

# IRELAND

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### EDITORIAL

## GIBRALTAR- the mask slips

● The big lie is falling apart. The elaborate and carefully constructed cover-up surrounding the shooting dead of three unarmed Irish Republicans on March 6th 1988, in Gibraltar, is rapidly crumbling as new and damning facts emerge.

One year later, details of their surveillance operation have been released by the Spanish police, who were the butt of British criticism for allegedly having bungled the task of monitoring the movements of the three before they crossed into Gibraltar.

Spain has clearly pointed the finger of accusation at Britain by awarding medals for "meritorious service in the field of intelligence" to 22 Spanish police officers and revealing that, when the IRA Volunteers crossed into the British colony, Spain had told the British authorities who they were and that they *did not* possess any weapons or explosives.

There can be no doubt that Mairead Farrell, Dan McCann and Sean Savage were quite deliberately and publicly executed. The evidence is now overwhelming that the SAS had explicit instructions to kill!

Who gave the order? Who planned the ambush and demanded that no prisoners be taken alive?

The answer lies with the British Cabinet in London. Indeed, for the first time since the hun-

ger-strike in 1981 in which ten Republican prisoners died, the buck quite clearly stops with Margaret Thatcher!

All of the available information points to her having maintained personal control of the SAS operation. In Gibraltar, unlike the British-occupied territories in the North of Ireland, Thatcher was intimately involved in the organising and decision-making process and the orders to kill came from her.

Republicans have stated that in the course of this war of national liberation against Britain's colonial presence, some will die and many others will be imprisoned. The three Republicans slain in Gibraltar knew the risks they ran in this conflict and courageously and unselfishly faced those possibilities.

In contrast, Thatcher and her government hide behind a shield of hypocrisy, lies and deceit. They deny that a war exists. They speak long and loudly of justice and democracy, of observance of the 'rule of law'.

In their hypocrisy, they dare to label those who valiantly struggle for freedom as criminals and murderers.

In Gibraltar the mask slipped. The real face of British imperialism, brutal and vicious, peered out at the world. British disdain for truth and justice and democracy was exposed.

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## Gibraltar cover-up

### Britain's account discredited

● Britain's shoddy attempt at covering up 'Operation Flavius' — the deliberate murder of three unarmed IRA Volunteers, Mairead Farrell, Dan McCann and Sean Savage, by the SAS in Gibraltar in March 1988 — is beginning to come apart at the seams.

At the Gibraltar inquest, the verdicts of "lawful killings" in all three cases rested on British Intelligence claims that the Volunteers were killed because they were believed to have been armed. The British also alleged that Spanish police involved in undercover surveillance had bungled the operation by losing track of the three before they entered Gibraltar.

However, two revelations in March have again brought Britain's actions under international scrutiny.

#### PUBLIC COMMENDATION FOR THE SPANISH POLICE

Juan Jose Echeverria, a journalist with the newspaper *El Pais*, revealed that sources from within the Spanish police force are "very angry at the British for denying that they had kept tabs on the three".

Chief Inspector Miguel Martin, President of Spain's Professional Police Union (SPP) told journalists that they had decided to state publicly their part in the surveillance operation because they were dissatisfied at the way they were treated by the Spanish government. They had been commended in secret last December but this was insufficient. The union lobbied the government and the policemen received public commendations.

**The Spanish government apparently accepts that their police force acted efficiently at all times.**

Martin said that: "When the IRA crossed into Gibraltar the Spanish police were able to tell the British who they were, when they had entered the territory and what their target was."

This turns on its head MI5 and SAS claims that they did not know the

three were on their way to Gibraltar until they were spotted by MI5 inside the colony.

Other impeccable Spanish police sources were quoted in *El Pais* as saying that documents exist to show that the Spanish police had informed the British Intelligence authorities that the IRA unit "had left Spanish territory heading for the border gate without either arms or explosives".

#### BRITISH POLICE WITNESS CHALLENGED

The second revelation was that Chief Inspector Tomas Rayo Valenzuela, the Spanish police officer used by Britain to support their claim, was not part of the Madrid-based Foreign Intelligence Brigade — the unit that had overall control of the surveillance.

In fact, Valenzuela was in charge of the Provincial Special Branch in Malaga. British sources have had to concede that he was "unaware of or not part of the early surveillance". The Irish newspaper *Sunday Tribune* obtained an uncensored version of a statement he had made making it clear that he and his men had been briefed only a few days before the killings.

Valenzuela was due to give evidence at the Gibraltar inquest but withdrew when, according to British Foreign Office sources, the Spanish Foreign Ministry refused to give him leave to attend. His unsworn statement was to have been read out but this was objected to by the lawyer representing the families of the three victims, Paddy McGrory, who had received only a censored version of the statement. Although Valenzuela did not appear, his statement was widely leaked to the media and was taken as support for the SAS version of events.

#### DELIBERATE MURDER

Commenting on the latest revelations, Danny Morrison of Sinn Fein said: "The British government, which speaks loudly and hypocritically of the rule of law, and those in Ireland and Britain who support British interference in Ireland, have knowingly and willingly covered up the deliberate murder of three Irish people."

On the first anniversary of the killings, the families of Volunteers Farrell, McCann and Savage called a press conference to announce that they are initiating legal proceedings against the British government in the High Court to uncover the truth about what happened during 'Operation Flavius'. Niall

Farrell, a brother of Mairead Farrell, called on the 26-County government to take up the case and bring it before the European Court. He stated: "We are certain that more vital information will be disclosed over the next twelve months to show that our loved ones, Mairead, Dan and Sean, were murdered by Mrs Thatcher's death squads."

### RUC shoot-to-kill hearings

● Yet another British policeman has been sent to the North to 'investigate' the RUC's controversial shoot-to-kill activities which resulted in the death of six unarmed nationalists in 1982. Following on from the Stalker/Sampson/Kelly police inquiries, Merseyside Chief Constable Sir Kenneth Oxford headed internal 'Disciplinary Hearings' against 20 RUC members charged with conspiracy and cover-up in regard to the killings.

The hearings were to have lasted several months but came to an abrupt end on the second day when it was announced that 18 of the 20 RUC members had been 'reprimanded', one was 'cautioned' and charges against another were dropped completely.

Nationalists had expected this outcome given that in January 1988 the British Attorney General Sir Patrick Mayhew had announced that no prosecutions of RUC personnel would be brought in this matter on the grounds of "national security". Also last year, the Police Authority, the body responsible for disciplinary breaches affecting senior RUC members, ruled that no charges should be brought against RUC chief Sir John Hermon and other high-ranking RUC members regarding the shoot-to-kill operations they had sanctioned.

Seamus Mallon, deputy leader of the SDLP, called on British premier Margaret Thatcher to justify what he called the "squalid and murky attempts to hide the truth". Thatcher sharply upbraided him, telling him that everyone should, "extend to the force the unqualified support it fully deserves."

Sinn Fein said that the hearings were a "farce" and would remind nationalists "of the total unacceptability of the RUC".

However, the issue is far from being swept under the carpet despite the number and nature of British government and RUC cover-ups. The inquests into the deaths of the six victims are still to be announced and undoubtedly will focus international attention once more on Britain's infamous shoot-to-kill policy in the North.

## New RUC chief

● By and large, the nationalist people of the Six Counties were unimpressed by the announcement on February 23rd that Dublin-born British police officer Hugh Annesley is to replace RUC Chief Constable John Hermon. Annesley (49), an Assistant Commissioner of the London Metropolitan Police, will take over the £57,000-a-year post when Hermon retires at the end of May this year.

The choice of Annesley was greeted with considerable surprise by the Irish and British press who had assumed that the front-runner was the "colourful" West Midlands Chief Constable, Geoffrey Dear. Dear was rumoured to be the choice of the Northern Ireland Office.

Until now, Annesley has received little attention from the press and public. One senior British crime reporter said that Annesley had always come across as just another "faceless, career police officer who had very little experience of the street".

Whether or not he has, Annesley's career has been marked by a lack of controversy. He joined the London Metropolitan Police in 1958, serving until 1976 in such areas as the West End, Fulham, Brixton and London Airport. He attained the rank of Chief Superintendent. Annesley then moved to the Sussex police force and in 1979 was selected to attend a one-year course in counter-insurgency at the British Royal College of Defence Studies. During that year, the course entailed, interestingly, visits to a number of overseas locations including Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia and South Korea — countries, especially the latter, which are known for their heavy-handed police tactics.

He returned to the Metropolitan force in 1981 and, since August 1987, has been head of Scotland Yard's Special Operations, which controls

a variety of units, including the Drugs Squad and the Special Branch, and works closely with the RUC.

In an attempt to placate the North's nationalist community, 26-County politicians and the media surrounded Annesley's appointment as head of the sectarian RUC with considerable hype concerning his Irish origins. Because Annesley's father was a Northern Protestant, his mother a Southern Catholic and his education took place in Dublin, he was somehow supposed to be more acceptable. Obviously grasping at straws, it was pointed out that Annesley's father had been an ardent supporter and member of the board of Belfast's Cliftonville Football Club, a team supported by many in Belfast's nationalist community.

It is not without significance that someone like Annesley, who is presented as a non-controversial figure, was appointed against a background of continuing controversy about the RUC's shoot-to-kill policy.

Annesley's appointment will not change the basic repressive and inherently sectarian nature of the RUC and the nationalist people will continue to bear the brunt of its policies. Despite the media hype and the politicians' exhortations, the fact remains that it will take much more than the support of a particular football team or one's birthplace to make the RUC acceptable to a people who have endured brutality, harassment and discrimination at the hands of that force since its inception 67 years ago.

## Life Sentence prisoners await Special Reviews

● Prisoners in the Six Counties serving indeterminate sentences had their cases highlighted in March when the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) announced that a number of cases had been "referred to the judiciary". This means that some of those prisoners whose cases have been reviewed by the Life Sentence Review Board will be given release dates.

This latest move is the result of 'Special Reviews' announced by the British Secretary of State for the North, Tom King, in October 1988, in the face of massive public pressure to

end the secrecy and political manipulation which surrounds the Life Sentence Review Board. However, instead of making substantive changes to this board and its mechanisms, King and the NIO are indulging in political games with a policy of *selective releases*.

● A total of 33 'Special Category' prisoners have had their cases referred to the judiciary in the final stages of these 'Special Reviews'. Of these, only 12 are Republicans. This will leave a further seven 'Special Category' prisoners in prison indefinitely even though many of them are now into their 17th year in jail. These prisoners have not been given any indication as to the reasons for the NIO's refusal to set release dates nor have they been informed of the criteria for release.

Sinn Fein's Prisoners of War Department said: "Our initial response to this latest development is that any moves to give a release date to any prisoner serving an indeterminate sentence are to be welcomed. However, further investigation of the facts shows that these prisoners and their families have nothing to be thankful for. We believe that the review procedure is seriously defective and is biased against Republican prisoners. We view this latest NIO statement as merely underlining the fact that the further imprisonment or release of these prisoners is a political decision."

A campaign organised and directed by the prisoners was set up over a year ago to campaign for the implementation of six changes to the Life Sentence Review Board to ensure that prisoners would get an open and fair hearing. The proposals put forward by the Campaign for Lifers are:

- An end to indeterminate sentences.
- The right to legal representation at Review Board hearings.
- An ending to secret reports as such reports can be biased against a prisoner.
- Reasons for a refusal to set a release date should be made known to a prisoner.
- An objective criteria for release should be made known to all prisoners.
- A prisoner should have the right to know the names of the people sitting on the review of their case and have the right to challenge the inclusion of at least two persons if mitigating circumstances would prejudice a fair hearing.

Information on the Campaign for

Lifers is available from: Conway Mill, 5/7 Conway Street, Falls Road, Belfast 12. Telephone: 331739.

## Dublin High Court rejects extradition appeals

● The 26-County High Court in Dublin, on March 16th, rejected the appeals against extradition of former Westminster MP and prominent Sinn Fein member Owen Carron and H-Block escapee Paul Kane.

In their appeals both Kane and Carron argued that it had not been shown in court that the Fianna Fail Minister for Justice, Gerry Collins, had examined and approved the warrants for their extradition.

Both men argued that it should have been shown to the courts if the minister had fulfilled his function in protecting the constitutional rights of citizens sought for extradition. The three judges, however, rejected this saying it was not necessary for the minister's action to be shown in court.

Owen Carron argued that he would be subjected to ill-treatment and that his life would be in danger if he was sent to the Six Counties and gave extensive evidence to that effect. This was also rejected by the court.

Carron is to appeal the High Court decision to the Supreme Court and Paul Kane is considering his next avenue of appeal. If this fails, he could face extradition to the British-occupied Six Counties as early as April 7th.

Meanwhile, High Court judgement was reserved in the appeal of a third man, Dermot Finucane, brother of the late solicitor Pat Finucane who was assassinated by loyalist paramilitary terrorists. Finucane's appeal against extradition opened in the High Court in Dublin on March 1st. The basis of his appeal was that he had been detained illegally by gardai in a house in County Longford in 1986 and also that he would be tortured if extradited.

Evidence of this was cited in the case of another H-Block prison escapee, Brian Pettigrew, who was awarded £3,000 damages in an action against the NIO and the Long Kesh prison governor over incidents in September 1983 when prisoners were beaten by prison warders, bitten by dogs and

refused medical treatment afterwards.

During the second day of the hearing Dermot Finucane took ill and the court had to be adjourned for some time.

## British collusion with loyalist death squads

● Many questions remained unanswered regarding the activities of the crown forces when the trial of loyalist assassin Michael Stone ended in Belfast after only ten days. Stone was convicted of six sectarian murders, including those of three mourners in Milltown Cemetery, Belfast, in March 1988, who were amongst a large crowd attending the funerals of Mairead Farrell, Dan McCann and Sean Savage, the IRA Volunteers murdered in Gibraltar.

Although Stone admitted the killings, he pleaded not guilty at the trial but instructed his lawyers not to put up any defence. This meant that the RUC conveniently did not have to give full evidence of its knowledge of Stone's activities.

For many years, Republicans have maintained that British Intelligence files have been made available to loyalist paramilitary terrorists. This is borne out by Stone's declaration that he had read the "files" of some of the people he had attacked and killed.

Stone has been presented by the press and by the British occupation forces as a "loner" and a "maniac". However at the trial, evidence of his preparations before the attacks gave every indication of his professionalism.

The failure of the RUC to arrest Stone after the attack, the absence of military saturation (which had been a feature of all previous funerals) and the 15-20 minutes it took the RUC to arrive (strangely at odds with the refined two-minute response to other incidents) all indicate that Stone knew in advance that he could launch his attack in safety and unhindered.

## Gardai/British army dirty tricks revealed

● Republicans have continually

highlighted the 'dirty tricks' operations of the British crown forces in Ireland and the British have denied the clandestine shootings and bombings of which they have been accused. However, the evidence continues to accumulate in relation to their shoot-to-kill activities and their servicing of loyalist murder squads.

Some of this evidence was made public by former British Army officer Fred Holroyd when he told a packed public meeting in Dublin in March about his role as an intelligence officer in the Six Counties and, in particular, the co-operation of the Garda and the Dublin government with secret British operations.

He named the gardai with whom he had directly dealt and gave an account of how he met Edmund Garvey, the then Garda Commissioner, at garda headquarters. He described how SAS Captain Robert Niarac, who was acclaimed a hero by the British after he had been killed by the IRA, had shown him evidence of having crossed the border to assassinate IRA Volunteer Francis Green.

After questioning his senior officers and critically reassessing the role he had to play in Ireland, Holroyd was imprisoned in a mental hospital in England. In the years since, he has sought to highlight the undercover and illegal activities of British Intelligence in Ireland.

## MacBride Principles set to win

● MacBride Principles campaigners in the US are convinced that the battle for fair employment is going their way after several major moves in the US recently.

These developments underline the generally-held view that the British government's new Fair Employment legislation — presently going through the British House of Commons — is seriously flawed and inadequate.

In March, the State of Vermont passed the MacBride Principles and the City Council of San Francisco adopted them by nine votes to two.

The New Hampshire State Assembly also recently adopted the Principles. This decision is especially sig-

nificant. Last year, following extensive lobbying by former US Defence Secretary George Schultz, the New Hampshire State Assembly had rejected the Principles. This time around, the British government sent two witnesses to claim that their new fair employment legislation would positively tackle the problem of political and religious discrimination in the North of Ireland. However, their attempts failed when the Assembly passed the Principles by a clear majority of two to one.

#### **AD HOC CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE LENDS SUPPORT**

In the annual St Patrick's Day statement released by the Ad Hoc Congressional Committee for Irish Affairs in the US, the sponsors highlighted the fact that of, "foremost concern is the continuing and worsening economic discrimination which primarily victimizes the Catholic minority population in Northern Ireland... To that end we reaffirm our support for the MacBride Principles of Fair Employment and non-discrimination. We believe their very existence has compelled the British government to seek needed reforms in their existing Fair Employment Act. Any change in that Act must include strong and verifiable enforcement provisions against companies and practices that promote or perpetuate discrimination."

#### **SENATOR LAUNCHES MacBRIDE BILL**

On March 18th, US Senator Frank Lautenberg launched a national MacBride Principles Bill, which he compiled and sponsored in the Senate.

The senator — whose re-election was due in part to his support for the Principles — said he expected to bring together a broad coalition of supporters from both the House of Representatives and the Senate. He has also been in contact with Congressman Hamilton Fish and Senator Alphonse D'Amato, co-sponsors of the MacBride Bill currently stalled in Congress.

Speaking about the proposed bill, Senator Lautenberg said: "The government has the obligation to make sure that our funds do not discriminate against any people anywhere in the world. If we are going to put money into the Northern Counties of Ireland, then we must force employers to comply to fair employment practices."

He also slated the British government's hypocrisy when talking about, "discrimination and repression in other places... I don't hear them talk-

ing about it in Northern Ireland".

If the Senator's Bill is successful, the MacBride Principles could become law across the US within two years. They are already law in ten states, numerous cities and have been endorsed by dozens of political organisations, churches, human rights activists and all the significant Irish groups across the US. The campaign has gained a momentum and importance surpassing that of any other Irish issue.

## **US writers criticise British censorship**

● **The Freedom to Write Committee of PEN American Center, which represents more than 2,000 writers, has written to British premier Margaret Thatcher expressing its deep concern about the continuing erosion of freedom of expression in Britain and the North of Ireland.**

Last year, the Committee worked on the cases of 90 writers in 29 countries, from Czechoslovakia to South Africa, whose right to freedom of expression had been curtailed. What virtually all these cases have in common is the excuse of the governments involved that 'national security' was at stake. In fact, the panacea of 'national security' was found to have been used most often to shield governments from legitimate scrutiny and to avoid political embarrassment.

The excuse of 'national security' has been used on numerous occasions in the Six Counties to avoid just such scrutiny and embarrassment. The most recent case took place last September at the Gibraltar inquest hearing into the killing of three unarmed IRA Volunteers by the SAS in March 1988. British Secret Service and SAS witnesses were given immunity from cross-examination on the grounds of 'national security'. Prior to the Gibraltar case, the now infamous investigation by senior British policeman John Stalker into the RUC's shoot-to-kill policy (which resulted in the deaths of six unarmed people in 1982) was covered up by the British Attorney General, Sir Patrick Mayhew. In January 1988, Mayhew said that no prosecutions of RUC members would take place on the grounds of "national

security" and "the public interest".

The US writers say that they are, "accustomed to thinking of Great Britain as a sister nation, with a common heritage of shared values. One of the most deeply held of these values is the belief that the freedom to speak, write and publish is essential to the meaningful exercise of self-government. Both the United States and Great Britain have often fallen far short of the strong commitment to freedom of expression mandated by our Constitution and your traditions.

"But a number of recent actions of your government have contributed to the impression that it is persistently hostile to the liberty of writers and journalists, particularly where their subject is national defence, intelligence or military policy."

PEN American Center cites a range of recently introduced curbs on civil liberties, including the broadcasting ban on radio and television interviews with Irish Republican spokespersons, as well as the extensive new powers included in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, which allow the police to enter and search newsrooms and reporters' homes and to seize sensitive investigative reports.

The letter to Thatcher continued:

"This enhancement of state power at the expense of individual rights stands in sharp contrast to your government's stated objective to reduce the role of the state in the lives of citizens. Unfortunately, encroachments on liberty in Great Britain have an impact far beyond your borders, as repressive governments around the world take instruction and comfort from the British example. In South Africa and elsewhere, British reporters fighting government restrictions on news coverage are beginning to have the 'British precedent' cited to them.

"We believe that the erosion of press freedom is a far greater threat to national security in Great Britain than any foreign government or domestic dissenter. We urge your government to take steps to reverse this disturbing trend."

## **Little to celebrate on International Women's Day**

● **Irishwomen, still largely shack-**

led by the conservatism of religion and doubly oppressed in the North by British imperialism, for the most part had little to celebrate on International Women's Day — March 8th.

'Reclaim the Night' marches were held in Belfast and Dublin, while women in Derry protested against the continuing, degrading policy of strip-searching of women prisoners in Maghaberry and Durham prisons.

A delegation of 80 women from England, Scotland and Wales visited the North on a fact-finding weekend. They listened to nationalist women regarding the methods of repression and intimidation: house searches, arrests, plastic bullets, extradition, cultural discrimination, job discrimination, censorship and harassment.

On Sunday March 5th, the delegation, which included delegates from several major British trade unions, joined several hundred people in a picket outside the gates of Maghaberry prison. Well-known Civil Rights campaigner Bernadette Devlin/McAliskey addressed them and recalled that historically women had provided the labour, talent and ingenuity required in challenging British rule. This was particularly evident today, she said, in the present and final phase of the continuing conflict in the North of Ireland. She paid tribute to women like Mairead Farrell, killed by the SAS in Gibraltar, and to those Irishwomen whose names, throughout the centuries, have been written out of the history books.

Meanwhile in Dublin, a conference held in Trinity College, marked the radical advances made by the Irish women's movement in recent years and its broadening perspective. Today, partition is regarded as a key issue for Irish feminists whereas, as Bernadette McAliskey observed at the Maghaberry picket, in the early Civil Rights days and during the mid-70s period when women Republican prisoners were imprisoned in increasing numbers, Irish feminists held the position that Republican women should not become involved in a "male conflict".

The conference explored how the failure to address imperialism, the underlying cause of poverty and oppression in Ireland, had weakened the women's movement. There was also agreement that women's liberation could not be achieved until national independence had been won but that the feminist struggle was closely

intertwined with the fight for freedom.

## Culture

### ■ U-TURN ON IRISH LANGUAGE BY BRITISH GOVERNMENT

The British government has abandoned plans to further downgrade Irish in the school curriculum, for the time being at least. Because of the overwhelming opposition to the proposals on language teaching in the education reform document *The Way Forward*, Irish can once again be studied alongside or instead of French, German, Spanish or Italian, as a second language, following English.

However, Irish-language groups have pointed out that this merely returns Irish to the status it held prior to publication of the education reform proposals last year. They are continuing to press for the implementation of their other demands, which include:

- The provision of an Irish-medium secondary school in Belfast;
- Recognition of Belfast's second Irish-medium primary school, Gaelscoil na bhFáil; and
- The provision of education in Irish as of right for all those who desire it.

### ■ IRISH-LANGUAGE INITIATIVE

Conradh na Gaeilge [Gaelic League], the oldest and largest Irish-language organisation has launched a comprehensive promotion and information campaign, enlisting the help of well-known figures from the music scene, such as U2 and Enya, as well as television personalities and political figures.

Starting on February 24th, 600,000 bi-lingual leaflets outlining the importance of the language for the future of Ireland were distributed to homes throughout the country, both North and South, and 40,000 posters were put up in shops, offices, schools and community centres. There will also be an advertising campaign and an essay competition for schools.

Launching the campaign, Conradh na Gaeilge General Secretary Sean Mac Mathúna said: "Although it has been demonstrated again and again that broad support exists for the language, a strong campaign of opposition has been waged in recent years with the support of some sections of the mass media."

### ■ ST PATRICK'S DAY PARADES

St Patrick's Day Parades took place in all the major towns and cities in Ireland on March 17th but without any of the leaders of the Dublin government. In its television coverage of the parades, RTÉ, the state broadcasting station, commented on how few government ministers were still in the country on that day.

Shortly before he left for Washington, Dublin premier Charles Haughey was asked in an RTÉ interview to explain why he flies out each year to celebrate St Patrick's Day in the USA. In reply, Haughey pointed to the importance of economic ties between the USA and Ireland.

This has added to the debate which began in January of this year with the refusal of the main political parties in the 26 Counties to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the 1st Dáil [Irish Parliament] which sat on January 21st 1919.

### ■ HANDS OFF OUR LANGUAGE

In Belfast, the theme of the parade was 'Ligí dár dteanga/Hands off our language', in protest at British government plans to downgrade Irish in the school curriculum (*see above*).

An RUC Land Rover and British army jeep drove in front of the parade as it made its way up the Falls Road and dictated the pace at which it proceeded.

The rally in the main Gaelic Athletic Association pitch at Casement Park was addressed by Níóirín Ní Chléirigh, chairperson of parade organisers Glór na nGael, Ffred Ffrancis, a leading Welsh language activist, Gearóid Ó Cairealláin, editor of the Irish language daily *LÁ* and Sinn Fein Councillor Máirtín Ó Muilleoir.

Ó Muilleoir said: "Not since the 1949 ban on Irish street names — a ban still in force to this day — has any British government made such a concerted attack on our cultural heritage as that presently spearheaded by the NIO Education Minister, Brian Mawhinney."

### ■ BI-LINGUAL SIGNS

This month saw the first bi-lingual signs go up throughout the Students Union building in Magee College, Derry. The move follows the adoption by the Students Union in November 1988 of a motion that all official documents, stationary and signs should be both in Irish and in English.

A similar motion was passed last

year by the Students Union at the University of Ulster at Coleraine, but little progress has been made to date due to the area in which the university is situated.

Queens University Students Union in Belfast has had a bi-lingual policy for the past five years. The union also publishes an all-Irish diary for students each year and provides practical assistance for Irish-language projects in the city.

On March 15th, the Students Union at Queens presented a cheque for £500 to Gaelscoil na bhFál, Belfast's second Irish-medium primary school, which receives no state funding whatsoever.

#### ■ TEACHERS CALL FOR CLEAR LANGUAGE POLICY

In a motion to go before the annual congress, the national executive of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation demands of the Dublin government:

"That the State defines its policy in relation to the Irish language; that a new primary school programme be devised which would place particular emphasis on oral language and that the necessary resources to overcome the difficulties involved in the teaching of Irish be made available to schools."

Since the 1920s, the education system has been the main mechanism used by successive Dublin governments to ensure the survival of the language. However, curriculum developments have never matched those for other modern languages and there is at present a chronic shortage of suitable textbooks in Irish.

#### ■ MEDIA WATCH

The inaugural meeting of Media Watch was held in Trinity College Dublin, on March 11th, sponsored by TCD Students Union.

The group has as its primary aim the monitoring of the Irish media with a view to publicising the bias and prejudice, the overwhelming acquiescence in censorship and the unquestioning attitude to establishment views on the economy.

The idea for such an association arose out of a conference in November 1988, which was attended by a wide cross section of interests including journalists, trade unionists, social workers, unemployed action groups, social justice groups and political parties, and which heard papers from, among others, Kadar Asmal, President of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties.

The conference heard of fears

about the concentration of press and broadcasting ownership in even fewer hands, the lack of real debate on the likely effect of the post-1922 Single European Market on Ireland, the failure to properly investigate the Dublin government's position on foreign debt, and the way in which the international news comes via three main news agencies with dominant Western perspectives.

Mike Jempson of the British Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom examined the application of the new censorship restrictions both in Britain and in the North of Ireland.

## IRA military operations

● In a series of devastating attacks throughout March, the IRA badly dented the morale of the British occupation forces in the Six Counties.

Military strikes against British army/RUC personnel and loyalist paramilitary terrorists engaged in sectarian assassinations have resulted in seven fatalities with up to 14 more injured. In keeping with long-established policy, the British and RUC regularly release press statements claiming there have been no injuries, to play down the high rate of IRA operations and sustain morale among their own ranks.

#### BRITISH ESTABLISHMENT SHAKEN

Two of the RUC's most experienced and senior commanders were ambushed and killed by IRA Volunteers in the border area of South Armagh on March 20th. The operation struck a major blow to Britain's colonial presence in the North.

The pair, one a Chief Superintendent and the other a Superintendent, had been responsible for the overall co-ordination of RUC and British army activity in the South Armagh border area. Chief Superintendent Breen was involved in the ambush and killing at Loughgall, in May 1987, of eight IRA Volunteers and a civilian motorist. Superintendent Buchanan was the central operational figure in cross-border contacts with the Garda, the 26-County police force.

The two were intercepted at one of several IRA checkpoints in South Armagh shortly after they had left a top-level meeting in nearby Dundalk garda station. The IRA unit seized a

number of secret RUC intelligence documents about cross-border security collaboration. The British establishment at every level, including the British queen, was shaken by the success of the IRA unit in breaching the security of these senior figures.

#### CALL FOR BRITISH WITHDRAWAL

Less concern was expressed by British establishment leaders when two British soldiers were killed in a landmine attack outside Derry on March 8th. In an attempt to present themselves as 'impartial peacekeepers', the British cynically released the contents of a letter written by one of the dead soldiers, Lance Corporal Steven Cummins, which was only to be read in the event of his death. In it, he asked his family to forgive those who killed him.

The establishment he served, however, coldly ignored his father's call for British withdrawal. In a statement to the British press, Geoffrey Cummins expressed the growing discontent felt by British people at the continuing military losses in Ireland.

Sinn Fein spokesperson Martin McGuinness in a press statement placed the responsibility for the continued casualties with the British state:

"No-one need die, no-one should die. The deaths of these two soldiers and the many other tragedies we have endured, can be ended, but only if the root cause of the conflict is tackled — Britain's presence, the partition of our country and the denial of our right to self-determination."

#### TIGHT SECURITY BREACHED

The IRA breached heavy security to mount attacks on British military bases and continued to attack the railway link to Dublin, thus tying down large numbers of British soldiers.

There were two bomb-attacks on British military housing complexes.

#### LOYALIST KILLER-SQUADS TARGETTED

In the South Derry village of Coagh, the IRA executed a UVF commander who had, in collusion with the local British regiment of the UDR, killed and injured members of the Catholic and nationalist community in the surrounding area. A second UVF commander was killed by the IRA in Belfast for similar sectarian atrocities and a loyalist arms dealer narrowly escaped death in an IRA attack in County Down.

## Unfounded allegations

● Scurrilous claims by the British Labour Party's Agriculture spokesperson, Dr David Clarke, that the IRA and the Mafia were using farming to defraud the European Community were recently proven to be totally unfounded.

Clarke alleged that billions of pounds were being siphoned off in this manner. However, according to research conducted by the Belfast Customs and Excise department, this is untrue.

Confirming the Belfast findings, EC Agriculture spokesperson Commissioner Ray McSharry, in Brussels, added that there was, "no evidence to support" Clarke's suggestion of IRA and Mafia involvement.

## Glossary

**AP/RN** — *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, weekly Sinn Fein newspaper.

**DUP** — Democratic Unionist Party, second largest of the unionist parties, leader Ian Paisley.

**EPA** — Emergency Provisions Act.

**FF** — Fianna Fail, governing party in 26 Counties.

**FG** — Fine Gael, opposition party in 26 Counties.

**IRA** — Irish Republican Army (Oglaigh na hÉireann).

**NIO** — Northern Ireland Office.

**OUN** — Official Unionist Party, the main unionist party, leader James Molyneaux.

**PTA** — Prevention of Terrorism Act.

**RUC** — Royal Ulster Constabulary, majority of members drawn from loyalist community.

**SAS** — Special Air Services, British army unit trained in counter-insurgency tactics and used in Ireland to kill as opposed to capturing prisoners.

**SDLP** — Social Democratic and Labour Party, leader John Hume.

**SF** — Sinn Fein, leader Gerry Adams.

**SOSP** — Secretary of State's Pleasure (applies to open-ended sentencing of young prisoners).

**UDR** — Ulster Defence Regiment, a British army regiment consisting almost exclusively of members of the loyalist community.

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## Sinn Fein's demands

● Sinn Fein's ultimate objective is to create the political conditions necessary to secure a true and lasting peace in Ireland. This can only be achieved by:

■ The ending of partition arising from British rule in six of Ireland's 32 counties;

■ British disengagement from Ireland and the restoration to the Irish people of the right to exercise self-sovereignty, independence and national self-determination;

■ The setting of a definite date within the lifetime of a British government for the completion of this withdrawal;

■ The disarming and disbandment of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Ulster Defence Regiment as part of the military withdrawal;

■ The calling of a Constitutional Conference to which all political parties would be invited. This conference to be responsible for determining the nature and composition of an emergent national police service and the judiciary. If Britain was sincere about disengaging and was committed to an orderly transference of power, this could be achieved with a minimum of disorder; and

■ The unconditional release of all political prisoners.

*Nuacht Idirnáisiúnta na hÉireann*

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