



AN CAMCHÉACHTA THE STARRY PLOUGH

NEWSPAPER OF THE IRISH REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST PARTY

* SPECIAL HUNGER STRIKE ISSUE

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DEMAND POLITICAL STATUS!

For centuries Britain has sought to portray as criminals those opposed to its rule in Ireland. Nowhere has this policy been more evident and more harshly implemented than in the treatment of Irish prisoners in her jails.

Throughout the centuries, Irish political prisoners have refused to be classified as criminals — to wear the convicts uniform or to conform to Britain's rules. In every generation, Irish prisoners have fought for and won political status. It is this same fight — the fight of O'Donovan Rossa, of Ashe and McSwiney — that is now being continued in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh and in Armagh prison.

In 1976 Britain withdrew political status from Republican prisoners. The response of those who were then classified as criminals was to refuse to wear the convicts uniform. It is a refusal that has lasted for nearly five years, during which time they have been deprived of visits, letters, reading and writing materials, chairs to sit on, tables to eat off, or a bed to lie on.

Now this resistance to the attempts at criminalisation has come to a head. Rather than rot for another five years in Long Kesh and Armagh, seven prisoners have embarked on a hunger strike to win back political status or die with dignity.

As I.R.S.P. hunger striker, John Nixon from Armagh stated prior to his hunger strike . . .

"We are imprisoned because of our fight to free Ireland from British oppression; because our goal is a United Socialist Ireland. We are political prisoners and will never accept criminalisation."

We, the Irish Republican Socialist Party salute John Nixon and his six Provisional Republican fellow strikers. We call on all Irishmen and Irishwomen — and all who value justice — to demand political status for the prisoners and to get involved in the various action groups, whether it be the R.A.C.'s; the hunger strike action groups or the National H Block Committee.

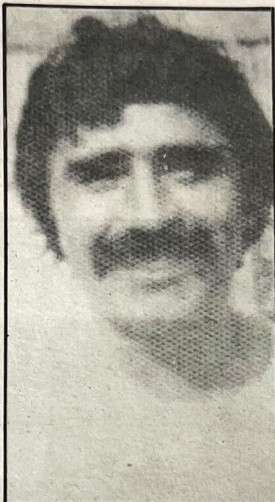


TOMMY, McKEARNEY aged 28 years is from Moy, Co. Tyrone.

Tommy was arrested in October 1977. He was taken to Dungannon R.U.C. station and from there to Castlereagh interrogation centre. While at Castlereagh, he was interrogated and brutally beaten. His head had been covered with a black plastic sack and he had been beaten around the head while the bag was tightened around his throat.

Police doctor, Robert Irwin, testified that Tommy had been badly beaten and a key prosecution witness stated that Tommy was not one of the men who had held her at gunpoint. Despite this Tommy was sentenced to twenty years for the shooting of a U.D.R. man.

Tommy spent 14 months on remand in Crumlin Road and has been on the blanket in H3 since December 1978.



BRENDAN HUGHES aged 32 is from the Lower Falls, Belfast.

Brendan Hughes was arrested in June 1973 and was brought to Springfield Road Barracks where he was brutally beaten. Following his interrogation, he was interned in Long Kesh.

In October 1973 he escaped from the Kesh but seven months later he was recaptured in a flat off the Malone Road and charged with possessing arms and ammunition. He was sentenced to fourteen years imprisonment.

While in the Long Kesh cages, Brendan held political status but in January 1978 he was given a further five year sentence and had political status stripped from him as a result of allegedly assaulting a prison screw.

Brendan was put into the H-Blocks where he immediately went on the blanket.



TOM McFEELY aged 32 is from Dungiven, Co. Derry.

Tom was arrested in May 1974 by the Free State authorities and imprisoned in Portlaoise. In August 1974 he was one of the nineteen escapees.

In May 1976 he was arrested in the North and taken to Limavady R.U.C. Barracks where he was interrogated for seven days (rubber tubing was put around his neck, choking him until he became unconscious; he was burned with cigarettes).

He was charged with taking part in an armed raid and possessing a gun. After nine months on remand he was sentenced to 14 years for possession and 12 years for the raid.

Tom has endured long periods in solitary confinement. In March 1978 he went on hunger and thirst strike to protest against these punishments. After eight days the authorities gave in.

While in the blocks Tom has been badly beaten and has had ground glass put in his food.



SEAN McKENNA aged 26 years is from Newry, Co. Down.

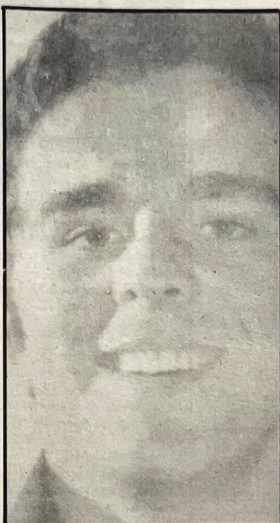
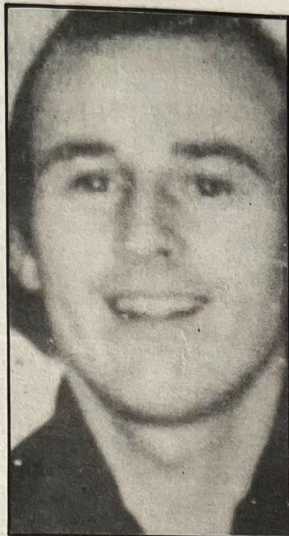
On Monday, the 9th of August, 1971 - Internment Day - the McKenna's house in Newry was raided, and Sean and his father were arrested under the Special Powers Act. Sean's father was interrogated for nine days and subjected to the notorious "hooded" treatment and white noise . . . resulting in his premature death at the age of 42 in 1975.

Sean was interned on the Maidstone and later transferred to Long Kesh. He was released in February 1975 and moved to Eddentubber, County Louth.

In the early hours of March 12th, 1976, SAS men in plain clothes smashed in the door of his cottage and Sean was dragged across the border for interrogation by the R.U.C. in Bestbrook.

Despite being tortured, Sean refused to answer any questions. He was charged with attempting to shoot an R.U.C. man. After 14 months on remand he was sentenced to 20 years. He has been on the blanket since.

GATES OF DEATH?



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JOHN NIXON aged 25 is from Armagh City.

In April 1973 John and his 17 year old friend James McGerrigan, were fired on by the British Army as they walked along the street. James McGerrigan was killed outright. John was seriously wounded. As a cover-up John was charged with possessing arms on the evening of the shooting.

The only evidence against John was the "word" of a British soldier. There was no forensic evidence, nor was there any weapons recovered. The judge, sentenced John in February 1974 to five years imprisonment, which he served in Long Kesh as a political prisoner.

He was released in July 1976. In December of that year he was arrested and brought to Armagh Barracks . . . where he was badly beaten by his interrogators. He was charged with an armed raid on a post office. The only evidence against him was the word of an R.U.C. man who alleged that John had made a last minute verbal confession.

In September 1977, John was given a 14 year sentence. He has been on the Blanket ever since. His 24 year old brother Leroy has political status in Long Kesh. Both John and his brother Leroy are members of the I.R.S.P.

RAYMOND McCARTNEY aged 25 years, from Derry City.

Ray is a former internee. He had been arrested in October 1973 and interrogated for three days at Ballykelly Army Camp before being interned in Long Kesh. He was released in March 1975 but was subjected to constant harassment and was held on three day detention orders.

He was arrested in February 1977, and after brutal beatings by the R.U.C. Special Branch was charged with the killing of the industrialist Geoffrey Agate and an R.U.C. Special Branchman.

A doctor who examined him testified that he had been badly beaten and witnesses gave evidence accounting for his movements on the days of the killings. The testimony of the doctor and the key witnesses was ignored and Ray was sentenced to twenty five years. His appeal against conviction is to be heard within the next few months.

LEO GREEN aged 27, is from Lurgan, Co. Armagh.

Leo was arrested in April 1977 and badly beaten during five days of interrogation. After spending a year on remand in Crumlin Road, he was sentenced to twenty-five years imprisonment, in April 1978 for allegedly killing an R.U.C. man.

He immediately went on the Blanket. Since then he has been subjected to brutal beatings by the screws in an attempt to make him wear prison clothes.

Leo's older brother, John, was assassinated by SAS gunmen at Mullyash in Co. Monaghan in January 1975. His younger brother Lawrence is serving 12 years on the blanket in H5-Block.



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THE STRUGGLE FOR POLITICAL STATUS

In 1971 Britain had a simple response to those who opposed it politically in the Six Counties — internment without trial. The result was such a militant response from the people that the Stormont regime was abolished and direct rule from London introduced.

In 1975, the policy of internment was ended, due to mass action in Ireland and international opinion. Being unable to lock up its opponents without trial, Britain sought and found another way of dealing with activists.

A new list of scheduled offences was drawn up. Trial for these offences would be in a non jury court and special rules of evidence would apply. These special rules include:

1. The onus of proof was shifted from the prosecution to the defence.

2. The removal of the right to internal appeal.

3. The non-jury courts were allowed to convict on the sole evidence of a disputed confession.

Along with the special rules for trial, there also exists special powers of arrest, detention and interrogation. What is known as the conveyor belt came into operation. This was the process under which a person can be arrested; held for up to 7 days; interrogated in torture centres such as Castlereagh and then convicted solely on the basis of one's own "confession".

Since the introduction of the new rules and powers, over 85% of all persons convicted in the special non-jury courts have been convicted solely on the basis of their own "confessions".

These new laws have been consistently opposed by the people of the 6 Counties — and Britain conceded that those arrested, interrogated, charged, tried and convicted were "special category prisoners". As the prisoners were politically motivated, their offences, trials and convictions of a political nature — they were in fact political prisoners.

The existence of these political prisoners was a continued embarrassment to Britain — that a country long reputed to be the bastion of civilisation, could be holding hundreds of political prisoners in concentration camps on its own doorstep. Their problem was how to rid themselves of this embarrassment.

The answer was to set up the Gardiner Commission, which recommended that "special category status" be ended and all

political offenders be treated as criminals.

In November 1975, Merlyn Rees, the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland announced in the House of Commons that after March 1st, special category status would be ended.

Before the announcement of Merlyn Rees entered into negotiations with the Republican organisations and Loyalist organisations who had prisoners on Long Kesh. Britain wanted to discuss the terms under which political status would be lost, and promised deals ranging from one half remission of sentence; new welfare centres; money; extra parcels to Chinese takeaways and colour TVs for the prisoners — if the loss of political status was agreed to.

Both the Irish Republican Socialist Party and the Provisional Republican Movement, rejected the offers made and stated that they would fight for political status.

In September 1976, the first prisoner to be re-classified as a common prisoner, Kieran Nugent refused to accept a prison uniform and was sent naked to his cell. He remained in his cell, clad only in a blanket until his release in '79. The second prisoner was James Connolly Brady, a member of the I.R.S.P. from Derry, who went on the blanket in December 1976. He is still on the protest in Long Kesh. He is not alone.

At this moment several hundred republican prisoners in the H Blocks of Long Kesh, in Crumlin Road and Armagh Jails are on the blanket. Forced to live in their own excrement following the refusal of warders to allow them to the cells to use the toilet or washing facilities unless they wear convict uniform — they have endured this degradation for years.

These prisoners are determined to win back political status — or die with dignity rather than endure another 5 years of hell.

THE FIRST TO DIE?

The condition of two prisoners other than the seven hunger strikers in the Six Counties continues to cause concern. The prisoners are Seamus Mullan and Pauline McLoughlin.

Seamus Mullan a 25 year old County Derry man, Republican Socialist is now over 57 days on hunger strike to protest his innocence following being framed on a charge of blackmail by the R.U.C. Earlier this year, he ended a 71 day hunger strike when promised an appeal.

When the appeal was denied Seamus began a second hunger strike which is now continuing. On Saturday November 8th last Seamus became unconscious in Musgrave Park Hospital and was put on a saline drip — a drip which is now removed. Seamus is determined to remain on hunger strike to show the lack of justice whether in the non-jury Diplock courts OR the all Loyalist jury courts.



Pauline McLoughlin a 23 year old Derry republican is dying of malnutrition in Armagh Jail. She is suffering from a serious illness the chief symptom of which is her inability to keep down food. At present she weighs less than 5st. and is only a shadow of her former self.

On October 13th Pauline suffered a heart attack and was transferred to Musgrave Park Hospital. She was later transferred back to Armagh at her own request because of the humiliating treatment imposed on her by the R.U.C. guards.

REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST P.O.W.'s IN THE 6 COUNTIES

REMAND CRUMLIN ROAD JAIL AND ON PROTEST FOR POLITICAL STATUS -

J. McNiece	Armagh
O. Grew	Armagh
B. McKenna	Armagh
J. Cusack	Portadown
Jackie Prior	Twinbrook
Martin Green	Portadown
Patrick J. Mulligan	Markets
B. Dorrian	Markets
Stephen Hagney	Markets
P. McDonnell	Portadown
D. Hagan	Portadown
R. Livingstone	Portadown
Paul Kelly	Beechmount
M. Devine	Beechmount

H-BLOCK — ON THE BLANKET:

Liam James McCloskey	10 years	Dungiven
Kevin Lynch	10 years	Dungiven
James Connolly Brady	6 years	Derry
Tony O'Hara	5 years	Derry
John Nixon	14 years	Armagh
Malachy Trainor	10 years	Armagh
John Cassidy	12 years	Derry
Mickey Devine	12 years	Derry
Justin Livingstone	8 years	Portadown
John Downey	4 years	Belfast
Brendan McManus	20 years	Belfast
Rab Collins	12 years	Belfast
Chris McArdle	10 years	Belfast
Kieran A. Toal	6 years	Armagh
Tony Rasey	4 years	Belfast
Harry Mullan	10 years	Glenullen
Tom McAllister	12 years	Belfast
Peter O'Neill	6 years	Armagh
Patsy O'Hara	8 years	Derry
Brian Kelly	10 years	Belfast
Gerard Dowdall		Belfast
J. Gilmore	12 years	Derry
Michael Ferguson	12 years	Andersinstown
B. O'Kane	12 years	Derry
L. Logue	8 years	Derry
Kevin Trainor	7 years	Portadown
John Douglas	12 years	Portadown
John McCann		Belfast
John Farran	10 years	Derry
Brian McKenna	5 years	Armagh
Sammy Dunne		Ballymurphy
Hugh Malone		New Barnsley
J. Friel		Derry
D. Fields		Armagh

YOUNG PRISONERS:

Martin Meehan	Crumlin Road	Divis Flats
Gary Trainor	Millisle	Portadown

LONG KESH — COMPOUND 10:

Seamus Grew	14 years	Armagh
Joe McArdle	12 years	Armagh
Patsy McNiece	18 years	Craigavon
Neily Nixon	18 years	Armagh
Seamus McHenry	8 years	Lr Falls

H-BLOCK — SENTENCED PRISONERS:

Jim Hughes	9 years	Belfast
J. McAdams	10 years	Derry
Desmond Walmsley	10 years	Derry
Robert Maguire	9 years	Belfast
Seamus McReynolds	6 years	Dungiven
J. Gillen	10 years	Derry
Patrick Smith	12 years	Turf Lodge
Finbar McComb	9 years	Belfast
J. Kelly	14 years	Derry
Francis Corry	Life	Portadown
Martin Savage		Belfast
Fra O'Connor		Divis Flats

JOIN THE IRSP

The IRSP is organised on a 32 County basis with the aim of establishing a 32 County Democratic Socialist Republic with the working class in control of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

(Block Letters Please)

Aimn (Name):

Seoladh (Address):

Tel:

SEND TO:

An Runai,
I.R.S.P.,
34 Upper Gardiner St
Dublin 1.
OR
392 Falls Road,
Belfast.
OR
Connolly House,
10 Chamberlain St
Derry.

INLA STATEMENT

We, the INLA salute our comrades in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh, the women in Armagh and all Irish political prisoners, incarcerated in Britain and Ireland.

In particular we salute the 7 brave men who are now bearing the brunt of the campaign for political status. It was their opposition to British rule in Ireland and to the British Agony of occupation which caused them to be imprisoned. Like O'Donovan

Rosa, Thomas Ashe and Terence McSwiney, these men will die rather than capitulate any longer to Britain's regime in Ireland. They are prepared to give up their lives, slowly and painfully, for the cause of truth justice and freedom for all Irish people.

The Irish National Liberation Army pledges its full support to the Hunger strikers in their Struggle.

We demand political status now.