progressive regimes which threatened US economic interests. The SOA fulfilled a dual function by enabling the US to establish a plethora of proxy regimes throughout the region which could maintain stability and repress internal threats to US interests. It is estimated that it currently costs the US government approximately \$42million per annum to maintain this notorious terror academy.

Each year 800 'students' from nineteen different Central and Latin American countries are enrolled in the SOA. These so-called 'students' read from textbooks such as *Handling of Sources, Terrorism and the Urban Guerilla*. In 1996 the US General Accounting Office conducted an inquiry into the SOA's training procedures. The inquiry found that standardised SOA training manuals advocated torture, the use of truth serum, false imprisonment, blackmail and extortion. Officials from the Pentagon dismissed the inquiry's findings, claiming that they had no idea of the training manuals' contents as they were written in

Spanish.

Since the end of World War II, it is estimated that the SOA has trained over 60,000 military personnel who went on to occupy leading positions in some of the most repressive military regimes in South America. These SOA graduates were later responsible for directing some of the most murderous right-wing death squads which operated in Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Panama and Colombia. Ten for-



mer graduates from the SOA went on to become self-appointed dictators of Central and Latin American countries through their participation in well-organised military coups which subsequently unleashed unprecedented levels of violence and repression.

The vicious activities of former SOA graduates stretch right across the Americas. The SOA's most notorious graduate, the former Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega, was responsible for the deaths of thousands of Panamanian peasants and workers. Another former graduate, the Argentinian dictator Leopold Galtieri, oversaw the murder and disappearance of in excess of 30,000 people. Roberto D'Aubisson graduated from the SOA in 1972. He directed El Salvador's death squads between 1978-92. Along with two other SOA graduates, D'Aubisson was accused of murdering Archbishop Oscar Romero in 1980. In 1989, Salvadorian soldiers murdered six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her sixteen-year-old daughter at the Central American University. In 1993, *Newsweek* highlighted the murderous role that the SOA graduates played in these horrendous activities. Nineteen of the twenty-seven Salvadorian officers responsible for murder and rape at the Central American University were SOA graduates. In Colombia it has been established that over one hundred mil-

itary personnel who have been accused of human rights violations were also SOA graduates. This is just the tip of the iceberg.

Over the past twenty-nine years there have been repeated calls by human rights organisations for the SOA to be closed down on the basis that it is nothing more than an military training ground for Latin and Central America's most vicious state terrorists.

In 1998, the US Defense Secretary William Cohen wrote, *'The School is an integral part of our efforts to develop closer and more effective ties to the militaries of Latin America. We have ensured that the school is an effective transmitter of our values to the military leadership of the region'*.

Fr. Hynes has stated that he hopes his arrest and period in jail will awaken Irish people to the real nature of the US state terrorist academy at Fort Benning. Speaking from the courtroom during his trial, Fr. Hynes stated: *'We have protested every November for the last thirteen years. The protest is held to commemorate the six Jesuit priests who were assassinated in El Salvador in November 1989. If there's one terrorist camp we can close down right now - that's the School of the Americas. Most people are not aware of its existence. When nuns and priests get arrested over this, it attracts more public attention. So I hope our sacrifice helps'*.

The existence of the SOA makes a mockery of the Bush administration's so-called 'war against terror'. How can Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld lecture the world about the existence of an 'axis of evil', while a murderous academy, which has been indirectly responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of ordinary people, is financed and operated by the US government within its own borders?

The US administration must be pressurised into closing the infamous SOA at Fort Benning. They will only do so when the people of America follow the courageous example of people like Fr. Jim Hynes, and when the international community focuses its attention on the SOA's nefarious political function. Hopefully the courageous sacrifice of people like Fr. Jim Hynes will not be in vain. For when the infamous gates of Fort Benning finally close, it will mark the end of one of the most sordid chapters in US history.

The New Republican Forum

The New Republican Forum is a coalition of political and community activists, founded to challenge the political status quo in Ireland by providing a radical Republican alternative to the mainstream political establishment.

The New Republican Forum:

- Stands for the reunification of Ireland and opposes all aspects of British interference in Irish affairs.
- Opposes the Belfast Agreement, which subverts the Irish people's inalienable right to self-determination.
- Stands for the creation of a just society in Ireland, based on principles of equality, social justice and genuine democracy, underpinned by a comprehensive charter of inalienable human rights.
- Supports the promotion and development of Irish culture.
- Opposes the resurgence of imperialism as a political ideology, led by the United States, its allies and client regimes.
- Supports all oppressed peoples struggling for national liberation.
- Opposes any attempt by the Dublin government to aid or assist any Western military alliance.

Our aims are:

- To establish a credible Republican opposition to British rule in Ireland.
- To critically reassess and analyse the history of the Republican struggle in Ireland, and by so doing, chart a course for the future of the Republican movement.
- To establish, support and coordinate the activities of Republican, community-based and other progressive organisations, forging a basis for a new national movement.
- To liase with other progressive forces, nationally and internationally, including anti-capitalist groups, trade unionists and environmental movements, along with national liberation movements worldwide, to further the cause of anti-imperialism.
- To establish a range of independent media outlets providing Irish people with alternative sources of information on political and social issues.

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