SPIORAD NA SAOIRSE

FEBRUARY 1997

PRICE £2

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DEFENDING THE UNARMED STRATEGY

INTERVIEW: RUAIRI O'BRADAIGH

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SPIRIT OF FREEDOM

The Theoretical Journal of Irish Republican Youth

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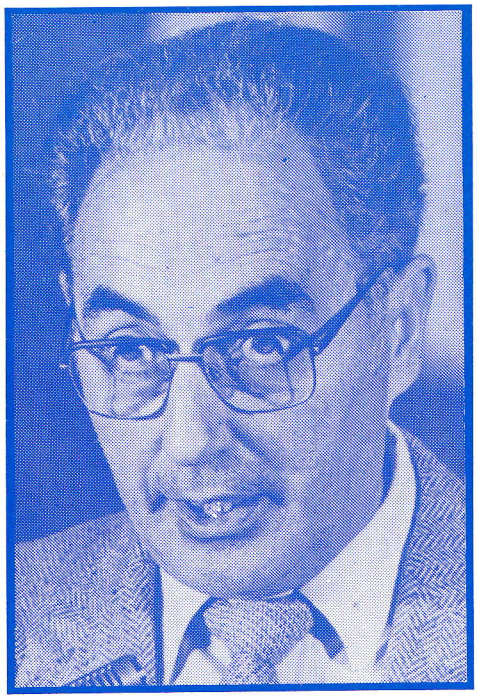

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THE JAMES CONNOLLY SOCIETY

Students of QUB.



The Connolly Society is a non-party political, student grouping established in September 1996 to forward the core aims and objectives of socialist republicanism. It is the position of the society that to forward the cause of the Irish Socialist Republic, a process of growth and regeneration must take place.

This new generation must evaluate the nature of political conflict in our country from a fresh perspective, drawing personal insight from those with past experience, while attaining political direction from the knowledge and acceptance of our radical theory and principles. We have been left with the awesome task of destroying the ever present, oppressive colonial remnants of Irish society still clinging to power in our country; still thwarting our expectations and our rights as Irish citizens; still dividing the wealth unevenly through exploitation and maintenance of social/colonial privilege; still mercilessly repressing those who dare to dissent.

To this end, we must prepare ourselves - we must make provision for our intellectual and political growth so that we can equip ourselves to overcome the pervasive yet blatantly ruthless might of the British establishment. It is this generation who must finally force the British government to withdraw its insidious tentacles from our society; to dismantle the institutionalised injustices of the six-county state - by removing the political cause - the constitutional existence of the state itself.

And what of the Twenty-six county establishment? We must tear out of our society, in the manner with which we might tear a weed from the ground, those in Dublin who:

- crucify daily the youth they have forced on to the inner-city scrap heap;
- are responsible for the irreversible decimation of rural communities in the west of Ireland, caused by economic neglect and discriminatory investment criteria;
- marginalise and denigrate those they perceive as a threat to their own corrupt and decaying hegemony;
- trade Irish neutrality and national sovereignty for higher levels of unemployment, emigration, military alliances and secure a place for themselves in the capitalist world market;
- through the lack of even a thread of moral fibre, dismiss and condemn the suffering of fellow Irish citizens who have been born into a British-occupied state which either excludes or terminates their very existence.

These people were taught the ways of successful free market enterprise, and in the process were imbued with the same inhuman and nihilistic values that took full advantage of (and actively encouraged), the mass starvation and emigration of millions of fellow

continued on inside back cover

SPIORAD NA SAOIRSE
SPIRIT OF FREEDOM

FEBRUARY 1997

"We want to create young fighters and revolutionists who will be the guardians and successors of the historical revolutionary traditions that we have not yet fully fulfilled...Revolutionary fighters can be trained only under conditions in which they are at once based on a bedrock of theory and closely and inseparably linked with the practical reality of revolutionary struggle."

— Leon Trotsky.

In every fight for national liberation throughout the world, young people's involvement has been both invaluable and essential. Never has an anti-colonial struggle succeeded without encompassing the active role of young revolutionary fighters and political activists in that struggle. The Irish Republican Army Commander, Kevin Barry; Bobby Seale, Huey Newton and other Black SNCC radicals in America during the 1960's and the student radical Steve Biko in the racist South Africa during the same period, are but a few figures who stand out in their historical contributions as young activists to their respective struggles.

These activists did not thrust themselves blindly into political struggle nor were they alone in their battle for freedom. They had politically educated themselves, knew their enemies, knew what methods were to be used to confront these enemies, and just as importantly had a collective vision of the kind of society they wanted to bring about in the process. Young Irish republicans today must follow this example. ***Spirit of Freedom***, produced by the Connolly Society, has set itself the task of facilitating young activists in this necessary process and in giving them the opportunity to enrich each other's collective understanding through a mutual exchange of insights and perspectives.

The articles featured in this first edition represent a wide range of opinion and issues. Student contributions from Belfast and Dublin are evident throughout. Hopefully the second edition will feature a wider spectrum of young republican opinion from further afield. We are also pleased to publish material kindly submitted by academics from Queens University Belfast and CBGS, Belfast. With some time and effort, we believe precious educational and political insights can be derived from a reading of these articles. We would also like to take the opportunity to thank Anthony McIntyre, Fr Des Wilson and Ruairi O'Bradaigh on this occasion for their contributions to the first edition.

The Connolly Society hope that the magazine is welcomed as a new and worthwhile dimension to republican politics, and as a long-awaited and useful platform for young republicans throughout the length and breadth of the island to articulate their view.

Spirit of Freedom,
Connolly Society,
Students of Queens University Belfast,
February 1997.

BRITISH STATE STRATEGY SINCE THE REPUBLICAN CEASE-FIRE

By Anthony McIntyre

With the resumption of republican political armed force in February of last year and its subsequent extension to the north, many people are without doubt asking themselves why did the British state let the opportunity for prolonged peace fade away. The most plausible explanation is to be found in identifying the prevalent and enduring consistent strand in British state strategy.

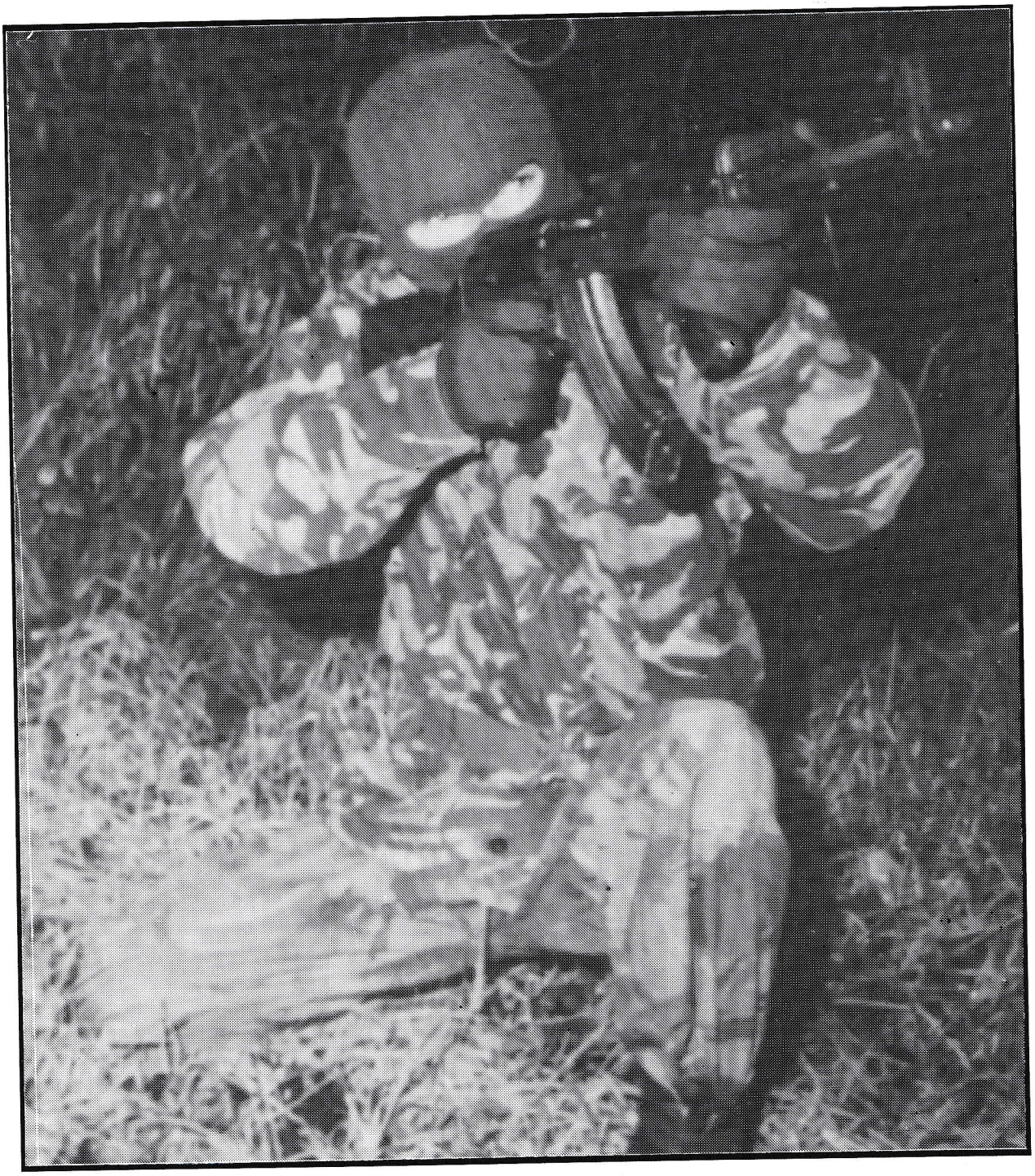
Since the early 1970s British state policy, or at times its seeming absence or ad hoc nature, has been guided by one firm strategic objective. That has been to render ineffectual the military capacity of the IRA and/or, more importantly, render ineffectual the military capacity of the IRA to effect political change, foremost the change which could bring about unity without the consent of the unionists. The British state has no preferred political solution, other than one which is inexpensive to manage and which meets with the consent of the unionists, that is to remove the IRA from the equation or the organisation's raison d'etre.

Taking out the IRA through a battery of sustained repressive measures proved more than difficult. It has merely served to reproduce the IRA. A more productive approach from the British point of view was to bring the IRA to the intellectual position, the logic of which would cause the organisation to undermine its own existence. This could best be achieved if republicans were to accept that the consent of the unionists was essential before a united Ireland could come into being . The IRA being an essentially coercive body would find no moral nourishment within a republicanism which adhered to the notion of unionist consent.

The IRA cease-fire of 1994 has done nothing to alter the central British strategic objective. Once called, the cease-fire elicited from the British a series of procrastination devices. Some nationalists including republicans erred in concluding that the main determinant of this behaviour was that the British were being their usual stubborn selves, or alternatively were worried about precarious parliamentary arithmetic shaping up at Westminster. Elements of both while undoubtedly present did not displace the dominant British state strategic objective.

The howling debates which for so long posed as 'struggle' or 'politics' and which took the form of clarifying how permanent the IRA cease-fire actually was, or the decommissioning quagmire, were in fact little other than the British striving to secure their objective.

From the announcement of the IRA cease-fire at the end of August, 1994, the British were signalling their intent not to convene (the much longed for by republicans) all-party talks until a two year period had elapsed. The British were aware that if everything that could be delivered to nationalists in the way of a new political arrangement were to be delivered shortly after an announcement of a cease-fire, it would have fallen so far short of general republican expectations that the pressure to recommence the armed struggle would have been awesome indeed. From the point of view of the British, republicans had to arrive at any such talks in such a state of weakness - produced by the attrition of two years exposure to the unity only by consent argument in sustained dialogue with, in the main, constitutional nationalists - that the outcome of those talks



Armed struggle, a structural response to the British presence

would have produced at best a half hearted and feeble response from any one inclined towards 'rejectionism'.

Such a strategy is,of course, fraught with dangers and dilemmas. Armed republicanism cannot be explained away as the organisational expression of some mere archaic tradition. It is more the structural response to British strategies of political marginalisation and displacement employed against nationalists. The more political space is denied nationalists in which to function, the greater the likelihood that those most excluded will resort to politics by means other than the constitutional.

British strategy throughout the cease-fire period, because it was aimed at defeating republicanism rather than democratising unionism, nurtured within republicanism a pre-existing structural current oriented more towards aggressively seizing nationalist political space than towards a political outcome which could only have led to the eradication of modern Irish Republicanism as it has come to be known since the emergence of the 'provisionals.'

Everything points to the conclusion that British state strategy, perpetually condemned to operate within the parameters of an essentially internal solution sans the democratisation of unionism, can only ever engender some form of violent response. The events of recent weeks in the North of Ireland have done little to diminish the accuracy of this bleak perspective.

A QUIET STROLL IN

By Gerard Mc Cann (Q.U.B).

Gerard McCann describes the events at Drumcree and analyses the crucial importance of the 'Marching Issue', as the media have labelled it, for Republican politics. He argues the view that the traditional Orange intransigence witnessed over the summer, and the fact that the British colonial Government have proven invariably acquiescent in such circumstances, offers young Republicans an assured opportunity to expose and exploit the sectarian contradictions of the State.

The snow capped mountains signify much more than just winter for many people. Winter marks the much awaited end to the marching season. A welcomed break, a short time of relief. Relief for those who cringe at the far off sound of a march approaching. A moment of rest for those who are damned to suffer second-class citizenship. Stripped of their dignity, Nationalist people over the summer were forced to experience imprisonment in their own homes, not to mention mass intimidation, directed from both marchers and the 'security forces'. Their views are neither asked for nor taken into account; a community's voice is given no consideration. Cries of protest fell on deaf ears. Nationalists' well-being was literally marched over in the decision-making process, put into effect to 'deal' with the 'marching issue'. Yes, let us once more reflect on the amazing, yet hardly surprising events of this summer, analysing them in their wider political context when appropriate.

EQUAL RIGHTS?

Once more the fallacy of using language like "equal rights" or "equality of treatment" or "parity of esteem ...within the state", was exposed and demonstrated to a new generation, by the reluctance to challenge unionist bigotry. All that was asked for was "No Consent, No Parade" - the democratic simplicity of the demand was patently obvious. It was refused. The whole scenario was underlined, of course, by the tried and failed tradition of violent suppression, in attempts to deter Nationalists from challenging the status quo of British and unionist domination.

As one has come to expect, it is in this field that the RUC, backed by the ever present British Army, excel themselves. Again this is nothing new. The most disturbing aspect of these sectarian marches over the summer was that they were marked by a litany of systematic and horrific injuries inflicted upon Nationalists, protesting against these expressions of fascistic truiphalism. The idea that the military strength of the British state solves the 'Irish problem' has been the preferred option in Ireland for centuries. So one would be gravely mistaken to think that the events of this summer were in any way unique. Here we see the refusal of the British to understand the problem. Repression in their sectarian colonial state breeds resistance, and greater repression breeds greater resistance.

DRUMCREE

The now infamous stand-off at Drumcree presented for all the opportunity to gauge for themselves the potential success of any peace process. In this capacity, it fulfilled its role splendidly. An initial decision to prevent the march from passing along the Garvaghy Road was regarded by most as the rational thing to do. Reason, however, is not a trait in the character of those who make the administrative decisions concerning the six counties. Under pressure from the threat of a Unionist backlash, and no doubt the real threat of an RUC rebellion within its own ranks, the decision was reversed. In the aftermath, politicians and the chief constable pointed the finger at one another in a pathetic attempt to avoid responsibility. But nothing could hide the fact that the decision was taken at the highest level of the imperialist establishment.

Could this reversal have been in the interests of the 'peace process', I hear you ask? I think not. What followed revealed all the contradictions inherent in this statelet: brute force became the remedy of the day. The domination of Unionist over Nationalist became so apparent to so many, that even some unionists looked a touch uncomfortable.

This became evident to the extent that there was talk of condemnation from quarters not traditionally sympathetic to Nationalist rights, such as our friend ...wait for it... the Lord of the Manor himself, John Alderdice. He even had the astuteness to point out that mainstream Unionism had breached the Mitchell Principles during Drumcree. Even if such people conveniently forgot this soon after, quick to dodge the slightest reference to the notion of their inconsistency in sitting at talks with these Unionists, and not Sinn Fein, this still pointed to the divisions within Unionism (shades of 1969, with the divisions between Brian Faulkner and the priggish 'liberal' Unionist Terence O'Neill).

I was outraged, like so many young Nationalists, watching the timid, docile R.U.C (before the Drumcree march was bulldozed through), whose members stood alongside those blockading roads, isolating towns and villages, rediscovering their vicious bite. Programmed to facilitate Unionist demands, our impartial police force marched off enthusiastically to confront Nationalist protesters. In a week when the Portadown UVF murdered Catholic civilian Michael McGoldrick the 'security forces' deemed it fitting to decommission 6,000 plastic bullets, 90% of which were fired at Nationalists. Nationalist demonstrations were also met with the murder of Dermot McShane, killed by the British army.

MARCHES - MICROCOSMS OF THE WIDER POLITICAL PROBLEM

So what is to be learned from these events? They bring us to the conclusion that the whole

THE SUMMER SUN



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controversy surrounding marches cannot be taken, at surface level, as isolated events. They are manifestations of a much greater problem rooted in the very nature of the 'Northern Ireland' state: a Partitionist State, whose existence relies upon the suppression of Nationalists, whether it be politically, economically, culturally, and, if need be - as we witnessed over the summer - militarily.

'Accommodation' is not sought - within the context of British rule - it is a Unionist word meaning 'Victory', and will remain this way indefinitely, until their veto is destroyed. The rights of Nationalists are time and again negated in the interests of the state, whether this be on the Garvaghy Road, the Ormeau Road or in the Bogside. It would be grossly wrong to infer that a satisfactory resolution of the problems surrounding these marches would signify a solution to the overall situation, but it could have been a starting point. However, the fact that since this proved impossible signifies that the wider problems cannot be resolved in the current political situation. Sinn Fein tried and failed to establish dialogue with Unionists, via the Residents Committees, which would have set a precedent for their involvement in 'Talks'.

Dealt with in isolation within a normal society, marching should be seen as a democratic right; the right to freely associate, organise and express a given political conviction. This right should be in no way abused! It is not an absolute right; thus, the rights of others must be respected in the process. Marchers have a responsibility both to themselves and to others. Intimidation and triumphalism must not be expressed at any time - this is not a legitimate right, it is part of an illegitimate cultural identity. Marchers must also acquire the consent of the residents whose district the march passes through. It is essential that when consent is not forthcoming march organisers should respect the wishes of the residents. And of course dialogue between march organisers and representatives of the residents must also be encouraged on all occasions.

DERRY

John Hume's response to an Apprentice Boys parade along Derry's walls on Saturday the 19th of October was however, totally unacceptable in the eyes of many Nationalists and every right-minded person . He was not defending the people of Derry; he was accommodating the forces of reaction. His line of argument resembled closely that espoused by Unionists. In brief, the crux of the argument goes, only local Derry men would participate (which later proved to be untrue) and that the parade would pass off relatively quickly. The parades, therefore, are in principle fine. The reality of the situation was that the parade would go ahead against the wishes of the Bogside residents and without any attempt at negotiations. In pursuing this approach John Hume has left us to look forward to another summer of triumphalism and coat trailing and he has entirely missed or dismissed the point, the point being that Nationalists have rights. And he'll be the first one out in the media condemning nationalist street protests! What a feeble-minded hypocrite.

NEXT SUMMER

Yes, the snow shall melt and spring shall be upon us once more. The air will again be filled with the sound of drums beating, flutes playing, yobs jeering, and rest assured, the R.U.C. will most certainly play their part in ensuring unionist supremacy is in no way undermined. Do not be fooled into thinking that Drumcree will never happen again, or that this injustice inflicted upon Nationalists is a thing of the past. No chance! Not an inch has been given, not an inch will be given, for that is the philosophy of those in power and to hell with those who disagree.

Whether it be negotiations at Castle buildings concerning the future of the six counties or the demand for dialogue to commence in relation to marches, Nationalists are continually excluded to the point of their views bearing little weight, or more often, not being considered at all. What's New! A reluctance to change on behalf of unionists, who are encouraged to adopt this stance by the British, can hardly create the conditions needed to bring about a satisfactory resolution to the socio-economic/political ills of this society. The present British government, like all previous British governments, have failed to introduce a credible framework aimed at bringing about a just and peaceful settlement for all the people of Ireland.

This summer Republican and Nationalist youth must show strength and unity in protest against those controversial marches which bring misery and heartache to so many. Solidarity is essential, we must all stand side by side demanding that Nationalist's rights are given just consideration. A continual denial of these rights ensures that conflict is inevitable. As for the peace process, it now lies dead - killed by Drumcree, Ormeau Road and Garvaghy Road - in short, by British colonial policy. But we will not stop here in our quest to bring about a just and peaceful settlement for all the people of Ireland. Our spirit, the spirit of freedom will never be extinguished by the cruel and brutal acts of injustice inflicted upon us and it is this spirit which will see us through the long hot days of this summer. The struggle shall continue, a struggle which belongs to us all and this summer the struggle will also belong to Republican and Nationalist youth.



rather they are its self-abused implementors. One cannot rationally deal with an effect unless one deals with its source. Thus the source of their reactionary behaviour must be removed - British involvement in Ireland. This is a step, a stage in the revolutionary transition to socialism in Ireland. Connolly agreed when he wrote "is it not well fitting that we of the working-class should fight for the freedom of the nation from foreign rule, as the first requisite for the free development of the national powers needed for our class? It is so fitting."

The Republican movement, unlike the juvenile S.W.P., has been labouring to raise the consciousness of the Irish people on the need for national liberation so to create the conditions conducive to social revolution, a dual process of which neither can be taken in exclusion, but are interdependent. National Liberation struggle is not by its nature exclusive to working-class activism, but it has to be an essential part of it. In order to attain social rights, one must first attain national rights. Therefore socialists do not compromise their principles by engaging in this struggle - they critically affirm them. To claim that socialists do compromise on principle through such action is the equivalent of stating that socialists who fought alongside imperialist forces to defeat fascism during the Second World War were unjustified and 'reactionary'. The idea is lunacy - it is a crudely mechanical and reductionist interpretation of Marx at its very worst.

IRISH NATIONAL LIBERATION AND THE S.W.P.

We engage in national liberation for the betterment of working people, in the interests of a human and free society. Thus we also pursue the policy of community involvement, through groups opposing (for example) sectarianism, social deprivation and drugs; and through promoting Irish language, educational and community networks, in order to aid and participate in the emancipation of communities from their engineered state of helplessness.

The S.W.P. pursue a policy of intervention and unashamed opportunism. Whenever there is a Republican demonstration or a reformist matter to be resolved within capitalist Irish society, the S.W.P. intervene (usually by simply attempting to sell issues of 'Socialist Worker') in an attempt to force their 'carnival of reaction', (their cluster of incoherent policies inapplicable to partitionist Ireland), on the Irish working-class. This action in itself clearly displays the party's condescending position with regards to the Irish working-class as not possessing the ability to form their own revolutionary agenda (which they have been doing since England occupied Ireland). When the matter is resolved (be it a postal strike or republican demonstration), the S.W.P. withdraw back to the periphery of society and gratuitously criticise those genuine revolutionary men and women who continually expose and struggle against the unjust nature of the imperialist set-up in Ireland. ('Imperialism', let us not forget, Lenin characterised as 'The highest form of capitalism'.)

It is not so much that the S.W.P. reject Republican ideas. Rather that they simply do not understand such ideas or their revolutionary meaning. Certainly this stems from a fundamentally sectarian reading of Marxist texts, as much as it stems from a lack of understanding Irish history, culture and the historically important task of Irish national liberation. Padraig Pearse once observed:

"One loves the freedom of men because one loves men.

There is therefore a deep humanism in every true Nationalist."

It is not so much that the S.W.P. reject Republican ideas. Rather that they simply do not understand such ideas or their revolutionary meaning

The Republican movement struggles for liberation from British imperialism, as the pre-requisite for full human emancipation on this island. An Irish Socialist Republican is a true Patriot, the embodiment of what it symbolises to be Irish. For these reasons, we unite with Connolly that "there should fly...the green flag of this country as a rallying point of our forces and the embodiment of all our hopes." We are not being 'divisive'. One cannot be an Irish socialist without being an Irish republican. Connolly's whole concept of struggle was based on this position.

Equally, and more applicable to the S.W.P., one cannot claim to be a British socialist and at the same time claim to stand against the Irish republican - to do so is not only to lose one's internationalism and hence socialism, but it is also to lose one's own humanity. Never have the S.W.P. played any significant role in the struggle on this island - and if they continue to refuse to acknowledge the primacy of the fight for national sovereignty, then they never will. In any event we, as true Irish socialists, will continue the freedom struggle to which James Connolly committed his life, and for which he was executed.

THE 1981 HUNGER STRIKES — AN CUMANN POBLACHTACH PAYS TRIBUTE

A Report — By Nikki Giovanni (Q.U.B.)

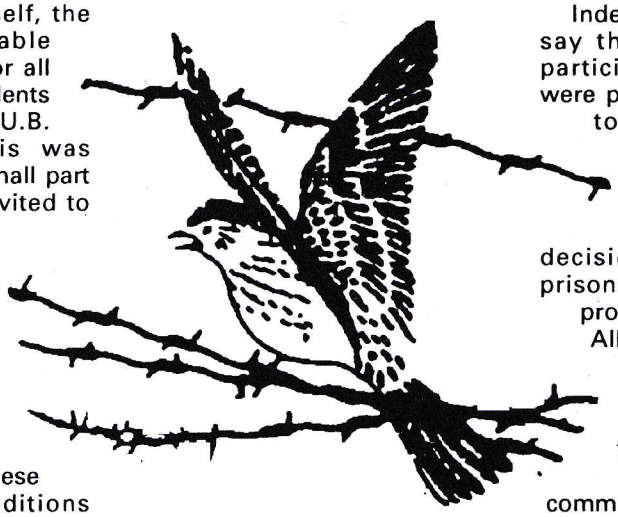
The prison struggle against British colonial strategy 1976-81 which culminated in the Hunger Strikes of 1980 and '81, resulting in the immediate deaths of 10 Irish Republican Prisoners of War, was a momentous event in the world history and in the history of anti-imperialist resistance in Ireland. It should be fully understood and never forgotten.

This was the underlying theme of An Cumann Poblachtach's organised day of public events, taking place on the 27th November 1996. It was also a fitting tribute to the late Pat McGeown who died on the 29th September 1996 after years of heart trouble caused by his involvement in the Hunger Strike. Staged as both a visual exhibition and as a critical discussion on the actual Hunger Strike itself, the event was an invaluable educational experience for all of the estimated 400 students who converged upon Q.U.B. Students Union. This was undoubtedly due in no small part to the guest speakers invited to address the gathering.

It was hoped that Sean Kinsella, ex-P.o.W., recently released from incarceration in England, would brief us on the deteriorating conditions of Republican P.o.W.s in English jails and help make parallels between these conditions and the conditions suffered by men and women protesters on the blanket protests. It was with painful irony that we learned that Sean was unfit to join the proceedings because of illness developed while under the very conditions he wished to describe. Bernadette McAliskey (prominent in the H-Block/Armagh Committee) was also unable to attend, due to the disgusting attempts by British "Intelligence" to politically distract and personally demoralise her by incarcerating her pregnant daughter Roisin in England, under particularly barbaric conditions.

STUDENTS AGAINST REPRESSION

However with this in mind, the event continued. Sean Hayes of South Belfast Sinn Fein and former student at Q.U.B. during the time of 1980/81, was one the speakers present and first to address the meeting. As a member of Students Against Repression, Sean outlined the projectory of student activism at the time, mobilised as it was around the demands of the prisoners and their families. Inevitably, he highlighted the accompanying methods of harassment and censorship implemented by the authorities in attempts to stifle the group's effectiveness and limit their organisational capacities, including covert operations such as the bomb attack on the Students Union in 1980.



Sean further described how Republican students organised within the Students Union, attempting to gradually counteract the transient moods of depression caused by marginalisation, by broadening their boundaries of campaign activity, dealing with the issues other than the immediate demands of the Republican struggle. His advice was met with notable interest.

WHAT WAS THE HUNGER STRIKE ALL ABOUT?

Indeed, it would be correct to say that the vast majority of participants to this discussion were present because of a desire to know; to deepen their understanding of what events preceded the Hunger Strikes and also what lay behind the decision at that time by the prisoners to embark upon their protest, to the last act of dying. All present were alive at the time of the protest and all presumably had their own particular memories of the time.

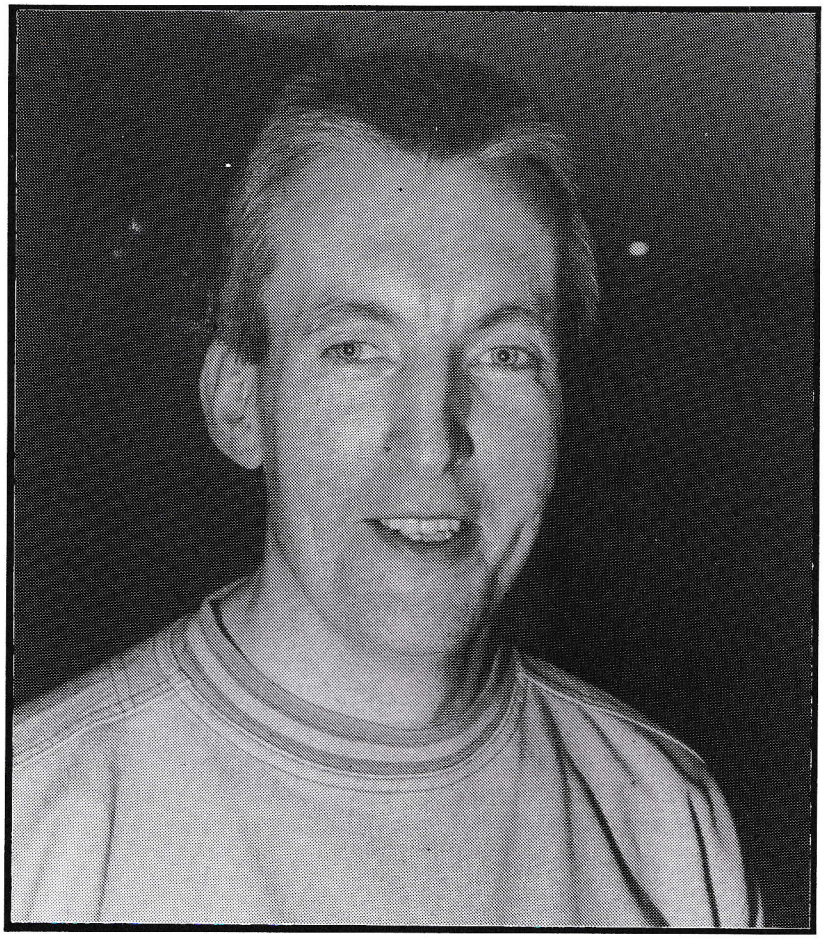
The deep and haunting communal summoning of the 'bin lids'; the emotionally charged atmosphere of street spontaneity; women using their bodies to block the path of British Army vehicles along narrow streets; the almost instinctual drive to find a stone to throw at the RUC as soon as the threatening roar of their jeeps became discernible in the distance. The plethora of new murals and slogans, the stories of plastic bullet deaths, and parental warnings to stay clear of the riots. These were my memories and the

common memories of the other young people around me on this occasion. We were now finally given the opportunity to put into a more politically defined context such childhood memories, by listening to those with first hand experience of what these events surrounded.

COUNTER INSURGENCY - THE PRISONERS' RESPONSE

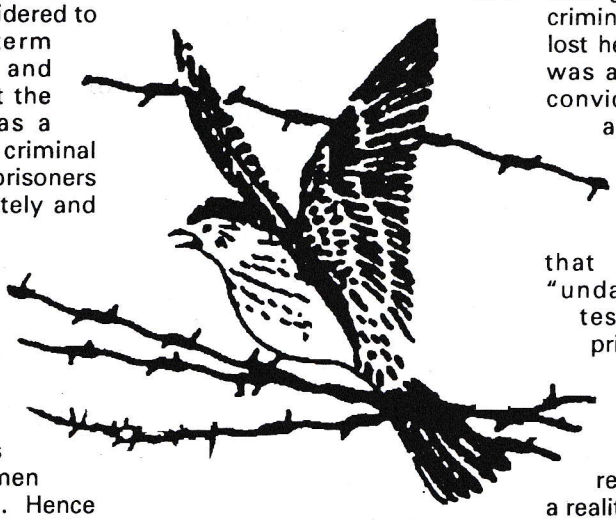
Laurence McKeown, the next speaker, who spent 70 days on hunger strike, gave a moving and authoritative account of the time. He began by saying that the hunger strikes could only be understood by analysing events from 1976-81, within the context of a counter insurgency strategy embarked upon by the British government. This included the triadic approach of Criminalisation, Ulsterisation and Normalisation. Internment, being ditched because of its negative implications on the international scene, was replaced by new more effective emergency powers of arrest, detention and conviction commonly known as the 'conveyor-belt' system. This constituted a process of de facto internment, ceremonially initiated in brutal fashion inside the purpose built holdings centres of Castlereagh and Gough Barracks, and in due course obscenely disguised by British legal fiction via the 'Diplock' (non-jury) courts. The RUC were simultaneously authorised primacy in their operational role in the six-counties, while 'Special Category Status' was removed on the 1st March 1976.

Republicans and other political prisoners were now considered to be "criminals"; a term slavishly used by local and national media to depict the liberation movement as a Mafia inspired "normal" criminal conspiracy. Republican prisoners recognised this immediately and confronted the British strategy head on. Ciaran Nugent was the first to refuse prison uniform when arriving at the newly constructed H-Blocks. His example was followed by more prisoners in the Blocks and eventually by the women P.o.W.s in Armagh Prison. Hence began the first phases of the prison struggle; non co-operation, escalating into the No-Wash protest, which was met with more brutality, resulting in the first Hunger Strike of 1980. The intensity of this battle between the prisoners and prison authorities seemed heavily reinforced at this point, as Laurence referred to the average age of those on the protests, 19-years, around the average age of those present in the hall.



Laurence McKeown

The first Hunger Strike was called off when negotiations seemed to have amounted to a resolution of the protest. The five demands however were not met, with the British reneging on their assurances, hoping to demoralise the



campaign and make it wither away. This, Laurence summarised, constituted the historical precedents of the 1981 Hunger Strike and accounts partially for the reasons Bobby Sands, followed by his comrades, initiated the second protest, which eventually led to their agonising deaths under colonial rule

THE "UNDAUNTABLE THOUGHT"

As I interpret it now, the prisoners' struggle was a direct response to the power which held them captive; a statement that they would not allow the lives of their fellow comrades, their lives, their actions, their motivations, their goals and aspirations, to be criminalised and broken. "What is lost here is lost for the Republic" was a statement of unbending conviction that they would not, and could not be defeated, because what was at stake was recognised as too precious an ideal. Their lives were committed to that ideal and it was this "undauntable thought" Sands testifies lit the dark of his prison cell, giving himself and his comrades the inner strength to see their protest to the end.

We are left with the stark reality of their total sacrifice, a reality that burns in the minds of every Republican as a painfully conscious reminder that the revolution we bring about must in itself be 'total', if we are to do justice to the memory of those dead comrades. As Laurence remarked during questions, the implementation of the criminalisation policy at that time

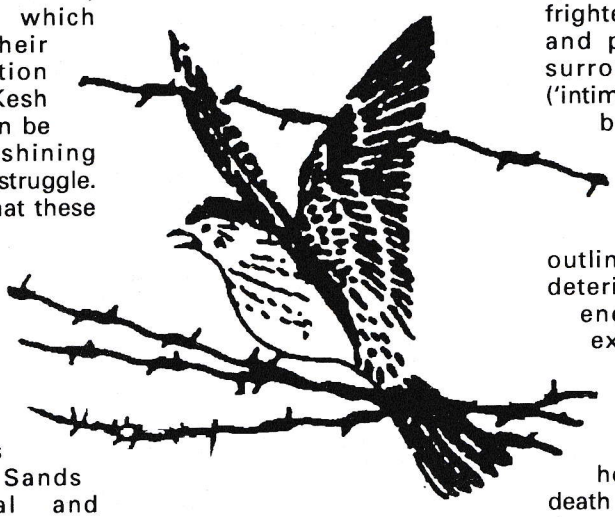
would have had a devastating effect on the Republican movement, had it not been for their selfless heroism.

They affirmed, in their actions, the same certitude which accounted for their involvement in liberation struggle outside Long Kesh Prison. Their actions can be universalised as a shining example of anti-colonial struggle. But it is my own view that these actions represent something more than this. They represent a messianic act of self-affirmation in that which is good and worthy of all humanity. "Greater love hath no man than to lay down his life for his friend", as Bobby Sands reminded the venal and manipulative cleric Denis Faul. Faul was responsible for persuading the families to medically intervene when the protesters entered into a coma-state, constituting the primary reason for the prisoners' decision to call off the Strike. However, in calling off the protest, the prisoners claimed a massive political victory over the British administration; since its colonial indifference and ineptitude had been thoroughly exposed and universally condemned - the movement was vindicated and the Republican cause spiritually enhanced.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE H-BLOCK STRUGGLE

The international response to the prison protests was striking. Solidarity messages from Cuba, Irish America, European nations, Iran, Palestine, South Africa and many other countries, were the refection of the enormous level of world sympathy and respect that the Hunger Strikers had won over. It is impossible however, to gauge the full effect of the H-Block/Armagh Campaign in Ireland. It certainly exposed the corrupt and morally bankrupt nature of the Irish establishment and the Catholic hierarchy for all to see; the clerically based 'Irish Commission for Justice and Peace' Laurence describing it as "at best grossly naive and at worse prepared to peddle a shady deal to the prisoners".

The Hunger Strikes are sometimes crudely reduced by our commentators as merely a catalyst for Sinn Fein's thrust into electoral politics. Let us not forget, however, that they inspired a new generation of Republicans to take to the streets in the fight for, as Bobby Sands put it, "total equality" embodied within a completely new Irish Republic. Let us also not forget that through their actions the Armed Struggle



became recognised as a more legitimate and morally coherent form of activism than ever before, being equated as it was, with a willingness to engage in sacrifice and suffering for its objectives.

THE MEETING: A SUCCESS

There is no doubt that this Republican gathering proved a major success in terms of its professionalism, its enjoyed level of attendance, its educational and propaganda value and its sending out clear signals to the established clique of careerists politicos at Queens Student Union, that the Republican presence at Queens has something fundamental to offer and is here to stay. The Unionist fraternity were notable for their lack of vocal presence - they had been planning a protest of some sort.

Why they did not is open to speculation. Maybe they were frightened by the righteousness and pervading sense of awe surrounding the event ('intimidated' was the word used by The Sunday Times, 19/1/97). How could anyone, for example, interrupt the proceedings while Laurence McKeown outlined the stages of physical deterioration leading up to the end, bearing witness to the excruciating deaths of his friends? Or begin heckling at the back of the room as the same person described in calm and measured tones how he would discover the death of a comrade, by identifying the peculiar sound of a light tin trolley hitting against the metal grids outside the door of his hospital room? The most bigoted Unionist at Queens (and there are many) would not have dared break the silence from the floor.

Apart from the usual bigots, the event was appreciated by all. We look forward to another display of dignity and strength by An Cumann Poblachtach in the future. As it proved, the sense of identity these gatherings help to form is essential. As we departed from the hall, we left with a sense of renewed conviction that our struggle is indefeasibly correct, and with a feeling that our will to carry on this struggle invariably strengthened and that must be built upon. It will be built upon.



Bobby Sands

AN CUMANN POBLACHTACH - OLLSCOIL NA BANRIONA

'A Respectable Minority'

By Paddy MacBride

Paddy MacBride, one of the founder members of An Cumann Poblachtach, explains the nature of the Queens University Student Union association, its political orientation, and its recent series of organised events and activities.

In his last statement James Connolly wrote that the presence, in any one generation, of even a respectable minority ready to affirm the truth that the British Government has no rights to Ireland, never had any right in Ireland, and never can have any right in Ireland, makes that government for-ever a usurpation and a crime against human progress.

THE REPUBLICAN ASSOCIATION - QUB

Were he alive today, James Connolly would find such a respectable minority in An Cumann Poblachtach - Ollscoil Na Banriona. Formed in September 1996, it has grown steadily over the last few months through weekly Cumann meetings and public activities. Drawing its membership from the student body and the surrounding community, An Cumann Poblachtach - Ollscoil na Banriona has brought together a range of working class women and men in their late teens and early twenties. Collectively, they are struggling along with others at home and abroad to promote the Irish Republican Socialism of James Connolly and those who followed in his footsteps.

Since most of our members have grown up within this militarised, divided and thoroughly reactionary state, we are fully aware of the implications which British occupation has for young people in Ireland. Unemployment,



Sheena Campbell murdered by British-sponsored Death Squads

discrimination, harassment, torture, imprisonment, poverty and alienation are but a few of the first hand experiences which activists have in common. Rather than leave Ireland to study elsewhere, or turn our backs on friends who have, for understandable reasons, not made it to University, members of An Cumann Poblachtach - Ollscoil na Banriona have taken James Connolly's advice and risen up off their knees.

CAMPUS ACTIVITIES

In October, we held a successful and dignified picket to protest at the presence of former Royal Marine and notable exponent of British military involvement in Ireland, Paddy Ashdown, on the University campus. In November, An Cumann Poblachtach - Ollscoil na Banriona organised its own fitting tribute to the late Pat Mc Geown by holding an extensive exhibition and debate around the theme of the 1980/1981 Hunger Strikes. The exhibition consisted of newspaper and historical accounts from the period, while the debate involved two prominent speakers - Laurence McKeown and Sean Hayes. Since the new year, An Cumann Poblachtach - Ollscoil Na Banriona have also started planning appropriate ways to commemorate the 1916 Easter Rising, and several dozen members of the group marched behind the Cumann's banner at the recent 25th Anniversary of the Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry.

INTERNATIONALISM

Like the great man himself, we see Ireland's struggle for social and national independence in its international context. Hence, some of our members remain in contact with former overseas exchange students and the Society encourages comparative analyses of our own situation with that of African Americans and Arab Palestinians.etc. Recently, Republicans at Queens have been engaged in a process of cultivating contacts with other young members of liberation movements in Europe and throughout other parts of the world. Jarrai, the Independent Basque Youth Movement, is just



Recently, 25-year old Roisin Mc Aliskey, community activist, pregnant woman and graduate of QUB, was arrested by the British Paramilitary Police in Ireland, in mid-November 1996, and is currently being held in inhumane and degrading conditions at Holloway Prison, England.

one organisation of which our members remain in constant contact, believing that such contact is invaluable to the cause of our respective struggles.

WOMEN AND FREEDOM STRUGGLE

One aspect of James Connolly's politics which has not received the attention it deserves is his anti-sexism. James Connolly cheered on those women of his day who rose up off their knees to fight for the emancipation of Ireland and its womanhood. Eighty years after his execution, An Cumann Poblachtach - Ollscoil na Banriona also shares his delight. We are proud to say that the young Irish republican woman who slapped Reginald Maudling across the face during a Westminster debate in the aftermath of 'Bloody Sunday' was a former student at QUB. An Cumann Poblachtach - Ollscoil na Banriona is also acutely aware of the enormous price that has been extracted from Irish Republican women during this current phase of the struggle. In the last 10 years, we have seen two female students murdered by the British Crown Forces and British-sponsored Death Squads.

Recently, 25-year old Roisin Mc Aliskey, community activist, pregnant woman and graduate of QUB, was arrested by the British Paramilitary Police in Ireland, in mid-November 1996, and is currently being held in inhumane and degrading conditions at Holloway Prison, England. She awaits extradition to Germany after the British administration co-opted the German authorities into demanding her arrest. We can only conclude that this was an attempt to politically distract her mother at this crucial stage in the 'peace process'. An Cumann Poblachtach have been actively involved in campaigning for her release, through both street protests and conscienceness-raising activities.

UNIONIST HATRED

Also, bigoted unionist obstructionists - who advocate the mass exclusion of the GAA, the Irish Speaking society (and the 'bilingual policy'), and The Queens Lesbian and Gay Society - are also currently carrying out an orchestrated campaign of attempting to demonise and marginalise our members and our association. This campaign has been shamefully supported by The Sunday Times, The Guardian, The Newsletter and others in the Brit print press. An Cumann Poblachtach was also featured in the December (1996) edition of Combat Magazine, the U.V.F 'journal'. It has become increasingly clear that these bigots are trying to create the political climate and opportune conditions whereby members of An Cumann Poblachtach and our comrades can be easily assassinated by the local loyalist death squads.

Our presence on this University Campus today is testimony in itself of how such armed and 'legally' repressive actions by the British State and its forces have failed to extinguish the revolutionary spirit of Irish Freedom.

DEFENDING THE UNARMED STRATEGY

By Sean McGrogan (Q.U.B.)

In this article, Sean McGrogan analyses the events and circumstances which initially led to the 1994 cease-fire, arguing the case for the unarmed strategy as a means of advancing the Republican struggle today.

The decision to call a cease-fire in August 1994 surprised most observers and led to much speculation concerning not only the timing of the announcement, but also the reasoning behind the event. Subsequent developments have failed to reveal a clarity of purpose concerning the short and long term future strategies of the Republican Movement. What can not be denied is that the Republican leadership decided in August of 1994 to call an indefinite halt to the Republican campaign of armed struggle well before the stated aims of Republicanism had been achieved. The process of events leading to the IRA cease-fire of August 1994 must be analysed by all Republicans in order to formulate a strategy for the way forward today.

The IRA cease-fire of August 1994 amounted to an acceptance by the Republican leadership that the next phase of the long and enduring struggle to achieve Irish freedom would involve a political agreement falling short of the traditional Republican goal of immediate British withdrawal from Ireland. In hindsight, an acceptance of the need for a transitional period could be inferred from the calling of the cease-fire, though it could also be regarded as a recognition of the need for a process of rejuvenating the Republican struggle. In my opinion, the cease-fire should be seen as a tactical decision, taken by the Republican leadership and based upon years of internal debate at leadership level. Most of these Republican leaders have spent a lifetime engaged in the struggle for Irish freedom and no doubt the decision, once taken, was difficult for one and all. It is my belief that the decision was correct, based upon the social, economic and political realities existing in Ireland at the time - and today.

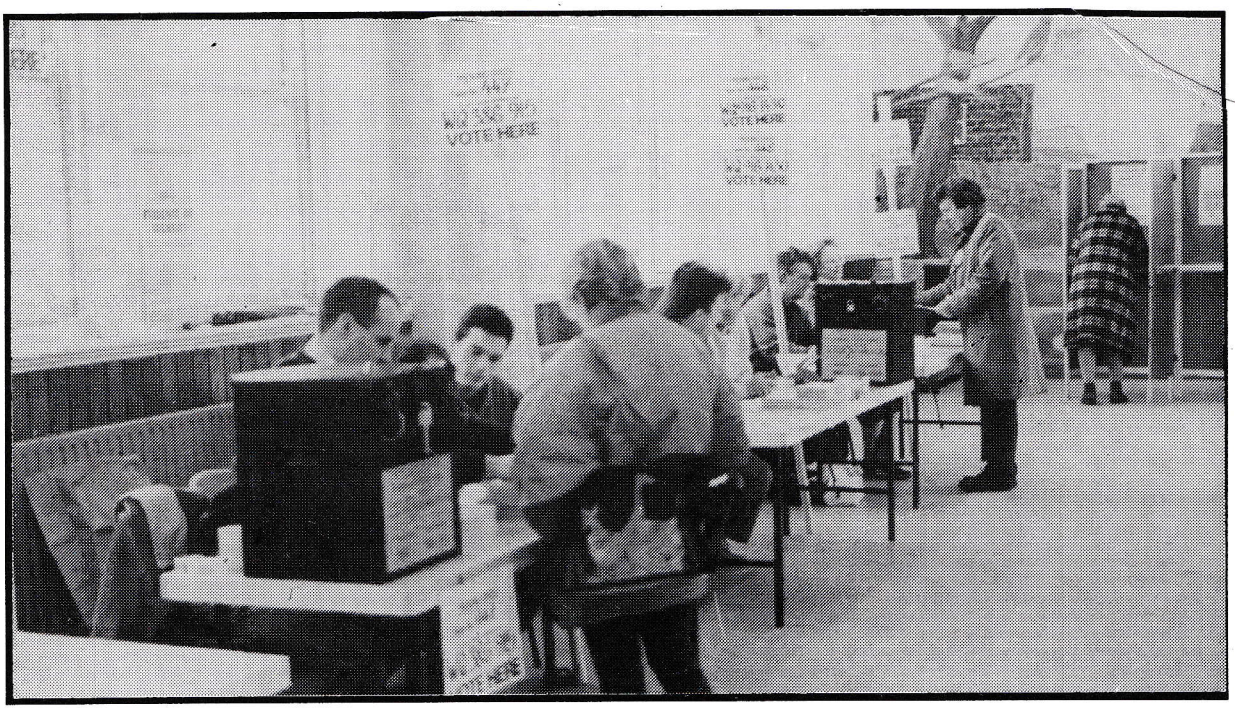
The breakdown of the IRA cease-fire in February 1996 -albeit sudden- was nevertheless anticipated by many political observers and Republicans alike. The duration of the cease-fire was conditional upon the unarmed strategy providing the dynamic to break the existing political and military stalemate. Seventeen months of peace without progress, coupled with talk of decommissioning and a six-county assembly as a pre-requisite for negotiations, proved too much for the IRA leadership.

Nevertheless, I am still of the opinion that the Republican leadership, including many who sanctioned the return to war in February 1996, are committed to pursuing an unarmed strategy in the short to medium term. The process of negotiations which led to the IRA cease-fire in the first place took almost a decade, and it would seem clear by the IRA statement which ended the cease-fire that the opinions formulated within that organisation precipitating the cease-fire have not altered significantly.

The present leadership of the Republican Movement consists of men and women who have been involved in the campaign since 1969. Mostly middle-aged, they have formulated Republican strategy for a quarter of a century, from the chaotic and bloody days of the early 1970s 'Victory' years, to the adoption of the 'Long War' strategy. The momentous decision to cease-fire was taken after years of consultation and calculating, and I do not believe a return to war is considered desirable nor productive in the long term, under the prevailing circumstances.

REPUBLICANS AND THE 26-COUNTIES

One of the primary difficulties facing Republicanism in recent years was it's irrelevant status as an issue south of the border, as witnessed by the humiliating election results for Sinn Fein throughout the 1980s and early '90s. The progressive social changes which have transformed Free State society in the past decade were all supported by Republicans - usually before any other party. Issues such as divorce, homosexual rights, contraception, abortion and anti-drug campaigns were all spearheaded by Republicans. Yet despite this, the Republican cause failed to make a breakthrough and catch the attention



The complete failure of Republicans to gain any substantial support in the 26 counties is a cause for great concern

of the mass of the population of the state. This was partially due to the utterly false assumption, by many in the Free State, that the pseudo-Republicanism espoused by the arch-conservative and reactionary leaders of Fianna Fail was in some way related to the genuine Republican struggle today. The self-seeking individualists who form this Establishment party have never sought to contribute towards the struggle to transform Irish society, within the Free State, and have never offered anything to the northern Nationalist community beyond empty rhetoric and false promises. Their association with the term 'Republican', however spurious, is something which must be eradicated to remove the damaging false preconceptions held by too many people in Ireland, and indeed beyond.

In past years, the enemies of Republicanism were largely successful in their campaign to demonise the Republican community throughout the country, using platforms such as the Sunday Independent to allow gutter journalists (like Eilis O'Hanlon) and right wing propagandists (Conor Cruise O'Brien, Ruth Dudley Edwards and Shane Ross) the opportunity to distort the nature of the conflict, often portraying the Republican community as evil and sub-human. This campaign of disinformation reached a new low in the summer of 1996 when the anti-sectarian parades sentiment, shared by all Nationalists and impartial observers, was dismissed as a Republican ploy whereby Nationalists were said to have been intimidated onto their own streets by the IRA in order to block the 'Loyal Orders'.

The post cease-fire period has witnessed a dramatic change in the popular perception south of the border towards Republican leaders, and as an extension, the Republican struggle. The lifting of Section 31 has allowed Republicans to be heard in the public arena and, to their credit, Republican leaders have maximised the potential offered by the development so as to destroy the revisionist- inspired myth of Republicans as 'evil psychopaths'. Instead, the prevailing view today(as confirmed in numerous opinion polls conducted by pro-Unionist papers in the Free State) is that the Republican leaders are genuine and sincere in their motives, and it is the British Government and Unionist leaders who are responsible for the destruction of the peace process.

The need for Republicans to develop a strong 32 -county popular base has emerged as one of the primary tasks facing Republicans today. This was accepted over a decade ago, and was the main argument in favour of dropping the abstentionist stance for the Dail. This was in recognition of the near universal acceptance within the 26 counties of the Dail as the legitimate representative body within the State, and the decision was intended to launch Sinn Fein as a political force within the State. The complete failure of Republicans to gain any substantial support in the 26 counties is a cause for great concern, and must be accepted as such to understand the rationale behind an unarmed strategy.

Gerry Adams once said that Republicans could not build a Thirty-two county Ireland without a Thirty-two county struggle. By the early-1990s, Sinn Fein was more of a Six-county party than it had ever been before. The Dublin rally after the Warrington bombing shocked many Republicans and assisted the process of concentrating their minds upon the need to address the unpopularity of the Republican message South of the border. The past two years has seen Republicans escape from the negative revisionist-constructed stereotype assumed previously by many within the 26 counties, and the genuine Republican message has been given an opportunity to be heard- and listened to - for the first time in a generation.

DEALING WITH CHANGING ASSUMPTIONS

The need for a new strategy to combat the enemies of Republicanism became increasingly evident as the 1980s progressed. The New Ireland Forum and the Anglo-Irish Agreement were crucial departures establishing the basis for the subsequent sea-change in Republican thinking. Both were attempts to curb support for the Republican struggle, and were to an extent successful, in that they succeeded in undermining support for Sinn Fein. The Forum brought constitutional Nation-alists throughout Ireland together and enabled them to collectively scrutinise their always dubious commitment to an all-Ireland Republic. From then on, the Republican rhetoric, most notably associated with Fianna Fail, was toned down, and a new consensus emerged in Dublin, increasingly at odds with the perceptions of Sinn Fein, and even elements within the SDLP.

The 'loss' of these parties should be regarded by Republicans as a

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INTERVIEW

Ruairi O'Bradaigh,

PRESIDENT OF REPUBLICAN SINN FEIN

Liam O Hanlon, on behalf of the Connolly society, questions Ruairi O'Bradaigh on Republican Sinn Fein's attitudes to the peace process, Drumcree, international politics and the role of young people in republican struggle. Ruairi O Bradaigh has been actively involved in republican struggle since the 1950's when he was interned in the Curragh Prison Camp. He has experienced nearly half a century of anti-colonial resistance in Ireland first hand. As President of Republican Sinn Fein since its formation in 1986, he represents an important strand of republican politics.

Connolly Society: How does RSF propose that Irish Freedom be achieved?
O'Bradaigh: " In a sentence, it can be achieved by mobilising the Irish people, at home and abroad, and also involving friends of Ireland, at home and abroad, in an all out struggle against British Imperialism in Ireland."

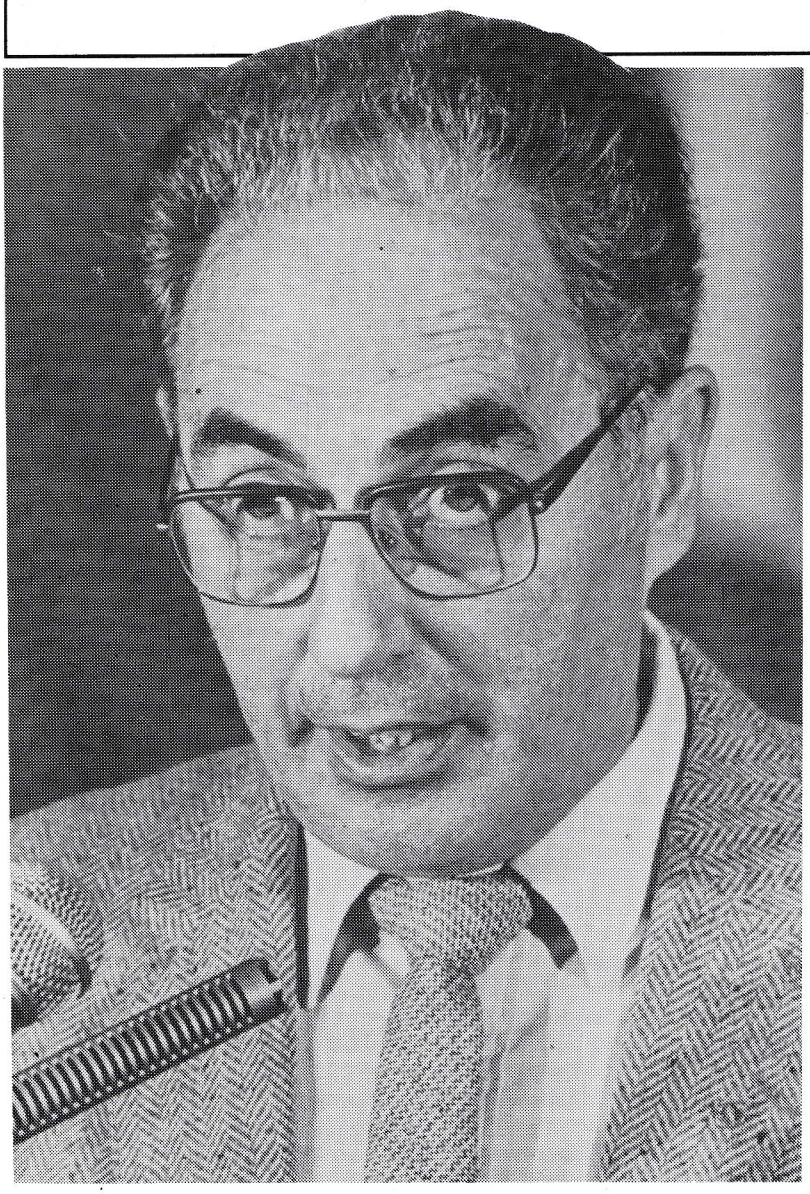
Connolly Society: Could you elaborate upon that?
O'Bradaigh: " We reject both states in Ireland, imposed on the Irish people by British force and British backed force, in 1922. We propose an entirely new Ireland. We accept neither the colonial state north of the border nor the neo-colonial state south of the border. We do not want to extend the neo- colonial 26 county state over the entire island. We believe that a completely new beginning is much more acceptable to anyone concerned with a solution to the situation in Ireland. As I was quoted as saying in an article in the Belfast Telegraph (20.9.95), the Unionists find the present 26 county state abhorrent, the Nationalists regard it as distasteful. The best approach that we have considered is a completely new Ireland, the separation of church and state, the establishment of a pluralist society and the division of power from the centre right down to local areas. We envisage this in terms of a new four province federal Ireland that would include a nine county Ulster."

Connolly Society: What overall benefits would this decentralised approach have?
O'Bradaigh: " This would do three things: (1) It would provide an answer to the situation in the province of Ulster; (2) It would help to correct the economic imbalance within Ireland, the east coast enjoyed economic development at the expense of the rest of the country; (3) Most importantly of all, it would bring power to the people. It would bring them as near as possible to a direct participatory democracy. In the case of Ulster, given the present voting patterns, the former Unionists would have a working majority of somewhere between 2.5% to 5%. Nationalist would be right behind them and in the reach of power. The regions of south Ulster and west Ulster would have a Nationalist majority while east Ulster and Belfast would have former unionist majorities. At district council level, according to local majorities, we propose that they have very strong powers, including control of the local police. Therefore, the nine counties of Ulster would appear like a patchwork quilt, if you like, according to local majorities.

EIRE NUA
To sum up, this would make for power sharing, but not in the artificial sense as we saw with Sunningdale were vertical power sharing was enforced. Instead of that model we propose natural power sharing on a horizontal level according to local majorities. This would make for an effective distribution of power at various levels of Irish society and we visualise foreign affairs, national defence and overall financing being reserved for the federal level of Government. We propose that this be taken out of Dublin completely and be relocated in the centre of the country at Athlone. This would be a complete break with the past and a division of the administrative capital from the commercial capital. This would facilitate real decentralisation, not the scattering around of civil servants between offices, that is not real decentralisation at all. The redistribution of power and decision making is.

The 'Eire Nua' new democracy document has stated that these are not definite proposals, nor are they exclusive of other alternative suggestions. These are what we will bring to the all Ireland constituent assembly that will be elected by all the people of Ireland in a single election and charged with drawing up a new constitution that would be put to the people by referendum. Eire Nua is our proposals in this situation. We believe that these proposals are the best and we will try to convince the Irish people accordingly. While we are flexible in relation to our domestic relation we are totally opposed to the continuation of British rule in Ireland."

Connolly Society: And the Unionist response to these proposals?
O'Bradaigh: " During the seventies and right through to the nineties, in our contact with Unionists of many different hues, including loyalists, we asked them "What would you do if the British were to leave, despite you?" Their answer was invariably that they would set up an Independent six counties. We then told them that we believed that it could survive and asked them what



would they do if it didn't survive, they invariably answered that our four province idea was the best available."

Connolly Society: Could you briefly point to your main policy documents?
O'Bradaigh: "RSF have three policy documents. Firstly, 'Towards a Peaceful Ireland' sketches the way forward in the advent of a British commitment to disengage from Ireland. It proposes an all Ireland election to a constituent assembly which would draft a new constitution for Ireland that would be put to the people of Ireland, as I have already mentioned. Secondly, the Eire Nua document and thirdly the 'Saol Nua: an alternative society'. Saol Nua is based on Republican, democratic, socialist, self reliance and environmental principles..."

Connolly Society: Could you outline your International perspective?
O'Bradaigh: "....On the international scene, we have always favoured the non aligned movement and we were opposed to the power blocs of both east and west. Now that the eastern one is gone there is one super power in the world. We believe in neutrality and non alignment for Ireland. We see Ireland taking its place with the former colonies and believe that links made during the period of struggle could stand Ireland well in the future."

Connolly Society: How does RSF differentiate itself from 'Provisional' Sinn Fein given that your party claims to represent 'true' Republicanism?
O'Bradaigh: "This must be seen in its historical context. People like to choose the segment of history that will suit their case. Often it seems to be the period after they left the Republican movement as Fine Gael and Fianna Fail etc. would do. We had in this century two crests of the wave in the struggle for national freedom and Independence. The first was in the 1920's and the next peak was in the 1970's and 1980's. Each time counter revolution was brought to bear.

1922
That's what happened in 1922 when the British stopped the movement. They subordinated a section of the leadership and got that section to organise its supporters to block and roll back the tide of Revolution. What I am referring to is the so called 'civil war'. We don't accept that it was a civil war as such. The personnel used was largely domestic but the issue was not domestic. Out of that came Cumman na nGaedheal, or Fine Gael as they now call themselves. The people who formed Fianna Fail left the movement in 1927 and were absorbed into the system in the same way that Fine Gael were, and used the firing squad against Republicans - they even went so far as to import a British hangman! They had men die on hunger strike rather than give them political status and put hundreds, in the case of Fine Gael, thousands of men, women and children into concentration camps.

1940'S
Then there was a third parting by Clann na Phoblachta at the end of the forties which was perhaps the most benign example in that they didn't try to convert the movement into something it never was. They organised outside the movement and had two ministries in the first coalition government and faded afterwards. Rather than take part in the coercion of Republicans they actually brought down the Government. Had they achieved a single party government in Dublin what they would have done with Republicans is an open question, but this is what they did when put to the test as a minority party in government and a number of them helped the movement afterwards.

1970
Then we had the Worker's Party which was a repetition of the same thing - trying to turn a revolutionary movement into a constitutional and reformist political party. Of course, they claimed to be the Republican movement, they claimed that they were Sinn Fein and they claimed that they were the IRA, but an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit and what they were about was very quickly seen. In due course it all came to fruition and young people only have to read what Pronssias de Rossa has been saying in the Dublin high court to realise that these people took part in all aspects of the republican movement, but were completely absorbed into the system and became the most zealous upholders of the Free State against their former comrades. I was in prison with these people, in the Curragh concentration camp, and involved in military and political activities with them.

1986
What we had in 1986 was, in due recurrent season, the fifth manifestation in the twentieth century of Irish counter revolution. An attempt was made once more to

turn the Republican movement into something that it was not. By its very nature it is a Revolutionary movement. An attempt was made to make it go along constitutional lines, this time starting with a reduction in its scope, rather than opting for a seat in Leinster house, Stormont or Westminster, which ran down the military organisation at the same time. This was a more gradual process, achieved first of all through acceptance of the Southern state and then bit by bit (i.e., applying to the RUC to honour those who those very British forces had killed). Then the political oath test was swallowed at local elections and Stormont assembly elections which would disown the Republican movement specifically and publicly and would denounce the use of active struggle to achieve Ireland's rightful freedom and Independence. We were not prepared to do these things, and of course, as has happened in the past, we have found ourselves excluded from certain elections. This was the inevitable result, if you like, of attempting to ride two horses at the same time while these two horses are going in two separate directions. This pulls people apart.

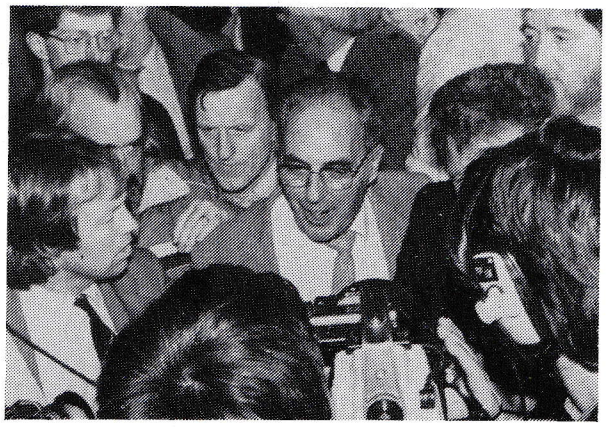
We warned people of this and in due course it came to pass very gradually. First the Provisionals' vote fell in the Southern elections when they accepted the state centred on Dublin. Then the demand for a British withdrawal was dropped at the beginning of the 1990's, from the annual Bodenstown address which has always been rated as a policy statement. Following that we had the Hume/Adams document which was secret. It took a year until the Sunday Tribune exposed it on 27th August 1993. This accepted the Unionist veto, hedged around various qualifications, against a free and independent Ireland. Then came the unilateral, indefinite and unconditional cease-fire of August 1994.

This varied and contrasted deeply with what happened in 1972 and 1975 when there was in each case a bilateral truce, agreed with British government representatives, over a period of time and in the case of the 1975 truce it was on written terms. Twelve points were drawn up and clause twelve was a penalty clause to be invoked in event of any of the previous eleven being violated. When a British public withdrawal was not given the whole thing was abandoned. In 1972 it lasted around two weeks and in 1975 it lasted seven and a half months. These truces were opposed by the Dublin government and Garret Fitzgerald's book (Towards a New Ireland) makes it clear that the Dublin government of the time told the British government most emphatically that they did not want a British withdrawal from Ireland. Furthermore, the British backed Loyalist organisations took advantage of the situation and engaged in an unprecedented campaign of assassination against innocent nationalist civilians. This and the British government's refusal to withdraw from Ireland is what brought the process to an end in 1975.

The Republican movement, of which Republican Sinn Fein is still a part, fulfils its revolutionary role. The Provisional movement, as we see it, has been increasingly absorbed into the system. This has been happening since 1986 and what we said then has been borne out again and again...

The Provisional Movement..."[being] increasingly absorbed into the system"

To illustrate a point, in the US they have allied themselves with the administration in Washington and with corporate America, having abandoned those people who for over twenty five years subscribed their $5,$10, $20 a week to support the prisoners dependants, the people who have been the mainstay of support in the US. Now they have far wealthier friends, the multi-millionaires and so on, who would not have given us a cup of water from 1969. These are the



Ruairi O'Bradaigh pictured in 1986

differences. The sooner this whole process runs its course and the logical thing, taking part in the British parliament with the SDLP, the better, because it will make things a lot more clearer..."

Connolly Society: What role does RSF envisage for young people in the anti colonial struggle?
O'Bradaigh: "....The war of Independence can be won successfully but the struggle for liberation must continue.... We would say to young people, you have a place in Republican Sinn Fein, you can take up your place in the brotherhood and sisterhood of struggle for the liberation of humankind and surely there is no more a noble struggle than that? Young people can play a role to the full and help to bring about a new dawn of history to Ireland, in our contribution to bringing a new dawn of human history to the world at large. Young people can be effective in participating in bringing such a situation about. The whole of the twentieth century has been a historic development of peoples, but imperialism continues its ways of operating. We must continue to oppose it. The twenty-first century will provide an even greater challenge than we have ever known in the twentieth century, because the imperial power will not be as visible nor seen to be as brutal and therefore will not be as easily opposed. It will use social, economic and cultural means to subjugate peoples. Young people must find ways to fight against this. This will be their role in Republican Sinn Fein."

Connolly Society: In the context of neo-imperialism, how then do you regard the interest currently being taken in Ireland by the Clinton administration?
O'Bradaigh: "...We argue that there can never be peace in Ireland as long as the British government tries to rule here. There may be a smothered war, but it always breaks out again. This is a lesson that Irish history has taught us and Irish history did not come to a halt on 31 August 1994.

WHITE HOUSE 'GOOD FAITH'

The Clinton administration's interest is not altruistic and it is not in support of Irish freedom. They talked continually of the so called Northern Ireland state and whenever they talk of Ireland they mean the twenty six county state. Therefore, in their vocabulary we have a truncated Ireland. We have a twenty-six county state which is Ireland and a colonial state carved out of the body-politic of Ireland, which is baptised Northern Ireland. Yet it would be very strange to talk of France as Northern France and France. It is a contradiction in terms. When President Clinton refused us visas he wrote to Congressmen telling them that until Republican Sinn Fein accept the current process and myself in particular accept the current process we would not get a



Confronting the garda in 1975

visa. It is as specific as that and it is not even a question of alleged 'terrorist offences'. It is because Republican Sinn Fein does not take a particular line. Yet he was elected four years ago on the promise that visas to the US would be available to all Republican spokespersons, that there would be an end to political extradition - "no more Joe Doherty's"- and yet he extradited Jimmy Smyth and there are other cases in the pipeline. Clinton also promised that the MacBride principles would be accepted yet he vetoed a bill that was passed by Congress in favour of the MacBride principles.

CLINTON'S NEW WORLD ORDER

So much for Mr Clinton's good faith. It is in the interest of the White house and corporate America to smother the revolutionary effort in Ireland and to secure a stabilisation of Ireland to make it a ground for transient multi-national investment and to secure and maximise profits made here. Naom Chomsky of the M.I.T writes about the globalisation of the economy - "The prosperous few and the restless many". The effect of this process is to move industry out of the developed first world towards the under-developed third world where wages are slashed and environmental and ecological concerns are completely ignored. Wages that would be demanded in the first world do not have to be paid by these companies nor are they required to clean up after themselves. Thus their profits are at a maximum. This pattern fits the interests of the White House and corporate America's in Ireland. They are seeking to secure an accommodation of British rule in Ireland and make it more acceptable internationally."

Connolly Society: What was the reaction of RSF to the Drumcree stand off, what went before it and what came after it?

O'Bradaigh: "...I don't accept for one minute that the decision to back down at Drumcree was an internal RUC decision, once more the British government backed down in the face of the threat of violence coming from that same quarter of North East Ireland, just as they did in 1886 when Randolph Churchill said, "the orange card was the cue to play in opposing Home Rule", just as was done during the crisis of 1912 -1914, and again in 1922....

Every time the question of freedom and independence of this country comes up the British government invariably backs down before these threats of violence and bloodbaths which feeds this appetite. We saw it with the orange strike in 1974 which led to the collapse of Sunningdale and we saw it last summer at Drumcree. Every time it happens a new generation is acquainted with the reality of the situation. Therefore the lessons are there for all who want to read from them."

Connolly Society: Is there room for accommodation on this Island?

O'Bradaigh: " There is room for everyone on this Island. There is no need that any minority be forced onto the edge of a political cliff. The question of accommodation however does not simply deal with the former 'unionist' minority within the context of a united Ireland. It deals with the Irish speaking minorities, the minorities of the inner cities, minorities of deprived people such a single mothers and the unemployed. The whole question of the alienation of a section of people from their own society arose strikingly during the Maastrict referendum, and pointed to the fact that two-thirds of the people on the island were doing reasonably well while there was an underclass of one-third who were doing very badly, in terms of being under-privileged and deprived in every sense. The problem is that Irish society is increasingly being organised according to the American model, yet if the richest country in the world cannot solve its own huge social and cultural problems then how can we expect to solve ours when we imitate its system. We have to look beyond the existing confines and look for alternatives."

continued from page 15

positive step forward in the Republican struggle. For generations these parties used the 'National Question' to manipulate the southern electorate, wrapping themselves in the flag to gain votes, knowing that once in power they would do nothing to alleviate the injustices of partition. The consequences of their actions can be measured in the cynical attitude which is common in the 26 counties towards politics in general, leaving people vulnerable to the Revisionist campaign.

By the time of the cease-fires, two of the main political parties in the Dail would be publicly sympathetic and supportive of Unionist aspirations (Democratic Left and the Progressive Democrats), with Proinssas de Rossa as a member of the Government feeling compelled to lecture a gathering of the Unionist Labour Group on how best to 'secure' the Union. The changing attitudes in Southern political circles owes much to the campaign carried out by Irish 'revisionist' historians, who took a very sympathetic view of the Unionist position in Ireland as part of their campaign to destroy what they alleged to be Nationalist and Republican myths, rewriting Irish history in the process. Even amongst the more 'Nationalist' parties in the Dail (Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Labour) there was a new emphasis on identifying the Unionists as the obstacle to Irish unity, not the British Government. All the parties accepted the Unionist veto/consent principle, and called upon Sinn Fein to follow suit. To their credit, Sinn Fein have refused to succumb to the pressures to do so, recognising the flaw inherent in this line of thinking : that such a position ignores the reality of Britain's central role as the sole governing body in the six counties, and that any changes will not be implemented without Britain's support.

The reality of this was brutally exposed to the Nationalist community during the events of July 1996, when Unionists were able to carry out a political coup d'etat due to Britain's unwillingness to face down the orange mobs across the six counties. The rhetoric thrown at Republicans concerning Britain's supposed neutrality in Ireland was revealed for what it was - a simple lie, manufactured by the British Government and naively accepted by the political incompetents of the so-called constitutional Nationalist parties.

This new 'Nationalist' consensus was greatly strengthened as a consequence of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. While not ending the 'Nationalist nightmare', as Garret Fitzgerald alleged, the Agreement nevertheless offered the first occasion since the foundation of the Northern state that the British Government had practically recognised the all-Ireland nature of the Nationalist and Republican traditions. The Agreement acted as an essential vehicle for the redefinition of the common constitutional Nationalist agenda. Constitutional Nationalism presented the Agreement as an historic and irreversible step, boosting the confidence of the SDLP in the North and allowing the Irish Government to finally get it's foot in the door.

Fionnula O'Connor traces the changing attitudes and perceptions of Northern Nationalists in her definitive study In Search of A State. The united Ireland espoused by Sinn Fein and SDLP voters alike takes on a variety of forms precisely due to its abstract existence at present. Therefore, the Anglo-Irish Agreement was welcomed by most as at least a step in the right direction. Following it, Nationalists and Republicans knew they were compelled to revise their short and long term goals to see what was realisable in actual terms. Hence the Hume/Adams talks, in which their shared visions were set out: no internal settlement, national self-determination and parity of esteem (or equality of traditions).

As a development, these shared goals represent a compromise on the part of both leaders. For Republicans, the notion of 'parity of esteem' is quite difficult to accept, after having suffered generations of injustices at the hands of British forces. Nevertheless, the reasoning behind the principle is based upon an accurate analysis of the (unfortunate but undeniable) expressed allegiances of the Protestant Unionist community in the six counties. The task of breaking the collective attachment to a colonial past can only be achieved once sufficient numbers of six-county Protestants reject the British identity and embrace the reality of their Irish existence. It is calculated that from a position of equality Nationalists and Republicans will prove capable of exposing to



Proinssas de Rossa

Protestants the anachronistic nature of their 'tradition', leading them to finally accept their role within the Irish Nation.

ADDRESSING THE UNIONISTS



Hume/Adams talks, in which their shared visions were set out: no internal settlement, national self-determination and parity of esteem (or equality of traditions)

The Republican analysis has always concluded that the British presence in Ireland is central to the conflict, and until removed will ensure peace can never be real. Republicans regarded Unionists as being essentially misguided people, the 'tools' of British imperialists, a people afraid to embrace their Irishness for fear of losing their position of supremacy within the Northern state. Republicans in the early 1980s maintained that Loyalism was "not British", that there were "no cultural or national links between the Loyalists and the British", and concluded that Loyalism was "an ideology and politics that can in no way be compromised with short of the achievement of a united Ireland." (Quotes from the Republican Lecture Series).

By 1994 Republican leaders were speaking with a different vocabulary. Jim Gibney, a member of Sinn Fein's Ard Comhairle, confessed that previously his understanding of the Unionist position was "limited", that he incorrectly believed "a resolution to the problems with Unionists would have to await the removal of the British Government's involvement in Ireland." However, he continued that he has reassessed his opinion of the Unionists and now believes that Republicans must appreciate the "dual identity" of Unionists, and recognise that there are "divided political allegiances within this nation". He concludes that accepting this reality points to a need for "fresh thinking on what type of political institutions are required to carry us forward" to British withdrawal, and what structures are required thereafter to "ensure the allegiance of all the people" of Ireland.

This new willingness to address the Unionist position was the result of dialogue between Hume and Adams, Sinn Fein and Protestant clerics, as well as a critical self-analysis of the Republican position. What it points to is a tacit acceptance by Republicans that the traditional perception that the British Government is the primary obstacle to Irish reunification is flawed in its failure to address the position of the Unionists. Whilst not accepting the constitutional Nationalists' position that Britain is 'neutral' on the question of Irish unity vs. the preservation of the Union, nevertheless Republicans have come to accept that the need to convince the Unionists of the benefits of a united Irish Republic is greater than the reasons for continuing armed struggle against the British forces, in the present conditions of stalemate. Republican leaders recognised that such a process was unachievable whilst armed struggle continued. Despite genuine appeals that the Republican struggle was non-sectarian, Republicans knew that the Protestant association with the state and its forces fostered the perception of Republicanism as a sectarian ideology, particularly when blatantly sectarian attacks were occasionally carried out by so-called Republican paramilitaries.

Through secret dialogue with the British Government over a number of years (1990-93), Republican leaders drew the conclusion that the British Government's presence in Ireland was no longer primarily due to its own imperial interests, but rather a result of their unwillingness to unilaterally 'break' the link with the Unionists. The Unionist 'strategy of threat', as described by Anthony McIntyre, was therefore the central determining factor in British policy-making. The events of the Summer of 1996 clearly illustrate the accurateness of this observation. The problem for Republicans is, therefore, how to devise a strategy capable of smashing the Unionist veto over British (and Irish) Government policy.

I believe the Protestant community within the 6 counties can be 'won over' from their outdated attachment to the symbols of Britishness by creating the conditions in which Unionists would be forced to engage in a deep and meaningful process of self-scrutinisation, subjecting their objections to Irish unity and their attachments to an exclusive British identity to rational examination. This process would involve allowing the Unionist community the breathing space from which rational thinking would be promoted above bigotry, fear and ignorance as determining factors for individual and communal action. Once sufficient numbers become locked into such a process, I believe the erosion of the Unionist mentality will take place at a relatively rapid pace, leaving only the religious right wing caught in the web of sectarian hatred perpetuated by adherence to an exclusivist ideology. Ironically, the events surrounding the Drumcree coup d'etat might have prompted the commencement of this process, as the fierce debates within the main Irish Protestant Churches concerning the Orange revolt would suggest.

DEMOGRAPHY AS A DYNAMIC TOWARDS UNITY

The concept of unarmed struggle inevitably leading to an all-Ireland Republic is lent credibility by the latest census figures for the Six counties (1991). These figures estimate the Catholic community's percentage of the total population somewhere between 40% and 42%, with some analysts calculating the prospect of a Catholic majority as soon as 2020. In fact, eleven of the twenty-six district councils in the North have Catholic majorities, and five more are very closely divided between the two communities. Although there is much debate as to the extent of support for the Republican ideal amongst the Catholic community, Republicans would be confident that overwhelming support would be forthcoming from the Catholic ranks if concrete proposals were offered for such a transition, based upon the sort of all-Ireland bodies envisaged in the Framework Documents of February 1995.

THE REASONS FOR THE CEASE-FIRE AND THE ROAD AHEAD

Through the cease-fire,



Republicans conceded that the "popular limitations" of armed struggle had confined its active support to its smallest core base after a generation of unrelenting conflict. The lengthy period of the campaign inevitably prompted a degree of war weariness within the Nationalist and Republican community. Consequently, as the current phase of struggle entered its third decade, this disillusionment was reflected in the decline in support for Sinn Fein. The loss of the West Belfast seat in 1992 was not simply because 3,000 Unionists had voted for Joe Hendron. More important was the fact that 13,000 West Belfast Nationalists voted for the SDLP candidate. This pattern was reflected throughout the six counties, with the SDLP defeating Sinn Fein in every constituency they contested. Clearly the Republican people at ground level were sending to the leadership a message of disillusionment and bewilderment with the continuing campaign, which seemed to be making no headway. By the time of the cease-fire, it was clear to most observers that the conflict in the six counties had long ago reached a stalemate. A new way forward was needed to revitalise Republicanism.

The goals of Socialist Republicanism can only be attained by the development of active support from within local communities in both the North and the South. This involves smashing preconceptions held by many Irish Nationalists about the nature of the northern state, which have developed as a consequence of the British strategy of normalisation and the work of revisionist policy makers.

The action taken by the Republican Movement in declaring a cessation gave the initiative to the wider Nationalist community. Britain's actions since, particularly over the issues of decommissioning and the Drumcree coup d'etat, opened the eyes of many Nationalists who had falsely assumed that the reasons giving rise to the conflict had been resolved and that the primary obstacle to conflict resolution was the IRA campaign. How many Nationalists today, after witnessing the intransigence of the British Government over the past two years, would conclude that Republicans are the obstacle to a just and lasting settlement ? I would imagine very few. Having experienced the Orange revolt of July 1996 and the subsequent brutality of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and British Army, can any Nationalist - or indeed impartial observer - doubt the irreformable nature of the forces of the State, and the State itself ?

The decision to call a cessation prior to the attainment of the Republican goal of British withdrawal has understandably caused much distress within the Republican community, leaving many disillusioned and feeling, to some extent, betrayed. While this is understandable, given the previous position declared by many Republican leaders that this conflict would not end prior to British disengagement from Ireland, I believe it is wrong to assume that the Republican leadership has, in any way, 'sold out'.

The present leadership of the Republican Movement have proven their commitment to the Republican cause over the past three decades, and for some well before that. The unarmed strategy should be viewed in the context of the centuries old conflict to achieve Irish self-determination and remove the British presence from Ireland. During many periods of the struggle, there has been no active militant resistance. The difference between those periods and the present situation should not be misunderstood nor underestimated. Never before has the Republican struggle been as well served as it is today by Republicans at local community level, and in terms of political and electoral successes. It is precisely because of the development of Sinn Fein -as an integral part of the Republican Movement - that the cessation was possible, as Republicans were (and remain) confident of their position within the present political framework, and more importantly, within the Nationalist community.

The cessation was a landmark decision in that it was a Republican initiative, taken by a community which had endured years of conflict and grown as a result of that struggle into a more confident and cohesive people, capable of reaching out to our enemies and genuinely seeking a just resolution

I would imagine very few. Having experienced the Orange revolt of July 1996 and the subsequent brutality of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and British Army, can any Nationalist - or indeed impartial observer - doubt the irreformable nature of the forces of the State, and the State itself?

to the conflict. In taking this decision, Republicans remained actively committed to the goal of a 32-county socialist Republic, intent on pursuing that goal with a keen eye on the many obstacles blocking the road to the Republic, formulating strategy with the primary aim of removing these obstacles. The Republican Movement has not changed its position concerning the right of Irish people to resort to armed struggle to remove the British from this country. Rather, it has decided that a tactical change of strategy was necessary after twenty-five years of armed struggle. The possibility of a resumption of armed struggle, as exists at present, has never been ruled out by the Republican leadership, and indeed could not be as no one can predict what the future might bring.

Quite simply, Unionism is a political creed based upon supremacy, division, bigotry, hatred and pure ignorance. It is irrational and as such incapable of surviving any inter-communal reconciliation within the six and thirty-two counties

EXPOSING THE CONTRADICTIONS WITHIN UNIONISM

The decision to alter the nature of the Republican struggle is based upon not only the political, social and economic realities of the day, but more importantly upon an observation of the dynamics of Unionism as an ideology. Quite simply, Unionism is a political creed based upon supremacy, division, bigotry, hatred and pure ignorance. It is irrational and as such incapable of surviving any inter-communal reconciliation within the six and thirty-two counties. Those who disagree and argue that the 'union' can (and should be) reformed are ignoring the motivating forces behind the Unionist ideology. Unionism was founded as a reaction to the democratic struggle by the mass of the Irish people to free themselves from the yoke of British rule. The Unionist resistance to Irish self-determination was supported by a British Establishment determined to retain a presence in Ireland. As a result, the Irish people were forced to suffer the cruel injustice of partition, which James Connolly accurately prophesised would provoke a "carnival of reaction" in Ireland, north and south, which would plague the Irish people for generations.

Consequently, having been rewarded for their intransigence and pure bigotry, the Unionists set about consolidating their dominion, striving to transform it into the illusion of 'British Ulster'. The outbreak of violence in the 1960s was inevitable simply because partition proved itself to be the antithesis of a permanent and just political settlement. The Unionist identity can (and will) only be accommodated within the context of the Irish country in its entirety. To approach Unionists in any other way is to misrepresent



the Nationalist-Republican position as part of a 32 county people, as opposed to a 6 county people. This is the only process of assimilation which will lead to a just and lasting peace in Ireland, a process which will bring about the destruction of Unionism as an ideology as it ceases to have any relevance to Irish society. The strength and self-confidence of the northern Nationalist people will ensure that this is the case as, having endured 75 years of partition and 50 years of one-party rule, we have no intention of ever again allowing our identity to be sacrificed and suppressed within a contrived state for the convenience of the Unionist leaders, Free State politicians and British policy makers.

This is not to under-emphasise the role of the British Establishment in the conflict. Far from it. The strategy of the British Government must at all times be challenged until it is driven to the position of withdrawal. The fact that armed struggle has proven incapable of forcing the British Government to withdraw from Ireland should not disillusion Republicans. The limitations of armed struggle at present must be accepted, and the unarmed struggle offered the opportunity to develop the Republican campaign on a new battlefield. The arguments favouring an unarmed struggle are powerful when measured against the tasks facing Republicans today, particularly when the weaknesses in the Unionist argument are fully grasped. As importantly, the strength in resolve and commitment of the Republican community today can not be denied. In the past, Nationalists and Republicans in the north were too willing to shy away from conflict, being content to remain silent as opposed to actively and aggressively asserting their identity as Irishmen and Irishwomen, part of a 32-county Nation and proud of it. This mentality was captured in Bernadette McAliskey's famous remark about "keeping your head as low as a Larne fenian". The past 25 years of struggle has witnessed the growth of an unbreakable spirit of resistance within the Nationalist and Republican community, a spirit which will carry the struggle for Irish freedom forward to its conclusion.

EDUCATION: *LIBERATION OR DOMESTICATION?*

By Aidan Donaldson

"The education system in Ireland was designed to make us, at the least, manageable slaves"

— P. Pearse, The Murder Machine.

Schools in both partitionist states in Ireland unite under the one educational agenda : to imbue students with business values at the expense of humanist ones, and to distort their understanding of the social and political surroundings - whilst bullying and humiliating those who resist. Here, Aidan Donaldson offers a critique of the education system in general and offers an alternative, liberating model. Aidan Donaldson is a teacher at St. Mary's C.B.G.S in West Belfast, and co-editor of the radical educational journal, Education and Ethos.

"Are we sure we know what the basic skills of life are? Bad enough that Johnny can't read or write. But why do we stop worrying there? Why are we not every bit as concerned that Johnny is such a stranger to his organism and emotions that he will (like most of the rest of us) spend the rest of his life struggling under the burden of his ignorance? Why do we not worry that Johnny's body is gripped by thrwarted anger and desire, that his dream life is barren, his imagination moribund, his social conscience darkened by competitive egoism? Why not worry that Johnny can't dance, can't paint, can't breathe, can't meditate, can't relax , can't cope with anxiety, aggression, envy, can't express trust and tenderness? Why do we not spare some concern that Johnny does not know who he is, or even that he has a self to find? If the basic skills, have nothing to do with all this, then let us admit that they have nothing to do with Johnny's health, happiness, sanity, or survival, but only with his employability. Whose interest then, is Johnny's education serving?"

— T. Roszak, Person/Planet (London, 1981)

The American educationalist John Holt begins his work Why Children Fail with the assertion that children are by nature smart, imaginative, energetic and eager to learn. He then suggests that they learn best in a climate of happiness, co-operation and activity. They do not need to be bullied, bribed, humiliated or threatened. Learning is a joyful, natural and celebrated activity. Finally, he points out that children (and adults) learn least when they are frightened, bored or humiliated. This may seem rather obvious and a sort of truism to the reader. Yet, as Holt goes on to suggest, schools follow precisely this negative structure, a structure which impedes the act of learning and which effectively and efficiently suffocates the child's natural desire for knowledge and discovery. Holt outlines why children experience this environment:

"They are afraid, above all else, of failing, of disappointing or displeasing the many anxious adults around them, whose limitless hopes and expectations for them hang over their heads like a cloud. They are bored because the things they are given and are told to do in school are so trivial, so dull, and make such limited and narrow demands on a wide spectrum of their intelligence, capabilities and talents. They are confused because most of the torrent of words that pours over them in school makes little or no sense. It often flatly contradicts other things they have been told, and hardly ever has any relation to what they already know - to the rough model of reality that they carry in their heads."

Holt describes a vision of school in which children learn to use their minds 'badly', to work out strategies to avoid trouble, to try to pick up 'signals' from the teacher which might help the student to get the right answer but will have very little to do with the process of internalisation of the knowledge in question. Ultimately, this 'avoidance strategy' leads to a trivialisation of the educative process and the destruction of the desire to fully comprehend so that the student is reduced to a limited and fragmented being for whom the quest for the truth, for genuine knowledge about himself, his fellow men/women and his world, becomes a hated toil.

Apart from prisons/corrective centres/remand homes, schools are the only social institutions in modern society which the law demands people must attend. Furthermore, unlike the former category of institutions, the school system is universally applied to a certain age group without distinction. The 'liberation' of the child takes place within the confines of incarceration. Perhaps the most bizarre scenario, which most teachers will readily identify with, is the case of the 'dysfunctional' (in a school setting) student who does not want to go to





Breachtnach and Shephard — united in the same enslaving policies

school, for whom the formal education system is doing absolutely no good at all, whose peers' academic development is being constantly undermined by the disruptive behaviour of the student, with those teachers similarly coming under pressure which in turn impacts upon all others within the enterprise. When the student (for whom a myriad of reasons, mostly socio-economic and psychological, finds school a bad place) decides that he cannot cope with the current situation and absents himself from the formal school setting, what is the response of the system? To bring him back precisely to that which he/she was rebelling!

This is not to advocate an anarchistic or entirely voluntaristic opting in or out of the system, at least on the part of the young person. Bureaucracy, by its very nature, cannot tolerate flexibility. While the educational philosophy of schools and schools systems emphasises the child- centeredness of the enterprise, the actual practice of formal education emphasises control, discipline and lack of accommodation. The rule is all, the aim is naught. Only in the most extreme cases of dysfunctionality in a school setting is there a recognition that schools are not empowering, enriching, formative and holistically and spiritually rewarding for all young people.

Holt accurately describes the crisis facing education - and especially the victims of our formal schooling system today. The illusion of education - an illusion which disguises itself and its purpose by presenting itself as a value-free or neutral process by which skills and 'facts' are imparted - lies at the very centre of the crisis, for it is this very activity which is identified, and has become almost synonymous, with learning and empowerment. Yet the form of knowledge we are dealing with is knowledge in its most limited instrumental sense which leads itself to a utilitarian ethic or 'telos' according to which man, by 'knowing' the conditions which are most likely to bring about a certain outcome, is able to manipulate or alter in a prescriptive manner these conditions in order to gain mastery over them.

What makes schools extremely vulnerable to domination by an anti-human and educational ethos is the actual position which schools occupy in contemporary society. As Illich points out, schools have become the repository of social mobility, of socialisation and of society's hopes. They have become, he suggests, the church of secular, industrial society. And like those churches which espouse and promise salvation of those who believe and are given grace, the education system offers salvation to the masses. Life-chances - salvation in the 'journey of life' - mirror precisely the eternal life-chances of fundamentalist religious expression. Sacraments and associated grace are received and distributed in the form of exam passes - and the 'Elect' do, as Weber told us, recognise themselves as such. Levels of attainment, possession of exam passes, quantification of knowledge : all of these are external and visible signs of social grace. Life after death has its direct and accurate (if somewhat more certain) parallels in a 'better' life-style after schooling. Even the practice of teachers in school mimics, unconsciously, the Pascalian wager by which one wagers the present on the possibility of an infinitely higher ('better') future/after-life. And, as is the case of all competitions, there are winners and losers.

Those who are able to best negotiate the route through the system - and this negotiation has nothing to do with value or essence - achieve economic and social dominance and are able to ensure that their children are able to perpetuate this position of domination through their knowledge of 'how to work the system'. And the overwhelming body of evidence in Western Europe and the USA strongly suggests that it is the middle classes who are able to utilise the education system to ensure its position of social importance in capitalist society as an educated elite of professionals and specialists. The so-called 'level playing-field', the sphere of education in reality, favours the middle-class for whom academic achievement represents its most important 'currency' in the process of social reproduction.

Effectively, what we have in this part of Europe is an essentially Calvinist form of education as secularised religion, with an Elect and a Damned. For those born into grace - predetermined and predestined by gender, social class, etc. to gain access to the new life and salvation of exam success which leads these social strata to consume an excess proportion of formal education at university level, more cars, consumables, foreign holidays, and so on - salvation and damnation are individual choices or predestination. The theological concept of sin is instituted into the education system at increasingly earlier ages with the Judgement or division of children into the categories of worthy (exam successes) and sinful (failures). Perhaps the most successful and pernicious aspect of the current education system is that it has managed to 'house' the concept of failure in the heads of the victims. It is not the system that fails - it is the students ! Under the system which prevails in the Six Counties children are judged - under rather specious and unfair criteria - and categorised as 'passers' or 'failures'. No account is taken for social backgrounds, personal circumstances or, indeed, the ability of richer parents to pay for extra tuition for their children to overcome the tests themselves. And effectively, the die is cast and life-choices have been determined.

The banking model of education which dominates contemporary European society corresponds to a scientistic and encyclopaedic model of education. It is based on a non-dialectic and instrumental mode of thinking and tends to regard with extreme suspicion any philosophical or ethical aspect which may 'hinder the delivery of the curriculum'. According to this concept knowledge is taught, generally through the narration of the teacher, and memorised through mechanical repetition of the various 'pieces' of knowledge on the part of the student. The critical or creative potentialities of the student are minimised and , indeed, distrusted within this process. A thinking student is an awkward student.

Power resides very much within the command of the teacher. Students are viewed as receptacles or depositories into which the teacher makes deposits of information or knowledge. There is no admission of a human or dialectical relationship or communication between teacher and student. To do so would be to relinquish the teacher's role as depositor. It is the student's consciousness which is to be transformed through a process by which 'facts' come to be possessed; the teacher's consciousness remains static and unaffected by the process. The main features of the banking model and the attitudes which maintain it are expressed by the Brazilian philosopher and pedagogist, Paulo Freire, thus :

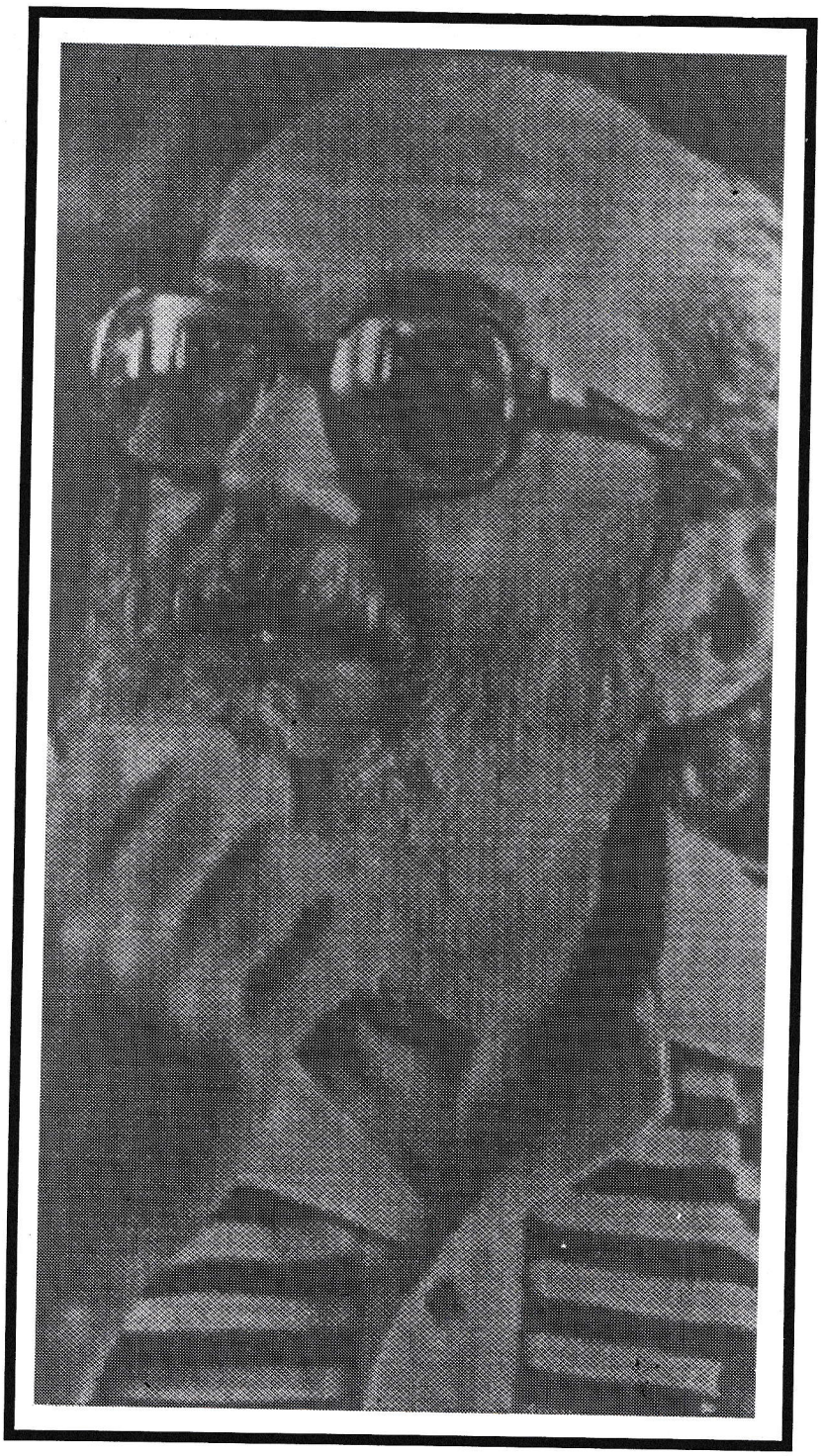
" The teacher teaches and the students are taught.

The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing.

The teacher talks and the students listen - meekly.

The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher.

The teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the students are mere objects."



Brazilian philosopher and pedagogist, Paulo Freire

For Freire this essentially passive and fragmented process views the student as a pliable and manageable being who empties himself of all critical consciousness and potentiality in order to accommodate the 'deposit' thrust upon him. The more he learns in this mechanistic fashion, the less a critical thinker he becomes. The more he accepts the passive role assigned to him, the more he is able to accept the partial and fragmented world view underpinning the modern world. The more he accepts this mode of thinking, the more completely he accepts his role as an external spectator, passively viewing a process which he cannot fully understand.

The critical or liberating model, on the other hand, views education ,and knowledge itself, as fully dialectical; it involves an active relation between the subject and object, between teacher and student. In contradistinction to the banking model, this concept of education views the goal of the process to be the humanisation of all involved and of society itself. The efforts of the teacher must necessarily be imbued with a profound trust in the creative consciousness and the ability of both teacher and student to arrive at a yet-to-be-discovered truth about the world in which they both live. This common and mutual quest involves dialogue - a two-way process by which both co-create the conditions under which they come to a knowledge of their world and the challenge to humanise it. Education is nothing less than the practice of freedom. According to this model, Man is not some abstract, ahistorical and isolated being. The starting point is that Man is fundamentally a part of the 'We' which exists in the world and for each other. The limit-situations which confront Man - denial of human rights, exploitation, degradation, enslavement, poverty, etc., - can only be resolved if that collective 'We', the true subject of history, becomes aware of its historical and, indeed, divine mission and seeks ways to build a world in keeping with human dignity which all of us possess. Freire points out that this dialogue cannot exist without a profound love for the world and mankind. It is both the foundation of the dialogue and the goal itself; it is the act of creating and re-creating. An a priori requirement for this dialogue is one's faith in Man's openness and ability to create and re-create the world, that, unlike the captives of Plato's cave or the one-dimensional Man of Marcuse who remained happy in their enslavement and ignorance, 'dialogical Man' will see His need for humanity and realise that it is in His own power to create and transform the inhuman reality into a value-laden one.

One of the most difficult aspects of the liberating model consists in teachers breaking through to the vision of Man and praxis necessary for the implementation of the dialogue through which this form of



The students see the teachers not as an oppressive and indoctrinating foreign figure - a further bearer of a power relation - but as one who aids them in their (and his/her) discovery of their true humanity

education can take place. Yet, if authentic education consists in permitting the emergence of our full humanity, then new relationships between teachers and students must be established, relationships which are founded upon mutual trust, common aspiration and partnership. Sensitivity to the dignity of the human person and the development of the whole person cannot, critical educators argue, take place within a system of education based on the 'them and us' model of the banking system; instead, they argue, the relationship should be communal 'We' based on an 'I' and 'Thou' relationship through which our communal humanity is continually affirmed and confirmed. Thus, as a humanist educator, I am in a human and vocational relationship with my students. In them my activity is concretised and my own dignity affirmed. The students see the teachers not as an oppressive and indoctrinating foreign figure - a further bearer of a power relation - but as one who aids them in their (and his/her) discovery of their true humanity. As co-workers and co-participants in this process, teachers and students alike, we come to regard each other as extensions of one another through which our common humanity shines out.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

If education is to be truly realised and practised, then it is incumbent upon all involved in the educational process to ensure that the sense of community, justice and human dignity define both the means and the goal of education. We are increasingly becoming locked into a dehumanising, competitive and unjust formal education system which inevitably and necessarily conflicts with the values of justice, community and human dignity. It is not simply that a certain tension exists between the demands of ethos and those of the educational market which can be accommodated. Both sets of values stand in an antithetical relationship to one another.

The radical and true sense of education is revolutionary in that it calls for a total turning away from inhuman values, which denigrate and frustrate human dignity, towards a new order based on those utopian values which alone enable Man to become in reality what He ought to be. By this I do not mean unrealistic or impossible. In fact, 'utopian', in its true sense, represents that towards which we must ceaselessly strive, hope for and genuinely expect; it is that which mocks and refutes the given. It is that seductive ideal upon which the dream of the better future, the truly human future, rests. The notion that people can and should feed/care for/ affirm each other out of brotherly love and not Kantian duty stands in direct opposition to the Hobbesian acquisitive individual of the market society.

According to the rules of the competitive model of society, such other-directed action is misguided, incomprehensible and damaging to the selfish interests of the self-seeking possessive Benthamite man. Yet the revolutionary vision is not based on such rules or visions of Man and society. The Marxian ethic aims at a victory over the world; it proclaims an entirely different set of values and operates according to a completely different agenda altogether. Indeed, it is not just practical; it is also necessary. Only by adhering to communal and sharing values can Man eliminate the powerlessness, exploitation, degradation, dehumanisation, and the enslavement of the majority of Mankind, the destruction of the earth's resources in the pursuit of profit and the wilderness of a valueless and pointless social order, and begin to fulfil His true destiny.

To do otherwise - to accept the world as it is - is to betray our humanity. In the formative field of education, the acceptance of a market-driven model leads to a denial of the freedom to create, to wonder, to venture and to be human. It also leads, as Erich Fromm pointed out in The Heart of Man, to 'a love of death' and 'not life'. To say that nothing can be done is to collude in the decision that nothing will be done. And this, perhaps, is the greatest danger facing all of those who aspire towards a truly humanistic, liberating and pedagogical concept of education. Whose interest, then, is Johnny's education serving?

"Trust Your Leaders!"

By James Connolly

James Connolly produced this article in 1915 amidst attempts by constitutional Nationalist leaders, such as John Redmond and 'wee' Joe Devlin, to conscript Irishmen to the British Army to fight in World War One. The constitutional argument was based on the premise that if Irishmen aided the British in Empire building, then Ireland would be 'granted' Home Rule. Connolly was always sceptical of the constitutional line and hence advised those people who wanted Irish freedom to always constructively question the wisdom and the agenda of those leaders using such methods.

Trust your leaders! Recently we have been treated to a homily on the above text. Trust your leaders; what do you know of their plans and resources, or what amount of confidential information they may possess that is denied to the rank and file? That is good advice. We endorse it thoroughly; agree with it in every essential. Your leaders have the right to your confidence. Let them know that you will obey them - that is one kind of confidence. Let them know what the rank and file are thinking and saying - that is another sign of your confidence.

The last is the most sacred kind of confidence. It is the confidence you only give to a loved friend, a friend whom you love so much that even at the risk of wounding his feelings you are prepared, for his sake as well as your own, to challenge his judgement and impeach his wisdom. That is the highest kind of confidence - the most sacred kind of trust.

If you are adventuring under a leader of proven judgement in the task you both have set out to perform, do not question his judgement rashly. But if his experience is no more than yours - his judgement untested, and his experience nil, do not leave him to flounder along without that saving criticism which must in peace provide the only possible substitute for the terrible punishment with which mistaken judgement is visited in war. If you do, you are untrue to him, to yourself and above all to the common cause. "Teach them, O Lord," said a French writer, "that in the haven of Liberty there are neither heroes or great men."

In Ireland, however, we have seized upon mediocrities and made them our leaders; invested them in our minds with all the qualities we idealised, and when we discovered that our leaders were not heroes but only common mortals, mediocrities, we abused them, or killed them, for failing to be any better than God made them.

Their failure dragged us down along with them because we had insisted that they were wiser than we were, and had stoned whoever declared them to be common mortals, and not all wise geniuses. Our real geniuses and inspired apostles we never recognised, nor did we honour them. We killed them by neglect, or stoned them whilst they lived, and then went in reverent procession to their graves when they were dead.

We are raising our voice, or using our pen, to insist upon taking the military leaders of the Irish people into our confidence; to ask our readers to insist likewise that if the rank and file must obey, so also is it true that the leaders must listen. We see neither heroes nor great men amongst these leaders, and we are devoutly thankful that it is so. Being common mortals like ourselves we shall refuse to invest them with the super-sanctity of gods or the wisdom and foresight of prophets. And above all we refuse, and we counsel all others to refuse, to assume that our policies for Ireland in this crisis are identical until we know what they are. At a time when all they hold dear trembles in the balance, should the armed citizens of Ireland fall in behind leaders without questioning what are the policies of those leaders, or what their outlook upon the immediate future?

We do not call for the public pronouncements from them, but every man is the guardian of his own conscience and responsible to that conscience if he shirks his duty to his country and its cause. By your choice of a leader now you may make your choice of the part you shall play in the hour of destiny. How can you make that choice wisely if you do not know what that leader's policy for the future is?

Do not be deceived, nor deceive yourself by words. For instance, , when you hear that someone

will 'fight conscription' push the question until you find out what he means by 'fighting' conscription.

The Quakers in England will fight conscription, the Dukhobors of Russia will be fighting conscription. But no blows are or will be struck by them - indeed their 'fighting' consists of refusing to strike blows. Is that your method, or the method of your leaders? Or do you prefer the method of that Catholic priest who recently advised his people to send a deputation of their ten best shots to meet the conscriptors? Words are said to be the medium by which we express our ideas, but in Ireland words are generally the means by which we conceal our ideas. Do not let them be so used in this great game now being played.

It is poor quibbling to say that the Workers' Republic stands for reckless fighting and ill-considered action. It does not. The Workers' Republic holds that at any time since the war broke out the British Government could have been halted in its inroads upon public liberties in Ireland by a flat refusal on the part of the majority of its armed citizens to allow their rights as citizens to be interfered with.

It needed no resurrection, no flying to arms, no storming of jails, it only needed that the armed Volunteers who claimed to stand for Ireland should mobilise and speak for Ireland. And in so speaking should declare that they would not demobilise until all orders of deportation were withdrawn, and full liberty accorded to the Irish Volunteers to organise under its own chosen officers. Not a troop would have been moved against them, nor a shot fired. The competent military authority would have been repudiated as readily as was the gentleman responsible for ordering out the military on Howth Sunday.

Does anyone imagine that at that period of Captain Robert Montheith's deportation, when everything was going wrong for England, that she would have hesitated to sacrifice her dignity or swallow an affront, rather than provoke in Ireland a conflict that she knew would test her loyalty of the reserves newly recalled to the colours? Just as Redmond could have gained Home Rule by refusing to speak in the House of Commons until he had a Convention in Ireland upon the outbreak of the war, so the leaders of the Irish Volunteers could have prevented the flowing over this island of the wave of military despotism by quietly challenging its force when first it broke upon us. But neither had the prerequisite imagination. Both essayed to grapple a revolutionary situation with the weapons of a constitutional agitation.

The tyranny we have since suffered under has been progressive in its virulence. At first it was only Government employees like captain Monteith who were arrested or deported, now it is any civilian under any conceivable circumstance. Tyranny grows with what it feeds upon.

We are told that the arrest of our leaders would justify action. Our leaders would have been arrested long ago were it not for the fact that at the protest meeting held by the Citizen Army against the deportation of Captain Monteith it was declared by the chief speaker that the arrest of the Volunteer leaders would be proof to their followers that the British had been defeated at sea, or that the Germans had landed. Fear lest the people of Ireland should interpret their arrest has spared them to us up till now.

We believe in constitutional action in normal times; we believe in revolutionary action in exceptional times. These are exceptional times.

When General Friend took down the sign from over Liberty Hall he did not do so in order to provoke us to insurrection. He calculated that a body of 100 armed men would scarcely spring to arms at such an insult after a body of 5000 armed men had submitted meekly to a greater one in the same city. His calculation was right. Had the numbers been changed his calculation might have missed. We acquit the competent military authority of any intention to provoke a revolt. But we are glad that it was not a Labour paper that pointed out to him that he could at any time provoke a revolt by seizing the leaders of the volunteers. We are sure that he is grateful for the suggestion, but we do not believe that he is needed.

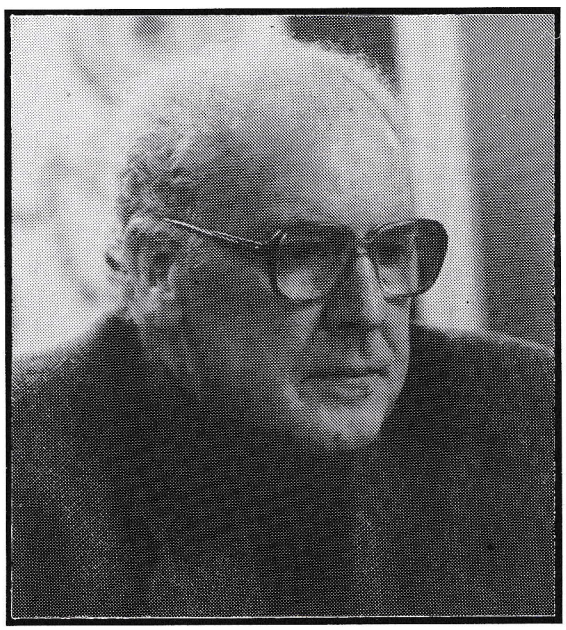
What do you think of the wisdom of those who tell you to be patient and trust your leaders whose plans you do not understand, but if those leaders are arrested, fly to arms? If your leaders who alone have plans are arrested your flying to arms will be that of a leaderless mob in a planless insurrection. And you know, don't you, that the same voices who talk thus of flying to arms, would then talk of waiting until your new leaders would have made new plans to meet the new situation? Finally: think over this chunk of wisdom. A revolutionist who surrenders the initiative to the enemy is already defeated before a blow is struck. It is a fine day if it wasn't for the rain.

— Workers' Republic, December 4th, 1915.

LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND IRELAND

By Des Wilson

Fr. Des Wilson is a life long activist for human rights. As a community activist in Ballymurphy, he has lived and suffered with the people of that Parish in support of their struggle for freedom and justice, for over twenty years, staying true to himself and the message of Liberation Theology. Fr. Des outlines the Biblical essence of God's role in Human emancipation and contrasts this with the traditional, accepted image of an irrelevant and distant 'God up there looking down' in Ireland, and indeed throughout the World.



Very few people in Ireland associate religion with freedom.

Most have been brought up to believe that religion is a programme of doing or avoiding things because you are commanded to and living in fear of the consequences of not obeying. Religion puts obligations on people.

Within the mainly religious groups there are procedures to make life better and get rid of the worst effects of your disobedience - fundamentalist preachers thunder about the evils we meet everywhere, even in our neighbours, but add the reassuring message that they themselves are ready with the help that can rescue us. Christians in general accepted that in such a dire situation as they found themselves in they needed a saviour, and preachers based their appeal for followers on this notion - you need a saviour and we know where to find one. The preacher's message often was, "there are demons in those woods but since you have to get through them you need a guide, do not be misled by others, I am the one guide you can trust".

It was a powerful message.

It was also wrong.

In recent times many people, including Christians, have reacted against this message. It was a message of pessimism which made people believe they were powerless, and that if they looked to God for help they would get help, but under such conditions as would make them more secure perhaps, but more dependent certainly. They began to explore whether there was another view of religion which would lead them away from fear and tension rather than into it.

Some rejected much of what religion stood for. Others accepted the basic principles of religion, but rejected the institutions and rulebooks which had been constructed around them. Others rediscovered the idea that religion is a way towards freedom and that if God is not a liberating god he - or she - is nothing.

Those who rejected what religious people stood for did not necessarily reject religion or religious idealism as such. They tried to find new ways of expressing and living it. Those who rejected the institutions did so with relief because they were convinced that rejecting the flawed institutions made them more religious, not less. It was the "liberation theologians" however who caused the greatest alarm to some important Christians, and even to some important governments.

The reason was not the truth or otherwise of Liberation Theology - which became an international movement - but the effect it might have in dissolving power structures. The United States government in particular was so worried about "liberation theology" that it campaigned against it through the CIA. Some Christians were killed. The Vatican was as worried about liberation theology as it had been about the worker-priest movement which arose in Europe after the second world war.

What then was Liberation Theology and why did it frighten the powers? Its simplest description is, the working out of the theory that religion used as a means to control people is a deformed religion, but religion in its true form must be a force for freedom. For some people this is a bizarre idea, for others a frightening one. But for "liberation Christians" it is a logical outcome of what they believe.

These Liberation Christians look to the Bible for inspiration in this. They say that God is portrayed in the Bible as a liberating God, as a force drawing - or even driving - his chosen people away from the tyranny of their oppressors towards a Promised Land. The Promised Land is a powerful symbol of liberation, used by

freedom workers including Martin Luther King ever since. They point to the story of how God led his people "out of the bondage of Egypt" into a land which was to be "flowing with milk and honey".

So far so good. God liberates his people and stands by them through thick and thin provided they worship and obey him. A difficulty arises from the story, however, because in order to get away from tyranny and into the promised land God's people were instructed to fight wars and kill, often with savage intensity. Men, women and children were put to death. Those who say the Judeo-Christian Bible is a story of liberation have to admit that it is also a story of war, cruelty and counter-oppression. They can also say that the Bible tells the story of a journey to freedom in which people did a lot of wrong things, or misinterpreted God's message.

But this theory is difficult to sustain because what the people did was often commanded by their God. Here is a basic difficulty in the Liberation Theology view of power and oppression and of how it is to be overcome.

However, the basic idea is firmly stated that religion should be - and if it is not we must make it so - a force for freedom, and should be used as such. This means that Christians and others should start with this idea firmly in place and after that use all the resources of their faith - intellectual, spiritual, material - first and foremost to bring about the liberation of human beings, who they believe are their God's people. Setting God's people free has to become a primary purpose of religion and is a logical consequence of our worship of God.

Such a view of religion comes as a shock to some people brought up in a culture of control. God the mighty judge watching every move, thought and intention - with personal and general judgement waiting at the end - is a far cry from God the liberator of people in distress. Religion has always provided comfort for "ordinary" people in distress by saying that God will provide for them, but it seldom portrayed God as struggling on their side against their oppressor. It is remarkable how seldom Irish people, involved in the civil rights movement of the sixties, appealed to God as a protector and partner in struggle. Their movement in Ireland was modelled on the struggle of black people in America, but there was a difference - the black leaders in the USA saw their God not only comforting but struggling on the same side as they were. In Ireland God was not a struggling liberator, comfortably spoken to and talked about on civil rights marches, but a god-judge who would see what was happening and reward or punish those involved according to their merits and demerits. Civil rights people seemed unsure that God was on their side. The churches and governments tried to convince them that God was not on their side but on the side of the government. This was the traditional understanding in Ireland. The civil rights people persisted in demanding freedom but seemed to do so in the hope that God would forgive them for it, rather than in the expectation that he/she would be on their side in doing it. And if it came to war they were assured by their leaders that God was firmly on the other side.

It was only with the writings of Fr. Joe Mc Veigh that the ideas of liberation theology were applied to Ireland. He was clear about the issues involved. If there was oppression, God was on the side of the oppressed. If the oppressed were struggling, God was on their side and it was the duty of all who worshipped God to be on the same side. Christians, he said, could not be neutral when there was oppression, still less could they be assistants of the oppressors. God was not simply waiting on the sidelines judging whether each side was using clean tactics or dirty tricks; God was on one side only and that was, as in biblical times, the side of those who wanted their freedom. Freedom was essential to human beings and struggling for freedom was essential to religion.

This was a powerful message which fell upon ears accustomed to a different kind of Christian opinion. The reaction to it ranged from icy indifference to raging opposition. With customary modesty Irish people refused to admit that the same issues were coming to the surface for religious people in Ireland as has appeared in Latin America and Africa. The same issues, the same God, the same oppression, the same causes for it, therefore the same struggle. And at least two versions of the way Christianity should deal with them all.

If religion was to be a means of liberation it had to be so for people everywhere and in all situations. Not only was it a matter of struggling against tyrannical governments - it was also a matter of recognising oppression wherever it existed, even within relatively benign regimes and even among relatively kindly people, and doing something creative about it, not only in the name of patriotism or decency, but in the name of God. Setting prisoners free was not a political matter only, it was one of the first duties of Christians as religious people. In their earliest days when they were trying to get an unwilling world to accept them, Christians said that a primary duty of theirs - and a sign that they were as good as they said they were - was that prisoners would be set free. Jesus Christ said that was to be one of the hallmarks of his new kingdom, yet in Ireland Christians are to the forefront in building more prisons and putting more people into them, substituting vengeance for restitution. For prisoners, the Christian religion has been turned on its head.

Opposition to bad government from London or Dublin or the City Hall, seen from a Christian liberation viewpoint, is a religious matter and not just one of confrontational politics. For many Christians this is not a new idea but for many it is an unwelcome one. Many take refuge from such stark possibilities by reverting to "the old time religion". Reverting to the old days of fundamentalism and pious hymnsinging is not just a flight towards infantile security, it is a reaction against the dangers of Liberation Theology which is evolving in Ireland, slowly and cautiously, but frighteningly for them all the same.

In other parts of the world battles are being fought with greater intensity. Opposition from the Vatican and the USA and from rich world-wide conservative movements is taking its toll and, although the churches do not emphasise it, religious people including their own priests and religious are being killed by governments who think they are going to far. It is difficult to say much about martyrs when you have been partly the cause of them yourself. Icy disapproval from your Christian friends helps the military opposition to do its worst without penalty.

But also taking its toll is the inherent difficulty already mentioned that the liberation described in the Bible was granted by God at too great a cost. The question facing Christians now is whether they have sufficient dynamic within their own body to struggle for freedom and get it without at the same time oppressing other people. It is a dilemma which they have not solved yet.

Film Reviews

"SOME MOTHERS' SON"

By North Belfast Cliftonville Fan

Writer-Director Terry George's film "Some Mother's Son" attempts to deal with the 1981 Hunger Strike as a result of which eleven republican prisoners died. Any dramatic representation of the Hunger Strike is almost certainly from the start doomed to failure in attempting to fully convey the depth and breadth of suffering, loss, and injustice endured by the prisoners, their families and their comrades, and to a lesser extent us all. So it is with the utmost humility that we should try to understand why some of the hunger strikers families did not wish to associate themselves with the making of this film.

The film centres around two fictional characters; the mothers of two I.R.A. men, one a republican Annie Higgins (Finnuala Flannigan), and the middle class mother Kathleen Quigley (Hellen Mirren). It begins with the events which lead to the arrest of the two sons, Gerard Quigley (Aidan Gillen) and Frank Higgins (David O'Hara). The story then follows the brutal journey endured by the two sons from sentencing to the no- wash protest, and the film ends with the culmination of the 1981 Hunger Strike.



While there are indeed flaws in the film, I feel the film's strength was to show that as long as there is oppression in these six counties there will be resistance to that oppression, and that resistance shall come from all sections of our society, whether we like it or not. It did this most graphically by showing the involvement in this struggle by a young middle class man, Gerard Quigley. Quigley's role as a volunteer showed him as a committed, young volunteer who was an equal with his comrades. This was contrasted with the initial gulf between the two mothers. Annie Higgins, the tough spirited farmer's wife, and Kathleen Quigley, the cosy middle class school teacher. But Kathleen Quigley's existence was about to change forever. There is, I believe, a lesson in this transformation for us all.

Through her son's conscious decision to try to change the society in which he found himself, his mother was forced to do the same. She was dragged kicking and screaming to the truth of the reason why there is conflict in the north of Ireland. Her "splendid isolation" which admits no-war no politics, even when it is happening all around her, was shattered only when it came to her own door. She was forced to choose and she grudgingly chose to fight; well at least to engage, to highlight, to criticise, to question, to seek to understand. She was forced to accept her son's decision; to fight for the right to be Irish in his own country.

Through this limited political maturing process of hers, the film allowed us to see the naivety and duplicity of the "institutional Church", the desperation of the Republican leadership outside the jail when trying to facilitate a just settlement, and the courage, dignity and sincerity of the prisoners - and last but not least the insane bloody-mindedness of the British establishment, who were eventually defeated.

Having said this, there was a high price to pay for these tangible truths. Annie Higgins was portrayed as a one dimensional Republican; she appears unthinking and atavistic. This enabled Terry George to portray Kathleen Quigley and her bourgeois values as the moral centre of the film - hereby reinforcing old stereotypes about republicans and armed struggle. Also, Bobby Sands was not given the recognition for being the visionary leader that he was. He was portrayed as a less than fully rounded character. And it must be said that the "screws" were depicted as being half-human - which would surely come as a shock to any Republican prisoners watching.

Having said this, we can at least take stock in the light of this film: the lesson being that unless we unearth the roots of this conflict (i.e. the British presence in the North of Ireland) there will always be those who will inspire the young and old, from whatever class or situation, to stay true to the Hunger Strikers' commitment and vision by struggling for Justice. The film at least pays tribute to this Spirit, The spirit of Freedom.

continued from inside front cover

Irish men and women under British rule, so that Irish society could be socially engineered, designed to obscenely selfish measurements. These are the descendants and rightful heirs of everything which must be considered the most unspeakably shameful aspects of our Irishness; an identity of neo-colonialism, of self denial and inward brutality. No amount of revisionist ideology or colonial historiography can ever make valid excuses for this grotesque perversion of our cultural heritage.

Is it any wonder, then, how these imperialist lipspitals can talk, without an outer hint of moral dilemma about the "democratic will of the majority" in the bastardised six-county state? Let us not forget, it was this "democratic will" of middle class unionism that led to the road-block campaigns, the intimidation of nationalists and the removal of over 100 families from North Belfast, in defence of their 'right' to parade their supremacist identity, openly endorsed by the British paramiltary police force in Ireland, the RUC. Let us not forget that these events over the summer highlighted and exposed once again the irreformable contradictions which lie at the heart of the State.

We, as young republicans, are the rightful heirs of Connolly and the legacy of 1916, and must identify these people as our enemies. Socialist republicanism's aims and objectives are to confront these people and remove their monopolies of power which they have so used against the Irish people in the interests of themselves and British imperialism. Socialist republicanism is based on a vision of a new Ireland, a 32-county Republic where national institutions operate according to principles of total democracy and justice; where 'equality' is a human value determining the nature of our economic process, acting as the touchstone of Irish society.

It can be summarised that the Connolly Society strives to forward these aims and objectives by pursuing two broad policy objectives of its own; both equally important and interrelated. The first is articulated in the society's constitution: (c); 3.2 - to work - "for the unity and strength of the liberation movement in Ireland by pursuing a policy of pledging its active support for those oppressed sections of Irish society who are denied respect and integrity by being excluded and forcibly dehumanised on this island... ."

Only through this strength and unity can a mass republican movement, anti-colonial in political character and radically inclusive in social essence, confront the twin evils facing this island today: National and Social unfreedom. As a student organisation the Connolly Society strives to work for this unity and strength by bringing together particularly campaign issues, radical in orientation, through the existence of the society's theoretical journal, whilst encouraging republican youth/student involvement in this national project.

The second policy objective is inextricably linked to the first: to pursue a programme of critical self-politicisation and radical education amongst republican students/youth through the 32-counties. This can be done by unifying strands of young republican activism through the structures of the journal giving republican activists the opportunity, whether resident in Dublin, Belfast, Galway, Derry, Coleraine, Limerick or elsewhere, to exchange analyses, ideas on methods of struggle, campaign issues, etc. This will bring about a coherency of radical theory and hence a guide to coherent radical practice. The journal will, in this respect, act as a 32-County forum.

We will do well to learn from each other, to draw insight from each other's involvement in political struggle, to reach a more crystalline understanding of the economic, social and cultural issues which make up our problem and its solution.

If the Connolly Society can, through the journal and from other organisational activity, achieve even a degree of success regarding these two policy objectives, then we believe that our existence as an active student body is worthwhile and beneficial to the socialist republican cause. The liberation struggle is quickly passing over to the hands of another generation of republicans. Therefore, it is imperative that this generation move forward together, learn together, grow strong and united together, as one people, with one voice, demanding one indefeasible right -Irish Freedom!

SUBMITTING ARTICLES

Students may wish to submit articles using a pen-name, as indeed have most of the contributors to this edition. We would be grateful if anyone wishing to correspond with us would specify a particular pen-name as well as their own name in order to maintain the integrity of the individual and the magazine. Contributions of any length are welcomed regarding any aspect of the republican struggle in Ireland today. However, the articles should be no more than four pages of type.

The editors of the 'Spirit of Freedom' would wish to stress that contributors are granted complete autonomy to express their own socialist republican beliefs.

WE CAN BE CONTACTED AT THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS :
Spirit of Freedom, Connolly House,
147 Andersonstown Rd , Belfast 11

"The IRA is conducting a struggle for self-assertion. They do not want Britain - a foreign country - to run a colony. We don't want any form of colonialism and, wherever colonialism is, we support those who fight it because people should have self-expression."



— South African President Nelson Mandela, 1992.