

IRIS

DEATH ON THE ROCK

the republican magazine



20th anniversary of Gibraltar killings & Milltown massacre



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THIS EDITION of IRIS marks the 20th anniversary of the summary execution of IRA Volunteers Mairéad Farrell, Dan McCann and Seán Savage by undercover British soldiers in Gibraltar. The deaths of the three Volunteers marked the beginning of a tragic and bloody

chapter in the history of the conflict in Ireland. Here, Belfast City Councillor TOM HARTLEY, a former Chairperson and General Secretary of Sinn Féin, looks back at the political context that led to the momentous and terrible events of March 1988.

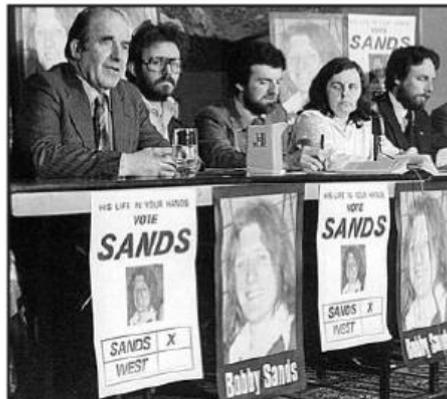


WHEN BRITAIN'S IRISH POLICY CAME TO THE STREETS OF GIBRALTAR

1988 WAS A YEAR OF CENSORSHIP, of the rearming of unionist death squads by British intelligence, of increased attacks by these death squads on Catholics, of collusion, and of the battles of the funerals.

The political backdrop to the horrendous events of 1988 can be found in the rise of Sinn Féin in the aftermath of the hunger strike of 1981. The success of Bobby Sands in winning the Fermanagh and South Tyrone seat accelerated the development of the Sinn Féin electoral strategy. Election success followed in 1982 when Sinn Féin won 5 seats in the Assembly elections, taking 10% of the vote. This was followed by the 1983 general election in which Sinn Féin took 13.4% of the vote and Gerry Adams won the West Belfast seat. The upward trend continued through to 1985, when Sinn Féin won 59 seats in the local government elections. This increased level of representation provided a powerful platform for the development of republican politics, while running a horse and cart through British attempts to criminalise and isolate the republican struggle.

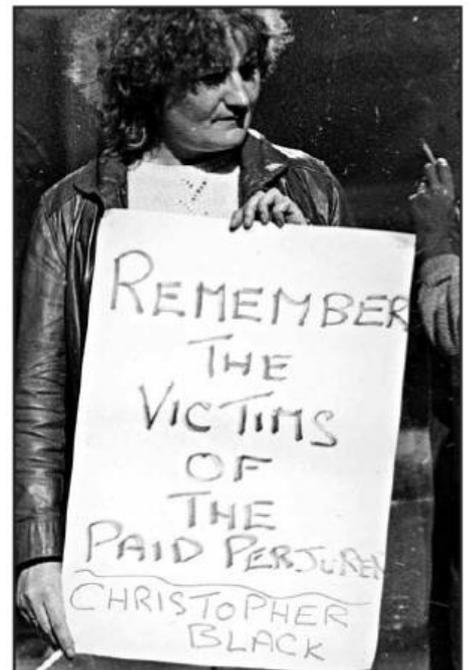
Against the backdrop of Sinn Féin electoral successes, the Thatcher Government made renewed attempts to defeat the republican struggle. This included refining and developing the institutionalised links that had existed since 1970 between British state forces and the unionist death squads. In addition, the British introduced new laws to allow for the use of paid perjurer evidence and show trials. The



• The success of Bobby Sands in winning the Fermanagh/South Tyrone seat accelerated the development of Sinn Féin's electoral strategy



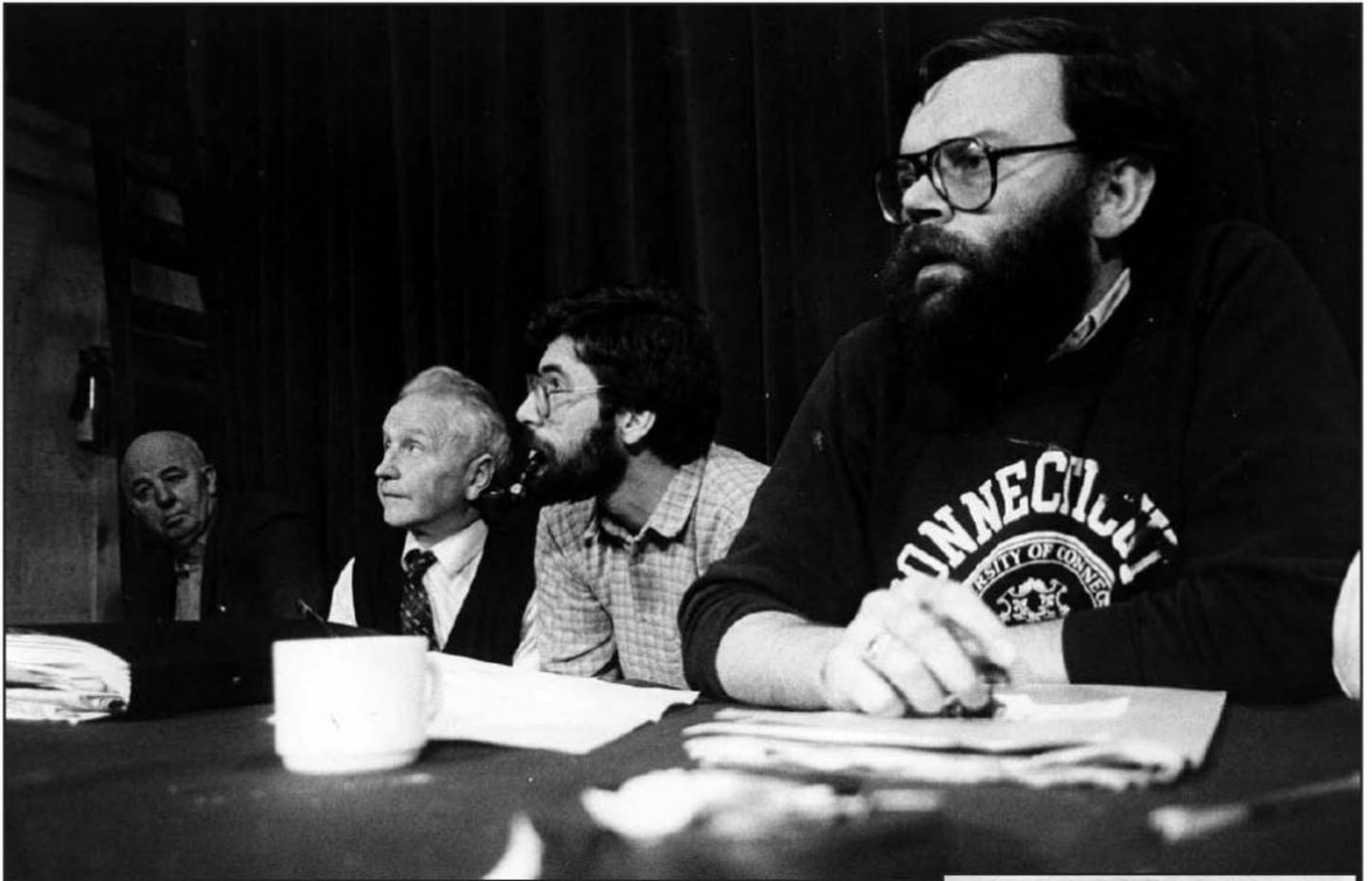
• The early 1980s witnessed blatant shoot-to-kill operations involving a rearmed and retrained RUC



• The British introduced new laws to allow the use of paid perjurers and show trials

early '80s also witnessed a number of blatant shoot-to-kill operations involving a newly rearmed, retrained and reorganised RUC.

British efforts – eagerly supported by the Irish Government – to suppress the republican struggle came to a head with the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in November 1985. Its main objective was to bolster the fortunes of the SDLP at the expense of Sinn Féin and it was about marginalising, demonising and targeting republicans.



• Joe Cahill, John Joe McGirl, Gerry Adams and Tom Hartley in 1985



• British efforts to suppress the struggle led to the Anglo-Irish Agreement

In 1987, republicans responded to the politics of the Anglo-Irish Agreement by launching their document *A Scenario for Peace* which was followed in 1988 with open dialogue between Gerry Adams and John Hume. This represented the very early stages of Sinn Féin's peace strategy and the subsequent development of the Irish peace initiative.

But the key strategy underpinning British policy at that time was collusion. Unable to stop or defeat the republican struggle, British policy makers decided to reorganise and rearm unionist death squads.

Brian Nelson, a senior British agent and member of the UDA in Belfast, was brought to British military headquarters in Lisburn where British intelli-



• Dialogue between Gerry Adams and John Hume represented the early stages of Sinn Féin's peace strategy

gence built for him an intelligence system that would have, as its foundation, information supplied directly by the British Army and the RUC. Alongside that a shipment of arms was procured from the apartheid government in South Africa by an alliance of unionist paramilitary organisations including the UDA, the UVF and Ulster Resistance.

These were smuggled into the North with the help of British intelligence and were responsible for a serious increase in the number of attacks on Catholics and republicans. Among their first targets were Sinn Féin elected representatives.

British policy makers had decided that a concentrated strategy of mur-

• Sinn Féin successes in the 1982 Assembly election in the North were followed by the 1983 general election in which Gerry Adams won the West Belfast seat

der and terror was to be employed in their efforts to isolate and defeat the republican struggle. This policy was activated across the North, and in March 1988 the special forces of the British military were deployed on the orders of the British Government to activate the same policy on the streets of Gibraltar.

Death on Gibraltar

ON 6 MARCH 1988, three unarmed Irish citizens were shot dead at close range by undercover operatives of the notorious British SAS as they walked along a public street in the territory of Gibraltar. This summary execution of three Irish Republican Army Volunteers spawned a series of tragic incidents, the reverberations of which continued long after the event.

The three Volunteers – Mairéad Farrell, Dan McCann and Seán Savage – were unarmed and had been under surveillance for some time by both the British and Spanish secret services. It is clear from all the evidence that they were lulled into a carefully-laid trap with the aim of killing them.



• Volunteers — Mairéad Farrell, Dan McCann and Seán Savage

The killings in Gibraltar were immediately followed by a massive cover-up, with lies from the British Ministry of Defence falsely stating that a suspected bomb had been found there. The SAS claimed that all three reached for hidden detonators when challenged to surrender and that only minimum force had been used. However, the wounds received by the three spoke for themselves.

Mairéad Farrell was shot five times – twice in the head, three times in the body. The bullets to the head were fired into her face and exited under her left ear and at the back of her neck. The three bullets that were fired into the middle of her back exited in the region of her left breast. Her heart and liver were pulped, her spinal column was fractured and her chest cavity was awash with two litres of blood.

Dan McCann was shot four times, twice in the head and twice in the back. The two shots to his back caused damage to his liver, heart and left lung. The two shots to his head caused multiple fractures, laceration of the left cerebral hemisphere and extensive brain damage.

Seán Savage was shot at least 16 times. He suffered 29 separate injuries. His arm was broken and he had various wounds on his torso. Five bullets entered his back and his lung was severely damaged. Four bullets entered his head and he had multiple damage to the brain and skull.

Following the killing, a process of disinformation and demonisation began with British tabloids attempting to dis-



• The bodies of Mairéad Farrell and Dan McCann are taken away from the scene of their assassination in Gibraltar



• Carmen Proetta

credit an independent witness to the shootings, Carmen Proetta. Of all the civilian eyewitnesses to the Gibraltar assassinations, Proetta's evidence was some of the most damning for the British Government and the SAS.

Proetta said she had seen McCann and Farrell shot without warning, their hands in the air. As soon as her evidence became publicly known, she was subjected to a campaign of threats and a barrage of media lies. The pressure on her was so enormous that despite being one of the most strongly determined of the witnesses to speak out, she told the inquest: "Let me tell you one thing, sir, if this had happened again I would not be here to give evidence."

For no other reason than that she had inconvenient testimony, the press – particularly the Murdoch-owned press – viciously attacked her. *The Sunday Times* launched a series of articles purporting to show that her story was untrue and saying that other witnesses had called her testimony ridiculous. This, like virtually every word published by the *Sunday Times* about Gibraltar, was a pack of lies.

On 27 September 1995, the European Court of Human Rights found the British Government guilty of violating the right to life of Mairéad Farrell, Dan McCann and Seán Savage. The long legal battle waged by the families of the Gibraltar Three, which began on that fateful Sunday afternoon, culminated in a judgment delivered seven years later. It was

the first time the Court had found a violation of Article 2 of the Convention. The British Government cannot escape, said the Belfast-based Committee for the Administration of Justice, "the fact that the oldest human rights court in the world has found the state shot to death three unarmed people at a time when they posed no threat to anyone".

For eight days, the bodies of three unarmed IRA Volunteers, Mairéad Farrell, Dan McCann and Seán Savage, shot dead by the British SAS, lay in Gibraltar until their fateful journey home.

It is clear from all the evidence that they were lulled into a carefully-laid trap with the aim of killing them

Dedicated republicans

The three members of the active service unit of Óglaigh na hÉireann summarily executed by the SAS in Gibraltar were each dedicated republicans and committed IRA Volunteers. Like all Volunteers they were prepared to take the risks involved in active service against a ruthless enemy. Each in their own way typified the political consciousness and personal struggle and sacrifice which has characterised the Volunteer soldiers of the IRA in the most recent campaign. While Volunteer Mairéad

Farrell was the most publicly known of the three comrades, Volunteer Seán Savage and Volunteer Danny McCann shared in full measure her absolute commitment to the national liberation struggle.

Chaith siad a saolta agus fuair said bás sa troid ar son saoirse mhuintir na hÉireann i bpoblacht daonlathach soisiach. Táimid cinnte, mar a bhí an triúr Óglach seo, go mbeidh an bua again agus go dtiocfaidh lá na saoirse lenár linn.

Volunteer Mairéad Farrell

VOLUNTEER MAIRÉAD FARRELL was probably the best known of the three Volunteers killed in Gibraltar. She stood as a H-Block/Armagh candidate in the 1981 general election in the 26 Counties while serving a 14-year sentence in Armagh Prison, where she went through the no-wash protest and the 1980 hunger strike. She was the first woman to be jailed after the withdrawal of political status in 1976. Mairéad was convicted in 1976 of planting a bomb in the Conway Hotel outside Belfast. One of her comrades, Volunteer Seán McDermot, was shot dead by the RUC. The other Volunteer on that operation was Kieran Doherty, who died on hunger-strike in the H-Blocks in 1981.

Mairéad was born in Belfast on 3 March 1957, the only girl in a family of six. She came from a republican family and her grandfather, John Gaffney, fought in the Tan War and was interned in 1920. She was educated at Rathmore Primary and Grammar Schools, a brilliant student to whom "exams were no problem" as a school friend recalled. But Mairéad had already thought deeply about the path she was to take and after she passed her 'O'



• Eileen Morgan and Mairéad in Armagh Jail

levels, she left school and joined the IRA. She was 18 years old.

ARMAGH JAIL

In Armagh Jail, Mairéad's intelligence and ability ensured that she quickly became Officer Commanding the sentenced women prisoners. This was no token position. As she said herself: "There were no kudos in it. I had to take decisions that would affect all the prisoners. There were times I felt very alone, even though I had the support of the other prisoners at all times."

Mairéad Farrell, Mary Doyle and Mairéad Nugent went on hunger-strike on 1 December 1980. The hunger-strike in the H-Blocks ended on Thursday 18 December and the three women hunger-strikers ended their fast on 19 December. Talking after her release in 1986 about the hunger-strike Mairéad said: "It was rough

on my parents. I was worried about them, knowing they would be shattered."

She also remembered how much the prisoners' morale had been boosted by the demonstrations at the jail and always wanted to thank all the women who came to support them.

Mairéad, Mary Doyle and Mairéad Nugent were in the hospital wing on the night of 18 December. Pauline McLaughlin had lent them her radio, but the batteries were low and their weakness made it difficult to hear. They heard on the news that the hunger-strike was over in the H-Blocks. They decided that without more information they could do nothing but wait until the morning. Mairéad: "The next morning the Governor came in saying 'The hunger-strike is over so you will be coming off it now.' I said 'I have to see Síle Darragh (the O/C) first, before we make any decision.' He was flabbergasted. 'You mean you're not coming off?' I told him we would do nothing until I had consulted with Síle Darragh."

But the trauma of hunger-strike was not over. The British Government reneged on any promises they had made and a second hunger-strike started in the H-Blocks on 1 March. Again a decision had to be taken about whether the women prisoners would join or not. Mairéad was again O/C. After heart-searching discussion among all the prisoners, the decision was taken that Armagh would not join the hunger-strike. It was, said Mairéad, "The worst time in prison. Waiting for the deaths."

As O/C, Mairéad worked all through that hunger-strike and through the deaths of ten comrades, keeping up the morale of the women prisoners, negotiating with the Governor for visits for women with boyfriends, fathers or brothers in other prisons, particularly those in the H-Blocks.

When the hunger-strike ended, Mairéad had some free time and the opportunity to study. In her remaining years in prison, she took Open University courses in politics and economics. She was released in September 1986 and was accepted by Queen's University in Belfast to do a degree in those subjects.

RELEASE

As soon as she got out of prison, Mairéad started working on the Stop the Strip-Searching Campaign, speaking at meetings all over Ireland. And she reported back to the IRA. Her ten-and-a-half years in prison had, as she said herself, strengthened her resolve. She had fought all during her imprisonment, for recognition that they were political prisoners of a political war. She was not to stop fighting when she was released. Not long before her death Mairéad said: "You have to be realistic. You realise that ultimately you're either going to be dead or end up in jail. It's either one or the other. You're not going to run forever."

Mairéad Farrell was a soldier and faced the possibility of her death like a soldier. It was not something she took lightly, or contemplated easily. It was a hard decision, hard thought out and hard to carry through. That she did it and yet kept her joyful love of life is what made her so special. Talking about herself as a republican woman she said: "I'm not equal...like a man's not equal as he walks out there. We're going to have to fight and have total national liberation and, within that, ensure that there'll be liberation for every-



• Mairéad receives a presentation from Cork republican Deirdre Harrington. Mairéad stood as a H-Block/Armagh candidate in Cork in the general election of 1981

one, women, children and everybody's going to be the same. When we get national liberation it's not going to be the men that are going to be making all the laws. Women are going to be actively involved to ensure that what happened after 1916 doesn't happen again.

"Everybody keeps telling me I'm a feminist. I just know I'm me and that I think I'm as good as anyone else and that goes particularly for any man. I'm a socialist definitely and I'm a republican. I believe in a united Ireland; a united socialist Ireland, definitely socialist. Capitalism provides no answer at all for our people and I think that's the Brits' main interest in Ireland.

"I'm oppressed as a woman but I'm also oppressed because I'm Irish. Everyone in this country is if we can't successfully end our oppression of our country. But I don't think that's the end of it. It happened before where women took the back seat. But women today have gone through too much, no way will they allow that to happen and I hope I'm alive because I certainly won't allow that to happen. Once we remove the British that isn't it. That's only the beginning."



• Mairéad Farrell photographed inside Armagh Jail

Volunteer Dan McCann

VOLUNTEER DAN McCANN, who was so brutally gunned down with his two comrades by SAS terrorists, was a respected and committed soldier in the Irish Republican Army but, more importantly, he was a cherished son to his parents, a warm comrade to his friends and a loving and devoted father and husband to his wife Margaret and their two children Daniel and Meadhbh.

Dan was born on 30 November 1957 to Gerry and Sheila McCann of Cavendish Street in the Clonard area of West Belfast.

The McCann family are a well known and highly thought of family, popular the length and breadth of the Falls Road where they ran a small butcher's shop which had been on the Falls Road since 1905 and in Belfast since 1889. The family history goes back as far as the history of the roads on which they live and they shared, lived and suffered as the Falls had suffered.

LIFE-LONG ACTIVIST

Dan's life story is one familiar to republicans – for those who knew, loved and were inspired by him, he was the epitome of Irish republicanism. Dan was a life-long activist. He knew no compromise and was to die as he had lived in implacable opposition to Britain's criminal presence in Ireland.

For his friends and neighbours, however, Dan was a sincere local lad whose brutal death left a gap in their lives.

In a sympathy letter after his death, a close friend expressed the feelings that many shared and identified with:

"Big Dan was a close and personal friend. I have never asked your special song, Dan, nor your favourite colour. I never tried to examine your innermost feelings. Never once did I think to find out



• Dan with his wife Margaret and children Daniel and Meadhbh (below) Dan in hospital after sustaining a crushed vertebra from a British Army beating in October 1982

your opinions on ordinary, everyday things. Now, Dan, I never will. This sorrow is tearing at me and will remain with me forever."

Dan McCann began his schooling at St Gall's Primary School at Waterville Street in the shadow of Clonard Monastery. He was a promising and first rate pupil, having passed his eleven plus at St Mary's Grammar School on Belfast's Glen Road.

In 1973 Dan's studies were cut short when he was sentenced to six months for 'riotous behaviour'. In the same year at the age of 17 he joined Óglaigh na hÉireann. On his release from prison Dan got a job at the Royal Victoria Hospital, but as a fully active Volunteer there was little time for much else, so he was soon to leave his job to become totally involved in his army work.

Dan experienced prison on three further occasions and was the target for British army death threats and an abortive assassination attempt by unionist paramilitaries. But his commitment never wavered.

H-BLOCKS

In January, 1979 Dan was arrested and convicted for possession of a single detonator. He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment which he spent on the blanket



and no-wash protests, going through perhaps the worst years of attacks upon the prisoners in the H-Blocks. On his release in January 1981, he immediately resumed active service. His spell of freedom was to be short-lived. In May 1981 he was again in prison. On this occasion he was to spend four months on remand for alleged possession of a weapon.

Back again on active service by September, Dan was free for only three months before he was again arrested and held in custody in November of the same year. The spurious charge was dropped after he had spent six months in prison. Shortly before his release on this occasion he married his fiancée Margaret Doherty from the New Lodge Road.

Dan was to spend one last spell in prison, the victim once more of internment by remand. He was arrested in July 1982 on the word of a witness blackmailed by the RUC. When the man retracted his story, Dan and the three others held on the same perjury were released. One of them was Seán Savage.

Volunteer Seán Savage

VOLUNTEER SEÁN SAVAGE was a fine young man with much to live for. He was a devoted and loving son, a loving and loved brother. He was full of life, intelligence and a caring consideration. He was so different from the paid killers who gunned him down that neither they, nor the ruthless political masters who sent them out, could ever hope to comprehend who he was or why he was prepared to give his young life for a vision and a hope of a better life, where he and his people could live in freedom and peace.

Seán was only 23 years of age. He was second eldest in a family of two boys and two girls. His parents John and Lily Savage are a quiet and deeply religious couple who for most of their married life lived on Belfast's Kashmir Road. It was here that Seán grew up in the narrow streets which nestle together today in the shadow of the 'peaceline'. He was born on 26 January, 1965 and was only four years old when Paisleyite-inspired mobs launched the 1969 pogroms which left his neighbourhood in a smouldering pile of rubble.

Seán's schooling began in St Gall's Primary School in Waterville Street. He was a gifted Gaelic footballer, winning trophies in his sport. He was an avid reader, who would spend hours of his spare time poring over books; chief among these were books on Irish history.

QUIET AND SINGLE-MINDED

He attended St Paul's Secondary School on the Falls Road and here his early promise as a student was confirmed. He took eight 'O' level passes and was studying 'A' levels when his studies were cut short by arrest.

Seán was a quiet and single-minded individual who neither drank nor smoked and rarely socialised. He was solitary by



• Seán Savage pictured with Pat Rice of Sinn Féin's Roinn an Chultúir



• Volunteer Seán Savage

nature but by no means shy or withdrawn. He was extremely articulate with deep political convictions, which he would readily debate with vigour.

At 17 years of age, Seán joined Óglaigh na hÉireann. He showed early leadership qualities, which he was to bring to bear throughout his short but full years on active service. He had an extremely high

sense of personal security and it came as a total surprise to his family and school-friends when they learned of his involvement. He spent one short period on remand in July 1982 on the word of an RUC informer who was later to retract.

Seán was an Irish language enthusiast and was fondly remembered by his friends with whom he attended Irish summer school in August 1986. He had also begun to study French at night classes shortly before he died.

In his early teens he showed a keen interest in photography and he pursued this hobby with a passion, adding to and experimenting with the equipment he had received from his parents on his 13th birthday. He was also an enthusiastic cyclist and toured Europe several times.

Immediately on his release from Crumlin Road Prison, Seán reported back for active service. His dedication to the struggle was total and unswerving. To his fellow Volunteers he was a strong, steadfast comrade, whose sharp and incisive judgment was relied on in tricky situations.

At home Seán was a hard working and conscientious son. He had a flair for cooking and experimenting at the stove. He was a familiar sight around the local area, either on his cycle or in the company of his younger brother Robert, a Down's Syndrome boy from whom Seán was inseparable.

BRITISH ATTEMPT

THE SUMMARY EXECUTION in broad daylight and in front of witnesses of three unarmed IRA Volunteers in Gibraltar on Sunday 6 March 1988 involving 12 SAS gunmen, acting on precise and clear instructions from their political wing, the British Cabinet, once again demonstrated to the world the chilling and brutal nature of Britain's war in Ireland.

Despite the hypocrisy and pretence that British forces were subject to the civil law, the British had for many years pursued a shoot-to-kill policy against Irish nationalists.

As the news of the killings broke on the Sunday evening news reports, a major campaign of disinformation was orchestrated by the British and eagerly peddled by the media. The public was told that the three

Despite the hypocrisy and pretence that British forces were subject to the civil law, the British had for many years pursued a shoot-to-kill policy against Irish nationalists

Volunteers had been shot dead in a gun battle and had just planted a bomb outside the residence of the governor of Gibraltar. 'Security' sources were quoted as having said the bomb had been defused. The public were told the location, nature, size and timing mechanism of this non-existent bomb – several experts were paraded on TV to speak about 'the Basque connection'. It was Monday afternoon before the British admitted that the Volunteers were unarmed and that no trace of a bomb or bomb-making materials had been found anywhere in Gibraltar.

An initial statement from the IRA, issued late on Sunday evening, stated:



• Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. The gunmen who killed the three Irish republicans in Gibraltar took their orders from the British Cabinet

"Three Irish Republican Army Volunteers are believed to have been shot dead whilst on active service in Gibraltar. All three came from West Belfast and were attached to an Active Service Unit of General Headquarters Staff.

"Their families have been notified but their names are being withheld until all relatives have been informed.

"Contrary to British security reports, none of the Volunteers was armed when they were shot so there could have been no gun battle."

By the Monday morning, details were still hazy. However, the campaign of disinformation continued with British sources claiming that the 'bomb' consisted of 1,000lbs of explosives, which had been timed to explode when crowds had gathered to watch the 'trooping of the colour' by British soldiers. By midday, the media had been in contact with IRA sources who immediately clarified the position and gave the lie to British propaganda by stating that "the Volunteers had access and control over 140lbs of explosives".

Throughout the rest of Monday, lies and distortion continued to be the order of the day. ITN's main news carried the 'definitive' version of events. It was explained that the IRA Volunteers, using false passports, had left Dublin en route to Spain. Viewers



were taken through a complicated surveillance operation to which the three had supposedly been subject over a two-month period.

In fact, on the Monday prior to her death, Mairéad Farrell attended a function in West Belfast, where she welcomed home a recently released prisoner, Jim Gibney, and in the week before that she was photographed on stage at a function to honour the Loughgall Martyrs as she presented a portrait to one of the families.

West Belfast MP Gerry Adams challenged the Haughey government

MAJOR COVER-UP

over whether it was involved in the whole affair:

"It is of the utmost importance that the Dublin government clarifies these reports so the Irish people can judge to what extent Dublin has been compromised and incriminated by

As the news of the killings broke on the Sunday evening news reports, a major campaign of disinformation was orchestrated by the British and eagerly peddled by the media

security co-operation with Britain."

As details became clearer, the IRA issued a second statement:

"The three Volunteers killed on active service in Gibraltar were unarmed at the time of their deaths. This would have been apparent to their executioners, apparently members of the SAS.

"The British public should know what its government refuses to admit, that it is at war with the IRA to maintain its occupation of Ireland.

"Its rules of war include the execution of unarmed Volunteers. So let us hear no more British Government hypocrisy about its forces acting within the civil law."

The circumstances surrounding the shootings were now clear. Three young Irish people, all of whom had experienced British oppression at first hand having served six prison sentences between them, were on active service in Gibraltar. They were dedicated soldiers in a people's army with limited resources and totally dependent on the Irish working class to which they all belonged. All three Volunteers knew the risks they took and faced them as soldiers.

British forces, with Spanish assis-



• The bodies of Volunteers Mairéad Farrell and Dan McCann lie at the spot where they were killed

tance, had detected the Volunteers shortly before they were killed. They were aware that no explosives were in Gibraltar and they knew full well the three Volunteers were unarmed.

On Sunday morning, 6 March 1988, a group of 12 SAS gunmen in plain clothes landed from a special flight at the airfield close to the Spanish frontier. Along with other 'security' personnel, they staked out the area in close proximity to the border.

On Sunday afternoon, at 2.30pm

local time, as the three unarmed Volunteers walked calmly and unsuspectingly past a garage in Winston Churchill Avenue, a quarter of a mile from the border with Spain, they were identified to the highly-trained and well-armed professional killers, who mercilessly gunned them down without warning.

Eyewitnesses told how two of the Volunteers fell dead on the spot,



• People sign a book of condolences for the Volunteers outside the GPO in Dublin

They were dedicated soldiers in a people's army with limited resources and totally dependent on the Irish working class to which they all belonged. All three Volunteers knew the risks they took and faced them as soldiers

while the other managed to stagger 200 yards before collapsing at the King's Lion fuel depot, which stands yards from the frontier with Spain. Having carried out their orders, the twelve assassins were immediately flown out of Gibraltar.

From the cold heart of a mountain to Ireland

Following initial sketchy news reports republicans in Ireland had to ascertain what had happened in Gibraltar and who was involved. They then had to organise to bring the bodies of the three Volunteers home. Two of those on whom these tasks fell were DANNY MORRISON and JOE AUSTIN.

ON that fateful Sunday in March 1988 Danny Morrison was at home in the Beechmount area of Belfast minding his two sons. He was flicking through the radio channels when a news-flash came on. It was BBC Radio Wales.

"It carried a very robust statement from the British Ministry of Defence saying that three 'IRA terrorists' had been shot dead in Gibraltar. At that time I was National Director of Publicity for Sinn Féin and immediately left the house and went to look for other members of the Republican Movement in West Belfast and discovered that many others were doing the same," Morrison says.

Eventually, following meetings between republicans, people gradually pieced together something of what had happened. Morrison says that confusion and rumour abounded:

"Different people's names were being mentioned, people who perhaps were on the run, people who had been away from home for some time. But eventually at about 6.30pm or 7pm that night the facts were slowly being put together that it was Mairéad, Dan and Seán who had been killed and we had to make arrangements to go and inform their families. I think some of the other families found out as a result of phone calls, rumour or speculation and it was my job to trace the family of Seán Savage."

At that time Seán Savage's father was the head barman in the Beehive pub and Danny Morrison went to break the news to him:

"I walked down to the Beehive and went into the pub and there he was just standing behind the counter, chatting away to people and smiling, not a worry on his face. I called him to the side and told him that there was bad news and he would need to go home and then I informed him of exactly what we understood

happened and with great dignity the man just put on his coat and left."

That night a meeting that involved the local MP, Gerry Adams, discussed how to get the bodies of the three Volunteers home. Belfast solicitor Paddy McGrory was contacted. Another meeting was held the following morning at McGrory's house which included Morrison, Gerry Adams, Joe Austin, the McCann family, Mr and Mrs Farrell and one of their sons, and representatives of the Savage family.

It was a distressing and emotional meeting because, as Morrison explains:

"You had the British Government and the media continually putting out this material about 'a very large bomb' having been caught, there had been a 'shoot-out', there had been a 'gun-fight'."

That meeting was the start of a very, very long 16-day period when, as Morrison says, the West Belfast community "was put through hell. I think it was at that meeting we understood there was going to be difficulties in securing transport to bring the remains home. After that I was put on publicity and not really involved in the organisation of getting the remains home."

That task landed on the shoulders of Joe Austin. He was accompanied on the journey to Gibraltar by Mairéad Farrell's brother Terry.

Gibraltar is built on a rock and the bodies were held in a mortuary that was in a British naval fort. The British attempted to get Austin and Farrell to sign the British Official Secrets Act or they would get no further. They refused. The British relented and allowed Joe and Terry into the mortuary.

Joe Austin describes the scene:

I was brought through these tunnels that are carved in the rocks, not a great distance but into the cold heart of a mountain, and that's exactly what it was, the cold heart of a mountain

"I was brought through these tunnels that are carved in the rocks, not a great distance but into the cold heart of a mountain, and that's exactly what it was, the cold heart of a mountain.

"I was brought into this very small room and I was shown Dan who was on the floor wrapped in polystyrene. It was the polystyrene that you would see

in a building site and the flip was taken off it and Dan was there and I said, 'That's Dan McCann.'

"Almost instantly, this guy pulled open a drawer, of the type you would see in those American movies, like a large filing cabinet, and Seán was there, and I identified Seán.

"He then brought me to an outer chamber where Mairéad was on a bed. There was a white sheet up to her chin and she looked like she was sleeping. Her nose was swollen and it was broken and I asked how her nose had been broken. I was told it had been broken when she had fallen with the impact of the gunshots hitting her body.



• Joe Austin and Danny Morrison



• Relatives and comrades carry the coffins from Dublin Airport



• A Guard of Honour flanked each hearse at Dublin Airport

"I then went outside and I talked to Mairéad's brother and I told him what I had done. I told him there was no need if he didn't feel he could do it, that there was no need for any more official identification, that I had done that but in my opinion he should go in to Mairéad. And we went back in again and he lifted Mairéad off the bed and put her down and we went back out into this corridor.

"These corridors look like they're miles long. They are lit by very dull lights. And in the distance I saw, I don't know what I was seeing, but I saw this figure drifting towards us in the distance and as it got closer I could see that it was a monk.

"He came to us. He was the padre of the base and his first words were, 'We didn't do this. These people came from London and they murdered and they went back. We didn't do it.'

"He asked for permission to say a few prayers and he explained that he was an Anglican monk. Mairéad's brother was very angry and very hurt and he said, 'No.'

"I asked this monk could he give us a second to talk among ourselves. I said, 'Look, your family, the McCanns, and the Savages don't think like me and you here. We're representing the families, what would they want?' and he said, 'Right,' and the monk came in and over each of them he said a very short prayer and we left.

"Our next stop was to the undertaker. Gibraltar is a very small place with very narrow streets and it's also very loyalist and here was this convoy going through. You know, you didn't have to be Sherlock Holmes to know who they were and who we were. People lined the streets.

Some had Union Jacks and some were just there for the novelty value, I suppose."

The undertaker explained that the British air force workers at the MoD airfield would not load the remains of the IRA Volunteers onto a plane and that whatever day the bodies were going home, they would be going on strike.

"Having done that night as much as we

could do we'd agreed that we weren't going to stay in Gibraltar. We were told at the start of this that we weren't welcome, that we weren't safe in Gibraltar and we agreed that we would travel back across the border into Spain."

Back in Spain, in the middle of the night – about 4am – the door was pounded in and Mairéad Farrell's brother was arrested. Austin and Farrell ended up in a holding cell in La Linea. Farrell was released on his own bail to appear at a magistrate's court in another small town the following morning.

The following morning two plain-clothes police arrived to tell Farrell and Austin that they were their bodyguards. A number of death threats had been issued.

At court a magistrate told them that there had been a massive mistake, that there weren't any charges.

"He was very apologetic and said that we should go back to doing what we were doing – do our business and then leave Spain as quickly as possible, that we weren't welcome in Spain either," Austin says.

Back in Gibraltar they found that not only would the MoD workers not handle the bodies; they wouldn't refuel a plane that would handle the bodies. Republicans in Ireland tried to hire a plane.

The delegation in Gibraltar were continually on standby and over the next period received various messages that they were ready to be flown out, only to be told that the plan had fallen through.

The British had made it known that they would fly Seán, Dan and Mairéad to Belfast in an RAF plane but this was unacceptable to the republicans and the relatives of the Volunteers.

"Our people asked the Spanish authorities could we travel by car into Spain to be picked up in Malaga or whatever and then fly from Spain to Dublin. That looked like a goer for a while and then we were told that the Spanish

All these men started to say the Rosary and it travelled from one bench to another bench and to another. We walked through these men and the Rosary was being said on either side of us and we travelled to the mortuary to meet the families

authorities would not ask the British for written permission to move through their jurisdiction because there was a jurisdiction row going on. At this stage we were frantic, we were frightened of the Brits taking the bodies, and we didn't know how long we would be there," Joe Austin says.

Eventually a plane was secured and Joe Austin, this time without Terry Farrell, flew

back to Ireland with the Volunteers' remains.

"The plane took all its time to fly back and I sat for four hours talking to Seán, Mairéad and Dan in the back of that plane," Austin says.

At Dublin Airport, Gardaí and customs officials came onto the plane and explained that there was a crowd of thousands at the airport mortuary.

Austin describes the scene: "They were trying for us to avoid the press. One of the most surreal moments of my life was when we unloaded the remains onto trolleys and with customs officials we entered this huge workshop with hundreds of people in it, hammering and doing all sorts and in the middle of all this din, I thought I heard someone saying a Hail Mary. And because you are away from home and you're emotional I thought no, no. And then very quickly the work stopped and all these men at these benches started to say the Rosary and it travelled from one bench to another bench and we walked through these men and the Rosary was being said on either side of us and we travelled to the mortuary to meet the families and my part of it was almost over."

GIBRALTAR – THE REACTION IN THE 26 COUNTIES

Voice of solidarity never silenced

BY MÍCHEÁL
MacDONNCHA

ON A COLD NIGHT in the month of March 1988 a group of four or five young people stood at an isolated spot somewhere between Dublin and Drogheda. They had been waiting in the rain for hours. They had prepared a black flag and a Tricolour and they lowered them in silent salute as a long line of cars passed on its way to the Border.

I saw that little group on the night Mairéad Farrell, Seán Savage and Dan McCann made their final journey home. I don't know who they were or exactly where that spot was. There were big crowds at Dublin Airport, Drogheda and Dundalk but the sight of those few young people standing together in the darkness was more moving. It was a time of repression, censorship and attempted isolation of republicans but the defiant spirit of



• Young people with black flags in Balbriggan, County Dublin wait to pay their respects to the deceased Volunteers on the route of the long journey home to Belfast

There were big crowds at Dublin Airport, Drogheda and Dundalk but the sight of those few young people standing together in the darkness was more moving.

resistance and solidarity, even where it was represented by just a handful of people, still burned strong.

It was the 'hidden Ireland' which came out to pay tribute to the Volunteers killed in Gibraltar. Thousands of people arrived to pay their respects at Dublin Airport. Someone had lowered the Tricolour to half mast and it remained so as the Volunteers' bodies were received and their funeral began. The Irish Government and the Gardaí allowed the funeral to proceed as planned, despite memories of what was done to hunger striker Proinsias Stagg in 1976. Provocative intrusion was avoided and the funeral from Dublin to the Border was orderly, peaceful and dignified. Given the nature of the Volunteers' deaths, the hysteria in the British media and the thuggish behaviour

of the RUC at republican funerals, the authorities in Dublin took the prudent course rather than provoke public anger in their jurisdiction.

Other voices wanted a different response. Dún Laoghaire Fine Gael TD Seán Barrett said the coffins should have been kept out of Dublin and sent directly to Belfast as the three were 'British' and had died on British soil. Progressive Democrats TD Pat O'Malley wanted Section 31 broadcasting censorship to be extended after he criticised RTÉ for interviewing Margaret McCann, widow of Dan McCann. She was not a member of any organisation banned under Section 31. The PD said the RTÉ reporter had not been aggressive enough in interviewing the bereaved woman.

It was all symptomatic of how the political

establishment in the 26 Counties was embarrassed, angered, confused and even panicked at the turn of events. Their main concern was to stifle in their own jurisdiction, and especially on the airwaves, any sense of solidarity, sympathy or even understanding of the fallen Volunteers and of the nationalist community in the Six Counties from which they came. This was to be starkly highlighted as the families attempted to bring the bodies of their loved ones to Belfast.

The RUC imposed themselves on the funeral and there was a stand-off on the Border. Among the reporters was Jenny McGeever of RTÉ radio's *Morning Ireland* programme. She recorded a report of the scene when Sinn Féin representatives and the RUC were negotiating. The report was broadcast with one sentence audible from Martin McGuinness: "It's acceptable to us and seemingly it's acceptable to them." All hell broke loose in RTÉ and Jenny McGeever was sacked. It was a technical breach of Section 31 and could easily have been defended by RTÉ management but instead they scapegoated McGeever. Her NUJ colleagues in RTÉ failed to fully back her.

Such was the political climate in the 26 Counties at the time of the Gibraltar killings. Censorship was tightened and this had a direct bearing on the conflict in the Six Counties for



• A silent procession to honour the fallen Volunteers makes its way from Dublin's GPO to the Garden of Remembrance on 9 March 1988



• Thousands turned out at Dublin Airport for the return of the remains of Mairéad, Seán and Dan

it was also in 1988 that British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher imposed the broadcasting ban on Sinn Féin. She used the political censorship regime imposed by the Irish Government to justify her actions. However, BBC and other broadcast journalists in the North and Britain tested the ban to its limit and made it look farcical with actors voicing the words of Sinn Féin representatives. They

It was a technical breach of Section 31 and could easily have been defended by RTÉ management but instead they scapegoated McGeever. Her NUJ colleagues in RTÉ failed to fully back her

put to shame the compliant RTÉ management and journalists.

In 1988 the appeal of the Birmingham Six had been turned down and they and the Guildford Four and Judith Ward, victims of notorious frame-ups by English police, were still in prison. The British Government had effectively binned the Stalker-Sampson report into killings by the RUC and announced that



• Huge crowds came out on the streets of Dundalk to pay their respects

for reasons of 'national security' there would be no prosecutions. Less than a fortnight before Gibraltar the British Army shot dead a young GAA member, Aidan McAnespie, at Aughnacloy, County Tyrone.

Despite all this, the Haughey-led Fianna Fáil Government stuck to the extradition deal they had done with the British Government in December 1987. A fig-leaf of worthless 'safeguards' was added to extradition legislation and in March 1988 Fianna Fáil Foreign

Minister Brian Lenihan was promising that extradition would soon be under way. One of its first victims was to be Belfast man Robert Russell. At the end of March his sister Roslyn told an anti-extradition rally in Abbeyfeale, County Limerick, in the constituency of Justice Minister Gerry Collins, that her brother had been interned at 16, jailed on trumped-up charges and sentenced to 20 years on flimsy evidence. He had escaped from the H-Blocks in 1983 and, with other escapers, was



• Dundalk



• The RUC imposed themselves on the funeral and there was a stand-off on the Border

now facing extradition from the 26 Counties.

To openly oppose these injustices at the time was to attract the unwelcome attention of the Garda Special Branch. For any public figure to do so was to face a gagging in the media as happened to journalist and author Nell McCafferty who was barred from RTÉ. Even the discussion programme *Questions and Answers* was attacked for tolerating nationalist views from the audience. A totally one-sided view of the war was presented in the 26 Counties, with every tragedy resulting from IRA actions magnified and covered in detail while actions by British forces and loyalists were distorted through the prism of censorship.

Typical was the *Irish Times* editorial after Gibraltar which spoke of "terrorists...forcing legitimate powers to act in the same way as the terrorists themselves...to upset the balance of the moral argument in the public mind". The editorial writer could not contemplate that in Gibraltar it was the British gunmen who were the terrorists.

And yet the seeds of progress were being sown. In March 1988 the third in a groundbreaking series of meetings between Sinn Féin and the SDLP took place, a dialogue that proved to be a precursor to the peace process. Nationalists in the North were being demonised but were defiant and resilient. Republicans in the 26 Counties remained

steadfast in spite of severe censorship and isolation. And the voice of reason in the wider community was not silenced. At an International Women's Day conference in Dublin two days after the Gibraltar killings,

Typical was the *Irish Times* editorial after Gibraltar which spoke of "terrorists...forcing legitimate powers to act in the same way as the terrorists themselves...to upset the balance of the moral argument in the public mind".

the following statement of tribute to Mairéad Farrell was signed by 100 delegates:

"Mairéad's life was an example of how deeply involved women are in the struggle for national liberation. She played a key role in breaking down the wall of silence surrounding the horrific conditions of women prisoners in Armagh and particularly highlighted the degradations they suffered as women.

"Mairéad stood as much for the liberation of women as for the liberation of the Irish people. On this International Women's Day we salute her courage and determination. Her name will be remembered alongside those of Maud Gonne McBride and Countess Markievicz. We will not forget her."



• Kevin's brothers carry his coffin into Milltown Cemetery

Volunteer Kevin McCracken

ON THE EVENING of Monday, 14 March, as the bodies of Mairéad, Seán and Dan were on their way back to Belfast, the British Army and RUC saturated the area around Seán Savage's family home and began harassing members of the Turf Lodge community who were awaiting the return of Seán's remains.

Volunteers of the Belfast Brigade, IRA moved into the area to launch an attack on the British forces.

IRA Volunteer Kevin McCracken was in the alley between Norglen Gardens and Norglen Crescent preparing to open fire when he was shot in the back by a British soldier.

Local people immediately phoned an ambulance. The ambulance arrived soon after but the British Army and RUC refused to let the ambulance through for over 15 minutes while Kevin lay in the entry severely wounded.

Kevin was still alive when the ambu-



• IRA firing party pays tribute to Volunteer Kevin McCracken

lance got to him but died while on the way to hospital.

Kevin McCracken, who was 31, could never be further from the stereotype portrait painted by the enemies of the Irish people. He was a loving, caring man who put the well-being of his family and his community top of his priorities.

Kevin's father and mother, Stephen and Rita, originally came from Carrickhill, moving to the nationalist Turf Lodge in 1962 when Kevin was only five. He was the eldest of five children, and had two brothers and two sisters, one of whom, Deirdre, was imprisoned in Armagh Jail between 1975-76.

He grew up in one of the most economically and socially deprived estates in western Europe and as he matured into adoles-





• A lone piper leads the funeral cortege of Volunteer Kevin McCracken

cence, Kevin witnessed his schoolfriends and neighbours being harassed on the streets, arrested from their homes and put through the conveyor belt system of torture in the interrogation centres, Diplock courts and heavy sentences.

Kevin was deeply affected by the suffering of his people and, as a direct response, he joined Fianna Éireann in 1972 when he was 15 years old.

Three years later, in 1975, Kevin joined Óglaigh na hÉireann and was soon at the forefront of IRA attacks in West Belfast for the following two years until his arrest while on active service in April 1977. He received a 13-year sentence for IRA membership and possession of a weapon and incendiaries.

JAIL

He was imprisoned in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh during the protest by republican prisoners against the British Government's attempt to criminalise them and the struggle. He was on the no-wash protest which began on 20 March 1978.

Kevin was also on the blanket protest and as an insight to the kind of determination and dedication he possessed, he refused visits until the protest ended.

He suffered the barbarity of the H-Block regime but, like his comrades, Kevin possessed a defiant spirit which could not be broken. Imprisonment brought out many of Kevin's finer qualities, his sense



• Mourners follow the Tricolour-draped coffin of Kevin to Milltown Cemetery

of humour, his loyalty, and his sharp intellect. He became a fluent Irish speaker while in the H-Blocks.

When he was released in November 1985 after serving eight years and seven months of his 13-year sentence, he immediately reported back to Óglaigh na hÉireann and was actively involved in operations and in broadening the republican base in Turf Lodge. During this time

he was arrested on two occasions and taken to Castlereagh Interrogation Centre and the family home was frequently raided.

When the British shot IRA Volunteer Kevin McCracken in the back, they killed a highly-committed soldier of Óglaigh na hÉireann who had dedicated 16 years of his short life to the struggle for Irish freedom.



FUNERALS AMBUSHED

ON MONDAY 14 MARCH 1988, the bodies of Mairéad, Seán and Dan arrived in Dublin to begin their journey to Belfast. The Volunteers' families were there to claim their remains. Thousands of people lined the route of the funeral cortege – all the way from Dublin to Belfast.

As the procession crossed the border, the RUC tried several times to delay it. They ordered that the national flag draping each coffin be removed. RUC Land Rovers then closed in on each hearse, following close behind the vehicles. At several

points they actually struck the hearses.

Loyalist mobs had also lined the route, ready to shout abuse and throw missiles at the bereaved. Just outside Belfast the RUC hijacked the hearses containing the remains of the three Volunteers and diverted them away from thousands of sympathisers who had gathered in Andersonstown in the early hours of the morning.

Republicans were unsure where the RUC had taken the remains but within minutes received word that they had been escorted directly to their recep-

tive family homes. The entire exercise was about showing who was in charge.

A senior RUC man was seen spitting on the hearse carrying the body of Volunteer Dan McCann to his Cavendish Street home.

On arrival in Belfast, a senior RUC man was seen spitting on the hearse carrying the body of Volunteer Dan McCann to his Cavendish Street home.

On 14 March, as he was preparing to launch an attack on crown forces intimidating mourners outside the Turf Lodge home of Seán Savage, IRA Volunteer Kevin McCracken was shot in the back by a British soldier. McCracken had been an H-Block

The crowd was unsure what was happening at first. There was confusion and screams as the injured fell. People scattered in panic and dropped to the ground for cover as stewards desperately appealed for calm

Blanketman, and was a dedicated republican. He died before an ambulance arrived.

By the time the funeral cortege reached Milltown cemetery in West Belfast, there appeared to be no crown forces about at all - with the exception of two British Army helicopters overhead.

When the coffins of Mairéad, Seán and Dan were lowered into the ground, a respectful hush descended on the assembled crowd. That was when a unionist paramilitary launched an ambush on mourners.

Wearing a cap, dark jacket and jeans, UDA man Michael Stone stood up from behind a headstone some 50 yards from the gravesides and lobbed



• Leading republicans Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness assist with the removal of the remains of Seán Savage from his home



• The remains of Mairéad Farrell leave the family home in West Belfast



• The Tricolour is placed on the coffin of Volunteer Dan McCann



• As many as 20,000 mourners took part in the funeral procession from Andersonstown to Milltown Cemetery



• The funeral on the way Milltown



• UDA man Michael Stone opens fire on mourners



• Terrified mourners try to revive one of the injured



• Mourners scatter as a grenade explodes sending a cloud of dust in the air. Visible in the distance is a white RUC van, stationary on the M1 Motorway to where the loyalist attacker was heading, raising the spectre of RUC collusion in the massacre



A reporter from the *Irish Times* who had been in attendance that day said of their actions: "This was not simply bravery; this was a heroism which in other circumstances I have no doubt would have won the highest military decorations."

• The distraught sister of Volunteer Seán Savage following the loyalist attack on the funerals

a grenade into the mourners. It landed just 20 yards from the Republican Plot and exploded, injuring several people.

The crowd was unsure what was happening at first. There was confusion and screams as the injured fell. People scattered in panic and dropped to the ground for cover as stewards desperately appealed for calm. Some lay over others, using their bodies to offer protection from the onslaught. Everyone was looking around, trying to ascertain where the attack was coming from, what was happening.

Stone reached into a pouch around his waist and pulled out more grenades. As he continued to throw the devices, many in the crowd began to pursue him in a courageous attempt to disarm him. Stone was undoubtedly surprised by this. He pulled out a pistol and opened fire, while still throwing the grenades, but those rushing to confront him pulled



back only momentarily and then surged forward again.

Stone continued to retreat towards the M1 motorway at the bottom of Milltown, throwing grenades and firing shots as he went. Those who were chasing him gave no thought for their own safety. They simply wanted to stop him before he hurt anyone else. Their bravery was exceptional.

As the crowd followed Stone towards the motorway, many noticed a white van parked on the hard shoulder. Stone made his way towards it, but it suddenly sped away.

Stone then tried to stop several vehicles at gunpoint to make his escape, but he was unsuccessful and republicans finally reached him. He was knocked to the ground and apprehended as he tossed his final grenade. It was only then that the RUC arrived and intervened, threatening the crowd with plastic bullet guns in order to pull Stone away from them.

Later, Stone would claim that his gun had jammed and his accomplices had "fucked off and left me". He then decided to retract that remark, and instead claimed he had acted alone.

In the end, three people died, and a

• Mourners ferrying the dead and injured from the graveyard in whatever transport was available

further 60 were injured by shrapnel or gunshot wounds. Among them was a 10-year-old boy who had been shot in the back as he tried to take cover, a grandmother with wounds to her stomach, and a pregnant mother of four. But had it not been for the courageous actions of those who pursued Stone that day, the toll would have been much higher.

The three men killed by Stone were Thomas McErlean, John Murray and IRA Volunteer Caoimhín Mac Brádaigh.

A reporter from the *Irish Times* who had been in attendance that day said of their actions: "This was not simply bravery; this was a heroism which in other circumstances I have no doubt would have won the highest military decorations."

There was never any inquest into the deaths of McErlean, Murray or Mac Brádaigh. In fact, the mother of 20-year-old Thomas McErlean was told quite bluntly by the RUC that there wouldn't be one.

Three days later the funeral of IRA Volunteer Kevin McCracken had been allowed to proceed unmolested. But the peace was to be short-lived.



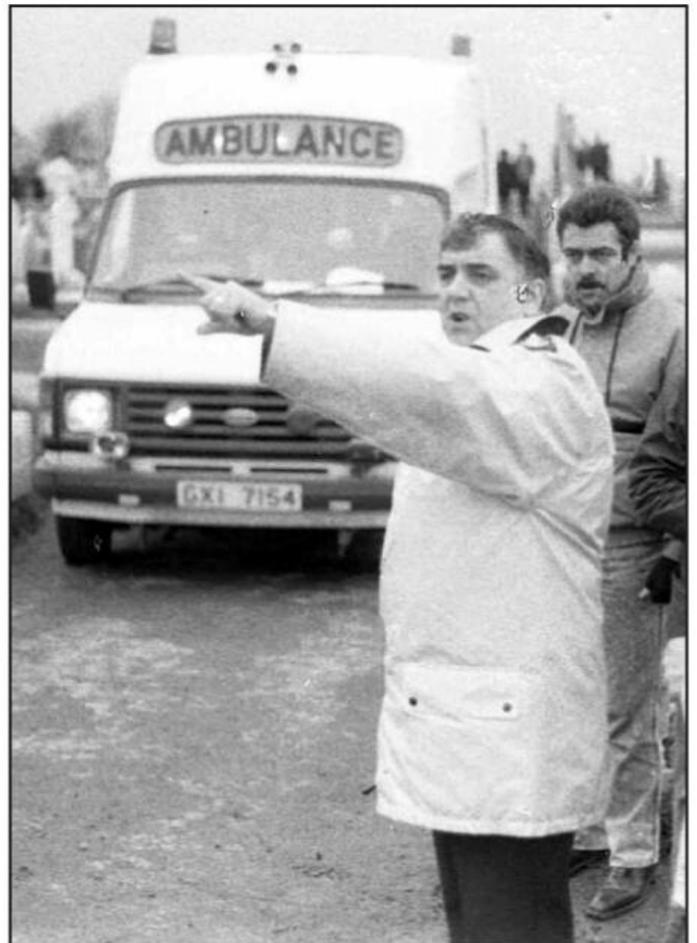
• Michael Stone, still pursued by courageous young people, attempts to hijack cars to make his getaway



• RUC members rescue Stone within seconds of his capture by nationalist youths while others confront the pursuers with plastic bullet guns



• Two handguns, unused ammunition, hat and gloves taken from loyalist assassin Michael Stone



• Ambulance arrives at Milltown Cemetery following the horrific grenade and gun attack on mourners

The Milltown Martyrs



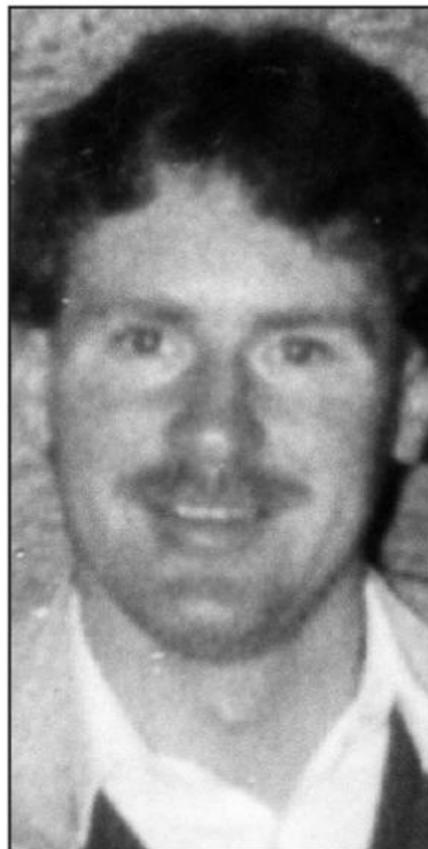
• Tricolour, beret and gloves are placed on the coffin of Óglach Caoimhín Mac Brádaigh

Óglach Caoimhín Mac Brádaigh

RUGADH Caoimhín Mac Brádaigh ar an 25ú Deireadh Fhómhair 1957 i mBaile Andarsain, Béal Feirste. Brid ab ainm dá mháthair agus Liam ab ainm dá athair. Bhí Caoimhín ar an duine is óige de sheachtar.

Bhí triúr dheirfiúr, triúr dheartháir agus an máthair beo in a dhiaidh. Fuair an t-athair bás i 1971. Dúchasach de Rann na Feirste an máthair agus casadh ar a fhear i sa Ghaeltacht. Pósadh i gCeann Caslach, Tír Chonaill iad 44 bliain ó shin. Chuir siad futhu i mBéal Feirste — baile dúchais Liam. Tógadh an clann le Gaeilge amháin agus chaith siad an cuid is mó dá cuid ama i mBéal Feirste ach bhí siad tamaill ina gconai i gCrawfordsburn i gContae an Dún.

Volunteer Caoimhín Mac Brádaigh, who so heroically gave his life along with two other nationalist youths in an attempt to prevent certain slaughter for countless people in Milltown Cemetery on 16 March 1988, was a quiet, versatile and dedicated revolutionary soldier who had so much to offer his country



and was never found wanting in that regard.

Caoimhín was the youngest in a family of four boys and three girls. His mother and father, Brid and Liam, were fluent Gaelgeoiri and raised their family in their native tongue. They imparted the sincere and simple virtues of our people to their children and can be rightly proud of their son Caoimhín who was a credit to them and his people.

The loss of Caoimhín was a grievous one for both his immediate and wider families. He was a person from whom goodness radiated and he touched deeply with his sincerity all of those who had the good fortune to work with him. Caoimhín was an adaptable revolutionary activist who could and did fulfil a variety of roles within the Movement. He was as effective in public political work as he was on active service, where his closest comrades have described him as an unflinching soldier who could be counted upon in the most dangerous of situations and who often had to prove that capability.

In 1975 at the age of 17, Caoimhín joined Óglaigh na hÉireann. He was seriously injured in a car accident in 1976 and was inactive for a period but, as soon as his health returned, he was back on active service.

Caoimhín was a regular visitor to prisons in the Six and 26 Counties and he wrote frequently to his imprisoned comrades. He built up deep and lasting friendships and commitments. His death itself was like his life - one of selfless concern for others.

John Murray

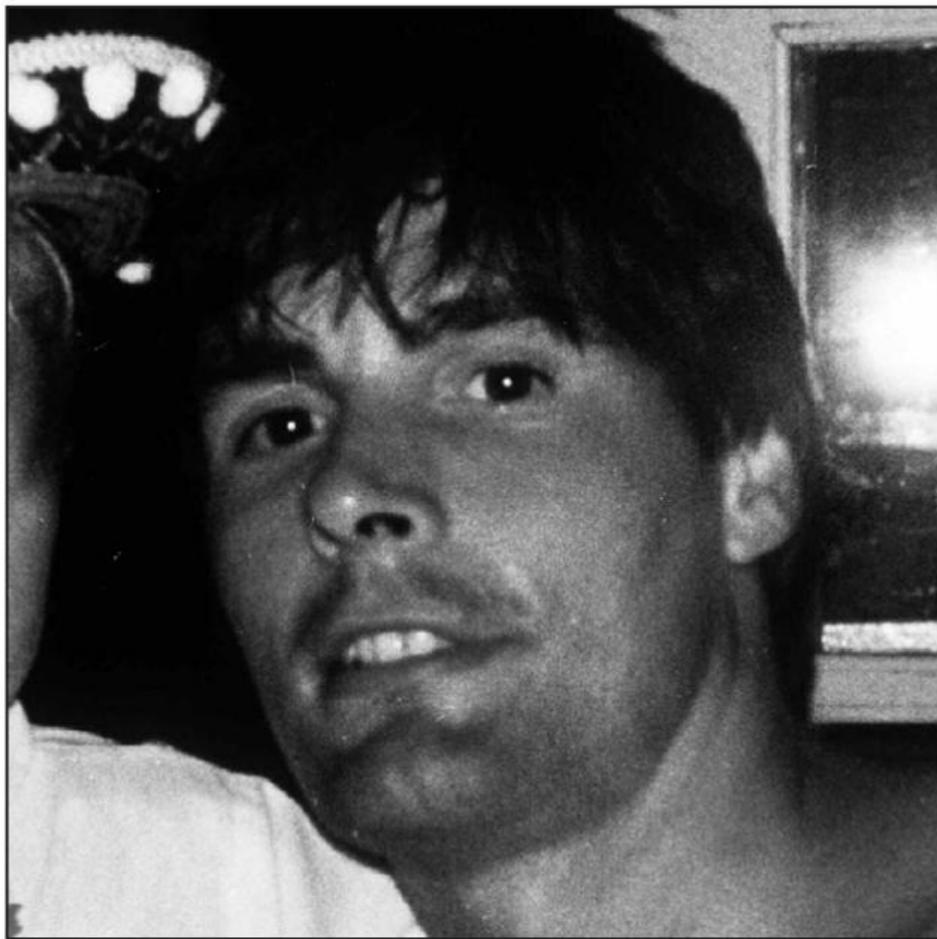
JOHN WAS 27 YEARS OLD when he was murdered in Milltown Cemetery by loyalist killer Michael Stone. John had five sisters and one brother. He differed from the rest of his family as he was born at home while the rest were born in hospital.

He received his education from the Christian Brothers at Oxford Street Primary, St Mary's CBS Grammar School in Barrack Street and then St Mary's CBS Grammar School on the Glen Road in Belfast.

John left school at 16 years of age and served his time as an apprentice at heating and plumbing. He married Catherine Coogan and had two children, Niall and Aislinn.

John was a sporting lad and was very competitive. He loved cross-country running, Gaelic football and soccer. He played Gaelic for Rossa at both minor and senior level and soccer for St John Vianney, Ashton Gate, Brookefield and Markets Social FC. It was through sport that John and his brother Peter got to be very close, as they both played for the same clubs.

John was well known and his family often referred to him as John the beloved, as he loved much and was much loved. He was a very generous and warm-hearted person who would have given his last to anyone, as he did at Milltown on the 16 March 1988 along with Caoimhín Mac Brádaigh and Thomas McErean. On that day their valiant actions saved countless lives.



Mo chara Caoimhín

Le Caoimhín Mac Mathúna

Ba dhuine lách cineálta é Caoimhín Mac Brádaigh. Fear a raibh am aige do dhaoine agus a bhí sásta cuidiú a thabhairt dóibh. Ba thiománaí tacsáí dhuibh é Caoimhín, ach níl mé ag rá gur chaith sé mórán ama a dul dó, nó bhíodh sé i gcónaí ag rith thart ag déanamh garanna do dhaoine eile.

Bhuail mé leis den chéad uair i 1976 agus chuaigh sé i bhfeidhm go mór orm. Bhí sé iontach nádúrtha agus duine lách a bhí ann. Tréimhse dheacair a bhí sa chogadh sna Sé Chontae agus bhí an céasadh sa Chaisleán Riabhach faoi lán seoil. Dá thairbhe seo níor amharc muid ró-fhada chun tosaigh agus mhair muid ó lá go lá.

Ba ghnách linn dul chuig an Clubhouse ar Bhóthar an Ghleanna fá choinne cúpla pionta agus ansin chuig an Green Briar achan Aoine. Ar an bhealach chun a bhaile agus muid stiúgtha leis an ocras cheannaigh muid iompar amach ón bhialann Síneach in aice le Páirc Mhic Asmoint.

Amanna nuair a bhí rudaí cineál suaimhneach chuir muid an lá isteach ag cur geallta ar na capaill i

siopa geallghlacadóra de chuid Rices in aice le siopa Murray's. Is cuimhín liom dúil a bheith ag Caoimhín sna 50p Quads! Corruair bhain muid agus chuaigh muid an oíche sin chuig an PD, áit a raibh na piontaí iontach saor.

Cainteoir dúchais Gaeilge a bhí i máthair Caoimhín agus thog sí a clann le Gaeilge. Go minic nuair a stop an RUC nó an UDR Caoimhín, bhí se de nós aige Gaeilge a labhairt ar ais leo, rud a chuir ar míre iad.

Nuair a cuireadh isteach i bpríosún mé scríobh Caoimhín chugam go rialta ag insint dom faoi na heachtraí seo. Is cuimhín liom uair amháin é ag insint dom gur stop an UDR é tráthnóna amháin agus nuair a labhair sé féin Gaeilge leo chuir siad fios ar an RUC. Ansin nuair a tháinig siadsan, iontas na n-iontas, bhí Gaeilge ag comhalta amháin den RUC!

Mar Óglach bhí Caoimhín gníomhach i mbun trodaíochta leis na Briotanaigh agus d'úsáid sé achan dels a fuair sé. Fear mór craic a bhí i gCaoimhín agus é amuigh ag ól cúpla pionta, ach nuair a bhí sé i mbun oibre d'Óglaigh na hÉireann bhí sé ar dhuine de na daoine sin a dtiocfadh leat brath air go huile is go hiomlán. Bhí sé stuama, agus bhí sé i dtólamh seasmhach agus é sa bhearna bhaoil.

Thomas McErlean

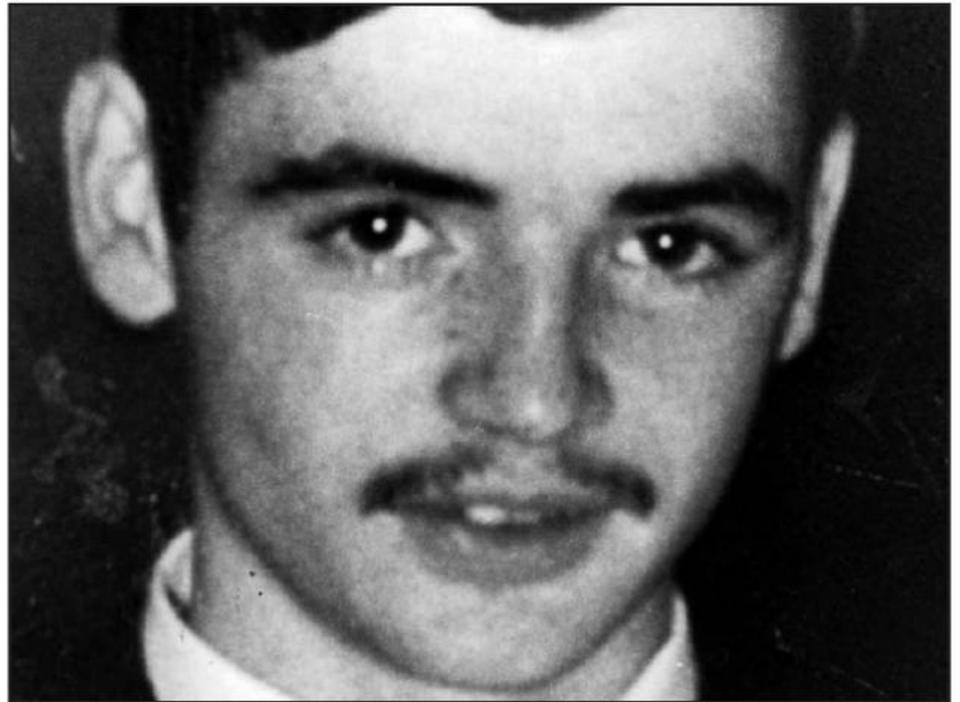
MILLTOWN MARTYR Thomas McErlean was born in the RVH on 12 October 1967 to Tommy and Sally McErlean. Thomas had four sisters — Annmarie, Rose, Bernie and Debbie — and one brother — Patrick. The family lived in Grosvenor Place in the Lower Falls area of West Belfast.

Thomas went to school in St Peter's Primary School in Raglan Street then to St Comgall's Primary after the family moved to Divis Flats. At age 11 he moved to St Peter's Secondary School then on to Springhill Education Project which was run by Fr Des Wilson.

After leaving school Thomas worked on an ACE scheme run by the Divis Residents Association learning metalwork skills, and also helped out on the fruit and veg stall run by his father and mother.

During this time Thomas met Anna McVeigh and they soon married and had two beautiful sons — Thomas (Tucker) and Stephen. Thomas was devoted to his wife and family and tragically he never got to see their third child — his daughter Lindsay — who was born 5 months after Thomas was murdered in Milltown Cemetery.

Thomas was loved dearly by his family who wish they could have shared so many more family occasions with him. He will live forever in all of their hearts.



His children have had to grow up without the love of their father although Thomas's family and his wife Anna have ensured they never forget him or what happened to him on 16 March 1988 when he heroically pursued the loyalist assassin along with other young people and saved countless lives.

A reporter from the *Irish Times*, who had been in

attendance that day, said of the actions of Thomas and the other young people: "This was not simply bravery; this was a heroism which in other circumstances I have no doubt would have won the highest military decorations."

Thomas's mother, Sally, in an interview on a community radio programme, said of her son, "In the end I raised a hero, and no matter what, I am proud of him."



• Volunteers of the Belfast Brigade, IRA stand for a minute's silence as a mark of respect for their fallen comrade, Oglach Caoimhín Mac Brádaigh

Undercover soldiers killed after driving into Volunteer's funeral cortege

ON 19 MARCH, 1988, the funerals of those who had confronted Michael Stone in Milltown Cemetery took place. IRA Volunteer Caoimhín Mac Brádaigh's funeral began quietly enough. Thousands of people gathered outside St Agnes' Church in Belfast in a mood of solemn and dignified mourning. They were there both to show solidarity with his bereaved family and to register their admiration for the courage of this Volunteer who had risked his life defending his people.

At the funeral of Volunteer Kevin McCracken 48 hours previously, the world had witnessed that, in the absence of attack from either official or unofficial British gunmen, republicans would lay their dead to rest with honour, dignity and calm, as had always been their custom.

Fresh in everyone's mind, particularly those who had attended the funerals of Mairéad, Dan and Seán, were the horrific events at Milltown when gunfire and grenade explosions had violated the peace of a burial ceremony. Untold carnage had been prevented only by the heroic actions of many mourners who doggedly pursued their attacker – three of them losing their lives for their efforts and gaining praise and acclaim from the international media, nationalist politicians and the Catholic hierarchy for their actions.

Republican stewards with two-way radios monitored the Mac Brádaigh funeral cortege as it inched along the Andersonstown Road towards Milltown Cemetery. The only overt British presence was a solitary helicopter, which hovered over the crowd of mourners.

But as the front of the cortege reached Casement Park, a grey Volkswagen Passat with two male occupants drove directly towards the crowd. The car had ignored the warnings of the stewards, and although the



The sudden appearance of armed men in a speeding car induced fear and panic in the crowd, many of whom were present when the loyalists struck at the funerals of the three Volunteers killed in Gibraltar

driver saw the cortege up ahead of him, he did not take the opportunity to turn off onto a side street or do a u-turn and go back the way he had come.

Instead, he accelerated at high speed and mounted a footpath, narrowly missing several of those who had gathered to line the route. The car then quickly reversed but was cut off by several black taxis, who were at the head of the cortege. There were shouts of "Jesus, they're armed!" and "He's got a gun".

The sudden appearance of armed men in a speeding car induced fear and panic in the crowd, many of whom were present when the loyalists struck at the funerals of the three Volunteers killed in Gibraltar. Believing they were again under attack from unionist paramilitaries, people began to surround the vehicle.

One of the occupants produced a handgun. There was a shot. The crowd pulled back for a second before fearlessly attacking the car again. Both occupants were dragged out of the vehicle and beaten. The IRA



• One of the armed undercover British soldiers getting out of their unmarked surveillance car

arrived on the scene and took custody of both men. The IRA, determining that the two were undercover British soldiers subsequently executed them.

The British Army later claimed that the two undercover soldiers were on their way from North Howard Street to Lisburn but Sinn Féin spokespersons said that this story lacked any credibility.

In a statement the IRA said that the soldiers were part of a large undercover operation by the British.

"We monitored messages being transmitted which revealed that at least two other undercover agents, who panicked and broke their radio silence giving co-ordinates of their position, were picked up by crown forces close to where the two soldiers were apprehended.

"Among possessions seized by the IRA were a number of log books, a military

intelligence pass which gave an emergency telephone number 22222, and other documents."

The statement concluded:

"Despite media reports, we are satisfied that at no time did our Volunteers physically attack the soldiers. Once we confirmed who they were, they were immediately executed. But we understand why a section of the mourners attacked them and given what happened in Milltown Cemetery on Wednesday, these people acted with exactly the same motive as those who were commended for pursuing loyalist paramilitary Michael Stone."

Following several days of extremely hostile media and political commentary about the mourners who had confronted, beaten and disarmed the undercover soldiers before they were killed and in which the SDLP's Seamus Mallon referred to local people as

"savages" while others called them "animals", Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams issued a statement saying:

"The people of West Belfast are neither savages nor animals. Those who describe us as such are feeding off their own ignorance or are engaging in a propaganda exercise to dehumanise our entire community.

"What happened on Saturday was terrible but it must be seen in the context of people trying to prevent a recurrence of Wednesday's Milltown massacre. Everyone at the funeral – mourners, journalists, priests and stewards – thought this and acted accordingly.

"The British Army's explanation for the presence and behaviour of their two armed undercover troops is totally unsatisfactory. Like the Milltown massacre, there are many questions which need to be answered about the lead-up to Saturday's tragedy."

Terrifying and tragic snapshot of conflict

THE SHORT PERIOD from the killing of three IRA Volunteers in Gibraltar to the killing of two British soldiers in Belfast provided a terrifying and tragic snapshot of the conflict in the North of Ireland in the 1980s. Twelve people had died in the space of 13 days, the majority in circumstances that were witnessed by many, many others.

The willingness of major sections of the media to unquestionably accept the British Government lies about the Gibraltar killings was a salutary lesson in the nature of media coverage of the conflict as a whole.

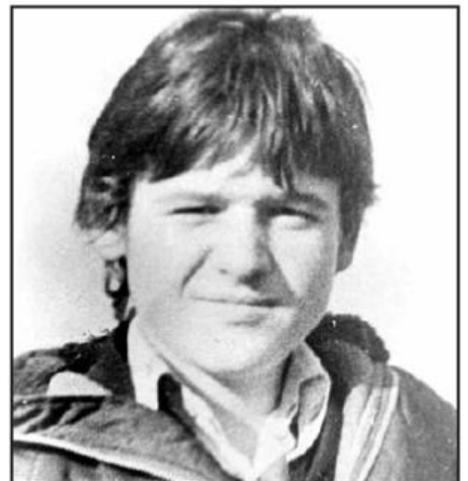
In the hours after the deaths of Mairéad Farrell, Dan McCann and Seán Savage in Gibraltar all eleven British

national newspapers reported the story that a bomb had been found at the scene. Detailed information was provided about the size, purpose and type of bomb, as well as how it was defused. According to the *Telegraph*, the three Volunteers were challenged after planting a 500-pound car bomb.

British Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe approved the killings in the British House of Commons. He claimed the Volunteers were challenged and killed because "they made movements which led security personnel to believe their lives were in danger". The British Government later claimed that Mairéad Farrell seemed to reach into her purse for either a gun or to detonate a car bomb.

Howe admitted however that the

The short period from the killing of three IRA Volunteers in Gibraltar to the killing of two British soldiers in Belfast provided a terrifying and tragic snapshot of the conflict in the North of Ireland in the 1980s.





When the BBC and the Independent Broadcasting Authority scheduled two television programmes about the deaths on Gibraltar, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher sought to stop the broadcasts

THE INDEPENDENT
 No 717 FRIDAY 27 JANUARY 1989 ... Published in London

Thames TV documentary on Gibraltar shootings cleared of main criticisms

PM dismisses 'Death on the Rock' report

By Heather Mills and Colin Hughes

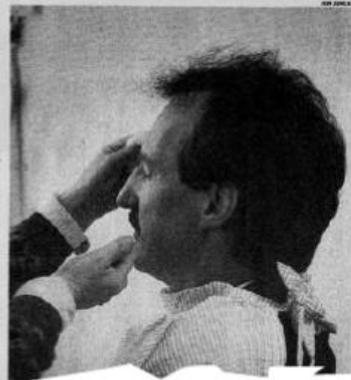
The main findings

... the report published yesterday by Lord Walsby, a former Conservative Home Office Secretary, stated that the British Government had not done enough to prevent the deaths of three British soldiers in Gibraltar in 1988.

... the report also stated that the British Government had not done enough to prevent the deaths of three British soldiers in Gibraltar in 1988.

SUMMARY
 Teletext licences granted
 100m drugs case
 Consensus egg
 Censorship ruling
 Deaths inquiry

TOMORROW IN THE INDEPENDENT
 WEEKEND
 CROSS WINDS
 ANTHONY BURGESS
 TRAVEL
 IMPRESA
 CAI
 GARDEN
 DRINK
 LANDS
 RICH



Volunteers were unarmed and that no trace of a bomb or bomb-making materials had been found anywhere in Gibraltar. Despite this, British Labour Party's Foreign Affairs spokesperson George Robertson added his congratulations to the undercover killers, referring in his remarks to an "enormous potential bomb" allegedly "placed opposite an old folks' home and a school".

But there was no bomb. There was no shoot-out. There were no verbal challenges. There was no attempt to effect an arrest. The three Volunteers were unarmed.

The truth only began to emerge as eyewitnesses to the killings came forward. These eyewitnesses were vilified and subjected to a campaign of black propaganda.

When the BBC and the Independent Broadcasting Authority scheduled two television programmes about the deaths on Gibraltar, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher sought to stop the broadcasts.

The programmes claimed that Mairéad Farrell and Dan McCann had their hands up when they were shot, and

that Seán Savage was shot in the back and then in the chest and head at point blank range.

In fact, Seán Savage had been shot 16 times: five times in the head, five in the back, five in the front and once in the hand. Mairéad Farrell was shot three times in the back at about three feet. Dan McCann had been shot twice in the back and three times in the head.

The events at the funeral of Caoimhín Mac Brádaigh were also misrepresented by the media and manipulated by political figures.



• Black flags flying in Belfast in a mark of solidarity with the fallen IRA Volunteers



• Mourners crouch for cover as loyalist Michael Stone (below) launches his attack in Milltown Cemetery

The two undercover soldiers apprehended by mourners and later executed by the IRA were named as officers Derek Wood and David Howes.

Newspapers carried large, front-page photographs of Fr Alec Reid administer-

While the events at Caoimhín Mac Brádaigh's funeral were shocking, they were the understandable and spontaneous reaction of people attempting to prevent a recurrence of the Milltown massacre

ing the last rites to the two dying soldiers who had been beaten and stripped by a section of the crowd.

While the killing of the two soldiers was brutal, a frenzy of outrage from establishment spokespersons served merely to demonise the people of republican West Belfast.

While the events at Caoimhghín Mac Brádaigh's funeral were indeed shocking, they were the understandable



and spontaneous reaction of people attempting to prevent a recurrence of the Milltown massacre. All who were there – mourners, journalists, priests and stewards thought this and acted

accordingly. To this day, the British Army's explanation for the presence and behaviour of their two undercover operatives remains totally unsatisfactory.

VOLUNTEERS DIE IN TRAGIC EXPLOSION

• Scene of the tragic explosion at Cregganduff



DAYS BEFORE the killing of three IRA Volunteers in Gibraltar, an earlier reminder of the sacrifices being made by the soldiers of óglaigh na hÉireann in the cause of Irish freedom came in South Armagh.

Brendan Moley and Brendan Burns, among the IRA's bravest and most dedicated Volunteers, were killed when a bomb, which was being transported prior to an attack on a British military installation, prematurely exploded. The tragedy at Cregganduff on



Monday, 29 February 1988 was the start of a tortuous and grief-filled week for the families of Volunteers Brendan Burns and Brendan Moley. Over the following six days they were to endure a bizarre ordeal because of the RUC's handling of the location and release of the two Volunteers' remains. When the funerals of the Volunteers did take place,

mourners were subjected to an unprecedented level of brutality at the hands of the RUC and British Army.

Volunteer Brendan Moley

MICHAEL AND MARY MOLEY were the third generation of a family of small farmers to bring up their children in Dorsey near Cullyhanna, South Armagh. They had a large family of nine children – five girls and four boys. Brendan was their fourth child. He attended Dorsey Primary School and later went to Crossmaglen Secondary School. He had a keen interest in Irish history and culture and was in his early teens when he first began questioning the British presence in his country. At 16, he was nicknamed 'The Long Fella' because he towered over his school mates. The name stuck to him throughout the rest of his life.

Brendan quickly showed outstanding leadership qualities soon after he joined Fianna Éireann at the age of 16. He left school around this time and trained as a joiner but Brendan had no personal ambition; his entire motivation came from an intense desire to rid his country of the British presence and he became a full-time active service Volunteer in Óglaigh na hÉireann when he was 18.

Volunteer Moley was arrested by the crown forces on a number of occasions on seven-day detention orders and brought to Gough Barracks, Armagh. He adamantly refused to communicate with his Special Branch interrogators. Around the peak of the paid perjurer show trials in 1983-'84 one particular Special Branch man attempted to bribe him into working for the RUC. Brendan was offered a lot of money for his co-operation, which he rejected with contempt.

Brendan was a trusted and respected member of his community. His advice was sought by his neighbours and local people on many occasions and on varied issues. His genuine concern for the community was one of his finest qualities and it was his concern for the future well-being of his people that made him all the more intent



• Funeral of Brendan Moley



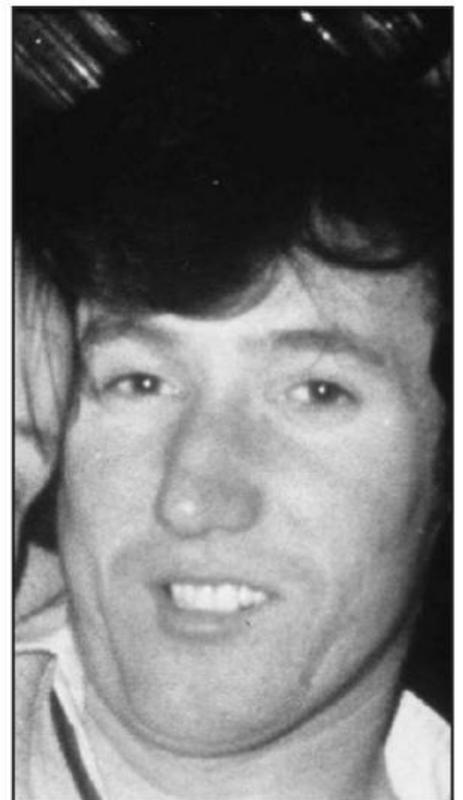
• Martin McGuinness and Gerry Adams shoulder the coffin of Brendan Moley

on giving his utmost to the Republican Movement.

He was involved in some of the most daring IRA attacks throughout the South Armagh border area. Brendan would never have asked Volunteers to do anything he wasn't prepared to do himself and indeed he would often undertake responsibility for the most dangerous part of operations.

During the daring escape of 38 republican prisoners from the H-Blocks of Long Kesh in September 1983, it was Volunteer Moley's familiarity with the South Armagh countryside which led many escapees to safe houses and ultimate safety.

He had the ability to deal with whatever situation arose while on active service. He had nerves of steel and would approach difficulties calmly and logically. It was qualities such as these which set Volunteer Brendan Moley apart, not only as a person but as a highly respected and committed Volunteer of Óglaigh na hÉireann.



Volunteer Brendan Burns

LIKE his comrade and friend Volunteer Brendan Moley, Brendan Burns had by the time of his death already become part of South Armagh's history.

He was the eldest child of Peter and Elizabeth Burns who had five children - two boys and three girls.

Several generations of the Burns family have been republican-minded but from a young age Brendan relied on his own eyes and ears to see and judge the repressive effect of British occupation. He was strong-willed and high-spirited as a child and first went to Cregganduff Primary School and then to Crossmaglen Secondary School, where his friendship with Brendan Moley began.

Brendan joined the Republican Movement at 16 and from the beginning he was impatient to become fully operational on active service in Óglaigh na hÉireann, which he joined in 1976.

The British forces felt the brunt of operations in which Volunteer Burns was involved during a series of well-planned IRA attacks on military installations and personnel throughout the South Armagh area. He radiated a confidence which inspired his comrades and his determination and commitment were unflinching.

By 1983, Volunteer Burns was being sought by the crown forces and it was as a direct result of cross-border collaboration that he was arrested by Garda Special Branch in Dundalk. He was to spend just over two years in Portlaoise Prison fighting an extradition order. However, Volunteer Burns beat the extradition case on a technicality when warrants issued against him were declared invalid by the Northern courts because they had not been properly sworn on oath before a Justice of the Peace. His detention in Portlaoise was declared illegal and he was freed.

On leaving court he was followed by the Special Branch but, true to form, he



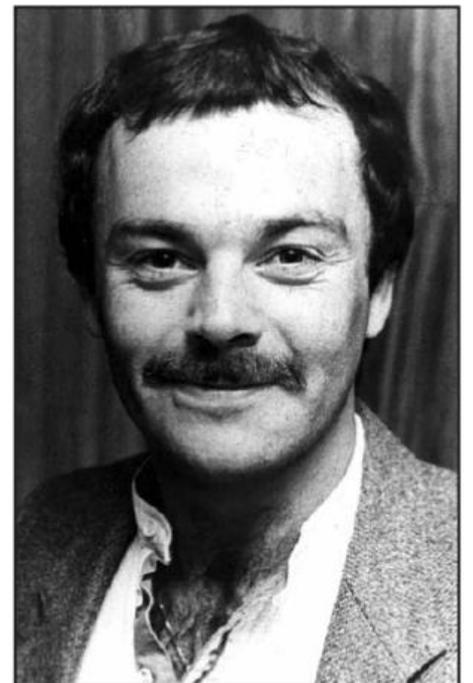
• The sisters of Volunteer Brendan Burns carrying the coffin of their brother through the streets of Crossmaglen (below) Some of the thousands of mourners who paid their last respects to Volunteer Brendan Burns outside Crossmaglen Church



slipped through their fingers by jumping onto a motorbike and driving away.

From then on, Volunteer Burns was on the run, but he refused to allow the danger of arrest to stop him seeing his family. He assumed different disguises and varied his routines so that he could regularly visit his parents at home. On several occasions he had narrow escapes when the crown forces came looking for him minutes after he had left the house. On another occasion he was at a social function when a British army patrol came into the premises. He calmly walked out past them without detection or arousing the least suspicion.

Such coolness typified the kind of man he was and this, among many other outstanding personal qualities, led him to be held in the highest esteem among the people of South Armagh, who opened their doors and their hearts to him without hesitation.





CROWN FORCES TORMENT GRIEVING FAMILIES

FOR A WHOLE DAY after crown forces moved in to search the scene of the explosion that killed the two Brendans, the Burns and Moley families' attempts to find out where their sons' bodies had been taken were frustrated by the RUC.

A pathologist at Craigavon Hospital then refused to release what the RUC said was the body of Brendan Moley and in solidarity with their neighbours, the Burns family refused to take the body of their son home stating: "The two boys fought together, they died together and it is only fitting that they should come home together."

Funeral arrangements for Thursday, 3 March had to be cancelled. The situation

took a new twist on Thursday morning when relatives of Brendan Moley along with neighbours returned to the scene of the explosion and found the Volunteer's body still lying where it had been discovered the previous Monday. He had lain at the scene for a full four days. The RUC attempted to blame British soldiers who had conducted the search, despite the fact that an RUC inspector had assured the family that he was in charge of the search operation.

The long and distressing wait for the families seemed to be ending when a pathologist announced that both bodies were then at Craigavon Hospital and

The crown forces had used the intervening time to prepare what was one of the biggest military saturation operations witnessed at any funeral during the course of the war

would be released on Thursday evening.

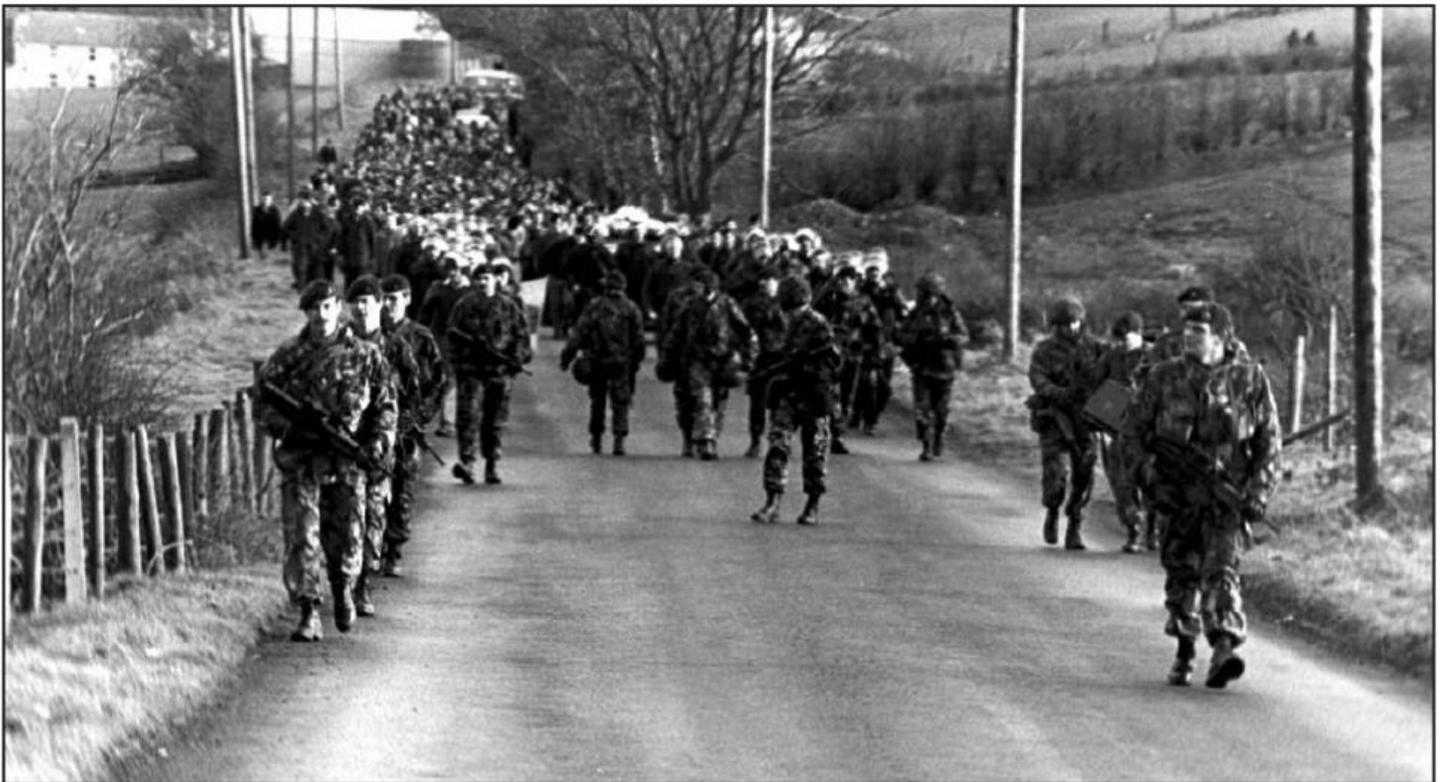
However the crown forces had used the intervening time to prepare what was one of the biggest military saturation operations witnessed at any funeral during the course of the war.

British troops dug in at many locations throughout South Armagh and hundreds of reinforcements were flown in for the funeral.

Throughout the early hours of Saturday morning, the roar of Chinook helicopters



• The overbearing and provocative presence of heavily armed British Army and riot-clad RUC personnel failed to weaken the resolve of the nationalist community of South Armagh to bury Volunteers Brendan Burns and Brendan Moley with the dignity and honour deserved by fallen soldiers



filled the air as they ferried almost 2,000 RUC men and British soldiers in full riot gear and with Alsatian dogs, to surround the funeral corteges.

On Saturday, hundreds of soldiers were dropped into the surrounding fields and

roadways leading to the homes of Brendan Burns and Brendan Moley and roadblocks were set up.

As a hearse bearing the Tricolour-draped coffin of Volunteer Burns left his home, crown forces, in a desperate attempt

to get in front of the cortege, attacked mourners with batons, boots and fists. Linking arms, the mourners managed to hold them back until the hearse turned the corner and sped away. The RUC then turned their fury on the mourners, attack-



ing them viciously. Roadblocks were set up to try and stop mourners following the hearse and cars had their windscreens smashed.

When the hearse reached the village of Crossmaglen, the RUC attempted to move in on the Volunteer's coffin. Mourners closed in protectively around the cortege and at several points along the short distance to the church, fighting broke out as the RUC tried to break through.

While Requiem Mass was in progress a continuous stream of British army personnel carriers landed reinforcements of RUC and British soldiers. The noise was deafening. They surrounded the cemetery on all sides and took up positions within yards of the graveside.

In a final daring tribute five masked and uniformed IRA Volunteers stepped forward and carried the Tricolour-draped coffin of their comrade after it emerged from the chapel.

A large force of RUC and British soldiers immediately rushed forward to intercept the Volunteers, batoning and injuring several people in their path. The Volunteers however, disappeared into the crowd.

Following these vicious attacks on the Burns funeral, mourners were harassed and blocked from travelling to the Moley family home where the body of Brendan Moley was due to leave for burial. Several hundred people did manage to get to the house where they were greeted by a massive force of crown forces personnel who searched and abused them as they made their way to the wake house.

• **Baton-wielding RUC personnel attack mourners at the funeral of Volunteer Brendan Burns (below) A mourner receives assistance after he was injured in an RUC baton-charge at the funeral of Brendan Burns**



As the cortege moved off, riot-clad RUC members hemmed in mourners front and back and repeatedly kicked and abused them. The cortege was halted while a local priest pleaded with the RUC to stop attacking the mourners.

The actions of the RUC and British Army in the days after the tragic deaths of Brendan Moley and Brendan Burns were

ample evidence of the fear that these courageous Volunteers engendered in the crown forces in South Armagh. It was only with massive numbers and huge military back-up that troops or RUC could even enter this area, a place which the two Brendans played no small part in making a no-go area for the occupation forces.

PLUS ÇA CHANGE... AND ALL THAT



BY JIMMY KELLY

Regional Secretary, UNITE the union

JIMMY KELLY is the Irish Regional Secretary of Unite, a trade union formed on 1 May 2007 following the merger of the ATGWU and Amicus. With around 100,000 members in Ireland, it is the country's second biggest union.

Writing for *IRIS* Jimmy Kelly argues that the Lisbon Treaty

is merely a cynical and undemocratic re-run of the discredited EU Constitution. He maintains that the Treaty fails to deliver rights in the workplace and society, or the oft promised 'Social Europe' and should be rejected by Irish voters in the forthcoming referendum.

"EUROPE IS CHANGING at a break neck speed. It is now moving in a neo-liberal, business-friendly direction. With new reform minded leaders in France and Germany and the European Commission, (there is) a great opportunity to agree the Treaty and drive forward a shared agenda across Europe."

That's according to Vijay Patel,

CEO of a leading European multinational healthcare company. I couldn't agree more. Europe is moving, it is moving quickly, and people feel helpless and disempowered. If the EU Reform Treaty teaches us one thing it is this – when the economic and social elites decide on a course of action, nothing will get in their way and certainly not a

minor thing like the democratic consent of the people.

That is the context in which this referendum is taking place – an arrogant contempt for the concerns of the people. For the Treaty is the discredited EU Constitution in another form. Following the double rejection by the French and Dutch voters, EU leaders had the option of taking a more inclusive and democratic route to EU reform. Instead, as Valéry Giscard d'Estaing said bluntly: "The European governments have agreed on some cosmetic changes to the Constitution to make it easier to swallow."

That this Treaty was hastily put together so as to avoid it becoming an issue in the upcoming EU parliamentary election – where sceptical parties and candidates might have made significant gains – only confirms that the conception of the Reform Treaty has been cynical and undemocratic.

UNITE's opposition to the Treaty is based on the very thing that Mr. Patel approves – namely the neo-liberal direction of the European proj-



• French President, Nicholas Sarkozy



• Valéry Giscard d'Estaing



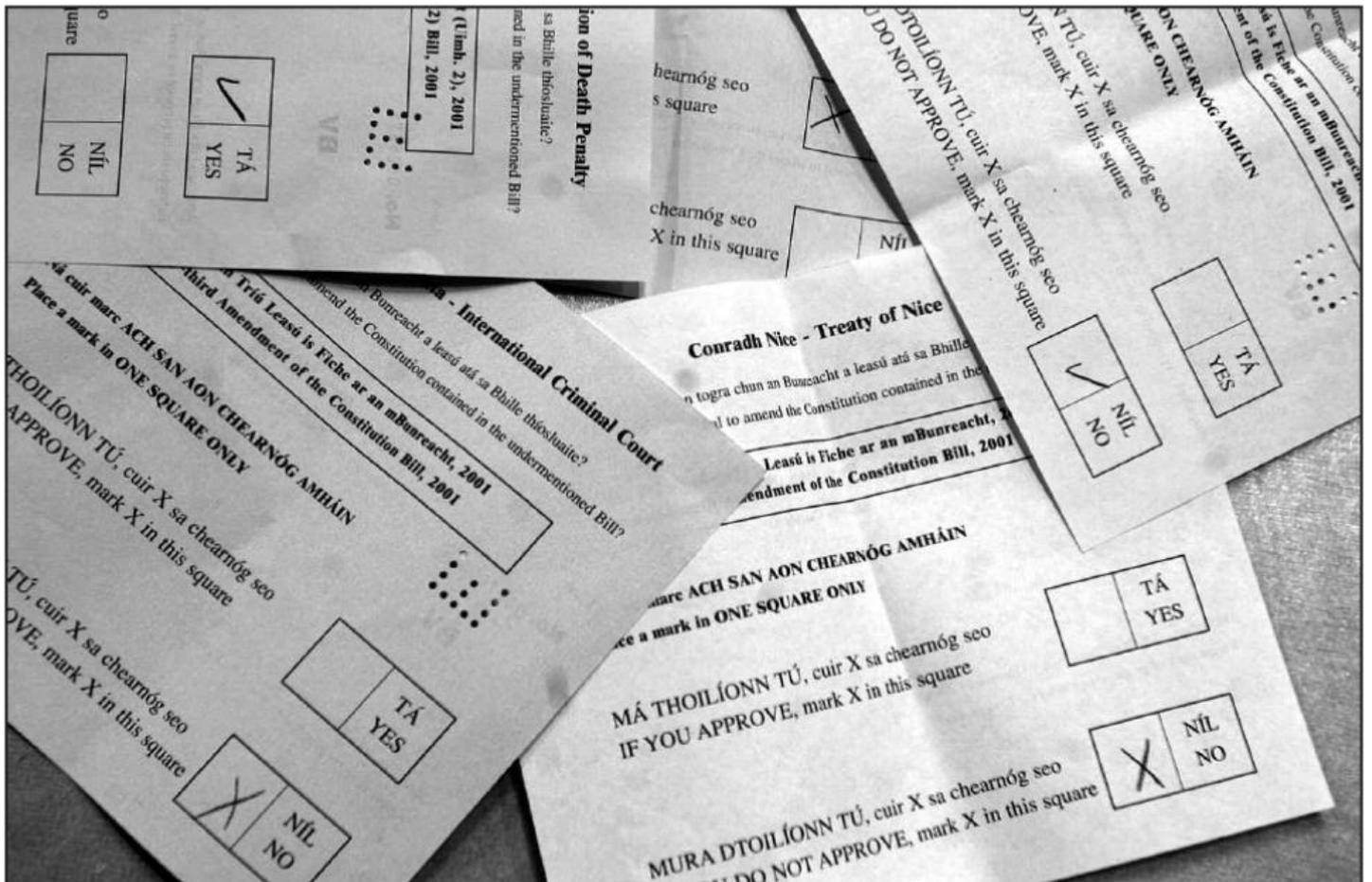
• March in support of Irish Ferries workers. The limitations of the Charter of Fundamental Rights was seen in the Irish Ferries debacle whereby workers are now being paid half the minimum wage

ect. Much play was made of French President, Nicholas Sarkozy's success in getting the reference to 'free and undistorted competition' taken out as an EU goal during the negotiations. But the fact is that this was a

The Irish Government has failed to provide a basis for workers to view this Referendum as genuinely delivering on rights in the workplace and society, and delivering on the promised 'Social Europe'

PR success at best, for it has no effect on EU law.

Article 105 underlines the "... principle of an open market economy with free competition" and "the internal market as set out in Article [I-3] of the Treaty on European Union includes a system ensuring



that competition is not distorted”.

This obsession with ‘competition’ is undermining people’s working conditions and economic growth. We have experienced this obsession here in Ireland, with the government’s liberalisation policy resulting in abnormally high electricity prices.

We have witnessed throughout Europe - most notably in the Laval and Viking cases (in which the European Court of Justice, while confirming the right of workers to go on strike, effectively subordinated that right to the ‘free’ movement of goods and services) – living standards being reduced to facilitate exploitation of cheap labour.

We have seen more and more markets coming under the control of a handful of companies who can use their resources to drive out smaller companies. The EU Reform Treaty reinforces these trends.

The Treaty is not content with attacking economic growth and living standards in Europe but rather it seeks to export it – impose it, if you will – to other more vulnerable countries. Under the Treaty EU trade policy will have as an objective to:

“Encourage the integration of all countries into the world economy, including through the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade”.

Generalised ‘free’ trade will remain a key plank in EU policy, allowing for even greater liberalisation.

Some may hope that the Charter of Fundamental Rights will somehow rebalance things in the EU, provide a counter-weight to the corporate powers that are more and more dominating policy. However, we should be more than sceptical.

Let’s look back to the last time we discussed these matters in detail – during the referenda on the Nice Treaty. At that time the Trade Union and Labour movement was encour-



• The Irish Government refuses the benefits of European standards of childcare and healthcare to Irish citizens

aged to support the Nice Treaty on the basis that the Charter of Fundamental Rights would deliver on the so called agenda for a Social Europe. Many trade unionists at the time supported the Treaty on that basis.

The Charter disappeared into a political declaration and while well meaning did not deliver in any substance on the social agenda. If anything, the aspirational social market has been overwhelmed by neo-liberal economic policies.

The implementation of the rights in this Charter is essentially a matter of the “national practices and

legislation”. This Charter does not create a set of European social rights that would provide a counter-balance to the right to free competition. The scope of the Charter is explicitly limited. The text states that it:

“Shall not extend in any way the competences of the Union ... (and) shall not affect the Union’s competences as defined in the Treaties.”

We can see the fall-out of this limitation in Ireland. The Irish Ferries debacle whereby now workers are being paid half of the minimum wage; employers’ attacks on the Joint Labour Committee’s attempt

to increase the wages of the lowest paid in the economy; the Irish Government's success in defeating the Agency Workers' Draft Directive in the EU Commission; and the continuing scandal of Irish workers being denied the right to be represented by a trade union of their choice – all these show the Charter of Fundamental Rights to be hollow and toothless.

And it also shows the hypocrisy of this Irish Government. Every few years – when a new EU treaty needs to be passed – the government demands that we be 'good

If the EU Reform Treaty teaches us one thing it is this - when the economic and social elites decide on a course of action, nothing will get in their way and certainly not a minor thing like the democratic consent of the people

Europeans' and vote Yes without question. Of course, the Government does not feel this 'good Europeanism' needs to be applied to them. It refuses to embrace Europe, refuses to act like a European government and refuses the benefits of a European way of life to Irish citizens.

People have a right to participate in the European project but this government is intent on preventing that.

The Irish Government has failed to provide a basis for workers to view this Treaty as genuinely delivering on rights in the workplace and society, and delivering on the promised 'Social Europe'.

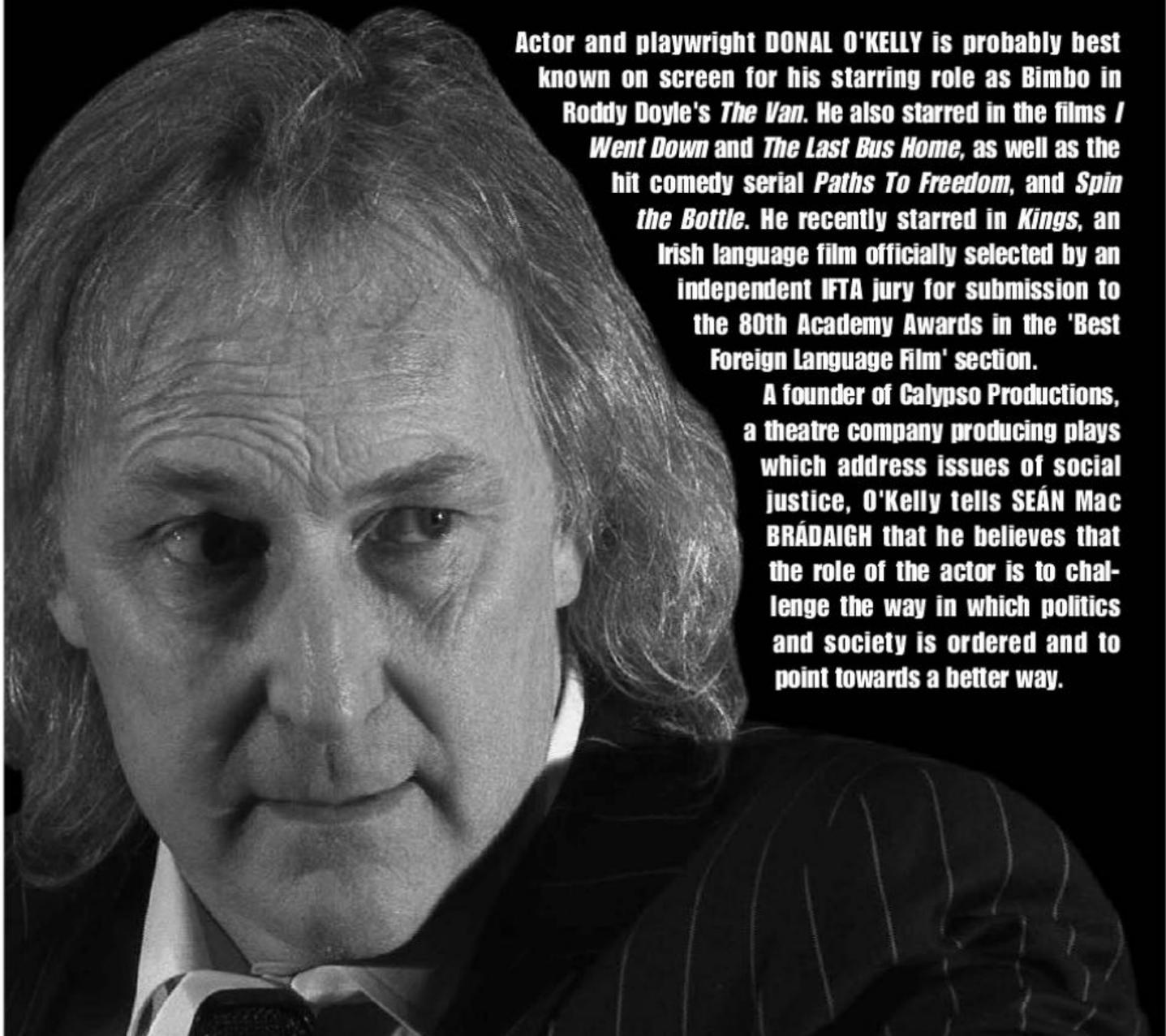
That is why we need a debate on this issue.

That is why UNITE is calling for working people to reject this Treaty and vote No in the upcoming referendum.

GOVERNMENT BACKS LISBON BUT REFUSES BENEFITS OF EUROPEAN WAY OF LIFE

- **IN STOCKHOLM**, citizens receive free GP care and subsidised medicine.
IN CORK, people go sick because they can't afford doctors and medicine.
- **IN HAMBURG**, childcare costs €90 a month because it is seen as a vital public service.
IN DUBLIN, families have to pay up to €900 for childcare because the Government doesn't believe in public services.
- **IN SPAIN**, they are ensuring that no one lives more than 30 miles from a high-speed train station to take them anywhere in the country.
IN IRELAND, rail transport is rated one of the worst in the industrialised world.
- **IN ROTTERDAM**, a mother with her newborn child receives daily visits from a public nurse to provide assistance and advice.
IN LIMERICK, a mother is forced to go back to work early because she gets little financial support.
- **IN BRUSSELS**, an old age pensioner is guaranteed 50% of their final salary to live on.
IN GALWAY, the elderly are only guaranteed a poverty-line subsistence.
- **IN ROME**, an agency worker is entitled to the same rights as any other worker.
IN MONAGHAN, an agency worker has no such rights, no such protection, no public agency to help them out.
- **IN VIENNA**, the state invests over €7,000 for each child's primary education.
IN WATERFORD, a child is only worth half that amount from a state that would rather reduce taxes for the corporate sector.
- **IN PARIS**, electricity is seen as a common good and prices are prevented from strangling households and businesses.
IN ATHLONE, the state raises electricity prices to ensure the private sector can make enough profit.
- **IN LIVERPOOL**, workers have a right to collective bargaining and to negotiate with their employers with a trade union of their choice.
IN WEXFORD, workers have no such rights, no such protection, and in many cases no such choice.

CHALLENGING 'THE SYSTEM' ON STAGE AND SCREEN



Actor and playwright DONAL O'KELLY is probably best known on screen for his starring role as Bimbo in Roddy Doyle's *The Van*. He also starred in the films *I Went Down* and *The Last Bus Home*, as well as the hit comedy serial *Paths To Freedom*, and *Spin the Bottle*. He recently starred in *Kings*, an Irish language film officially selected by an independent IFTA jury for submission to the 80th Academy Awards in the 'Best Foreign Language Film' section.

A founder of Calypso Productions, a theatre company producing plays which address issues of social justice, O'Kelly tells SEÁN Mac BRÁDAIGH that he believes that the role of the actor is to challenge the way in which politics and society is ordered and to point towards a better way.

IN TOM COLLINS' Irish language film *Kings*, Donal O'Kelly starred alongside Colm Meaney and Brendan Conroy. The film dealt with the experiences of Irish emigrants in England. Explaining why he thinks *Kings* was an important film O'Kelly says:

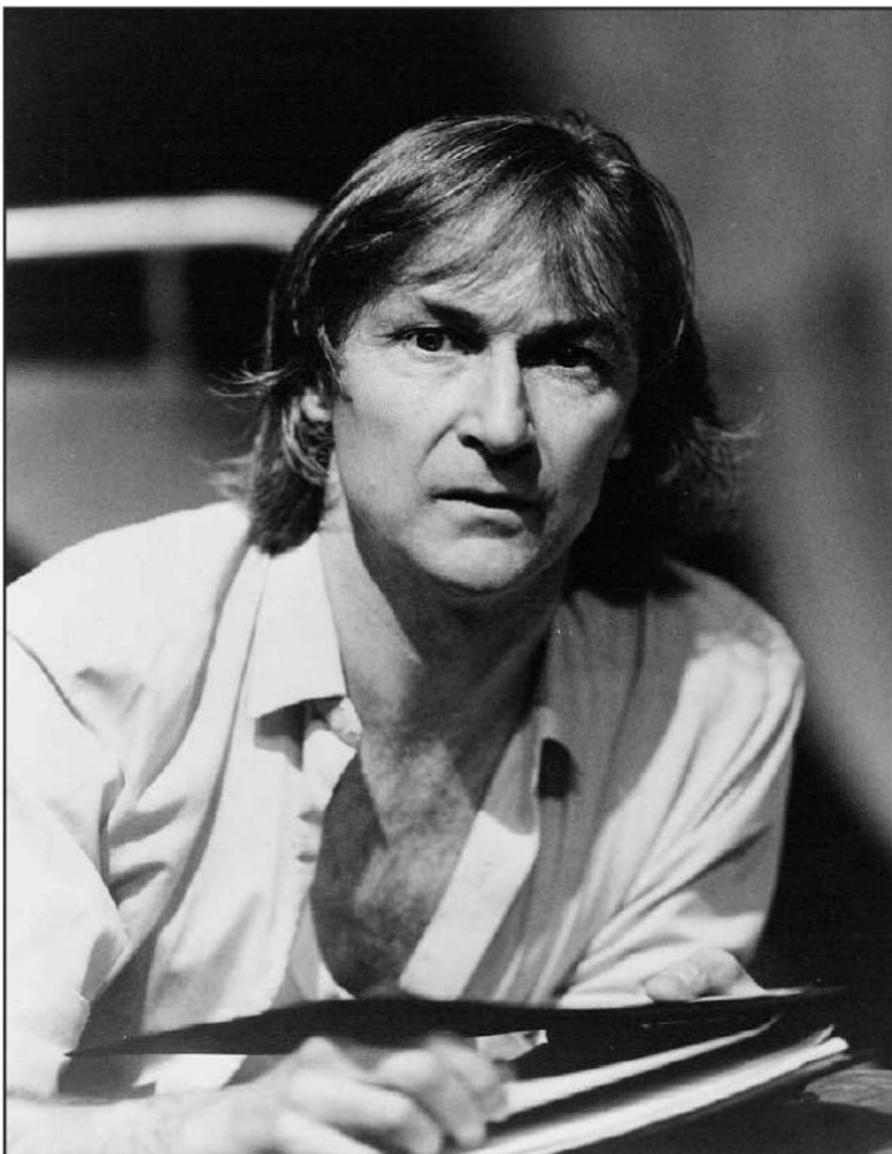
"Great credit is due to Tommy Collins for taking the project on and giving it such broad appeal. It ran for longer than most Irish movies and a lot of people saw it in the country and it put the spotlight on a kind of neglected area of Irish life – the emigrants who actually kept the ship afloat before prosperity came.

"I think it's great that this film was made because it's an issue that would have been swept under the carpet. It seems to be part of our collective memory that we don't want to think about any more. It's like a shameful thing in a way that previous generations had other things that they didn't want to be thinking about.

"There are a couple of generations there of emigrant labourers, economic migrants

'Politics is a part of our lives as much as the air that we breath. It's around. And you often find that the artist who is most vociferous in claiming to be apolitical is the most political manoeuvrer in the room'

• Donal O'Kelly in *Catalpa*



and the reason it is so important that a film like *Kings* is made now is that we are on the other side of the migration trail now – we're a destination and we would want to be very careful of our attitude. Remembering is always good."

O'Kelly has appeared in a number of major films over the years, and is currently playing a part in RTE's *Fair City* but his background is in theatre and he says that this remains his preferred medium:

"If I was keeping an eye on my career path I should be hedging my bets but I just love live audiences. I especially love touring theatre and I love doing shows in places where it's a clean deal with the audience. There's no hype involved. You just get a crowd of people into a hall and you have to tell a story in a way that's gripping. That's turned out to be what I do mainly."

Over the years O'Kelly has lent his support and talent to social and political campaigns and sees the artist as having a role in bringing about social change. He explains:

"Politics is a part of our lives as much as the air that we breathe. It's around. And you often find that the artist who is most vociferous in claiming to be apolitical is the most political manoeuvrer in the room.

"The ultimate function of the artist is to indicate a better way of being and that means how we order ourselves in society. It doesn't mean that you have to be on a soap-box all the time, in fact part of the craft is not to appear too prescriptive. But at the same time I think it is the mark of true art that there is a vision of a changed way of being.

"Art is inescapably part of our lives and when it is politically repressed is usually when it bursts forth with most vigour. Obviously I don't think censorship is a good thing but it's amazing how the most vibrant art sometimes erupts out of situations of repression.

"For me theatre comes down to the verb 'to act'. The people who became the leaders of the 1916 rebellion were actors in every sense of the word. It's no coincidence that McDonagh and Plunkett set up the Irish Theatre Company, which is something that I think is horrifically overlooked. They set up this company with Edward Martin to produce plays about Irish life, but not only Irish life because they wanted to do Stringberg's *Easter* which was a real avant-garde play at the time in 1915 but they had to shelve it because, well, their time got short!

"Connolly wrote *Under which Flag* and



had it presented on the Palm Sunday weekend before the 1916 rising. Seán Connolly played the leading role in it and the flag used in the play was the flag he was holding when he was shot. At the time to act meant to illustrate what your ideas were as well and what do you do? You just get up on a stage and do it and that's what they did.

"Since the advent of film that's changed, theatre doesn't have such a provocative 'in-your-face' role as it did back then. But we have to deal with that. It's not as clear cut as it was then but that impulse to get up on stage and say what you mean is fantastic."

Many of O'Kelly's own plays have themes rooted in the events of Irish history.

"It started accidentally because I love reading about history. Then there is the old motto that you can't move forward unless you look back. You have to look back and learn lessons that were well learned in the past otherwise you're going to make the same mistakes again. I also think that history provides some very interesting prisms or lenses for looking at problems today.

"I did a play called *The Cambria* which is about the very little known fact that Frederick Douglass, the most prominent African-American of the 19th century, came here to Ireland as an asylum seeker. He ended up speaking on platforms with Daniel O'Connell, a hero of freedom. I would point the finger at the historical establishment for the fact that not more is written

• Donal in *Running Beast*

'Especially during 30 years of troubles in the North, historical analysis was so entrenched that people were just written off as a 'Stick' or 'Provo stooge'. That's almost gone now which I think is a very good thing'

about this. That is why I did the play.

"How many Frederick Douglasses have landed today and never got past immigration? How many have been deported?"

"I like looking at history and the contradictions and teasing them out. It's complex, not simple. What you're given is almost always somebody's propaganda. There is always some agenda behind what is received generally. There is a big difference between earned consensus and glib consensus. The latter is enforced, usually by censorship."

His play *Catalpa*, based on the true story of the Fenian rescue of six Irish prisoners in 1875, won a Scotsman Fringe First Award at the 1996 Edinburgh Fringe Festival and the Critic's Prize at the Melbourne International Festival in 1997.

"It's a great story. But also it's quite a tricky story because it's not all cut and dried patriotic heroics. It never is in my opinion. It was a great humanitarian quest. The idea was to use a whaling ship to rescue six Fenian prisoners. They succeeded in rescuing the six and bringing them back to New York. But within that overall story there was quite a number of contradictions over what the right thing to do was. The overall question is - what is a hero? And it's not always as easy as you might first imagine. Again, it very rarely is. They were in some tight spots, particularly the captain of the *Catalpa*, George Anthony, who wasn't Irish at all. He was more or less



brought back by gunpoint to New York in the end. It's quite a complex story."

O'Kelly's *Operation Easter* was an unusual take on the 1916 story, juxtaposing as it did modern day Moore Street with the personalities and events of Easter 1916. Describing the thinking behind this unconventional treatment he says:

"Once we categorise things as historical we think of people as less mixed up than we are now ourselves. I don't think that's a good thing. I also wanted to point up the fact that there has been a huge amount of selectivity in what we want and don't want to remember about 1916. Especially during 30 years of troubles in the North, historical analysis was so entrenched that people were just written off as 'Stick' or 'Provo stooge'. That's almost gone now which I think is a very good thing. There is a lot of real, original examination going on now which is good."

The 400th anniversary of the Flight of the Earls last year saw the staging of a music theatre piece by O'Kelly called *Running Beast* based on Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone. Michael Houlihan had written the music and asked O'Kelly to put words to it. He explains:

"At first I used the usual source on O'Neill - Seán Ó Faoláin's biography *The Great O'Neill* which is fascinating. But it was only when I went to the other sources as well, new sources, that O'Neill struck me as a very Irish and yet a very universal kind of leader. He had traits that are still recognisable when you look at our political leaders today. He was incredibly ruthless and with a significant amount of ideological

• Donal with Sorcha Fox in *The Cambria*

'I think that there is a real need for a new movement defining citizenship, that redefines the state as what it's meant to be – a facilitator for people's citizenship. At the moment it facilitates the wealthy at the expense of people in need'

Running Beast will play the Teatro della Cometa, Rome, Monday 14 April as part of the commemoration events for the Flight of the Earls arrival in Rome, April 1608, and as a major production in the National Concert Hall, 8pm Sunday 11 May, with the Orchestra of Saint Cecilia.

vision. It seems to me that we haven't really progressed much in terms of civilisation in how we chose our leaders. The whole mechanism of how leadership is attained is still such a primitive path."

O'Kelly feels that as long as things remain this way it is very hard to see hope for "a real participatory democracy".

"I cannot believe that in this day and age the state would make the Ó Cuanacháin parents pay to get their own child's education. It's unbelievable. What's happened to the concept of a citizen? That child is a citizen, entitled to citizenship rights as much as Bertie Ahern who has no problem bringing the Mahon Tribunal to the High Court and at the same time these people are being treated unbelievably. It is so uncivilised, in the sense that it's denying citizenship.

"I think that there is a real need for a new movement defining citizenship, that redefines the state as what it's meant to be – a facilitator for people's citizenship. At the moment it facilitates the wealthy at the expense of people in need."

O'Kelly is involved with justice and human rights organisation Afri and says the group's focus of activity is on issues of demilitarisation, democratic reorganisation of the EU, Irish neutrality and in particular the use of Shannon for the US war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"It's all about challenging," he says, adding:

"I talk about the requirement of the artist or the actor to challenge and sometimes every way we have of ordering ourselves needs to be challenged in order to be well-tempered. If there's no challenge it doesn't really mean anything."

O'Kelly says he will oppose the EU Treaty "on the grounds of increased militarisation of the EU. What recently happened in Chad is an illustration of how careful we've got to be. An EU intervention force or whatever you want to call it doesn't necessarily have clean hands. France's involvement in Chad puts quite a question mark over any EU Rapid Reaction Force or peace enforcement. The chances are, especially with Europe's colonial past, that anywhere you go in Africa you're going to have dirty hands".

He said that he would be voting No in the referendum with, as usual, "an apprehensive glance at some of the other people doing the same. We have to just get used to that and treat that as a hazard of democracy in action".

10 REASONS WHY..... THE LISBON TREATY IS A BAD DEAL

1 It does not deliver reform, efficiency or democracy. It gives the EU too much power and reduces the ability of member states to prevent decisions that are not in their interests.

2 It puts at risk the Irish people's automatic right to a referendum in the future. (Article 48 gives the European Council the power to amend existing Treaties without the need for an intergovernmental conference or Treaty). This is in line with the decisions of the French and Dutch governments to ratify the Treaty without rerunning the referenda in which people voted no in 2005.

3 It gives 105 additional powers to the EU on aspects of international relations, security, trade, economic policy and justice. In more than 60 of these areas, including aspects of the internal market and health, member states will lose their right to prevent legislation not in the national interest.

4 It creates an EU Foreign Minister and a common foreign policy. It allows the EU to create a diplomatic corps and to act on the international stage in the same way as a state.

5 It erodes neutrality by creating a common defence policy and obliging member states to increase military spending. (Article 11 says "The Union's competence in matters of common foreign and security policy shall cover all areas of foreign policy and all questions relating to the Union's security including the progressive framing of a common defence policy that might lead to a common defence.")

6 It cuts Irish voting strength on the Council of Ministers by more than half. In addition the threshold for passing decisions is also significantly low-

ered. It ends the automatic right of each member state to have a Commissioner. This means Ireland will not have a Commissioner for five years in every fifteen.

7 It fails to address the lack of democracy. (The Treaty includes a Citizens Initiative whereby if one million signatures are collected the Commission must examine the Citizens proposal. However there is no obligation on the Commission to do anything other than consider the proposal. There are proposals for national parliaments allowing one third of member states to object to a Commission proposal. However unless these parliaments can secure the support of the European Council or European Parliament their objection will have no effect.)

8 It undermines workers' rights and public services. Ireland has already suffered serious consequences from the privatisation of Eircom and Aer Lingus. The ESB and An Post now face the same fate. (Article 16 of the treaty places "economic and financial conditions" on the provision of services. This means that services, including healthcare and education would be subject to the rules of competition.)

9 It mandates the EU to promote nuclear energy. (Protocol 2 incorporates the European Atomic Energy Community.)

10 It is bad for developing countries. (Article 10(a) makes the "progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade" one of the EUs guiding principles in its interaction with non-EU member states. This mandates the EU to seek the removal of "beyond borders controls" irrespective of the consequences to developing world economies.)



Aontas Clé na hEorpa/Na Glasraigh Chlé Nordacha
Grúpa Parlaiminte · PARLAIMINT NA HEORPA

The European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) Group in the European Parliament is made up of forty-one MEPs from sixteen political parties in thirteen European countries. GUE/NGL parties received almost 9 million votes in the June 2004 European elections. For us, the EU, with the right political will, has the capacity to change the circumstances of ordinary people for the better. Our alternative vision is of a Europe that stands for peace, equality, global solidarity, social justice, openness and democracy, respect for the environment and human rights.

It is a confederal group in which each component party retains its own identity and policies while pooling their efforts in pursuit of common political objectives.

French and Dutch members of the group played an important role in their respective countries rejection of the EU Constitution.



Members of an IRA firing party salute their fallen comrades, Volunteers Mairéad Farrell, Seán Savage and Dan McCann